



Bird Gallery

Notes by Gillian Jervis

Birds at Birraring Banks

10 - 11am

Sunday, 18 October

*Event for Birrarung
Riverfest 2026*

Proudly hosted by: KooyongKoot Alliance,
Rewilding Stonnington and The Yarra Link Project

Introduction

We're delighted to host our first joint event on this special spot as part of Riverfest 2026.

Situated on the inner reaches of our beloved Yarra River/Birrarung and just downstream from the confluence of the river with Gardiner's Creek/KooyongKoot, Birrarung Banks is part of the living history of the river. Wurundjeri Country for thousands of years, this bank of the river has seen significant disruption since European settlement. Locals have told us cattle once grazed on or near the site; more recently, it was used as a works depot when the Heyington rail bridge was duplicated in 1968. As part of these works the river was rerouted. A roadway was cut in and land along the banks removed.

Today, Birrarung Banks represents only a remnant of the original landscape. Habitat for birds and other native species has changed and the trees you will see on site have mostly been planted in the last half century. There are however encouraging signs of regeneration.

The Yarra Link Project Inc was established with the purchase of a parcel of land east of the rail bridge in 2014; we registered as an environmental charity in 2015.

Rewilding Stonnington Inc is a volunteer organisation based in Stonnington, incorporated in 2022 and registered as an environmental charity in 2024. We signed a 10-year lease with Melbourne Water for the site at Birrarung Banks west of the rail bridge in 2025. Our work on the site is supported by funding from the Australian Government through the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program as part of the Regenerate! Project 2025-2028.

Both organisations are members of **The KooyongKoot Alliance Inc. (KKA)**, comprising more than 20 Friends groups who care for the Gardiner's Creek (KooyongKoot) Catchment. *KooyongKoot* - the First Nations name for Gardiner's Creek - is a major tributary of the Yarra River (Birrarung) and an important piece of infrastructure in Melbourne's east. The Catchment spans more than 100 square kilometres from headwaters to river confluence. Our work supports urban biodiversity, improves waterway health and provides valued open space that brings communities together. The KKA was registered as an environmental charity in 2022.

Together, we are working with nature, to restore habitat and invite birds, animals and insects back to the riverbank. These Notes by Gillian Jervis show some of the birds observed along this part of the river; we hope to see these and more as habitat is restored.

We hope you enjoy your visit!

GILLIAN JERVIS, EVENT LEADER
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2026 Aussie Bird Count

Please register at aussiebirdcount.org.au (being held 19-25 October) and help gather a national snapshot of bird life across Australia. If you are interested in joining future events and working bees here at Birrarung Banks, please get in touch.

Proudly hosted by:





Nankeen Night Heron

Nycticorax caledonicus

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Stocky build with cinnamon-coloured upperparts, white underparts, black crown and yellow legs/feet. Large head with short neck and legs giving it a stooped appearance.

Habitat & Distribution

Prefers well vegetated wetlands and can be found along shallow river margins, mangroves, floodplains, swamps, parks and gardens. Spends much of the day roosting hidden amongst dense foliage, emerging at twilight. Found throughout Australia wherever there is permanent water. Uncommon in Tasmania. Nomadic in response to rainfall.

Breeding

Breeds throughout the year in colonies depending on food availability, and often together with egrets and cormorants. Drainage of wetlands, and interrupted river flows can disrupt breeding activity. The nest is a loose stick platform over water. Both sexes incubate the eggs.

Diet

Feeds at night in shallow water on a wide variety of insects, crustaceans, fish and amphibians.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Makes a distinctive loud croak, often at night.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Little Pied Cormorant

Microcarbo melanoleucos

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Small black and white cormorant with stubby yellow bill. Not to be confused with the Pied Cormorant which has a long ivory bill and contrasting "black trousers" on flanks of legs.

Habitat & Distribution

At home in fresh and salt water. Often seen in large flocks on open waterways where large numbers of fish are present, however, often solitary on inland waterways. Common species found along coasts, islands, estuaries and inland waters throughout Australia.

Breeding

Breed either in colonies or, less commonly, in single pairs. The nest is a flat platform of sticks lined with green leaves and is usually placed in a tree. Both adults share incubation duties and care for their young.

Diet

Feeds on a variety of aquatic animals including insects, fish and crustaceans.

Interesting/Fun Fact

They stand with open wings to help dry off after a swim. Unlike ducks which have waterproof oil on their feathers they have loosely bound feathers that absorb water. This lack of waterproofing reduces trapped air bubbles, allowing them to sink and dive like a bullet to chase fish and crustaceans.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Purple Swamphen

Porphyrio porphyrio

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Has a resplendent purple-blue neck and underside, and a gaudy, oversized bright red bill and eyes.

Habitat & Distribution

Habitat & Distribution
Typically found around freshwater swamps, streams and marshes in small groups. Common throughout eastern and northern Australia, with a separate subspecies common in the extreme south-west of the continent.

Breeding

Generally found in small groups and studies have shown that these consist of more males than females. All family members, and occasionally younger birds from a previous brood share incubation and parenting duties. The nest consists of a platform of trampled reeds with the surrounding vegetation sometimes being used to form a shelter. Often two broods will be raised in a year.

Diet

Includes soft shoots of reeds and rushes, small animals such as frogs and snails.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Reputed egg stealer and will also eat ducklings if caught! Despite its bulky shape, is an accomplished flyer and will readily take to the air to escape danger.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Powerful Owl

Ninox strenua

Conservation Status

Vulnerable in Victoria, NSW and QLD

A large owl with a relatively small head and rounded tail. Dark grey-brown and white barred plumage and off-white underside. The male and female are similar with the female slightly smaller and narrower head.

Habitat & Distribution

Endemic to eastern and south-eastern Australia. Found in open forests and along sheltered gullies in moist forests with dense understoreys, especially along watercourses. Roost by day, perched in shady tree canopy, often with the previous night's prey in their talons. With greater numbers of possums in urban areas, sightings of Powerful Owls in these areas are becoming more common.

Breeding

Mates for life (over 30 years in some cases) and pairs defend their territory year-round. The male prepares the nest which is usually a vertical hollow in a large old tree and provides the female and young with a constant food supply during the early part of the nesting period.

The female incubates the eggs and broods the young, emerging later in the nesting period to help hunt for food.

Diet

Carnivorous eating mainly medium to large tree-dwelling mammals including the Common Ringtail Possum, Great Glider and Flying Foxes. It will also take roosting birds and small ground-dwelling mammals such as rabbits and small marsupials. Forages mainly in trees, swooping down and taking prey with its feet.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Australia's largest owl and nocturnal bird.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Gang-gang Cockatoo

Callocephalon fimbriatum

Conservation Status

Endangered

Small, stocky cockatoo with a wispy crest, large broad wings and short tail. Young birds are like the adult female.

Habitat & Distribution

During summer, the Gang-gang cockatoo is found in tall mountain forests and woodlands with dense shrubby understoreys where they breed in tree hollows. In winter, they will move to lower altitudes into drier, more open forests and woodlands. Often seen in suburban areas during this time in trees feeding on fruit and seeds. Consistent sightings in Gardiners Creek Reserve, Burwood.

Breeding

Form close, monogamous pairs. The female chooses a nest hollow in a suitable tree, and both sexes prepare the nest for egg-laying, lining it with wood chips and dust by chewing at the sides of the hollow. Both sexes incubate the eggs for 30 days and care for the young with a nesting period of 56 days.

Parents feed their young for a further four to six weeks after fledging and family groups will be seen feeding together during breeding season.

Diet

Feeds mainly on seeds of native and exotic trees and shrubs, but prefer eucalypts, wattles and introduced hawthorn. They also eat berries, fruit, nuts and insects and their larvae.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Hold food using their left foot (rare preference amongst birds). Can anyone guess which is the female and male?

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Musk Lorikeet

Glossopsitta concinna

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Medium-sized sturdy lorikeet, sometimes seen in large flocks when trees are flowering, and often in mixed flocks with other parrots and birds including Little Lorikeets, Swift Parrots and Honeyeaters. Mostly green with a yellow patch at the side of the breast and bright red patch on forehead and below eyes. They are active and noisy.

Habitat & Distribution

Endemic to south-eastern Australia and typically found in tall, open dry forest and woodlands dominated by eucalypts, and are usually found in the canopy. Also seen in suburban areas, parks and street trees.

Breeding

Breed in hollow branches and holes in living eucalypts, often near watercourses. The entrance holes are usually very small, so they must squeeze in. Eggs are laid on a base of chewed or decayed wood. The female incubates the eggs and both parents roost in the hollow at night.

Diet

Pollen and nectar from eucalypts and some grevilleas and banksias, but also seeds, fruits and insects and their larvae.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Has a brushed-tipped tongue to help collect nectar and pollen from native flowers.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Tawny Frogmouth

Podargus strigoides

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Often confused with owls due to their nocturnal habit and owl-like appearance but are more closely related to Nightjars. Overall plumage is silver-grey, slightly paler below, streaked and mottled with black and rufous.

Habitat & Distribution

Found throughout Australia including Tasmania. Can be seen in most habitat types except dense rainforests, alpine moors and treeless deserts.

Breeding

Have regular breeding season from August to January in temperate southern Australia. Birds in more arid regions may breed in response to heavy rains. They mate for life and share nesting duties. The male sits on the nest during the day but both sexes share sitting at night. The nest is a loose platform of sticks, which is usually placed on a horizontal forked tree branch.

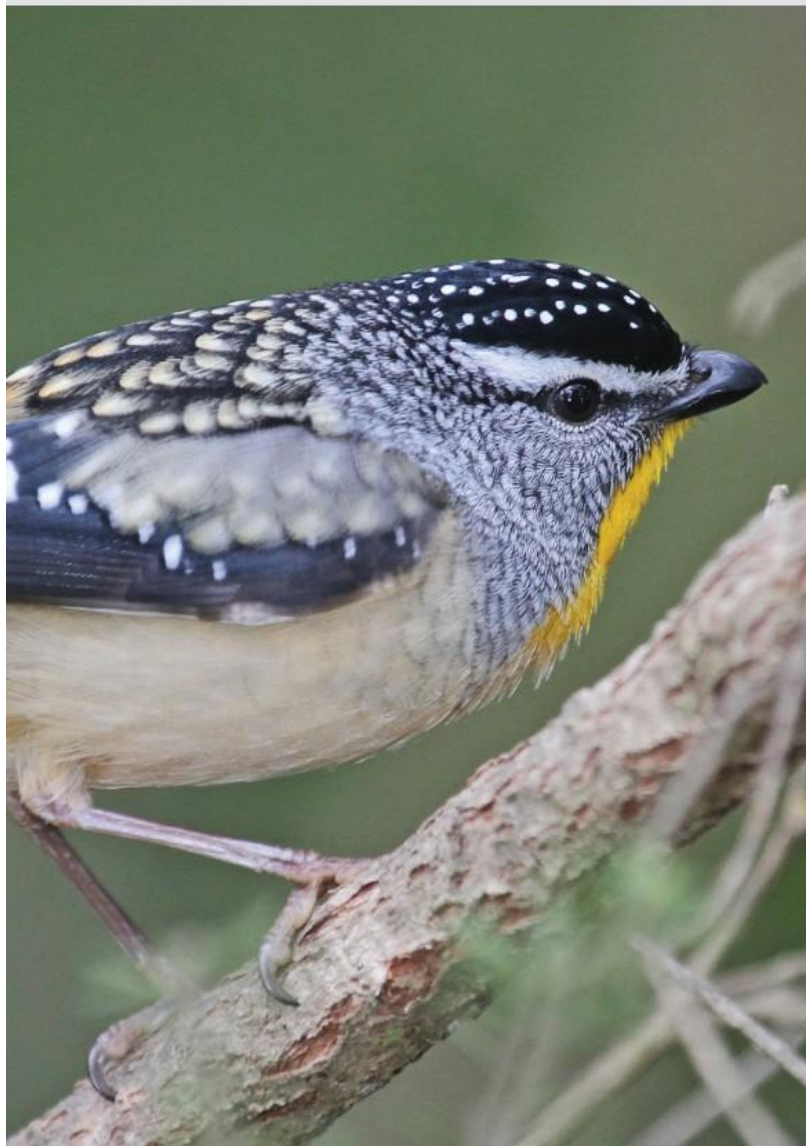
Diet

Feeds mostly on nocturnal insects, worms, slugs and snails but also on small mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds. Most food is obtained by pouncing to the ground from a tree or elevated perch.

Interesting/Fun Fact

When scared they freeze upright, close their eyes and point their beaks skyward to resemble a dead tree branch.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Spotted Pardalote

Pardalotus punctatus

Conservation Status

Least Concern

One of Australia's smallest birds that is most often in high eucalypt canopy, so is more often detected by its characteristic call. Wings, tail and head of the male are black and covered with small, distinct white spots. Males have a pale eyebrow, yellow throat and red rump. Females are similar with less distinctive markings.

Habitat & Distribution

Mostly found in eucalypt forests and woodlands but occurs in parks and gardens with well-established eucalypt canopy. Found in eastern and southern Australia, occurring in coastal areas extending to western slopes of the Great Diving Range in the east.

Breeding

The nest is an enlarged, lined chamber at the end of a narrow tunnel, excavated in an earth bank. Sometimes they nest in tree hollows and occasionally in artificial structures. Both parents share nest building, incubation of eggs and feeding young.

Diet

Forages on the foliage of trees for insects especially psyllids and sugary exudates from leaves and psyllids.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Nests have sometimes been found in carpet rolls and garage roll-a-doors.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Superb Fairy-wren

Malurus cyaneus

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Adult males are brightly coloured, especially during the breeding season. Rich blue and black plumage with females and young birds mostly brown.

Habitat & Distribution

Seen in most habitat types where suitable dense cover and low shrubs occur. Common in urban parks and gardens and can be seen in small social groups, often consisting of one dominant male and several females/young birds. Showing signs of reduced numbers. Their presence reflects healthy, low-shrub understoreys and thriving wetland-adjacent ecosystems.

Breeding

The nest is a dome-shaped structure of grasses and other fine material. Usually placed in a low bush and constructed by the female. Eggs are incubated by the female, but the young are fed by both sexes. Other members of the group will also help feed the young.

Diet

Feeds on insects and other small arthropods which are caught mostly on the ground but may also be taken from low bushes. Feeding occurs in small social groups.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Have been labelled "the least faithful birds in the world". Females may be courted by up to 13 males in an hour!

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Willie Wagtail

Rhipidura leucophrys

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Largest and most well-known of the Australian fantails with black plumage above and white underneath. Can be identified by its white eyebrow and whisker markings. Young birds resemble the adults but have paler, slightly rusty edges to the feathers of their wings.

Habitat & Distribution

Found in most open habitats, especially open forests and woodlands. Often found near watercourses and wetlands, and commonly seen around human habitation. They can also be found in the company of cattle and sheep in rural areas sitting on their backs to catch insects.

Breeding

Their nest is a neatly woven cup of grasses covered with spider webs on the outside and lined with soft grasses, hair or fur. Nests can be re-used in successive years or if destroyed, the materials re-used to build a new nest. If conditions are favourable, the breeding pair may raise up to four clutches in a single season.

Diet

Active feeders, they can be seen darting around lawns as they hunt for insects on the ground. As they do so, their tail wags from side to side. Insects are also caught in the air in active chases.

Interesting/Fun Fact

The name wagtail stems from the constant sideways wagging of its tail.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Laughing Kookaburra

Dacelo novaeguineae

Conservation Status

Least Concern

One of the larger members of the kingfisher family known by its distinctive laughing call. Generally off-white with brown barred wings and the tail is more rufous, broadly barred with black. Sometimes called a "laughing jackass"!

Habitat & Distribution

Inhabits most areas where there are suitable trees. Found all over Australia except the Northern Territory.

Breeding

Believed to pair for life. The nest is a bare chamber in a naturally occurring tree hollow or in a burrow excavated in a tree-dwelling termite mound. Both sexes share incubation duties and care for their young. Other Laughing Kookaburras, usually offspring from the previous one to two years act as 'helpers' during the breeding season. Every bird in the group shares all parenting duties.

Diet

Feeds mostly on insects, worms and crustaceans, although small snakes, mammals, frogs and birds may be eaten. Small prey is eaten whole but larger prey is killed by bashing it against the ground or a tree branch.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Females are bigger than males and use laughing to establish/defend territory.

PHOTO: IAN MOODIE



Australian Wood Duck

Chenonetta jubata

Conservation Status

Least Concern

Medium-sized goose-like duck with dark brown head and pale grey body with two black stripes along the back. Males have a darker head and small dark mane

Habitat & Distribution

Found in grasslands, open woodlands, wetlands, flooded pastures and along the coast in inlets and bays. Common on farmland with dams, around rice fields, sewage ponds and urban parks. Widespread in Australia including Tasmania.

Breeding

Forms monogamous breeding pairs that stay together year-round. Breeding season from September to November in the south, after rain in the north. It nests in tree holes, above or near water, often re-using the same site. Both parents feed their young and young birds remain with them up to a month after fledging.

Diet

Eats grasses, clover and other herbs, and occasionally insects.

Interesting/Fun Fact

Rarely seen in open water, preferring to forage in shallow water, or in grasslands and crops. Flocks chatter when feeding.

PHOTO: GILLIAN JERVIS

Work at Birrarung Banks
is supported via the
Regenerate! project 2025-28

*We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the
Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of this
Country. We honour their knowledges and cultural
practices, maintained over many thousands of
years. Sovereignty was never ceded.*

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