

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

Australia Post Publication No. WA 111453

No 65 March 1993

Latham's Snipe Confirmed In South-West

On February 6th 1993 Doug Watkins, with Tony Kirkby and Colin Davis, mist-netted a snipe (*Gallinago* sp.) at Lake Kogolup. On examination the bird was found to have 18 tail feathers and a wing measurement of 163 mm. The bird was a Latham's Snipe, the first confirmed identification in the south of WA.

Three species of *Gallinago* snipe are known to occur in Australia, Latham's Snipe, Swinhoe's Snipe and Pintail Snipe. In the field these birds appear virtually identical, but in the hand they have distinct differences, as follows:

Species	No. Tail feathers	Wing Length
Latham's Snipe	18	157-168 mm
Swinhoe's Snipe	20 (18-26)	137-151 mm
Pintail Snipe	26 (24-28)	125-143 mm

This is the second *Gallinago* snipe to be positively identified in the south west - a Pintail Snipe was mist-netted near Osborne Park in 1984.

Swinhoe's Snipe may well visit the south west. I have seen six snipe in the Perth Metropolitan area since 1989 but have not been able to identify any with certainty as examination in the hand is the only reliable method of identification.

Originally seen by the author on January 21st, the Latham's Snipe was observed feeding, far from cover. The bird was probing its long bill into the mud with a "sewing machine" action. At times it was seen to preen and a good description was obtained.

Head - eyestripe narrower than supercilium close to the bill. (This feature does not vary except in Common Snipe, a possible visitor to Australia).

Mantle and Coverts - beautiful mixture of black, brown and buff. This is very similar in all 3 snipe species, not a useful characteristic.

Tertials - long, overlying primaries completely.

Tail - long, protruding past the folded wings, at times at a downward angle.

Belly - white.

Flanks - noticeably barred brown.

Breast - tan, interspersed with dark chevrons.

Underwing - white with black barring, a very distinctive pattern.

Bill - dark, long greenish near the base.

Legs - olive green.

In the hand the outer tail feathers were quite broad (see photograph), by comparison with Swinhoe's and Pintail Snipe where the outer tail feathers are reduced to "pins".

Seen regularly over the next two weeks, the flight patterns rarely varied — normally flushing out of cover to fly direct and low, usually only short distances and on landing walking into cover. Once it flew high when it joined a small group of Wood



Tail of Latham's Snipe mist-netted in SW

Sandpipers for a short time, before breaking away to land close to the take-off point. No zig-zagging was noted. The bird was heard to call on two occasions, making a hard "chak" on flushing.

Initially, we thought the bird most likely to be a Swinhoe's Snipe, an identification mainly based on the flight characteristics. Neither the length of tertials nor the call seemed to fit but as a Latham's Snipe seemed unlikely we tended to favour Swinhoe's. The mist net confirmation of Latham's Snipe came as a surprise.

J. Hunt

(A Latham's Snipe was reported in WABN No. 36, p7 December 1985 and further commented upon in WABN No. 37 p7 March 1986. A good article on snipe identification in the field is in WABN No. 33 pp 6 & 7 March 1984 and there is further reference to Swinhoe's and Pin-tailed identification in WABN No. 34 p9 June 1985. Editor.)

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires in brackets.

SOUTH-WEST (*Shark Bay to Cape Arid*)

Cattle Egret - 2, 8/1/93, Lake Kogolup (Cockburn) - MBy, KC
Rufous Night Heron - 20-25, 14/2/93, Lake McLarty N.R. (Murray) - IS and RAOU excursion

Australasian Bittern - 1, 2/1/93, small swamp 3 km W of Lower King Bridge (Albany) - MB

Glossy Ibis - 3, 8/1/93, Kogolup Lake (Cockburn) - MBy, KC

Yellow-billed Spoonbill - about 100, 14/2/93, Lake McLarty N. R. (Murray) - IS and RAOU excursion

Australian Shelduck - 4500, 25/11/92, Lake McLarty N.R. (Murray) - MC

Chestnut Teal - 2 males, 10/2/93, Lake Claremont (Claremont) - MC

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 11/1/93, Gosnells (Gosnells) - RS * 1, 15/1/93, Beckenham (Canning) - JH

Malleefowl - 2, 27/1/93, Great Eastern Highway, 40 km E of Merredin (Merredin) - RS

Hooded Plover - 1 juvenile, 14/11/92, Peel Inlet (Murray) - RAOU excursion

Whimbrel - 3, 8/1/93, Baldivis (Rockingham) - MBy, KC

Wood Sandpiper - 1, 10/2/93, Lake Claremont (Claremont) - MC * 112, 17/2/93, Lake McLarty N.R. (Murray) - MC

Oriental Pratincole - 3, 8/1/93 to at least late January, Baldivis water ski park (Rockingham) - TK

Possible Franklin's Gull - 1, 1-3/2/93, Bibra Lake (Cockburn) - RbS, MC, BBa, KC, MBy (size, colour of bill, wing, mantle, head, eye ring and trailing edge of wing consistent with Franklin's)

Caspian Tern - 2, 10/2/93, Lake Claremont (Claremont) - MC

Fairy Tern - apparently breeding, Rous Head, Fremantle (Fremantle) - JD

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo - 38, 29/11/92, Stinton Cascades Reserve, (Armadale) - LH

Purple-crowned Lorikeet - small flocks, Aug-Oct/92, Greenwood (Wanneroo) - PJ

Yellow-throated Miner - up to 3, 20/11/92 - 13/2/93, Beldon shopping centre (Wanneroo) (unusual in urban areas) - CW

Black Honeyeater - 1, 7/2/93, Dryandra (Williams) (unusual this far south-west) - SN, CW, BN, RS

Red-eared Firetail - 4, 27/1/93, John Forrest National Park (Mundaring) - HvW

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

Hoary-headed Grebe - 5, 9/92, Rawlinna (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - TH * numerous nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) (unusual breeding record) - SH, AC, PF

Black Swan - nest with 5 eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) (unusual breeding record) - SH, AC, PF

Freckled Duck - 2 nests with eggs and 1 new nest on 24/10/92, 2 other nests and 1 new nest (all in lignum) on 6/11/92 and 1 brood of 6 on 12/12/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - PF, JBW * 14 birds, 1 nest with three eggs and one nest with 1 egg in clutch of 6 eggs of Pink-eared Duck, 20-21/11/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - RJ, AC (Note: 9 probable breeding records of this species here this season is one of the largest breeding efforts known in WA)

Chestnut Teal - 1 male, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - SH, AC, PF

Blue-billed Duck - nest with 12 eggs, 12/12/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) (new breeding record for this area) * PF, JBW

Musk Duck - 2, 15-19/11/92, small lake 172 km from Payne's Find on Sandstone road (Yalgoo) - MC, GM

Grey Falcon - 1, 9/92, Plumridge Lakes N.R. (Menzies) - TH

Australian Crake - 1, 20/11/92, flushed from lignum and canegrass in 0.7 m deep water, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - RJ

Painted Snipe - feathers (greater coverts, tertials, mantle) of female, 21/11/92, Melaleuca-lignum swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) (4th record south of the Tropic in WA in last 50 years) - RJ

Banded Lapwing - 102, 2/2/93, on beach at Eyre (Dundas) - GW, RW

Red-kneed Dotterel - 30+ and 5 nests with eggs (some at the base of lignum bushes), 21/11/92, on small islands among Melaleuca trees, Melaleuca-lignum swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - AC, RJ

Oriental Plover - 29, 2/2/93, on beach at Eyre (Dundas) (high number for this area) - GW, RW

Inland Dotterel - 45 between Eyre and Cocklebidy (Dundas) and 153 on the beach at Eyre (Dundas), 2/2/93 - GW, RW

Wood Sandpiper - 3, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) - MC, GM

Common Sandpiper - 1, 9/92, Rawlinna (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - TH

Black-winged Stilt - several nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - SH, AC, PF

Whiskered Tern - 80, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) (high number for this area) - MC, GM * 2 nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo - SH, AC, PF

Gull-billed Tern - 6, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) - MC, GM * 9 nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - SH, AC, PF

Diamond Dove - 8, 20/11/93, Warne River crossing, Payne's Find-Sandstone road (Yalgoo) - MC, GM * 2, 10-15/2/93, Eyre Bird Obs (Dundas) (rarely observed in this area) - GW, RW

Cockatiel - 8, 23/1/93, Caiguna (Dundas) (unusual this area) - DW

Scarlet-chested Parrot - 1, 8/92 and 2, 9/92, Plumridge Lakes N.R. (Menzies) - TH

Welcome Swallow - about 500, early Feb 93, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - GW, RW

Fairy Martin - 2 birds and 8-nests under a large rock, 3/12/92, 39 km E of Rawlinna (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB * an old (used) nest in ganger's hut, 5/12/92, 23 km E of Loongana (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB * about 60 nests (some still in use) on buildings and numerous birds, 9/12/92, Rawlinna HS (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - MM, AB * 13 nests (2 with large chicks), 28/1/93, Pannikin Plains Cave nr. Cocklebidy (Dundas) - DW (there are very few previous martin breeding records from the Nullarbor; presumably they only breed there in really good seasons)

Nullarbor Quail-thrush - 1, 4/12/92, 20 km E of Loongana (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB * 2, 5/12/92, 2 km north of Reid (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB * 1, 6/12/92, 46 km S of Deakin (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB

Little Grassbird - 4 nests with eggs, 2 recent nests and 2 new nests, 12/12/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - PF, JBW

Rufous-crowned Emu-wren - 3, 17/11/92, Wanjarri N.R. (Leonora) (SW limit of distribution) - MC, GM

Slaty-backed Thornbill - 2, 15/11/92, 40 km from Payne's Find on Sandstone road (Yalgoo) (at or near southern limit) - MC, GM

Black Honeyeater - 1 male, 18/11/92, Wanjarri N.R. (Leonora) - MC

Pied Honeyeater - 1 male, 2/2/93, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - GW, RW

Orange Chat - 20, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) - MC, GM

KIMBERLEY

Green Pygmy-Goose - 3, 30/12/93, silt catchment pond near Argyle mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (first record for mine site) - FO

Dollarbird - 2, 4/9/92, Mitchell River Falls (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (very early arrival) - LF

Observer Codes

AB -	Allan Burbidge	LF -	Lee Fontanini
AC -	Alan Clarke	LH -	Lee Hassan
BBa -	Bryan Barrett	MB -	Mary Bremner
BN -	Brenda Newbey	MBy -	Max Bailey
CW -	Chris Wilder	MC -	Michael Craig
DW -	Doug Watkins	MM -	Murray McQuie
FO -	Frank O'Connor	PF -	Phil Fuller
GM -	Glenn Moore	PJ -	Peter Jacoby
GW -	George Watkins	RJ -	Roger Jaensch
HvW -	Hank van Wees	RS -	Rod Smith
IS -	Ian Standring	RW -	Rita Watkins
JBW -	Basil Woods	SH -	Stuart Halse
JD -	Jack Donohoe	SN -	Simon Nevill
JH -	Jack Hunt	TH -	Tim Hunt & others
KC -	Kate Creed	TK -	Tony Kirkby

Members Contributions

CARBLA STATION

Late in January we gained permission to camp by a running bore about 170 kms south of Carnarvon on Carbla Station. The overnight stay proved to be an excellent idea as we had seen few birds the previous afternoon.

At first light Mulga Parrot flew over our camp and woke us. We set up watch westwards from the bore and were well rewarded. About fifty Mulga Parrot watered, bathed and flew around us freely for about two hours. Many Little Grassbird, Clamorous Reed Warbler and one Buff-banded Rail sneaked in and out of the reeds. The reed birds started calling around 10 am.

In the first few hours of light we also saw (approximate numbers): 100 Budgerigar, 30 Crimson Chat, 30 Spiny-checked Honeyeater, 1 Silvereye, 6 Black-fronted Plover, 4 Common Bronzewing, 50 Crested Pigeon, 20 Richard's Pipit, 100 Zebra Finch, 6 Willie Wagtail, 30 Singing Honeyeater, 6 Galah, 12 White-browed Babbler, 4 Australian Magpie-lark, 6 Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, 1 Brown Honeyeater (seldom seen this far north), 30 Tree Martin, 4 Southern Whiteface, 2 Emu, 100 Masked Woodswallow, 20 White-plumed Honeyeater, 1 Grey Shrike-thrush, 30 Little Crow, 1 White-winged Triller (female) and heard a Chiming Wedgebill. Many Variegated and White-winged Fairy-wren with dozens of females and young were darting everywhere. Some male White-winged Fairy-wren were deepest navy while others were the usual 'Reckitts' blue.

Water birds were 3 White-faced Heron, 2 Grey Teal, 1 Pink-eared Duck, 12 Black-fronted Plover and an Oriental Plover. There was only one raptor in twenty four hours - an Australian Kestrel.

The excellent outing was capped on our return home, by sighting a pair of Orange Chat.

Please note that permission must be obtained from the station before camping at Carbla.

M. Gallin and D. Kingston

RED-CHESTED BUTTON-QUAIL; ARGYLE

On Saturday 30th January a small bird was found covered in mud in the main pit of the Argyle Diamond Mine. This was just after an extended rainy period (about 125mm in the previous 48 hours) which included some gusty (but not gale force) winds and heavy cloud cover from the tropical depression that had moved across from the Northern Territory.

The bird was brought down to the medical centre where it was cleaned. It was in a weak condition but appeared to have no physical damage.

The bird was shown to me briefly that afternoon for identification and again the next day. It seemed either an immature quail or a button-quail, but not of a species that I could immediately identify.

The eyes were a distinct yellow. The feet and legs were pinkish. The bill was dark. The complete throat, chest and flanks were an even orange-buff. The overall colour was dark, but the back and wing coverts had chestnut markings. The extended wing had two distinct coloured areas with the primaries darker. The head was dark but it was more streaked on the side of the neck. I measured the bill to tail length as a rough 15cm (possibly 13 to 17) with a ruler. I extended the right wing

and all feathers were fully developed with only a little wear.

I consulted my Simpson & Day field guide. My first thought was of a Chestnut-backed Button-quail (a species not on the Argyle list yet but a probable) because of the colouring above. However, after more thought I discounted this because of the colour underneath, the general colour overall, the head and tail colour, the size and the bill and leg colour.

Little Button-quail are quite common, but I decided against this because of the lack of any white underneath and the general dark colour.

Red-backed Button-quail and King Quail occur in the Kimberley but are unlikely to occur at Argyle. Their descriptions and illustrations were not close. The bird was much too small to be a Brown Quail which are very common at Argyle.

With the bird next to Simpson & Day, it looked like the female Red-chested Button-quail illustrated. The only discrepancy was that the colour above was more distinct than the illustration of the bird in flight.

The Red-chested Button-quail was observed three times at Argyle in the wet season during the 1983 environmental survey. It received a special mention as having only been observed six times previously in the Kimberley. In *Birds of the Kimberley Division, Western Australia* by Storr G.M. (1980) WA Museum, Perth it is described as "perhaps a drought refugee from the interior of eastern Australia" (p.31) and he mentions two records from near Fitzroy Crossing. I also know that it has been seen fairly often in the grass plain at the back of the Broome Bird Observatory.

The bird was very docile and easy to pick up. It was quite happy to walk around my desk and to explore the village room of the person looking after it. It was drinking from water provided and ate bread and milk mashed together and bird seed provided. A concern however was that it sometimes flew into the wall seemingly disoriented. It will be looked after for a few more days and then either released in grassland near the mine, or CALM, Kununurra will be consulted for advice.

F. O'Connor

INTERSPECIES PROTECTION ?

On 4 January, six kms. north of Kojonup on the Albany Highway, there is a 40m x 40m island of native bushland overgrown with grass and weeds, surrounded by hectares of agriculture. In this small area there were 12 Western Rosella feeding on the grass seeds, 2 Western Thornbill, 1 Grey Shrike-thrush, 1 Rufous Whistler and 5 Black-faced Woodswallows.

While enjoying this birdlife in the weedy, neglected-looking island of native bushland, I was suddenly swooped by a Black-faced Woodswallow at great speed. It passed within 200mm of my hat. I was swooped again and again at approximately 60 second intervals.

This encouraged me to look for a nest or young probably of the Black-faced Woodswallow family. But no - in cryptic posture on a horizontal branch less than 3m away was a small, 150mm Tawny Frogmouth with wing and tail feathers. There was no sign of the typical shallow bowl type nest of the woodswallow, nor could another Tawny Frogmouth be seen in the vicinity.

I have often been swooped and pecked by nesting seabirds, Silver Gull, Fairy Tern and Crested Tern and on land by the Australian Magpie during the September to November nesting season, but this is the first time I have been swooped by a Black-faced Woodswallow.

M.H. Bremner

AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN AT BENDER

A team comprising J. Lane and A. Clarke (CALM), R. Jaensch (consultant) and J. Stewart (volunteer) conducted the survey. Weather conditions were favourable (still, cool) and water was up to 0.5 m deep over large areas.

Methods and Result

At 20.00 to 20.30 hours on 16 November, the team listened for calling bitterns from sites in the SE and centre of the swamp, from the top of a 4WD vehicle. No bitterns were heard.

From 7.30 to 12.00 on 17 November, the team searched for bittern nests in the far NW of the swamp, between the roads name Bittern Close and Freckled Duck Drive and immediately N and S of that area. Soon after the start, an adult Australasian Bittern was seen flying purposefully for 300m from near the central N end of the swamp, to land in tall dense Typha less than 100m N of Bittern Close. Five minutes later, another was seen in the same routine: although viewed from a different site, it appeared to land in or near the same area as the first bird. Systematic searching of Typha within 100-150m of the bitterns' landing site failed to find evidence of bittern breeding, although a secondary wing feather was found. An adult bittern, either one of the first two or a third, was flushed from Typha just S of Bittern Close.

Water was 0.3-0.4m deep through a large part of the Typha searched and in many places the Typha was more than 3.0m high and closely spaced but not excessively choked with collapsed dead material, i.e. relatively easy to walk through. Less and more dense Typha also was extensive.

Conclusions

Little is known about the breeding of Australasian Bittern in WA, probably nothing in regard to breeding in Typha. However, a possible explanation for behaviour of the first two bitterns is that they had been feeding elsewhere in the swamp and were bringing food to nestlings. Normally bitterns would not fly such distances unless flushed or exploiting a favoured food resource far from a nest or roost. The landing site had enough water and shelter (and was not too dense) to support a nest of the type that bitterns probably make. A nest or nestlings (which probably wander from the nest at an early age) could have been missed by the team, despite intensive effort, given the size of the area and density of vegetation.

Although no firm conclusions can be made about breeding, prospects for success in further study of bitterns at Bender during breeding season are encouraging. Future surveys could begin with watching for bittern flights from an elevated position in early morning, to pinpoint possible nest sites, probably at weekly intervals through October and November.

R. Jaensch

Notices

THANK YOU SLIDE CONTRIBUTORS

I would like to thank the members who have contributed the many valuable slides for our collection, particularly those who made important contributions. The RAOU Office now has two sets of slides which cover many species; one set will be kept for reference and record purposes and the second set will be available for borrowing by members, subject to conditions.

P. Howden

COMMITTEE 1993-4

Chairman:	John Blyth
Vice-Chairman:	Chris Wilder
Secretary:	Michael Craig
Treasurer:	Peter Anson
Members:	Allan Burbidge, Bill McRoberts, Brenda Newbey, Tom Spalding, Brian Wilson

MALLEEFOWL CONSERVATION PROJECT

The RAOU (WA Group) is planning a project to determine the WA distribution and population of Malleefowl.

Many members (and others) may have knowledge of active or inactive mounds and have sighted the birds in various localities. A consolidation of such data will produce a clear indication of present distribution. Eventually it is hoped to evaluate changes which have occurred since Atlas information was gathered.

Specific study sites will be selected for intensive investigation which will require interested members to search for and to monitor mounds and Malleefowl.

Our membership may provide the only group of dedicated personnel large enough to carry out this co-ordinated task.

If you are interested in checking areas where Malleefowl have been reported please contact the co-ordinator. Individuals making investigations in various locations will enhance our understanding of the Malleefowl's distribution. Already there are locations where sightings have been reported and need follow-up.

Please give for Malleefowl sightings: location (indicate district, road intersections or landmarks, relevant distances and directions etc), date and time and for Malleefowl Mounds: location (detailed as above), condition of mound, date of discovery, are mounds threatened by development?

Rod Smith, Co-ordinator RAOU (WA Group) Malleefowl Conservation Project, PO Box 199, Jolimont 6014.

SINCE BIRDS CAN'T TALK

RAOU (WA Group) needs more members willing to give talks to interested groups. We receive requests from schools, scout groups and other organisations for speakers on bird topics - but in responding to these requests, have been relying on a small number of dedicated volunteers. We are keen to hear from any members ready to add their names to our register of speakers.

Have you some expertise in any particular aspect of birdwatching? For instance, you may be familiar with a local "patch" of bushland or a lake, or have developed a special interest in a group of birds such as parrots or fairy-wrens. Perhaps you know about developing a local garden to attract native birds - or know in some detail programmes to protect endangered species ... or maybe you have a broad, general knowledge of the feathered friends.

If you can help, please contact our office any weekday between 9.30 am and 12 noon and your offer will be recorded by the volunteer on duty and passed on to either Judy Blyth or Norah Brockman.

An updated speakers' register will result, showing the topics on which volunteers are prepared to speak. It will then be easier to match requests for bird talks to suitable speakers.

J. Blyth

WA THREATENED BIRDS: DISPLAY

Every birdwatcher, whether professional or recreational, is sadly aware of the shrunken range and reduced numbers of many Australian birds since European settlement. Two species previously found in Western Australia, Lewin's Rail and Rufous Bristlebird are now considered to be extinct in the State. The WA group has recently commenced a public education project to increase awareness of which birds are threatened, the nature of the threats and the programmes in place or planned to preserve these species.

We intend to produce a well researched and presented modular kit of display material, with photographs of as many of the State's threatened species as possible, as well as a variety of printed material including names, captions and information about threatening processes and plans for the recovery of particular species. All photographs and text will be laminated to cope with the rigors of being transported around the State and of public display.

It is hoped to have one kit produced in time to join the EPA's "Green Train", which will set off from Perth on World Environment Day, June 5th, for a year-long tour of the State. A second will be available for other displays as required. Relevant parts of the kit can be used for display in the Wheatbelt, Pilbara, Kimberley, South Coast, Perth and its environs or anywhere else in the State.

It is expected that most of the funding for this project will be covered by a grant received from the former State Government's Social Advantage Initiative.

The display should make a significant contribution to increasing community understanding of the threats to birds in our State and strengthen efforts to ensure the survival of the more threatened species.

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Editor	B. Buchanan, PO Box 10 Wannamal 6505

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 50th Commemorative
Issue
7 May 1993**

OLFACTION IN BIRDS

Big Bird writes concerning the answer to question 7 in BBCBQ of WABN No. 54 June 1990, "Do most birds have a sense of smell". The answer on page 12 was "No" and derived from Dorst J (1974 translation) *The Life of Birds*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London.

More recently Martin G (1991) in *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Ornithology* ed Brooke M & Birkhead T, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and Melbourne writes :—

"The nasal cavity in birds lies within the skull at the base of the upper bill. It contains many elaborate folds of the underlying bone; these serve to increase the surface area of the mucous membrane where the olfactory (smell) receptors are situated. The cavity is so designed that all air breathed through the nostrils is directed over these sensory surfaces. The size, position, and shape of this organ, and the part of the brain which subserves it, vary greatly between species.

Although use of smell in the daily life of a bird varies markedly between species, both laboratory and field studies have demonstrated the importance of smell in species ranging from pigeons to vultures. Some findings appear quite exceptional. For example, Black-footed Albatrosses can be attracted by odour from a distance of at least 30 kilometres to bacon fat poured on the ocean surface." (pp 50 & 51)

Other examples are given. In the circumstances Big Bird believes the answer 'No' to the original question for "most birds" should be treated with great caution. It seems possible all birds have a sense of smell but the development/use of it is markedly different between species.

Editor

WABN: LOCATIONS INFORMATION

It would be greatly appreciated if all contributions which refer to the locations of birds, either in observations or articles, contain sufficient information to allow the location concerned to be determined with reasonable precision by reference to the *Travellers Atlas*, or in the case of Greater Perth locations by reference to either of the street guides now available.

Observation or sightings which are not sufficiently specific will not be printed until sufficient clarity is obtained.

Locations on pastoral properties, unless more closely detailed, are adequately delineated by the name of the pastoral property concerned.

Locations can be "x km North-east (or whatever direction) from y" (a town or geographical feature shown in the *Travellers Atlas*.)

Should any contributor believe a location should not be revealed, (an un-necessary precaution except in the cases of the nests of some rare/endangered species eg Red Goshawk) then WABN will *not print* the observation or sighting.

The purpose of making each location clear and sufficiently specific is to make WABN information of value to both current and later researchers and observers. For example, a report in WABN that say, a Black Bittern was seen at Salt lake, Plantagenet Shire is of little value unless the location of Salt Lake, Plantagenet Shire is known — which in fact it is not and help in the location would be appreciated.

Editor

INFORMATION BROCHURE PROJECT

This month we have presented copies of our first information brochure to the President of the Shire of Carnarvon. 'Birding Around Carnarvon' contains a map and information on good birding sites in the town and Shire with the names of feature birds.

The brochure also informs readers about the RAOU, its aims and activities.

The brochure was prepared by a group of city and country members.

NOW! Country members, please contact our office and tell us you are prepared to help with a similar brochure for your area.

A copy of the Carnarvon brochure will be sent to you with the name of a Committee member appointed to provide you with information and any help you need.

Brochures will be printed by the RAOU and sent to you for presentation to your Council or Shire. Every brochure assists in making more people aware of birds and their importance.

So over to you country members! Help make this a successful activity for country and city.

A. Jones

BBCBQ

- 1) Is the visual acuity of the Brown Falcon worse, equal or better than that of man ?
- 2) What are the two methods of head scratching by birds ?
- 3) Which of the two methods is regarded as characteristic of ground dwelling species and the most primitive ?
- 4) Why is exposure to sun, (termed sunning), useful to birds ?
- 5) How much more energy does a bird require to fly than a fish to swim ?
- 6) Why do some birds often fly close to water ?
- 7) Could the ancestors of Emu fly ?
- 8) When in deep sleep what happens to the eyes of most birds at regular intervals ?
- 9) Most birds sleep each day for how long ?
- 10) Six major biogeographic realms have been described. Which is the richest in endemic bird families ? and where does Australasia rank in the six ?

Answers on page 11

Excursion Reports

COODANUP 14 Nov

A number of Perth members joined the Mandurah Bird Watching Group, under the leadership of John Taylor, to look at the birdlife in the Creery Wetlands.

In the first two hours 42 species were sighted in and around the samphire flats, the marshes and the tuart forest. Along the flats the Pied Oystercatchers in their black, white and red livery were busily searching for food in the shallows, whilst overhead the Osprey and Caspian Tern hovered and circled, ever vigilant for fish in the estuary, with a Whistling Kite accompaniment.

Amongst the understorey of the tuart bushland were the

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, honeyeaters of various species, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin, Rufous Whistler, Willie Wagtail, Port Lincoln Ringneck and Red-capped Parrot. Small groups of waders were sighted along the mud flats, the most interesting being an adult Hooded Plover which was resting in the shallows.

After lunch on the grass at the Nairns, some of the group continued round to the eastern end of the By-pass Bridge and ventured under the bridge and along the edge of the samphire. This effort was rewarded by good sightings of large groups of waders circling round the islands. A flight of six Eastern Curlew flying low in front of the group was much appreciated.

J. Taylor

WILGARUP 21/22 Nov

On the weekend following record weather conditions, including snow over the south west, 9 members set up camp by a large lake on the property of Eric and Yvonne Phillips of Wilgarup. Although the weather was clearing the sheltered camp area was appreciated.

Saturday afternoon was spent surveying the lake which was exceptionally full for the time of the year. The reed beds were well out into the lake and the water birds well dispersed. The nearby bush yielded a good number of species including Red-winged Fairy-wren.

An excellent camp fire and everything from drinks to chocolate and Christmas cake rounded off a pleasant afternoon.

The next morning though fine looked threatening. We were able to break camp and get in an hour of bird watching before the rain arrived. While looking for the nesting Yellow-billed Spoonbill we found a Tiger Snake and several spider orchids. We then went to the Phillip's garden which contained many species of proteas, native flowering trees and shrubs which attract honeyeaters and parrots. Good views of Elegant Parrot, Red-capped Parrot, Western Rosella and Port Lincoln Ringneck were obtained. A cup of coffee in front of a large fire warmed us while we made up our bird list of 62 species seen.

S. Abbotts

GARDEN ISLAND 29 Nov

Michael Brooker of the CSIRO led a full day excursion to Garden Island. He has recently been involved in a biological survey of the island on behalf of the Defence Department.

Nineteen people assembled at the causeway at 8.30 am when the weather was threatening with dark clouds looming in the west. The impending weather was forgotten as we watched a Silver Gull pursuing a Black-shouldered Kite. The raptor manoeuvred well and was soon free of the gull.

As we crossed the causeway (five vehicles only for security reasons) our first sightings were of nesting Silver Gulls.

There were then heavy showers for the first two hours and the birdlife was sparse. However, there were good views of an Osprey nest with three chicks at an advanced stage of development. The nest itself looked as if it had had several years of use and was quite close to a small limestone cliff on which we were standing. The chicks were not obvious at first as they were flattened against the floor of the nest, though the golden yellow eye of the largest chick gave away its presence. An adult bird circled low over us and occasionally perched on a nearby pole. Later in the day we saw more adult Osprey at other places on the island, including three flying together.

Other morning sightings included a number of Banded Lapwing on the cricket oval, Whimbrel on one of the beaches, a flock of Sanderling and unidentified all-dark shearwaters

following a fishing boat.

The weather improved late in the morning before worsening again in the afternoon. After lunch most of our time was spent on a beach walk on the east of the island. Observed amongst the seaweeds were - Grey Plover, Crested Tern, Pied Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Caspian Tern and Grey-tailed Tattler. Pied Cormorant and Bridled Tern were seen on rocks off-shore.

It was a very interesting day out and we welcomed the chance to look at the birds and other features of this restricted access area. A total of 39 species were seen including Grey Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Singing Honeyeater, Australian Magpie and Magpie-lark. Brush Bronzewing also occur on the island but they successfully eluded 19 pairs of binoculars and two telescopes.

Our thanks go to Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg for organising the trip and to Michael Brooker for leading us.

J and D. Newsome

ALFRED COVE 6 Dec

There was a good turnout of members and visitors for this outing on a fine day. There were not a great number of species to be seen (40 at the final count) - no rare waders and even the regulars were fewer in number than in recent years. However, the resident Ospreys took up their positions on the radio masts. One enthralled everyone by wheeling twice overhead with a large fish and, despite the strong NE wind, cleverly landing without losing its catch.

In spite of Alfred Cove being a regular breeding area for Black-winged Stilt, only one bird was seen. A light (grey) Richard's Pipit was sighted among others on the oval.

As the bird count for the morning was being completed, an Australian Hobby flew into a nearby tree causing noisy complaints from the numerous Tree Martin in the area.

M. Clegg

GWELUP 16 Dec

This was the last excursion for 1992, on a fine hot morning led by Bryan Barrett. It was popular with both RAOU members (some new) and local residents.

We approached the lake from the west, where there is good parking. On open water we found a good representation of the usual lake dwellers including a group of six juvenile Black Swan.

In the nearby reeds we could hear a Clamorous Reed-warbler. With some persistence most managed to focus on the bird clinging to the reeds as it sang.

The surrounds of the northern side of the lake are well wooded - with Tuart, Flooded Gum and old Paperbark at the water's edge.

Haunts of heron and egret and a row of young Grey Teal on a log were pointed out. We also saw a variety of bush birds - honeyeaters, Rainbow Bee-eater, Grey Butcherbird and a group of Striated Pardalote flying in and out of the hollows of a dead tree.

We turned back at the north east corner of the lake where the going gets rough and walked through Karrinyup Reserve seeing an Australian Kestrel or two, Australian Raven, some Port Lincoln Ringneck, a Rufous Night Heron and finally a Rufous Whistler in full melodious song.

Thirty six people attended and 42 species of birds were sighted.

After the excursion, the Warden of Stirling City Council

was contacted by phone and informed of both a dead duck and the dead pike seen at lakes edge and of a small invasion of bamboo in the north eastern bush.

D. Perret

GROVE FARM 10 Jan

This inner suburb Reserve, with its wide variety of habitats, again proved to be one of the best in the Perth area. Sixty species were sighted in a 3 hour walk. Unfortunately the excessive heat proved too much for some members who withdrew to shady spots while the tougher ones battled through long grass and muddy marshes seeking rarer species. No snakes were sighted but care should always be taken if visiting this Reserve.

Early arrivals unfortunately disturbed a group of Rufous Night Heron when they walked around the first lake before the majority arrived and they missed this interesting sight.

A highpoint apart from the large variety of species, were sightings of Variegated Fairy-wren, the large number of Rainbow Bee-eater and Red-kneed Dotterel (which breed in the Reserve).

Searches for a recent possible Intermediate Egret, nesting goshawks and the Brown Songlark were unsuccessful. Black-shouldered Kite, which breed here, seen on every previous visit since 1990 were strangely absent.

Although conditions were difficult it was a rewarding excursion for the 18 members who participated.

T. Delaney

GROVE FARM 20 Jan

A starting time of 7.30 am seems a little early for some people, particularly me, but 19 keen birdos showed up for the mid week walk to this marvellous area, led by Tom Delaney. Tom knows Grove Farm better than anyone and his personal list is 93 species. The weather was just right for mid January, lots of sunshine and a pleasantly cool breeze.

Three hours later when we stopped for a mid morning cuppa we had seen 49 species. The tea was sufficient motivation for adding another five.

A few lucky people saw a Buff-banded Rail at great distance, but perseverance rewarded everybody with a Mistletoebird and interestingly there were 2 Ospreys on the top of an aerial-like structure, with some sticks! There was also a Little Eagle, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and the immaculate Red-kneed Dotterel.

It is quite remarkable that such a large, good and varied birding habitat, within a stones throw of the centre of Perth gets so little publicity. So often it is not until a council, government, or mining company show an interest, that conservationists have anything to say and then, what they say often sounds very negative.

We should continually sing the praises of areas like Grove Farm before the developers arrive, so that everyone in the community knows areas are worth keeping in their present state and for what reasons. Why are we so silent?

M. Bailey

AMARILLO POOL 24 Jan

A clear warm day greeted those who attended. Each group was divided into a number of smaller groups, each searching a part of the banksia, jarrah woodland at the entrance to Amarillo Farm. Views of the commoner bush birds were all that were available unfortunately with no sighting of the elusive Hooded Robin seen some years ago.

From the entrance we progressed to the farm house and the

track from the back of the property which follows the river to a home-made bridge connecting with the adjacent property. Some commoner waterbirds and a Sacred Kingfisher were seen, but by far the most impressive sighting was a 2 metre Dugite which appeared from under the bridge as we approached.

After lunch the group was ferried across the paddock to the pool in 4WD vehicles. Searching around the dead fallen timber produced Long-toed Stints and Wood Sandpipers. Looking out toward the middle of the pool the group witnessed a large flock of Red-necked Avocet rise from the water to mob a Whistling Kite passing slowly overhead: the kite moved off in view of this opposition.

Later large numbers of waterbirds were noticed moving hurriedly from the southern outflow of the pool into open water. At first there appeared no reason for this exodus, until an immature White-bellied Sea-Eagle came into view, a magnificent sight. Soon after two Brown Quail were flushed from long grass close to the water giving some a fleeting glimpse. Two Little Egret seen on the edge of the pool just prior to leaving brought the day's species count to 75.

J. Hunt

COWARAMUP 30 Jan

This campout, the sixth by the RAOU, on the 200 acre property of Steve Kennedy on Caves Road, Cowaramup, was led by Bryan Barrett. We made camp in the shade on the edge of the forest/bush, where there was a one roomed hut with a verandah. We had use of the hut as our headquarters and a number of the group found it convenient for their cooking. We were all self-contained, there being no water or ablutions available. By Saturday afternoon thirty people had assembled for the campout.

The forest area was interesting, heavily wooded with medium size Jarrah, Marri, Blackbutt, Wattle and many scrub species and when birds were found they were not difficult to see. The weather was ideal throughout the weekend with overcast mornings, sunny afternoons and warm nights and hot enough for the swimmers to go to the ocean at Gracetown five kilometres away.

Gracetown was visited on Saturday morning and some of the group walked up a stony watercourse running down a very narrow valley on the edge of the town. The steep rocks, attractive trees, undergrowth and many very large old Peppermints made it a pleasant outing. Many New Holland Honeyeater, White-breasted Robin and White-browed Scrubwren were sighted.

Independent birdwalks were made at the camp on Saturday afternoon and group walks through the bush were led by Bryan Barrett, Allan Jones, Chris Wilder and Peter Anson on Sunday morning. The bird count for this visit was 49. One new bird, a Varied Sittella, was sighted making the total bird count for the block 69.

It was a relaxing, enjoyable long weekend, well organised, thank you Bryan and Margery.

R. Hardie

**Help an endangered species.
Contribute to the Malleefowl Project
See page 5**

Eyre Report

We have had a busy period with five courses being run. First was Field Techniques for Bird Study led by Dr Stephen Davies. This was very interesting and broadened our knowledge of birds considerably, while showing how many birds are revealed by systematic looking.

Next was Stargazing, led by Trevor Keates. Trevor's twice daily talks expanded participants' knowledge of things to do with stars, moon and sun, but unfortunately the weather did not co-operate. However the group had some two hours mid week and on the last night a beautiful clear sky sparkling with stars.

Then Christmas at Eyre, which was relaxed and fun. We had beautiful weather and were able to swim on the lovely beach every day. On Christmas Eve we sang Carols by Torchlight on the beach - probably to the alarm of the Red-capped Plovers - and the Eyre version of the Twelve Days of Christmas written by Claire Mercer using Eyre birds. Christmas Day was traditional dinner after presents from the tree; on Boxing Day we made a trip to Twilight Cove.

The Dune Stabilisation Work Parties then arrived. The willing workers planted a large area of dune with *Spinifex hirsutus*, led by Sara Davies and Tim Hunt, the Spinifex seed heads having been picked beforehand.

Bats, Bats, Bats! was led by Doug Watkins. Participants met these fascinating little creatures by going down a cave where hundreds of Chocolate Bats were hanging from the roof - Doug estimated not less than three thousand in the cave. They also set harp traps along the road and at Burnabbie, as well as mist nets at the caves to catch and band, weigh, sex and record the bats.

Last week we had some extremely hot days - 44 and 45 degrees on consecutive days, which resulted in some interesting birding. On the weekly beach count, which covers 13 km, we recorded 171 Inland Dotterel, 106 Banded Lapwing, 149 Red-capped Plover, 29 Oriental Plover, 2 Red-necked Avocet and 2 Banded Stilt. About 50 Inland Dotterel were seen on a trip to Cocklebidly the same morning.

The hot weather also brought a continual stream of honeyeaters to the bird bowls and we had one sighting of a male Pied Honeyeater, which is unusual here. Another surprise visitor was a single Diamond Dove, waiting at the garage when we got back from the beach count. Big flocks of Pink Cockatoos are around every day, many feeding young ones. They compete at the bird bowl with Australian Raven. Brush Bronzewing creep in whenever they get a chance.

Dugites have been all too plentiful, but they hastily get out of the way as you approach. Masters snakes have been sighted too and quite a number of Monitor Lizards - one having a lovely bath in the bird bowl at the back! On a trip to Twilight Cove with the dune workers, we observed a pair of seals swimming along close to the shore and about six dolphins.

R. and G. Watkins

(Storr G M (1987) Birds of the Eucla Division of Western Australia, WA Museum, Perth mentions an unconfirmed report of Diamond Dove at Twilight Cove in April 1973. Ed.).

Coming Events

Sunday 7 March Half day excursion - Walyunga National Park

Meet at 8.30 am at the carpark at the end of Walyunga Road (off Great Northern Highway, Upper Swan near Long Pool).

The National Park lies along the Darling Scarp. The Avon River bounds one part of the planned walk and there are some good stretches of Wandoo. We should see a good variety of birds. If you wish bring your lunch and explore another area of the park in the afternoon. The Park entrance fee is \$4.

Leader: Peter Anson

Saturday 13 March Full day excursion - Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

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

A second visit to look for rare waders which have been seen in late summer at this large, muddy lake. Wellington boots or waders are recommended, plus hat, insect repellent and water. Those wishing to walk round the lake should take lunch with them.

Leader: Michael Craig

Wednesday 17 March Mid-week walk - Bayswater Bird Sanctuary

Meet at 8 am at the Swan River end of King William Street, Bayswater. The Reserve was created in 1977 by Eric Singleton in conjunction with the Bayswater Council. The reserve consists of waterways and paved paths (suitable for wheel chairs), a bird hide and an artificial island. Many waterbirds breed in the reserve and the species list is about 100 birds.

Leader: Eric Singleton

Sunday 21 March Full/Half day excursion - Doopiter Swamp, West Gingin

Meet at 9 am at the T-junction of Cowalla Road and Gingin Brook Road. We will then continue along Cowalla Road, to the swamp, approx. 12 kms.

This large swamp has permanent water and usually many waterbirds, some waders and plenty of bush birds. There is no suitable access for cars so we shall park on the roadside as far off the road as possible and climb the fence. Those who wish to stay for lunch may explore the far side of the swamp; a good area for photographers, with plenty of cover. Boots/wellingtons useful. A round trip of approximately 200 km.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

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.

Saturday 27 to Sunday 28 March Campout - Hunt for Malleefowl Mounds - Dryandra Forest

A co-ordinated search for Malleefowl mounds at Dryandra. Members with some bush navigation experience are needed, together with others to form search teams.

Two cottages have been booked at \$10 per person per night. Bring compass, sleeping bag and food. Go to the Caretaker's cottage for direction on Friday 26 March in the evening, or if visiting for the day only, wait at the Caretaker's cottage to be met at 10 am either morning.

Please contact Rod Smith (09) 397 5319 or (09) 293 2777 if you intend to take part.

Saturday 3 April Half day excursion - Amarillo Pool, Baldi

Meet at 8.30 am at the entrance to Amarillo Farm, on the Serpentine River. Travel south on the Mandurah Road turning left into Paganoni Road, the turnoff to the Marapana Deer Park, several kilometres from Mandurah. Amarillo Farm is to the right at the first bend in the road.

As in January, we will search for waders along the mudflats of the river. Long trousers and boots/Wellingtons recommended - our sighting of a very large dugite on the previous visit has made us more alert to the presence of snakes in the area. Hats, insect repellent and water should be carried.

Leader: Jack Hunt

Easter Campout Friday 9 April to Monday 12 April - "Birralee", near Dumbleyung

Because of inability to find a suitable camping site in the Walpole area, the Easter campout has been transferred to private property approximately 52 km north east of Dumbleyung, about three and a half hours from Perth. "Birralee" is a 2,300 hectare property, half pasture and crops, the rest comprising some large areas of mallee heath. Southern Scrub-robin, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Shy Hylacola and 8 species of honeyeaters were seen on a recent visit, as well as Owlet and Spotted Nightjar.

Limited accommodation is available in a cottage; there is room for some tents and for 1 or 2 caravans. Those interested in joining this campout should contact either Margery Clegg (09) 364 5266 or Bryan Barrett (09) 298 8245 for further information.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Wednesday 14 April Mid-week walk - Bibra Lake

Meet at 8 am at the first carpark at the northern end of the Lake, part of the Beeliar Wetlands chain, where large numbers of waterbirds can readily be seen.

Leader: Peter Anson

Sunday 18 April Full day excursion - Garden Island

Meet at 8.30 am at the mainland end of the bridge to the Island.

A repeat excursion for those who were not able to undertake the previous visit. Members who have already indicated they wish to attend and any others interested should confirm this at the RAOU office by 26 March.

Garden Island being naval territory necessitates limitations on the number of cars and people permitted on the island. The party will be limited to 20. Only those whose names have been submitted to the Naval authorities will be allowed on the Island.

Leader: Michael Brooker

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.

Saturday 1 May Full day excursion - Lake Mealup, Pinjarra

Meet at 9 am at Pinjarra Trotting Club on the right hand side of the Highway from Perth, corner of South West Highway and Greenlands Road, on the southern outskirts of Pinjarra. Allow a little over an hour from Perth.

The Lake Mealup Preservation Society has invited RAOU members to visit the Lake where it has been surveying the bird and plant species around the area. 100 bird species have been seen.

Leader: Peter Wilmot

Sunday 9 May Full day excursion - Boyagin Rock Nature Reserve

Meet at 8 am at the corner of Canning Mills Road and Brookton Highway, Karragullen. A round trip of about 250 km. This reserve contains impressive stands of powderbark wandoo and has a species list of 79 birds. Moderate to easy walks or some more strenuous around the Rock.

Leader: Clive Napier

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.

Wednesday 12 May Mid-week walk - Woodman Point Reserve, Munster, Cockburn

Meet at 8.30 am at the entrance to Woodman Point Recreation Camp - off Cockburn Road, south of the caravan park. A reserve of tuart woodland and native cypress.

Leader: Brenda Newbey

Saturday 15 May to Sunday 16 May Campout (or full day Saturday or Sunday) - Lowlands Estate, Serpentine

The owner, Mrs Midge Richardson, has kindly put her shearers quarters at our disposal for a limited number of people.

Lowlands is approximately 1 hour from Perth. 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 gate to the property is approximately 3 km further on.

Meet at 8.30 am on either day at the cottage which is 2.9 km from the entrance gate - turn left at the road junction, over a narrow bridge to the cottage where you will be met. As this is private property, it is important that you do arrive only at the appointed time. Those members who wish to stay overnight must contact Allan Burbidge (09) 306 1642.

Leader: Allan Burbidge

Saturday 22 May - 50th Anniversary of the WA Group

On Saturday 22 May, the WA Group celebrates its 50th Anniversary with the gathering of members at Perry House. A light luncheon will be provided. Members and ex members are welcome to join in the celebrations and are requested to contact the Treasurer at the office (09) 383 7749 by May 1st. There is no charge for the luncheon which commences at 1 pm. Further details will be given closer to the date on the RAOU Hotline (09) 387 8412.

Sunday 23 May Half day excursion - Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury

Meet at 8.30 am at the first carpark off Whitfords Avenue (on the right hand side through the entrance). An interesting park where gardens and lawns are flanked by natural woodland of tuart and banksia. Some 65 species of birds have been sighted in the area, including Yellow-throated Miner.

Leader: Graham Little

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, extinct in Western Australia) have fared over the years.

Saturday 5 June Full day excursion - Flynn Road

Meet at 8.30 am on the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about 1 km on the Perth side of The Lakes turnoff (ie the York Road turnoff). We will look at several areas of wandoo woodland where 3 species of robin are usually seen.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Monday 28 June Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Ian and Eleanor Rowley will speak about colour banding studies of some fairy-wrens. Ian began such studies in Canberra in 1955 with fairy-wrens, then sorted out the different species of Australian corvids in the 1960s and investigated co-operative breeding in colour-banded White-winged Choughs. Since coming to WA in 1969, he has, while working for CSIRO, carried out research on Galahs, Pink Cockatoos and Splendid, Red-winged, Purple-crowned, White-winged and Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens, in each case with marked individuals. He is the current editor of Emu. Eleanor studied social behaviour in kangaroos and honey possums before converting to birds and has, since 1977, worked with Ian on the WA fairy-wrens.

Monday 26 July Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

John Dell of the Department of Terrestrial Vertebrate Biogeography and Ecology at the WA Museum will describe local responses of birds to changing conditions at Woodstock/Abydos in the eastern Pilbara.

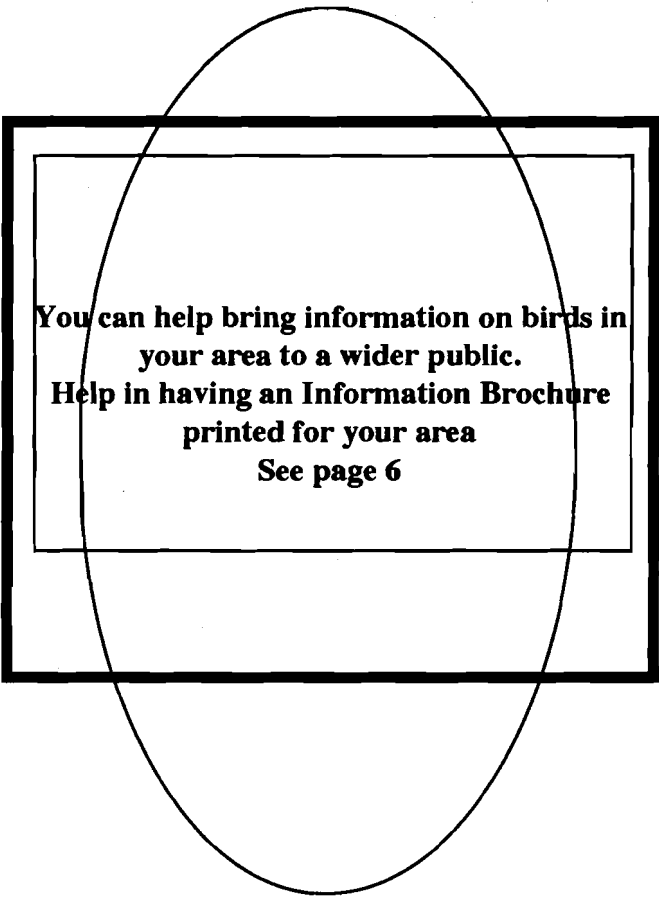
Monday 23 August Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Dr Tony Start of the Woodvale Research Centre of CALM who has been studying bats for many years, will compare bats and birds and deal with some of the relationships between them.

B B C B Q Answers

- 1) Almost identical (p 49)
- 2) Direct (underwing) and indirect (overwing) (p 141)
- 3) Direct (p 141)
- 4) Restores and maintains flight feather shape, may help synthesise Vitamin D, may help spread preening oil and soften old oil, alters feather colours, may improve skin condition and may make parasites more active and more easily found and removed. (p 140)
- 5) Over 40 times (p 57)
- 6) Flat surfaces reduce wing drag by up to 20% (p 63)
- 7) It is thought yes (p 88)
- 8) Open their eyes, though often only one eye and survey their surroundings, every few minutes or even seconds. Eyes close if there is no disturbance, but remain open if there is. Birds sleeping in groups open their eyes less often. (p 146)
- 9) About 8 hours, but there are big variations between and within species. (p 148)
- 10) Richest is Neotropical (South and Central America, South Mexico and the West Indies) with 31 endemic families. Australasia is second with 16. (p 157)

All questions derive from *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Ornithology* (1991) Brooke M & Birkhead T (Eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, to which the page references refer.



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Chairman's Report to the 1993 Annual General Meeting

This has been a very significant year for the Western Australian Group of the RAOU. In reviewing 1992, I want to mention briefly the highlights, touch on some of the less obviously noteworthy, ongoing things which taken together made up the year for the Group, and then spend a few minutes looking at what we are doing now and where we might head in the future.

From a Western Australian point of view the two highlights of the year were undoubtedly the visit to the State by Bill Oddie and the shift of the W.A. Group into new headquarters at Perry House, in Bold Park. Bill Oddie's visit was a part of an Australia-wide trip organised by RAOU Australia. Allan Jones and a team of three other volunteers took on the almost full time task of liaising with Moonee Ponds and arranging Bill's Western Australian schedule, including a public talk, attended by over 500 people and the opening of Perry House. Between these two major commitments, Bill had a very full schedule of media appearances and interviews. His last official task in Western Australia was a trip to Two Peoples Bay to take part in the translocation of several Noisy Scrub Birds from the mainland to Bald Island.

A very good news item of this event, including an interview with Bill Oddie, was filmed by Channel 10, who also provided the helicopter by which the translocation was made. Overall Bill's visit to the State provided a tremendous boost to the cause of birding and bird conservation and the WA Group is very grateful to RAOU, Melbourne, and to Allan Jones and his team for the great job they all did in arranging the very complex programme.

The shift of the WA Group's headquarters from Canning Bridge to Perry House was the culmination of many months of discussion and enquiries by the Committee, especially Brian Wilson, who investigated many alternative possibilities for our future quarters. Negotiations with the City of Perth and modifying and refurbishing the building and its grounds (both of which looked very much less inviting then than they do now) were also major tasks, handled most capably by Peter Anson, Clive Napier, Chris Wilder and a host of other volunteers, including many from the Wildflower Society.

The final result, sharing the lovely old Federation-style Perry House with the Wildflower Society of W.A., with the City of Perth as our landlord, has been an outstanding success. The very low rental will give the WA Group great financial security, while the extra space for office work, meetings and secure storage is a delight after the cramped conditions at Canning Bridge. In addition, the arrangement between the City of Perth, the Wildflower Society and ourselves ensures that the RAOU is very much a part of the local community, with an involvement in regular festivals and providing occasional walks and displays for the public at other times throughout the year. Although not challenging the National Gallery, the ongoing display of bird art and photography is a real feature of our new centre, and we hope that eventually it can become known as a place to come to see (and to buy!) outstanding examples of wildlife art. *

Two other significant, if less positive, events for the year were the completion of the Scopewest Survey of wetlands and waterbirds of the Swan Coastal Plain, and the end of Government funding for the twice yearly "Duck Count". Hundreds of RAOU volunteers have been involved in one or both of these

surveys for several years and there will now be considerable gaps in the calendar of bird projects to do for many of us. Some have no doubt already switched to other ongoing RAOU projects, but there certainly exists a need, and an opportunity, for the WA Group to develop one or more specifically Western Australian projects for our members to contribute to. The new Committee will give this matter a high priority in the near future.

While it is true to say that 1992 was dominated by the events discussed above, it is equally true to say that a multitude of other events, activities and achievements occurred and continue and that it is these ongoing, sometimes routine, things which make the RAOU what it is. A number of these things are discussed below, not in any order of importance, but to provide examples of the very wide range of activities that the Group and its members are involved in.

Early in the year, the WA group provided \$4,800 (partly as a direct donation to BBO and partly as a low-interest loan to RAOU Australia) to the Broome Bird Observatory to fund the purchase of extra facilities to improve their visitor's accommodation and thereby increase their ability to attract fee-paying visitors.

The 1992 Twitchathon was held in October to coincide with the National event taking place in other States. Although the numbers of birds recorded by the nine Western Australian teams could not compare with some of the higher counts made by some of the teams from the East Coast, the winning Western Australian team of Gail and Bryce Wells (the Kimberley Kuckoos) recorded a very creditable 130 species. The event was very enjoyable for all those taking part and special thanks go to Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg for an excellent job of making all the necessary arrangements and of recording and assessing the results.

Bryan and Margery were also responsible for organising an outstanding programme of outings and campouts throughout the year. Under their remarkably energetic leadership, there were walks or campouts virtually every weekend throughout the year, as well as frequent midweek walks, a new and very well received initiative.

The WA Group also continued to have a wide range of interesting and authoritative speakers at our regular monthly meetings and sometimes an occasional extra meeting was held to take advantage of the presence in the State of someone of particular interest. This excellent programme was arranged by Jeremy Talbot and the increasingly large numbers of members coming to our meetings is a sure sign of how successful he is being in obtaining speakers who give our members the entertainment and information that they want.

A special New Members Night was held for the second year in a row. It was well received by the many new members for the year who attended and learned more about the workings and activities of the WA Group and it is hoped to make this a regular annual event.

We also need to remember that we are a part of RAOU Australia and that there are many achievements by our "parent body" that are significant for us. The RAOU continues to run a varied and successful research programme, from single species studies, such as the recently concluded study of the Red Goshawk, to the ongoing, volunteer based Australian Bird Count. One of the most important projects was the completion

of an Action Plan for Australian Birds, written by Stephen Garnett and funded by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. This project represents a milestone for the conservation of threatened birds in Australia. The fact that the RAOU received the contract for it indicates how high the Union's reputation is in the scientific community and the outstanding way in which the project has been completed and reported should further enhance that reputation.

The year has also seen the resignation of Philip Moors as the Director of the RAOU and his recent replacement by David Baker-Gabb. Philip did an outstanding job as our Director for almost four years and the WA group wish him well in his new position, a senior one in the Victorian Public Service, as Director of the Melbourne Royal Botanical Gardens. Like Philip, David Baker-Gabb comes with a high reputation as a research ornithologist. Many of our members will know of his work on the Plains Wanderer, the Red Goshawk and the Bird of Prey Watch. The reputation of the RAOU as one of the primary sources of authoritative knowledge about Australian birds is in good hands.

While thinking of RAOU Australia I would like to congratulate Brian Wilson for continuing to be a member of the RAOU Council and to thank him for the regular reporting and co-operation between the two groups which results.

The WA Group has a number of ongoing or recently begun projects which will continue to provide activities for members and benefits for the Group as a whole. These include the nationally organised Beach Patrol for beach washed seabirds, with Bryan Barrett as our State Co-ordinator; involvement in a project for the conservation of the Malleefowl being organised by Jean-Paul Orsini of the Threatened Species Network, an almost completed brochure on the birds of Carnarvon, master-minded by Allan Jones and intended to be the first of many such regional guides and the upgrading of our slide collection by Peel Howden. In regard to this last, special thanks go to Simon Nevill for the donation of a collection of several hundreds of his slides, including many excellent ones of Western Australian birds; a very significant addition to our collection.

Among other projects which deserve mention are two to be funded by the previous State Government's Social Advantage Initiative. These are the production of display material on the endangered birds of Western Australia, a project being co-ordinated by Judy Blyth and now well underway and the production of a high quality brochure about birding around Perth.

The Committee is most grateful to all the people named above and to all of the other willing helpers who are ensuring that these and other projects will be successful. My personal thanks to the Committee for being such a great group of people with whom to work and to all of our volunteers who maintain the office and generally provide the W.A. Group with its greatest strength.

Some of the Activities described above provide, I believe, a good direction for the future. We need to continue to be active, both as a group and individually, in projects such as the Australian Bird Count and the Beach Patrol organised on a national level and perhaps more importantly, we need to develop more specifically Western Australian projects in which our members may be involved. To expand our efforts in this way we will need continued and expanded assistance from our existing willing volunteers and from as many new helpers as possible. We need more ideas about projects, about how we

might be able to fund them and we need people with a variety of skills, to design the projects and implement them. The talents needed include public speaking, design and layout of brochures and displays, office work, computer operation - the list is endless but above all we need people who are interested in birds, like to both watch and talk about them and who wish to help with their conservation.

J. Blyth

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 Rottneest	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		
Parrots and Pigeons		\$71.00
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 \$25.00
Other Items for Sale		
Audubon Squeakers		\$9.50
Bird-call tapes		\$11.50
Blue Wren (good gift for children)	Brooker	\$9.50
RAOU Emu badges		\$3.00
Car stickers - Splendid Fairy-wren		\$2.00
Gift Items are also available —	including	
tea towels		
gift packs		
all purpose cards	for 8	\$6.00
1993 Calendar		\$5.00

NB - postage extra. Eg - Simpson & Day \$3.40 locally, Calendar \$ 1.50