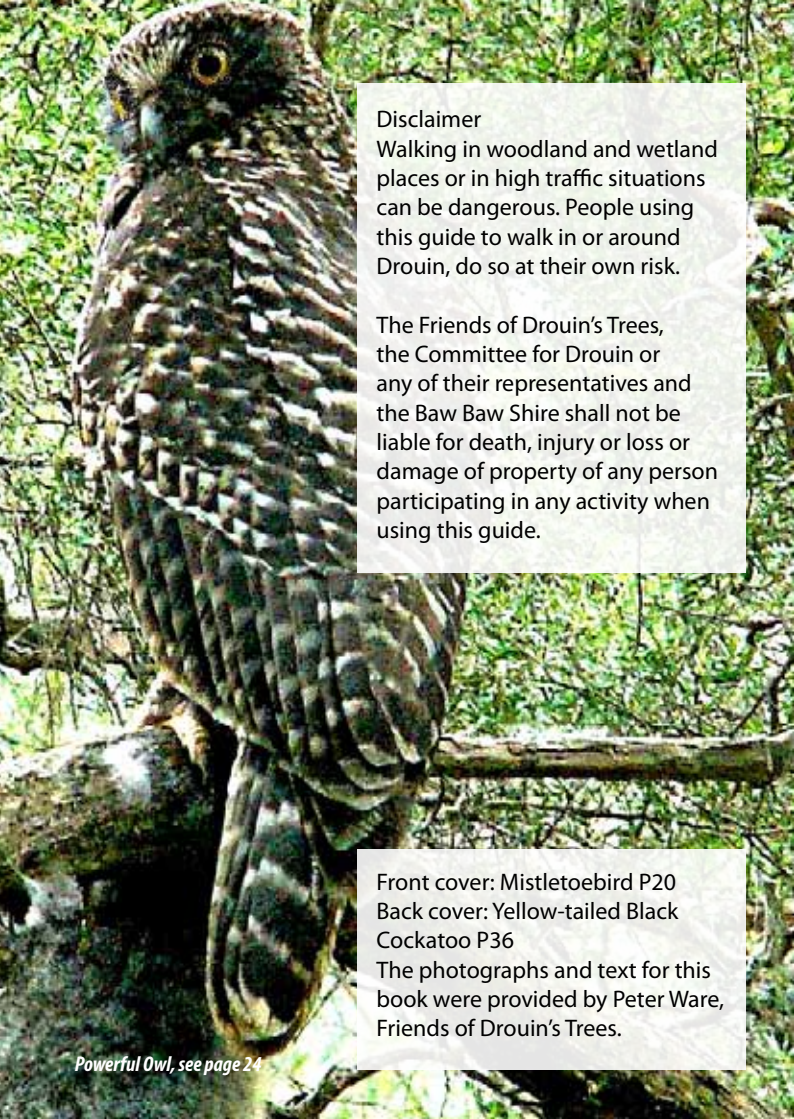




BIRDS OF DROUIN AND DISTRICT





Disclaimer

Walking in woodland and wetland places or in high traffic situations can be dangerous. People using this guide to walk in or around Drouin, do so at their own risk.

The Friends of Drouin’s Trees, the Committee for Drouin or any of their representatives and the Baw Baw Shire shall not be liable for death, injury or loss or damage of property of any person participating in any activity when using this guide.

Front cover: Mistletoebird P20
Back cover: Yellow-tailed Black
Cockatoo P36

The photographs and text for this book were provided by Peter Ware, Friends of Drouin’s Trees.

Powerful Owl, see page 24

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Jackie the pet Lyrebird: A local story



'Jackie' the Lyrebird was found injured in the bushland of Drouin by Sam McNeilly, son of the pioneer John McNeilly. Jackie became a tame family pet and was quite famous after articles about him appeared in various Australian newspapers in the late 1890s. He was an excellent mimic and could imitate all the various sounds of the farm and the bush. He and his mate would often walk into Drouin town.

You can listen to the story of the McNeilly family at the Stories of Drouin website - www.storiesofdrouin.com.au

Museums Victoria has an excellent article on the Lyrebird, circa 1895 by A J Campbell, a passionate field naturalist and bird observer – www.collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/1171

Photo: June Sealey (Jackie the Lyrebird)

Photo: Museums Victoria, A J Campbell (Lyrebird nest)



Introduction

This booklet is a result of the popularity of the *Birds of Drouin* booklet, published by the Friends of Drouin's Trees in 2019. The birds in this booklet, *Birds of Drouin and District*, are in addition to the species included in the first booklet.

Most of the birds in this book can be found within the urban and surrounding areas of Baw Baw Shire. Others can be found in the woodlands, coastal and estuarine areas of nearby places such as Bass Coast and Westernport Bay.

West Gippsland and nearby regions, offer bird watchers a broad range of habitats and consequently a large variety of bird species. Birds that prefer to occupy rainforest, woodland, grassland, heathland, wetland, alpine, coastal and estuarine environments, can all be found within a relatively short distance from Drouin.

The Friends of Drouin's Trees trusts you will enjoy the *Birds of Drouin and District* booklet and that you might find it a useful guide to help find and identify some of Gippsland's special and precious avifauna. Please note that the birds in this booklet have been grouped according to their usual habitat. This can be a little unreliable sometimes, as many birds are happy to inhabit a variety of environmental surroundings.

Friends of Drouin's Trees 2021





Grey Butcherbird



King Parrot



Eastern Rosella



Golden-headed Cisticola



4 Feather fossil discovered at Koonwarra, South Gippsland. Photo: Benjamin Healley, Museums Victoria

Feathers – they define a bird

Not all birds can fly. Many insects and bats can fly just like a bird. The thing that distinguishes birds from all other animals is that they have feathers. The main roles of a bird's feathers are that they enable flight, provide insulation, waterproofing in some species, camouflage and display.

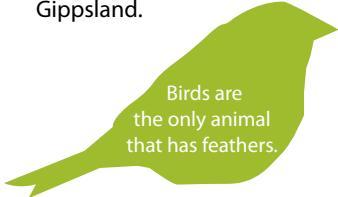
The colours and patterns of a bird's feathers are a large part of the reason we like to watch birds and they can give a clue to identifying the species.

Feathers are made of keratin, like human hair and fingernails. A scientific analysis of a bird's feather can determine the proportions of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and hydrogen in its diet and can even give clues to the various locations the bird has visited in its lifetime.

The feathers of most birds do not grow continuously. They have to be taken care of and they do wear out. Bathing, grooming (preening) and oiling are three processes that many birds conduct in order to take care of their feathers.

Old and worn feathers are pushed out by new ones in a process called moulting. In some birds, moulting is a continuous process that takes place in a well-defined sequence. Other birds will moult on a seasonal basis, sometimes producing a completely different pattern and colour of plumage.

In the 1960s, a feather-fossil estimated to be more than 110 million years old, was discovered in a roadside cutting in Koonwarra, South Gippsland.



Birds are
the only animal
that has feathers.

Bills – tools for a purpose

The bill is the principal tool for a bird to help find and manipulate its food. Birds use their bills to build their nests, feed their young and to defend themselves. Many bird species conduct complicated bill manoeuvres during courtship.

Probing, prising, tearing, sifting, spearing, crushing and grasping are some of the functions that different bills are designed for.

Most birds have several songs or calls.

Bills are composed of a material similar to our fingernails and are subject to continuous wear. Like our fingernails, a bird's bill is constantly growing.

Most birds have nostrils, or nares, located near the base of the upper part of the bill. The chicks of many species of birds have an 'egg tooth' on the tip of the upperpart of the bill. This is a hardened tip that allows the chick to break through the shell of the egg. The 'egg tooth' drops off shortly after hatching.



Crested Shrike-tit



6 *Kookaburra*



Pelican



Little Pied Cormorant

*Masked Lapwing**Magpie Lark**Varied Sittella**Eastern Yellow Robin**Brown Gerygone**Jacky Winter**Olive-backed Oriole**Superb Fairy-wren*

Nests – an almost endless variety

There are many different types of bird nests. A cup-shaped nest of grasses, leaves, twigs or mud, often bound together with spider web or animal hair, is probably the most familiar style.

Birds build dome-shaped nests, suspended nests, platform nests, etc. Some birds dig a tunnel in the earth and some just lay their eggs on open ground. Swans and grebes often build nests that float on the water. Many Australian birds build a nest in a tree hollow.

It is usually the female that builds the nest but often the male will help. Some birds build 'false nests' to distract predators and of course many birds are expert at camouflaging their nests. Male bowerbirds build a decorated bower of sticks to attract the female who builds

her own nest and rears the young completely alone.

Eastern Yellow Robins are very good at camouflaging their nest with mosses, lichen and bark. The Jacky Winter hardly builds a nest at all, simply a very small cup-shaped nest on a horizontal fork. Eagles can build huge platform nests of sticks and small branches. The Spotted Pardalote likes to dig a nest tunnel in some soft earth. Magpie Larks build cup-shaped nests from mud.

The nest of a White-bellied Sea-eagle

'Birdscaping' a garden

Native birds can be attracted to a private garden when some simple basic rules are applied:

- Add a water bowl for drinking and bathing.
- Plant native and try some local species.
- Plant in layers – mulch, ground covers, low shrubs, grasses and sedges, tall shrubs, small trees.
- Build a birdbox, batbox, insect hotel.
- Lock up your cat.

Some resources include:
Birdscaping Australian Gardens, George Adams, Viking.
Habitat. A practical guide to creating a wildlife-friendly Australian garden, A B Bishop, Murdoch Books.
Indigenous Wildlife of the Baw Baw Shire, Baw Baw Shire pamphlet.
Indigenous Plants of the Baw Baw Shire, Baw Baw Shire pamphlet.



Insect Hotel



New Holland Honeyeater

A good bird garden will contain plants that provide food, shelter and nesting sites. Sometimes, a well-designed bird garden might incorporate nearby bush, parkland or wetland, or perhaps even a neighbour's garden. Be patient and in time you will be rewarded with a visit from a parrot, honeyeater, wren or pardalote.



Eastern Rosella and nestbox



Eastern Spinebill and Kangaroo Paw

Definitions of status

Sedentary

Birds that spend their whole lives in one location are said to be sedentary. There is nearly always some movement of individual birds as local conditions change and birds are forced to move. Some sedentary species will spend their entire lifetime within a few hundred metres of their locality. There is also some dispersal after breeding when young birds seek new territory.

Nomadic

Climatic conditions and variable flowering times of plants will sometimes cause some birds to wander about as they seek ideal feeding grounds. Australia is said to have the highest concentrations of nomadic bird species due to our variable climate. Arid country birds particularly are nomadic as they follow the erratic rainfall patterns.

Migratory

Migratory birds follow a regular seasonal pattern and usually involves a whole population. Many seabirds for example, will conduct regular migratory patterns covering whole continents. Sometimes though, migration might simply be from the nearby high country down to the coastal plains in winter and back up to the mountains in summer.

Dispersive

Many bird species simply disperse over a wider range at times. After breeding, the young of some birds disperse to new territory. Fluctuating food sources will often cause birds to disperse further afield.

Irruptive

Many birds are capable of reacting quickly and often dramatically, to changed conditions. Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes will appear and breed quickly in response to an infestation of caterpillars. Mouse plagues attract increased numbers of Black-shouldered Kites. On the rare occasions that Lake Eyre floods, Pelicans arrive in huge numbers to breed in the ideal conditions.



12 *Migratory: Olive-backed Oriole, p20*



Migratory: Black-faced Monarch, p56



Irruptive: Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike

Nearby birdwatching locations

Thornell's Reserve Princes Way (old Princes Hwy), Longwarry North. Tall eucalypt woodland, acacia with sedge understorey. Mistletoebird, Crested Shrike-tit, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote may be seen here.

Nangara Reserve Nangara Rd, Jindivick. Mixed eucalypt forest, some wet tree fern gullies with Victorian Christmas Bush, Forest Boronia. Brown Gerygone, Black-faced Monarch, Rose Robin, Wonga Pigeon may be spotted here.

Uralla Nature Conservation Reserve Giles Rd, Trafalgar. Wet tree fern gullies and tall wet eucalypt forest with Muttonwood. Home of Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Gerygone, Olive Whistler, Bassian Thrush.

Mount Worth State Park Allambee Estate Rd, Allambee. Tall, wet eucalypt forest and wet tree fern gullies with Blanket Leaf. Look out for Olive Whistler, Eastern Whipbird, Superb Lyrebird, Bassian Thrush, Rose Robin.

Bunyip State Park from Gembrook to Labertouche. Mixed eucalypt woodland and forest, heathland and wet gullies. Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Restless Flycatcher, Southern Emu-wren, Rufous Fantail, may be found here.

Westernport Bay Phillip Island, Powlett River, Bass Coast. Coastal woodland and heathland, tidal estuaries, open beaches. Birds to look out for Cape Barren Goose, White-fronted Chat, Double-banded Plover, Pied Oystercatcher, Striated Field-wren.



Uralla Nature Conservation Reserve



Powlett River, Bass Coast



Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve



Bunyip State Park

Other Places

- Robin Hood Reserve** Fisher Rd, Drouin.
- Sweetwater Creek Nature Conservation Reserve** Beards Track, Neerim East.
- Crossover Regional Park** Lavinia St, Rokeby.
- Glen Nayook Reserve** Paynter Rd, Neerim Junction.
- Wuchatsch Reserve** Cherry Tree Rd Nyora.
- Mt Cannibal Flora and Fauna Reserve** Garfield North Rd, Garfield North.
- Cranbourne Botanical Gardens** Ballarto Rd, Cranbourne.
- Adams Creek Nature Conservation Reserve** Hookers Rd, Lang Lang.
- Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve** Stanley Rd, Grantville.

Brown-headed Honeyeater

13-14cm. A rather dull olive-grey bird with a white nape, creamy-white eye ring and pale underparts.

Bounces through the canopy collecting insects, spiders and larvae from the foliage and bark. Also takes manna (a sweet gum that exudes from the bark of some eucalypts) and lerp (a sugary exudate from a psyllid bug on the leaves). Nearly always in small communal groups. Roost together at night. Family members share the duty of rearing the nestlings.

Locally nomadic and common. Rainforest and eucalypt woodland. Fairly widespread down the eastern half of the continent and into South Australia. Nangara Reserve, Thornell's Reserve, Labertouche, Bunyip State Park.



Azure Kingfisher

17-19cm. Long bill, glossy blue head and back, white to buff-orange belly and white neck plumes.

Dives into the water for its prey of small fish, crustaceans and aquatic insects. Returns to a perch to consume its capture. Digs a nest tunnel in the riverbank.

Lives along wooded streams, around lakes, dams and billabongs. Sections of Tarago River, Bunyip River and Labertouche Creek. Sedentary and uncommon. Believed to be in decline due to altered stream profiles, urbanization and farming practices.



Common Bronzewing

30-36cm. Olive-brown pigeon with scale-like iridescent wings (green, bronze, orange). Pink to grey throat, breast and belly. White cheek stripe. Buff forehead.

Usually solitary. Always alert while feeding on seeds on the ground. Fast, direct flight with audible wing-flaps. Diagnostic call is a far-carrying, slowly repetitive 'whoom'.

Very widespread. Diverse woodland, forest, scrub and heathland habitats. Locally nomadic and common. Bunyip State Park, Thornell's Reserve, Nangara Reserve.



Brush Bronzewing

25-33cm. Very similar to the Common Bronzewing but smaller and more chestnut-rufous overall. Chestnut nape and shoulders. Grey-blue underbelly. Chestnut forehead.

Much more wary and secretive than the Common Bronzewing. Forages on the ground under shrubbery and on the roadsides. Builds a nest very low down, sometimes on the ground making them vulnerable to predators.

Less common and widespread than Common Bronzewings and more impacted by urbanization and land clearing. Generally, prefer heathy scrublands and coastal forests. Sedentary. Bunyip State Park, Neerim East, Grantville, Wilson's Promontory.



Mistletoebird

10-11 cm. Male has a black back and head, red throat and chest and a white belly with a black central stripe, see front cover. Female is mostly all mid to dark grey with a pink flush undertail.

Closely linked to the mistletoe plant. The bird feeds exclusively on the fruit and excretes the seed directly onto a branch. Builds a suspended nest of plant fibres and spiderweb. Has a clear penetrating 'dzee' call and other whistling notes.

Any woodland or forest that supports mistletoe. Widespread, nomadic, common. Labertouche, Thornell's Reserve, forests around Westernport Bay.



Olive-backed Oriole

25-28 cm. Olive upperparts and head. White throat, chest and belly, streaked dark. Red eye and orange bill.

Distinctive, rolling 'orry-orry-ole' call that signifies spring has arrived. Nearly always first heard before it is seen due to its wonderful camouflage. Mainly a fruit-eater but also takes insects. Builds a basket-shaped nest of bark and spiderweb suspended from a horizontal fork.

Eucalypt forests and woodlands, rarely rainforest or coastal woodlands. Migratory, relatively common. Thornell's Reserve, Drouin golf course, Drouin South, Rokeby-Crossover.



Owlet Nightjar

20-24cm. Like a small grey-brown owl. Large, dark eyes set in a dark stripe from the crown. Paler underparts. Distinctive 'whiskers' are often visible.

Captures moths and other insects on the wing and from on the ground. A rolling-churring call at night. Roosts and nests in small tree hollows. Nocturnal with occasional daytime sightings.

A very widespread bird and quite common but mostly unseen. Found in various woodland and forest habitats. Parks and gardens in Drouin sometimes, bush reserves, Bunyip State Park, Neerim East.



Pallid Cuckoo

28-34cm. Basically an all grey bird with darker upperparts and paler underparts. Dark stripe through the eye which has a yellow eye ring. Dark and pale barring on the undertail.

Feeds on insects and grubs taken from on the ground and amongst the foliage. A diagnostic call of eight upward scale whistling notes. A brood parasite that uses the nests of various honeyeaters, flycatchers, woodswallows, orioles.

Generally, prefers open habitat, farmland and golf courses. Widespread and migratory. Parkland, roadside corridors, Labertouche, Bunyip State Park, Westernport Bay.



Powerful Owl

60-70cm. Australia's largest owl. Upperparts brown with white mottling. Underparts white with grey chevrons. Dark face mask and prominent yellow eye rings.

Nocturnal raptor that takes possums, gliders and sometimes other birds. Often has several regular day-roosting trees spread over a large territory. Will often sit motionless throughout the day with a recent catch in its talons. Needs large tree hollows for nesting.

Preferred habitat is usually tall eucalypt forest with dense wet gullies. Uncommon and sedentary over a large range. Bunyip State Park, Holey Plains State Park, Rokeby.



Restless Flycatcher

16-21cm. Glossy black back, head and tail. White throat, chest and belly. Often raises crown feathers.

Rarely still. Catches insects on the wing and from foliage and branches. Bouncy, buoyant flight, sometimes hovering. Very distinctive grinding call giving rise to the name 'scissor-grinder'.

Open forest and woodlands are the favourite habitat. Often near water. Common in some localities, unusual elsewhere. Sedentary to very nomadic, perhaps migratory. Bunyip State Park, Holey Plains State Park, sometimes closer to habitation – parklands, golf courses.



Rose Robin

10-12cm. Head, back and throat are all a slate-grey colour. Rose-red breast and a white belly. White forehead spot.

Acrobatically catches insects in the canopy, flycatcher-like. Diagnostic, repetitive uprising call. Builds a well camouflaged cup-shaped nest of moss, lichen and spider web. Often has more than one brood per season.

Found in rainforests and wet eucalypt forests. Dispersive – here today, gone tomorrow. Uncommon. Summer migrant in our region. Mt Worth State Park, Nangara Reserve.



Satin Bowerbird

28-34cm. Males are a glossy blue-black bird with a blueish eye. Females and juveniles are a dull green with rufous wings and tail. The underparts are a white-green colour with brown scallops.

Their main call in breeding season is a hissing-buzzing-churring sound. Males build the familiar bower, decorated with blue items to attract the females. Mating takes place in the bower, then the female flies off to build a nest and rear the young.

Forests and woodland. Distributed in a thin strip down the south east coast to just past Melbourne. Common, sedentary and dispersive.



Shining Bronze Cuckoo

16-18cm. Glossy, iridescent green back, spectacular in the sunlight. Pale belly and throat with unbroken bronze bars up under the chin. Pale brown eye. Scallops around the eye.

Diagnostic call like someone whistling a dog. Heard during the breeding season, otherwise quiet. Likes to parasitize the nests of thornbills, wrens, silvereyes, gerygones and similar species. Can lay a single egg in more than a dozen nests in a season.

Found in rainforest and woodland, sometimes parks and gardens. Migratory, abundant some years, scarce the next. Bunyip State Park, Uralla Reserve at Trafalgar, Thornell's Reserve, Nangara.



Southern Boobook

28-35cm. Small rufous-coloured owl. Brown back spotted white. Underparts reddish-brown mottled with pale streaks. Wide face with darker 'eye-goggles'. Several races.

Well recognised, two-syllable 'mo-poke' call. Sits quietly through the day in some dense foliage, sometimes harassed by other small birds. Feeds on insects such as moths, small birds and rodents.

Widespread through a variety of habitat – rainforest, woodland, parks and gardens. Fairly common, usually sedentary but can be nomadic. Frequently heard at night in many parts of Drouin, and in reserves such as Thornells, Nangara and Uralla.



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

45-50cm. Familiar large white bird. Bright yellow crest and sometimes a faint yellow wash on the cheeks and under the wings and tail.

Adapted to urban living, they often appear in large noisy flocks in parks, ovals and roadsides. Fly with an irregular flap-and-glide flight. Ear-splitting screech at times. Need large tree hollows for nesting. Feed on a wide variety of seeds, fruit and occasionally invertebrates. Roost communally.

Abundant, widespread, common and generally sedentary.



Tawny Frogmouth

33-50cm. Large nocturnal bird with mottled grey plumage. Yellow-orange eye. Grey bristles at the base of the bill.

Wonderfully camouflaged in the daytime when they sit motionless on an exposed branch. Nearly always in pairs or family parties. Feed on large nocturnal insects, spiders. Most active just after dusk and before dawn. A pulsating 'oom-oom-oom' call.

Very widespread through a variety of forest, woodland and parkland habitat. Normally quite sedentary, often seen using the same roosting site. Fairly common but often missed. Parklands, Thornell's Reserve, Bunyip State Park, Lang Lang, Grantville.



Tree Martin

12-14cm. Small, dark swallow with all white-buff underparts and a short tail. Distinctive white rump in flight.

Uses tree hollows for nesting. Roosts and nests communally. Feeds on flying insects above the canopy and over the surface of a water body. Like swallows, Tree Martins are wonderful aerialists.

Generally dispersive or nomadic in West Gippsland. Common and widespread. Preferred habitat of open country with large trees, along watercourses, lakes and wetlands. McNeilly Wetlands, Bellbird Park wetlands, Drouin South.



Varied Sittella

11-13cm. Overall a grey-brown bird with some darker streaks, a dark head and a yellow-white eye ring. Barred undertail and an orange underwing band are often obvious, especially in flight.

Collects insects, larvae and spiders from under the bark, always working downward, (opposite to a treecreeper). Nearly always in small parties with a constant twittering contact call. Builds a well camouflaged nest on an exposed branch.

Widespread species but in decline in many places. Open eucalypt and acacia woodland is the preferred habitat. Uncommon, nomadic. Labertouche, Pryor Rd Drouin, Bunyip State Park, Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve.



Wedge-tailed Eagle

0.9-1.1m. Large dark eagle, our largest raptor. Obvious wedge or diamond-shaped tail in flight. Older birds are mostly all black. Very long, fully feathered legs.

Expert at using thermal updrafts to help cover long distances. Often seen soaring, attending to road-kill or perched in a dead tree. Prefers live prey – rabbits, small wallabies – but will also take carrion. A now discontinued bounty was the cause of the deaths of hundreds of thousands of birds.

Widespread across the continent, with large territories of diverse habitats. Fairly common in most regions now, except for heavily populated areas. Bunyip State Park, foothills, coastal forests.



Weebill

8-9cm. Very small bird with a stubby bill. Olive-green upperparts and creamy-yellow below. Pale yellow stripe above the eye.

A sociable and vocal bird at times with a sharp buzzing contact call mostly in flight. Often with other species like thornbills and pardalotes. Feeds on insects taken from the foliage and in the air.

Very widespread and several races. Almost strictly confined to eucalypt woodlands. Sedentary and locally common in some places. Roadside corridors, bush reserves, etc, Thornell's Reserve, Labertouche, Lang Lang.



Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo

58-65cm. Large black cockatoo. Yellow ear patch which is larger and brighter on the female. Male has a red eye-ring. Both have yellow panels in the tail.

Usually occur in small to large flocks, especially in winter. Mostly eat seeds and fruit of native trees but pine seeds are a favourite. Often excavate grubs from inside a trunk or branch. Large tree hollows required for nesting. Long drawn out wailing call is mostly heard in flight.

Numbers are considered to be in decline due to fragmentation of their eucalypt woodland habitat. Moderately common, seasonally nomadic.



Yellow-tufted Honeyeater

17-22cm. Olive-brown back, distinctive black 'mask' and yellow tufts. Yellow throat and crown. Dusky grey and yellow belly.

Several races, including the rare and endangered Helmeted Honeyeater, the bird emblem of Victoria. Nearly always in active, aggressive colonies throughout the mid to upper canopy. Takes blossom, nectar, lerp (the sugary exudate of a leaf bug) and insects.

Fairly common in some places but highly nomadic as it chases the blossoming patterns of the eucalypts. Bunyip State Park, Yarra Ranges, Latrobe Valley foothills, West and East Gippsland.



Blue-winged Parrot

20-22cm. Small parrot with a golden yellow belly, pale green chest and an obvious blue wing-band. The tail is blue-green.

They are swift fliers and usually in small parties. They are true grass parrots – feeding on the seeds of grasses and herbs. Like all parrots and many other native birds, they require tree hollows for breeding.

In some localities, these birds are common but they have sporadic distribution and little is known about their migration patterns. Coastal woodlands and grasslands and other open forests. Holey Plains State Park, Bunyip State Park, Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve.



Long-billed Corella

38-41 cm. White cockatoo with red band across the face and red-pink tinge to the throat feathers. Very long upper mandible. Blue bare skin patch under the eye. Faint yellow tint to the underwings.

Uses its long bill to dig for tubers and corms. Tree hollow nester.

Uncommon for West Gippsland but sightings seem to be increasing. Principal home range is western Victoria, south-east SA and a small part of southern NSW. Every flock of the more common Little Corella is worth checking for this larger bird. Lardner Park, Bellbird Park.



Striated Pardalote

9-11 cm. Small, colourful canopy bird. Dark crown, grey back and belly, dark wings, yellow and white eyebrow. Stubby bill, striated check markings.

More often located by its 'wid-did-i-up' call. Opportunistic nester in hollows – eaves of sheds and houses, cracks in brickwork, power poles, trees, and sometimes digs a nest tunnel like its Spotted Pardalote cousin. Feeds on insects and larvae principally in the foliage of eucalypts.

Widespread across the continent with several races. Often urbanised. Common, sedentary. Forests, parklands, woodlands and roadsides.



Darter

85-90 cm. The long sinewy neck and straight pointed bill best identifies this bird. Males are almost all black, females have a white-grey throat and belly.

Swims very low in the water. Communally nests in trees. Often sits with wings extended after a fishing expedition.

Generally prefers deeper water bodies surrounded by trees. Coastal and inland habitats. Common. Gippsland Lakes, Traralgon Railway Reserve, Westernport Bay and similar.



Australian White (Sacred) Ibis

65-75cm. Large white bird with black, featherless head and long downcurved bill. Lacy black tail plumes. Obvious neck plumes when breeding.

Occur singly or in large flocks, probing inundated ground for crustaceans, insects, worms, frogs, crickets, etc. Only breed when their nesting grounds are suitably covered with water. Often fly in unison in long lines or v-shaped groups. Deep grunting noises when settling at night.

Inhabit shallow, fresh or tidal wetlands, flooded paddocks. Common, widespread, mostly sedentary but sometimes dispersive with seasonal conditions. Well adapted to urban areas.



Spotted Crake

19-22cm. A dark reedbed bird with fine white streaks on olive-brown upperparts. Grey throat and flanks. Grey-white belly barred black. Olive green bill and legs. Red eye.

Best seen early in the day when it ventures into open spaces amongst the reedbeds. Forages slowly on the mudflats, flicking its tail. Mostly in pairs.

Widespread from coast to inland wetlands, marshes, billabongs, sewerage ponds, etc. Secretive to a degree and generally sedentary but can be nomadic, dispersive and irruptive. Phillip Island, Gippsland Lakes, wetlands around Port Phillip Bay.



Hardhead

45-60cm. Rich rufous-brown duck. White undertail sometimes visible. Very obvious white eye of the male is brown in the female. Pale blue-white tip on the bill.

One of the few ducks that dives deep to feed. Often rafts of hundreds or more. Swift flyer with fast, whirring wingbeats. Rapid swimmer.

Common at times, depending on seasonal conditions. Dispersive. Prefers deep freshwater bodies such as lakes, dams, sewerage ponds, swamps and lagoons. Breeding is often dependent on seasonal circumstances. Drouin Sewerage Ponds, McNeilly Wetlands, Gippsland Lakes.



Blue-billed Duck

36-44cm. Small, chestnut duck with a dark, rounded head and a 'dished' bill that is an obvious blue when breeding. Female is blackish-brown all over, finely barred.

Swims with its tail submerged. Usually shy and secretive and will dive below the surface when alarmed. Rarely ventures onto land. Has a seldom seen, spectacular courtship display.

Occupies deep, freshwater wetlands, dams and swamps. Uncommon, sedentary and seasonally dispersive at times. Mid Murray River home range. McNeilly Wetlands occasionally, Drouin Sewerage Ponds, Gippsland Lakes.



Freckled Duck

50-59cm. Dark brown-black duck with white 'freckles'. Top of the bill is obviously concave. Slightly peaked crown.

Mostly seen resting on the water through the day under overhanging foliage. Feed mostly at night. More closely related to swans than other ducks. Generally breed at any time, depending on seasonal conditions.

A very rare duck. Home range is the Murray-Darling basin and western Victoria. Less often seen this side of Melbourne but a small colony seems to have been established on Lakes Guthridge and Guyatt in Sale. In 2017, a small group was seen on Drouin sewerage ponds. Nomadic, dispersive, irruptive.



Shelduck

55-75cm. Large impressively-marked duck ('Mountain Duck'). Chestnut breast, white neck ring, dark head. Teal and white markings on the wings. Female has a white eye-ring.

Mostly terrestrial where it grazes on pasture. Very wary. Flocks fly in formation when travelling often giving a 'honk' call. Will congregate in large groups at times.

Common at times but numbers do fluctuate according to seasons. Some are sedentary, most nomadic. Fresh, brackish or saline wetlands. Farm dams, Bass Coast estuaries.



Little Grassbird

13-15cm. Rufous-grey back streaked black. Pale grey underparts lightly streaked dark. Conspicuous white eyebrow. Olive-brown crown.

Secretive reedbed species, often missed. Clearly identifiable, soft low, two or three note whistle, often the only indication of its presence. Pops to the top of the reeds occasionally and sometimes sits on the sunny side early in the morning.

Found in the reedbeds around the edges of wetlands, swamps and saltmarshes. Generally sedentary but now and then, despite its weak flying ability, will disperse considerable distances. McNeilly and Bellbird Park Wetlands, sewerage ponds.



Little Pied Cormorant

58-68cm. Our smallest cormorant with black above and white below (often stained). Stubby black and yellow bill with a fine hook. Crest plumes very obvious during breeding.

Can appear in large flocks wherever there's a suitable water body but generally hunts alone. Strong flyer takes-off steeply from the surface. Builds a stick platform for a nest in a stream-side or lagoon-side tree, often in large colonies.

Widely distributed. Adapted to saline, brackish or fresh water. Common, often nomadic as they follow the inland rain patterns. Wetlands in Drouin, farm dams, lakes, estuarine waters.



Great Cormorant

80cm-1m. A large black cormorant with yellow facial skin. Strongly-hooked bill. Some scalloping on the back. Australia's largest cormorant.

Usually solitary, sometimes in pairs. Often seen with wings extended to dry – wingspan up to 1.5m. Excellent diver. Takes fish, eels and crustaceans.

Relatively common on large expanses of water, fresh or saline, lakes, estuaries, lagoons and wetlands. Sometimes irruptive breeders depending on seasonal conditions. Sewerage ponds, Westernport Bay, Gippsland Lakes, occasional visitor to McNeilly Wetlands and Bellbird Park Wetlands.



Little Black Cormorant

55-65cm. Similar to the Great Cormorant but much smaller. Slender, all black bird with some scalloping on the back. Black face and a hooked bill.

Frequently seen on small water bodies like farmers dams. If disturbed, takes flight steeply.

Found mostly on fresh water bodies of water like lakes and dams, sometimes on saline estuaries. Common and sometimes plentiful, sedentary and nomadic. McNeilly Wetlands, Alex Goudie Park, in Drouin, Gippsland Lakes, Westernport Bay.



Masked Lapwing

35-39cm. Easily recognisable plover. Yellow face, bill and wattles. Black crown and sides of the neck. White throat and underbelly. Dull brown back. Spur on the wing.

Bold, aggressive bird that vigorously defends its ground nest site by swooping intruders. Generally in pairs or small family groups but can flock up to several hundred birds outside the breeding season.

Common, widespread, usually sedentary but often dispersive. Inhabits any short-grassed localities, particularly beside fresh or saline water bodies. Parks and gardens, wasteland, estuaries, wetlands.



Pelican

1.6-1.8m. Well known, large, white and black bird with a huge white bill that turns pink when breeding.

Flies and soars with its head tucked back, often in vee-shaped groups. Uses thermals to fly to great heights and for long distances with slow wing beats. Usually gregarious. Groups are known to work in cooperation to round up fish. Often tame around fishing boats and jetties.

Common, nomadic, widespread and dispersive. Coasts, estuaries and inland lakes. Westernport Bay, San Remo, Phillip Island, Bass Coast, lakes and dams. Sometimes seen in Drouin's wetland parks.



Red-kneed Dotterel

17-19cm. Medium sized 'mud-flat' bird with a black crown, nape and chest. White throat and underbelly. Chestnut flank bar. Knees and upper-legs are red. Dull-red bill.

Probes muddy and shallow edges of water bodies for aquatic life. Often stands still before darting forward to spear prey and will swim and submerge their heads at times. Sometimes in large flocks when conditions are favourable.

Fairly widely distributed. Flooded paddocks at times, sewerage ponds, shallow wetlands, etc. Often locally common, dispersive and nomadic. Drouin Sewerage Ponds, wetlands around Port Phillip and Westernport Bays, Bass Coast, Gippsland Lakes.



Red-necked Avocet

40-48cm. A unique Australian wader with strongly upturned bill and chestnut-red head and neck. Long legs and dark wing bars.

Feeds on aquatic crustaceans, molluscs and insects by sweeping its bill from side to side. Often seen in the company of stilts and nearly always in small to large groups. Legs stretch beyond the tail when in flight. Irruptive in some areas in response to flooding paddocks.

Generally widespread where there are shallow, brackish, saline or fresh water bodies. Dispersive and nomadic. Drouin Sewerage Ponds, flooded paddocks.



Bassian Thrush

27-29cm. Upperparts are an olive-brown with dark scallops. Underparts are paler with dark scallops. Pale white patch around a dark eye.

Earthworms, insects and fallen fruit are sought amongst the leaf litter on the ground. If disturbed it will sometimes freeze and rely on its excellent camouflage to avoid detection. Normally a very silent bird.

Prefers wet forests with plenty of leaf litter. Sedentary but can disperse at times. Locally common. Bunyip State Park, Uralla Reserve, Mt Worth State Park, Morwell National Park and similar.



Black-faced Monarch

16-20cm. Mostly grey bird with an obvious black face and throat and a rufous-orange belly.

A flycatcher that hawks for insects among the foliage in a slow or deliberate manner. Mainly finds its prey on the branches and leaves of shrubby understorey. Usually alone or in pairs. Mostly first noted by its whistling call. Builds a moss-camouflaged and cup-shaped nest in a secluded gully.

Migratory and uncommon in West Gippsland and perhaps doesn't even get here every year. Inhabits wet gullies in rainforest patches such as Nangara Reserve at Jindivick.



Brown Gerygone

9-11 cm. Small, plain olive-brown bush bird. Grey, finely streaked cheeks and eyebrows.

Often in small parties sometimes mixed with other species. Flits among the foliage taking insects and larvae. Unobtrusive yet incessant soft twittering call.

Almost at the southern limit of its distribution here in West Gippsland where it inhabits wet forests in places such as Uralla Reserve Trafalgar and Nangara Reserve Jindivick. Recorded in Pryor Rd Drouin in 2019. Sedentary and perhaps becoming more common in this district.



Eastern Whipbird

25-30 cm. Olive green bird with a dark crest and a white cheek patch. Long tail with a few white-tipped feathers.

The widely recognized, explosive whip-crack call of the male, instantly answered by the 'tchew-tchew' of the female, is a territorial and contact call. Hops through thick undergrowth examining rotten logs and leaf litter for insects and larvae.

Occupies dense, wet gullies and forest thickets. Common and generally sedentary. Bunyip State Park, Mt Worth State Park and others. Present in Thornell's Reserve at times. Almost at the limit of its distribution down the eastern seaboard here in Gippsland.



Large-billed Scrubwren

16cm; 12-13cm. Plain grey-olive bird with a long straight bill. Dark eye, pale buff underparts and face.

Behaves like a thornbill, actively feeding through the mid-storey. Usually in small flocks and sometimes with other small 'brown' birds. Sometimes hard to pick from Brown Thornbills and White-browed Scrubwrens, so is often miss-identified.

Rainforest habitat along a south-eastern coastal strip with West Gippsland just about its southern limit. Sedentary, locally more common than expected. Nangara Reserve at Jindivick, Uralla Reserve at Trafalgar, Bunyip State Park and other similar locations.



Lewin's Honeyeater

19-22cm. Olive-brown back. Mottled grey underparts. Eye-catching yellow ear patch. Downcurved bill.

Machinegun-like call. Almost always heard before being seen. Undulating flight pattern. Like many honeyeaters, takes insects and fruit as well as nectar. Often aggressive toward other species.

Preferred habitat is wet forest gullies. Common, relatively abundant and sedentary. Glen Nayook, Nangara Reserve, Mt Worth State Park.



Olive Whistler

20-22cm. An olive-brown and grey bird, stocky in appearance. Scalloped white throat. Dull overall look.

Strong, melodious, far-carrying call. Mostly takes invertebrates from the vegetation and on the ground. Often shy and secretive. Sometimes with robins and scrubwrens.

Endemic to south east Australia. Possibly some altitudinal migration. Uncommon, seldom seen. Prefers moist, densely vegetated forest gullies. Uralla Reserve, Mt Worth State Park, Bunyip State Park.



Pilotbird

16-17cm. Small, all brown, ground foraging bird. Dark, rufous-brown upperparts and lighter, cinnamon-brown underparts. Long legs. Orange-red eye. Broad tail sometimes fanned.

Forages in the leaf litter in the dark understorey. Often likes to search through lyrebird scratchings. A loud two-three note call, alerting observers to the possible presence of a lyrebird – hence ‘Pilot’ bird. Poor flier and will run when alarmed rather than fly.

Wet rainforest gullies. Sedentary, relatively common in places although often overlooked. Glen Nayook, parts of Bunyip State Park, Mount Worth State Park, Tarra-Bulga National Park and similar places.



Rufous Fantail

15-16cm. Colourful flycatcher with a brilliant rufous and grey tail. Rufous forehead and eyebrow. White chin, white breast and belly with dark scallops.

Forages for insects from the foliage, logs, etc with quick flitting flights. Builds a cup nest of grasses and fibres, generally low down and sometimes over water. A very high and weak insect 'tizzy' call.

Found in the undergrowth and mid-storey of wet forests. A breeding summer migrant in Gippsland. Uralla Reserve, Nangara Reserve, Bunyip State Park and similar forest habitat.



Superb Lyrebird

80cm-1m including tail. Familiar 'bush chook' with long lyre-shaped tail. Male has two rufous-coppery lyrate tail plumes used in displays.

Roosts in trees at night but otherwise a ground dweller where it scratches over the leaf litter. Well known for its mimicry of other birds and bush noises. Male builds a display mound. Most sightings are of the bird fleeing across the road or an open space.

Common in its preferred habitat of undergrowth in rainforest gullies. Sedentary. Nangara Reserve, Uralla Reserve, Mt Worth, Glen Nayook, Bunyip State Park.



Wonga Pigeon

35-40cm. Plump grey and white pigeon. Slate-grey back and wings, white forehead. White belly with grey scallops. Grey chest with a white 'V'.

Diagnostic, penetrating, endlessly repeated 'whoik-whoik-whoik' during breeding season. Seldom seen flying. Forages on the ground for seed, fallen fruit, etc. Usually solitary.

At the extreme southern end of its eastern seaboard distribution here in West Gippsland. Sedentary, generally uncommon. Inhabits rainforest, dense wet eucalypt forest, fern gullies. Bunyip State Park, Nangara Reserve, Mount Worth State Park and similar wet forest areas.



Emu

1.5-2m. Australia's iconic Coat of Arms bird. Loose, shaggy feathers that 'bounce' when the bird runs.

Nearly always in pairs or loose parties. Mainly vegetarian but known to take insects as well. Adapted well to arid regions where a favourite food is the eremophila plant – Emu Bush.

Increasingly uncommon in our region but some populations are still present – Gippsland Plains, Holey Plains State Park, coastal areas behind the sand dunes, some open forests. Can travel fast and long distances. Inland birds are highly nomadic as they are affected by seasonal conditions.



Cattle Egret

48-53cm. Small, all white egret nearly always seen in flocks associated with cattle. Hunched posture. Yellow bill. (Orange-yellow head, neck, throat and back when breeding)

Very sociable. Feed on insects stirred up by the feet of cattle (and buffalo in the north). Sometimes perch on the backs of cattle to pick at parasites in the hide. Also feed around the edges of lakes, dams and estuaries.

Introduced to Australia in the 1930's, but numbers have grown rapidly, suggesting natural expansion from Asia. Winter migrant to Victoria, locally abundant. Stock paddocks, pastures and wetlands in West and South Gippsland.



Straw-necked Ibis

58-76cm. Upperparts are dark brown to black, often iridescent. Mottled white neck and white belly. Straw-like breast plumes very pronounced when courting. Black bare skin on the head. Long, downcurved bill.

Feeds on insects, molluscs, frogs, found in dry or wet pasture. Feeding is often associated with a plague or irruption of locusts or other insects. Roosts communally at night and fly in huge flocks in formation at a great height between feeding grounds.

Often abundant depending on seasonal conditions. Widespread, nomadic.



Yellow-rumped Thornbill

11-12cm. Olive brown-grey bird with a distinct yellow rump seen clearly in flight. Black forehead spotted white. Pale brown eye. Pale face with faint dark streaks.

Hops across the ground, usually in small parties, hunting for insects and spiders. Dashes for cover with jerking, undulating flight. Can rear three or four broods each season from an unusual double nest of grass and fibre with a false nest on top.

Often found in 'edge' habitat with some open ground or clearings next to shrubby woodland, parkland and gardens. Widespread, common and sedentary.



Blackbird (common)

25-26cm. Easily recognised all black bird with yellow bill and eye-ring. Plumage often has a glossy sheen appearance.

Feeds mostly on insects and larvae on the ground and on fruit and seeds in orchards and crops. Pest species that drives away native birds. A melodious song. Builds a cup-shaped nest of grasses, bound with mud, in a low shrub or bush.

Found in parks, gardens and bushland. Introduced to Australia by 'acclimatisation societies' in late 19th century. Sedentary and dispersive. Common in many places across south-east Australia including West Gippsland.



Kookaburra

40-47cm. An Australian bird-icon. Large bill, slightly hooked, dark on top, light underneath. Brown eye-stripe on a white face. Flecks of pale blue on a brown wing. White underbelly.

Identifiable 'laughing' call used to advertise territory. Terrestrial hunter of lizards, snakes, rodents, insects and sometimes other small birds. Mostly locates its prey by sitting watchfully on an exposed branch. Needs hollows in which to nest.

Preference for open eucalypt woodlands and forests. Often seen in parkland and roadside verges and on powerlines. Common, sedentary and widely distributed in southern and eastern Australia.



Magpie

37-44cm. Black and white bird. Males have a white back, females are grey. Straight, tapering bill.

Territorial and aggressive when breeding. Complicated but very pleasant 'carolling' call. Forages for a wide variety of invertebrates taken on and under the ground, fruit, food scraps and sometimes other small birds. Builds a stick nest in the canopy. After fledging, young birds are often fed by the parents for some weeks.

Inhabits bushland, parks, gardens and paddocks. Several races, widespread, common and sedentary.



Magpie Lark

26-30cm. Medium-sized black and white bird. Male has a black throat and prominent white eyebrow.

Often called a Mudlark or Peewee. Nearly always in pairs or family parties. Sometimes noisy. Walks with a to and fro head movement. Builds a bowl-shaped nest of mud and grass nearly always close to water.

Common, sedentary, sometimes nomadic. Very widespread distribution. Parks and gardens, light woodlands.



Sparrow (House Sparrow)

14-16cm. Familiar street and garden bird, mostly brown and grey. Females are much duller.

Very gregarious and noisy little bird. Nearly always in small flocks or family groups as they scavenge for food scraps around shops and houses. Communally roost overnight in a dense shrub or under a building eave. Nests in a tree hollow or in a gap in a building.

Introduced in the 1870s to help control crop insect pests. Compete with native species for food and nest sites. Common, abundant and sedentary over the eastern half of the continent.



Spotted (Turtle) Dove

28-32cm. Black patch spotted white on the nape. Grey head, pale pink breast, brown back. Blue-grey shoulders and white-tipped tail feathers visible in flight.

A distinctive, mellow 'ooo-a-ooo, ooo-a-ooo' call. Walks sedately and flies directly. A ground feeder whose diet consists largely of spilled seed and pet food.

Introduced to Victoria from southern Asia, circa 1870. Seldom seen in natural bush areas. Non-aggressively competes with native birds for seed, fruits, nesting sites, etc. Once unusual but becoming locally common near habitation. Parks and gardens, car parks, rail yards, scrublands.



Starling (Common)

19-21cm. The Common Starling is an all-over black bird with buff-white tips and edges to the feathers on the back and wings. White striations on the belly. Appears glossy-black in summer.

Gregarious, often in large flocks. Communally roost overnight. Principally ground feeders on insects and larvae but also take fruits and seeds in orchards and fields. Hollow nesters.

Introduced in Melbourne in 1850s. Aggressively drive native species away from nest hollows and feeding grounds. Nomadic, migratory and dispersive. Common in urban, woodland and open areas.



Welcome Swallow

14-15cm. The well-known 'house' swallow that builds a mud nest under verandahs. Back and crown a glossy blue-black. Chestnut forehead, face and throat. Deeply forked tail.

Very efficient and acrobatic flyer that catches much of its insect prey on the wing. Has adapted to human infrastructure such as bridges, culverts, sheds and houses for its nesting sites. Often seen hawking for insects over wetlands or perched in a line on a fence or power line.

Very widespread. Generally sedentary with some nomadism. Common.



Willie Wagtail

19-22cm. Black back and white belly. White eyebrow and 'whiskers'. Constantly wags its long tail from side to side.

Insectivorous. Forages very close to ground level. Sometimes seen capturing insects around the feet of cattle and sheep, often hitching a ride on the back of the animal. Aggressive and territorial, especially during breeding and often seen harassing much larger species. Frequently call throughout the night.

Seen on open ground, including parks and gardens, paddocks, lawns, etc. Very widespread in urban, forest and open areas. Common and sedentary.



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Plump-looking wader, mostly grey and white. Chestnut crown. Back feathers have pointed, dark centres with white margins. Paler underparts are lightly streaked. Traces of a white eyebrow. Slightly down-curved bill.

Breeds in Arctic Siberia. Arrive in Australia in September or October and spread out over most of the continent, but most abundant in the south-east corner. Some will stay over winter but most depart for the Arctic in April or May.

Shallow, fresh and saline water mud flats, tidal inlets, inland lakes, flooded paddocks. Abundant, migratory. Westernport Bay, Bass Coast, Gippsland Lakes and rarely, Drouin Sewerage Ponds.



Banded Stilt

35-43cm. Unique Australian wader with dark chestnut-black breast band. Black wings, rest of the body is white.

Nearly always seen in large flocks, often 'yapping' amongst themselves. Feed on brine shrimps and other tiny crustaceans. Can sometimes be seen swimming in deeper water.

Saline swamps, lakes and inlets around the coast of western Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Will move inland periodically to breed when conditions suit. Seldom seen east of Melbourne. Very nomadic and dispersive.



Black-winged Stilt

33-37cm. Handsome wader with black wings, nape and back. White head face and underparts. Pink legs and long, slender bill.

Sometimes in just pairs but often in small or large parties. Wades gracefully through the shallows. Able to wade into deeper water with its long legs. Probes the water and mud for tiny shrimps, molluscs and invertebrates.

Widespread species throughout most of Australia in fresh and brackish water. Generally sedentary but can be dispersive as conditions change. Phillip Island, Gippsland Lakes, Drouin Sewerage Ponds infrequently.



Cape Barren Goose

75-90cm. Unmistakeable large mottled grey goose with a white-pale yellow fleshy patch at the base of the upper bill.

Only take to water to seek refuge from predators. Most time is spent grazing for grasses and seeds on the shoreline. Often in large numbers. Once slaughtered in large numbers for food. They nest on the offshore islands.

Unique to Australia. Restricted to the coastline and islands of Victoria and South Australia with a separate race in Western Australia. Can be locally common in some areas. Dispersive and perhaps migratory at times. Phillip Island, Westernport Bay.



Crested Tern

43-48cm. Large grey and white tern with obvious black crest or cap and a slightly downturned, yellow bill. Grey back and white underparts.

An abundant tern often seen resting on a sand spit in large numbers. Graceful fliers. Flies a few metres above the sea and plunges down just below the surface to catch prey. Breed on offshore islands around our coastline in large noisy colonies.

Common. Offshore and coastal seas, estuaries, tidal inlets, etc. Sedentary and dispersive. Bass Coast, Westernport Bay, Gippsland Lakes.



Caspian Tern

48-54cm. A large tern with a robust red bill. White-grey body and a black head with a short crest sometimes visible. Fork tail

A breeding resident but a very cosmopolitan bird. Powerful, long distance flier. Patrols the edges of the surf and estuaries for fish, then dives to capture their prey. Nests on a sand spit generally on an offshore island.

Very widespread around the coast and sometimes on large water bodies inland. Common in some places but can be very nomadic. Gippsland Lakes, Westernport Bay.



Hooded Plover

19-23cm. Plover of 'tubby' appearance. Black head and face, red eye-ring. White nape and underparts. Grey-brown back. Short, black, lateral chest bar.

Feeds on invertebrates, etc, found in the drift of receding waves on coastal beaches. Squats in small sand depressions. Runs short distances when disturbed and stops with its back turned to the observer. Often nests in a simple sand depression above the high tide line.

Endemic to the southern coastline of Australia. Vulnerable to human (and dog) interference. Numbers are in decline. Sedentary, dispersive. Bass Coast, Inverloch, Phillip Island.



Pacific Gull

50-66cm. A large black and white gull with a massive yellow bill tipped red. White head, neck and underparts. Slate coloured back and wings. Immatures are a motley brown.

Sometimes gregarious but mostly alone or in pairs. Frequently seen following fishing boats or resting on jetties. A graceful and leisurely flyer as it patrols the coastal beaches and estuaries in its search for fish, squid, crustaceans or even other small seabirds.

Endemic to the coastal regions of southern Australia. Common, sedentary and dispersive. Westernport Bay, Tooradin, Bass Coast.



Pied Oystercatcher

42-50cm. Heavily built black and white wader. Scarlet-red bill and eye-ring. Black head, face, chest and back. White belly.

Probes the sand, often almost to the full extent of its bill, for shellfish, worms. Very adept at prising open mussels and other shellfish. Normally solitary or in pairs but sometimes seen resting on a mud flat in larger numbers. Lay their eggs in a shallow sand scrape above high tide level.

Present right around the Australian coastline but despite being strong flyers, they are generally sedentary and dispersive. Westernport Bay, Phillip Island, Bass Coast.



Silver Gull

38-42cm. Mostly white and grey with red bill and legs. Black and white feathers on the wingtips. Juveniles are a mottled brown.

Gregarious, bold, aggressive and adaptive scavengers. Nearly always in large noisy flocks. Breed mostly on offshore islands where they make a rudimentary nest in a depression on the ground.

Abundant, widespread, even far inland. Often in great numbers at rubbish tips. Sedentary and dispersive. Drouin sewerage ponds, Westernport Bay, Bass Coast and many other coastal sites.



Southern Emu-wren

15-19cm. Tiny wren with tawny-rufous upperparts with dark streaks. Underparts are a buff-white colour. Tail consists of six long filament plumes. Male has a powder-blue throat, chest and eyebrow.

Bounce through dense undergrowth like mice. Feeble fliers. Usually remain well concealed, keeping in contact with very soft insect-like calls.

Dense, low cover is the preferred habitat, consisting mainly of heaths, sedges and buttongrass. Common in some places but seldom seen. Sedentary. Wilson's Promontory, Bunyip State Park.



Striated Fieldwren

13-14cm. Small, mostly all tawny-brown bird heavily streaked with dark striations. Male has a white eyebrow.

Shy grassland wren that dives for cover when disturbed. Often runs across the ground between tussocks. Feeds on insects and seeds. During breeding, often sings from on top of a tussock or a fence wire. Reputedly emit an odour.

Preferred habitat is damp heathland, saltmarsh and tussocky plains in south eastern Australia. Although the bird is little-studied, it is thought to be sedentary with some dispersal. Westernport Bay, Bass Coast, Wonthaggi Heathlands.



White-fronted Chat

11-13cm. White face and chest, grey belly. Black crown, nape and breast band. Dark grey back, pale grey belly and black wing.

Gregarious, nearly always in small flocks. Bouncy, undulating flight. Feeds on insects taken mostly at ground level. Nests low to the ground in a tussock, saltbush, etc. Diverts intruders away from its nest site by feigning injury.

Occupies open country containing low heaths, saltbush, samphire, etc, around lakes and swamps. Sedentary with some nomadism as conditions vary. Gippsland Lakes, Westernport Bay, Phillip Island.



Australian (Richard's) Pipit

16-18cm. A tawny brown bird mottled with darker streaks. Pale eyebrow. Dark streak down the sides of a white throat. Pale underparts with dark streaks. Yellow-pink legs often obvious.

A ground bird that runs between tussocks. Wags its tail up and down. Male does a courting song-flight, climbing high and plunging abruptly back down to the ground.

Widespread distribution. Open heathland, coastal dunes, paddocks and sometimes wasteland fringing urban areas. Sedentary and nomadic. Common but losing habitat in some areas. Westernport Bay, Phillip Island, Bass Coast, Gippsland Lakes, sometimes paddocks around Drouin.



Double-banded Plover

18-21 cm. Small plover with unique grey-brown, double breast bands often incomplete. Grey-brown upperparts, white underparts. Broad grey-brown mark through the eye.

Normally in small or large groups running across the sand or mud flats at low tide. Feed on small invertebrates along the shoreline and sand flats, sometimes in adjacent paddocks.

New Zealand migrant. Arrives in Australia around January and departs in August. Coastal shorelines, bays and inlets, sometimes even lakes further inland. Corinella, Phillip Island, (Westernport Bay), Bass Coast.



Red-capped Plover

114-16 cm. Small sand Plover. Rich chestnut crown and nape. White face, chest and belly. Black forehead and black line through the eye. Short, black lateral breast patch.

Runs along water's edge, sometimes alone, sometimes in small flocks and often with other small waders. Stops abruptly. Fast flyer, taking off and landing en masse.

Very widespread on inland salt lakes, coastal estuaries and tidal inlets. Can be locally abundant. Usually sedentary, sometimes nomadic. Westernport Bay, Gippsland Lakes.



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Trees

...give much more
than they take



Trees absorb and store carbon dioxide and give out oxygen

Trees provide homes and give shelter to wildlife

Trees improve the quality of the air we breathe

Trees cool the air by the shade they give saving electricity

Trees help people stay healthy & well in many different ways

Trees are silent witnesses to the stories of people's lives

Trees help to keep roads cool saving costs of road resurfacing

Trees help to prevent erosion and stabilize the soil

Trees reduce storm water runoff & hold water in floods

Trees roots filter water keeping our creeks and rivers clean



Friends of Drouin's Trees is a community group that cares about the urban environment of Drouin and Baw Baw Shire.



The group has partnered with the Baw Baw Shire in many projects and activities. The Significant Tree Register developed in 2015 identified significant remnant and planted trees within the town boundary and is being used as the blueprint for other towns within the shire.

The Friends of Drouin's Trees advocates for retention of the beautiful trees and environment of Drouin as the town grows. It has a strong interest in community awareness and education; this book being the third book written and produced to showcase the remarkable flora and fauna at our back door.

Further information:

Web: drouinstrees.blogspot.com.au

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