



Seatrees

November 2018

Issue 7



Male



Female

Our Spotted Pardalote pair worked for days digging out and lining their nest hole in the side of a rocky clay bank. How fortunate we were to be able to see the magic. Their hard work paid dividends for one of Australia's smallest and most beautiful birds when they successfully raised their chicks.

Star-filled Nights and Moon Eclipse

Seatrees is a perfect dark night venue for seeing the most brilliant displays of stars and the moon on clear nights.

A new study has found that a third of the Earth's population can't see the Milky Way in the night sky because of light pollution, and it's getting worse. Until relatively recently, every living person on this planet could look up at night and see the galaxy we live in. An author of the study, Fabio Falchi, describes his findings as a "cultural loss of unprecedented magnitude...."

Our friend Don Gogerly, an astro photographer, took these awe-inspiring photos of the night sky from our front decking at Seahouse.

Above: The night sky hovers over Seatrees Photo by Don Gogley

Above left: Orchid on moss track at Seatrees

"The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff."

— Carl Sagan, Cosmos



The Milky Way with Mars shining bright, as seen from Seahouse. Photo by Don Gogley

On July 27 this year we were also treated to a rare and historical vision of the Blood Moon, which was the longest total lunar eclipse of the 21st century. During the eclipse the moon turned a deep red colour as it entered the depths of Earth's shadow. The colour change happens because Earth's atmosphere acts as both a lens and a scattering medium for the sun's light. This lunar eclipse coincided with Mars being nearly as close as possible to Earth, a concurrence that happens once every 25,000 years.



The Blood Moon Eclipse. Photo by Willie Bedford

“Meanwhile the Cosmos is rich beyond measure: the total number of stars in the universe is greater than all the grains of sand on all the beaches of the planet Earth.”

— Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*

The Day Jubilation Turned to Horror: Whale Entangled

One of the greatest joys of living at Seatrees is to watch whales swim by, usually in their high migration season between July and October. Watching a whale breach and emerge with its flukes up high out of the water is a captivating sight. Late afternoon on September 12th, such joy turned into horror as an endangered Southern Right Whale emerged from a dive entangled in craypot ropes and buoys.

Reporting this highly distressing incident immediately to the Whale and Dolphin Emergency Hotline was all we could do for the thrashing and captured whale. Fortunately DELWP reacted swiftly and with great professionalism initiating an extensive operation for the following day, as the fading light meant crews simply did not have enough time to hit the water. Meanwhile, just before dark the whale managed to free itself from the pot, but was swimming slowly past Seatrees with all the entanglement still wrapped around its tail and body.

Next morning at dawn a full-scale operation was activated with an aircraft attempting to try to spot the whale which apparently can swim 200kms in a day. The state government set up an incident room in Colac with the whale's condition considered an emergency. Boat crews trained in disentanglement procedures awaited at Apollo Bay Harbour to go into action once the whale was spotted.

Despite a week-long air search of the entire Victorian coastline and alerts issued interstate, the whale was not spotted. Unlike its fellow whale from Portland in August, disentanglement could not take place.

Entanglements are an Australian and global issue for our precious marine life that should concern us all. The good news that can't be implemented soon enough is that an innovative company from Canada is trialing a ropeless crayfish/lobster trap. They are working on developing a submersible buoy that goes down with the pot and is geo-trackable.



Entangled whale close off the shore at Seatrees

It was ironic in terms of timing that our whale got trapped in the last week of the crayfish season when all pots have to be removed. Just a few days later it would have been safe to swim the seas.

Our spirits rose two weeks later when an entangled whale was spotted near St Helens on the Tasmanian east coast over 200 kilometres from Apollo Bay. Another rescue operation was launched but with no results.

Our endangered Southern Right whale may now be heading back to its feeding grounds in the Antarctic forever encumbered with fishing equipment still wrapped around its body and tail. The hope is that it survives, but all entangling material is life-threatening and could persist for many years.

Owls and Kestrel on view - but a disastrous season for many



Nankeen Kestrel at Seatrees

The Nankeen Kestrel is one of the smallest falcons. They do not rely on speed to catch their prey. Instead, it simply perches to spot its prey, but it also has a distinctive technique of hovering while hunting, beating its wings rapidly while keeping its head and body still.

Beautiful Barn Owls and stunning Nankeen Kestrels have been regular visitors to Seatrees over the winter months but have sadly suffered, particularly in South West Victoria. There are various theories of why this has happened.

Bird Life Australia and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) have named rat bait as being the most likely cause of death in barn owls. Research is showing significant levels of pesticide in many of our owl and raptor populations.

But the large increase in sick and injured owls and kestrels can also be attributed to starvation. Editor of Australian Birdlife Magazine Sean Dooley thinks drought might be playing a part.

"Inland drought conditions and related summer rodent plagues could have caused an increase in owl populations over the warmer months," he said. He proposed that the onset of cold weather might have pushed the owls and kestrels to unknown, coastal territories looking for new food sources. "Once they're out of their territory, they're less successful at finding the food," he said.

The heart-shaped structure of the Barn Owls facial disc is unique to these types of owls. This allows the slightest sound waves to be channelled toward the ears, so the owl can pinpoint prey even in complete darkness.



Barn Owl visitor in back garden

Recent Seatrees Wildlife Shelter Patients

This secretive Bassian Thrush hit a window, but after rest and treatment, jumped out of her rehabilitation basket and hopped quickly into the bush. Most often this beautifully marked bird is seen scratching under leaf litter. If disturbed, it crouches on the ground and freezes, relying on its scaly and scalloped patterned plumage to conceal its presence.



Bassian Thrush



Pinkie Brushtail Possum

How perfectly formed is this tiny Pinkie Brushtail whose mother was killed on the Great Ocean Road last summer. We struggled for weeks in an attempt to save her but after two months she died overnight - warm, snug and fed in her pouch.

This beautiful orphaned wallaby named Pippi came into care in February. She required six feeds of special marsupial milk a day. Once her rehabilitation treatment was stabilised we handed her over to a new carer in our Otway Wildlife Group so she could be trained in caring for wallaby joeys. Lee did a wonderful job raising her and taking her through to adolescence which took eight months. Pippi is now released back in the wild enjoying her second chance of life.



Wallaby Joey



Ringtail Joey

Scout, this Ringtail joey, came into care as an orphaned 80gm possum in early September. Unlike all my other possum rehabbers – and I must have had over seventy or so – Scout has proved to be quite a handful to catch and feed. She ran the gauntlet scratching and biting until I captured her safely in her pouch to feed her the essential amount of milk. Now she has grown and is self-feeding and my hands are slowly recovering from their injuries. Her independent attitude should prove a positive once she is released back into the wild.

Ancient Coastline

The Marengo volcanic rockface in front of Seatrees is millions of years old. It displays some wonderful sculptured shapes. Here are a few of them:



Photo by Tim Schroeder



It seems to me that we all look at nature too much, and live with her too little.

- Oscar Wilde

Seatrees Wildlife Booklets



**Seatrees Wildlife Shelter
- Mammals -**

Seatrees Mammals

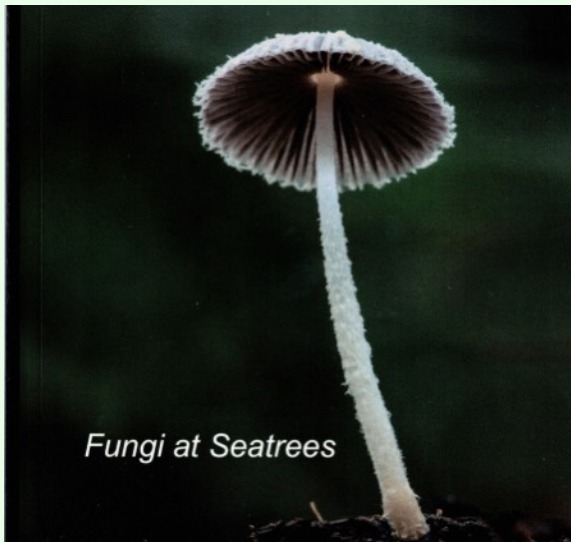
presents photographs of over forty-nine beautiful creatures, many of whom we have had the privilege of rescuing and restoring to a full life at Seatrees.

Seatrees Birds

contains a selection of the 120 species of birds recorded on the property. It features photos of birds with a little information on each.



**Seatrees Wildlife
- Birds -**



Fungi at Seatrees

Fungi at Seatrees

provides photographs and descriptions of sixteen quite common fungi, ranging from the tiniest to larger. There is also information on the crucial role fungi play in contributing to the health of all plants and its role in recycling organic matter, as well as being a source of food for our Seatrees wallabies. *Fungi at Seatrees* was produced in conjunction with Alison Pouliot, environmental photographer and fungus expert.

Copies of each title can be purchased for a \$20 (per book) donation to our wildlife shelter.
Contact us on 0407 530 960 or email jenny@life.net.au

Donations to our Seatrees wildlife shelter are greatly appreciated.
By mail to Post Office Box 83, Apollo Bay, VIC 3233 or by direct deposit to
Seatrees Foundation, Bendigo Bank, BSB 633 000 Account 163 006 406