



Western Australian Bird Notes

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Quarterly Newsletter of the W.A. Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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COMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held at Cynnet Hall on the waterfront at the corner of Mackett Drive and Stirling Highway, Crawley, beginning at 8.00 p.m.

This year we have arranged a series of lectures dealing with the major forest habitats in W.A.

Monday March 29 — Dr. Ron Wooller of Murdoch University will speak on "Birds in the Karri Forest".

Monday May 3 — **NOTE THIS IS AN EXTRA MEETING.** Visiting lecturer Val Gargett will speak on "The Black Eagle of Africa".

Monday June 28 — Graeme Chapman - "Birds of the Salmon Gum Woodlands".

Monday September 27 — John Dell of the W.A. Museum will speak on "Birds of the Jarrah Forest".

ANNUAL DINNER & MEETING

The 1982 dinner was held at Roger Jaensch's house in Boya Crescent, Boya on the evening of Friday, January 29. Over 100 members and their guests were in attendance and enjoyed the pleasant surroundings of the grounds. The catering by Miss Maud was lavish and Roger lived for weeks on the left-overs. Stephen Davies Jr. spoke afterwards about the migration and distribution of Palearctic Warblers, showing some excellent slides to illustrate his points.

The Annual General Meeting accepted the Treasurer's report and elected the following officers and committee for 1982:

Chairman	Dr. S. J. J. F. Davies (regional contact)
Vice Chairman	Dr. D. L. Serventy
Secretary	Mrs. J. Seabrook
Treasurer	Mr. D. Drakes
Editor	Mr. G. S. Chapman
Committee	Mr. J. N. Talbot Mr. D. Watkins
Minutes Secretary	Miss Stephanie McNeil
Editor of W.A. Bird Notes	

LOCAL EXCURSIONS

Saturday April 17th — Garden Island - Leader Bob Goodale, Telephone (095) 274 289. Meet at the Causeway Carpark at the mainland end of the causeway where we shall re-organise into fewer cars at 9.00 a.m. We shall be joining with the Rockingham Field Naturalists. The island offers a range of shore and bush birds and is not readily accessible to the public.

Saturday June 12th — Bindoon area - Lake Chittering and wandoo forest. Leader Graeme Chapman. Meet at 8.00 a.m. at the Chittering Store, Great Northern Highway. Water birds in the morning and on to lunch at Julimar State Forest.

DISTRIBUTION OF W.A. BIRD NOTES

As indicated in the December issue, W.A. Bird Notes is now being mailed only to RAOU members and Waterbird Project participants. This move followed a review of printing costs for the first new format issue by the W.A. Group committee and will avoid the cost of mailing W.A. Bird Notes to people who are not contributing in some way to the work of the RAOU. The new format was produced primarily to give feedback to Waterbird Project participants and is largely financed by the Project.

NORTH-WEST WADER STUDIES EXPEDITION: Spring 1982

Following the immensely successful expedition to the Broom and 80-Mile Beach areas in 1981, a similar venture has been planned for the period 17th August to 10th September 1982. The 1982 Australasian Wader Studies Group expedition will involve both wader counting and banding activities. Timing will coincide with the arrival of birds in Australia from the northern hemisphere breeding grounds and with peak spring tides. Some birds will hopefully be coloured-dyed to assist in the tracing of wader movements within Australia.

Information gained from our studies will improve our knowledge of wader biology and migration and will assist in the preservation of vital roost and feeding sites. If you are interested in going, a firm indication is required by the end of April: contact Graeme Chapman, 91 Mackett Drive, Greenwood, Perth, Western Australia, 6003.

NATIONAL WADER COUNT

- Preliminary Report -

The Australasian Wader Studies Group of the RAOU held its summer national wader count on the weekend of 6th and 7th February, 1982. Coverage of wader habits in W.A. was excellent in the South-West division but patchy in the north of the State.

Returns are still being collated but at least 40,000 birds were counted of 40 species, with the Broome, Dampier and Peel Inlet areas being especially productive. Former Atlassers were approached to assist in this exercise and response was quite good. A number of species were included in counts in W.A. for the first time, these being the Bush Thick-knee (Stone Curlew), Red-kneed Dotterel, Hooded Plover, Oriental Plover, Little Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper and Ruff. Encouraging numbers of Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel and Sanderling were reported.

All participants will receive detailed summaries of the count results and a more comprehensive report including comparisons with other States may be published in the June issue of *W.A. Bird Notes* or in *The Sift* (A.W.S.G. bulletin).

Ken Mills.

THOMSON'S LAKE EXCURSION REPORT

The advertised starting time for this excursion was 6.30 a.m. but cloud remained from three days of steady rain just ended, so conditions were rather cool. More than 25 people arrived at Thomson's Lake Nature Reserve and were treated to a frenzy of bird activity in the tuart - jarrah - banksia woodland adjacent to the lake.

Rainbow Bee-eaters, Grey Fantails, Western Gery-gones (Warblers) and a large party of Varied Sittellas were most conspicuous, while Grey Shrike - thrushes, Rufous Whistlers and Striated Pardalotes were seen feeding dependent flying young. A lone Shining (Golden) Bronze-Cuckoo called briefly.

The lake itself had risen to its outer margins from the heavy rain and runoff and was therefore unsuitable for smaller waders, although many stilts remained. RAOU Waterbird Project Field Officer Roger Jaensch demonstrated methods of counting large mixed flocks of waterbirds and pointed out Pink-eared Ducks and Shovelers with the aid of a mounted spotting scope. About 1400 ducks were present, Shoveler being the largest component. Ten Sacred (White) Ibis were recorded but few other large wading birds were noted. A total of 56 species was listed for the reserve.

Moving on to Lake Forrestdale Nature Reserve we found equally high waterlevels but fewer waterfowl. Highlights were Red-necked Avocets and a Marsh Harrier attempting to catch juvenile Pink-eared Ducks.

A small group of enthusiasts called at Yangebup Lake on the way back to Perth and enjoyed excellent views of about 15 Long-toed Stilts and a brief glimpse of two Wood Sandpipers. Continuing on to Point Waylen on the Swan, we studied Great Knots (80) and Bar-tailed Godwits (30) amidst some 3000 smaller waders feeding on exposed mudflats.

PEEL INLET EXCURSION REPORT

Saturday, 13 February 1982

The RAOU's February excursion was considered a tremendous success, from the point of view of both organisers and participants. A group of 25 local and Perth observers visited the area between the Broome, Dampier

and Mandurah. The extensive mudflats at Yunderup were partly covered with water blown in by south-westerly winds; this contrasted with the situation several days before when this area was dry as a result of persistent easterlies. RAOU Waterbird Project coordinator Roger Jaensch described methods of counting huge masses of waterbirds and assisted with identification of confusing wader species by using a telescope.

Highlights of the Yunderup area were long, close looks at three Pectoral Sandpipers and a Ruff feeding with Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and a Long-billed Stint foraging beside Red-necked Stilts. A nest containing eggs of the Red-capped Plover was located in gravel near the cars and a Peregrine Falcon soared high above with a group of Darters.

Few waders were seen at Coorow but a lone Glossy Ibis and a pair of Little Egrets were observed on the muddy shores. In the sheltered boat anchorage behind the Mandurah breakwater we enjoyed roosting Roseate Terns, Fairy Terns with dependent flying young, Red and Great Knots and Large Sand Plovers, one of which was in advanced breeding plumage. Those staying until late in the afternoon saw about thirty Regent Parrots flying through woodland just south of the Mandurah bridge. A total of 43 species was seen on the day.

TORBAY CAMPOUT

The RAOU campout at Torbay took place on the long weekend of 27th February to 1st March, with 38 people from Perth and southern districts attending. A report will appear in the June issue of *W.A. Bird Notes*.

W.A. WADER STUDY GROUP NOTES

Wader banding has been carried out in several different parts of the State during the last year or so. Ken Mills has been operating from his base at Narrogin and has been paying special attention to Albany; Peter Congreve, the warden at Eyre Bird Observatory, has been banding numbers of waders as well as dry land birds such as honey-eaters at his outpost on the Great Australian Bight; Grant Pearson and other Western Australians have twice joined folk from Victoria and other points east in mounting expeditions to the northwestern coastline of the State where large flocks of many species, including many thousands of Great Knots, occur at certain times of the year; and the Perth wader banding fraternity have been keeping up their weekend mistnetting and cannon netting activities.

This brief account deals only with the banding activities of the Perth sub-group, members of which have also taken part in periodical wader counts. The results of these counts will be reported elsewhere in due course.

As at 28 February 1982, the season's catching tally stands at 490 birds of 16 different species, including 33 retraps. Unfortunately, details of when and where the re-trapped birds were originally banded are not yet available. These figures compare with 482 birds of 20 different species caught during the whole of the 1980/81 season and 277 birds of 9 different species caught during the whole 1979/80 season. Two new species have been caught this season - Red-kneed Dotterels netted by Grant Pearson and Roger Jaensch at Capamaura Lake or Swamp near Coorow and Sanderlings taken at Brown Bay on Garden Island. As usual, Red-necked Stilts have formed the bulk of the catch with a total of 243 birds.

Pelican Point on the Swan estuary has yielded large numbers, including 140 birds (a record for the subgroup's mistnetting activities) on 21 November and 93 birds on 20 February. With the kind permission of the naval authorities at Garden Island, we have cannon netted there twice this season and hope to do so a third time soon in the company of Bob Goodale and others from the Safety Bay and adjacent areas. Our biggest catch there this season has been 52 birds. Owing to high water levels on the coastal lakes, which have no doubt helped to produce the big catches at Pelican Point, we have thus far visited only one of those lakes (Lake Forrestdale or Jandakot). We have also been to the mouth of the Preston River at Bunbury, Karakin Lake near Lancelin and Lake Cooloongup south of Rockingham.

Finally, Ken Mills and Peter Curry prepared a submission on our behalf to the Environmental Protection Authority concerning wetlands of importance to waders in the System 6 area and we are most grateful for their efforts. If our activities have done something to show up the importance to waders of some of those wetlands, we shall be well rewarded.

JNT

W.A. BIRD REPORT 1982

This is your Report and I am awaiting the first batch of reports.

The questions we would like to answer are:

1. How many of what, live where and when?
Even though we do not have many true migrants, we don't have regular records of when they arrive and when they leave.
2. Do they leave completely or just head North?
3. What is the pattern of movement in Silvereyes?
Do you see flocks of them moving in any particular direction, at different times of the year?
4. Do birds like Reed Warblers, Swallows, Martins leave your area in Summer or Winter?
5. Are there more White Fronted Chats in Perth this year?
6. Have the floods in the South West changed distribution patterns at all?

Answers to these sorts of questions can only be formulated by a collection of information from a lot of people, over a long period of time. So, let's get started!

Records in any form will be welcomed, but it would be helpful if you could use the forms provided. Additional forms can be obtained from Geoff Shannon or at RAOU meetings. A vetting system has not yet been formalised but details will be announced later. This is not because we do not believe you. Rather these records will form an important body of biological information and therefore have to be seen to be accurate.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Geoff Shannon,
31 Climbroke Way,
Duncraig, W.A. 6023

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Eyre is holding a full programme of courses this year. Those coming up in the near future are:

- 9 - 15th May: EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY. Its history and work. DI and Peter Congreve. Participants will be involved in the work of the Observatory, Bird Banding, Surveys, and renovation. Excursions will be made to Twilight Cove and either Burnabbie or the Hampton tableland.

16 - 22nd May: HONEYEATERS. Dr. Brian G. Collins. The course will involve the use of mist nets and the handling of honeyeaters, and will concern various aspects of nutrition, energetics and pollination biology of these birds.

Contact Peter Congreve, Eyre Bird Observatory, Cocklebidy, via Norseman, W.A. 6443, as soon as possible with your bookings.

WATERBIRDS OFFICE TO SHIFT

Increased travel costs and greater time being spent at the Wildlife Research Centre (Wanneroo) and University (Crawley), has caused me to decide to shift my home and office to the inner city area. This move will have the added advantages of my location being closer to wetlands in which I can test waterbird survey techniques and also closer to most project participants.

I would suggest that you continue to write to me at my Boya address until I notify you in writing of a new address. I must apologise for any inconvenience this will cause but I expect that the move will ultimately result in better liaison with waterbird enthusiasts and RAOU members in general.

Roger Jaensch.

WAGIN DISTRICT FIELD DAY

In order to obtain participants for the Waterbird Project in the Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning districts, I will be conducting a field day in that region on Saturday, 24th April, 1982. I hope to meet both local observers and Perth enthusiasts at the intersection of the Narrogin - Wagin and Harrismith roads (in Narrogin) at 9.00 a.m. From there we will take a tour of some of the lakes in the Upper Arthur River system, arriving at the Wagin Post Office at 12 noon. We will then proceed through the Wagin Lakes chain to the Albany Highway, 22 km south of Arthur River settlement.

This is the only part of the South-West Nature Reserve system that has minimal coverage in the Waterbird Project. I hope to have this situation rectified before May 1982.

R.J.

JANUARY FLOODS AND SUBSEQUENT WATERBIRD BREEDING

The heavy rainfall and flooding experienced in the South-West in January 1982 predictably caused a major dispersal of waterbirds from summer refuges to revitalised wetlands. Most of the region between Mandurah and Gnowangerup received around 200 mm of rain followed by heavy runoff, causing most wetlands to fill or overflow.

Reports from various observers indicated that herons and many waders had dispersed to temporarily flooded pastures and marshes, while ducks had re-appeared at numerous dams, swamps and flooded river flats such as the Cobline near Dumbleyung. Clutches of Grey Teal and Pink-eared Duck eggs were reported from the wheatbelt and a survey at Kwobrup Swamp near Katanning revealed that all Grey Teal present were paired off. Furthermore, 80% of birds in a small sample of Grey Teal and Pink-eared Duck (from the Cobline and Kwobrup) examined by Wildlife Officers in early February, had enlarged gonads indicative of birds in breeding condition. The full extent of breeding may never be known due to the thin spread of observers in the large area affected by flooding.

