



# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the W.A. Group

## Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

RAOU Office Room 218, Rowley's Centre, 15 Ogilvie Road, Canning Bridge W.A. 6153  
in W.A.: Telephone: (09) 364 6202  
CHAIRMAN: Geoff Shannon, 29 Waldemar Street, Gwelup, 6021. Telephone: 445 2417  
SECRETARY: Judy Jenkins, 5 Howlett Place, Leeming, 6155. Telephone 332 3580  
EDITOR: Bruce Buchanan, 2 Jarman Avenue, Manning, 6152  
RAOU BIRDING HOTLINE 364 7349

Registered by  
Australia Post  
Publication No. WBH1453

## DUNE STABILIZATION AT EYRE

8 January - 21 January, 1988

The area selected for stabilization was that which is opposite to last year's work, where the track to the beach is at its highest. Unfortunately insufficient nets were available. Consequently, the protection of the newly planted areas had to be implemented mainly by the spreading of seaweed.

Inspiration was gained by the green area resulting from the 1987 effort. Referred to as 'The Vegie Patch', it attracts Pink Cockatoos and a family of Emus. Euphorbia had sprouted early, so we were enthusiastic in gathering and planting its seed between the Spinifex Hirsuta heads which take about two years to grow. Our task was not without its setbacks. One was the Land Rover which, on a search for seaweed deposits, gave up the ghost 9 km from the house and required three visits before it was successfully towed away for repairs. With the aid of some newly-gained mechanical know-how we were able to keep

the Land Rover going to collect sufficient seaweed to cover the bulk of the acre which was planted. Another problem was the shortage of people. In the second week only two course participants were at Eyre. Without the assistance of Brice, Gail and Peter, much less progress would have been made. It was not an easy time for Brice and Gail to be working on dunes as another course was imminent and they were preparing for a handover and to take a well earned holiday.

The weather was mostly kind, but there was a little sunshine and a fair measure of wind-blown sand with which to contend. Between the dune duties we examined the possum boxes, did a beach bird count, swam, looked for birds in the bush and were entertained by the antics of visitors to the bird-baths. Dugites were sighted a few times, one making an appearance on the work bench in the shed. Bats did the nightly rounds of the verandahs as a prelude to the following week's course.

Everyone worked hard, including those who had not envisaged their short stay would include such a task. Because of these efforts and those who have worked before, dune stability is becoming a reality. Further effort will soon stabilize those areas which are currently a problem.

R. Smith



Toby Nichols and Brice Wells on the dunes

Photo by: Rod Smith

# OBSERVATIONS

collated by Rodney Vervest and Roger Jaensch

The following records have been partly vetted and should receive further scrutiny before publication in RAOU Reports or in technical journals. Observers are encouraged to submit copies of field notes with all accounts of unusual sightings. The Atlas of Australian Birds, Serventy and Whittell's Birds of Western Australia and regional lists (e.g. Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Eucla) by the W.A. Museum should be useful guides to records that are unusual with respect to distribution or status.

This series mainly covers the period from October 1987 to January 1988. Shire names or the nearest known locality are given in brackets. Where known, the observer is identified by an abbreviation - abbreviations are listed below.

Observations that appear in other articles in this newsletter may not be repeated here.

Please send details of sightings to 'The Observations Officer' at the W.A. Office of the RAOU.

## DOWN SOUTH

**Great Crested Grebe** - 4, 11/11/87, East Jerdacuttup Lake, near Hopetoun: four nests with eggs in flooded paperbark thicket - RJ \* 35, 31/8/87, Lake Clifton (Mandurah) - AD

**Great-winged Petrel** - 1, 30/10/87, flying over Melville Water, Swan River (Metro) - GM (The Great-winged Petrel can be seen in all seasons in southern W.A. but during the Atlas sightings were most widespread in spring. The species is a winter breeder and colonies are known from islands between Albany and Cape Arid - RV)

**Sooty Shearwater** - 1, 1/12/87, Kanidal Beach, Eyre: beach-washed (1 also on 18/12/87) - BW, GH

**Pacific Heron** - 9, 26/12/87, Minvalara Swamp, Bremer Bay area - ABu, BBu

**Little Bittern** - 1, 12/11/87, 31 km E of Esperance: calling from tall Baumea rush - RJ \* 3, 26/11/87, North Kogolup Swamp (Cockburn): two nests with eggs, one in Typha and one in Melaleuca thicket - RJ, DW

**Australasian Bittern** - 3, 19/1/88, Owingup Swamp (Denmark) - LB

**Glossy Ibis** - 13, 28/12/87 & 11/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, RV, SN, JH \* 2, 9/1/88, Forrest Road marsh (Cockburn): feeding with 30 Straw-necked Ibises - PRH

**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** - 74, 17/8/87, Barragup Swamp (Murray) - AD \* 2, 10/11/87, Coomalbidup Swamp (Esperance): nest with three eggs in paperbark in deep-flooded yate swamp: first breeding record for Eucla Division - RJ \* 34, 17/12/87, mouth of Sleeman River, Wilson Inlet (Denmark) - LB \* 130+, 28/12/87 to 11/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, RV, SN, JH \* 24, 19/1/88, Owingup Swamp (Denmark) - LB

**Freckled Duck** - 3, 10/12/87, Chittering Lake (Chittering) - BK \* 1, 13/12/87, Joondalup Lake (Wanneroo) - MHB \* 2, 25/12/87, Yellilup Swamp, Jerramungup - ABu, BBu

**Australian Shelduck** - 10,000, 10/11/87, Gore Lake (Esperance) - RJ \* 7000, 12/12/87, Gore Lake (Esperance) - JE

**Grey Teal** - 11,900, 11/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, RV, SN, JH

**Blue-billed Duck** - 80, 5/12/87, North Lake (Cockburn) - NG

**Square-tailed Kite** - 2, 28/10/87, Wannamal Lake (Gingin) - AB, JR \* 1, 27/12/87, Albany Highway between Kelmscott and Armadale - PC \* 1, 19/1/88, Owingup Swamp (Denmark) - LB

**Brown Goshawk** - 3, 15/1/88, Pipidiny Swamp (Wanneroo): immature birds - BBa

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle** - 3, 6/11/87, Carraburyup Reserve Murray: one downy young also - JS

**Little Eagle** - 1, 28/11/87, Joondalup Lake (Wanneroo): young in nest - PRH \* 1, 9/12/87, Bayswater Bird Sanctuary (Bayswater) - JH \* 1, 27/12/87, Albany Highway between Kelmscott and Armadale - PC

**Peregrine Falcon** - 1, 10/12/87, Bond Corporation Building, St Georges Terrace, Perth - DKe \* 1, 24/12/87, Twilight Cove, Eyre: male - BW, GH \* 1, 12/1/88, Eyre Bird Observatory: female - BW, GH

**Australian Hobby** - nesting, 26/10/87, Star Swamp, North Beach: with two young in tuart tree - VP

**Baillon's Crane** - 1, 12/11/87, 31 km E of Esperance: flushed from low rush and stunted Melaleucas fringing Baumea rush swamp - RJ \* 1, 26/11/87, Forrestdale Lake (Armadale) - PRH

**Purple Swamphen** - 2, 11/11/87, 29 km NE of Hopetoun: with small black runner in flooded roadside swamp of low Melaleucas and tussocks - RJ

**Pied Oystercatcher** - 15, 2/11/87, Alfred Cove (Metro) - PA

**Lesser Golden Plover** - 2, 17/12/87, Morley Beach, Wilson Inlet (Denmark) - LB \* 85, 2/1/88, Coodanup, Peel Inlet - PW \* 20, 3/1/88, Hardy Inlet, Augusta - MB \* 24, 29/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, RV

**Hooded Plover** - 2, early October 87, un-named lake, Stirling Range National Park - AR \* 4, 13/12/87, Nornalup Inlet, Walpole - LB \* 2, 3/1/88, Ocean Beach, Denmark: both juveniles - LB

**Oriental Plover** - 35, 7/1/88, Kanidal Beach, Eyre - BW, GH

**Eastern Curlew** - 8, 2/1/88, Coodanup, Peel Inlet - PW (The known world population of the Eastern Curlew may be as low as 10-15,000 individuals and there is evidence that the species may be declining in Australia. Observers should note that the Eurasian Curlew has been recorded as a vagrant in the North and can be distinguished from the Eastern Curlew by the extensive white areas on its lower back and rump - RV)

**Whimbrel** - 1, 13/12/87, Nornalup Inlet, Walpole - LB

**Wood Sandpiper** - 57, 18/12/87, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, JB \* 2, 19/12/87, river mud flat (Bayswater) - JH \* 8, 19/12/87, Forrest Road marsh (Cockburn) - RJ \* 5, 20/12/87, swamp in Banjup (Cockburn) - DJ \* 2, 20/12/87, Yangebup Lake (Cockburn) - DJ \* 12+, 22/12/87, west end of Gnaragara road (Wanneroo) - GS \* 2, 15/1/88, Yakamia Swamp (Albany) - SK \* 1, 19/1/88, Owingup Swamp (Denmark) - LB \* 10, 31/1/88, Forrestdale Lake (Armadale) - PRH (The Wood Sandpiper is most often seen in suitable fresh water habitat and can be found throughout the inland of Australia. It can be identified by its strident calls and by the spotted pattern on its upperparts. The Green Sandpiper, a possible vagrant to northern Australia, is similar but has blackish upperwings and underwings - RV)

**Grey-tailed Tattler** - 1, 29/10/87, Alfred Cove (Metro) - GM

**Marsh Sandpiper** - 1, 19/1/88, Owingup Swamp (Denmark) - LB

**Terek Sandpiper** - 2, 12/1/88, Lower Kalgan (Albany) - LB

**Gallinago snipe** (probably Pin-tailed Snipe) - 1, throughout December 1987 (last seen 1/1/88), at Forrest Road marsh near egg-shop (Cockburn): toes extended beyond tail in flight, infrequent calls - BJ, SKe, RJ

**Black-tailed Godwit** - 1, 17/12/87, Morley Beach, Wilson Inlet (Denmark) - LB \* 8, 28/12/87, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ

**Red Knot** - 12, 2/11/87, Woodman Point (Cockburn) - DN

**Great Knot** - 170, 2/1/88, Coodanup, Peel Inlet - PW

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** - 1230, 29/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, RV

**Pectoral Sandpiper** - 1, 29/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, RV

**Long-toed Stint** - 1, 26/11/87, North Kogolup Swmap (Cockburn) - RJ \* 2, 19/12/87, Forrest Road marsh (Cockburn) - RJ \* 3, 4/1/88, Oyster Harbour, Lower King (Albany): feeding with large flock of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers - LB \* 49, 29/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ, RV \* 3, 31/1/88, Forrestdale Lake (Armadale) - PRH (This tiny wader looks like a miniature Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. The short, trilling call and 'bat-like' flight style are distinctive. Birds often fly high and far before returning, sometimes to the site they rose from. When alarmed they often stand erect behind short vegetation or squat close to the ground - RV)

**Sanderling** - 1, 13/11/87, Alfred Cove (Metro) - GM

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** - 2, 7/12/87, Lake Clifton (Mandurah) - AD \* 1, 23/1/88, Guraga Lake (Dandaragan): amongst Red-capped Plover and Red-necked Stint - ABu, BBu (Descriptions should be submitted with all observations of this species)

**Ruff** - 1, 2/10/87, Alfred Cove (Metro) - GM

**White-winged Tern** - 1, 9/11/87, Alfred Cove (Metro) - PRH \* 1, 28/12/87 & 11/1/88, Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary (Busselton) - RJ

**Common Tern** - 1, 31/1/88, Point Waylen (Metro) - PRH (Descriptions should be submitted with observations of this species because there is interest in determining subspecies; colours of bill and legs are required - RJ)

**Bridled Tern** - 1, 10/12/87, Como foreshore (Metro) - DKe

**Elegant Parrot** - 1, 21/11/87, Joondalup Lake (Wanneroo): feeding young - PRH

**Rock Parrot** - 2, 13/1/88, Kanidal Beach, Eyre - BW, GH

**Southern Boobook** - 5, 2/12/87, near Star Swamp, North Beach: roosting in jarrah tree - VP

**Tree Martin** - 500, 14/1/88, Mill Street Pond (Metro) - JH

**White-winged Triller** - 1, 19/10/87, Wannamal Lake (Gingin) - BBa

**Red-browed Firetail** - 30, 28/11/87, The Dell, Kalamunda: 14 nests found, six with eggs and two with young - SvA

**Red-eared Firetail** - 2, 28/11/87, The Dell, Kalamunda: nest with three eggs - SvA

#### UP NORTH

**Australian Pelican** - breeding, 9/5/87 Lacepede Islands: nine chicks - KC

**Great-billed Heron** - 1, 10/5/87, Sale River - KC \* nesting, 17/5/87, Gibson Creek off Sale River: one large young - KC

**Australian Crake** - 1+, 18/6/87, bore, N of Overlander Roadhouse - KC

**Gallinago snipe** - 1, 5/1/88, 34km N of Broome - KC

**Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** - 1, 6/1/88, One Arm Point - KC

**Rainbow Bee-eater** - 50+, 21/8/87, Carnarvon - GS

**Rainbow Pitta** - 1, 11/5/87, Sale River - KC

**Spinifexbird** - 6/6/87, Python Pool (Chichester Range National Park) - KC

**Rufous-crowned Emu-wren** - 14/6/87, Millstream (Millstream National Park) - KC

#### KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

AB	- Alan Burbidge	JR	- Julie Raines
ABu	- Anne Buchanan	JS	- John Start
AD	- Austin Daw	KC	- Kevin Coate
AR	- Allan Rose	LB	- Lola Broadhurst
BBa	- Bryan Barrett	MB	- Mariee Bougher
BBu	- Bruce Buchanan	MHB	- Mary Bremner
BJ	- Barry Jackson	NG	- Norm Godfrey
BK	- Brad Kneebone	PA	- Peter Anson
BW	- Brice Wells	PC	- Peter Curry
DJ	- David James	PRH	- Peel Howden
DKe	- Diana Keeling	PW	- Peter Wilmot
DN	- Doug Nash	RJ	- Roger Jaensch
DW	- Doug Watkins	RV	- Rodney Vervest
GH	- Gail Hooper	SK	- Sue Keogh
GM	- George Miller	SKe	- Steven Keeling
GS	- Geoff Shannon	SN	- Simon Nevill
JB	- John Blyth	SvA	- Sean van Alphen
JH	- Jack Hunt	VP	- Vera Patterson
JE	- Jack Ewert		

## WATERBIRD STUDIES

### THE GREAT DUCK COUNT

Third Annual Count

5 - 13 March, 1988

Waterbird enthusiasts in Western Australia have the opportunity to participate in the third annual GREAT DUCK COUNT. This is an initiative of the RAOU's Waterbird Usage Study funded by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM).

THE GREAT DUCK COUNT has two objectives:

- (1) to monitor annual changes in populations of water-fowl in Western Australia, and
- (2) to identify sites that are important as refuges for waterfowl.

Data collected in the first (1986) and second (1987) Great Duck Counts confirmed the importance of many wetlands for waterfowl (ducks, swans and coots), and led to recognition of the importance of many other wetlands that were not previously thought valuable for waterfowl. In the 1988 GREAT DUCK COUNT, these sites will again be surveyed, as well as any major wetlands not surveyed in 1986 or 1987.

By repeating this comprehensive count each year, long-term changes in the population of each species of duck, swan and coot can be monitored and appropriate conservation measures enacted if consistent declines are detected.

In 1988, the GREAT DUCK COUNT will be held from 5 MARCH TO 13 MARCH (incorporating two weekends)

We will be asking volunteers who participated in the 1986 or 1987 Counts to re-survey major wetlands they visited in 1986 or 1987 as well as to survey any 'new' wetlands in their area. Volunteers who have continued routine monitoring of waterbird usage of wetlands will again be an important component of the observer force. In March, these observers will be counting waterfowl and other waterbirds as part of their routine monitoring. In addition, the Waterbirds Officer and waterbird research officers of CALM will participate. Large estuaries, complex open lakes, large reservoirs and a selection of farm dams will be surveyed from the air, to supplement our ground coverage.

To fill the many gaps in coverage of the South-west (Kalbarri to Israelite Bay), additional participants - both country and city-based - will be required to join the 1988 GREAT DUCK COUNT. This is a once-off commitment for the year. Perhaps you could encourage your friends to join in the Count!

PLEASE RING OR WRITE TO RODNEY VERVEST at the R.A.O.U. Office (phone 09 364 6202 - 24 hrs) if you think that you can assist us.

Previous experience with counting waterbirds would be helpful but is not essential. It is however imperative that observers be committed to obtaining TOTAL COUNTS (i.e. finding and counting all that are present) ducks, swans and coots at the wetland on the survey day. This can be achieved by devoting enough time and energy to fully investigating the wetland during the survey. A pre-count reconnaissance can be helpful.

Simple data forms will be used for recording counts of swans, ducks and coots. Counts of other waterbirds in addition to ducks, swans and coots will be accepted for entry in the Waterbird Usage Data Bank but are not first priority in the Great Duck Count. Such information should be entered on standard waterbird usage data sheets which are available from Rodney Vervest.

A report will be circulated as soon as possible after the count period. The full report of the 1986 and 1987 Great Duck Counts has been prepared and should be circulated to 1986 and 1987 participants during the year.

WOULD YOU MISS OUT on the challenge & excitement of THE GREAT DUCK COUNT? contact without delay Rodney Vervest Coordinator, 1988 Great Duck Count 364 6202

## RAOU REMOTE WETLAND EXPEDITION, 1988

### Lower Fitzroy & Roebuck Floodplains

Second to thirteenth of May has been set for the 1988 Expedition. The plan is to survey SEASONAL WETLANDS so their condition may or may not be in our favour when we get there. However, early May should give a fair compromise of weather and concentration of birds.

The objective will be to assess the importance for waterbirds of wetlands in the Lower Fitzroy and Roebuck Floodplains. One or more surveys (using 'area searches') will be made at each of a sample of wetlands (of varied characteristics) in order to record the numbers of each waterbird species present. Importance will be assessed for each wetland and for groups of wetlands, by comparing data from the expedition with RAOU data for other remote and southern wetlands and with standard criteria for wetlands of international importance.

It is already known that wetlands in the study area support large numbers of the Glossy Ibis, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Brolga and others, as well as rarer species such as the Yellow Chat. In addition to confirming the importance of particular wetlands, we hope to establish the collective importance for waterbirds of seasonal wetlands in the Fitzroy-Roebuck area.

Volunteer participants (self-sufficient campers with their own transportation), are required to conduct counts of waterbirds and assist in other daily duties of the expedition. It is hoped that survey vehicles will include Department of CALM four-wheel-drive trucks (2), a 4WD 'bus' and Dual Cab provided by Falcon Tours, a variety of private 4WDs and at least two small outboard boats. There may be two communal eating arrangements as well as self-sufficient individual campers.

The expedition will commence from Broome on 2 May. After surveys in the area it is planned to move to Derby about 6 May. The last survey will be 13 May. The expedition will be moving on regularly and each overnight stop will be for 2 or 3 nights.

Approximately 10 seats may be available with Falcon Tours as a means of getting to and from the expedition and participating in it. FT coordinator Simon Nevill is planning a leisurely trip up and back to give opportunity for casual bird-watching. The FT group would be fully catered for (tents, eating); the cost is likely to be very reasonable. Contact Simon on (09) 450 2460 or at 38 Pether Road, Manning 6152 if interested in this option.

Names and addresses of persons interested in joining the 1988 expedition should be forwarded to:

Rodney Vervest, RAOU Office, 30/15 Ogilvie Road, CANNING BRIDGE 6153

Firm commitments will be sought in late February or early March, 1988. A post-expedition (private) tour to the Mitchell Plateau may be organised.

Roger Jaensch, RAOU Waterbirds Officer,  
Rodney Vervest, RAOU Scientific Assistant.

## EGRET BREEDING COLONIES: 1987-88

The RAOU, under contract to CALM, is studying egret colonies in Western Australia and fieldwork has recently finished for the 1987-88 breeding season. Intensive surveys in the South-west were conducted in October, November and December in 1987 and in January 1988.

Four colonies of Great Egret were active in south-western Australia during the season (five were active in 1986-87) and these were as follows: South Perth Zoo (5 pairs), West Corio Swamp (20 pairs), Australind Egret Swamp (15 pairs) and McCarley's Swamp (39 pairs). In 1986-87 a colony of 35 pairs was discovered at Caris Park Road Swamp (S of Pinjarra) but this colony was inactive in 1987-88. More egrets bred at West Corio Swamp in 1987-88 (8 pairs in 1986-87) and it is therefore likely that some of the Caris Park birds moved to West Corio (the two swamps are less than 15km apart). Numbers breeding at South Perth, Australind and McCarleys were similar in 1986-87.

As in the previous year, an aerial survey of potential egret breeding swamps between Perth and Australind was undertaken. Fifteen wetlands in which egrets were sighted from the air were inspected from the ground and although no further colonies of egrets were found, at least five contained colonies of herons or cormorants and were considered potentially suitable for breeding by egrets.

An aerial survey was also conducted between Hopetoun and Esperance where numerous yate and paperbark swamps were suitable for breeding. However, as in the previous year, few egrets and no egret colonies were discovered in this area.

Results of surveys of northern colonies, such as that at Lake Kununurra, have yet to be returned. As yet no colonies have been found in the 200km north of Perth.

No nest of the Little Egret were identified in 1987-88 but a pair displaying breeding characters was at West Corio Swamp and it is assumed that they bred there. A single Little Egret was seen twice at Australind Egret Swamp though no nest was found. (Previous breeding records are from Australind and Caris Park)

All of our southern egret colonies are threatened. These threats include clearing, drainage, death of vegetation due to artificially high water levels and (at the only protected colony, Australind), by chemical pollution.

As Australia is obliged by international agreement to protect the Great Egret, the RAOU through its programme of waterbird research in W.A., will continue to monitor existing colonies and attempt to discover new ones in the 1988-89 season.

Thanks are due to all RAOU members and others who have contributed information and especially to those who gave time to assist in the field.

Rodney Vervest, Egret Survey Coordinator

## LAKE MACLEOD RE-VISITED

The Grey Fantail observed at Lake MacLeod was of the sub-species phasiana. The plumage is somewhat different to the Grey Fantail of the South-West, the song slightly varied and the eggs and nest structure are different. Widely considered to be a different species, the Mangrove Grey Fantail's separate status has not yet been accorded by the RAOU.

The Mangrove Gerygone reported from the Lake MacLeod expedition must be regarded as a doubtful sighting. The Mangrove Gerygone occurs in the Kimberley and while it is apparently spreading southwards, it can be regarded as unlikely that the bird has reached the area of Lake MacLeod.

The report of Australian Raven at Lake MacLeod is incorrect. The birds sighted would most probably have been Little Crows or possibly Torresian Crows.

Editor

## VASSE-WONNERUP ESTUARY

RAOU observers have made 80 surveys of the waterbirds using Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary since October 1981. This work has shown that Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary is of international importance for waterbirds, because it regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds. Maximum counts in the past four years have been as follows: 15,600 in 1984-5; 33,000 in 1985-6; 28,700 in 1986-7 and 30,000 in 1987-88.

A list of the 77 species recorded at the Estuary (14 of them breeding) is presented with this article. Twenty-one of these species are cited in the Japan Australia Migratory Birds Agreement.

Being close to Busselton and Bunbury, the Estuary is subject to development that may be detrimental to its waterbirds. Current proposals include a canal-based housing estate (as at Mandurah bridge), which would be partly built on waterbird feeding and breeding areas and close to part of the Estuary which is an important refuge for waterbirds in the dry season.

A small portion of the Estuary is in Sabina Nature Reserve, but the rest is in private tenure (grazing, small holdings), or of obscure status. A suitable means of protecting the whole wetland may be to have it managed as a regional park, enabling farmers, waterbirds and tourists to coexist harmoniously.

Efforts are being made to have Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary officially recognised as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Successful nomination will ensure greater recognition of the Estuary's importance for waterbirds and (hopefully) better protection of its conservation values. It is a point of embarrassment to W.A. ornithologists that W.A. has not yet nominated any wetlands to be so recognised, despite having at least 10 wetlands that qualify. All other States except Queensland each have several wetlands recognised by the Convention.

A colour brochure was recently produced in order to improve the awareness of local residents, politicians and State authorities of the conservation values of Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary. The brochure was created by Brad Kneebone, Bernie Masters, Roger Jaensch and others, and was sponsored by various donors including the Busselton Naturalists Club and the RAOU. A free copy is enclosed with this issue of W.A. Bird Notes. Members may wish to express their concern for the protection of Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary and its waterbirds, by writing individually to their elected representatives or to relevant State Ministers.

(Note: Public access to the Estuary is limited, but a close approach can be made in the following way: take Laymans Road off Bussell Highway in the Tuart Forest, then take the first bitumen road on the left and zigzag to the dead end within 30 m of the water.)

R. Jaensch

### WATERBIRDS recorded by the RAOU at the VASSE-WONNERUP ESTUARY October 1981 to January 1988

SPECIES	HIGHEST NUMBER COUNTED	FOUND BREEDING (* )
Hoary-headed Grebe	150	
Australasian Grebe	50	*
Australian Pelican	750	
Darter	10	
Great Cormorant	60	
Pied Cormorant	212	
Little Black Cormorant	150	
Little Pied Cormorant	130	
Pacific Heron	4	
White-faced Heron	250	
Great Egret	237	
Eastern Reef Egret	1	
Little Egret	2	

Rufous Night Heron	17	
Australasian Bittern	1	
Glossy Ibis	14	
Sacred Ibis	79	
Straw-necked Ibis	500	
Royal Spoonbill	1	
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	130	
Black Swan	1700	*
Australian Shelduck	2570	*
Pacific Black Duck	4200	*
Grey Teal	11900	*
Chestnut Teal	1	
Australasian Shoveler	500	*
Pink-eared Duck	66	
Hardhead	200	*
Maned Duck	100	
Blue-billed Duck	6	
Musk Duck	80	*
Osprey	2	
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	1	
Marsh Harrier	5	
Buff-banded Rail	3	*
Baillon's Crake	1	
Australian Crake	5	
Spotless Crake	2	*
Black-tailed Native-hen	4	
Dusky Moorhen	14	*
Purple Swamphen	15	*
Eurasian Coot	4000	
Painted Snipe	1	
Pied Oystercatcher	1	
Banded Lapwing	5	
Grey Plover	14	
Lesser Golden Plover	24	
Red-kneed Dotterel	2	
Red-capped Plover	785	*
Black-fronted Plover	6	
Black-winged Stilt	5000	*
Banded Stilt	226	
Red-necked Avocet	4000	
Wood Sandpiper	61	
Grey-tailed Tattler	1	
Common Sandpiper	4	
Greenshank	200	
Marsh Sandpiper	8	
Pin-tailed Snipe	1	
Black-tailed Godwit	18	
Bar-tailed Godwit	14	
Red Knot	8	
Great Knot	12	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	2300	
Pectoral Sandpiper	3	
Red-necked Stint	2000	
Long-toed Stint	49	
Curlew Sandpiper	1200	
Ruff	1	
Silver Gull	1531	
Whiskered Tern	180	
White-winged Tern	16	
Caspian Tern	15	
Fairy Tern	2	
Crested Tern	25	
Clamorous Reed-Warbler	1	
Little Grassbird	6	
exotic waterfowl	2	

## AMC WETLANDS CENTRE, CAPEL

Over the past four years, members of the RAOU have been recording birds at a series of ponds formed by sand-mining at Capel, south of Bunbury. The mining company concerned, Associated Minerals Consolidated, wants to rehabilitate the area as habitat for waterbirds and has asked the RAOU to manage the rehabilitation project.

Rehabilitation will involve re-shaping the steep banks of the lakes into shallow feeding areas, creating an artificial paperbark swamp, re-planting swamp and woodland plants, making floating islands for loafing and nesting areas and erecting nesting boxes. Facilities will be provided for members of the public interested in birds and for people wishing to carry out research at the lakes.

During the next few years there will be ample opportunity for volunteers to assist in the project and I would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in participating. Please write either to the RAOU Office at Canning Bridge or to PO Box 224, Capel, 6271. Phone: (097) 272675.

Ma. Bamford

## BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORTS

### EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

This is our last report as the wardens of Eyre. The next time WA Bird Notes appears it should have the first report from the Broome Bird Observatory, which we will write as the duly appointed wardens. Shifting from Eyre after only one year here leaves us with mixed feelings. It is certain that only the Kimberley could have lured us away so early. The new wardens, when they are appointed, will have our congratulations and support. We know they will quickly learn to love the best place on the Nullabor - just don't neglect the Pygmy Possums.

The PP's are still using the boxes, though their numbers are reducing as the mallees cease blossoming. We are looking for enough time to write up the material we have (with a little help from our friends), to have it ready for the 1986-87 Observatory Report due a little later this year. We have 51 boxes which have been used by nearly 150 individual adults. A good number of females have raised young, with a very high percentage surviving to independence.

One of the useful, although mildly macabre aspects of Observatory life is the opportunity to find, identify and measure the many beachwashed specimens (mainly birds) that come ashore on Kanidal and Wader beaches. The 1987 weather wasn't particularly helpful, with only a few big southerly 'blows' and virtually no storms. Nevertheless, we still managed to have a fairly impressive list. Four Southern Giant Petrels, one Yellow-nosed Albatross, one Rockhopper Penguin, one Little Penguin, two Fleshy-footed Shearwaters, two Short-tailed Shearwaters, two Sooty Shearwaters, one Southern Fulmar, one Slender-billed Prion. In addition we had a Sea Lion, a Loggerhead Turtle and a Bottle-nosed Dolphin. One of the Sooty Shearwaters was taken to the WA Museum for positive identification. It proved to be the first specimen recorded in WA and obtained by the WA Museum. The Rockhopper Penguin, a first for Eyre, found its way to the Adelaide Museum.

The dune rehabilitation work party (which spent its working time being sandblasted) had their reward when they saw a pair of Rock Parrots near Kanidal Beach.

We had a minor influx of Starlings during October and December. We shot three and trapped three, but two escaped. For some time we've had a cat trap which has proved to be a conspicuous failure so far as catching cats is concerned. We decided to give it one last chance and set it up as a Raven trap as part of our banding programme. After little initial success, though we caught a pair of adults in August, our catch rate was on a par with the cats. However, a sudden influx of immature birds in December seemed to give us the opportunity we required. So it proved; within a month we added a further 29 birds (three retraps)

before our supply of suitable bands was exhausted and we had to close the trap.

We have had another Peter Congreve working here as assistant warden over the long vacation. He doesn't look much like his illustrious grandfather (lacking the moustache) but is keen on banding. We have appreciated his help.

There are some really good courses on offer during this year. Here's what you must do. Secure a brochure, (write to EBO or to the RAOU office), study it carefully, then book early for the course of your choice. Give yourself the reward you deserve. Eyre is beautiful, peaceful and full of interest. You aren't being kind to yourself if you fail to visit soon. G. Hooper, B. Wells

## WARDENS WANTED

The forthcoming departure of the Eyre wardens for the Broome Bird Observatory results in a need for wardens at Eyre, for short or long-term residence. Any interested person/s please contact Doug Watkins, Tel: 417 2422

## BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Broome Bird Observatory will open, all being well, towards the end of March or in early April. Situated on a 2.5 hectare site, it is 20 km from Broome but only 100m from Roebuck Bay.

At the outset the Observatory will consist of two chalets, which have been generously donated by Lord McAlpine. The wardens will occupy one, visitors the other, which will comfortably accommodate four. Provision for camping is to be made as the Observatory and its site are further developed, a process likely to take some two years. The site is vested in the Department of Conservation and Land Management who have leased it to the RAOU.

In the migratory season Roebuck Bay can shelter up to 50,000 waders which promises to make weekly beach counts interesting. Some 3 km from the Observatory are mangroves and their specialised habitat should provide for different bird observing when the wader counting palls.

Costs of visitor residence are not yet finally determined but should be similar to those of Eyre.

The Observatory already has basic furniture, crockery, cutlery etc. but should you have any household items which you believe may be of value in Broome, please contact Doug Watkins, through the RAOU office.

## NATIONAL PARKS SURVEY

Thank you for the many cards sent in for this Survey.

The Data Bank Program is established and all data received so far has been entered. The Sunday Times recently featured our Program in its "Electronic" section.

Sixty-seven cards listing over 2000 sightings in 31 National Parks have been received. The Porongorups National Park has been the most surveyed, with 12 cards received. We are recording reasonably recent lists from National Parks even though they were compiled prior to the beginning of the National Parks Survey.

The stored information can be recalled as a list of birds sighted in a Park during a nominated time span or as the number of times a species is sighted. This can be compared with the number of cards entered and a relative ease of sighting determined. The Program also allows the recall of the specific sightings of each species within a given time span.

Di Beckingham has recorded more birds from more Parks than anyone else to date and Rod Smith has visited Parks from Esperance to Kununurra.

Within the next two weeks all cards received should be acknowledged and replacement cards sent. It is hoped to fulfil this task weekly in future.

Please maintain your support with a steady flow of cards.

C. Napler

## PALLID CUCKOO PROJECT (PCP)

The Bicentennial Year seems a good year in which to carry out a new survey of the hearings and sightings of the Pallid Cuckoo in Western Australia.

Such a survey was conducted in 1949 and again in 1950 and reported in the WA Naturalist. Based on the pattern of calls heard and/or sightings a suggestion was put forward regarding the pattern of arrival and distribution of the Pallid Cuckoo throughout WA.

In 1949, the earliest call/sighting was in June, the 3rd and in 1950, April 10 was given as the first report. I hope, with your help, to duplicate the 1949 survey and compare the results.

Serventy & Whittell (1976) refer to the movements of the Pallid Cuckoo as "obscure" (p 293) and say the song is "first heard in the Perth district.....about the end of May, or beginning of June" (p 293).

I should be grateful if all birdwatchers would let me know of the dates and places of their hearings or sightings of a Pallid Cuckoo in 1988. One report only is requested from each place/area. Should you visit another location and hear/see a Pallid Cuckoo, another date/place report would be appreciated.

Please send your date/place/hearings/sightings to the RAOU office, endorsed PCP, or telephone my work number (09) 350 7060 with information.

While this edition of WA bird Notes may be a rather early notification, the June issue will probably be too late. So please help remove some of the obscurity about Pallid Cuckoo movements and keep the PCP in mind when you hear/see PC's in each location in 1988.

Write to the RAOU office or telephone my office. B. Buchanan

Reference: Serventy D.L., & Whittell H.M. (1976) Birds of W.A., UWA Press, Perth.

## REVIEW

### WHAT BIRD CALL IS THAT: A Review

What Bird Call is That consists of two cassette tapes and a 128 page booklet.

The first tape gives a general introduction to bird song, introducing 75 different birds and their calls with some comment on their most usual habitat. The second tape simply announces each bird and gives an extended sample of the call of each.

The accompanying booklet has a useful introduction on the purposes of bird song and a section on each of the 75 birds with a short though good introductory text, giving distribution, field marks of similar species, behaviour and nesting/breeding information. The booklet is compiled by the National Photographic Index of the Australian Museum and not surprisingly therefore, has first class photographs throughout. In some cases both male and female bird photographs are used, but not in all. The package is based on SE Australia. The birds chosen are the most "frequently heard bird calls of Australia's South-Eastern margin" (p 13). However, 48 of the birds are to be heard in Western Australia.

The whole is attractively presented in a plastic case and the quality of the tapes and the accompanying booklet is high.

It is not easy to grasp for which market the package is designed. Probably not for the 'man in the street', who may find words in the text like 'ubiquitous' and 'exacerbated' out of reach. Some 'technical' knowledge is assumed - wet sclerophyll forest is mentioned and Spotted Pardalotes "feed mainly on lerp" (p 44). The informed birdwatcher however is unlikely to want recordings of Silver Gull, Willie Wagtail, Black Swan and Australian Magpie to assist

identification. The most likely target seems to be a beginner who wants more information on birds, especially of calls.

Despite this, even experienced bird watchers unfamiliar with calls (such as, for example, Jacky Winter, Stubble Quail or Cicadabird), will find the kit useful. Bird calls are a vital ingredient in identification.

Some of the calls are not as useful as others. The call of the female Pacific Black Duck is that most often heard at wetlands, rather than the male which seems to be recorded here. The Musk Duck whistle given is not the far carrying 'mating' call so often heard at wetlands during the breeding season, and the familiar Red Wattlebird 'chok' is not recorded.

The variation of colour of the breast of the Sacred Kingfisher is attributed to age, wear or fading. This seems to follow The Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1979) which refers to wear or fading. Fading seems inherently unlikely - for example why does the breast fade and not other more exposed plumage. Pizzey (1980) states the colour variation is seasonal.

The incubation period of the Whistling Kite is stated as unknown. Hollands (1984) states (on the basis of one nest) 40 days.

Popular names are used but only eight differ from RAOU usage, five by omitting words (e.g. Common from Skylark and Australian from Magpie-lark. The only Gerygone, White Throated, is stated as Warbler).

The package which sells for about \$40 at present is well worth investigating.

#### References:

1. Hollands D., (1984), Eagles Hawks and Falcons of Australia Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne.'
2. Pizzey G. & Doyle R., (1980), A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, William Collins, Sydney.
3. Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1979) Readers Digest Services Pty. Ltd., Sydney.
4. Lindsey T.R. (1987), What Bird Call is That, Angus & Robertson, NSW.

## NOTICES

### Correction - to December 1987 WA Bird Notes No. 44

P2 first column, para 2 headed Discussion, reports 3270 Large Sand Plovers at Shark Bay. This should read, as the table correctly indicated, 373.

P5 first column records the sighting of 2000+ Flock Bronzewing. The area should read Camballin, the observer DK.

### OFFICE BEARERS 1988

At the Annual General Meeting of the WA Group, the following office bearers and committee were elected:-

<b>Chairman</b>	- Geoff Shannon	<b>Committee Members</b>
<b>Vice-Chairman</b>	- Ros Denny	Bruce Buchanan
<b>Treasurer</b>	- Clive Napier	Peter Curry
<b>Secretary</b>	- Judy Jenkins	Barbara Hale
		Allan Jones
		Ian Standing
		Brian Wilson

### BIRDS OF THE SOUTH-WEST ESTUARIES.

#### Information wanted

Ernest Hodgkin and Ruth Clark are asking all birdwatchers who visit any of the estuaries between Augusta and Esperance (excluding the Hardy Inlet) to report on the species of waterbirds and their numbers which are observed using the estuaries. Any recorded information on the estuaries in the last five years would be welcome, as well as observations which may be made in the future.

The information will be published in Reports on each of the estuaries. Contributions will be most appreciated. Hodgkin & Clark can

