



# Western Australian Bird Notes

Number 25  
March 1983

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

Registered by  
Australia Post  
Publication No. WBH1453

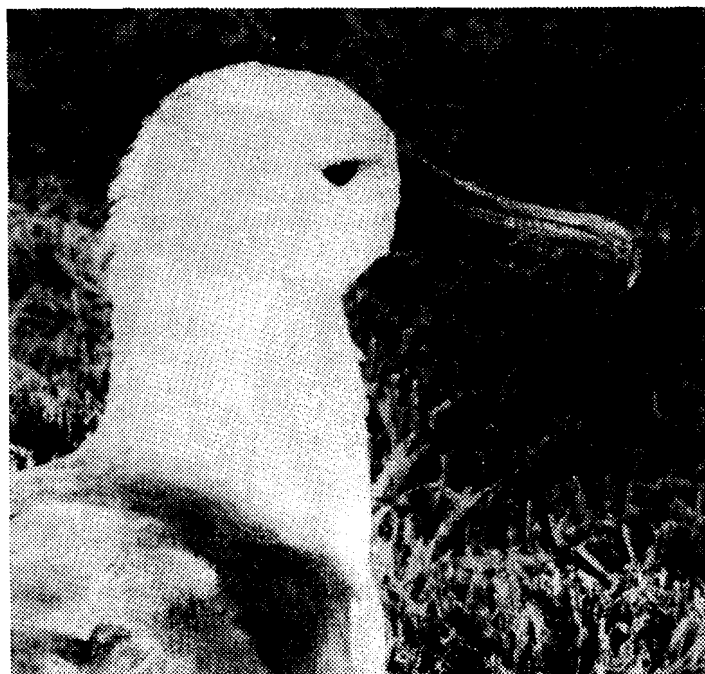
**CHAIRMAN** : Dr. S. J. J. F. Davies, "Waters Upton", Mt. Helena, 6555.  
**SECRETARY**: Mrs. J. Seabrook, 15 Rabone Way, Boya, 6056. Ph. 299 6816  
**EDITORS** : Graeme Chapman, P.O. Box 10, Glen Forrest, 6071. Ph. 298 8491  
Roger Jaensch, 69 Lanark St., Coolbinia, 6050. Ph. 444 9936

## IT'S ALIVE!

On the way back from the Goodale Sanctuary in January, one group of especially enthusiastic birdos stopped off at the mouth of the Peel Inlet to do some wader-watching. After being amazed by the sight of 37 Common Terns (definitely uncommon), they noticed a piece of rubbish on the beach which, with imagination, looked like a seabird — say, an **albatross**. On closer examination it proved to be just that (of the **Yellow-nosed** variety) and what was more, it was alive! The weakened creature was disturbed from its observations of yachtsmen and was carried off to my home for recuperation. Examination by vets at Murdoch University revealed that it had a lacerated wing and was weak with hunger, but was otherwise well.

The bird was named Jonathon Livingston (J.L. for short) and was settled in our garden where he has been fed on fish supplied by the estuarine biology research team from Murdoch. J.L. is very docile and wanders contentedly about (we have a high perimeter wall), tearing up the occasional plant that gets in his way and sounding like someone walking in flippers when he flat-footedly crosses concrete paths. He has made a slow recovery but is now quite strong and will soon be released. His departure will be greeted with mixed feelings by our cats who aren't sure what to make of him, but delight in stealing his fish.

Mike Bamford



## MASSING MASKED WOODSWALLOWS AT ESPERANCE

At about 12.30 p.m. on 23rd October 1982 my attention was drawn to a huge flock of Masked Woodswallows passing overhead at Esperance. They were flying high and giving their typical call. They continued to fly overhead in a more or less continuous flock for about an hour: they must have numbered many thousands.

The morning weather was hot with a strong north wind which may have initially blown the birds towards the coast from further inland. By 12 noon the wind had changed to SW so that the birds were first seen flying from the SW to the NE as they appeared over Esperance.

During the next hour or so the birds tended to fly over at a much lower altitude and were more easily observed. All appeared to be Masked Woodswallows and no White-browed were seen.

Bill and Lorraine Lane, who had been to Duke of Orleans Bay during the morning, encountered the flock about 30 km east of Esperance at about 1.00 p.m. when the birds were flying low and perching on the stunted scrub of that area. From this information it would appear that the flock was continuous for at least 30 km, because the woodswallows were still passing over Esperance at that time. Bill also

remarked that he had kept a look-out for White-browed Woodswallows but had not seen any.

I had read of large flocks of Masked Woodswallows appearing unheralded in odd places but had not expected to see anything like the numbers seen on this occasion.

Austin Daw, Esperance

## COMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held in Cygnet Hall, on the waterfront at the corner of Hackett Drive and Mounts Bay Road, Crawley, commencing at 8.00 p.m. There is ample parking adjacent to the hall and visitors are always welcome.

**Monday, March 28. Ian Rooke** will speak about aspects of the biology of Silvereyes and management of Silvereyes at vineyards in the Margaret River district.

**Monday, June 27. Members' Night.** Peter Curry will present a short summary of his work in analysing Dr. Dom Serventy's Bass Strait Mutton-bird data; other speakers will give short illustrated reports on RAOU and private bird-study projects being conducted in the South-West. Members should also bring items of interest to present: the Chairman will make a list of those who wish to speak and will call for as many speakers as time permits.

## COMING EXCURSIONS & CAMPOUTS

In order to attract and retain members, we are embarking on a programme of **monthly local excursions**. **New members and visitors are especially welcome**: members could bring friends along to show them one type of activity that the RAOU can offer.

These excursions will generally be less than a full day's length and will be led by a variety of experienced birdos. Unless otherwise specified, **the meeting place** for each outing will be in **Kings Park**: take the first left-hand turn at the roundabout just past the restaurant, into the no-through road and gather at the carpark area. The meeting time will be **8.00 a.m.** from October to April and **9.00 a.m.** from May to September, unless otherwise specified (see below).

**Saturday, March 26: Herdsman Lake.** Leader: Steve Keeling.

Meet at the playground near the junction of Heron Place and Lakeside Drive, Churchlands (Floreat Waters Estate), at 2.00 p.m. This will principally be an introduction to a wide variety of reed and lake-dwelling waterbirds.

**Saturday, April 16:** local excursion; meet in Kings Park (see above) — bushbirds.

**Anzac Long-Weekend, April 22-25: Perup Campout.** Leaders will be Grant Wardell-Johnson, Doug Watkins and Roger Jaensch. The Forests Department has generously offered us (free of charge) the use of their research station at Perup (42 k ENE Manjimup). The station is a homestead set in a small clearing in jarrah-wandoo forest and is within close reach of karri forest, banksia woodland, paperbark and reed swamps and timbered river valleys. We propose to search generally for bush and water-birds, but also to investigate bird counting and trapping methods.

**Facilities** at the homestead include mattresses for eight persons (two bedrooms), a spacious meeting-room, gas and wood cooking equipment, a shower and a toilet, a rainwater tank and outside space for however many people turn up. Organisers will also be at the research station on Friday afternoon and copies of the campout programme will be issued to all attending and also left at the house for later arrivals.

**Directions: From Boyup Brook**, take the main Kojonup road and turn right (more or less straight-ahead) into the "Boyup Brook-Cranbrook Road" (sealed part-way), when 15 km out of Boyup Brook. Stay on the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook Road, passing intersections with Westbourne Road, Kingston Road and Distributor Road. When about 43 km out of Boyup Brook, you should pass over the Perup River: after a further 5 km take the (first) right-hand track. There will be a closed but un-locked gate about 50 m in from the main road. Proceed through this for about one kilometre to Perup House. If you get to Northern Road or Tone River along the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook Road, then you have gone too far.

Travellers from areas east of Perup should get to Frankland (eg. via Muirs Highway and Rocky Gully) and then proceed toward Kojonup (sealed) for 26 km where the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook Road will be met. Proceeding westward (left) you must pass Bolbelup and Unicup Roads and Tone River: the Perup turnoff is on the left, two km after the intersection with Northern Road (turnoff is about 12.5km W of the Tone River bridge).

People from Manjimup can reach Perup via Cup Road (becomes Northern Road), which leaves Muirs Highway after the Strachen turnoff.

**Further Information:** Campers need to be self-sufficient for meals. Use of the station's cooking facilities will be discussed at the campout, but the toilet and shower will be available for all to use. The rainwater should be used for drinking purposes only. If you wish to use the house bedrooms or require more details, please contact Roger Jaensch (09 444 9936).

**Saturday, May 21:** Yanchep excursion; meet in Kings Park (see above). A good variety of birds in pleasant surrounds.

**Saturday, June 11: Wheatbelt trip.** Meet at the Centrepoint carpark, just before the Town Hall in Great Eastern Highway, Midland, at 8.00 a.m. (note the early time). We plan to conduct a similar day-trip to that which was held at this time last year in the Goomalling and Toodyay districts. A good chance to meet country birdos and see inland bush-birds. If the weather looks ominous, ring the Secretary or any other Committee member to check whether the excursion will go ahead.

**September School Holidays: "Bristlebird Bash - Phase 1"**. We are tentatively planning to camp out in bush near Yallingup in the last week of the school holidays (5-11 September), to search for the Rufous Bristlebird. Details to follow in the June newsletter.

**October Long Weekend: "Bristlebird Bash - Phase 2" or "Fitzgerald Region Campout"**. The dates we have chosen for this epic event are Thursday, September 29 to Wednesday, October 5. We hope to conduct a series of organised activities including searches for Western Bristlebirds and Ground Parrots. Check the June and/or September newsletters for details.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On Friday, January 7th, 63 people attended the 1983 Annual Dinner and Meeting held at Dan and Doris Drake's house at Parkerville. The spacious lawns and gardens provided an attractive venue and our thanks go to Doris and Dan for both their generosity and hard work which ensured the success of the evening. Miss Maud's catering was up to its usual high standard and an unexpectedly brisk evening for January, even in the hills, ensured that everyone was on their toes and didn't go to sleep during the Annual Meeting.

Dan Drakes presented the Treasurer's Report and the following committee members were elected:-

|                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Chairman               | : | Dr. S.J.J.F. Davies                        |
| Vice Chairman          | : | Dr. D.L. Serventy                          |
| Secretary              | : | Mrs. J. Seabrook                           |
| Treasurer              | : | Mr. D. Drakes                              |
| Assistant Editor       | : | Mr. G.S. Chapman                           |
| Committee Members      | : | Miss Shapelle McNee<br>Mr. Stephen Keeling |
| Ex officio: Editor     | : |  |
| Bird Report            | : | Dr. G. Shannon                             |
| Field Officer & Editor | : | Mr. Roger Jaensch                          |

The meeting concluded with a series of short addresses by those involved in the various group activities such as waders, water-birds and the Annual Bird Report and a discussion on RAOU aims and membership in W.A.

## GINGIN AREA EXCURSION

It was a pleasant warm morning on 4 December 1982 for the twenty-two strong excursion party which met at 8.00 a.m. at the Bindoon Hotel. While some ate breakfast and awaited late-comers, bird species noticed included Straw-necked Ibis, Sacred Ibis, Brown Honeyeater, Grey Butcherbird, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Red-capped Robin and Rufous Whistler.

The party drove through attractive undulating country to Wannamal Lake and walked the lake edge by the railway line. Bird highlights included Black-tailed Native-hens and a Common Sandpiper but waterbird numbers were low despite

the efforts of Roger Jaensch to stir up more by wading at the northern end. Nests of the Tree Martin, Willie Wagtail and Sacred Kingfisher were of interest, as were small numbers of Restless Flycatchers, Varied Sittellas and White-winged Trillers.

Towards mid-day the party drove to Gingin for lunch and then moved to Bambun Lake and associated Nambung Lake and swamp. Nambung had dried out but the eastern and southern boundaries of Bambun had a diversity of waterbirds (eg. Great Crested Grebes) sheltering in the shade of the trees along the edge. Finally, we went to Chandala Reserve (pronounced by the locals as "Shan'dala") where large numbers of Straw-necked Ibis nests were still in use, together with a good quantity of other water-birds.

The excursion required quite a long drive and though warm in the middle of the day, it was a most enjoyable and varied day with 26 waterbird and 26 other bird species being recorded. Thanks are due to Roger for leading the party and providing the knowledge and information which makes all the difference.

Bruce and Ann Buchanan.

## GOODALE SANCTUARY CAMPOUT 21-23 January 1983

Waterbirds were the primary concern of the thirty-four bird-watchers who attended the RAOU field outing and camp-out based in the Goodale Sanctuary near the Harvey Estuary. The well-preserved bushland and associated *Melaleuca* lakes yielded nesting Darters, plus Spotless Crakes, an Australian Hobby and Elegant Parrots. Owllet-nightjars churred through the night but the Black Bittern remained like the Holy Grail — elusive.

On Saturday morning, the party moved out to Austin Bay to investigate the flocks of migratory waders intermingled with thousands of Banded Stilts. Initiates to waders were guided on key identification points and with the aid of telescopes, direct comparisons were often available.

Next on the agenda was the rewarding Lake McLarty. Moving cautiously at first with eyes peeled for the rumoured black bull, the party soon relaxed when confronted by the presence of so many interesting species. Amongst the waders, Marsh Sandpipers (2), Pectoral Sandpipers (2), Wood Sandpipers and a Long-toed Stint gave several members their first taste of less evident sandpipers. Baillon's and Australian Crakes were quite co-operative while a timid Black-tailed Native-hen made sporadic appearances. Offshore, Great Crested Grebes and kids remained unperturbed, unlike the thirteen Yellow-billed Spoonbills which took to flight.

On the road back to the campsite many Elegant Parrots perched on the roadside fence admiring the road-train of birdwatchers, while Rufous and Brown Songlarks erupted from the paddocks.

The following morning, Doug Watkins led the remaining birdos in pursuit of an Australian Crake at Island Point and the group ended up amidst the Common Terns at Mandurah. Many thanks to both Roger Jaensch and Doug Watkins for the organisation and leadership they gave and to Bob and Ann Goodale for their hospitality in letting the campers use their excellent sanctuary. It was great to see the varied mix of young and less-young, seasoned and unseasoned birdos at the camp-out.

## FROM OUR COMMITTEE

### Membership Drive — W.A. Group Leaflet.

I am sure we have all noticed, since Roger Jaensch was installed in W.A., a new feeling of cohesion and involvement within our branch of the RAOU. Evidence of this can be seen in the *W.A. Bird Notes*, which are really worth getting; in the South-West Waterbird Project, now magnificently established and running well; and in the increased participation in excursions, campouts and such like. The new spirit is, in my view, the result of having locally a single available co-ordinator and an official, albeit temporary, RAOU office.

Unquestionably, we would like to see the present situation continue — to see RAOU go from strength to strength, with a comprehensive plan for the future. Such a plan would eventually, it is hoped, enable us to have a permanent, properly staffed RAOU office in W.A. and a modern RAOU Magazine. In addition, a great deal more in the field of research and in the establishment of observatories and reserves, would then be possible. Conservation through observation!

Much has already been achieved through our current involvement in a number of projects, but we really do need to look to the future. How are we to develop further? If we are to undertake more research and the development of reserves and observatories, we will need more finance and much greater manpower at our disposal. Both requirements can be met by vastly increasing our membership base.

**Our aim therefore, must be for everyone to make an all-out effort this year to get at least one new member each.** If we all do this for only two years we will have 1500 members in W.A. alone — almost as many as the RAOU's total present membership! We can do it if we want to!

To help in our effort, a 'new-member leaflet' has been enclosed with this issue of *Bird Notes*. It has been specially designed for people in W.A. who are interested in birds, who want to know what we are about and how to join. I am certain that all of us have at least one person we could give the new membership leaflet to — so please go to it!

Steve Keeling.

### The RAOU at ANZAAS, PERTH. May 1983.

The Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science will be meeting in Perth in May this year. The RAOU and Section 11 (Zoology) are jointly organising a symposium entitled 'Bird Census Work in Australia'. The symposium will be held on the morning of **Tuesday 17th May** at the University of Western Australia. The exact venue is not yet determined but will be announced on notice boards in the University Grounds.

The program is:

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 9.00  | <b>Dr. G.W. Arnold.</b> Comparison of numbers and species of birds in wandoo woodland obtained by two census methods. |
| 9.45  | <b>Dr. C.D.T. Minton.</b> Wader studies in Australia.   |
| 10.30 | Morning Tea.  |
| 11.00 | <b>G. Wardell-Johnson.</b> Censusing birds in karri forest.   |
| 11.30 | <b>R. Jaensch.</b> Censusing waterbirds using south-western wetlands.   |
| 12.15 | <b>Dr. H. Recher.</b> Bird census procedures in Australia.  |

The standard registration fee for a single session of ANZAAS (all morning or all afternoon) is \$10 (including tea). RAOU members may like to bring verification of their membership in case it is possible to arrange a reduced entry fee for us.

It is worth noting that even ANZAAS members have to pay a congress fee (reduced) to help defray costs of visiting speakers. The session should be an interesting one and I hope that many RAOU members will be able to come.

Stephen Davies

**R.A.O.U. W.A. GROUP**  
**Financial Statement 31/12/82**  
**Income and Expenditure for 12 months from 1/1/82 - 31/12/82**

**Perth Funds**

| <b>Account</b>            | <b>Income</b> | <b>Expenditure</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Middlesex Trust           | 1752          | 1700               |
| 1981-2 Dinner             | 900           | 804                |
| 1982-3 Dinner             | 444           | 50                 |
| Afls                      | 139           | 82                 |
| Outings (Torbay, Waroona) | 581           | 310                |
| Sundries                  | 70            | 250                |
|                           | 3886          | 3196               |
| Balance                   |               | 690                |

**Eyre Bird Observatory Funds**

| <b>Account</b>                     | <b>Income</b> | <b>Expenditure</b> |
|------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Salaries                           |               | 3675               |
| Equipment - Scientific             |               | 81                 |
| Equipment - Furnishings            |               | 21                 |
| Equipment - Other                  |               | 87                 |
| Maintenance - House                |               | 214                |
| Maintenance - Vehicles             |               | 1011               |
| Fuel and Oil for Vehicles          |               | 1134               |
| Freight                            |               | 656                |
| Fuels - Household                  |               | 862                |
| Food                               | 2473          | 4612               |
| Telegrams, Bank Charges etc.       | 67            | 282                |
| Fees and Transport                 | 9176          |                    |
| Souvenirs - Mugs, Clothing etc.    | 1701          | 1274               |
| Purchase of Solar heater etc.      |               | 1185               |
| Donations                          | 2643          |                    |
| Course Leaders' Expenses           |               | 50                 |
|                                    | 16060         | 15144              |
| Balance                            |               | 916                |
| Add Balance Perth Funds            |               | 690                |
| Add Balance brought forward 1/1/82 |               | 460                |
| Current Account Balance 1/1/83     |               | 2066               |

**Notes**

1. An interest-free loan of indefinite term for \$1000 is still outstanding, but could be met out of the present balance. No account has been taken of stocks of publications, clothing and other souvenirs held for sale at Eyre and in Perth.
2. The Middlesex Trust account is held in Melbourne. Of the "expenditure", \$1250 was in fact a transfer only.
3. Figures for the 1982-3 Dinner are incomplete, but it is expected that a useful profit will be made.

**D.S. Drakes, Treasurer.**



