

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

No 74 June 1995

SALT, SWEAT AND SWEET SATISFACTION

Banding Hooded Plovers at Lake Gore, Esperance in 1995

I can still remember my disappointment as we walked over the low dune and got our first view of the famous Lake Gore. The lake is near Esperance and it is the site where over 1600 Hooded Plovers had been counted only weeks before. Jack Ewart, a local ornithologist who had generously offered to guide us into "Hoodie" territory, stood beside me and said "Oh, dear". In fact I think he said it twice. The flat looked lifeless, and we all peered silently through our binoculars at the birdless expanse of salt. All seemed to be lost. I had travelled across the country to research Western Australian Hooded Plovers, and luck had not been going my way.

I turned my gaze along the salt-flat. It was then that I noticed a small group of "Hoodies" roosting by the water's edge. There was at least 30 birds; what a relief! But as I scanned further in that direction, there was another group, then another, and another. I was now more than relieved, I was excited. There were hundreds of Hooded Plovers here, not quite 1600, but still plenty to study. I suspect Jack was secretly relieved as well. He had advised us to hurry to Lake Gore, and to band as many birds as we could, as quickly as we could. The lake was drying, and the birds were almost certainly ready to leave. There was no time to waste. We set camp, and set our first trap line.

We had brought a type of trap called a "noose mat". These traps have only been used on Hooded Plovers in Tasmania, and with limited success. Nevertheless, I felt it was the only workable way of catching Hooded Plovers. They are very simple, and simply consist of a mat with three rows of nooses made from fishing line. The idea is that the birds walk across the mat and entangle their legs. In this circumstance, we were using no bait. Instead we relied on a technique known as twinkling. Simply put, twinkling is to birds as mustering is to cattle, although the former requires a lot more stealth. Fortunately, "Hoodies" are easy to twinkle by avian standards, and it was not long before a flock approached and crossed the first trap line.

We caught four beautiful Hooded Plovers. A wonderful start, considering it was our first afternoon's work. The birds were aggressive in the hand, and every now and then one would bite the bander or assistant. Unfortunately for the birds, their bite drew no blood, and caused absolutely no pain! We measured and banded the birds, and released them in a healthy and strong condition.

The next day was not as productive as we had hoped. We worked from dawn to dusk and only caught two birds. Once again I began to worry. Would we ever make our goal of 50 birds. We thought about what went wrong, we discussed it, and we formed a plan. We moved the trap line to a low sand ridge, and turned the line into a cross! We staggered the traps, instead of having an unbroken line. We waited until the afternoon. Then it happened, we had found the formula! Six Hooded Plovers were caught before dark. But the middle of the next day was fruitless and none was captured. This is despite the best twinkle I have ever seen; Jack Ewart moved about 900 "Hoodies" around 750m, but just as they approached the traps they flew off! Disaster! Once again we gave up until later in the day when another successful period before dark set us thinking. Could it be that dawn and dusk were the best time to twinkle the birds over the traps? The short answer proved to be "yes" and we had cracked the code!

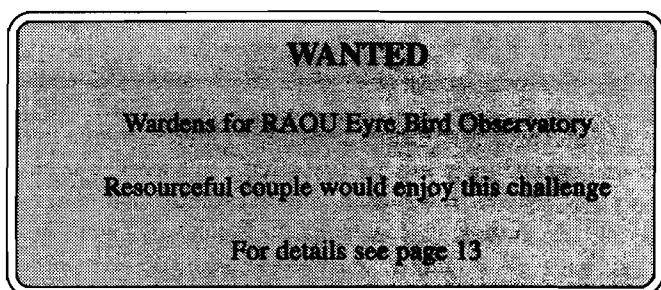
The next few days brought catches of seven, eight and 10 "Hoodies", then the following two days produced an unbelievable 20 birds per day! On two occasions we had to cover the traps because we had too many birds to process. We had passed 50, and our sights had now fixed on 100 birds, the upper limit of my CALM permit. Within a few days we had achieved our goal and we had banded 100 Hooded Plovers! We had also finished just in time, as rain associated with cyclonic activity forced us away from the lake only days after the end of banding! It was clear that my luck had changed, as circumstances had allowed us to band 100 birds.

We did not manage this feat alone. I would like to thank

Jack and Kate Ewart and John and Janelle Hynde for all their expertise, encouragement, help, hospitality and equipment. We could not have done this without them. The rest of the Esperance Bird Group was an invaluable help. I don't know what we would have done without the extra hands and enthusiasm, and I am so glad that most of you got a close look at a Hooded Plover. The cold drinks and ice were wonderful! Thanks to Kate Dawson for organising the volunteers. The Hooded Plover Sub-Committee provided fantastic count information, and was a great support in general. If there is anyone I have forgotten to thank, please forgive me. I ask all counters, and any new volunteers, to assist the ongoing Hooded Plover Project. Remember that it is a project of national significance.

Finally, I ask you all to remember one thing — **if you see a Hooded Plover in Western Australia, look to see if it has a metal leg band.** To my knowledge, the only banded Hooded Plovers in the state are the result of our expedition to Lake Gore. Therefore any banded bird has almost certainly come from Lake Gore.

Mike Weston



Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

Names and order follow Christidis, L. and Boles, W. (1994) *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. RAOU Monograph 2.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Malleefowl - 2, 10/1/95, 36 km east of Jerramungup (Jerramungup) - JS, HS * 1, 25/1/95, Great Eastern Highway just east of Kambalda turnoff (Coolgardie) - UE

Southern Giant Petrel - 1, 31/1/95, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - RP * 1, 8/2/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP (these are both early records for this species)

Kerguelen Petrel - 40, 26/10/93, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Salvin's/Antarctic/Slender-billed/Broad-billed Prions - 2, 27/7/93, Bunker Bay (Busselton) - RP * 20, 15/9/93, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 3, 6/6/94, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP (Note: prions can be difficult to distinguish even in the hand unless both age and sex are determined independently)

Fairy Prion - 15, 12/1/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 100+, 8/2/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough

(Busselton) - RP (unusual at this time of year; largest numbers and earliest dates for the west coast; possibly non-breeders or immatures)

White-chinned Petrel - a number of records from the Dunsborough area including: 3, 27/7/93, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - RP * 1, 27/7/93, Bunker Bay (Busselton) - RP * 1, 28/8/93, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 3, 17/9/93, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 1, 9/10/93, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - RP * 1, 24/5/94, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 2, 18/6/94, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Yellow-nosed Albatross - 2, 26/6/94, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Little Egret - 47, 14/2/95, Creery wetlands, near Creery Island (Murray) - MS * 21, 6/3/95, Lake Joondalup (Wanneroo) - GL (high counts for this species in the south-west)

Royal Spoonbill - 1, 6/3/95, Lake Monger (Perth) - DS * 1, 4/95, Booragoon Lake (Melville) - GM

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - 2, 17/3/95, Creery Island (Murray) - MS

Spotted Harrier - 1, young bird, 25/2/95 and 17/4/95, Thomsons Lake (Cockburn) - TK

Wedge-tailed Eagle - 2, 25/2/95 and 17/4/95, Thomsons Lake (Cockburn) - TK * 4 flying together, 18/3/95, Keysbrook (Serpentine-Jarrahdale) - JS, HS

Peregrine Falcon - 2, 5/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, GM * 1, 15/4/95, Dawesville cut (Mandurah) - CD

Painted Button-quail - 2, 25/1/95, Canal Rocks Road, Yallingup (Busselton) - RP

Bar-tailed Godwit - 3, 25/2/95, Thomsons Lake (Cockburn) - TK

Whimbrel - 1, 24/2/95, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - RP

Pectoral Sandpiper - 12, 5/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, GM (high count for this species in WA)

Red-necked Phalarope - 1, 26/3/95, Lake Baghdad, Rottneest Island (Rottneest) - JO, SO * 1, 21/4/95, Lake Baghdad, Rottneest Island (Rottneest) - SN

Banded Lapwing - 2 adults and 4 fledglings, 27/1/95, Kwinana Beach Road adjacent to CSBP works (Kwinana) - MS

Pomarine Jaeger - 1, 19/2/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Arctic Jaeger - 1, 19/2/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Caspian Tern - 41, 17/3/95, Serpentine River mouth, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

(Eastern) Long-billed Corella - 25, 16/11/94, Pt Walter (Melville) - PS

Crimson Rosella - 1, presumed aviary escapee, being pursued by a Peregrine Falcon, 15/3/95, Morley (Bayswater) - HvW

Barking Owl - 1, 17/2/95, Sugarloaf Road, (near Cape Naturaliste) - RP

Fork-tailed Swift - 1, 19/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - LH and RAOU excursion * 7, 9/4/95, Star Swamp (Stirling) - HvW, DP

Variegated Fairy-wren - 3, 2/2/95, Lake Joondalup (Wanneroo) - NH

Red Wattlebird - 100+, 15-16/4/95, moving north across the Dawesville cut in the early morning (Mandurah) - CD

Grey Currawong - 4, 27/1/95, McLaughlan Rd, The Spectacles (Kwinana) - MS (uncommon on the Swan Coastal Plain)

Zebra Finch - 2 (one male, one female), 16/3/95, Pemberton (Manjimup) - BB (probable aviary escapees)
White-backed Swallow - 14, 17/4/95, Barrett-Lennard Lake (3 km N of Beermullah Lake) (Gingin) - BB

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

Banded Stilt - 15000 pairs nesting in several colonies, early April 1995, Lake Ballard (Menzies) - JL * 4/95, nesting at Lake Barlee (Menzies) - REJ

Double-banded Plover - 2, 28/3/95, on beach, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - EBO

Black-fronted Dotterel - 1, 21/3/95 and 3/4/95, on beach, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - EBO

Hooded Plover - 2, 9/4/95, Goongarrie, on a salt lake near the National Park (Menzies) - TK * 2 pairs each with 2 eggs, ca. 15/4/95, small lakes adjacent to Lake Deborah West, near Bullfinch (Yilgarn) - RAOU excursion

KIMBERLEY

Magpie Goose - 60 birds and 25 nests, 18/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM

Pink-eared Duck - 8 adult birds and 6 ducklings, 25/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM (few breeding reports from the Kimberley)

Hardhead - 1000, 18/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM (generally uncommon in the Kimberley)

Great Crested Grebe - 5, Taylors Lagoon, ca. 80 km E of Broome (Broome) - BBO, GS (rare in the Kimberley)

Glossy Ibis - 230, 18/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM
Letter-winged Kite - 1, 30/4/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - RC

Baillon's Crake - 1, 28/4/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CS, RC

Little Button-quail - 3, 25/4/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Red-chested Button-quail - 1, 4/1/95, Kununurra sewage ponds (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB * 2, 6/1/95, beside Packsaddle Plains Road, near Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB * 1, 30/4/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - RC (few records in the Kimberley)

Common Redshank - 8, 14/4/95, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - TD

Grey-tailed Tattler - 3000, 19/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM (very high count for this species)

Ruddy Turnstone - 303, 9/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Asian Dowitcher - 103, 9/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO (high count for this species)

Black-winged Stilt - 5000, with hundreds nesting, 18/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM

Red-kneed Dotterel - 8 adults and 6 chicks, 22/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO (few breeding records in the Kimberley)

Whiskered Tern - 1500, most nesting, 18/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM

White-winged Black Tern - 1500, 23/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Flock Bronzewing - 1, 8/4/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - TD

Fork-tailed Swift - 300, 21/2/95, Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) - BBO

Yellow Chat - 5, 23/3/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - CM
Lemon-bellied (Kimberley) Flycatcher - 1, 30/10/94, in Melaleuca thicket on Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO (this species is normally only found in mangroves)

Leaden Flycatcher - 2, 6/4/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - JP

OBSERVERS

BB = Bruce Buchanan

BBO = Broome Bird Observatory

CD = Colin Davis

CM = Clive Minton

CS = Clinton Schipper

DP = Dorothy Pearce

DS = Dee Smith

EBO = Eyre Bird Observatory

FO = Frank O'Connor

GL = Graeme Little

GM = George Miller

GS = George Swann

HS = Helen Start

HvW = Hank van Wees

JL = Jim Lane

JO = John O'Malley

JP = John Pridham

JS = John Start

MS = Marcus Singor

NH = Neil Hamilton

PS = Peter Sandilands

RC = Rohan Clarke

REJ = Ron Johnstone

RP = Ross Payton

SN = Simon Nevill

SO = Sue O'Malley

TD = Tom Delaney

TK = Tony Kirkby

UE = Una Edwards

RAOU Office WA

Telephone

Birding Hotline

Chairman

Joint Editors

Perry House, 71 Oceanic Drive, Wembley 6014

or

PO Box 199, Jolimont 6014

(09) 383 7749

(09) 387 8412

B Wilson, 46 Farrant Street, Gooseberry Hill, 6076

Tel. (09) 293 1094

John Blyth

Tel. (09) 405 5100 (w)

Tel. (09) 381 6293 (h)

Fax. (09) 306 1641 (w)

Allan Burbidge

Tel. (09) 405 5109 (w)

Fax. (09) 306 1641 (w)

Tel/Fax (09) 306 1642 (h)

Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

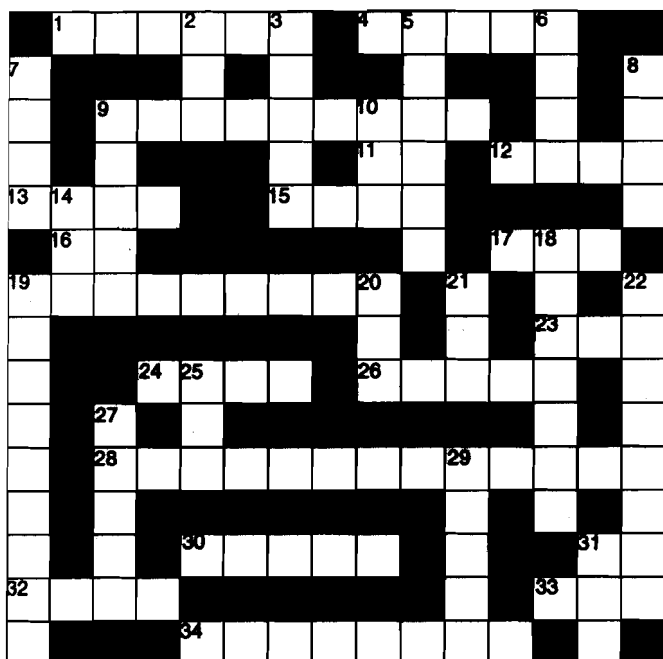
- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**
- WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

Deadline for the September Issue

1 August 1995

at Perry House

Crossword



DOWN

2. Pelicans will often use warm currents of this to soar to great heights.
3. This call signifies a warning.
5. Spectacular high diver at sea.
6. A vulture may do this to remove meat from a carcass.
7. Probably a beginner's term for *Corvus coronoides*.
8. Cramped cubby for dedicated birdwatchers.
9. Erectile feathers on a bird's head.
10. For a sea-bird, this could mean big trouble.
14. Young Dotterels will do this very well, rather than fly.
18. Many of the waders in WA head for this remote location each autumn.
19. Said to be an omen of good luck by mariners.
20. A Scarlet Robin owns a white one.
21. Title of the RAOU's scientific journal.
22. One is likely to meet a sudden end if it attempts to cross the Nullarbor into WA.
25. A female swan.
27. Pertaining to birds.
29. Ground-dwelling bird which prefers to run rather than fly.
31. Recapture of banded birds may give some indication of this.

The crossword solution is provided at the end of these notes.

ACROSS

1. Long-toed bird of the tropics.
4. Graceful white bird of the wetlands.
9. Shy bird of the forests with a loud, clear, ringing call.
11. Finch, minus the head and long tail!
12. Chats are commonly found in these areas.
13. A diminutive bird with a long tail is likely to be one of these.
15. If it's a Reeve, it isn't one!
16. Keen birdwatchers.
17. As a beginner, it is wise to do this if you want further information.
19. Wilson's Storm Petrel breeds in this area.
23. It's winged and warm-blooded but definitely not a bird.
24. A Masked Lapwing has one, though it's not as useful as a cowboy's.
26. Long, lacy feather developed by the Egret during the breeding season.
28. This quality of the Crested Bellbird's song sometimes makes it difficult to locate.
30. A Lyrebird is well-known for its ability to do this.
31. If you have a bird in your hand, you have a good chance of identifying it, but if the head and tail disappear, you'll be left with this small word only!
32. If you happen to be a Rainbow Bee-eater, this is prime real estate.
33. In most cases, it is oval in shape.
34. A young bird, wearing its first plumage of true feathers.

Members' Contributions

DATABASE OF WA BIRDS — ANNUAL REPORT (formerly known as the National Parks Project)

The number of cards (lists) sent in to the office has increased markedly over the past year and covers many locations for which there were previously no records in the database. A continuing problem is the number of cards that arrive without dates on them — this is essential information — or names and addresses of contributors so that replacement cards can be sent out or unusual records checked. For remote sites, the latitude and longitude is a great help to those responsible for the input of data.

At the end of summer 1995, over 104,000 records had been entered into the computer database covering 443 species at 334 sites. Last year's National Parks Project Report (WABN No. 69) included information on the number of records the database held for the Malleefowl. Since then another 41 records have been added, doubling the total. However, 38 of these were from Eyre Bird Observatory and the Nuytsland Nature Reserve — a stronghold for the species and subject to regular observation. The remaining three records were from Kalbarri National Park, Buntine Nature Reserve and Yilgarn Shire (Southern Cross). The indications are that it is still not a regularly recorded species.

Among the 443 species currently recorded in the database are a number that have less than 10 sightings recorded. These are listed below to encourage all members who contribute to the project to keep a special lookout for them and include them on the lists that they send in. Pelagic seabirds and migratory waders have not been included.

Atlas No.	Species Name	No. of Sightings
006	Orange-footed Scrubfowl	1
198	Cape Barren Goose	8
098	Black-faced Cormorant	9
184	Great-billed Heron	4
195	Little Bittern	5
197	Australasian Bittern	9
234	Pacific Baza	3
233	Letter-winged Kite	8
220	Grey Goshawk	6
238	Black Falcon	7
052	White-browed Crake	9
047	Chestnut Rail	2
013	Red-backed Button-quail	1
015	Chestnut-backed Button-quail	5
170	Painted Snipe	2
981	Kelp Gull	1
120	Sooty Tern	5
122	Common Noddy	9
123	Lesser Noddy	8
033	Emerald Dove	3
040	Partridge Pigeon	5
021	Rose-crowned Fruit-dove	3
026	Pied Imperial Pigeon	3
303	Scarlet-chested Parrot	4
311	Ground Parrot	6
336	Oriental Cuckoo	5
347	Common Koel	8
348	Channel-billed Cuckoo	8
247	Rufous Owl	1
252	Grass Owl	1
334	White-throated Needletail	1
324	Forest Kingfisher	1
354	Rainbow Pitta	1
528	Rufous-crowned Emu-wren	7
518	Black Grasswren	2
513	Striated Grasswren	4
512	Thick-billed Grasswren	3
457	Large-billed Gerygone	2
458	Green-backed Gerygone	8
480	Slaty-backed Thornbill	6
469	Banded Whiteface	2
607	White-lined Honeyeater	2
599	Grey Honeyeater	4
379	Lemon-bellied Flycatcher	2
388	Mangrove Robin	9
439	Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush	7
440	Nullarbor Quail-thrush	1
413	Little Shrike-thrush	9
372	Shining Flycatcher	8
673	Spangled Drongo	7
429	Cicadabird	3
431	Varied Triller	8
672	Yellow Oriole	8
545	White-browed Woodswallow	4
658	Yellow-rumped Mannikin	7
670	Gouldian Finch	6
523	Tawny Grassbird	5
969	Zitting Cisticola	1
TOTAL SPECIES with less than 10 sightings in database (12.98%)		58

Any members who are interested in collating and keying information into the database are invited to contact the Office Manager and joint co-ordinator, Max Bailey. For more information on the Database of WA Birds Project contact the office. Detailed enquiries can be addressed to the co-ordinators who are usually in the office on Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

Peter Sandilands and Max Bailey
Database of WA Birds Project Co-ordinators

ARE THE MAGPIES "IN THE KNOW"?

This year in mid January the Western Magpie arrived in large flocks both on the coastal plain and in the hills. On 15 February there were 95 Western Magpies feeding on the road at 5.30 am over a 1 km stretch on the road just east of Kalamunda.

It is not usual to see such large flocks at this time of the year. Are they escaping from drier areas? The rainfall however has been reasonable apart from the coastal strip to which they have come. Are they getting ready for early breeding? Do they "know" something that we humans do not?

Mary Bremner

WHITE-FRONTED HONEYEATER AT DOBADERRY NATURE RESERVE

As part of a banding project in the Beverley/West Dale area, we were mist netting and banding birds in the Dobaderry Nature Reserve (65 km south-east of Perth, 35 km south-west of Beverley) during February 1995. The habitat in the area was wandoo woodland with some dense *Dryandra* sp./*Gastrolobium* sp. scrubland. On one particular round of net checking, we were surprised to find a White-fronted Honeyeater in the net. With somewhat similar looking species such as Tawny-crowned, New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeaters also in the net or more regularly in the area, it was not until we noticed the red skin behind the eye that we realised it was a White-fronted Honeyeater.

Having not previously recorded White-fronted's in the Beverley/West Dale area and having associated them more with the arid and semi-arid parts of the state, we wondered if this bird may reflect another recent occurrence of a south-western or coastwards movement by some arid zone birds in response to low rainfall experienced further inland, as referred to by Mike Bamford in his recent article on Black Honeyeaters (WABN No. 73: March 1995).

Anthony Bougher and Peter Congreve

FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATERS NEAR MANDURAH

A visit to the sea-wall on the south side of the Dawesville cut at about 3.00 pm on 4 March revealed a large flock (60+) of Flesh-footed Shearwaters very close to the shore. It was a warm afternoon with only a light breeze.

Several groups of fisherfolk and a couple of boats were presumably attracted to the same school of fish as the birds which were sitting, squabbling and diving in the vicinity of the fishing lines. Unfortunately, this resulted in several getting snared and hooked, but once they got used to being held, the birds seemed reasonably resigned while the frustrated fishermen disentangled them.

Interestingly, one group which threw rocks at the birds to discourage them was rewarded by attracting and ultimately catching more of them!

The closest birds were less than 10 m from the breakwater, so the distinguishing features were easily seen — overall chocolate brown colour, paler tips to underwings, pink bill with dark tip, pale pink legs shorter than the slightly rounded square tail. The long elegant wings and graceful flight were wonderful to watch.

A group of 10-12 Sanderlings loafing on the higher rocks of the breakwater seemed oblivious to the excitement.

John and Hilary Brooke

BEACH-WASHED FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATERS

On the morning on 10 March Charlie and I were walking along Goode Beach when we came across about 20 dead Flesh-footed Shearwaters scattered along the first kilometre of beach. There may have been more along the second part of the beach, but they were definitely Flesh-footed Shearwaters, not Petrels, as was reported in *The Albany Advertiser*.

There is a difference of opinion as to why they should appear as we are told they do every year at about this time. We have been here for only about 20 months, but there was certainly a large number last year, too.

One theory is that they starve as a result of the shortage of fish. Another is that the mulie fishermen kill them when they interfere with their fishing. A third is that they become exhausted when flying into a headwind, and when diving after fish are unable to take off and thus drown. We had very high winds a week or so before.

We collected a fresh carcass and took it into the museum that morning, but so far have not heard the result of any examination.

Elizabeth Davies

THE BEACH PATROL SCHEME

In the December 1991 issue of *Wingspan* it was announced that the RAOU would start an exciting new project in which anyone could participate. Knowledge of our 'seabirds' is limited due to lack of opportunity, identification problems and the difficulties of observation at sea.

Regular patrolling of our beaches for dead or dying seabirds has proved to be an effective and rewarding pursuit. Up to 14 species have been added to the continental Australian list by this method. It follows therefore that the gathering of such data is a valuable and important task that can contribute to long-term environmental monitoring and short-term pollution control.

With the above in mind, a number of selected members living near or within easy access to our coasts were asked to set up their own groups to walk their local beaches from time to time throughout the winter months. We hoped to cover some of the accessible areas between Port Hedland and Esperance. The two Bird Observatories had already set up their own systems.

The scheme allows for:

- an increased chance of banded birds being recovered;
- the opportunity to increase the collections of seabirds in museums;

- the provision of specimens for the study of parasites, moult and diet;

- the chance for patrollers to learn to identify species of seabirds.

Anyone with an interest in seabirds can be a patroller. We ask people interested to either contact us through the RAOU office or their local organiser. Although monthly visits are desirable, opportunistic visits to rarely patrolled beaches are encouraged. Members interested in the scheme will be issued with a kit. Specimens collected are to be handed over to either the ornithological department of the Western Australian Museum for Ron Johnstone's attention, or to the local museum.

"a completely unknown species was collected"

Since the December 1991 issue a further request has been made for the collection of specimens of cuttlefish. This later request came from the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association and has the blessing of the RAOU. One of the objects of the SOSSA is the study of species of albatross and in particular the Wandering Albatross at present under threat from long-line fishing. Their diet is chiefly cephalopods, cuttlefish and squid. Cephalopods generally have a short life. They grow to maturity over two years, breed and die. All cuttlefish species and many squid float to the surface when they die and form the staple diet for many seabirds. The biomass available from this source is huge and a lot comes from Australian waters.

In an attempt to gain more information about cuttlefish in Australian waters, how it changes over time, and its distribution, patrollers are asked to collect specimens. It appears that there are many species of cuttlefish, etc, in our waters — in fact, a completely unknown species was collected on one of the Albany beaches in 1994 by Liz and Charlie Davies.

Dr C C Lu of the Museum of Victoria, Russell Street, Melbourne and Curator of Invertebrate Zoology is co-ordinator of this study and specimens should be forwarded to him.

Bryan Barrett

WADER MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

While reading the latest edition of *The Tattler*, which is the newsletter of the Australian Wader Study Group, it became evident to me that most of the States were involved in this study, with the notable exception of Western Australia. We had done so in the early 80s, but no serious effort has since been made.

To attempt to rectify this lapse I put a proposal before our Committee, which they have accepted.

This, therefore, is the proposal in broad outline. Further details will be published in the next issue of *WA Bird Notes*.

Many of our lakes, swamps and estuaries have been designated as areas of national and international importance to one or another species of wader. In addition, we have numerous wetlands which attract these birds. It is proposed to cover as many of these as possible during the year to

ascertain the species present and their numbers.

This study will hopefully involve many members and give them a worthwhile project in which to participate. We will be looking at a period of at least the next three years, possibly longer.

Bryan Barrett

NEST RECORDING

During the recent Easter camp-out held at Ennuin Station north of Bullfinch, some of the adjacent wetlands were investigated. In one such area three or more Hooded Plover were seen and two nests located. One nest held two eggs, covered by a sitting bird. This nest was photographed for the records of the Hooded Plover Project. No harm in that — if that was all that had happened.

Unfortunately, others (not unnaturally) took the opportunity to approach the nest and other photographers were seen near the nest.

The following afternoon a second party was taken to the area but was not able to find any trace of the plover. The nest had been deserted and the eggs were cold.

The moral of the story is that if members find nests while in a group, please keep the information to yourselves. By all means tell the group leader or, if present, the member responsible for the Nest Record Scheme. But please do not tell the whole group of your find.

Bryan Barrett



CYCLONE BOBBY

Banded Stilts are present in the Creery wetlands, especially during the summer and autumn months, and numbers often build up to many thousands.

When Cyclone Bobby passed through the Goldfields in late February, early March 1995 it caused extensive flooding inland.

It was interesting to note that Banded Stilts were totally absent from the Creery wetlands a few weeks' later. When I visited the Creery wetlands on 17 March 1995 I could not locate a single Banded Stilt.

It would be interesting to know how soon they departed after the inland rains had fallen. No one really knows what triggers their departure to inland areas. Could they be extremely sensitive to changes in barometric pressure?

I later heard on the RAOU hotline that large numbers of Banded Stilts had appeared near Menzies after the cyclonic rains. The exact date of this is unknown.

Marcus Singor

Editors' note: Fifteen thousand pairs of Banded Stilts were recorded at Lake Ballard north of Menzies in early April 1995 (see Observations section of this issue).

SCARLET ROBINS AT PIESSE BROOK

At 7.30 am on 22 April at Piesse Brook, I saw six Scarlet Robins, all in male plumage, chasing one another about and then sitting in pairs on low branches before once again joining in the chase. This continued for about 15 minutes.

Mary Bremner

WADERS AT THE SPEEDWAY

A recent issue of "Speedway Racing News" includes a small article concerning a nest of a plover (probably a Masked Lapwing) in the centre of a speedway racing track at Lismore, on the north coast of New South Wales. The nest and eggs were discovered when the promoter, Warren King, was "dive-bombed" while he was preparing the track. He cordoned off the area and warned drivers to avoid the vicinity of the nest. Apparently the birds and nest made it safely through the night, but the final outcome of the nesting attempt was not reported.

From March 1995 issue of "Speedway Racing News"

Margaret Philippon

Editors' note: Masked Lapwings are sometimes reported

ANTI-PREDATOR BEHAVIOUR OF THE BANDED STILT AT CREERY WETLANDS

The small salt lake on Creery Island contained water for the first time in many months when I visited the area in mid February 1995. Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers were present, as were groups of Banded Stilts, scattered around the small lake. Some were standing in the water, some among the samphire and others were feeding while moving rapidly around the perimeter of the lake.

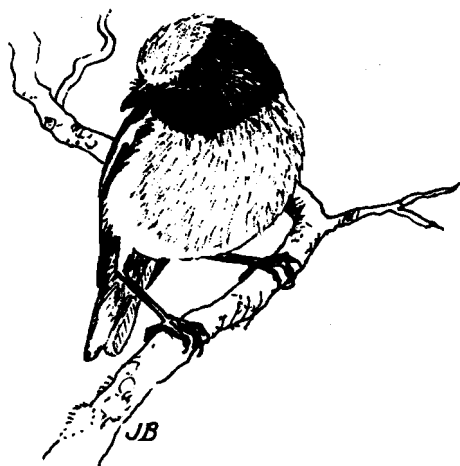
Suddenly groups of the smaller waders started taking off and swarmed around which made me suspect a bird of prey was in the neighbourhood. I looked around and found a departing raptor.

My attention then turned back to the lake, only to notice that at first glance all the Banded Stilts seemed to have disappeared. I thought this strange because I could not recall them flying away. However, standing in the water were two very tightly packed groups of Banded Stilts which, when alarmed by the raptor, must have congregated into these clumps almost instantaneously.

The only reference found relating to similar behaviour was on page 785 Volume 2 of the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, quoting Kolichis (1976), "When the colony was approached by an aircraft the birds were seen to leave their eggs and huddle together in shallow water off the edge of the colony. They quickly returned to the nests once the aircraft had passed."

Marcus Singor

nesting in close vicinity to other human activities, such as on playing fields and grassy margins of car parks, but it not known how successful they are in such situations.



MORE ON ROBINS AND FIRE

I was interested to read the article by Bryan Barrett on robins coming into burnt areas in the latest WABN. I can recall a similar incident. Back in 1993 a fire burnt through the Ellis Brook valley near Gosnells between the Barrington quarry and Bickley valley. The fire was quite extensive. I visited the area shortly afterwards and observed a pair of Red-capped Robins in the newly burnt areas. I think this was around May 1993 but I no longer have my notes to confirm this.

I do recall going back in spring to see if the robins were breeding but could find no trace.

I went back to the same area in 1994 and while the bush and low shrub were showing signs of regrowth the effects of the previous year's fire were still very evident. I observed a male Red-capped Robin in the area again on 27 May 1994. I remember wondering if the burnt area had something to do with its presence as I have never before seen Red-capped Robins so close to Perth or in this area.

I have visited the Ellis Brook valley for at least the last 10 years on a regular basis.

Marcus Singor

Notices

WA GROUP COMMITTEE 1995

At the AGM on 20 February, the following committee was elected:

Chairman: Brian Wilson

Vice Chairman: John Blyth

Hon Treasurer: Peter Anson

Hon Secretary: Margaret Philippon

Committee: Bryan Barrett, Helen Clark, Allan Jones (since resigned), Bill McRoberts, Clive Nealon, Rod Smith, Trevor Stoneman

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 1994

The main activity involving members during the year was the Hooded Plover Survey which runs in WA from 1st July 1994 to the end of June this year. This survey is part of an Australia-wide survey organised by the RAOU in Melbourne, to discover the numbers, distribution, and recruitment rate of this endangered species. Handled here by Phyllis Bentley, this survey has been well supported by members.

The next biggest activity has been the ongoing National Parks survey, now known as the Database of WA Birds, established by Clive Napier and now run by Max Bailey and Peter Sandilands. Over the years no less than 100,000 entries have been made in our computer, from reports sent in by members, of birds seen in defined areas of WA. A start is now being made on analysing this information to discover trends in bird movements and any other useful details.

Perry de Rebeira and others continued their birdbanding activities which again increases our knowledge of where birds live and their movements.

The usual programme of excursions and camp-outs was ably handled by Bill McRoberts and proved popular with members. There's an outing on a Saturday or Sunday roughly every one or two weeks, with occasional mid-week outings for those unable to make weekends. Camp-outs further afield took place on long weekends. We owe a vote of thanks to the many leaders of these outings who have willingly given their services, and to the leaders of the periodical walks for members of the public in Bold Park and elsewhere.

An excellent series of country brochures has been produced by Allan Jones, listing birds and where to see them in different country districts. These brochures have proved popular with local tourist bodies and Shire Councils, apart from publicising the RAOU.

The trading table, which is our main source of funds, has been well managed by Clive and Wendy Napier, with the sale of cards proving among the most profitable. Without this income the WA Group would definitely be struggling.

*"an excellent series of
country brochures has
been produced"*

Wendy Napier also manages the roster of volunteers who man the office (I'm not going to say "who people the office") on weekday mornings. It can't be said often enough how lucky we are to have such a band of stalwart volunteers prepared to undertake this and various other jobs. There's Jeremy Talbot, who in addition to his normal job of keeping the WA Government within the law, organises the list of speakers for our monthly meetings. There's his wife, Val, who sets up the tea and coffee at these meetings. There's Max Bailey, the office manager, who keeps the office running smoothly. There's Allan Jones who looks after the library and the sale of bird books as a service for members. There's Judy Blyth, our enthusiastic publicity officer, who puts together display boards and their material, for showing at suitable events such as school functions, country festivals, and urban shows. There's Graham Little, who for years has updated the Hotline with information about recent sightings of birds. There's Peter

Anson, our Treasurer, who's managed our finances prudently and undertaken all sorts of other jobs around the office. Brenda Newbey has given a lot of time to handling conservation; this has meant responding to draft management plans, drawing attention to issues threatening birds and their habitat, and keeping in touch with the Conservation Committee in Melbourne.

At the end of the year, Bruce Buchanan, who had been editor of *WA Bird Notes* for the past ten years, handed over the reins to joint editors John Blyth and Allan Burbidge. Our grateful thanks go out to Bruce for his tremendous effort in bringing Bird Notes to its present high level of excellence. We also owe thanks to Rod Smith who for years has organised the printing and distribution of Bird Notes. He has also continued his longstanding survey on the mounds of Malleefowl and the distribution of this species.

Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg have been responsible for a report on farming properties in the South-West where many farmers have been found to be sympathetic towards preserving habitat and birds on their farms.

To sum up, the WA Group in 1994 continues to be active, to provide services for its members, and to strive to preserve birds and their habitat by persuading the Authorities to act in the right direction. Happily, with the aid of the trading table and the efforts of volunteers, we remain financially viable. The indications are that this satisfactory state of affairs will continue in future. Our relations with the RAOU in Melbourne have continued to be cordial and satisfying, likewise our relations with our fellow tenants in Perry House, the WA Wildflower Society.

Finally, I must pay tribute to colleagues on the Committee whose wise counsel and experience have been of the greatest assistance. In this connection, Margaret Philippon, the Secretary, has provided a truly professional polish to her duties. The WA Group can be said to be in full flight.

Brian Wilson

BIRDING HOTLINE

The Birding Hotline has been brought to you for the last five years or so by Graham Little. That has meant coming to the RAOU office each Monday evening and recording any information regarding recent interesting bird sightings and forthcoming outings.

Graham has recently retired from this responsibility. Thank you, Graham, for your commitment for so long in providing our members with this useful source of information.

The Hotline is still available and functioning, but there is a question mark against how much members actually use this facility.

If you use the Hotline then please give the RAOU office a ring and say so — 9.30-12.30 Monday-Friday. Unless there is reasonable support for its use, then it is likely that the service will be discontinued.

A NOTE TO RAOU COUNTRY GROUPS

There are well established and active RAOU groups at Albany, Esperance and Mandurah, and perhaps others that we are not aware of at other country centres. The WA Group would be pleased to publish in Bird Notes details of meetings and excursions of these country groups. This would be of

interest to all of our members, would help to publicise your itinerary and would be likely to attract visiting members to your events.

Anyone wishing to pursue this idea could simply send itineraries to the Editors at Perry House, or could contact our Secretary, Margaret Philippon on (09) 375 2068, or either of the Editors, John Blyth or Allan Burbidge at (09) 405 5100.

A BIG THANK YOU

The editorial committee has been delighted with members' enthusiastic response to our plea for items for WABN. We already have material in hand for our next issue! Many thanks to those who have contributed. We look forward to an ever-widening group of contributors, to ensure this remains a genuine members' newsletter.

Editors

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

— INTERMEDIATE EGRET

The Intermediate Egret is a vagrant in the south-west of WA, and records are very rare. There was only one record in the RAOU Atlas, from south of Perth, and no records in the waterbird usage surveys conducted by Roger Jaensch or in the Scopewest survey. The species is easily overlooked amongst Great Egrets and, under some circumstances, can be difficult to distinguish from the Great Egret, so it may be more common than the few records suggest. Apart from the Atlas record, I am only aware of five other reports in the south-west. These range from doubtful to convincing.

In the north they are more common, and breed in small numbers in the East Kimberley. There is a small number of autumn-winter records of this species visiting the northern Pilbara.

I am interested to hear of any observations which members may have made on this species in southern Western Australia. I would like to know date, place, numbers, names of any other observers who may have seen the bird in question, approximate distance at which the bird was observed and as much of a description as possible (preferably including size, shape, proportions, bill colour and behaviour). Please send information to me at PO Box 312, Wanneroo (or fax (09) 306 1642) or at Perry House.

Information provided will be summarised in a future edition of *WA Bird Notes*.

Allan Burbidge

LIFETIME DEDICATION RECOGNISED

The RAOU WA Group congratulates member Jim Masters of Northam who was recognised this year in the Order of Australia awards. Since his childhood years, Jim has been involved in practical study of the Avon Valley and environs, and is a recognised authority throughout the state for his accumulated experience and knowledge. Always a meticulous record-keeper, Jim's commitment is well evident in the data he presented to our Rural Brochures Sub-Committee for the leaflet, *Birds of the Avon Valley and Western Wheatbelt*.

ANOTHER MEMBER HONOURED

More recently, RAOU member Phyllis Robertson was presented with a Silver Award by the Stirling City Council

for service to her community in preservation of the environment and local history.

Well done, Phyllis.

CRESTED SHRIKE-TITS

I am a Post Graduate Student at Murdoch University, and have been studying karri forest birds since November 1992. During that time I have become very interested in the status and distribution of the Crested Shrike-Tit (South-Western subspecies, *Falcunculus frontatus leucogaster*). Over the last few years, I have records of only 10 individuals at my study sites south of Quinpinup (two of these birds were banded as part of my study). All birds observed were in mature forest at least 60 m from regrowth. Birds were seen either singly or in pairs, and one female with one young was observed. Five of the nine adult birds were seen feeding on the bark of understorey species close to the ground (< 2 m), and two birds were on karri branches 10-15 m from the ground.

I would be most interested to hear from WABN readers of any past or present records of Crested Shrike-Tits in the South-West — in karri, jarrah, wandoo or other habitats. This information will be collated to determine areas or habitats in which they are most abundant. Any information about observed behaviour, nesting, foraging or site fidelity would also be valuable. Little is known about these birds in the South-West, and your assistance would be much appreciated.

Please ring me on (097) 61-1591 or write to **Penny Atkinson**, School of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Murdoch University, Murdoch WA 6150

HELP NEEDED

The RAOU (WA Group) NEEDS MORE AGENTS.

Most of you would be aware that our local group gains most of its funds from the sale of CARDS. In recent years sales have been increased by the assistance of members who act as our agent (unpaid) in their area. Their task is to carry a very small amount of stock — two shoe boxes — and casually visit any local retail outlets (such as tourist bureaux) whenever they think their card supply may be getting low. They need not collect cash and their only bookkeeping is to write out an invoice when a delivery is made.

Simple but effective. Leslie Harrison at Northcliffe has sold thousands and services quite a large area. Di Congreve does a wonderful job in the far less tourist-oriented district of Beverley and sells cards to her Bridge Club amongst many others.

We need AGENTS in many areas but particularly Geraldton and north to the Kimberley. We also have no representative at Esperance or in the wildflower areas just north of Perth.

If you can spare a few minutes each month, write to me at the Office or ring me at my home on (09) 332 7265 after 24th June when I will have returned from a trip.

Good Birding!

Clive Napier (Trading Committee)

OLIVE HOUSE

Olive House is opening 14 June 1995 at 2 Broadway, Bassendean.

It is an educational project on Prevention of Childhood Injuries and Environmental Awareness for Children especially in the area of native plants and birds.

A display board is available and anyone in the Bassendean area will be welcome. Perhaps someone might like to donate some time to spreading the environment awareness and prevention of injury messages to our younger generation.

Any willing helpers please contact 321 4594

Mary Bremner

PERRY HOUSE LIBRARY NEWS

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

The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories — Leslie Christidis and Walter Boles — RAOU 1994

Urban Bushland Strategy Workshop Proceedings — CALM — December 1994

A Water Supply Strategy for Perth and Mandurah to 2021 (with a Focus to 2010) Main Report Overview — WA Water Authority — December 1994

World Heritage: Management Planning for Shark Bay, WA — CALM — December 1994, Issue 4

Regional Management Plan 1994-2004 — Goldfields Region — CALM — December 1994

Submission on the Regional Management Plan for the Goldfields Region — Analysis of Public Submissions — CALM — 1994

Tree Society Review — No 1 March 1995

Newsletter — Cumberland Bird Observers Club Inc — Vol 16 No 3 Jan-Feb 1995

Annual Report for the Year July 1993 to June 1994 — Conservation Council of WA — December 1994

Shark Bay Marine Reserves: Draft Management Plan — CALM, National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority and World Heritage — 1994

The Greener Times — Conservation Council of WA Inc — January 1995, February 1995, and April 1995

Wingspan — RAOU — Vol 5 No 1 March 1995

The Flow: Keeping in Touch with Waste Water 2040 — WA Water Authority — February 1995

Australian Flycatchers — Brig Hugh R Officer — Bird Observers Club, Melbourne — 1969 (donated by Ian Rowley)

Australian Honeyeaters — Brig Hugh R Officer — Bird Observers Club, Melbourne — 1964 (donated by Ian Rowley)

Urban Bushland Community Group Directory — Urban Bushland Council (WA) — 1994/95

Helen Clark, Librarian

RAOU (WA Group)

EDITORIAL POLICY: WA BIRD NOTES

[Editors' note: This policy was drafted by the Editorial Sub-Committee and circulated to the WA Group Committee and to a range of members who expressed interest. At the April 1995 WA Group Committee Meeting, the policy was accepted in its present form and the Committee agreed that this policy would be the policy of the WA Group on editorial matters. Nevertheless, if any members have any further

comments, please get in touch with the editors.]

Background

Western Australian Bird Notes (WABN) No. 1 (June 1944) summarised the aims of the Group as approved at the first meeting, held May 1943. It was agreed that WA Group meetings "should have the serious aim of making us better ornithologists as well as providing an evening of entertainment". It was felt that we would find birdwatching much more interesting the more we know about it. These aims are just as relevant today and, in a parallel way, it is appropriate that WABN helps us be "better ornithologists", hopefully in a way which is interesting and entertaining to as many members as possible. A further aim of the RAOU, which should be reflected also in WABN, is to promote the conservation of birds generally, and in particular, the birds of Western Australia.

Objective

To provide WA Group members with information of interest to them with respect to

- 1) activities of the WA Group,
- 2) the birds of WA,
- 3) birds and birdwatching generally,

and to generally assist in communication between members and help them to be "better ornithologists".

Content

Material published in WABN must reflect the aims of the RAOU (WA Group) and reflect the interests of the membership.

WABN may include:

- a) interesting and/or unusual records of birds in WA (criteria for inclusion of observations will be published at intervals),
- b) articles associated with the above, or with accounts of bird behaviour, breeding, population numbers, identification, conservation activities, etc,
- c) reports of organised Group outings, meetings or other activities,
- d) reports or promotional articles concerning Observatories in WA,
- e) reports of group or individual projects,
- f) notification of RAOU activities, including meetings and excursions, and of other forthcoming events of ornithological interest,
- g) letters to the Editor,
- h) statements by the Editor(s) or Committee,
- i) any other material of interest to the membership, eg. illustrations of birds, reports on bird-watching trips made by members, short "news" articles concerning recent ornithological findings or activities, biographical notes on office-bearers or volunteers, reviews of books concerned with birds or birdwatching, etc, and
- j) advertisements.

Contributors are likely to be RAOU members, but membership of an author is not a necessary criterion for inclusion if the article or record is likely to be of particular

interest to members.

Editorial Sub-Committee

The Editorial Sub-Committee will include the Editor(s) and the individual(s) with prime responsibility for overseeing, collating and typing contributions, type-setting, printing and distribution, and any other person the WA Group Committee may wish to appoint. The Sub-Committee should consist of 2-6 members, with power to co-opt for particular tasks.

Production

Deadlines will be set by the WA Group Committee on recommendation of the Editorial Sub-Committee. WABN will normally be produced quarterly, with deadlines being set 3-4 weeks before the proposed distribution date.

Areas of Responsibility

The Editor is responsible to, and must be guided by the wishes of, the Committee, through the Chairman. The Editor(s) will assess all contributions for relevance to the aims and objectives as set out in this Policy. Where it is not clear whether a contribution is relevant or appropriate, the Editor(s) will seek a decision from the WA Group Committee.

Areas of responsibility may be formally delegated to committees or individuals with specific interests and expertise, such as the following:

Members Contributions	Editor(s)
Observations	Observations Officer
Rare Sightings	Records Appraisal Committee
Notices	Publicity Officer and WA Group Committee
Excursion Reports	Editor(s)
Observatory Reports	Observatory Staff, Editor(s)
Coming Events	Excursions Organiser, Meeting (speakers) Organiser
Project Reports	Research Officer(s), Project Leader(s), Editor(s)
Commercial Ads	Editor(s)

Style

To remain consistent with the aims and objectives of WABN, the language used should be simple and attractive "plain English", avoiding un-necessary use of "jargon" or complex technical terminology. At the same time, there is a need to be accurate, to avoid interpreting bird behaviour in human terms and to avoid an excessively personal or "chatty" style of writing.

WABN uses RAOU recommended English names.

Maintenance of Scientific Standards and Accuracy, and Appropriate Style

The "Observations" section will be compiled by an "Observations Officer" appointed by the WA Group Committee. This officer may convene a panel (of 2-3 people) to scrutinise all records submitted. This officer/panel will compile lists of interesting bird sightings for publication. These records will be selected on the basis of a set of criteria approved by the WA Group Committee and published at intervals.

Sightings that are very unusual, such as rare vagrants or new records for the State, submitted either as "Observations"

or as "Members Contributions" or in any other form, should be submitted to the WA Records Appraisal Committee before publication, irrespective of who made the observation(s). In the absence of such a committee, the Editor(s) will arrange for such records to be assessed by at least two competent, knowledgeable observers with relevant experience. Where reports are inadequately documented, observers will be asked to provide further information. This should be done in a manner which is encouraging, not critical, so as to assist in "making us better ornithologists".

The Editor(s) may ask appropriately experienced observers to provide an assessment of the validity of any other material submitted for publication in WABN, where the Editor(s) do not have sufficient personal experience on which to base an informed assessment of suitability.

The Editorial Sub-committee has responsibility for determining the final form of each issue, but will consult authors if any significant changes are deemed to be necessary to submitted items. If an item submitted for inclusion is deemed to be not relevant or inappropriate, the author(s) will be informed.

Advertisements

The current WA Group policy on advertising in WABN, which sets out categories and charges, will be followed.

Excursion and Observatory Reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Migration watch this March and April was again a fantastic spectacle with a maximum count of 4080 birds migrating between 4pm and 6pm on 11th April. During the two months nearly 25,000 shorebirds were recorded migrating in over 280 flocks. Many thanks to all who helped, especially course participants, and Clive Minton who provided the leadership.

Shortly after Cyclone Chloe caused havoc in southern WA, 'Cyclone' Clive Minton arrived at the observatory with fantastic news of Banded Stilts beginning a nesting colony on Lake Ballard, north of Kalgoorlie. On his sixteenth visit to Broome, Clive was on a photographic mission instead of the usual wader banding trip. He was joined by world class shorebird photographer, Richard Chandler from England, and Dick Vetch from New Zealand. With the use of carefully placed hides and a great deal of patience in humid conditions they photographed many of Broome's shorebirds in pristine breeding plumage just prior to migration.

Three attempts to catch the shorebirds during March and April were thwarted by untimely raptor appearances. However, a beautiful catch of 134 waders, and one Little Egret, was made on 2nd May. Comprising Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpiper, Great Knot, Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit, the catch at this time of year was particularly good as expeditions in past years had only covered March and April when mainly adult birds were caught. This catch was almost all first-year birds which will stay in Australia while their parents breed in Siberia. The first-year birds are particularly valuable to band, as they can be aged exactly if caught again. Of particular interest was a Grey-tailed Tattler which had some breeding

plumage but was clearly a first-year bird from its wing moult.

*"Black-winged Stilts ... had
to build ramps up to their
tall mounds of twigs."*

Broome has had the wettest February ever recorded with much of the Kimberley remaining inaccessible until mid May. Consequently waterbirds have been breeding on every suitable wet area. There was so much rain that early nesting Black-winged Stilt were flooded. Those which nested when the plains were full had to build ramps up to their tall mounds of twigs. Red-kneed Dotterel were recorded breeding on Roebuck Plains for the first time. It was hardly surprising that they have been missed in the past as they laid their eggs on the ground near the cattle watering trough. With no protection from cattle which come in day and night it is incredible how they survive being trampled. Of five nests which were recorded we later saw two chicks, though others may have survived.

Five Great Crested Grebe turned up on a lagoon 80 km east of Broome and one at Lake Eda although it was unclear if they bred this year. A Letter-winged Kite was seen along with Red-chested and Little Button-quail not far from the observatory on Roebuck Plains. The Kite is probably one of the few to survive in the area following the irruption last year and was reported to be in good health. Many of the kites seen late last year looked in very poor condition.

John Fallaw and Becky Hayward

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Thanks to Gwen and Graham Goodreid for looking after Eyre so well while we were on leave, until we returned in mid-February, refreshed again. Visitors were conspicuous by their absence during March, a situation not helped by the closure of the Eyre Highway for a week. However, April, so far, has been very busy.

The rain we received from Cyclone Bobby has had a most beneficial effect on the vegetation, with fresh green growth evident on most plants. The amount of germination is very encouraging, especially as rabbit numbers are low at present, probably because of the low rainfall last year. Little Sedge (*Gahnia lanigera*), which is usually kept nipped back to ground level, is about 20 cm tall since the rain. Another interesting result of the rain was clouds of different types of butterflies and moths, some which rose from the vegetation as one walked through the bush and some hovered around the mallee blossom or came to the windows at night.

Blossoming *Eucalyptus leptophylla* has brought large numbers of White-fronted Honeyeaters back to the area and in the last couple of weeks flocks of Purple-crowned Lorikeets, 80 being the largest group counted. On the Hampton Tableland, a Spotted Harrier was an unusual sighting.

Since the rain, a number of bird species have been observed showing evidence of breeding. These are Banded Lapwing, with chicks, two families of Chestnut Quail-thrush, Yellow-throated Miner (nest with eggs), Singing Honeyeater, Golden Whistler, Yellow-rumped Pardalote, and Welcome Swallow.

On the beachfront, the change from summer to winter

conditions is very marked. In summer the beach is wide, smooth, hard and free of weed, making driving our 13 km beach count a piece of cake. In winter, it can be a race against high tides, ploughing through soft sand, dodging heaps of seaweed or washaways — generally challenging driving conditions.

"Plovers ... playing possum"

Birds are difficult to see amongst the weeds and Red-capped Plovers particularly, are masters at sitting unmoving behind humps of seaweed, "playing possum". During the course "Field Techniques for Bird Study", led by Dr Stephen Davies, in December, the group spent some time studying the behaviour of a flock of about 100 Red-capped Plovers, a few Red-necked Stints and one Mongolian Plover. They were on a hard, stony limestone area behind the primary dune near the beach. During the time of observation, a severe electric storm was raging. When thunder and lightning occurred, the birds dashed back and forth confusedly, as if afraid or bewildered. When it rained, they sheltered beneath the small cushioned bushes there. As soon as the rain stopped, they continued their movement towards the beach, until the next bout of thunder and lightning, when they began dashing around again. Even though we were getting wet too, it was very interesting to watch.

Red-capped Plovers are still breeding, with 17 runners caught and banded since 1 January, plus four retraps. These showed an average weight-gain of 4 grams over 6 days. A Double-banded Plover has taken up residence on the beach about 1 km west of our entrance. Larger than usual numbers of Red-necked Stints have been recorded on beach counts over the last three weeks (60 at last count). A single Black-fronted Dotterel was recorded on the beach in the same area for two weeks.

Last week the course "Focus on Birds (Autumn)", led by Peter Sandilands, was held. Eleven keen birders participated and left saying they had increased their knowledge considerably. All had good views of some less easily found birds such as Chestnut Quail-thrush, Southern Scrub-robin, Purple-gaped and White-fronted, Spiny-cheeked and Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Yellow-rumped Pardalote, Jacky Winter and Mulga Parrot. Some lucky ones saw Malleefowl and Australian Bustard, but Blue Bonnets and Ground Cuckoo-shrikes managed to elude them. In the process, they contributed to a worthwhile study of the birds of the region.

Eyre is a unique place, very peaceful and beautiful, well worth a visit, so please consider it when planning your next break — perhaps the RAOU Group visit in September. The trip is long, but for a naturalist, full of interest too. Jan and Rob Hill will make sure you have an enjoyable stay.

George and Rita Watkins

Some plants were already flowering, while others are in bud and likely to flower in the near future, attracting nomadic birds such as the Purple-crowned Lorikeet.

Against this backdrop, 11 participants, plus leader, plus Eyre Bird Observatory's Wardens set out to record the birds at 10 sites located in the Nuytsland Nature Reserve between the Eyre Highway and the coast. The course began with an identification session of the species close to the observatory. Although some participants were fairly new to birdwatching, this session set the mood for the rest of the course, with good views of Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens, Spiny-cheeked, White-eared and Purple-gaped Honeyeaters as well as Chestnut Quail-thrush with young. Each day brought its common and less common species as participants moved between the various sites. Species regularly recorded (seven or more sites) included Yellow-rumped (sub-species of Spotted) and Striated Pardalotes, Weebill, Inland Thornbill, Singing, White-eared and White-fronted Honeyeaters and Grey Butcherbird. Less common species recorded included Spotted Harrier, Brown Goshawk, Mulga Parrot, Jacky Winter, Western Yellow and Southern Scrub-robins, Crested Bellbird and Little Crow. The species seen at the most sites was the Yellow-rumped Pardalote while the most numerous was the White-fronted Honeyeater. Forty-eight species of birds and two of mammals were recorded at the sites.

Overall, participants in Focus on Birds (Autumn) obtained good views of between 40 and 60 species while improving their recognition of calls and flight patterns. The data gathered during the course was a valuable contribution to this ongoing project. The next one in the series will be conducted in January 1996 — numbers permitting.

Peter Sandilands

WARDENS FOR EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

George and Rita Watkins have registered an intention to resign as Wardens later this year. The RAOU is seeking a couple to fill this position and would be pleased to hear from interested people.

Eyre Bird Observatory operates from the old telegraph station on the Great Australian Bight. It is 30 km south of Cocklebidy on the Eyre Highway, 1100 km east of Perth. The stone house has accommodation for two staff and 16 visitors.



Eyre Bird Observatory

FOCUS ON BIRDS (AUTUMN) 16-22 APR AT EYRE

Good rainfall in the Eucla and Goldfields prior to the commencement of the course had changed the appearance of the region with much standing water and new plant growth.

Courses are conducted at Eyre on birds and other natural history subjects. The biological research programme involves weekly wader counts along the Kanidal Beach and bush bird

counts in the mallee of the Nuytsland Nature Reserve. Eyre is also an official weather recording station which sends daily reports to Perth.

Since the Observatory is self-funding, most of its income is derived from accommodating visitors, about 1000 visitor nights per year. The wardens' main responsibilities are organising accommodation, meals, and activities within a limited budget, as well as maintaining the Observatory's plant which includes two vehicles and other equipment necessary to operate a field station at a remote locality.

The combined salary for the two staff is \$14,580.

The position is an interesting and challenging one calling for skill and dedication of a high order but providing many enjoyable moments. The vital qualification is that staff enjoy the work at Eyre. A term of two years' appointment is preferred. However, because of the high level of commitment required, one year may be considered. Further information may be obtained from:

Gwen Goodreid, Deputy Chairperson
Eyre Bird Observatory Management Committee

Contact: G Goodreid Tel: (09) 418 2906
26 Chesham Way Fax: (09) 434 2752
Hamilton Hill
WA 6163

DOOPITER SWAMP 12 February

With the promise of cooler weather (31°C) and a wonderful name like "Doopiter Swamp", 13 of us could not resist heading north for the day. Bryan Barrett organised the trip to this lake as he became familiar with it during the Scopewest duck counts in 1991 and gained permission from the manager of the farm.

Doopiter Swamp consists of two lakes connected by a small stream during the winter and has many dead trees in its centre providing good cover for the water birds. Around the edge are tuart and tea tree providing shade for us and shelter for bush birds. The water level was the lowest experienced and the top lake had dried out but there was plenty of water in the lower lake and a slight cool breeze kept us comfortable as we circumnavigated the water.

A total of 59 species were seen which included seven species of waders including Wood and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, nine species of duck and a Great Egret with a wing tag. Bryan got his wish of an 80th bird for his count on this swamp with the sighting of a Red-necked Avocet. We then lunched by the still flowing Moore River. Many thanks, Bryan, for a very pleasant and interesting walk.

Sue Abbots

DUMBLEYUNG CAMP-OUT 4-6 March

This long weekend saw 21 people camped on Terri and Dale Lloyd's property, "Ronville", with eight more members arriving from elsewhere to participate in our various excursions. Thirty-three species were observed on the property itself, with a dam being a focus for waterbird activity (10 species, including Banded Lapwing).

On the first two days, windy conditions associated with Cyclone Bobby made birdwatching difficult — otherwise our

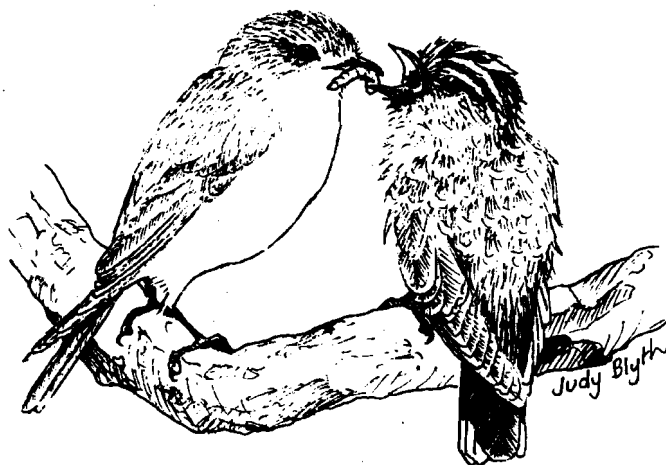
final overall tally of 75 species may have been more. Smaller birds such as emu-wrens, hylacolas and calamanthus, if present, would probably have kept under thick cover — but the compensations were many.

Two small remnant bushland patches were visited on Saturday morning. Wishbone Reserve by the railway east of Dumbleyung yielded Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Splendid Fairy-wren, and on a subsequent visit, Australian Owllet-Nightjar. Thirty-four species were recorded there. Nearby, and adjacent to the 129 Road was Eynon's Reserve where nine species, including Varied Sitella, were seen.

That afternoon was spent around Lake Dumbleyung itself where we saw a couple of flocks of over 100 Australian Shelduck and 20 Grey Teal — but surprisingly no other waterfowl or waders. The conditions were gusty. A hungry Peregrine Falcon put up a Shelduck flock that had been resting on nearby cleared land. Concentrating on one particular duck, the falcon quickly divided it from the others and twice its yellow talons made contact before its terrified prey splashed down safely in the lake. Undeterred, the Peregrine, on curved-back wings, sped purposefully through the wind to a second flock of ground-resting Shelduck which was quickly up in the air. Again, the raptor harassed one chosen duck which managed to escape with its life by reaching the lake. No wonder the Peregrine is sometimes called "Duck Hawk".

A quieter highlight was a Tawny Frogmouth perched quite low on a dead branch in woodland. Its upward-pointing cryptic pose was an excellent subject for our cameras. Thirty species were recorded on or by the lake.

We drove north of Dumbleyung to Coalling Poole (off Mt Pleasant Road) on Sunday morning. Here, 29 species were seen, including Brown Goshawk and six honeyeaters — and from there to the "Mt Pleasant Reserve" where 47 species were recorded. A fenced Dongolocking Bush Corridor is being established to link these two bush remnants. Small flocks of Purple-crowned Lorikeets flew over the Wandoo and Salmon Gums. Western Yellow Robins eyed us from mid-level branches and White-browed Scrubwrens were seen fleetingly in the understorey. Three species of Thornbill (Inland, Chestnut-rumped and Yellow-rumped) were recorded and eight species of honeyeater — Spiny-cheeked, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing, Yellow-plumed, Brown-headed, Brown, Tawny-crowned — and lastly the White-eared who inspected our picnic lunches.



Another invaluable Dongolocking Bush Corridor linked Nature Reserves 19085 and 19086. Here, the beautiful old

Wandoo woodland was full of hollow limbs much used by Rufous Treecreepers. Generally the understorey was sparse except for a thick patch of dryandra. Tall Morrell (*Eucalyptus longicornis*), grey-trunked and attractive, grew in some places. Jacky Winters were common, and we saw one spotty juvenile being fed. Other "flycatchers" present were Red-capped Robin, Rufous Whistler and Willy Wagtail. A Wedge-tailed Eagle on upswept wings effortlessly lazed high above us and the metallic "squeaking" of Grey Currawongs rang through the bush. Twenty-six species were recorded here.

Driving south to Dumbleyung, we walked through the small town reserve immediately to its east. A Common Bronzewing was observed sitting on its nest with two eggs. The late afternoon sun illuminated a pair of Regent Parrots. Thirteen species were seen here.

Our final day, Monday, had an exciting start in a reserve near Morans Road to the north of Dumbleyung. A local study, much assisted by RAOU member Geoff Burrow, is collecting data on ground fauna by means of pitfall traps. Two yielded tiny Western Pygmy-possums (*Cercartetus concinnus*). Their large eyes, dark and lustrous, thin, big pinkish ears and long twitching whiskers were irresistibly appealing. Their finely furred tan-grey bodies ended in long prehensile tails curled at the tip. The habitat was Brown Mallett with very little understorey. Perhaps these minute nocturnal marsupials found shelter in the occasional fallen hollowed logs, or even under a particularly low and thorny ground cover (possibly an acacia) that grew there.

In the adjoining Bush Corridor (through Angwin's property) more pitfall traps revealed two White-tailed Dunnarts (*Sminthopsis granulipes*). While about the same size as the pygmy-possums, their noses were pointier and tails much shorter and fat at the base.

The Dongolocking Reserve (one of many irregularly shaped bush remnants) to the north of the corridor, contained an interesting mosaic of different vegetation types — old Wandoo and grasstrees, thick dryandra, Mallett, She-oak, Morrell, banksias, low mallee (many in flower) and dense heathland. A fox abatement program is underway. Numerous Rainbow Bee-eaters and Rufous Treecreepers were seen in taller woodland — as well as a pair of Restless Flycatchers. A Grey Shrike-thrush flew to a horizontal bough to devour a large Preying Mantis. White-browed Babblers jumped along branches of low mallees. Counting White-fronted Chats, nine species of honeyeater were seen including Purple-gaped. These were in upper branches of mixed Brown and Blue Mallett in a thick stand above a breakaway. Mingling with them were White-cheeked Honeyeaters.

A highlight of the weekend was the sumptuous Sunday afternoon tea provided by Terri in the Ronville shearing shed. She and husband Dale are very active in local conservation efforts, particularly the Dongolocking Bush Corridor Sites.

Many thanks to the Lloyds for providing camping ground and other support, and to Bill McRoberts for organising this adventurous long weekend.

Judy Blyth

ALFRED COVE 8 March

The morning was perfect when about 20 people met at Alfred Cove. Birding looked promising as we made our way to the mud flats where we could see large flocks of waders.

Just as we were erecting telescopes large numbers of

cormorants went up from the more distant sand banks and were almost immediately followed by panic stricken waders. A Peregrine Falcon was seen sweeping over the banks. The waders vanished high in the direction of Wireless Hill and failed to return, except for a flock of Grey Plovers, several Greenshanks, a few Great Knots and Curlew Sandpipers. One Curlew Sandpiper was in full breeding plumage and several Grey Plovers were showing signs of it.

The Peregrine made several more harassing sweeps leaving the banks and flats bereft of anything but cormorants, Stilts, Grey Teal, Ibis, Pied Oystercatchers and of course the persistent Silver Gulls.

An Osprey soared majestically onto the wireless mast, without prey and called loudly for some time. Another Osprey was seen circling over the trees. Later the bird on the tower came down and gave a spectacular display, plummeting three times before capturing a sizeable fish with which it returned to its platform.

A belated highlight of the day was when Mary Vaughan and two companions returned to the haunts of the Splendid Fairy-wren near Haig Road and found three wrens. This is surely delightful proof that the resident pair have endured and bred successfully.

Despite the lack of viewable small waders it proved to be an interesting and enjoyable morning. Our checklist yielded 49 species.

Thanks to all the RAOU members who so kindly shared telescopes and knowledge with visitors and newcomers.

Norma Duff

JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK 23 March

On a still, dull morning 14 members met in John Forrest National Park to be led by Perry de Rebeira. During the two hours or more that we walked, a total of 27 species was seen, most of which were in very small numbers, except for the parrot species and ravens. The walk would not have been very successful had it not been for our leader, as from time to time he would stop and offer a mini lecture on some aspect of bird life, bird watching or bird banding. I for one learnt a lot and it is hoped that others were able to broaden their knowledge of our bird life. So, a reasonably dull walk was turned into one of immense interest. Our thanks to Perry.

Bryan Barrett

BIG CARINE LAKE 25 March

Twenty-one people joined Bill McRoberts for the visit to the Carine open space, a large recreational parkland that contains the Big and Little Carine Lakes. The extended period of dry weather prior to the visit had reduced Big Carine Lake to three or four large puddles and although the number of birds was down there was good variety.

The highlight on Big Carine was the presence of Little, Great, and Intermediate Egrets in close proximity, allowing direct comparisons to be made of the diagnostic features of the three. The Intermediate Egret was smaller than the Great but larger than the Little and had an orange bill which appeared proportionally heavier than the bill of the Great Egret. Also present on the water were Sacred Ibis, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Black Swan, Black Duck, and Grey Teal, while the muddy edges were host to Dusky Moorhen, Purple Swamphen, and White-fronted Chats.

The lake's fringing trees and scrub provided views of Varied Sitellas, Grey Fantails, Silver-eyes, and honeyeaters — Brown, New Holland, and Singing, and Red Wattlebirds. Some of us had a brief glimpse of an Australian Hobby flying past — fast, but we all had excellent views of a Black-shouldered Kite, hovering and perched.

Several people remarked on the abundance of Willie Wagtails in the park area as we moved on to Little Carine, and we were shown by a Brown Goshawk just how quickly raptors gain altitude. The lesser lake added Little Pied Cormorants, a Darter, and Wood Ducks to the day's list, which finally totalled 48 species.

Clive Nealon

HERDSMAN LAKE 5 April

A sunny day but with a stiff easterly did not augur well for bush birds at this outstanding venue. The gentle leadership of Judy Blyth took us through some bush, into the reeds with the hope of seeing Little Grassbirds and back to the Lake shore. Some had a close study of a Striated Pardalote, possibly a young bird, on the ground. It appeared to hold a tiny winged insect. How commonly do Striated Pardalotes come to ground? The writer had previously seen three or four groups of 4-6 Striated Pardalotes on the ground on a calm, heavily overcast, misty day near Horsham in Victoria.

A "Whistling Kite" teased us with the uncanny ability of changing into a "Little Eagle" and back again! At the end of the day a recount of votes came out in favour of a Little Eagle — slight undertail barring; very dark morph; barring under primaries/secondaries; occasionally slightly upturned wing-tips; straight end to the tail (although longer than expected) when not spread.

A Yellow-billed Spoonbill obliged by giving close-up views of its striped patterned bill and whisky black in the tail. Among the 48 species recorded was a Cockatiel. Some members whistled it up and it settled among us, finally sitting on shoulders. Not only do birds charm the observers. Some observers charm the birds. Perhaps St Francis *redivivus*!

Ray Schulz

WOODMAN POINT 9 April

There was a good turnout of members on a cool, overcast morning, the clouds being associated with the dying Cyclone Chloe. Just after arriving I glimpsed three swifts but by the time I had picked up the binoculars, a couple of steps away, they had vanished, so although my impression was of White-throated Needletail, identification could not be guaranteed.

For the first two hours we walked in the bush and saw 17 species including four groups of Splendid Fairy-wrens, White-front Chats and Australian Shelduck flew over. The only raptor was a Brown Goshawk.

We then moved to the coast and walked along to the point. Sightings included a lone Sanderling, Grey Plovers, and Ruddy Turnstones, some in almost-complete breeding plumage. Gulls and terns were fishing well offshore and skuas could be seen pursuing some of them, but too distantly for accurate identification. From that distance though an Osprey and a gannet were observed. As a small group of us waited near the cars for the others to join us for the final bird count, a small flock of turnstones flew by followed by a different wader which

conveniently perched just long enough — a Grey-tailed Tattler. The final bird count was 42.

Brenda Newbey

LAKE GWELUP 13 April

On a clear morning with light north-easterly breeze, some 20 people met for this mid-week walk. About three-quarters of these were RAOU members. The remainder were mainly local residents who had seen the notice in the newspaper. Two of these said that they would apply for membership.

From the car park, we walked north along the western side of the lake and then turned east to follow the northern shore. Good viewing was found here, with the sun now over our shoulders.

When access to the lake became more difficult, the party headed north along a walk trail which led through bushland to the reserve's boundary with Karrinyup golf course. In this area a few marri and banksia were flowering and the birds were busy. Some people remarked upon the large number of Red Wattlebirds to be seen.

The group then returned to the car park, where we compiled our bird list. Fifty-six species were recorded, comprising 24 water birds, 27 bush birds and five raptors. No holarctic waders were sighted and, unusually, no White-faced Heron. Six of the birds seen appeared to be new to the list for this site (RAOU Tracking Database, Park Sightings Report, Lake Gwelup, 22 Dec 1994). These birds were: Little Egret, Pink-eared Duck, Black-winged Stilt, Varied Sitella, White-cheeked Honeyeater and Western Spinebill. However, Ron Van Delft, in his book *Birding Sites Around Perth* does indicate a count of 78 species for this lake so perhaps some, or all, of the abovementioned birds are accounted for elsewhere in our records.

Our thanks to the Excursions Sub-committee for organising today's walk. This is a well placed suburban venue with ample parking, easy walking and a nice spread of bird species.

Eric Banfield

ENNUIN STATION-JAURDI STATE FOREST 14-21 April

A big group of about 30 people met at Ennuin Station, approximately 50 km NE of Bullfinch for the Easter Camp-out. Ennuin is a pastoral property of some 130,000 acres of open woodland, with salmon gum, gimlet, blackbutt and acacia the most common species.

The present lessees have held the property for about three years but have chosen not to run stock on it in an attempt to regenerate what was a badly degraded area. There is still minimal ground cover/understorey in many areas, but the rabbit population seems to be under control, allowing new growth a chance to develop. A baiting programme to control dingoes and foxes has also been carried out.

Recent rains in the area meant that there was ample water in the East Dam, where we camped, and a light cover of grasses in many areas. A number of trees and shrubs were in bud.

By late Friday most of the participants had arrived, and Bryan Barrett and Allan Jones kindly and capably took on the leadership responsibilities as Bill was unable to make it before Sunday. Light showers on Friday evening were a little

ominous, but Saturday dawned clear, cool and sunny, with a light breeze ... perfect weather for birding.



Gnabberdocking Rock

We headed north, using 4WD vehicles only, and stopping first at Gnabberdocking Rock, a few kilometres from camp. A Laughing Turtle-Dove was an interesting sighting (they were also seen at other sites later) suggesting this species has the ability to establish itself well beyond the wheatbelt areas. Hooded Robin were also seen in this area.

A brief, unscheduled stop further on enabled a few to see Gilbert's Whistler, and others to at least hear the call, before we stopped for coffee at an area of breakaways. Further on we crossed small sandy areas, but were unable to locate the extensive sandplain country which we understood was near the northern boundary of Ennuin. Lunch was eaten among an area of salmon gums on the way back, and before we left, everyone was able to have excellent views of a Spotted Nightjar, which remained motionless on an exposed stony area among short tussocks.

Small groups chose to stop at various points on the way back, but none was able to relocate the elusive Gilbert's Whistler.



West Lake Deborah

On Sunday morning we visited several sites along the shore of West Lake Deborah which forms the southern boundary of the property. Hooded Plovers with nests were the highlight. Two nests were located, each with two eggs. White-winged Fairy-wrens and White-fronted Chats were found among the samphire margins, and White-backed Swallows and a small flock of Purple-crowned Lorikeets were seen

overhead. Late in the afternoon, the group made another short trip to explore the area around another rock and small dam south of our campsite. As in other areas Striated Pardalotes, Weebills and Southern Whitefaces were common.

On Monday morning the group met at a mill not far from the homestead and all those present had excellent views of a male Gilbert's Whistler, a very satisfying finale for those who then had to return to Perth, while the others set off to meet a local miner and to enjoy views from the hilltops.

Other sightings of interest on this stage of the trip were Pink Cockatoos which were seen feeding on paddymelon in the paddock near the homestead, a pair of Australasian Grebe with two young on the dam near the campsite and a Chiming Wedgebill, seen just north of the campsite. Seven different raptors were seen and nine species of honeyeater. The total number of species seen at Ennuin was 75, a considerable increase on the number previously recorded on the property, but possibly less than might have been seen had it still been very dry.

Pam Agar

On Tuesday the camp broke up and some people returned to Perth, but a group of 15 continued on to Jaurdi State Forest. Here we set up camp at the CALM Research Centre about 70 km east of Koolyanobbing where we had spent the Easter of 1994.

The group went to several areas previously visited and after three days had located a total of about 55 species. However, the eucalypts which had been in full flower in 1994 were finished and we had only one or two sightings of Purple-crowned Lorikeets and seven species of honeyeaters.

A visit to the top of the Horseshoe (Big) Breakaway was again rewarded by close-up sightings of White-backed Swallows, Dusky and Little Woodswallows as well as Tree Martins as they swooped over the area after insects.

A stop en route to Wallangie Soak revealed several Redthroats in full song and some Splendid Fairy-wrens with a male in brilliant colour.

The weather continued to favour us with clear, mild days and chilly nights. However, we were relieved to leave Jaurdi on Friday morning as heavy cloud threatened the area. Rain would have made the track to Koolyanobbing very slippery and difficult to traverse.

Margery Clegg

JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK 27 April

On a cool, damp morning Perry de Rebeira and his team of banders gave an enthusiastic group of bird watchers a demonstration of their art. Perry showed the group how to extract small honeyeaters from the mist-nets, and how to keep captured specimens immobile for up to two hours. Also, while back at the banding centre, he illustrated the technique of ageing and sexing birds by examining their feathers. Bands were applied, measurements taken and recorded, and the birds allowed to escape back to the bush. The importance was expressed of placing the birds being handled under the minimum amount of stress — even to the extent of driving hungry magpies away from the release area. The only slight hitch to the proceedings was a shower of rain, but the audience called for more and would have kept Perry talking for a lot longer. He has promised to conduct another demonstration of bird banding in the spring.

Bryan Barrett

Coming Events

Saturday 3 June to Monday 5 June — Camp-out at Goodale Sanctuary

Goodale Sanctuary, south of Pinjarra, is located in mixed Jarrah, Marri and Banksia woodland. There are three swamps, and we should see wildflowers, including winter orchids. The bird list presently stands at over 100 species.

Campers need to be fully self-sufficient, including drinking water. A bush toilet exists, and a small rainwater tank is available for emergency use only.

For further details, please contact Dave Crossley (09 434 2000), who will be leading this camp-out.

Wednesday 7 June — Mid-week walk at Booragoon Lake, Brentwood

Meet at 8.30 am on the corner of Lang Street off Aldridge Road. Depending on the weather, we may also walk into Piney Lakes Reserve. Both areas have colonies of nesting cormorants and other water birds including Rufous Night Herons.

Leader: Allan Jones

Sunday 18 June — Full-day excursion at Flynn Road Bushland

Meet at 8.30 am on the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about 1 km on the Perth side of The Lakes turnoff, ie, the York Road turnoff.

We'll look at several areas of wandoo woodland where three species of robin are usually seen.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Monday 26 June Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Murray Unkovich will talk to us about his experiences in finding and photographing birds which, because of their rarity, habitat preferences or general secretiveness, are not often seen.

Sunday 2 July — Half-day excursion to Wungong Gorge

Meet at 8.30 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam, at the end of Admiral Road (off Albany Hwy), Bedfordale. An excellent site for Red-eared Firetail and White-breasted Robin. Should be interesting to see the difference six months after the fire.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Sunday 9 July — Full-day excursion to Karakamia Sanctuary, Chidlow

Meet at 9 am at the Sanctuary entrance at Lot 201 Lilydale Road. From Perth, travel along Toodyay Road. About 5 km past Gidgegannup, turn right into Lilydale Road and continue for 6.5 km. The Sanctuary is on the right-hand side, just before Clark Road.

"Karrakamia" means "home of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo". It has been set up as a sanctuary for endangered native species indigenous to the Darling Range. It is based on Warrawong Sanctuary in South Australia, which is renowned for successfully breeding small endangered native mammals. We had a walk here in August 1992. A total of 90 species of birds are on the list.

Leader: Andre Schmitz

Wednesday 12 July — Mid-week walk at Bayswater (Eric Singleton) Bird Sanctuary

Meet at 8.30 am at the Swan River end of King William Road, Bayswater. The reserve was created in 1977 by Eric Singleton in conjunction with the Bayswater Council. The reserve consists of waterways and paved paths (suitable for wheel chairs), a birdhide and an artificial island. Many waterbirds breed in the reserve and the species list is about 100 birds.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Monday 24 July Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Penny Atkinson, for her PhD, has been studying among other things the effect on birds of logging in the karri forest and will discuss her findings. Penny presented information on this subject to the 1994 International Ornithological Conference in Vienna.

Sunday 30 July — Half-day excursion to Lake Goollelal

Meet at 8 am on the corner of Kingfisher Way and Lakeway Drive, off Wanneroo Road. Kingfisher Way is the first road left past Hepburn Avenue (going north), before you reach Gnangara Road. There should be interesting bush and water birds present.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Sunday 13 August — Half-day excursion to Walyunga National Park

Meet at 8.30 am in the car park at the end of Walyunga Road (off Great Northern Hwy, Upper Swan, near Long Pool). The National Park lies along the Darling Scarp. The Avon River bounds one part of the planned walk, and there are some good stretches of Wandoo. We should see a good variety of birds. There is a Park entrance fee.

Leader: Peter Anson

Thursday 17 August — Mid-week walk at Lake Joondalup, Joondalup

Meet at 8.30 am in the Neil Hawkins Park car park, off Shenton Avenue. This is a large lake which has a number of species of water birds and possibly bush birds.

Leader: Eric Banfield

Sunday 20 August — Half-day excursion to Thomson's Lake

Meet at 8.30 am in the car park off Russell Road, between Pearce and Hammond Roads. This is a good area for bush and water birds.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Monday 28 August Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Vernon Handley, the Chief Conductor of the WA Symphony Orchestra, manages to be an enthusiastic birdwatcher despite his many professional commitments and will be speaking about the birds he has encountered during his conducting career.

Sunday 3 September — Half-day excursion to Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury

Meet at 8.30 am at the first car park off Whitfords Avenue

(on the right-hand side, through the entrance). This is an interesting park where gardens and lawns are flanked by natural woodland of tuart and banksia. Some 65 species of birds have been sighted in the area, including Yellow-throated Miners.

Leader: Graham Little

Sunday 3 to Saturday 9 September — Visit to Eyre Bird Observatory

Rob and Jan were wardens at Eyre Bird Observatory in 1986. This is an excellent opportunity to be shown the local attractions, guided by two people who have for many years had their hearts in Eyre, and who have developed a close understanding of the Eyre environment. At this time birds will be nesting and actively going about their housekeeping duties. Waders start to make an appearance. Mammals, reptiles, invertebrates and plants all offer something of interest at this time of the year.

Leaders: Jan and Rob Hill

Monday 25 September Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Neil Hamilton is Section Keeper of Birds at the Perth Zoo and will talk about the Zoo's role in bird conservation, a role often performed in conjunction with other organisations such as government departments and other zoos.

Monday 23 October Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Michael Craig, a former secretary of the WA Group, will help us with wader identification, a source of considerable difficulty to many, as migrant wader species, normally in WA in the summer, are then less distinctive.

Monday 27 November Meeting — Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Some time ago Gordon Tozer and others started a photographic group within the RAOU in Perth. Gordon, Peel Howden and Mavis Norgard will show 15 slides apiece and Dusty Millar will display print photographs. In discussing their work, they will be giving helpful hints for beginners in bird photography.

STOP PRESS Leg-flagged Banded Stilts

Tens of thousands of Banded Stilts have nested at Lake Ballard near Menzies during the past two months, following cyclonic rain in January. During the first week of May, Alan Clarke, Andy Chapman and I leg-flagged 170 chicks at various stages of growth. The leg-flags are small, made of stiff yellow plastic and located above the left "knee" (on the tibia).

The lake's water level is high and food supply (brine-shrimps) abundant so the majority of these chicks should survive to fledge and disperse to other wetlands.

Should you sight any of these leg-flagged stilts we would be most grateful if you could pass the details on to me at CALM's Busselton office (ph: 097-521677 or fax: 097-521432 or mail c/o Dept. of CALM, Queen Street, Busselton, 6280). Information we would like is location, date, number of "flagged" stilts seen, total number of stilts and any other information of possible interest. Include the name of the observer and a contact number or address.

Jim Lane

Crossword Solution



FALCON TOURS

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Camping 1-15 Oct (15 days 14 nights) \$1480 Accommodated 22 Oct 1st Nov (11 days 10 nights) \$1680 Guides: Bill & Karen McRoberts

1996 AFRICA BIRDWATCHING & GENERAL WILDLIFE

We continue our successful series of tours to Africa. '96 takes us to some of the finest tours visiting Northern Transvaal, Kruger Nat. Park (the big five here) Zululand Game Park, Coastal Natal. We may cross the border into Mozambique to birding areas only just opened) 20th Aug - 4th Sept \$5150 (Note: S.A. is more expensive than Zimbabwe). Ext. to Natal south coast. The beautiful Drakensberg Mountains, Lesotho, Transvaal Highveld 4th - 12th Sept \$1250 Cost includes return air Syd. or Melb (Perth, small reduction) Fully accommodated. Small group only

KIMBERLEY'96 and extension to North Canning Stock Route for Princess Parrot

Travel with someone who really knows the Kimberley. Broome - Kununurra 2 - 17 June \$2280 Ext. to Canning Stock Route 21 - 29 June \$950 Guide Simon Nevill. Send for itinerary to 1 Simons Drive, Royston 6111 Perth, Western Australia Ph/Fax: (09) 397 5125

STOP PRESS Elegant Parrots in the Goldfields

Following what sounded like a very promising report of a Night Parrot sighting on Maranalgo Station, John and Judy Blyth and Phil Fuller of CALM made a rush trip to the Station, about 25 km south east of Paynes Find, to investigate.

Unfortunately, the birds proved to be Elegant Parrots, a southwestern species not normally seen in this part of the Goldfields, but presumably able to spread out into such areas following heavy rain earlier this year. This sighting, of at least four birds and probably seven, is of some interest but not, it must be said, as wildly exciting as the rediscovery of Night Parrots would have been! Perhaps another time?

John Blyth

ART CONTRIBUTIONS

No, not your Renoirs and Picassos.

If you have any bird or bird-related drawings that you would like to see in WABN, the Editors would welcome contributions. The items should ideally be line drawings in black ink on white paper and without half tones.

Selection of suitable artwork to be inserted in WABN will be made by the editorial committee. Credits to individual artists will not normally be given but the artwork may be signed or initialled within the body of the drawing.

As no guarantee can be given that original artwork will be returned, it is suggested that a clear photocopy of your work is made and sent to the WABN Editors, c/o RAOU at Perry House.

GIFTS

Do not forget that, in addition to the trading table at the monthly meeting, a wide range of items is available for sale from the office in Perry House.

Stock includes books, paintings by artists such as Michael Morcombe and Val Talbot, bird videos, bird call tapes, Audubon bird whistles and many small gift items.

Call in to the Perry House office between 9.30 and 12.30 weekdays, or phone (09) 383-7749.

SERVENTY ORGANIC WINES

Low preservative wines made from grapes certified A level organic by N.A.S.A.A.

STOCK UP YOUR CELLAR AND SUPPORT RAOU's RESEARCH FUND

Here's an opportunity to indulge yourself with some quality red wines from the Margaret River region and at the same time swell the coffers of the Research Fund.

Peter Serventy, son of Dr. D.L. Serventy, has established Western Australia's first commercial organic winery and is offering members this chance to order wines direct from the winery. For every case or half case sold using this order form, SERVENTY ORGANIC WINES will make a substantial donation to the RAOU's Research Fund.

The wines are produced from grapes grown without chemical herbicides and pesticides, using compost, fish and seaweed fertilisers. The resulting fruit has plenty of flavour and vitality and is made into wine using traditional French techniques with minimal preservative. Both Serventy Shiraz and Pinot Noir wines have been medal winners in wine shows over recent years.

'93 Shiraz This wine will take you straight to the hill of Hermitage in the Rhone Valley. Colour is bright purple and the nose shows pepper and spice quality. The palate has heaps of fruit quality with generous, spicy peppery characters, enhanced by light oak maturation.

'93 Pinot Noir A medium bodied wine with deep, ochre red colour. The spicy, gamey nose is truly varietal with the oak showing through as smoky bacon characters. The palate is ripe and earthy with cherry and coconut flavours. The finish is long and beautifully balanced by the powdery tannins. A serious wine for serious wine drinkers.

	½ Doz.	Dozen	Quantity	Amount
'93 Pinot Noir	\$76.00	\$150.00
'93 Shiraz	\$76.00	\$150.00
Mixed Dozen	\$76.00	\$150.00
Wine Cost:				
Delivery Cost:	Perth Metro Area \$5 per case/half case:		
	Country/Interstate \$10 per case/half case:		

Your Name:

Delivery Address:

..... Phone/Fax

RAOU SPECIAL OFFER

Make cheques payable to - P & L SERVENTY (not the RAOU) and send your order direct to VALLEY HOME VINEYARD, P.O. WITCHCLIFFE, WA, 6286.