

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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50th Anniversary of Western Australian Group RAOU

Historic events are determined by later assessments of them. Those who survive the dangers, fear and stress of battle, with images forever fixed in the mind, must be disconcerted to find "their battle" barely mentioned in the official history and with perhaps no more than a brief paragraph in the regimental/squadron account.

Those ten persons who gathered at the WA Museum on 22 May 1943 were (it is to be hoped) free of stress and fear: in any event their boldness and resolution still shows in the report of the first meeting. While it is likely that the memory of that evening has largely faded from the minds of those remaining, it is highly unlikely that they thought their meeting would be seen for what it was — the foundation of the WA Group of the RAOU and an historic event.

In the early years members were few, though reaching 50 by 1948. Meetings were held and outings organised. Significant effort was put into the creation and fostering of the Gould League, seen (among other things) as a valuable source of future ornithologists and RAOU members.

From 1950 to 1953 the branch was inactive, although the members were far from so being, much of their work appearing in the pages of *Emu*. Meetings were again held in 1954 and throughout the 50's work in support of the Gould League was undertaken.

1959, besides an irruption of Cattle Egret, saw the commencement of wader banding at Pelican Point, an activity which continued in 1960 and 1961. This work was the genesis of the later WA Wader Study Group.

The branch had 67 members in 1963. Vincent Serventy was Chairman and regular meetings were recommenced.

In 1964 the first Ruff and Dominican Gull were sighted in WA.

A period of quiescence followed both for the branch and the RAOU as a whole, altered by the election of Stephen Davies as National President in the middle 70's. Significant developments commenced towards the establishment of observatories and the start of the Atlas project, among others.

The Atlas encouraged greater participation in WA group activities, but in 1980, a year before the end of the Field Atlas, the WA Group had only 72 members.

However the start of another RAOU project in WA, the South-west Waterbird Survey, led to the appointment of a full-time field Officer, Roger Jaensch (in April 1981) and the establishment of an office. An office, in the bedroom of the Field Officer in the early days, enabled the WA group to have a "permanent" focus. The nature of the project, dealing with waterbirds, readily identifiable and accessible (compared to bush birds), together with the recruitment of volunteers, their training, organisation and support and the particular talents of the Field Officer, saw a dramatic rise in WA Group members. By July 1984 there were 440 members and by March 1985 over 500.

Today membership approaches 700: there is a fine headquarters and a vibrant organisation.

On the 50th anniversary we should recognise the contribution of the pioneers of 1943 and the efforts of those who kept the WA RAOU alive through some difficult years.

Page 2 of this Western Australian Bird Notes is a facsimile copy of the first page of the first WABN.

Western Australian Bird Notes

No. 1.

PERTH, W.A.

June, 1944

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Western Australian Branch of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union will be held at the Museum, Perth, on Saturday, July 1, 1944, at 2.15 p.m. Major Whittell will preside.

- AGENDA: 1. The study of Silver-eyes by Trapping and Banding, by Messrs. V. N. Serventy and L. J. McHugh. (Preliminary reading: The Emu, vol 42, April, 1943, p. 194).
2. Albatrosses: Discussion on problems of identification, led by Mr. L. Glauert and Dr. D. L. Serventy.

REPORTS OF PROCEEDINGS INAUGURAL MEETING, MAY 22, 1943

The following persons attended the meeting at the Museum on May 22, 1943, convened by the President (Major H. M. Whittell): Major Whittell, Misses O. Seymour and N. Fletcher (Victoria); Dr. D. L. Serventy and Messrs. G. Doepel, C. Eakins, E. Edmondson, L. Glauert, C. F. H. Jenkins and V. N. Serventy (State Secretary).

Major Whittell briefly described the aims and organisation of the R.A.O.U. and indicated the reasons for the calling of the meeting, the first of its kind in the State. He hoped that in future regular meetings would be held, and so develop a strong group of ornithologists in Western Australia. He then called on members present and visitors to outline their activities in bird work and offered suggestions for local activities. Miss Fletcher described the Bird Observers Club in Victoria. Mr. Edmondson traced the development of the W.A. Gould League, and Mr. Eakins described how Correspondence Classes were furthering bird study.

Dr. Serventy, at the instance of the chairman, outlined a plan for the future conduct of the meetings. He wished to avoid the profitless type of meeting so often found in natural history organisations. The meetings should have the serious aim of making us better ornithologists as well as providing an evening of entertainment. Bird people in Australia do not read enough about their subject, therefore they lack the theoretical background which is needed to get the best out of their observing. A great deal of effort is collectively expended in field-work, involving time, money, etc., and we should capitalise all this to the fullest extent. It was proposed to organise the future meetings of the R.A.O.U. in Perth so as to include discussions under direction, or tutorials, in the various subjects needed for a fuller understanding of birds in the field or of specimens in the study. We shall find our hobby much more interesting the more we know about it. It was hoped to include a theoretical and practical topic at each meeting.

The proposal was discussed with approval and Dr. Serventy and Messrs. Glauert and V. Serventy were appointed a committee to handle the organisation of future meetings.

SECOND MEETING, JULY 24, 1943

At the second meeting of the branch, held at the Museum on July 24, 1943, at 2.30 p.m. Dr. D. L. Serventy presided and led discussions on territory and the genus *Acanthiza*.

TERRITORY IN BIRDLIFE

The following is a summary of Dr. Serventy's remarks: That birds have parcels of ground or territories which they jealously guard for themselves while nesting, may seem quite an obvious fact. Actually, however, the idea of territory as a factor in the life cycle of birds is quite a new one, at least as far as the average birdlover is concerned and it means much more than merely keeping enemies away from the nest. The idea of territory may be very effectively introduced by an incident which happened in one of the local Museum classes. A boy mentioned that Robins fight other birds at nesting time. Which other birds he was asked, Hawks, Magpies? Instead of giving the conventional answer, the keen young observer replied, other Robins. That was the essence of territory. A plot of ground, centred around the site of the nest, is defended by the male, sometimes the female also, against other males of the same species.

The best introduction to the study of territory for the average birdlover is given in James Fisher's "Watching Birds" obtainable in the Pelican series. It should be in the hands

of everybody at all interested in the field study of birds. A typical life cycle for an average territory bird was as follows:

First the individual was a member of a co-operative food-seeking flock, in which the birds did not sing. In the Spring the flocks began to break up and the males would leave and begin to pay visits to suitable small areas of their summer habitat. Finally the males left the flock altogether and stayed permanently in their territories, singing vigorously from various points of vantage in it. Thus the area became parcelled among the males. When any one intruded into the sphere of influence of another, aggressive reactions followed. There was a good deal of chasing about, but frequently no real combats. The intruding birds seemed conscious of the fact they were trespassers and put up no resistance until they got back past their frontier line; then the roles were reversed.

It was now the female's turn to leave the flock. She was attracted by the singing male and eventually she attached herself to one particular partner. When a male thus acquired a mate he usually ceased to sing. Those males possessing gaudy colours and special ornaments also stopped displaying them when the female became a resident. Generally the only occasions when the male would sing henceforth were when other males approached, and song and display were then a signal to aggressive intentions. The purpose of song was essentially to advertise the possession of territory, and the reaction of birds hearing it depended on their sex. A male bird hearing the song is made aware that a male is in possession and is challenging his approach; a female, on the other hand, is made aware that here is an unmated male with a territory and she is attracted to the spot. This theory now superseded the old idea that bright colours and display played a part in sexual selection and that females chose as their mates, the best singers and most gaudy males.

In the northern hemisphere, where the subject had been most studied, birds usually held territories only in the spring and summer nesting period, after which the territories were dissolved and the birds joined up again into nomadic or migratory flocks. However, there were many birds which were sedentary and did not form flocks. Study of some of these species revealed that they defended territories for the whole of the year. A consequence of this was that the males would sing all the year round. In the case of the American Mocking-bird males and females has separate territories in the winter, when both sang. In the spring when the female joined the male but did not share in the defence of the nesting territory she did not sing.

Very little work had been done in Australia, Mr. C. A. Fleming's work on the Silver-eye in New Zealand being practically a pioneer effort on an Australian bird. His work showed that the territory cycle in the Silver-eye compared fairly closely to a typical northern hemisphere bird maintaining only spring and early summer territories. Generally Australian ornithologists have not accepted the territory theory too enthusiastically for the interpretation of their bird observations. In particular they are averse to accepting the fact that song is purely utilitarian and serves merely to advertise the possession of territory. Here in Australia birds sing for a greater part of the year than in Europe and visiting ornithologists are impressed by the number of birds to be heard singing in our autumn and winter months. To my mind this suggests one of two things: Some of our honeyeaters, for example, have very prolonged breeding seasons. The Tawny-crowned and New Holland Honeyeaters may have individuals nesting almost at any month of the year; therefore, these particular birds would be singing. Secondly, territories may be defended permanently, all the year round. Therefore song as "a distance threat" to rival males would continue all the year. We have, as a matter of fact, few birds that are migratory; those that are strictly sedentary might well hold permanent territories.

The field ahead of us is a big one. We should organize our observations with the territory theory at the back of our minds as a working hypothesis, without clinging to every feature of overseas interpretation as indisputable dogma. Note the facts according to whether or not they are consistent

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires shown in brackets.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Red-tailed Tropicbird - 1, being attacked by a Peregrine Falcon, 7/3/93, Sugarloaf Rock (Busselton) - GL

Glossy Ibis - 5, 5/3/93, Lake Kogolup (Cockburn) - JH

Royal Spoonbill - several, 1/5/93, Lake Mealup (Murray) - RAOU excursion per PW

Yellow-billed Spoonbill - 11, 12/4/93, Perry Lakes (Perth) - AF, SF * 90, 1/5/93, Lake Mealup (Murray) - RAOU excursion per PW

Pink-eared Duck - 20, 6/3/93, flying over Edward Island (Lancelin) and then SW, ie out to sea (Gingin) - AC

Bush Thick-knee - 1, 27/2/93, in small wooded patch on road verge, 45 km W of Brookton on Brookton Hwy (Brookton) - GM

Hooded Plover - 26 including 2 immatures, 18/3/93, Bremer Bay on bar to Wellstead estuary (Jerramungup) (good number for a coastal site) - BB

Red-necked Avocet - 1000, 8/3/93, Amarillo Pool, Serpentine River (Murray) - JH, CD

Wood Sandpiper - 17, 10/3/93, Perry Lakes (Perth) - PP

Pectoral Sandpiper - 1, 8/3/93, Baldivis Water Ski Park (Rockingham) - JH, CD *

9/3/93, a swamp about 15 km NNE of Manypeaks townsite (Albany) - LB

Long-toed Stint - 32, 8/3/93, Amarillo Pool, Serpentine River (Murray) - JH, CD * 6, 9/3/93, a swamp about 15 km NNE of Manypeaks townsite (Albany) - LB

Fan-tailed Cuckoo - 1, 8/3/93, Buntine NR (Dalwallinu) - BB * 1, 13/4/93, Wannamal (Gingin) - BB (these are both early records for this area)

Crested Shrike-tit - 3 on 8/3/93 and 2 adults feeding an immature, 26/3/93, near Denmark (on a reserve 500 m E of Denmark River and S of South Coast Hwy) (Denmark) - LB, TS

White-plumed Honeyeater - 2, 20/4/93, in Salmon Gum, Karroun Hill NR (Mt Marshall) (unusual this far south) - BB

White-fronted Honeyeater - 200+, travelling west, 20/4/93, Karroun Hill NR (Mt Marshall) - BB

Black Honeyeater - 2 males and 1 female, 11/4/93, near Dumbleyung (Dumbleyung) (unusual this far south-west) - BM, BBa, MC

Common Starling - 70, March 1993, 8 km S of Condingup (65 km east of Esperance) (Esperance) - per P. Coyle, APB

KIMBERLEY

Wandering Whistling Duck - 3 groups of up to eight ducklings, 10/4/93, pond near Argyle mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Green Pygmy Goose - 2, 10/4/93, pond near Argyle mine (near margin of range) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Baillon's Crake - 4, 10/4/93, pond near Argyle mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Common Redshank - 3, 27/4/93, Crab Creek, near Broome (Broome) - DW

Asian Dowitcher - 2, 27/4/93, Crab Creek, near Broome (Broome) - DW

Singing Bushlark - 100s, 20/3/93, near Ord River, south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO
Bar-breasted Honeyeater - 1 (possible nest), 20/3/93, Smoke Creek, 30 km from Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Observer Codes

AC = Alan Clarke	GM = Greg Marston
AF = Austin Fincham	JH = Jack Hunt
BB = Bruce Buchanan	LB = Lola Broadhurst
BBa = Bryan Barrett	MC = Margery Clegg
BM = Bill McRoberts	PP = Peter Pickford
CD = Colin Davis	PW = Peter Wilmot
DW = Doug Watkins	SF = Sandra Fincham
FO = Frank O'Connor	TK = Tony Kirkby
GL = Graham Little	TS = Tina Smith

The INDEX to WABN

How often have you searched unsuccessfully through WABN for a reference to a bird or place? Or simply baulked at the difficulty of the task and not commenced.

This is past, for we now have an Index of the contents of Western Australian Bird Notes from the first issue, which commenced with the first meeting in May 1943 until May 1993. There will be future addenda annually which will keep your searches short and your frustration at bay.

The Index, which can help take us back to the early days of WA ornithology, covers species, locations (with shire, latitude and longitude co-ordinates) and these locations listed by Shires for all the bird species and their locations in WABN. In addition, there are indexes to the bird identification hints that have appeared over the years, the various bird topics which have been covered, publications considered, major bird projects and more.

The idea, its execution and the labour of working through the past copies of WABN has been that of Bruce Buchanan, current Editor of WABN.

We owe him a debt of gratitude not only for producing the Index but also for editing WABN such that it is of professional standard. The Index is in keeping with this standard.

Members now have a new and welcome tool to assist in pursuing their interest in birds.

Do not search your memory. Get Indexed!

B. Wilson

The Index to WABN is available from the RAOU Office for \$7.50.

Committee 1993

Chairman: John Blyth

Vice-Chairman: Chris Wilder

Secretary: Michael Craig

Treasurer: Peter Anson

Members: Allan Burbidge, Brenda Newbey,

Bill McRoberts, Rod Smith, Tom Spalding, Brian Wilson

Members Contributions

LAKE NAMMING

Lake Namming is an attractive lake to visit. Not only does the Lake usually have a good range of waterbird species but it is visually agreeable. The greater part of the shoreline is comprised of living paperbark trees, some of considerable size, with Flooded Gum further from the waterline. It is the only wetland so vegetated in the area.

There are other wetlands nearby, Fred, Ibis and Crackers Swamps, (1.2 km to the South-east) which comprise the Namming Nature Reserve: despite the similarity of name this Reserve does not include Lake Namming. The overflow of the three Namming Nature Reserve swamps runs into the south of Lake Namming and in turn the overflow of Lake Namming departs at the northern end for Guraga Lake, only 1.5 km to the north. Hurstview Lake is 4 km to the North-east. Caren-Caren Brook flows into Lake Namming from time to time, as do other small creeks, all from the East.

The usual approach to Lake Namming is by farm track from the east through a paddock grazed by sheep. The other three sides have natural vegetation for at least 10 km, a factor which appears to be of importance in determining the waterbird usage of wetlands. (It is possible to walk over the ridge between Guraga and Lake Namming, there being a fire break for much of the distance.)

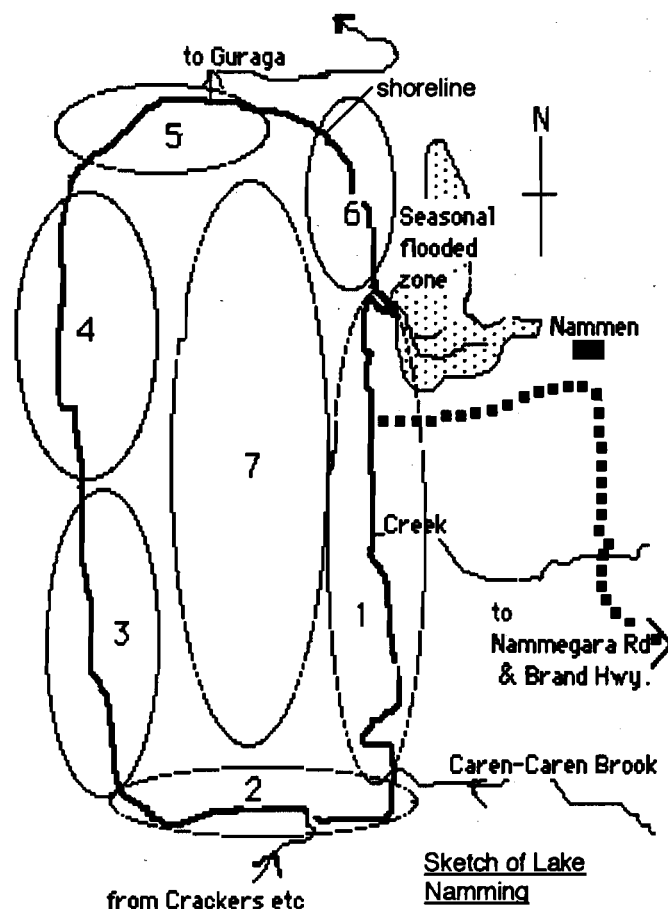
The Lake is reached via Nammegara Road, a left turn on the Brand Highway 12 km North of Regans Ford. Five kilometres along the road is the gate to Nammen, the property which contains Lake Namming. The gate is not usually locked. The Lake, being used for water skiing, means there is a track to the shore of the Lake. In the wet months however, four wheel drive is advisable, for the final 250 metres of the track becomes covered by water to a depth of some 250 mm and is soft when drying out.

The Namming Nature Reserve group was reported upon in Jaensch et al (1988). Guraga was also reported therein and in WABN No 51 September 1989. Hurstview was covered briefly in WABN No 60 December 1991.

The following is based on visiting Lake Namming every month for four years, commencing July 1988 and finishing August 1992, with the exception of a survey in December 1992 to "compensate" for a survey missed in December 1991. The Lake was visited as close as practicable to the middle of each month. This report now completes waterbird information on all the swamps/lakes in the area.

Lake Namming has 1000 metres of clear water north to south and 450 — 550 metres of clear water east to west. At high water the south has nearly 150 metres of flooded paperbark trees between the water's edge and the open water, the east has a similar zone of about 80 metres. The north shelves more steeply and has no high water tree flooded zone, the East has two such flooded areas of 50 metres at high water, with steeper shelving ground between.

The sketch does not show the surrounding high water flood zones except for that behind area 6., This is largely flooded paddock which attracts ducks and egret/heron species. This zone was counted as part of the Lake. The Lake proper did not



dry during the survey period and appears not to have done so "within living memory".

Having little sandy/muddy shore line for most of the year, Lake Namming is not attractive to migratory waders. Most of the shoreline which is attractive to waders is within Area 1. Although 9 migratory wader species were recorded, numbers were consistently low.

The depth and permanency of the Lake makes it important for diving species.

The flooded tree areas result in eight species of waterbird breeding (at least.)

The minimum number of individual waterbirds that used Lake Namming during the survey period was 11,680 — the sum of the maxima of all the species. The total species recorded was 43, the highest number observed at one visit being a splendid 32 in February 1991. The lowest number of species seen was 7, in August 1991. Twenty species or more were seen on 19 occasions out 48, or 40% of visits.

The calendar year with the highest bird numbers was 1991, the total for the 12 months being 20404, well ahead of 1989 with 13372 and 1990 with 11501 despite the fact that nearby Guraga was dry for much of 1990.

The following lists the species seen at Lake Namming during the period of the survey, with some comments. Listed for each species is the maximum number recorded, the number of times seen and the percentage this represents of the maximum of 48 possible, the months of the year in which the species was seen, the 3 months with the highest numbers and the average number in these months, the 3 lowest months and the average number in these months, breeding status and the Area of the Lake most usually used.

The average figures for the highest and lowest three months are the sum of the 12 months, ie 3 months x 4 years,

divided by 12. For the lowest average figures, 0 means no birds were seen in the 3 months, <1, means birds were seen, but with an average less than 1.

The Areas to which reference is made refer to those on the sketch of the lake and show those parts where the birds were most often seen when undisturbed. When disturbed, most birds used all parts of the lake as well as the central area, 7.

Great Crested Grebe — Max. no. 7 in Mar 1989, seen 10 times (21% of visits), on six months of the year (Feb, Mar, Apr, Jul, Sep, Dec), highest 3 months Feb-Apr, average 1, lowest Aug-Oct., average <1. No breeding. Using area 7.

Hoary-headed Grebe — Max. no. 835 in Apr 1990, seen 44 times (92%), seen all 12 months, highest 3 months Feb-Apr, average 245, lowest Jul-Sep average 40. No breeding. Using all areas.

Australasian Grebe — Max. no. 4 in Mar 1991. Seen 12 times (25 %) on 7 months of the year, highest 3 months Feb-Apr, average 1, lowest Sep-Nov, average <1. No breeding. Using areas 4 & 5 & northerly 7.

Australian Pelican — Max. no. 154 in Feb 1990, seen 28 times (58%) seen 10 months (not Jul or Oct) highest 3 months Feb-Apr, average 52, lowest Sep-Nov average <1. No breeding. Using areas 1 & 4.

Darter — Max. no. 19 in Mar 1990, seen 44 times (92%), on all months of the year, highest 3 months Feb-Apr, average 9, lowest Oct-Dec, average 2. No breeding. Using area 4.

Great Cormorant — Max. no. 12 in Jan 1990, seen 28 times (58%) on 11 months of the year (not Dec), highest 3 months Aug-Oct, average 3, lowest Mar-May, average 1. No breeding. Using areas 2 & 4.

Little Black Cormorant — Max. no. 117 in Feb 1990, seen 33 times (69%) seen all months, highest 3 months Jan-Mar, average 21, lowest Apr-Jun, average 1. No breeding. Using areas 4 & 6.

Little Pied Cormorant — Max. no. 14, seen 24 times (50%) on 11 months (not April), highest 3 months Sep-Nov, average 3, lowest Apr-Jun, average <1. No breeding. Using area 4.

Pacific Heron — Max. no. 1 on 6 occasions (12%) only in Aug-Nov, average 1, low average 0. No breeding. Using area 4.

White-faced Heron — Max. no. 21 in Dec 1990, seen 38 times (79%), on all 12 months, 3 highest Dec-Feb, average 7, lowest Jul-Sep, average 1. Breeding in 1988 & 1989. Using area 2.

Great Egret — Max. no. 20 in Mar 1988, seen 18 times (37%) on 10 months (not Jun or Jul), 3 highest Oct-Dec, average 2, with peaks in Mar 1988 & 1990 of average 10, lowest Jul-Sep, average <1. No breeding. Using areas 2 & 5.

Rufous Night Heron — Max. no. 1 on 5 occasions (10%) in Aug, Nov, Dec, Feb. No breeding. Using area 3.

Sacred Ibis — Max. no. 7 on Jan 1990, seen 17 times (35%) on 9 months (not Jul, Aug or Oct), 3 highest months Jan-Mar, average 3, lowest Jul-Sep, average <1. No breeding. Using area 3.

Straw-necked Ibis — Max. no. 23 in Aug 1990, seen 27 times (56%) on 11 months (not July), 3 highest Aug-Oct, average 5, lowest May-Jul, average <1. No breeding. Using areas 4 & 5.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill — Max. no. 22 in Mar 1990, seen 41 times (85%) on all 12 months, 3 highest Mar-May, average

9, lowest Jul-Sep, average 3. Breeding in 1988, 1989 & 1992 with maximum 8 nests. Using areas 2 & 4.

Black Swan — Max. no. 664 in Jan 1989, seen 34 times (71%) on all 12 months, 3 highest Jan-Mar, average 158, lowest Jun-Aug, average 2. No breeding. Using areas 2 & 4.

Freckled Duck — Max. no. 52 in Jun 1989, seen 7 times (15%) on 4 months, Dec, Mar, May & June with the highest no's. in May-June, average 18. Low average 0. No breeding. Using areas 1 & 6.

Australian Shelduck — Max. no. 3600 in Oct 1989, seen 44 times (92%) on all 12 months, 3 highest Oct-Dec, average 1253, lowest Jun-Aug, average 6. Breeding 1989. Using all areas. The high months coincide with the moulting periods.

Pacific Black Duck — Max. no. 414 in Feb 1989, seen 46 times (96%) on all 12 months: 3 highest Jan-Mar, average 111, lowest Aug-Oct, average 6. Breeding 1991. Using areas 2, 3 & 4.

Grey Teal — Max. no. 2500 in Jan 1991, seen 46 times (96%) on all 12 months, 3 highest Dec-Feb, average 835, lowest Jun-Aug, average 22. Breeding 1989 & 1992. Using areas 2, 3 & 6.

Chestnut Teal — Max. no. 2 in Dec 1990, seen also in Feb 1990, 1 only on second occasion. No breeding. Using area 2. Chestnut Teal were seen in Jul 1991, Aug 1990 & Sep 1989 (one only each time) at Hurstview. Presumably all "vagrants".

Australasian Shoveler — Max. no. 238 in May 1990, seen 32 times (67%) on all twelve months, 3 highest Mar-May, average 40, lowest Sep-Nov, average 2. No breeding. Using areas 2 & 3.

Pink-eared Duck — Max. no. 1250 in Apr 1990, seen 29 times (60%) on 11 months (not Aug), 3 highest Mar-May, average 270, lowest Aug-Oct, average <1. No breeding. Using all areas.

Hardhead — Max. no. 387 in May 1988, seen 29 times (60%) on 11 months, not Aug, 3 highest Mar-May, average 86, lowest Aug-Oct, average 11. No breeding. Using areas 4 & 5.

Maned Duck — Max. no. 30 in Nov 1991, seen 16 times (33%) on 7 months, not Jan-Apr inclusive or Jun, 3 highest Sep-Nov, average 7, lowest Jan-Apr, average 0. Breeding 1989 & 1991. Using areas 1 & 2.

Blue-billed Duck — Max. no. 498 in Jun 1990, seen 42 times (88%) on all 12 months, 3 highest May-Jul, average 157, lowest Nov-Jan, average 4. No breeding. Using areas 4, 5. & 6.

Musk Duck — Max. no. 195 in Apr 1991, seen 47 times (96%) on all 12 months, 3 highest Mar-May, average 71, lowest Oct-Dec, average 4. Breeding 1991. Using areas 5 & 6.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle — seen once (2%) in Apr 1992 when it swooped on an Australian Pelican in the middle of the Lake. The pelican put its bill vertical and snapped at the attacker. After several circles of the Lake close to the water, the eagle settled in a tree in area 4 where it appeared to "survey the scene". After some 15 minutes the eagle took off and flew in the direction of Crackers Swamp.

Marsh Harrier — Max. no. 2 in Jan 1989, seen 5 times (10%) in Jan, Feb and Apr only. No breeding. Using all areas.

Black-tailed Native-hen — Max. no. 12 in Dec 1992. Seen 5 times (10%) in 5 months, Sep and Dec-Mar inclusive. No breeding. Using areas 2 & 3.

Eurasian Coot — Max. no. 228 in Feb 1991, seen 41 times (85%) on all 12 months, 3 highest Jan-Mar, average 90, lowest Aug-Oct, average 7. Breeding 1988, 1989, 1991 & 1992. Using all areas.

Black-fronted Plover — Max. no. 32 in Feb 1990, seen 18 times (38%) on 7 months, Feb -Aug inclusive, with the highest 3 Feb-Apr, average 9. No breeding. Using areas 1 & 2.

Black-winged Stilt — Max. no. 49 in Feb 1989, seen 18 times (38%) on 8 months, Jan to Jul inclusive and a single bird in Oct. Highest 3 months Jan-Mar, average 29, lowest average <1. No breeding. Using areas 1 & 2.

Banded Stilt — Max. no. 19 in Dec 1990, seen 5 times (10%) on 5 months, Dec-Apr inclusive. No breeding. Using area 1.

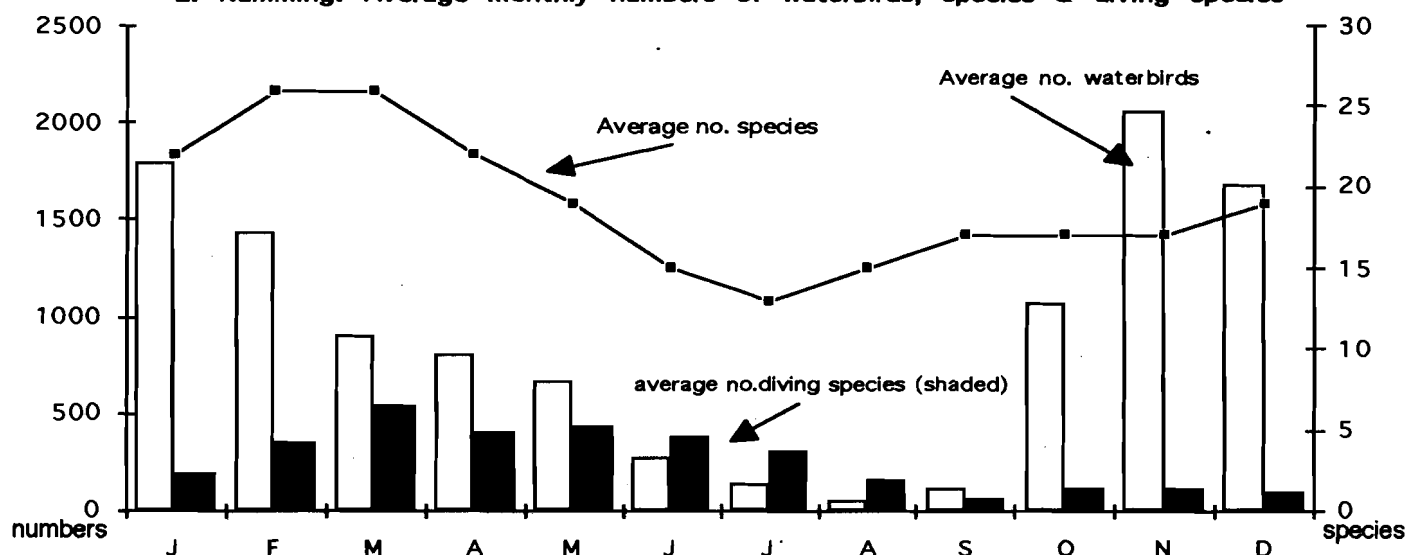
Red-necked Avocet — Max. no. 154 in Jan 1989, seen 13 times (27%) on six months Jan to May inclusive and once a single bird in July. Highest 3 months Jan-Mar, average 34, lowest average 0. No breeding. Using area 1

In the next fifteen minutes the engine was loudly turned over and the boat launched and driven round the Lake twice, on both occasions outside the designated area and into that clearly sign-posted for bathers only.

The count of birds for the month was 1551 with 26 species. Within fifteen minutes of the arrival/launching of the ski boat, only 4 species were to be seen — Red-necked Avocet (90), Black-winged Stilt (49), Black-fronted Plover (5) and Silver Gull (58). The first three of these species are shore line feeders and they were and remained on the shore line in Area 1, which being more shelving, was the most distant from the circling boat.

All three species (avocet, stilt and plover) seemed to gain from the wave action of the boat, presumably as more food was

L. Namming: Average monthly numbers of waterbirds, species & diving species



Common Sandpiper — Max. no. 2 in Jan 1990, seen 16 times (33%) on 6 months, Jan-May inclusive and once in July. Highest 3 months Dec-Feb. Using area 1.

Greenshank — Max. no. seen 13 in Mar 1988, seen 7 times (15%) on 3 months Jan-Mar only, average 3. Using area 1.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper — one bird seen once in Feb 1990 (2%) in area 1.

Red-necked Stint — 3 birds seen once in May 1990 (2%) in area 1.

Curlew Sandpiper — seen twice, (4%), 5 in Mar 1988 and 4 in May 1990 in area 1.

Ruff — one bird seen once (2%) in Feb 1989 in area 1.

Silver Gull — Max. no. 58 in Feb 1989, seen 15 times (31%) on 6 months, Dec - May inclusive. 3 highest months Jan-Mar, average 22, lowest average 0. Using areas 3 & 4.

Whiskered Tern — seen on 4 occasions, 3 of which were a single bird, the other, 13 birds in Nov 1990. The other sighting months were Feb-Apr inclusive.

cast ashore and washed to the shallows. None flew from the Lake. The Silver Gull, mainly in area 4 scattered but quickly settled round the edges of the Lake in all areas, presumably to also seek food disturbed by the boat.

All the other 1349 birds of 22 species departed, as far as could be ascertained in 25 minutes of subsequent observation. The majority appeared to fly towards Guraga and Hurstview. This was the one survey at which a Ruff was seen: my hope of longer viewing was curtailed by the skiers.

Lake Namming once had a depth gauge in the lower water but this has been removed, presumably to advantage the skiers, for it would have been in their way. Consequently the actual depths were not known. However the Lake, like most on the coastal plain is at its lowest in March-April and highest in August-September, following the rains of winter. The water level usually declines fairly steadily from the high point to the low.

The chart (above) shows the average number of species present throughout the year, the average numbers of species other than diving species and the average number of the divers. (Diving species at Namming are Little Black, Little Pied and Great Cormorant, Blue-billed Duck, Hardhead, Musk Duck, Great Crested, Hoary-headed and Australasian Grebe and Darter.)

It is evident that from January the non-divers/waders/shoreline birds etc decline steadily as the water level first falls and then rises, while over the same period the number of diving birds steadily increases, until at the time of the highest water

Unfortunately Lake Namming is open for water skiing. Judging from tyre marks and litter, skiing is mainly a warm months pursuit (when the water is at its lowest and the activity the most dangerous) Consequently surveys when at week-ends (the main skiing time) were carried out early (before 0830 hrs.) to avoid the possibility of disturbance.

It transpired however in February 1989, not having commenced survey until 0930 hrs, that the survey was virtually complete when a single water-ski boat was brought and launched.

levels, diving species outnumber all others, in June, July and August. Subsequently as water levels fall, these opposing trends are reversed. Lake Namming is important for the diving species, significantly more being present on average than at either Guraga or Hurstview, with the exception of Hoary-headed Grebe.

Lake Namming is both visually attractive and important for waterbirds. It is to be hoped it will receive appropriate protection and that there will be a reconsideration of the water-ski policy.

Reference:

Jaensch RP, Vervest RM & Hewish MJ (1988) *Waterbirds in Nature Reserves Of South-Western Australia 1981-1985 Reserve Accounts*, RAOU Report No. 30, Canning Bridge, WA
B. Buchanan

PAINTED SHIPE AT BROOME

On the morning of 20 January we found a male Painted Snipe under our orchard pump in Broome, apparently trying to drink from the outlet pipe which had a slight leak. The weather was very hot, we had had practically no rain and the bird was obviously exhausted.

He was put in a box in a quiet and cool spot with a dish of water. Unfortunately after appearing to recover, he gradually weakened and died that evening.

A. Cuthbert

(A good colour photograph accompanied this note. Unfortunately black/white reproduction could not shew the subtlety of the colouring. Ed.)

OF GRASSHOPPERS AND BOWERBIRDS

On 13th April I was working in my office at the Argyle Diamond Mine when my attention was drawn to a Great Bowerbird outside. Great Bowerbirds are common, but this one was hopping along a path with up to one metre hops for some 20 metres. It picked something up and shook it.

I observed through my binoculars that the Great Bowerbird had a large (about 10cm) green grasshopper held by one wing. This broke off. It then picked up the grasshopper by the other wing and shook it free. The bowerbird then picked up the grasshopper, shook it briefly, dropped it on the path and then appeared to jump on it. This all took place over a period of about one minute.

Next, a "ta ta" lizard (about 30cm long, but mostly tail) raced up, swallowed the grasshopper in one bite and raced away. I thought the bowerbird looked shocked and hopped a couple of times after the lizard. The look of the bowerbird made me laugh.

The Great Bowerbird's plumage looked cleaner and neater than any I had seen previously, with its lilac crest very evident but not raised. I had not seen a bowerbird catching insects previously, and I was surprised that it let the lizard (common in the area) have a chance.

F. O'Connor

NESTING TOGETHER

On Monday 1st February I was taken to see the nest of a 'small black and white bird like a wagtail' built at the top of a platform near some conveyors in the Argyle Mine processing plant.

On reaching the site an Australian Magpie-lark left the nest and perched on a beam about 10 metres away and called vociferously. I was told that this was not the bird that had mobbed my informant the day before.

The nest was a typical Australian Magpie-lark one, mud, lined with some grass. There were three pale (but brown blotched) eggs in the nest. It was located on an electrical cable (about 3cm thick) beneath an electrical switchboard, about 10 to 15 metres above the ground.

A Willie Wagtail gave a warning chatter and then hovered about a metre from us, before perching on a beam some three metres above. It had been sitting on a nest four metres to the right of that of the magpie-lark. The Willie Wagtail nest looked like a miniature version of the magpie-lark nest although showing more grass in the structure. It was also based on the same electrical cable though close to a beam about 15cm above it. There were three eggs very similar in colour to the magpie-lark, but much smaller.

Australian Magpie-larks are abundant at Argyle with many nests in trees around the process plant, the village, the Alluvials plant, the airport and near the roads. However this is the first I have seen in the structure of a building.

Willie Wagtails are also common at Argyle. This is the first nest that I have observed but a nest had been reported to me during the previous wet season (possibly the same nest and pair). The nests that I have seen elsewhere in Australia were difficult to locate and in a bush or tree branch within two metres of the ground.

There is plenty of nesting material available all year round. The conveyors nearby carry wet diamond ore after crushing, with some spillage, on to the structure and the ground below.. Across the road about 30 metres away is a drain with wet soil/mud, and there is some patchy ground vegetation nearby.

Both nests were in good condition despite the extended rain that had fallen in the previous week and the occasional gusty winds. The switchboard and beam had been well chosen to provide protection from the elements. My main surprise was that these two fairly aggressive birds had chosen to nest so close together.

They were both very vocal during our presence, but were surprisingly not very aggressive, possibly because of our hard hats. While access to the location is easy, few people would need to go there during their normal duties.

Postscript: It was reported to me that all three Australian Magpie-lark and three Willie Wagtail eggs hatched. However, a few days later all Willie Wagtail chicks had gone - cause unknown. The three Australian Magpie-lark chicks fledged.

F. O'Connor

(Beruldsen G (1980) *A Field Guide to Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds*, Rigby. Australia mentions Willie Wagtail nests on "ropes or wires" and "usually less than five metres above the ground" (p.316). Ed.)

KORUP SWAMP

The land owner within whose property is Korup Swamp informed me that the location of the swamp on most maps is incorrect. I have not checked this, but it is exactly located on the tourist map sheet *The Stirling and Porongurup Ranges of Western Australia*, issued by the Department of Lands and Surveys.

Korup Swamp is on the north side of Bloxidge Road, 7.2 km from the junction with Palmdale Road. At that point there is a wide farm 'cocky' gate. The swamp is 230 metres north from the gate along the fence line. The swamp is not visible from Bloxidge Road.

When visited in the last week of March, after some

particularly heavy rain in the South-West, Korup had a good area of open water, 250 metres x 100 metres. Obviously rather larger at the height of the winter wet, it is a swamp which has easy access at all times of the year and good vantage points for observation. It is fresh.

Being late March, waterbirds were relatively few and unsurprising — Australasian Grebe 4, Hoary-headed Grebe 22, White-faced Heron 1, Yellow-billed Spoonbill 1, Australian Shelduck 76, Pacific Black Duck 4, Grey Teal 12, Maned Duck 25, Blue-billed Duck 22, Musk Duck 3, Purple Swamphen 1, Eurasian Coot 4.

Korup has been mentioned in WABN once previously (No. 58, June 1991), for the presence of Long-toed Stint. An attractive swamp of easy access, with good viewing places which is within easy reach of Albany, Mount Barker or the Porongorups it should be worth a visit if you are in the area.

B. Buchanan

SANDPIPER EVADES FALCON

On Saturday 20th March I was observing a solitary Wood Sandpiper from a car at 10-15 metres distance in a small shallow pool at the Argyle Diamond Mine alluvial tailings dam. The Wood Sandpiper suddenly walked to stand still in the shade of a small rock about 30cm in the pool. This seemed strange to me until I looked up and saw a Brown Falcon approaching from about 100 metres away. The Brown Falcon flew about 10 metres directly above the Wood Sandpiper but appeared not to see it. The Wood Sandpiper then continued to feed.

The Wood Sandpiper had not seemed to be keeping a lookout for predators. It had its head down feeding most of the time. Perhaps it noticed the falcon, or heard an alarm call from other birds, although there were none within 30 metres.

F. O'Connor

B B C B Q

This being an 'historic' issue Big Bird's questions are all history.

- 1) In which century was the first printed book devoted entirely to birds ? 15th, 16th, 17th or 18th Century ?
- 2) The V formation of geese and other birds and their changes of leader were first observed by ?
- 3) Possibly the first to study birds in the wild was ?
- 4) In what year was *On the Origin of species by means of natural selection* (Charles Darwin) published?
- 5) In what year was the first long range banding recovery ? 1875, 1903, 1909, 1913 or 1922 ?
- 6) Which country has the earliest falconry records ? When ?
- 7) The first bird list for WA was published when ?
- 8) Who arrived on 6 march 1839 at Fremantle to commence collecting birds ? Drummond, Gould, Gilbert or Priess ?
- 9) The first positive reference to a WA land bird was made by ? Vlamingh, Dampier, Pelsaert ?
- 10) In what year was the "first" WA RAOU excursion ?

Beach Patrol

Members living on or near the coast of the State are reminded of the ongoing DEAD seabird survey: The Beach Patrol Scheme.

With the imminence of winter gales and cold weather the possibility of finding beach-washed birds becomes more likely. Should any member come across a specimen during a walk along the beach during the coming months we suggest it is picked up, placed in a plastic bag and sent with all haste to Ron Johnstone c/o the WA Museum.

A note should be included with the specimen stating where and when it was found and the sender's name. Another should be sent to the RAOU office for my attention so that an overall picture can be formed of Western Australian coastline. The cost of postage will be refunded.

Last year few specimens were sent in. We hope for more this year. Of those received 75% consisted of immature Australasian Gannets killed by swallowing fish-hooks and strangled by the attached gut. We do not require any cormorants, other than the Black-faced Shag.

B. Barrett

Notices

STARLING ALERT

Peter Coyle from the APB says a flock of 70 Common Starlings have been sighted 65 kms East of Esperance, 8 kms South of Condingup. This is the largest flock that has been sighted for two years.

If anyone sees this flock or any starling please report to Ron Payne, APB, Esperance (090) 761333 or to the APB in Perth on (09) 368.3333.

WETLANDS PROJECT

The Australian Heritage Commission has recently contracted the RAOU to determine which wetlands are most important for waterbirds and shorebirds. South Australia and southern Western Australia are the first areas to be investigated.

I have been employed as Research Officer for the next 11 months to use available information to identify those wetlands most important for birds and to develop nominations for inclusion on the Heritage Commission's Register of the National Estate.

The project will be carried out mostly by myself, but there will also be a small volunteer component. If you are looking for an excuse to spend some time at an interesting wetland, I may well be able to provide you with one.

There is likely to be a need to collect photographs and possibly extra information on bird usage of some wetlands and mud maps of areas where birds congregate.

If you have any enquiries about the project, have any relevant unpublished information or would like to help, I would be pleased to hear from you. I will be based at Perry House part of the time and can be contacted by telephone on (09) 383.7749, or at the monthly general meetings. There will be a progress report in the next issue of WA Bird Notes.

Julie Raines, RAOU Research Officer

Malleefowl Project

There has been a heartening response to the request for information about Malleefowl and mound sightings. Most refer to the last 5 years but some go back about 30 years. Reports have been received from 45 observers and their information has been recorded and plotted on a map. Further data has been gathered from Atlas records of 1977-81 and periods prior. Searches have been made in WA Bird Notes to find reports from 1984 to the present and much information has been made available by CALM staff.

However these records only scratch the surface.

If you have records which have not been forwarded to the WA Group office because you believe the information is well-known, you may be incorrect. Dryandra reports are a good example. Collecting Dryandra sightings has resulted in 39 mounds being placed on the Dryandra map, but only three of those mounds were reported by two or more observers. In March an organised search found another 15 mounds which had not been known to the project committee. There must be more.

The region of WA which supports Malleefowl is vast, though severely fragmented. If you have seen Malleefowl or mounds please contact the office. More reports are needed to gain a better understanding of this bird. Your information is valuable, whether current or historical, for both can indicate changes in occurrence.

Historical records indicate how widespread occurrences of Malleefowl can be: Shark Bay, Warburton Range, SE of Madura and south of Northcliffe. More recent sightings have been made at locations within the above extremes which are quite surprising: Deep River, William Bay, Lake Namming, the York district and many others which were not reported during the Atlas reporting period.

Malleefowl/mound reporting sheets have been prepared and these are available from the WA Group office. Members are encouraged to search likely areas for mounds anywhere within the southern half of our huge state.

Even a small area, carefully searched for an hour by 2 or 3 members and clearly documented on the reporting sheet, will be included in the project's data. At a later date the search can be extended by the next adventurous group. Coverage can be thus extended gradually to many remote sites as members travel about.

Please send your reports of Malleefowl and mound sightings to the WA Group office (09) 383.7749, or contact Rod Smith, co-ordinator (09) 397.5319 or at work (09) 293.2777.

Excursion Reports

LAKE McLARTY 14 Feb

A good number of members attended this outing, many no doubt hoping to see waders and some of the lesser known species.

Unfortunately the water level of the lake was high and there were only small numbers of most species i.e. Red-kneed Dotterel (1 adult, 1 immature), Black-fronted Plover (7), Black-winged Stilt (20), Red-necked Avocet (1), Greenshank (5),

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (c.10), and Red-necked Stint (3-4). The wader highlights for me were Marsh Sandpiper (6), Long-toed Stint (c.8) and Wood Sandpiper (80+).

Other interesting sightings were Rufous Night Heron (20-25) flying around (some disturbed from a melaleuca/ti-tree patch in the south-west corner), Glossy Ibis (1) and Yellow-billed Spoonbill (c.100).

As usual, almost all the waders were on the eastern side of the lake, only small numbers on the south and virtually none along the western shore.

Lake McLarty is shown as Big Lake on the RAC Perth Region series of road maps and is just south of Lake Mealup and to the east of Harvey Estuary. It is an excellent location for waders at the end of summer (February, March and April).

I. Standring

KALAMUNDA N.P. 20 Feb

On a fine clear but windy day, ten members walked through the southern part of Kalamunda National Park. Despite gloomy prognostications, we managed to see a total of 14 species. Probably the wind kept sightings down, including the area's most expected species, such as Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush and Red-browed Firetail. As it was, we saw Port Lincoln and Red-capped Parrots, Scarlet Robin, Splendid Fairy-wren, White-naped Honeyeater and Western Spinebill. None exciting, but different to the normal run of suburban birds, in pleasant rural country not too far away on a Saturday morning. Better luck next time.

B. Wilson

BOYUP BROOK 27 Feb

This weekend at Warraminga, property of Di and Geoff Lodge, was a great success. Eleven campers recorded 52 bird species.

A neighbour Ian Parker, guided us to a large reserve of Wandoo woodland nearby, where Regent Parrots, Painted Button-quail and many Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters were observed. A White-breasted Robin was close to the verandah of Ian's home and 8 species were feeding 3 metres away at a bird table. We were also shown a resident pair of Barn Owls breeding close to the house in a huge old dead tree - they are year round residents.

On Sunday morning, Di guided us around their 100 ha. jarrah forest block. Numerous Scarlet Robin with Western Yellow Robin and White-naped Honeyeater were among species sighted.

In the afternoon we walked in the campsite area and along the river. It was very pleasant birding with Restless Flycatcher, Little Pied Cormorant, Black-fronted Plover, Darter and a large flock of Maned Duck.

J. Rogers

WALYUNGA 7 Mar

The weather for this walk was warm, autumnal, with a cooling breeze. We saw a reasonable variety of birds but the total bird population was small.

The most remarkable absentee was the Rufous Treecreeper. The river bank alongside Long Pool had high numbers of them on previous visits and yet the 14 pairs of keen eyes saw not a single specimen this time, although we might have heard a call.

Despite the disadvantages, it is a splendid walk along the river bank and then easterly up to the higher ground with its sweeping views over the valley to the wooded slopes opposite. We saw two small flocks of mixed species feeding together

Weebills, Brown Honeyeaters and Western Gerygones mainly.

One pair of sharp eyes saw a dark shape flit into the top of a tall stump, about three metres tall, 300 mms in diameter, burnt and obviously hollow at the top. One of the party scratched the trunk to simulate a goanna climbing and we were delighted at the success of the ruse, for the dark shape shot from its hide and froze onto a nearby branch - it was an Australian Owlet-nightjar. The bird stayed motionless for several minutes and it finally became bold enough to return our close inspection and we were able to appreciate the disproportionately large dark eyes set well forward and the faint outline of a facial disc. It was an adult bird, dark grey above and darker beneath than as shown in the illustration in Pizzey G. (1980) *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, Collins, Sydney (illus 56). The markings on the neck were not particularly noticeable.

Later, we walked the southern boundary of the park in an area of mixed woodland, mainly young Wandoo, but with a good understorey of shrubs and some patches of heath. We saw, Splendid Fairy-wren, Western Gerygone, Grey Shrike-thrush, Weebill, New Holland and Brown Honeyeaters.

In all we recorded 27 species.

P. Anson

BAYSWATER SANCTUARY 17 Mar

This remarkable area would not exist had it not been for Eric Singleton's guidance and perseverance in persuading the local Council to retain the old gravel pits. In 1977 it was proposed to route the Tonkin Highway across the swamp part of which was being used as a tip.

Now, 16 years later, we and the public can watch both water and bushbirds from the comfort of a well-built wooden hide, whilst those who may be confined to a wheelchair have access by means of a well-graded tarmac path.

Fourteen members with 12 guests met, listened to Eric's introduction and were conducted around the area. Emphasis has been given to the requirements of breeding ducks and thanks to Eric and his helpers many breed each year.

During our visit a total of 44 species were seen, the most notable of which were two Spotless Crake which fed close to the hide, taking no notice of a somewhat noisy group watching their performance. The Sanctuary has a bird list of over 80 species.

B. Barrett

DOOPITER SWAMP 21 Mar

Ten members visited the swamp and adjacent lake on a dull day, but pleasant for walking. We walked around the northern end and disturbed many duck, most of which flew to the southern end well sheltered from our intrusion by a screen of dead ti-trees. There were many Australian Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal as well as Blue-billed Duck and Musk Duck.

Since shooting has been prohibited on the property more birds use the swamp - the area was badly poached up to the end of the 80's.

We surveyed the northern lake for the first time, finding two new species - Dusky Moorhen and Spotless Crake - as well as a wing-tagged Great Egret and Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Fifty-six species in all were seen.

Members wishing to visit the area must apply for permission from the Estate Manager, Bill Vogan, on telephone 341.7263 as the lake-swamp is on private land.

B. Barrett

DRYANDRA 27/8 Mar

A preliminary investigation of reports of Malleefowl mounds at Dryandra resulted in 21 mounds, so it was encouraging to discover another 15 during our search. These have been incorporated into our Dryandra mound map.

The Malleefowl Conservation Project is investigating the status of the Malleefowl at Dryandra where work will continue. Other areas will be searched and monitored for mounds later and other regions of the state are also under consideration for future study.

The Dryandra search parties were an energetic group. Twenty seven searched for mounds, their efforts resulting in sightings of echidnas, Malleefowl, numbats, woylies and kangaroos as well as the usual range of interesting birds for which the area is well-known.

None of the mounds was active but a few were encouragingly recent. Our search covered two square kilometres. The June search will be adjacent to that region and with a similar number of volunteers, will probably cover another three square kilometres.

R. Smith

AMARILLO POOL 3 Apr

On 3rd April 16 people met at the farm on what was a very pleasant autumn day. A walk over the paddocks to the pool was made more enjoyable by regular sightings of woodland birds.

Once at the pool, the Southern outflow produced some birds but nothing like its full potential. Once at the pool proper shorebirds were hard to find but well worth the effort. Good close views were obtained of Long-toed Stint and Wood Sandpiper with a few Curlew Sandpiper showing signs of breeding plumage.

On the open water avocet in large numbers were the focal point with good sightings of the regular Marsh Harrier and Whistling Kite.

J. Hunt

DUMBLEYUNG 9/12 Apr

This Easter campout on a 2,300 hectare property leased for sheep grazing by Terri and Dayle Lloyd of Dumbleyung, was most ably led by Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg. "Birralee" is about 300 km from Perth via Narrogin or Wickepin, with pasture, large areas of mallee heath and some regrowth. *Banksia baueri* and *Banksia sphaerocarpa* were flowering prolifically. Several kilometres away, a lovely area of Salmon Gum and Wandoo, is a Town Reserve for the Shire of Kulin and for this we have a separate list, with 33 species to date. Throughout the four days the weather was mild to cool with a little light rain. Nineteen people camped on the property, six enjoyed the comfort of the Oasis Hotel in nearby Harrismith, and two people from Wagin visited us for one day.

A total species list of 70 was collated for the farm property which included some sightings made in February. There were 12 species of honeyeaters including White-eared, Purple-gaped, Yellow-plumed, Brown-headed, White-cheeked, Tawny-crowned, Pied and Black Honeyeater - the Black Honeyeater being well out of its usual range. Robins were well represented with Southern Scrub-robin, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin and Western Yellow Robin being seen, as were Jacky Winter, several Shy Hylacola and *Calamanthus*. Raptors recorded to date are Square-tailed Kite, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Spotted Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Brown Falcon and Australian Kestrel. An Australian Owlet-nightjar called each dusk and dawn near our campsites, a Southern Boobook was

heard and two Tawny Frogmouths seen on a spotlighting run. In February, a Spotted Nightjar was flushed.

We searched an area of dense scrub for Malleefowl mounds in groups of three, walking about one and a half kilometres through the scrub before repeating the walk in another area. After three hours of precision teamwork two old mounds were located.

We have been invited to return to this property in the spring to add to the species list. The wildflowers on the heath should be superb, so make a note of our intention to return, possibly in October.

D. Beckingham

NORTH LAKE 14 Apr

It was a lovely crisp sunny morning, but we only had seven members and two non-members on our walk. The lake was very full and there was no exposed margin beyond the reed beds. On the western side there was the usual mixed flock of swans, coots, moorhens and assorted ducks looking for handouts.

We moved to the east to explore the shore and the bushland where birds were active both on the water and on land. Our most notable sighting was a Stubble Quail which we flushed from under our feet. The large Splendid Fairy-wren population of this area was as active as ever. We counted 44 species in all.

P. Anson

LAKE MEALUP 1 May

About 30 members arrived at Lake Mealup on a cloudy morning when the water level in the Lake was fairly low (0.5 m maximum). Species sighted included about 90 Yellow-billed Spoonbills, with several Royal Spoonbills and several hundred ducks (mostly Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal and Australian Shelduck) together with other Black-winged Stilt, Hoary-headed and Australasian Grebes, Australian White Ibis, Great Egret and Marsh Harrier.

The adjoining bansia-eucalypt woodland contained among others Scarlet Robin, Golden and Rufous Whistler, Splendid Fairy-wren, Weebill, Yellow-rumped and Inland Thornbill and Western Gerygone. A total of 51 species was recorded.

After lunch some visited the nearby Harvey Estuary, where Great Crested Grebe, Silver Gull and Red-necked Avocet were added to the species tally.

P. Wilmot

Coming Events

Hello! We are the new excursion organisers, taking over from Margery Clegg and Bryan Barrett who have done a splendid job for the past 2 years or so. All members will join us in thanking them for their hard work in organising a most interesting and enjoyable series of outings.

We welcome members' ideas for excursions and would also like to hear from anyone willing to lead one. Contact us on (09) 459.1971 or leave a message with the RAOU Office (09) 383.7749.

Several members have enquired about the possibility of a pelagic trip to the continental shelf, about 50 km offshore. We have looked at hiring a boat - a booking for a whole day would be \$880, which based on 16 people is \$55 each, seems rather

expensive.

Following further discussion with the owners they said they would be happy for 2 or 3 people to go out with the fishing crew for a reduced charge of \$30 each. The boat is called the M.V. Cape Peron and is 44 ft long. Any interested party can make a booking by phoning (09) 592.2292.

K. & W. McRoberts, Excursion Organisers

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

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 5th June Full day excursion to Flynn Road

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

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 12th June Half day excursion to North Mole, Fremantle

Meet at 8.30am. We aim to spend a couple of hours looking for seabirds. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Michael Craig

Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th June Campout to Dryandra Forest

Another search for Malleefowl mounds. Accommodation available Friday and Saturday nights - charges: \$10 per person per night; \$2 per day visitor. If you arrive during the morning meet everyone at the cottages at 8am or wait there at 10.30am to be taken to the search area.

Clothing which will give adequate protection from prickly vegetation advisable, a compass, sleeping bag and food is needed. Crockery, cutlery and cooking utensils are provided at the cottages.

Contact Rod Smith (09) 397.5319 or 293.2777 if you intend to take part.

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

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.

Thursday 8th July Mid week excursion to Lake Monger

Meet at 8.30am, at the first car park past Gregory Street. An ideal birdwalk for beginners.

Leader: Norah Brockman

Sunday 11th July Half day excursion to Yellagonga Regional Park

Meet at 8.30am on the section of Bindaree Terrace off Goollelal Drive nearest Lake Goollelal.

Leader: To be announced

Sunday 25th July Half day excursion to North Mole, Fremantle

Meet at 8.30am. We are trying to improve knowledge of winter seabirds in this area. BYO telescopes.

Leader: Michael Craig

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

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.

Friday 30th July to Monday 2nd August Winter Campout - Rottnest Island

It has been some years since RAOU visited Rottnest: last time was extremely enjoyable, so come for good birding, walking, company and log fires!

We have booked one of the settlement cottages. Numbers are limited so book early by telephoning Karen or Bill McRoberts (09) 459.1971, or RAOU Office (09) 383.7749, ASAP. Accommodation cost \$25 for the 3 nights. Bring own cutlery, personal linen, sleeping bag and food.

Sunday 8th August Half day excursion to Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale

Meet at 8.30am at the first carpark for Wungong Dam, end of Admiral Road (off Albany Highway), Bedfordale. An excellent site for Red-eared Firetail and White-breasted Robin. Over 80 bird species have been seen in the area.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Wednesday 18th August Mid week excursion to Mary Carroll Park, Gosnells

Meet at 8.30am at the car park off Eudoria Street. A pleasant easy walk. 38 species of waterbird have been seen here.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

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

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.

Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th August Campout to Mt Lesueur/Badgingarra

Visits will be made to Lesueur National Park and the property of Joy and Don Williams. Accommodation will be at the Apex Recreation Camp at Jurien, where there is also a caravan park. Please phone Karen or Bill McRoberts on (09) 459.1971 ASAP for bookings.

Monday 20th September Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm

Brian Wilson, our previous Chairman and now Hon.

Secretary of the RAOU in Melbourne, will speak to us about the birdlife of that part of Antarctica which lies south of South America.

Monday 25th October Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm

Hobby photographer Mavis Norgard will show slides which may give some encouragement to those members who would like to try bird photography, but are deterred by the belief that it is essential to have special equipment and technical knowledge.

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

Ron Johnstone of the Western Australian Museum is preparing a handbook on the birds of Western Australia and will discuss various aspects of our birds which he has examined in the course of that work.

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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 September
Issue
21 August 1993**

B B C B Q Answers

- 1) 16th Century: it was in this century that comprehensive study of birds commenced. (p 294)
- 2) Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) of the Holy Roman Empire. (p 293)
- 3) Johann von Perna (1660-1731). He realised, inter alia, the importance of learning in bird song. (p 294)
- 4) 1859 (p 294)
- 5) 1903, a White Stork ringed in Hungary was shot in South Africa. (p 295)
- 6) China. 2000 BC (p 295)
- 7) 1836 in the Swan River Guardian. (p 30)
- 8) John Gilbert, whose "work in Western Australia was of so remarkably brilliant a character that his activities in the new colony overwhelmingly obscure the work done by any other collector during the century" (p 30). He was collecting for John Gould (p 33)
- 9) Francisco Pelsaert, in a book about his wrecking on the Houtman Abrolhos. He referred to Brush Bronzewing, still present there. (p 15)
- 10) October 1981 to Mundaring Reservoir and Pickering Brook led by Graeme Chapman, assisted by Roger Jaensch (see WABN No. 20 Dec 1981)

Questions 1 to 6 derive from Brooke M & Birkhead T (Eds) (1991) *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Ornithology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and questions 7 to 9 from Serventy DM & Whittell HM (1976) *Birds of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, WA to which the page references refer.

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

Conference: Nature Conservation

An international conference on the role of networks among those involved in conservation is being organised by the CSIRO, Division of Wildlife and Ecology, the Centre for Conservation Biology at Auckland University, World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF Australia) and CALM, WA.

The conference will be held in Geraldton from Sunday 15 to Friday 20 May 1994.

The conference will cover subjects such as: community involvement and the role of indigenous people in conservation; the links between scientists and community groups involved; conservation biology as a discipline and as a force for change; current understanding of landscape linkages and the role of landcare groups in conservation; the integration of conservation with production and developments and the role of mining companies. These issues, together with other subjects related to the conference theme will be presented in invited and contributed papers as well as in structured workshops.

Those interested in attending or obtaining further details should contact: Dr Denis Saunders, CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology, LMB No 4, PO Midland, WA, 6056, telephone (09) 252.0111.

Yellow-crested Cockatoo: request for Information

The Yellow-crested Cockatoo is endemic to Indonesia. Its range encompasses Sulawesi and the island chain of Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, Sumba and Timor. The Department of Nature Conservation and Forest Protection and ICBP are concerned that the species appears to have markedly declined in recent years. An assessment of the distinct citron-crested Sumba sub-species indicated a remaining population of only between 1150 and 1850 individuals.

PHPA and ICBP would welcome records from any birdwatchers who have visited Sulawesi and Nusa Tenggara in recent years. We would be grateful for sighting details - date, location, habitat or land use, time spent in the field, the number of contacts and group sizes. Of equal value is information on forest areas visited where Yellow-crested Cockatoos was NOT recorded.

Send your records to ICBP Indonesia Programme, P.O. Box 310\Boo, Bogor 16001, Indonesia. Thank you.

Budgerigars: request for sightings

A film on the Budgerigar, titled "Wild Desert Pet" is being made in association with the ABC, National Geographic and the BBC with cinematography by Lindsay Cupper, of Mildura, who has made many films on birds.

Some of the key scenes of the documentary require the filming of large flocks of Budgerigars in their natural habitat. Due to the unpredictable nomadic lifestyle of Budgerigars the producers must rely on recent sightings by competent field observers to locate large flocks.

Should you encounter any large flocks of Budgerigar within the next few months, we would be extremely grateful for - how many birds, where last sighted, in which direction headed and whether breeding. Contact Mitchell Kelly or Gary Steer, Sky Visuals Pty Ltd, 133 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo, NSW, 2011, telephone (02) 356.2266 or Lindsay Cupper, San Mateo Avenue, Koorlong, Mildura, Vic, 3500, telephone (050) 257248.

Birds and Acacias (wattles): request for participation

You may wish to participate in the 1993 BOCA survey.

The objective is to find out which bird species eat which wattle seeds and other ways that birds use wattles for food e.g. insect larvae from branches or nectar from glands. The record sheet makes allowance for not knowing on what the bird was feeding e.g. "Details unknown: birds foraging on trunk". Either level of information will help build a clearer picture than now exists.

If you want to assist, ask the RAOU (WA) office to send you a record sheet.

Straw-necked Ibis: request for current breeding information

I am in the final year of my PhD on the Straw-necked Ibis. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who knows of active breeding sites for this bird (other than Capel and Cataby, which are already under investigation). Any information concerning birds with yellow wing tags would also be appreciated. Contact at Murdoch University (09) 360.2690, or write care of the School of Veterinary Sciences, Murdoch University, Murdoch, 6150, or most evenings (09) 459.1971. Thanks.

K. McRoberts

Eyre Expeditions to Plumridge Lakes

There will be further expeditions to Plumridge Lakes organised by Eyre Bird Observatory on :—

7 — 18 June

12 — 23 July

13 — 24 September 1993.

If you are interested in joining one of these expeditions, tel (090) 393 450 for further details.

Holidays: request for holiday friends

Hank van Wees and his wife Elisabeth would like to meet a similar couple, husband a birdwatcher and wife with other hobbies, with a view to occasional joint holidays. If interested please ring on (09) 276.7445.