

# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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## ASIAN DOWITCHER REACHES SOUTH-WEST

The Asian Dowitcher (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*) is an uncommon wader in Australia, the movements of which are little known (Lane 1987). Occurrences of this species reported in Australia have been fragmented, but it is now considered to be a regular migrant to north-western W.A. Occasional records are known from south-eastern Australia. The following report documents an occurrence of the Asian Dowitcher at Albany, Western Australia.

In early July 1989, Jerry Tolman (an American bird-watcher on tour in Australia) reported seeing an Asian Dowitcher near Emu Point, Albany. The sighting was related to Richard Nowotny of Shenton Park, an RAOU member visiting the area who subsequently located the bird on the 15th of July, 1989. It was observed in company with a group of Bar-tailed Godwit and three Black-tailed Godwit in partial breeding plumage. Early reports, in excellent visibility, noted the overall size differences and the proportions of the bill (the 'dowitcher' being noticeably smaller, the bill straighter and thicker than the godwits, entirely black and bulbous near the tip). The feeding technique was also noted, being more 'up and down with less obvious rooting around' than the godwits. The bird was noted also as having brick-red colouring on the head, neck, back and chest. It was concluded that the bird was an Asian Dowitcher. On the 21st of July 1989, Vic Smith of Albany also made detailed descriptions of the bird at Emu Point (near the boat harbour). On this occasion the bird was roosting and further observations of plumage were recorded. Noted principally

were a mottled chestnut-red colouring on the head, nape, mantle, breast and flanks with some fine dark-brown barring on the flank and mantle. Wing coverts were recorded as dark-brown. Noted also was the smaller size and 'dumpiness' of the bird by comparison with the godwits. The same bill features were described as in the previous observation except for the presence of a small pinkish patch at the base of the lower mandible. A pale supercilium, emphasized by a dark line through the lores and a dark crown were seen and when the bird took flight the absence of any wing bar was noted. It was concluded that the bird was an Asian Dowitcher in partial breeding plumage.

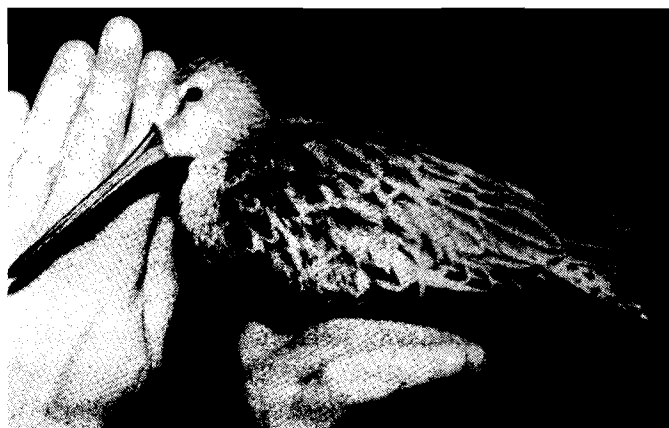
My last sighting of the Asian Dowitcher was at Lake MacLeod, near Carnarvon in October 1987. On the strength of the above observations I decided to travel to Albany. Tide was low on the early morning of the 22nd of July 1989 when I arrived at Emu Point. There was already wader activity on the beach. After scanning the area with my telescope and locating a small group of godwits, I proceeded to study each of them carefully. Clearly observed were four Black-tailed Godwit in partial breeding colour and about 20 Bar-tailed Godwit. Other waders in the area included Great Knot, Red Knot (some with red colouring) and a few Grey Plover.

Knowing that good wader habitat existed a few hundred metres to the north-west of the boat harbour, I transferred my effort there and within fifteen minutes or so located something 'odd' in a group of waders. This was at approximately 7.45 am in moderately good light and after careful 'manoeuvres', I reached within 20-30 metres of the birds.

After setting up my telescope and scanning through a group of about 250 knot and Grey Plover I located a larger, actively feeding wader which I estimated to be about 25% larger than a nearby Great Knot. Brownish-red colouring on the head was immediately noticeable as was a prominent supercilium giving a somewhat 'capped' appearance. The bird was feeding busily and was probing the mud with a decisive, 'sewing machine' action. I managed to get a few metres closer to record the following detail:

Crown darkish brown with streaked appearance; from front on, pale supercilia were prominent, extending to bill. Dark loreal mark evident and pale mark noticed near base of lower mandible on the chin.

Bill was long and entirely black, thickened at the base and



Asian Dowitcher, captured by RAOU NW Wader  
Expedition, 1983 .

Photo: Duncan Parish

distinctly bulbous near the tip; particularly obvious when front on. General aspect of head/bill relationship very 'snipe-like'.

Brownish-red colouring covered the whole neck down to the top of the breast and along the flank following the wing fold, also extending to the mantle. Slight barring on the flanks extending back and becoming fainter towards tail. Remainder of body, from breast to belly and tail, whitish.

Scapulars dark centred with whitish linings giving mottled grey-brown impression.

Legs were longish and black.

The bird was not in company with either species of godwit but the overall 'jizz' was quite unlike those species. Particularly noticeable was the angle of bill to head and body. Whenever the bird was not feeding, the bill was held close to the body giving a very 'heavy' appearance. When feeding the bird often inserted its bill to about three-quarter length and make very rapid up and down movements. On two occasions the bird stretched its wings. The underwing was observed as pale over the whole area. When refolded there was no projection of wing tip beyond the tail and the bird appeared quite 'blunt-ended'. I concluded the bird was an adult Asian Dowitcher in partial breeding plumage.

My observations continued for about 40 minutes until the entire wader flock lifted and circled in tight formation making several sweeps over and around the feeding area until finally flying off strongly in a north-easterly direction.

It is likely that the Asian Dowitcher was an over-wintering bird (i.e. here in W.A. during its normal breeding season in the northern hemisphere), considering the time of year. Asian Dowitchers are more usually known to arrive in the north-west in September (Lane, 1987) though nine Asian Dowitchers were recorded near Broome (Crab Creek) on the 6th of July 1989 (two in breeding plumage) which closely coincides with the first report of this bird at Albany.

The Albany sighting is the most southerly occurrence of the Asian Dowitcher in Western Australia, the previous record being that at Lake MacLeod some 900 km to the north-west.

I am grateful for the very detailed and thorough observations provided by Richard Nowotny and Vic Smith.

R. Vervest

#### Reference:

Lane B.A. (1987) *Shorebirds in Australia*, RAOU, Melbourne.

## OBSERVATIONS

Please send details of sightings to 'Observations Officer' at the W.A. Office of the RAOU. Unusual sightings should be accompanied by field notes. Preliminary checking of the following observations has been undertaken but further scrutiny should be given prior to inclusion in any official or technical report. This list of observations mainly covers the period from May - August 1989.

Compiled by Rodney Vervest.

#### DOWN SOUTH

Emu - 1, 27/6/89, Poison Gully, Brookton Highway - GMA.

Black-browed Albatross - 1, 12/4/89, Stokes Nat. Park - BN.

Yellow-nosed Albatross - 10, 21/7/89, Wader Beach (Eyre Bird Observatory) - RS.

Southern Giant Petrel - 1, 20/7/89, South Mole, Fremantle -

MO.

Cape Petrel - 1, 21/7/89 - Kanidal Beach (Eyre Bird observatory): beach washed specimen - IA.

Sooty Shearwater - 1, 4/7/89, City Beach, Perth: dead bird with fish head wedged in throat - GM.

Australasian Gannet - 2, 31/7/89, Woodman Point - PRH.

Black-faced Shag - Wilson Inlet, near mouth of Hay River - LH: rarely reported this far west. One Atlas record from 1980 at Augusta \* 2, 10/4/89, Stokes Nat. Park - BN.

Red-tailed Tropicbird - nesting, 10/12/88, Pelsaert Island, Abrolhos: bird sitting on two eggs - MHB: according to the Atlas, breeding at the Abrolhos was last recorded in 1954.

Cattle Egret - 7, 30/5/89, Joondalup Lake - JH \* 1, 3/6/89, small pond N of Bibra Lake - PRH \* 2, 15/7/89, near Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve - RN \* 1, 31/7/89, south of Bibra Lake on Forrest Road: immature - PRH.

Little Egret - 1, 22/7/89, Lake Joondalup - NH, AB.

Glossy Ibis - 8, 30/5/89, Lake Joondalup - JH.

Sacred Ibis - 14, February 1989, swamp on farmland, Tenterden - TH \* 6, 1/4/89, Stokes Nat. Park - BN \* 3, May-June 1989, Kalgoorlie (in town) - AC: there are no records of Sacred Ibis in the Atlas or in Storr's list for the Kalgoorlie area and it is evident that this species is spreading east as well as south \* small group, 23/7/89, standing in flooded paperbarks with Straw-necked Ibis off Lower Denmark Rd, east of Albany (possible colony?) - RV.

Freckled Duck - 1, 14/5/89, Namming Lake - BBu.

Chestnut Teal - 4, February 1989, swamp on farmland, Tenterden - TH.

Musk Duck - 1, 6/7/89, Wittacarra Creek, Kalbarri - NT: northern limit for this species?

Osprey - 1, 18/7/89, Canning Bridge: flying overhead and being 'mobbed' by Silver Gulls - RV.

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 19/6/89, Albany Highway, near Wungong Gorge - JH.

Whistling Kite - 2, 31/7/89, Kogolup Lake: at nest - PRH.

Little Eagle - 1, 4/7/89, Canning River near Mt Henry Bridge - PA.

Peregrine Falcon - 1, 29/5/89, Bentley: on top of wheat silo - JH.

Malleefowl - 1, 19/7/89, Microwave Tower (Eyre Bird Observatory) - IA, PC.

Painted Button-quail - 1, 24/6/89, off Baldvis Rd, Baldvis - GM.

Baillon's Crake - 1, 15/4/89, Warburton sewage pond: seen dead on 18/4/89 - DP.

Dusky Moorhen - 82, 14/5/89, Perry Lakes - DM.

Bush Thick-knee - 2, 16/6/89, 8 km SE Northam: resident in the vicinity and breeding - LM.

Grey Plover - 2, 31/7/89, Woodman Point - PRH.

Hooded Plover - 2, 19/2/89, Margaret River mouth - RN \* 273, 30/3/89, Lake Gore and Lake Gage, Esperance (91 on Station Lake, Esperance on 11/3/89 also) - JE.

White-winged Tern - 1, 20/4/89, Thomsons Lake - GM.

Roseate Tern - 17, 25/6/89, Mandurah Sea-wall - GM.

Little Corella - 1, 16/6/89, Kelmscott - GMA.

Rainbow Lorikeet - 50-60, 30/5/89, Bateman - DN.

Regent Parrot - 5, 3/4/89, 80 km N of Zanthus Siding (Trans Aust. Railway) - DP.

Pallid Cuckoo - 1, 23/4/89, Wannamal (Gingin district) - BBu.

**Fan-tailed Cuckoo** - 1, 28/4/89, Lake Cooloongup - GM.  
**White-back Swallow** - 6, 19/6/89, Herdsman Lake - RSh \* 12, 20/6/89, Claremont Lake - TY.  
**Ground Cuckoo-shrike** - 8, 29/5/89, Eyre Highway, near turn-off to Eyre Bird Observatory - BBa, MC.  
**White-breasted Robin** - 20-30, 18/5/89, Wungong Gorge - MW.  
**Chestnut Quail-thrush** - 3, 30/5/89, Newman Rock (Eyre Highway): male, female and sub-adjult - BBa, MC.  
**Dusky Grasswren** - abundant, early/mid April 1989, Jamieson, Cavenagh and Blackstone Ranges, 60-90 k E of Warburton: in spinifex grassland on rocky hillsides - DP \* 1, April 1989, Walter James Range, 30 k NE Giles Met. Station - DP.  
**Yellow-plumed Honeyeater** - 4, 16/1/89, Lake Cooloongup: one immature - GM \* 7, 16/6/89, Christmas Tree Well, Brookton Highway - GL.  
**Spotted Pardalote** - 9+, 2/4/89, Stokes Nat. Park: flying north: 2 seen in yate swamp same area on 10/4/89 also - BN: this is about the eastern range limit for this species.  
**Striated Pardalote** - many flocks, 20/7/89, Eyre Bird Observatory: one count of 92 made - RS.  
**Zebra Finch** - 1, 24/4/89, Kelmscott - GMa.  
**Pied Butcherbird** - 1, 18/6/89, Claremont Lake: seen and heard singing - NB.

#### UP NORTH

**Flock Bronzewing** - late April/early May, Camp Nifty, W of Telfer on edge of Great Sandy Desert - JB.  
**Dollarbird** - 1, 19/4/89, Wyndham, in town: last sighting for the season - KO.  
**Spinifexbird** - 1, 21/4/89, Bungle Bungles - KO.  
**Painted Firetail** - 10, 23/4/89, Bungle Bungles - KO.

#### KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

AB - Allan Burbidge	LM - Lindsay Milhinch
AC - Andy Chapman	MC - Margery Clegg
BBa - Bryan Barrett	MHB - Mary Bremner
BBu - Bruce & Anne Buchanan	MO - Margaret Owen
BN - Brenda Newbey	MW - Mark Whackett
DM - Dusty Millar	NB - Norah Brockman
DN - Doug Nash	NH - Neil Hamilton
DP - David Pearson	NT - Noel Tyrer
GL - Graham Little	PA - Peter Anson
GM - George Miller	PC - Peter Congreve
GMa - Greg Marston	PRH - Peel Howden
IA - Ian Ashton	RN - Richard Nowotny
JB - John Brooke	RS - Rod Smith
JE - Jack Ewert	RSh - Ray Shulz
JH - Jack Hunt	RV - Rodney Vervest
KO - Kimberley Observer	TH - Tom Hordacre
LH - Lesley Harrison	TY - Tim Yates

## WATERBIRD STUDIES

### SCOPEWEST: Swan Coastal Plain Wetlands Study Begins

I've stepped into the waders of retiring Chief Wetfoot, Roger Jaensch and am currently wading through the initial tasks of setting up the new waterbird project. Roger has migrated north and it is with pleasure that I announce the beginning of

SCOPEWEST (Swan Coastal Plain Wetlands Study).

As outlined in the previous issue of W.A. Bird Notes (No. 50) this project is part of a multi-disciplinary study (about five projects in all) principally funded by the Water Authority of W.A. The SCOPEWEST study will provide species lists and counts, detailed breeding information and through banding studies, details of waterbird movements in the study area. The projects will examine many aspects of wetland ecology and hydrology.

As the project title implies, the research is confined to the Swan Coastal Plain. This area is bounded in the north by the Moore River, in the south by Bunbury and the east by the Darling Range. With CALM officers I have been busy travelling by road and air over most of the study area and have completed selection of about 250 sites for survey.

There are four scheduled survey periods each year: **October, January, April and July** and observers will have the whole month in which to carry out surveys. This is an important research project designed to provide accurate and readily usable information for managers which will be of vital importance to the conservation of our wetlands and waterbirds.

Please register your positive intent in assisting with SCOPEWEST to Rodney Vervest at the W.A. Office. Recruitment slips will be sent out soon and a survey kit will be provided to participants. **The first SCOPEWEST survey will be in October 1989.**

#### REGULAR MONITORING PROGRAMME

For those observers outside the SCOPEWEST study area who have been collecting waterbird data on nature reserves or other wetlands, please continue with counts. Data sheets should be sent in as usual and will be stored at the W.A. office. The information will be used and acknowledged appropriately though no formal RAOU report will be published. For observers living in the SCOPEWEST study area, I would encourage you to 'join up' and focus your efforts on the new project. If you have a particular wetland you are monitoring and wish to continue with (i.e. one that is not included as a SCOPEWEST wetland), please continue and the RAOU will store the data.

#### ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNT

The **NOVEMBER COUNT** is scheduled to run from **18 - 26 November 1989.**

Our last count in March this year produced a 'bumper' total of ~~348,000 waterfowl~~ and a near perfect coverage of the study area. This is great credit indeed to all waterfowl counters and we hope you will be available to survey your block in November. Recruiting forms will be coming your way in late September. Current participants, please notify Rodney Vervest (Duck Master) at the W.A. Office if you are *unable* to survey your block.

## OBSERVATORY REPORTS

### BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

We have two pairs of nesting Black-necked Stork; one pair is easily accessible, the other not so. Two chicks in one nest have been observed regularly.

This year our wintering population of waders appear to have a greater number of birds in part or full breeding plumage which has helped to make the identification of species much easier.

Lake Eda has a great supply of water this year and the area continues to delight those willing to undertake the 50 km trip. Thousands of ducks, many raptors and Brolga in huge numbers are the highlights.

We have been pleased to see many WA members of the RAOU here this year. We wish you all many happy returns and for those who have not made the great northern trek include us in your next holiday plans. The observatory is a great starting point to the delights of the Kimberley. Let us help you become familiar with the birds first.

G. Hooper & B. Wells  
Wardens

## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

### WARDENS REQUIRED

Ian Ashton will be leaving Eyre in January 1990 after almost two years as Warden. The RAOU is seeking a couple to take over the running of Eyre and would be pleased to hear from interested people.

Eyre Bird Observatory is operated in an old telegraph station on the Great Australian Bight. It is 30 km south of Cocklebidy which is on the Eyre Highway, 1100 km east of Perth. The stone house has accommodation for the two staff and 16 visitors.

Eyre runs courses on birds and other natural history subjects. It maintains a biological research programme in the Nuytsland Nature Reserve that includes weekly wader counts along the beach and bush bird counts in the mallee. Eyre is also an official weather recording station, sending reports twice a day to Perth.

The Warden's position involves organising meals, accommodation and activities for visitors, on whose fees the Observatory depends for its income. Eyre presently caters for 1000 visitor nights per year. The Warden also maintains the Observatory's plant, which includes two vehicles and other equipment necessary to operate a field station at a remote locality.

The combined salary package for the two staff is \$13,080. The position is an interesting and challenging one, calling for skill while providing many rewarding moments. The vital qualification is that staff enjoy the work. Terms of appointment as short as one year are acceptable because of the high level of commitment that is required for the position. A term of two years is preferred. Further information may be obtained from: Doug Watkins, Chairperson, Eyre Management Committee, Lot 25 Kinley Road, BANJUP 6164 Ph (09) 417 2422.

### MALLEEFOWL MOUND SEARCH - EYRE

A search for Malleefowl mounds at Eyre Bird Observatory was organised in the week commencing July 16th. Eleven course participants booked for a week's hard work, so with Ian, Peter and Simon joining in when possible it was not difficult to ensure an effective number of search groups.

5.6 square kilometres of mallee were searched along the North Track by small groups walking a kilometre east or west of the track in lines 50 metres apart. We had immediate success when George and Pam Agar found the first: an active mound, crater-shaped, which had a huge pile of damp plant material inside, in the centre of which had been dug a steep-sided chamber. Surrounding the mound was an area which had been recently scratched clear of litter.

By the third day in this area nine mounds were discovered. Two

were active, one probably active this year and the others old.

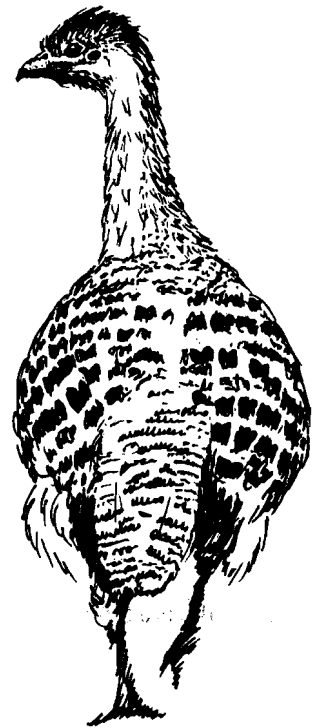
Another morning was spent searching near the microwave tower and that got off to a bright start with the sighting of a Malleefowl. Twelve mounds were found, one an active mound which was enthusiastically photographed.

All group members showed a keen application to the task and co-ordinated well. Recording the positions on a map and on the track will be a straightforward job because of their effective work.

The last day was spent on an outing to Twilight Cove. Even though travel along the beach was next to impossible we managed to sight seven whales and a party of ten Yellow-nosed Albatross. Ian's trained eye was sharp enough to spot a Cape Petrel which had been washed up.

It was a week which all enjoyed. Apart from the kindness of the weather we were favoured by the hard work and good humour of Ian, who had only just returned from a two weeks' break, and the pleasant co-operative spirit of Eyre's guests.

R. Smith



Malleefowl

## ROGER JAENSCH

### RAOU Field Officer WA 1981-1989

WA Bird Notes No. 18 May 1981 recorded the arrival of Roger Jaensch to be field officer for a "new and exciting project" (p.2), the "Waterbird Usage Survey". By WA Bird Notes No. 19 in September 1981 the new project was entitled the South West Waterbird Project and volunteers were being summoned. Roger also became joint editor of WA Bird Notes (with Graeme Chapman) from No. 19 to No. 28 (December 1983) inclusive, when the departure of Graeme Chapman to Canberra left Roger as sole editor for Nos. 29 to 36 (December 1985) inclusive. Pressure of other birding work then necessitated Roger handing over as Editor to another, but Roger continued as "Observations Officer" until his departure from WA in July 1989.

Roger Jaensch soon became well known to all bird-watchers in WA. His patience in training and encouraging others brought many more closely into bird-watching, particularly waders and waterbirds and by virtue of tireless effort he became well acquainted with an enormous range of wetlands through the whole of the south-west.

Always well organised, he was a popular leader of outings, excursions and expeditions. His quiet diplomacy grew the more assured as the years passed and his leadership ability became the more evident. During his time in WA, membership of the RAOU grew from about 60 to 600, an increase for which much is owed to Roger Jaensch. He has now taken up the challenge of an opportunity for leadership in the Asian Wetland Bureau in Malaysia. We thank him for his great contribution and wish him well for the future.

## THE RAOU AUSTRALIAN BIRD COUNT

### THE ATLAS WITH NUMBERS!

The most exciting and challenging national bird project - the RAOU Australian Bird Count (or ABC) is here at last! The RAOU invites you to enjoy the fun and thrill of being a CABBIE (short for Counter of Australian Birds)!

The ABC aims to investigate seasonal and year-to-year changes in the abundance of land-birds in a broad range of habitats throughout Australia. The project has immense conservation and scientific value because it will be the first of its kind to identify on a national scale those bird species which are endangered, common or even those which have reached pest status. Secondly, it will help identify those habitats which should be conserved to ensure proper management of all our birds. Analyses of results will also improve our understanding of seasonal bird movements within Australia, which are poorly known at the moment.

The ABC is a 5-year project, at least. It is now possible for all contributors to the Atlas Project, plus others who missed out on all that fun, to help the RAOU achieve the goals of the ABC by counting birds regularly in the same location or opportunistically in remote areas.

### Benefits

You will learn first-hand about the status of Australian land-birds on both a local and national scale. You will be given regular and frequent feedback on the project's progress through published articles, reports and seminars at local and national bird meetings. You will contribute to knowledge of our birds, particularly in the area of conservation. You can make each survey an enjoyable social event by taking a few friends and/or relatives along with you.

### Involvement

Observers are asked to count birds regularly in defined areas, using identical procedures on each visit. The survey site can be in your local area, but the emphasis is on nature reserves, national parks, state forests or any other site where the natural vegetation is uniform and of stable tenure. The **minimum** number of surveys per site we request from each observer is **two in spring/summer and two in autumn/winter**. You are free to survey your sites more frequently, if you wish; there are already some enthusiastic volunteers who have started on a programme of monthly surveys. However, it is entirely up to you if you wish to survey your sites more frequently than the minimum level. Each visit to your site will require at least three 20-minute surveys. If you think you can commit yourself to a few hours of bird counting at the same site throughout the year, then you are the ideal person for this project! Few people will be able to make regular surveys in remote areas, but information from such locations is still important. Therefore, even single 20-minute counts will be valuable, in a specified habitat (e.g. mulga or spinifex/mallee), in a remote area. If several people make such counts at different times of the year (albeit in different but precise areas), a picture should emerge of gross seasonal changes in particular habitats.

### Joining In

Firstly, you should write to me and become a registered cabbie. Provide your name and address, and the name(s) of the site(s) you wish to survey. I will then send you out the Project Kit complete with instruction booklet, data sheets and a list of other

project participants in your local area. This is an invitation to ALL birders.

The Project Office is set up at the Australian Museum. Correspondence can be sent to me:

C/- Department of Vertebrate Ecology, The Australian Museum, 6-8 College Street, Sydney, NSW 2000.

The ABC Project is an exciting and challenging concept and the benefits gained will be far-reaching. It has the potential to contribute as much to Australian ornithology as did the Atlas Project, if not more. The success of the project depends on YOU, so sign up today and become a CABBIE right now! Happy Birding!

Stephen Ambrose

(Coordinator)

## NATIONAL PARKS PROJECT REPORT

After nearly two years of operation it is time for an account of the Project.

Over 14000 records have been received and entered into the database. These have come from 82 Parks, Reserves or sites. It was decided some time ago to extend the scope of the Project to cover any easily identifiable area in Western Australia and we now have numerous records for places members have visited on a regular basis over several years. State Forests, Nature Reserves, Lakes, Shire Districts, farming properties etc as well as the National Parks are covered.

We still will be providing C.A.L.M. with data for Checklists for the various Parks, but it became obvious that the data had a wider long term value for research and so the scope has been extended both in locality and in time.

The value of such a database increases greatly with both time and volume. In ten years when there will be 100,000 records it will be a really worthwhile source of information when submissions for Government are being prepared and due to its size and age will carry considerable weight.

The computer programme can provide some useful and interesting printouts already. Below are samples of information available. The first is the normal list of species observed in a particular area (Peak Charles) with the number of times birds have been sighted. The summary at the end of the Report shows the number of CARDS which have been received for the area. Comparing sightings with cards can indicate the possible rarity of a species or more positively the ease of seeing it. The second printout shows the distribution of a particular bird (**Crested Shrike-tit**). It shows where it has been seen and when. Both Reports can be given for the full period of the Project or for any specified period. This last feature is useful in investigating migration or nomadism.

The above Reports are available to Members who require them for their own research or interest at no cost. They are sold to others who use them professionally. It takes some time to print out these Reports so don't rush in to the Office on the day you want one!

New record CARDS are now printed. Your eyesight and ours should benefit. The numbers against the birds are the R.A.O.U. Atlas numbers and are used for recording. We have not been sending out replacement cards recently due to the new cards being prepared but all contributors should soon receive some new cards. New members who want to send in records please contact the Office for details. There is a list of locations presently being used but if you are in doubt, determine your own location and send us the parameters with the list. The surest method is to use the Travellers Atlas and give a Latitude and Longitude reference and a nearby town or feature.

Remember to keep those cards rolling in. One record card for a locality is good but regular cards for the same locality are even better. Make it routine to note any sightings on a card and send them to the Office. We will record them for posterity.

Finally, thanks to the many dedicated birdwatchers who have sent in the 14,000 records and particular thanks to Sandra Fincham who not only sends in many records but has spent long hours at the computer entering the data.

C. Napier  
Project Coordinator

## NOTICES

### NEW PUBLICATION

The latest volume in an interesting and valuable series on the regional distribution of Western Australian birds has been published by the WA Museum. This is, Storr G.M. and Johnstone R.E. (1988) *Birds of the Swan Coastal Plain and adjacent seas and islands*, published by the WA Museum. It is Supplement 28 of the Records of the Western Australian Museum from where it may be purchased (\$5). It is dedicated to the memory of one of WA's outstanding ornithologists,

Julian Ford.

### ROAD WORK VOLUNTEERS, EYRE

Bill Graham has some volunteers for help to improve the scarp descent to Eyre. More are needed. Accommodation at Eyre for volunteers will be half price - an opportunity to visit an outstanding birding area, get some gentle exercise in the open air and cheaply. Contact Bill Graham, PO Box 101, Scarborough 6019, Tel 341 5389.

### WILDFLOWER EXHIBITION

We are hoping to have a display and to be able to sell RAOU cards again at the Kings Park Wildflower Exhibition which is from September 29 to October 3 (9 am - 7 pm). We would be very grateful for as many volunteers as can give their time to help. Please ring the RAOU office and give your name and telephone number if you would like to join us.

It has also been suggested that an R.A.O.U. display should be set up and cards sold for one day at each of the larger shopping centres during Bird Week which begins on 22nd October. All volunteers will be welcome.

The trading table will be at the Busselton Wildflower Exhibition from September 20th to 23rd and the Darlington and Kalamunda Festivals both late in October.

M. Wilson

### EGRET WATCH

The Shortland Wetland Centre at Wallsend NSW is seeking observers across Australia to take part in their Project Egret Watch, which is investigating the breeding biology, migration and ecology of all four species of egret in Australia. Observers can either look for colour banded birds (legs) or wing-tagged birds and/or report any sightings whether banded/tagged or not.

The banding/tagging is being done in Queensland and NSW and it is probably unlikely that many banded/tagged birds will reach south-west WA. However, there are interesting results thus far, with birds sighted up to 2500 kilometres from their place of banding/tagging.

Should you see a banded/tagged egret please note the colour sequence of bands top down on both legs or the shape and colour (top down) of wing tags and inform the RAOU Office. If you wish to participate write to Shortland Wetlands Centre, PO Box 130, Wallsend, 2287 NSW.

### GREY FALCON

I am presently examining the ornithological literature in an attempt to glean any records of Grey Falcon sightings in the South-west of W.A. In addition, I am hoping to unearth some unpublished records and it would be appreciated if observers could hunt through their field records for any Grey Falcon sightings.

I would be most grateful if the details of any sightings were forwarded to Murray Unkovich at 80 Clarence Street, Brunswick East, Victoria 3057.

### COOMBERDALE LAKES

Ron van Delft is seeking people interested in accompanying him to the Coomberdale Lakes area, approximately 20 kms north of Moora, in mid November, as part of the Great Duck Count. Ron envisages a small group helping count in the many lakes of the area. If you are interested please contact Ron on 279.9913.

### BIRD WEEK 23-27 OCTOBER, 1989

We hope to draw public attention to birds and their environment during Bird Week 23-27 October 1989. The public libraries in W.A. are being invited to mount displays. If you wish to help with Bird Week please go and talk with the librarian in your local public library. The librarians may appreciate your knowledge - and your extra pair of hands (to help set up a display).

The second thrust is an offer of assistance to schools to talk to students about birds during Bird Week. A limited number of slides can be made available for these school visits. If you wish to participate send/telephone your name, address and telephone number to the RAOU office. Thank you in anticipation.

Rod Smith  
Margaret Owens  
Dot Kingston

### RAOU SCIENTIFIC DAY 27 MAY 1989

The Australasian Wader Studies Group organised the Scientific Day. Speakers delivered papers on various aspects of wader study, including Clive Minton's summary of the RAOU effort in the North West since 1981. His paper stressed the importance of the Broome-Port Hedland coastline to waders, where up to a third of the total peak wader population of Australia may congregate. Scientific data from capture and from radar studies have helped to determine the distance and direction of travel of many species. Other papers of interest to WA birders dealt with wader studies in South-East Asia and with the perplexing matter of the location of breeding sites. Cassettes of speeches are available from: RAOU, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds, 3039.

### PROSPECTIVE LEADERS

Are you interested in knowing more about becoming a better excursion leader. An informal afternoon is to be arranged to discuss the finer points with experienced leaders on hand to answer any questions.

Please contact Chris Wilder (401.8329) if interested.

## MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

### VISIT TO THREATENED AREA AT MT LESUEUR

The RAOU recently received an appeal for help in identifying birds at Mt Lesueur during a survey which the Department of Zoology of the University of W.A. proposed to mount during the first two weeks of July, 1989. The area to be surveyed is of immense importance from the botanical point of view in that a number of species found on the slopes of Mt Lesueur grow nowhere else in Australia. This area is under threat from a mining organisation which is planning an open cut coal mine over an area of approximately 6 x 10 km, to remove and dump nearby the topsoil and rock, and take out coal to a depth of 100 metres. They also plan to build a power station nearby and to house a workforce of 400 people in and around Jurien Bay.

The area consists (at present) of open heathland intersected by breakaways and gullies, all of which contain thick low scrub interspersed by stands of wandoo and other eucalypts, banksia and paperbarks, etc.

Garry Connell of the Department of Zoology had spent a considerable amount of time planning a system of grids to cover the area under threat. We arrived on the evening of 9th July. Garry and his team of some 25 Zoology students were in the process of trapping and monitoring the mammals and reptiles which inhabit the area. Our brief was to visit as many of his designated sites as possible to get a broad view of the habitats available for birds, to list and count the species we found or heard, and to advise four of his team - who already had some knowledge of birds - in what they were likely to see during the rest of their stay in the area.

We spent the whole of the 10th and 11th working with these four students during which time we found that the heathland was the home of innumerable honeyeaters - both Tawny-crowned and White-cheeked were feeding on the flowering plants - whilst family groups of White-winged Fairy-wrens were also present. Brown Honeyeaters seemed to call from every bush and must have been present in great numbers. Overhead we had two pairs of Wedge-tailed Eagle, one pair flying to the east of the area and the second pair over the western slopes. We understood from a local resident that the White-tailed Black Cockatoo sub-species *Calyptrorhynchus bandinii latirostris* (Carnaby's Black Cockatoo) breeds in the hollows of the wandoo and that it may well be one of its last refuges. We found and heard several cuckoos. The Shining Bronze and Fan-tailed were seen whilst Horsfield's Bronze were heard, and we wondered whether the area is used by these birds as a stopover for their migration from the southern wetter regions. Of the less seen species, we found a pair of White-breasted Robin and a family group of Southern Emu-wren. Garry Connell and his group heard and saw Southern Boobook during a night spotting exercise, and an Australian

Owlet-nightjar was found in one of the traps.

Many plants have yet to come into flower - we found no eucalypts in flower. However, we felt certain that a greater number of species of birds would inhabit the area during the spring. We therefore propose to revisit the area in early September.

#### Our bird list for the area was as follows:

4 Wedge-tailed Eagle	4 groups of White-winged Fairy-wren
1 Australian Hobby	1 group of Variegated Fairy-wren
1 Brown Falcon	2 groups of Southern Emu-wren
2 Australian Kestrel	5 White-browed Scrubwren
2 quail (species ?)	Weebill
4 Common Bronzewing	Western Gerygone

10 Galah	2 Red Wattlebird (heard)
9 corella	70 (est.) Brown Honeyeater
12 Port Lincoln Ringneck	55 Tawny-crowned Honeyeater
4 Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo	50 White-cheeked Honeyeater
2 Shining Bronze-cuckoo	2 Singing Honeyeater
3 Fan-tailed Cuckoo	4 Western Spinebill
Tree Martin	12 Silveryeye
5 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Striated Pardalote
6 Grey Shrike-thrush	14 Dusky Woodswallow
1 Rufous Whistler	12 Black-faced Woodswallow
2 White-breasted Robin	1 Grey Butcherbird
1 Willie Wagtail	Laughing Kookaburra (heard)
8 Grey Fantail	Australian Magpie
32 White-tailed Black Cockatoo	Australian Raven

B. Barrett

(Landscape, Vol 4 Number 4 Winter Edition 1989, published by WA Department of Conservation and Land Management contains a well illustrated and interesting account of the Mt Lesueur area and has a good section on Carnaby's Black Cockatoo. Ed.)

### WESTERN YELLOW ROBIN ON SWAN COASTAL PLAIN

The Western Yellow Robin was once common on the Swan Coastal Plain, but by about 1935 it had disappeared from Kings Park (Serventy and Whittell 1976) and had become scarce in the Perth, Rockingham and Bunbury districts. By 1988 it was considered to be possibly extinct on the Coastal Plain (Storr and Johnstone 1988). However, the Western Yellow Robin does persist and possibly still breeds in at least one locality.

On 9 October 1988, in company with J. Raines, I saw at least two Yellow Robins in Jarrah-Banksia-Sheoak woodland on Nine Mile Lake Nature Reserve, about 15 km south-west of Pinjarra. Further searching revealed the presence of a fresh (but empty) Western Yellow Robin nest situated about 3.5 m up on an almost horizontal branch of Sheoak.

Unfortunately we were not able to return to the area to confirm breeding.

I strongly encourage anyone who sees a Western Yellow Robin anywhere on the Swan Coastal Plain to report their sighting (particularly breeding records) to me, or to the 'Observations Officer' at the RAOU Office, so that we can clarify the status of Western Yellow Robin in the area.

A. Burbidge

#### References:

- Serventy, D.L. and Whittell, H.M. (1976) *Birds of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth.
- Storr, G.M. and Johnstone, R.E. (1988) *Birds of the Swan Coastal Plain and adjacent seas and islands*, WA Museum, Perth.

### GURAGA

Guraga Lake is situated on the sandy Dandaragan Plateau thirteen kilometres north of Regan's Ford and three kilometres directly west of the Brand Highway (the Lake can just be seen). It is one of a number of lakes and swamps west of the Brand Highway, which includes Eneminga Swamp and Pools (5 kilometres NE), Namming Lake (1.5 kilometres S), Hurstview Lake (2 kilometres W), the three wetlands of Namming Nature Reserve - Crackers, Ibis and Fred Swamps (5 kilometres SSE) and many other smaller swamps, the great majority of which have not been visited from an ornithological viewpoint.

Access is by three kilometres of track with much deep sand followed by a deeply rutted track for 800 metres which also serves as a creek in winter. Parts of the sandy track also become water covered in winter and four wheel drive is advisable at all times of the year. These conditions reduce opportunities for



birdwatching but have the desirable result of deterring water skiers who operate at Namming Lake. They have expressed a wish to use Guraga, but say the track prevents them getting their boats to the Lake.

Guraga is the largest of the lakes in the area. A slightly east-west compressed circle it is normally 1.8 kilometres north to south and 1.5 kilometres east to west. During the years 1987 and 1988 in which Anne and I visited each month the size did not greatly alter; the shore lines show the Lake normally remains at the size indicated. However, in some years, Guraga, with a mean depth of 1.07 metres in 1987/88 has reached 2.5 metres (1983) and the "locals" can recall it being over 3 metres. In these circumstances the Lake increases its size by an additional 500 metres in all directions, producing a substantial body of water.

The Lake is mainly fed from Caren-Caren Brook, which first flows into both the Crackers Swamp complex and Namming Lake, both of which in turn overflow into Guraga (Crackers via Namming Lake). In addition, the winter creek down the access track from the north brings a substantial volume of water and seepage occurs from surrounding high ground.

Not only is Guraga the largest lake, it is also unique in its area as being the only one to have no trees or bush growing close to the water or any form of vegetation above water, living or dead in the entire lake. The main consequences of this appear to be a very low number of breeding species, absence of birds which often roost/watch on trees (eg Darter) and not insignificant wave action in forming and maintaining beaches. There is a considerable expanse of beach at the southern end of the Lake (750 metres long x 200 metres wide) and another at the north east quadrant (600 metres x 40 metres). This is also a seepage area. The north west quadrant also has large sandy areas but behind the usual lake edge where wave action has broken it. These areas flood in winter to form sheltered meres. Between these areas the shoreline is relatively narrow and quite sharply shelving, attracting few birds.

The Lake is surrounded by samphire. This contains shallow depressions which fill with water during winter, particularly down the western side. These are cut off from the Lake by low rolling samphire covered dunes.

A further notable feature is the density of plant growth in the Lake waters. Wading is very tedious and slow and fortunately not really necessary as it is usually possible to drive around the Lake. Such an abundance of aquatic plant growth naturally attracts water birds which feed on it - Black Swan, Eurasian Coot and Australian Shelduck. Black Swan were present at each of the 24 monthly visits (with a low of 46 in April 1987 and a high of 1326 in February 1988 - surpassed in March 1989 with 2900).

Eurasian Coot, whose diet is 80% plant growth (Dorst 1974), were present on 19 out of 24 visits. Absent during April 1987 and April 1988 (as well as September/October 1988) there was a low of 19 in March 1988 and a high in November 1987 of 4500. Australian Shelduck, only absent in August 1988 (though with one only in July 1988), had a total of 6000 in October 1987, and 5900 in October 1988. However in October 1985, 8000 Australian Shelducks were recorded (Jaensch et al 1988).

Australian Shelducks "after the breeding season ... concentrate on lakes and estuaries and ... a regular pattern of concentration has been noted". (Frith 1967 P.144). Frith (1967) also notes that Australian Shelducks in moulting concentrations as at Guraga in October/November come from very wide areas. The concentration pattern at Guraga must have continued for a considerable period as the local aboriginal word for Australian Shelduck is Guraga (Serventy & Whittell 1976). It is possible that the absence of surrounding trees and vegetation is partly a

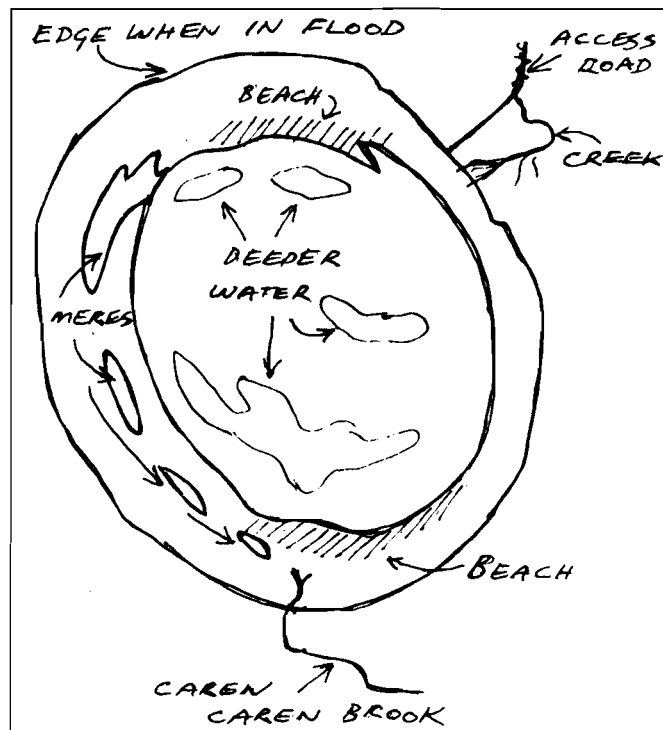
result of Aboriginal camps around the lake over many past years.

The area and density of aquatic plant growth understandably restricts the use of the Lake by diving species, at least when the water level is relatively low, as existed during the two years of survey. Great Cormorant were seen on four successive months only, (numbers 1, 1, 3 and 18), Little Black Cormorant twice (13 and 1) and Little Pied Cormorant once, 1 bird. Darter were not seen. Among the diving ducks, Blue-billed were seen 8 times, maximum 73, Hardhead 8 times, maximum 21, Musk Duck 14 times, maximum 39. It was noticeable that these species were nearly always in the same area of the Lake, presumably because it is a part relatively clear of weed and of appropriate depth. Hoary-headed Grebes, maximum 370 used the same area but were often more widely distributed.

The difference wrought by deeper water is evident in figures for 1982/3 and 1983/4 when the Lake depth exceeded two metres - Great Cormorant 150, Darter 10, Blue-billed Duck 100, Hardhead 200, Musk Duck 400 (Jaensch et al 1988).

Shore and shore-line feeders (other than waders) were relatively uncommon. One Great Egret was seen on two occasions and four Pacific Heron once, while White-faced Herons were seen 13 times, with a maximum of 16. These species were usually not along the water line but in the shallow flooded depressions and meres away from the Lake proper. Yellow-billed Spoonbill, which breed at nearby Crackers and Namming Lake, were only seen three times, (8, 1 and 1). The low numbers of these species presumably reflect the paucity of suitable shore-line habitat. The shallow water feeding ducks, Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal which "prefer to feed near marshy vegetation on muddy bottoms in shallow water" (Dorst 1974 p.439) usually have little such preferred habitat. While Pacific Black Duck were generally present (19 visits) numbers on 14 of these 19 occasions were 10 or less. Grey Teal though present more often (22 in 24) and in greater numbers, were 40 or less on 15 of the 22 occasions. When the shallow meres were flooded it was noticeable these were the preferred location of these two duck species.

Grey Teal had a spectacular irruption in March, April and May 1988 with 2200, 6200 and 1900 birds respectively. The month previous, February 1988, recorded 40 and the month



*Simplified sketch of Guraga based on aerial photograph*



subsequent, June 1988 nil. The three months of large numbers of Grey Teal, March, April and May 1988, were the three months of lowest water level in the two years at 0.54 metres, 0.47 metres and 0.50 metres.

Pink-eared Duck, 2300 in January 1987 (only surpassed by Pinjarrega Lake with 2500 during the South-West Water Bird Survey, (Jaensch et al 1988) dropped the next month to 120. Subsequent monthly figures recorded were 368, 621, 328, 1436 (June 1987), 600, 230 and nil in September 1987. In the following six months only two Pink-eared Ducks were seen. Numbers then rose to 300 and 390 in April/May 1988 (the lowest 1988 water level period) followed by 7 months with no record.

"Opportunist" increases and decreases in the numbers of water birds appear to be a feature of Guraga, which (based on the two years of survey) does not appear to have any recognisable pattern of waterbird usage unlike many other lakes and swamps. Depth of water seems to be an important determinant but there are clearly other factors involved.

The large areas of sandy beach, augmented in winter/spring by large areas of samphire with a thin layer of water, produce good wader habitat. Red-capped Plover, the only bird observed breeding at Guraga, were seen on 22 of 24 visits (maximum 825 February 1988). The two months of nil sightings were September and October 1988 when the high water level (1.76 metres and 1.84 metres) covered their usual beach habitat.

Red-necked Stints (maximum 454 February 1988) were present throughout 1987 as were smaller numbers of Curlew Sandpipers (maximum 13 March 1987). Some of these must have been overwintering in the South-West. Some were observed in part and in full breeding plumage. Such birds were not observed at subsequent visits, so they must have departed and as total numbers remained static or rose they must have been replaced by others. Such population membership changes are probably a feature of all the species at Guraga but this is only observable with the aid of obvious plumage change (or banding). Neither Red-capped Plover or Curlew Sandpipers remained during winter 1988.

Lesser Golden Plover, 5 in March and 10 in April 1987 were high numbers for the South-West. (Jaensch et al 1988). In April 1987 one of these in full breeding plumage was very striking. The total numbers and frequency of sighting of other wader species was low (excepting 84 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in December 1987) but wader species variety was good. Observed were Double-banded Plover (see WABN no. 43 September 1987), Grey Plover (away from usual haunts), Bart-tailed and Black-tailed Godwit, Pectoral Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper and Greenshank (maximum number 21). Marsh Sandpiper and Broad-billed Sandpiper were also seen and have been seen again at nearby Hurstview Lake in 1989. Red-necked Avocet, Black-winged and Banded Stilt were fairly frequently seen in 1987 but despite not dissimilar water conditions in 1988 (bar two months of higher water) virtually absent.

An interesting and perhaps ominous feature was the presence of Silver Gulls. Prior to the commencement of this survey the highest number reported was one in April 1985 (Jaensch et al 1988). We found Silver Gull were present at Guraga every month from April 1987 onwards with an average of 13 and a maximum of 70 (June 1988). On a number of occasions their presence appeared to disturb the waders.

In all during the calendar years 1987/8 43 species were observed at Guraga, which number included 8 species not previously recorded. At the same time 6 species previously observed were not recorded making the total waterbird species list 49. Guraga is clearly important for waterbirds and its unique environment within its general area adds to its value.

## References:

- Dorst, J(1974) *The Life of Birds*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London
- Frith, H J(1977) *Waterfowl in Australia*, A H & A W Reed Pty, Sydney
- Jaensch R P, Vervest R M & Hewish M J(1988) *Waterbirds in Nature Reserves of South-Western Australia 1981 - 1985*, RAOU REPORT No 30
- Serventy D L, Whittell H M(1976) *Birds of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth

## BBCBQ

The second of 'Big Bird's Clever Birdo Quiz'.

1. Which harrier is unique among the species in its nesting habit?
2. What is WA's largest migrant wader?
3. Which species in WA has two white plumes from its head when in breeding plumage?
4. Which WA species can hop upside down?
5. Some raptors (e.g. Wedge-tailed Eagle) soar with wings upswep in a V. What is the benefit?
6. Other raptors (e.g. Brown Goshawk) soar on flat wings. Why?
7. Which WA species is known to hunt in conjunction with the Australian Hobby.
8. When was the Laughing Turtle-dove introduced to Perth?
9. If you see two Bar-tailed Godwit how might you determine which is the female?
10. How do Pelicans use their feet on take-off?

## EXCURSION REPORTS

### GINGIN

Approximately 30 people enjoyed the cool and sunny conditions on Sunday 18th June, ideal for birding around the Gingin area:

Few species were observed within our first stop, Yurine Swamp, though a total of 33 species were sighted in the surrounding bushland including the raptor species Collared Sparrowhawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle and Australian Kestrel.

At Lake Beermullah we saw Great Crested Grebe, Great Egret, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and duck species - Australian Shelduck, Pacific Black, Grey Teal, Australian Shoveler, Pink-eared, Hardhead, Blue-billed and Musk Duck. The total species count for the lake and surrounding woodland was 24. Two different vegetation sites of the Boonarring Nature Reserve were also visited. In the western jarrah section we observed a total of 20 species including Red-capped Parrot and Western Spinebill. In contrast, the eastern banksia section was almost completely dominated by Brown Honeyeater with the most notable of the 9 species sighted in this area being Hooded Robin.

G. Marston

## WANDERING DOWN WUNGONG

On most previous RAOU outings to Wungong Gorge it has been extremely wet. However, on 15th July our luck held. A keen group of about 25 members met in the car park below the Dam on a fine although rather chilly morning. As we proceeded to wend our way along the track which follows Wungong Brook through the Gorge we were greeted by several kangaroos and a flurry of parrots - Port Lincoln, Red-capped and Western Rosella. During the walk most people were able to get very good sightings of several pairs of Spotted Pardalote, Splendored Fairy-wren with males in breeding plumage, Red-eared Firetail, a lovely male Golden Whistler, a busy flock of Varied Sittella and a pair of Scarlet Robin. Lots of Fantail Cuckoo and at least one Shining Bronze Cuckoo were heard. White-breasted Robin and Red-winged Fairy-wrens are known to inhabit the Gorge but none were sighted during our walk, possibly due to the spraying of the blackberries along the creek.

Altogether 32 species were recorded during the walk out of a total of 64 seen over the last five or six years. Most of the group walked at least two-thirds of the track before making the return journey at a more leisurely pace. A few even spent some time investigating movements in the blackberries - was it a crane or maybe a bittern?

During lunch at the adjacent BBQ area we were entertained by a family of Splendored Fairy-wrens hunting insects under the tables close to us - the dominant male being in full shimmering breeding plumage.

After lunch some of the group drove into nearby Bungendore Park but found only a few species as the weather had deteriorated by then. New Holland Honeyeaters were most active among the flowering dryandra and hawking low over the tracks for insects. None of the usual treecreepers were sighted and only a single Western Yellow Robin. However, as we left a party of noisy Red-tailed Black Cockatoo were perched in tall eucalypts near the entrance to the Park and we all had a very good view. I'm sure all who attended this energetic outing were rewarded by good bird sightings and enjoyed the beautiful scenery provided by the Gorge.

B. Barrett

## MEETING REPORTS

### 29 MAY : GROUNDWATER CONCERNS

Ron van Delft spoke of the effects of urbanisation and agriculture on the wetlands of the Swan coastal plain. Those remaining are of considerable importance and in March each year about one third of the WA waterbirds are on the Swan coastal plain, an area with the highest diversity of waterbird breeding species, twelve major breeding places with five known breeding places for Freckled Duck.

Urbanisation increases run-off and nutrient pollution (especially from lawn fertilisers) of groundwater. Agriculture has similar effects, leading to the over-development of algae, which shades out other growth, and the deaths of many ducks from botulism.

### 26 JUNE : A.B.C.

Stephen Ambrose, Co-ordinator, RAOU Australian Bird Count, spoke of the paucity of information in Australia about land bird movements. Despite several years of study in the Eastern States little reliable information is available. The RAOU Australian Bird Count aims, among other objectives, to reduce the ignorance. (See elsewhere in this issue, the RAOU

Australian Bird Count).

### 24 JULY: STARLINGS

A somewhat smaller gathering than usual heard an interesting account of the fight of the Agriculture Protection Board against the infiltration of Starlings into Western Australia given by Greg Pickles. A project of high priority with the APB, it has deployed not inconsiderable resources to detect, trap, shoot and destroy individual birds and small colonies. These have been found along the Trans-Australia railway and at Eucla, Eyre, Manypeaks and Bremer Bay.

Starlings cause severe damage to soft fruits, consume considerable quantities of cattle and poultry feed and because they roost in large flocks, damage buildings and trees with droppings. Starlings compete for nesting sites with native birds, particularly parrots and have been seen "evicting" parrots from nesting sites.

Any possible starling sighting should be reported immediately to the APB.

## COMING EVENTS

Excursions and campouts are directed toward both country and metropolitan localities and aim to provide experience in bird recognition and appreciation to both members and newcomers. The information gathered is often used for specific management or educational purposes.

Interested newcomers are always welcome at any event and experienced birdwatchers are only too pleased to assist with identification of unfamiliar birds.

Meetings are generally held on the fourth Monday in the month.

### Saturday 9 - Sunday 10 September Mt Lesueur

4WD only - to be discussed at RAOU meeting Monday 28 August.

### Saturday 16 - Friday 22 September Campout

#### White Wells Station

After a good season White Wells Station should have a lot to offer by way of wildflowers and birdlife. The station has varied habitat and covers an area of approximately 190,000 hectares.

Over 65 bird species have been recorded in two earlier visits including Bourke Parrot, Crimson Chat, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and Black-eared Cuckoo. We hope to see Budgerigar and Pink Cockatoo.

The turnoff to White Wells Station, 80 kms north of Wubin (do not take the first turnoff), is signposted with an old refrigerator on the opposite side of the road to the sign. About 4 hours from Perth.

Contact Margery Clegg (364.5266) or Bryan Barrett (298.8245) as soon as possible to arrange accommodation requirements.

### Monday 25 September Meeting

#### Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Dr. Denis Saunders - Birds of the Wheat Belt, Western Australia - our vanishing heritage.

## RAOU CARDS - 1989



*Purple Swamphen*



*Black-shouldered Kite*  
*Paintings by Rish Gordon*

The fourth set of RAOU cards is now ready - a packet of eight cards with attractive coloured reproductions of paintings of Western Australian birds by Western Australian artist, Rish Gordon. Post Office preferred envelopes are included. The cards are blank on the inside and information about each bird, compiled by Michael Bamford, is printed on the back. Each

year a different Western Australian artist has provided paintings for a different set of cards depicting Western Australian birds. The cards have proved immensely popular in the last four years. They are a delightful gift to send overseas or just to give to a favourite friend or relation. They can be used both as Christmas cards or birthday cards or simply as note cards.

The cost is:-

\$6.00 per packet (eight cards) plus \$1.05 if sent by post - \$7.05

Each extra packet of cards is \$6.00 and postage for two packets is \$1.10.

\$50.00 for ten packets of cards - \$4.05 for postage = \$54.05

### **Saturday 30 September - Friday 6 October Campout**

#### **East of Hyden to Emu Rock and McDermid Rocks**

This excursion will be to Emu Rock, McDermid Rocks and on to Norseman, with perhaps a stop at Peak Charles National Park. We hope to see Gilbert's Whistler and Square-tailed Kite. Meet at Emu Rock on Saturday afternoon - about 70 km east of Hyden.

Be fully self-sufficient including petrol (last petrol at Hyden; Hyden to Norseman direct route is 270 km). Road conditions should be reasonable for conventional vehicles. Please contact Chris Wilder (401.8329) for further details.

### **Saturday 21 October Excursion**

#### **Heirisson Island**

Experience the birdlife close to the city. Meet at 3.30 pm at the McCallum Park end of the Causeway. Park in Taylor Street near the river.

Leader: Ron van Delft

### **Monday 23 October**

#### **Meeting**

#### **Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm**

Sue Gordon - Part 1 - Clamorous Reed Warbler song Part 2 - Argentine Ants - their effect on birds at Herdsmen Lake

### **23 - 27 October 1989**

#### **Bird Week**

### **Saturday 28 & Sunday 29 October Campout**

#### **Goodale Sanctuary**

Goodale Sanctuary, in Jarrah, Marri and Banksia bushland with many wildflowers/orchids, includes three swamps. Meet at 9 am Saturday at the campsite.

Campers need be fully self-sufficient. A bush toilet exists and a small rainwater tank for emergency use only.

Those attending will be asked to participate in the October Waterbird count for the sanctuary.

For further details please contact Chris Wilder (401.8329).

**18 - 26 November  
Great Duck Count**

**Saturday 25 November**

**Excursion**

**Benger Swamp**

Meet at 10 am in Swamp Road, Benger. A full day excursion. From Perth, turn right off South West Highway, immediately south of Benger Service Station and rendezvous just past the bridge about 2 kms down Swamp Road.

To camp out on Saturday night at New Hoffman Mill (on the Bibbulman track) near Harvey, please contact Chris Wilder. (A bush camping area suitable for caravans, with toilets only).  
Leader: Doug Watkins

**Monday 27 November**

**Meeting**

**Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm**

Travellers Tales/Journal/Quiz.

**Saturday 9 December**

**Excursion**

**Penguin Island/Lake Cooloongup, Rockingham**

Meet at 9 am at Mersey Point jetty off Arcadia Drive, Shoalwater. Morning on Penguin Island observing seabirds such as Penguin and Bridled Tern. (Ferry cost \$2.50-\$3.00 return). Lunch on the island, then to Lake Cooloongup. A detour to Lake Richmond may be made.

Those attending should contact Peter Wilmot tel. 339.4142 or the RAOU office, to enable ferry numbers to be booked.  
Leader: Peter Wilmot

**BBCBQ - ANSWERS**

Big Bird says the work of Ian Rooke on Silvereyes is published in the Journal of Agriculture Vol 25 No 1 1984 (4th Series), Dept of Agriculture, WA. The article is entitled The Secretive Silvereye. See question 3 in the first BBCBQ.

1. Spotted Harrier: it nests in trees (Pizzey & Doyle 1980).
2. Eastern Curlew (Pizzey & Doyle 1980)
3. Rufous Night Heron (Pizzey & Doyle 1980)
4. Tree-creepers (Pizzey & Doyle 1980)
5. High stability in unstable or gusty air. Important for hunting (Ruppell 1977)
6. Low stability; enables rapid turns and manoeuvres. Important for hunting (Ruppell 1977)
7. Pied Butcherbird (Pizzey & Doyle 1980)
8. 1898 (Pizzey & Doyle 1980)
9. The larger of the two may be female (Pizzey & Doyle 1980)
10. Both feet "paddle" simultaneously (Ruppell 1977)

**References:**

Pizzey G & Doyle R (1980) *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, Collins, Sydney, NSW

Ruppell G (1977) *Bird Flight*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York

**ADVICE FOR CONTRIBUTORS**

**DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER 1989 ISSUE IS 20TH OCTOBER 1989**

**COATE'S WILDLIFE TOURS**

You are invited to share the companionship of other enthusiasts on our wildlife tours:-

**24-DAY FLINDERS RANGE**

**Cost : \$1440 22nd August - 14th September 1989**

Travelling via the Nullarbor Plain to Wilpena Pound - Arkaroola in the North Flinders with an optional extra of the famous Ridgetop Tour - Lake Eyre - the fascinating mound springs north of Marree - Coober Pedy - Ayers Rock (with interesting birdlife all the way - Gibber Birds, Orange Chats and many others) and returning via Warburton. As there have been recent good rains across the centre, a prolific and colourful season is anticipated for flora. Six vacancies still available.

**4-DAY BLACKWOOD RIVER VALLEY**

**Cost : \$228 13th - 16th October 1989**

Springtime is lovely in the Boyup Brook - Bridgetown and Nannup areas. Plenty of orchids, wildflowers and birds.

**3-DAY DRYANDRA-MURRAY RIVER VALLEY-PEEL INLET**  
**Cost : \$148 24th - 26th October 1989**

This popular short tour concentrates on birdwatching and wildflowers, with night spotlighting in the forests.

**9-DAY FITZGERALD-CAPE LE GRAND NATIONAL PARKS**

**Cost : \$520 13th - 21st November 1989**

There is still much to be discovered in these areas which include Hyden - Peak Charles - Fitzgerald River - Esperance and Cape Le Grand at this time of year.

**11-DAY FITZGERALD-CAPE LE GRAND NATIONAL PARKS - BREMER BAY**

**Cost : \$620 28th November - 8th December 1989**

Here is the added opportunity to see unusual flora for which this part of the country is renowned. It will include a day trip to the West Mt Barrens.

**WEEKEND WONGAN HILLS**

**Cost : \$125 11th - 12th November 1989**

With overnight accommodation at Wongan Lodge, see massed displays of Verticordia at their best.

The pace will be relaxing with plenty of time to photograph and study birds and wildflowers.

For information on these and other tours contact:-

**COATE'S WILDLIFE TOURS**

**87 First Avenue, Mount Lawley W.A. 6050**

**(Telephone: 271 7879 or 457 1515)**