

Earthcare News

We do what we can. where we are



Thursday May 31

Jeff Baker

**Vegetation
Management**

**In
Parks and Open
Spaces**

**In
City of Port Phillip**

**7.30pm
Ecocentre**

**Corner Blessington/Herbert Sts
St Kilda**

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOLD BELLY WATER RAT PHOTO

The photo below of the caged Rakali is one of my favourites and appears on a number of websites including rakali.com. The history of its origins had become lost. However, the other day I was cleaning out some old computer folders and came across the original 2004 email from Chad Loxsom in Sydney. At the time he wrote:

For months my moored boat in Fairlight, Sydney NSW has been visited nightly by some type of animal. This animal has been leaving pieces of fish and squid behind, not to mention its fecal matter that I seem to find most often as it squeezes through my toes. I thought it could have been roosting ducks or European Rats that grew accustomed to the water and made nightly forays to search for food. I learned about the possibility that it could be a Rakali after doing a little research. Two nights ago I set a live trap to see just what was coming on board. It turns out that Manly/Fairlight and probably many other waterfront suburbs in Sydney have an active community of Rakali or Water Rats. I have attached a picture of the animal. I released it straight away hoping that the trauma of being in a trap would scare it into not coming on board again and making a mess.



Jeff will give a presentation on future planning and issues involved with management of plants in parks and open spaces in City of Port Phillip with an emphasis on the Natural Heritage Areas

So, mystery solved and belatedly I would like to thank Chad for allowing us use of his photo.

Rakali Symposium

The next Rakali Symposium will take place on Saturday October 20, 2007. More details next month.

www.rakali.com

PORT PHILLIP NATURE WATCH APRIL - MAY 2007

At the beginning of this month I gave a presentation and slide show on 'Wildlife in the City of Port Phillip' with an emphasis on Rakali and Little Penguins to the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc. Despite the depth of knowledge and expertise in the audience they were genuinely surprised at what our area had to offer and the diversity of species present. And yes I was pulled up for the incorrect identification of a small juvenile parrot. What I thought was a Blue-winged Parrot turned out to be a juvenile female Red-rumped Parrot. Apart from that I got through the presentation unscathed!

For the last two months all reported sightings confirm that species already established here are still about and doing well. They include:

- John Richardson an Elwood resident reported seeing a Tawny Frogmouth in the street near his house on the evening of 1 April. Not having seen these birds since mid -February it is good to get a report to confirm they are still here. I have seen one roosting recently (6 May) in the St Kilda BG.

- Neil Blake passed on a report from James Brinkat, Albert Park Ranger in Charge, Parks Victoria. On 10 April two Park rangers on a routine Kayak patrol discovered 6 Black Swan nests, all with eggs, all on one side of the same island and all currently with sitting parents. To their surprise, the rangers also discovered that one of the parents have successfully hatched 2 cygnets. This is most unusual to have multiple pairs nesting at this time of the year, as the swans begin their nesting season about August and the first cygnets are seen on the water from September on. Has this got something to do with the ending of the drought and that they will breed when perfect conditions arise, regardless of the season?

- Louise Kelly saw a pair of Crested Pigeons in Albert Park on the morning of 21 April. They were feeding on the ground, between Ian Johnson Oval and Harry Trott Oval (opposite Junction Oval).

- Jill Sokol saw a Nankeen Night heron along Elwood canal between Ruskin and Addison Streets, on the evening of 3 May in almost full moon. She last reported seeing a Night Heron on October 16 2006. Again it is good to get regular reports confirming they are still present.

Zoe Hogg recorded a Spoon Bill and a Great Egret at Albert Park Lake and a White Faced Heron in Cowderoy Creek. Also Skipper Butterflies (Greenish Grass Darts) in the garden

The period from late March to May is a time for seasonal movements of birds through much of Melbourne, during which one may encounter some very unusual species. Although not good as in previous years (the past drought may have something to do with this) I experienced some good sightings including a Rufous Fantail in the backyard in early April, Eastern Spinebills and Grey Fantails in St Kilda BG throughout April, a Boobook Owl in St Kilda BG on the evening of 16 April, an immature Golden Whistler in the backyard on 19 April, and finally an Australian Hobby (Little Falcon) flew over the St Kilda BG on 30 April.

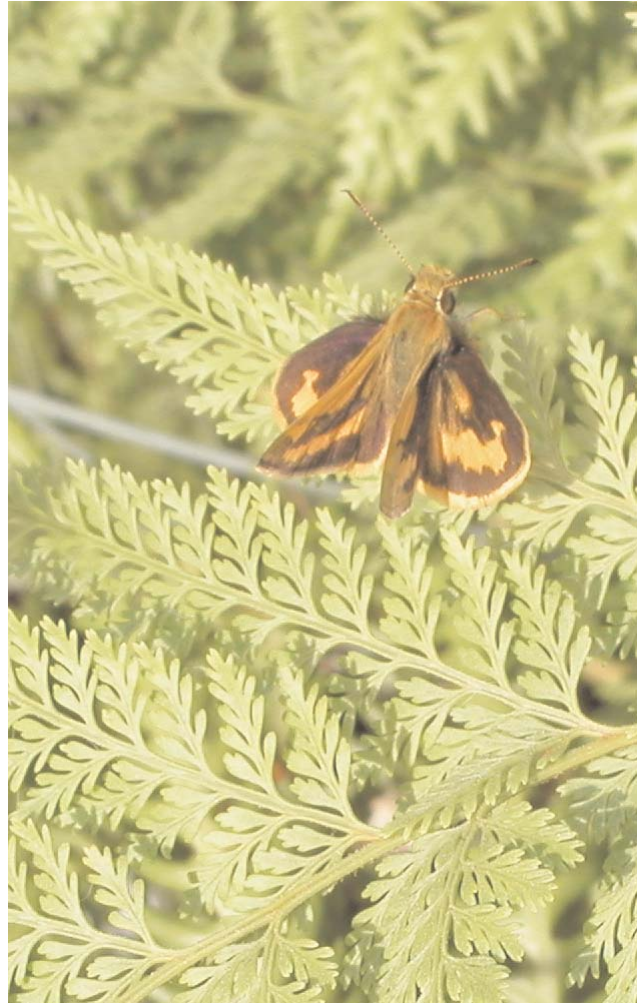
The Marbled Geckoes have been recently showing up in good numbers lately, sometimes being rescued just in time from our cat, which has been hunting them in our back garden. I noticed that they will hunt insects around the outside light if it is regularly left on just like the Asian House Geckoes in the tropics. I managed to take this photo of a gecko with a tasty moth just beside my front door.

If you see any interesting wildlife please send me a report. I can be contacted on 9531 2270, or email awmccutcheon@optusnet.com.au

Andrew McCutcheon



Marbled Gecko



Greenish Grass Dart



Rufous Fan Tail



Eastern Spine Bill