



# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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No 68 December 1993

## White-breasted Robin at Neerabup

The White-breasted Robin is known from parts of the south coast through to the Darling Range north to Canning Dam (Storr 1991), with occasional sightings further north at Bickley (eg WABN 47: 13). There is also an isolated population from Lancelin to near Geraldton. On the Swan Coastal Plain, in recent years it has only been found near Harvey and Busselton, with records of vagrants at Bengier Swamp and Floreat (Storr and Jonstone 1988, Storr 1991).

On 13 October 1993 I saw a single White-breasted Robin on the Swan Coastal Plain near the southern end of Neerabup National Park, six km NW of Wanneroo. This location is almost 50 km NW of Bickley and 60 km from Canning Dam. I had a good, clear view of the bird in good light, using 10 x 50 binoculars at a distance of about 6-7 m. I also heard it giving typical robin alarm calls. The bird was in a dense 2m tall thicket of *Dryandra sessilis* with scattered tuarts. At least on the Swan Coastal Plain, the White-breasted Robin seems not to have been recorded previously in *Dryandra* thickets. The birds north of Lancelin are usually found in dense thickets of *Acacia* and *Melaleuca*.

During a search at the same site two days later, I could not relocate the bird. The vegetation is very dense, however, and so robins could easily be missed. On the other hand, it may have been a vagrant on its way through, although this is perhaps unlikely at this time of year. It would be interesting to know whether this bird belongs to the northern or south-western population. If it is a northern bird, this species may also occur in other dense thickets between Neerabup and Lancelin.

As observations in other localities may assist in answering this question, observers should be on the

lookout for the White-breasted Robin on the Swan Coastal Plain, particularly in dense thickets.

Interestingly, I recorded Golden Whistlers within 100 m of the site where I saw the robin. The Golden Whistler is also scarce on the Swan Coastal Plain.

**Allan Burbidge**

#### References:

- Storr, GM (1991) *Birds of the South-West Division of Western Australia* Records of the WA Museum Suppl. No. 35  
Storr, GM and Johnstone, RE (1988) *Birds of the Swan Coastal Plain and Adjacent Seas and Islands*. Records of the WA Museum Suppl. No. 28

The Editor and staff  
of  
Western Australian Bird Notes  
send  
Christmas Greetings  
to all.

May you have good bird observing  
in 1994  
&  
remember to  
send one contribution to WABN  
during the year.

# Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

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

**Great-winged Petrel** - 20+, 25/9/93, Cape Leeuwin (Augusta-Margaret River) - JH, FO

**Australasian Gannet** - 6, 27/9/93, Penguin Island (Rockingham) - FO \* 8, 10/10/93, Scarborough Beach (Stirling) - GL, IL

**Chestnut Teal** - 1 male in eclipse plumage, 2/10/93, Kogolup Lake (Cockburn) - JH, TK

**New Zealand Scaup** - 1, 9/5/93, North Lake (Cockburn) (escapee from Perth Zoo) - AA

**Spotted Harrier** - 1, 20/9/93, ca. 6 km N of Stirling Range (Gnowangerup) (rare this far south) - FO

**Malleefowl** - 1, Hyden-Norseman Rd, 1.2 km W of turn-off to Graham Rock (Kondinin) - BN \* 1, 29/9/93, 4 km W of Hyden (Kondinin) - JB \* 2, 18/10/93, Buntine Nature Reserve (Dalwallinu) - BB

**Common Pheasant** - 1 male, 20/8/93, Bold Park (Perth) (presumed escapee) - PA

**Sooty Oystercatcher** - 47, 18/9/93, car park at Cape Leeuwin Light House (Augusta-Margaret River) - JH

**Double-banded Plover** - 1 immature, 10/9/93, Pelican Point (Nedlands) - MBy \* 2 immatures, 18/10/93, Woodman's Point (Cockburn) - BM

**Whimbrel** - 17, 10/10/93, Creery Island (Murray) - JH, TK, CD

**Greenshank** - 175, 5/10/93, Creery Island (Murray) (apparently the highest count from south-western Australia) - JH, TK, DCD

**Laughing Turtle-Dove** - 1, 19/10/93, Buntine (Dalwallinu) (E margin of range) - BB

**Galah** - 12, 14/9/93 Rottnest Island (unusual on Rottnest) - TJ

**Rainbow Lorikeet** - 2+, at intervals since early 1992, Henley Brook (Swan) (this species is expanding its range) - AW \* 6, 28/10/93, Edith Cowan University campus, Joondalup (ca. 2 km W of Wanneroo) (Wanneroo) - MJB

**Ground Parrot** - 1, 16/6/93, Cheyne Beach (Albany) - AD, LW \* 1, 10/9/93, Waychincup River (Albany) - MH (these are the first definite records in the Manypeaks-Cheyne Beach area since the 1970s)

**Crimson Rosella** - 1, 10/9/93, Bold Park (Perth) (presumed escapee) - PT, RN

**Red-whiskered Bulbul** - 1 male, 25/8/93, Safety Bay (Rockingham) (specimen now in WA Museum) - per APB

**Southern Emu-wren** - 2, 22/10/93, Duke of Orleans Bay, feeding young Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo (Esperance) - PB, VM, VW

**Chestnut-breasted Mannikin** - 25, 27/6/93, Bibra Lake (Cockburn) (feral population) - AK

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

**Regent Parrot** - 8+, 24/8/93, near Paynes Find, entering hollow linbs, apparently breeding (Yalgoo) - KC

## KIMBERLEY

**Great Frigatebird** - 50 + (breeding also recorded), 11/5/93,

Adele Island (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, KC

**Great-billed Heron** - 1, 18/5/93 and 12/6/93, Sale River (West Kimberley) - KC \* 1, 22/5/93, Walcott Inlet (West Kimberley) - KC \* 3, Hunter River, Prince Frederick Harbour (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

**Magpie Goose** - 200+, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Radjah Shelduck** - 1 female, 1/93, Broome sewage ponds (Broome) - GS (unusual in the western Kimberley)

**Pacific Baza** - 1, 8/6/93, King Cascade, Prince Regent River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

**Red-chested Button-quail** - 2, 21/5/93, grassy woodland near Isdell River (West Kimberley) - FO, KC

**Chestnut Rail** - 9, 3/6/93, Hunter River, Prince Frederick Harbour (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

**Banded Lapwing** - 20, 4/7/93, Lake Gregory near Stafford Bore (northern-most record) (Halls Creek) - FO, KC

**Oriental Plover** - 14000, 6/3/93, in 18 km along Eighty Mile Beach (Broome) - BBO

**Red-capped Plover** - 2, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (unusual in this area) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Ruddy Turnstone** - 1, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (unusual in this area) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Common Redshank** - 2, 4/6/93, entrance to Rothsay Waters, near Prince Regent River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

**Asian Dowitcher** - 35, 8/6/93, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO \* 54, 11/6/93, Richard's Point, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - GS

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** - 100+d, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (unusual in this area) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Red-necked Stint** - 20+, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (unusual in this area) - FO

**Curlew Sandpiper** - 10+, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham East Kimberley) (unusual in this area) - FO

**Gull-billed Tern** - 150, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Caspian Tern** - 50+, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Torresian Imperial-Pigeon** - 250+, 2/6/93, in fruiting trees, Coronation Island (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC \* 250+, 5/6/93, St Andrew Island (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

**Spinifexbird** - 1, 4/7/93, ca. 20 km S of Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) (few records from this area) - KC

**Rufous-crowned Emu-wren** - several family groups, 4/7/93, 10-20 km S of Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) (northern limit of range) - KC

**Black Grasswren** - 1+, 19/5/93, lower Sale River (West Kimberley) - KC

**White-lined Honeyeater** - 1, 18/5/93, Sale River (West Kimberley) (SW limit of distribution) - KC

**Yellow Chat** - 1 male, 9/10/93, south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Masked Finch** - 4, 26/7/93, Manning Gorge, ca. 2 km W of Mt Barnett HS (West Kimberley) (near southern margin of range in this part of Kimberley) - GS

**Gouldian Finch** - 3, 1/6/93, near Lombardina, Dampier Peninsula (Broome) - KC \* ca. 100, 31/7/93, Pumpkin Spring, 20 km W of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

**White-browed Woodswallow** - 1, 26/7/93, with Masked and Black-faced Woodswallows, Manning Gorge, ca. 2 km W of Mt Barnett HS (West Kimberley) - GS

**CORRIGENDA AND ADDENDA TO WABN 67, September 1993**

**Long-billed Corella** - 11, 4/93, Lake Joondalup South (Wanneroo) - NH. At least some of the birds in this flock were Eastern Long-billed Corellas (*Cacatua tenuirostris*). This is a separate species from both the Western Long-billed Corella (*C. pastinator*) and Little Corella (*C. sanguinea*). Flocks of corellas in Perth can contain the Little Corella, Eastern Long-billed Corella or Western Long-billed Corella, all established from aviary escapees. Mixed flocks do occur. The Little Corella appears to be common in Perth, The Western Long-billed Corella uncommon and the Eastern Long-billed Corella rare. More observations would help clarify this, but observers should take care in distinguishing the three species.

**Tree sparrow** - 4, 7/93, Fremantle (Fremantle) - APB - arrived by ship. (Shown as Diamond Firetail in WABN 67.)

Observer codes for WABN 67: Add CD = Chris Davis

**Observer Codes**

AA = Andy Anderson  
AD = Alan Danks  
AK = Alan Kemp  
APB = Agriculture Protection Board  
AW = Allan Willis

BB = Bruce Buchanan  
BBO = Broome Bird Observatory  
BM = Bill McRoberts  
BN = Brenda Newbey  
CD = Colin Davis  
FO = Frank O'Connor  
GL = Graham Little  
GS = George Swann  
IL = Ingrid Little  
JB = John Brooke  
JH = Jack Hunt  
KC = Kevin Coate  
LW = Leigh Whisson  
MBy = Max Bailey  
MH = Mary Hart  
MJB = Mike Bamford  
NH = Neil Hamilton  
PA = Peter Anson  
PB = Phyllis Bentley  
PT = Patricia Todd  
RN = Richard Nowotny  
TJ = Tom Jeffcote  
TK = Tony Kirkby  
VDM = Viv McCormick  
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**Notes For Contributors**

The Editor requests contributors to note :-

- \*WABN normally only publishes material on WA birds
- \*contributions should be written or typed with Double Spacing
- \*WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- \*copy will be edited where appropriate
- \*contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

**Deadline for the March Issue**

**12 February 1994**

**BAT AND BUTCHERBIRD**

While visiting the Pallinup Nature Reserve (Shire of Jerramungup) on 17th April 1993 I saw a Grey Butcherbird fly to a fallen log with what appeared, at first, to be a bird in its beak with its wings still flapping. Through my binoculars I saw that the captive 'bird' looked more like a mouse-sized mammal.

The Grey Butcherbird delivered about 6 blows to its victim against the log and then flew off when I briefly lost sight of it. I saw the butcherbird about 50 metres away, in a Yate tree, where it was jamming its prey into a forked branch. I was still confused as to the prey but as I watched the Grey Butcherbird wrenched a chunk of flesh from its victim and a wing flopped open. To my surprise I realised the prey was a bat.

It was mid-morning and a bright sunny day. The bat was still alive when I first saw the Grey Butcherbird with it. I assume the bird found the bat roosting in a nearby hollow as it was unlikely the bat was active during the day. Do Grey Butcherbirds forage for bats as part of their normal behaviour or was this just an opportunistic find?

A. Sanders

**ALFRED COVE ATTACKER**

On the 2 November 1993 I was standing on the mudflats at Alfred Cove about 200 metres from the shoreline observing a large flock of migratory waders. The flock, of several thousand birds, comprised mostly Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers. There was also a large number of Silver Gulls resting on mudflats nearby.

I had been observing the flock for about half an hour while searching for a Broad-billed Sandpiper, when the flock suddenly flew and headed rapidly towards Como. At the same time there was a loud commotion among the gulls. Curious as to the

cause of this uproar, I turned to see a slow flying Bar-tailed Godwit, which was following the flock, being knocked into the water by a Peregrine Falcon.

The Peregrine Falcon did not catch the godwit. It then turned towards the raucous gulls. As the Peregrine Falcon flew towards the land, it cruised about two metres above the mudflats and it frightened the Silver Gulls into flight. As they took off, the falcon swooped and hit gulls in the back, which caused them to crash into the water. About eight Silver Gulls were bullied in this way by the Peregrine Falcon, but none appeared injured.

The falcon was last seen flying away from Alfred Cove toward Canning Highway. An astonishing sight, and yes, I did see the Broad-billed Sandpiper!

G. Moore

## DUCK v DUCK

At 6.10 p m on Sunday 26 September, I was observing a family of Pink-eared Duck - two adults and two young - at Lake Claremont when I witnessed an unusual event.

The two adult Pink-eared Duck rose into the air and flew in different directions piping loudly. The cause of this was a Musk Duck, which had taken one of the young from below the lake surface. The Musk Duck surfaced holding the duckling by the legs and proceeded to shake the captive round until it was gripping it by the head. By this time the duckling was only making very feeble kicks with its legs. The Musk Duck then submerged, coming to the surface again some distance away from the initial location of the incident. It then proceeded to swallow the duckling whole - quite a meal. There was no sign of the adults or the other duckling by now.

Searching the literature, I have only found one reference to the taking of Hardhead ducklings by Musk Duck, (Frith et al 1969, p. 1154), who are quoted in HANZAB.

I have not observed this phenomenon previously and it appears uncommon.

P. Sandilands

Reference: Frith H J, Braithwaite W, McKean J L (1969)  
*CSIRO Wildlife Research* 14: 17-64.

## PELICAN POINT UP-DATE

In the fifty two weeks to June 30, 1993 the Reserve, which is part of the Swan River Marine Park, was visited in forty three of them and not less than twice in each month. Fifty two species were recorded.

Only for the second time in the last ten years were Bar-tailed Godwit not seen and neither were Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Curlew Sandpiper were recorded on two visits only. Variegated Fairy-wren were seen or heard every month. White-cheeked Honeyeater is now resident and seen regularly, but the New Holland Honeyeater has been seen only once in ten years. Of the four species of cormorant, somewhat surprisingly the Great Cormorant was present most frequently.

A Western Rosella seen in December was a new species for the Reserve.

M. Bailey

## MORE SOUTHERN EMU-WREN

The article on Southern Emu-wren (J. Hunt, WABN No. 67 September 1993), prompted me to set down my own observations.

Over the past 8 years I have observed Southern Emu-wren on the Darling Scarp at Gosnells on three occasions and also adjacent to Coalmine Beach Caravan Park, (in the Walpole-Nornalup National Park), on four occasions.

All these sightings have been associated with sparsely

distributed eucalypt species (up to 3 m high) within a heath community.

The three Gosnells sightings were January and November 1987 and October 1991, from a total 84 surveys of this locality commenced in April 1985. The Gosnells heath is approximately three hectares, and directly below a 330 KV power line ascending the scarp. Emergent eucalypt here is *Eucalyptus calophylla* and *Eucalyptus wandoo*, which SECWA periodically lop to near ground level.

Coalmine Beach sightings were mainly December to January; once in October. The sighting area, between Coalmine Beach Caravan Park and Walpole Inlet, is a *Pimelea longiflora* heathland community, with probable *E. marginata* and other eucalypt species.

C. Marston

## Notices

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre on Monday 7th February 1994 at 8 p m. All Committee positions will be declared vacant and office bearers will be elected for 1994-1995.

Nomination forms may be obtained from the office and must be signed by the proposer, seconder, and the person nominated, all of whom should be paid-up members. The completed form should be sent to the Secretary or handed in prior to the commencement of the A G M.

### PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED

Any WA RAOU members who are keen bird photographers and are interested in forming a photographic group within the WA RAOU please contact —

Gordon Tozer (09) 446 7696 after 6 pm.

### WADER WATCHERS WANTED

The Australian Wader Study Group has been co-ordinating bi-annual wader counts throughout Australia since the early 1980's. The aim of this monitoring programme is to record trends in wader numbers, both across Australia and at individual sites. Results are regularly reported in *The Stilt*, the specialist journal produced by AWSG.

Members interested in assisting with the monitoring programme, either by taking on a new site or assisting at an existing one, are asked to contact Mike Bamford, the AWSG representative in WA, on: (09) 309 3671 or at his very appropriate address, 23 Plover Way, Kingsley. WA. 6026.

## Observatory News

### BROOME

As the new Wardens (Rebecca Hayward and Jon Fallaw) of the Broome Bird Observatory, we would like to say hello to all W.A. Group members. We look forward to meeting those of you who travel to Broome or keeping in touch through W A Bird Notes. We have emigrated from Melbourne, where we were involved with wader monitoring and banding on Westernport Bay.

We had a busy changeover week, learning the ropes and observing many new bird species.

Our first cannon netting was on the shores of Roebuck Bay on 30th October with Vaughan and Martina, Doug Watkins, Alastair Cuthbert and many willing hands from Denmark, Poland, Victoria and Broome! We caught 186 waders of 8 species, including one Mongolian Plover and 17 Little Terns. Of the 103 Red-necked Stint, nearly 20% were juvenile, as was one of the three Grey-tailed Tattlers.

With the build up to the wet in progress, temperatures have soared into the 40's, which has resulted in high usage of the Observatory bird baths - Zebra and Long-tailed Finches, doves, honeyeaters, Great Bowerbird and Little Friarbird, all of which come to drink when dew is not available from the surrounding Pindan woodland. All these thirsty birds quickly depart when the Brown Goshawks come to drink. One female in particular has a really good splash and leisurely bath.

We have also been fortunate enough to see the resident Grey Falcon, albeit a three second glance, which we are assured is the maximum viewing time for this raptor here.

We are looking forward to more exciting experiences with birds of the Kimberley and to sharing these with you.

**J. Fallaw & R. Hayward**

## EYRE

The Bird Banding and Malleefowl Studies courses ran concurrently and were well supported, (see report) and on a recent trip to Twilight Cove 26 Wedge-tailed Eagles were observed. Raptor numbers seem to have increased lately, perhaps in response to the large numbers of rabbits in the area. At the Observatory Wedge-tailed Eagles are seen almost daily and we have had recently sightings of Square-tailed Kite, Whistling Kite, Australian Kestrel, Brown Falcon and Brown Goshawk. On the Tableland, Black-shouldered Kite were seen on three occasions. They are unusual in this area. Some visitors said they had seen six Australian Kestrel nests in Cocklebidly Cave, all with chicks, - one with five.

Both the number and variety of waders in our weekly Beach Count have increased in the last month. We have seen Ruddy Turnstone, Grey Plover, Red-capped Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling, Red-necked Stints, Red and Great Knot and Greenshank.

White-fronted and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater left the immediate Observatory area but are still plentiful at the "9-mile", where the Banding group netted 67 one day.

We were surprised to see a Buff-banded Rail at the drinking bowl recently, but on checking the records, found one was seen briefly last year. This year the rail stayed two weeks.

On the Tableland, Blue Bonnets and Ground Cuckoo-shrikes are being recorded. Budgerigar have returned and they and Chestnut Quail-thrush, Striated Pardalote, Yellow-rumped Pardalote, Welcome Swallow, and Red-capped Plovers are all nesting. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo has been observed being fed by White-browed Scrub-wren.

From 5th to 11th December, "Field Techniques for Bird Study" (leader Stephen Davies), will be held, followed by "Star Gazing" (Trevor Keates). December 23 to 29 will be "Christmas at Eyre". January 9 to 22 will be "Greening the Dunes" with "Going Batty on the Nullarbor", (leader Doug Watkins). March has "Birding for Beginners" with the Wardens.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas, especially those

who we have met at Eyre in the past twelve months and look forward to meeting more of you in the next twelve months.

**R. and G. Watkins**

## MALLEEFOWL/BANDING REPORT

The first two-week combined Bird Banding/Malleefowl Studies course at Eyre Bird Observatory proved to be productive, enjoyable and extremely well dined. Participants were offered the choice of taking part in the activities of either course as well as joining the wardens in bird census work in the mallee, on the Hay Plain or on the beach. All activities were well supported and we thank everyone for their enthusiasm, diligence and good humour.

Two Malleefowl were banded; a young Red-capped Plover caught on Kanidal Beach during the beach count was a retrap record, having been banded two weeks earlier; a day trip by the banding group to 9 Mile was most fruitful whereas an excursion to Burnabbie was not - the total number of birds processed outnumbered the banding party by one!

Some mist-netting time was lost due to the vagaries of Eyre's erratic weather patterns but the workforce then directed their efforts to searching for new Malleefowl mounds or relocating and making observations on previously-recorded mounds. Most was done in the study areas below the escarpment. Four mounds are currently active there and one other active mound is located above the escarpment. Each of the twenty six known mounds in the mallee sandplain was examined and the active ones monitored. The total monitoring time was 21.5 hours, which with the many kilometres walked, indicates the enthusiasm of the members of the course.

Items of greatest interest were: the first bird to be banded, a Malleefowl, caught early before the course officially commenced.

Rita Watkins banded the first Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo ever caught at the Observatory. The three previous banding records, in 1982, 1985 and 1990, were made at Twilight Cove

Many of the New Holland Honeyeaters retrapped on the 6th October had been banded as a cohort of young birds on the 1992 banding course. This year we again caught many juveniles in "clusters" in the same position and expect to encounter some of these birds during the course next year.

The only retrap at 9 Mile was a White-browed Scrubwren banded in November 1984. It was the first time that this bird had been retrapped, 8 years 10 months and 22 days later.

This age record was extravagantly outdone by Purple-gaped Honeyeater 122-40113, banded 6 February 1980 and retrapped 3 times during this course, the last time on the Friday before we left E B O. It fell into a net, probably as a farewell gesture, to record its 43rd retrap! It was then not less than 13 years, 8 months and 6 days.

A Silveryeye and a Purple-gaped Honeyeater were each recorded as moving 1.5 km in a day between banding sites.

The combined Bird Banding/Malleefowl Studies course will run again in 1994. It will soon be booked out. Put your name on the list now if you would like to join us at Eyre and are willing to take part in both sections of the course.

The banding and retrap figures for the 24 species processed and the new longevity records for the Observatory banding programme are shown.

**Alma de Rebeira, Perry de Rebeira** (Regional Organiser, Australian Bird Banding Scheme WA), **Rod Smith** (Co-ordinator, Malleefowl Studies, Eyre BO)

Species	banded	re-traps	total
Malleefowl	2		2
Red-capped Plover		1	1
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1		1
Welcome Swallow	19	22	41
Tree Martin	1		1
Jacky Winter	1		1
Grey Shrike-thrush	4	2	6
White-browed Babbler	6	2	8
Weebill	4		4
Inland Thornbill	2		2
White-browed Scrub-wren	16	10	26
Blue-breasted Fairy-wren	7	6	13
Yellow-rumped Pardalote	5	1	6
Silvereye	75	19	94
White-fronted Honeyeater	75		75
Brown Honeyeater	23	11	34
Singing Honeyeater	74	45	119
White-eared Honeyeater	5	1	6
Purple-gaped Honeyeater	12	11	23
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	1		1
New Holland Honeyeater	176	58	234
Red Wattlebird	1		1
Grey Currawong	7		7
Striated Pardalote	2	2	11
24 species	<u>526</u>	<u>191</u>	<u>717</u>

#### Longevity records

Species	Age	re-traps
Purple-gaped Honeyeater	13 yrs 8 m 6 days	43
White-browed Scrubwren	8 yrs 10 m 22 days	1
Grey Shrike-thrush	7 yrs 0 m 10 days	1
Blue-breasted Fairy-wren	6 yrs 4 m 10 days	3
New Holland Honeyeater	5 yrs 9 m 0 days	2
Silvereye	5 yrs 1 m 13 days	1

## B B C B Q

Being towards the end of the breeding season, Big Bird's questions are about breeding matters.

- 1) What is the Fraser Darling effect ?
- 2) Can birds communicate with their young in the egg before hatching ?
- 3) Can chicks in eggs communicate with each other ?
- 4) The two feeding advantages of colonial nesting are ?
- 5) How many communal breeding species are in most of South West WA ? under 11, 11-14, 15-18, 19-22, 23+.
- 6) Most Australian communal breeders are ground feeding insectivores in dry woodland. How does this effect communal breeding ?
- 7) What is thought to be the single most important factor in determining monogamy in birds ?
- 8) Parasitic cuckoos often remove an egg from the host nest. Is this to prevent the host counting and rejecting the extra egg ?
- 9) There is a strong correlation between body size and fledging periods. True or false ?
- 10) Who first described imprinting in birds ?

## Excursion Reports

### WUNGONG GORGE 26 Sept

Eighteen bird-watchers gathered at the car park, Wungong Gorge, on what promised to be a glorious day. That promise was fulfilled, beginning with the sighting of a Pacific Heron in the trees high above the spill-way below the dam. In all, forty-four species of bird were sighted. We had prolonged views of Splendid Fairy-wrens in brilliant breeding colour, of Red-eared Firetails at their nest, of the Red-Winged Fairy-wren, of the Grey Fantail, the Horsfield's and the Shining Bronze Cuckoos, and a pair of Western Gerygones building their nest. It was, as one member put it, "an absolutely delightful day". Special thanks to our leader Bill McRoberts and to the other experienced bird-watchers in the group, for their help and advice.

D. Johnson.

### NARROGIN 2-4 Oct

Extremely adverse weather conditions prior to the long weekend of October 2 - 4 failed to deter eight RAOU members from meeting at the Narrogin farming property of Barry and Dorothy Hardie. We were fortunate to have the use of their well equipped shearers' quarters. The weather improved and a most enjoyable few days of birding was experienced.

The group walked through several areas of bushland on the Hardie properties and also an adjoining reserve. In the past mallet has been cut from these areas for use in tanning, but regeneration has occurred.

The habitats varied and included Wandoo, Brown Mallet, Casuarina, Marri and Jarrah with mostly low, sparse under storey. We also walked through an area of salt affected land that has been planted with Salt River Gum, Casuarina and Lupin tree. The environs of the homestead and a nearby creek bed also provided a number of birds for our list.

In all, a total of 62 bird species was recorded. Parrots were seen and heard in profusion in all areas. These included Port Lincoln Ringneck, Western Rosella, Red-capped and a small number of Regent Parrot. Three species of robin were seen by some of the group — Scarlet Robin were numerous and some Red-capped Robin and Western Yellow Robin were observed.

We enjoyed excellent sightings of a Peregrine Falcon, both in flight and perched and a pair of Tawny Frogmouth with young, in a tree overhanging the entrance to the property.

Other species identified as breeding included Red-capped Robin, Mistletoebird, Australian Magpie, Western Rosella, Grey Teal, Banded Lapwing and Red Wattlebird. The latter had recycled the nest of a Magpie Lark.

Many thanks to Bill McRoberts for leading the group, Robert Hardie for showing us the good birding spots and to the Hardie family for permission to visit their properties.

P. Bentley

### KALAMUNDA 9 Oct

Some 14 members walked along the track beside the Piesse Brook in fine sunny weather for a half-day's outing. Although the walk produced only 28 species, it was rewarding in that the "quality" was good. There were several excellent sightings of male Golden and Rufous Whistlers, likewise Varied Sittella, and a Peregrine Falcon that flew around before settling on a bare branch to be admired.

An Australian Raven was pursued by Tree Martins and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo called from an invisible position before finally coming out in the open. Within 5 metres of the group, two Port Lincoln Ringnecks had a furious fight, with feathers flying everywhere. At the end of the walk, a Sacred Kingfisher appeared and the bird count had to be temporarily abandoned to view a Variegated Fairy-wren.

BD. Wilson

## **TWITCHATHON 30 Oct**

This year we had only four teams in the Twitchathon: The "Kimberley Kuckoos", led by Gail Wells; "The Flighty Frogmouths", led by John Blyth, "The Golden Whistlers", led by Brian Wilson, and "Spot 'til You Drop", led by Bill McRoberts.

The overall winners were the "Kimberley Kuckoos", with 126 species, winning the perpetual prize of the engraved telescope. Their three best birds were a Garganey, a Yellow Wagtail and a Peregrine Falcon, a bird which is not often seen in the East Kimberleys.

The winners of the South of the 26th parallel section were "Spot 'til You Drop", with 104 species. These were all seen within the Perth Metropolitan area, with a Square-tailed Kite and nesting Black-shouldered Kites being "best birds".

Next were the "Golden Whistlers", with 100 species, again all seen within the Perth Metropolitan area. An Arctic Jaeger and an Osprey were of special interest.

Last, but not least, were the "Flighty Frogmouths", with 98 species, beginning in Dryandra Forest for the Malleefowl weekend and ending in Perth: a Rufous Songlark their "best bird".

We finished the event with an enjoyable BBQ at Perry House.

K. McRoberts

## **Coming Events**

### **No December Evening Meeting.**

#### **Sunday 5th December — Half day excursion to Alfred Cove**

Meet at 8.00 am at the car park in Troy Park, Burke Drive, Attadale (by the radio mast). Bring your telescope for wader watching.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

#### **Sunday 9th January 1994 — Full day excursion to 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 (i.e. the York road turnoff). We will look at several areas of wandoo woodland where 3 species of robin are usually seen.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

#### **Sunday 16th January — Half day excursion to Lake Gnangara**

Take the Gnangara Road off Wanneroo Road to the junction of Alexander Drive and turn left. Meet at the picnic area at 8:30 am. We will look for waders and bush birds. Don't forget hat, sunscreen, and water.

Leader: Graham Little

#### **Monday 24 January Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8.00 pm**

Dr Andrew Burbidge, the Director of the Threatened Species and Communities Unit at the WA Wildlife Research Centre at Woodvale, will speak on the birds of the Gibson Desert.

#### **Sunday 6th February — Half day excursion to the Wellard Wetlands**

Meet at 8.00 am at the corner of Zigzag Road and St. Alban's Road, Baldivis. The Wellard Wetlands are artificial wetlands that were once clay pits. In 1983 RAOU members sank knee-deep in clay to plant paperbarks in an effort to make the area more attractive to birds. Come and see the result 11 years later.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

#### **Monday 7 February — Annual General Meeting Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8.00 pm**

See Notices.

#### **Sunday 13th February — Full day excursion to Lake McLarty, Pinjarra**

Meet at 8.00 am at the intersection of Southwest Highway and the Old Bunbury Road, approximately 5 km south of Pinjarra - turn right into the parking area. We'll look for waders, ducks, etc. Wellington boots are recommended, plus hat, insect repellent and water.

Leader: Les Harris

#### **Monday 28 February Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8.00 pm**

Professor Brian Collins, Head of the School of Environmental Biology at Curtin University and currently President of the RAOU, will have as his topic "The Gouldian Finch - is it an endangered species?".

#### **Saturday 5th March to Monday 7th March — Dwellingup Campout: Jan and Rob Hill's property**

Meet at 11.00 am at the property entrance. Head east from Dwellingup for 1.5 km on the Pinjarra to Williams Road. Turn right into Vandals Road and travel 2.7 km. Turn left into River Road (not signposted, but look for the RAOU sign) and travel 1.2 km. Turn right into the property when you see the RAOU sign.

Come and enjoy some Jarrah forest birding, a swim in the river and some pleasant company. Basic bush toilets and water available. There will be room for tents and some caravans. Bring bathers, towels and gas stoves (due to the fire danger at this time of year, no fires please.)

Leaders: Jan and Rob Hill

#### **Sunday 13th March — Half day excursion to Thomson's Lake**

Meet at 8.00 am in the car park off Russell Road, between Pearse and Hammond Roads. A good area for bush birds, waders and waterbirds.

Leader: to be announced.

#### **Monday 28 March Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm**

A panel of experienced birdos chaired by Dr Allan Burbidge

