

INSIGHT #3 - Happy New Year!

February 2011



Greetings to everyone! Wherever you may be reading this, I hope you are safe, well and happy!

As I write this, a beautiful Kambekor (also Kambyne, Nyoongar for Tawny Frogmouth) is sitting about 5 metres away outside my office window, perched on a horizontal limb and tucked neatly against the trunk of a sheoak tree. His camouflage is perfect. The squabbling magpies already drew me outside once to investigate, but I couldn't see anything suspicious. A raven had also come in for a look, and he croaked a couple of warning calls, making me squint and scan the trees carefully for a bird of prey. Nothing. I then searched the ground for a snake or goanna - birds are very good indicators of predatory animals. Still nothing. I went back inside and kept working, but the magpies persisted their cackling. It was only on the second check that I noticed him. A large blob partly covered by the needle-leaves of the sheoak. Glowing yellow eyes concealed snugly inside wiry, blunt-edged brows, a massive, broad bill. Like an old rustic custard-spoon. Grey feathers streaked with black, and chocolate-brown markings. Just like bark. What an

exciting garden visitor!

Sitting back in my office chair, I now know he is there, just outside. And my office-bound tasks are made all the better for knowing.

Wildlife like this surrounds us every day of our busy lives. It crawls, creeps, flies, hops, sleeps, roosts, snuggles, bites, hunts, eats, climbs and scurries its way around our backyards and homes. Obviously there is a huge variation in the number of species, and which ones, we are lucky enough to see. But there is always *SOMETHING*, from the deep in the city to the bushy suburbs, to take notice of, and this is my mission in life: to share these happenings of the natural world to other humans, through stories, photographs and films. To act as an interface between the natural world and the human one. I hope to continually draw people's attention to the exciting wildlife encounters that we can all have if we just open our eyes. I know many of you reading this already do this, but many of you may not, and whichever the case, it is easy to forget how rich in nature we are in Western Australia, despite the changes that have occurred in the last few centuries. What has been done in the past is done - we need to appreciate what we have now, and move forward with a positive outlook for the future. Positive thinking = positive doing! I believe that by appreciating our natural world our lives are enriched *enormously!*

Anyway, enough ramble, lets give you some NEWS! Firstly, I'd like to wish you all a HAPPY NEW YEAR! I hope you all had a safe, relaxing and enjoyable break over Christmas and the New Year. Although it's now already February (crikey!), it still feels like a new refreshed beginning.

### UNI is OVER!

One thing I've been up to over the holiday season is finalising the corrections on my Masters thesis from New Zealand, which is now finally done and dusted! Wahooo! I now just need to hear the final ok from Otago Uni, then I can print and bind the final copies and get my piece of paper - HOOORAY! It certainly felt like a truck had been lifted from my back after I finished the writing and pressed the 'send' button. Despite this signalling an end to my studies in New Zealand (at LAST, I hear you cry!), the

memories of my time there remain strong and, although I find it hard to believe that it was THREE YEARS ago that I embarked and 'skipped over the dutch', I feel very lucky to have met many amazing people and had even more amazing experiences since.

Many of you 'long-term members' of iNSiGHT News will remember the early days of these emails, which were crafted in a dark Dunedin internet café, where they began as wafflings about my NZ experiences in 2009. If you are having cravings of hearing some more NZ jokes, or, if you are newer to the scene and haven't heard any before, then don't despair! I have now archived all my SUNZ (Simmo's Update of New Zealand) emails and placed them in the 'News' section of my website. Feel free to click the link below and scroll to the bottom to start reading.... and laughing!

[http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon\\_Cherriman/News/Archive.html](http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Archive.html)

Once again, the upcoming DVD of 'A Wedged Tale' has been delayed because of harddrive failure! In the last couple of months I've had TWO of my Video Footage hard drives crash, never to work again, unless I had a spare \$2000 to fork out for professional data recovery. Normally I have these things backed up, but this time both the original drive and the backup drive went. I was working on the 'making of' documentary when I went to source some eagle footage, which I devastatedly found to be MISSING - I hadn't realised this when the drives first crashed. So for a moment, I had lost all of my wedge-tailed eagle footage shot since the beginning of 2010... but thanks to my friend Adam, who also had backups of this in America, I am able to recover the footage by sending him a new drive. So currently I'm waiting for the post to arrive before I get back into the DVD making. It's frustrating. I'm taking bloody ages I know - I'm sorry! Just don't hold your breath.... and Watch - This - Space!

## Wildlife Waffle

Speaking of news updates, I'm still adding regular observations to the 'News' section of my website. Usually there is about 1 update per week, so keep an eye on the site for interesting news and information about what I've seen running past lately! You can also visit the homepage,

and hit the 'Facebook Like Button' (sorry, I've fallen in with modern times too!). I'm hoping to get as many 'Likes' as possible to increase the awareness about what I'm up to.

Since the last newsletter, there's been some interesting snippets. Tortoises next to the airport runway, scrub-wrens nesting at my friend's doorstep, and some interesting finds during a Fauna Monitoring Field-trip from the Banksia Woodland north of Perth. Then in the New Year came some nesting Bayswater Bee-eaters, a family of Frogmouths (the Tawny variety!) in the hills, and some tiny hatchling duck-billed pigeons (also known as Common Bronzewings). But the most exciting news came from a trip back to the Porongurups, where I was THRILLED to find that a pair of **Endangered Gnoolarks (Carnaby's Black Cockatoo)** had nested inside a nest-box that Jeff and I made three years ago! Photographs of the large chick, which was almost ready to fledge in early January, can be seen here:

[http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon\\_Cherriman/News/Entries/2011/12/29\\_An\\_Endangered\\_Cockatoo.html](http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/News/Entries/2011/12/29_An_Endangered_Cockatoo.html)

## Nest Boxes and Education

Speaking of nest boxes.... another project I've started and am keen to get running further along is a School Nestboxes Activity. After months of driving past their skip-bins, I finally got round to getting in touch with the construction company Macmahon. This is the company in charge of the Great Eastern Hwy - Roe Hwy interchange project, where they have been building a big overpass for about the past year. After telling them who I was and what my plans for nest boxes were, the staff kindly donated lots of scrap material, mostly Form Ply, which was otherwise destined for landfill. Making nest-boxes from scrap material is SO REWARDING: it involves planning, design, construction (all hands-on things!), makes you feel good for recycling material that would otherwise be wasted, and gives you an opportunity to help and learn about local wildlife in your area. Next time you pass a Roadside Collection or see some wood in a rubbish bin - think about what uses you can put it to!

My plan is to get an education program going where school children (Primary and High) build nest boxes, have them installed in their school somewhere, then keep tabs

on what animals use them. I then want to get an online forum set up where children can share their observations about animals that might use their box. Some places could be in the range for breeding Endangered Black Cockatoos, so these could have large cocky boxes installed in their school!

If you work at a school, or know someone who does, [please forward them my details](#) and get them to email me. I can then send a project proposal. A picture of the first cockatoo box (yet to be painted) made from recycled material is at the end of this email. With word of mouth I hope to reach hundreds of children this year.

## Bird Walks

are ticking along slowly, with the next one coming up in March. This time it will be an evening/twilight walk on Sunday 4th March, so bring a torch and come along! We meet at the Hills Forest Discovery Centre, have a brief chat and I'll show you some bird nests, then we go for a walk and finish up with some refreshments back at the centre. After this, the next walk is scheduled for 1st April - this will be an early morning walk again, starting at 7am. Bookings are essential, and all the information can be found here:

[http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon\\_Cherriman/Whats\\_On.html](http://www.simoncherriman.com/Simon_Cherriman/Whats_On.html)

The inaugural walk kicked off in early December and it was a GREAT success! I'd like to thank everyone who came along. The walk was fully booked and the 12 lovely people who attended were lucky enough to see both Red-winged and Splendid Fairy-wrens, and even a Peregrine Falcon! For those interested, a list of the 28 species we saw during the 2-hour walk can be seen at the bottom of this email.

And speaking of the bottom of the email, I'd better make this just about it and wrap things up - otherwise you will never get to the end! I hope you've enjoyed reading this update and please let me know if you can help with the Nest Box project.

Happy New Year, Happy February, and Happy trails enjoying our wonderful world of wildlife!

Best Wishes,

Simon

🌳 Save a tree, please don't print this e-mail unless necessary

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APPENDICES...



From rubbish to habitat: a Black Cockatoo Nest Box



The elusive Red-winged Fairy-wren seen on the inaugural bird walk:

#### Mundaring Weir Bird List (11th Dec 2011)

Common Bronzewing  
Rufous Whistler  
Golden Whistler  
Striated Pardalote  
White-browed Scrubwren  
Western Gerygone  
Weebill  
Inland Thornbill  
Western Thornbill  
Australian Ringneck  
Red-capped Parrot  
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo  
Shining Bronze-cuckoo  
Fan-tailed Cuckoo  
Grey Currawong  
Australian Magpie  
Grey Butcherbird  
Australian Raven  
Peregrine Falcon  
Australian Wood Duck

Red-winged Fairy-wren  
Splendid Fairy-wren  
Brown Honeyeater  
Red Wattlebird  
New Holland Honeyeater  
Silvereye  
Western Yellow Robin  
Laughing Kookaburra