

August, 2012 in the Sanctuary

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The last few weeks have been simply superb at the Wetlands Sanctuary. The weather has been perfect, the birds have been singing at their loudest and best, the boardwalks have been a joy to walk, and the people I've been meeting have been thoroughly enjoying themselves, and commenting favourably on their experiences.

As usual, the Brown Honeyeaters have been singing throughout all the habitats, while the Grey Shrike-thrushes have been joining in with their melodious calls. The songs of the Mangrove Gerygones, while not as loud, are nevertheless very attractive. The Eastern Yellow Robins have been along the first part of the walk, flying back and forth from the trees to the grass, picking off unwary insects. The White-throated Tree-creepers spend quite a bit of time in the area to the left just before the farm dam, and have recently started to call. It is coming up to nesting season for many of the birds, so calling and displaying will soon be at the peak.

The activity of the Northern Brown Bandicoots (and occasionally the Long-nosed Bandicoot) has been obvious, but not the animals of course since they are nocturnal. There must be plenty of food near the surface as the disturbances are not deep. Bandicoots are omnivorous, eating insects and arthropods, tubers, and fallen fruits and seeds. The Water Rat has been leaving so many footprints in the mud close to the river, and there are again juveniles. I do wish I had the opportunity to actually watch them at night. If only I could spend time quietly sitting and waiting in various areas, just to see what activity occurs and which birds and animals may be present.

I've been so lucky with daytime bird sightings. Although there are so many Red-browed Finches resident at the moment, we rarely have Double-barred Finches. A week or so ago, I heard their call down at the far crab hide, and there were a few birds on the opposite bank. At the same time, the Little Bronze-Cuckoo was calling, and there were two of them in the same location. I later found another one up towards the beginning of the casuarina forest. They have magnificent bronze-green plumage on their backs and lovely stripes across their breasts and stomachs. The male has a distinctive red eye-ring.

The next time I went to the sanctuary, I firstly found one of the Noisy Pittas out near the beginning of the "crab area". It does not seem suitable habitat, yet a few of us have seen them there on several occasions. As I was departing, I also found one quite near the beginning of the new section of boardwalk. The Shining Flycatchers are very special birds and not easily found, but both the male and female were there that day. The male being completely jet black, appearing blue-black, looks unrelated to the female with her rich chestnut back, black head and white underparts – a stunning bird. But perhaps my most exciting sighting was a pair of White-throated Nightjars. They are nocturnal birds and more usually live on ridges. They are not rare, but not found very often. I had seen a juvenile in this same area in March when the boardwalk was closed, but tended to think it was a bit lost and that I would never see it again. However, the sighting of two adult birds together now makes me think they may be permanent residents and may even breed there. They fly very like a hawk when disturbed, but utterly silently. They appeared quite a

dark grey tone in flight with no outstanding markings, but the thing which surprised me most was that one of the birds landed on a small fairly upright branch of a Grey Mangrove. I had only seen them in flight or at rest on the ground previously. The second bird landed on the boardwalk, and when the one flew from the Grey Mangrove, the branch on which it had perched really bounced around for a few seconds.

Each time I've been at the sanctuary, I really have been going out to "work", but it has been so easy to be distracted.....



Little Bronze-Cuckoo
Internet Photo



Grey Shrike-thrush
Photo Tobias Hayashi



Shining Flycatcher Male
Internet Photo



Shining Flycatcher Female
Internet Photo