



# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

**RAOU Office in WA**  
**Telephone**  
**Chairman**  
**Secretary**  
**Editor**  
**RAOU Birding Hotline**

Room 218, 15 Ogilvie Road, Canning Bridge 6153  
(09) 364 6202  
B Wilson, 46 Farrant Street, Gooseberry Hill 6076, Telephone (09) 293 1094  
C Wilder, 28 Craigie Drive, Craigie 6025, Telephone (09) 401 8329  
Bruce Buchanan, 2 Jarman Avenue, Manning 6152  
(09) 364 7349

## CARNEGIE STATION

David Wynford Carnegie was a remarkable man. The younger son of an Earl, he left his chosen career as a Ceylon tea planter to seek new opportunities in the 1892 gold rush to Coolgardie. After pegging a claim (worked unsuccessfully) he joined the rush to Hannan's (now Kalgoorlie) under severe conditions and again with no success. He worked with Godfrey Massie (who had walked from York and was a brother of the once famous cricketer) and they were the first amateurs to get a job on the Great Reward Claim (Carnegie 1989 p.13) and Carnegie comments (unusually for the son of an earl in the 1890's), "Working regular hours, eight hours on and sixteen off, sometimes on the surface, sometimes below, with hammer and drill, or pick and shovel, always amongst glittering gold, was by no means unpleasant" (Carnegie 1989 p.14). After taking part in the rush to Siberia, Carnegie was employed as an outrider, armed with a repeating rifle, to escort the Bayley's gold coach to Perth. Carnegie then joined with Gus Luck to journey from Coolgardie to Queen Victoria Spring, then due north into unknown country to Mt Shenton (naming Mt Luck en route) before returning to Coolgardie via Mt Margaret, and Mt Ida. During this trip Carnegie learned bushcraft from Luck, who also described the journey (Luck 1988).

In 1894 Carnegie discovered gold near Lake Darlot (still a large mine). He survived an attack of typhoid, sold the mine and in 1896 used the proceeds to finance his own expedition from Kalgoorlie to Halls Creek, believing (with others) there must be some good pastoral or auriferous country between. Today with modern transport and communication, this would be a dangerous and difficult journey, but in 1896 crossing wholly unexplored and unknown country constituted an astonishing journey, one which "no other explorer had undertaken" (Luck 1988 p.129). Carnegie and his companions, Joe Breaden, Charles Stansmore and Godfrey Massie and a local aboriginal Warri, walked to Halls Creek, from 9 July to 4 December 1896.

After very severe privations on this journey, what is the more startling is the decision of the party to walk back to Coolgardie by a somewhat more easterly route in the hope of finding good country. This was accomplished. No good country was found. Much of the route was and is desert sand ridges and no route today follows the expedition path. Carnegie left a classic account in "Spinifex and Sand" and the names of members of his party (and friends and relations) are immortalised in remote features of the Western Australian interior.

Among the places named for Carnegie is Carnegie Station, a cattle station 350 kilometres east of Wiluna and on the edge of

the Gibson Desert. East of the station is "low sand ridges ... alternating with open spinifex plains" (Carnegie 1989 p.246). The climate is harsh, hot summers (48 degrees Celsius January 1990) with most days from December to March in the low 40 degrees Celsius. Dry, with dust-storms, the area nevertheless supports a good variety of bird life and in the twelve months of our stay here we have identified 52 species near the homestead and a recent visitor added a further eleven species, mainly about 30 kilometres north of the homestead.

Species frequently seen around the homestead are Australian Magpie-lark (nesting in a tree shared with the local Yellow-throated Miners), Pied Butcherbird, Crested Pigeon and Galah. Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Red-capped Robin and White-winged Fairy-wren appear around the homestead from time to time.

Unusual bird events in the last year have included a night thunder-storm in summer, which produced about 20 Black-winged Stilt. They seemed dis-oriented and circled the homestead, some trying to land on the corrugated roof.

When the thermometer reached 48 degrees Celsius (the homestead is a recognised weather station) the front lawn was a carpet of birds seeking relief under the sprinklers, mainly Zebra Finches and Masked Woodswallows. There were a total of 14 species, among them a Spotted Bowerbird.

A more recent unusual visitor was a Common Starling. The Agricultural Protection Board, informed of the arrival, were to fly out to inspect the bird, but it left before their arrival, having been mobbed frequently by the Yellow-throated Miners.

The current Carnegie Station bird list is:

Emu	Red-capped Robin	Pacific Heron
Rufous Whistler	Straw-necked Ibis	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian Shelduck	Crested Bellbird	Grey Teal
Willie Wagtail	Maned Duck	White-browed Babbler
Brown Goshawk	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Collared Sparrowhawk
White-winged Fairy-wren	Australian Hobby	Slaty-backed Thornbill
Brown Falcon	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Australian Kestrel
Southern Whiteface	Australian Bustard	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Black-fronted Plover	Yellow-throated Miner	Inland Dotterel
Singing Honeyeater	Black-winged Stilt	White-plumed Honeyeater
Feral Pigeon	Brown Honeyeater	Diamond Dove
White-fronted Honeyeater	Common Bronzewing	Pied Honeyeater
Crested Pigeon	Crimson Chat	Galah
Mistletoebird	Little Corella	Red-browed Pardalote
Cockatiel	Zebra Finch	Budgerigar
Spotted Bowerbird	Port Lincoln Ringneck	Australian Magpie-lark
Bourke's Parrot	Masked Woodswallow	Sacred Kingfisher
Black-faced Woodswallow	Rainbow Bee-eater	Grey Butcherbird

White-backed Swallow	Pied Butcherbird	Richard's Pipit
Australian Magpie	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Torresian Crow
White-winged Triller		

In October this year Whistling Kite were nesting at Harry Johnston Waterhole where a Little Eagle and Collared Sparrowhawk were also present. Neither Whistling Kite or Little Eagle is on the Carnegie list, but the waterhole (60 km from the homestead) is part of Wongawal Station.

**J. Howell**

(Jim Howell is among the most remote of our WA subscribers. The bird list illustrates the value of "long term" observing in one locality, containing as it does some unexpected species. In terms of the Blakers et al (1984) distribution maps the following species represent new sightings for the 1 degree Block containing Carnegie - Straw-necked Ibis, Collared Sparrowhawk, Australian Bustard, Black-fronted Plover, Feral Pigeon, Little Corella, Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, White-backed Swallow, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Brown Honeyeater, Spotted Bowerbird and Grey Butcherbird. This is an impressive list of extensions of known territory/vagrancy and even Storr (1985) in the indispensable *Records of the WA Museum* series makes no reference to Feral Pigeon (which appears to have been deliberately introduced to Carnegie in earlier years) and Sacred Kingfisher. Spinifex and Sand can be recommended to all interested in exploration and the early history of the Goldfields region. Luck's book is less enthralling but of great interest. A memorial to Carnegie is in St George's Cathedral, Perth.

Ed.)

**References:** Blakers M, Davies S J J F, Reilly P N (1984), *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria.

Carnegie D W (1989), *Spinifex and Sand*, Hesperian Press, Perth (a reproduction of the 1898 edition).

Luck A J (1988), *The Outback Trail*, Hesperian Press, Perth (from the Western Mail 1938-1942). Storr G M (1985), *Birds of the Mid-eastern Interior of Western Australia*, WA Museum, Perth.

## OBSERVATIONS

Please send details of sightings to 'Observations Officer' at the W.A. Office of the RAOU. Please provide details of number, location, date and other relevant notes. 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 August to November 1990.

Compiled by Rodney Vervest

### DOWN SOUTH

Great Crested Grebe - 1, 27/9/90, Culham Inlet, Fitzgerald River N.P. - DN

Grey-headed Albatross - 1 juvenile decomposed, 1 juvenile skull, 6/8/90, Leighton Beach - GM \* 1 live juvenile, 6/8/90, Warnbro - GM (died several days later with massive internal injuries)

Australasian Gannet - 1, 5/9/90, Whitford Sea Sports Club - GL \* 1, 20/9/90, Alkimos wreck site - GL

Cattle Egret - 2, 12/8/90, Lake Joondalup North - GL \* 2, 10/10/90, Armadale Golf Course - TK

Little Egret - 2, 10/8/90, Lake Joondalup North - GL \* nesting, 30/9/90, McCarley's Swamp - RAOU Excursion

Glossy Ibis - 3, 29/7/90, Herdsman Lake - IS, BWi \* 1, 26/9/90, Floreat Waters - GL

Yellow-billed Spoonbill - 34, 30/6/90, Lower King Bridge, Albany - MB \* 1, 17/10/90, Herdsman Park - MO

Pacific Black Duck - 1 shepherding 24 ducklings, 9/10/90, Alfred Cove - PA

Chestnut Teal - 1, 3/9/90, Alfred Cove - JK \* pair with 6 young, 6/9/90, West of Pinjarra - JS, HS

Australasian Shoveler - pair with 8 ducklings, 8/10/90, 10 Mile Pool, Murchison River - PM

Osprey - 1, 27-28/6/90, Point Resolution Reserve, Dalkeith - MB \* 1, 20/9/90, Quinns Rocks - GL \* Pair starting to build on tower, 3/10/90, Alfred Cove - TK

Square-tailed Kite - 1 building nest, 8/10/90, Stirling Range N.P. - AR

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - pair taking food to nest, 28/10/90, Ravenswood - RS

Wedge-tailed Eagle - Pair nesting - 1 young, 3/10/90, Wungong - TK \* pair nesting - 1 young, 6/10/90, Yallalong Station, Murchison - PM

Peregrine Falcon - 1, 1/8/90, Wilson Park - CM \* 1, 21/10/90, Blue Gum Lake, Booragoon - MC et al

Painted Button-quail - 5, 11/5/90, Dryandra - IS, BWi \* 1, 12/5/90, Dryandra - IS, BWi

Black-tailed Native-hen - 1, 17/10/90, Herdsman Lake - MO

Dusky Moorhen - 1, 15/10/90, Bodey's Swamp, Wannamal - BBu

Bush Thick-knee - 1, 11/5/90, Dryandra - IS, BWi

Pied Oystercatcher - 3, 5/9/90, Whitford Sea Sports Club - GL

Banded Lapwing - 1, 14/9/90, Lake Gnangara - GL \* 1, 17/9/90, Attadale foreshore - PH \* 1 with 4 eggs, 17/9/90, Attadale Golf Course - PH \* 2, 19/9/90, Leeuwin Barracks sportsfield - PA \* pair nesting, 21/9/90, Sea View Golf Course, Cottesloe - RN Grey Plover - 2 in breeding plumage, 29/8/90, Alfred Cove - PA \* 4, 3/9/90, Alfred Cove - JK \* 30, 24/9/90, Alfred Cove - ND

Black-winged Stilt - single egg in nest, 4/9/90, Alfred Cove - GL Banded Stilt - 2000, 1/10/90, Pink Lake, Esperance - BB, MC

Red-necked Avocet - 700, 24/10/90, Peel Inlet - BB, MC

Whimbrel - 1, 8/10/90, Alfred Cove - PH

Wood Sandpiper - 14, 3/9/90, Lake McLarty - JK

Grey-tailed Tattler - single bird in partial breeding plumage, 30/9/90, Fremantle - RN \* 1, 14/10/90, Alfred Cove - PH

Greenshank - 10, 24/9/90, Alfred Cove - ND

Marsh Sandpiper - 1, 26/9/90, Floreat Waters - GL \* 18, 24/10/90, Peel Inlet - BB, MC

Bar-tailed Godwit - 100, 24/10/90, Peel Inlet - BB, MC

Great Knot - 90+, 30/6/90, tidal flats at Lower King, Albany - MB

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper - 2, 29/8/90, Alfred Cove - PA

Curlew Sandpiper - 30, 24/9/90, Alfred Cove - ND

Sanderling - 1, Oct 90, Laverton - TK

Red-necked Stint - 400, 24/9/90, Alfred Cove - ND

Great Skua - 1, 20/9/90, Alkimos wreck site - GL

Caspian Tern - 4, 29/4/90, Lake Miranda, Leinster - JL

Common Bronzewing - 1, 12/8/90, Lake Joondalup North - GL

Elegant Parrot - 5, 26/8/90, Lake Joondalup North - GL

Pallid Cuckoo - 1, 10/8/90, Lake Joondalup North - GL \* 1, 29/8/90, Fred Jacoby Park - PA

Fan-tailed Cuckoo - 1, 12/8/90, Lake Joondalup North - GL \* 1, 29/8/90, Fred Jacoby Park - PA

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo - 1, 29/8/90, Fred Jacoby Park - PA \* 1, 22/9/90, Cape Mentelle - RN

Southern Boobook - 1, 8-9/9/90, old Claremont Asylum - MO

Rainbow Bee-eater - 4, 12/10/90, Geraldton - PM \* 60, 13/10/90, Wanneroo - ID

White-backed Swallow - 12+ and 1 pr. nesting nearby, 5/9/90, Whitford Sea Sports Club - GL

White-winged Fairy-wren - 4, 5/9/90, Whitford Sea Sports Club - GL

Brown-headed Honeyeater - small flocks of 8-10, 11-12/5/90, Dryandra - IS, BWi

Spotted Pardalote - 2, Sept/Oct 90, Applecross garden - FO

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin - c.90, 29/7/90, Herdsman Lake - IS, BWi \* 12, 13/8/90, Herdsman Lake - MO \* 48, 1/9/90,

Herdsmen Lake - MO  
Masked Woodswallow - 80, 30/10/90, Bullabulling - GB  
Grey Currawong - 1, 21/9/90, Peel Inlet - RN

#### UP NORTH

Soft-plumaged Petrel - 1 dark phased, Aug 90, Mandu Mandu Beach, Cape Range - GM  
Frigatebird sp. - 1, 2/8/90, Port Hedland - MN  
Little Egret - 14 in breeding plumage, 21/8/90, Babbage Island, Carnarvon - MBr  
Radjah Shelduck - 10, 21/10/90, Ord River - FO  
Pacific Baza - 1, 4/8/90, Hidden Valley N.P. - JS, HS  
Grey Goshawk - 1, 7/8/90, Pinnacle Creek - JS, HS  
Spotted Harrier - 1, 12/8/90, Learmonth Air Base - RS  
Black Falcon - 1, 5/8/90, Kununurra Irrigation area - JS, HS  
Peregrine Falcon - 1, 11/8/90, Overlander Roadhouse - RS  
Grey Falcon - 1, 4/8/90, Hidden Valley N.P. - JS, HS  
White-browed Crake - pair with 2 young, 5/8/90, Kununurra Diversion Dam - JS, HS  
Brolga - 6, 12/8/90, Learmonth Air Base - RS \* 15, 21/8/90, Lyndon River Crossing on Minilya/Exmouth Rd - MBr \* 78, 25/8/90, Lyndon River Crossing on Minilya/Exmouth Rd - MBr \* 1, 9/10/90, Hamelin Station - Anon.  
Oriental Plover - 10, 8/9/90, Old Derby Airport - LV \* 1, 9/9/90, Derby Sewage Ponds - LV, PMA  
Marsh Sandpiper - 2, 21/10/90, #1 Barge near Lake Argyle - FO  
Long-toed Stint - 5, 26/8/90, Derby Sewage Outlet - PMA, TK \* 2, 9/9/90, Derby Sewage Ponds - LV, PMA  
Caspien Tern - 600, 22/8/90, Point Maud (spit north of Coral Bay) - MBr  
Fairy Tern - 1000, 22/8/90, Point Maud - MBr  
Crested Tern - 1500, 22/8/90, Point Maud - MBr  
Lesser Crested Tern - 400, 22/8/90, Point Maud - MBr  
Flock Bronzewing - 1, 9/9/90, Derby Sewage Ponds - LV, PMA  
Galah - 500, 30/8/90, Wyndham Oval - KO  
Budgerigar - 100, 10/9/90, Wyndham Hospital - KO  
Northern Rosella - 16, 30/7/90, Wyndham Hospital - KO \* 4 on 26/9/90, Argyle Village - FO  
Elegant Parrot - 3, 15/8/90, creek - 20kms south of Carnarvon - RG  
Forest Kingfisher - #1 Barge near Lake Argyle - FO  
White-winged Triller - 8, Sept 90, Argyle Minesite - FO  
Sandstone Shrike-thrush - 1, 4/8/90, Hidden Valley N.P. - JS, HS  
Spinifexbird - 1, 4/8/90, Wittenoom Gorge - MN  
Golden-headed Cisticola - 1, 5/8/90, Kununurra Diversion Dam - JS, HS \* 1, 6/8/90, Parry's Lagoon, Wyndham - JS, HS  
Crimson Chat - 40+, 20/8/90, Cape Range - RS \* 1, 9/9/90, Edge of Derby township - LV, PMA  
Orange Chat - 3, 21/8/90, Lyndon River Crossing on Minilya/Exmouth Rd - MBr  
Star Finch - 20, 14/8/90, Maree Pool, Karratha - JS, HS \* 20, 9/9/90, Derby Sewage Ponds - LV, PMA  
Gouldian Finch - 120, 10/9/90, Wyndham Hospital - KO  
Spangled Drongo - 1, 5/9/90, Koolan Island - LV  
Masked Woodswallow - many hundreds, 1/8/90, 10kms west of Timber Creek, N.T. - JS, HS  
Little Crow - 52 (most juvenile), 22/8/90, Learmonth Air Base - RS

#### KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

AR - Allan Rose	ID - Ian Davis
BB - Bryan Barrett	IS - Ian Standring
BBu - Bruce Buchanan	JK - John Kirby
BWi - Bev Wilcox	JL - John Lauri
CM - Cath Margrain	JS - John Start
DN - David Newsome	KO - Kimberley Observer
FO - Frank O'Connor	LV - Lee Vernon
GB - Greg Barrett	MB - M Bougher
GL - Graham Little	MBr - Mary Bremner
HS - Helen Start	

MC - Margery Clegg	PMA - Pam Masters
MO - Margaret Owen	RG - Ray Garstone
MN - Margaret Nash	RN - Richard Nowotny
ND - Norma Duff	RS - Rod Smith
PA - Peter Anson	TK - Tony Kirkby
PH - Peel Howden	
PM - Peter Mack	

## WATERBIRD STUDIES

### SCOPEWEST

Thanks are due to the continuing efforts of all SCOPEWESTERS in providing data for this project.

The July survey data has been entered and October data is currently being processed - please submit any outstanding data quickly as we are using the data frequently.

Wing tagging of ibis and spoonbills commenced in November and observers are requested again to keep an eye out for colour-marked birds. Numbers as well as letters are now being used and some 'white' birds (e.g. Sacred Ibis) are now being fitted with dark blue tags (White letters/numbers). All tags previously fitted are yellow with black letters.

At the recent SCOPEWEST and Annual Waterfowl Count presentation (October meeting), new volunteers were recruited to both projects and I would like to thank all those people who came along.

Two 'special' waterbird surveys are being currently organised. A bitter listening and search at two metro wetlands (December) and a waterbird count at the Vasse Estuary in January 91. Please contact me at the W.A. Office if you are interested in assisting with either of these surveys.

### ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNT

All participants from the November survey will be reminded of the survey dates for March 91 by mail. I hope you all kept your maps and spare data sheets.

If you required new maps or further instructions please call me at the W.A. Office.

People are needed for country work, i.e. to travel up to 200 km to survey outer blocks in the study area. If you feel you could cope with the challenge of some remote duck counting I'd be pleased to hear from you.

The March count may be our last opportunity to gather data on waterfowl as funding has not yet been secured to further this research.

R. Vervest

## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

September and October are great months for birds at Eyre and some very interesting sightings have been made.

Along Kanidal Beach the waders are presenting us with some challenges. Luckily we've had the company of some keen birdwatchers who have assisted greatly in the identification of these birds. We are now becoming familiar with Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Ruddy Turnstones and Curlew Sandpipers. Not quite so familiar are the Great Knot, Red Knot, Grey Plover, Large Sand Plover and one lonely Whimbrel at the Nine Mile.

Raptors have been well represented, with eleven species being recorded. A Black Kite, not seen in the area since 1987, was recorded in September and a Square-tailed Kite in October.

In the evenings the Southern Boobook and Tawny Frogmouth have been calling. One evening a Spotted Nightjar flew by just as we were about to have our meal. Needless to say, the meal was deferred until after the Spotted Nightjar had been followed and positively identified. An Owlet Nightjar was sighted during the Pygmy Possum Course and we collected a Barn Owl (road kill) from beside the road to Cocklebidly.

The Red-backed Kingfisher, only recorded during the spring months of 1980, 81, 85 and 87, was again sighted this month. It is nesting time for many of the birds. Budgerigars are nesting in the hollow trees on the plains. We've recorded a Grey Butcherbird's nest and a Grey Currawong's nest each containing two nestlings. The Welcome Swallows around the Observatory are busily feeding their young, a Red Wattlebird nestling was predated by a Grey Currawong and an Inland Thornbill has been busy feeding a cuckoo in the nest.

These are the sightings that make birdwatching so fascinating and interesting, and being at Eyre provides a wonderful opportunity to observe these happenings.

G. and G. Goodreid

### HONEYEATER COURSE, EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY 8-13 JULY 1990

Course Leaders: Stephen Ambrose and Michelle Christy

The limited flowering at Eyre meant that the numbers of honeyeaters had only built up marginally since last January. Therefore, the six course participants spent most of their time banding a wide range of birds from honeyeaters (mainly Singing, New Holland and Brown) to those LBJs (little brown jobs!) like White-browed Scrubwrens, Inland Thornbills and Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens in eclipse plumage. We also braved the sub-zero temperatures of the pre-dawn period on two mornings to band and measure Welcome Swallows that roosted around the house.

Almost all participants were learning to band, measure and moult birds for the first time. Thank goodness the usual rule of buying the course leaders a drink for each bird released prematurely didn't apply on this course, otherwise we would have been signing into Alcoholics Anonymous upon leaving Eyre! Several Brown Honeyeater and Silvereye caught around the house had been banded several years earlier, but had not been recaptured until this course. One Brown Honeyeater had not been mist-netted since March 1983 and a Silvereye was netted for the first time since September 1985. Are these resident birds which have avoided recapture over the years, or have they been absent from Eyre and recaptured on their subsequent return to the region?

The high recapture rate of Welcome Swallows (62%, total birds banded  $n = 104$ ) on this course compared with last January (0.2%,  $n = 240$ ) suggests that many swallows return to the same roost site each night during winter, whereas in summer nearly all roost at the house for only one night before moving on to a new roost the following evening. The low numbers of swallows banded in January that were recaptured in July (13, 0.6% of the roost population of January) also supports this idea.

During the weekly Australian Bird Count exercise we saw four Rock Parrot, the first time this species had been seen since April. It is commonly believed that this species breeds on offshore islands in S.W. Western Australia between June and December, but the nearest islands are in the Recherche Archipelago, about 350 km West of Eyre.

Day trips allowed us to see the banded Boobook Owl in the cave at Twilight Cove and Redthroat at Burnabbie. But the highlight of the trip, without a doubt, was observing two pairs of shorts flying at half-mast on mist net poles for half a day before Michelle realised they were missing from her luggage!

S. Ambrose & M. Christy

## RAOU CONGRESS 1991



A brochure giving details of next year's Congress in Perth accompanies the forthcoming issue of the RAOU Newsletter. The registration form and payment are to be returned by 28th February 1991.

A \$5 surcharge will be made for late registration.

Please contact the RAOU (WA Group) if further details are required.

## NOTICES

### BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY 1991 WARDENS

Gail Hooper and Brice Wells, currently wardens at Broome will complete their term in mid-April 1991. Those interested in applying for the positions are invited to contact Broome Bird Observatory Management Committee, P.O. Box 1313, Broome, W.A. 6725. Phone (091) 935 600. Early contact with prospective wardens is desirable. Conditions of Service and Job Descriptions will be sent to all applicants. Please note that the salary is extremely modest.

The Wardens

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre on Monday 4th February 1991. All committee positions will be declared vacant and office bearers will be elected for the coming year. Signed nomination forms may be sent to the Secretary or handed in prior to commencement of the meeting.

### LEGISLATION ANTICIPATED

The following press statement was issued recently by the office of the Premier of Western Australia.

"Legislation to ban recreational duck shooting will be introduced in State Parliament this year."

Premier Carmen Lawrence said today that the Wildlife Conservation Act would be amended to protect ducks, geese, quail and other prescribed species from recreational shooters. She said the ban was in line with the State Government's policy on the protection of native birds.

Western Australia would be the first State to ban duck shooting.

"I have made no secret of my opposition to shooting ducks for recreation," Dr Lawrence said.

"Duck shooting runs counter to the environmental sensitivity to which our community increasingly aspires."

"There is widespread opposition throughout the community to the cruelty and environmental damage caused by shooters."

"Evidence from previous seasons shows that injured ducks have been left to die, protected species have been shot and fragile wetlands have been polluted by lead and cartridges."

"Our community has reached a stage of enlightenment where it can no longer accept the institutionalised killing of native birds for recreation."

## CORRECTION

On page 6 WABN 55 September 1990 a picture was captioned "Bar-tailed Godwit and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Roebuck Bay." In fact the birds, other than the Bar-tailed Godwit, are knot species.

## MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

### FLYNN ROAD DISCOVERED

To a Pom entirely ignorant of Australian birds and their habitats, the bush surrounding Mundaring became an immediate challenge. During my first year in residence many hours were spent driving off the 'bitumen' looking for areas which might perhaps be worth investigating at a later date. In consequence of these meanderings, the wandoo woodlands in the Flynn Road area (off Great Eastern Highway) were discovered and my thoughts were that they looked promising having seen treecreepers, Elegant Parrot and others from the car. The next step forward was an introduction to RAOU via the then Secretary, Joanna Seabrook and further encouraged while listening to Dr. Stephen Davies at one of his introductory courses.

Since then, Flynn Road has become an area of considerable interest which our small group of keen amateur birdos visit from time to time. From June 1985 we have walked in the area on 30 occasions and have a bird list to date of 72 species, many of which breed in the area.

In principle we study three sections, each different from the other. No. 1 consists of wandoo woodland with an open understorey of blackboy and patches of dryandra. No. 2 has a mix of wandoo and jarrah with some marri trees and a denser understorey giving cover for various passerines. Also, as this area is hilly and more broken, two creeks meander through, giving pools of water even in the dry. No. 3 is a small area of heathland and low open bush inhabited by White-cheeked and Tawny-crowned Honeyeater which we have not found elsewhere in the area. This latter section is bordered by grass paddocks on two sides.

Of the total number of species seen to date, eleven can be considered as passage migrants or as resting/feeding while passing through. Excluding the two species of duck and the White-faced Heron which can sometimes be found during the winter months in the flooded creeks and a few ditches, we have seen various "rarities". For instance, six Fairy Martin perched high in a dead tree on 29th March, 1986. Other occasional occurrences have been Purple-crowned Lorikeet seen on only four visits, White-winged Triller and Rufous Songlark twice. Occasionally we find Brown-headed Honeyeater and surprisingly only very occasionally do we find Australian Magpie-lark within the areas although they can generally be seen on the open grasslands.

Of the raptors, we have recorded eight species, two of which are known to nest in the area. Others may also nest further afield in the Darling Ranges. A pair of Wedge-tailed Eagle nest from time to time on the edge of one of the farms, to the pleasure of the owner who believes their presence helps to keep dingoes and wild dogs away from his sheep. We also located a pair of Brown Goshawk nesting in 1989.

During most years five of the six species of parrot nest in the mature forest and are present throughout the year. However, we noted a decline in the number of Port Lincoln Ringneck during 1989/90. This species is generally very numerous and can often be seen or heard in every area - not so this last season.

Of the passerines we have located four different robins - namely the Scarlet, Hooded, Western Yellow and Red-capped (in order of frequency of sightings). The first three breed regularly; perhaps the Red-capped do too as we found two immature birds on 28 October 1989, and a sub-adult on 17 February 1990. A possible point of interest may be that Hooded Robin seem to re-inhabit a burnt area quicker than most other species. The Department of Conservation and Land Management conducts burns on a five to seven year pattern. No. 1 area, within which a pair of Hooded Robin have nested each year of our study, was burnt during the spring of 1989. While the burning affects most species, the Hooded Robin returned and raised another brood. Western Yellow Robin are relatively common throughout the first two areas - in March 1986, we found 20 in one small spot, six sitting together like woodswallows on a low branch and several more on the ground below.

Our rarest and least seen bird is the Crested Shrike-tit. We found our first during June 1986 and since then have seen them on several visits in both areas 1 and 2.

As many members know, we have introduced the Flynn Road bush to the WA Group. However, I believe there should be a word of warning to would-be visitors. Feral pig are known to exist within the confines of the forest. On more than one occasion we have met or heard in the distance 'hunters' and their hounds, and the so-called hunters have been armed with crossbows - a lethal weapon.

The following is a list of birds seen and known to nest within or close to the areas which we frequent:

- C = Common i.e. seen on most visits and more than 5 birds in any one area
- R = Rare i.e. seen occasionally, or less than 5 birds at any one time
- OP) = Migrant or On Passage i.e. may be abundant
- M) when seen but absent during next visit(s)
- N = Nesting, or adults seen with immatures

		No. of times seen out of 30
White-faced Heron	R	4
Pacific Black Duck	R	2
Maned Duck	R	4
Square-tailed Kite	R	5
Whistling Kite	R	2
Brown Goshawk	RN	1
Collared Sparrowhawk	R	2
Wedge-tailed Eagle	RN	2
Little Eagle	R	4
Peregrine Falcon	R	2
Brown Falcon	R	1
Brown Quail	C	11 population seems to be increasing
Common Bronzewing	C	10
White-tailed Black Cockatoo	OP	7 the occasional flock may be seen
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	OP	4 as above
Red-capped Parrot	CN	15
Western Rosella	CN	16
Port Lincoln Ringneck	CN	30 see text
Elegant Parrot	CN	18
Pallid Cuckoo	M	5
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	M	10
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	M	3
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	M	3
Laughing Kookaburra	CN	23
Sacred Kingfisher	M	5
Rainbow Bee-eater	M	8
Welcome Swallow	R	2

Tree Martin	C	18
Fairy Martin	R	1
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	C	15
White-winged Triller	OP	2
Scarlet Robin	CN	17 Red-capped
Robin R 3 Hooded Robin	CN	21 two known breeding territories
Western Yellow Robin	CN	21
Crested Shrike-tit	R	10
Golden Whistler	C	12
Rufous Whistler	CN	20
Grey Shrike-thrush	C	28
Restless Flycatcher	CN	16
Grey Fantail	CN	21
Willie Wagtail	CN	28 two known breeding territories
Rufous Songlark	R	3
Splendid Fairy-wren	CN	23 five family groups located
White-browed Scrubwren	R	3 we suspect this species will be found to a greater extent in areas 2 and 3
Weebill	C	20
Western Gerygone	CN	21
Inland Thornbill	CN	8
Western Thornbill	C	13
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	C	13
Varied Sittella	OP	7
Rufous Treecreeper	CN	25
Red Wattlebird	OP	12
Little Wattlebird	OP	2
Singing Honeyeater	C	18
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	C	N 26 often very numerous
Brown-headed Honeyeater	OP	5
White-naped Honeyeater	CN	23 often with
Brown Honeyeater	C	23
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	R	2 reported by Jack Hunt in area 3
White-cheeked Honeyeater	C	6 in area 3 only and common therein
New Holland Honeyeater	C	8
Western Spinebill	R	13
Spotted Pardalote	R	6
Striated Pardalote	CN	25
Silvereye	OP	8 numerous at times
Australian Magpie-lark	OP	4
Dusky Woodswallow	CN	23
Grey Butcherbird	ROP	2
Australian Magpie	CN	23
Grey Currawong	OP	3
Australian Raven	C	27

Some two years ago I started to record quantity rather than presence and this I believe to be more important. Nectar-feeding bird species are particularly misleading as when host trees are in flower an area may be swarming with a species - go to the same place later or earlier in the year and one may only find single birds or indeed none (which makes the formulation of a bird-list less exacting).

B. Barrett

#### A GATHERING OF WHISTLING KITES

While counting waterbirds in a small wetland at Baldivis for the Scopewest project during the afternoon of July 3rd 1990, a group of six Whistling Kite were seen soaring. As they gained height over a ten minute period more Whistling Kite were seen until a total of fourteen was counted.

While we watched the Whistling Kite soaring on the thermal some were seen to "chase" others before tumbling together. Eventually all descended and were lost to view.

I have never previously witnessed such a large flock of Whistling Kite. Storr and Johnstone (1988) state "formally common, now uncommon to moderately common, usually singly occasionally in twos, rarely small flocks (up to 6)" (p.26). Possibly breeding was the reason but Storr and Johnstone (1988) state "breeding only during October and November" (p.27).

Food availability may have been a factor. While most references state Whistling Kite eat almost anything, Storr and Johnstone (1988) state "Whistling Kite are attracted to Straw-necked Ibis rookeries (where it feeds on eggs and dead young)" (p.25). Although Straw-necked Ibis were present in large numbers no evidence of breeding was obvious.

This sighting is among the largest total of Whistling Kite together in the south-west in recent years. It may be that Whistling Kite are increasing in the south-west, if so, why should this be?

Serventy and Whittell (1976) report, "Up to 1938 the bird was practically never seen in the Bridgetown district. In that year rabbits increased greatly and this hawk from that year onwards has become one of the normal breeding birds of the district. (A similar increase took place .... in the Moora district" (p.163).

J. Hunt  
P. Anson

**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 (records of the WA Museum, Supplement No. 28)*, WA Museum.

[A comparable number of Whistling Kite, over 20, were seen at Bibra Lake on 10 March 1984, during an RAOU excursion there, though not specifically mentioned in the excursion report in WA Bird Notes No 30 June 1984. Similar patterns of behaviour, rising in large groups in thermals and apparent "pursuit" and rapid "tumbling" descents were observed. A speculation is that the behaviour (both observations being out of breeding season) is that of birds simply enjoying themselves and if of young birds (first year) in using newly mastered skills].

Ed.

#### GOLDFIELDS TRIP - OCTOBER 1990

Between September 29 and October 7 we travelled through the Goldfields from Coolgardie to Wiluna, returning via Payne's Find and station country.

Rowles Lagoon, 73 km north of Coolgardie was a little disappointing, though a known haunt of waterbirds including Freckled Duck. The lake was very muddy and the only birds seen were two each of Whiskered Tern, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and Grey Teal and seven Pink-eared Duck. A pair of Collared Sparrowhawk were seen and may have been breeding in a large nest.

At an overnight camp at Niagara Dam we found Little Crow busily feeding young, and a single Black-tailed Native Hen spent hours feeding on a grassed area between campsites, barely concerned by nearby campers.

That night, with a full moon, a Pallid Cuckoo called persistently from a tree beside our tent. On one occasion it made 48 consecutive calls.

The following morning, we stumbled on what was to be the highlight of the whole trip - Spotted Bowerbirds displaying to



