

GEELONG NATURALIST



Quarterly magazine of the Geelong Field Naturalists Club

In this issue...

Quandongs near Geelong?

Butterfly species this summer

Bird comeback: three species
return to Inverleigh Reserve

Discovering nature: family fun at
Balyang Sanctuary

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Front Cover:

Top Left: *Endotricha* sp. Moth, Lorraine Phelan

Top Right: *Echthromorpha intricatoria* wasp, Lorraine Phelan

Middle Left: *Entometa* sp. moth, David Boyle

Middle: *Destolmia lineata*, Andrea Dennett

Middle Right: *Cosmodes elegans*, Lorraine Phelan

Bottom Left: *Phyllotocus* sp. beetle, Rod Lowther

Bottom Right: *Genduara subnotata*, Lorraine Phelan



The GFNC respects, studies and explores the land, skies, waterways, plants and wildlife of our region, Wadawurrung Country.

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The magazine provides a channel for Club members and others to share and communicate their knowledge and research on natural history.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions of a scientific nature or as informal contributions are welcome and will be due on **31 May** for the **June** issue. Email to naturalist@gfnc.org.au

Guidelines for contributors can be downloaded from www.gfnc.org.au/about-us/publications

COVER IMAGE

Thirteen observers recorded 82 species of insects and spiders at Point Richards reserve in February (see full **report pp.18-20**). The Front Cover collage features some invertebrates seen at the moth sheets that evening.

SEANA Campout

At the time of writing, we're in the final stages of planning for the SEANA Campout to be held over the last weekend of March. We have just over 80 visitors coming from other clubs around the state and we are running 19 separate excursions and two evening events. Several GFNC members are also attending.

Thank you to all the 20 or so club members who are helping to make this possible, notably the organising team of Barry and Bernie Lingham, Phil and Alison Watson, and Deborah Evans.

First Aid courses

The Committee decided that the club should aim to have someone with First Aid training at all excursions. We are looking at a City of Greater Geelong funded course as part of their Nature Safe program, but we will only take up that offer if less well funded groups don't take up all the places. To meet remaining needs, we will then arrange club funding of a course every three years for those who commit to help out. We've already contacted those who commonly lead

excursions to see if they are interested, but if you're a frequent attendee who can help out and would be interested in training, or who already has current First Aid qualifications, then contact me via club email.

Jerringot Wetland

You may have seen the improved bird hide. A planting day is planned for Sunday 19 April to complete the work that was done last year at the opening of the hide. The Committee has also agreed to fund a floating platform for birds that will be placed in sight of the hide. We are just finalising the design, and we then need final council signoff: they agree in principle.

We ran our annual Clean Up Australia Day event at the wetlands earlier in March, and thanks to Lorraine Leversha for coordinating that activity since 2022 ([see report on p. 28](#)). If you'd like to take over the coordination for next year, then contact me via the club email.

Environment Fund

The Fund trustees recommended, and the wider committee agreed, to provide

\$3,820 to the Moorabool Landcare Network for equipment to create nesting hollows in fence posts for Blue-winged Parrots. The method has been used elsewhere with good results ([see article on pp. 9-10](#) by Colin and Wendy Cook).

You can see all [past grants on our website](#). Two recent recipients, Clara Borel and Jeane Thompson, will be presenting on their work after the AGM on Tuesday 7 April.

You can of course also help to support similar initiatives via a tax-deductible donation to the fund.

Club memberships

If you have not paid for 2026 membership this will be your last *Geelong Naturalist*. If you are not sure if you've paid, then please ask via the club email.

Graham Possingham

Quandongs near Geelong?

Lynne Clarke

Wild peach pie is delicious.

I know this, because when we visited our grandmother when we were children, we were sometimes so fortunate as to eat it for dinner! Her sister-in-law, who lived at Kimba, west of Port Augusta on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, would collect and dry the flesh of Quandongs, *Santalum acuminatum*, colloquially known as ‘wild peaches’, and send a packet to grandma. Grandma had grown up in the district, where they still grow prolifically.

When I came to Geelong in 2005, I wondered if I could possibly grow a Quandong. I asked my brother, then living near Menindee in western New South Wales, if he could find me some seeds. Not long afterwards a packet of about 20 arrived, complete with the gob of emu poo in which he had found them, and I planted them together, hoping one might germinate. I knew they were hemiparasites, but they would have plenty of roots to which to attach, as they were beside a well-grown but slender Agonis, and quite near a Golden Wattle and a casuarina which I had planted. (How many Australian plants adopt this strategy to support life in dry conditions? I know the Cherry Ballart also does, but what else?) They took their time, and I had forgotten all about them, but a couple of years later I was most delighted to discover a little seedling.

At that period, I was in touch with Mark Trengove whom I consulted about my grasses. He was interested to see that I had a Quandong. He mentioned that in the distant past they had grown across Victoria, almost down to Geelong. Indeed, there is a district called Quandong, about halfway between Melton and Little River. Now, none are known to exist anywhere nearer than the Wimmera district. He wondered if perhaps we had had a local variant.

Bernie Lingham linked me to the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA), which lists two preserved Quandong specimens in the National Herbarium of Victoria from southern Victoria. One near Meredith dates to 1884 and was identified by J. H. Willis in 1966, who noted it was a ‘remarkable isolated record’, with no subsequent finds in the Moorabool River area ‘this century’ (**Occurrence record: MEL: MEL 2227221A**). The other specimen from Lerderderg lacks a collection date (**Occurrence record: MEL: MEL 1563344A**).

My Quandong has a lovely upright habit and is now more than three metres tall. Right now, it is in full bloom, not that you would notice, as the flowers are small and green. They do not escape the notice of insects, however! The fruit take many months to develop, but by October some are approaching golf-ball size, bright red and shiny, like Christmas decorations. They ripen over about



Quandong in my garden, provenance Menindee NSW, with upright habit, next to the slender Agonis, 25/2/26

six weeks, and I eat them raw with my muesli, because I know they have lots of nutrients, but the flavour is ... not much. The rest I take to dry, like my great-aunt, and when cooked, they are something else! It is also possible to eat the seeds, and though I have tasted them and they are quite pleasant, they are so fiddly to handle I don’t bother.

A couple of years ago I was curious about a few little plants coming up nearby. In due course I identified them as Quandong suckers! I checked with the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, and, yes, they quite often sucker. Last year more emerged some distance away—those roots have spread everywhere. I would end up with a copse of them if I kept them all. I haven’t decided about that yet....

Last October, as part of another event, I invited the Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens to visit my garden. One couple I did not know approached me. ‘You’ve got a Quandong!’ they exclaimed with astonishment. ‘We have too!’

They explained that they have had a farm out at Wurdiboluc for about 30 years. Twenty or so years ago they decided to put in a plantation of indigenous trees as a windbreak for the house and sheds. They obtained their trees from a native nursery at or near Bambra on the edge of the Otways—eucalypts, wattles, etc., all indigenous to the area.

A few years later they saw these strange little trees coming up within the plantation. ‘They are Quandongs!’ she said. She knew because she had grown up at Kimba in South Australia! They invited me to visit them, to see. On 29 November 2025, I did so.

The plantation is about 20 to 30 metres wide and perhaps 300 metres long. The trees are generally well grown, with some senescent, and a number of dead wattles. It just looks like a fairly mature patch of bush.

The Quandongs were still in fruit (mine had finished fruiting). The first one I saw was about two metres tall with a lovely weeping habit. I collected some of the fruit, and the stones are uniformly smaller than the stones from my tree.

About 30 metres away was another, this time of the same upright habit as mine. Around it were some little trees that looked just like suckers to me. The fruit from this tree produced the same varied sized stones as my tree, generally larger than those on the first tree.

The trees that had been planted in the plantation had not included Quandongs. I find the idea that Quandong seeds were in the potting mix highly unlikely.

It seems likely to me that the original seeds of these trees had been lying dormant in a paddock for many years, until the conditions for survival changed and open woodland enabled them to thrive. (I have seen Quandong growing in open woodland on my cousin’s farm at Natimuk.)

If that is so, it also seems to me to be likely that the local Quandongs had a variety of form which still persists. Perhaps the weeping form is a local variant?

I thought that the Herbarium might be interested, but the only email address I could find was through the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria (Melbourne). They replied,

telling me that they had triaged it to the Melbourne Arboretum, which disappointed me, and it is the last I have heard about it.

I think it would be helpful if someone other than me checked out the Quandongs at Wurdiboluc. I am sure the owners would welcome visitors and information about their Quandongs.

If anyone would like to try growing Quandongs, I still have plenty of seeds from last year’s harvest. Or probably you would prefer to try ‘local’ ones from Wurdiboluc? I am sure the owners would be very happy about that! I could put you in touch. Perhaps a handful of aged chook poo might substitute for our now-extinct emus’ contribution.

References

Occurrence record: MEL: MEL 2227221A. Preserved specimen of *Santalum acuminatum* (R.Br.) A.DC. | Sweet Quandong recorded on 1884, ***Atlas of Living Australia***.

Occurrence record: MEL: MEL 1563344A. Preserved specimen of *Santalum acuminatum* (R.Br.) A.DC. | Sweet Quandong, ***Atlas of Living Australia***.



My Quandong flowering 10/02/26
Photos: Lynne Clarke



Quandong in fruit, Wurdiboluc
29/11/25



Quandong (weeping habit) with fruit,
Wurdiboluc 29/11/25

Local extinction may not be forever: the return of three bird species to the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve

Richard Alcorn and Margaret Alcorn



Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve, November 2025

Photo: Margaret Alcorn

Background

In 2002, former club member Lawrie Conole published a paper in *Corella* titled 'Local Extinction and Decline of Birds in a Woodland Remnant at Inverleigh, Victoria' (2002). Based on 41 visits to the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve over a 20-year period from 1979 to 2000, and using as a baseline a list of the birds of the Inverleigh district compiled by Roy Wheeler in 1973, this paper identified 13 locally breeding species that had become extinct in the reserve and another nine that were in marked decline.

The 13 species that were considered locally extinct were:

- Bush Stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*
- Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*
- Grey-crowned Babbler *Pomatostomus temporalis*
- Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang*

- Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata*
- Speckled Warbler *Pyrrholaemus sagittatus*
- Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*
- Buff-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza reguloides*
- White-browed Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis*
- White-throated Treecreeper *Cormobates leucophaea*
- Brown Treecreeper *Climacteris picumnus*
- Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*
- Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*.
- Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chalcites basalis*
- Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chalcites lucidus*
- Jacky Winter *Microeca fascinans*
- Yellow Thornbill *Acanthiza nana*
- Varied Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*
- Diamond Firetail *Stagonopleura guttata*
- White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos*.

The nine species that were considered to be in marked decline were:

- Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus*
- Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis*

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to review the status of the 22 species identified as having become locally extinct or to be in marked decline by the year 2000 at the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve based on data from **eBird** and **iNaturalist** for the ten-year period from 2016 to 2025.

Data sources

eBird is a public citizen-science project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that aims to extract scientific value from lists of birds compiled by birders in the field at one location on one day. Such a list is referred to as a checklist. A complete checklist is one upon which the observer has recorded all the birds that they could identify. Complete checklists allow researchers to infer absence and hence calculate the frequency with which a species appears on checklists, a measure of how likely a species is to be encountered.

iNaturalist is an independent, non-profit, public citizen-science project that aims to record observations of all living things. The building block of iNaturalist is the verifiable observation with date, location, identification and photograph or sound recording. An observation is Research Grade

if there is community agreement on the identification.

Method

We downloaded the January 2026 eBird basic data set for Victoria which includes all public checklist data submitted to eBird up until the end of 2025. We limited our analysis to those checklists with a distance travelled of no more than 10 km (a distance that might be travelled whilst birding in the reserve).

We consolidated shared¹ checklists into a single checklist containing all species listed on the shared checklists. From the eBird website we counted the number of photographs and sound recordings from the reserve for each of the 22 study species over the period 2016 to 2025. Likewise, from iNaturalist we counted the number of Research Grade observations of the same species from the reserve over the same period.

A small percentage of eBird observations are likely to be in error due to species misidentification (Goleri and Areta 2022) or data entry errors. In cases where there are very few records of a species, none supported by photographs or sound recordings, then it is possible that all observations are misidentifications or data entry errors rather than records of vagrant individuals or of species that occur at a very low density. In these cases, we consider the occurrence of the species in the reserve to be unconfirmed.

We summarised the frequency with which each of the study species was recorded on complete eBird checklists from the study area over the period 2016 to 2025 into frequency classes based on a half-log base 10 scale (see Table 1).

Frequency class	Frequency
Very Low	<1%
Low	1–3.16%
Moderate	3.16–10%
High	10–31.6%
Very High	> 31.6%

Table 1: Frequency classes based on the frequency with which a species was recorded on complete eBird checklists

¹ In eBird a checklist can be shared (copied) to other members of a birding party resulting in multiple checklists being created for the same birding event. Each member can add or delete observations from their copy of the original checklist resulting in several versions of what is essentially the same checklist.

Results

The numbers of observations and photographs from eBird and iNaturalist over the period 2016 to 2025 of those species considered locally extinct in 2000 are listed in Table 2. No sound recordings of these species were made during the study period.

Species	eBird observations	eBird photos	iNaturalist photos
Bush Stone-curlew	-	-	-
Barking Owl	-	-	-
Grey-crowned Babbler	-	-	-
Scarlet Robin	1	-	-
Hooded Robin	-	-	-
Speckled Warbler	-	-	-
Brown Thornbill	71	2	3
Buff-rumped Thornbill	2	-	-
White-browed Scrubwren	67	1	5
White-throated Treecreeper	25	6	3
Brown Treecreeper	-	-	-
Eastern Spinebill	1	-	-
Grey Butcherbird	3	-	-

Table 2: Number of eBird and iNaturalist observations and photographs for the period 2016 to 2025 for the 13 species considered locally extinct in the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve in 2000

The number of observations, photographs and sound recordings from eBird and iNaturalist over the period 2016 to 2025 of species considered to be in marked decline in 2000 are listed in Table 3.

Species	eBird observations	eBird photos	eBird sound recordings	iNaturalist photos	iNaturalist sound recordings
Sacred Kingfisher	27	-	-	3	-
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	62	4	-	1	1
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	14	2	1	-	-
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	14	1	-	1	-
Jacky Winter	4	-	-	-	-
Yellow Thornbill	4	-	-	-	-
Varied Sittella	14	-	-	1	-
Diamond Firetail	-	-	-	-	-
White-winged Chough	36	3	-	4	-

Table 3: Number of eBird and iNaturalist observations, photographs and sound recordings for the period 2016–2025 for the nine species considered to be in marked decline in 2000

The status in 2000 and 2025 of the 22 species considered to be locally extinct or in marked decline in the reserve in 2000 is listed in Table 4.

Species	Status 2000	Status 2025
Bush Stone-curlew	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Barking Owl	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Grey-crowned Babbler	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Scarlet Robin	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Hooded Robin	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Speckled Warbler	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Brown Thornbill	Locally extinct	Very high frequency
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
White-browed Scrubwren	Locally extinct	Very high frequency
White-throated Treecreeper	Locally extinct	High frequency
Brown Treecreeper	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Eastern Spinebill	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Grey Butcherbird	Locally extinct	Locally extinct
Sacred Kingfisher	Marked decline	High frequency
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Marked decline	Very high frequency
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Marked decline	Moderate frequency
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Marked decline	Moderate frequency
Jacky Winter	Marked decline	Locally extinct
Yellow Thornbill	Marked decline	Locally extinct
Varied Sittella	Marked decline	Moderate frequency
Diamond Firetail	Marked decline	Locally extinct
White-winged Chough	Marked decline	High frequency

Table 4: Status in 2000 and 2025 of the 22 species considered to be locally extinct or in marked decline in the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve in 2000

Discussion

Changes in management practices in the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve since European settlement have altered the vegetation structure. Originally set aside as a timber reserve, logging, plantation forestry and grazing caused large-scale disturbances to the understorey vegetation which continued until the 1980s. Following the cessation of disturbances there was a great expansion in the *Acacia paradoxa* shrub cover (Franco and Morgan 2007).

Three species considered locally extinct in 2000, the Brown Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren and White-throated Treecreeper, have re-colonised the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve. Two of these, the Brown Thornbill and White-browed Scrubwren, are now among the 20 most frequently recorded of the 131 species recorded in the reserve over the study period, and the White-throated Treecreeper is among the top 40 (eBird).

Brown Thornbill and White-browed Scrubwren are found widely across the Geelong region and presumably have had little difficulty in finding their way back to the reserve. White-throated Treecreeper is largely confined to woodland and forest in the Geelong region (Alcorn and Alcorn 2022), but records in eBird of this species along streams in the Geelong region show that this species could have followed streamside vegetation along the Leigh River to recolonise the reserve.

The 10 remaining species considered locally extinct in 2000, the Bush Stone-curlew, Barking Owl, Grey-crowned Babbler, Hooded Robin, Speckled Warbler, Brown Treecreeper, Scarlet Robin, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Eastern Spinebill and Grey Butcherbird, remain locally extinct. Three of these, the Bush Stone-curlew, Grey-crowned Babbler and Hooded Robin are extinct in the broader Geelong region, and it would seem unlikely that they will ever return. The remaining seven species, the Barking Owl, Speckled Warbler, Brown Treecreeper, Scarlet Robin, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Eastern Spinebill and Grey Butcherbird, occur elsewhere in the Geelong region (in the case of the Barking Owl at least from time to time), and may conceivably once again inhabit the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve should the habitat become suitable for these species.

Of the nine species considered to be in marked decline in 2000, six, the Sacred Kingfisher, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Shining

Bronze-Cuckoo, Varied Sittella and White-winged Chough, have markedly improved their status. The return of the Brown Thornbill and White-browed Scrubwren, host species of the three cuckoos, may have helped to increase the number of cuckoos visiting the reserve.

Three species considered to be in marked decline in 2000, the Jacky Winter, Yellow Thornbill and Diamond Firetail, have declined further to the point where they are now considered to be locally extinct.

Conclusion

Three species considered locally extinct in the Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve in 2000, the Brown Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren and White-throated Treecreeper, are now frequently observed in the reserve, most likely due to the expansion of *Acacia paradoxa* cover since the 1980s.

Acknowledgments

We thank Lawrie Conole and Guy Dutson for providing helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this article.

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Brown Thornbill, Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve, October 2022,
iNaturalist
Photo: Susan Kruss

GFNC Environment Fund: grant to make new nesting hollows for Blue-winged Parrots *Neophema chrysostoma*

Colin and Wendy Cook

We have been monitoring the outcomes of Blue-winged Parrots nesting on our Meredith property since late 2021. They were observed nesting in old hardwood fence posts with rotted centres. When BirdLife Bass Coast launched their project aimed at studying the Parrots and determining if they were nesting in the Bass Coast area, we contacted them and began working with them. At the time, knowledge of contemporary Victorian nesting sites was lacking.

In 2022, BirdLife Bass Coast installed three nest boxes on our property and we installed two Habitech boxes. We also started using motion sensitive camera traps on all the posts and boxes, as well as conducting in-person visual inspections.

In 2025, BirdLife Bass Coast swapped their existing boxes for some of new design, following the 2024 death of three chicks from heat stress in one of their boxes, as well as installing five more boxes. We found two old fence posts left behind after a boundary fence replacement. These were

relocated to a sheep free area close to one of the existing post hollows. All the posts and boxes are in a 600 x 600 m area.

For the 2025–26 nesting season, we had the following available for use:

- BirdLife Bass Coast boxes: 8
- Eclipse Creek boxes: 3
- Eclipse Creek post hollows: 8

We set up monitoring cameras on all boxes and posts. Once any nesting activity was confirmed, visual checks were made regularly, taking photos and videos with a smartphone.



Above: Blue-winged Parrot chicks inside old fence post, December 2025 Photo: Wendy Cook

Top right: Blue-winged Parrot eggs inside old fence post, December 2025 Photo: Colin Cook

Bottom right: Blue-winged Parrot chicks being fed at top of post, October 2025 Photo: Wendy Cook

Researchers from the Difficult Bird Research Group and Fenner School of Environment and Society of the ANU (Australian National University), took DNA and crop samples from numerous chicks prior to fledging (all under appropriate permits).

Known nesting success since 2021

2021–2022: 1 chick fledged

2022–2023: No nesting observed

2023–2024: 1 chick fledged

2024–2025: 9–10 chicks fledged, 1 from a nest box

2025–2026: 18 chicks fledged, all from post hollows

Measurements and observations of the post hollows, both successful and unsuccessful, have highlighted some common factors for success:

- a wide post (30 cm or more)
- large entrance hole (10 cm), but a deep hollow (>40 cm)
- allows chicks to climb to the post entrance for feeding.

The deep hollow helps to improve the insulation performance at the bottom, as well as providing protection against predator access.

Given that old wide hardwood fence posts are a scarce commodity, we intend to make suitable hollows in posts obtained from Blue Gum plantation trees. (We have a source of very wide trees from an unharvested plantation on a conservation property near Bacchus Marsh.)

The grant from the Environment Fund will enable our local Moorabool Landcare Network to

purchase a **Hollow Hog grinding tool**. This tool was invented specifically for making hollows in living trees but is well suited to grinding out large hollows in cut logs. The Moorabool Landcare Network often run nest box building workshops and encourage landholders to install them. The Hollow Hog tool would add an additional way of making artificial hollows for a range of indigenous species, including Blue-winged Parrots and, if used by an arborist, could be used to make hollows in living trees.

The Moorabool Landcare Network interacts with hundreds of volunteers every year including students from Bacchus Marsh Grammar who have a campus on a former farm in Staughton Vale. We intend to work with their ‘Staughton Vale Ambassadors’ group of students to install Blue-winged Parrot hollows adjacent to the Brisbane Ranges National Park. The results of the use of the hollows can then be communicated to the rest of the students working on the site over subsequent years.

Posts will be set up by the next nesting season (September 2026). Camera and visual inspection monitoring of all posts and nest boxes will be carried out as per usual.

All data will be shared with BirdLife Bass Coast and the researchers from the Fenner School.

We will collaborate with any further research or sampling undertaken by the Fenner School, or any other interested institution.



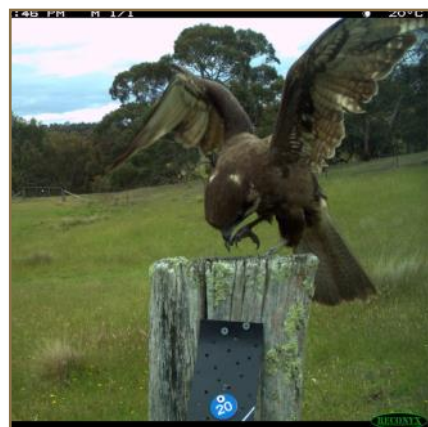
BirdLife Bass Coast nest box, 19/10/25



Habitech nest box, 19/10/25



Brown Falcon perched on old fence post used for nesting, December 2025



Brown Falcon attempting to seize chicks in old fence post used for nesting, December 2025

Photos: Colin Cook

Eucalyptus flowers

Wendy Cook



Photo: Bernie Lingham

The trunk of the Red Ironbark, tall and straight, grows ridges of dark grey bark, separated by deep furrows. Although it is a Eucalyptus, its bark gives it an appearance unlike a smooth-barked gum tree. Its leaves are often duller and greyer than other Eucalyptus leaves. Beneath its branches, the ground is strewn with a creamy carpet of fallen flowers. Its neighbour, another Red Ironbark has pale pink flowers, the two colours intermingling on the rocky red soil below the meeting of their canopies.

The flowers of gum trees and other Eucalyptus trees are different from those of many other plants, as they have no showy petals. Instead, the petals are fused and hardened to form a green cap protecting the flower bud as it develops. In the centre of the flower is a stigma, the part that collects pollen. Surrounding it are stamens, each stalk ending with an oval-shaped anther which will be coated with pollen when it matures. Inside the bud, the stamens are bent over, but as the cap comes off they straighten, pushing it upwards. After the cap falls, the stamens spread up and outwards forming a typical gum

flower. Eucalyptus buds grow in clusters, often tightly packed, and open around the same time. The result is a mass of hairy-looking blooms, strongly scented with honey. Most of our local Eucalyptus flowers are white or creamy, although a few are pale pink. Those from other parts of Australia may be darker shades of pink, red, yellow or occasionally orange.

The purpose of flowers is to attract pollinators, which eucalypts do by providing food. Deep within each flower is a supply of nectar, which is mostly sugar and water, but includes proteins and other nutrients. It also contains compounds which prevent

microorganisms, such as bacteria, from growing, and so can stop the spread of diseases. If you have walked below a Eucalyptus tree covered in blossom, you may have noticed the smell of honey, the continual buzzing of bees, and the variety of insects and birds attracted to the tree.

On the Red Ironbark trees, flowers hang in shaggy clusters, facing downwards.

A black beetle with an iridescent blue shine over its body, buries its head in a flower as it feeds.



Red Ironbark flowers
Photos: Lorraine Phelan

A longer brown beetle lands nearby. It folds its delicate wings, hiding them beneath the hard wing cases on its back. Its black legs stretch out to the sides, and with black antennae forwards, it walks across the stamens, past a native bee, to another bloom. Black ants explore a cluster of flowers. They have made a long journey up the tall trunk to crawl inside blossoms and collect nectar. Soon, they will descend, delivering food to their nest several metres from the base of the tree.

A flowering Eucalyptus is not only for feeding; it is also a meeting place for finding a mate. As the day warms, beetles with orange bodies, dark green wing cases and black heads begin to arrive. Gradually, they build to a swarm, flying around the trees and plants, landing on flowers and stems, and finding partners, the male climbing onto the female's back. Other insects are mating among the blooms, including a pair of native wasps, the male with wings and the female wingless. They are joined by the tips of their abdomens, and will remain this way for several hours, while they feed from the flowers.

For birds, pollen and nectar are not the only source of food in the

tree. All the insects provide an added attraction. A honeyeater perches on a twig, picks a fly from a flower, then reaches between the stamens to lick up the sweet liquid and any insects with its long brush-like tongue. Pollen from the anthers sticks to its beak and face feathers. When it moves to another blossom, some of the pollen rubs off onto the stigma. For many plants, including eucalypts, for pollination to be effective, the pollen must come from another plant of the same species. Larger honeyeaters, such as wattlebirds and New Holland honeyeaters defend territories within trees, and only occasionally move to another tree, so do not help much with pollination. They chase smaller birds, including honeyeaters, away from their territories. These smaller birds are likely to be more efficient at spreading pollen between trees, and pollinating flowers, so that seeds develop.

After dark, when the birds have retired for the night, the activity continues. Other insects visit the trees, including moths and more beetles. Many of our mammals feed at night, and possums, gliders, antechinuses, phascogales and flying foxes all enjoy a feed of nectar and pollen,

and pollinate flowers as they move from tree to tree.

Some visitors provide little benefit to the trees. Parrots grasp small branches and hang upside down, biting into the flowers to extract nectar. They snip the slender stalks, so that the blooms fall to the ground and form a carpet. With the large quantity of flowers a mature Eucalyptus grows, and the long life it lives, it does not require all its flowers to be pollinated and become gumnuts. The food it provides is important to the animals that visit it, and sometimes crucial to keep them alive.

Published in Meredith and District News, June 2025.

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Insects on Eucalyptus flowers
Photos: Wendy Cook

Fauna survey report

Old Boardman Property

Butchers Road, Anakie

13 December 2025–5 January 2026

Barry Lingham

Site description

This large property of over 550 ha was purchased in 2025 to be managed primarily for conservation purposes. Although it had been used for sheep grazing in the past, the majority of the property has natural vegetation with areas of heathy woodland similar to the adjacent Brisbane Ranges National Park, plus rocky valleys dominated by Ironbark/ Stringybark forest. Manna Gums and other eucalypts such as Long-leaf Box thrive in the lower valley zones that are more fertile. Interestingly, the GFNC had previously visited this property in the early 1960s.

The zone selected for this survey was dominated by large healthy trees of various species including Messmate Stringbark *Eucalyptus obliqua*, Red Stringybark *E. macrorhyncha* and Southern Red Ironbark *E. tricarpa*. An understory of Austral Grass-trees *Xanthorrhoea australis* was present with scattered small acacias such as Hedge Wattle *A. paradoxa* and Mitchell's Wattle *A. mitchellii* and many species of flowering plants. Both Creeping Mistletoe *Muellerina eucalyptoides* and Box Mistletoe *Amyema miquelii* were present. We were informed that wildflowers were prolific at the site during spring.

A summary list of flora and invertebrate species recorded at the property during the survey is available on [iNaturalist](#).

Survey details

An audio recorder and microbat recorder were deployed for 19 days. The audio and bat recordings will be uploaded to the Terrestrial Ecology Research Network (TERN).

Five motion cameras were set for 23 nights from 13/12/25 until 05/01/26. Baits consisting of peanut butter, rolled oats and a dash of golden syrup were placed in steel mesh containers. The weather was generally cool for this time of year with many days experiencing windy conditions.

Cam No.	Site description
1	Open Woodland. Messmates with Grass-tree understory. Camera mounted at 1.6 m focused upon bait attached to trunk of large Messmate
2	Open Woodland. Messmates with Grass-tree understory. Good leaf litter cover. Camera mounted at 20 cm focused upon bait at ground level.
3	Messmate woodland, some <i>Acacia paradoxa</i> and bracken species. Camera mounted at 20 cm focused upon bait at ground level.
4	Closer to the dam (dry) in open Messmate woodland. Some wildflowers. Good leaf litter. Camera focused vertically down on gap in drift fence.
5	Open Woodland. Messmates and acacias with Grass-tree understory. Camera mounted at 1.6 m focused upon bait attached to trunk of medium sized Messmate.

Results

Mammals	Cam. 1	Cam. 2	Cam. 3	Cam. 4	Cam. 5
Agile Antechinus <i>Antechinus agilis</i>		*	*		
Krefft's Glider <i>Petaurus notatus</i>	*				
Common Ring-tailed Possum <i>Pseudocheirus peregrinus</i>	*		*		*
Common Brush-tailed Possum <i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>				*	
Eastern Grey Kangaroo <i>Macropus giganteus</i>		*			
Swamp Wallaby <i>Wallabia bicolor</i>			*		

Note: Common names as per iNaturalist

Other species on the cameras

Birds photographed included Superb Fairywren, White-browed Scrubwren, Australian Magpie and two Painted Buttonquail that were noted scratching near the bait. A Pale-flecked Garden Sunskink was detected and many Common Brown Butterflies. The tail of a mammal, probably a cat, was photographed on camera 3, but it is not identifiable.

Comments

It was pleasing to note the presence of Agile Antechinus and

the Krefft's Glider (previously known as a Sugar Glider). Common Ring-tailed Possum and Common Brush-tailed Possum were detected on camera many times as was the Swamp Wallaby.

The initial survey indicates that the habitat is capable of supporting a range of mammal species. Further surveys are needed to establish the distribution and full range of mammal species present.

The survey was conducted by members of the GFNC Fauna

Group under the GFNC Scientific Procedures Fieldwork Licence 20072.

Thanks

Thanks to Annette Rypalski for arranging permission to visit the property and for showing us around. Thanks also to all those who helped with setting up the cameras and equipment or uploading photo observations to iNaturalist.



GFNC excursion to Boardman Property in early 1960s
Photo: supplied by Tony Sherwood



Painted Buttonquail scratching near the bait.
Photo: Camera 2

Bird Group excursion report

Jerringot Wetland and Wal Whiteside Walk, Barwon River

22 January 2026

Kerry Haddon

Our group of 22 birders visited two local areas for the first bird watching event of 2026. These areas were Jerringot Wetland in Belmont, and the Wal Whiteside Walk along the Barwon River.

Although the conditions were a little windy at Jerringot there were a couple of exciting sightings of Spotless Crake and Australian Spotted Crake. The surrounding area of the Belmont Common was very dry, prompting the appearance of a Tiger Snake! A couple of Latham's Snipe were seen from a distance along with a graceful Royal Spoonbill in breeding plumage.

After morning tea, we drove to the old Breakwater Bridge and crossed the Barwon River to walk on along the Wal Whiteside path. This was much more sheltered, and we immediately saw several smaller birds like Brown Thornbills, Grey Fantails and Superb Fairywrens. An interesting observation was an Australian Reed Warbler high in an allocasuarina tree, foraging with a full beak!

Ebird Checklists supplied by Craig Morley:

- **Barwon River at Breakwater**, 24 species observed
- **Jerringot and Belmont Common**, 36 species observed.



Spotless Crake
Photo: Linden Young



Royal Spoonbill
Photo: Linden Young



Great Egret
Photo: Karyn Brown

Excursion Report

Balyang Sanctuary

17 January 2026

Graham Possingham

Introduction

This was our fourth consecutive January excursion aimed at attracting families and local residents. We returned to Balyang Sanctuary after outings to Armstrong Creek and Lake Lorne in 2024–25. All the sites were chosen to have a mixture of easily seen birdlife, good parking, proximity to suburbs, and access to water for pond dipping. The program was informal, with participants collecting water samples to search for water bugs and other creatures, taking short walks to spot birds, or just poking around in tree bark looking for spiders and beetles.

Unfortunately, the day was windy, as were the last two January excursions. That meant we could not safely erect a marquee and signs. Brochures and other material were a little hard to wrangle, but we did attract two passing families who asked what we were doing and joined in. Overall, five families with children joined us (both members and visitors), with a total of 12 adults and 10 children of varying ages.

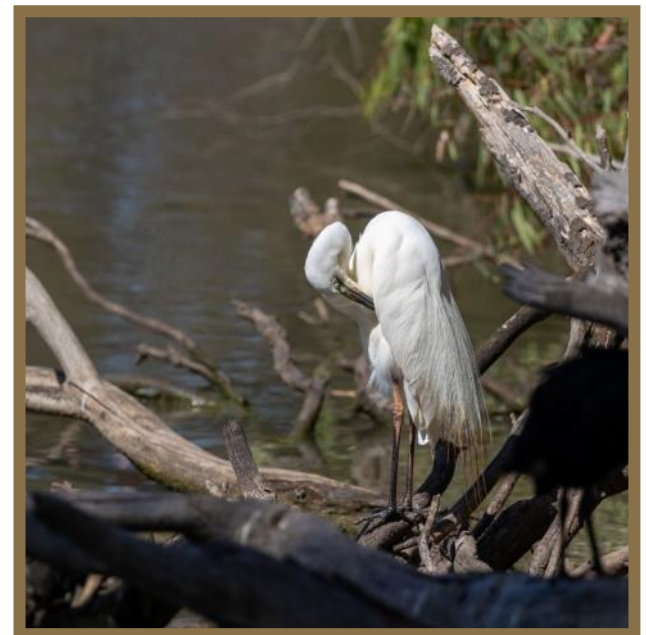
Balyang Sanctuary is a well known suburban park with a series of lakes and wetlands. It is a key site for the treatment of storm water runoff from Newtown before it enters the Barwon River. See the ***Geelong Naturalist* 58(9):10** for a report of the January 2023 excursion.

Birdlife

We recorded a moderate **bird list of 26 species** for the location. Highlights were a **Great Egret in breeding plumage**, a family (two adults and a juvenile) of **Tawny Frogmouths**, and a **White-throated Gerygone**, which is a vagrant to the Geelong region (Geelong Bird Report 2013–2016).



Tawny Frogmouths
Photo: Barry Lingham



Great Egret in breeding plumage
Photo: Graham Possingham



Sophie and Rowan discovering water bugs with help from Barry
Photo: Bernie Lingham

‘Water bugs’ and other invertebrates

We collected several buckets of water from the wetlands, decanted the water into shallow trays, and then collected items of interest in small white lids to view with a stereo microscope. The younger (and several older) visitors became very engaged with spotting the various small animals we found. Several ID pictures were taken using a mobile phone camera and the microscope, which worked well.

It is hard to get complete and verified identification for freshwater invertebrates. We recorded examples of Ripple Bugs

(*Microvelia* spp.), Culicine Mosquito larvae (subfamily Culicinae), and Water Boatmen (tribe Corixini).

Many were examples of true water bugs, including one Giant Water Bug *Diplonychus eques*. At the time we thought many specimens were dead, but we found via iNaturalist that they were just exoskeletons that had been shed as the bugs grew.

We found a docile specimen of one of the Ghost Moths *Abantiades* sp., (possibly a female Labyrinthine Ghost Moth *Abantiades labyrinthicus*) but the habitat would seem to be too dry).

These are large and showy moths,

of approximately 80 mm body length. The size impressed several of the children, others were less enthusiastic. The larvae take several years to emerge from the ground, where they eat eucalyptus roots. The adults have no mouth parts, cannot eat, and live for only a few days. Their sole purpose is to mate and lay eggs. Normally they emerge after rain, however January was dry.

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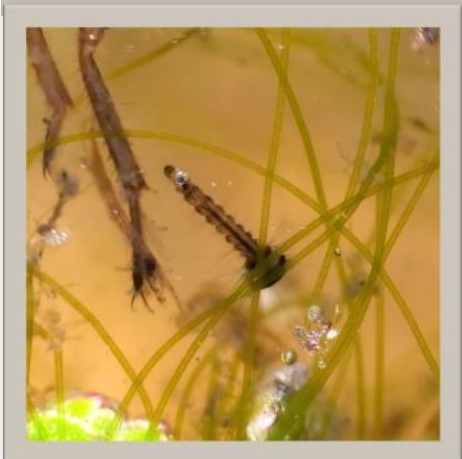
Ghost Moth
 Photo: Graham Possingham



Water Boatman
 Photo: Bernie Lingham



Giant Water Bug
 Photo: Jenny Possingham



Mosquito larvae
 Photo: Bernie Lingham



Ecnolagria sp. beetle
 Photo: Bernie Lingham



Ripple Bug
 Photo: Jenny Possingham

Report on surveys at Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve

Bioblitz survey: Saturday 14 February

Bird Group excursion: Thursday 26 February

David Boyle, Barry Lingham, Pete Sullivan and Hayley Pickering

Introduction

GFNC members have an ongoing interest in the fauna and flora of the Point Richards Reserve. Previous activities have included fauna surveys in August 2008, May 2013 and April 2024, along with Bird Group outings on other occasions to record the avifauna at the reserve. On this occasion we were hosted by Hayley Pickering, from Bellarine Bayside Coastal Management. Friends of the Point Richards Reserve and local community members also attended. Of note was the recent release of **Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Plan 2025–2045**.

Bioblitz survey

The objective was to undertake a Bioblitz survey to contribute to the ongoing documentation of the fauna and flora of the reserve. Twenty-five attendees participated in bird surveys (recorded on eBird) and plant surveys (recorded on iNaturalist). Insects were also noted (recorded on iNaturalist).

When evening arrived five moth sheets were set up and monitored until about 10.00 p.m. In spite of the dry and at times windy conditions we enjoyed a fine and productive evening's activity.

Fauna survey camera traps and bird and bat song meters which had been deployed in the wetlands area earlier on 6 February were recovered during the afternoon for analysis and recording of species detected.



Moth sheet in action

Photo: Hayley Pickering

Bioblitz results

Birds

The reserve was in the grip of very dry conditions which prevailed across south-western Victoria and in South Australia for an extended period. Water levels were very low in the wetland south of the Growling Grass Frog loop where a number of wetland birds were recorded (Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Australasian Swamphen, Black-fronted Dotterel, White-faced Heron, Australian Reed Warbler and Golden-headed Cisticola).

Sightings of Brown Quail confirmed that the reserve continues to host this species. eBird now records **124 bird species** at the Point Richards Flora and Fauna Hotspot.

eBird check list: Point Richards Bioblitz, 14 February consolidated list compiled by Graham Possingham.

Additional contributors to the eBird check lists for the 14 February Bioblitz and/or 26 February Bird Group excursion were Craig Morley, Jeff Dagg, Jenny Possingham, Peter Sullivan, Troy Zanker, Karyn Brown, Anthony Hall, Andrea Dennett, John Renowden, Brad Ferrier, Hayley Pickering, Susan Kruss and David Boyle.

Bioblitz camera survey

Three motion cameras were set for eight nights. Baits consisting of peanut butter, rolled oats and a small amount of golden syrup were placed in steel mesh containers at each site.

Camera 1 was set to record arboreal species that could climb a slanted tree trunk to reach the bait. Camera 2 was set to record terrestrial animals in a woodland, and Camera 3 was set to record animals in the reeds zone beside the main wetland.

Cam No.	Site description	Camera Mounting	Bait Mounting
1	Lightwood <i>Acacia implexa</i> woodland. <i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i> and acacia understorey.	Lightwood tree at 1.7 m	On slanted tree trunk
2	<i>A. implexa</i> woodland bordering thicket of Common Reed <i>Phragmites australis</i> . Understorey: bracken, <i>A. implexa</i> and grasses.	Short post, angled down	Ground level
4	Close to main billabong in reed zone, with Slender Knotweed <i>Persicaria decipiens</i> .	Long post/ facing down at ~45°	Ground level

Camera survey results

Camera 1	One Black Rat <i>Rattus rattus</i> was noted on several nights. It appeared to be
Camera 2	No sightings, despite many nighttime false triggers.
Camera 3	House mice <i>Mus musculus</i> noted on several nights.

Comments

Following on from previous surveys, the only animals detected on the cameras were Black Rats and House Mice. The lack of bird detections was unusual, but direct observation during the bird walk showed many species in the reserve.



A Black Rat investigates bait that is attached to the sloping tree trunk. Black Rats are excellent tree climbers.

The photo is taken automatically, triggered by movement detection. An infra-red flash allows the camera to take a photograph in complete darkness. The flash is not able to be seen by the animals.

Invertebrates and plants

A wide range of moths and flying insects were recorded during our observational walks and at the five moth sheets, with records being deposited in iNaturalist.

Eighty-two species of insects and spiders were recorded by 13 observers. Many require supporting identification; however, they add to the record of the rich diversity of invertebrate species in the reserve.

For plants, of note was flowering Wireleaf Mistletoe *Amyema preissii* and a record of Mistletoe

Moth *Phalaenoides behri* larvae.

Tree Everlasting *Ozothamnus ferrugineus* was also flowering.

Song meter recordings

Data from the bird and bat song meters deployed and retrieved at the same time as the survey cameras are undergoing analysis. The bird song meter was set up to record bird calls for one hour before to one hour after sunset, and one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunrise. The bat song meter was set up to record microbat calls from 30 minutes before sunset to 30 minutes after

sunrise. For microbats, recording is triggered by ultrasound above 20 kHz. Each recording lasts for a maximum of 15 seconds depending upon triggering during this time. Microbat recordings are in the process of being archived at TERN EcoAcoustics, University of Queensland. They will contribute to a national archive of microbat calls in Australia and facilitate the development of call classifiers for microbats of the Australian region.

This survey was carried out under the GFNC Scientific Procedures Fieldwork Licence 20072.

Bird Group Excursion 26 February

The Bird Group excursion to the reserve on the 26 February was very well attended with 27 participants taking part. We commenced the excursion from the main visitor entry on Point Richards Road at 9.00 a.m. We walked the trails for approximately three hours observing and recording all birds sited within the boundaries of the reserve.

We recorded a total of 32 species. Two highlights were an **Australian Rufous Fantail** and a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**. Both birds were the first recorded sighting on eBird at this location. Other notable sightings included 24 Silvereye, 20 White-plumed Honeyeaters, 42 New Holland Honeyeaters and one Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

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Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Plan 2025-2045. Bellarine Bayside Coastal Management.



Little Corella feeding on Golden Wattle

Margaret Alcorn

In my Ocean Grove garden, I have several large Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* shrubs that flower well and set large quantities of seed. In December 2025 a few Little Corella *Cacatua sanguinnea* decided to feed in one of my wattles. I photographed two of the Corellas to see what and how they were eating.



Left: Little Corella holding a Golden Wattle seedpod that has a gall made by the Golden Wattle Gall Wasp *Trichilogaster signiventris*.

Right: The same Corella is holding the half-eaten gall in its left foot as it takes another bite.



Another Little Corella is eating Golden Wattle seeds.

Photos: Margaret Alcorn

Butterfly observations report

December 2025–February 2026

John Newman

As we start to draw towards the end of a dry summer, it is interesting to note what species have been seen in our district, as determined by Geelong Bioblitz boundaries.

Following on from the Spring 2025 summary in the December 2025 edition of the *Geelong Naturalist*, it seems that the total number of species and total butterfly numbers are again down. The continued dry weather and fewer flowering plants likely contribute to this. Nevertheless, it is an interesting list of 34 species seen, encompassing all five butterfly families that can be found locally.

Family	Species	Records this quarter	Comments
Papilionidae (Swallowtails)	Dainty Swallowtail	2	A citrus specialist, irregular and local. One record from Portarlington and one from Geelong city.
Hesperiidae (Skippers)	Barred Skipper	8	Found in moist grasslands and open grassy forest of coastal areas and ranges. More common in late summer. A strong hilltopper. Most records from the Otways forest and Anglesea.
	Bright Shield-Skipper	9	Mostly seen late summer in cool, moist eucalypt forests. All records from the Otways forest.
	White-banded Grass-dart	2	Widespread in grasslands; tiny and easily overlooked.
	Green Grass-dart	31	Widespread including urban areas. Most records from the suburbs and Bellarine Peninsula.
	Montane Ochre	5	In open forest where larval plant food <i>Lomandra filiformis</i> abounds which tolerates drier forest compared to <i>L. longifolia</i> .
	Splendid Ochre	4	A large, showy skipper utilising open forest and eucalypt woodlands where <i>Lomandra longifolia</i> exists.
	Golden-haired Sedge-Skipper	3	A very rare local skipper utilising <i>Gahnia</i> species in coastal areas and saltmarsh. Few records locally.
	Varied Sedge-Skipper	2	Found in a variety of habitats from coastal sedgeland to subalpine woodland where <i>Gahnia</i> species grow.
	Yellow Sedge-Skipper	2	Rare and threatened, another coastal species, dependent on <i>Gahnia</i> ; rarely reported.
	Flame Sedge-Skipper	3	Found in tall open eucalypt forest where <i>Gahnia sieberiana</i> grows; particularly in swampy coastal areas at Anglesea and Timboon.

Family	Species	Records this quarter	Comments
Pieridae (Whites and Yellows)	Cabbage White	57	Much more common than records suggest; ubiquitous, under-reported. A pest species in commercial and suburban vegetable gardens.
	Spotted Jezebel	1	A colourful mistletoe specialist and a strong hilltopper.
	Imperial Jezebel	2	Another mistletoe specialist, more common in spring than autumn.
Nymphalidae (Nymphs or Browns)	Monarch	3	An occasional visitor, with a strong preference for introduced milkweeds from North America and Africa.
	Australian Painted Lady	81	One of the first to appear locally and last to disappear; widespread.
	Yellow Admiral	42	Widespread. A rapid flier and can be hard to pin down. Often perching on blackened tree trunks.
	Meadow Argus	19	A common late season brown with a liking for dry soils in sparse grasslands.
	Varied Sword-grass Brown	5	Red-fruited Saw-sedge <i>Gahnia sieberiana</i> dependant; mostly Otway ranges and foothills, and Wombat Forest.
	Common Brown	106	Our most recorded species. Males disappear over Jan/Feb. Records become predominantly females, looking to lay eggs on grass species.
	Ringed Xenica	6	Widespread in woodlands; numbers peak Dec–Jan.
	Marbled Xenica	29	Woodlands; fairly widespread.
	Striped Xenica	14	Widespread in wet forest mostly Otways, Jan–March.
	Solander’s Brown	3	Widespread in wet forest mostly Otways, Jan–March.
	Shouldered Brown	1	Usually widespread in tall forest with grassy understory; mostly Otways and Anglesea areas. Few records so far.
	Spotted Brown	1	Scarce; few records in wet forest, mostly Otways, Anglesea area. Very similar to Shouldered Brown.
	Forest Brown	1	A December record from the Otways. Adults largely disappeared by January.
Lycaenidae (Blues)	Chequered Copper	5	Native grasslands and woodlands including urban fringes.
	Varied Dusky-Blue	3	Widespread through open forest and heathland where larval food plant <i>Cassytha</i> spp. Dodder-laurel grows.
	Blotched Dusky-Blue	1	Smaller than its relative above. Open forest and heathland where larval food plant <i>Cassytha</i> spp. Dodder-laurel grows.
	Two-spotted Line-Blue	1	A tiny blue, dependent on acacia plants. Easily overlooked but widespread.

Family	Species	Records this quarter	Comments
	Saltbush Blue	14	Widespread on various saltbush plants throughout coastal areas and in suburban plantings.
	Rayed Blue	2	Locally seen mostly in the You Yangs and Brisbane Ranges on <i>Prostanthera nivea</i> .
	Common Grass-Blue	62	Our commonest blue in any grassy habitat including urban nature strips.

This quarter, Family HesperIIDae is well represented. These butterflies are also known as Skippers and tend to be less colourful than a lot of the larger, tropical species. They are notoriously fast flying and difficult to identify in the field, even from photographs.

They tend to have rapid and jerky flight, many flying close to the ground among grasses and sedges and being particularly active in bright sunshine. They do tend to settle frequently with wings orientated in an 'F18 fighter jet' arrangement with forewings vertical, opened at 90 deg over the thorax whilst hind wings are held open in a horizontal plane. Males are very territorial, often returning to the same twig or exposed rock to perch repeatedly. They challenge other males aggressively. Males frequently hilltop.

Skipper larvae feed on foliage at night, resting by day inside a shelter made from leaves.

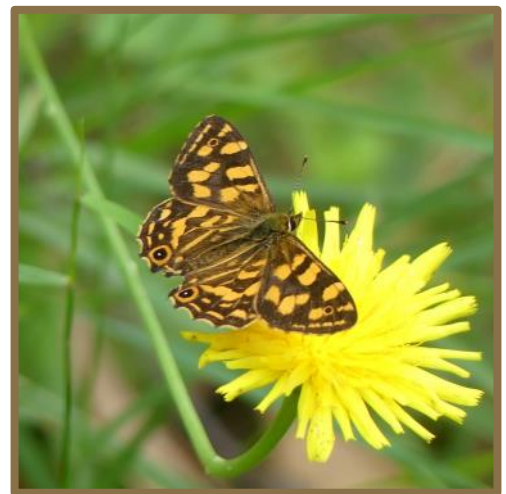
In contrast to many other butterfly larvae, caterpillar larvae in this group seek refuge in shelters when not feeding, a behaviour more commonly associated with moths. Some taxonomists believe that the HesperIIDae fit in somewhere between moths and butterflies, despite all members being day-flyers like typical butterflies.

One thing that stands out when observing these butterflies is that they have a very long proboscis which enables them to feed on a wide range of flowers that have nectar not accessible to other groups.

So keep your eyes open and cameras shooting for any butterflies seen while out in the field. They are fascinating creatures with the most intriguing life histories. We continue to add new species to the local list with careful observation. It won't be long until the winter is upon us and we need to head north to find these flying treasures, but for now autumn species are at their peak.



Yellow Sedge-Skipper, Sparrovale Dec. 2025



Striped Xenica, Benwerrin Feb. 2026



Bright Shield-Skipper, Benwerrin Feb. 2026

Photos: John Newman

Invertebrates observation highlights

October–December 2025

Rod Lowther

During the last quarter of 2025, we saw an uptick in member observations with **1,553 records** added to the club iNaturalist Invertebrates Collection. The Collection also grew by an additional **67 recorded new species** bringing the total to **2,662 species**.

Warmer weather brings more obvious insect activity when walking around the bush. This fact came to my attention during one of the club’s recent excursions to a property in the Brisbane Ranges. On a grass spikelet was the most delightful looking beetle, aptly called a Jewel Beetle. The colour pattern on its outer wings was bright and slightly iridescent. When I uploaded the photograph to iNaturalist the AI had no problem assigning a species identification. A few clicks of the computer mouse and I could see that many members had seen Jewel Beetles. I was surprised by

the species diversity. To the end of 2025 from **35 individual observations**, 14 species of Jewel Beetles have been recorded in the Collection. But have our members seen all the Jewel Beetles likely in our region?

Jewel Beetles are the common name for beetles within the taxonomic Family Buprestidae.

This family is one of the largest within Order Coleoptera (Beetles). Jewel Beetles are distributed globally, except in the cold regions of the Arctic and Antarctica. The larvae, known as flatheaded borers, unsurprisingly have an extensive range—anywhere there are plants and trees! Some of the species are plant specific borers and have adapted to their local environment. Given the great diversity of plants, Jewel Beetle species number approximately 15,000 worldwide. With their bright glossy colour, specimens can be sought after by insect

collectors. The iridescence is due to the outer shell having a microscopically fine structure rather than having any pigment or colouring agent in the exoskeleton. The structure of the surface creates an effect due to light reflection much like the iridescence seen on the surface of a CD disk!

In Australia, there are over 1,400 species with an amazing 478 being in one genus: *Castiarina* (Zborowski and Storey p.176). On iNaturalist, 582 Jewel Beetle species have been recorded within Australia, of which 259 are members of genus *Castiarina*, so there are still many species yet to be observed, photographed and uploaded.

Drilling down locally, 27 *Castiarina* species have been found and identified in the Geelong BioBlitz Region out of a total of 270 Jewel Beetle observations.

Taxonomy Level		Observations	Species
Family	Buprestidae	270	52
Genus	<i>Castiarina</i>	148	27
	<i>Diphucrania</i>	35	5
	<i>Neocuris</i>	3	1
	<i>Melobasis</i>	38	8
	<i>Germarica</i>	4	1
	<i>Agrilus</i>	4	1
	<i>Temognatha</i>	19	4
	<i>Ethonion</i>	6	2
	<i>Nascio</i>	1	1
	<i>Diadoxus</i>	4	1

Table 1: Total number of Jewel Beetle observations by genus in the **Geelong BioBlitz region**



Castiarina crenata

Brisbane Ranges, Trevor Pescott



Castiarina vegeta

Pentland Hills, Margaret MacDonald



Castiarina decemmaculata

Steiglitz, Helen Schofield



Castiarina flavopicta

Aireys Inlet, Bernie Lingham



Castiarina erythromelas

Moggs Creek, Alison Watson



Castiarina watkinsi

Anglesea, Pete Crowcroft

Members of the *Castiarina* are generally 10 to 20 mm in length with an elongated body tapering to a tip at the end of the abdomen; and a blunt head with bulbous eyes. The elytra (outer wings) have longitudinal grooves and generally a single iridescent colour and contrasting patches. These beetles cannot be missed. Their bright colour acts as a warning and deterrent to predators that they are distasteful to eat. The spotted design on the wing is useful for identification. The larva is described as a white grub with flattened head (Rowland and Whitlock p.83) and to me this sparse comment might explain why there are no larvae

observations in iNaturalist!

Adult Jewel Beetles tend to emerge during summer, which aligns with the flowering of native plants such as eucalypts and teatrees. Many of the observations made by members show the beetle on a flowering plant.

Other members of the Jewel Beetle family such as ***Temognatha*** and ***Melobasis*** are also very attractive. It is worthwhile exploring the relevant pages in iNaturalist for photos that members have taken of these beetles. There are two examples on the next page.

Thanks to all the observers who continue to add their observations

to the GFNC Collection.

References

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- Rowland P and Whitlock R (2019) *A Naturalist's Guide to the Insects of Australia*. Issued by Australian Geographic. John Beaufoy Publishing.
- Zborowski P and Storey R (2017) *A Field Guide to Insects of Australia*, fourth edition. New Holland Publishers.



Temognatha suturalis

Dogs Rock, Susan Kruss



Melobasis propinqua

Staughton Vale, Lorraine Phelan



Fauna observation highlights

December 2025–February 2026

Barry Lingham

Listed below are selected observations and comments about unusual species, species out of normal range or exhibiting interesting behaviour, selected from observations made during the summer months of December 2025 to February 2026.

Observations were sourced from the GFNC **iNaturalist Fauna Collection**.

MAMMAL SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Eastern Short-beaked Echidna	Steiglitz (1), Morrisons (1), Durdidwarrah (1), Gherang Gherang (1), Gerangamete (3)
Koala	Morrisons (2)(1), Batesford (1)
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	Batesford (1+)
Swamp Wallaby	Batesford (1)
Red Fox	Belmont (1)
Grey-headed Flying Fox	Point Richards (1), Colac Botanic Gardens (1+)

REPTILE SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Eastern Short-necked Turtle	Balyang Sanctuary
Whip Hooded Snake (Little Whip Snake)	Gnarwarre (1); in swimming pool
White-lipped Snake	Gerangamete (1)
Tiger Snake	Portarlinton (personal communication to BL)
Black Rock Skink	You Yangs (1)
Southern Water Skink	Lara (1)
Glossy Grass Skink	Bellarine area (1)
Weasel Shadenskink	Belmont (1); in house
Blotched Bluetongue	Morrisons (3 records)
Common (Eastern) Bluetongue	Belmont (3)

FROG SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Brown Tree Frog	Brisbane Ranges (1)
Southern Bell Frog (Growling Grass Frog)	Portarlington area (several records)
Common Eastern Froglet	Portarlington (1)
Eastern Banjo Frog	Portarlington (1)

Comments on mammal observations

Echidnas have been active over summer. Three echidnas were spotted at different times drinking from puddles in wheel ruts along a bushland track near Gerangamete. One was unconcerned by the White-lipped Snake beside it at the puddle.

At the recently declared Moorabool River Reserve, upstream from Batesford, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, a Swamp Wallaby and a Koala were recorded, showing the value of conserving the riparian habitat along our rivers so that they can act as wildlife corridors. The Moorabool River valley has been revegetated in some sections by the Koala Clancy organisation as part of their project to reconnect koala habitat remnants.

The main Grey-headed Flying Fox colony is located in the Eastern Gardens in Geelong, but another

colony also exists at the Colac Botanic Gardens.

Security cameras caught video of a Red Fox drinking from a backyard pond when it visited a Highton home above Seaview Park.

Comments on reptile and frog observations

White-lipped Snakes are one of our smaller local snakes, growing to around 45 cm. Their colour varies from olive through to grey, reddish brown to dark brown, but all have a white stripe along the top lip which extends to beneath the eye. In our region, they have been seen in the Anglesea Heath and Otway Ranges.

Tiger Snakes are a rare sighting in the Bellarine area, but a recent photograph of this species at Portarlington shows that they can still be found along the northern coastal areas.

In the Geelong region, Black Rock

Skinks have a stronghold in the You Yangs with isolated records from the Brisbane Ranges and Bamganie area.

Historical koala sightings in the Geelong region

Koalas were reintroduced to various sites in the Geelong Region mainly during the period from the 1940s until the 1980s. These animals bred and moved to new areas, including the Geelong urban zone and the Bellarine Peninsula, but I believe they are no longer seen within these areas.

Several members recounted their memories of sightings in Geelong or the Bellarine at the club's March General meeting. I am keen to hear of sightings from the past 50 years that may not have been officially recorded to help paint a picture of how the koala population distribution has varied in that time. Please send details to info@gfnc.org.au



Left: Echidna sharing a puddle with a White-lipped Snake, Gerangamete, 01/01/26
Photos: Bernie Lingham

Above: Black Rock Skink, Little River, 15/02/26
Photo: John Newman

Clean Up Australia Day report for Jerringot Wetland

1 March 2026

Lorraine Leversha

Photo: Graham Possingham

This year 14 volunteers helped clean up this wetland area. We collected many items: 47 aluminium cans; two small batteries; approx. 90 cigarette butts; 43 glass beverage bottles; three wine bottles; 19 plastic drink bottles; lots of take away food and drink containers; soft plastic bags and chip packets; some clothing; lots of polystyrene, foam packaging, plastic straps and soggy cardboard.

There were a few unusual items such as a tyre, a large corflute sign, bbq tongs and the base of a bollard. Rod was a great help going out in his waders to rescue rubbish embedded in the wetland itself.

The road and particularly the council depot car park (which we found unlocked) was the major source of our rubbish. Perhaps a rubbish bin in this carpark would be very useful. There are still a large number of plastic, aluminium and glass bottles dumped so one would assume the 10-cent rebate is not attractive enough to ensure they are recycled.

Thanks to all of you who came along and made it another successful day. I would like to hand over the reigns for next year to anyone who is interested, and I am happy to assist.



Rubbish at the site
Photo: Graham Possingham



Matt, Jenny and Graham with some of the collected rubbish
Photo: Lorraine Leversha

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P.O. Box 1047
Geelong, Vic. 3220
info@gfnc.org.au
www.gfnc.org.au/