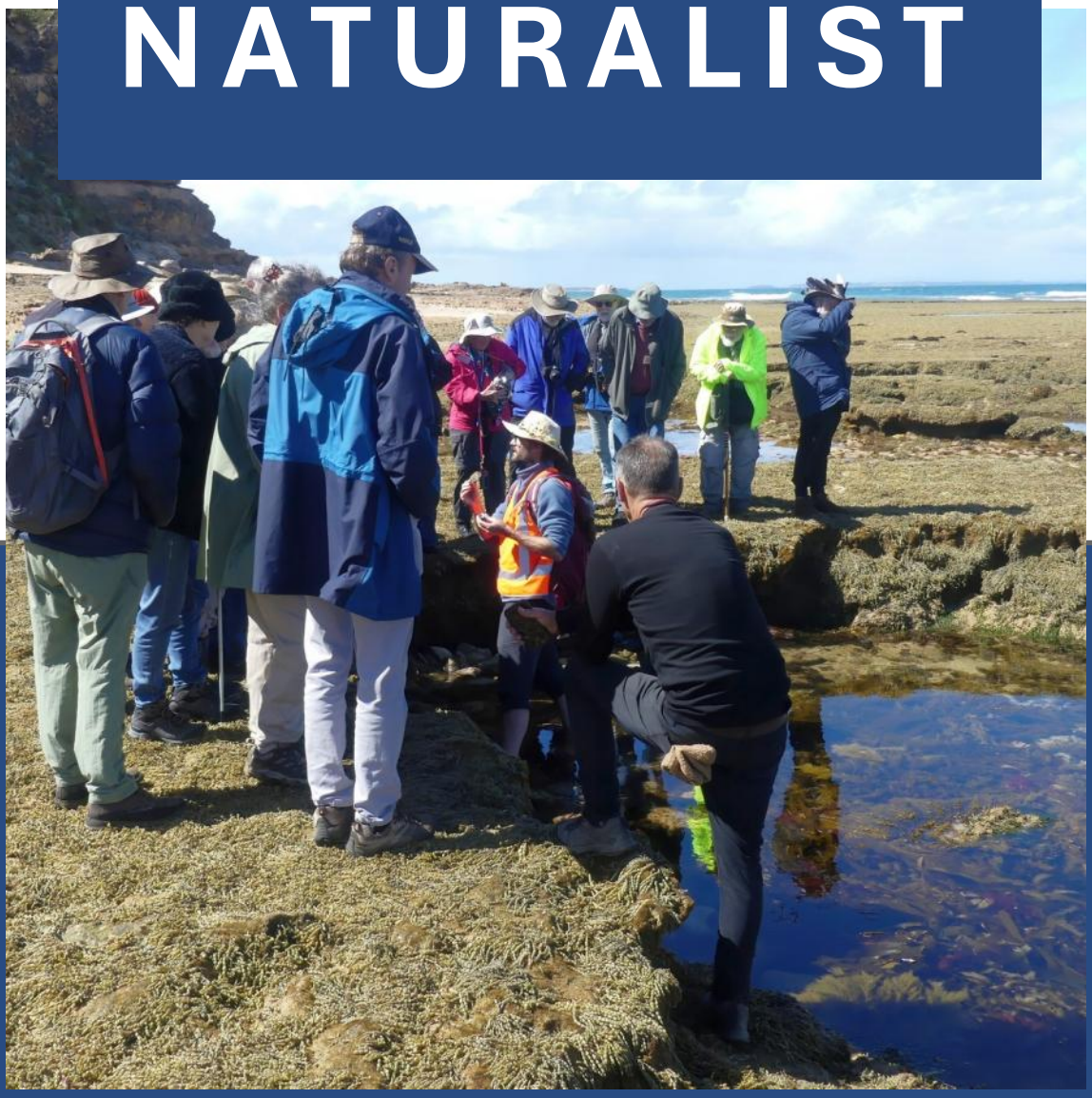
GEELONG NATURALIST



Quarterly magazine of the Geelong Field Naturalists Club

In this issue...

GFNC celebrates 65 years' work

City Nature Challenge 2026

30,000 honeyeaters on the move

Restoring Jerringot

Vol. 62 no. 1 June 2026

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The GFNC respects, studies and explores the land, skies, waterways, plants and wildlife of our region, Wadawurrung Country.

GEELONG NATURALIST

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The magazine provides a channel for Club members and others to share and communicate their knowledge and research on natural history.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions of a scientific nature or as informal contributions are welcome and will be due on **16 August** for the September issue. Email to **naturalist@gfnc.org.au**

Guidelines for contributors can be downloaded from **www.gfnc.org.au/about-us/** publications

COVER IMAGE

'Discovering the marine mysteries of rock pools'.
Image taken by John Newman during the SEANA excursion to the Barwon Heads Bluff and rockpools 28/03/26.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

2026/27 Committee

We held our 2026 AGM on 7 April at the Botanic Gardens. As per our rules all positions were declared open, and our new Committee was elected unopposed.

President Graham Possingham
Secretary Jane Morrow
Treasurer Peter Pick
Minutes Secretary Courtney Jennings
General Committee Margaret Alcorn, Silvana Benacchio, Wendy Duncan, and Brad Ferrier

The Vice President position remains vacant, and we also have room for three extra committee members, so if anyone can help then contact me. We meet online and a variety of skills and opinions are useful. Thank you to both Chris White and Naomi Wells, who did not renominate, for their work over the last six years in various roles.

The President's report can be found on **page 2** and Treasurer's report **page 7**.

New club website

We went live with our new club website in mid-April, after two years of conceptual design and preparation. Thank you to Margaret Alcorn for both leading this and undertaking most of the work, and to all of those who helped to update the content and review the design. The location remains the same, at **www.gfnc.org.au**.

65th anniversary event

Exactly 65 years after the inaugural meeting of the current club on 11 April 1961 we enjoyed a birthday celebration at the Grovedale Community Hall with food, a cake, reminiscences from all nine living Life Members, and a quiz. Thanks to the organising team of Silvana Benacchio, Jane Morrow, Linden Young, and Kerry Haddon plus many other helpers for making this a memorable event. See **page 10** for the report, **page 6** for some photos.

SEANA

Read the report of the South East Australian Naturalists' Association (SEANA) Autumn Camp, hosted by the club, on **page 12**. A special thanks to the organising committee who made it possible, notably Barry Lingham (program), Bernie Lingham (communications), Deborah Evans (finances), Jenny Possingham (committee), Alison and Phil Watson (meals and meeting room). I simply held it together!

Graham Possingham

FROM THE EDITORS

We'd like to thank everyone who contributes to the magazine, especially our regular authors who continue to share their knowledge and experiences. We also appreciate those submitting for the first time—every contribution, whether a short piece, excursion report or in-depth article, is truly valued.

Our sincere thanks go to our dedicated copy editors—Kester Baines, Susan Kruss, Richard Alcorn, Chrissy Freestone and Deborah Evans—whose time and expertise help bring each issue together. Special thanks to Deborah for her careful proofreading and guidance on style.

We warmly encourage all members to send in their writing or images. This is your magazine, created to share your observations and experiences of the natural world.

If you'd like to contribute and have an idea for an article, feel free to have a chat with us or others to get feedback, or send it through to **naturalist@gfnc.org.au**.

Happy reading,
Jane Morrow and **Bernie Lingham**

President's report 2025

Graham Possingham

Overview

As always, I want to thank the members who actively help keep the club running, allow us to offer a wide range of activities for members, and contribute to protecting the environment. We don't employ any staff, so we rely on that subset of members to make things happen, either via identified roles, or just pitching in when needed. It is not only Committee members who do this work: there is always a place for members to contribute without joining the Committee, but joining the Committee is a good stepping stone so that those in more 'senior' roles can move on. We do not have formal term limits for positions, but there is risk in having a concentration of knowledge and skills in a small group.

During the year Naomi Wells had to step back from the Secretary position (remaining on the general Committee) due to extra work responsibilities and Jane Morrow kindly agreed to take on the role. Although the Treasurer's role was officially vacant for the year, Chris White continued to carry out most of the work. Both Chris and Naomi are not renominating for the Committee for 2026 after six years of service.

We continued the mix of in-person and online, 'Room or Zoom' meetings, based on time of year and speaker location. We've seen a rise in those attending in-person meetings as people slowly get back into the habit after COVID. We are still waiting for the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) to implement the promised changes to the meeting room so that we can stream in-person meetings to those who cannot attend meetings in person.

Winstanley Bequest

In July we received a significant bequest of $493k from former member Jan Winstanley (1998 to 2015). We received a final distribution of $24k in Jan 2026. There were no directions on how we should use the funds, but we do need to spend it in line with our purposes and, to retain our Charitable status, not use it for direct benefit of members.

The Committee convened a small advisory group to develop both ideas and governance processes for the funds, and they have been meeting regularly. At this stage they are still exploring ideas, we can now consider options that we'd not looked at in the past, and have spoken to several third parties, including another like-minded recipient of the same amount from the estate. We see no need to rush. For now, we hold the funds in Term Deposits. However, given we already had a strong balance sheet, we do want to increase our spending and will be more active in 2026 in funding small to medium size projects.

Membership

Membership rose slightly to 310, with 40 new members joining and 37 leaving, a typical turnover rate. Members David Cook (joined 2013) and John Brownbill (joined 1970) and past member Dean Hewish (2004 to 2023), all died during 2025. Condolences to current members Marilyn Hewish and Susan Kruss.

At this AGM we are recognising five new 'long-standing member' milestones, including Craig Morley who has now been a member for 50 years.

General Meetings and Excursions

Over the year, members were treated to many interesting and informative presentations at general meetings. Dr Adam Cardilini gave a thought-provoking presentation on how humans can interact with animals ethically. Graham and Jenny Possingham, with Greg O'Toole, told of their adventures in South Africa. Tamika Farley-Lehmer presented her research into relationships between fire intensity and vegetation regrowth.

Member Kelly Clitheroe spoke on preventing light pollution of the night sky in her presentation called Dark Skies. Dr Daphne Sands shared her knowledge of the latest space telescopes and Jeanette Spittle from CoGG informed us of the City's biodiversity mapping and Plan for Nature.

Ross Auchettl has spent many nights surveying animals in the Wombat State Forest, and he informed us about his findings. Aaron Ledden from Forest Fire Management Victoria discussed

new methods of vegetation management using mechanical mulching and cool burns at the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve.

The plight of many invertebrates as climate change affects biodiversity was presented by Dr Nick Porch. Member Sue Wilson showed some of her stunning wildlife photography and gave hints on taking better photos. The year ended with Caroline and John Booth describing their trip through Namibia.

The general excursion program started with a family-friendly excursion to Lake Lorne. A 'bioblitz' of the Point Richards Reserve recorded many birds, invertebrates, some mammals, and reptiles. At Mt Rothwell, we saw the many animals successfully bred at the sanctuary. Wildflowers of the Anglesea Heathland were observed, and we visited Batesford Quarry to search for fossils from the limestone. A visit to the site of the old Sewer Aqueduct across the Barwon River gave insight into the plans for a new park here. Near the Brisbane Ranges, a visit to a new privately owned conservation property allowed us to investigate the interesting habitats. Sadly, we had to cancel a planned trip to Mud Island due to strong winds.

For the past three years, we have had opportunities to explore other regions of Victoria. Participants at our Wangaratta campout in October 2025 enjoyed visiting the Chiltern area, the Warby Ranges and the Winton Wetlands.

Bird Group

Our January 2025 meeting was a members' night with Graham Possingham telling us about the birdlife at the new Golden Plains Moorabool River Reserve and Grace Lewis relating many stories of birding around Victoria. Then began a run of Zoom presentations from February to October. Dr Karen Rowe presented on some of her Museums Victoria bioacoustics projects in honour of Trevor Hodson.

We heard about several BirdLife Australia projects. Sonia Sanchez started with a thoroughly engaging presentation on the Fairy Tern Project, a topic dear to many members, including those who have helped Sonia's research in preparation for the project. Finn Saurine gave us a thorough update on the Beach-nesting Birds Project, especially regarding our beloved Hoodies on the Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast. Chris Purnell fascinated us with floating roosts for shorebirds and small terns. Golo Maurer entertained us with the 'local premiere' of a project developing a wind farms siting tool to minimise/eliminate impact on birds.

Craig Morley presented a different way of thinking about and viewing bird of prey ID and Matt Herring told of his work with the Australian Painted Snipe where so many new and fascinating aspects of the ecology of this enigmatic and iconic species are becoming known.

Rich Fuller held us transfixed relating some of his findings from deploying a song-meter in his Brisbane garden, including a Noisy Pitta flying over at night and several calls that neither he nor anyone else has been able to identify.

It was great to have Professor Dave Watson online; a lightning strike at the last moment in his local area prevented him from joining us in 2024! He shared some of his extraordinary breadth of knowledge on the intricate relationship between Australian woodland birds and mistletoe. Graham Possingham rounded out the year with a presentation comparing far north Queensland birding in the wet and the dry.

We enjoyed many fascinating excursions. In January we visited private property at Avalon after a 2024 cancellation. We teamed up with Hayley Pickering (Bellarine Bayside) for a February visit to Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve and Jeff Dagg and David Boyle took the lead and organised a successful and enjoyable all-day Saturday excursion for those who had never been to the Western Treatment Plant. Karyn Brown and Troy Zanker led us through Rice Reserve and Dans Reserve in March and we visited Golden Plains Moorabool River Reserve in April to explore the area discussed at the January meeting. We then visited two very enjoyable parts of the Brisbane Ranges, Reids Road northern end (May) and Anakie Gorge (June). Phil and Alison Watson took the group on Yan Wirring Mirr Loop in Anglesea Heath, and we kept the coastal theme going with Point Addis/ Ironbark Basin (August) and Moggs Creek (September). Brad Ferrier filled in for Craig Morley with a follow-up visit to Wooloomanata and Brad and Jeff Dagg finished off the year in style with a wonderful excursion to Eynesbury.

Many members volunteered their time, skill, and energy to help with

at least one and in many cases all three Orange-bellied Parrot surveys. Both the summer and winter shorebird surveys were well supported. It is noteworthy that members have been supporting these two critically important BirdLife survey programs since 1979 and 1981 respectively. Hooded Plover wardening, another BirdLife initiative, was completed by several very dedicated members.

Fauna Group

The Fauna Group studies the fauna of our region. Detecting species via the use of technology is becoming more prevalent. Survey activities aim to detect mammal, reptile, frog, bird, and invertebrate species. In 2025, audio recorders detected audible noise from birds and animals and the high-pitched inaudible calls of microbats. Positively identifying all the species recorded is still challenging, but there have been rapid advances in the development of better identification software.

Surveys use techniques such as trapping using Elliott traps or harp traps, motion detection cameras, checking beneath grids of roof tiles for reptiles, small mammals, frogs and invertebrates, plus observational techniques such as spotlighting and rock/log rolling. Illuminated moth sheets attract invertebrate species that we photograph and record in iNaturalist (iNat). All the surveys require that we hold the appropriate permits, which is quite a task in its own right.

In 2025 we carried out full fauna surveys at Moggs Creek and Spring Creek at Torquay. Elliott traps, motion detection cameras and spotlighting were used during a four-day/three-night period. A 'bioblitz' at a Swan Bay property involved motion cameras and sound recorders plus a bird walk, spotlighting and moth sheets checks. We checked the many tile grids established across the region on private properties.

Observation highlights included successful detections of Swamp Antechinus and Swamp Rats at Spring Creek and the observation of Yellow-bellied Gliders and an Agile Antechinus at Moggs Creek.

Publications and Communications

A major review of our website progressed with significant redevelopment of design and content on a new platform. We went live in April 2026.

We completed the last of seven Birding Trails, marking a significant milestone for the club. All trail details are accessible via our website, ensuring members and the public can easily find and utilise these great resources. We will review each Trail every two years and have already started that process.

We received files of scanned old Geelong Naturalist publications from the Biodiversity Heritage Library. Once we have agreed on a preferred process for handling these files, priority actions will focus on filling gaps in more recent volume sets and uploading several more volumes to the National Library's research tool, Trove, aiming to ensure all volumes are complete and accessible online.

We updated the content and modernised the design of our publicity trifold, which we use at events such as Angair.

The Atlas of the Birds of the Geelong Region has been a huge project over several years and is nearing completion. It includes distribution maps and frequency graphs for monthly and yearly occurrence covering ten Local Government Areas based on more than 1.3 million records of 340 species over eight years.

Observations and bioblitzes

We closed the website observation portal in July. We have uploaded all our data on butterflies, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians from the portal to the Atlas of Living Australia and have archived all the data for future reference. Throughout the year the Data Working Group took proactive steps to assist and educate members in transitioning to use eBird and iNat for submitting their sightings, and we adapted the website to provide easy access to iNat collections and eBird LGA summaries to keep track of recent observations.

Within iNat, three projects (Plants, Fauna and Invertebrates) collected members' observation data, with almost 7,500 individual observations submitted. We participated in two events to promote and encourage the use of the platform. The first was the Great Southern Bioblitz held in springtime each year. Last year, observations recorded for the four-day event were up from previous years mainly due to an increase in the number of participants, a very encouraging sign indicating that the system continues to attract new users. The

second event is a newly introduced annual butterfly challenge recording all butterfly observations in our region over a 12-month period. We observed 45 species and John Newman became the inaugural winner, with a count of 27.

eBird is now well established with many members having accounts and its use during excursions and bird surveys and for reporting in the *Geelong Naturalist* what we saw is now standard practice.

Conservation Group

The Subcommittee monitored and contributed to issues through input to reference groups, workshops, and submissions. Highlights were:

Moolap Wetlands Master Plan update
Release of the Master Plan is well behind schedule and is unlikely to happen before mid-2026. Club representatives attended several planning meetings and continue to monitor this unsatisfactory situation.

Viva LNG Import Plant
The project was granted Ministerial approval in May 2025, with strengthened measures to prevent or mitigate environmental impacts.

Bellarine Basin (Barwon Water)
Planned work at this site is well underway. Barwon Water has deferred a public opening until mid-2026.

Proposed Extension of Ramsar Wetlands
We supported many extensions to the Port Phillip Bay and Bellarine Ramsar Wetland boundary. The following extensions ended up being approved.

- Edwards Point Swan Bay Wildlife Reserve and Coastal Reserve, including Lakers Cutting
- Lake Connewarre (extra land adjacent to existing Ramsar site boundary)
- Moolap Wetlands
- Point Cook Cheetham Coastal Park and Marine Sanctuary.

Barwon Water Sewer Aqueduct
Barwon Water plan to demolish the Ovoid Aqueduct as they could not find a safe way to partially demolish the section over the Barwon. The surrounding zone will become a public park.

Geelong Strategic Assessment for the Western and Northern Growth Areas
CoGG are working to update the draft plan and strategic assessment report following comments received. This is expected in early 2026.

Responding to CoGG Plan for Nature
Representatives from the club met with CoGG environmental officers in April 2025. Further consultation will occur when they release the draft Plan for Nature in early 2026.

Creation of new National Parks
The Conservation Subcommittee applauded the declaration of new National Parks at Mount Buangor, Pyrenees, and Wombat-Lerderderg in November 2025.

The Old Boardman Private Conservation Property
This important habitat adjacent to the Brisbane Ranges National Park is a valuable acquisition. We have made preliminary surveys at the site and plan further activities there.

EPBC Act reform
The reform legislation was passed in November. Sadly, not all recommendations from the Samuel Report were adopted.

Other Issues
We were also involved in

- Protection of significant trees on private land in CoGG municipality
- You Yangs submission re the updated Master Plan
- Point Richards Masterplan
- CCMA Fish Ladder project
- Sovereign Drive Recreational Reserve Master Plan

Environment Fund

We continued to fund one project, Jeane Thompson's 'Investment trade-offs by Grey Fantails during nest building'. Despite the Winstanley bequest we will keep this fund separate and active as a way for members and others to make tax deductible donations.

Other Activities

The Geelong Nature Festival 'Explore and Restore' in July was again a partnership between CoGG and our club. We provided some of the funding, several members helped run events, and we had a stall at the Family Day at Fyansford. We had our usual booth at the September Angair Wildflower and Art show.

During the year members gave talks to several community groups and schools. We spent two weekends (in autumn and spring) removing Boneseed from our area in the You Yangs and organised the March Clean Up Australia Day event at Jerringot.

We provided five 'scholarships' that covered fees for the Geelong Nature Stewards course run by the

Victorian National Parks Association. Several members took the course, and others gave presentations and/or led field trips.

We added new 'wings' to the bird hide at Jerringot, renaming it in honour of past member Graeme Tribe, who designed and helped build the hide in the 1980s, and undertook some preliminary replanting. We plan more work in 2026.

We joined Landcare Victoria, with CoGG kindly funding this (and the associated liability and accident insurance) for us and other groups who undertake work on CoGG land. Landcare is a more natural fit for us than our previous membership and insurance through the Royal Horticultural Society of Victora.

Towards the end of the year a small team started to plan the autumn 2026 SEANA campout. More about that on **page 12** of this issue.

Finally, although this is a 'President's Report' it incorporates lightly edited input from several committee members and Group leads: thank you!

Photos from the club 65th anniversary celebration

(see report p. 10)

Photos: Linden Young

Trevor Pescott cutting the cake.

The cake (above) and special guest (right).

Life members (l-r) Lorraine Phelan, John Newman, Trevor Pescott, Craig Morley, Marilyn Hewish, Barry Lingham, Diana Primrose, Valda Dedman and Deborah Evans.

Treasurer's report 2025

Chris White

Summary
The club (excluding the Environment Fund) ran a $502,084 surplus in the 2025 financial year, against a budgeted $3,800 deficit.

The major and significant variation of $492,878 was due to a bequest. The Committee has established a group of members to investigate and consider options to use these funds.

Other than the bequest the main variations to planned budget were:

- total income was higher than budget by $4,700, with $2,100 of that being SEANA registrations (for the 2026 campout) and $1,710 due to prepayment of a planned excursion to Mud Island in 2026
- expenditure on the production of the Geelong Bird Report deferred to 2026 ($4,750)
- lower maintenance and purchase of new equipment ($2,500)
- lower costs related to meeting expenses ($280).

Income
Membership income of $9,940 came from 58 joint memberships, 158 individual memberships, and 13 student members. Membership fees were held at the same rate as 2024 and they remain unchanged for 2026.

As advised last year the TAFE GFNC Scholarship did not proceed as the course wasn't offered. The funds were returned to GFNC in 2025.

We received $1,534 in donations. Bank interest received was $665.

The Sparrovale survey work provided $5,000 from the City of Greater Geelong.

Expenditure
The total expenditure for the 2025 year was $8,300 below budget.

Final production of the Bird Report was deferred again until 2026 which contributed significantly to the under expenditure (by $4,750).

Meeting expenses were low due to minimal costs associated with speakers. Equipment costs were also low ($2,500 below budget). IT and other general costs were within budget with Insurance and Incorporation fees $770 below budget due to the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) covering our liability and accident insurance costs.

We supported several environmental organisations, with donations of $100 each to Environmental Justice Victoria, the Victorian National Parks Association and Birds Australia. We supported the Trust for Nature ($250 for Clarkesdale) and the Timboon Bushland Reserve ($500). We also supported our two key observation record partners: eBird with $100 and iNaturalist with $100. We helped fund the Geelong Nature Stewards Program ($1,750) and the CoGG Geelong Nature Forum ($2,299).

We spent $251 on memberships with other organisations including the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, the Victorian Environment Friends Network, and the South-East Australian Naturalists' Association.

Net Assets
Cash/investment balance, excluding the Environment Fund, is $579,938. This includes $552,878 held in Term Deposits. Total assets are $617,048.

Environment Fund
The fund now holds $10,549 resulting from donations of $1,720 and grants allocated of $1,000 during the year.

The trustees of the fund continue to call for donations and to solicit proposals from various environmental, scientific, and educational organisations. The fund balance has reduced over the last two years, and the trustees aim to continue to steadily reduce the balance through support of worthwhile projects.

Forward Planning
With the addition of the funds from the bequest the GFNC holds a high cash balance. We again call for input from members on projects to target for financial support. Members are asked for any suggestions they have for proposals/ideas which include the management and delivery of the spending.

GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC
Registration No A0013708R

CBA Cheque Account 063 525 10034365
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS
FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	01/01/24 - 31/12/24		01/01/25 - 31/12/25	
Cash book balance brought forward		**$10,767.71**		**$ 17,421.87**
RECEIPTS				
Subscriptions from members				
Ordinary	$ 6,200.00		$ 6,320.00	
Joint/Family	$ 3,720.00		$ 3,480.00	
Junior/FT Student	$ 220.00		$ 120.00	
Part-time Student	$ 30.00		$ 20.00	
Total	$10,170.00		$ 9,940.00	
Donations	$ 1,090.00		$ 1,534.00	
Government grants (CoGG)/other grants	$ -		$ 1,500.00	
Field surveys	$ 5,000.00		$ 5,000.00	
Sale of items at cost	$ 1,770.00		$ 20.00	
Interest	$ 1,256.66		$ 621.46	
Excursion & camp receipts	$ -		$ 2,930.00	
Total		**$19,286.66**		**$ 21,545.46**
Less PAYMENTS				
Geelong Naturalist - print & post	$ 1,007.65		$ 273.38	
Geelong Bird Report - publish	$ 55.83		$ 258.94	
Stationery, printing, IT - general	$ 1,650.11		$ 1,524.61	
Subscriptions/memberships	$ 183.00		$ 155.00	
Insurance premiums + Incorporation fees	$ 1,361.36		$ 725.51	
Meeting-room hire	$ 198.00		$ 198.00	
Guest speaker expenses and fees	$ 344.84		$ 59.38	
Library purchases	$ -		$ -	
Travelling Expenses	$ 159.50		$ -	
Exhibition & Displays	$ -		$ -	
Field surveys	$ 146.00		$ 555.50	
Purchase of equipment	$ 2,440.28		$ -	
Repairs & maintenance of equipment	$ 300.95		$ -	
Donations / Grants	$ 862.03		$ 1,002.96	
Excursion & camp fees	$ -		$ 1,237.50	
Special Projects	$ -		$ 3,245.67	
Gordon Scholarship	$ 1,500.00		$ -	
Nature Forum	$ -		$ 2,299.20	
Nature Stewards	$ 2,000.00		$ 1,750.00	
Sundries	$ 422.95		$ 397.24	
Transferred to Savings (net)	$ -		$ 1,524.05	
Total		**$12,632.50**		**$ 15,206.94**
Cash book balance at end of year		**$17,421.87**		**$ 23,760.39**
CBA bank balance at end of year	$17,421.87		$23,760.39	

GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC
Registration No A0013708R
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF INCOME, EXPENDITURE & ASSETS
FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	01/01/24 - 31/12/24	01/01/25 - 31/12/25	
INCOME			*Notes*
Subscriptions from members	$ 10,170.00	$ 9,940.00	
Donations	$ 1,090.00	$ 1,534.00	
Donations to Environment Fund	$ 1,900.00	$ 1,720.00	
Grants for field surveys	$ 5,000.00	$ 5,000.00	1
Refund Gordon Scholarship	$ -	$ 1,500.00	2
Bank interest	$ 1,334.12	$ 665.10	
Sale of books, pens, clothes	$ 1,770.00	$ 20.00	
Bequest	$ -	$ 492,877.88	
SEANA Income	$ -	$ 2,100.00	
Excursion & camp receipts	$ -	$ 2,930.00	3
Total Income	**$ 21,264.12**	**$ 518,286.98**	
EXPENDITURE			
Meeting-room hire	$ 198.00	$ 198.00	
Guest speaker expenses and fees	$ 344.84	$ 59.38	
Stationery, IT & printing - general	$ 1,650.11	$ 1,524.61	
Insurance premiums & incorporation fees	$ 1,361.36	$ 725.51	4
Geelong Naturalist - print & post	$ 1,007.65	$ 273.38	
Geelong Bird Report	$ 55.83	$ 258.94	
Gordon Scholarship	$ 1,500.00	$ -	
Nature Forum	$ -	$ 2,299.20	5
Subscriptions & memberships	$ 183.00	$ 155.00	
Donations	$ 862.03	$ 1,002.96	
Equipment - purchase, repair & maintenance	$ 2,741.23	$ -	
Field surveys - expenses	$ 305.50	$ 555.50	
Library	$ -	$ -	
SEANA	$ -	$ 800.00	6
Camp & Excursion payments	$ -	$ 1,237.50	3
Special Projects	$ -	$ 3,245.67	7
Nature Stewards	$ 2,000.00	$ 1,750.00	
Environment Fund Grants	$ 6,250.00	$ 1,000.00	
Sundries	$ 422.95	$ 397.24	
Items for resale	$ -	$ -	
Total Expenditure	**$ 18,882.50**	**$ 15,482.89**	
SURPLUS	**$2,381.62**	**$502,804.09**	

ASSETS	**31/12/2024**	**31/12/2025**	
CBA Cheque A/C	$ 17,421.87	$ 23,760.39	
CBA Savings account	$ 30,944.71	$ -	8
CBA SEANA Account	$ -	$ 3,300.00	
Bequest Term Deposit	$ -	$ 492,877.88	
Term Deposit	$ 29,487.60	$ 60,000.00	
Equipment	$ 12,345.00	$ 10,617.88	
Library stock	$ 14,392.64	$ 14,392.64	
Shares in Timboon Bushland Coop	$ 250.00	$ 250.00	
Items for sale	$ 50.00	$ 1,300.00	9
Environment Fund	$ 9,829.02	$ 10,549.02	
Total Assets	**$ 114,720.84**	**$ 617,047.81**	
LIABILITIES	$ -	$ -	
NETT ASSETS	**$ 114,720.84**	**$ 617,047.81**	

Notes

1 Sparrovale surveys. from CoGG
2 Refund of 2024 payment
3 Mt Rothwell and Mud Island
4 CoGG paid liability cover
5 Every 2 years
6 Campout is 2026
7 Jerringot Bird Hide
8 Converted to SEANA Account + money moved to TD
9 Balance owing from HANZAB sale

Club 65th anniversary celebration

Organising team

On 11 April 1961, the GFNC as we know it today was established. Exactly 65 years later, the club marked its milestone anniversary. Founding member Trevor Pescott, along with all our surviving Life Members, joined the festivities for a memorable and enjoyable afternoon.

More than 80 current and former club members, as well as special guests, gathered at the Grovedale Community Hub. President Graham Possingham served as MC, and the event was officially opened by Cr Elise Wilkinson from the City of Greater Geelong.

Life Members Trevor Pescott, Valda Dedman, Diana Primrose, Marilyn Hewish, Barry Lingham, Craig Morley, Deborah Evans, John Newman and Lorraine Phelan each took a turn to share heartfelt stories and memories, reflecting on what the club has meant to them over the years.

The club's history was beautifully presented in a slideshow curated by Linden Young, featuring photos and information spanning decades. A PDF of the slideshow can be viewed and downloaded **here**. A timeline of key club events, created by Kerry Haddon, was also displayed.

To honour the club's milestone, Trevor Pescott cut a cake decorated with 65 Small Ant-Blue Butterflies—the club's emblem. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon tea which followed. The celebration wrapped up with an engaging and entertaining quiz about the club, crafted by Rod Lowther.

Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank Cr Elise Wilkinson for opening the event, and Graham for keeping things running smoothly as MC. Special thanks to our Life Members for sharing their stories, and to the organising team—Silvana Benacchio, Jane Morrow, Linden and Kerry—for all the hard work behind the scenes.

Thanks also to Rod for putting together the quiz, and to the helpers on the day—Kester Baines, Suzanne Hudgell, Andrea Dennett, Jenny Possingham and everyone else who lent a hand to make the event such a success.

We'd also like to express our gratitude to Geelong Cake Decorating Centre for the delightful mud cake, and to the Geelong Country Women's Association for the delicious afternoon tea.

Below is a poem written by Lorraine Phelan for the occasion. It is dedicated to Dave King, Valda Dedman, Trevor Pescott, Gordon McCarthy, Margaret Cameron and Graham Tribe.

Blue Crane

It's a Blue Crane my dad said.
He passed over his old army binoculars,
showed me the colours and other particulars,
especially the plumes on its head.

I found the bird standing stately and still.
Instantly I'm a birder, a birdwatcher for life,
not just a mother, teacher and wife.
A White-faced Heron. What a thrill.

I bought *What Bird is That*, and Simpson and Day
and new binoculars, started a life list.
Got up at dawn! I couldn't resist.
And bought more books, quite an array.
I joined the Bird Observers Club,

devoured their journals, looking for kernels
and titbits of knowledge, bought thermals,
explored beach, bush, swamp and scrub.

I did 20-minute counts on my patch.
Magpie, eagle, Crimson Rosella and rail
scrubwren, bluewren, egret, stubble quail.
My list jumped to 100! From scratch!

In 1986 we moved to Geelong,
I found the Field Nats, discovered mudflats,
loved the chitchat about bats and scats.
I was welcomed, encouraged to belong.

I've lost my phone in a long drop,
got bogged, broke binoculars and camera lenses,
lost kneeling pads, tangled with fences.
I love it all. I'm a kid in a sweetshop.

Fantastic speakers at club meetings,
excursions, camps in the alps and around the states,
bird counts, eBird, iNaturalist, mammal baits,
tweeting, Facebook, blogging and friendly greetings.

Twisted ankle, bullants, beestings, mozzies and leeches,
Never mind. Buy moth sheets, macro lens, camera and tripod,
more books on my shelf, get rid of the fiction. What is that seedpod?
Look for thismia, orchids, saltbush, hoodies on beaches.

A bird heard, an insect to detect and inspect, something on the drop cloth,
fungus in the darkness (or fungi as in monkey or is it fungi as in magpie)
Is that a sandfly, mayfly, blowfly, silvereye? I need some shuteye.
Take a photo. LOL. On the computer screen it's a moth!

I study geology, mycology, botany, and more,
zoology, biology, entomology, ichthyology, conchology, bryology
cosmology, nephology, ornithology, palaeontology ...
and sometimes genealogy, those who came before.

I'm a citizen scientist in my spare time.
My small contributions are valuable fare.
Sometimes I even find something rare.
Doesn't matter if I'm a senior or in my prime.

My advice? Connect with nature and place. Stretch the brain.
Do something meaningful and worthwhile, forget the hours,
Get involved with frogs, or butterflies or reptiles or flowers.
The Blue Crane (and the field nats club) will keep you sane.

Lorraine Phelan

South East Australian Naturalists Association (SEANA): Autumn Camp Geelong

27–29 March

Bernie Lingham

In late March, the GFNC welcomed 72 participants from visiting field naturalist clubs, as well as 32 of our own club members, to the SEANA Autumn Camp in Geelong. These camps are key events in club calendars and are typically well attended. Fortunately, high fuel prices at the time did not significantly affect attendance.

The camp featured half and full day excursions over two days to a diverse range of marine and terrestrial locations, offering opportunities for participants to explore and appreciate the unique habitats, fauna, and flora of our region. The excursions included visits to several sites on the Bellarine Peninsula, Brisbane Ranges, Serendip Sanctuary, You Yangs Regional Park, Moorabool River and Western Treatment Plant, as well as a boat tour of Port Phillip Bay.

Evening programs featured a catered meal followed by guest presentations. On Friday, GFNC members Deborah Evans, Craig Morley, and Barry Lingham spoke on aspects of local geology, birdlife, and mammals. Lorraine Phelan presented on her wonderful 10 m scroll featuring illustrated flora of the Victorian volcanic plain. On Saturday evening Sean Dooley from Birdlife Australia discussed Victoria's changing cuckoo populations.

Despite a bit of inclement weather on Saturday morning, the weekend was a great success with many participants passing on positive feedback about how much they learnt from and enjoyed the activities; the opportunity to share experiences with others; the discovery of new places to explore around Geelong; the well-chosen venue; and the interesting and informative talks.

Acknowledgements

Significant effort is required to organise an event of this scale. The success of the camp relied on the dedication and hard work of many GFNC members, and we sincerely thank everyone involved.

We also thank other SEANA clubs, whose support and participation were essential to the event's success.

Exploring Limeburners Lagoon, 28/03/26
Photo Bernie Lingham

Admiring extended views of the region from the top of Big Rock, You Yangs 29/03/26
Photo: Bernie Lingham

Exploring the rockpools at Barwon Bluff, 28/03/26
Photo: John Newman

The growth of eBird in the Geelong region

Richard Alcorn and Margaret Alcorn

eBird is a public citizen-science project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that aims to extract scientific value from lists of bird species compiled by observers in the field. The purpose of this article is to describe trends in the quantity of checklist data submitted to eBird for the Geelong region[1] to the end of 2025. A checklist is a list of the bird species recorded by an observer at one location on one day. An observation is a record of a single species on a checklist.

The number of checklists submitted to eBird per year for the Geelong region has risen steadily except for a slight pause during the COVID-19 years[2]. For 2025 alone, more than 30,000 checklists containing more than 500,000 observations were received for the Geelong region from more than 2,000 observers[3] (see Figure 1).

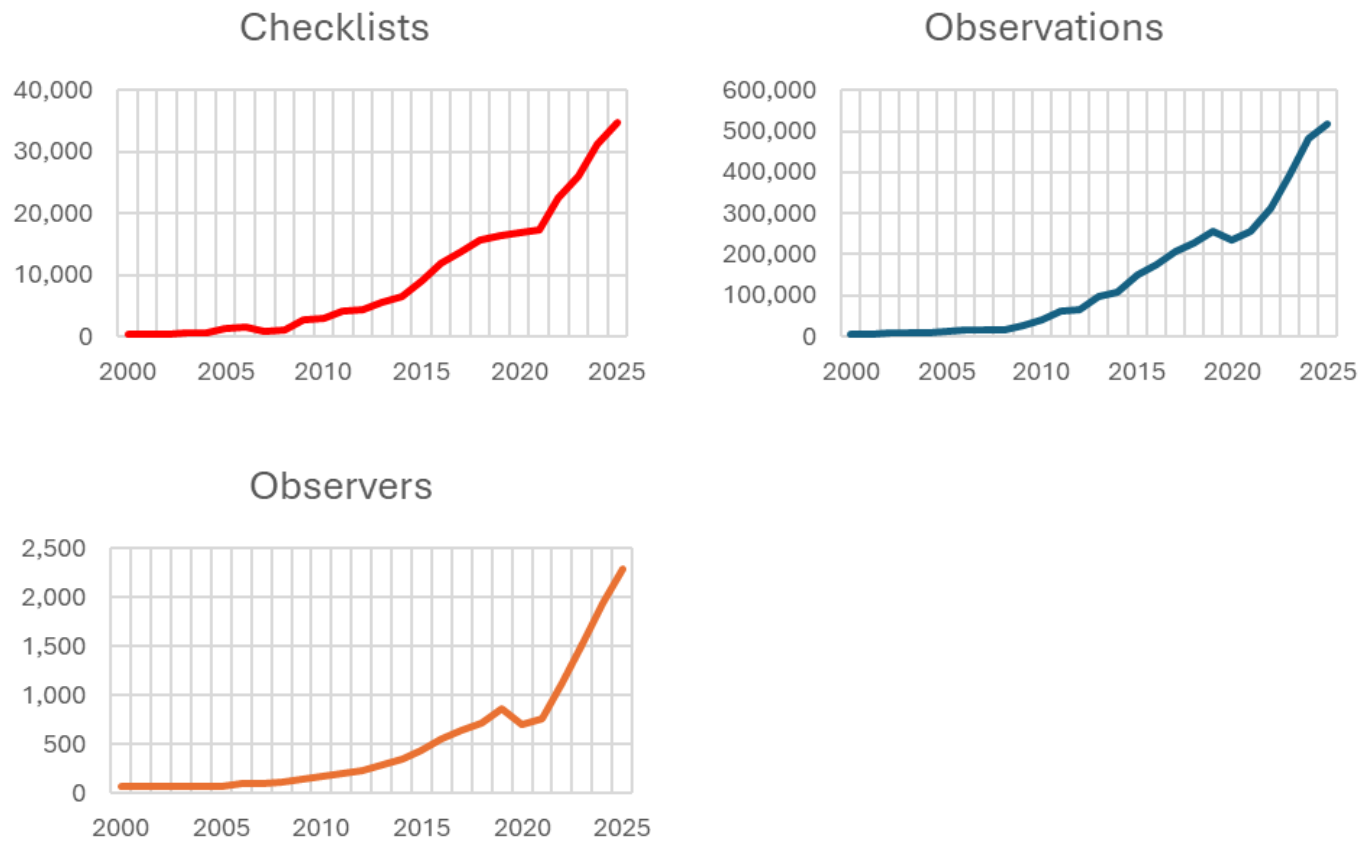


Figure 1: The number of checklists and observations submitted to eBird for the Geelong region by year since 2000 and the number of observers who submitted those checklists.

[1] For the purposes of this report the Geelong region comprises the local government areas of Greater Geelong, Queenscliffe, Surf Coast, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Golden Plains, Moorabool, Wyndham and Melton.

[2] COVID-19 restrictions significantly prevented travel in 2020 and 2021.

[3] An observer is an eBird account holder, usually an individual, but sometimes a couple or a group.

Spatially, checklists submitted to eBird for the Geelong region for 2025 were heavily biased towards urban areas and popular birding hotspots; seasonally, more checklists were received in late spring and early summer (October to January) than in other seasons (see Figure 2).

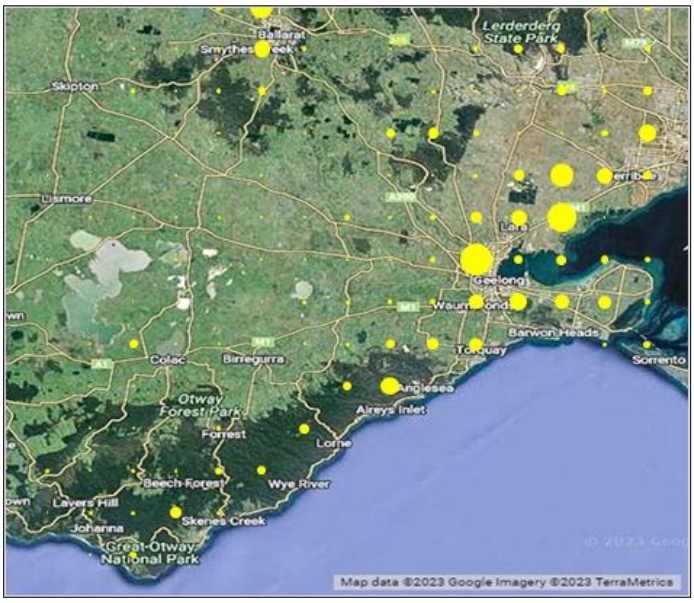


Figure 2: Left: Geographical distribution of checklists submitted for 2025 for the region shown on the map. Circle size (area) represents the number of checklists. Circles are centered on cells aligned on 0.1° lines of latitude and longitude.
Right: Checklists by season for the Geelong region for 2025

The ten most frequently reported species for the Geelong region for 2025 are listed in Table 1.

Species	Total number of times reported
Superb Fairywren	14,059
Little Raven	12,729
Red Wattlebird	11,520
Australian Magpie	11,138
Welcome Swallow	10,859
Magpie-lark	9,683
Common Starling	8,823
Pacific Black Duck	8,399
Chestnut Teal	8,294
Black Swan	7,863

Table 1: The ten most frequently reported species in eBird for the Geelong region for 2025.

Superb Fairywren, Sparrovale Wetlands, May 2025
Photo: Karyn Brown, **ML636514473**

The ever-increasing flow of data into eBird will greatly aid researchers in their efforts to cast light on the changing patterns of abundance, distribution and seasonality of the birds of our region and beyond.

Reference

eBird, accessed 19/1/2026. eBird Basic Dataset. Version: EBD_relDec-2025. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Dec 2025.

Migration of 30,000 honeyeaters along Blackrock Road, Connewarre 19 April 2026

Margaret Alcorn and Richard Alcorn

Part of a mixed, small honeyeater flock

On the morning of 19 April 2026 at 9.00 a.m. while driving along Blackrock Road we noticed flocks of small honeyeaters flying north along the roadside vegetation corridor. So we stopped at the opening in the vegetation near the entrance to the Black Rock Water Reclamation Plant, where the birds could be easily counted as they crossed.

Nearly three hours later we had counted 29,500 small honeyeaters (see our **eBird checklist**), all flying north and staying close to the trees. There were almost certainly more birds in this migration event than we counted as they were already streaming past when we arrived.

The small honeyeaters were mostly Yellow-faced Honeyeaters with about five percent being White-naped Honeyeaters. We counted the small honeyeaters in tens, and when the birds came thick and fast, in hundreds. Flying with the small honeyeaters were 250 Red Wattlebirds and a small number of Grey Fantails, Flame Robins and Silvereyes.

The previous highest count of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters in Victoria on a single day was 14,200 by Guy Dutson at Loch Ard Gorge on 19 April 2019 (**eBird**) and for Australia 100,000 at Hasting Point, Queensland in 1965 (Liddy 1966). Yellow-faced Honeyeaters are known to be partially migratory, moving north in autumn and south in spring (Higgins et al. 2001).

References

Higgins PJ, Peter JM and Steele WK (eds) (2001) *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Volume 5,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Liddy J (1966) ***Autumnal Migration of the Yellow-faced Honeyeater***. Emu — Austral Ornithology, *66*(2): 87–103. accessed 04/06/2026.

Red Wattlebird

White-naped Honeyeater

Yellow-faced Honeyeater

Grey Fantail

Flame Robin, male

All photos taken by Margaret Alcorn, 19/04/2026, Blackrock Rd, Connewarre.

City Nature Challenge 2026

24–27 April 2026

Rod Lowther

This City Nature Challenge (CNC) was the 13th bioblitz the club has participated in and unlike other recent bioblitz events, we were graced with excellent weather. Interestingly, there were few insects around. Could it have been that the weather had been so good the last month that autumn insects had come and gone? However, there were still a lot of other taxa to see around Greater Geelong!

Our region saw 173 people get involved and submit around 2,575 observations, finding 977 identified species. A respectable outcome but down from our heyday when 5,000 observations would be reported during a bioblitz.

The observations and species found can be seen via the **CNC project** and a comparison to previous events via our **GFNC Event Project**.

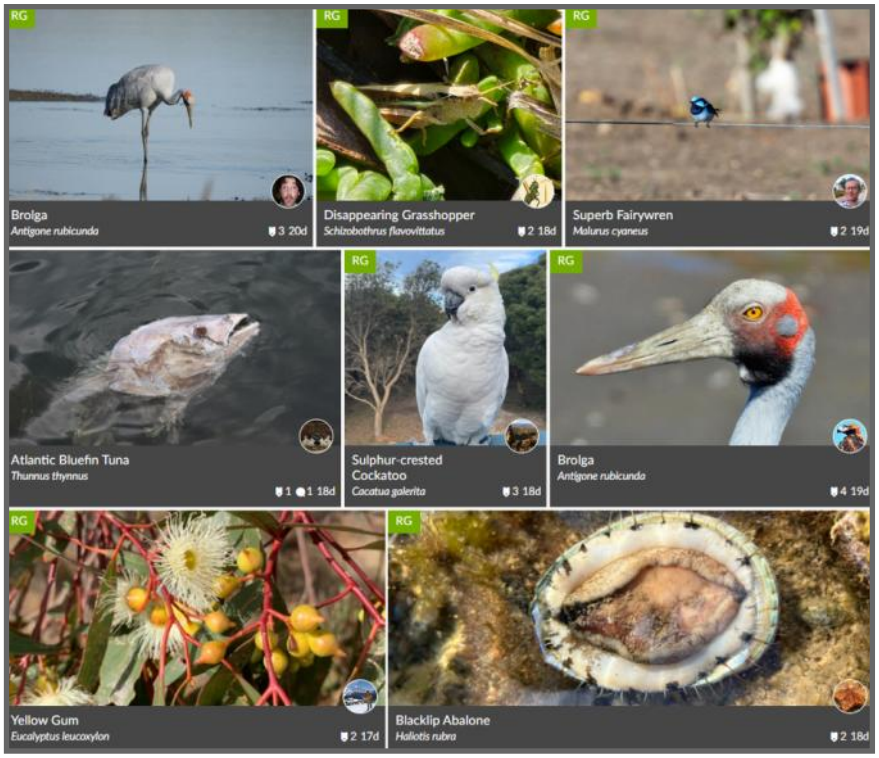
This year's leading observer was Susan Kruss who submitted 323 observations and achieved the equal highest number of birds photographed over a 4-day event of 132 species. A great effort. The challenge is out for the next bioblitz to find 133 bird species.

The standout new achiever or Rising Star award goes to Andrea Dennett (239 observations) who found 194 species, equal highest species count with Susan. Andrea's performance was remarkable in that all the observations were made within walking distance of home, demonstrating the spirit of a City Challenge.

Whilst we had 173 observers, only 11 people achieved 50 or more observations. That is a key indicator of the club's bioblitz involvement.

Worldwide, CNC broke a few records with over 100,000 observers from 754 cities contributing and finding 5,688 rare, endangered, or threatened species. The city Ostrava in northeast Czech Republic achieved the highest observation count with more than 138,000 observations and that's with a population of about the size of Geelong! The city with the most species found was Graz in Austria that has a population of 1.2 million. Their observers located and identified approximately 5,000 species.

The next bioblitz is the Great Southern BioBlitz (GSB) 27–30 November.



A group of observation photos most liked by iNaturalist observers and identifiers within our region.

Update on the Barwon Water Sewer Aqueduct at Porronggitj Karrong

Deborah Evans

We reported in the December 2025 *Geelong Naturalist* that Barwon Water had been unable to find a safe way of removing just a small number of spans of the aqueduct (over and either side of the river) allowing the rest of the structure to remain, and had (with great sadness) applied to Heritage Victoria for permission to pull down the whole structure. Heritage Victoria granted permission for this demolition in April this year with 29 conditions, including details of the archival surveying and photographic recording to be done before and during demolition and requirements for the Heritage Interpretation Strategy. You can access the permission details at the Heritage Victoria website in the references.

While waiting for the outcome of the Heritage Victoria application, Barwon Water has been doing considerable work on the Porronggitj Karrong site to provide access for the proposed demolition and for future public access to the site. This has included providing improved vehicle access on the track that we used to get down to the river during our September 2025 excursion to the west of the aqueduct as well as access work to the east.

Plans are now being finalised for public access and heritage interpretation *before* the demolition, including a public open day as well as encouraging organisations to join the Wadawarrung in their planned tree planting along the ridge area. Keep an eye on our email newsletter for details of these activities.

The Community Reference Group (CRG), on which GFNC is represented, is continuing to work with the consultants on the Heritage Interpretation Strategy (HIS) features to be installed after the aqueduct is demolished.

One thing the HIS team is looking for is personal accounts from people who used the previously accessible path along the top of the aqueduct to cross the river to what was then farmland on the south side of the river. It is hoped that audio-taped and/or written accounts from people who remember doing this can be included in the heritage interpretation. If you or someone you know remembers using the aqueduct this way, please contact Deborah Evans, the GFNC rep on the CRG, or send your name and contact details to the GFNC information site info@gfnc.com.au

References

Evans D (2025) 'Excursion Report: Porronggitj Karrong and Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct', *Geelong Naturalist*, 61(03):7–8.

Heritage Victoria (2026) **https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/permits-and-approvals/recent-permit-decisions** (scroll down to 2 April 2026), accessed 29/05/2026.

Photo: Linden Young, 21/09/2025

Jerringot gardening activity

19 April 2026

Rod Lowther

On a clear Sunday April morning, 11 club members and friends attended the planting day at Jerringot Wetlands. This was the second time we had gathered to undertake some general weeding and planting activities around the bird hide. The tube stock that had previously been planted in September 2025 had mostly survived the summer weather. However, we did have to clear some weeds during January.

At the start of this activity we did some weed removal, principally the introduced species, Orache *Atriplex prostrata* and Kikuyu Grass *Cenchrus clandestinus,* to prepare the area for new plantings.

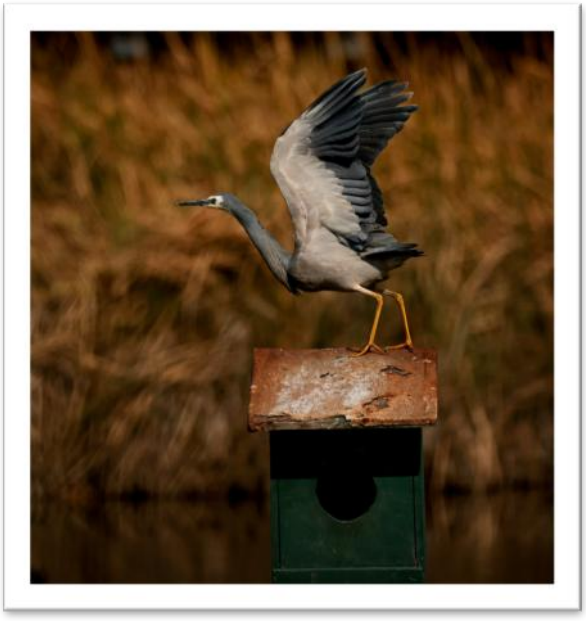
We then proceeded to plant 35 new tube stock which covered grasses, shrubs, and a few River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. The list of plants we used are detailed in the table below.

The plant selection was arrived at by reference to several publications. The first was the GFNC booklet 'From Buckleys to the Break' written by Valda Dedman, Gordon McCarthy, and Trevor Pescott. This book was published in 1987 and outlines the natural history of the Barwon River around Geelong. There is a chapter dealing with 'Vegetation—Then and Now' describing what role some of these plants play in the ecology of the river valley.

The second source of our plant selection was the City of Greater Geelong plant information sheets. These guides cover the whole municipality with 19 zones based on local soils, topography, and microclimate conditions. We cross-checked our plant selection against Zone10 which specifically lists riparian vegetation of the Barwon and Moorabool valleys and its associated rivers and creeks.

More recently in 2012 students undertaking the conservation diploma at The Gordon prepared a guide of Barwon River plants following extensive surveying of the area, as part of their course work. This is a handy pocket publication, designed to be used as a reference when walking along our local rivers as it includes photos that can aid plant identifications. This was also used to select the plants for this activity.

The Induction and safety briefing prior to activities



White-faced Heron

Photos: Chrissy Freestone

Jerringot Native Garden Project

Common Name	Scientific Name	Comments
Silver Wattle	*Acacia dealbata*	Planted at the September session last year, well represented in the area and can easily self-sow. No further plantings undertaken
Tall Sedge	*Carex appressa*	Not available at Nursery for this planting. Many around Geelong waterways and some tube stock added last year around new bird hide wings
Basket Sedge/ Common Sedge/ Poongort	*Carex tereticaulis*	Isolated examples around Geelong and the Bellarine. About 8 plants added at both sessions
Woolly Tea Tree	*Leptospermum lanigerum*	Isolated cases reported around Geelong waterways
River Bottlebrush	*Callistemon sieberi*	This species is present all along the river and many exist at Jerringot
Australian Blackthorn/ Sweet Bursaria	*Bursaria spinosa*	Nine iNat observations around river and one at Jerringot
Slender Bottle-Daisy	*Lagenophora sublyrata*	Australian plant, none recorded on iNat in CoGG
Marsh Saltbush	*Atriplex paludosa*	Lower reaches of the Barwon R. and Limeburners lagoon. Around Jerringot *Atriplex prostrata* (Orache), an introduced species, is present
Austral Crane's Bill/ Solander's Geranium	*Geranium solanderi*	A couple of plants are recorded at Balyang Sanctuary and Buckley Falls
Fan-Flower	*Scaevola* sp.	A few observations recorded in iNaturalist in Belmont and around the Bellarine
River Red Gum	*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*	Common along the Barwon River
Common Everlasting	*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*	Recorded downstream of Buckley Falls near River Red Gum Walk
River Tussock Grass	*Poa labillardierei*	Recorded at Buckley Falls and along river
Kangaroo Grass	*Themeda triandra*	Patches at Seaview grassland and River Red Gum Walk/ Highton recorded
Knobby Clubrush	*Ficinia nodosa*	Present at Jerringot and other areas along Barwon R. and coastal reserves

Members at Work

Photo: Rod Lowther

Map of plant records from the GFNC Jerringot Wetlands Collection. Source **iNat**.

iNaturalist users who visit Jerringot have submitted just over 330 plant observations that have been captured in the Jerringot Project, **documenting 92 species**. Some species are locally indigenous, some non-indigenous Australian plants and some are introduced species. There are **38 introduced species**, these are quite widespread and are considered weeds, posing a risk to the health of this much-loved wetland area.

Many thanks to the people who attended the gardening day and enthusiastically helped with the weeding and planting effort. While at Jerringot, it was impossible not to see a few birds and during our gardening activities those were noted. Thanks to Chrissy Freestone for the eBird list, **here**.
Our next gardening/planting day is scheduled for late August/early September.

References

Dedman V, McCarthy G and Pescott T (eds) (1988) *From Buckleys to the break: a history and natural history of the Barwon River through Geelong*, Geelong Field Naturalists Club.

Flora of the Barwon River (2012), The Gordon institute of TAFE.

Indigenous plants of Greater Geelong region, City of Greater Geelong, accessed 04/06/2026.

GFNC Jerringot Wetlands Collection—Plants, iNaturalist, accessed 04/06/2026.

Boneseeding report You Yangs Regional Park 23 May 2026

Courtney Jennings

It was a lovely sunny Saturday morning to meet at the You Yangs Regional Park for our bi-annual Boneseed weeding activity.

Over 65 years of clearing has made a visible difference, ‘our hill' is now clear of all Boneseed except for the odd small stragglers that have somehow missed detection, or have germinated since our most recent activity last August. The work has allowed the native plants to return and it’s looking great.

The new patch that has been started on in recent years was previously a large section of mature Boneseed. Removal of the mature plants has required some soil disturbance, which in turn has led to much seed germination. The crew of 13 made quick work clearing the many hundreds of small plants that have popped up as a result.

Whilst clearing all Boneseed from the You Yangs might be a never-ending battle, the dedication shown by members of our club certainly demonstrates that every effort makes a difference as we work to restore biodiversity and allow our native plants to thrive.

Our next session is scheduled for Saturday 29 August. Keep an eye on the **website** for details closer to the date. We would love to see you there!

Photo: Rob Beardsley

Birdwatching around Koondrook Vic and Barham NSW

Cheryl West Lau

I recently had an enjoyable four day stay (19–23 April) in the twin towns Koondrook/Barham on the Murray River, north-west of Kerang. At this time of the year, you may be lucky enough to spot a variety of birds migrating north for the winter. Koondrook is situated near the Gunbower National Park, which extends quite a distance along the Murray River down to Gannawarra and Cohuna, Victoria. I went birdwatching mainly in areas close to Koondrook and Barham, which included the Koondrook River Red Gum walk/ drive, the Koondrook Forest Drive near the Koondrook Weir, and the Canoe Trail Road alongside Gunbower Creek. I also visited the Guttram State Forest north-west of Koondrook. On the NSW side of the Murray River, North-west of Barham, is the Campbells Island State Forest. I initially drove into this area but as it is a designated logging coup there are signs warning of logging trucks on the single-lane road in, and so I decided not to go any further. However, the website does mention camping and birdwatching.

I stayed at the Big4 Caravan Park on the Murray River in Barham, just 1.6 km out of Barham. The Murray River wasn't looking its best, with water levels well down. Koondrook/Barham use the water from the river as their main water supply. You cannot drink the water from the taps—water is purified by the local Council for drinking purposes, delivered to the caravan park, and placed in large tanks. The Park provides a large water container which needs to be re-filled when it becomes empty. The caravan park is not large (not your usual B4) and it is a bit old, but I am glad I stayed there and will do so again. I was blessed with great weather, every day was 26–27 degrees.

On my first night at dusk, I could hear the Noisy Miners (of which there were plenty) and there were flocks of other birds coming back to roost in the Caravan Park and alongside the river. These included Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Corellas and Galahs. As it was getting dark, I saw movement just outside my cabin where there was a small patchily leafed tree. Looking through binoculars, I confirmed that it was a family of three Blue-faced Honeyeaters, two adults and one juvenile. One by one they flew into the tree and disappeared into their own patch of foliage. I was so close, yet they took no notice of me, nor could I see them in the tree once they had settled. This happened every night I was there; it was a highlight for me at the end of the day.

On my first day I went to the Koondrook River Red Gum walk, which is situated on the edge of Koondrook. I crossed the bridge over Gunbower Creek to the start of the walk. Near the bridge I heard a Restless Flycatcher and saw many young Welcome Swallows learning to fly—there were around 30 of them. There were a couple of Brown Treecreepers where I parked my car.

I have never seen as many Brown Treecreepers and Peaceful Doves as I did in the Koondrook/ Gunbower Forest area. I saw these two bird species in a number of spots throughout the Koondrook Forest and along the Canoe Trail Road which runs beside Gunbower Creek. I often hear Peaceful Doves when I am up north of the State but here, not only did I hear them, but I saw many of them as well. Also, there were sightings of Common Bronzewings in a few spots. I startled a few of them resting on the ground. The only raptor I sighted during my stay was the Whistling Kite and I would have seen around five of these overall. The Rosellas seen were Crimson (Yellow) Rosellas and Eastern Rosellas.

Flocks of White-winged Choughs were in many spots, and the call of the Australian Raven was regularly heard. Both Striated and Spotted Pardalotes were present, particularly Striated. Sitting on a branch was a Jacky Winter preening itself, probably after having a dip in the river (it looked wet). White-plumed Honeyeaters and Striated Pardalotes were flying around high in the trees. On my way back I approached the bridge to see a long, thin black snake sunning itself on the road. It clocked me at the same time I

saw it, before it conveniently departed, slithering under the bridge. Another non-avian species I saw was what I initially thought was a dunnart. I saw a movement at the base of a tree and saw this 'mouse' with large ears and a small tail. It definitely wasn't a rat. I looked up some information on dunnarts and found that they usually don't come out during the day, so it may have been an antechinus, although after comparing images of the two, I still lean towards it being a dunnart.

In Barham there is a man-made lake, which is situated close to the caravan park and is home to many water birds. There is a walk around the lake (2 km) and the whole area is about 15-16 hectares. I walked around the lake one afternoon and saw Grey Teal, Royal Spoonbill, Dusky Moorhens, Pacific Black Ducks, an Australasian Darter on a branch drying its wings, about 10 Little Pied Cormorants, eight Little Black Cormorants sitting on the branches of a dead tree, Swans, Pelicans and Australasian Coots. Other birds included a Pied Butcherbird, two Common Bronzewings, Superb Fairywrens and Grey Shrikethrush.

There is also the Botanical Federation Reserve in Barham managed by Barham Landcare, which is reported as being 10 hectares in size, but I only walked on tracks around an area near the entrance. The vegetation planted here is endemic to the area (within a 100 km radius of Barham). I visited mid-afternoon and birds I saw were Singing Honeyeater, Silvereye, Grey Fantail, Noisy Miner, Willie Wagtail and Red Wattlebird.

Another area I really enjoyed was around the Koondrook Weir, and from there I also walked part of Koondrook Forest drive. Here I saw many Brown Treecreepers and Peaceful Doves, a flock of White-winged Choughs (about 40), White-browed Babblers, a Black-faced Cuckooshrike and Dusky Woodswallow, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Crested Pigeons, Red-rumped Parrots and Superb Fairywrens. I then drove down the Canoe Trail Road and stopped for lunch beside Gunbower Creek. A Whistling Kite circled overhead, and I saw on the water a Purple Swamphen and a Black Swan. A Little Grassbird was calling.

Another afternoon I visited the Guttrum State Park, which is close to Koondrook. The weather was very warm, and I didn't hear many birds calling until I came upon an area where there was water in a small canal beside the road. Birds sighted here were a male Rufous Whistler, Brown Treecreepers, Grey Fantails, Peaceful Doves, Grey Shrikethrush, one Common Bronzewing, and a Crimson (Yellow) Rosella.

I couldn't help but notice a particular plant that was in flower everywhere— a small bush, sometimes spreading as ground cover, dotted with red flowers. I thought at first it was Flame Heath, but with a closer look I realised the flowers were different and were tube-like in shape, and I concluded it was Cranberry Heath *Astroloma humifusum*. I also saw Ruby Saltbush *Enchylaena tomentosa*, with its red and yellow berries.

I do wonder what the area would be like in Spring, whether the birds would be different, or whether there would be more, or fewer, birds, so perhaps I will have to return.

A slightly damp but happy group on the excursion to Bannockburn Conservation Reserve, 17/05/2026. (**Report p. 25**).

Photo: Stuart McCallum

Bird Group excursion report

Barwon River at Fyansford and Balyang

23 April 2026

Linden Young

Rainbow Lorikeets

Australasian Darter (male)

Australasian Darter nestlings

Photos: Linden Young

We met in the carpark just west of the Fyansford Pub. After a briefing we set off walking north-east along the Moorabool River. Along this part of the walk we spotted a few different water birds, along with some Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Silvereyes, Red-browed Finches and European Goldfinches to name a few. This year we could walk further along this part of the river due to a new path.

As we searched the trees for birds a large, white bird flew along the opposite side of the river. Most of us thought it was a cockatoo, but Troy had a feeling it was a Goshawk and raced along the path ahead of us to get a better look. He and David did confirm that it was a Grey Goshawk, white morphology. Good spotting Troy.

New Holland Honeyeaters and White-plumed Honeyeaters were plentiful as we returned and walked over the Fyansford Monier Arch Bridge. While waiting for the group to reassemble we saw several Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos fly past and circle around for a bit until they landed in a tree beside the river. We then walked down the west side of the Moorabool. Here we spotted a Magpie-lark and there was some discussion about how to tell the male and female apart. If they let you get close enough you can see that the female has a white throat above a black bib, compared to a male which has a black throat. The male also has a horizontal black eye stripe.

As we crossed onto Redgum Island a few Gang-Gang Cockatoos landed in the trees above us. We walked around the island to where the Moorabool meets the Barwon and then headed back to the carpark. There we saw a Brown Falcon flying in the distance. Collectively we saw 43 species of birds at Fyansford.

We then drove to Balyang Sanctuary where we had a late morning tea. Here, on the edge of the Barwon River we spotted some Rainbow Lorikeets in a tree hollow and some Australasian Darters nearby. On the other side of the river, we could see a couple of darter nests containing nestlings, stretching themselves while they waited for food. This gave Craig an opportunity to show us how to log nestling sightings in eBird.

Those of us who had time walked around the lake, which was very dry in parts, keeping an eye out for Tawny Frogmouths which have been seen here before. But no luck today.

eBird lists: **Fyansford**
Balyang Sanctuary

Bird Group excursion report
Russells Bridge
28 May 2026

Brad Ferrier

The bird excursion to Russells Bridge evolved from me driving home from Geelong late last year taking a different route than usual to look at areas that might have birds that are not being observed let alone being recorded. Other places like this one are just around every corner or bend. In essence, seek and ye shall find.

The small township nestled adjacent to the meandering Moorabool River is very quaint. Along the river are exposed basalt blocks from previous geologic times, as well as many very old and mature River Red Gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. Some appeared to be hundreds of years old. These are very evident in the Russells Bridge Nature Reserve—a place with great shade on hot summer days and a very nice place to look for birds and/ or have a picnic lunch.

Our morning commenced with a 50 m walk to the north to look at an exposed high roadside cutting reflecting geology dating back to the Ordovician Period, roughly about 500 million years ago. (Thanks to Deborah Evans for alerting us to this feature). To put things into perspective, terrestrial (land) plants had not even evolved at that time. it wasn't until around 415 million years ago that they did (Willis and McElwain, 2002).

Back to the reserve to look for birds. In the past the Friends of the Reserve group had done some plantings of local species. A notable one was our local Hemp Bush, *Gynatrix pulchella*. Well, I was a bit worried as there was hardly a bird in sight, only a couple of Long-billed Corellas in the dead wood of one of the gums and they were being very quiet for that species. The morning had started with quite heavy fog but quickly cleared to grey skies and, two hours later, welcome sunshine. As we were doused with sunshine, birds decided to make themselves known.

The reserve slowly revealed a few species, but the word 'scant' kept going around in my thoughts. Crimson and Eastern Rosellas were heard and seen. A solitary Grey Shrikethrush called from the fringes of the reserve. A few Superb Fairywrens delighted us as we gathered then exited together for the slow walk along the road through and into the township proper. The sun was now fully ablaze. As we walked east past most of the homes, the vegetation present in the gardens yielded more bird species than back in the reserve. Most notably, the vegetation in these gardens was no longer strictly 'local'. There were plenty of Australian native plants from places elsewhere such as Sugar Gums *Eucalyptus cladocalyx*, and many exotic plants including oak and olive trees.

Small birds including Yellow-rumped Thornbills near ground level and New Holland Honeyeaters were attracted to the Pin Cushion Hakea *Hakea laurina*. More Superb Fairywrens flitted around in their investigative manner. Two Wedge-tailed Eagles delighted us overhead to the west, climbing to great heights and then seen again kilometres to the east as they flew at speed with a tail wind.

A low yield of birds led us to turn left into Parker Road. Our group slowly walked towards Lowndes Bridge. En route in a large Eucalypt stand, three Eastern Shrike-tits were a definite highlight. We passed by paddocks that yielded White-fronted Chats and many Eurasian Skylarks.

This entire area and surrounds with its deep valleys and the meandering course of the Moorabool River has resulted in many bridges being constructed, mostly in the mid-1800s, from basalt cut from previous lava flows. Russells, Lowndes and Burkes. Upon reaching Lowndes Bridge, we turned around and made our way back to the nature reserve where we had lunch. Whilst eating and drinking beverages, a little 'dessert' was offered to us in the way of two Restless Flycatchers.

Thanks to all attendees for their conduct and humour on the day. A very enjoyable casual morning was had by all. Please see eBird list **here**, compiled by Graham Possingham.

Reference

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Excursion Report
Bannockburn Conservation Reserve
17 May 2026

Graham Possingham, with input from Stuart McCallum and Alex Hurley

Stuart McCallum, a club member but also from the Friends of Bannockburn Bush, led the excursion. The weather forecast was for rain, so it was a small group who met at 8.45 a.m. with just nine of us plus Stuart. However, we ended up staying dry, except for our footwear, and the weather improved over the morning. One of the best times for a walk in the bush is just after a nice fall of rain. Everything is fresh and the birds are out looking for insects.

The reserve has had many uses over the years since European settlement including timber harvesting for firewood and fencing, informal camping, a pine plantation, rubbish disposal and gravel stripping (McCallum et al.1996). It has always been Crown land, originally being a firewood reserve. The area also has signs of use by the Wadawurrung with stone flakes in several areas along a creek line. Stuart showed us some anvil stones and a midden.

We took a 5 km loop through the southern section of the reserve. Vegetation was a mix of Sugar Gum *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* plantations of varying age, Melbourne Yellow Gum *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* ssp. *connata* woodland on clay soil, River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* in places and areas of Manna Gum *Eucalyptus viminalis* on sandier soil. The route was mostly on tracks but included some bush bashing; we trusted Stuart and the short cuts! Along the way Stuart explained how timber from coppicing the Sugar Gums helped fund land management, although the recent transition of land management from the Ballarat Environment Network (BEN) to the Western Region Environment Network (WREN) has had some teething problems.

Areas of felled Sugar Gum had several fine examples of what we think is the well-named Spectacular Rustgill *Gymnopilus junonius*. We turned a few tiles from the grids laid by Trevor Pescott and found an Orange-footed Centipede *Cormocephalus aurantiipes* which is widespread in the drier regions around Geelong.

Birds were quiet to start but we ended up recording 23 species with 152 individual sightings. Weebills were calling in many places, particularly in the Sugar Gums. We had several good views of White-eared Honeyeaters; this is one of the closer places to Geelong to reliably see this species. White-naped Honeyeaters were common with their 'kissing' calls heard in many locations. Firm identification of a species member of the Australian Robin family (maybe a Jacky Winter, maybe a Flame Robin) eluded us as it did not hang around. Jacky Winters are known from several areas in the reserve as it's a reliable place to find them. Details of the birds can be found on eBird **here**.

Reference

McCallum S, Stephens A and Trengove M (1996) ***A preliminary field guide to the vegetation of the Bannockburn Recreation Reserve***, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Spectacular Rustgill

Orange-footed Centipede

Photos: Graham Possingham

Fauna survey report
Old Boardman Property
Butchers Rd, Anakie
8–11 May 2026

Barry Lingham

A Krefft's Glider photographed by one of the motion cameras on-site, 17/05/26. It showed no interest in the bait station.

Summary

This survey conducted in May followed a motion camera survey undertaken at the property in December 2025. During the 2025 survey, the cameras detected a range of mammals including Agile Antechinus *Antechinus agilis* (Lingham 2026).

This current survey was conducted in a woodland area of about three hectares bounded by two gullies. This site was approximately 650 m from the December survey site.

The main tree species in this zone included many large prolifically flowering Red Ironbarks *Eucalyptus tricarpa,* plus Messmates *E. obliqua,* Red Stringybark *E. macrorhyncha* and Red Box *E. polyanthemos*. A wildfire burned the property in 2006 and many sapling eucalypts up to five m tall are the dominant understorey. Leaf litter was abundant. Grasstrees *Xanthorrhoea australis* were present on the upper slopes. Grassy areas occurred on the gully floor. Austral Bracken *Pteridium esculentum* was present in sandier places.

The survey

This survey used several methods to detect wildlife.

a) Automated recorders were deployed for 17 days from 8 to 25 May 2026.
- The club's audio recorder and microbat recorder were set up. A privately owned PUK bird recorder was also used for one night.
- Five HF2X Reconyx motion cameras were set, focussed upon bait stations with baits consisting of peanut butter, rolled oats and a dash of golden syrup. Four bait stations were placed on the trunks of large Ironbarks, and one was placed on a large log.

b) Thirty small baited Elliott traps were set in three lines of 10 traps, each about 10 m apart. Traps were set for three consecutive nights. Any trap with a captive animal was closed for the remainder of the survey after release of the animal.

c) Spotlighting for terrestrial animals was undertaken on two nights.

d) Invertebrate surveys using moth sheets with UV lights were set up on two nights.

e) Bird walks were undertaken during the day to monitor species present.

The weather was generally cool, with light drizzle and fog on some mornings. Temperatures ranged from 7°C to 17°C with calm conditions over the four days of the survey.

Results from Elliott traps

A total of eight Agile Antechinus were trapped and released from the 30 traps over the three nights. No other species were caught.

An Agile Antechinus is released from the Elliott trap, 10/05/26. Note the pointed face and notched ear lobe.

Although superficially similar to a mouse, they are not rodents and are more closely related to phascogales, dunnarts and quolls.

Photo: Barry Lingham

Results from cameras

Mammals (common names as per iNaturalist)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Agile Antechinus *Antechinus agilis*	*	*		*	*
Krefft's Glider *Petaurus notatus*			*		
Common Ringtail Possum *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*	*				*
Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula*					
Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus*		*			
Swamp Wallaby *Wallabia bicolor*	*	*	*	*	
Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*		*			
Fallow Deer *Dama dama*			*		

Other species on the cameras
Birds photographed included Grey Currawong, Yellow-faced Honeyeater and Red Wattlebird.

Results from spotlighting
Common Ringtail Possums (8)
Common Brushtail Possum (1)

Invertebrate Survey
During the evening of Saturday 9 May a wide variety of moth species were observed on the moth sheets. Species included a very large Rain Moth *Abantiades* sp., the colourful White-stemmed Acacia Moth *Chelepteryx chalepteryx* and Emerald moth *Chlorocoma* sp.

Conditions must have been more suitable for moths on that night, as few moths or other invertebrates were seen the next evening. Photographs can be viewed via this **link**.

Birds noted during the survey
The most widespread bird observed and heard was the Red Wattlebird. Very large numbers were present in the flowering Ironbarks and they were continuously calling. A range of other honeyeaters were present and both Scarlet and Flame Robins were seen. A Bassian Thrush was seen scurrying along the ground on the floor of a gully.

Comments
The cameras recorded hundreds of images and videos of the aptly named Agile Antechinus. They could be seen actively climbing and hunting on the trunks of Ironbarks and almost appeared to defy gravity while running and jumping up, down and sideways. Several images showed the Antechinus checking grooves in the bark for invertebrates. It is possible they climbed to the flowering canopies to feed on nectar or invertebrates attracted to the flowers. Some of the moths we observed would have made a good meal for the antechinus.

A motion camera captures an Agile Antechinus moving around the trunk of an Ironbark, 14/05/26

You can view a short video clip of the Agile Antechinus **here.**

Of note was the lack of detection of any rat species. There may be a link between healthy populations of antechinus and habitats where few rats are present.

Studies of tree use by small mammals note that they show a preference for foraging on large mature trees. Those trees also

provide nesting or roosting hollows (Dickman 1991).

The population of Agile Antechinus was observed in the study area where many large mature Red Ironbark trees are present, supporting the findings of researchers about the importance of large trees. Elsewhere on the property, significant numbers of large Yellow Gums, Red Box and Messmates are present. They will provide fertile sites for further surveys.

The survey was conducted by members of the GFNC Fauna Group under the GFNC Scientific Procedures Fieldwork Licence 20072.

Thanks

Thanks to the property manager, Annette Rypalski, for arranging permission to visit the property and carry out the surveys. Thanks also to all those who helped with setting up the traps, cameras and equipment or uploading photo observations to iNaturalist.

References

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Invertebrate observation highlights

January–March 2026

Rod Lowther

During the first quarter of 2026, 1,705 observations were added to the GFNC Invertebrates Collection. With 533 species identified in that period, the Collection now lists a total of 2,750 species recorded in our region.

One observation that caught my attention recently was a Common Brown Antlion photographed by Pete Crowcroft at Anglesea in late March. This species has been recorded only six times in the Geelong region since the iNaturalist project began, with observations split between coastal bushland and the hinterland of the Brisbane Ranges. Nearly all records were made at night using a UV light and mothing sheet to attract insects. The Common Brown Antlion belongs to the family Myrmeleontidae, which includes both antlions and owlflies, and forms part of the order Neuroptera, alongside lacewings and their allied groups.

The table below provides a taxonomic breakdown of the Neuroptera order to family level and includes the number of iNaturalist observations recorded within the Geelong bioblitz region, giving a sense of relative abundance and ease of detection. Additional columns show the number of species observed in the region and the number represented in the GFNC Collection.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Geelong Bioblitz Region Observations	Geelong Bioblitz Region Species	GFNC Invertebrates Collection
Order Neuroptera	**Antlions, Lacewings and Mantidflies**	**1,020**	**61**	**45**
Superfamily Myrmeleontoidea	Antlions, Owlflies and Allies	176	18	14
Myrmeleontidae	Antlions and Owflies	141	16	12
Nyphidea	Split-footed Lacewing	34	2	2

Scientific Name	Common Name	Geelong Bioblitz Region Observations	Geelong Bioblitz Region Species	GFNC Invertebrates Collection
Suborder Hemerobiiformia	Lacewings and Mantidflies	834	43	31
Berothidae	Beaded Lacewing	19	2	1
Chrysopidae	Green Lacewing	358	11	9
Coniopterygidae	Dusty-winged Lacewing	15	3	3
Hemerobiidae	Brown Lacewing	189	7	7
Mantispidae	Mantidflies	70	11	
Osmylidae	Stream Lacewing	159	7	6

* Data correct as date of publishing and numbers for higher level taxonomy level will contain unidentified observations.

The common names for families within this order generally reflect the most distinctive features of the adults, except for the antlions, whose name refers to the behaviour of the larvae—ants make up a large part of their diet, and the larvae are notably aggressive predators. All lacewing and antlion species are predatory in both their adult and larval stages. Lacewings typically inhabit vegetation, while antlions occupy sandy or gravelly ground environments. As a result, lacewings are valuable insects to have in the garden, helping to control pest species such as aphids, scale insects, mites and caterpillars that can otherwise cause significant damage to plants.

Antlions have many interesting traits, the most notable being the pit traps constructed by their larvae. The larva buries itself at the base of the cone-shaped pit, waiting for an ant or other small insect to slip down the sides. When prey enters the trap, the antlion strikes, injecting a mixture of venom and digestive enzymes before sucking out the liquefied contents. For a more detailed account of antlion behaviour, see Tony Mlynarik's article on the *Land for Wildlife* website: **Antlions, Land for Wildlife**.

An interesting feature of lacewings is that the females glue each egg to the tip of a silken stalk. This strategy offers several advantages: it reduces the risk of cannibalism by newly hatched larvae, limits predation by other crawling insects, and helps prevent fungal contamination from nearby plant surfaces and other materials in the environment. As shown in the linked example **Lacewing eggs**, the eggs can be laid on a wide variety of substrates.

Below are sample observations from each family within this order.

Family Beaded Lacewing
Quasispermophorella neuropunctata
Brisbane Ranges, Cathy Powers

Family Split-footed Lacewing
Blue Eyes Lacewing
Nymphes myrmeleonoides
Anglesea, Peter Crowcroft

Family Beaded Lacewing
Quasispermophorella neuropunctata
Brisbane Ranges, Cathy Powers

Family Green Lacewing
Dictyochrysa peterseni
Leopold, David B Boyle

Family Dusty-winged Lacewing
Heteroconis ornata
Anglesea, Peter Crowcroft

Family Brown Lacewing
Tasmanian Lacewing
Micromus tasmaniae
Barwon Heads, Andrea Dennett

Family Mantidflies
Campion australasiae
Drysdale, Bernadette Lingham

Family Stream Lacewing
Pied Lacewing
Porismus strigatus
Steiglitz, Colin and Wendy Cook

Thanks to all the observers who continue to add their observations to the GFNC Invertebrate Collection. We are also thankful to Ken Harris who does most of the identification of our lacewing/ antlion observations. Ken recently wrote a guide, **Lacewings of Victoria**, published by Entomological Society of Victoria. It is available for purchase on their web site.

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Butterfly observations report

March–May 2026

John Newman

What a dazzling three months we have had in butterfly world as the autumn winds up and we take a moment to look back at what has been reported on iNaturalist and to ponder the stunning variety of butterflies seen in our reporting region since the start of March.

Thirty species have been seen in our varied habitats during this reporting period, totalling **657 individual records.** All five of our possible butterfly families have been represented.

Butterfly Family	Number of records	Number of species
Swallowtails	7	1
Skippers	74	4
Whites	155	5
Browns	277	12
Blues	144	8
TOTAL	**657**	**30**

Having covered the basics of the biology of the five local families in past editions of the Butterfly Report gives an opportunity to look more closely at some individual species that have been reported these past few months. Butterfly biology is just astounding.

The **Dainty Swallowtail** *Papilio anactus* is an endemic Australian swallowtail of ancient Gondwanaland origin that has evolved on the native citrus plants found in the eastern states.

Dainty Swallowtail
Photo: John Newman, 10/11/24

It has quickly adapted to the introduced citrus trees and can now be found in most areas where these trees are cultivated, including the Geelong region, albeit in very small numbers.

It belongs to a group of swallowtails that mimic poisonous or unpalatable butterflies. In this case the **Dainty Swallowtail** mimics the male **Clearwing Swallowtail** *Cressida cressida* which, in its main population range further north, obtains its toxic properties through its hostplant, the Dutchman's Pipe *(Aristolochia).*

Larvae of the latter swallowtail assimilate the poisons (aristolochic acids and derivatives) occurring in the plants, store them and then transfer them via the pupae to the adult butterflies. The non-poisonous mimic butterflies gain protection from animal and bird predators due to their similarity to the poisonous model.

To retain the non-predation protection the mimic butterflies, must remain in low numbers and the **Dainty Swallowtail** usually occurs in very low numbers, even in southern temperate areas where its mimic model, the **Clearwing Swallowtail** does not occur. Interestingly, by having expanded its flight range to the citrus orchards of the southern states, the **Dainty Swallowtail** has lost its mimetic benefit.

The flight of the **Dainty Swallowtail** is usually slow and lazy, but if disturbed, can depart with great speed. Many of the swallowtails occurring worldwide that use *Aristolochia* as a hostplant, advertise the presence of their body poisons with their aposematic warning colours, which are generally red spotting of the hindwings and body. They normally have a slow flight so that they can be easily recognised by bird predators. The interesting thing about the slow flight of

these swallowtails is that the forewings do most of the flapping, while the hindwings remain relatively motionless and are therefore readily visible. Hence, it is not important for the forewing of the mimic butterfly to be an exact copy of the model.

Males commonly collect on hilltops, often at some distance from their nearest larva hostplant source, where they patrol. The small number of observations for the **Dainty Swallowtail** this quarter were widespread across the recording area including the Geelong Botanical Gardens.

The **Caper White** butterfly *Belenois java* is a familiar species locally especially early in the season.

Caper White
Photo: John Newman, 14/11/20

This butterfly has its origins in Africa where many morphologically similar species occur and are well known for undertaking major mass migrations. This butterfly has historically made its way to India and from there probably made its way via Indonesia to Australia where it is now represented by *B. java*.

Male and female butterflies can occur in either a pale or dark colour form and both forms can occur together in the one population at the same time. The darker form seems to be a product of a cool breeding period, possibly more coastal, particularly during winter, which causes a lengthening of the brood period (particularly the pupation period) resulting in increased melanin (black) pigment.

It is a strong migrant. Every spring, numbers of these butterflies will fly south from northern breeding grounds helped by the hot northerly winds that occur at that time. Females are both gravid and fertile during these migrations and will stop to lay eggs on species of *Caparis* hostplants if they happen upon them. The numbers in these migrations can be immense, attracting attention from the public who often think it is a plague of **Cabbage Whites** *Pieris rapae* descending upon them.

Caper Whites are easily distinguished from the former by the black margins to the wings and the yellow-orange markings beneath.

The **Meadow Argus** *Junonia villida* is a locally common nymph butterfly that is predominantly a late season open grassland species and very often the last species we see in late autumn/ early winter, other than the small number of **Cabbage Whites** that persist.

The brown colouration is marked by large ocelli or 'eyes' on the wings. These 'eyes' are often used by the butterfly to confuse or frighten bird predators. It is largely

Meadow Argus
Photo: John Newman, 03/12/20

replaced in tropical areas by the **Blue Argus** *Junonia orithya*.

The habits and biology of the **Meadow Argus** are very similar to the **Australian Painted Lady** *Vanessa kershawi*. They often occur together and from a distance are easily confused with each other.

Males often rest on bare ground with wings open, from where they will periodically undertake patrols of the vicinity searching for newly emerged females with which to mate. They will also hilltop in the afternoons for the same purpose.

The larvae usually eat the leaves and softer green parts of the hostplant, which are mostly perennials including many weeds. The suitability of the various plants as larval hostplants is variable, with the larvae developing better on some hostplants than others.

To finish off this report it is hard to go past the stunning record of a **Dark Purple Azure** *Ogyris abrota* on the Barwon River at Highton. Records of this species locally are very few and so to get a lovely photo of a crisp adult was extraordinary.

Dark Purple Azure
Photo: Anthony Mitchell, 30/03/26

These butterflies are rarely seen in flight. The male butterflies have a very rapid flight and are usually active about the canopy of eucalyptus trees hosting mistletoe plants some 10–30 m above the ground. The mistletoe is usually Creeping Mistletoe *Muellerina eucalyptoides* and often found on River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*.

They spend a lot of their time settled with wings closed on a bare branch or twig near the top of the tree where they will wait for newly emerged females to show up for mating. These butterflies become invisible when settled, as like all other *Ogyris* species, they have cryptically marked undersides that make the butterflies indistinguishable from the rough bark of trees and bushes when they are settled.

I will certainly be out looking for this species again next season.

So as winter now closes in on us, it is time to plan for the spring and summer ahead. Perhaps searching in warmer areas further north for species we do not see locally and reporting each and every record to iNaturalist to continue to build our understanding of butterfly distribution and ecology.

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South Australian Butterflies and Moths, accessed 02/06/2026.

Fauna observations highlights March–May 2026

Barry Lingham

Listed below are selected observations and comments about unusual species, species out of normal range or exhibiting interesting behaviour, selected from observations made during the autumn months of March to May 2026.

Observations were sourced from the GFNC **iNaturalist Fauna Project.**

MAMMAL SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Platypus	Barwon River, upstream of Ring Road bridge (1)
Eastern Short-beaked Echidna	Gherang (1)
Agile Antechinus	Durdidwarrah, GFNC survey on private property (multiple noted)
Koala	Moorabool River Reserve Batesford (1)
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	East side of Lake Connewarre
Swamp Wallaby	Reports from bushland, wetlands and dune areas
Brown Rat	Barwon Heads
Australian Fur Seal	Pope's Eye, Port Phillip Bay

REPTILE SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Eastern Snake-necked Turtle	Point Richards (1)
Eastern Short-necked Turtle	Moorabool River Batesford (1)
Marbled Gecko	Newtown (1), Hamlyn Heights (1)
Eastern Three-lined Skink	Point Richards (1), Armstrong Creek (1), Ocean Grove Nature Reserve (1)
Southern Forest Coolskink (Coventry's)	Benwerrin (1)
Metallic Coolskink	Point Lonsdale (1)
Southern Water Skink	Lara (1)
Pale-flecked Garden Sunskink	Multiple records across the region
Blotched Bluetongue	Meredith area (1,1)
Common (Eastern) Bluetongue	Highton (1,1), Belmont (1, 1)
Jacky Dragon	St Leonards (1), Ocean Grove (1)
Lowland Copperhead	Point Addis (1)
Tiger Snake	Benwerrin (1)

FROG SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Brown Tree Frog	Belmont (1)
Southern Bell Frog (Growling Grass Frog)	Point Richards Reserve (9)
Common Eastern Froglet	Widespread records
Spotted Marsh Frog	Point Richards Reserve (1)

Comments on fauna observations

There are three local antechinus species. The largest is the Dusky Antechinus found in wet Otway forested zones. The Swamp Antechinus is found in wetter areas of bushland and coastal dunes.

The recent GFNC Fauna Survey near the Brisbane Ranges found a healthy population of Agile Antechinus **(see report page 26).** They are active tree climbers, and their preferred habitat is drier forests with mature trees.

Agile Antechinus trapped, examined and released, GFNC Fauna Survey 11/05/2026
Photo: Bernie Lingham

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