



Education

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Little Black Cormorant, Herdsman Lake, WA November 2008. Photo: Duncan Turnbull

BIRD WEEK 2011 – 22-28 OCTOBER BIRDS NEED TREES – INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS

Birds need trees for a variety of reasons. They obtain food from blossoms, seeds and the insects that also inhabit trees. Trees are favoured roosting sites for birds, even those which feed elsewhere. Hollows in old trees provide nesting sites for owls, parrots and several other birds. Woodlands and forests provide habitat and corridors in which many birds live and travel.

This year Bird Week will celebrate forests and woodlands because birds need trees. More information about how to participate in Bird Week 2011 will become available in the coming months.



PORTLAND SECONDARY COLLEGE – UNDERSTOREY PROJECT

In 2005, staff and students of Portland Secondary College, Vic, became concerned that some old hollow-bearing trees in the school grounds were doomed to be felled because of safety concerns. The result of this concern is the Understorey Project. Students studying in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) program have been involved in the program each year since 2005.

During Term 1 students learn about the project and engage in team building activities. During Terms 2 and 3 the students host an information forum for Primary School Captains and a tree planting day. The VCAL students help prepare the site, train Primary School children in planting methods and provide catering.

The project does not cease on the planting day but also involves ongoing monitoring for weeds and regular fauna surveys. A bird list has been compiled and is available on the school website. The students have developed an action plan that guides activities until 2013. It includes the provision of future planting, the construction of a nature walk and continued bird monitoring.



Tree Day 2010. Photos: A-M Bourgoine

PENBOC EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

RAW FOR AFRICA

RAW for Africa was a music event held at Mornington Racecourse, Victoria, to raise money to help prevent trafficking of wild animals in Africa. It took on an environmental theme with the local BOCA Branch, Penboc being invited to attend and to run children's activities.

The activities focused on waterbirds, including migratory waders. Children were invited to play the migration game, test their skills with a beak simulation activity and to colour pictures of migratory shorebirds.

It was a busy day with families dropping in to the display and collecting information about BOCA and birds.



Playing the migration game. Photo: Annette Cook

ENVIRONMENT WEEK AT THE BRIARS

During the last week of March Penboc ran several birding sessions for school children at The Briars, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria. This was part of the Environment Week activities that are held annually. Other organisations represented included Friends of the Hooded Plover, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water. Bunnings hardware store ran planting activities and Woolworths handed out fresh fruit and vegetables. Children were also introduced to farm animals and were able to listen to a bush band.

The birding activities were held in the Chechingurk Hide overlooking the wetland. On arrival the children were given a brief introduction to wetland birds and some of their specific adaptations. The class was then divided into two, with one group identifying birds on the wetland and the other doing the beak simulation activity before swapping.

GREENING AUSTRALIA – VICTORIA TOOLBOX FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

The focus for the 2011 Toolbox for Environmental Change, hosted by Greening Australia – Victoria, was using Technology for Sustainability.

The keynote speaker was Dr Paul Mees who gave an entertaining and informative presentation about how Australia falls behind other countries in the provision of public transport. He argued that evidence from 'best practice' cities and regions in Europe and North America suggest that existing technologies and urban environments can support a dramatic improvement in environmental outcomes but still provide excellent services.

There were many different workshops and displays where teachers, students and others shared their environmental programs.

The BOCA display featured a large cardboard tree and bird images. The laptop played one of the two educational DVDs that we have produced. Many of these were given away to toolbox participants, along with copies of *The Bird Observer* and *The Stickybeak News*.

ONLINE RESOURCES TO KEEP YOU THINKING

The Birdland project asked Radio National listeners to describe what birds really mean to them. Responses range from audio to text, and images. The best contributions were used to make a radio documentary.

The result is a profound exploration of what birds mean to Australians... and how we'd feel if they were gone.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/360/stories/2011/3154271.htm>

The Miriwoong Interaction Seasonal Calendar is an online calendar that combines Indigenous weather knowledge with western science. It has been produced through the combined efforts of the Kimberley Land Council, the Mirima Language and Cultural Centre and the Bureau of Meteorology. The Calendar captures the six seasons of the east Kimberley and provides information about what plants and animals, including birds, are around during each season. <http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/miriwoong/index.shtml>

Log onto www.coolaustralia.org and click on information for teachers. This will take you to a range of lesson plans categorised by year level. The plans and resources are not focused solely on birds but there are plenty of opportunities to include them in the proposed lessons.

For the technophiles among you here are a couple of free apps for iPhone or iPod-touch. Museum Victoria has produced a field guide that includes birds, mammals and invertebrates from Victoria.

The Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service has developed a birdcall app and claim that "with this app you can be sure of having not one, but 23 birds 'in your hand' when you next head bush!" Both apps are available free to download from <http://www.apple.com/au/itunes/>

The Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife www.parks.tas.gov.au also has some audio and video podcasts to download.

Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds Education Volunteers Training Workshop

The Workshop was held on Thursday 24 March at Tooradin Community Hall. A field trip with Tooradin Primary School students was held in the afternoon at Blind Bight. Participants who attended the workshop included Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA) volunteers, Birds Australia (BA) volunteers, members of Friends of the Hooded Plover, Birds Australia employees, Parks Victoria rangers, teachers from Point Cook P-9 College and Tooradin Primary School and a representative from each of Phillip Island Nature Park (PINP) and Victoria Wader Studies Group (VWSG).

On the Monday prior to the workshop an information session was held at Tooradin Primary School to prepare students for the field trip. At this session students were introduced to some of the birds of Western Port, including migratory shorebirds, using a PowerPoint presentation and bird skins. The students demonstrated the characteristics of waterbirds by participating in the “Build a Shorebird” activity where items are placed on a chair to represent the characteristics of birds. A down sleeping bag for down feathers, wing shapes cut from paper for contour feathers, barbecue tongs for a bill and camouflage shorts for their plumage. The threats experienced by waterbirds were also illustrated using black card for an oil spill and a plastic six-pack holder for litter. Information was provided for the teachers to help with further education about Western Port birds.

The Thursday workshop started with participants introducing themselves to each other by completing the questions on a “mingle sheet”. This informal activity was followed with a description of BOCA education programs and the role taken by volunteers.

After morning tea Robyn Cairns from Point Cook P-9 College spoke about the birdwatching program she has conducted with Grade 6 students at the school (see *The Bird Observer* 867 p23). She told us how her ideas about what students would gain from the project have changed as it has progressed. To ensure a cross curriculum experience, the aim was originally to focus on the collection of data that could be analysed in Maths classes. Robyn found that the most important outcome was assisting the students to connect with and value the natural environment in their neighbourhood.

An *Education Resource Kit* was provided to participants. It is presented in a loose leaf folder which, after some introductory pages, is divided into sections titled – *Birds, Habitat, Threats, Action and Field Trips*. Each section contains a selection of resources to assist educators to deliver programs about the waterbirds of Western Port. Further resources were included in plastic pockets and more were available to collect on the day of the workshop. A CD version of the kit, plus other resources, has been mailed to participants since the workshop.

Participants shared some ideas from their own programs. Graeme Burgan (PINP) described games and field activities he conducts

with secondary students. Meg Cullen (BA) spoke about her use of *Rusty Loses his Loop* (reviewed in *The Bird Observer* 865 p41) with primary schools. One participant suggested that a useful addition to the kit would be information that was suitable for students in schools to take home to their parents.

The final session of the morning focused on the needs of schools. Part of the discussion related to the need to ensure programs matched the curriculum needs of schools. Primary Schools are more flexible and look for things that are relevant to the local environment but the higher up you go in Secondary Schools, the more important it is for programs to link with prescribed learning outcomes.

BLIND BIGHT FIELD TRIP

After lunch, participants left for Blind Bight where they were met by Tooradin Primary School students who arrived by bus at 2.00pm. The start of the field trip was somewhat chaotic, largely due to a heavy shower of rain just as we were organising everyone into groups. Despite the rain, some groups moved off to look for birds in the surrounding woodland. The remaining students huddled under the shelter with scopes looking for birds on the water's edge. After a time the rain cleared and the students seemed to have an enjoyable time observing wetland birds, bush birds and some rain-drop decorated spider webs. There were enough birds that did not mind the rain to make it an enjoyable afternoon, including a White-faced Heron, a Little Pied Cormorant and several Australian White Ibis, Pacific and Silver Gulls, Willie Wagtails, Welcome Swallows and Superb Fairy-wrens.

The workshop provided an opportunity for a range of people, who provide education about birds, to learn something new and to share their ideas. Feedback received on the day was positive with one participant declaring that, “It was the best workshop like this I have ever been to”. A formal evaluation form, emailed to participants after the workshop, revealed that people were happy with the experience and would value future networking opportunities.

An exciting outcome of the day was the decision by the teacher from Tooradin Primary School to start a birdwatching club at the school. BOCA will facilitate this by providing BOCA Stickybeak membership for a year.



Blind Bight in the rain. Photo: Janet Hand