



BOCA Report Number 7

Melbourne City Birdwatch

Records of sightings 1959–1996

compiled by
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1997

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All maps are oriented so that an arrow parallel with the side margin of the page points to North at the top of the page.

Introduction

Many members of the Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA) have observed birds in the Central Business District of Melbourne (CBD) over the years, but it is believed that hitherto a comprehensive checklist has never been prepared for the area. A list prepared by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (see Appendix C) incorporates the CBD but covers approximately three times the area covered by the BOCA survey, including parts of Collingwood, Fitzroy and Carlton North. Another list which has much historical interest (printed here as Appendix D) was prepared by Ferdinand von Mueller in 1869 from his sightings in the Botanical Gardens. Although this list covers an area outside the CBD, its proximity to that area provides some idea of the species which were seen close to the centre of Melbourne a hundred and twenty-five years ago.

All of the records of CBD sightings available to the Club at this time have been incorporated into this Report, the purpose being to have a consolidated base from which to work should it be decided to conduct further surveys of this area. Birdwatchers in many cities throughout the world carry out such surveys, perhaps the most notable being that which results in the publication of the annual *London Bird Report*, produced regularly by the London Natural History Society. In that survey, the area covered is roughly 1257 square miles — the area within a radius of 20 miles around St Paul's Cathedral, using a team of over 400 observers, and their list this century covers 302 species. Comparisons are said to be invidious, but this present Survey area covers 6.75 hectares (2.6 square miles), our team of observers numbers less than 50, and our survey so far lists 65 species.

A number of sub-lists have been included in this report. The lists of birds sighted in particular years or periods of years give some opportunity for comparison of changes in the species mix. Some birds seen in 1959 may no longer be seen due to changing environment or pressure from other species (eg. the increasing spread of the Common Myna and other introduced species). Changes in species mix may, of course, be due in part to the different methods used to compile these lists. It is a very different matter to go out on a particular day to count birds than it is to stroll around in the sun recording what comes to one's notice over a period of several years.

Records indicate that public gardens in the CBD, however unlike the natural environment they may be, provide important bird habitat. Lists of birds in specific public gardens have been included for the consideration of birdwatchers interested in a particular part of the CBD, again to provide a base for future comparison.

The inclusion of the *Atlas of Victorian Wildlife (AVW)* (Appendix C) bird list may give an indication of species which could be expected to be present in the CBD. For example, if a bird has not been recorded on a BOCA survey since 1959, it may be worth checking the *AVW* computer database where a more recent sighting may be an indication that the bird may still be seen in the survey territory. In Details of Sightings (pp. 8-12) in this Report, comment is made from time to time that a particular species is also on the *AVW* list for a particular year. This is generally necessary only where the BOCA sightings have been scarce or when the last record was many years ago.

The von Mueller list of birds recorded from the Botanic Gardens is included for historical interest. The changes in some of the Latinized/scientific names of species during the century and a quarter since it was compiled also provides an insight into the development of ornithological knowledge.

It is to be hoped that surveys of the birdlife of the CBD will continue on a more frequent and continuous basis. Additional records are always welcome, please forward these to BOCA, PO Box 185, Nunawading, Victoria 3131.

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July 1996

Acknowledgements

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment gave permission to include the summary of species in the CBD from their *Atlas of Victorian Wildlife*.

The list of Ferdinand von Mueller's sightings was kindly provided by Royal Melbourne Botanical Gardens authorities.

Dr Les Christidis and Mr Rory O'Brien from the Museum of Victoria generously made available records of specimens in their collection.

Cicada Bay Pty Ltd and Ms R Boyle kindly allowed us to use text and maps from *A Guide to Melbourne's Parks and Gardens*.

Melway Publishing Pty Ltd gave permission for maps of the Central Business District to be copied from *Melway Greater Melbourne Street Directory, 21st Edition*.

Various versions of the manuscript were read by Frances Ashburner, Reg Johnson and Ken Simpson. Their helpful comments and corrections have been appreciated.