



Correa Mail

Newsletter No 408 - December, 2024

NOVEMBER MEETING - BAT WATCHING

We decided to follow up Grant Baverstock's talk about bats at our June meeting, with an excursion to Eastern Gardens. Fourteen hardy souls braved the icy breeze and myriad mosquitoes and joined Grant at the Grey-headed Flying Fox camp near the East Geelong Golf Club.



Grey-headed Flying Foxes at Eastern Gardens

Grant explained that the bats had recently finished giving birth to this year's batch of young. We kept a reasonable distance from the camp so as not to cause stress to the bats which might cause them to drop their pups.

There are about 4,400 bats currently at the Eastern Gardens camp. There are a number of camps across Victoria. Interestingly many of them are at botanic gardens. While each camp is a separate entity, the bats are known to move from one camp to another. So in effect they are a single population.

At their peak, the Eastern Gardens camp had about 10,500 individuals. Numbers at any one camp are determined by available food, which in turn is governed by the weather. We've had a dry winter and spring, so food is limited and numbers are down.

The bats may travel as far as 40 km in a night to find sufficient food, and may visit as many as sixty different

trees. As fruit eaters and nectar feeders they are important to the local ecology as pollinators. They also spread seeds, carried quite long distances in their gut, then deposited with a nice batch of bat fertiliser to ensure that they germinate. Random tomato bushes popping up in my garden are testament to the success of this way of spreading seeds.



Watching you watching me

The colonies have 'scouts' who are able to communicate the position of a good food source to other members of the camp. The exact method by which they do this is unclear.

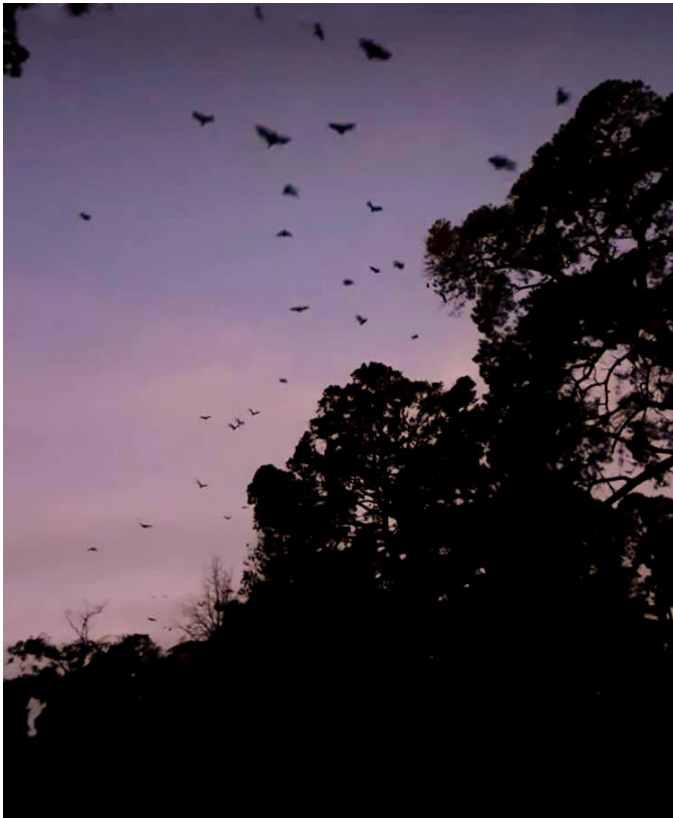
As the sun sets and darkness approaches, the camp begins to stir. The bats, which have been hanging like large fruits begin to unfold and stretch their wings. The noise levels increase and individuals appear to be squabbling with each other. One or two individuals make a trial flight then settle back into a tree with a great deal of chattering.

Gradually more and more bats take to the air, flying a little distance from the camp and then returning, as if reluctant to be the first one to head out in search of food. Finally one or two make the move and are followed by a great stream of bats as they spread out to feed for the night.

Grant had with him a very high-tech little device which plugged into his mobile phone. Connected to an app, he could use this device to record the high frequency calls of the little micro-bats in the area. A

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visual representation of the sound-waves on Grant's phone enabled him to identify the species as Gould's Wattled Bat.



The fly-out

It was a very interesting evening and we thank Grant for giving us a wonderful insight into the world of the Grey-headed Flying Fox. If you haven't witnessed the Eastern Gardens fly-out, I urge you to do so over the summer. And takes Grant's advice ... Look up, but keep your mouth shut. The bats don't look before they poop.

Bats aren't the only creatures with a roost in Eastern Gardens. Not far from the bat camp is a small colony of Nankeen Night-herons. They are not uncommon birds, but this is the only roosting site I know in the Geelong area. You can often see them deeing on the rock wall at Buckley's Falls.



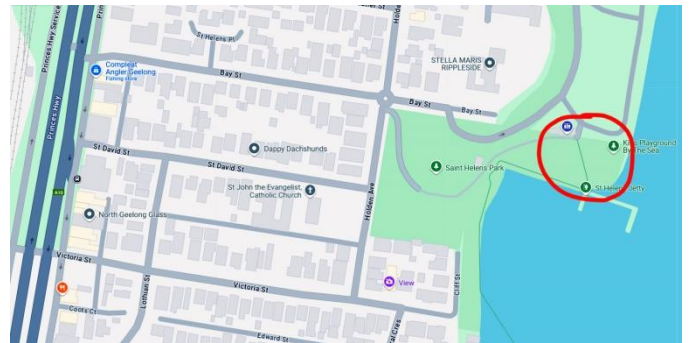
Nankeen Night-heron – Eastern Gardens

CHRISTMAS BREAK-UP BBQ BASH

We will celebrate our Christmas break-up BBQ on Sunday 8th December. It will be held at St Helen's Park, with a car-park at the end of Bay Street, North Geelong. There are BBQs, toilets and shelter if the weather should be less than ideal.

Please bring your own meat, drinks, plates, cutlery and chair. We would love if everyone could bring a salad or dessert to share and join in the festive spirit.

11.00 am for a chat before lunch. See you there.



2024/25 MEETINGS and OUTINGS

- Nov 3** – ANOS Orchid Show – Christ Church Hall
- Nov 19** - Grant Baverstock – Bat spotting
- Dec 8th** - Christmas Break-up BBQ
- Jan** - In recess
- Jan** – Campout at Mt. Hotham
- Feb 18** - Sophie Small –Bellarine Indigenous Plants
- Mar 18** - Kelly Clitheroe – Light Pollution Effects
- Apr 5** - Plant Sale
- Apr 15** - John Lenagan – Insects and Ecosystems
- May 20** – Plant Based Trivia and Pizza
- Jun 17** - Ian Evans – Brachychitons
- Aug 19** – AGM and Photo Competition

PLANT TABLE - We didn't have one 😊

We didn't have our usual meeting, so there was no plant table. However we did find a Eucalypt in flower by the bat camp that had a few of us guessing as to its identity. I'm going with *Eucalyptus melliodora*, Yellow or Honey Box, which I think was Bruce's opinion on the night.

E. melliodora is a tallish tree from 10 – 30 metres with a single trunk. The bark is variable, but usually

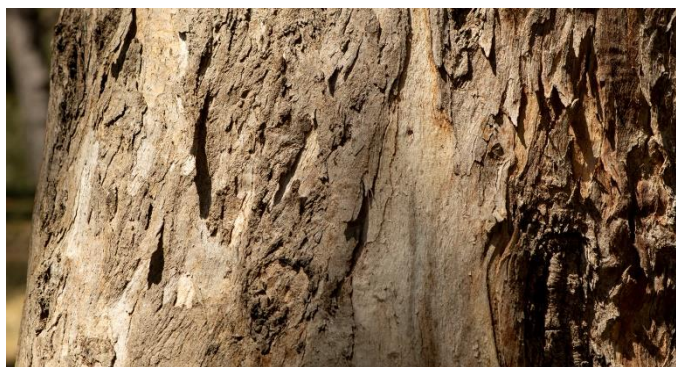
grey/brown and slightly fibrous on the trunk and quite smooth higher up. The leaves are narrow and grey/green with oval juvenile leaves. The flowers are small, white and have a heavy honey smell.



Flowers of the tree in question

It is found naturally on and around the Great Dividing Range from southern Queensland to Western Victoria.

The specific name *melliodora* comes from the Latin 'melleus' – referring to honey and 'odora' – sweet smelling ... very descriptive. The common names are equally descriptive. Yellow Box refers to the colour of the wood, and Honey Box to the smell, but also to the excellent honey produced from the flowers. The name Box was given to these trees by early settlers because the wood resembles that of the European Box, *Buxus sempervirens*.



The bark of the tree in Eastern Gardens

JANUARY 2025 Mt. Hotham trip - Bruce McGinness

Your committee is planning a trip to Mt Hotham to coincide with the peak of flowering in the alps. The final cost per person will depend on the number of members attending as we intend to book-out the entire lodge.

- Arriving: Friday 17th January
- Departing: Monday 20th January



The Kalyna Ski Lodge we stayed at last year has a communal a style commercial kitchen and sixteen bedrooms with various bed configurations each with a bathroom and toilet. When we booked out the lodge last year there were enough rooms for couples and individuals to have a room to themselves. The lodge has a large communal area with expansive views over the alps. Participants can be as active or sedentary as they wish. There are many easy walks near Dinner Plains or more challenging walks towards Mount Cope.

I will need to book this lodge soon and pay a deposit so please get in early and help me plan. I can promise you beautiful scenery and lots of wildflowers. We have visited the alps several times over the past few years so we can guide you on many easy walks to showcase the flora and scenery and identify most of the flowering plants. I suspect there will be some knowledgeable members attending who can help with any wildlife identification as well. We will not be organising bus transport, and I would recommend members arrange carpooling amongst themselves. If you have any questions, please contact me.



Please let Bruce know asap if you are interested, as we need to book the lodge.

MERRY CHRISTMAS everyone. I hope it's a great time for you and yours. Thanks to all who have contributed to the newsletter this year and in years past. And thanks to all of you for supporting our club, taking part in our adventures and making the club a great one to be involved with. See you all next year. Ade