



Western Australian Bird Notes

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Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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No 64 December 1992

Another Red-necked Phalarope at Rottnest

It appears that sightings of Red-necked Phalarope are very much on the increase in Australia. The first sighting was in Victoria in 1962 and in Western Australia on Rottnest in 1980 (but see below - Ed.) The Red-necked Phalarope now continues to be seen regularly and in greater numbers (Saunders & De Rebeira 1987). Nevertheless it is still exciting to see one, especially when you are the observer!

Kate Creed and myself were walking along the track on the south side of Government House Lake, Rottnest Island on 20 August 1992 in the late afternoon with the sun behind us. Kate suddenly noticed a bird standing on a small rock less than 20 metres away and about 2 metres from the shore. Immediately the bird moved off the rock into the water, but showed no haste to move away. In fact it turned to face us to give an excellent view of the well defined white throat and the U shaped red band from behind the eye, down the sides of the neck and joining across the breast. This pattern with the dark head and thin bill was enough for us to say immediately Red-necked Phalarope — with some degree of excitement!

The bird was alone and slowly but erratically swam away from us picking from the surface as it went. In the 15 minutes that we were observing it, it did not perform any of the "spinning motions" mentioned in text books and well remembered by me from my only previous encounter with this species. It finally took flight and became lost to view.

The next morning we walked to the lake again and were close to a rocky spit which juts from the eastern shore near the causeway. A few moments after a plane landed at the airport a flock of about 40 waders, mostly Ruddy Turnstone, with a few Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and a Grey Plover landed on the spit about 20 metres from us. Looking at them with x8 binoculars as we had the previous day, in excellent viewing conditions, we saw a Red-necked Phalarope in the water at the back of the group.

Although our view was somewhat impaired by the presence of the other birds, we saw it well enough for identification

and assumed it was the same bird as we had seen the previous day. The brightness of the colouration, particularly the well defined white throat and red band leaves me in little doubt that the bird we had seen on the two occasions was a female in breeding plumage.

A phone call to Ian Standring was all that was necessary to bring him and his friends over to Rottnest. The bird was co-operative and still on Government House Lake and it was seen by Ian et al three days after the first sighting.

M. Bailey, K. Creed

Reference:

Saunders D.A. and De Rebeira C.P.(1987) A review of sightings of Red-necked Phalaropes in Australia. *Australian Bird Watcher*. Vol. 12 (4) Dec 1987.

All the sightings of Red-necked Phalarope recorded in WABN have been at Leslie Salt Works at Port Hedland (1983, 1984, 1986, 1991 and again in 1992 — see Observations on page 3) or at Rottnest Island (1980, 1986, 1992). A 1979 sighting is given as "probably the first report of this species in the south-west" in August 1979, but the location is not stated. (see WABN No 13, March 1980)

A sighting exception was in November 1986, when a Red-necked Phalarope was seen at Lake Hinds in the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu, about 130 kilometres from the coast, the only 'inland' sighting.

Editor.

WA Threatened Species List

WABN No 63 September 1992 gave among the Observations criteria, birds listed in Garnett (ed) (1992) Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia RAOU Report No 82. Those birds listed which may be seen within the boundaries of WA are given below for the information of members. The list excludes several seabirds which do not breed in this State.

- Australasian Bittern** *Insufficiently Known*
Possibly fewer than 100 pairs in the SW of WA. Mainly concentrated at the Lake Muir wetlands.
- Square-tailed Kite** *Rare*
Mainly coastal and sub-coastal open forests and woodlands and inland along water courses of the SW and Kimberley.
- Red Goshawk** *Vulnerable*
In coastal and sub-coastal regions of the Kimberley. About 350 pairs Australia wide.
- Grey Falcon** *Rare*
Main habitat are regions of less than 250 mm rainfall around inland drainage systems.
- Freckled Duck** *Rare*
Numbers appear to fluctuate markedly. Most WA breeding in the SW maybe 10 pairs per year.
- Cape Barren Goose** (Western sub-sp) *Endangered*
Breeds only on the Recherche Archipelago; perhaps less than 1000 individuals.
- Malleefowl** *Vulnerable*
Habitat clearance has fragmented the population and made it vulnerable to fire and feral predators.
- Chestnut-backed Button-quail** *Insuff Known*
In Kimberley
- Painted Button-quail** (Houtman Abrolhos) *Vulnerable*
Reasonably abundant but vulnerable to predators and fire.
- Lewin's Rail** (WA sub-species) *Extinct*
Not seen since 1930's. Confined to swamps in SW corner of WA.
- Painted Snipe** *Insufficiently Known*
Has become rare on Swan Coastal Plain and the whole of WA.
- Beach Thick-knee** *Vulnerable*
Total Australian population may be 1000 only. Occurs in suitable habitat from Onslow north to the NT.
- Hooded Plover** *Rare*
In SW WA both coastal and on salt lakes over 100km from the coast. Generally few seen but flocks occur.
- Fairy Tern** (breeding only) *Rare*
Breeds around WA coast as far N as Admiralty Gulf.
- Lesser Noddy** *Rare*
Breeds in Houtman Abrolhos. Possibly 80,000 pairs. Vulnerable to cyclone, oil spill and commercial fishing reducing prey.
- Partridge Pigeon** *Insufficiently Known*
Occurs in NW Kimberley within 100 km of the coast.

- Eastern sub-species in the East Kimberley is vulnerable.
- Alexandra's Parrot** *Insufficiently Known- probably Rare*
Nomadic and rarely seen. Throughout arid zone of WA.
- Blue Bonnet** (Naretha sub-sp) *Rare*
In woodland on the Nullarbor fringe, mainly the western side. Scarce S of the trans railway.
- Scarlet-chested Parrot** *Rare*
Found in Great Victoria Desert and occasionally further West and South. Can be locally common.
- Ground Parrot** (W sub-sp) *Endangered*
Found with certainty only in Cape Arid and Fitzgerald River N.Ps. None found between. Possibly only 425 total.
- Night Parrot** *Insuff Known - Rare*
Sightings have been reported in WA in the last 10 years.
- Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo** (SW sub-sp) *Insuff known*
Restricted to sub-coastal forest from Perth to Albany.
- Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo** *Vulnerable*
Breeding confined to the Wheatbelt, but non-breeding birds occur in the far south-west. Appears to be declining.
- Baudin's Black-Cockatoo** *Insufficiently Known*
Found South and West of line Perth-Albany in forest dominated by Jarrah, Karri and Marri.
- Western Long-billed Corella** (S. sub-sp) *Vulnerable*
About 1000 total. May be increasing. Centred round Lake Muir and surrounding districts.
- Masked Owl** *Rare*
Southern sub-species occurs in broad coastal strip up to the Pilbara, Northern sub-species (insufficiently known) in the Kimberley and a sub-species inland (eg Nullarbor.)
- Noisy Scrub-bird** *Endangered*
Population of 291 singing males. Mainly Two Peoples Bay and sites to the East.
- Purple-crowned Emu-wren** (W. sub-sp) *Vulnerable*
About 7000 total. restricted to within 10 metres of riverine habitat in the Kimberley.
- Striated Grasswren** (Sandplain sub-sp) *Insuff Known*
In semi-arid zone Pilbara to north of the Nullarbor. May be declining.
- Thick-billed Grasswren** (W. sub-sp) *Vulnerable*
In the Northern half of the Peron Peninsular and immediately SE of Shark Bay..
- Rufous Bristlebird** (W.sub-sp) *Extinct*
Coastal between Cape Mentelle and Cape Naturaliste.
- Western Bristlebird** *Endangered*
1000 total in two sites E. of Albany. Increasing with exclusion of fire.
- Slender-billed Thornbill** (W. sub-sp) *Insuff Known*
Found in shrubland and saline flats, Nullarbor Plain to Carnarvon.
- Western Whipbird** (W. heath sub-sp) *Endangered-Rare*
In dense thickets with open overstorey Mt Taylor to Waychinicup River. 500 total.
- Western Whipbird** (W. mallee sub-sp) *Rare*
Scattered from Stirling Range-Pingrup in W. to Ravensthorpe- Hopetoun in E. 4000 total.
- Cinnamon Quail-thrush** (Nullarbor sub-sp) *Rare*
Confined to Nullarbor from Naretha (W)-85km N. of Loongana (N)-Arubiddy (S) and WA border (E); also on Nullarbor in SA.
- Crested Shrike-tit** (W.sub-sp) *Rare*

South of 30 degrees S and W of Norseman. May no longer be on Swan Coastal Plain or N. of Perth.

Star Finch *Locally Common-Rare*

Round Lake Argyle, Ord River and along Pilbara waterways. May be declining.

Yellow-rumped Mannikin *Insufficiently Known*

Moderately common nr. Kununurra and to Katherine in NT.

Gouldian Finch *Endangered*

Has drastically declined since 1970's. Patchily distributed in Kimberley grassy woodlands.

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Note: Shires are shown in brackets.

SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Wandering Albatross - 2, 26/8/92, Rottnest Island - GL * 1 (stage 4 plumage), 30/8/92, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - MC, GM

Yellow-nosed Albatross - 150, 30/8/92, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - MC, GM

Shy Albatross - 1 juvenile, 30/8/92, Cape Leeuwin (Augusta-Margaret River) - MC, GM * 5 juveniles, 30/8/92, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - MC, GM

Darter - 2 active nests (one with 5 eggs, other with sitting female), 13/10/92, Kent River between Owingup Swamp and South Coast Highway (Denmark) (new breeding record for this wetland) - RJ, AC

Little Black Cormorant - 10 nests with young, 13/10/92, Kent River between Owingup Swamp and South Coast Highway (Denmark) (new breeding record for this wetland) - RJ, AC

Little Bittern - 2, 8/10/92, Lake Jasper (Nannup) in agonis-baumea swamp (first definite record for this wetland) - RJ, AC * 1, 14/10/92, Lake Saide (Denmark) (5 km SW of Young townsite), in Typha swamp - RJ, AC

Australasian Bittern - 6-8, 16/10/92, Lake Pleasant View (Albany) (near Manypeaks townsite) (high count for the south-west) - RJ, AC

Domestic Goose - 4+, nest with 9 eggs, 24/10/92, Lake Monger (Metro) - AB, JR

Freckled Duck - 2, 22/8/92, Gibbs Road Swamp, Armadale (Metro) - DM

Black Kite - 1, Oct 92, Karroun Hill Nature Reserve (Mt Marshall) - BBu

Australian Hobby - 2 adults and 1 young, 15/9/92, near Buntine (Dalwallinu) - BBu

Malleefowl - 5 plus an active mound, 17/9/92, 24 km NE of Dalwallinu (Dalwallinu) - BBu

Peafowl - 4, 4/10/92, Lake Joondalup north (Metro), near hospital - ID

Guineafowl - 4, 8/92, Neil Hawkins Park, Lake Joondalup north (Metro) - MBa

Inland Dotterel - 1, 1/11/92, Austin Bay Nature Reserve, Peel Inlet (Murray) - JB, CW

Eastern Curlew - 16, 10/10/92, Coodanup, Mandurah (Murray) - TK

Ruff - 1, 10/10/92, Coodanup, Mandurah (Murray) - TK

Pomarine Skua - 5, 1/11/92, North Mole, Fremantle (Metro) - CW, AD, SK

Silver Gull - 1, wholly dusky grey, 8/9/92, South Perth (Metro) - PC

Pacific Gull - 1, immature, 13/7/92, North Mole, Fremantle (Metro) - MC, GM

Common Tern - 1, 10/10/92, Mandurah (Murray) - TK

Rainbow Lorikeet - 5, 30/10/92, Wanneroo (Metro) - AB

Rainbow Bee-eater - 2, 27/9/92 (early arrival for this species), Dryandra State Forest (Cuballing) - GL

Western Yellow Robin - 3, 13/9/92, "Lowlands", c. 10 km SW of Mundijong (Serpentine-Jarrahdale) (rare on Swan Coastal Plain) - JR

Crested Shrike-tit - 1, 1/8/92, Yarra Rd, c. 15 km SE of The Lakes (Mundaring) - BBa, ND, MC * 3, 29/8/92, Maurice Road off Caves Road (Augusta-Margaret River) - MC, GM

Golden Whistler - several, 12-13/9/92, "Lowlands" c. 10 km SW of Mundijong (Serpentine-Jarrahdale) (uncommon on Swan Coastal Plain) - AB and RAOU excursion

Southern Whiteface - 8, 16/9/92, 30 km ENE of Dalwallinu (Dalwallinu) (at or near W margin in this part of range) - BBu

Brown-headed Honeyeater - 1, 15/9/92, near Buntine (Dalwallinu) (near inland margin in this part of range) - BBu

ARID ZONE (including the Pilbara, Gascoyne, interior and Nullarbor)

Straw-necked Ibis - 24 active nests, 23/10/92, nests on ground on island in salt lake near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - PF, JBW

Yellow-billed Spoonbill - 24, 23/10/92, salt lake near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - PF, JBW

Freckled Duck - 2, 20/8/92, Lignum Swamp, 26 km NE of Mt Vettors HS (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) (male in breeding colours and giving "axle grind" call indicative of early stages of

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Notes For Contributors

The Editor requests contributors to note :-

- *WABN normally only publishes material on WA birds
- *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 March Issue
19 February 1993**

breeding HANZAB pp. 1166-8) - RJ

Blue-billed Duck - 1 (male), 21/8/92, Brown Lagoon, 13 km E of Rowles Lagoon (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - RJ, RV * 1 (female), 21/8/92, Rowles Lagoon (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - RJ, RV * 1 adult male, 30/9/92, found freshly dead near Edah Station HS (Yalgoo) - S/LL * 1, female, 10/11/92, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - RJ

Black-breasted Buzzard - 1, 26/8/92, Nerren Nerren Station (Shark Bay) - AB, JR * 1, 2/9/92, Toolonga Nature Reserve (Shark Bay) (c. 80 km SE of Overlander Roadhouse) - AB, JR
Marsh Harrier - 1, 21/8/92, Brown Lagoon (13 km E of Rowles Lagoon) (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - RJ, RV, ACh

Australian Crake - 2 old nests, 8/92, Canegrass Swamp (18 km S of Goongarrie Hill) (Menzies) (no breeding records in this area) - RJ, RV, ACh * 3+, 20/8/92, Lignum Swamp, 26 km NE of Mt Vettters HS (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - RJ

Hooded Plover - 2, 15/8/92, salt lake just E of Newman Rock (Dundas) - MB

Red-necked Phalarope - 11, 28/9/92, Port Hedland saltworks (Port Hedland) - DW

Silver Gull - 55-60, 25/10/92, Warriedar Station (Yalgoo) - PF, JW

Pacific Gull - 1, 25/10/92, Warriedar Station (Yalgoo) - PF, JW

Whiskered Tern - 300-400, 3/10/92, over salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo); many starting to nest on samphire on 23/10/92 - PF, JBW * c. 45 pairs with nests, building to small chicks, 6/11/92, freshwater swamp on Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) (unusual to breed on freshwater) - PF, JBW

Gull-billed Tern - 67 pairs with nests, building to small runners, 23/10/92, island in salt lake near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - PF, JBW

Clamorous Reed-warbler - 1, 10/11/92, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - RJ

Little Grassbird - 8+, 20/8/92, Lignum Swamp, 26 km NE of Mt Vettters HS (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - RJ * three records on Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo): recent nest, 24/10/92 - PF, JBW; nest under construction, 6/11/92 - PF, JBW; 1, 10/11/92 - RJ
Slaty-backed Thornbill - 3-4, 26/8/92, 17 km NE of Nerren Nerren HS (Shark Bay) - AB, JR

KIMBERLEY

Little Bittern - 3-5, 23/7/92, Lake Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - PBT

Black Bittern - 1, 18/7/92, Dunham River Bridge, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Black Falcon - 1, 14/9/92, King River near Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

White-browed Crake - ca. 20, 23/7/92, Lake Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - PBT

Little-ringed Plover - 1, 10/92, Broome Sewage Ponds (Broome) - DW

Pectoral Sandpiper - 3, 14/10/92, at a bore on Roebuck Plains (Broome) - DW

Long-toed Stint - 1, 8/9/92, Broome Sewage Works (Broome) - FO * 8, 9/9/92, artesian bores, Roebuck Plains Station (Broome) - BBO

Ruff - 1, 10/92, Broome Sewage Ponds (Broome) - DW

Eastern Grass Owl - 5 (including one in a mist net), 10/92, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - PJF

Black-tailed Treecreeper - 4 (2 banded), 6/9/92, Tagarana Bore, Roebuck Plains Station (Broome) - BBO (First record for BBO)

Painted Firetail - c. 1000, 1/9/92, Mary River bridge, c. 100 km SW of Hall's Creek (Hall's Creek) - FO

Gouldian Finch - 2 immature, 12/9/92, 113 km W of Fitzroy River (Hall's Creek) - FO

Observer Codes

AB = Allan Burbidge	JB = John Blyth
AC = Alan Clarke	JR = Julie Raines
ACh = Andy Chapman	JBW = Basil Woods
AD = Adam Dudley	MB = Mary Bremner
AJM = John Malcolm	MBa = Mike Bamford
BBA = Bryan Barrett	MC = Michael Craig
BBu = Bruce Buchanan	PBT = Peregrine Bird
BBO = Broome Bird	Tours (per FO)
Observatory	PC = Peter Coyle
CW = Chris Wilder	PJF = Peter Fullagar
DM = Dusty Miller	PF = Phil Fuller
DW = Doug Watkins	RJ = Roger Jaensch
FO = Frank O'Connor	RV = Rodney Vervest
GL = Graham Little	SK = Simon King
GM = Glenn Moore	S/LL = Sharon & Lance
ID = Ian Davis	Lee-Steer
	TK = Tony Kirkby

Members Contributions

REACTIONS TO RAPTORS

I wrote of the reactions of waterbirds to predators in WABN No. 62, June 1992. I wrote "Whistling Kite..... rarely evoke any reaction from waterbirds" (p.5). In this I was premature, writing before the (usually) annual arrival of Black-tailed Native-hen.

As befits a "regular" migrant, the times of arrival of Black-tailed Native-hen in my garden at Wannamal are surprisingly uniform. In 1987 arrival was 17 July, 25 June in 1988, failed to arrive 1989, 4 August in 1990, 18 July in 1991 and this year 1992, arrival was 20 July. Arrival within a four day period in the three years 1987, 1991 and 1992 is remarkable. Breeding has commenced in August each year it has occurred, 1987, 1988 and 1992.

This year numbers were higher than since 1986 when a flock of 200+ was present. This year the maximum seen was 90+. When this 90+ group was in the garden, making devastating assaults on my newly planted atriplex sp (bad) and the Capeweed (good), I had numerous occasions to see their reaction to Whistling Kite, which were breeding nearby. Each time a Whistling Kite appeared, the flock both scattered and ran to cover, frequently gathering under a *Melaleuca rhaphiophylla* at the swamp edge. Clearly Whistling Kite alarm Black-tailed Native-hen in a way which is not evident with the more "water-borne" — ducks etc. It is necessary to add however that when those breeding had separated from the flock they seemed not to show much if any comparable alarm. Perhaps the alarm is a flock reaction.

It was also of interest to note that the flock of Black-tailed Native-hen were scattered and driven off by the repeated attacks of a Grey Butcherbird when they lingered in part of its food gathering territory. It was raising a brood some 200 metres away.

I then recalled WABN No. 40, December 1986. On page

five, describing an incident at Le Lievre Swamp, it is written "a group of Black-tailed Native-hens, numbering about two hundred and fifty had taken up a position on the edge of the lake, acting like 'a la carte meals' for any predator that cared to sample them.....They were attacked in turn by a Marsh Harrier, a Brown Falcon and two Whistling Kites, taking frantic evasive action only when it was generally too late".

The Whistling Kite is "...a carrion eater....feeding on poisoned and trapped rabbits, dead sheep and the carcasses of other animals. Besides rabbits the bird feeds on grasshoppers, but does not harm lambs or poultry" (Serventy and Whittell 1976, p.163). Pizzey (1980) says "Groups gather to roost or feed at carrion. Also takes live prey: harries feeding birds such as ibis, forcing them to disgorge" (p 81). Hollands (1984) categorises Whistling Kite as "Mainly a scavenger and carrion eater.....Live prey taken includes kitten rabbits, rats, lizards, small snakes and occasionally birds and fish." (p 193).

Serventy and Whittell (1976) give the weight of the Whistling Kite as male 23 ounces, female 30 ounces. They also give the weight of the Black-tailed Native-hen as (a surprisingly low) 13.5 ounces. Consequently a Whistling Kite needs to attack a hen of between 45% and 58% of the kite body-weight. Given that Marsh Harrier are known to successfully attack Eurasian Coot (sometimes with difficulty — see WABN No. 55, September 1990), whose body-weight (on Serventy and Whittell 1976 figures) is between 79% and 100% of that of the Marsh Harrier, a Whistling Kite attack on Black-tailed Native-hen seems less of a feat.

Given the apparent carrion preference of the Whistling Kite as described above the question is whether Whistling Kite actually strike down Black-tailed Native-hen adults as prey. The Le Lievre description is equivocal on this point. It is apparent that flocks of Black-tailed Native-hens may take alarm at Whistling Kite. Are they in fear of their lives? or are they afraid of losing their last meal?

Has any reader unequivocal evidence of Whistling Kite killing prey as large as Black-tailed Native-hen?

B. Buchanan

GREY SHRIKE-THRUSH DIET

We have a pair of Grey Shrike-thrush nesting in our garden in Cranbrook.

Last year they nested in a small plastic bucket in our open shed where they hatched and reared 2 young. This year they freshened up the bucket nest, but then built on the top of a nest recently built and occupied by a pair of thornbill.

On the 1st September there were 2 eggs in the nest, on the 20th they were feeding the two young. On the 27th I saw the male on the garden fence beating something to death. Later it was seen to be pecking and pulling bits off it. Inspection at 1600 hours revealed it was a 7cm long frog. The thrush had impaled the frog on a splinter on top of the fence to a depth of 2cm at its throat!

The Grey Shrike-thrush returned regularly and continued pulling the frog to pieces after I had taken photographs. By 1800 hours the frog was all gone.

D. Lawrence

(Pizzey (1980) says the Grey Shrike-thrush is "sometimes predatory on smaller birds ... and have been known to take surprisingly large items like feathertail gliders and green tree frogs" (p.248). Boles (1988) says "The Grey Shrike-thrush is perhaps the most carnivorous songbird of its size. Although it

has been recorded as eating fruit and seeds on occasion, the bulk of its diet consists of insects and other invertebrates, frogs, lizards, mice and even pygmy possums" (p.250).

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

Boles W.E. (1988). *The Robins and Flycatchers of Australia*, Angus & Robertson, London.

Ed.).

SOUTH COAST ALBATROSS

Due to the strong winds that had been blowing for most of the week my friend Glenn Moore and I decided to head south for the weekend to see if any seabirds had been blown landwards. We left late on Friday 28th August for Cape Leeuwin and were up early on Saturday to see what had arrived. Although the wind had dropped considerably, we obtained reasonable views of a Black-browed Albatross plus 9 Australasian Gannet. There were also some 20 albatross and 50 all-dark petrels that were too far out to identify.

By lunchtime activity had diminished so we went to Maurice Road (off Caves Road) to do some karri forest birding. Here some White-breasted Robin, Red-winged Fairy-wren and three Crested Shrike-tit (two males and a female) provided some cheer despite the rainy conditions.

On Sunday morning it was up early on the Cape again and luckily the winds had arrived too. By mid-morning we had logged 8 Australasian Gannet, 3 Yellow-nosed Albatross, 3 Black-browed Albatross and a juvenile Shy Albatross with the numbers of unidentified-birds similar to the day before. Activity seemed to fall off by mid morning so we went to Cape Naturaliste to see what was there. After the long walk down to the Cape we were greeted by large numbers of Yellow-nosed Albatross with the odd Black-browed and Shy thrown in for good measure. There were also large numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters much further south than I thought they occurred (recourse to the HANZAB showed that Cape Naturaliste is the southern extremity of their range). After watching the streams of albatross fly past for a couple of hours Glenn Moore remarked sarcastically "all we need now to round the day off is a Wandering Albatross".

Strange things do happen in this world and the next thing I did on looking through my telescope was to focus on a large albatross out at sea (I thought it was probably a Shy). Only when it banked to reveal its gleaming white back did I realise that I was looking at a Wandering Albatross. We could hardly believe our luck. The huge bird soared in until it was only about 60 metres away, its 3.3 metres wingspan dwarfing the numerous Yellow-nosed Albatross around it. I was filled with awe at seeing so huge a bird.

The rest of the day seemed something of an anti-climax, but still the albatross and shearwater streamed by. By the end of the day we had logged 100 Wedge-tailed Shearwater, 150 Yellow-nosed Albatross, 3 Black-browed Albatross, 5 Shy Albatross (all juveniles), one Wandering Albatross and 28 Australasian Gannet.

A memorable weekend, that certainly greatly increased my knowledge and field experience with albatross. For example, I found from HANZAB that the age distribution of the Shy Albatross we observed was due to the fact that the fledglings disperse widely whereas the adults tend to remain at the Tasmanian colonies all year round.

Finally I would like to encourage other members to make similar trips. Not only will you be graced by the presence of

some truly beautiful birds you will also be contributing greatly to our very fragmentary knowledge of seabird distribution in West Australian waters. If anyone would be interested in setting up reasonably regular pelagic trips out of Busselton, Augusta or Albany next winter please give me a ring (09) 384 5398 so I can gauge whether it would be financially and logistically feasible.

M. Craig

PURPLE SWAMPHEN DIET

Eric McCrum of the Gould League passes on information of the taking of a Black Swan cygnet by a Purple Swamphen at Tomato Lake, Belmont. The cygnet was found to have had its neck broken. Pizzey comments in Pizzey & Doyle (1980) a *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, Collins, Sydney on page 99 that the larger species of *Rallidae*, which would include Purple Swamphen, are "occasionally predatory on young birds".

WABN Number 56 December 1990 records a similar attack on a gosling at Lake Monger.

Editor

CHALLENGES TO RAPTORS

Hollands (1984) has written admirably of the hearing of alarm calls coming nearer as a raptor approaches the nest. Recently (September) I had the pleasure of hearing such a progressive alarm when near the nest of an Australian Hobby.

It was about 6.45 am. The alarms were dominated by those of Galah, not at that time of that day stirring in the Reserve (at Buntine) in which the Australian Hobby nest was placed. An Australian Hobby passed very quickly a little in front of me at about 20 metres height, skimming over the lower eucalypts to swoop upward to the nest, situated some 30 metres above ground.

My view of the nest being somewhat obstructed from my then position, I had it in full view in time to see the hobby, perched on the edge of the nest, leaning down into it as though to feed young. A few moments later a second Australian Hobby flashed by, swooped upward towards the nest but by-passed it to settle and preen in a tree some 50 metres distant.

The first hobby, still at the nest edge, then flew down to a dead branch some 10 metres below the nest where it appeared to settle, fluffing its feathers — it was cool. After a minute or so, a group of Galah came to the nest tree and flew around the settled hobby, screeching loudly. The settled bird appeared wholly unmoved. Two Galah perched on the same branch, one either side (but at a respectable distance) the meantime raising and lowering their heads and calling. Others in the party settled around the nest tree all keeping up a raucous commotion.

Finally one of the Galah on the same branch as the Australian Hobby, flew off the branch and fluttered steadily upward until it was at nest level, when it perched on the edge of the nest. This was too much for the hobby which in turn flew to the nest where it also perched on the edge. The Galah, turning its head and craning forward seemed as if it were "looking at the baby" (if there were such in the nest.)

No action was taken by the adjacent Australian Hobby but after about a minute the Galah turned and left the nest edge to "watch" from a nearby small branch. After "watching" another 30 seconds or so, the Galah flew off accompanied by the rest of the group.

Another raptor incident occurred close to my home. A Whistling Kite flying slowly at about 30 metres height was "challenged" by a Willie Wagtail. The Whistling Kite, unfazed and attracted by something in the swamp below, began to circle

slowly, allowing the Willie Wagtail to rise above it and attempt further harassment by fluttering and calling close to the kite. The Whistling Kite made no obvious response and to my surprise the Willie Wagtail alighted on the right wing of the Whistling Kite at the apex of the "curve" of the wing and circled with it as "passenger".

When the Whistling Kite flapped to gain a little height, circling the meanwhile, the Willie Wagtail fluttered above as before. However as soon as the kite stopped flapping the Willie Wagtail again alighted on the same wing in the same place and again partook of a circular downward ride.

The Whistling Kite finally lost such height as to obstruct my view and when it came into sight again it was without passenger or challenger.

B. Buchanan

B B C B Q

Big Bird says it is shorebird time again:

- 1) Do Sooty and Pied Oystercatcher inter-breed ?
- 2) Hooded Plover occurs on both the coast and inland WA. Where else in Australia does the Hooded Plover occur inland ?
- 3) Which wader visiting WA makes the longest migratory journeys ?
- 4) Ruddy Turnstones can move stones greater than their body-weight. How much greater ?
- 5) Red-necked Avocet swim — are their feet webbed ?
- 6) Do Black-winged Stilt swim ?
- 7) Adult Silver Gull mature into a red bill. Does the colour brightness vary thereafter ?
- 8) Which WA shorebirds are essentially nocturnal ?
- 9) Most shorebirds migrate from North to South. Which one migrates in reverse ?
- 10) Which tern, seen in WA, is to be found on every continent ?

Answers on Page 13

Notices

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre on Monday 1st February 1993 at 8pm sharp.

All positions will be declared vacant and office bearers will be elected for the year. Nomination forms may be obtained from the office and sent to the Secretary or handed in prior to

commencement of the meeting.

50th ANNIVERSARY

There will be a special day on Saturday 22nd May 1993 for members in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the WA Group of the RAOU. Mark this day, 22 May 1993, in your diary. See the March 93 WABN for details.

LOCATION HELP WANTED

Two Hooded Plover were seen at Salt Lake or Swamp (or possibly at a salt lake or swamp) in the Shire of Plantagenet on 8 September 1984. This was reported in WABN in Observations. The Editor wishes to ascertain the precise location of Salt Lake/Swamp in Plantagenet Shire to which the Observation refers. If anyone can help please write to the Editor direct or via Perry House.

RUFIOUS TREECREEPER SIGHTINGS

WABN Number 61 March 1992 referred to the sighting of a Rufous Treecreeper at Woodvale as "only the second from the coastal plain since 1920" (p5). I must thank R.S. Stranger for reminding me of the sighting of a Rufous Treecreeper at Bayswater Bird Sanctuary by Eric Singleton in July 1991 (see WABN Number 60 December 1991.)

Rufous Treecreeper was also shown by S. Keeling in his species list for Alfred Cove/Point Waylen, published in WABN Number 43 September 1987.

Editor

LAKE BARNES

In WABN No. 62 June 1992 on page 5 I erroneously referred to Lake Brown, near to Lake Erie. The lake nearby and the property of the same name is Lake Barnes. Apologies for the error and any confusion caused.

B. Buchanan

BLACK-HEADED GULL

R.S. Stranger writes that J.E. du Pont, author of *Philippine Birds*, states that Black-headed Gull occur in the Philippines, on the islands of Luzon and Mindanao and further that he has observed the species on Negros Island. In WABN Number 60 December 1991 F. O'Connor stated the Black-headed Gull did not occur in the Philippines (p2.)

Editor

SLIDES WANTED

We are bringing our slide collection of Western Australian birds up to date. Members who are prepared to donate slides or have slides copied, please contact Peel Howden on (09) 330 4665.

RAINBOW LORIKEET IN PERTH AREA

In recent years the Rainbow Lorikeet has become more abundant in the western suburbs of Perth and in the South Perth area. It has also been reported further afield. For example, the species was recorded at Wanneroo for the first time in late 1991 and has been present ever since.

There is some concern that the Rainbow Lorikeet will expand even further and that it may compete seriously for nest hollows with local species.

I am interested in hearing from any observer who has noted

a change in abundance (or no change) in any area in recent years. I am particularly interested in hearing about nest sites and of any observed interaction with other species, especially other parrots. Information on food sources would also be helpful.

Information can be sent to the RAOU office, or I can be contacted on 405 5109 (BH) or 306 1642 (AH).

A. Burbidge

Malleefowl Conservation

The Malleefowl is of special significance to the people of Gnowangerup for the Shire takes its name after the word "Gnow", the name of the Malleefowl in the local Nungyar Aboriginal language. According to legend, Gnowangerup is the place where the Gnow or Mallee Hen made her nest. The bird features in the Shire's crest and the Gnowangerup district High School's crest. Consequently when members of the Gnowangerup Land Conservation District realised the Malleefowl had declined so much in recent years such that it might become locally extinct, they contacted the WA Threatened Species Network Co-ordinator.

Conservation status of the Malleefowl in Western Australia

Knowledge of the Malleefowl in Western Australia is patchy, despite the fact that the species has been recommended for addition to the state list of threatened fauna and despite its overall decline in Australia (Garnett 1992a). The most comprehensive distribution data set for the species in Western Australia is the Atlas of Australian Birds (Blakers et al. 1984).

The species has already disappeared from several areas of the south-west: the Busselton-Cape Naturaliste-Cape Leeuwin coastal fringe, the Lake Muir area (Storr 1991), the Kellerberrin district (Saunders and Curry 1989) and probably other areas of the wheatbelt where most of the favourable habitat has been cleared.

The bird was recorded in several reserves of the wheatbelt in the late seventies (J. Dell et al: Records of the WA Museum Supplement No. 4, 5, 7, 9, 13: 1977-81). It occurs in the Shire of Shark Bay (Storr 1985a) and is sparsely distributed in the arid interior (Storr 1985b). A study has been in progress for several years at the Eyre Bird Observatory where several Malleefowl pairs are being monitored. The core of the bird's distribution in Western Australia today is the mallee lands of the South-west of the state, particularly where some large areas of native bush remain.

A vivid account of the biology of the Malleefowl in New South Wales was published by H.J. Frith in a captivating book in 1962. To date this remains the most comprehensive account of the life history of the species.

The main causes for decline (see Garnett 1992a and b for a summary) are the clearing of the bird's native habitat (Frith 1962), fire (Benshemesh 1990), lack of food due to the disappearance of understorey because of rabbits and domestic stock (Frith 1962), and predation by foxes (Priddel 1990). Other causes have been suggested: inbreeding in isolated populations due to fragmentation of habitat, lack of recruitment of young birds and road kills.

Western Australia lags behind New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia where research has been carried out for several years and conservation plans are in the process of being produced. Despite the fact that Western Australia probably

holds significant populations of the species, the current conservation status of the bird in WA is not known and no conservation plan has been outlined to address the bird's decline.

The Malleefowl Preservation Group

The Malleefowl Preservation Group was established in August 1992 in Ongerup, it meets monthly. Its aim is "to preserve and if possible re-establish sustainable and secure populations of the Malleefowl in their natural habitats in Western Australia". The group has received the support of local Land Conservation District Committees, the Shire of Gnowangerup, members of the Aboriginal community, the local office of the Agricultural Protection Board and the Department of Conservation and Land Management. The activities of the group have obtained good coverage on the radio (Albany and Great Southern ABC Regional) and in the press (Albany Advertiser, Great Southern Herald, Gnowangerup Star).

Several actions have already been taken to foster the conservation of the bird:

- Feral control: a "Save the Malleefowl" fox shooting campaign has been launched and is complemented by an extensive on-farm baiting programme over nine adjacent shires co-ordinated by the APB.

- Public awareness and fundraising: a Malleefowl display has been taken to country shows, schools, shire offices, etc. A "It's Gnow or never" fundraising campaign is pursued through the sale of Malleefowl T-shirts.

Several projects are scheduled in the next 12 months:

- the preparation of a Community Action Plan for the conservation of the species with support from the Gordon Reid foundation. This Plan will outline the role and involvement of the various community groups and government agencies in Malleefowl conservation and will be widely distributed throughout the community,

- a questionnaire to be widely distributed to assess the current status of the bird,

- field surveys for the mapping of Malleefowl mounds in various areas,

- a feasibility study for the setting up of a Malleefowl sanctuary in the Gnowangerup area and the possible establishment of a reintroduction programme,

- a study of the cultural significance of the Malleefowl for Aboriginal people.

The Malleefowl Preservation Group welcomes the contribution of members of the RAOU willing to be involved with Malleefowl conservation. The RAOU WA Group is very supportive of this project. You may wish to start a local section of the Malleefowl Preservation Group in your area. Please contact me on (09) 3843756 or John Davis, the convenor of the group on (098) 271144 or the Malleefowl Project Convenor, c/o RAOU Office, Perry House on (09) 3837749 for more information. We would especially welcome the help of volunteers to carry out Malleefowl surveys in the field and to gather recent distribution data. We are collecting Malleefowl observations around the state and would appreciate receiving any recent report, even of road kills, for our database.

Jean-Paul Orsini

WA Threatened Species Co-ordinator, Perth.

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Excursion Reports

KARAKAMIA SANCTUARY 9 Aug

About twenty five members were present on our excursion to the "Karakamia" Sanctuary at Giddegannup - "Karakamia" being the aboriginal name for 'home of the Black Cockatoo'. We enjoyed the privilege of having Dr. Boyd Wykes, the eco-consultant to the sanctuary, show us the area which is not yet open to the public. About 1,000 hectares has been donated by Mr. Martin Copley, who has also provided the finance, for the area to be developed as a sanctuary for native animals. Boyd showed us the topography and described how it will need to be fenced to keep the animals in and predators out. He aims to reintroduce the animals which originally inhabited the area.

We had a great walk in this beautiful bush, although the weather was very showery and so not conducive to good birding. However, we saw robins, Red-capped Parrot and a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo busy in a blackboy tree. We are all grateful to Boyd for giving us his time and the benefit of his expertise.

C. Forman

LAKE GWELUP 12 Aug

This mid-week walk took place on a fine, dull morning commencing at 8am. Only a few people came in response to the advertised walk and I was the only RAOU member. The leader was Len Talbot, late of CALM, who lives nearby and knows the area thoroughly.

The lake was very full and not many waterbirds were present. However, we did see a pair of Great Crested Grebe as well as the usual duck and swan. The lake and its surrounding woodland provides an interesting area in which to introduce some of our birds to prospective members. During the 2-hour walk we were able to introduce a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, various parrot species and their nest holes, the difference between Tree Martin and Welcome Swallow, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and others. By the end of the walk 2 new members signed up and 2 others assured us they would join when they retired.

B. Barrett

BROOKTON HIGHWAY RESERVE 15 Aug

One day, somebody in the RAOU alchemy research division will isolate the essential inner flame burning in the souls of birdwatchers; that force which impels them to assemble at windy, flooded reserves throughout the desolate winter months in the hope of gaining fleeting glimpses of little brown jobs hurtling towards warm dry shelters. An instance of this bizarre phenomenon was evidenced on this particularly siberian Saturday.

Fifty minutes east of Karragullen lies a CALM reserve which, on a warm sunny afternoon, offers pleasant walks through a variety of breakaway and parkland habitats containing a good mix of bushbirds. Regular winter sorties had led to the development of a bird list totalling 49 species, even though most of the winter reconnaissances were conducted in perpetual drizzle. Natural laws of chaos, average, and random effect decreed that the outing would have to be blessed by clear blue skies and soft warm zephyrs.

The bedraggled RAOU dozen who gathered that Saturday witnessed a startling breakdown in natural laws, being precipitated upon initially, then blown through the Reserve in the arms of a cyclone, before experiencing post-lunch hypothermia as temperatures plummeted to hitherto unrecorded depths. The sighting of Crested Shrike-tit was seized upon as a means of momentarily lifting group morale and adopted as the solitary highpoint of an otherwise grey day.

A second excursion is being planned in the early part of next year, if only to break the meteorological hex.

J. Ashford

AVON VALLEY NATIONAL PARK 29 Aug

This excursion took place on one of the few fine weekends experienced during the winter. We had a fine, still, sunny day after an early morning ground frost with a low of 1.5 degrees. Birds proved hard to find and far from plentiful. However, 45 species were seen during the day.

We found 4 species of robin, Scarlet, Red-capped, Hooded and Western Yellow; both whistlers; a Southern Boobook and no less than 9 types of honeyeater. The two main morning walks were restricted to areas of wandoo/marri which grow close to the Ranger's residence.

We lunched at Drummond's Lookout on the edge of the scarp, and afterwards some of the more energetic members explored the higher slopes of the valley as far as the waterfall, always a good area for wildflowers and with superb views of the river valley.

B. Barrett

PINNAROO VALLEY PARK 5 Sep

It was very pleasing to see about 20 people turn out as there was much rain during the night and some at the beginning of the walk. Surprisingly 36 species of birds were observed. We in turn were observed by about 14 Grey Kangaroo.

A feature was 2 male Splendid Fairy-wren with some females moving past and contrasting sharply with the green lawn. The sun shining from the correct angle made it perfect. Unfortunately we did not see the hoped-for Yellow-throated Miner.

The wildflowers were also beautiful.

Thanks to Graham Little for showing us this beautiful and restful area.

H. Van Wees

NORTH LAKE 16 Sep

On a fine bright morning twelve participants turned up promptly. With lake level abnormally high I did not expect we would see many waterbirds and was a little fearful of an uneventful walk. So it was a welcome surprise to be greeted by a great deal of activity from the bush birds.

About half the walkers were quite new to birding and we were able to keep their heads turning for the two and a bit wholly absorbing hours of the tour round the lake. From the start, Splendid Fairy-wrens, thornbills and the common honeyeaters were sighted continuously, but the first real feature was a long look at a Clamorous Reed-warbler preening in clear view about 15 metres from us. This was my first prolonged examination of the bird so I was as elated as anyone else.

When we reached the eastern side of the lake a flock of Red-capped Parrot flew into nearby trees and allowed us a close look at their spring-fresh gaudy colouring. There were very few waterbirds but those few comprised a good variety of species. We saw three Great Crested Grebe, Blue-billed Duck, Australian Shoveler, Hardhead, Musk Duck and an Eurasian Coot sitting on the nest and the biggest surprise, we put up a Rufous Night-heron from some low scrub around the Hope Road Swamp.

It was a busy enjoyable outing and we counted 39 species.

P. Anson

CARRAMAR WETLANDS 26 Sep

The RAOU had been invited by the owner, Kingsley Vaux, to investigate the bird life on his property near Ongerup. An 8-9000 hectare farm, part cereal and part grazing, with several large lakes, one of which is fresh, all surrounded by ti-trees. The latter is Kingsley's pride and joy and took some members 2 hours to walk round. It was hoped to find some uncommon species of waterbird present, but regrettably we could only locate several types of duck, most of which had broods. Close by, on slightly higher land, is a saltwater lake where the water level is being kept low by means of a solar pump to prevent contamination.

In addition to the lakes, Kingsley has fenced off and fox-baited an area of bush within which he knows there are 7 active Malleefowl mounds. We found one which had been worked earlier in the morning.

In the nearby Nature Reserve we found Southern Scrub-robin, 5 species of honeyeater - White-eared, Spiny-cheeked, Brown-headed, Purple-gaped and Singing - besides many other bushbirds. During the weekend we found sixty-eight species in all.

In spite of the uncertain weather we lived in the comfort of luxurious shearers' quarters which had recently been improved - the pot-belly stove was much appreciated by all.

Bird-wise the cream of the weekend was to stand in the Vaux's lounge-room and watch an Australian Owlet-nightjar perched on the edge of a pillar supporting their verandah, the bird having taken up residence some 9 months earlier.

B. Barrett

FLYNN ROAD 3 Oct

After heavy rain the previous day, it was quite mild with little or no wind and even a little sun at times to encourage the birds. During the course of our visit we walked in three different areas of the forest.

The best birding area probably consists of marri and wandoo with an open understorey of blackboy and thickets of various types. This area lies on the far side of a creek which

throughout the winter has been in flood. One party managed to cross the creek and had excellent sightings, including two separate family groups of Hooded Robin, nests of Scarlet and Western Yellow Robin, and the nesting holes of Sacred Kingfisher, Rufous Treecreeper and others.

The second area consists of tall wandoo and some blackboy, where Crested Shrike-tit have previously been seen - three were seen on this occasion by several members.

After lunch we held a bird call-over and found that 47 species had been sighted - nine of which were nesting or feeding flying young.

Before leaving the area some of the party drove to some nearby heathland and added three more species to the overall list.

B. Barrett

TUTANNING N. R. 10/11 Oct

About a dozen people (including a local farming resident) attended the campout at Tutanning Nature Reserve, with arrivals on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Led by Leon Silvester, CALM Ranger from Narrogin, we took full advantage of the cool, dry, sunny weather with morning and afternoon walks through a range of habitat that included wandoo, casuarina, mallet and heathland. Leon was a mine of information on the many wildflowers in bloom and on the numerous holes dug by a variety of mammals and reptiles.

There were sightings of Brown-headed, White-eared and White-naped Honeyeater, numerous Golden Whistlers, Wedge-tailed Eagle, a Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo and Sacred Kingfisher: a total of 52 species. A Scarlet Robin attended a nest in a tree beside the camping area, where a Mistletoebird also showed itself.

With a full moon overhead, a convoy of vehicles went spot-lighting one night round the reserve, finding less than expected (possibly because of vehicle noise and the moon) but nonetheless coming upon a fine Tawny Frogmouth sitting on a fence post. There were also fleeting glimpses of woylies, wallabies, and kangaroos which chose not to allow a good view in the spotlight.

With excellent weather, pleasant surroundings and a useful bird list, it was an admirable campout.

B.D. Wilson

TWITCHATHON 24/25 Oct

This year the Twitchathon was held on the weekend of 24-25 October to coincide with similar exercises being held in the other states. Luckily, the weather proved ideal and 9 teams competed in the 24-hour event. Some teams covered vast distances as no restrictions were placed on their movements.

The winning team, the Kimberley Kuckoos, the only country team to compete, was from Wyndham under the leadership of Gail Wells. This group of 5 sighted 120 species in spite of the dryness of the area. This was in contrast to the conditions in the south-west where the opposite applied; there was so much water that the waterbirds had dispersed far and wide. The Kimberley Kuckoos prize "sighting" was a possible Yellow-headed Wagtail.

The runners-up - The Duffers under the leadership of Norma Duff - located 106 species which included a Pectoral Sandpiper.

Other good team sightings were Little Penguin (at Penguin Island), Large Sand Plover, Whimbrel, Terek Sandpiper and Long-toed Stint. The reported sighting of "a family party of flamingoes at Moora - a possible breeding record?" was de-

clared 'out of order' by the judges! It is interesting to note that the winning team in 1991, from the metro area, sighted 133 species.

On Sunday evening an enjoyable barbecue was held in the grounds of Perry House to announce the winners who will hold the Perpetual Trophy Telescope - with the name of their team added - for the next year. Thanks must go to all participants who thoroughly enjoyed their day of concentrated birding and much appreciation to Peter Anson for assistance with setting up the barbecue.

B. Barrett

BOYUP BROOK 7/8 Nov

Overworked clichés such as "idyllic setting" and "superb rolling scenery" are the province of hackneyed realty journalism nowadays. For the RAOU members assembled on Warraminga, the property of Geoff and Di Lodge, the visual impact of rich green and gold pastures embraced by great stretches of soft rounded hill slopes, riverscapes and woodland, engendered powerful inner feelings of tranquillity beyond mere description. Spread over 3000 acres and running alongside the Blackwood for 15 kilometres, Warraminga yielded a list of 50 species during the course of several relaxed rambles.

On Saturday afternoon, a visit was paid to a notable section of riverfront which features a Wedge-tailed Eagle nest built over the seasons to be a thickness of two metres, suspended in branches high above a Little Pied Cormorant colony set over the water. Some conjecture on possible relationships between such unlikely neighbours and the balance between protection and predation, was interrupted as the group witnessed a protracted aerial tussle involving at various intervals the two Wedge-tailed Eagle, a Magpie-lark and a smaller raptor not positively identified; twelve humans watching an inscrutable territorial engagement born of the instinct of aeons.

That night the group sought insulation from nature's enigmas, huddled around a warming campfire, drinking wines and munching on lashings of honey toast provided and prepared by Geoff and Di.

The next morning saw early risers enjoying a sunny breakfast by the river, whilst befuddled late risers emerged to discover a solid ring of curious cattle around their bed. The group met at the farmhouse and sat in the front garden, viewing a flypast of White-naped, Yellow-plumed and New Holland Honeyeater mixing freely with Splendid Fairy-wren and Silveryeye at the feed tables, dining on blended oats sprinkled with sugar.

Later, wandering by the Blackwood River they observed Western Yellow Robin, Dusky Woodswallow and Willie Wagtail on nests in the stands of Flooded Gums; on the opposite shore, more colonies of Little Pied Cormorant sprouted nests on pendulous Paperbark limbs stretched out across the water; next to them Darter parents oversaw their offspring plummeting from their nests into the water below. Small groups of Western Rosella and Red-capped Parrot splashed scarlet trails through the Marri. At the end of the morning, at the furthest reaches of the three thousand acres (or that was how some of the group's legs told the story!), Geoff lumped them all onto his traytop and bore them back to base.

Elsewhere in this issue are details of a future trip to Warraminga in the early part of next year. The area is highly recommended to watchers seeking idyllic bushland settings or superb rolling scenery

J. Ashford

Eyre Report

Gwen and Graham Goodried have moved to Rotamah. We wish them well in their new position. They crammed our heads full of information before leaving - half of which we might remember and left us with a smoothly running Observatory. We will do our best to keep it so.

Life at Eyre is busy and interesting. We had an Emu Tours busload of 17 for two days and nights, with beautiful warm days, so they were able to enjoy swimming at the beach. Some also sighted Chestnut Quail-thrush, Southern Scrub-robin, Shy Hylacola, a Crimson Chat, about 110 Budgerigar flying over and a Rufous Night Heron on the track. Most were able to increase their honeyeater lists with Singing, Brown, New Holland, White-fronted, White-fronted, White-eared, Purple-gaped, Yellow-plumed and Spiny-cheeked honeyeaters in the area. There are patches of Mallee flowering. They also got a good view of a big Dugite drinking at the North bird bath, from the safety of the verandah.

There is much nesting activity, with Welcome Swallows, Jacky Winter, Western Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Willy Wagtail, White-browed Scrub-wren, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Inland Thornbill, White-browed Babbler, Yellow-rumped Pardalote, Brown Goshawk and Australian Kestrel all busy with nests or young. Tim recorded over 200 Budgerigar on Hampton Tableland and estimates not less than 50 nests. A pair of Inland Thornbill are raising a Fan-tailed Cuckoo and White-browed Scrub-wren are working overtime feeding a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo.

The wader numbers, which have hitherto been low this year are increasing with 89 Red-capped Plovers, 16 Red-necked Stints and 44 Sooty Oystercatcher recorded on different occasions recently.

During the last week we have seen Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon, Australian Kestrel, Australian Hobby and Square-tailed Kite on several occasions. A Brown Goshawk terrorises the Starlings every morning, by sitting on their cage and wishfully peering in.

We were aided in some Welcome Swallow banding by Clive and Pat Minton, who called in on their way back to Melbourne from Broome. We banded 43 adults and retrapped 34, one which was first banded as an adult 10 years ago.

We are looking forward to a happy time at Eyre and will be most interested to see how the seasons unfold with the attendant differences in flora, bird-life and seashore. Visitors will be made most welcome to share this unique environment with us. Coming up is the Stephen Davies course on Field Techniques for Bird Study, then Stargazing and Christmas at Eyre. In January we have Dune Stabilisation Work Parties and Bats, Bats, Bats.

George and Rita Watkins and Tim Hunt

Coming Events

Sunday 6 December Half day excursion - Alfred Cove

Meet at 8 am at the carpark in Troy Park, Burke Drive, Attadale (by the radio mast). Experienced wader-watchers with telescopes will be on hand to help those not familiar with these migratory birds. Old footwear desirable for walking on the sandbanks.

Leader: Norma Duff

Saturday 12 December Members Christmas barbecue — Perry House

Commences 5.30 pm. Barbecue facilities will be available. Please bring your own food, drinks and chair. Fruit punch and tea/coffee will be provided.

Wednesday 16 December Mid-week walk - Lake Gwelup

Meet at 7.30 am at the carpark on the corner of Stoneman Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road). This large permanent lake carries a variety of waterbirds with plenty of bushbirds in the adjacent woodland. An ideal spot for new birdwatchers to view birds at close quarters.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 10 January Half day excursion - Grove Farm Reserve, Belmont

Meet at 7 am at the entrance to Parry Field Stadium, off Stoneham Street, Belmont. An interesting area, close to the city, comprising of shallow lakes and swamps used by a variety of waterbirds and waders; plus grassland and light bush. Long trousers and boots are advisable as the grass could be long and thick and could harbour snakes. Hats and insect repellent are also recommended.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Saturday 16 January Full day excursion - Serpentine National Park

Meet at 8.30 am at the junction of the Southwest Highway and Falls Road (the turnoff to Serpentine Falls). A final visit in our survey of this Park.

Leader: Rod Smith

Monday 18 January Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8 pm

Simon Nevill, whose work takes him all over the country, will talk about birding hotspots around Australia.

Wednesday 20 January Mid-week walk - Grove Farm Reserve, Belmont

Meet at 7.30 am at the entrance to Parry Field Stadium, off Stoneham Street. A central and accessible area with a wide range of habitat. An ideal place for beginners and less experienced birdwatchers to see and identify a variety of birds at close hand. Hats and insect repellent are recommended.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 24 January Full day excursion - Amarillo Pool, Balddivis

Meet at 8.30 am at the entrance to Amarillo Farm, a

Know the number of your days

see page 14

property on the Serpentine River. Travel south on the Mandurah Road turning left into Pagonini Road which is the turnoff to Marapana Deer Park, several kilometres before Mandurah. Amarillo Farm is at the eastern end of the road.

We will look at the banksia woodland nearby and along the river at the back of the property. After an early lunch we will continue across the paddocks in 4WD vehicles to search for waders along the mudflats of the river. Long trousers and boots/wellingtons are recommended as snakes could be active at this time of the year. Hats, insect repellent and water should be carried.

Leader: Jack Hunt

Saturday 30 January to Monday 1 February Campout - Cowaramup

A campout on the 200 acre property of Steve Kennedy on Caves Road, Cowaramup. Travel through Busselton, turn south along the Bussel Highway and just south of the Cowaramup township turn west into Cowaramup Bay Road and then left at the T-junction into Caves Road.

The property is about 1 km south on the lefthand side indicated by an RAOU sign. It consists of a large grassed paddock containing a community hut. The rest of the block is bushland of jarrah, marri and banksia, with a creek running through it. Over 60 species of birds have been sighted here during several visits in the summer.

A chance for a relaxing weekend for bushbirding, swimming at nearby Gracetown (Hooded Plover have been seen on the nearby beach) and perhaps some night-spotting. Campers should be entirely self-sufficient. Sorry, NO OPEN FIRES! Level grassed area available for caravans. Further information concerning directions and alternative accommodation can be obtained from Bryan Barrett (09) 298 8245 or Margery Clegg (09) 364 5266.

Saturday 6 February Full day excursion - Lowlands Estate, Serpentine

Meet at 8 am at the entrance to "Lowlands" - do not go past the gate. Approximately one hour from the Perth GPO. Turn off Thomas Road, Oakford into Kargotich Road, travel south for 14 km to the T-junction with Lowlands Road - a No Through Road - turn right and the entrance to the property is 3 km further on. RAOU has been asked to identify the birds on the estate which borders the Serpentine River. The usual precautions apply - take water, insect repellent and boots.

Leader: Allan Burbidge

Wednesday 10 February Mid-week walk - Pelican Point, Crawley

Meet at 7.30 am at the gazebo opposite Mounts Bay Sailing Club at the end of Australia II Drive, off Hackett Drive, Crawley. Max Bailey has been looking for many years at the waders which inhabit Pelican Point each summer. He will lead us through the area and help us to identify the various migratory and bush birds.

Leader: Max Bailey

Sunday 14 February Full day excursion - Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

Meet at 8.30 am at the intersection of South West Highway and the Old Bunbury Road, approximately 5 km south of Pinjarra (turn right into the parking area). A large, usually

muddy lake which often contains some surprises. Large numbers of waders and ducks should be present at this time of year. Wellington boots or waders will be very useful, plus hat and insect repellent. Those wishing to walk right round the lake should take their lunch with them. It could be a very rewarding exercise. Don't forget to carry water with you!

Leader: Ian Standring

Saturday 20 February Half day excursion - Kalamunda National Park

Meet at 8.30 am at the junction of Hummerston Road and Schipp Road at the southern end of Kalamunda National Park. Take Mundaring Weir Road from Kalamunda and turn left into Hummerston Road. A morning walk to see Golden Whistler and other bushbirds - and possibly Red-browed Firetail.

Leader: Brian Wilson

Monday 22nd February Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Darren Murphy, who is conducting research on Spinifexbirds in the Pilbara and on Barrow Island, will speak to us about this little known species of arid country.

Saturday 27 February to Monday 1st March Campout - "Warraminga", Boyup Brook

A follow-up, self-sufficient campout on Geoff Lodge's property on the Blackwood River. Turn right as you drive into Boyup Brook on the Bridgetown Road. Proceed for approximately 4 km, then turn left into Brown-Seymour Road (a gravel road), travel 8 km until you reach a T-junction. Turn left into Jayes-Bridgetown Road for 3 km, then right into Lodge Road for approximately 8 km. Follow the RAOU signs to the campsite on the river.

Meet at 12 noon on Saturday when Geoff will direct us to some of his many birding sites. Over 50 species, including many breeding, were seen on the earlier visit in November.

Leader: Geoff Lodge

Sunday 7 March Half day excursion - Walyunga National Park

Meet at 8.30 am at the carpark at the end of Walyunga Road near Long Pool (off Great Northern Highway, Upper Swan). The National Park lies along the Darling Scarp and the Avon River bounds one part of the planned walk. There are some good stretches of Wandoo woodland where we should see a variety of birds. For those who bring lunch, we can explore another area of the park in the afternoon. There is an entrance fee to the park of \$4.

Leader: Peter Anson

Monday 22 March Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Michael Morcombe, who has written a number of books on natural history topics and illustrated these and other books with his own photographs, will discuss bird photography.

Friday 9 April to Monday 12 April - Possible Easter Campout at Walpole-Nornalup National Park - see details in March WABN.

Monday 19 April Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Illegal trafficking in certain species of wild birds is a serious problem for the Department of Conservation and Land Management. Kingsley Miller of CALM will speak to us on the different methods of collection and concealment that traffickers are known to use as well as on the DNA profiling currently used in this State to establish whether or not birds said to have been bred in captivity have in fact been taken from the wild.

Monday 10 May Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Giovanni Casotti (PhD student, Murdoch) will show slides and talk of his work concerning the adaptation of honeyeaters to arid conditions.

Monday 24th May Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Geoff Lodge, who farms near Boyup Brook and has studied the birds of his area since the 1930s, will tell us how those birds (which include Lewin's Rail, possibly extinct in Western Australia) have fared over the years.

Remember to buy
a 1993 RAOU calendar
for yourself
and as a gift for others
see page 14

BBCBQ Answers

- 1) Yes (p 51)
- 2) No-where (p 93)
- 3) Pacific Golden Plover (p 79)
- 4) 1.8 times (p 183)
- 5) Yes (p167)
- 6) Yes, occasionally (p 151)
- 7) Yes (p 488)
- 8) Bush Thick-knee (p 22) and Inland Dotterel (p 143)
- 9) Australian Pratincole (p 433)
- 10) Gull-billed Tern (p 535)

BBCBQ derives from Pringle JD (1987)

The Shorebirds of Australia Angus and Robertson

NSW, to which the page numbers refer.

Publications

Australian Waterbirds-Fieldguide	Kingsford	\$15.00
Beach Patroller's Guide	Rowe & Plant	\$7.00
Birders Guide to Japan	Robinson	\$15.00
Birding Sites around Perth	Van Delft	\$10.00
Birdlife of Murdoch	Porter	\$6.00
Birdlife of Rottnest	Saunders & de Rebeira	\$8.00
Birds of Australia-Logbook	Simpson & Day	\$11.00
Birds of WA	Serventy & Whittell	\$12.00
Check List of Birds of W.A.	10 for	\$1.00
Field Guide to Birds of Australia	Pizzey	\$23.00
Field Guide to Birds of Australia	Simpson & Day	\$25.00
Field Guide to Australian Birds	Slater	\$25.00
Field Guide to Birds of W.A.	Storr & Johnstone	\$20.00
Great Australian Birdfinder	Morecombe	\$55.00
Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the Rockingham Offshore Island and Cape Peron	W.A. Naturalists	\$10.00
Attracting Birds to a W.A. Garden		.50
Methods of Censusing Birds in Australia	Davies (ed)	\$5.00
National Photographic Index Books		\$71.00
Parrots and Pigeons		
Seabirds		\$61.00
Shorebirds		\$61.00
Honeyeaters and Allies		\$64.50
Wrens and Warblers		\$51.00
Robins and Flycatchers		\$68.00
Waterbirds of Australia		\$61.00
Parrots of the World	Forshaw	\$60.00
Pocket List of Australian Birds	Schodde	\$1.50
Portrait of a Peninsula	Smith	\$9.00
Save that Song	Hutchinson	\$25.00
Seabirds- Identification Guide	Harrison	\$64.00
Shorebirds in Australia	Lane	\$45.00
The Action Plan for Australian Birds	Garnett	\$20.00
Threatened & Extinct Birds of Australia	Garnett (Ed)	\$15.00
W A Bird Notes	per issue	\$3.50
Waterbirds in Nature Reserves of S.W. Australia 1981-85	Jaensch Vervest & Hewish	\$15.00
Waterbirds at Remote Wetlands Parts 1 & 2	Jaensch & Vervest	\$12.00
Where to Find Birds in Australia	Bransbury	each \$30.00

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