

BANDICOOTtimes

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BIRDS

SPECIAL EDITION

hobartcity.com.au/bushcare



A PROGRAM OF



City of **HOBART**

Bushcare Roundup

Claire Knowles
Bushcare Coordinator

Thank you to all the dedicated volunteers who enthusiastically attended Bushcare in February after the summer break. We're already making headway on another productive autumn of Bushcare!

In this edition of the *Bandicoot Times*, we shine a spotlight on the beautiful birds of Hobart, with a special piece written by birder and nature journalist Don Knowler.

Bushcare staff recently had the pleasure of attending the launch of BirdLife Tasmania's *Hobart Bird Walks* brochure, which will become an invaluable guide to the bird species you might come across in our reserves. Even if you're not a bird expert, it is filled with fascinating facts, amazing photos and should stimulate a greater appreciation for the bird life that's all around us in Hobart.

Some fantastic work has started along the New Town Rivulet in Lenah Valley. A February working bee attracted 18 volunteers who tackled a festival of weeds including blackberry, fuchsia, hemlock, thistle and caper spurge.

We are now looking forward to more special activities involving weeding and planting in Lenah Valley as part of our autumn working bee program.

Clean Up Australia Day on the mountain

How lucky were we for the Clean Up Australia Day event on



Grant Murray, Adrian Bol and Charlie Chadwick, all very proud of their Clean Up Australia Day haul. Photos: John Sampson



Ella Helman and her daughter Wren made a great Clean Up Australia Day team, and Kath McGinty was keen to give something back to the mountain she loves.



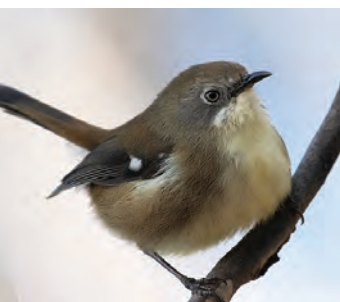
kunanyi/Mt Wellington? Despite the crisp air, wind was minimal, and around 60 volunteers turned up to share their care for the mountain and to search the beautiful alpine vegetation and lichen covered rocks of the summit for rubbish.

Volunteers carefully retrieved 85kg of general rubbish, 6kg of rubbish that can be recycled and 1kg of compostables, including several \$50 and \$5 notes and

oddities such as a blue lace bra, prescription sunglasses, car tyres and hats.

Cigarette butts and chewing gum were also prevalent and although small they are unwelcome litter.

Chewing gum is basically plastic and not biodegradable, while cigarettes are known to leach toxins into the environment. The mountain has springs of crystal-clear water so a huge thank you for helping to keep it this way!



Cover photo:
The scrubtit is endemic to Tasmania.
Photo: Mick Brown

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WHEN THE MIGHTY FALL

Bec Johnson
Bushcare Team Leader

Would you know what to do if you found a dead or injured bird of prey?

I wasn't sure who to call after making the sad discovery of a dead wedge-tailed eagle on the Lyell Highway near Ouse, but because it was under a powerline I contacted TasNetworks.

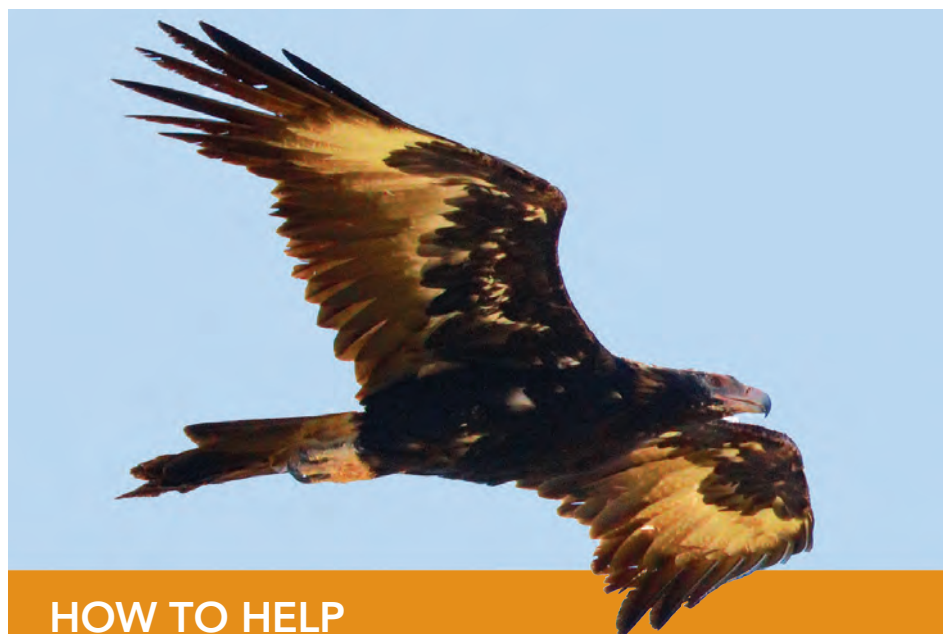
I sent details of where the eagle was found and within just a couple of days the carcass was collected, taken to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and a necropsy was conducted to determine if it had been electrocuted.

TasNetworks has partnered with TMAG to investigate hazards facing our threatened birds of prey, especially the dangers of powerlines.

No clear cause of death could be determined due to the bird's late stage of decomposition – it had been on the road for a few days before we found it. However, TasNetworks took the proactive step of installing reflectors on the nearby powerline within just weeks of my report, as they do at many locations where birds of prey may fly into powerlines.

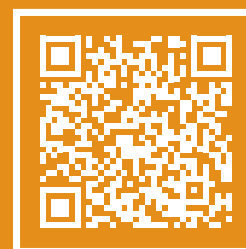
Sadly, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle is an endangered species, with less than 1500 mature individuals remaining.

Often scavenging on roadkill, eagles (as well as Tasmanian devils and quolls) are at risk of being killed or injured by vehicles, so it is a good idea to move any dead wildlife off the road, but



HOW TO HELP

1. If you know of an eagle's nest, please record it on iNaturalist or the Natural Values Atlas – you could help to save that nest well into the future.
2. If you find an injured bird of prey, report it directly to Bonorong Wildlife Rescue on 0447 264 625 (all hours)!
3. If you find a dead bird of prey near a powerline report it to TasNetworks on 132 004 or scan the QR code for their online reporting form.



only if you can do so safely.

The Tasmanian 'wedgie' is a breathtaking sight. It is Australia's largest bird of prey and has a wingspan of up to 2.3 metres, strong legs as thick as your arm and huge feathered talons.

The wedge-tailed eagle builds a large nest in tall, emergent eucalypts, usually on sloping ground to the leeward side of a ridge. The chosen tree must be sturdy and strong, usually well over 100 years old and usually over 27 metres tall.

A breeding pair may have several nests within their territory, allowing them to choose one each breeding season, perhaps

based on local food abundance or the climate. Nests can be up to two metres wide and two metres deep and are often used by many generations of birds.

Habitat loss is a major factor threatening the survival of the wedge-tailed eagle.

Potentially the most effective way to protect 'wedgies' is to avoid any disturbance near the nest, especially leading up to and during the breeding season (July to January).

We hope as we learn to manage threats to our wedge-tailed eagles this magnificent bird will still be here for our grandchildren to glimpse and gasp at in wonder.

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Don Knowler
On the Wing Columnist

Over millennia, the rich diversity of birds inhabiting the Hobart area has followed ancient ley lines shaped by the landscape and the seasons.

The first Tasmanians, the Palawa, and Charles Darwin in his ascent of kunanyi/Mt Wellington, followed them too.

And even today the marathon runners participating in the Point to Pinnacle share the same route negotiated in spring by migrating crescent honeyeaters and eastern spinebills, moving from winter territories near the coast to their summer breeding grounds rising 1271 metres to the summit.

The Point to Pinnacle provides a rough approximation of the route, although the birds are more likely to hug the gullies cut by the Hobart, New Town and Sandy Bay rivulets.

The topography of the region represents a jigsaw of habitats, a kaleidoscope of colour. Hobart is a city unique in Australia – a place where near-pristine bush sits side-by-side with human habitation. It provides a home to 11 of the 12 bird species found nowhere else on Earth beyond Tasmania.

The manicured lawns of Wrest Point and the summit of kunanyi/Mt Wellington represent two different worlds. At Wrest Point one of the 11 Tasmanian endemic species, the native

hen, can be seen. And along the shore a wading bird makes an appearance, the pied oystercatcher. A little south, little penguins breed.

On the other side of the city, the Queens Domain gives a snapshot of what Hobart looked like before European settlement. It is clothed in wallaby grass interspersed with blue and white gums and sheoaks, providing a home for woodland birds typical of the Hobart environment – yellow-tailed black cockatoos, musk lorikeets, green and eastern rosellas and, in spring, swift parrots.

Where European trees have replaced native ones in inner-city parkland settings, many bird species can still be seen including the rare masked owl.

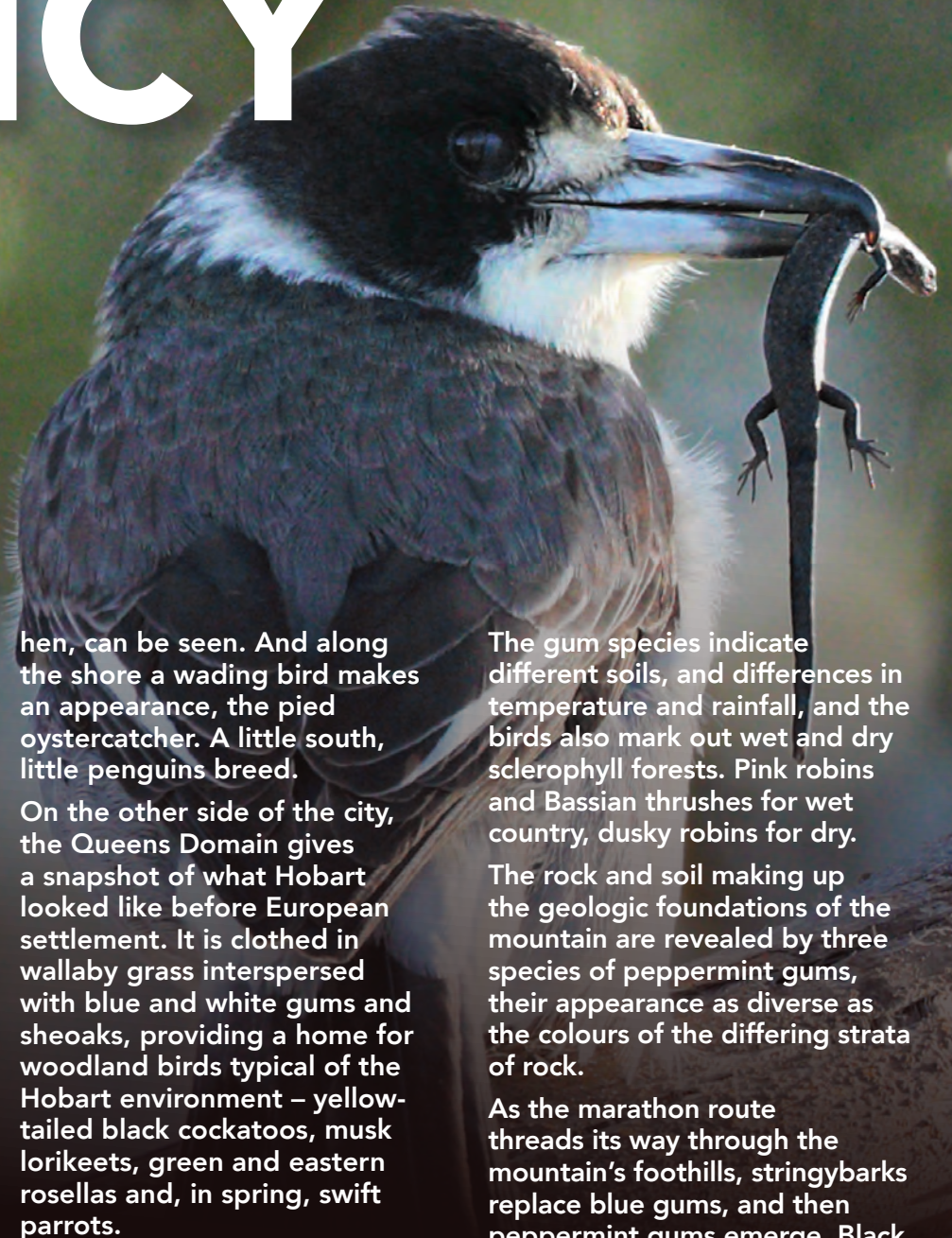
As with the Domain, the landscape of Hobart just a few kilometres beyond the ribbon of development that hugs the Derwent shore has changed little from the time of the Muwinina people.


The gum species indicate different soils, and differences in temperature and rainfall, and the birds also mark out wet and dry sclerophyll forests. Pink robins and Bassian thrushes for wet country, dusky robins for dry.

The rock and soil making up the geologic foundations of the mountain are revealed by three species of peppermint gums, their appearance as diverse as the colours of the differing strata of rock.

As the marathon route threads its way through the mountain's foothills, stringybarks replace blue gums, and then peppermint gums emerge. Black peppermints form a canopy of narrow, finger-like leaves along the Huon Road beyond South Hobart. The black peppermints grow on sandstone and yellow wattlebirds, another bird species endemic to Tasmania, frolic in their branches.

The foothills feature sedimentary sandstones and mudstones laid down during the Permian Period (230-280 million years ago).





Further towards the mountain these are overlaid by sandstones rich in quartz formed during the Triassic (180-230 million years ago). Finally, igneous rock from the Jurassic Period 170 million years ago tops the summit, the dolerite Organ Pipes the standout feature.

Silver peppermints replace the black peppermints in places. These eucalypts favour a foundation of mudstone and the fragile rock, crumbling and soft, is revealed along the roadside edge. Yellow-throated honeyeaters, another endemic species, flit through boughs and branches holding thin and shiny tin-foil leaves. Then come white peppermints, more restrained than their silver cousins, with

muted yellow bark and blue-green leaves.

Approaching the Springs half-way up the mountain, the signature tune of the Tasmanian high country rings out. The trumpet song of the black currawong replaces the "clinking" call of the grey currawongs, chiefly heard in the drier areas closer to Hobart. Although true rainforest is usually associated with Tasmania's wild west, there are high-rainfall species like myrtle, sassafras and gum-topped stringybark here, and strands of the tallest flowering plant on the planet, swamp gums.

Beyond the Springs, the forest canopy thins to be replaced by yellow and snow gums. Here

flame robins find a home in summer.

From the summit, the Derwent Estuary is seen spread out far below, the watercourse snaking north. The Derwent Valley represents another ley line – navigated by interstate migrating birds using the sun and stars as their compass. They arrive in spring and depart when autumn bites, completing Hobart's rich tapestry of birdlife which in total includes about 100 species.

- Don Knowler writes "On the Wing" in the *Sunday Tasmanian*. Explore more of Don's stories on his website: donaldknowler.com

Photo: Grey butcherbird.
Michael Roberts

OUR BIRD WORLD REVEALED

The secrets of Hobart's bird world have been unlocked with the release of a comprehensive guide to Hobart bird walks.

Hobart's bushland reserves are havens for an incredible array of native birds including eastern rosellas, pink robins, the golden whistler and the elusive Bassian thrush.

"If you know what to look for and where to look you can find wedge-tailed eagles soaring on wind currents above kunanyi/ Mt Wellington and flame robins and fan-tailed cuckoos in our forests and woodlands," Hobart Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds says.

"Our blue gums draw the critically endangered swift parrot, a very fast bird that forages in Knocklofty Reserve, Ridgeway and Bicentennial parks.

"If you're lucky you might even spot a grey goshawk, a pure white version of this raptor that

can be seen hunting on our urban fringes and of which there are thought to be less than 110 breeding pairs left in Tasmania."

Hobart Bird Walks has been published by BirdLife Tasmania with a City of Hobart community grant and follows a similar guide created for Kingborough.

"The guide aims to introduce people to the places that showcase Hobart's wonderful birdlife," BirdLife Tasmania Convenor Karen Dick said at the launch of the brochure.

"This project seeks to encourage both locals and visitors to enjoy and value our native birds so we can work together to protect them and their habitats."

Eleven of the 12 Tasmanian bird species found nowhere else on the planet can be seen in Hobart, including the Tasmanian thornbill, scrubtit and "turbo chook" – the Tasmanian native hen.



Hobart Bird Walks is available at the City of Hobart Customer Service Centre and the Tasmanian Travel and Information Centre.



Yellow-throated honeyeater.
Photo: Mick Brown

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE



Tawny frogmouth. Photo: Michael Roberts

Andrew Walter

BirdLife Tasmania volunteer

The Hobart area is well placed to observe local and interstate migratory birds.

Altitudinal migrants spend summer in the higher parts of the Tasmanian landscape, for example on kunanyi/Mt Wellington, and then move to lower altitudes in the cold, windy winter months. Birds that do this include the eastern spinebill and flame robin.

There are also some Australian mainland birds that migrate across Bass Strait to breed and spend the summer months in Tasmania before returning to the mainland in late summer/autumn. These migratory birds include the striated pardalote, black-faced cuckoo-shrike (both common), satin flycatcher (uncommon) and the swift parrot (very rare).

Hobart and birds

Alpine heathlands, a mosaic of lower altitude eucalypt forests, parkland, calm-water coastal environments and several water storages attract and support different bird species across Hobart. The walks covered in the new *Hobart Bird Walks* brochure include several types of habitat, enabling bird watchers to see the greatest range of birdlife.

Birdwatching etiquette

BirdLife Tasmania encourages behaviour that respects the wellbeing of birds, does not disrupt bird behaviour or activities, and protects bird habitats. If birds



Strong-billed honeyeater. Photo: Mick Brown

are reacting to your presence, you may be disturbing them and taking them away from nests and young or reducing their time for foraging or breeding.

Move away and observe or photograph from a distance.

These guidelines apply to watching birds anywhere and anytime, bird photography, beach-going and other activities.

What you can do:
Citizen science

BirdLife Tasmania encourages people to record their bird observations in the national bird database (Birddata) to assist in bird conservation and the management of Australia’s native birds.

Please visit birddata.birdlife.org.au for more information.

BirdLife Australia supports a Birds in Backyards program that focuses on the birds that live where people live. This program is a great way to learn about your local birds and more information can be found at birdsinyourbackyards.net.

HOBART BIRD CHECKLIST

Shore/Wetland/Waterbody species

Endemic bird species are marked E

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Australian pelican | <input type="checkbox"/> Crested tern | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific black duck |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Australian pied oystercatcher | <input type="checkbox"/> Eurasian coot | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific gull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Australian wood duck | <input type="checkbox"/> Great cormorant | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver gull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black swan | <input type="checkbox"/> Hoary-headed grebe | <input type="checkbox"/> Sooty oystercatcher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black-faced cormorant | <input type="checkbox"/> Kelp gull | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasmanian native hen (E) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chestnut teal | <input type="checkbox"/> Little pied cormorant | <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome swallow |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Masked lapwing | <input type="checkbox"/> White-faced heron |

Heathlands/Woodlands/Forest species

E = Endemic S = Summer migrant I = Introduced

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Australian magpie | <input type="checkbox"/> Golden whistler | <input type="checkbox"/> Scrubtit (E) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beautiful firetail | <input type="checkbox"/> Green rosella (E) | <input type="checkbox"/> Shining bronze-cuckoo (S) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black currawong (E) | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey butcherbird | <input type="checkbox"/> Silvereye |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black-faced cuckoo-shrike (S) | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey currawong | <input type="checkbox"/> Spotted pardalote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black-headed honeyeater (E) | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey fantail | <input type="checkbox"/> Striated pardalote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brown goshawk | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey (white) goshawk | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong-billed honeyeater (E) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brown thornbill | <input type="checkbox"/> Grey shrike-thrush | <input type="checkbox"/> Swift parrot (S) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brush bronzewing | <input type="checkbox"/> Laughing kookaburra (I) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sulphur-crested cockatoo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common bronzewing | <input type="checkbox"/> Little wattlebird | <input type="checkbox"/> Superb fairy-wren |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crescent honeyeater | <input type="checkbox"/> Musk lorikeet | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasmanian scrubwren (E) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dusky robin (E) | <input type="checkbox"/> New Holland honeyeater | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasmanian thornbill (E) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dusky woodswallow (S) | <input type="checkbox"/> Noisy miner | <input type="checkbox"/> Tawny frogmouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern rosella | <input type="checkbox"/> Olive whistler | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree martin (S) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern spinebill | <input type="checkbox"/> Pallid cuckoo (S) | <input type="checkbox"/> Wedge-tailed eagle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fan-tailed cuckoo (S) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pink robin | <input type="checkbox"/> White-bellied sea-eagle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flame robin | <input type="checkbox"/> Rainbow lorikeet (I) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow wattlebird (E) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forest raven | <input type="checkbox"/> Satin flycatcher (S) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-throated honeyeater (E) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Galah (I) | <input type="checkbox"/> Scarlet robin | <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-tailed black-cockatoo |

Birds on the move

Sonya Stallbaum
Bushcare Team Leader

Some birds benefit greatly from human induced change. Native birds can extend their ranges in response to land-use changes that suit them. Waterbirds arrive wherever dams are built.

Species on the move challenge us and many birds are finding new niches to occupy our changing landscapes. Sulphur-crested cockatoos occur naturally in Tasmania but since European settlement their numbers have surged as they find more of their preferred open feeding grounds. Seasonal effects too are less influential as intelligent cockatoos find year-round food on agricultural land and via the grain in cattle feedlots and pine plantations.

Open bush created by land clearing, fragmentation and other practices that reduce structural diversity or eliminate understorey favour the noisy miner, a native honeyeater. Their habitat is broadened by extensive farmlands, roadside reserves, recently burned areas and suburban parks and gardens.

Noisy miners live in large cooperative colonies. Breeding occurs throughout the year, single females laying four eggs, often with up to 20 males supporting the nestlings and fledglings. They aggressively defend territory and outcompete almost every other bird.

Large flocks of noisy miners perpetuate further forest decline but as generalists feeding on nectar, fruit, and insects they always have more habitat scope and with competition eliminated or chased away they have become a disproportionately successful species.



Kookaburras were introduced into Tasmania in an attempt to reduce snake numbers.

Rainbow lorikeet

The rainbow lorikeet is an Australian native bird, but its natural range lies in northern Australia and concern is mounting as large flocks are being seen in Tasmania. Believed to have escaped from aviaries these colourful birds form huge flocks and have the potential to cause massive problems for Tasmania's critically endangered parrots and fruit industry.

We don't have exact numbers for Tasmania, but rainbow lorikeets have quickly been labelled an introduced species and a feral pest. A hybrid species has emerged from interbreeding with the native musk lorikeet. A bright blue head distinguishes the rainbow lorikeet from our native musk but when hybridised the feather colours blend to become a messy undefined colour palette. Rainbow lorikeets compete for scarce nesting hollows with many of our native animals, including the critically endangered swift parrot.

BirdLife Australia points to research showing that rainbow

lorikeets will communally roost in trees where there is a large amount of artificial light at night – e.g. shopping centres and sports ovals – possibly to expose approaching nocturnal predators. Feeding these birds helps them to thrive and spread further across the state.

Galah

Bird feeding is abetting the expansion of galah populations, which extended their range by flying from the mainland across Bass Strait. They are highly problematic for mature, native park trees in north west Tasmania, stripping the bark from trees all the way back to the living layer below – enough to kill limbs, or the entire tree. Galahs have become unwanted hollow competitors too, their numbers rapidly increasing over the past decade.

Kookaburra

It is unclear what the motivation was, but attempts to introduce the kookaburra to Tasmania failed in 1902 and again in 1906. Then in 1938 the then Lands

Department released kookaburras to reduce snake populations – and this time the bird persisted.

Kookaburras are nest robbers. When a family of kookaburras moves into a bushland area they add a lot of extra pressure to the ecosystem, impacting smaller nesting birds and reptiles. Interestingly, BirdLife Australia data has shown a 40 per cent kookaburra decline on the mainland over the past 15 years while holding their own in Tasmania.

Lyrebird

Yet another Australian icon was introduced in the 1930s and 40s when mainland populations of the superb lyrebird were mistakenly thought to be in decline. The bird found plenty of suitable habitat in Tasmania's wet forests, and we know the lyrebird is happily living on the wet slopes of kunanyi.

The impact of introducing superb lyrebirds to Tasmania is not yet fully understood. Known as ecosystem engineers, they plough



HOW TO HELP

- Please don't feed wild birds, artificial feeders are also not recommended.
- Record sightings of rainbow lorikeets and hybrids in iNaturalist.
- Tell your friends – explain the difference between a rainbow and a musk lorikeet.

up hundreds of tonnes of soil and leaf litter annually in search of invertebrates, potentially drying out the forest floor, spreading weeds and altering fire behaviour. Ground cover species including rare orchids are at risk of being dug up or buried by these birds.

My backyard

Imbalances in populations of native birds is simply a response to humans changing their habitats, whether this be in a favourable or unfavourable way. Usually, human-induced change favours less biodiversity as only the most adaptive species thrive.

Small woodland birds are becoming threatened nationally

due to habitat loss. Birds (and other animals) reliant on tree hollows for nesting are already under pressure without additional competition. Like weeds, introduced birds and opportunistic natives can capitalise on change and adapt to disturbance and landscape shifts.

We can address some of the imbalances in our backyards by encouraging structural vegetation diversity including a mix of Tassie natives, not just showy plants. Many "bird attracting" plants will bring in the honeyeaters, but it's important not to forget the seed eaters, insect and berry eaters. Lots of grevilleas, as one example, can be an unbalancing influence.

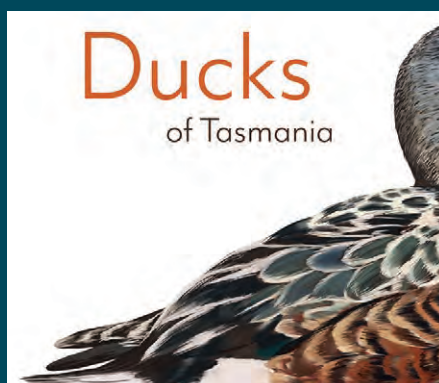
Ducks of the Derwent

Did you know feeding ducks can put our native ducks in peril?

So many families have wonderful childhood memories of feeding ducks, but we now know that human food harms them.

However, we can still create lovely memories by becoming duck 'twitchers' instead of duck feeders with the help of a handy and easy-to-read new pocket book called *Ducks of Tasmania*.

This beautifully illustrated



publication has been created to help people identify ducks in Tasmania and learn how to keep them safe and healthy.

A joint project between BirdLife Tasmania, the Pacific Black Duck Conservation Group, Greater

Hobart councils and the Derwent Estuary Program, the pocket book is expected to bring great joy to people venturing on walks around Tasmania.

"We wanted to create something easy to carry and read for duck lovers," says Ursula Taylor, CEO of the Derwent Estuary Program.

"We have 11 native ducks in Tasmania, many of whom are regular visitors to the Derwent Estuary. We wanted to share how we can enjoy seeing them without harming their welfare."

Visit the City of Hobart's Customer Service Centre for a free copy of *Ducks of Tasmania*.



Clean Up Australia Day volunteer Richard Siu. Photo: John Sampson