

Outing to Chauvel Park, Chipping Norton Sydney

16 April 2016.

Ian Bailey

Eleven enthusiasts gathered on a fine autumn morning to survey a section of the banks of the Georges River at Chipping Norton. The area had previously been surveyed for about 3 years, about 9 times per year for a total of 28 checklists to date, and a total of 94 species recorded.

The 1.8 km section of the river is tidal and a week ago a three metre Bull Shark had been sighted. We decided swimming was out! The tide was just below full and receding, meaning there was not much exposed mud along the fairly steep river banks.

A group of experienced bird watchers will always find very nearly all species around as the eyes and ears are well tuned and today we finished with a total of 41 species, including one not seen recently.

The usual plentiful population of Noisy Miners and Rainbow Lorikeets started the list without too much excitement. Grey Butcherbirds are always around (bred here last year) and Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Magpie Lark and Willie Wagtail are never missing. We may have expected more water birds as only Pacific Black Ducks of the Anas family were recorded as we were not sure about a distant pair, on the other side of the fairly broad Lake Moore and possibly Chestnut Teal (not listed) and the best 'Dip' of the day was the Coot. There were three Cormorant species (no Pied) and a White-faced Heron and a Great Egret which is seen only occasionally.

Just as we were thinking that White-bellied Sea-Eagle has been seen here, at the back of the Warwick Farm STW, there it was! Perched in a large eucalypt overlooking Lake Moore AND only metres away in the tree, was a Grey Goshawk! The Goshawk is an addition to the Chauvel Park list at number 95. Although quite distant, they were not a bad opportunity for photos.

For most of us, the sighting of a single Restless Flycatcher, quite a way over a backwater of the river, was a real find. The species has not been recorded here in the last three years anyway, so it was added to the list at number 96. It is hoped that a few pictures will make it possible to show the differences between this bird and the Willie Wagtail which is very similar. A few observers commented on the deep blue sheen the Flycatcher had in the sunshine. It will be an "alert" species over the next few months to see if it stays around and whether it has any friends.

During the morning, a local gent spoke with Ian as he had thought this might be a good place to photograph birds, a total coincidence of meeting, and Bob Storey, the Environment Officer of Liverpool Action Group joined us for a few minutes. He explained the restoration work done by the group along a section of the river bank which is fairly heavily infested with lantana and vines.

A fine morning, a happy time had by all and 41 species in 3 hours. What more could you want? See **eBird, Chauvel Park Chipping Norton**, for a full list of species today and the complete list of birds seen during this series of audits.

The Restless Flycatcher photographed and shown here is the bird we saw at Chipping Norton. I thought it might work to show the features of that bird as compared to a similar photo of a Willie Wagtail.



Can you tell the difference? The Restless Flycatcher, top, photographed by Greg McLachlan at Chipping Norton 16 April 2016, compared to the Willie Wagtail pictured by Charles Dove about the same time, clearly shows the differences.

The Flycatcher is white under and right up to the lower bill, with a faint wash of buff across the breast; deep satin-blue back seen best in the sunlight and a straight narrow tail.

The Wagtail has a black chin, white eyebrows and a slightly fanned tail and its rapid flittering about. However, at a distance, it would be easy to miss the Flycatcher thinking it to be the Wagtail that is much more common in many areas. Both birds are very active when feeding. Both are about 20 cm long and both are often seen alone.

In future, I will take more notice of the birds I put down as Willie Wagtails, promise.

That's what my binoculars are for!

Ian Bailey, 27 April 2016.