

Western Australian Bird Notes

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Interesting Sightings in the Nullabor Region

In late October and early November 1991 we spent a week on the Nullabor Plain and its western and north-western fringes searching for Nullabor Quail-thrush as part of a WWF project. During this time we recorded a number of sightings of interest.

Little Button-quail — one nest with a clutch of three eggs, 21 km west of Haig (31 Oct).

Crested Pigeon — two at the Limekilns (15 km W of Naretha) and one 6 km E of Naretha. According to Storr (1986, 1987) this bird only occurs as a rare vagrant on the Nullabor.

Galah — several flocks totalling more than 120 birds 4 km S of Rawlinna (29 Oct), a flock of 60 just N of Rawlinna HS (30 Oct) and a flock of 80 at Speculation Bore (about 20 km SE of Rawlinna) (2 Nov). Storr (1987) states that the Galah is a scarce visitor in small flocks (up to 30 birds) in this part of the Nullabor, while local residents (M. & D. McQuie) told us that Galah numbers had increased dramatically during 1991.

Regent Parrot — a flock of 6 birds, probably all adults, in tall open eucalypt woodland 3 km E of Chifley (about 40 km E of Kalgoorlie), near the eastern limit of their range (28 Oct).

Blue Bonnet — three records (1, 2 and 4 birds) within 5 km of Rawlinna HS (29 Oct); six records (4, 5, 2, 1+, 1 and 2 birds) between 66 and 114 km N of Rawlinna (near the northern limit of its range) (30-31 Oct) and two birds 26 km W of Naretha (near the normal western limit of its range) (2 Nov).

Crested Bellbird — nest with a clutch of two fresh eggs being incubated, 81 km N of Rawlinna (30 Oct). The bellbird is rare on the Nullabor and has not previously been recorded breeding there at this time of year by Storr (1986, 1987).

Nullabor Quail-thrush — 16 birds recorded at 9 locations, from near Rawlinna to 98 km N of Rawlinna and east to Loongana.

Inland Thornbill — one group of 5-6 birds in myall woodland 114 km N of Rawlinna (31 Oct). This is probably the most southerly record for this area, as the species is absent from the Nullabor proper (Blakers et al. 1984, Storr 1986).

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill — two small groups were seen in myall woodland 114 km N of Rawlinna (31 Oct),

representing a southerly extension of known range in this area (Blakers et al. 1984, Storr 1986). They are absent from the Nullabor proper.

Slender-billed Thornbill — five small groups within 5 km of Rawlinna HS (29 Oct), two birds 29 km N of Rawlinna (29 Oct), two groups, including one bird flushed from a nest with a well incubated egg, 3 km N of Endeavour Bore (about 55 km N of Rawlinna) (30 Oct), 4-5 birds 3 km S of Haig (1 Nov) and four small groups on Arubiddy Station (2 Nov). These records are of interest because this thornbill appears to have declined in numbers and Storr (1986, 1987) gives no recent records north of Rawlinna.

Crimson Chat — two birds (one carrying food), 29 km N of Rawlinna (29 Oct) and two birds (both carrying food) 47 km N of Rawlinna (31 Oct). Both pairs were probably breeding, but no nest was found.

Orange Chat — two pairs, at two sites within 5 km S of Rawlinna HS (29 Oct).

Zebra Finch — one pair with a clutch of four fresh eggs in a nest in the base of the disused nest of a Wedge-tailed Eagle, near Waddilynia Rockhole (about 5 km S of Rawlinna HS). Storr (1986, 1987) states that the Zebra Finch is rare on the Nullabor and Blakers et al. (1984) show very few records for this area.

Black-faced Woodswallow — nest with one egg and one young out of the nest, 74 km N of Rawlinna (30 October) and a nest with three fresh eggs being incubated, 81 km N of Rawlinna (30 October).

The Nullabor Quail-thrush study is continuing. We are interested in being informed of any sightings of this bird that members may have.

A.H. Burbidge & L. Pedler

References:

- Blakers M, Davies SJF and Reilly PN (1984) *The Atlas of Australian Birds* MUP Melbourne.
- Storr GM (1986) *Birds of the South-eastern Interior of Western Australia* Records of the WA Museum Supplement No. 26.
- Storr GM (1987) *Birds of the Eucla Division of Western Australia* Records of the WA Museum Supplement No. 27.

Second Gibberbird Sighting in Western Australia

On 7 March 1991, while in the company of Greg Barrett, in modified Salmon Gum woodland with saltbush understorey some 10k South-East of Kalgoorlie, I observed a small pipit-like bird on the ground. The resemblance to a pipit was so strong except for the size, that we remarked on it, until the bird turned to reveal a yellow front. We also noticed white markings on the end of the tail.

Our tentative field identification was female Orange Chat. However when checking the Orange Chat illustrations in Simpson and Day (1984) the absence of yellow on the rump and the presence of the white tail tip markings ruled this out and Gibberbird (on the same page) seemed likely. The pipit-like behaviour was further evidence of our sighting being a Gibberbird — Pizzey (1980) notes the similarity of behaviour to Richard's Pipit. The Gibberbird is significantly smaller than a pipit — we remarked on the small size.

Another possibility considered and discarded was Yellow Wagtail. This species has a relatively long tail without white on the tip.

We concluded the bird sighted near Kalgoorlie was a Gibberbird. The only other report of this species from WA is that of Howell (1991).

A. Chapman

References:

Howell J (1991) Gibberbird in Western Australia, Western Australian Bird Notes, No. 59 September 1991.

Pizzey G (1980) *A field Guide to the Birds Of Australia*, Collins, Sydney.

Simpson K & Day N (1984) *The Birds of Australia, A Book of Identification*, Lloyd O'Neil, South Yarra.

(Jim Howell's sighting was about three months previous, in December 1991 and some 500 kilometres NNE. It is possible that the Kalgoorlie bird was of the same group as seen at Carnegie, given that both sightings are over 1000 k from the nearest previously reported area of Gibberbird. Gibberbird should now enter the list of WA birds. Ed.)

Observations

Compiled by R. Vervest and A.H. Burbidge

Little Bittern - 5, 9/1/92, Quitjup Lake (D'Entrecasteaux N.P.) induced to call by observer's vocalisations of 'bittern advertising call' - RJ * nesting, 15/12/91, Lake Jasper, W. side - RJ * calling, 22/12/91, Lake Saide, nr Denmark: nest found on 10/1/92 - RJ

Australasian Bittern - 5, 9/1/92, Owingup Swamp, three observed feeding - RJ

Great Egret - 1, 5/12/91, Orange Grove Rd, Kalamunda, nesting in Marri in swamp, a new breeding area - via EMcC

Royal Spoonbill - 1, 7/1/92, Clifton Rd Swamp - RV * 1, 11/1/92, Barrett-Lennards Lake (Gingin) - RV * 2, 15/1/92, Amarillo Pool, Serpentine River - JH

Black-breasted Buzzard - 2, 11/11/91, North-West Highway N. of Kalbarri turnoff, feeding on roadside kill - CWN

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - 1, 12/1/92, Amarillo Pool, Serpentine River - JH, PH

Malleefowl - 1, 31/10/91, 160 kms N. of Northampton - BB

Baillon's Crake - 1, 15/1/92, Spectacles Reserve, E. Gingin - BBu

Australian Crake - 7, 14/12/92, Lake McLarty - JH

Spotless Crake - 19, 22/12/92, Owingup Swamp, nest with four eggs - RJ

Pacific Golden Plover - 1, 17/11/91, Emu-Ballajura ponds - JB

Eastern Curlew - 4, 9/12/91, N. Mandurah Traffic Bridge - TJ * 3, 14/12/92, Mandurah, between bridges - JH

Whimbrel - 4, 14/12/91, Mandurah, between bridges - JH * 8, 9/1/92, Halls Head - HVW

Grey-tailed Tattler - 10, 14/12/91, Mandurah, between bridges - JH

Terek Sandpiper - 3, 8/11/91, Alfred Cove - MC, GL

Bar-tailed Godwit - 1, 23/11/91, Karakin Lakes - DM

Pectoral Sandpiper - 1, 4/1/92, Lake Yangebup - PH * 1, 4/1/92, Forrest-Liddelow Swamp, Banjup - JH * 1, 7/1/92, Thomas

Rd (Pinjarra) - RV * 2, 10/1/92, Amarillo Pool, Serpentine River - JH * 2, 12/1/92, Alfred Cove - RAOU Excursion - 1, 14/2/92, Wannamal Nature Reserve - BBu

Long-toed Stint - 2, 23/11/91, Karakin Lakes - DM * 45, 14/12/91, Lake McLarty - JH * 48, 24/12/91, Amarillo Pool, Serpentine River - JH

Sanderling - 42, 13/12/91, Halls Head - JH

Ruff/Reeve - 1, 27/12/91, Lake McLarty - JH, IS * 1, 18/1/92

Coodanup - RAOU Excursion * 1, 19/1/92, Coodanup - JH

Oriental Pratincole - 1, 24/11/91, Bookerbidey Swamp, E of Goomalling - MB

Pacific Gull - 1, 1/1/92, Mandurah Boat Harbour - JH

Whiskered Tern - 6, 9/1/92, lake on Boat Harbour Rd, no previous records of this species on south coast between Augusta and Albany - RJ

Roseate Tern - 4, 13/12/91, Halls Head - JH

Common Noddy - 9/1/92, Lancelin Island, breeding - AB

Crested Pigeon - 1, 17/1/92, Lake Gngara - AB

Rainbow Lorikeet - flock, 12/11/91, nr. Warwick Grove Shopping Centre - MM * 2, Jan 92, Wanneroo area - AB * 4, 9/1/92, Burrendah: first record in 14 years by Anon observer

Regent Parrot - 6, 21/11/91, Lyons Rd, Wandi (nr. Jandakot) - MU

Grey Shrike-thrush - 1, 11/11/91, Cranbrook, nest in a bucket in shed, with two young - DL

Crested Bellbird - 1, 16/11/91, Dryandra - CW, G&RK

ObserverCodes

AB -	Allan Burbidge	IS -	Ian Standring
BB -	B. Barker	Jb -	John Brooke
BBu -	Bruce Buchanan	JH -	Jack Hunt
CW -	Chris Wilder	MB -	Mary Bremner
CWN -	C & W Napier	MC -	Michael Craig
DL -	D. Lawrence	PH -	Peel Howden
DM -	Dusty Millar	MM -	M. Massam
EMcC	Eric McCrum	MU -	Murray Unkovich
GL -	Graham Little	RJ -	Roger Jaensch
G&RK	Gail & Rex Kennett	RV -	Rodney Vervest
HVW -	Hank Van Wees		

Members Contributions

WHITE-PLUMED HONEYEATER IN EXMOUTH

My wife and I visited Exmouth and camped from October 9th to 12th 1991 at Norcape Lodge. The Lodge has a large swimming pool enclosure, with bar, which is very popular with the patrons of the Lodge. The area is open from early until midnight and during this time music is played over a sound system, the pool is well utilised and the result can vary from quiet to very noisy.

We were having lunch on our first day there, when I noticed birds flying to and from a Ficus Benjamina at one end of the bar. The ficus was in a pot under the verandah of the bar and was about 3 metres tall.

The birds were White-plumed Honeyeater and they were nesting. The nest was about 1.8 metres above the ground, composed of woven bark, hair, and cobwebs. The nest contained two young birds, partially feathered, who appeared to be getting a little too large for the nest.

The nesting site seemed to have been chosen with complete disregard for the humans using the pool area. Several times we saw people ducking to avoid the birds moving to and from the nesting site and people talking and laughing less than a metre from the nest appeared not to affect the birds at all. A bright yellow "party light" about 0.7 metres above the nest did not appear to disturb the birds, as when darkness fell all four birds sat on a branch beside the nest and roosted for the night there. Possibly the light gave off enough heat to make it very comfortable for the birds.

There may be a difficulty when the young birds start to fly, because of the proximity of the swimming pool and the large numbers of people who sometimes congregate there. If there are problems, however, I believe that there will be enough "helping hands" around to ensure that no harm comes to the family who have set up home in a most unusual place.

J.G. Little

SQUARE-TAILED KITE & AUSTRALIAN HOBBY

On 26th December 1991 some 20 kms North of Walpole on the Manjimup road, we saw two Square-tailed Kite flying slowly among and just above the treetops. They appeared to be covering an area about 300 metres square. We then noticed an Australian Hobby flying about 30 metres above the kites. Every now and again the Australian Hobby would stoop below the treetops to then climb again to a position above the kites which appeared to take no notice of their accompanist. When the Square-tailed Kite moved out of our sight we could follow their course by watching the Australian Hobby and when the hobby drew closer, sure enough, below it were the kites.

We assumed the Australian Hobby was taking advantage of the kite by pursuing any small bird that might be disturbed by them. We watched for over 20 minutes, but saw neither raptor make a kill.

J. & H. Start

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE & KANGAROO

While walking in the early morning (c. 6.30 am) along the edge of a semi-cleared paddock, one side partially cleared the other original banksia woodland, I observed a Wedge-tailed Eagle. It was gliding slowly above the banksia woodland some 3 metres above the trees, about 15 metres above the ground. It crossed the edge of the woodland some 70 metres in front of me and continued over the cleared area.

On reaching the cleared paddock the eagle lost height until it was about 5 metres above the ground. Directly in the Wedge-tailed Eagle flight path stood a clump of remnant Marri and banksia, four trees, about 12 metres in height and 100 metres from the woodland edge. The eagle glided upwards to over-fly the clump but it "halted" above it, gained a little height with a circle above the clump of trees and then descended with its talons down thrust to just over the tree tops.

This made two kangaroo leave the shelter of the clump and hop slowly towards the banksia woodland. The Wedge-tailed Eagle glided round the clump of trees and followed the kangaroo down their path some two to three metres behind them and on a level with the kangaroo heads — less than two metres above ground. It appeared as though the eagle was chasing the kangaroo for sheer devilment. As the kangaroo reached the banksias the eagle gained height and turned back on its original course.

Presumably the Wedge-tailed Eagle had previously adopted similar tactics with good result: the passage of the kangaroo disturbing suitable prey.

I have frequently noticed that Wedge-tailed Eagle are to be seen either perched or flying close to the ground in the early mornings. This probably reflects some lack of thermal activity at such hours but there may be a more positive explanation.

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Notes For Contributors

The Editor requests contributors to note :-

- *material concerning WA birds may be published
- *sightings in respect of non - WA birds will not normally be published
- *contributions should be written or typed with Double Spacing
- *WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- *copy will be edited where appropriate
- *contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

**Deadline for the June Issue
24 April 1992**

RUFIOUS TREECREEPER AT WOODVALE

On 20 January 1992 I saw a Rufous Treecreeper at Woodvale Nature Reserve, in the north Perth metropolitan area. A bird was first heard on 17 January and was still present at the site on 22 January, but was not seen or heard thereafter. However, A. Williams heard and saw a Rufous Treecreeper in similar habitat several hundred metres away on 24 January. When seen, it was foraging on the lower trunks of Tuart trees in tuart/banksia woodland.

According to Storr (1991) the Rufous Treecreeper was common in the Swan River district in the 1840's, but scarce by the 1890's. Storr and Johnstone (1988) could find only one record on the Swan Coastal Plain after 1920 - an observation by Nick Kolichis at Balcatta in 1974. The present record is therefore only the second from the coastal plain since 1920.

A. H. Burbidge

References

Storr GM (1991) *Birds of the South-west Division of Western Australia* Records of the Western Australian Museum Supplement No. 35.

Storr GM and Johnstone RE (1988) *Birds of the Swan Coastal Plain and adjacent seas and islands* Records of the Western Australian Museum Supplement No. 28.

BIRDING IN CANNING

To many the City of Canning may appear virtually birdless. However, this is far from the case. I have recorded 100 species (46 of which are waterbirds) since 1989.

The Canning River is by far the most significant birding area of the city. The river, with adjacent wetlands, acts as a major attraction to resident and migratory birds. Smaller bodies of water throughout the City of Canning are also valuable resting, feeding and breeding areas predominantly for resident birds.

Records prior to 1950 show Black Bittern breeding in the City and Bush Thick-knee were heard in the Cannington area up to and beyond 1954. Alas, these species are long gone and their habitats changed irreversibly. Much of the remaining original habitat and open land left is being developed causing birds such as the Black-shouldered Kite (breeding in the City) to move away.

Some raptor species are seen regularly. The electrification of the Perth-Armadale railway resulted in higher power lines which make excellent perches for Australian Kestrel, who wait to catch grasshoppers and the like disturbed by passing trains. Australian Hobby can be seen moving along the railway also, perhaps feeding.

The aerial on the Westfeeds grain silo in Bentley is a favourite perch of Peregrine Falcon, which can be seen quite often.

During December 1989 a Square-tailed Kite was seen frequently over houses in Queens Park (see WABN No 53 March 1990 Ed). Another was seen in April 1990 at Riverton Bridge being harassed first by Australian Raven then by Australian Kestrel and finally by a Marsh Harrier. Buff-banded Rail and Spotless Crake can easily be seen against the rushes at Riverton Bridge when the tide is out.

The species list (at 96 spp) proves for me the value bird watching in an area on a thorough and continuous basis. The City of Canning comprises the suburbs and parts of:- Welshpool, East Cannington, Cannington, Queens Park, Bentley, St. James, Wilson, Ferndale, Riverton, Lynwood, Shelley, Rossmoyne, Willetton and Canning Vale.

Australasian Grebe	C B	Australian Pelican	C
Darter	C	Little Pied Cormorant	C
Great Cormorant	C	Little Black Cormorant	C
Pacific Heron	R	White-faced Heron	C B
Great Egret	C	Little Egret	R
Rufous Night Heron	U	Glossy Ibis	R
Australian White Ibis	C	Straw-necked Ibis	U
Yellow-billed	C	Black Swan	C B
Spoonbill			
Australian Shelduck	C	Pacific Black Duck	C
Mallard	C	Grey Teal	C
Australasian	U	Pink-eared Duck	U
Shoveler			
Hardhead	U B	Maned Duck	C B
Blue-billed Duck	U	Musk Duck	U
Osprey	U	Black-shouldered Kite	C B
Square-tailed Kite	R	Brown Goshawk	C
Collared	C	Little Eagle	U
Sparrowhawk			
Marsh Harrier	U	Peregrine Falcon	U
Australian Hobby	U	Australian Kestrel	C
Buff-banded Rail	C B	Spotless Crake	U
Dusky Moorhen	C B	Purple Swamphen	C B
Eurasian Coot	C B	Black-fronted Plover	C B
Black-winged Stilt	C	Banded Stilt	R
Red-necked Avocet	U	Common Sandpiper	C
Greenshank	C	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	R
Red-necked Stint	R	Silver Gull	C
Caspian Tern	C	Crested Tern	C
Feral Pigeon	C B	Laughing Turtle-Dove	C B
Spotted Turtle-Dove	C B	Common Bronzewing	U
White-tailed Black	U	Galah	C
Cockatoo			
Little Corella	R	Red-capped Parrot	U
Port Lincoln	C B	Pallid Cuckoo	C
Ringneck			
Shining Bronze	C	Fork-tailed Swift	R
Cuckoo			
Laughing	C	Sacred Kingfisher	C B
Kookaburra			
Rainbow Bee-eater	C B	White-backed Swallow	R
Welcome Swallow	C B	Tree Martin	C B
Richard's Pipit	C B	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	C B
White-winged Triller	U	Red-capped Robin	R
Rufous Whistler	C B		
Grey Fantail	U	Willie Wagtail	C B
Clamorous Reed	C B	Little Grassbird	C
Warbler			B?
Western Gerygone	C	Inland Thornbill	C
Western Thornbill	R	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	C B
Varied Sittella	U	Red Wattlebird	C B
Little Wattlebird	C B	Singing Honeyeater	C B
Brown Honeyeater	C B	New Holland Honeyeater	R
Western Spinebill	U	White-fronted Chat	R
Mistletoebird	C	Striated Pardalote	C
Silvereye	C	Australian Magpie-lark	C B
Black-faced	U	Grey Butcherbird	C B
Woodswallow			
Australian Magpie	C B	Australian Raven	C B

C = Common, seen all year B = Breeds R = Rare, only seen once or twice U = Uncommon, usually seen at a particular time of year only eg during migration or dispersal

J. Hunt

RAPTORS AND SPIDERS

I recently made a brief visit to the Shire of Murchison, the only Western Australian Shire without a town. The locality of Murchison has a grand total of twenty-three inhabitants. Birds were not plentiful either, but camping on the banks of the Murchison River I was fortunate to come across a large stick nest. This proved to be the nest of a Black-breasted Buzzard in which (probably) eggs were being brooded, to judge from the actions of the sitting bird.

The partner of the sitting bird was twice seen to visit the nest and perch on the edge briefly. On neither occasion did food appear to be brought. On one of these occasions, on being attacked by an Australian Magpie and my moving, the bird on the edge of the nest rose and circled above the nest calling loudly. Hollands (1984) describes the call as "a loud, hoarse yelping" (p 191), which seemed a reasonable description. During the evening (8 pm) and in the morning (6.15 am) one of the birds gave what Hollands (1984) describes as "a harsh, scraping sound.....used to induce other adult to go hunting or when impatient for it to return" (p 191).

Inspection of the nest shortly after this morning call showed one of the buzzards sitting about two metres from the nest in the same tree, apparently taking the morning sun and doing a little preening. The bird sat quietly for 45 minutes in the same spot while I circled slowly round the nest tree obtaining fine views from all directions.

About 100 metres from the nest of the Black-breasted Buzzard, also in a River Red Gum, was the nest of a Little Eagle. The eagle too appeared to be brooding eggs. By contrast with the buzzard, the Little Eagle was much more wary and tended to slip off the nest early and glide away behind cover. Only one Little Eagle was seen.

Hollands (1984) refutes a "legend" concerning Black-breasted Buzzard, that they never perch in trees. My testimony is scarcely necessary, but apart from the perching incident mentioned above, in the afternoon a Black-breasted Buzzard sat in the tree containing the Little Eagle nest for about twenty minutes, after which I disturbed both species. Another legend concerns buzzards breaking eggs with stones. The Australian Bird Watcher Vol 14 No's 3 and 4 September and December 1991 contains interesting articles describing such action.

While following a mixed flock of Southern Whiteface and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill in the scrub I saw ahead what at first sight I took to be a suspended nest. It was hanging by spiders web from the branch of a bush. However closer inspection revealed the "nest" to be a live young Chestnut-rumped Thornbill (judged by the feathers) wholly trapped and unable to move, caught by a spiders web and hanging head down. When I removed the web, with some difficulty, the thornbill flew off - apparently unharmed.

Koch (1980) writes of the Bird-eating Spider "known to capture small birds (including chickens)" and which occurs "in arid inland parts of Western and South Australia" (p 13). I did not have Koch's book with me to confirm whether the spider in a large web adjacent to the trapped bird was of the bird-eating species. The web seemed very strong and parted with an audible snap. It may be that the entanglement of small birds in spider web is more common than the paucity of references to it in the ornithological literature would suggest.

References: Koch LE (1980) *The Red-back Spider and Other Venomous Creatures* WA Museum Perth

Hollands D (1984) *Eagles Hawks and Falcons of Australia*

Thomas Nelson Victoria

B. Buchanan

CANNING STOCK ROUTE - SOUTH

In July 1991 we were fortunate to travel with a convoy to No. 6 Government Well near Pierre Spring on the Canning Stock Route. The main purpose of the trip was to restore potable water to the well.

Our journey from Geraldton to Wiluna was uneventful, the main highlight being Chiming Wedgebill and a very noisy feeding flock of Grey-crowned Babbler. The second part of the journey took us from Wiluna on a detour through Granite Peak Station to No. 5 Government Well as recent rains had made the Lake Nabberu section of the Canning Stock Route impassable. Granite Peak Station is not open to the public. The area looked interesting: however, our convoy of non-birders was not in the habit of stopping and we were not able to do the area justice as far as noting bird species was concerned.

The track between Wells Nos 5 and 6 (about 20kms) was in reasonable condition and at the time of our visit the flora, including the spinifex, appeared lush and green due to the rains. Prior to arrival at Pierre Spring an unexpected stand of blackboys (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) was passed.

Pierre Spring was originally named "Diamond of the Desert" by John Forrest, who subsequently renamed it after Tommy Pierre, one of his aboriginal guides. River Red Gums (*E. camaldulensis*) are the main tree species and the spring is to the south of No. 6 Well. The surrounding area includes acacia woodland, claypans, rocky outcrops and low sand ridges interspersed with spinifex.

We spent each day exploring the area round camp. Several species were seen at the "Spring" every day, including Port Lincoln Ringneck, Mulga Parrot, Yellow-throated Miner, Crested Pigeon and Crested Bellbird. Galah flew into the trees each day, sometimes up to 12 birds. A group of 5 Pied Butcherbird stayed close to our campsite. Pied, White-fronted and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater were heard or seen at every location investigated, but Singing Honeyeater were seen on two or three occasions only. Two White-plumed Honeyeater were seen near camp, always in the same area. Only one Black Honeyeater was seen. On several walks flocks of up to 5-6 Crimson Chat (both male and female) and one flock of 11 birds, were seen flying in a southerly direction. One flock was found foraging in a low tree. Five Zebra Finch were observed feeding on the ground one morning.

The large eucalypts held many old nests high at their tops. An Australian Hobby appeared interested in two separate nests. A pair of Brown Falcon visited one particular nest each morning, calling loudly on each visit. They were seen mating twice. They did not appear to visit the nest much during the day, although we were not present all the time. A fire was constantly alight during the day under these nests whilst the undergrowth surrounding the well was being cleaned away. A disused nest (thought to be that of a Wedge-tailed Eagle) was discovered in a claypan about two kilometres from camp. It was only about 4 metres from ground level. Two Wedge-tailed Eagle were seen twice but they did not appear to be abundant in the area.

On our daily walks we were surprised by the low numbers of some species. Only two Grey Fantail, one Willie Wagtail near a low sand ridge, two Rufous Whistler, a small number of Weebill, Yellow-rumped and Inland Thornbill and two Striated Pardalote, with another heard. The pardalote were seen going to a hollow several times. One each of Grey Butcherbird, Red-browed Pardalote, Black-eared Cuckoo and White-winged Triller (male) were counted.

Some areas were sparsely vegetated and it was a surprise to see a pair of Chestnut-rumped Thornbill refurbishing a nest in a dead stump only 300 millimetres from the ground and very unprotected. Southern Whiteface were carrying material to nest in a dead stump a metre from the ground. Chestnut-rumped Thornbill were seen frequently in small groups or pairs. Pairs of Red-capped Robin seemed to be in territories each of which appeared very close to the next. A pair of Red-capped Robin was seen chasing a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, groups of three of which were seen flying in circles after each other making a one note trilling call. Caterpillars were on the ground in great numbers and the cuckoos were seen several times with them. One pair of cuckoos was seen mating.

A pair of Torresian Crow was seen almost every day and were carrying nest material to the top of a eucalypt. Four Little Crow flew by one day. These were the only corvids seen.

Near our camp we discovered the bower of a Spotted Bowerbird. It was decorated mainly with white glass and green berries. We were lucky enough to watch the male one morning enticing a female into the bower. For over an hour he contorted his body and displayed to her, his pink crest raised, sometimes holding a large caterpillar in his bill, trying to draw her into the bower. Several times the female hopped into and out of, or through the bower, but she eventually became disinterested and flew off. On one occasion we thought there were three birds at the bower, but there may have been more. One bird was heard near a thicket in the mornings making its cat-like call and scratch marks were found in the sand where it had been. The bowerbirds also mimicked the Yellow-throated Miner and Australian Magpie.

Other birds seen near the camp were Australian Magpie, a family of Variegated Fairy-wren, White-browed Babbler and six Varied Sittella, which flew through once. Birds were heard almost every night. On two occasions we sat by a large hollow with droppings at the entrance and went spotting another night. However nothing was seen.

A visit to a hill near Mt Davis was a must. It is approximately 4 kms north-east of the Spring and is a spectacular sandstone formation 669m above sea level. Native White Cypress (*Callitris columellaris*) are to be found at the top. A Peregrine Falcon was seen here and evidence of a number of birds roosting in the many crevices was seen. Several dead kangaroos were seen near the summit. They appeared to have made an almost impossible climb for either water or shade. A trek to a waterhole 8kms west of No. 6 Well was very disappointing with only a small number of birds, although another bowerbird was seen. More dried remains of kangaroos were found also.

Our return journey from No. 6 Well to Wiluna was down the Canning Stock Route. Several species were seen that we had not observed at No. 6 Well. Between Nos. 6 and 4A Well Australian Kestrel, Spotted Harrier, Common Bronzewing and a pair of Red-capped Robin finishing their nest. At Windich Springs 10 Little Corella, a Pallid Cuckoo and a Black-faced Cuckoo- Shrike were added. Groups of 40+ Masked Woodswallows were seen beside the track and in the evening groups swirled above us calling loudly. A Brown Songlark was seen near 4A Well and a Richard's Pipit was also added to the list. A female Crimson Chat was found tending a nest containing 3 eggs.

Lake Nabberu looked interesting, but we were on the road and unable to stop as the weather looked threatening and we had been warned the area became impassable in the wet. However Black Swan and Black-winged Stilt were heard in the night and

Black Swan, Australian Shelduck and other waterbirds could be seen in the distance on open water. Near No. 3A Government Well, two Australian Magpie-lark were seen on the track.

At a place called "granites" near No. 2A Well a pair of Hooded Robin were found to be carrying nest material and a Grey Shrike-thrush was also seen as well as another bower alongside an old one. Several flocks of Bourke Parrot were seen including one group of 20 birds.

A severe dust storm was experienced before we reached Wiluna. Flocks of Masked Woodswallow swirled round in the dust, seemingly undisturbed.

For those intending to travel the CSR, an interesting book is the "Canning Stock Route, A Travellers Guide for a Journey through History" Ronelle and Eric Gard (1990), Western Desert Guides, Wembley Downs, WA, gives all manner of facts.

K. Haythornthwaite and C. Wilder

(An interesting history of the construction of the Canning Stock Route is in Smith E (1985) *The Beckoning West, the story of H.S. Trotman and the Canning Stock Route* St George Books Perth based on Trotman's account of his work during the construction. Ed.).

MARSH HARRIER HUNTING

While watching two Cattle Egret on a winter-wet grass field near Armadale Golf Course on 13th November our attention was drawn by the urgent calls of two duck. They were half flying and half, frantically paddling back and forth in a small area of the flooded field. Overhead a Marsh Harrier was hovering some five metres above the water. Every time the harrier stooped, talons extended, the duck dashed to escape. We watched for about ten minutes until, eventually, the harrier was successful in seizing a small duckling in one talon. The Marsh Harrier carried its prey to a patch of dry ground some 30 metres away where two Pacific Black Duck were loafing less than 10 metres distant but they seemed to take no notice of the predator.

Owing to the length of the grass and rapid manoeuvres of the duck we were unable to observe their species. Both duck were dark coloured and wet. We thought they were most likely Pacific Black Duck.

J & H Start

Scopewest

True it is that the data gathering part of the SCOPEWEST project is now completed. As I write, the last bits of January 1992 data are trickling in and participants are to be congratulated on responding to the shorter survey period.

Up to July 91 (i.e. three surveys ago), 330,000 waterbirds had been counted on the coastal plain and I expect this figure to reach near half a million by the time the October 1991 and January 1992 data have been included. Literally tens of thousands of individual records testify to the fact that SCOPEWEST has been a project of highly-concentrated monitoring.

Another pleasing result is the coverage achieved. On average, only between 5 and 8 wetlands of 255 were left unsurveyed in each of the 10 survey periods. This is an excellent coverage rate. Of course, not only the waterbird counts conducted by the RAOU make up SCOPEWEST.

Considerable effort by CALM has gone into monitoring the 255 wetlands for the many environmental factors. This work has been carried out by only two CALM Officers! The full dataset (i.e. waterbirds, physical, chemical and vegetation data) is substantial.

Preliminary analysis of the data has revealed pronounced differences between waterbird usage and wetland types (e.g. lakes, river pools, winter-wets). Permanent lakes, for instance, are far the most significant in terms of abundance and species richness. Estuarine sites are also important, with winter-wets, drains and river pools being of lesser significance. Analysis has also revealed that different wetland types display marked differences in environmental attributes. For example, the deeper wetland types were the permanent, seasonal and river pools, fish abundance was highest in drains and river pools and wading zones in winter-wets and seasonals were markedly different from steep-sided drains and river pools.

In general, these results reflect current knowledge and understanding of wetlands on the coastal plain. As the data is refined and further analyses are conducted we expect to show closer relationships between waterbird usage and particular environmental factors — e.g. the effect of the presence of invertebrates etc. on waterbird usage. In all, 29 different environmental factors were measured and these will be interacted with 'your' waterbird data.

CALM have also completed their colour-marking programme and are still keen to receive any sightings. Great effort has gone into this aspect of the project which at times has been a perilous, exhausting and 'messy' business. We have not fully examined this data yet, but we expect to reveal new information on the movements of waterbirds between different wetland types.

Although the data collection has finished, there is much to be done to write up the project. I will no longer send data sheets to complete but for those who wish to continue with surveys, I shall continue to provide you with sheets on request. As the analysis and writing-up progresses, I will keep you in touch with results and news through WA Bird Notes and personal communications.

On a lighter note it is amusing to recall incidents that have occurred as part of the field work and SCOPEWEST has had its full share of 'incident'. In fact, I'm sure there is enough material for a book on 'encounters and happenings' during field work.

This epic tale is richly interwoven with feats of endurance (how long can you stand being pinned under an electric fence?), bravery beyond the call of duty (coming face-to-face with the stud bull — and the intense psychological battle that ensues), flights of fancy (usually linked to heat-induced hallucinations of strange species, sometimes birds), bewilderment (when a flock of 6000 ducks lifts the moment you arrive at the wetland) and 'the bizarre' (when you return from your survey and killer horses have "eaten" your car!)

These, and many other enlightening and uplifting experiences, have all been yours as part of SCOPEWEST and it has been pleasure to have sent you, dedicated, intrepid, unknowing and naked into the exciting world of wetlands and waterbirds.

R. Vervest.

BBCBQ

Big Bird's Clever Birdo Quiz is on waders — it is the season for wader watching.

1. Which migratory wader is normally the most numerous in WA ?
2. Do Sharp-tailed Sandpiper prefer wetlands of the coast or interior ?
3. When in WA how can the sexes of Greenshank be distinguished ?
4. With what other shorebird is the Black-fronted Plover often associated ?
5. Which, alone of the plover, lapwing and dotterel breeding in WA, makes a substantial nest ?
6. Eastern Curlew is almost identical in size and appearance to Eurasian Curlew. How will you be certain which of these two species you observe ?
7. Common Sandpiper "teeters" more than most other sandpipers. Why ?
8. Among gulls in WA, Silver Gull shares a unique feature with the South African Hartlaub's Gull. What is it ?
9. Which of the Pectoral Sandpiper sexes is the larger ?
10. Which is the larger in Australia, the Bar-tailed or Black-tailed Godwit ?

Answers on page 12

Notices

WA GROUP COMMITTEE 1992

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Committee

John Blyth
Chris Wilder
Charlie Davis
Peter Anson
Allan Burbidge
Brenda Newbey
Rod Smith
Tom Spalding
Brian Wilson

BEACH PATROLS

Volunteers are sought for the patrol of beaches, particularly during the winter months of May, June, July, August) when beach-washed specimens are most likely to be found (for a report on a major addition to knowledge from beach patrol, see WABN No. 31 September 1984.)

Those participating will be part of an Australia wide effort being conducted to increase knowledge of the bird species off our shores, the RAOU Australian Beach Patrol Scheme (see Wingspan No. 4 December 1991 p. 25)

If you would like to be involved please inform the RAOU Office, Canning Bridge.

SEABIRDING EXCURSIONS PROPOSED

In 1984 the first of a number of boat-based excursions was made to seek "little-known offshore seabirds" (see WABN NO. 32 December 1984). It is planned to re-new these trips if there is sufficient support to defray the inevitable costs of boat hire. If you are interested in taking part, please inform the RAOU Office, Canning Bridge.

BUNBURY FESTIVAL OF ART AND NATURE

During the Easter holidays the WA Group of the RAOU will take part in the Bunbury Festival of Art and Nature, the first of its kind to be organised by the Bunbury Council.

Geoff Shannon, a Bunbury member, is co-ordinating a programme of speakers and bird excursions and members in the area will help with the organisation.

The Bunbury Environment Centre has been made available by the Council for a programme of speakers and displays on important local bird habitats and RAOU activities.

Members are being approached to loan paintings or photographs as part of a display in the Bunbury Art Gallery.

This is an excellent opportunity for the WA Group to publicise our aims and activities. We look forward to a successful participation in the festival.

If you are visiting Bunbury during Easter (17 April-20 April) and would like to join in, please ring Allan Jones (09) 364.3975. Your help would be appreciated.

EASTER HOLIDAY AT SHANNON NATIONAL PARK

Combine a holiday with leading bird walks - 18th, 19th and 20th April 1992.

RAOU leaders are needed. Walks are being advertised and organised by CALM. Best campsites reserved for leaders (no charge). Telephone Jeff Kimpton, CALM, Northcliffe on (097) 767095 or (097) 767050 (reverse charge call) or Chris Wilder (09) 401.8329 as soon as possible for further details.

Eyre Report

Life at Eyre continues to be interesting and active. The seaweed came in just in time for our second week course participants to experience that lovely feeling of collecting fresh clumps of weed, loading it on to Betsy and chugging up to the dune to spread it over newly planted spinifex. The Pink Cockatoo and their young appear to be thoroughly enjoying the easy pickings; spinifex, euphorbia and nitre berries all on the menu at the same time.

Ducks were the feature of the last beach count. Thirty seven Grey Teal were on the ocean and three Pink-eared Duck were swimming in the shallow pools amongst the seaweed. One Red-kneed Dotterel has been sighted on the last three counts and last week four Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, three Grey Plover and two Red Knot were recorded. Red-capped Plover runners are still

being banded, a breeding season of nearly six months, from the end of August 1991 to at least the end of January 1992.

Despite the relatively low rainfall for 1991 many birds appear to have had a successful breeding season. Each day many young raven, bronzewing and currawong are coming to drink at the birdbaths. Malleefowl have been sighted close to the Observatory and most of the active mounds continue to be worked, although one fowl was found dead near a mound. Three active scrub-robin nests were located but ultimately only one breeding site appeared successful. Within a group of Varied Sittella sighted at the base of the scarp were three young, being fed by adult birds.

This year's bat course, led by Doug Watkins, has been exciting. Mist nets and harp traps initially set up along the North Track netted one Greater Long-eared Bat and three King River Eptesicus, this last being the first time this species has been caught at Eyre during a bat course.

A total of 369 Chocolate Bats were banded at the Cave and another three Greater Long-eared and Lesser Long-eared Bat were banded from nets and traps set at the base of the scarp.

Towards the end of March we have our birding course, just the right time to catch those autumn waders on their migratory path.

The Wardens

Cuckoo in the Southwest

One of the first tasks of 1992 in the Australian Birds Count (ABC) office was the analysis of cuckoo data. Seasonal movements of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo are discussed in Wingspan (March 1992) and the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo is treated in Cabbie's Chronicle No. 6 (the official newsletter of the ABC project).

Some interesting patterns of movement of cuckoo in South-west WA are beginning to emerge, but analyses highlight the need for more regular bird counts before these patterns can be accepted as accurate accounts of cuckoo migration. Let me whet your appetite for participating in the ABC by describing some cuckoo movements in the South-west.

Most cuckoo exhibit latitudinal movement, southwards in spring/summer and northwards in autumn/winter (see bar chart).

Fan-tailed, Pallid and Shining Bronze-Cuckoo are encountered at ABC sites from 31 S, to the coast (35 S) in spring/summer, suggesting that they move to wetter, cooler areas in this period. This is particularly true for the Fan-tailed Cuckoo because the greatest proportion of sites in which this species was seen in spring/summer was south of 34 S, whereas there was a more even spread of sites in autumn/winter.

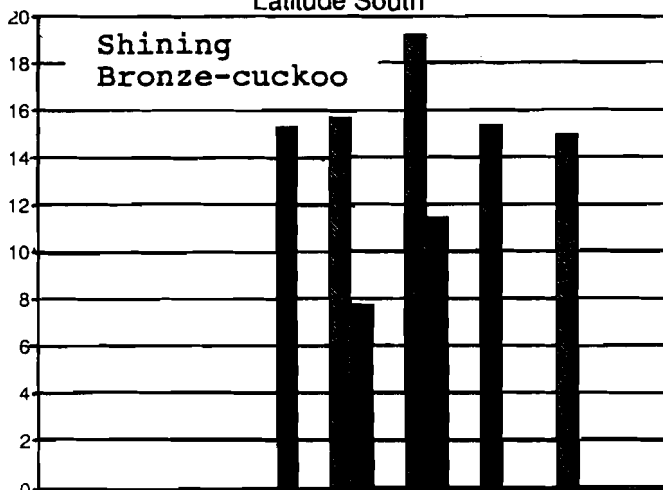
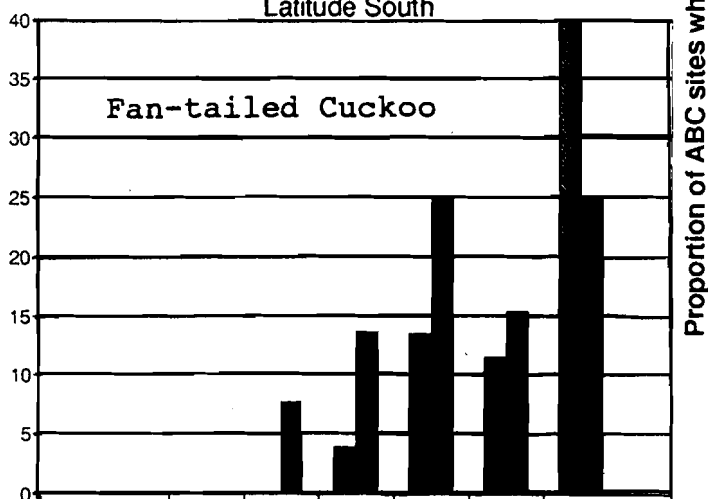
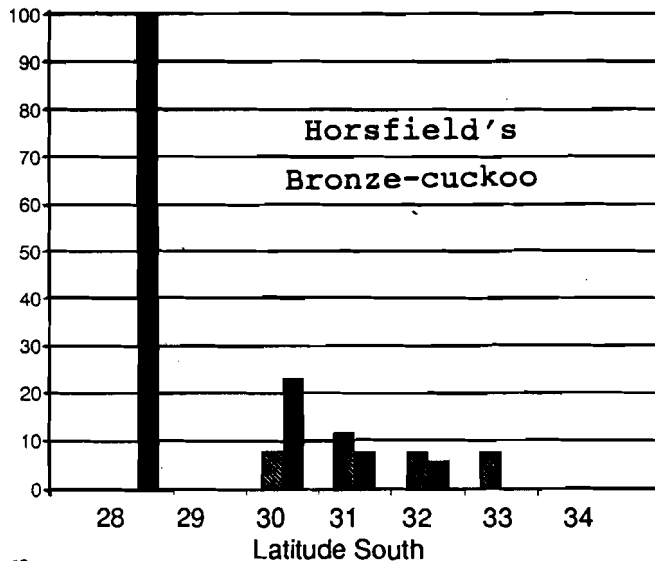
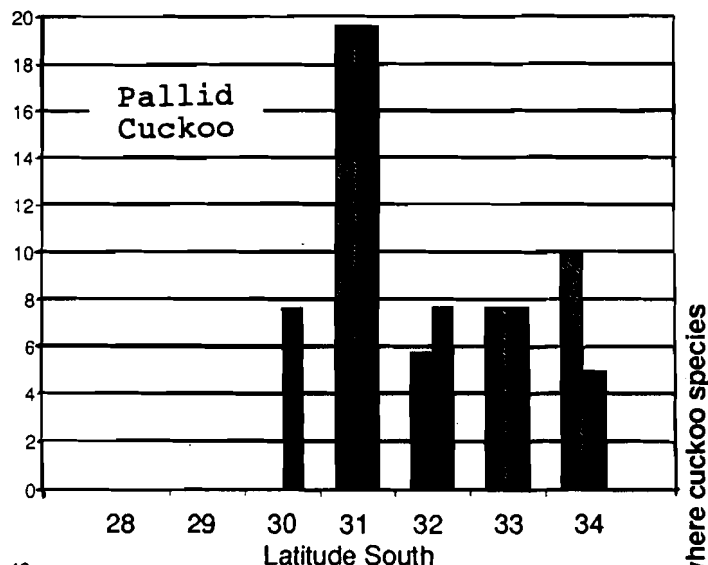
There appears to be a slight southern extension of the range of the Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo in spring/summer but, so far, its southernmost ABC site is Borden (34 19' S, 118 12' E). Perhaps this species will be encountered farther south if more ABC sites are established south of places like Margaret River, Nannup, Bridgetown, Tambellup and Borden.

All cuckoo seem to extend their range northwards in autumn/winter to 30 S, except the Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo which has been observed in the South-west as far north as Mt Magnet (28/04 S, 117/05 E).

Fan-tailed Cuckoo are encountered in a greater proportion of ABC sites in spring/summer, (17.4%) compared with autumn/winter (12.0%). Similarly, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo were seen in 15.0% of sites in spring/

summer compared with 7.2% in autumn/winter. This probably means that these two species migrate into the South-west from northern Australia in spring. There are no seasonal differences in the proportions of sites in which Pallid Cuckoo and Shining Bronze-Cuckoo were counted.

We have insufficient data to make any conclusions about movements of Black-eared Cuckoo in the South-west.



Excursion Reports

EAST GINGIN WETLANDS 6 Oct 91

A small group visited a winter wet area before walking round Lake Bullingarra. Horsfield's and Shining Bronze-Cuckoo were much in evidence at Bullingarra, where in addition to the usual duck, a nest building pair of Sacred Kingfisher were seen, as well as Variegated Fairy-wren. After lunch the Udumung Nature Reserve contained a Wedge-tailed Eaglet in the nest and a flowering Star of Bindoon — the Reserve is the only one where this flower is to be found; less than 20 wild plants exist.

B. Buchanan

1991 TWITCHATHON 1 Dec 91

The 1991 Twitchathon was held on Sunday 1st December in fine warm weather. Some 36 members took part in the competition and excellent results were recorded.

The team of Jack Hunt, Ian Standring, Tony Kirby and Marion Massam produced the winning tally for the whole area and their team total is the highest recorded for any Twitchathon. The sighted 133 species in a very long day. Julian Pegler, Chris Wilder and Alan Burbidge were second with a good total of 107 species. Mavis Norgard's team won the South of the river section with a respectable score of 97 while Sandra Fincham and friends scored 40 species in the barren Northlands. It was an enjoyable day and the combined totals proved that we have a great variety of birds within close proximity of Perth.

Forty members gathered at the Napier's after the competition for a BYO BBQ which seemed to be enjoyed by all.

C. Napier

LAKE MUIR 7/8 Dec 91

The base for the excursion was Basil Hanekamp's farm about 60 km from Manjimup and just to the east of Lake Muir. The lake is an impressive body of water this season, stretching some 11 km long by 4 km wide and bounded on the east by an elevated rock fault giving a spectacular view over the lake and the surrounding countryside.

Our host, a keen naturalist, welcomed our visit. An old

cottage was given over to us for quarters and cooking, and the camp site was in a fine spread of woodland. This was also home to Long-billed Corella, (stated by Pizzey (1980) to be an isolated colony - Ed.) Laughing Kookaburra and Boobook Owl - none of us needed alarm clocks for the early morning start on Sunday! We also found a Varied Sittella's nest in a fork high in a big tree here, exactly as described in Pizzey (1980) and watched both parents feeding the young.

On the Saturday afternoon we first explored the swamps and smaller lakes to the east. These are extensive and would need a great deal of effort to explore them thoroughly. Our brief look could only hint at the amount of birdlife they must shelter. Unfortunately from our selfish viewpoint, the abnormally high water level spread out the waterbird concentrations and gave them ample cover in the water-filled reed beds. We could see quantities of birds spread out in the distance but too far to identify easily in the heat haze. But in every body of water we saw Black Swan, Australian Shelduck (probably still in moult), Great Crested Grebe and Australasian Grebe. Musk and Blue-billed Duck were also present in good numbers. There were also frequent sightings of raptors. Swamp Harrier were most common, but we saw Wedge-tailed Eagle, Square-tailed Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk and a fine close-up of an Australian Hobby perched and feeding. Another unusual sighting was of a Barn Owl.

We returned to the area in the evening to listen for Australasian Bittern, but in the end we had to be content with a mere couple of apologetic coughs that were unmistakably bitternish. In compensation, however, the memory of a glorious sunset reflected in the waters of the reed beds is still vivid in my mind. One of our group did hear bittern calling clearly in the still small hours of the night.

We made an early start on Sunday morning on a tour round Lake Muir, visiting points of interest on the way such as the exploration area for the extensive peat deposits. Many bush birds and more raptors were seen as well as a family of two adult and five young Emu. Most spectacular was the view from the rocky heights overlooking the lake, for not only was the scenery superb, but we were close also to some 2,000 waterbirds, a variety of species, but predominately Australian Shelduck and Black Swan.

An interesting area deserving of a longer excursion. In our somewhat rushed visit we counted 67 species. The next visit should be earlier, in the spring, to get full benefit of the Australasian Bittern's protracted booming calls.

P. Anson

Reference: Pizzey G & Doyle R (1980) *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* Collins Sydney.

GROVE FARM RESERVE 12 Dec 91

Some 25 members plus one visitor from Scandinavia joined the walk around the Reserve. A sunny morning but chilly wind greeted them but the morning warmed later and it turned out to be a great morning for birding. Grove Farm probably has the widest range of habitat of any Reserve in the Perth metropolitan area and being both central and accessible makes it an ideal place for beginners and less experienced bird watchers.

The shallow lakes and swampy areas held many species of waterbirds and the grasslands, light bush, the river and mudflats enabled observers to see a total of 59 species. For a three hour walk within sight of Perth city this is remarkable. Some of the more interesting species were Buff-banded Rail, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Osprey, Mistletoebird and Rufous Night Heron, three of the latter being seen adjacent to the carpark area.

More secretive birds e.g. crakes and bitterns may well be in the Reserve capable of being seen by individuals or small groups watching at suitable spots.

T. Delaney

COODANUP 18 Jan 92

About 30 members and interested birdos from Mandurah found themselves shivering in the unexpectedly cool breeze on the shores of Peel Inlet. The party split into two groups. The more intrepid under Jack Hunt, braved a creek crossing and headed down river; the other, led by Bryan Barrett headed upstream.

Several beginners appreciated help from the more experienced birdwatchers to discover the differences between Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpiper and Greenshank, one of which was looking decidedly unwell and caused a lot of difficulty in identification. A great Egret behind a Great Cormorant, a combination looking remarkably like an Australian Pelican, also caused a little excitement.

We then set off in convoy to Mandurah, which demonstrated the difficulty of keeping a long convoy together on a busy road. The party eventually came together below the new Mandurah Bridge where excellent views were obtained of Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel. Feeding side by side, it was easy to appreciate the difference in size between the two. An Australian Pelican gliding majestically under the bridge looked remarkably like an old flying-boat coming in to land.

After lunch at a picnic site, we made for the inner harbour, where we found a very co-operative Common Tern 'posing' for us on a buoy and over 20 more on a nearby beach, enabling us to study the dark wing smudge which distinguishes them from other terns. Although the weather was becoming rather windy, we found, among other birds some Red-capped Plover and Large Sand Plover at the edge of a pool in a sandy depression.

The final count revealed 65 species, including Ruff, Whiskered and Gull-billed Tern and Little Egret, in addition to the Common Tern, Whimbrel and Eastern Curlew already mentioned.

C. Davies

ALFRED COVE 12 Jan 92

The first 'Beginners Walk' took place at 9.00am at Alfred Cove. The tide was low, the weather warm and calm: conditions were almost perfect. About forty people attended, among them several experienced and knowledgeable 'wader watchers'. This enabled everyone to join a group led by someone helpful and with a telescope.

The wader numbers were quite high and we were able to find sizeable flocks of the well known Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Red-capped Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit. There were many Greenshank and Great Knot and some Red Knot. One of the highlights of the morning was the sighting of two Pectoral Sandpiper and a solitary Ruddy Turnstone. The Pectoral Sandpiper obligingly extricated themselves from the main flock of Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpiper to stand to one side, allowing clear and prolonged viewing by our delighted company.

Common Sandpiper, Pied Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, Red-necked Avocet, Australian White Ibis, White-faced Heron, Caspian, Crested and Fairy Tern added interest and variety, as did Pacific Black Duck, Australian Shelduck and Grey Teal.

A number of bush birds were recorded in the surrounding trees. Many were interested in an abandoned nest of Varied Sittella. Rainbow Lorikeet were busy inspecting hollows in the 'famous nesting tree' near the wireless masts. Black-shouldered Kite and Australian Kestrel were also present.

We recorded forty-six species. Many thanks to all who so kindly and ably helped with the wader identification.

N. Duff

Coming Events

It is regretted that the proposed visit to Lake MacLeod had had to be cancelled.

Our first "beginner's walk" was a success, with about 40 present, many of whom were new to the RAOU.

Bryan Barrett, Excursions Organiser

Saturday 7 March Half-day excursion - Kings Park

Meet at 7 am in the car park behind the Restaurant. We have been asked by the Management Committee of the Kings Park Board to help them formulate a new programme for the preservation of the Park after the disastrous fire in 1989. Their report needs to be presented by June.

A half-day walk in the park to confirm whether birds seen during the visits made by Dom Serventy and H.F. Recher are still present.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 7 March to Sunday 15th March - Annual Waterfowl Count

Sunday 22 March Half-day excursion - Bungendore Park, Bedfordale

Meet at 7 am at the Park entrance on Admiral Road, just past the entrance to the Emmaus Christian School, on the right-hand side going towards the Dam.

This will be a second beginner's walk to introduce new members to some of our bushbirds.

Leader: Simon Nevill

Monday 23 March Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm

Dr John Long, Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology, Dept of Earth and Planetary Sciences at the WA Museum, will talk on the evolution of birds. Birds tend to be poorly represented in the fossil record, but Dr Long will speak about some interesting recent developments.

Wednesday 25 March Mid-week walk - Kings Park

Meet at 7 am in the car park behind the Restaurant. An early morning walk for an hour or so for those unable to take part in week-end walks.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 28 March to Sunday 29 March Campout - Wilgarup Lake

This lake is on a property owned by Mr & Mrs Eric Phillips, some 15 km north of Manjimup. A large lake surrounded by bush which Eric has made a wildlife sanctuary under the aegis

of CALM. We shall investigate the bird life both on the lake and in the surrounding bush.

Travel via Bridgetown south towards Manjimup. Watch for the 15 km to Manjimup signpost, proceed 200 m beyond and turn right. Follow the road to the homestead. RAOU signs will direct you to the camp site. Be self-contained. It is approximately 265 km from Perth.

A chalet is available sleeping 4 - one double and two single rooms at \$30 per head per night - first come first served! The toilet in the chalet will be available to all campers. People wishing to book the chalet should ring Eric direct (097) 711517.

Leader: Rodney Vervest

Saturday 4 April Full day excursion - Toodyay district

Meet at 8.30 am at the information bay 1 km outside Toodyay at the Northam Rd. junction. From Perth follow the Toodyay Rd via Red Hill and Gidgegannup. Morning and lunch at private property some 15 km north of Toodyay.

In the afternoon we visit Jim Masters' own reserve on the Avon River. Those wishing to stay later are invited to BBQ their own food on Jim's lawn before returning to Perth. Approximately 105 km. Be prepared to wade.

Leaders: Jim Masters and Doug Morgan

Sunday 12 April Half-day excursion - Lake Monger and Herdsman Lake

Meet at 8 am at the Lake Monger car park on Lake Monger Drive.

Leader: Ian Standing

Monday 13 April Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm

Norman Robinson, who established a Laboratory of Animal Sounds at CSIRO's Division of Wildlife and Research at Canberra in 1960 and has made a major contribution to Australian ornithology in the field of bird vocal mimicry, will speak about listening to birds and what can be learned by doing so.

Friday 17 April to Monday 20 April Easter Campout - Hopetoun

A tentative booking has been made at the Hopetoun Caravan Park for 10 bays. This must be confirmed by 7 March.

Birding trips will be made to the East Barren Ranges, Fitzgerald River National Park, Culham and Stokes Inlets and numerous estuaries on the South Coast. On Tuesday, those wishing to extend the visit will continue East to Esperance and Cape Le Grand.

Leader Clive Napier, from whom more detail may be obtained (09) 332 7265.

Friday 17 April - 20 April Bunbury Festival - see Notices section.

Saturday 2 May to Sunday 3 May Campout - Dryandra Forest

A weekend campout in Dryandra Forest, renowned for its variety of woodland birds, including Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Crested Shrike-tit, Malleefowl and Bush Thick-knee. Dryandra is easily reached on a bitumen road from North Bannister via Wandering and Pumphrey's Bridge. The village is on the right, off the main road, but is signposted.

Accommodation will be in two forestry cottages which take up to 8 people each, \$10 per head per day. Reserve your place by notifying the office on (09) 364 6202 - booking is essential! - latest date 21 April. Bring your own food and bedding.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 10 May Half-day excursion - Whiteman Park

Meet at 8 am at the gate (not a main gate) 5 km N of Marshall - Beechboro Road intersection, look for RAOU signs. The gate will be locked at 8.30 am - be punctual. Michael Brooker of the CSIRO will take us into an area of the park (closed to the public) which he has been studying.

Leader: Michael Brooker

Saturday 23 May Full-day excursion - Mundaring Weir

Meet at 8.00 am on the Mundaring Weir road at the CALM Grevillea Mycumbene BBQ area, 4-5 km from Mundaring on the right. We will go to the Big Log Reserve, two areas adjacent to the weir and introduce them to members. One area overlooks Helena Valley, the other the dam.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Monday 25 May Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Ray Garstone, who farms near Woodanilling and who has frequently guided members around his area, will talk about the birds observed there.

Saturday 30 May - Monday 1 June - Campout - Mt Lesueur/Badgingarra area

Mt Lesueur is now a National Park. We will visit several areas and also Hi Vallee, property of Joy & Don Williams, winners of the John Tonkin Golden Tree Award for preserving 2000 acres of bush for rare and endangered flora.

Accommodation at the APEX Recreation Camp at Jurien, where there is also a caravan park. Please inform Chris Wilder (09 401 8329) before the end of March if you will participate.

Saturday 27 June - Sunday 28 June - Campout - Trayning

Note in your diary. The RAOU will join with 'Men of the Trees' to assist in planting 6000 seedlings of understorey plants in shelter belts near Trayning.

Bush camping or at Hall in the Town. Billyacatting Reserve is close and can be visited during the weekend. Details from Chris Wilder (09 401 8329) and next edition of WABN.

Monday 22 June Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm.

Ron Johnstone, who has collected bird and other fauna for the WA Museum throughout the State and who has visited several parts of Indonesia in this work, will speak about the birds of the Lesser Sunda Islands.

Monday 27 July Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm.

Roger Jaensch on "Argus to Baza, birdwatching in Malaysia".

Annual Waterfowl Count

The final draft of the November 89 and March 90 waterfowl counts is now going to press. When printed, copies will be distributed to all volunteers.

Bird Banding 1992

CSIRO Division of Wildlife & Ecology is studying avian populations in remnants of vegetation and road verges in the wheat-belt of Western Australia.

Dr Denis Saunders is in charge of the research programme with Perry de Rebeira the Senior Technical Officer running the bird banding project within the major programme.

Qualified banders, trainees or interested birdos, or students wishing to acquire or extend their bird-banding experience, are invited to join Perry on banding trips to the study area near Kellerberrin.

Field trip dates for 1992 are:-

23-27 March

13-24 April

11-15 May

15-19 June

13-17 July

14-18 September

Transport and accommodation on field trips is provided free of charge. A Field Allowance of \$10 per day will be paid to volunteers except for the April expedition, which will be differently structured. The maximum number of volunteers per trip is three.

Enquiries should be directed to:-

Perry de Rebeira, CSIRO, LMB4, PO Midland WA 6056

Tel: (09) 252 0107 Fax: (09) 252 0134

O'seas Fax: (619) 252 0134

For fuller details of the research programme and arrangements see WABN No. 57 March 1991 p.4.

BBCBQ Answers

1. Red-necked Stint p. 353
2. Interior p. 325
3. Impossible, even Greenshank have difficulty p. 247
4. Red-kneed Dotterel p. 137
5. Red-kneed Dotterel p. 87
6. European Curlew has a white rump in flight p. 193
7. Unknown. Possibly to blend with moving waters p. 241
8. Has 2 broods in a season p. 488
9. Male p. 331
10. Bar-tailed is larger in Australia, but Black-tailed is larger in Europe p. 297

Big Birds Clever Birdo Quiz is derived from Pringle JD (1987) *The Shorebirds of Australia* Angus and Robertson North Ryde NSW to which the page numbers refer.

Chairman's Report 1991

The highlight of 1991 was the RAOU Congress which took place at the end of September at the University of Western Australia. It was attended by over 100 members and others from Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere, with a wide range of stimulating papers on the theme of water-birds. From all reports, those attending enjoyed themselves and felt that the long trip to W.A. (aided by cheaper air fares at that time) was well worth while.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the sub-committee that organised the Congress, particularly to Rod Smith who took care of the registration and accommodation and to Allan Burbidge who had overview of the speakers and papers and made sure the proceedings ran to time. Others helped in different ways. For instance, Bev Nicholson managed the catering which was so good that it took some effort to re-assemble members at the end of each meal break and Allan Jones erected a superb display of publicity material.

The Congress in Perth was followed by a camp-out in Albany, attended by over 50 people who pursued various activities - a boat trip to see pelagic birds, visits to nearby National Parks and Reserves and bird banding. Aided by good weather throughout, the camp-out was a great success and owed much to the efforts of its organiser Chris Wilder.

During the year, we were heartened by news that Mt Lesueur for which we had campaigned in 1990 had at last been declared a National Park, despite last-minute problems about a gravel pit used by the local shire within the boundary. This was resolved by excising the gravel pit from the new National Park. To balance this news, the W.A. Government announced that, of the 62 National Parks in W.A., mining would not be allowed in 60 of them, but would be allowed in two: Hamersley Range and D'Entrecasteaux. In practice, mining is also due to take place in the Rudall River National Park. The Conservation Council which opposes mining in D'Entrecasteaux has set up a Coalition, as a successor to the Lesueur Forum. The W.A. Group is represented as an observer at meetings of the Coalition..

During the long weekend in May, the WA Group held a country meeting and camp-out at Geraldton, as part of Group policy of showing the flag to country members and of emphasising that activities are not solely for the benefit of members in Perth. During the Australia Day long weekend, late January 1992, a meeting and camp-out were held in Busselton, in conjunction with the local Naturalists Club. Both country meetings went well and seemed to serve their purpose.

Throughout the year, your Committee pursued various possibilities for new office premises to replace the inadequate 41m² at Canning Bridge. Unfortunately all the possibilities fell through, except for a building offered at Bold Park by the Perth City Council, to be shared with the W.A. Wildflower Society. The site is fairly distant from the City but has other advantages. At this stage, we may not be in a position to argue, because it appears likely that CALM funding of the SCOPEWEST project (on which Rodney Vervest is engaged) will cease at the end of June and it is by virtue of these funds that we can pay the rent of \$450 p.m. for the Canning Bridge premises. We have asked that the Bold Park premises should carry a nominal, peppercorn rent.

Our computerised data collection of bird lists in National

Parks and Shires under the direction of Clive Napier, continues to mount, with some 60,000 entries to date. Volunteers help with the computer work and also staff the Canning Bridge office on weekday mornings. Without their willing help and that of Wendy Napier, who organises their roster, the office simply would not function. The fact that the office is neat and tidy, despite the cramped conditions, is a tribute to Rose Jones, the office manager. The splendid name badges that most of wear are the work of Charlie Davies, who by now must have produced dozens of Splendid Fairy-wrens.

On December 1, we held our own Twitchathon, coinciding with a similar one in the Eastern States run by the RAOU. Organised by Clive Napier, our Twitchathon allowed teams to compete either north or south of the Swan River. The overall winning team came up with an astonishing score of over 100 species.

Under its Editor, Bruce Buchanan, WA Bird Notes continues to appear quarterly, now in a slightly different and more economical format, but with its usual stimulating and attractive material. Rod Smith has handled the process of getting WA Bird Notes printed and issued.

Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg, who are responsible for organising outings and excursions, have put their enormous knowledge of the countryside to good use by arranging outings at fortnightly and even weekly intervals, with a nice balance between outings for experienced and less experienced bird watchers. In company with Sandra Fincham, our official greeter, we strive to make new members feel at home at excursions and evening meetings. Bryan and Margery try to ensure that less knowledgeable bird watchers are accompanied at outings by experienced members who can point out and identify birds.

In the course of the year, a successful evening meeting was held for new members, to tell them about the RAOU and the W.A. Group and the elements of happy bird watching.

Outings could not have occurred without the willing co-operation of volunteer leaders. We owe them a vote of thanks.

Jeremy Talbot has arranged monthly meetings and speakers for them, with a variety of interesting topics. Meetings have been generally well attended, by at least 50 members on each occasion, with refreshments provided by Claire Mercer and Phyllis Bentley who work long and hard in the background — a euphemism for the pantry.

Under Clive and Wendy Napier, the Trading Table took part in a number of fairs and festivals in and around Perth and provided the majority of our income. We were able once again to sell cards at the King's Park Wildflower Festival which coincided with the RAOU Congress in September. For the first time, we also sold cards in the period before Christmas at the Combined Charities Card Shop in the R & I Bank in Barrack Street. This proved a successful venture and is likely to become a regular feature in future.

The Treasurer, Peter Anson, kept a close eye on finances and I am happy to say that financially we seem to be managing adequately. Allan Jones produced the usual excellent displays of publicity material that was shown at all functions and helped to spread the word about the RAOU. Brenda Newbey handled conservation and responded to the several invitations to comment

on draft management plans.

During the course of the recent Busselton camp-out, I was driving down the Nannup road when I passed a well-filled cemetery. A sign outside it read "Cemetery. Entry only". I'm happy to feel that the WA Group doesn't require such one-way directions.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to the Committee, which throughout the year has worked hard and conscientiously at its tasks. Without its help, things would not have gone so smoothly, nor would I be able to report that the WA Group is in good shape and ready for another interesting year.

B. Wilson

Office News

Volunteers are normally at the RAOU Office each weekday, 9.30 am to 12 noon, to attend to your requests. However we suggest you telephone the office before calling.

The office may be attended irregularly at other times.

BOOK NEWS — "Parrots and Pigeons" is the latest in the National Photographic Index Series. It will be available in early March. Telephone the Office now to place your order. Special discount price to members \$71.50.

AUDUBON SQUEAKERS — now \$12.50 each.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS — Would you like to take part in our wide range of school and senior programmes to publicise the W.A. Group of the RAOU?

Leaders for birding excursions and assistance with school projects are two areas where you can help.

With the growing number of requests for our participation we urgently need more helpers.

Telephone Allan Jones (09) 364 3975 for more information.

BIRDING GUIDE/DRIVER Falcon Tours

Falcon Tours has an opportunity for a part-time Birding Guide/Driver. The position is initially for limited times throughout the year, but there is prospect of a full time post within 2-3 years.

The ideal applicant will be mature with not less than 10 years adult life experience, possess a current drivers licence and be of cheerful, patient temperament, with an interest in birds. Previous bird identification and knowledge an advantage.

Please address written applications or enquiries to Birding Guide, Falcon Tours, 1 Simons Drive, Roleystone 6111.

Publications for Sale

Atlas of Australian Birds — members only at —	\$15.00
Atlas of Australian Birds	Overlays \$6.00
Australian Waterbirds-Fieldguide	Kingsford \$15.00
Birders Guide to Japan	Robinson \$25.00
Birding Sites around Perth	Van Delft \$10.00
Birdlife of Murdoch	Porter \$6.00
Birdlife of Rottmest	Saunders & de Rebeira \$8.00
Birds of Australia-Logbook	Simpson & Day \$11.00
Birds of W.A.	Serventy & Whittell \$12.00
Check List of Birds of W.A.	10 for \$1.00
Eyre Bird Observatory Report 1986/87	Money to \$6.00
Field Guide to Birds of Australia	E.B.O. \$23.00
Field Guide to Birds of Australia	Pizzey \$25.00
Field Guide to Australian Birds	Simpson & Day \$28.00
Field Guide to Birds of W.A.	Slater \$20.00
Great Australian Birdfinder	Storr & Johnstone \$55.00
Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the Rockingham Offshore Island and Cape Peron	Morcombe W.A. \$10.00
Guide to Hong Kong Birds	Naturalists \$7.00
Attracting Birds to a W.A. Garden	Viney & Phillips \$5.00
Methods of Censusing Birds in Australia	
National Photographic Index Books	
Parrots and Pigeons	\$71.50
Seabirds	\$61.00
Shorebirds	\$61.00
Honeyeaters and Allies	\$64.50
Wrens and Warblers	\$51.00
Robins and Flycatchers	\$68.00
Parrots of the World	Forshaw \$95.00
Pocket List of Australian Birds	Schodde \$7.00
Portrait of a Peninsula	Smith \$9.00
Report of Middlesex Study Centre	\$5.00
Save that Song	Hutchinson \$25.00
Shorebirds	Hayman \$49.00
Shorebirds in Australia	Lane \$45.00
W A Bird Notes	per issue \$3.50
Waterbirds in Nature Reserves of S.W. Australia 1981-85	Jaensch Vervest \$35.00
Waterbirds at Remote Wetlands	& Hewish \$12.00
Parts 1 & 2	Jaensch & Vervest each \$30.00
Where to Find Birds in Australia	Bransbury
Other Items for Sale	
Audubon Squeakers	\$13.00
Bird-call tapes	\$11.00
Calendars 1992	\$12.50
RAOU Emu badges	\$3.00
RAOU ties (Navy or maroon)	\$9.00
Car stickers - Splendid Fairy-wren	\$2.00