



*Supporting landholders
with native vegetation*

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Swift Parrots in our Spotted Gums

by Barbara Jones



Photos: Max Sutcliffe

Lathamus discolor - Swift Parrot

The threatened Swift Parrot is 'swift' in name and 'swift' in flight, whizzing through the trees with the speed of light showing an almost iridescent green on the back and accompanied by a high pitched chattering.

There are fewer than 1000 breeding pairs remaining in Australia, with declining numbers largely due to habitat loss.

Breeding in the Blue gum forests of Tasmania over summer, they arrive on the south east mainland during autumn, feeding mainly on the blossoms of eucalypts throughout winter.

Whilst their primary winter feeding grounds are the Box Ironbark forests of central Victoria and the Red Ironbark and Yellow Gums of south-west Victoria, coastal forests of NSW provide an important food source, particularly in times of drought further west. This was the case in 2009 when about 900 birds called the Eurobodalla and Bega Valley areas their home during June, July and August before making their epic flight back across Bass Strait.

The Spotted Gums along our coastline and forests are having a good flowering this year and some

Swift Parrots have already been seen in Moruya and Bermagui but numbers so far are low and the search is on for more. BirdLife Australia (formerly Birds Australia) has two Woodland Birds Recovery Project Officers, Chris Tzaros and Dean Ingwersen who will be in the area soon looking for Swift Parrots. Contact Chris at BirdLife Australia on chris.tzaros@birdlife.org.au with any sightings. Community monitoring is an important part of Swift Parrot recovery efforts.

Where to look? Most readers will be familiar with raucous Rainbow Lorikeets and the Swifts could be feeding with them in flocks. Also within the flocks could be Musk Lorikeets which can be easily confused with Swift Parrots at first sight – they too have the iridescent green seen in flight and red on their face, but closer observation will show the Swifts have much longer tails, and red above and below the bill with a splash of yellow in front of the eye.

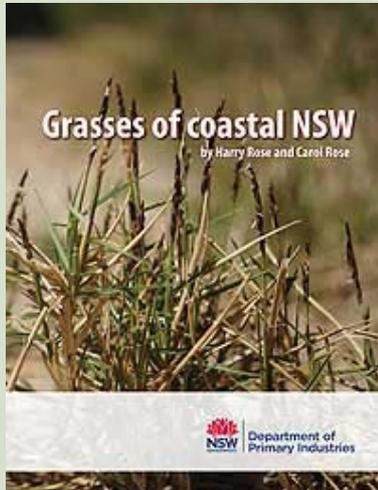
If you're having trouble identifying birds in your area, a quick email to [The Far South Coast Birdwatchers birds@asitis.net.au](mailto:TheFarSouthCoastBirdwatchersbirds@asitis.net.au) will find someone to help.



Glossopsitta concinna - Musk Lorikeet

Grass ID book

Grasses of coastal NSW by Harry Rose & Carol Rose is an easy to use reference to the grasses of coastal NSW, including beautiful colour photographs for each species. A great glovebox guide.



It can be purchased from:
booksales@tocal.com

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Coordinator's column

With winter almost upon us, thoughts turn to keeping warm. With over 80% of firewood in Australia coming from private properties, landholders are well placed to make a difference when it comes to looking after habitat. Included in this edition are some simple steps that can help.

CMN members have responded with enthusiasm to the Wildlife Monitoring workshop on 25 May. With all spaces filled it looks like this is an area members want to know more about, so keep an eye out for future workshops.

I've loved learning about Swift Parrots through Barbara Jones' article. If you type Swift Parrot into your search engine you can see and hear more, including photos, videos and calls. These are remarkable birds that migrate further than any other parrot in the world.



Pittosporum revolutum - Autumn in Bournda NP

Two local landholders have combined their love of birds and the local landscape with music and tell their story on page 4.

Wishing you all the best in your land care efforts this season.

Ali



Photo: J Miles & M Campbell

Weeping grass - *Microlaena stipoides* with seeds ready for collection in autumn

What is the CMN?

The Far South Coast Conservation Management Network (CMN) supports private landholders in the Bega Valley Shire to recover and manage native vegetation on their properties.

The CMN aims to inspire and motivate landholders, increase knowledge about native vegetation management and develop the skills to do this work. The coordinator produces quarterly seasonal newsletters, organises workshops and field days, manages a website and keeps landholders up to date with relevant events and information via a mailing list.

The CMN is funded and supported by the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and Bega Valley Shire Council.



Southern Rivers
Catchment Management Authority



Collecting Firewood

and minimising habitat disturbance

With the onset of colder weather, landholders across the Valley are busy gathering firewood to warm their homes. For those who have a source of timber on their place, this can be an economical choice and a lovely one. As with most resource use, this can have an impact on other species. With a bit of planning and thought when gathering wood, we can make choices that help reduce this impact on the wildlife and forests that also use fallen timber and dead trees. We can also plan ahead to make this a more sustainable resource in the long term.

Wood collection generally involves the removal of relatively undecayed fallen logs and standing dead trees as these are ready to burn well and produce less smoke. Removal of dead old trees (either standing or on the ground) results in the loss of important habitat

such as hollows and decaying wood for a wide variety of vertebrates, invertebrates and microbial species and may adversely affect a number of threatened species. Loss of surface moisture resulting from the removal of dead wood will affect soil organisms below fallen logs as well as changing the above ground plant cover.

As ecologist Steve Sass says "even slight disturbance to the forest floor can affect what lives there". Reptiles for example are particularly susceptible to habitat disturbance. They consume huge numbers of insects which depend on dead wood and forest litter. They occupy small home ranges, and have a low-dispersal capability (less than 40 metres) over cleared ground".

So what can we do?

Steve recommends limiting firewood collection to certain areas of your property. "Choose a sacrificial patch where you go back each year to collect firewood, and leave other areas undisturbed". Other actions which can help are: leaving dead old trees standing to provide hollows; leaving hollow logs and decaying timber on the ground (as it is likely to be already in use as habitat); connecting woodland or forest areas by leaving fallen timber and grasses between them (this will allow reptiles and other fauna to move from one area to another, helping to maintain genetic diversity).

And for the future?

If you have the space, consider establishing a woodlot, planting fast growing firewood tree species suited to the area. Read more about this in the next newsletter.

"Choose a sacrificial patch... and leave other areas undisturbed"

Seedbank

by Karen Walker

The days are getting shorter and cooler, but there are still little delights to look out for in our bush areas.

Right now you may notice the first of the wattles flowering, *Acacia terminalis* (Sunshine wattle) with



Photo: Michael Fiedler

lemon yellow flower heads on sparse bushes about person height, and *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum) with creamy white staminate flowers. Both of these occur naturally towards the coastal fringe.

Seed collecting is not as frantic now, but there are still some species worth noting. Many of the riparian plants have seed capsules which mature in winter. *Leptospermum emarginatum* (twin-flowered tea-tree) is a favourite with larger foliage (than you expect on a tea-tree) and 2 or more flowers per leaf axil. *Callistemon subulatus* (river bottlebrush) tends to blend in to the surroundings until the stunning red-crimson flower spikes open, when it is easy to spot and collect older capsules from. Casuarinas are a good species to collect from, both the river she-oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) and the black/forest she-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*).

Let's not forget the grasses! *Microlaena stipoides* (weeping grass) is ripening and ready to collect now – all you need is a paper bag and "sock-savers" - go for a wander and run your hands along the flower spike to collect seed.



Photo: Max Sutcliffe

Rhipidura albiscapa - Grey fantail

Watery Fowls and Bright Birds

by Alison Rodway

On the shores of Wallagoot Lake near Bournda National Park, Cliff Wallis and Sayaka Mihara have transformed 'Watery Fowls' from cleared sheep paddocks to a haven for birds, and more recently, composers.

When Cliff bought the 100 acre property in 1997 there were remnants of forest (such as the big old Redgum near the sheds) which provided habitat for birds as well as forest around the edges. Cliff didn't start with a strong interest in birds or plants, growing up in a busy suburb in Sydney, but as he said recently, "I defy anyone to come here and not get interested in birds".

Sayaka grew up in Tokyo, Japan, where she had little contact with the natural environment or animals apart from domestic pets and birds in cages. Since 2007 she has embraced life at Wallagoot and developed a passionate interest in birds. As Cliff said quietly, "she is a really excellent bird watcher, with great attention for detail, by far the superior birdwatcher of the two of us".

In 2006, Cliff signed a Voluntary Conservation Agreement which covers over half the property. He began planting bird loving trees and shrubs to bring them in from the fringe. After three large scale planting events and the creation of 40 beds around the house, Cliff and Sayaka have put in about 3000 plants. With the help of friends over Easter, they planted 680 more plants. Each bed has a diversity of trees, shrubs and groundcover, recognising that different birds like different heights and habitat structure. Natural regeneration has also been able to take place with stock pressure removed from most of the property.

The abundant kangaroos and wallabies help keep the grass under control, whilst young plantings

are protected by mesh guards and chicken wire around each bed until established. Cliff has found that "one metre is the minimum height for plants (apart from native grasses) for them to survive browsing by native animals".

Cliff and Sayaka are also passionate about music. They decided to commission a piano piece for Bermagui's Four Winds music festival to see what influence the local landscape and environment might have on someone visiting from the city. They had no preconceived ideas but were quietly hoping that whoever came would be inspired by the birdlife. Damian Barbeler, a teacher and composer from Sydney, was chosen by the festival director. During the visits where he stayed at 'Watery Fowls', Damian was taken on walks by Cliff and Sayaka and made sketches and recordings of what he saw and heard.



Sayaka and Cliff at *Watery Fowls*

The birdlife clearly had an impact on him. The song of the Grey fantail provided inspiration for Damian to write 'Bright Birds', a piece for two pianos featuring the bird's refrain. He wanted to evoke the frenzy of spring activity he encountered in the local landscape. The start of the piece evokes a dawn-chorus and Grey fantails can be heard calling to each other from the two pianos. The piece premiered at the Four Winds Festival over the Easter weekend this year.



Wetland at Watery Fowls - a diverse habitat for birds

Damian visited the Far South Coast Birdwatchers during his time here, playing recordings of the Grey fantail and showing how he transposed them into music. He explained how the call is like a theme with infinite variations which gave him plenty of material to work with. With little previous interest in or knowledge about birds, Damian now sends messages back to Cliff about birds he has just seen on particular walks.

Cliff hopes that Damian's new love of birds will spread far and wide, both through Damian's performances and his teaching. As Cliff said "the more people interested in birds, the more interest there will be in protecting their habitat." And the

effects of Damian's music are already being felt, with all 50 copies of the Far South Coast Birdwatchers' newest publication *Looking at Birds on the Far South Coast* sold out over the Four Winds Festival weekend.

Cliff and Sayaka's idea to combine their love of birds and the local landscape with music composition has led to an inspiring example of how people use art to express the emotions they feel when they encounter the natural world and also, how art can open up new ways of connecting with and understanding nature.

Bournda Herbarium

a new online resource

A herbarium of over 340 plant species found in Bournda National Park and surrounding areas is now available online at:

www.bournda-e.schools.nsw.edu.au

The herbarium combines the pressed specimens of plants collected by local botanist Dane Wimbush with the photos of local naturalist and volunteer Steve Burrows.

There is a monthly flowering guide with flowers organised by colour. This makes it is easy to identify what you are seeing when you visit the park and surrounding coastal forests at any time of year.

This is a really excellent resource with links for each specimen to PlantNet (the online herbarium of the NSW Royal

Botanic Gardens) and the photographs of Jackie Miles and Max Campbell on the begavalley.org.au website.

If you're trying to identify what is growing on your property, doing a school project, or trying to find out what you've just seen on a walk, why not make your first stop the Bournda Environmental Education Centre 'Digital Herbarium'?

Herbarium image (click on thumbnail to download larger image)	Photograph (click on thumbnail to download larger image)	Comments
		<p>Herbarium Number: 930921/003 Date: 21/9/1993 Family: Proteaceae Locality: Bournda NP, Kangarutha track S of White Rock Habitat: OH with sedges and small <i>Melalucca armillaris</i> Coll: D.J. Wimbush Notes: Spreading shrub to 1m</p> <p>Flowering Period: Unsure, observed in flower 10/5/11 along Bournda Quarry Fire Trail</p> <p>Internet Reference: PlantNet Bega Valley Plants</p>

Making Progress with Weedy Grasses

by Ann Herbert

Grasses can be some of the most difficult weeds to deal with due to the competitive advantage they have over more desirable species. Ann Herbert talks us through some well known and new weedy grasses of the Shire and says communities that work together have the biggest impact.

Often invasive weedy grasses and other weedy species are found by observant landholders or knowledgeable passers-by curious enough to have them identified. If you come across a plant you don't recognise and think may be a weed, take it to the DPI or Council for positive identification. Controlling a small infestation is much easier than trying to deal with widespread weeds.

Control of any grassy weed is a long term project. You will tend to get better outcomes if you develop a program, looking at all the control options and using a number of actions that complement each other. Council can help landholders work out a program for particular weeds.

Some of the weedy grasses we are dealing with on the Far South Coast are African lovegrass, Serrated tussock, Chilean needle grass and the recently found Coolatai grass.

Control of African lovegrass will depend on whether you have an isolated outbreak or a dense infestation. Isolated outbreaks can be managed effectively by targeted control and persistence. Management of extensive dense infestations requires a very different approach, one that is



Synchronised blowfly salute on Towamba Landcare weed walk

Chilean needle grass has been found on several properties in the Angledale area. It has dark green leaves and pointed seeds and has the ability to produce seed within the base of the stem. Thus slashing is not an option for its control and dug out plants should be destroyed to prevent this hidden seed germinating. It too, has been effectively controlled using a cropping and pasture program.

Coolatai grass was recently found on the road verge east of Cobargo. It can grow to a metre high, has flat blue-green leaves and a two-branched seedhead. A vigorous control program was immediately put in place and the site will be monitored.

Serrated tussock has been a problem in some parts of the Shire for years. In the Towamba Valley, landholders take a very proactive and cooperative approach to this weed. Many residents take part in a valley-wide management program that includes roadside weed walks and management plans for specific properties. This has seen a significant reduction in the area and density of this weed.



Towamba Valley residents working together to keep roadsides clear of weeds

Grassy weeds can establish in stressed pastures. Drought, overgrazing and selective grazing of more palatable species result in bare ground that allows weeds to germinate. They are weedy because they are competitive and often respond to rain more rapidly than desired species. In effect, they get a head start.

aimed at reducing the extent and impact of the weed rather than full control. Of course, full control may be possible over the years, with a robust pasture rehabilitation program, which would include sowing of vigorous cover crops followed by pasture over several years.

Native Look-alikes

The similar appearance of weedy grasses to some of our native grasses can make them hard to identify, leading to control of the species that we actually want to keep.

Spear grasses, for example, can easily be confused with the invasive needle grasses. Hairy panic, Blown grass and some of the *Poa* tussocks can be mistaken for Serrated tussock. Kangaroo grass, Barbed-wire grass and Red grass may be mistaken for Coolatai grass.

Council will have a 'Weedy Grasses' leaflet printed in the coming weeks and that will be freely available to the community. Otherwise, you can find information on websites such as: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au or www.southeastweeds.org.au



Poa labillardieri seeds (left) are purple whereas African lovegrass seeds (right) are blackish in appearance, although their tussocks are often confused.



Poa meionectes (left) is a small tussock with fine leaves which can be mistaken for Serrated tussock.

Photos by Jackie Miles and Max Campbell



Barbed wire grass (left) and Red grass (centre) may be mistaken for Coolatai grass (right), recently found east of Cobargo

Candelo Landcare



After successfully completing willow control and significant planting of Candelo Creek in the town centre, Candelo Landcare is about to commence work on a new site.

The old town pound on the Mogilla Road at the edge of Candelo Village will be the focus of weed control efforts, followed by planting out of the creek which flows through this area. The creek is a tributary of Candelo Creek.



Candelo Landcare recently received funding for these works from the Department of Primary Industries, Catchments and Lands.

If residents are interested in participating in community planting on this site or in other working bees at Candelo Creek, please contact Philippa Street on: 6493 2802 or philippa.street@bigpond.com