



Birds of the Bluff

Barwon Heads, Victoria, Australia.

INTRODUCTION

The iconic Barwon Heads Bluff is home to a wealth of extraordinary bird life. These birds of the Bluff occupy every niche along our dynamic coast from the tortured scrub atop the imposing limestone cliffs to the scrabble of black basalt boulders of the marine sanctuary below; from the long sweep of a turbulent Bass Strait beach to the fluctuating fortunes of the Barwon estuary; from the tussocky glare of the dunes to the dappled haunts of the Moonah woodland.

The diversity of habitats is matched by the variety of birds. Red-capped Plovers chase a receding tide and take refuge among the seaweed litter during the high tide. Tiny thornbills skitter through the undergrowth chatting incessantly. Ibis stalk the rock pools, kestrels defy gravity watching free-wheeling gannets dive with military precision. There is the stately yellow swish of a honeyeater singing atop the Beard Heath, while in the Coastal Moonahs, the sonorous chorus of magpies is often taken for granted.

The Bluff owes a great debt to its birds. They not only provide an unexpected flash of colour, an irrepressible feat of acrobatics, or the inspired soundtrack to the Bluff, but their digestive habits are instrumental in the regeneration of the Bluff's remarkable flora. (see *Plants that Clothe the Bluff* booklet). There is a tenuous balance that should not be disturbed. So tread carefully, stand patiently and watch quietly and discover the wild places that are home to the birds of the Bluff.

So tread carefully, stand patiently and watch quietly. And discover the wild places that are home to the birds of the Bluff.

Discover the wealth of plants and animals that live in this special wild place and help protect the remarkable "Life on the Edge".



A Guide to this Guide

Birds of the Bluff is not meant to be a comprehensive guide to the identification of birds, but rather, it is designed to assist in recognising those birds that can be commonly seen on a walk around the Bluff environs.

ZONES:

The use of zones in this booklet is to provide a general guide to where specific birds are most often seen. The following zones are used:

- On the Bluff
- On the beach
- In the estuary
- Out to sea
- Up in the sky



However, birds can fly and have no regard for zones. While Welcome Swallow are listed as being generally found 'on the Bluff', they can often be found hawking insects from seaweed washed up 'in the estuary'. It is hoped that these zones will give the best indication of where to look for birds.

There is no guarantee you will see all these birds on any one trip. Some birds always seem to be around. Others are more active during early morning or early evening. Some are more frequent at particular times of the year and some are just good at not being seen easily. The availability of food or water, the lack of a low tide or even extreme weather will all influence the abundance of birds. Often you can hear a bird but cannot see it. Be patient, the wait is always worth it.

- A good pair of binoculars will help get you close to the birds while keeping a good distance away. Avoid disturbing the bird unnecessarily.
- When walking please use defined paths. In the marine sanctuary avoid trampling sensitive plants and animals and try to stay on rocky surfaces.
- Please keep dogs under effective control. Do not allow dogs to chase or interfere with birds.
- Take home all rubbish and litter....and maybe take home someone else's as well. Ensure that fishing line and tackle is disposed of properly.
- Please help to care for and protect our wonderful birds of the Bluff.

Chestnut Teal

Anas castanea

In the estuary
All year round



The male **Chestnut Teal** is very colourful, with a chestnut body and dark green head that reflects the sunlight. The female is a plain dark brown. Chestnut Teal are now common local breeding residents that are widespread but they tend to prefer saline wetlands. They are sometimes seen in the Barwon Estuary.

Beak-to-tail:
40 - 48 cm

In the estuary
All year round

Pacific Black Duck

Anas superciliosa

The **Pacific Black Duck** is a common breeding resident of freshwater lakes and rivers or sheltered coastal waters. It is sometimes seen in the Barwon Estuary, but more likely in freshwater wetlands. Note the distinctive dark brown eye stripe, light eyebrow and dark crown. The introduced Mallard Duck cross-breeds with Black Duck and the offspring are a brownish colour, with a partial eye-stripe and orange legs.

Beak-to-tail: 48 – 60 cm



Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*

Out to sea
April - September



The **Black-browed Albatross** are large sea birds, most likely to be seen during winter when they move through Bass Strait in search of food. The best time to find albatross is on a very windy day, as they find it easier to fly when the wind is strong. The wings are very dark on top and also across the back. The underwing has thick, dark edges and a patch of white in the middle. They breed on sub-Antarctic islands.

Beak-to-tail: 85 – 95 cm

Wingspan: up to 2.5 m

Out to sea
April - December

Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*

The **Shy Albatross** is a large seabird. It is usually seen during winter, but can be seen at any time of year. The upper-wings are a dark grey and the underwings have a thin grey edge to the mostly white underwing. It is the only albatross to breed in Australian waters, with a colony on Albatross Island in Bass Strait. It has been more common than the Black-browed in the past few years.

Beak-to-tail: 90 - 100 cm

Wingspan: up to 2.5 m



Short-tailed Shearwater
Ardenna tenuirostris

Out to sea
October - April



The **Short-tailed Shearwater** is the Muttonbird of Bass Strait. It is one of Australia's most numerous birds, with flocks of many thousands able to be seen out to sea from the Bluff. They are mainly fish eaters and nest on Bass Strait islands in a burrow dug into the sand. These shearwaters complete a long migration north through the Pacific to near Alaska, before returning via the North American coast to arrive back in Australia in mid-September. They then depart around mid-April.

Beak-to-tail: 40 – 45 cm



Australasian Gannet *Morus serrator*

Out to sea
All year round



The **Australasian Gannet** is commonly seen out to sea from the Bluff, flying in small groups or in flocks of up to 100. It has a large wingspan and makes spectacular high-dives into the water. These gannets have distinctive buff-coloured heads with a black trailing edge to the underwing. They breed on Pope's Eye and Wedge Light structures in Port Phillip Bay.

Beak-to-tail: 90 cm

Wingspan: 1.5 – 2 m



Little Pied Cormorant

Microcarbo melanoleucos

On the beach

All year round



The **Little Pied Cormorant** is a small cormorant with white underparts and a black crown, neck and back. The bill is yellow and this bird has a white eyebrow that extends to the beak. These cormorants can form large flocks or they may be seen singly.

Beak-to-tail: 55 – 65 cm

On the beach

In the estuary

All year round

Great Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo



The **Great Cormorant** is mainly black, but has a yellow throat patch and facial skin. It is seen singly or in small groups. This cormorant inhabits freshwater wetlands or bays and estuaries.

Beak-to-tail: 75 – 90 cm

Little Black Cormorant

Phalacrocorax sulcirostris

On the beach

All year round



The **Little Black Cormorant** is a small, all-black cormorant that sometimes forms large flocks of many hundreds of birds. They locate fish from the air and then chase the prey underwater.

Beak-to-tail: 55 – 65 cm

In the estuary

Out to sea

All year round

Pied Cormorant

Phalacrocorax varius



The **Pied Cormorant** is a larger cormorant. It is black above and white below, with a pale-coloured beak and a yellow facial spot in front of the eye. It does not have a white eyebrow and can be seen in small numbers in the estuary or out to sea.

Beak-to-tail: 65 – 80 cm

White-faced Heron
Egretta novaehollandiae

On the beach
In the estuary
All year round



The **White-faced Heron** is commonly found in shallow wetlands and it will hunt for food along the foreshore or in the Barwon Estuary. It hunts by moving slowly through the water before lunging to catch prey in its long beak. The back of this heron is a powder grey and the underparts have light brown highlights. The face is white and the legs are yellow.

Beak-to-tail: 65 – 70 cm

Australian White Ibis

Threskiornis molucca

In the estuary
All year round



The **White Ibis** often has grubby plumage as it has learned to forage in rubbish tips and garbage bins. Its natural habitat is wetlands along the Barwon Estuary or on the foreshore. It is mainly white, with black tail feathers and black skin on the bare neck and head. During flight, narrow scarlet patches of skin can be seen on the underwing.

Beak-to-tail: 65 - 75 cm

Up in the sky
In the estuary
Flocks overhead Sep - Nov

Straw-necked Ibis

Threskiornis spinicollis

During spring, the **Straw-necked Ibis** grows yellow straw-like plumes on the upper chest and neck. Their back is a distinctive glossy black. Large flocks of these ibises can be seen flying in a V formation when the birds fly to grassy paddocks to feed before returning to their nesting colony on Mud Islands in Port Phillip Bay. By consuming large amounts of insects, they help farmers to be more productive. They also feed in shallow water such as the estuary.



Beak-to-tail: 60 – 70 cm

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus axillaris*

Up in the sky
All year round



The **Black-shouldered Kite** is an elegant small bird of prey with white plumage and a grey back. As the name of the bird implies, the adult (right) has a dark shoulder patch and dark red eyes. Young birds (above) have a reddish-brown wash on the head and breast and brownish-orange eyes. It feeds on insects and small animals like mice or skinks. They are not common, but sometimes they are seen hunting around the Bluff or along the dune area, often hovering in a stationary position waiting to spot any movement below.

Beak-to-tail: 35 – 38 cm

Wingspan: 80 – 95 cm



Nankeen Kestrel
Falco cenchroides

Up in the sky
All year round



The **Nankeen Kestrel** is a similar size to the Black-shouldered Kite, though by comparison, the wings and tail of the kestrel appear longer. Kestrels are regularly seen hovering effortlessly, for long periods of time, maintaining an almost motionless pose above the dunes or cliffs of the Bluff. The female is larger and has a brown crown and upper tail. The male has a grey crown and grey upper tail. Nankeen Kestrels feed on mice, small lizards and insects.

Beak-to-tail: 30 – 35 cm



Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*

On the beach
All year round



The **Red-capped Plovers** are small waders. They are breeding residents which nest in sandy areas where there are some shell fragments. This helps camouflage the naturally marked eggs and protects them from predators. The male has a bright orange/red cap with a dark stripe through the eye while the female is less boldly marked.

Beak-to-tail: 14 – 16 cm

On the beach
January - September

Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*

The **Double-banded Plover** differs in habit to other migratory waders as it arrives in autumn and departs for the breeding grounds in New Zealand by late winter. When it first arrives, the two chest bands may be seen. The impressive orange/brown chest band is separated from a dark band on the lower neck. The local mudflats are popular feeding areas.

Beak-to-tail: 18 – 21 cm



Pacific Golden Plover
Pluvialis fulva

On the beach
September - April



When the **Pacific Golden Plover** first arrives in September, it may still have the breeding plumage of bold black underparts and white stripe extending from the eyebrow to the shoulder, but it soon changes to the mottled golden brown of the non-breeding plumage. At high tide, small groups roost among rocks and at low tide they feed on mudflats. By April, the breeding plumage starts to return before these birds depart on the long flight to the nesting sites in Siberia or Alaska.

Beak-to-tail: 24 – 26 cm



Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis*

On the beach
All year round



The number of **Hooded Plovers** has declined over the past 50 years as increased human activities take place on the sandy beaches where it feeds and nests. Breeding season is from August to December, when the eggs are laid in a small scrape in the sand above high tide mark. The adult birds (above) are easily disturbed from their nests by people or dogs and the unguarded eggs are taken by gulls or ravens. The tiny chicks scurry along the beach with the adults, and their only defence is to lay still when danger approaches. This makes them vulnerable to being crushed by people, horses or vehicles. They are also easy prey for foxes, rats and cats. This small, plump wader can be easily identified by the dark head. Juvenile birds have light brown head markings (see front cover).



Beak-to-tail: 19 – 23 cm

Visit <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/our-projects/beach-nesting-birds.html> for more information about this endangered species.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*

In the estuary
All year round



The **Masked Lapwing** is an aggressive bird, defending its eggs and chicks by swooping any invaders and scolding them in a loud screeching voice. This allows them to raise young in urban areas where cats, dogs, possums and rats often take eggs or chicks. Nests are often in unusual places such as roundabouts, rooftops or football ovals. The birds were once known as Spur-winged Plovers. They are not true plovers, but are related to the lapwings from other parts of the world, so the name was changed.

Beak-to-tail: 35 – 40 cm

In the estuary
September - April

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Ruddy Turnstones are dumpy waders that act like small bulldozers as they move along the beach or rock platforms tossing aside rocks or seaweed in their search for sandhoppers and small molluscs. They migrate to breeding grounds in Eastern Siberia, departing around April and arriving back in the following September.

Beak-to-tail: 22 – 24 cm



Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Haematopus longirostris

In the estuary
All year round



The **Australian Pied Oystercatcher** is a larger wader that is a year-round resident on the Bluff. It has a striking red beak and legs, with white underparts and a black head and body. It nests on open beaches, so it has suffered from the increased human activity on local beaches. This oystercatcher feeds on marine worms, cockles and mussels.

Beak-to-tail: 42 – 50 cm

In the estuary
All year round

Sooty Oystercatcher

Haematopus fuliginosus

The **Sooty Oystercatcher** has a uniform black colour all over the body. The red bill and legs are thicker than the Pied Oystercatcher. This oystercatcher feeds on the rock platform, prising limpets, chitons and mussels from the rock or it may eat sandhoppers on the beach area. It is resident all year, but moves about the coastal areas.

Beak-to-tail: 40 – 52 cm



Caspian Tern
Hydroprogne caspia

In the estuary
All year round



The **Caspian Tern** is a large tern, easily distinguished by the massive bright red/orange bill and graceful flight on long shapely wings. It is seen in pairs or alone, cruising along the edge of the breakers or in the Barwon Estuary. It dives into the water to catch fish. This species of tern nests at Mud Islands.

Beak-to-tail: 48 – 55 cm

In the estuary
All year round

Crested Tern
Thalasseus bergii

The **Crested Tern** is the most numerous of the local species of tern. It appears to be similar to a Silver Gull at first glance. However, the dark cap, grey back and long, pointed wings help to distinguish it. These birds often roost opposite the jetty or on boats moored in the estuary. They are excellent fliers and are able to dive from great heights to catch fish they spy swimming below the surface.

Beak-to-tail: 43 – 48 cm



On the beach
Out to sea
All year round

Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*

The **Pacific Gull** is about twice the size of a Silver Gull and has a dark back and wings, with a black stripe across the tail. The tips of both parts of the bill are orange. Juveniles remain as brownish coloured birds until their third year when they complete the moult into the black and white plumage of the adults. The main diet is scavenged dead fish or marine animals.

Beak-to-tail: 50 – 65 cm



On the beach
Out to sea
All year round

Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*



Fifty years ago, the **Silver Gull** was considered to be uncommon, but it has benefitted from human activity and it is now very common. It nests in huge colonies at Mud Island, often travelling to nearby rubbish tips to scavenge for food. Its natural habitat is the shorelines and the ocean.

Beak-to-tail: 38 – 42 cm

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Calyptrorhynchus funereus

Up in the sky
Mainly Feb -Sep



The **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** is the largest local cockatoo and is black all over except for the distinctive yellow band across the tail and the yellow ear patch. Before European habitation, it ate banksia or sheoak seeds, but it now favours seeds from pine trees. To complete its diet, these parrots use their massive bills to crush the branches of wattles in search of succulent borer grubs. They were once very rare, but have been commonly seen since the mid-1990s.

Beak-to-tail: 55 – 65 cm

Up in the sky
All year round

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

Cacatua galerita

The **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** is an iconic species which has increased in numbers in the past decades. It has adapted to feed in farmland or in urban areas where the loud screeching call can often be heard as the flocks waken after dawn. Their rowdy habits and liking for chewing on wooden window frames have made them unpopular with some coastal residents.

Beak to tail: 45 – 50 cm



Galah
Eolophus roseicapillus

On the Bluff
All year round



Galahs have a grey back, a pale grey rump, a pink face and chest, and a light pink crest. The male has a very dark brown iris, and the female has a mid-brown/red irises. The first European settlers in this area rarely saw galahs but this colourful grazer parrot has adapted to eat cereal crops and other introduced species. It is also a popular visitor to the feeding tables that some people erect. The sight of these birds clowning around performing acrobatics on powerlines is very comical.

Beak-to-tail: 35 – 38 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Eastern Rosella
Platycercus eximius

The beautiful **Eastern Rosella** has a striking combination of bright colours. It frequents open forest areas but has adapted to living in urban zones where it may be seen in parks and gardens. Like many other parrots, the Eastern Rosella makes a nest in a hollow branch, but it is happy to use an artificially constructed nest box if hollow trees are not available.

Beak-to-tail: 30 – 35 cm



Crimson Rosella
Platycercus elegans

On the Bluff
Mainly Autumn - Winter



The bright crimson colour of the adult **Crimson Rosella** is very different to the olive-green plumage of juvenile birds. They predominantly feed on seeds. They are commonly seen during the winter months, but may be seen at any time. Unlike some parrots, they have a pleasant bell-like call.

Beak-to-tail: 32 – 37 cm



Barwon River

Birds on
the Bluff

← Birds on
the beach

↑ Up in the sky!!
Birds of prey

28W

Birds of the Bluff

Where to look for them

Birds of
the estuary



Birds out
to sea

On the Bluff
All year round

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*

The **Rainbow Lorikeet** is a very colourful parrot, which has become a common visitor to flowering plants and trees in coastal areas. In the local area, there are also many hybrid crosses with Musk Lorikeets or Scaly-breasted Lorikeets. These cross breeds came originally from cage birds that were released, but the offspring have bred locally.

Beak-to-tail: 26 – 31 cm



Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna*

On the Bluff
Mainly Autumn - Winter



When the local Bellarine Yellow Gums flower in winter, flocks of **Musk Lorikeets** arrive for the feast. At other times, small numbers may be seen in flowering trees such as the Tuart Gums in the Barwon Heads Caravan Park. The distinctive red cap and mark through the eye help to identify this species.

Beak-to-tail: 21 – 23 cm

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo

Chalcites basalis

On the Bluff
July - February



In late winter and spring, the call of the returning **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** can be heard as the bird sits perched near the top of a tree. The call is a repeated note with a descending inflection. If you have binoculars, you can note the bronze green sheen on the wings, a white eyebrow and rufous coloured outer tail feathers.

Beak-to-tail: 14 - 17 cm

On the Bluff
July - February

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo

Chalcites lucidus

The smaller **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** is similar to Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, but it is more brightly marked with iridescent green/brown on the wings, back and neck. The barring on the chest of adult birds is complete, without the central break of the Horsfield's. The call has an upward inflection – not unlike a human whistling a dog.

Beak-to-tail: 16 – 18 cm



Pallid Cuckoo

Cacomantis pallidus

On the Bluff

July - February



The large **Pallid Cuckoo** is often heard at the beginning of spring. The loud call of about 8 notes ascends the musical scale. Like all the cuckoos, this bird parasitises other species, laying eggs in the nests of other birds, so that the host bird species raises the cuckoo chick.

Beak-to-tail: 28 - 34 cm

On the Bluff

Mainly July - February

Fan-tailed Cuckoo

Cacomantis flabelliformis

A few **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** may stay around all year. However, the majority spend the winter in northern Australia like the other cuckoo species and return in early spring. Favourite species that are parasitised include fairy-wrens, thornbills or honeyeaters.

Beak-to-tail: 25 - 27 cm



Superb Fairy-Wren
Malurus cyaneus

On the Bluff
All year round



The sight of a stunning **Superb Fairy-wren** brings delight to all. The beautiful male "blue wren" is kept busy with a small harem of female "jenny wrens". The females are generally a brown colour with reddish tail feathers. The young males are like the females, but with a bluish tinge to the tail feathers and darker beak and eye surrounds.

Beak-to-tail: 13 – 14 cm



White-browed Scrubwren
Sericornis frontalis

On the Bluff
All year round



Hidden amongst the denser undergrowth, the **White-browed Scrubwren** is often detected by the scolding call it makes when intruders enter its territory. It also has a pleasant territorial song that can be heard, at any time of year, when the birds are breeding. Look for the distinctive white eyebrow that is more boldly marked in the male. Two small white flashes on the wings also help to identify this small bird from other "little brown birds". It is a year-round resident.

Beak-to-tail: 11 - 13 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Striated Fieldwren
Calamanthus fuliginosus



The **Striated Field Wren** is a show-off, perching at the top of a bush with its tail cocked vertically and singing loudly to proclaim its territory. The song is loud for such a small bird. The brownish plumage has bold dark streaks on both the back and chest of the bird. It prefers saltmarsh or the coastal heath and dune vegetation.

Beak-to-tail: 13 - 14 cm

Spotted Pardalote
Pardalotus punctatus

On the Bluff
Nomadic



The **Spotted Pardalote** is an endearing small bird with jewel-like plumage. The call of the Spotted Pardalote can be heard from high in the gum trees where they feed. The call is bell-like, with a note followed by two notes close together. If these tiny birds come down lower to allow easier viewing, the splendid colours and markings can be fully appreciated. They often allow you to get very close if you move slowly and quietly. The nest is a burrow into a sandy bank, compost heap or hanging garden basket. The female (right) has a cream throat and the male has a yellow throat and breast.

Beak-to-tail: 8 – 10 cm



Yellow-rumped Thornbill

Acanthiza chrysorrhoa

On the Bluff

All year round



Commonly known as "tom tits" or "butter-bums", these small **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** show a flash of yellow on the rump when they fly. They prefer to be near trees or bushes, but spend much of their time feeding on the ground. Look for them in short grass, such as on the football ground or around the caravan park.

Beak-to-bill: 11 – 12 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Brown Thornbill

Acanthiza pusilla

The small **Brown Thornbill** is reasonably common, but not well recognised. The chest and throat have striations of dark streaks and the crown and rump are tawny brown. They make a pleasant song as small family groups flitter about in the bushy undergrowth of the Bluff or search for insects in the foliage of trees.

Beak-to-Bill: 9 – 10 cm



Eastern Spinebill
Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris

On the Bluff
Mainly April - August



The main breeding site of the **Eastern Spinebill** is near the Otway Ranges, but they move into the Barwon Heads area around April each year. The long thin bill that gives the bird its name is used to reach deep into flowers to collect pollen and nectar. It appreciates the banksias and other flowers of the Bluff, but it is quite at home in urban gardens. As it moves about, it keeps in contact by calling a repeated single whistled note. The male has bolder markings, but both sexes have eye-catching markings of orange/brown, black and white.

Beak-to-tail: 14 – 16 cm

Yellow-faced Honeyeater

Lichenostomus chrysops

On the Bluff
April - August



Yellow-faced Honeyeaters leave the Otway Ranges and many thousands may pass through the Barwon Heads area, on migration to the north, during Autumn. Sometimes the flocks navigate along the Barwon and rest for some time at the Bluff. A few birds may stay around for all the winter if there is a good supply of blossoming eucalypts.

Beak-to-tail: 16 – 18 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

Acanthagenys rufogularis

Until recent times, the **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** was rarely seen, but it is now quite common along the coastal zone. It can be distinguished from the slightly larger Red Wattlebird by the pinkish base of the bill and apricot coloured chest. When it flies, the end of the tail is white. It is seen in pairs or small groups and the loud gurgling call is very distinctive.

Beak-to-tail: 23 – 26 cm



Singing Honeyeater
Lichenostomus virescens

On the Bluff
All year round



The larger **Singing Honeyeater**, in Victoria, is a bird of the coastal scrub west of Western Port Bay. The other zone where it is found in Victoria is the drier Mallee area. It is often heard singing from the top of a tall bush or tree on the Bluff or along the dune system of Thirteenth Beach. Its preferred foods is the berries of local shrubs, but it also feeds on nectar. Some innovative birds have discovered that the dregs of a camper's coffee cup may also contain a sweet drink.

Beak-to-tail: 18 – 22 cm

White-plumed Honeyeater *Lichenostomus penicillatus*

On the Bluff
All year round



The small, greenish **White-plumed Honeyeater** is found in open woodland where smooth-barked eucalypts are growing. The white plume below the ear is sometimes difficult to see, but the overall olive-green plumage helps to identify this species from other honeyeaters. It is a year-round resident, often found in small groups that keep in contact with the cheery "do-wheet" or "chick-o-wee" call.

Beak-to-tail: 15 - 17 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*

The **New Holland Honeyeater** is a chirpy little bird which is very friendly. At times, groups of more than 10 birds will gather for a "corroboree" of singing and chasing each other about in a playful manner. The yellow flash on the wings is easily seen. The head is mainly black, with a small white cheek-patch and a white eyebrow.

Body length: 17 - 19 cm



Little Wattlebird
Anthochaera chrysoptera

On the Bluff
All year round



The Coastal Banksias planted around Barwon Heads are the favoured trees of the **Little Wattlebird**, but they will visit other trees or plants when they are flowering. The raucous call attracts attention, but the best way to identify this species is from the dark plumage, with white streaks that covers the whole bird. When it flies, the wings have flashes of orange/brown.

Beak-to-tail: 27 -31 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Red Wattlebird
Anthochaera carunculata

The loud call of the **Red Wattlebird** is heard all year around. It is the largest of the local honeyeaters, with a red fleshy lobe hanging below its cheek and streaked white underparts. It sometimes nests in trees in residential gardens or around the caravan park.

Beak-to-tail: 32 – 36 cm



Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Coracina novaehollandiae

On the Bluff
Mainly September - May



The chirring call of this handsome bird is often the first indication of its presence. **Black-faced Cuckoo shrikes** often perch high in gum trees where they feed on insects and grubs. They are able to eat the woolly caterpillars whose hairs cause other birds discomfort. Young birds do not have the full black mask on the face and neck of the adults.

Beak-to-tail: 30 – 36 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Grey Shrike-thrush
Colluricincla harmonica

The **Grey Shrike-Thrush** is a plain grey bird with a brown back. It has a wide range of loud melodic calls that can be heard early in the morning. Some calls are short single notes and other calls have a range of notes. It is a resident of open forests and coastal scrub where it feeds on insects and other invertebrates.

Beak-to-tail: 22 – 25 cm



Grey Butcherbird

Cracticus torquatus

On the Bluff
All year round



Butcherbirds look a bit like a miniature kookaburra, with a similar shaped beak and body. The adult has a black head, grey back and black wingtips and tail. Juveniles have a brown head and back. The underparts are a light grey. Its name is derived from its habit of hanging its prey of small lizards, mice or young birds on a fork on a branch. It may be a day or two before it returns to eat the decaying meat. The call is a loud, rollicking tune.

Beak-to-tail: 25 – 30 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Australian Magpie

Cracticus tibicen

The **Magpie** must be one of our best known birds. The local sub-species has a white back with the males having a bright white back and the females having darker speckling across the back. Magpies feed on small invertebrates or reptiles. The nest is constructed in a tall tree and is made from sticks and often contains man-made objects such as bits of wire, plastic or coat hangers.

Beak-to-tail: 38 – 45 cm



Little Raven *Corvus mellori*

Up in the sky
All year round



There are three similar raven species in the Geelong district, but usually only the **Little Raven** visits the Bluff area. It lacks the long throat hackles of the Australian Raven. Large flocks congregate on the sand dunes to feast on the white berries of the Coast Beard Heath in mid-summer. They also eat insects and carrion.

Beak-to-tail: 48 – 50 cm

Up in the sky
All year round

Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*

Although the **Pied Currawong** is sometimes mistaken as a raven, the yellow eye-ring and white flash on the rump and wings helps to identify this bird. The loud, wailing call is often heard in the evening as groups of birds return to roost. Its numbers are increasing. It feeds on berries, insects and small lizards. They also take small birds, with a group of currawongs attacking together to rob nestlings during the breeding season. This may lead to a decrease in the population of some smaller birds.

Beak-to-tail: 42 – 50 cm



Grey Fantail
Rhipidura albiscapa

On the Bluff
All year round



Grey Fantails have the nickname of "cranky fan". They very rarely sit still, and the large fantail is in continual motion. These inquisitive birds will often approach quite close to people. Their excellent flying skills allow them to catch small insects and also evade predators such as cats. Their nest is carefully crafted from spiderwebs.

Beak-to-tail:14 – 17 cm

On the Bluff
On the beach
All year round

Willie Wagtail
Rhipidura leucophrys

Willy Wagtails are a well known year-round inhabitant of bushland, parks, coastal scrub and urban gardens. They help to keep the mosquito population down and also eat other insects. The "sweet-pretty-creature" call is often heard in the middle of the night, especially on moonlit nights.

Beak-to-tail: 19 – 22 cm



Magpie-lark
Grallina cyanoleuca

On the Bluff
All year round



Known as a Peewee in some parts of Australia, the Magpie-lark has adapted well to living with humans. It can be found in parks and open areas where it forages for worms and insects. The nest is made from mud and attached to the branch of a gum tree or other tall trees. The male (above) has a black throat and white eye-brow while the female (below) has a white throat and no eye-brow.

Beak-to-tail: 26 - 30 cm



Flame Robin
Petroica phoenicea

On the Bluff
April - September



In early April, **Flame Robins** return to the open areas around the Bellarine Peninsula. Some have spent the summer in the Otway Ranges where they nest, and it is possible other birds may even travel from Tasmania. The males have a brilliant flame-orange breast and throat, with a grey back and head. Females are dull brownish birds with whitish wing-bars.

Beak-to-tail: 13 – 14 cm

On the Bluff
All year round

Eastern Yellow Robin
Eopsaltria australis

The **Eastern Yellow Robin** is a friendly and inquisitive species. The birds have a grey back and head, with yellow underparts, so they are easy to identify. Their usual call is a three note piping whistle.

Beak-to-Bill: 15 – 16 cm



Silvereye
Zosterops lateralis

On the Bluff
All year round



Silvereyes are named for their prominent white eye ring. The head and rump are pale olive-coloured and the throat is greenish-yellow. They love to eat the fruit of the Kangaroo Apple, despite the fruit being poisonous to humans during most of the time it is growing. They also eat insects, nectar and fruit. During winter, the Tasmanian sub-species, with brownish flanks, flies in across Bass Strait while the birds that have bred locally move further north.

Beak-to-tail: 10 – 12 cm

Welcome Swallow
Hirundo neoxena

Up in the sky
Mainly September - May



Welcome Swallows are usually seen as they fly about trying to catch insects on the wing. The long, forked tail helps distinguish them from martins. If they sit on a fence or a tree or a powerline, you can check the beautiful glossy blue back, rusty coloured face and upper chest. The nest is built from mud, with the favoured site often being under a verandah or inside a building.

Beak-to-tail: 14 – 15 cm

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PAGE
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Disclaimer

All due care has been taken to provide factual information in this guide. It is intended to be a simple guide to the remarkable bird life of our Bluff and should be considered as such.

For more comprehensive information, please visit www.birdsaustralia.com.au

Friends of the Bluff, 2010

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**For more information on Barwon Bluff Marine Sanctuary
visit our website at www.barwonbluff.com.au**



"There is nothing in which birds differ more from man than the way in which they build and yet leave a landscape as it was before."

Robert Wilson Lynd



Front cover - Hooded Plover - adults with juvenile in middle

Back cover - Singing Honeyeater - photography by Craig Morley

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