***Future Archives Transcript: ‘Collateral Damage: The Changing Birdscape of Victoria*’ by Sophie Gleeson**

**Audio Info:**

(11:59)

Collateral Damage is a podcast set in 2028 that explores the challenges and fundamental changes faced by Australian environments under global heating. The creative work is an excerpt of a podcast episode titled “The Changing Birdscape of Victoria” – an episode focusing on changes to Victorian birdlife over the past decade.

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**[BEEP]**

**[Background sounds of bird calls]**

**DEV:**

Hi, I’m Dev, and this is Collateral Damage, a space for listening to and discussing the environment around us, and how we’ve changed it.

Last week we listened to the changing coastline of Broome in Western Australia

Today, we’re in Victoria, Australia, and we’re looking at, or listening to, birds.

Thank you to the Community Habitats Organisation and several local bird advocacy care circles who have provided the field recordings of birdlife across Victoria, which we will listen to today.

**[MUSIC]**

**DEV:**

If you have ever been to Naarm, you may know the saying, ‘4 seasons in one day’. But this little line seems to be losing its punch. Over the past 15 years, Australia, like many other countries, has begun to really feel the fast-changing climate, and sooner than expected.

Across the land, we’re seeing less rain, we’re feeling more heat, and our seasons are getting shorter. Each year the Autumn leaves hang on for longer, and this year a heatwave arrived before the first flowers of spring. The humidity levels in NSW and Victoria have been slowly climbing, and while southern Victoria has been largely spared from the drought, northern Victoria and the land above has experienced a 3% decrease in rain over the past decade.

Victoria is undergoing a slow but sure ‘tropification’ as the climate as we know it shifts in new strange ways. Though - you know this. You’ve felt the heat. But... what have you heard?

What sounds do you hear in the early morning?

When you step into city green-spaces for lunch?

What bird is on your balcony?

Where are the birds?

**[MUSIC]**

**DEV:**

Across Victoria, birdlife has been one of the most impacted and documented fauna. It’s easy to notice, when the birds don’t sing like they used to.

In the inner-city, the concrete is staying warmer for longer, and the sparse trees cannot protect all the birds. It’s an unliveable environment for the native wildlife, and for us. The heat is getting to us all. There’s an increasing presence of opportunistic, introduced species, namely minor birds, ravens and pigeons. And some native birds are starting to learn from these city-slickers. Last month, during the open community call for a new ‘official symbol’ for Victoria, an image of a crow, pigeon and seagull wearing sharp suits came second.

Listen now to the city, and picture that image

**[SOUNDSCAPE]**

**DEV:**

Even as you move further out from the city, the birdlife is changing elsewhere. Native birds are few and far between, and there are new faces in the bush.

In northern Victoria, the arid land is simply getting too hot, and water sources are shrinking. Major Mitchell cockatoos and budgerigars are moving to more temperate regions down south.

In southern Victoria, the increasing humidity and changing climate has resulted in the increase of more subtropical bird species, as wildlife usually comfortable in south-east Queensland and NSW migrate south. It’s not unusual now to hear lorikeets and rosellas singing louder than wrens, thrushes and bowerbirds in the Dandenong Ranges.

And we humans are doing the same - moving south, keeping cool, migrating with the birds. But the ever increasing population density happening in Victoria and Tasmania means... more concrete, less space, less green.

I’ll play for you now some an excerpt of Victorian bushland from last year.

**[SOUNDSCAPE]**

**DEV:**

Now, I mentioned Victoria’s birdlife is one of the most impacted, but also one of the most documented fauna. This is thanks to the work of citizen science.

Local birdwatching groups have grown greatly, and it is a clear reflection of the growing community concerns for the flora and fauna around us, which we have a responsibility to care for. These birdlife advocacy groups not only document rural environments, but the city too, observing the birds that are and are not there. Their work is becoming an important resource for scientists and conservation organisations. These birdlife ‘care circles’, and other flora and fauna care circles, are still not recognised by the government. Despite this, their efforts to care for country are having a great impact within communities and local councils.

One group, the Community Habitats Organisation, started the hugely successful Naarm Greening Initiative, which continues to develop today in the CBD and surrounding suburbs, as rooftops, balconies, alleys and grey spaces are being turned into green spaces for respite - for people and for birds. These spaces are now the only homes for some birds in the CBD, though some greenings are becoming breeding grounds for opportunistic bird species.

On a smaller scale, these birdlife care circles are encouraging residents to provide shelter and respite in their own gardens. Small interventions, such as birdbaths, shelters, feeders, and the push for greater use of native and tropical plants in the gardens are having an amazing impact. They are micro-sanctuaries for birds. Responsible gardening is becoming a recognised ‘care’ practice in pockets of Australia, and the flora and fauna care circles are responsible for this incredible change. Person by person, we are helping.

There are many resources online, including birdwatching documentation, field recordings, community care guides, and, always, there’s an open door for you to come through.

Let’s listen now to some of these city greenings. At the end of this podcast, HiveLinks will be transmitted to your device. Thank you for listening, thank you for caring.

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