

Bairnsdale Advertiser

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Mail letters to: Bairnsdale Advertiser, PO Box 465, Bairnsdale 3875. Name (not necessarily for publication), address and phone number for verification purposes must be included. Letters must be signed. Letters may be edited. Those exceeding 500 words will be returned to sender, or edited. Preference will be given to letters intended for publication solely in papers produced by East Gippsland Newspapers. Preference will also be given to letters which have names supplied for publication.

Signed letters may also be sent by Fax: (03) 5152 6257

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We regret that we cannot be responsible for any errors beyond the first day if you fail to bring it to our attention.

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Foxes on the run

As a ground nesting and feeding bird there are enough dangers in life already without the threat of a fox eating your eggs, your babies or even you.

To have survived pressures such as habitat loss and native predators only to have a newly hatched baby bird run down by a fox is a pressure adult birds can do without.

Over 80 waterbird species call the Gippsland Lakes home as well as migratory birds that travel thousands of kilometres every year to feed and rest. These birds depend on the health and safety of the Gippsland Lakes for their existence. This is why the Gippsland Lakes are RAMSAR listed and part of an international agreement to look after world-wide migrating waterbirds.

Foxes are just one of the many potential threats to birds that live in the Gippsland Lakes but it is one threat that is being targeted.

Working together and sharing skills, GunaiKurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), Parks Victoria, landowners and Trust for Nature are conducting several fox baiting programs in areas around the Gippsland Lakes. The aim is to reduce fox numbers, which will give the waterbirds a chance to survive, breed and increase their populations.

Birdlife Australia, together with the regional group of volunteers from Birdlife East Gippsland, is also involved with their project being one of 11 to receive funding in the Gippsland Lakes Community Grants 2017. They are working on a fox index, which will measure the presence of foxes in waterbird breeding sites and their impact on these ground nesting birds. The index will assist managers to measure the success of the baiting program.

East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) chief executive officer, Graeme Dear, said the health of the Gippsland Lakes is a priority listed in the Water



Deb Sullivan, of Birdlife Australia, has seen many foxes when out doing field work during the day and is alarmed at how bold they are. (PS)

Plan for Victoria and targeting foxes is an example of agencies and community groups sharing skills and knowledge and working together.

Deb Sullivan, of Birdlife Australia, has seen many foxes when out doing field work during the day and is alarmed at how bold they are.

"I was putting out song meters used to record Australasian bittern and a fox swam out from the other side of the wetland, across the river, walked up to the song meter about 50 metres away, had a sniff then decided to

swim back across the river into the wetland. I couldn't believe it, as bold as brass!"

The ground feeding and nesting birds are fair game for the foxes. Deb also said "species such as the small terns, pied oyster catchers and hooded plover's babies run from the moment they hatch; they don't sit in the nest and wait to be fed by the parents. They are completely mobile, but they can't fly. They are still perfect prey for the fox even though they are fast they wouldn't outrun a fox. We are trying to reduce those fox numbers to give the birds a better chance".

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