



VUT students and Yellow Robins

Robert Bender
November 2023

Christine 2012



On 23 Apr I was just unloading the ladder to re-attach a bat box when a thunderstorm broke and a young woman scurried back to a little car with a Deakin Uni decal on it.

I stopped to ask her what she was researching and she told me she is just starting a PhD on yellow robins and their genetic relationship around metropolitan Melbourne.

She is Christine Connelly, and was keen to get the bird list, plant list and other things I offered to send, and even agreed to write some notes for the newsletter reporting on the progress of her research.



Urbanised robins

Christine was getting into a PhD on the adaptation of Yellow Robins to urban environments.

In July 2012 I found her setting traps and banding robins by the riverbank

And demonstrating how one holds a small bird, a finger either side of its head, body cupped in one's palm.

Makes measuring easy



VUT students 2023

Christine now teaches conservation biology at VUT and has a young child so annual field trips with her students to learn from her 2012 study site are led by Wouter van Dongen.

Late Oct., he brought 26 students to Wilson Reserve hoping I'd magic up some robins for them.

He told them about field techniques, trap types, how to hold a bird, take a blood sample, etc.



Muttonwood site

We'd seen a pair at the Muttonwood site where we'd been weeding in September.

So I took them all there, and they helped clear some patches of Trad, to open up bare spaces.

Then we sat about and waited for the robins to notice that breakfast was served, ground insects exposed



Students

We had to wait about 10 minutes, as I expected. They all tried not to wriggle or chatter (not very successfully).

Then the robin pair flitted down to observation perches to watch for insect movement before swooping down to peck them up. Instant silence.













One young fellow captured a couple of frogs while clearing Trad and brought them over to show me, in great excitement.