**Little Eagle on Moncrieff Ridge**

Bill Graham 10.February 2023

Yesterday, I was at Moncrieff Ridge, in the evening, before sunset looking for kangaroos. My daughter-in-law’s father had arrived from South Korea that day and that’s why we were there. I noticed Dusky Woodswallows hawking so decided to return the next day. The background is that I have just had one week of mild COVID followed by another week being mostly housebound due to lack of energy and slight nausea and temperature if I walked even a short distance.

I knew Moncrieff Ridge was quiet a hotspot as I usually included it in eBird as part of the Amaroo District Playing Fields. The last recorded sighting of a Little Eagle there was in 2014 by P. Milburn. The closest recent sightings have been at North Mulligans and Mulligans Flat in 2021. Ten years ago, when I moved into Bonner and there were only a few houses on the Horse Park leasehold side of the suburb, a Little Eagle flew over our house a couple of times but I do not recall making a record of it.

The Ridge itself it quite untidy and scruffy, with long grass and weeds and a decent spread of original woodland. And a creek that originates in the Horse Park wetland on the east side and ponds on the west. An extensive urban development will add to Jacka in the north. It will take up about half of Horse Park and leave the homestead, yards, front paddocks and wetlands intact. I say this as time will tell how much longer the Little Eagle will venture this far into suburbia.

Moncrief Ridge is well landscaped with a footpath that goes around like a lasso and surprisingly, leaves the main part of the ridge alone. This morning I was astounded to get a cornucopia, list of 29 species including Dusky Woodswallows, Brown Quail, European Goldfinches, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Tree Martins and a Little Eagle.

The path on the eastern side follows the creek and ridge is quite steep so that discourages people clambering up there. The place is infested with rabbits. A few years ago the hillside was crawling with them There must have been at least four dozen. Good food for raptors.

I was on the eastern side and stopped as a woman was walking towards me with her little dog. I turned away to look up the ridge and saw an eagle perched low. I thought at first it was a wedge-tail, though it didn’t seem to have much of a tail. It was very close, only about 15 m away and on a fallen dead tree branch about 3m above the ground, unperturbed by me. It may have been a juvenile as the head was a bright light red, the rest of the body was a dark morph.

When the lady reached me, I warned her that her little dog could make a meal for the wedge-tail. As we were watching it, it flew into low cover nearby. As we talked it flew out and began circling low over the creek. A flock of a dozen cockies chased it south til it wheeled back into the ridge and they left. Again, it circled in the same location over the creek and finally into the upper ridge. There had been a few people walking past while it was there, so it seemed to have ignored them. Its original perch, though low to the ground was surrounded by young saplings and it was quite cryptic in the shadows. Needless to say, the dog, a chihuahua/terrier mix, was not small enough for the eagle’s requirement.

The lady told me that owls had nested and brought out 2 young on the Amaroo side of the creek. She indicated that it would have been near the pond in Evella Ct in Amaroo. After some discussion the owl’s ID was moved Tawny Frogmouth.

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