

Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher, Jim Butler

MY LOCAL PATCH (PART 2)

It is only through the creation of a "local patch" that some aspects of bird life can be learnt. Certain understandings are only available to someone who visits and observes over an extended time; minimum a year, preferably many years. This is because the local patch has its own set of habitats and therefore is attractive to a select range of bird species. For some birds species their presence in the local patch is connected to the yearly cycle



of the seasons, whereas for other birds it does not matter. It is the observation of this changing bird population within the unchanging local patch that allows the pattern of bird movements to emerge.

What I learnt as I created my local patch at the Gap Creek Reserve was astounding. I became aware of the birds that are resident all year round and how they live through the seasonal variability: Treecreepers for example. I can record the arrival of the summer migrants and four months later,

their departure: summer cuckoos will place their eggs in which nests this year? Similarly in winter, I can measure the time the Rose Robin remains in my patch and delight in its aerial foraging. And then there are those large birds, for example the Powerful Owl, for whom my

patch is only a tiny part of their large territory of many square kilometres. I have only seen the Owls twice but what a reward!

There are so many rewards from creating a 'local patch'. It

takes time but it transforms the patch of bush forever. It creates a mosaic of highlights that are attached to individual trees in an otherwise anonymous patch of bush. It is personal, it is enduring, and it doesn't exclude others.

Happy systematic birding!

~ Jim

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Image: Spectacular White-eared Monarch
Image taken by Ed Frazer at Brookfield, 16 May