



Education

ANNETTE COOK

Kinglake West. Photo: Pat Bingham

THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION CONTINUES

From its beginning, BOCA has valued the inclusion of education as part of its activities. Early records of special speakers for members are one of the indicators. In later years programs aimed at educating and involving the public were introduced – especially around the time of Bird Week during the last week of October. BOCA volunteers have been speakers at schools and community groups for many years, helping to encourage an understanding of Australian birds and their habitat needs.

Encouraging children to be involved in birdwatching and including bird education in schools has long been a challenge for BOCA. In an attempt to encourage junior membership, Stickybeaks was developed. *The Stickybeak* newsletter has been produced since 2003, about a year after I was employed as Education Coordinator, in late 2002.

During the last nine years education activities have continued to evolve and grow. Working with the Education Committee, many lectures, workshops and field trips have been offered. A series of successful programs was themed around habitats. Beginners programs attracted new members and encouraged those who had recently joined. An increasing interest in digital photography provided the impetus for successful activities at Little Desert Lodge and Bairnsdale. Bob Young, who started PhotoBOCA, was then a member of the Education Committee.

The Education Committee was comprised of Melbourne-based people. These people moved onto other roles in BOCA and/or out of Melbourne and so the committee no longer exists as it once did. It has been largely replaced by a network of education officers in BOCA's various branches. As Education Coordinator I now communicate with branches as far afield as Townsville as well as those closer to Melbourne, particularly PENBOC and MELBOCA. Many BOCA Branches are delivering excellent

education programs in their own areas. The programs include school programs, adult courses through U3A or the Council of Adult Education, interpretive signage, brochures or local field guides and assistance with TAFE and local government education.

In 2009, several branch education officers met to assist in the development of an education plan for BOCA. The Education Planning Day was preceded by a survey, for Branches and Affiliated Groups, to gather information about education activities and the kind of support that BOCA National Office could provide. The result of the survey and the Planning Day was the BOCA Education Plan.

At about the same time as BOCA was conducting its education survey, Birds Australia had opened the Discovery Centre in Sydney and employed Aimee Freimanis as Education Coordinator. Aimee attended BOCA's Education Planning Day and I was invited to be part of the BA National Education Committee. As a member of this committee I have had the opportunity to give input to the BA National Education Strategy.

A partnership based on the principles of Education for Sustainability and recognition of the role birds play in connecting people to the environment has formed. This partnership will provide an excellent start for the continued development of education activities as BirdLife Australia comes into being. The work has already begun with the production of a single page summary of the main aims of education for BirdLife Australia. This summary was produced after consideration of the BOCA Education Plan and the BA National Education Strategy with particular attention to areas of overlap.

Education in BirdLife Australia involves three approaches: Building Capacity, Driving Action and Influencing Others. *Building Capacity* has an internal focus and will assist staff and volunteers in delivering education by providing resources and training. *Driving Action* aims to support land managers, both private and public, in making management decisions favourable to



Winning diorama, Point Cook College. Photo: Annette Cook



Blue-wren from winning diorama. Photo: Annette Cook

birds. Finally, *Influencing Others* involves engaging the community through events, activities and formal education programs.

Education for BirdLife Australia has a great foundation upon which to grow. Two education coordinators, one based in Melbourne and one in Sydney, a range of education resources, the Discovery Centre in Sydney, Clarksdale in Victoria and other properties and, most importantly, a team of enthusiastic volunteers that enable the delivery of education to occur across the country.

I look forward to continuing to work together with staff and volunteers to deliver the best bird education programs in Australia.

HAPPENINGS IN EDUCATION

CITY OF KNOX NATIONAL TREE DAY

National Tree Day is held each year on, or near, 1 August. This year BOCA was invited to join City of Knox celebrations in Melbourne. The day was aimed at families and included performances by children from local primary schools. The singing was led by local indigenous leaders. BOCA had a small display and held three short walks during the day. Each participant received a booklet produced by BOCA that included information and photographs for selected local birds of the area.

ST JOSEPH'S PS BORONIA

After meeting a teacher from St Joseph's PS at the Knox Tree Day, BOCA was asked to speak to students and local residents at a local environment information session hosted by the school's student environment group. Students spoke about work they have been doing in the school grounds and local parks to establish habitat corridors. A quick talk from BOCA about the

importance of backyard habitat contributed to the knowledge gained by residents. Residents were presented with an appropriate habitat plant for their gardens.

THREATENED SPECIES DAY AT MILL PARK LAKES

Julia Vanderoord, the Healthy Waterways Waterwatch Coordinator for the Cities of Banyule, Darebin, Whittlesea, Yarra and the Shire of Nillumbik, organised a bus tour for residents on Threatened Species Day. BOCA was invited to attend and assist with a birding walk at Mill Park Lakes. Amongst the many Eurasian Coots, Northern Mallards and Pacific Black Ducks there were Black Swans and Hardheads. There were several young Swans, indicating breeding. I was assured by a participant that this is not unusual. After leaving the lake the bus took the group to Plenty Gorge. The group included some students from Northern Melbourne TAFE and several local residents with a range of birding knowledge. It was pleasing to see the response to this informative and interesting activity.

POINT COOK COLLEGE P-9 GREEN WEEK

Point Cook College has been mentioned quite often in *The Bird Observer*, with good reason. They are very active in promoting environmental programs within the school. During the last week of Term 3 they held Green Week. The whole school was treated to guest speakers and activities. A number of organisations were represented including BOCA, Birds Australia and Melbourne Water. Pictured on this page is the bird diorama, made by Prep and Grade 1 students, that won a prize in the Wyndham Sustainability Expo held by the City of Wyndham.



Creek Gully at Kinglake West – now almost too overgrown to access. Photo: Annette Cook

KINGLAKE WEST SURVEY

During January 2011, the City of Whittlesea invited BOCA to speak to residents about attracting birds back to their gardens after the 2009 Black Saturday fires. At that time a field trip was conducted on a Kinglake West property which had been burnt in those fires, with 35 species being recorded. On Saturday, 15 October, some BOCA members paid a return visit. It was a fine morning with a slight breeze. Initially there were four starters but after a few late comers the numbers grew to 13 participants.

We formed two teams covering similar areas as the last survey, across the paddocks via the dam and alongside burnt forest. It is amazing how tree and plant growth has established since January. It was difficult to get into the creek area due to the trees that have grown there.

The highlights were – a Brown Quail flushed from the long grass and hearing three species of cuckoo. What a difference spring makes? Wildflowers were everywhere with some more common than before the fires. The cumulative species count is now 46 species.

James Booth from the City of Whittlesea has suggested another survey in autumn 2012.

BIRD WEEK 2011 – BIRDS NEED TREES

Although Bird Week is held in the last week of October, it seems the activities often begin much earlier and continue later into spring.

The Australian Plants Expo provided the perfect place to promote the 2011 Bird Week theme – Birds Need Trees. The event was held during the weekend of 10 and 11 September. MELBOCA member, Janet Hand, assisted by several other volunteers, developed the display and was present during the

weekend. Between six and seven hundred people visited each day, collecting BOCA brochures, copies of *The Bird Observer* and seeking advice for establishing bird gardens.

Twenty Bird Week display kits were sent to branches and schools for use in local libraries and other public spaces during October.

At the time of writing this article Bird Week had not officially begun but the calendar included several community events.

The week kicked off on Saturday, 22 October with a talk sponsored by Jacksons Creek EcoNetwork and Melbourne Water at Sunbury Aquatic Centre titled *Gardening for Birds and Frogs*.

On Sunday, 23 October, MELBOCA hosted Breakfast with the Birds for the City of Banyule and BOCA held a display at the Whitehorse Spring Festival.

Although not exactly a Bird Week activity, BOCA worked with BA to hold an introduction to birding day at Blackburn Lake on Sunday, 6 November. The day promoted the importance of bird-friendly gardens and introduced participants to the Birds in backyards website.

LOOKING FORWARD TO SUMMER ACTIVITIES

WESBOC EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Bass Coast Shire sponsors the publication of “Sun, Surf and Sand”; a magazine which advertises activities held throughout the shire from December to Easter. Not-for-profit organisations can advertise their activities in this magazine for free.

WESBOC decided to make use of this publication to trial a series of Introduction to Bird Watching sessions during January 2011. The sessions were free to participants.

Sites were spread across the shire on Phillip Island (Swan Lake), Corinella and Wonthaggi. A variety of habitats were also chosen; wetland, coastal foreshore and bush. Unfortunately, the session planned for Corinella had to be cancelled due to unseasonably heavy rainfall.

The first outing was at Swan Lake, Phillip Island. Fourteen visitors took a pleasant stroll through the bush to the boardwalk over the midden, leading to the two birdhides. Participants were enthralled with the birds seen and views through both binoculars and scopes. A Musk Duck entertained everyone with a display.

The final outing was a walk along the rail trail at Wonthaggi. Nine visitors, including four children and about six local members set out. Part of the beauty of this route is the variety of habitat along the track. A list of nearly thirty species of birds was recorded.

WESBOC are in the process of planning to repeat these walks during the 2012 summer season. If you would like further information please contact Elizabeth Shaw on 03 5952 1533 or email surefoot@waterfront.net.au.

Julaka Birds CD

The new Julaka Birds CD accompanies the Warumungu Bird book and poster. These resources are made for the Tennant Creek community and schools, to support the teaching of Indigenous Language and Culture Programs.

This resource is very important as there are very few resources in Warumungu language. The recordings of Warumungu elders reading the story, belong to speakers Judy Nixon and Sandra Morrison. The bird call audios were sourced from Howard Plowright, David Secomb and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA). Samantha Disbray, who was working as the Central Australian, Department of Education and Training Linguist, developed the CD and book from the Warumungu poster which she worked on with Warumungu speakers.

The CD will be used in Tennant Creek schools for students to learn more about the local language and culture. These bird resources are linked to learning outcomes in Indigenous Language and Culture, and Science programs. They can be used at all levels of schooling and follow up activities can be adapted to the different levels. For example, Early Years students can play matching games with the photos of birds and bird names. Students can mimic sounds and actions of birds. For example, flapping their arms the way certain birds do. Older students can do bird surveys and detailed studies of bird habitats.

The book and poster have written English translations. The idea for the interactive CD came from the popular series of bird posters which are made in five different Central Australian



Assistant Teacher Marie Ryder using flash cards with the names of birds which match the photos of the birds. Photo: Bob Gosford



Wurrkamili Crested Pigeon *Ocyphaps lophotes*.
Wurrkamili-ji angku turrupari ngappa ngunta.
Crested Pigeons tell where there is water.
Photo: Bob Gosford



Jintipirri Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*
Pangkala, walpunju mana jintipirri, yama!
Amaparn kumppu wurttu kulparnkun.
Don't harm a Willie Wagtail. Leave it alone!
Harming it may cause strong wind.
Photo: Bob Gosford

languages by Indigenous language speakers and linguists. These posters are available for purchase from Charles Darwin University in Alice Springs. It would be wonderful to make interactive CDs in all of these languages in the future, as these resources have proved to be very popular in Central Australian schools. They promote local cultural knowledge which is valued by the community.

Susan Moore and John Runciman
NT Department of Education and Training;
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Superb Fairy-wren, Wye River, Vic. Photo: Ray Chatterton

"The third meeting of the Club was held on the 14th June ... The figure of the male Blue Wren was adopted as the emblem of the Club." Emu Vol 5 p103 Oct 1905