

Meetings

Please note that there will be no quarterly meeting this year in spring because the forthcoming field excursion to the Pilbara will be held at that time. The next meeting in Perth will be the annual Christmas meeting, details of which will be announced in the November newsletter.

1978 Pilbara Field Excursion

So far 57 people have decided to attend the 1978 field excursion to the Mt. Augustus Station area and no doubt the usual late entrants will swell the total. Such a large turnout will, when spread over the three camp sites, ensure the success of the outing. The dates again are August 26 to September 9 inclusive. Contact Stephen Davies, Waters Upton, Mt. Helena, 6555, for details.

1979 R.A.O.U. Congress in Kalgoorlie

Preliminary information on the 1979 Congress and field outing is given in the accompanying R.A.O.U. Newsletter.

Eyre Bird Observatory

A good number of bookings have been received already and so the observatory is at last operating. The bird list for the area has already reached the 100 mark. This may not sound very high by some eastern states standards but this is more than offset by the large numbers. One of the most plentiful species is the Purple-gaped Honeyeater.

Our plea last issue for a variety of equipment needed at Eyre was greeted by a nil response. Perhaps we were too generalised in our request.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS needed for Eyre, for evenings or rainy days. Natural history subjects preferred, but even thrillers will do. All offers to Stephen Davies, Waters Upton, Mt. Helena 6555.

Observations

An irruption of Fork-tailed (Black) Kites is occurring at present into S-W Australia. Although the numbers seen so far have been greater in the Pilbara, single sightings have been made as far south as Esperance. Care should be taken not to confuse juvenile Square-tailed Kites which are dark and reddish viewed from below and when moulting may not have square tails. The Square-tailed Kite is widespread throughout the forest and mallee areas of the south-west although not common.

A reeve was seen recently by Peter Curry at Bibra Lake in Perth, very early in the season for so rare a wader. Reports coming in suggest that quite a few waders have spent the winter in the south this year.

Whilst on the subject of waders, a lady rang in recently about a wader with orange legs which we were trying to make into all sorts of things until it transpired it was a Turnstone in breeding plumage. The bright plumage of this species is not very well illustrated in any of the books and is a perfect example of how hard it can be for beginners to identify a distinctive species when they have no experienced person to consult.

The very first of our U.R.R. forms substantiated with a tape recording was submitted recently - a Gilbert Whistler on the Paynes Find - Sandstone Road. It wasn't a brilliant recording but it was proof. In this day of compact cassette recorders, every birdwatcher should have one.

Identification of the chestnut-shouldered fairy-wrens.

Amongst the most frequently mis-identified birds on the Atlas records that come in are the three fairy-wrens in the S-W - the Red-winged, Blue-breasted & Variegated. The easiest to identify of the three is the Red-winged. In breeding plumage the male has a white patch on the back, a clear diagnostic feature. Females, apart from having rather browner wings than the other two species, are clearly identifiable by a single feature which is only mentioned in two books (McDonald, & Cayley's Fairy Wrens). The chestnut on the face is restricted to the lores, i.e. between the eye and the bill. In the other two, the chestnut runs through the eye.

The difficult ones to separate are the Variegated and Blue-breasted. Females appear to be indistinguishable in the field. Male Blue-breasteds show a clear deep royal blue breast WHEN VIEWED IN SUNLIGHT. At other times the breast mostly appears black. In male Variegateds, the breast appears black at all times. The two species seem to prefer quite different habitats, the Blue-breasted preferring thicker heath where it lives largely on or close to the ground. Dryandra Forest is one of the best places to see Blue-breasteds easily where they live in the shrub layer beneath the wandoo trees in a rather more open habitat than is usual.

Secretary

Our Secretary, Mrs. Joan Seabrook, recently retired from CSIRO so she can spend more time birdwatching and growing plants. Her telephone number (at home) is 299 6816.

Editor: Graeme Chapman

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