



Earthcare News

We do what we can, where we are

November
December
2008

COME AND VIEW THE PENGUINS

All Earthcare members are invited to come out onto the St Kilda breakwater with the penguin team. There are plenty of penguins and chicks at this time of the year.

Meet at the beginning of St Kilda Pier
8.30pm Friday 21st November

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE COMING

Wear warm clothing and shoes suitable for uneven ground. Bring a small torch. Stay behind the penguin team on the path and do not stand on the edges of the breakwater as they are likely to collapse. No flash photography.

Please be on time because we will be locking the gate

Peg Jones

Peg Jones passed away peacefully on 26th September. She was an avid supporter of Earthcare St Kilda. Every day Peg would remove two bags of weeds from the West St Kilda Beach Salt Marsh. She also came to many of our other locations for planting sessions in all sorts of weather. Peg would look for unusual lights on the St Kilda Breakwater at night and many a fisherman was caught beyond the fence.

We will remember her irrepressible enthusiasm for the environment, she was an inspiration to all of us.

We all will have opportunities through Earthcare to follow up her work on West Beach and preserve this very special salt marsh.



Port Phillip Nature Watch

November 2008

As I have not written a PPNW report since March there is lot to report. First I will start with two separate, but very unusual items washed up on Elwood Beach just south of Pt Ormond over the winter and early spring.

The first was a small and completely intact a Paper Nautilus *Argonauta nodosa* on 20 June, which somehow escaped being pulverized by the beach cleaner. Paper nautilus are not nautilus at all, but are actually octopuses. The paper thin white calcareous 'shell' is an egg case made by females. These delicate 'shells', prized by beach combers are rare and occasionally encountered in Port Phillip Bay over winter. I also found some pieces of larger shells washed up on the beach at Rickett's Point, Beaumaris a week later. Neil Blake reported finding fragments on West Beach on 24 June.



The second was a dead Shy Albatross found washed up on the beach 100 metres south of the rock groyne at Pt Ormond in the late afternoon on 9 September. Having only recently died suggests that the bird may have been foraging in the northern part of the bay, or alternatively drifted up from the south of the bay with the currents loafing on the surface. The body which is in very good condition and weighing in at 2.7 kg is now with Museum Victoria, where it was enthusiastically received. Rather than just showing an image of the dead bird as it was found on Elwood Beach, I am also including an image of a very much alive bird in flight 20 km off the coast west of Port Fairy just to show how beautiful and graceful this species is.



Little Wattle Bird Chick

Reports of sightings have been received from Earthcare members and others. They include:

- **Bottlenose Dolphins** observed close in to shore in St Kilda between Brookes Jetty and the Marina by Steve Pennells on 23 April 08. I saw at least six off Point Ormond -St Kilda Mariner on 16 July and a pair offshore from St Kilda BW on 9 September. Kay McKenzie reported three dolphins moving south along Middle Park beach on 30 July.
- At dusk on 8 May 08 Neil Blake heard a whoosh of wings followed by clamour of startled Indian Mynas in the St Kilda BG. Looking up he saw the silhouette of a **Brown Goshawk** gliding through, around 10 metres almost directly above.
- The presence of a **Laughing Kookaburra** in Elwood has been reported a number of times by Michael Norris on 13 May, Jill Sokol on 1 June and **Bob and Alyson** on 23 September. I suspect all these reports are of the same bird, which I photographed within the grounds of Elsternwick Golf Course on 16 April 08.
- Neil Blake sent me two separate reports he received of **Southern Boobook** owls in our general area. They were from Kay McKenzie in Middle Park on 29 June and Joan Gibby in the area of Elsternwick Golf Course (heard) on Wed July 2.
- Zoe Hogg sent pictures of a **Royal Spoonbill** near the pier in St Kilda on 8 July and a baby **Little Wattlebird** (very cute) in her garden on 29 October.

Please let me know if you see any interesting wildlife. I can be contacted by email awmccutcheon@optusnet.com.au or phone 9531 2270.

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