

Bird Report for March 2020

This was a month with a split personality. At the beginning of the month people were encouraged to come to Mallacoota for a Big Weekend to support the town's recovery and make some steps towards assessing the recovery of birds from the fire. By the last third of the month people were being asked not to come to twitch the White-eared Monarch to protect the town from COVID 19. (On which topic, from reviewing the eBird lists there were no non-resident ebirders in Mallacoota for the last week of the month. Thank you for your understanding guys and gals!)

Bird of the month was undoubtedly the White-eared Monarch photographed by Keith Allan and posted to Mallacoota Birds Facebook group. Other members of the group subsequently indicated that they may also have seen the species about the same time. This was a first record for Victoria and the bird was around 500 km from its usual range. It may also be noteworthy that some tropical sea birds were seen on a pelagic trip from Eden: perhaps the same weather system assisted the Monarch to a new location?

The final total number of taxa reported was 154, including some cases where the observer was unsure of which of 2 or more species was observed and others where the bird was a hybrid. A complete list is at Appendix 1. A summary by category of bird is

New Category	Count of species
10 Waterbirds	20
11 Waders	11
12 Ducks	11
15 seabirds	4
20 Birds of Prey	7
30 Parrots and Relatives	10
40 Kingfishers and other non-songbirds	14
41 Nightbirds	2
50 Honeyeaters	12
60 Flycatchers and similar species	18
70 Thornbills and similar species	10
72 Finches	3
80 Other, smaller birds	21
90 Other, larger birds	7

The total number of species was similar to that reported in 2019, when March was the month with the third highest diversity (after November and December). I suspect this is an interaction of some migrants moving through combined with a high number of observers in the area.

36 species seen in March 2019 were not recorded in March 2020. They are listed in Appendix 2. None of them were common species.

Balancing the latter point 27 species were recorded in March 2020 but not in March 2019. They are listed in Appendix 3. As March 2020 is the focus of this report here are comments about some of the more notable species in this list.

1. Peaceful Dove: in Bruce Pascoe's 1979 book about Birds of Mallacoota he commented that there were "Quite a number of Birds in the area." That has not been the case recently with a bird seen in Shady Gully during the Big Weekend the first reported to eBird for this area since 2016. A bird was subsequently seen on a verandah with photographs submitted to the Facebook group.
2. Little Penguin: a bird was found in a short burrow excavated under a rock at Bastion Point. It seemed to be onshore during the day, which surprised me but I have received expert advice that this is not uncommon while the birds are moulting.
3. Yellow-billed Spoonbill: a very experienced observer reported one from the Broome St Lagoon. Again Bruce Pascoe comments "Quite common and found in the same areas as Royal Spoonbills." However eBird only has 3 other records in this area from 1981, 1991 and 2007. (All large white wading birds are now being carefully examined!)
4. Scarlet Honeyeater: I recall being surprised in 2019 that this species was hard to find after the New Year. They have been more common this year, especially in the flowering gums.
5. Noisy Friarbird: Not common in the area although there were several reports in March 2018.
6. White-bellied Cuckooshrike: 2 sightings on our back fence. Surprisingly (to me at least) there have been several sightings in each of the last few Summers.
7. Little Grassbird: a skulker of dense grass in marshes, more usually heard (a diagnostic 3 note call) than seen. One or more birds seems to be resident in the marsh between the Fisheries Jetty and Stingray Point.
8. Emu: Although reported in both years the appearance of an Emu at Nauta PI was a large surprise. They are usually only seen in the paddocks at Genoa. It is thought that the fire opening up (euphemism of the year) the understory has made the woodland more attractive to this species

Appendix 1: List of Taxa reported

Species	Conservation status
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Emu	
Pink-eared Duck	
Black Swan	
Australian Shelduck	
Hardhead	
Australasian Shoveler	
Pacific Black Duck	
Mallard x Pacific Black Duck (hybrid)	
Grey Teal	
Chestnut Teal	
Musk Duck	
Australian Wood Duck	
Hoary-headed Grebe	
White-headed Pigeon	
Spotted Dove	Introduced
Wonga Pigeon	
Common Bronzewing	
Crested Pigeon	
Peaceful Dove	
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	
White-throated Needletail	
Australasian Swamphen	
Eurasian Coot	
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	
Sooty Oystercatcher	
Red-capped Plover	
Double-banded Plover	
Hooded Plover	Vulnerable
Masked Lapwing	
Eastern Curlew	Critically endangered
Bar-tailed Godwit	
Red Knot	Endangered
Red-necked Stint	Near threater
Silver Gull	
Caspian Tern	

Crested Tern	
Little Penguin	
Black-browed Albatross	Endangered
Shy Albatross	Vulnerable
Australian Pelican	
Nankeen Night-Heron	
Great Egret	
White-faced Heron	
Eastern Reef Egret	
Australian White Ibis	
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	
Royal Spoonbill	
Australasian Gannet	
Little Pied Cormorant	
Great Cormorant	
Little Black Cormorant	
Black-faced Cormorant	
Pied Cormorant	
Australasian Darter	
Wedge-tailed Eagle	
Swamp Harrier	
Grey Goshawk	
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	
Whistling Kite	
Sooty Owl	
Southern Boobook	
Azure Kingfisher	
Sacred Kingfisher	
Laughing Kookaburra	
Nankeen Kestrel	
Peregrine Falcon	
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	
Gang-gang Cockatoo	
Galah	
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	
Australian King-Parrot	
Crimson Rosella	
Ground Parrot	
Musk Lorikeet	

Little Lorikeet	
Rainbow Lorikeet	
Superb Lyrebird	
Satin Bowerbird	
White-throated Treecreeper	
Red-browed Treecreeper	
Superb Fairywren	
Southern Emuwren	
Eastern Bristlebird	Endangered
Scarlet Honeyeater	
Noisy Friarbird	
New Holland Honeyeater	
White-eared Honeyeater	
White-naped Honeyeater	
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	
Eastern Spinebill	
Lewin's Honeyeater	
Little Wattlebird	
Red Wattlebird	
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	
Bell Miner	
Spotted Pardalote	
Striated Pardalote	
Brown Gerygone	
Speckled Warbler	
White-browed Scrubwren	
Large-billed Scrubwren	
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	
Striated Thornbill	
Brown Thornbill	
Varied Sittella	
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	
White-bellied Cuckooshrike	
Rufous Whistler	
Golden Whistler	
Grey Shrikethrush	
Crested Shrike-tit	
Eastern Whipbird	
Australasian Figbird	
Olive-backed Oriole	
Pied Currawong	
Grey Currawong	
Australian Magpie	
Grey Butcherbird	
Dusky Woodswallow	
Willie Wagtail	

Rufous Fantail	
Grey Fantail	
Little Raven	
Australian Raven	
Leaden Flycatcher	
Satin Flycatcher	
Restless Flycatcher	
Magpie-lark	
White-eared Monarch	
White-winged Chough	
Rose Robin	
Scarlet Robin	
Jacky Winter	
Jacky Winter	
Eastern Yellow Robin	
Beautiful Firetail	
Red-browed Finch	
House Sparrow	Introduced
Australasian Pipit	
Little Grassbird	
Tree Martin	
Welcome Swallow	
Silvereye	
Common Starling	Introduced
Bassian Thrush	
Common Blackbird	Introduced

Appendix 2 Species recorded in 2019 but not 2020

COMMON NAME
Arctic Jaeger
Australasian Grebe
Australasian/Hoary-headed Grebe
Australian Hobby
Australian Masked Owl
Australian Owlet-nightjar
Australian Reed-Warbler
Black-faced Monarch
Black-fronted Dotterel
Brown Goshawk
Brown-headed Honeyeater
Buff-banded Rail
Cattle Egret
common Greenfinch
Crescent Honeyeater
Fluttering Shearwater
Glossy Black-Cockatoo
Latham's Snipe
Mallard
Mistletoebird
Noisy Miner
Osprey
Pacific Gull
pardalote sp.
Pink Robin
Short-tailed Shearwater
Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater
Spotless Crake
Spotted Quail-thrush
Square-tailed Kite
Striated Fieldwren
Stubble Quail
Wedge-tailed Shearwater
White-capped Albatross
White-fronted Chat
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater

Appendix 3: Species recorded in March 2020 but not in March 2019

Species	Common code
Musk Duck	36
Peaceful Dove	80
Red Knot	198
Caspian Tern	275
Little Penguin	303
Black-browed Albatross	325
Shy Albatross	328
Nankeen Night-Heron	415
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	433
Black-faced Cormorant	449
Australasian Darter	452
Swamp Harrier	463
Nankeen Kestrel	511
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	535
Scarlet Honeyeater	637
Noisy Friarbird	644
White-eared Honeyeater	652
Speckled Warbler	726
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	764
White-bellied Cuckooshrike	765
Crested Shrike-tit	787
Olive-backed Oriole	794
Grey Currawong	799
Satin Flycatcher	833
White-eared Monarch	840
Scarlet Robin	853
Little Grassbird	919