

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

No 70 June 1994

Submerging sandpiper, plenteous plovers, murderous magpie

SANDPIPER SUBMERGES

On the 20 February 1994 whilst birdwatching on the Chapman River near Geraldton, I observed a Common Sandpiper being pursued in flight across open water by a Brown Goshawk. As the raptor gained on its potential prey the sandpiper was observed to dive completely underwater.

The sandpiper remained submerged for a few seconds before surfacing and flying to the safety of the bank. The Brown Goshawk having missed its chance continued on in search of other prey.

I was greatly surprised by the whole incident as I did not think it was in the nature of waders to take refuge underwater. When life depends on it, perhaps anything will be tried.

T. Vigilante

MAGPIE ATTACKS

On 3rd April at 5.30 pm, my husband heard a commotion outside our house. He thought it was a cat after the birds. Instead he saw an Australian Magpie pecking a live Western Yellow Robin and I was called to the scene.

The magpie was a juvenile, probably born on our bush block last October. The Western Yellow Robin appeared to be an adult bird. The magpie was perched on a log and was periodically pecking at the robin, which lay on the log and kept flapping its wings. My husband was so disgusted with the magpie that he threw a stone at it, but missed. The magpie then flew off with the unfortunate robin in its beak and landed on a distant tree before flying down out of sight. Has anyone else seen a magpie take another bird?

L. Hassan

LESCHENAULT PLOVERS

On Sunday 6 February 1994 I was making my regular count of the waders around Pickles Point on the south end of Leschenault Inlet, Bunbury. The tide was high and all the waders were on the dredge spoil from the harbour extension. I counted 183 Grey Plover and three Pacific Golden Plover along

the edge of the wet area.

While moving to obtain a better view I disturbed three plovers. Large Sand Plover are not uncommon, but when I turned my 20x telescope on the birds at a range of 20 metres, I was surprised to see there were two with noticeably short bills. With the birds side by side, two had bills about the same length as the distance from eye to front of the head, while the third bird had a bill about two thirds or more of a head length. These three then joined another thirty birds which were hiding in the rough, dry ground some thirty metres away. These thirty were all Mongolian Sand Plover.

The 183 count of Grey Plover represents the largest number recorded on the Inlet and the second highest in the South-West of WA (Supplement to WABN No 68). It was also the first record of Mongolian Plover for the Leschenault Inlet.

G. Shannon

and KELMSCOTT ROBINS

Following an earlier major fire on the Kelmscott Scarp in March 1988, I observed a juvenile Scarlet Robin about 2 Kms west of the scarp in native trees planted around the Westfield Park Primary School oval. This was my first sighting of Scarlet Robin on the coastal plain since commencing weekly surveys in 1985. After a fire on 20 May 1994 I again saw a juvenile Scarlet Robin.

There seem two possible reasons for their presence. One could be a temporary displacement from fire devastated habitat; this being the robins' original territory. Another reason could be that young birds wander outside their territorial areas in Autumn (as occurs in Victoria and Tasmania — see Blakers et al (1984) p 367.

Adult Scarlet Robin on Kelmscott Scarp appear to be altitudinal migrants. Sightings tend to be more frequent on the lower scarp slopes in summer and autumn and on the upper slopes in winter and spring.

G. Marston

Reference: Blakers M, Davies SJF, Reilly PN (1984) *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, RAOU, Melbourne University Press.

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Cattle Egret - 1, 10/5/94, Claremont (Claremont) - PS
Great Egret - 44, 3/4/94, Jandabup Lake (Wanneroo) - AB, JR
Little Egret - 22+, 29/12/93, Mandurah (Mandurah) - IS, JH * 25, 12/2/94, Island Point, Harvey Estuary (Mandurah) - AB, MJB (high counts for the SW of WA)
Yellow-billed Spoonbill - 60, 3/94, Forrestdale Lake (Armada-Kelmscott) (high number at this site) - SN * 114, 27/3/94, Jandabup Lake (Wanneroo) (high number for SW) - AB
Chestnut Teal - 1, 27/3/94, Lake Monger (Perth) - IS * 2, 14/2/94, Lake Joondalup South (Wanneroo) - JB * 4, 6/3/94, Thomsons Lake (Cockburn) - RS
Pink-eared Duck - 200, 9/3/94, Lake Joondalup South (Wanneroo) (High number this site) - GL
Peregrine Falcon - 1, 16/2/94, Vasse Estuary, Busselton (Busselton) - RP * 1, 20/3/94, Lake Monger (Perth) - IS, BS * 2, 17/4/94, Mt Cook (Wandering) - IS, BS
Malleefowl - 2, 21/4/94, Karroun Hill Nature Reserve (Mt Marshall) - BB * 1, 17/12/93, Useless Loop Road, Shark Bay (Shark Bay) - TV
Spotless Crane - 10+, 20/3/94, Lake Monger (Perth) - IS, BS, DN, JN
Eurasian Coot - 3000+, 26/3/94, Joondalup Lake (Wanneroo) - AB, JR
Black-fronted Plover, 97, 16/3/94, Adventure World wetland, near Bibra Lake (Cockburn) - JH
Hooded Plover - 1, 28/12/93, Lake Clifton (Murray) - MB * 38 (about one-third in juvenile plumage), 25/2/94, Fitzgerald River National Park (Jerramungup) - BN * 44, 30/4/94, Lake Preston (Wanneroo) - BW * 2, 13/5/94, Cape Leeuwin (Augusta-Margaret River) - IS, BS
Double-banded Plover - 1, 6-7/4/94, Forrestdale Lake (Armada-Kelmscott) - TK
Large Sand Plover - 1, 26/10/93, Quindalup sand bar, Dunsborough (Busselton) (uncommon in the lower SW cnr of WA) - RP
Banded Stilt - 1000+, 16/2/94, Vasse Estuary, Busselton (high number this wetland) (Busselton) - MJB
Wood Sandpiper - 10, 13/3/94, Jandabup Lake (Wanneroo) - AB
Terek Sandpiper - 9, 30/10/93, mouth of Preston River, Bunbury (Bunbury) - RP
Red Knot - 120, 8/2/94, Pelican Point, Swan River (Nedlands) - MBy, FO
Pomarine Skua - 20+, 6/5/94, Woodman Point (Cockburn) - FO
Silver Gull - 1, blackish all over except for smudgy white nape; legs and bill reddish, 9/93, Coogee (Cockburn) KL * 1, sooty all over, black legs, dark reddish black bill, 1/94, Mullaloo Beach (Wanneroo) - DC * 2200, 12/2/94, Lake Cooloongup (Rockingham) - AB (high number for this site)
White-winged Tern - 100+ (many in breeding plumage), 25/3/94, South Yunderup (Murray) - TK

Roseate Tern - 7 in breeding plumage, 7/3/94, Woodman Point (Cockburn) - JH, IS
Rainbow Lorikeet - about 50, 2/94, Attadale (Melville) - PH * 9, 5/94, Lake Goollelal (Wanneroo) - MJB (this species is increasing in abundance in the Kingsley-Wanneroo area)
Regent Parrot - 1, 27/3/94, Lake Monger (Perth) - IS, BS * 1, 25/4/94, Yokine (Stirling) - IS (unusual in suburban areas; possible aviary escapees)
Fork-tailed Swift - 50+, 13/3/94, mouth of Poison Creek, Cape Arid National Park (Esperance) - SR, AR * 5, 20/3/94, Morley (Bayswater) - HvW
Tree Martin - 1000+, 3/94, Geordie Bay, Rottnest - MCA
Gilbert's Whistler - 1 female, 21/4/94, Karroun Hill Nature Reserve (Mt Marshall) - BB
Restless Flycatcher - 1, 7/5/94, Thomson's Lake (Cockburn) - MM, RS
House Sparrow - about 60, breeding, early 1994, Mariginiup (Wanneroo) - MM (the APB is controlling this population)
Australian Magpie-lark - 200, 25/4/94, corner Nicholson Road and Thomas Street, Oakford (Armada-Kelmscott) - MJB

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

Australian White (Sacred) Ibis - 1, 15/4/94, near mangroves, Carnarvon (Carnarvon) (rarely recorded in this area) - AB
Royal Spoonbill - 3, 11/1/94, man-made ponds near corner David Brand Drive and Babbage Island Road, Carnarvon (Carnarvon) (rarely recorded in this area) - GMO
Freckled Duck - 5, 6/4/94, Carnage Lake, 4 km S of Rowles Lagoon (Boulder) - BM & RAOU Campout
Marsh Harrier - 1, 10/1/94, Hamelin Pool, Shark Bay (Shark Bay) - GMO
Grey Falcon - 1, 4/5/94, Boolathana Station, north of Carnarvon (Carnarvon) - AB
Banded Stilt - 1500, 4/94, Cargills Salt Works, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - AWSG
Red-necked Avocet - 5000, 4/94, Cargills salt works, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - AWSG
Gallinago sp. snipe - 1, 18/1/94, Nanutarra Roadhouse, Pilbara (Ashburton) - GMO
Asian Dowitcher - estimated 100 before migration, April 94, Cargills Salt Works, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - AWSG
Red-necked Stint - 3000+, April 94, Cargills Salt Works, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - AWSG
Broad-billed Sandpiper - estimated 1000 before migration, 4/94, Cargills salt works, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - AWSG
Barking Owl - 2, 24/3/94, Weeli Wolli Spring, Marillana Station (Nullagine) - MJB
Common Bronzewing - 100+, 8/4/94, Dead Man's Soak, Nineteen Mile Rocks, Goongarrie National Park (Menzies) (arriving at dusk, landing nearby and walking into water) - BM & RAOU Campout
Gilbert's Whistler - 1, male, 3/4/94, Ryan's Find Road on track to Mt Walton, 213 km S of Jaurdi Station HS (Coolgardie) - HC, BM & RAOU Campout
Thick-billed Grasswren - 1, 9/4/94, 7.5 km south of Denham (Shark Bay) - AB

KIMBERLEY

Pied Heron - 1, 4/94, Broome Sewage Works (Broome) (rarely recorded in west Kimberley) - BBO, GS et al.

Cattle Egret - 2, 5/94, Broome (Broome) (rarely recorded in the west Kimberley) - GS, PC
 Yellow-billed Spoonbill - 1, 16/5/94, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO
 RadJah Shelduck - 1, 16/3/94, Argyle Village sewage ponds (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO
 Letter-winged Kite - 1, 25/3/94 and Apr 94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - BBO
 Black Falcon - 1, 16/5/94, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO
 Brolga - 114, 16/5/94, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO
 Comb-crested Jacana - 1, 18/3/94, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (southern limit of range in this area) - FO
 Painted Snipe - 2, 10/4/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - JH, JF
 Eastern Curlew - 350, 27/4/94, Bush Point, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO
 Pintail Snipe - 1 banded and photographed, 23/4/94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - AWSG
 Pectoral Sandpiper - 2, 18/3/94, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO
 Whiskered Tern - 1000+ birds in early March, and 32 nests with eggs, 26/3/94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - BBO
 Common Tern - 4, (1 in breeding plumage, with red bill with black tip, is presumably subspecies *hirundo* from the Atlantic), 10/6/94, Broome jetty (Broome) - GS * 400, April 94 (apparently the eastern subspecies *longipennis* with black bills). (Broome) - GS
 Rufous Owl - 1, Surveyor's Pool, Mitchell Plateau (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS
 Fork-tailed Swift - 3000+, 18/2/94, Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) - BBO
 Collared Kingfisher - 1, 24/1/94, Crab Creek, Broome (Broome) - GMo
 Tree Martin - 100+ each morning, moving north, 4-9/4/94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - AWSG
 Yellow Wagtail - 26, including a number of males in breeding plumage, 17/4/94, Broome Sewage Works (Broome) (probably subspecies *simillima*) (apparently the highest number recorded in Broome) - GS
 White-browed Robin - 1, riverine thicket near Mitchell River Falls, Mitchell Plateau (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS
 Little Grassbird - 1, 31/1/94, Lake Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (this appears to be a small isolated population) - GMo
 Purple-crowned Fairy-wren - 3, 24/7/93, Miners Pool, Drysdale River Crossing, Gibb River Road (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS
 White-winged Fairy-wren - 15-20 (6 banded), 5/4/94 Anna Plains Station (Broome) - AWSG (at or near northern limits of range in this area)
 Black-tailed Treecreeper - 1 immature, 16/5/94, Lake Campion, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO (near southern limit in the Kimberley)
 Black Honeyeater - 1 male (banded), Mar-Apr 94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - BBO, AWSG (near northern limit of range)
 Pied Honeyeater - 3 (1 male banded), 23/3/94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - BBO, AWSG
 Orange Chat - 8, 23/3/94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - BBO
 Painted Firetail - 10, 7/3/94, Anna Plains Station (Broome) - BBO * 2, 27/4/94, Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) (near

northern limit of range) - BBO

Observer Codes

AB - Allan Burbidge	JH - Jack Hunt
AR - Allan Rose	JW - Jane Newsome
ANBG - Australian	JR - Julie Raines
Wader Study Group	
BB - Bruce Buchanan	MB - Mary Bremner
BBO - Broome Bird Obs	
BM - Bill McRoberts	MBY - Max Bailey
BN - Brenda Newbey	McA - Marie Casley
BS - Bev Standring	MJB - Mike Bamford
BW - Brian Wilson	MM - Marion Massam
DN - David Newsome	MPa - Mike Mahoney
FO - Frank O'Connor	PC - Peter Collins
GL - Graham Little	PH - Peel Howden
GMo - Glenn Moore	PS - Peter Sandilands
HC - Helen Clark	RP - Ross Payton
HvW - Hank van Wees	RS - Rod Smith
IS - Ian Standring	SN - Simon Nevill
JB - John Blyth	SR - Sandy Rose
JuB - Judy Blyth	TK - Tony Kirkby
JF - Jon Fallaw	TV - Tony Vigilante

The Observer Codes for WABN No. 69 of March 1994 were inadvertently omitted. Apologies. Ed. Herewith:—

AB - Allan Burbidge	JH - Jack Hunt
AS - Angela Sanders	JR - Julie Raines
BB - Bruce Buchanan	JS - John Start
BBa - Bryan Barrett	KC - Kevin Coate
BBO - Broome Bird Obs	KL - KC Lim
BN - Brenda Newbey	KN - Klaus Niemela
CD - Colin Davis	LS - Leon Silvester
DC - Doug Coughran	MJB - Mike Bamford
FO - Frank O'Connor	MBY - Max Bailey
GM - George Miller	MC - Margery Clegg
GL - Graham Little	MCR - Michael Craig
GS - George Swann	ND - Norma Duff
HS - Helen Start	PBT - Peregrine Bird Tours
HvW - Hank van Wees	RD - Ray Downes
IL - Ingrid Little	TJ - Tom Jeffcote
JuB - Judy Blyth	
JB - John Blyth	TS - Trevor Stoneham

GOULD LEAGUE CAMP

Expressions of interest are invited from 11 year old students from all schools who have a genuine interest in Natural History. Spend 12 days in the richly endowed Bickley Valley studying all aspects of wildlife and the environment as part of schoolwork.
 Telephone the WA Gould League (09) 387 6079 at Herdsman Lake for details — do not delay — places are limited

Hooded Plover Project — new for WA

The Hooded Plover has been thought to be classified as *Charadrius rubricollis*. Marchant and Higgins (1993) have classified it as *Thinornis rubicollis* as being allied with the very rare Shore Plover *Thinornis novaeseelandiae* of the Chatham Islands.

The Hooded Plover is categorised as rare and in some states there has been a clear decline in numbers. In WA no survey of numbers for this species has been carried out and insufficient is known to make a reliable estimate of the numbers here. The species is particularly interesting in WA because, unlike their eastern counterparts which are rarely more than 500 metres from the coast-line, in WA some of the population breeds hundreds of kilometres inland, on the edges of salt lakes. It appears that many of these inland breeding birds move close to the coast after breeding and can aggregate in sizeable flocks in estuaries and on near-coastal lakes. In WA Hooded Plovers have been recorded coastally from Shark Bay to Eyre Bird Observatory and inland as far as Menzies.

How many Hooded Plovers are there in WA? This is the primary question we are hoping to begin to answer. It is also hoped we shall find out more about where and when they breed, their ecological requirements, pattern of movement and problems with disturbance.

The Project

The project has been initiated by the WA Group because of the lack of information about this species, the vast area sparsely occupied by Hooded Plovers and also because there is no other project of the nature for WA members at present.

Co-incidentally but fortunately, Mike Weston of the RAOU and the Australasian Wader Studies Group, is planning to undertake a Ph.D on Hooded Plovers in WA next year. He will analyze the data. Our efforts will assist him to make a more comprehensive and useful study. Funding for postage, printing, and administrative phone calls for the WA Group Hooded Plover Survey will initially come from our reserves, but sources of outside funding will be sought.

The project will commence in June 1994 (now) and run until June 1995 (inclusive). It will consist of:

(i) records made on an incidental basis throughout the survey period

(ii) a co-ordinated count in February 1995

Records should fit into this June to June time-slot. Earlier records are not required at this stage. A newsheet will be sent to contributors each quarter. Incidental records should be recorded on the observation forms supplied which will be sent

as required, though it is hoped that some observers will use photocopies. It is a one-year-only project so do what you can towards tracking down the Hooded Plovers of the west in this time.

Background

In 1987, the RAOU published a Conservation Statement (Schulz and Bamford, 1987) on the Hooded Plover, as the species appeared to be declining in NSW, Victoria and South Australia. The status of the Hooded Plover in WA was not known when the report was written and no detailed survey work has been done here since. Garnett (1992) in *Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia* classes the Hooded Plover as rare because current estimates are that the entire world population does not exceed 10 000 and may be as low as 5000.

Identification

The Hooded Plover is sturdy, almost neckless, with short, pale orange legs and it has a near-horizontal stance. The white band across the back of the neck is a major definitive feature of both the adult and the juvenile. (see illustration). Although the adult plumage of black, white and sandy-grey combined with the black-tipped red beak, red eye-ring and pale orange legs appears eye-catching in the field guides, it is very easy to overlook Hooded Plovers.

They often stand with their back to an observer before moving away inconspicuously or they will stand motionless behind a scrap of seaweed or among stones of a similar colour to their backs.

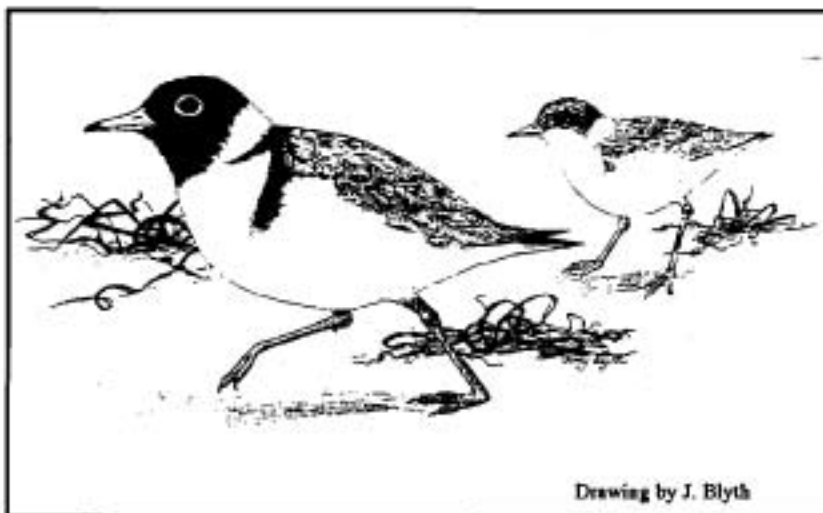
If a white neck band is seen, there should be no confusion with other species except with the very rarely seen (in WA) Little Ringed Plover. The broad wingbar, lack of a breast-bar, larger size, paler colour, should clearly differentiate the juveniles of these two species; the adults are less easily confused.

Habitat & Nesting

Hooded Plovers are usually found on wide bare shores where there appears to be little cover or vegetation. They also use primary dunes. Occasionally they have been recorded at inland fresh-water seepages.

Hooded Plovers nest on the beach, among dunes, on the edge of inland lakes and on rocky outcrops within salt lakes, between August and March. The decline of populations in eastern Australia is considered to be mainly due to disturbance while nesting. They have a 30

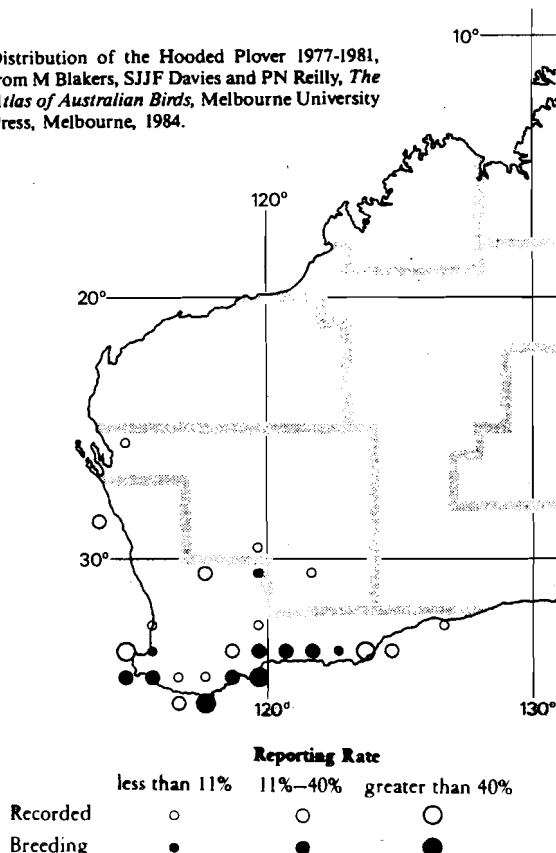
day incubation, the young do not fly for three weeks and have been seen to shelter in wheel ruts. Nests are very likely to be run over or stepped on and can readily be destroyed by dogs.



There is no information about their foraging habits and food in WA.

To help you decide general search areas, the WA part of the distribution of Hooded Plovers from *The Atlas of Australian Birds* (survey period 1977 to 1981 inclusive) is shown and the following list brings together the records which appeared in WA Bird Notes from 1987 to 1989.

Distribution of the Hooded Plover 1977-1981, from M Blakers, SJJF Davies and PN Reilly, *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1984.



Year	Date	Location	No.
1987	14/3	Lake Preston (Mandurah)	87
	16/3	White Lake (Esperance)	140
	18/4	Football Lake (Gingin)	1
	18/4	Forrestdale Lake (Forrestdale)	1
	12/5	Lake Clifton (Mandurah)	2
	29/8	Graveyard Swamp (Gingin)	1
	1/10	Stirling Range National Park	2
	29/10	Lake Clifton (Mandurah)	5
	13/12	Nornalup Inlet (Walpole)	4
1988	2/1	Ocean Beach (Denmark)	2
	9/4	Lake Warden (Esperance)	539
	23/4	Gracetown (Margaret River)	4
	1/10	Karbul (Esperance)	260
	18/11	Lake Preston (Mandurah)	6
	20/11	Benje Benjenup Swamp (Esperance)	50
	20/11	Two Mile Lake (Stirling Range NP)	4
	10/12	Ned's Corner (Munglinup)	103
	10/12	Alfred Cove (Melville)	1
1989	12/1	Cosy Corner (Augusta)	3
	20/1	Bodey's Swamp (Wannamal)	1
	7/2	Dunn Rock NR (Lake Grace)	75
	19/2	Mouth of Margaret River	2
	26/2	Baghdad Lake (Rottneest)	3
	11/3	Station Lake (Esperance)	91
	30/3	Lake Gore (Esperance)	273
	26/10	Dunn Rock NR (Lake Grace)	104

B. Newbey

References:

- Garnett S, (ed) (1992) *Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia*. RAOU Report 82, RAOU & ANPWS.
- Marchant S & Higgins PJ (eds) (1993) *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Volume 2 Raptors to Lapwings*, Oxford University Press, Australia.
- Schulz M & Bamford M (1987) *The Hooded Plover*, RAOU Conservation Statement, RAOU Report 35.

Members Contributions

MAXIMISING BREEDING SUCCESS ?

Bird behaviour is essentially explained by attributing it to efforts to maximise reproductive success, known as natural selection. This theory is termed parsimonious by scientists, that is, it is a theory simple in itself which explains a great deal. Scientists generally accept that the more parsimonious, the greater the probability of a theory being correct. On this basis natural selection is a powerful explanatory theory and it is no wonder that it has dominated thinking for so long.

Many examples are cited in the literature of the accuracy of the natural selection theory. One interesting example recently quoted by Dr Michael Brooke of the University of Cambridge is the growth of the bill of the Medium Ground Finch in the Galapagos during a prolonged two year drought. A seed eating species, usually eating small seeds, these became exhausted in the dry period and with only large seeds left, the birds with bigger bills survived while those with smaller bills perished. On average bills were 4% larger after the drought.

When the weather later resumed a normal pattern and smaller seeds became available once more, the bill size declined to the pre-drought pattern.

Karl Popper with his famous Black Swan analogy, has pointed out that the gathering of more and more supportive evidence does not give any theory greater validity. Popper realised that (in Europe) a theory that 'all swans are white' is not made the more certain by exhaustive surveys of all swans virtually world wide, which would show that indeed all swans are white. A single exception disproves the 'all swans are white' statement and a visit to Australia is all that is needed. In Popper's view, the advancement of scientific truth is not through the gathering of more and more positive evidence, but by the seeking a single negative example. If found, a theory needs modification or rejection, if not found the theory is possibly correct. This philosophic idea has had profound effects in scientific and other areas of life.

The theory of natural selection therefore does not need more evidence, of which there is plenty, but examples which disprove, or do not fit. Rowley in his fine work on the Galah writes that "fast flying with frequent changes of direction could be categorized as play" (p 35) and of acrobatics which "to call this play does not help explain why adults and young birds

behave in this seemingly pointless way" (p 42.) It is difficult to resist a conclusion, while Rowley is careful not to say so, that the behaviour to which he refers is not readily explained by the natural selection-maximise reproductive success theory — although of course with a little ingenuity such Galah behaviour can be made to accord with it. (One of the problems with a good theory is that much effort is often used to make difficult data fit rather than modify the theory.) Similar fast flying was observed by myself in young and adult Collared Sparrowhawks (see WABN 53, March 1990 p7) which I attributed to 'exercise'. It may well have been play.

There are many examples of wild birds having been reared or befriended by humans returning to their human friends over a number of years. (eg see book mention WABN 38 p10), often bringing their young brood for inspection? approval? behaviour which only very distantly if at all fits natural selection.

Recently (May) I was surprised to hear four very loud calls from a Western Spinebill just outside my window. A number of Western Spinebills have been in the garden for some months (particularly attracted to flowering *Grevillea tenuiloba* — a ground cover). On investigating I saw a male Western Spinebill standing on my verandah close to the window and a few millimetres from a female spinebill which was lying injured, evidently by having flown into the window. (These distressing collisions have occurred almost daily in the last two months with one or other species and keeping the curtains closed, which seems to reduce the collisions is not always practical.)

I picked up the injured bird and held it in my hand. After a few minutes I gave some water, having found that birds so injured pant heavily and seem to benefit by a little water. Later when it appeared capable of perching, I placed the injured female spinebill in a shrub close to the *G. tenuiloba*, where it simply hung on alternately opening and closing its eyes, apparently dazed or injured.

After a while a male Western Spinebill approached the base of the shrub and called twice loudly — the same call as earlier had drawn my attention. A little later the male flew into the shrub where the injured female clung and called again, with a soft burbling call. With the coming of darkness I was not able to see more, although the female was seen to fly a short distance.

Of course, the male Western Spinebill was well aware that paired birds who are used to each other have a much higher incidence of breeding success and the male Western Spinebill was simply endeavouring to maintain a favourable breeding opportunity. Or was it?

B. Buchanan

References:

Brooke M, Birkhead T (eds) (1991) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Ornithology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rowley, I (1990) *Behavioural Ecology of the Galah Eolophus roseicapillus in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia*, Surrey Beatty & Sons Pty Ltd, NSW.

SWIFT FLIGHT

The Fork-tailed Swift is an infrequent visitor to the South West of Western Australia during summer. They follow low pressure systems that move down the West Coast and through the inland.

On the 13 March 1994 an estimated 50—80 Fork-tailed Swifts were seen hawking very low over coastal vegetation at Poison Creek in the Cape Arid National Park. Hundreds were

seen at the Esperance townsite on 19 March 1994, at Cape Le Grand National Park on 20 and 21 March and near Grass Patch (787 kilometres north of Esperance) on 22 March 1994. Weather conditions during all sightings was hot and humid.

A count of Fork-tailed Swifts was undertaken during the 20 March 1994 sighting at Cape Le Grand National Park.

At 1620 hours from the front verandah of our house at the Park I observed Fork-tailed Swifts flying to the North-East.

I sat, facing east and commenced counting the swifts as they passed an imaginary line perpendicular to the horizon. The area of the sky counted represented one quarter of the visible sky. Fork-tailed Swifts were seen in all quarters.

In the 35 minutes from 1620 hours, 401 Fork-tailed Swifts passed the 'imaginary line', flying in one direction only, from the South-West to North-East. At 1655 hours I ceased counting as the swifts were then circling with no definite flight direction.

At 1710 hours the Fork-tailed Swifts resumed their directional flight, but in the opposite direction, from the North East to the South West. At 1901 hours the swifts changed again to the opposite direction, flying from the West South-West to the East North-East. Few swifts flew in this new direction. During the 51 minutes from 1710 hours, 443 Fork-tailed Swifts flew past the 'imaginary line'.

Assuming that Fork-tailed Swifts flew past the other three quarters of the sky in the same numbers and at the same times, then a total of 1604 Fork-tailed Swifts flew from the South-West to the North-East between 1620 hours and 1655 hours and 1772 flew from the North-East to the South-West between 1710 and 1801 hours.

A. Rose

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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 1994**

DENMARK WATERBIRDING

On Thursday, 6 May, I and five others went to observe the waterbirds in Wilson Inlet.

Although the driest summer in living memory had not pleased most people, farmers in particular, it had resulted in an enormous increase in the numbers of waterbirds feeding on the exposed mud flats and shallow water of the Inlet.

At one site among a dense crowd of waterbirds of several species, were over 100 Banded and Black-winged Stilt and at another, we saw some 550 Eurasian Coot feeding on the shore and in the water. At another place we found not less than 300 Pacific Black Duck, although at other sites we saw none.

We estimated that among the many species feeding on the inlet that day there were at least 3,000 Black Swan, 1,000 Banded Stilt, at least 200 Red-capped Plover, 100 Black-winged Stilt, 100 Hoary-headed Grebe, 100 Little Black Cormorant, 100 Curlew Sandpiper and 100 Red-necked Avocet.

One interesting sighting was of all four species of cormorant sitting on one rock, offering a unique opportunity of comparison.

After lunch we visited Morley Beach and the mouth of the Hay River. In both places the shore was crowded with feeding birds and we counted 380 waders, mostly Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint and Red-capped Plover, in less than one kilometre of beach. Nearer the tree line we found another three or four hundred Red-capped Plover and Red-necked Stint sheltering in the samphire.

Our total count for the expedition was 56 species, including Australasian Shoveler, Grey and Chestnut Teal, Whistling Kite, four Osprey, a Marsh Harrier, and a White-bellied Sea Eagle

On the way back to Albany we saw a Peregrine Falcon, and at a brief stop at Lake Powell we counted 150 Australasian Shoveler and 10 Pink-eared Duck.

C. Davies

CORELLA FLYWAY

Wannamal lies at the foot of the Eastern section of the Darling Escarpment. A chain of lakes and swamps has formed along the foot of the scarp, from Mogumber Swamp in the north, through Lake Wannamal, Taylors Lake, Gooninong Swamp, Wandoo Waterhole, Cullala Pools, Cartabin Pools, Needoonga Lake and Lake Chittering, where the succession of major bodies of open water ends — a total distance of 45 kilometres. All the swamps etc above are joined either naturally or by man made drains all of which finally become the Brockman River.

From the air this line of waterways, which is broadly followed by the railway and road, must be readily visible. It seems likely these landmarks are used by Little Corella and no doubt other birds, when moving north and south. However Little Corella are only observed to move South.

In 1988 movement was observed from January to May, in 1988-89 October to April, 1989-90 August to March, 1990-91 September to March, 1991-92 July to April and similarly July to April in 1992-93. In the current "season" 1993-94 Little Corella have been observed from June to March (all above months inclusive). The commencing month of movement ranges from June to January, with July /August/ September the most common, while cessation is March/April with the exception of the 1988 year, when the latest recorded commencement

of January had the latest cessation of May.

Movement commences with a small number of birds; often travelling in three's, two's being unusual. As the summer warms numbers steadily increase and generally in December and January the movement is in large flocks numbering between 100 and 200 birds. Fortunately for the observer corella call continuously and loudly while "on passage", so when not already outside the observer can leap from the chair when so summoned to observe the fly past. Nearly all the large movements are in the morning between 6 am and 10.00 am, 8am to 9am being the most common, with a few in the later afternoon in the summer.

The most striking phenomenon of the observations is that virtually all the Little Corella all fly southwards. On rare occasions, a few birds or a larger group which have passed over have been seen to wheel and return northwards, but only apparently to join with a greater number to fly south. Naturally it is difficult to be sure, but on two occasions there have been distinguishing absences of wing feathers to make this certain. At no time during all the years has there been corresponding corella flights north.

The flyway always appears to be the same, within easy sight of the chain of waterways. Most groups pass directly over my garden.

It is apparent where lies the southern flyway. Where is the north ?

B. Buchanan

B B C B Q

- 1) What is the 'birdwatcher' definition of "extinct"?
- 2) Do Square-tailed Kite breed in the Kimberley ?
- 3) When was a Lewin's Rail last recorded in WA ?
- 4) Do Painted Snipe migrate out of Australia ?
- 5) What is the main threat to Blue Bonnet ?
- 6) An authenticated specimen of Night Parrot was obtained in 1991. How many years since the previous authentic specimen ?
- 7) How long before a pair of Western Long-billed Corella replace themselves ?
- 8) What evidence is there of a reduction of range for Alexandra's Parrot ?
- 9) Since which decade has the Gouldian Finch declined rapidly ?
- 10) Which bird was reported most frequently in WA during the Atlas survey ?

Answers page 13

Notices

NEWS ON THE HOTLINE

'Two adult Hooded Plover have been sighted on three separate mornings this week at Alfred Cove. The....'

Graham Little records the week's interesting sightings on the Hotline so other keen birdwatchers can, hopefully, locate some of the birds.

This is not an activity peculiar to Western Australian twitchers. The same activity is common in many countries. In England there are nearly one million birdwatchers, many of whom ring up their district Hotline which is updated regularly. English farmers have become accustomed to a 'flock' of twitchers peering over the fence, binoculars at the ready, at a Hoopoe feeding among the turnips.

It's time more Western Australian birdwatchers became more involved in this activity.

As birds need material to build nests, the Birding Hotline needs material to include on the recording. Reports do not have to be only of 'rare' birds. When you observe some interesting bird behaviour or a bird out of its normal territory or seasonal location (e.g. Western Yellow Robin seen on the coastal plain in summer) or a larger than usual flock of a species (e.g. 539 Hooded Plover at Lake Warden, Esperance) send/telephone your sighting to the office.

Send reports from all parts of the State. Remember the information is also recorded in W.A. Bird Notes and can be of value in research work. At present, past reports of Hooded Plover are being examined in our new project.

So, get active. Make the Birding Hotline an exciting and rewarding experience for all members.

Birding Hotline is now up-dated twice a week.

A. Jones

DISPLAYS FOR DISPLAY

The RAOU WA Branch now has two displays ready and eager to be mounted in places where the general public will be able to see them. The displays are: —

1. Threatened Birds of Western Australia
2. How to Attract Birds to Your Garden

Both have been displayed in Melville and Subiaco libraries and in several schools and have drawn favourable and interested response.

The WA Group is keen that these educative and attractive displays are shown in other local libraries/learning centres/schools and we would be pleased if members would approach their local librarians etc to book either or both displays through Judy Blyth (on our Education/Publicity sub committee) on (09) 381 6293.

The WA Group has been invited to participate in two community festivals later in the year: —

Wannamal Wildflower Weekend, Saturday 10 & Sunday 11
September, and

Mingenew Rural Expo, Friday 23 and Saturday 24
September.

In both cases, we hope to be able to mount displays of local birds, promote the RAOU and possibly conduct a few bird walks and raise funds via our trading table.

If you are interested in volunteering to staff either of these displays, please contact Judy Blyth on (09) 381 6293.

IDENTITY CRISIS ?

The excellent turnout for the evening meeting on March 28 at which problems of bird identification were discussed indicates that there is a strong demand for this kind of meeting. It may well be that meetings of this kind should become an annual event. Before another such meeting is arranged, however, it is important that members should have an opportunity to send in their suggestions concerning the format of such meetings, the suitability or otherwise of our present venue, birds which are particularly difficult to identify, etc. Please send suggestions to Jeremy Talbot at 29, Joyce Road, Lesmurdie, WA 6076, or telephone him at home on (09) 291 6563.

Beach Patrol

Members are reminded that during the winter months there is more chance of picking up dead birds along our extensive coastline.

Any material which a finder considers suitable should be forwarded to the nearest museum for their ornithological department. At the same time, a notification of the specimen should be sent to the RAOU office, addressed B. Barrett, so that an overall record can be maintained.

Currently most information is being sent in by Liz and Charlie Davies from periodic rambles along the Albany coast. Recently they reported a wreck of shearwaters washed ashore, many of which had been killed by gunshot. It appears that fishermen shoot birds as they follow their boats.

Please note that the museums DO NOT REQUIRE dead Silver Gulls, or Little Black or Little Pied Cormorants.

B. Barrett

Banding Networks

Man's curiosity about the movements of birds is as old as history itself. The lack of knowledge of bird migration led to some imaginative explanations for observed seasonal changes in bird populations in different parts of the world.

Hibernation was a theory that many found plausible at a time when people were aware of this form of wintering behaviour in some species of mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Incidents of finding some species of birds seeking temporary shelter in crevices and holes helped to cement the thought that hibernation was the reason for the reduction in numbers or complete absence of birds in the depth of winter.

A more creatively wrong theory was put forward by Aristotle - that of transmutation. This suggested that birds undertook a change of form with the changing seasons. In his day Redstarts were common through much of Greece during summer and they were replaced in winter by Robins, also a common species. A similar pattern, Garden Warblers during summer and Blackcaps in winter, added support to the theory. The appearance of moulting birds at regular times was taken as evidence of birds in intermediate stages of transmutation.

We now know that migration accounts for the changes that were being witnessed and the unravelling of migration paths,

the origins and destinations of bird movements is one of the justifications for banding birds. A great deal of effort has been devoted to the subject of bird movement and I list records of band recoveries within WA or into WA from elsewhere.

Most birdwatchers are aware of the lifestyle of various bird groups and readily accept the fact that waders, for instance, are among the great travellers of the bird world. They warrant a story of their own. Less well known are the movements of some common species around the Perth area.

The big flocks of White-tailed Black-Cockatoos that congregate on the coastal plain each summer are the short-billed form that leave their inland breeding grounds when their young have fledged. They gather in large concentrations in pine plantations and in flowering Banksia woodlands, returning to their breeding areas in winter. This regular movement attracts attention because this species is usually absent from the vicinity of Perth at other times of the year. Galahs, another species of cockatoo, move in a more random manner. Juveniles disperse widely and may cover long distances within food-seeking flocks. One young bird travelled from Manmanning to Beacon, a distance of 82 km. Another juvenile, banded at Helena Valley, was found dead at Konnongorring 15 months later, 120 km from the banding site.

In general however, parrots seem to be rather more staid, moving relatively short distances in their preferred habitat; like the recovery of a Port Lincoln Ringneck between Budinin and Wickopin, a distance of 31 km west. Regent Parrots on the other hand are known to be wanderers within the south-west of WA, with band recoveries up to 320 km from the banding site.

Other known travellers within Australia are Straw-necked Ibis, a species that has produced some remarkable distance records. The following list of recovery sites is of birds banded at the same breeding colony near Muchea, WA:- Onslow, WA - 880 km; Beagle Bay, WA - 1825 km; Forrest River Mission, WA - 2210 km; Orange, NSW - 3105 km and Beaudesert, Qld. - 3570 km.

Another species that undertakes long nomadic movement is the Grey Teal and it is one of the first species of waterfowl to appear on ephemeral inland lakes after local rain. A bird banded at Swansea, Tasmania was recovered four years later at Lake Austin, WA 3170 km away, while a bird from Humpty Doo, NT was recovered 11 years, 7 months and 9 days later at Moora, WA 2530 km south-west of the banding site. Knowing that Grey Teal respond rapidly to rain patterns across the Australian continent, one can only guess at the distance covered by this individual between banding and recovery.

A Sacred Kingfisher, banded at Chain of Ponds, SA in December 1964 was recovered at Tuart Hill, Perth, in November 1968. East-west migration? Or did this bird fly further west than usual on a return trip from the tropics?

A programme to test the homing ability of Laughing Turtle-Doves was carried out in Perth during the early 1960's, birds being transported from Wembley and Nedlands to sites in the Outer Perth Metropolitan area. Homing was demonstrated by one bird on no less than three occasions, returning from release sites up to 27 km away. The distance record during this experiment was set when, after 9 months and 9 days, a bird transported to and released at Tammin, WA, was re-trapped in Nedlands, Perth a distance of 160 km.

Banding activity on Rottnest Island has produced some interesting dispersal records. A White-fronted Chat banded on the island as a juvenile turned up at Herdsmans Lake almost ten months later; three young Ospreys were subsequently recovered at Lancelin, Denmark and Albany; a Silver Gull turned up at Cape Leeuwin; a Crested Tern was found at Mosman Bay and two Welcome Swallows were recovered on the mainland, one at North Beach, Fremantle and another at Triggs.

Another island generated recovery was that of an Osprey banded on Garden Island and recovered at Bremer Bay after 10 months, a distance of 423 km. What could be a record for a raptor from WA is that of a Little Eagle released near Margaret River, WA and recovered dead near Newry, Vic., 2884 km east, just over a year later.

The most dramatic recovery of a marked bird in WA took place before the advent of modern bird banding. This happened in September 1887, when three boys on a hiking trip up the coast found a dead Albatross with a metal collar around its neck near Trigg Island. The collar bore a message in French, seeking help from 13 sailors who were shipwrecked on the Crozet Islands in the southern Indian Ocean. The late Dr Dom Serventy recounted the events leading up to the finding of the bird and the subsequent mystery of the sailors' fate, in Serventy DC & Whittell HM (1976) *Birds of Western Australia*, 5th edition, UWA Press, Perth, pages 75 & 76.

Recent attempts to trace the metal collar have so far failed, but contact has been made with descendants of two of the boys who made the original recovery. Perhaps the collar will turn up one day to take its place as a relic of the ornithological history of WA.

P. de Rebeira
Regional Organiser for WA
Australian Bird Banding Scheme.

Excursion & Observatory Reports

EYRE

In early March we banded 128 Welcome Swallows over two days, while attempting to catch one with white wing feathers. It was caught on the second day and we found the primaries and coverts 9-5 on the left wing and 9-6 on the right wing totally white. About 100 from the large flock of swallows present moved on two days later and the white-winged bird has not been seen since. During the banding, we caught 40 retraps, including one 14 years old.

In March a large flock of Fork-tailed Swifts arrived. We recorded 12 on most days for a week, then 100 circling over the dunes. The following day there were approximately 200 at the 9-mile, circling and calling and then no further recordings.

There have been other comings and goings during the last three months. Almost 1000 White-fronted Honeyeater and 350 Red Wattlebird passed through the area in February flying east. So far, there has been very little blossom to entice them back, but Brown and New Holland Honeyeater numbers have in-

creased with *Eucalyptus incrassata* starting to flower along the dunes. Fan-tailed Cuckoos have arrived back in the last couple of weeks, giving their pleasant call early in the morning. During April we had recordings of Purple-crowned Lorikeet, the first in 12 months.

One Double-banded Plover is now a regular on our weekly beach count and Red-necked Stint have increased in number recently and are showing quite russet neck feathers. The pair of Pied Oystercatcher which are near our Beach entrance most of the year have also arrived back from "their summer holiday".

Around the Observatory the year-round residents carry on as usual, the beautiful male Blue-breasted Fairy-wren now looking quite ordinary in eclipse plumage. Two Common Bronzewing have been putting in an appearance at the bird bath recently, a very uncommon event!

We are always happy to give information to anyone planning a visit. Just a phone call or note will do.

R. & G. Watkins

BROOME

On the evening of the 23 April at an artesian bore on Anna Plains, Eighty Mile Beach, I held a Pintail Snipe in my hand for the first time. Caught by mistnet, it is one of only a handful of records for this part of Australia and the first banded in the Kimberley.

For the Australian Wader Studies Group members who were nearing the end of their longest expedition to North West Australia, it was enough to put a smile on their weary faces. There have been a number of confirmed sightings in the Pilbara and other possible sightings in the Territory, but this wader is a definite vagrant. The tail feathers (usually 26) are the distinguishing feature. The outermost ones were astonishingly narrow and stiff, hence the name 'Pintail'. The bird was duly measured, banded, weighed, prodded and photographed in many varying positions until released into the night.

This snipe was one of 6012 waders banded by the AWSG during their nine week expedition. A staggering 36 wader species in total were caught and released, most sporting a yellow plastic leg flag on their right tibia to signify North-West Australia. The significant achievement of the expedition was that a range of wader species were sampled at regular intervals throughout their entire northward departure period, something never before achieved at Broome.

During the expedition the Wardens upgraded from "C" to "A" class banders and hope to continue banding work throughout the year. Peter Collins who has contributed much in the past to BBO, will be Assistant Warden through the busy dry season and his expertise with birds and people will be much appreciated.

In response to the increasing demand for transport to the Observatory, by school groups and excursions, a small 13 seater bus was purchased from Perth in April. A second hand vehicle, it is in first class order and we would like to thank Mr Frank Kagis and WA Group for checking the vehicle and negotiating the purchase for us, which would have been impossible without an expensive trip to Perth. We also thank WA Group member Mary Vaughan, who was of exceptional help here from late February to mid May. We could not have coped without her during the expedition and course.

Our first course ran for 11 days during which 156 species were seen and everyone was involved in the banding work with the AWSG expedition. Of note were, Mangrove Gerygone, Red-headed Honeyeater, Long-toed Stint and a pair of Painted

Snipe, cryptically hidden in a swamp on Roebuck Plain (first seen by Jack Huht). Many were thrilled to see such a rare (in WA) wader at close quarters.

Our next course in August (6-11), promises some excellent birding and covers all the habitats that we are so lucky to have close at hand, mangrove, woodland, beach, freshwater lake and plain. There are still places left and we are enjoying meeting Western Australian birdwatchers. If you are thinking of heading up North this winter and wish to stay at the Observatory, please book ahead to avoid disappointment. Every day the bookings are flowing in for campsites, units and the chalet, ensuring another busy season for BBO.

J. Fallaw & B. Hayward

LAKE McLARTY 13 Feb

On a very windy day thirty nine people attended. Fifty four species were seen, including a rarity, a white headed or "albino" Red-necked Avocet.

Species numbers were lower by comparison with previous weeks, possibly because of the strong winds and low water level.

L. Harris

DWELLINGUP 5 - 7 Mar

Despite the forecast of hot weather a total of 51 bird species were sighted on this long weekend campout in the jarrah forest. Prime birdwatching times were spent in the field and the hot middle of the day was spent relaxing, swimming and canoeing. During previous campouts in this area, held in better weather and with greater numbers of birds present, 56 species were seen.

The mix of farm, river, jarrah forest and bullich swamp habitats provided an interesting variety of birding. Highlights of the weekend included a pair of Collared Sparrowhawks, three robin species, an Owlet Nightjar and an elusive Red-eared Firetail. The latter was sighted by a new comer to the group whose description fitted perfectly and was confirmed shortly after by the distinctive call. Despite two spotlighting outings the Barn Owl, heard several times each night, was not seen.

This campout again highlighted to us the benefits to new members of an extended weekend of birding. Not only do their bird-watching skills significantly improve, but also they meet new friends and become part of the group in a way which is difficult to achieve at meetings and day outings.

J. & R. Hill

THOMSONS LAKE 13 Mar

On a warm summer's day, over 30 people attended. Much of the Typha had been cut back, which made it easier to see the waterbirds - Hoary-Headed and Australasian Grebes, Australian Pelicans, three species of Cormorant and seven species of duck, including Pink-eared, Hardhead, Blue-billed and Musk Duck. A Marsh Harrier and Whistling Kite 'patrolled' the lake.

Some of the group saw Great Egret, Little Egret and Intermediate Egret together, making it quite easy to observe the differences.

Finally we ventured into the surrounding bush. Weebills, Rufous Whistlers, Splendid Fairy-wrens and Western Spinebills calling made for a pleasant finish.

In all we saw 61 species.

B. McRoberts

BIG CARINE LAKE 26 Mar

Eight members joined me on a walk around the lake, which had dried to about a third of its September 1993 size. We came upon Greenshank, Sacred and Straw-necked Ibis, egret and three species of cormorant. On the southern side of the lake we saw the three species of grebe.

A Whistling Kite and Brown Goshawk were the only raptors seen during the day. White-fronted Chat were espied by some of the party; they seem to have been widespread this year. We finished by having a look at Little Carine Lake, where there were several cygnets - a little late in the year? We saw 50 species in total.

B. McRoberts

JAURDI STATE FOREST 1 - 4 Apr

Jaurdi: In ideal Autumn weather, 30 adults and one child had arrived at Jaurdi State Forest for the '94 Easter Campout.

Jaurdi, a former pastoral lease, was purchased by CALM in 1989 for conservation and research. It is north of the old Boorabbin townsite. It proved to be an excellent birding location because of its size, diversity of landforms and vegetation habitats. We visited uncut woodland, salt lakes, granite outcrops, breakaways and ironstone ranges and hills.

Excellent camping facilities have been installed by CALM at the Research Centre - including hot showers.

On the Saturday we visited several interesting birding habitats including Big Breakaway, Wallangie Soak and finally on to Mt Walton. Sightings included Chestnut Quail-thrush, Rufous Treecreeper, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and Splendid Fairy-wren.

With the *Eucalyptus concinna* in heavy blossom we were treated to many low-flying flocks of thousands of Purple-crowned Lorikeet, which provided a good subject for photographers as they sat preening among the blossom. Flowering eucalypts also attracted ten species of honeyeater - White-fronted, Spiny-cheeked, White-eared and Yellow-plumed being the most common.

On Sunday we explored south to the Mt Walter area. Great excitement was caused by the sighting of a Gilbert's Whistler by some of the party, in thick *Exocarpus spartea* scrub. This was another day of successful birding for all.

Jaurdi proved ideal for all members to either participate in organised excursions or use their time to visit the Shed Dam and surrounding natural bushland for birdwatching. All enjoyed the evenings by the campfire for the 'daily count' and to join John Malcolm's discussion programme.

Sixty eight species were recorded and the prize for the

correct guess of the number of species was jointly won by Barbara Stoneham and Bryan Barrett.

Rowles Lagoon Nature Reserve: By Tuesday morning only a 'hardy nine' remained to drive to Rowles Lagoon where camp was set up. We had good views of Red-necked Avocet, Black Swan and Eurasian Coot from our camp.

This area includes several semi-permanent freshwater lakes fringed by melaleuca (sp) which provide an excellent refuge for many waterbirds. Eight species of duck were sighted on an evening drive to Carnage Lake.

There are access tracks to each of the lakes. Forty one species of waterbird have been recorded here, a record for the Australian temperate interior.

Early Wednesday morning we set out on an eight kilometre return walk through timber to Carnage Lake. Wood Sandpiper, Black-fronted Plover, Black-winged Stilt, Red-Kneed Dotterel and Greenshank were feeding along the lake's edge and all had good views of Freckled Duck among the melaleucas. The return walk, through mulga-eucalypt bushland, brought more sightings including Australian Hobby, Grey Currawong and White-fronted Chat.

The afternoon drive was to a breakaway area near Muddy Lake where we eventually located White-winged Wren.

Sixty one species were recorded during our two night stay at Rowles Lagoon

Goongarrie National Park: An 'eager eight' set out via Ora Banda and Broad Arrow to Goongarrie National Park. At

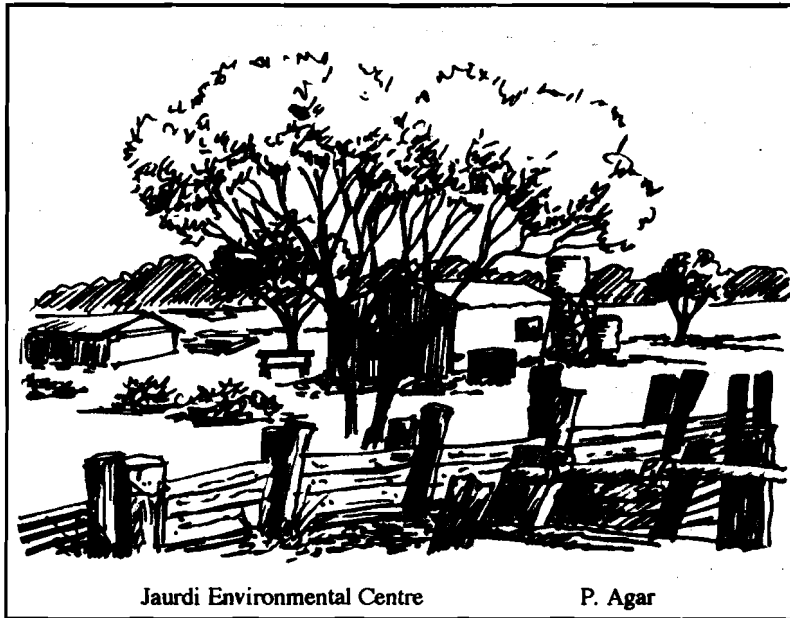
midday camp was set up by Deadman's Soak at Nineteen Mile Rocks and over lunch we watched over ninety Emus come in to drink.

Goongarrie National Park is south-east of Menzies and situated on the mulga/eucalypt line. It is comprised of mulga predominantly, with pockets of eucalypts, callitris thickets and with granite outcrops and salt lakes. At sunset we gathered near the Soak to witness the arrival of birds coming to drink. It was of great interest to observe the different wary methods of approach. We saw

Galah, Mulga Parrot, Crested Pigeon and over 100 Common Bronzewing.

At the end of summer it was not to be expected that many species would be sighted on our morning excursion east. However, several mulga and arid-zone species were sighted, including Crested Bellbird and Pied Butcherbird. We were also successful in locating White-browed Treecreeper, feeding on the ground near and in a grove of *Callitris verrucosa*. At our final campfire count we recorded 35 species for Goongarrie.

This successful excursion will be remembered by those who participated. Its success was due to the thorough and thoughtful planning of Karen and Bill McRoberts. Their excellent organisation of the daily excursions, frequent communica-

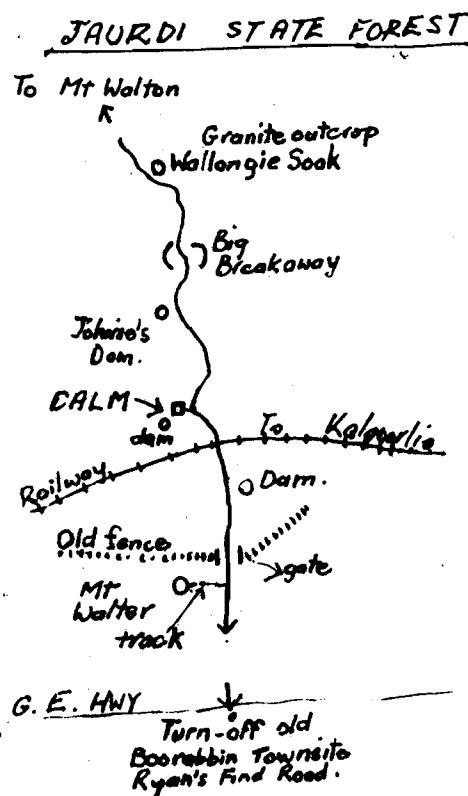


Jaurdi Environmental Centre

P. Agar

tion with members throughout the eight days, fortitude and good humour at all times was appreciated by all.

R. & A. Jones



Sketch map by A. Jones

BIBRA LAKE 13 Apr

An unpromising day, heavily overcast, misty, warm and yet so humid that binoculars tended to mist over and the surrounding bush so quiet, it seemed likely we would see nothing but the usual swans and ducks seeking handouts on the shoreline. However, soon we had good views of all three grebes, together with all the ducks to be seen in the metro area, a glimpse of a Reed Warbler and of a flock of Splendid Fairy-wren.

We then moved to the northern and eastern shores of the lake and soon established the characteristic of the walk, an abundance of Willy Wagtails and a scarcity of the common bush birds. In contrast to previous visit, only one Grey Fantail, two Brown Honeyeaters, two Yellow-rumped Thornbills, one Pardalote and one Silvereye were seen and two Port Lincoln Ringnecks at the very end of our walk.

We had our strokes of fortune: on the shoreline by the start of the board walk, we found a small flock of White-fronted Chat, another of Red-necked Stint and of Red-necked Avocet. Here also we had a fine view of a young Whistling Kite. We saw individual Buff-banded Rail at three separate places, watched a Bandicoot having a leisurely 'elevenses' and tried unsuccessfully to discover what was driving a flock of some thirty New Holland Honeyeater and some Weebill into frenzied activity.

Recuperating after nearly four hours of rewarding birding, two of our stalwarts nearly choked on their coffee on seeing a Long-billed Corella among a flock of Galah. This brought our total of species sighted on such an unpromising day to 65. There must be a moral somewhere if only I could think of it.

P. Anson

WUNGONG GORGE 17 Apr

Approximately 40 people joined Karen and Bill McRoberts on a cool, fine morning to walk down the 7 km gorge track, when Bill recorded his 199th visit. The bush along the track showed signs of withering due to the long rain-free period and a lot of the vegetation was dying.

Birds were not plentiful, but there was no shortage of Grey Fantail which were seen throughout the gorge. Red-eared Firetail were both seen and heard and some caught sight of White-breasted Robin. There was no sign of the Wedge-tailed Eagle: it was said that one of the pair has been shot.

The BBQ area had Splendid Fairy-wren and Red-winged Fairy-wren, with at least one Red-winged male in breeding plumage.

Thirty four species were recorded.

J. Marsland

STINTON CASCADES 7 May

On a fine autumn morning 23 members met on the outskirts of Karragullen to be conducted around Stinton Cascades NR. This new CALM Reserve is being investigated by a small group let by John & Helen Start to help CALM form a management plan.

Two groups were formed and each covered a section of the Reserve, noting bird species and their numbers. Due to the very dry conditions birds were not plentiful, but some enjoyed the sight of a group of Red-winged Fairy-wrens, including 3 males in breeding plumage, near the edge of the creek.

It was disturbing to see the number of dead and dying trees and shrubs throughout the Reserve, especially around the granite rocks of the normally rushing cascades. The creek was dry and all plant life showed signs of distress.

Later the group drove to an interesting area below Canning Dam, where White-breasted Robin, more Red-winged Fairy-wren and a pair of Mistletoebirds were seen.

After lunch at this attractive spot the outing concluded with a walk in Bungendore Park (adjacent to Wungong Gorge) - which looked surprisingly green in the afternoon sunlight. Again, birds were difficult to find. However, some found Western Yellow Robin, several Western Spinebill and New Holland Honeyeaters were seen feeding in the dryandra.

A most enjoyable day, Thanks to John and Helen Start.

B. Barrett

DOOPITER SWAMP 15 May

It was a calm, fine day. Eleven people spent a pleasant morning at Doopiter Swamp, which is actually two permanent water paperbark swamps, both on private land.

Fifty four species were recorded, including seven species new to the list. These seven were, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Red-capped Robin, Red-capped Plover, Long-toed Stint, Striated Pardalote and Silvereye.

Water level in the swamps was very low, but we saw many duck as we peered between the paperbarks. The hoped-for Freckled Duck were not seen.

Two tagged Great Egret were seen. The tag of one was able to be read, the other had only a left wing tag and we were unable to make out the letters.

Lunch was taken on a shady bank of the Moore River, where we watched a flock of Maned Duck moving back and forth between the river and nearby pastures.

Thanks to Bryan and Margery for organizing such a pleasant and rewarding outing.

H. Clark

Coming Events

Saturday 25th June - Half day excursion to Bibra Lake

Meet at 8.30 am at the first carpark at the northern end of Bibra Lake. It is part of the Beeliar Wetlands chain. Large numbers of waterbirds are usually seen; in April we saw a total of 65 species.

Leader: Peter Anson

Monday 27th June Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Barry and Jennifer Muir will describe the habitats of various tropical bird species in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Sunday 3rd July - Half day excursion to the CALM Wildlife Research Centre, Woodvale

Meet at 8.30 am at the entrance to the Centre on the old Ocean Reef Road, near the turnoff to the Mitchell Freeway. Allan will show us around this small reserve surrounding CALM's Research Centre.

Leader: Allan Burbidge

Sunday 17th July - Half day excursion to Lake Coogee

Meet at 8.30 am on the southern side of Mayor Road, Munster (50 metres west of Hamilton Road).

Over 80 species have been seen at the lake and in surrounding bushland including nine species of raptor.

Leaders: Jan and Dave Crossley

Monday 25th July Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Bob Goodale, naturalist, photographer and film-maker, will introduce us to the birdlife and other aspects of the Shoalwater Marine Park near Rockingham.

Sunday 14th August - Half day excursion to Herdsman Lake

Meet at 8.00 am at the carpark beside the tennis courts off Herdsman Parade, opposite Dodd Street (just south of Jon Sanders Drive). We will walk right around the lake (6 km). Wear soundwalking shoes, a hat and bring a drink and insect repellent. We will drive to Floreat Waters carpark at the southern end of Lakeside Road for a picnic lunch.

Leaders: Judy and John Blyth

Sunday 21st August - Half day excursion to Ellis Brook

Meet at 8.00 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin. This interesting site for bushbirds close to Perth may have some species not often seen in the metropolitan area.

Leader: Les Harris

Monday 22nd August Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Jan and Rob Hill, who were wardens at Eyre Bird Observatory some years ago, will talk about the RAOU's senior bird observatory with its beautiful setting, historic associations, numerous activities and abundant birdlife.

Sunday 4th September - Half day excursion to Lake Joondalup, Edgewater

Meet at 8.30 am at the first area of parkland on the right-hand side of Edgewater, just north of Ridge Close. From the freeway, head east on Ocean Reef Road and turn left into Edgewater Drive.

This is a large lake with several habitats containing different species. We shall focus on the southern end of the lake, (where nearby streets have names such as "Warbler Close" and "Passerine Close") Bring a telescope if you have one.

Leader: Graham Little

Monday 26th September Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Mr CFH Jenkins, will known for his natural history contributions to the *West Australian* newspaper and a founder member of the WA Group of the RAOU (having attended its inaugural meeting on May 22 1943), has entitled his talk "Looking Back".

Monday 24th October Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Karen McRoberts, who has considerable experience in the field, will be discussing the investigation of disease in waterbirds. The severe impact of increasing human activity on our remaining wetlands makes her topic important for all concerned with the survival of the birds of those wetlands.

Monday 28th November Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Dr Stuart Halse, of CALM's Woodvale Research Centre, will speak to us about Cape Barren Geese, which in this State occur only in small numbers on the islands of the Archipelago of the Recherche and the adjacent mainland, and to some extent also about some of the other southern hemisphere geese such as Magpie Geese.

NO DECEMBER EVENING MEETING

B B C B Q Answers

- 1) "Taxa not definitely located in the wild during the past 50 years, or species that have not been found in recent years despite thorough searching". (p 1)
- 2) Yes (p 32)
- 3) 1932 by HM Whittell in the Bridgetown area (p 54)
- 4) Probably not (p 55)
- 5) Illegal trapping (p 85)
- 6) Over 100 years (p 97)
- 7) 10 years (p 107)
- 8) None (p 83)
- 9) 1970's (p 104)
- 10) Willie Wagtail (p xxxiii)

Questions 1 to 9 derive from Garnett S, (Ed), 1992, *Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia*, RAOU Report 82, RAOU & ANPWS, Victoria and question 10 from Blakers M, Davies SJF, Reilly PN (1984) *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, RAOU, Melbourne University Press, to which the page numbers refer.

Bookshop News

There are MANY new publications now available on birding in overseas countries —

Indonesia, Asia, Malaysia, Vanuatu, Singapore, East Africa, Southern Africa,
the Americas, Borneo
and many more.

New bird studies include finches and sparrows, hornbills, avian biology, falconry etc.

Ring our office, or better, **call** in any week-day am. to **examine** the catalogues of books available. We can order any title for you
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