

# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

No 73 March 1995

## An Invasion of Black Honeyeaters

It is occasionally remarked that if you watch birds at one spot for long enough, you will get to see just about everything there is to see. While exaggerated for effect, there are times when this statement might seem to be not so far from the truth. Such a time occurred recently for me at Cooljarloo, 15 km north of Cataby on the Brand Highway, a place where I have recorded birds regularly since 1986 for Tiwest Joint Venture, who mine mineral sands in the area. From 29 November to 4 December 1994, in the typical Banksia low woodland of the northern sandplains, amongst the Brown, Tawny-crowned, White-cheeked and Singing Honeyeaters, I came across not one but dozens of Black Honeyeaters.



The Black Honeyeater is an arid-zone species which I had previously only seen in spinifex grasslands of the Great Sandy Desert. They are sometimes recorded in the south-west region in small numbers, but this was something else entirely. From never seen at the site (and not expected) they jumped to the second most abundant species in my Australian Bird Count Surveys, with an average density of 0.8/ha across a total search area of 36 ha. Only the ubiquitous Brown Honeyeater, at 2.5/ha, was more abundant.

The Black Honeyeaters were in loose flocks of 2-6 birds and there appeared to be slightly more males than females, although this was probably because the males are so distinctive. They were seen at all spots visited over an area of several square kilometres, which suggests that there were hundreds,

if not thousands, in the area. So, if you thought you saw Black Honeyeaters in the South-West recently, look again; you probably did! It would be nice to know the extent of this invasion.

As a footnote, another new species for the site, the Masked Woodswallow, was also present in large numbers that week. Not as unexpected as the Black Honeyeater, its presence suggests that a general south-western movement of arid-zone birds may be taking place in response to low rainfall in many inland areas of Australia.

**Mike Bamford**

### Editors' Note

As Mike Bamford suggests in his article above, his sightings at Cooljarloo are apparently part of a much wider invasion of south-west Western Australia by Black Honeyeaters. The Observations column of the last issue of Bird Notes included a record of three birds seen at Dryandra Forest on 1 October 1994 by Chris Wilder, and others were seen at Dryandra later the same month. John and Judy Blyth observed Black Honeyeaters at Wongan Hills Nature Reserve on 10 and 11 September 1994, and around Mingenew on 24 and 25 of the same month.

On 7 November, Simon Nevill, Tony Kirkby and others found three pairs of Black Honeyeaters and two nests at Dryandra. One nest contained three eggs while the other was not examined, to reduce possible disturbance to the birds. Breeding of Black Honeyeaters this far south-west is extremely unusual.

The two observations at Wongan Hills were of single males in two places in mallee/heath vegetation about one km apart. Around Mingenew, Black Honeyeaters were seen in three widely separated stands of remnant shrub/heath along road reserves. In each of these cases there was at least one male and one female bird present, and the largest group was of four birds. Several groups of Crimson Chats were also present in roadside vegetation around Mingenew on the same weekend, supporting Mike's suggestion of a general movement of inland birds away from drought-affected areas.

## Thank You to Our Former Editor

This being the first edition of WABN in 1995 and the first produced under its new editors, it is fitting to pay tribute to Bruce Buchanan, the former editor. For the past ten years, Bruce edited Bird Notes, raising it to professional standards of scientific accuracy but avoiding its becoming a heavy academic journal. There was enough human interest, including the regular birding quiz, to catch the eye of even the less experienced. It was a pleasure to see good grammar and spelling, accurate typing, and a logical layout of material. These were high standards indeed, and something to be treasured. To produce work of this splendid nature required hours of voluntary labour once a quarter, regardless of other commitments in life. Too often, there was not enough material from members to fill up the pages, and it was left to Bruce to plug the gap with an absorbing article of his own. Who can forget the forthright views in his recent front-page article *The Tyranny of Taxonomy*? It must have raised quite a few blood-pressure. His prolonged labour in producing an Index of former articles in WABN was a prodigious effort, for which he must take the utmost credit.

As is sometimes the case, it is not until a competent person leaves his job that one realises just how competent he was and what a hard act it will be to take his place. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Bruce and his wife, Ann, for their efforts over the years in editing WABN. We look forward to their contribution in the form of more stimulating articles from Bruce, if he can spare the time from his numerous and long-standing surveys of birds in WA's wetlands.

To the new editors of WABN, we wish every success in their exciting venture.

Brian Wilson (Chairman)

## Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

Names and order follow Christidis, L. and Boles, W. (1995) *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. RAOU Monograph 2. (See *Names for Australian Birds* on page 4 herein).

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

**Malleefowl** - 1, 27/11/94, 10-15 km N of Wubin (Dalwallinu) - SN and party

**Cape Barren Goose** - 14, 30/12/94, Cull Is, S of Esperance (Esperance) - MC

**Freckled Duck** - 5, 19/11/94, corner Forrest and Liddelow Roads, Banjup (Cockburn) - TK \* 26, 29/1/95, Football Lake (Gingin) - BB

**Chestnut Teal** - 900, 25/12/94, Lake Warden (Esperance) (high count, especially for the Esperance area) - MC \* 1 male, 12/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - DJ, TK

**Pink-eared Duck** - 2380, 4/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, GMo, JC

**White-headed Petrel** - 1, 11/94, Cheyne Beach (Albany) - GMo

**White-faced Storm-Petrel** - 1, 11/12/94, 5 km north-east of Rottnest Island - GL

**Yellow-nosed Albatross** - 1, 15/1/95, 1 km S of Strickland Bay, Rottnest Island - GMo

**White-necked Heron** - 17, 10/11/94, Higgins Swamp, Nannup (Nannup) - BKM \* ca. 60, 3/12/94, Forrestdale Lake (Armada-Kelmscott) - KL

**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** - 80, 26/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS

**Letter-winged Kite** - 2, 28/11/94, Heirisson Prong (Shark Bay) - PB

**Peregrine Falcon** - nesting with 3 young, 12/11/94, Ellendale Pool (Greenough) - JD, JH

**Buff-banded Rail** - 1, 6/12/94, Eatha Spring, SE of Green Head (Dandaragan) - AB

**Australian Spotted Crake** - 4, 6/12/94, Eatha Spring, SE of Green Head (Dandaragan) - AB

**Eurasian Coot** - 10000, 7/1/95, - MC, GMo, JP \* 4500, 15/1/95 - AB \* 3000+, 26/1/95, - IS \* 190, 4/2/95, - MC, JC, GMo - all at Lake McLarty (Murray)

**Bar-tailed Godwit** - 90, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Whimbrel** - 15, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Marsh Sandpiper** - 34, 26/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS

**Wood Sandpiper** - 40+, 28/12/94, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS

**Long-toed Stint** - 20 (including one in apparently full breeding plumage), 15/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, GM, AB

**Pectoral Sandpiper** - 1, 29/12/94, on small lake 4 km N of Quagi Beach, 70 km W of Esperance (Esperance) - MC

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** - 1, 7/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, GMo, JP

**Ruff** - 2, 28/12/94, 7/1/95 and 15/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS, MC, TK, and others \* 3, 4/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, JC, GMo

**Black-winged Stilt** - 3670+, 3/1/95, Forrestdale Lake (Armada-Kelmscott) - DJ, TK (very high count for the south-west)

**Pacific Golden Plover** - 13, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS \* 4, 15/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, GM, AB

**Grey Plover** - 82, 26/12/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Little Ringed Plover** - 1, 4/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, JC, GMo (second record for McLarty; there are less than 10 records from the south-west)

**Greater Sand Plover** - 3, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Hooded Plover** - 1, 6/12/94, on beach just south of Leeman (Carnamah) - AB \* 1, 17/12/94, mouth of the Greenough River - KC

**Arctic Jaeger** - 1, 30/12/94, 1 km N of Cull Island, S of Esperance (Esperance) - MC \* 3, 13/1/95, 8 km NE of Rottnest - GL \* 5, 13/1/95, Woodman Point (Cockburn) - BB, MC

**Common Tern** - 12, 8/1/95, Mandurah boat harbour (Murray) - MC, GMo, JP

**Common Noddy** - 20, 18/1/95, Lancelin Island (Gingin) - DB

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** - 8, 12/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, DJ

**Rainbow Lorikeet** - 2, 3/1/95, Carousel shopping centre, Cannington (Canning) - MS  
**Budgerigar** - 15, 23/11/94, 20 km N of Lake King (Lake Grace) - SN and party  
**Orange Chat** - 1, 27/11/94, 2 km due E of Morawa (Morawa) - SN and party  
**White-breasted Robin** - 1, 15/1/95, Yanchep National Park (Wanneroo) - PdR  
**Brown Songlark** - 1 female, 24/12/94, on oval at Dianella (Stirling) - HvW

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

**Letter-winged Kite** - 5-9/10/94, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - John Dell (also see above and WABN 71 and 72 for other recent reports in WA).  
**Square-tailed Kite** - 1, 17/10/94, Nerren Nerren Station (Shark Bay) - PF  
**Black-breasted Buzzard** - nest with two young, 26/9/94, Wongawol Station (Wiluna) - SN  
**Australian Bustard** - 19 in flight, 3/10/94, 50 km N of Cocklebidy (Dundas) - SN  
**Oriental Plover** - 12, 3/10/94, 18 km N of Cocklebidy (Dundas) - SN  
**Striated Grasswren** - 3, 22/8/94, 38 km due east of Mungili Claypan, Gunbarrel Hwy (Wiluna) - SN \* 2, 28/9/94, 25 km due E of Cosmo Newbery (Laverton) - SN  
**Slaty-backed Thornbill** - 12, 24/9/94, Nallan Station (Cue) - SN  
**Grey-crowned Babbler** - 6, 24/9/94, Nallan Station (Cue) - SN  
**Banded Whiteface** - 4, 21/8/94, 52 km N of Alexander Spring, Hunt Exploration Track (Wiluna) - SN  
**Rufous Treecreeper** - 4, 19/8/94, 18 km N of Neale Junction (Laverton) - SN  
**Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush** - 1, 21/8/94, 2 km N of Alexander Spring, Hunt Exploration Track (Wiluna) - SN

## KIMBERLEY

**King Quail** - 2+, 7/1/95, heard, then flushed, from damp grass in an irrigated Lukina crop, Kingston rest station, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (few if any previous records for the East Kimberley)  
**Magpie Goose** - 10000+, 4/1/95, Kununurra sewage ponds (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 5000+, 4/1/95, Kimberley Research Station, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Australian Shelduck** - 3, 25/11/94, 4 on 10/12/94 and 9 on 11/12/94, Broome sewage ponds (Broome) - PCo, GS, MR  
**Garganey** - 4, 13/1/95, Derby sewage ponds (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 1, 17/1/95, sewage ponds at Argyle village (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO  
**Streaked Shearwater** - 1, 24/12/94, found sick and dying on Cable Beach (Broome) - GS (specimen now in WA Museum)  
**Great-billed Heron** - 1, 9/94, Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - MCA  
**Nankeen Night Heron** - 20, 15-16/12/94, Broome crocodile farm (Broome) - BBO  
**Little Bittern** - 1, 6/1/95, Kona Caravan Park, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Black Bittern** - 1, 5/1/95, Cheese Tin Creek, ca. 40 km S of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**White-bellied Sea-Eagle** - 10 (including 7 immature), 8/1/95, Lake Argyle and Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO  
**Eurasian Coot** - 2000+ in one flock, 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Gallinago sp(p)** - 100+ birds flushed (minimum 35 individuals), 5/1/95, 5 km along road to Palm Springs, SE of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB - 30+ of these appeared to be **Swinhoe's Snipe**, but 4+ were apparently smaller, with shorter bill, different call and usually higher and more twisting flight, and were possibly **Pin-tailed Snipe**  
**Bar-tailed Godwit** - 15,000, 19/12/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO  
**Eastern Curlew** - 260 in one flock, 19/11/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO  
**Great Knot** - 10,000, 19/12/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO  
**Long-toed Stint** - 4+, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 30+, 13/1/95, marsh near Derby sewage ponds (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Red-necked Phalarope** - 2, 19-20/12/94, Broome sewage ponds (Broome) - GS, BBO  
**Painted Snipe** - 2 females, 5/1/95, Parry Lagoons, SE of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Comb-crested Jacana** - 8 (including 3 immature), 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Pacific Golden Plover** - 7, 4/1/95, Kununurra sewage ponds (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 10, 4/1/95, Kimberley Research Station, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 3, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (previously only few records from East Kimberley)  
**Little Ringed Plover** - 1, 13/1/95, marsh near Derby sewage ponds (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Oriental Plover** - 20, 8/1/95, Ord River at south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 3, 13/1/95, near Willare Bridge, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Oriental Pratincole** - 400+, 8/1/95, Ord River at south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Whiskered Tern** - 1000+, 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**White-winged Black Tern** - 10+, 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Common Noddy** - 48, 18/12/94, at Broome port (Broome) - GS  
**Oriental Cuckoo** - 2 or 3, 13/1/95, Derby sewage ponds, (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Brush Cuckoo** - 4, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (unusual this far south in the East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Channel-billed Cuckoo** - 1, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (unusual this far south in the East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Grass Owl** - 1, 8/1/95, salt marsh near Broome (Broome) - PCo

**Azure Kingfisher** - 1, 7/1/95, Kingston rest station, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Collared Kingfisher** - 1, 5/1/95, Wyndham port (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 1, 13/1/95, Derby port (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Purple-crowned Fairy-wren** - 8+, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (in a thicket of the introduced Jerusalem Thorn (?*Parkinsonia* sp.) covered by introduced passionfruit vines(*Passiflora foetida*))

**White-throated Gerygone** - 1, 16/10/94, Flying Fox Creek, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (at southern limit of range in this area)

**Silver-crowned Friarbird** - 50+, 16/10/94, Flying Fox Creek, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (at southern limit of range in this area)

**Bar-breasted Honeyeater** - 1, 17/1/95, near Argyle Diamond Mine village (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (unusual this far south)

**Black Honeyeater** - 10, 17/11 to 3/12/94, woodland near Broome (Broome) - BBO

**Pied Honeyeater** - 65, 24/11 to 3/12/94, woodland near Broome (Broome) - BBO

**Yellow Chat** - 1+, 9/94, Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - MCa \* 15+, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Lemon-bellied (Kimberley) Flycatcher** - 1, 7/1/95, Barred Creek, north of Broome (Broome) - PCo \* adult feeding immature, 13/1/95, Derby port (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Varied Sittella** - 20, 28/11/94, Broome (Broome) - BK per BBO

**Sandstone Shrike-thrush** - 1, 23/1/95, in mine pit at Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Northern Fantail** - 1, 7/1/95, Barred Creek, north of Broome (Broome) - PCo (SW limit of range)

**Yellow Wagtail** - 1, 5/1/95, Parry Lagoons, SE of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 12, 6/1/95, Kununurra golf course (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Yellow-rumped Mannikin** - 50+ (biggest flock 30+), 4/1/95, Weaber Plains irrigation area near Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 1, 7/1/95, Kingston rest station, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Barn Swallow** - 50+, 11/1/95, Roebuck Plains, near Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

possible **Oriental (Great) Reed-Warbler** - 3+, 4/1/95, Lily Creek Lagoon, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (apparently different call from Clamorous, and fine streaks on breast, pink mouth (but note: Clamorous can also have pink mouth))

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Editor's note: Christmas Island and Cocos-Keeling Islands are Australian territories in the Indian Ocean and species recorded on these islands are included in the latest RAOU checklist. We therefore welcome interesting sightings from these two territories.

**Pied Heron** - 1, 1/12/94, at the Casino Resort - KC (apparently the first record for Christmas Island)

**White-breasted Waterhen** - 2, 2/12/94, near Drumsite - KC  
**Eastern Curlew** - 1, 7/12/94, alongside the airstrip - KC (apparently the first record for Christmas Island)

## ERRATA

**Letter-winged Kite** - 1, 10/94, 50 km N of Kalbarri (Northampton) - AB (observer omitted in WABN 72)

## OBSERVERS

AB = Allan Burbidge

BB = Bruce Buchanan

BBO = Broome Bird Observatory

BK = Brian Kane

BKM = Bernie Masters

DB = Di Beckingham

DJ = David James

FO = Frank O'Connor

FS = Fred Smith

GL = Graeme Little

GM = George Miller

GMO = Glenn Moore

GS = George Swann

HvW = Hank van Wees

IS = Ian Standring

JBe = Jim Beruldsen

JC = Jean Craig

JD = Jill Denning

JF = Jon Fallaw

JH = James Hall

JP = Jane Prince

KB = Ken Baker

KC = Kevin Coate

KL = Kim-Chye Lim

MBa = Mike Bamford

MC = Michael Craig

MCa = Mike Carter

MR = Mavis Russell

MS = Marcus Singor

PB = Philip Boglio

PCo = Peter Collins

PdR = Perry de Rebeira

PF = Phil Fuller

RM = Robert Mitchell

SN = Simon Nevill

TK = Tony Kirkby

## ALBINO BIRDS SEEN RECENTLY:

**Silver Gull** - 1, 10/12/94, Penguin Island (Rockingham) - Geoff Burrow (This bird had a dark eye, pink bill and feet, with uniform white plumage).

**Crested Pigeon** - 1, 20/10/94, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - Kevin Coate

**Welcome Swallow** - 4 or 5, 20/12/94, shed at BHP, Kwinana (Cockburn) - Colin St Jack

## NAMES FOR AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

The RAOU has recently published a revised list of Australian birds (Christidis, L. and Boles, W. E. 1995 *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. Monograph 2, RAOU, Melbourne). This is now the "official" list to be used in RAOU publications.

There are two significant kinds of changes in this list. The first is to scientific names and the order of species, and the second is to English names. No doubt some people will be dismayed to hear that there are any changes, but there are good reasons for both kinds of changes, and there are some changes that almost everyone will welcome.

### English Names

It is 16 years since the publication of the RAOU's *Recommended English names for Australian birds* (Emu 77 Supplement, 245-313). These names were also used in the RAOU Atlas of Australian Birds. Despite that length of time and the great amount of work done on Australian birds during

that period, relatively few changes in English names are proposed in the current list. They fall into three categories, which are listed below with examples using Western Australian species. In each case the 'new' name is listed first, with the 'old' name in brackets.

1) *Changes to names of introduced or wide ranging species to conform with current international usage:*

Common Greenshank (Greenshank), Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian Plover), Greater Sand Plover (Large Sand Plover), White-winged Black Tern (White-winged Tern), Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon).

2) *Changes as a result of increased understanding of taxonomic status:*

Black-faced Cormorant (Black-faced Shag), Australian White Ibis (Sacred Ibis), Swamp Harrier (Marsh Harrier), Pacific Golden Plover and American Golden Plover (Lesser Golden Plover), Pied Imperial Pigeon (Torresian Imperial Pigeon), Western Corella (in addition to Long-billed Corella of south-eastern Australia), Short-billed Black-Cockatoo and Long-billed Black-Cockatoo (White-tailed Black-Cockatoo), Australian Ringneck (includes Mallee Ringneck, Port Lincoln Ringneck and Twenty-eight Parrot), Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush (separate from Cinnamon Quail-thrush), Cinnamon Quail-thrush (includes Nullarbor Quail-thrush), Mangrove Grey Fantail (in addition to Grey Fantail), Western Bowerbird (in addition to Spotted Bowerbird), Red-browed Finch (Red-browed Firetail), Painted Finch (Painted Firetail).

3) *Changes to names that were thought to be unpopular and have been changed after survey of birdwatchers:*

Australian Wood Duck (Maned Duck), White-necked Heron (Pacific Heron), Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous Night Heron), Nankeen Kestrel (Australian Kestrel), Australian Spotted Crake (Australian Crake), Bush Stone-curlew (Bush Thick-knee), Beach Stone-curlew (Beach Thick-knee), Black-fronted Dotterel (Black-fronted Plover), Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (Pink Cockatoo), Princess Parrot (Alexandra's Parrot), Shy Heathwren (Shy Hylacola), Rufous Fieldwren (Rufous Calamanthus), Magpie-lark (Australian Magpie-lark).

Experienced birdwatchers will have noticed that a number of these are changes back to 'traditional' usage. This is despite leading to one or two inconsistencies, such as Australian Wood Duck which is not related to Wood Ducks elsewhere in the world, and is a more cumbersome name than Maned Duck. However, overall, the changes are likely to result in a list which is stable for many years to come.

# **Taxonomy**

From the point of view of the ordinary birdwatcher, there are few changes in scientific names and these will be of little practical consequence to most people. What is more significant and interesting is the order in which the families and species have been placed. The current checklists were published in 1975, and there has been an enormous increase in our understanding of the relationships of Australian birds in the intervening 20 years. In 1975, the prevailing view was that most Australian songbirds were simply curious relatives of northern hemisphere groups of birds such as robins and warblers. Today, it is believed that many major groups of

Australian birds (such as honeyeaters) actually evolved on the southern super-continent Gondwanaland, and are not closely related to any northern hemisphere groups. Indeed, it is now widely accepted that the original ancestor of the worldwide crows and ravens, and the northern hemisphere magpies and jays and their relatives, originally evolved on the southern continents, not, as had previously been assumed, in the northern hemisphere. Studies on these southern-evolved groups has helped to clarify a number of major general questions about the origins of the world's bird fauna.

This new knowledge is incorporated into the new list, with the longer-established Australian groups close to each other at the beginning of the list, more recent arrivals such as the crows which belong to originally southern-evolved groups placed next, and the northern-evolved groups (such as swallows and martins, songlarks and finches) being placed at the end of the list. This highlights, for scientist and 'ordinary birdwatcher' alike, the unique and important nature of Australian birds. Groups such as pardalotes, thornbills, fairywrens and honeyeaters, which are common birds to us, are found only in Australia, New Guinea and New Zealand. They are of international importance and interest and not simply the quaint relatives of the major northern hemisphere groups.

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## **Notes for Contributors**

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**
- WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

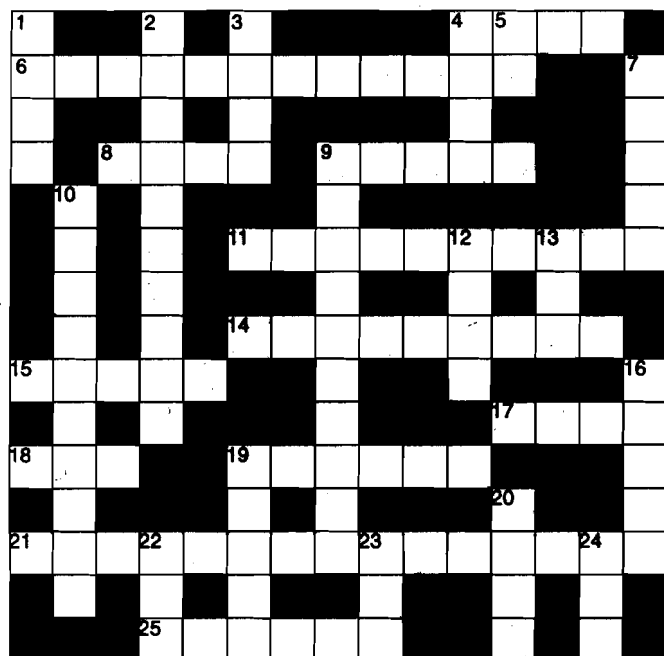
## **Deadline for the June Issue**

**1 May 1995  
at Perry House**

## New Challenge

Since Big Bird has retired, I thought it might be an appropriate time to challenge readers with a crossword instead of a quiz. Hopefully the longtime stalwarts will still need to think a little, but beginners to the birding scene may also learn something in the process of tackling the crossword. The answer is given on the last page. Have fun!

Pam Agar



### ACROSS

4. Possibly an alternative nest-site for a kestrel on the Nullabor.
6. The biological order which includes owls.
8. One duck is named from its bill which is this colour.
9. Not a gold-digger, but likely to be found in the same area.
11. Optical aids for birdwatchers.
14. Young bird, ready to fly.
15. Food eaten by finches and doves.
17. Aboriginal name for Malleefowl in southwestern W.A.
18. Most birds will do this for long periods during the breeding season.
19. Site of WA's second bird observatory.
21. Eastern States parrot, becoming very common in the Perth metropolitan area (2 words).
25. If you were a Rainbow Bee-eater you might appreciate help with the construction of one.

### DOWN

1. You may need a boat to visit one if you are looking for Little Penguin nests.
2. Together with binoculars, essential for the beginner (2 words).
3. Flies well in the wind, even without human control.
4. Ridge above the bill of a bird, containing nostrils.
5. As wise ... an owl.

7. A Calamanthus often does this from an exposed perch.
9. A species under survey at Eyre Bird Observatory.
10. Small parrot seen in large flocks in the north of WA.
12. This sort of weather may cause a bird to fluff up its feathers for warmth.
13. Feather yet to grow through the surface of the skin.
16. Doesn't necessarily live up to its speedy name.
19. A small honeyeater, common in the Perth metropolitan area.
20. Predatory sea-bird.
22. This might be a tasty snack for a parrot.
23. Nocturnal bird of prey.
24. The bird representative on the Australian coat of arms.

## Members' Contributions

### REPORT ON FARMING PROPERTIES VISITED IN THE SOUTH-WEST

Whilst Margery Clegg and I were responsible for arranging the walks and campouts for the RAOU we were approached by the Land Management Society and asked if the RAOU would be prepared to conduct surveys on some of their members' farms to ascertain bird species and densities and to advise on improvements.

We were then invited to their Annual General Meeting at Dryandra on 17/18 October 1992. Upon our arrival we met, amongst others, our friend Leon Silvester (Wildlife Officer for the Narrogin district) who had driven over to give an evening lecture and take bird walks on the Sunday. Leon persuaded us to take the walks for him as he had been away for a week and wished to return home. This we did, having surveyed the surrounding area to see what species were present and if possible to find some nests.

We took two walks on the Sunday, one in the morning and the second after lunch. On both occasions we found our audience to consist of country people and landowners, most of whom had spent most of their lives on the land but had paid little attention to bird life.

The results we feel have been well worth the effort as we have been asked to visit six properties, met some delightful people, and have been able to hold two very successful campouts for the RAOU. In addition, these activities were reported in the Land Management Society's magazine, with an invitation to other landowners to seek assistance from the RAOU to compile a bird list for their properties.

Set out below is a list of the farms visited, together with some information about each of them.

#### 25-28 September 1992: Wigboro Farms, Ongerup (Sandy and Kingsley Vaux)

This holding was introduced to us by Rodney Vervest, but is included in the report as it is similar to the rest of the properties visited.

We found that Kingsley is very interested in the preservation of his district and has set aside, with his brother, an area of thick bush known to contain more than one active Malleefowl mound. This area has been fenced against fox intrusion and has been baited.

There is also an area of swamp-cum-lake on the edge of his property which the owner hopes will be made into a

recognised CALM reserve. We were asked to check this site in particular as he hoped we would find evidence of rare or unusual bird life. Regrettably, we failed to locate the area until the last morning of our visit and only two people were able to walk right round the freshwater lake.

We think that the property should be visited on a 3-4 year basis and is an excellent area for an RAOU campout.

**8-10 January 1993: Tamaru Poll Stud Farm (John and Leslie Doncon, RMB 8002, Kalgan River, via Albany 6330)**

This property, of 1075 hectares, is not suitable for either an RAOU campout or as a place that the local Albany Group could take a walk. Each paddock and area of bush is surrounded by a 4-strand electric fence carrying 250 volts. This gave us considerable trouble getting into the areas we wished to survey.

**Birrale Farm near Dumbleyung (Terri and Dale Lloyd, 125 Gate Road, Dumbleyung)**

This was a leased property which we first visited for two days on 9-11 February 1993. Whilst there we realised that it would be very suitable for an RAOU campout. It consisted of approximately 1900 hectares with four large areas of bush, some of which had been cleared 20 years or so previously. These areas were regrowing and provided good cover for a variety of birds.

An RAOU campout was held for the long Easter weekend 8-13 April 1993. Seventy species of birds were found, including Spotted Nightjar, Owlet Nightjar, Shy Heathwren, Redthroat, Fieldwren and Black Honeyeater.

Unfortunately, the lease has lapsed and we understand that the owners have sold the land.

**Jindalee Farm, Dumbleyung (Terri and Dale Lloyd)**

The Lloyds purchased this property in 1993 to replace their leased land. It is an area of 1700 acres. We were asked to look at two relatively small areas of bush, both of which had in the past been grazed by sheep. They hoped to gain a grant to help fence one of the areas. When we walked there in March 1994 we were not very impressed with either area, but of the two the area nearest the shearing shed seemed to provide the best cover.

We looked at the area again on 6-7 October 1994, and confirmed our original findings. The area consists of breakaway country, some very large boulders, areas of dense scrub which are very difficult to penetrate, small patches of mallee and an area of heath in which we found evidence of Rainbow Bee-eaters' nesting holes. Whilst there we found a nest of Western Yellow Robins and saw a second pair with immature young.

**16-17 November 1993: Hartley Reserve, Corrigin (Laurie Pitman)**

The northern boundary consisted largely of sparse mallee with areas of scattered open timber and virtually no understorey, and consequently there was very little bird life. We did find a few Brown and White-eared Honeyeaters and some Red Wattlebirds. Bronzewing Pigeons and Australian Ringnecks (Port Lincoln Parrots) were also there but we felt that they were using the bush as a roosting area and feeding in the adjacent paddocks. This density of bird species could alter when the eucalypts are flowering, but we feel that only nectar and manna feeders would be found.

On the morning of the second day, we walked through the thick low scrub growing adjacent to the road and found a number of species. We continued along the southern track, passing through belts of different habitats caused by changes of soil and small breakaways. Both of these areas provide excellent cover and a source of food for bird life. We noted also that the occasional patch of low eucalypts which were in flower had attracted honeyeaters such as the Brown-headed. The latter species is nomadic and follows the flowering of eucalypts. In this instance we thought some nesting had taken place in the reserve as the feeding group consisted of both adult, young and immature birds.

Throughout these two areas of denser scrub we found that the commonest birds were Southern Scrub-robins and White-browed Babbblers. Both of these species tend to feed on or near ground level on beetles and other small invertebrates and on small seeds which they find in the litter. We thought that the relatively small area of 300 hectares supported an unusually large population of Southern Scrub-robins, estimated at 10, possibly 12 pairs. White-browed Babbblers were also numerous and we thought that four or five groups of up to 12 individuals were present. We saw a total of 12 species, and the presence of Shy Heathwren and Southern Scrub-robin is of special interest for a remnant in the Wheatbelt.

The area could be visited during spring by a small group of about 6-8 individuals and a thorough search made of the whole area. We do not think that the area is suitable for a larger group owing to the difficulty of access for 2WD vehicles.

**4-5 October 1993: Red Hill Farm, Nyabing (Michael and Win Patterson)**

We had intended to visit this farm the previous March, but the extreme heat prevented our inspection, to the relief of the owners who wanted to visit Albany!

We spent two days after the Woodanilling campout looking at two areas of woodland, one of 75 acres and the second 150 acres.

The first consisted of an area of standing old wandoo with many hollows suitable for nesting parrots, etc., also areas of casuarina and open pavements of granite. The areas have been grazed and there is little or no understorey. We noted an old Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest. The area is small and would not offer much cover for permanent bushbirds.

Next morning we spent four hours looking at the 150-acre block which was much more interesting both for the resident birds and the plant life. Several different habitats presented themselves: breakaways clad in various types of eucalypts, mallee, old wandoos and an open park-like area, stands of tea-trees and other bush. We found evidence of several species nesting in the area such as Red-capped Robins and honeyeaters. There are two, or possibly three, nests of Wedge-tailed Eagles, one of which appears to have been or is being used. However, we saw no sign of the eagles.

The Pattersons own another block of some 1500 acres which we expect to visit in the near future after which a full report will be sent to the owners.

**Bryan Barrett**

**NOTEBOOK JOTTINGS**

Following our appeal to members for articles for WABN, Bryan Barrett has offered to write a series of snippets from his notebooks. The first of these appears below with some

background biography, and concludes by posing an interesting question about robins and fire.

#### Editors

As an introduction, allow me to explain that I commenced serious birding in Australia in 1983, having visited WA in 1977 and 1980. Since 1983 I have kept extensive notes for every excursion. I make a practice of noting the time of arrival on site, the weather, my companions, what was done during the visit, any unusual behaviour on the part of the species seen, and indeed their state of development. Nests are recorded, their position, the material from which they are constructed, number of eggs/young, etc. Up to 1986/87 presence only was recorded. However, it then occurred to me that this practice was of little significance to the area being investigated so quantity was added to the records. Each loose-leaf notebook is indexed both for the places visited and the species seen on each day.

(I am old-fashioned; doubtless the younger generation does all that on one of those new-fangled machines. However, I hope we all arrive at the same conclusions.)

In 1983 I had neither seen nor heard much more than a kookaburra and Australian Magpies, except for one glorious day in 1977 when Ann and Bob Goodale showed me Scarlet Robins, a Sacred Kingfisher and an Australian Kestrel on a nest in a blackboy. Perhaps there were others, but regrettably no record was kept. Then, on a campout, I met Brice Wells (later to become a warden at both the Eyre and Broome Bird Observatories) and have never looked back. So, my recommendation is that inexperienced members should attach themselves to people with more extensive knowledge than themselves who usually take great pleasure in introducing our bird life to others.

As a result of my note-taking and observations over the years I find there are many questions for which I would like to find answers. Here is my first quandary which has come from observing an area affected by bushfires.

It was in December 1983 that Brice introduced me to Pipididdy, an area adjacent to Yanchep Park, which he had been visiting for three years. The heath had been burnt in 1982/83 and regrowth was apparent. As we walked we found two new species - a pair of Hooded and a pair of Red-capped Robins. When Brice left to go up north Margery, Norma and I continued to visit the area and did so on an average of nine times a year until the next time the area was burnt in January 1991. During this time we found no evidence of either species. Walking the badly burnt heath during May 1991 we again noted both robins close to the location in which they had been in December 1983. However, they had disappeared again by June of the same year and have not been seen there since.

The question is: where had they come from and where did they go? If any other members have also noted this behaviour of robins coming into areas after fires, I would be grateful if they could contact me.

Bryan Barrett

#### PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR OF BLACK-COCKATOOS

While on a wildlife survey in the Ravensthorpe area during November-December 1994, I observed what I believe to be unknown behaviour of the Carnaby's Black Cockatoo (now officially Short-billed Black-Cockatoo).

Each night between 6 and 7.30 pm the arrival of the family

(male, female and one young) would be announced by the young bird squawking as they approached the same tree every night.

After 10-20 minutes the female would feed the young bird which would then work its way to a hollow. On some occasions the female would then approach the hollow and spend up to five minutes with the young bird.

Just before dark the female would fly off, presumably to the canopy for the night, as seen on one occasion.

While all this happened the male was perched within five metres of the hollow. The male would stay long after the female had departed and well after dark.

The young one could be heard squawking (not a begging sound) until half an hour to one hour after dark.

The next morning at 4.15 am the dawn would be accompanied by a cacophony as they all greeted each other. They would all then fly off and not return until that evening.

This behaviour was seen every night that I camped in that area between 18 November to 13 December (some 11 nights).

Geoff Burrow

#### FOOD OF HOBBY

Within 60 metres of the cockatoo tree referred to in the previous item, a pair of Hobbys was raising two nestlings. Food brought to this nest included a Yellow-rumped Thornbill, a New Holland Honeyeater and a mammal of mouse or honey possum size.

Of interest in the same area, a rare and endangered carpet python was observed.

Geoff Burrow

#### FRANKLIN'S GULL AT ESPERANCE

While walking on the old tanker jetty at Esperance, at about 5.20 pm on 30/12/94, we saw a beautifully marked black headed gull with a small flock of Silver Gulls near local fishermen. There was a warm easterly wind blowing. We had good views of the gull, flying and sitting on the water, through 8x40 and 7x35 binoculars. At times it was less than 10 m away, in excellent light. The gull was slightly smaller than the nearby Silver Gulls, and had a distinct, clearly demarcated black hood, a red bill and white eye ring. The upper wing and back/mantle were grey (slightly darker than the Silver Gulls), with a clearly defined white trailing wing stripe, and black wing tips separated from the remainder of the upperwing by a white patch. The remainder of the upperparts (between hood and back, rump and tail) were white. The tail was short and square. The underparts, with the exception of the dark wing tips, were white. The legs were red. We watched the bird for 10-15 minutes. A search the next morning failed to locate it. A check of several reference books including *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World* by G. Tuck and H. Heinzel showed it to be a Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) in full breeding plumage.

John and Hillary Brooke

Editors' note: This bird was seen also by Pam Burgess on the same day, and may have been the same bird seen by other members in late January. There are very few records of this species from Western Australia, and this is probably the first confirmed record from the south coast. Gulls with black heads can be difficult to identify, and not all the possible vagrants

are illustrated in Australian field guides. Good field descriptions are therefore always warranted for any sightings of unusual gulls such as this one.

### BIRDS & OVERHEAD POWERLINES

On 23 December 1994 at 0840 hrs, while walking from the Edgewater train station to CALM's Wildlife Research Centre in Woodvale, I found a juvenile Black Swan lying dead on the ground some 40 metres north of Ocean Reef Road. A quick inspection revealed the likely cause of death. It was lying 20 metres from overhead powerlines and had a deep diagonal gash across the upper chest. There was no other obvious damage to the bird except for a few primary feathers (right wing) broken off at their base. Judging by the general condition of the carcass (which was quite fresh though swarming with ants) the bird had died some time the previous night.

Overhead powerlines are well known killers of swans and other birds and may even limit population sizes in some areas. In Kent (Britain) for example, twenty-one Mute Swans (30% of the local flock) were killed in two months by a powerline sited midway between roosting and feeding grounds (Harrison, J.G. 1963. Wildfowl Trust Annual Report 14: 164-5). Conspicuous markers on powerlines may reduce mortality rates but will not eliminate the problem, particularly on a regional scale. State Energy Minister, Mr Colin Barnett, has been reported as wanting to see overhead power lines in the Perth metropolitan area progressively placed underground. Perhaps this move warrants support in the interests of our birdlife.

Jim Lane

### CRAKES AND RAILS AT HERDSMAN LAKE

One might assume that the large expanse of dense twigrush, bullrush and water-couch in and around Herdsman Lake would provide ideal habitat for secretive waterbirds such as the Buff-banded Rail and the three species of Crake which occur in the South-west. Nevertheless, sightings of these species are very occasional. Of the two major surveys of waterbirds at the lake, the two-year Scopewest Survey conducted from 1990 to 1992 (Storey et al. 1993) recorded only the Buff-banded Rail at Herdsman Lake, and that rarely. The more intensive one-year study by Peter Curry (Curry 1981) recorded the Spotless and Australian Spotted Crake very rarely, a possible call record of Baillons Crake, and the Buff-banded Rail rather more commonly.

Over about 10 years of sporadic birdwatching at Herdsman Lake, I have recorded both the Buff-banded Rail and the Spotless Crake occasionally, the Rails occurring only as single birds. Over the last half of January 1995 an adult and large juvenile Buff-banded Rail, and a single Australian Spotted Crake, have been present on the far side of the deep-water channel near the south-eastern end of Floreat Waters. On each of the three occasions that I have seen them the three birds have been together, foraging on small damp muddy areas between the rushes and the deep-water channel, and I have been able to watch them for about half an hour. The two Rails, although tending to stay fairly close together, foraged independently, and appeared to spend much of their time digging in specific places, either for root material or for animals buried in the mud. I could not see what they were eating. The Crake, on the other hand, was more active, moving about and spending only a short time at any one place, and its

movements were consistent with searching for and catching small invertebrate animals on the surface of the mud. The sightings have all been within about 100 metres of each other, between five and six o'clock in the evening, and I assume that they were the same three birds on each occasion.

John Blyth

### References:

Curry, P. 1981. *A Survey of the Birds of Herdsman Lake 1980-1981*. Bulletin 105. Western Australian Department of Conservation and Environment, Perth.

Storey, A. W., Vervest, R. M., Pearson, G. B. & Halse S. A. 1993. *Waterbird Usage of Wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain*. Wetlands of the Swan Coastal Plain, Volume 7. Water Authority of Western Australia, Perth.

### HOODED PLOVER PROJECT

#### Esperance Visit 26-27 January 1995

As part of the 'big count' of Hooded Plovers for this long weekend, 15 members travelled to Esperance and enjoyed four days of excellent weather.

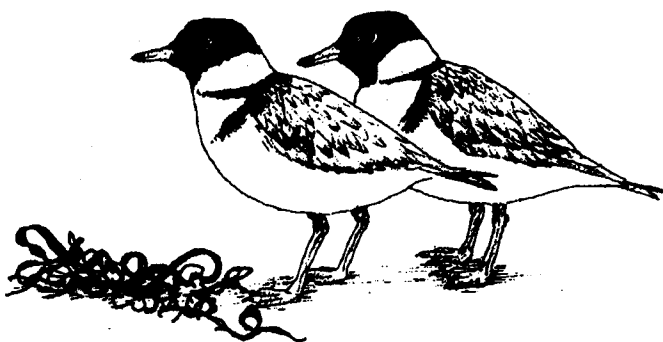
On arrival in Esperance we were advised that a Franklin's Gull was feeding off scraps from fish-cleaning at the long jetty, along with the usual Silver and Pacific Gulls. We were able to observe the Franklin's Gull at close range, making an exciting start to the weekend. (See also item by John and Hillary Brooke in Members' Contributions: Eds)

On Thursday evening 12 members of the Esperance Bird Group joined the visitors for a pleasant get-to-know-you evening and to discuss plans for the two-day Hooded Plover excursion.

On Friday and Saturday mornings Esperance birders were at the rendezvous to transport and lead us to a series of wetlands to search for Hooded Plovers. After visits to several lakes with only a few sightings, imagine the excitement when, peering through the bush surrounding Lake Gore, we saw many Hooded Plovers strung out along the water's edge. Our two reliable and experienced counters were able to give us a final count of 1570 birds!

The Summary section below provides more details of other sightings on this trip.

Saturday lunch was at Lake Monjinup, a reserve being developed by a community group, and having picnic facilities, boardwalks and walk trails — a welcome respite from the heat and glare of the salt lakes.



On Sunday we enjoyed a boat trip to some of the islands of the Recherche Archipelago, with lunch and walks on Woody Island. This was a great day, with calm waters and interesting birds, including a close view of Black-faced Cormorants nesting in a rock-hollow.

The success of the Hooded Plover count was largely due to the support and participation of the Esperance members, ably led by Jack Ewert and Kate Dawson, whose knowledge of the area made our observation program so successful.

Many thanks, Esperance Group. We look forward to our next visit.

### Summary of the 'Big Count'

Forty-one members, in addition to the Esperance party of 15, volunteered to participate in the program over this long weekend. To date (7 February) returns have been received from 75% of participants, so this report is a preliminary one.

**Distribution.** A comparison of our results with sightings reported in *WA Bird Notes* and the *Atlas of Australian Birds*, for the period 1982-1994, shows a greater present concentration of Hooded Plovers in the coastal area from just south of Perth to Esperance. This may well be due to the long dry period in inland areas.

Around Esperance Hooded Plovers were congregated at two areas, Lake Gore and Stokes Inlet, with the 1570 birds recorded at Lake Gore being over three times the maximum count for the 'Esperance Lakes' recorded in *Shorebirds in Australia* (Lane 1987).

Hooded Plovers were distributed as follows during the 'Big Count':

Total recorded	1970
Highest number	1570 (Lake Gore)
Beaches	1.6% of sightings
Lakes	85.1% of sightings
Estuaries	13.3% of sightings

The two largest congregations of Hooded Plovers, at Lake Gore and Stokes Inlet, were examined closely and appeared to contain about 1% juvenile or immature birds, suggesting heavy mortality of young birds.

**Population.** Lane (1987) gave an estimated minimum total for Australia of 1800, while Doug Watkins is cited in HANZAB (Marchant & Higgins 1993) as estimating a total of about 5000 Hooded Plovers for Australia as a whole. The present survey being conducted right across southern Australia will provide a revised estimate.

**Further Research.** Mike Weston, who is studying the biology and status of the Hooded Plover, is in Western Australia at present, and will examine the following questions arising from our survey:

- what are the important breeding sites for Hooded Plovers in Western Australia?
- the movement of birds over both long and short distances (for example, 90 birds were seen at Lake Warden on 4 January 1995, but none was present on 26 or 27 January);
- the conditions under which birds congregate in large numbers, such as those recorded at Lake Gore;
- possible predation or disturbance; there is no access for vehicles to most of the lakes used by Hooded Plovers and little human disturbance, but the effects of predation by feral cats and foxes are not known and need fuller investigation.

Many thanks to all volunteers for past and continuing support, so making this a very successful project. There will be a more comprehensive report in the June issue of WABN.

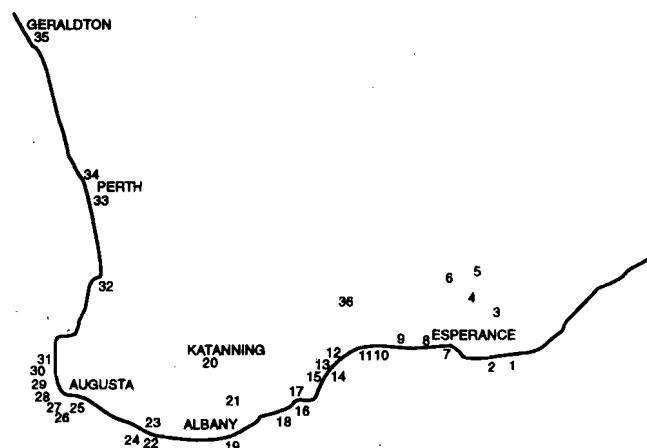
Phyllis Bentley, Max Bailey & Allan Jones

### References:

- Lane, B. A. 1987. *Shorebirds in Australia*. Nelson, Melbourne.
- Marchant, S. & Higgins, P. J. (Eds). 1993. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds: Vol 2 Raptors to Lapwings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

### Map: Distribution of Hooded Plover in Western Australia.

Numbers refer to sites from which Hooded Plovers have been recorded between 1 January 1994 - 29 January 1995. The table shows highest number of Hooded Plover recorded at each site, during the above period.



Site No.	Site Name	Highest No. of Birds
1	Yokinup Bay	2
2	Wharton Beach	4
3	Mullet Lake Complex	76
4	Station Lake	3
5	Benje Benjerup Lake	20
6	Lake Warden	90
7	Fourth Beach	2
8	Lake Gore	1570
9	Stokes Inlet	208
10	Mason Bay	2
11	Mylies Beach	3
12	Fitzgerald River Inlet	10
13	Pt Ann/St Mary's Inlet	21
14	Fitzgerald Beach	2
15	Gordon Inlet	27
16	Bremer Bay	14
17	Wellstead Estuary	15
18	Cape Riche	3
19	Norman's Beach	2
20	Twongwillup Pool	1
21	Lake Quaderwardup	14
22	William Bay	2
23	Irwin Inlet	2
24	Mandalay Beach	2
25	Augusta Beach	3
26	Deepdene Beach	4
27	Foul Bay	4
28	Hamelin Bay	2
29	Boranup Beach	1
30	Boodjidup Beach	3
31	Gnarabup Beach	3
32	Lake Preston	30
33	Pt Heathcote	1
34	Lake Claremont	1
35	Greenough River Mouth	1
36	Lake Ronnerup	14

Not all reports from the 26-29 January count had been received when the above table was compiled.

## Notices

### SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

Professional and amateur ornithologists are advised of the Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress, an international conference that has been scheduled for early October 1996. This meeting will be conducted in WA, and organised by Australia's leading bird research and conservation group, the RAOU.

The major focus of the congress will be upon southern hemisphere birds and their habitats, although delegates who wish to highlight differences or similarities between avian systems in various parts of the world will be most welcome. Provision will be made for the presentation of spoken and poster papers.

**Time:** Saturday 5 - Wednesday 9 October 1996

**Location:** Albany. Excellent conference facilities will be available, accommodation ranging from basic to luxury provided, and pre- and post-conference tours that demonstrate the magnificent natural history of south-western Australia offered to delegates.

**Major theme:** The ecology, conservation and management of southern hemisphere birds.

**Sub-themes:**

- (1) Conservation and management of birds.
- (2) Impact of fire and habitat fragmentation on bird communities.
- (3) Studies of seabirds and waders.
- (4) Breeding biology and mating systems of birds.
- (5) Abundance and distribution of birds.
- (6) Plant-animal interactions and pollination.
- (7) Foraging behaviour in terrestrial bird communities.

**Further information:**

Persons seeking additional information should contact the RAOU President, Professor Brian Collins, c/o School of Environmental Biology, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6001;

Tel 619 351 7041; Fax 619 351 2495;

Email: B.Collins@info.curtin.edu.au

### INDEX TO WABN

Bruce Buchanan has compiled an index to WABN numbers 69 to 72 (March to December 1994) and copies are available from Perry House.

### MALLEEFOWL ROAD DEATHS

Over ten days in January during the grain harvesting period, I saw six dead malleefowl on the Ravensthorpe-Esperance Road, where it crosses the Phillips River.

Members of WA Group could help by publicising the need for care on this and other roads where malleefowl occur.

Geoff Burrow

### ADVERTISING IN WA BIRDNOTES - POLICY

The following is a summary of a policy agreed to by the WA Group Committee in September 1993.

#### 1. Advertisements by Non-commercial Organisations

An appropriate charge to be levied in each case is left to the discretion of the Treasurer, in consultation with other Committee members when necessary, in the light of the overall policy of the WA Group and decisions of the Committee. The following sorts of items will usually be published free of charge:

- notices or promotions by RAOU bird observatories;
- requests for assistance and information from naturalists and researchers;
- announcements of events, conferences and other activities likely to be of general interest to members.

#### 2. Small advertisements

Advertisements of ten lines or less may be published at the rate of:

- \$5 per insertion for subscribers to WABN;
- \$10 per insertion for non-subscribers.

#### 3. Larger Advertisements by Commercial Organisations

The following rates apply:

- \$1.50 per line
- \$30 per quarter page
- \$50 per half page
- \$90 per full page.

#### 4. Repeat advertisements

Advertisements run in more than one issue of WABN will receive a 40% discount for issues after the first in which they appear.

### REQUEST FOR HELP

Norman Robinson, whose lifelong professional study of bird calls is of much interest to RAOU, and Margaret Philippon, RAOU WA Group secretary, both have the wish but not the means — not being drivers at night — to attend the interesting monthly meetings at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre.

Could anyone who usually attends our meetings and lives at some suitable location to them (Norman in Sorrento and Margaret in Embleton) drive them to our meetings when it is convenient?

If you could help, please ring Norman on 447 1098 or Margaret on 375 2068.

### WABN EDITORIAL POLICY

A draft editorial policy has been formulated for WA Bird Notes. The draft is available from Perry House for comment by members until the end of March 1995.

## PERRY HOUSE LIBRARY NEWS

The following reports/journals have been received during the quarter:

*Birds of Big Swamp Bunbury WA* — Report 29 Oct 1994 — Shannon, Dr T G D

*Broome Bird Observatory Newsletter* — November 1994

*The Greener Times*. — November/December 1994 — Conservation Council of WA (Inc)

*A Comparative Study of Epiphytic Diatom Communities on Aquatic Macrophytes in Two Artificial Wetlands* — RGC Wetlands Centre — John, Jacob and Gayton, Christine — School of Environmental Biology, Curtin University of Technology — Technical Report No 23, October 1994

*The Effect of the Addition of Hay on the Biomass and Diversity of Macroinvertebrates in Cadjeput Pool, Capel, WA* — RGC Wetlands Centre — Cale, David J and Edward, Donald H D — Aquatic Research Laboratory, Department of Zoology, University of WA — Technical Report No 24, September 1994

*Waterbird Usage of the Lakes at the RGC Wetlands Centre, Capel, Western Australia 1993* — Doyle, Frank W — RAOU Technical Report No 25, October 1994

*Boddington Gold Mine — Rehabilitation Strategy — Worsley Alumina Pty Ltd — Proposed Changes to Environmental Conditions* — Report and recommendations of the Environmental Protection Authority — Bulletin No 766, December 1994

*Urban Bushland Strategy — Analysis of Public Submissions and Discussion Paper*

*34th Annual Report 1994* — Ian Clunies Ross Memorial Foundation

*Report* — December 1994 — RGC Wetlands Centre

*Wingspan* — No 16 December 1994

*Ecoplan News* — Issue 12 Summer 1995 — Dept. of Environmental Protection

## Excursion and Observatory Reports

### BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Finding relief wardens for an observatory is usually a difficult task. Fortunately for us, BBO seems to inherit or attract ideal people for the job, and we had no qualms about leaving the place for our holidays in the hands of Peter Collins and Mavis Russell. The day before our departure, we had one final task to accomplish, a filming segment with "Talk to the Animals". It was an early start for everyone concerned as we were mist-netting in the mangroves then filming people looking at birds in the bay. The nets were unfurled at 4.30 am. This was exciting as these were brand new mistnets, funded by Australian Geographic. Within minutes, Brown Honeyeaters, Yellow White-eyes, White-breasted Whistlers and a Sacred Kingfisher were in the net. Our team of local banders, Gail, Helen, Rosemary and George were then kept busy weighing, measuring and recording in front of the cameras. The sandflies enjoyed the fresh new Victorian blood and played havoc with the cameramen. We then moved on to film visitors looking at shorebirds on the beach and two White-bellied Sea-Eagles put on a brilliant display. The show should be on TV in March.

In mid December BBO experienced another near miss as Cyclone Annette passed 200 km out to sea. Broome was on yellow alert as the cyclone strengthened to Category four. Mavis and Pete battened down the hatches, while we were blissfully walking the Snowy Mountains, unaware that it had built to such intensity. Luckily Broome escaped again while further south, winds flattened Sandfire Roadhouse as Annette crossed the coast.

We also managed to visit Barren Grounds Bird Observatory in NSW, which is located in 2000 hectares of pristine nature reserve and provides heathland, forests and magnificent views to the coast from the escarpment. While we talked to the Wardens, we could hear the Pilotbird and wrens in profusion. It was very valuable to visit another observatory and we thank Patrick and Paul for their warm hospitality. While we were in Melbourne we visited the magnificent new Head Office in Hawthorn. We were given a guided tour to see the spacious library, the sales area, HANZAB offices and the hallowed upstairs area of *Wingspan* production, Boardroom and Director's office. It is evident that the increased space and shopfront will allow the RAOU to give even better and more efficient service. We were lucky enough to attend a Vic Group meeting, where Danny Rogers and Mike Weston gave a talk on their trip to Russia, "Tundra Ecology '94" Expedition. The slides were amazing and we will not forget the shots of the Snowy Owls, Arctic foxes and shorebird chicks on nests.

Gordon Reid Foundation (Lotteries Commission) has funded the update of our Botanical Trail. This was desperately needed as some of the specimens had died (not realising they were down on paper!) and the signs were faded and tatty. New signs have been bought, and the text is currently being rewritten with the help of the Broome Botanical Society.

BBO's bird list continues to grow! While we were away, Australian Shelduck and Red-necked Phalarope were added. George Swann also found an ailing Streaked Shearwater on Cable Beach after the cyclone. It subsequently died and was sent to the WA Museum. We could also add Peacock to our list, as Mavis collected one as she was driving into town one evening. The peacock decided to try and cross the road at the same time, resulting in one destroyed Mitsubishi windscreen, one shaken Mavis and one presumably deceased Peacock.

Places on our Courses this year are filling up fast. There are still places available on our April "Wave the Waders Goodbye" course. Participants will experience the amazing phenomenon of mass shorebird migration, while contributing to valuable data on when, how many and what (!) birds leave Roebuck Bay. Clive Minton will also be here on a photography mission which will add colour to the course. Please phone for details (091) 93 5600.

We have just learnt that a Great Knot caught by BBO on 6/9/94 was banded by Vic Smith in Albany on 16/3/91. This is great news as very few waders banded at Broome have been found in the south-west or vice-versa.

Jon Fallaw and Becky Hayward

### EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Although this week has officially been a 'Batting Week' with Doug Watkins running a course on bats, the birds have not escaped attention.

Increased numbers of Rainbow Bee-eaters have been recorded in the area. Each evening at about 1830, just as we

recorded in the area. Each evening at about 1830, just as we were commencing our evening meal, they would fly past heading south. Members of the course were particularly interested in where they were roosting, so they set off in hot pursuit.

They followed them over the sand-dunes to the south-east of the Observatory where about 80 Rainbow Bee-eaters were found to be roosting in a large mallee. During the day, these birds are only seen in small numbers. A night roost of this size must represent a concentration of birds from at least 10 km away.

Around the tree the next day, it was observed that the leaves on the sheltered side were lightly stained with faeces and on the sand beneath were pellets of discarded food materials. Samples were collected and eight were measured, their length ranging from 12.0 mm to 19.3 mm and width 7.8 mm to 9.4 mm. Each sample was very dry and friable, oblong in shape, one end being rounded and the other slightly tapered.

Careful examination under the microscope enabled them to be identified as exoskeletons of wasps and beetles, the heads being virtually intact, while the legs and wings were mainly in fragments. It was considered that the pellets of indigestible insect parts had most likely been regurgitated by the Rainbow Bee-eaters at the roost.

Rainbow Bee-eaters are recorded at Eyre from early October to late March, and have nested at several sites near the base of the scarp. Numbers seen near the Observatory peak in February. The data from the Daily Bird Log suggests that the current night roost may have started in 1991, with this year having the highest numbers. A night roost in a similar area was recorded in 1985 (Eyre Bird Observatory Report 1984-1985, RAOU 1988).

**Gwen and Graham Goodreid**

#### **MANNING PARK 15 November 1994**

A warm easterly was blowing when we set off on our midweek walk at Manning Park on 15 November. We headed towards the lookout where we saw and heard a number of Brown Honeyeaters, Singing Honeyeaters and Silvereyes. Two raptors were sighted overhead, an Australian Kestrel and, probably, an Australian Hobby (it flew out of sight very quickly).

As we proceeded back towards the lake, we noted numerous Laughing Turtle-Doves, heard a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo calling, saw a Striated Pardalote and spotted a Western Gerygone carrying food back to its nest. Further on, a Laughing Kookaburra returned to its juvenile which was begging for food. Calls of the Rufous Whistler, Grey Butcherbird and New Holland Honeyeater, alerted us to their presence.

Around the grassed edge of the lake were the usual Australian Magpies, Australian Ravens, Willie Wagtails, Magpie-larks and Silver Gulls. Just adjacent to the edge of the lake, was an Australasian Grebe's nest, the adult birds busily caring for two young chicks. Feeding on the lake, were a number of adult and young Eurasian Coots, Pacific Black Ducks, Grey Teal, Musk Ducks, a pair of Black Swans with cygnets and the newly arrived Black-winged Stilts. White-faced Herons, Purple Swampheens and Dusky Moorheens both with young, completed the lake sightings.

Flying around the area were Welcome Swallows, Tree

Martins and an Australian White Ibis. There was a fleeting glimpse of a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Rainbow Bee-eaters were heard. Although not heard, Red Wattlebirds were present, including a juvenile begging for food. Two Galahs, a Red-capped Parrot and Australian Ringnecks were recorded, while among the trees we heard a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo calling and saw two Yellow-rumped Thornbills. Perched high on dead twigs were two Sacred Kingfishers.

The highlight of the walk was the sighting of two Black-fronted Plovers on the grassy slope to the north of the lake. The final count of 40 species, including three Great Egrets seen just prior to the commencement of the walk, and the pleasant company of other keen birdwatchers, made it a very enjoyable morning.

**Gwen and Graham Goodreid**

#### **YALGORUP NATIONAL PARK 19 Nov 1994**

Yalgorup National Park, whose main feature is a north-south chain of saline lakes, was the hunting ground for 12 members on 19 November. Our first search area, exposed to a cool southerly breeze, adjoined the causeway which separates Lakes Clifton and Preston. We were rewarded, without delay, with the view of nine Hooded Plovers, placid and approachable, at the water's edge. It transpired that a small party of this species has been frequenting this shoreline for at least seven days. Substantial flocks of Banded Stilts, Red-necked Stilts and Australian Shelducks were also observed.

We then moved on towards the top end of the park, by way of the Martin's Tank camping area. From here we walked to Lake Pollard, a pleasant, leisurely round-trip of a few kilometres. The track runs through an attractive stand of well-grown Tuart, with a vigorous understorey of West Australian Peppermint, plus occasional Jarrah and Marri. At this time of the year, Lake Pollard is renowned for its large population of Black Swans. We saw at least 300 of this species with large numbers also of Australian Shelducks.

Two lesser lakes, Martin's Tank and Hayward, were also visited, but found to be bereft of bird life. The forest provided a reasonable number of species, including the Western Yellow Robin, a species which has been recorded here, in the breeding season, for three or four years.

Time did not permit us to visit the park's other habitats - its higher scrub land or its dune fringes - but we were contented with our list of 44 species, including our good sighting of the Hooded Plovers.

**Frank Pridham**

#### **COODANUP 3 December 1994**

Access problems at the planned venue (Amarillo Pool) required a late change for this day's outing. Bryan Barrett did a great job of organising an alternative at Coodanup.

The weather was kind with no wind until 11 am so the waders were close and quiet, right up to the edge of the car park. Many Banded Stilts, Avocets and the Red Knot still with some breeding plumage delighted all, as did the sight of approximately 500 Little Black Cormorants at the northern end.

The aid of the Mandurah group was much appreciated and their knowledge of the birds of the area was invaluable.

A total of approximately 60 species of birds were seen for the day with only two birds of prey, the Osprey and Swamp

Many people recreate at these areas, especially on weekends and this would disturb some species so such a total is even more pleasing.

Mary Vaughan

#### GROVE FARM RESERVE 18 December 1994

Les Harris conducted this, the last walk of the year held during the heat-wave before Christmas. Actually, we were lucky as Sunday morning was not as hot as the previous mornings had been. We walked the usual route around the claypits and found, during the three and a half hours, 63 species of birds, mostly in ones and twos, although of course Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal and Black-winged Stilt were plentiful. Some of our best sightings were a single White-necked Heron, a Nankeen Night Heron, a Buff-banded Rail, a Baillon's Crake and two Spotless Crakes. Clamorous Reed-Warblers and Little Grassbirds called repeatedly from the reeds, and all members of the group had good views of a pair of White-winged Trillers and Mistletoebirds. A very satisfactory walk to end the year.

Bryan Barrett

#### WUNGONG GORGE 14 January 1995

Our first walk of the year was a warm one, with 12 eager members attending. Before we set out, I informed the group that Wungong Gorge had recently been devastated by fire; large sections of Bungendore Park had also been destroyed.

As we started out a Peregrine Falcon went into a stoop straight over our heads!

Further along we saw several White-breasted Robins, Scarlet Robins, and both Red-winged and Splendid Fairywrens. A Rainbow Bee-eater treated us to a very colourful display.

It was very pleasing to see six Red-eared Firetails; two previous trips since the fire failed to locate any.

Red-capped Parrots and Australian Ringnecks (Port Lincoln Parrots) were seen almost everywhere, apparently feeding among the ashes. Many Western Rosellas were also sighted, feeding mainly in unburnt trees. New Holland Honeyeaters abounded, along with a sprinkling of Brown and White-naped Honeyeaters.

A major disappointment of the walk was the absence of Spotted and Striated Pardalotes; to my knowledge, these haven't been seen or heard since the fire in December.

Surprisingly, a grand total of 38 species were seen. This is probably due to the fact that parts of the gorge east of the orchard were spared, this area acting as a refuge.

Bill McRoberts

#### 1994 EXCURSION REPORT

Over the last 12 months we have had 12 half-day excursions, 13 full-day excursions, six mid-week walks, six campouts, two malleefowl campouts, and a 24-hour Twitchathon; a grand total of 40 birdwatching excursions for the year!

Bryan Barrett, Dave Crossley, Karen McRoberts and myself have formed a subcommittee for organising future outings. This is to generate new ideas and spread the workload.

We hope members have enjoyed the excursions to date, and we look forward to another year of exciting birding.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the leaders of the 1994 excursions, and to encourage new leaders for future outings. Please contact me if you can help (tel: 09 459 1971).

Bill McRoberts

EXCURSION ORGANISER



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1995

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1996

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## Coming Events

#### Monday 27 February - Annual General Meeting and General Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8pm

Alan Danks of CALM has been associated for many years with the very successful management programme for Noisy Scrub-birds at Two Peoples Bay east of Albany, and will bring us news on current research, population trends, translocations and other matters relating to this State's best known threatened bird species.

#### Saturday 4 to Monday 6 March - Campout at Dumbleyung

Travel to Dumbleyung. Take 129 Road east from Dumbleyung for about 10 km, then turn left onto 125 Road for two km. Look for RAOU signs. The farm is called "Ronville". Terri and Dale Lloyd will be our hosts. Come self-contained for camping or, if you wish a shearing shed is available. For those wanting more comfort, Dumbleyung has a caravan park and tavern (book these yourself).

We shall look at reserves and some will examine Lake Grace for Hooded Plover.

Please let me know if you will attend so I can keep watch for you (09) 459 1971.

Leaders: Bill McRoberts and Allan Jones

**Wednesday 8 March - Mid-week walk at Alfred Cove**

Meet at 8.00 am at the carpark in Troy Park, Burke Drive, Attadale (by the radio mast). Bring your telescopes and we'll wader-watch, etc.

Leader: Norma Duff

**Sunday 12 March - Half-day excursion at Burswood Park**

Meet at 8.30 am outside the Park Board Administration Building. Parking is available about 100 metres to the left or right of the building.

From the causeway, travel east on Great Eastern Highway and turn left into Glenn Close (opposite Craig Street), which leads into Kagoshima Park.

We will be looking at the bird life which has returned to the magnificent public parks and gardens which occupy the site of the former Rivervale Dump.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

**Thursday 23 March — Mid-week walk in John Forrest National Park**

Meet at 7.30 am at the main picnic/BBQ area past the tavern. Travel east along Great Eastern Highway, over Greenmount Hill. Turn left into Park Road at the second sign to John Forrest NP and tavern. (The first sign just opposite the Bilgoman Swimming Pool, Greenmount, will get you to the same place, except that it's a 5-6 km scenic drive.)

Leader: Perry de Rebeira

**Saturday 25 March - Half-day excursion to Big Carine Lake**

Meet at 8.30 am in the carpark off Beach Road, Carine. 60+ species have been recorded here, including the three ibis, eight species of duck, the Buff-banded Rail, and several raptors. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

**Monday 27 March - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8.00 pm**

Dr Denis Saunders of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology at Helena Valley has been involved in, among other activities, the preparation for publication of a bird atlas for the Wheatbelt and adjacent areas. People in the atlas area have been sending Denis their records of birds observed locally and he will be giving us a summary of the atlas results.

**Wednesday 5 April - Mid-week walk at Herdsman Lake**

Meet at 8.30 am in the carpark off Lakeside Road, near the children's playground. This is on the western side of the lake, near Halcyon Way. A good variety of waterbirds and bushbirds should be seen.

Leader: Judy Blyth

**Sunday 9 April - Half-day excursion to Woodman Point Reserve, Cockburn**

Meet at 8.00 am at the entrance to Woodman Point Recreation Camp, off Cockburn Road, south of the caravan park. We will start by looking for bushbirds in the reserve of tuart woodland and native cypress, and then head over to the point to look for seabirds (don't forget your telescopes for this part).

Leader: Brenda Newbey

**Monday 10 April Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm**

Peter Mawson of CALM will be discussing the nest hollow requirements of some WA parrots and what those requirements entail for the management of those birds. *(Please note the early date of this meeting, made necessary by the Easter long weekend and Anzac Day later in April.)*

**Thursday 13 April - Mid-week walk, Lake Gwelup**

Meet at 8.30 am at the carpark on the corner of Stoneham Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road). An opportunity for new and experienced members to see a variety of bush and waterbirds.

Leader: Eric Banfield

**Friday 14 April to Monday 17 April - Easter Weekend campout to "Ennuin" and Jaurdi State Forest, north of Southern Cross**

Travel to Southern Cross along the Great Eastern Highway, then turn north into the Wyalkatchem-Southern Cross Road and drive to Bullfinch. Take the Mt. Jackson Road out of Bullfinch for about 30 km. Cross the causeway over Lake Deborah West; the front gate to the property is on the right with the name 'Ennuin' on the gate. (There will be an RAOU sign on the side of the road.)

The road in has not been graded for a while, so people in conventional cars — take care. Follow the track for about 15-20 km to the homestead (more signs will mark the route). Continue on past the homestead for another 15-20 km to the East Dam, our camping area.

There are plenty of trees here, but campers will need to be fully self-sufficient, including drinking water; the dam water is only good for cleaning and washing. A bush toilet will be set up, and we can carry water from the dam for washing.

The owners request that members observe national park-type standards at all times, ie, please take out all rubbish, leave gates as found, no shooting of any kind, and no fires in exposed areas if conditions are dry.

This is a large property (about 130,000 acres), but to date only 36 species have been recorded here, so there's plenty of scope for adding to the list!

For those with a little more time and energy, we'll be going on to Jaurdi State Forest (we had a very successful campout here last Easter). We'll be leaving Ennuin on Tuesday, and picking up stores, water, etc., at Southern Cross before continuing on to Jaurdi. From Southern Cross, drive about 53 km north to Koolyanobbing. Then follow the railway line another 100 km or so to Jaurdi.

The field centre at Jaurdi has been booked for us from Tuesday 18 April to Friday 21 April. Something of a bush oasis, the centre has three shearers' units, a BBQ, kitchen, rainwater tank, a flush toilet, and a bathroom with a hot shower!

If by any chance we get a very large amount of rain in the week preceding Easter, it may be necessary to abandon the entire campout - the roads will simply not take traffic in these conditions, including the Mt. Jackson Road out of Southern Cross.

Please note that booking is ESSENTIAL. Ring Bill or Karen McRoberts on (09) 459 1971 to book or obtain further information.

