



Western Australian Bird Notes

No 75 September 1995

A Cruise on Lake Argyle

In January 1995 I organised a trip to the Kimberley with three experienced birders from Melbourne. We spent a week in Kununurra and a week in Broome. One of the best days of the trip was Sunday 8th when we arose at 3.45 am, left Kununurra at 4.20 am and arrived at Lake Argyle at 5.05 am. We had arranged a special boat trip on Lake Argyle with Lake Argyle Cruises run by Stephen Sharpe. The boat is excellent and can cruise at 50 km/h, with a draught of less than 50 cm, and a ramp at the front that allows you to get ashore easily without getting wet. Stephen provided plenty of drinks plus fruit and raisin bread to eat. The trip would have been \$600 (\$150 each), but Stephen had arranged some other people (non-birders) so the cost was only \$100 each and it was well worth it.

We soon saw some Pied Cormorants (about 100 for the day) and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle (the first of about 10 for the day, mostly immature), both of which would normally be considered unusual this far from the coast. It took just over an hour to get to the south end of the lake, where we spent most of our time along the Ord River. Our first goal was to see Yellow Chats, and we found them easily along the banks in full breeding colour. We would have seen at least 15 for the day. Lake Argyle is probably the only place in Australia where they can be almost guaranteed at any time of the year.

We then spent a little time looking for waders as we went up the river. They were common but scattered (mostly Wood and Common Sandpipers), but we also saw two Pacific Golden Plovers (new for my Argyle list), a few Marsh Sandpipers, a *Gallinago* sp. snipe (probably Swinhoe's) which walked into the grass, several Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, three Long-toed Stints (new for my Argyle list), a small flock of Oriental Pratincoles and six Australian Pratincoles on the grass near the shore. There were lots of waterbirds (especially Magpie Geese, Glossy Ibis and some Black-necked Storks and Brolgas) along the shores and in wet areas off to the side. There were also 200+ Purple Swampheens along the banks, plus many Singing Bushlarks in the grass and a few Brown Songlarks.

A Channel-billed Cuckoo (my best sighting to date of this

species) flew along the river being chased by a Torresian Crow. Some Budgerigars appeared to be breeding in the hollows in some dead trees, and a small group of Cockatiels flew across the river. A group of six Australian Bustards close to the shore were also good to see.

Our second main goal was to see Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens (new for me in WA). We stopped a few kilometres (maybe 4) along the Ord River where there was a large stand of eucalypts. Between them and the shore was a thicket of an introduced plant Jerusalem Thorn (a *Parkinsonia* species) mostly covered by wild passionfruit vine. We split up, and after seeing a few groups of Red-backed Fairy-wrens I found a male Purple-crowned Fairy-wren in breeding plumage plus two other birds. My companions had also found them, and I had good but brief views of a male and female in the sunlight. In an area of the thicket less than 200 m long by 20 m deep we saw four groups (although two were probably the same) totalling at least eight birds. The thicket stretched for possibly a kilometre along the bank, and Jerusalem Thorn is starting to establish itself in some other places. This area is a stronghold for this endangered species in the Kimberley, which would provide an interesting dilemma if someone decided to eradicate this introduced plant pest. Other good sightings for the area were some Bar-shouldered Doves (my first for my Argyle list), two Grey-fronted Honeyeaters, two Grey Shrike-thrushes, a Black-chinned (Golden-backed) Honeyeater and we heard a few Brush Cuckoos (new for my Argyle list).

Our third goal was to see rare waders, but here we were less successful. We turned back and made our way close to the banks. We found a few more Long-toed Stints and a very young Masked Lapwing. On a sand island there were a lot of terns including 50+ Caspian, 10+ Gull-billed, at least three White-winged (new for my Argyle list) and 50+ Whiskered. On the east bank there was a small bay with five Black-tailed Godwits and four Greenshanks among others. Past the point we could see 100+ Australian Pelicans, 2000+ Eurasian Coot and a flock of 500+ terns probably mostly Whiskered. Back

on the west bank where Argyle Diamonds used to have a barge pumping water to the mine we found a small group of Plumed Whistling-Ducks, and then a large flock of 400+ Oriental Pratincoles with about 20 Oriental Plovers in the grass back from the shore and another Pacific Golden Plover on the shore, plus one Little Curlew. Nearby there were large numbers of Magpie Geese plus some Comb-crested Jacanas including some young.

On the way back we stopped to look at a Black-necked Stork's nest (not in use) on the top of a small rock island, and a small group of Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies resting in the shade of a rock overhang. We arrived back shortly after 12 pm.

This was birding in comfort, with spectacular scenery, the history of the lake, and plenty of birds with 83 species seen between us in only half a day. Many of these were wet season migrants but the birding would be excellent at any time of the year especially if Yellow Chats and Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens are of interest. Stephen Sharpe was very helpful, and I would consider this trip to be a must for anyone visiting Kununurra who is interested in natural history and birds in particular.

Frank O'Connor

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)

Australian Shelduck - several pairs, 10/7/95, 5 nautical miles N of Rottnest (seen at different times of day, apparently flying from the mainland to Rottnest) - JB

Southern Giant-Petrel - 1, 26 and 29/6/95, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - RP

Kerguelen Petrel - small numbers 9/4/95 to 19/6/95 and 200+, 1 and 2/6/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Great-winged Petrel - 1, 8/3/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Soft-plumaged Petrel - 1+, May/June 1995, North Island, Abrolhos Group - BF (scarce winter visitor to the Abrolhos)

Broad-billed/Salvin's/Antarctic/Slender-billed/Fairy Prions - varying numbers, 17-19/7/95, beach-washed along the west coast south from Lancelin (Gingin) to about Busselton (Busselton) after gales, with hundreds (all five species, but mostly Salvin's (Medium-billed) Prion, *Pachyptila salvini*) in the Busselton area - various observers per WAM and RAOU (many specimens submitted to the WA Museum; data are being compiled and a report will be published elsewhere in due course)

White-chinned Petrel - up to 4 birds, 16/5/95 to 18/6/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Streaked Shearwater - several, March/April and May/June 1995, North Island, Abrolhos Group - BF

Black-browed Albatross - 8, 7/6/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 1 immature, 10/7/95, 5 nautical miles N of Rottnest - JB

Yellow-nosed Albatross - 200+, 26/5/95, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) - RP * 16, 6/6/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Red-tailed Tropicbird - 3 single birds, early 1995, North Island, Abrolhos Group - BF

Australasian Gannet - 26 flying south in 1 hour, 25/7/95, Woodman Point (Cockburn) - MS

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - 2, 8/4/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 1 sub-adult on sheep carcass, 1/6/95, Ravenswood (Murray) - MBa

Bar-tailed Godwit - 1, 8/3/95, Qindalup sandbar, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP (uncommon south of Bunbury)

Lesser Sand Plover - 1, 8/3/95, Qindalup sandbar, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Hooded Plover - 1, 7/7/95, Cape Leeuwin (Augusta-Margaret River) - KL * 1, 7/7/95, Hamelin Bay (Augusta-Margaret River) - KL * 2 adults and possibly 2 juveniles, 8/7/95, Skippy Rock, Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park (Augusta-Margaret River) - SM

Great Skua - 1, 8/7/95 and 25/7/95, Woodman point (Cockburn) - MS * 11 over 6 hours, 19/7/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * several, 10/7/95, 5 nautical miles N of Rottnest - JB (uncommon this far north)

Pomarine Jaeger - 2, 2/4/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP * 1, 7/7/95, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Arctic Jaeger - 1, 5/3/95, Bunker Bay (Busselton) - RP * 1, 28/4/95, Sugarloaf Rock (Busselton) - RP

Weebill - 1, 20/4/95, Cape Naturaliste lighthouse (Busselton) - RP (unusual this far south west)

Western Yellow Robin - 1, 24/3/95 and 1, 25/4/95, in *Banksia* woodland at Whiteman Park (Swan) - MBr (rarely recorded in this part of the Swan Coastal Plain)

Crested Shrike-tit - 1, 16/7/95, in wandoo in Christmas Tree Well area (ca. 40 km SE of Armadale) (Wandering) - HC, SA, DS

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

Plumed Whistling-Duck - 3, 28/3/95, 70 km S of Newman (Meekatharra) - KC (unusual this far south)

Hardhead - 1, 31/7/95, Kanidal Beach, 10 km W of Eyre (Dundas) - EBO

Fiordland Penguin - 1, 4/7/95, beach-washed at Eyre (Dundas) - EBO

Black-breasted Buzzard - 1, 14/5/95, birrida on northern Peron Peninsula (Shark Bay) - MB

Beach Stone-curlew - 1, 6/7/95, Point Samson (Roebourne) - ST

Black-winged Stilt - 2, 14/5/95, birrida on northern Peron Peninsula (Peninsula (Shark Bay) - MB (rarely recorded on Peron Peninsula)

White-cheeked Honeyeater - 1, amongst many New Holland Honeyeaters, 7/95, Eyre (Dundas) - EBO (rare this far east in WA)

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush - 4 adults and 1 nest with 2 eggs, 20/7/93, E side of Kennedy Range (Upper Gascoyne) - JS, HS

Star Finch - 50+, mostly juvenile, and nest with 2 young, early June 1995, 15 km E of Newman (Meekatharra) - MC (south-easterly limit of distribution in this area)
Tree Martin - 1000, 14/6/95, feeding on brine fly at a concentration pond, Cargill salt works, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - MM

KIMBERLEY

Black Swan - 97, including several with nests with eggs and some young, 10/7/95, Lake Willson, south of the Dennison Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL (few breeding reports from the Kimberley)

Great Crested Grebe - 25, 11/7/95, Lake Willson, south of the Dennison Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL

Masked Booby - 2, 28/5/95, West Lacepedes (Broome) - KC (not normally seen here)

Red-footed Booby - 1, 16/5/95, Broome Harbour, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - KC (unusual at Broome) * 6 breeding, 17/5/95, Adele Island (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

Great Frigatebird - 100+ breeding, 17/5/95, Adele Island (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

Great-billed Heron - 2, 27/5/95, Talbot Bay (Derby-West Kimberley) - KC, DM

Spotted Harrier - 1, 27/6/95, sitting on a nest (probably eggs or small young) Brolga Springs near the Ningbing Ranges (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC

Buff-banded Rail - 1, 28/5/95, West Lacepedes (Broome) - KC

Chestnut Rail - 3 including 1 juvenile being fed, 20/5/95, Prince Regent River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC, DM
Purple Swamphen - 12, 9/7/95, Lewis and Slaty Creeks, near Dennison Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL (first records for SE Kimberley)

Beach Stone-curlew - 2, 24/5/95, Raft Point, Doubtful Bay (Derby-West Kimberley) - KC, DM

Little Tern - 50+, 28/5/95, West Lacepedes (Broome) - KC
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo - 2, 9/7/95, Dennison Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL (at NE limit of distribution)

Rufous-crowned Emu-wren - several, 3/7/95 to 11/7/95, north of Gardner Range and several locations around the Gardner and Dennison Ranges (Halls Creek) - KC, GL (extension of known range to the north by about 100 km)

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater - 1+, 3/7/95, Gardner Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL * 1+, 13/7/95, Dennison Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL (these records are at the northern limit for this species)

White-lined Honeyeater - 1, 25/5/95, Sale River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - KC (at SW limit of distribution)

Crested Bellbird - 1, 4/7/95, Gardner Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL

Masked Woodswallow and White-browed Woodswallow - several, 4/7/95, feeding at flowers of *Grevillea wickhamii*, Gardner Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL

Spinifexbird - several, 3/7/95, 5/7/95, Gardner Range (Halls Creek) - KC, GL

Golden-headed Cisticola - 1+, 3/7/95 and 6/7/95, near the Gardner Range (Halls Creek) KC, GL (extension of known range to the south by about 200 km)

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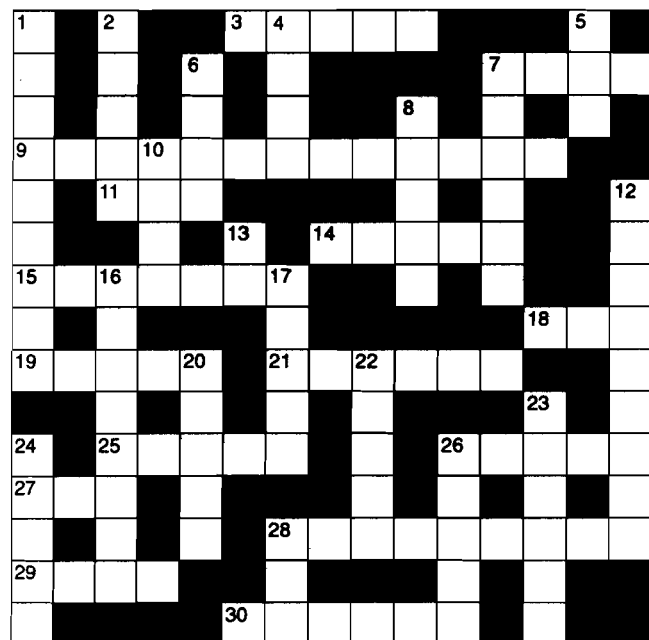
The Editors request contributors to note:

- 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 December Issue

**1 November 1995
at Perry House**

Crossword



CLUES ACROSS

3. The sole representative of this family in Australia is a black-necked one.
7. You may have time for one while you wait for one to appear.
9. One of the feathered dinosaurs, a distant relative of today's birds.
11. The female of a bird species.
14. Secretive bird of the marshes.
15. Possibly the favoured food of a smart black and white coastal bird.
18. A common shape for a bird's nest.
19. Many parrots lay eggs which are roughly this shape.
21. If lucky, you may see one nesting on a cliff on Rottnest Island.
25. Officially means "grey with age" but a certain grebe may feel insulted by the name.
26. May well be colourful but, unlike a king's, it can't be removed.
27. Sometimes used for marking birds in order to check movements.
28. Could describe the nests of both Mistletoebird and Yellow-breasted Sunbird.
29. One above or below the eye is often a useful identification feature.
30. A Willy Wagtail may well expect this from a hungry Australian Hobby!

CLUES DOWN

1. Together with colour and shape, this may help you to identify a bird easily.
2. Small bird, often seen in flocks in dry areas.
4. The formal genus name of the Barn Owl.
5. The "arch enemy" of small bush birds.
6. Often represents the State of Western Australia.
7. Author of an early Australian bird identification book.
8. Common material from which leg-bands are made.
10. May cause both birds and 'birdos' to lie low in the

middle of the day.

12. If conspicuous on the ground, may indicate a popular roosting site.
13. A fork may seem a good nest site, but if the limbs on either side fall off, you'd be left with this word only!
16. This Whiteface lacks a band across its lower breast.
17. Dull black.
20. Male duck.
22. It's essential for a bird to do this every day.
23. The bird equivalent of a crowded city in China.
24. A bird reaches its full colouration during this stage.
26. You may hear a Scrubfowl do this softly.
28. In past years, a Galah may well have been one of these.

Members' Contributions

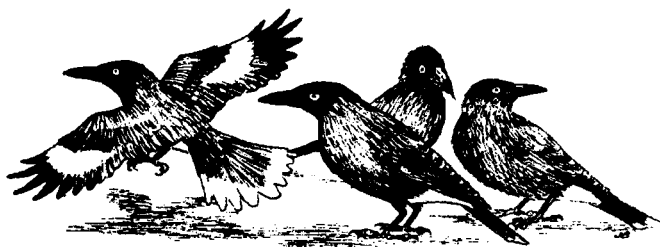
DISAPPEARING STILTS

At the Cargill salt works, Port Hedland, there are usually up to 1000 Banded Stilts and about 300 Red-necked Avocets during winter. This year, both species left the saltworks after rain in the middle of February. By mid-June some avocets (about 40) had returned, but the stilts were still absent. It will be interesting to see when they return.

Mal McKenzie

GREY CURRAWONGS ON THE SWAN COASTAL PLAIN

From Margery Clegg's and my observations it would appear that this species is resident in The Spectacles Reserve, Kwinana. We have been visiting the area since it was first drawn to our attention by work done by Mike Bamford. On nine out of 10 visits, spread over the past five years, we have seen or heard Grey Currawongs, nearly always near the wetter area but never among the banksia woodlands. I would, however, agree that we do not find them in any other locality away from the hills. And a further observation on the distribution of the species in the Darling Range: they are quite common along the upper regions of Helena Valley; can nearly always be observed close to Mundaring Weir and in Jacoby Park. We sometimes find them along one of the valleys which cross Flynn Road, Mundaring Shire, when the creeks are flowing, but we only find them in one part of that district.



My conclusion is that they prefer to be close to some form of water. Against the above observation, I am well aware of the fact that they can often be observed along the edge of the Albany Highway.

Bryan Barrett

BOOK REVIEW

BIRDS OF SOUTHWESTERN AUSTRALIA:

An atlas of changes in distribution and abundance of the wheatbelt fauna

by Denis Saunders and John Ingram

This book is the result of a three-year survey of birds in the wheatbelt and other parts of southwestern Australia. The survey was overseen by the authors and conducted by 187 members of the public at a total of over 150 sites. It is published by Surrey Beatty and Sons and is available in soft cover at \$39.95.

Denis Saunders is well known for his views on the importance of conservation biologists communicating their results to the general public and being a part of the process for change which the results of their science suggest is necessary. Accordingly, the survey and the book are as much about trying to generate favourable actions for the conservation of birds and other wildlife as about documenting the circumstances which need changing.

The book starts with two short introductory chapters, outlining the need for ecologically sustainable development in the southwest of Western Australia, describing the study region, its history of development and the resulting environmental changes.

Chapter three describes the approach taken to the survey and the presentation of results. Those results, in Chapter 4, "Species Accounts", take up over 240 of the book's total of 296 pages, and provide much fascinating detail for anyone with an interest in birds. Each species account occupies a full page, sometimes two, and is made up of a summary of what is known about the historical and current status of the species in the southwest, and an assessment of whether it has increased, remained stable or declined. The distribution of the species is presented in map form, usually with two maps per species. One of the maps is based on the reports of 10 observers between 1900 and 1937, and the other shows the sightings reported by participants in the survey between 1987 and 1990. Reporting rates, as a percentage of observers reporting the species, is given for the period 1900-1937 and for the period of this survey. For over 50 species, seasonal occurrence in the study area is graphed.

The results are discussed and summarised in Chapter 5, "Changes in distribution and/or abundance of birds of the wheatbelt", and this chapter provides an excellent introduction to the ecological principles which influence the abundance and distribution of birds. The book concludes with a short chapter on "Conservation Actions".

There is much in this book to interest birdwatchers, other naturalists, and landowners throughout the southwest. Despite the overall conclusion that almost half of the species of birds throughout the wheatbelt have declined, the atlas of actual sightings during the time 1987-1990 indicate that some very rarely seen birds, such as the Malleefowl, Bush Stone-curlew, Bustard and Southern Scrub-robin, are still distributed, albeit sparsely, over much of the wheatbelt. If the right changes in land management result from the current emphasis upon landcare and ecologically sustainable development, it may not be too late for many of these species to re-establish themselves throughout much of their original range.

Like many biological atlas projects based upon input from

the public, questions can be raised about the reliability of sightings and the thoroughness with which records are assessed. Verification of data is referred to, but further discussion of this point would have made a useful addition, and allowed a more critical judgement of the reliability of conclusions.

Another potential problem (which the authors have obviously thought about) is the difficulty of comparing the modern survey with very sparse historical information to obtain realistic estimates of changes in abundance or distribution. Specifically, the 10 published accounts of bird observations in various parts of the wheatbelt, which were used to assess historical status, were probably all written by experienced birdwatchers. On the other hand, the experience and skills of the volunteers contributing to this survey were perhaps very varied (although the reader is given no information about this). Differences in skill at finding and observing birds or experience in identifying them could result in different recording rates and therefore different assessment as to status. This problem would flow through to the calculation of reporting rates as a percentage of observers in the two periods, and is particularly acute for secretive birds and for small, relatively nondescript species, such as thornbills and small honeyeaters.

The authors have attempted to overcome these problems in two ways. Firstly, by using whatever literature is available to confirm any conclusion drawn by comparison between historical and current information. That is, did any of the 10 historical observers, or others since then, report declines in number or range of any species? Secondly, by considering the situation 'from first principles'; that is, if a particular species is dependent upon a specific type of habitat and that habitat is reduced greatly in area it seems inevitable that the species will decline in abundance and distribution.

Given the importance of habitat loss in the assignment of status to various species, it is a little surprising that no reference is made to authors like Wilson (1988) who have presented evidence for a significant correlation between the loss of habitat and the number of species retained. Wilson (1988) argued that a 90% loss of habitat is likely to result in an eventual loss of 50% of the original species. This provides an ominous extension to the major conclusion of this study, that almost half of the bird species of the wheatbelt (which has been approximately 90% cleared) have declined in range and abundance.

The questions discussed above do not significantly affect the major conclusion, nor do they diminish the value or interest of the book as a whole. As the authors intended, the atlas project has focused attention upon the issue of nature conservation in the wheatbelt and has resulted in a considerable increase in the number of people in local communities throughout the wheatbelt who are interested in birds and have some understanding of their ecological needs. These people will constitute a significant force for continuing change towards more sustainable farming methods.

Like all books published by Surrey Beatty and Sons, the presentation is excellent; uncluttered, easy to read and with a number of colour plates throughout. The plates illustrate many of the factors important to various species of birds, and some of the general principles of sustainable agriculture. Editing has been very thorough, with few typographical errors, and the list of references provides an excellent introduction to the

status and conservation of birds in southwestern Australia.

This book is likely to be the definitive reference on the status of birds in the agricultural areas of WA for many years. It will also be the first book I consult when planning birdwatching trips to the wheatbelt!

John Blyth

Reference: Wilson, E.O., 1988. *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington DC.

ATLANTIC OCEAN BIRD EXPEDITION

Although we have been members of the RAOU for some years, since we moved to Swan View, where we regularly see some 60 species of birds, our participation in birdwatching excursions has been minimal. We use our knowledge of, and interest in, birds to enliven our travel experiences, rather than travelling specifically to see birds.

Shortly before Christmas 1994 we received a brochure from Chris Doughty's Peregrine Bird Tours announcing a trip which would make up for all the bird excursions we had not been on previously. It was advertised as an Atlantic Ocean cruise from Ushuaia, Argentina to Plymouth, England. Visits to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia held the promise of birdlife on a massive scale. We were not disappointed.

The Estonian research vessel *Livonia*, on charter to the Canadian company Marine Expeditions, was our home for 50 days. Although she has a capacity of 36 passengers, only 16 people had booked on this cruise. Passengers were outnumbered by the 25 crew and four Marine Expeditions staff. Chris Doughty, who accompanied us as ship's naturalist, was always on hand to identify birds. The expedition leaders went out of their way to ensure we visited places of most interest.

The majority of our fellow-passengers, although all interested in natural history, were not fanatical birdwatchers. Three had come specifically to see the birds. Two of those were particularly keen to add rare endemics to their lifetime lists.

Conditions were ideal for birdwatching as we had the full run of the ship, including the bridge, at all times. The bridge made an excellent viewing platform, particularly when seas were too rough for us to be out on deck. Chris and the keen birdwatchers spent practically all the daylight hours there during the early part of the cruise. Nearer the equator far fewer birds were seen between islands. The disappointment of the one day when no birds were sighted was tempered by the day when both tropical and Antarctic birds, Brown Boobies and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, were seen together near Tristan da Cunha.

A total of 184 species of birds was recorded. This included five species of Penguin (King, Gentoo, Rockhopper, Macaroni and Magellanic), and seven species of Albatross (Wandering, Royal, Black-browed, Grey-headed, Yellow-nosed, Sooty, and Light-mantled). Chris claimed an Amsterdam Island Albatross of which tiny numbers nest in the southern Indian Ocean. Unfortunately he was alone at the time. Wandering and Black-browed Albatross became familiar companions as they floated effortlessly over the ship.

Although we struck some unpleasant weather, including sleet during our first zodiac landing, we were absolutely entranced by the birdlife we saw in the Falklands. The first colony of Penguins we visited was on the inauspiciously named

Carcass Island. Here it was possible to observe and photograph the colourful Rockhopper and Gentoo Penguins from a mere two metres.

South Georgia was a total contrast to the Falklands; it was very green, where the Falklands' late-summer vegetation was brownish-grey. The light was much clearer and brighter, though this could be attributed to the better weather we experienced there. Our first view of icebergs was quite breathtaking and the 60,000 or so King Penguins at Salisbury Plain were a sight never to be forgotten. Their sleek, shiny silver grey backs, brilliant white fronts, enlivened by bright yellow, and pink-sided bills make them the most attractive of birds. When we stood still the Penguins approached within a metre of us. Sometimes when we walked they followed us in single file.

Other highlights included seeing rafts of thousands of Shearwaters and Prions feeding just metres in front of the ship between Gough and Inaccessible Islands (near Tristan da Cunha). Numbers of Prions and Petrels stranded on the ship each night in this area provided delightful close encounters with these beautiful creatures. After overnighting in the "Bird Rehabilitation Centre" (a willing passenger's cabin) they were presented for a "press conference" before being released.

Officially only eight pairs of the Wirebird (St Helena Plover) survive and our island guide was dubious whether we would see them at all. He thought the best chance would be on the golf course and here we found 30, many of them young birds!

A bonus for the birdlisters was the Razo Island Skylark found only on this small island in the Cape Verde group. The zodiac landing on its rocky shore was very tricky. When we climbed six metres up from the water and stepped onto the plain above we were surrounded by Skylarks and Spanish Sparrows. An Osprey circled overhead.

As casual birdwatchers we were pleased to be the only people to see two vagrants during the trip: a Cattle Egret at Stanley in the Falklands and a Ruddy Turnstone (also well-known to us here) on the shore in Tristan da Cunha.

The cruise was a fantastic wildlife experience. All participants gave the thumbs-up to its nature interest. Most of the non-birdwatchers considered themselves at least mild-birdwatchers by the end of the trip.

(Marine Expeditions run regular Arctic and Antarctic cruises, as well as repositioning cruises such as ours. We would recommend them to anyone interested in natural history.)

Loreley and Philip Morling

HOODED PLOVER SURVEY

August will see many RAOU members involved in the Hooded Plover Project. At the time of writing, the five field trips outlined in the *WAHOOPS* newsletter are organised and ready to go.

The numerous lakes east of Grass Patch will be searched by members of the enthusiastic Esperance group. This group is also planning a trip later in the year to search beaches and nearby lakes between Israelite Bay and Wattle Camp. The RAOU members who searched areas in the January 1995 Hooded Plover count have been asked to repeat the searches during August. It is hoped that all members will be on the lookout for Hooded Plovers and send in reports of sightings.

Remember to watch out for banded birds. One hundred Hooded Plovers were banded with metal bands at Lake Gore by Michael Weston in February (see WABN 74:1-2). To date there has been no report of a sighting of any of these birds. In January over 1,500 Hooded Plovers were known to be in the Esperance area, but by March very few were still there. This year many inland areas have received above-average rainfall and this may influence the movement and breeding of the birds.

It is planned to repeat the August field trips in January 1996.

Phyllis Bentley

Country Groups

ALBANY GROUP

The June outing, attended by 13 people, was to Boxwood Hills Golf Course, Jerramungup Shire. The day was perfect for birdwatching and was well worth the rather long drive to get there.

The Albany Group meets on the second Tuesday of each month. The 11 July meeting was an indoor one with some videos, slides and general discussion (everybody leaves Albany in July!).

Contact numbers are printed on the Albany Brochure, and we've just had 1500 new ones printed. Visitors are always welcome.

Tel: (098) 44 1073 **Viv McCormick**
Tel: (098) 44 7540 **Ray Garstone**
Tel: (098) 44 4460 **Charlie Davies**

ESPERANCE BIRD OBSERVERS' GROUP

On the weekend 6/7 May, 20 Esperance Bird Observers' Group (EBOG) members, including six children, spent a weekend camping at Moir Rock, about 165 km north of Esperance.

John and Jeanette Hyndes have been doing regular bird counts here and at nearby Peak Charles, for five years and we joined them for one of their counts.

Thirty-one species were seen over the weekend, adding six species to the Hyndes' list of 65 species for Moir Rock. The vegetation is open woodland, predominantly mallee.

As well as checking out the birds, we explored the rock and surrounding bush and drove to Peak Charles for an afternoon, about 35 km west. Several members climbed part way up the peak, while three made the arduous climb to the summit (651 m) to enjoy the view amidst the soaring Wedge-tailed Eagles.

Many enjoyable yarns were told around the campfire on the cold nights and the weekend was hailed a great success. Thanks to John and Jeanette for sharing their considerable knowledge of the area and birds.

Further camps are planned with the next one in spring to a rock near Cascade. Also planned are a hunt for the elusive Malleefowl spotted about 70 km north-east of Esperance, to be led by Allan Rose, and bird surveys of bush reserves in the Esperance region.

Kate Dawson

PO Box 150, Esperance 6450
Tel (090) 71 3304

Notices

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS – 22 OCTOBER 1995

Members will recall that at the Annual General Meeting held February 1995, brief consideration was given to a proposal to increase the number of WA Group Committee members from 10 to 11, due to the increased number of activities in this State and the need to share responsibilities.

An Extraordinary General Meeting will be held on Monday 22 October 1995 in conjunction with the General Meeting to be held at Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, commencing at 8 pm.

It is proposed that section 5 of the Rules be amended to provide for a Committee consisting of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and seven Committee members (currently six).

In accordance with section 17 of the Rules, the RAOU Council (at HQ, Victoria) has approved this proposed amendment and it now remains for the Extraordinary General Meeting to formally adopt the amendment.

BIRDING HOTLINE

In the June issue, members were invited to ring the RAOU office with comments about the proposal to discontinue the Hotline service. As no responses have been received as yet, the WA Group Committee has decided that this telephone number can be put to better use as a facsimile line, which will improve communications with our members and affiliated groups around the country.

Accordingly, our facsimile number is (09) 387 8412.

INVITATION TO DUNSBOROUGH

I have a Kowa TSN3 x 20 scope set up permanently inside my house and invite any interested visitors to the Cape Naturaliste area to call and have a look through it. Some interesting species of seabirds can often be seen.

Tel/fax (097) 55 3263

Ross Payton

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined the RAOU WA Group between 1 January and 25 July 1995. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

S Abercromby, K Ashbury, N J Beissel, T Blake, J M Bligh, P Boglio, E Bowles, L Brent-White, D Brockis, L Bromhead, G Brooks, J Brooks, K Chatfield, B Cooney, K Cooper, C H Cornes, J C Darnell, S Davies, F Faulkner, J Fisher, C Gangell, D J Garic, M Gibbs, T Giles, T O Giles, J Gye, J Haggas, M H Henderson, S Henderson, M Hitchins, Y Hocking, A Honti, P A Hyman, J P Hyndes (Mr & Mrs), R King, G Kirkman, J Kirkwood, I Kirsten, G K Lane, J Langford, W R Maddeford, S Marsh, K A Mazzucchelli, W McBride (Mr & Mrs), A Musca, M Nairn, G Nienow, M M O'Connor, B A Payne, P A Phillips, C A Phillips, E E Pyatt, C Reidy, V M Saffer, P J Scott, B M Sherrard, J D Stewart, N Taylor (Mr & Mrs), A Thomson, R Vaughan, T R Walton, F Watson, J White, L Whiteside, J J Wilksch and D Williamson.

Margaret Philippon

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY – CAN YOU ASSIST?

Eyre is presently in need of assistance with the provision of an extra toilet/ablution block. A single toilet and one bathroom now serve the needs of the wardens and all visitors. Extra facilities are needed urgently.

An effort has been made to meet those requirements through approaches to CALM and by making grant applications, so far to no avail. This then is an appeal to someone with ideas which will help us to achieve our aim. Is there a reader of *WA Bird Notes* who knows of a funding source? Or someone who has the expertise to organise the creation of a toilet/ablution block? Are there volunteers who are prepared to spend time at Eyre doing whatever manual tasks are required to instal such a facility?

Any bright idea at all would receive a grateful reception. Eyre is scraping by at the moment and the credit for its survival must be given to all the wardens who for years have survived on a pittance while working doggedly at their tasks.

Please contact Eyre Bird Observatory Management Committee through Rod Smith on (09) 397 5319 or (09) 293 2777, or the RAOU (WA Group) office on (09) 383 7749.

Rod Smith

WADER MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Further to my note in the last issue of WABN regarding the monitoring of wader movements, the project has been designed to provide further information on the changes in the populations of the various species which visit our State. Fifty-one species could be seen, of which 15 are resident and 36 are regular migrants (with at least a further 16 other species occasionally being recorded as vagrants).

Within the State 52 areas have been identified by Doug Watkins *et al* (1993) as of international importance, and an additional three areas of national importance for shorebirds. Counts at regular intervals within these designated areas of wetlands and others of lesser importance will allow us to follow population trends. It will also give an indication of human disturbance, drought and other causes for concern.

It is hoped that individual members, or in the case of some of our larger lakes, etc, groups of members, will volunteer to monitor a designated area at least twice a year (preferably more frequently), to count the wader population. Each volunteer will be issued with the necessary forms on which to record their sightings and a sheet of instructions. Also, as the organisers realise that waders carry the unfortunate stigma of being difficult to identify, an easy-to-follow identification sheet of those species which are most likely to be encountered will be included with each kit.

Two major counts will be called for each year that the project lasts, to coincide with counts being taken in other States, so that an overall picture of the Australian wader population can be obtained. These will add to earlier counts made in the 1980s for many of the sites.

Apart from the member or group assigned to a named wetland, it is hoped that other members will take part in the project and record what they find. In other words, the more records we get throughout the year the greater our ultimate knowledge, and it is hoped that many people will take up the challenge. If you wish to look at any of the listed areas or any

other wetlands, please contact us so that we can send you the necessary information and forms.

Set out below is a list of 56 wetlands, some of which it is hoped will be monitored during the project.

Bryan Barrett - Organiser

Areas of International and National Importance for Waders

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Jandabup Lake NR | 28. Benjup-Benjunup Lake |
| 2. Lake Joondalup | 29. White Lake |
| 3. Swan Marine Park * | 30. Lake E Munglinup |
| 4. Kogolup Lake | 31. Lake King |
| 5. Thomsons Lake NR | 32. Dunn Rock NR |
| 6. Forrestdale Lake NR | 33. Lake Grace North |
| 7. Lake Cooloongup | 34. Dumbleyung Lake NR |
| 8. Lake McLarty | 35. Lake Quarabang |
| 9. Lake Clifton | 36. White Water Lake |
| 10. Rottneest Island | 37. Mears Lake NR |
| 11. Garden Island | 38. Nambling, nearby lake |
| 12. Peel Inlet | 39. Walyormoor Lake NR |
| 13. Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands | 40. Ninan Lake NR |
| 14. Blackwood estuary | 41. Hinds Lake NR |
| 15. Wilson Inlet | 42. Shark Bay area |
| 16. Albany harbours | 43. Lake Macleod |
| 17. Grassmere Lake NR | 44. Dampier Saltworks |
| 18. Kwoncup Lake | 45. Port Hedland Saltworks |
| 19. Ballcup Lake NR | 46. Eighty Mile Beach |
| 20. Culham Inlet | 47. Anna Plains |
| 21. Oldfield estuary | 48. Roebuck Bay |
| 22. Lake Gore NR | 49. Roebuck Plains |
| 23. Gidon wetlands | 50. Lake Eda |
| 24. Kubitch Lake | 51. Lake Gregory |
| 25. Karbul Lake | 52. Camballin flood plain |
| 26. Station Lake | 53. Lake Argyle |
| 27. Warden Lake NR | 54. Parry flood plain |

* consists of three separate sites: Alfred Cove, Pelican Point and Milyu Reserve.

Reference:

Watkins, D. (1993) *A National Plan for Shorebird Conservation in Australia*. RAOU Report No. 90.

Notices

THE NIGHT PARROT IS AUSTRALIA'S MOST MYSTERIOUS BIRD!

It is secretive and nocturnal, and lives in far-flung and isolated places. It has declined in abundance and distribution since 1900. There have been very few confirmed sightings this century and it is endangered.

But reports keep coming in – from the Gascoyne, Pilbara, southern Kimberley and along the Canning Stock Route. In 1990, a dead bird was found near Boulia in Western Queensland. This was the first specimen collected for more than 80 years.

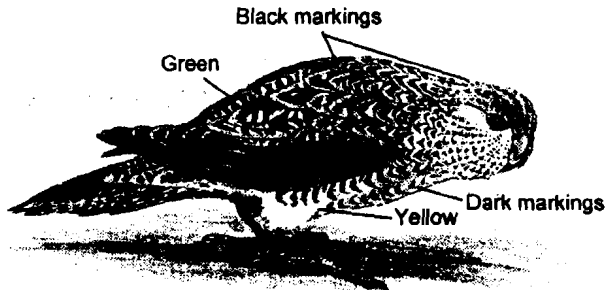
The essential first step to conserving Night Parrots is locating birds in the wild. **You can help us find and protect this unique, endangered bird.**

Appearance: About 24 cm (9.5") in length. Similar colouring to a budgerigar but larger, more robust and shorter tailed (see below).

Calls: One is a harsh, repeated alarm call said to be similar to the croak of a frog. Another call, delivered during flight, is a long-drawn-out mournful whistle which is two-toned.

Night Parrots may occur anywhere in arid Western Australia.

If you find a dead bird (check your radiator grille after long drives at night), seal it in a plastic bag and put into a freezer.



If you see a Night Parrot, make careful and detailed notes, then please contact:

John Blyth, CALM, PO Box 51, Wanneroo 6065
(09)405 5161

Andy Chapman, CALM, PO Box 366, Kalgoorlie 6430
(090) 21 2677

Gordon Graham, CALM, PO Box 942, Kununurra 6743
(091) 68 0200

Peter Kendrick, CALM, PO Box 835, Karratha 6714
(091) 86 8288

PERRY HOUSE LIBRARY NEWS

The following reports/journals/books have been received during June and July 1995:

Birds of Southwestern Australia. Denis Saunders and John Ingram. Surrey Beatty & Sons. 1995

The Stilt. Bulletin of the Australasian Wader Studies Group of RAOU. October 1994 and April 1995

The Tattler. Newsletter of the Australasian Wader Studies Group of RAOU. October 1994, January 1995 and April 1995

Wader Movements in Australia. Margaret Alcorn, Richard Alcorn, Michael Fleming. AWSG Report No. 94, October 1994

Discover Your Local Bushland. Editors David Wake and Natalie Reeves. Quinns Rock Environmental Group. April 1995

Emu. RAOU. Vol 95, Part 1, March 1995

Newsletter – Cumberland Bird Observers' Club Inc. Vol 16, No. 4. March-April 1995

Watsnu. Newsletter of the WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit, CALM. April 1995

Yangebup Lake – Draft Management Plan. Ecoscape, Landscape Ecologists. November 1994

Annual Report. RAOU. 1994

CALM Science. WA Journal of Conservation and Land Management. A Biological Survey of the Fitzgerald Area, WA. Supplement Three. CALM. March 1995

Birds – Collins Gem Guide. Collins, Glasgow. 1980 (donated by John Malcolm)

Mana Pools. Jan Teede. Quest Publishing, Harare. 1988 (donated by John Malcolm)

Your Guide to Borth. Mid-Wales Tourism Council (donated by John Malcolm)

Mombasa and The Kenya Coast: A Visitor's Guide. J H A Jewell. Evans Bros (Kenya) Ltd. 1987 (donated by John Malcolm)

Birds of the World Magazines. 1970 (donated by Ian Rowley)

The Bird Observer. Bird Observers' Club of Australia. No. 754. July 1995

Broome Bird Observatory Management Committee, Minutes of Meeting 12 July 1995

Lake Meallup Preservation Society (Inc), Newsletter. Vol 8 No. 2. July 1995

RGC Wetlands Centre Report. RAOU. June 1995

Northwest Shelf Environmental Resource Atlas Report. BHP. February 1995

Urban Bushland Strategy. Ministry of Planning. WA Government. June 1995

Helen Clark

RAOU (WA GROUP) COMMITTEE

Meetings of the WA Group Committee are held on the third Wednesday of each month at Perry House.

It is through the committee that the business of the RAOU (WA Group) is managed. The committee members are kept very busy with such matters as finance, conservation, excursions, publications (such as *WA Bird Notes* and brochures), publicity and the maintenance of the office. Many other voluntary workers give their time in the day-to-day performance of tasks which are vital to the corporate well-being of our organisation.

Recent committee meetings have dealt with the following:

- the Hotline cancellation
- purchase of a facsimile machine
- Hooded Plover Project – funding is being sought to continue this work; in the meantime the WA Group will provide sufficient money to keep the project running
- upgrading of the computer program, for which grant funds have become available
- *Birdwatching Perth and Environs* – 2000 copies to be produced for sale
- Malleefowl Recovery Team meeting in Adelaide (September) – WA will be represented by three members
- conservation issues: Belmont, Roebuck Bay, Monkey Mia, Perup, Lake Muir, Swan-Avon Catchment, Bold Park, Urban Bushland, Point Grey, Black Cockatoos
- *WA Bird Notes* – report on developments
- library accessions, journal exchanges and policy on books for sale
- publicity – various displays set up during the recent months

Future issues of *WA Bird Notes* will give an outline of some more of the issues dealt with in the few months prior to each publication. It is not practical to comprehensively cover meeting outcomes in WABN so members are invited to seek clarification, when required, from the secretary.

Rod Smith

BANDING NETWORKS

In February this year the process of forming Western Banders Association was commenced with a meeting of 26 interested participants. The association has a membership of 48 so far, most of whom are also RAOU members.

Banders in WA now have the opportunity to more readily appreciate what is happening with other banding projects and be able to co-ordinate efforts to a greater degree. Banding projects are conducted presently at such locations as Dongolocking, Lake King, John Forrest National Park, Yanchep, Dryandra, Mt Claremont, Thomson's Lake, Fitzgerald River National Park, Marradong and Shark Bay. Through their association banders are able to enlist the assistance of other banders in carrying out their own projects, to disseminate ideas or announce unlocked avian secrets.

An example of the co-operative nature of the Western Banders Association can be demonstrated in the recent presentation at the RAOU (WA Group) meeting by Penny Atkinson. Her PhD project and others receive voluntary banding assistance from people who belong to the new association.

RAOU members who have an interest in banding birds are welcome to participate. (Be prepared for an early start, a drive into the country or even camping conditions – though projects are also in the metropolitan area.)

For more information contact Perry de Rebeira on (09) 298 8999.

Rod Smith

RURAL BIRD BROCHURES

If you're travelling around the state, you would find it helpful to have brochures giving some information on birds of those areas.

Allan Jones and his team have prepared 25 brochures so far, using data supplied by members sending in their bird sighting report cards and recorded in the Database of WA Birds (formerly called the National Parks Database). The brochures have been produced with the financial assistance of the Gordon Reid Foundation, Landcare and Alcoa.

Below is a list of the brochures available. The brochures marked with an asterisk have an associated bird list:

Albany
Avon Valley/Wheatbelt *
Broome
Bunbury *
Busselton *
Carnarvon *
Central Wheatbelt *
Denmark *
Dumbleyung *
Esperance *
Fitzgerald River *
Geraldton *
Kalbarri *
Kalgoorlie-Coolgardie
Katanning *
Kojonup *
Kununurra *
Mandurah
Margaret River *
Mullewa *
Narrogin *

Perth *
South of Perth *
Walpole *
Wyndham
Wyndham/Kununurra birdlist

Excursion and Observatory Reports

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

It was good to get back to living with nature and the birds at Eyre, after two weeks in the city, even though we did have a happy break, catching up with most of our family. Mavis and Mitchell did an excellent job looking after Eyre and the visitors, so everything was running smoothly when we returned last week. Unfortunately, the weather hasn't been good since we returned (end of July). In fact, for the first six months of this year, nearly 200 mm of an average 300 mm rainfall has fallen, so we are well on track for a good year. As a result, thick moss covers the ground in protected areas and quite a lot of fungi are to be seen, even on the limestone-encrusted plain behind the foredune. Banded Greenhood (*Pterostylis vittata*) orchids are growing in profusion in damp places.

Bird sightings of note recently have been Crimson Chats (three) on the Tableland, Black-eared Cuckoo, and a White-checked Honeyeater at the bird bath (only the second sighting for Eyre). A beach-washed Fiordland Penguin (also, only the second record for Eyre) was picked up, quite freshly dead, so we were able to take it to the Museum when we went on our break.

Malleefowl are busy again, one making a huge mound within 2 km of the house. Another, even closer, is situated in what looks to us like a very unsuitable position, among thick scrub, where a rabbit warren was previously. All litter has to be scratched to the mound between the trunks of Mallee, Acacia and Quandong, making it very difficult work for the poor bird. It will be interesting to see if he perseveres or gives up. Perhaps 'Mrs Malleefowl' will decline to lay eggs in it. Then again, maybe they know something we don't!

Spiny-cheeked and White-fronted Honeyeaters are still numerous around the house, with *Eucalyptus diversifolia* flowering. Fantailed Cuckoos are still very vocal and the first Shining Bronze-Cuckoo for the season was seen a few days ago. A short walk will usually be rewarded with the sighting of a Mistletobird. Brown Songlarks have arrived on the Tableland.

In May, the Governor-General, Mr Hayden, Mrs Hayden, their son and staff, and the Federal Member for Kalgoorlie, Mr Graham Campbell, visited Eyre, as Mr Hayden was keen to see people and places of the Outback. They had morning-tea with us and looked around the Observatory, before travelling on to Twilight Cove for lunch, finishing back at Cocklebidy in time to fly to Eucla. It was a beautiful day, showing the country at its best. George acted as a driver and guide for the day. We received a nice letter of thanks later, saying how they had enjoyed the day.

Late in June exceptionally high tides occurred on the coast here, eroding the foredune badly and on a couple of occasions washing in through our entrance for about 10 metres. We were fortunate to escape the huge deposits of dead pilchards

but in May, a Pygmy Sperm Whale was washed up dead on the beach. Dolphins have been sighted frequently during winter and we have had a few sightings of seals and sea-lions. We are commencing a Beach Litter Survey, co-ordinated by US Marine Mammals Commission, which is a world-wide survey, hoping to decrease the incidence of litter disposal at sea.

Courses to consider in October are Bird Banding and Malleefowl Studies. In December, Field Techniques for Bird Study and Christmas at Eyre. Focus on Birds (Summer), Greening the Dunes and Star Gazing in January and Going Batty on the Nullarbor in February.

George and Rita Watkins

**Southern Africa
A slide presentation and talk
by Simon Nevill**

Venue: Herdsman Wildlife Centre, Wembley
Tuesday, 12 Sept : Time 7.30 pm

Simon has run two successful tours to Africa and this will show some of the big game and birdlife seen. Ring (09) 397 5125 for any further information.

Entry donation to the RAOU \$1.00

BIBRA LAKE 10 May

My reconnaissance round the lake some four days earlier had been discouraging. After the prolonged dry spell, the extensive perimeter of mud was baked dry and hard, and bare of the abundant bird life I had hoped would delight us on the planned walk. Too many of the shrubs that make up the rewarding birding spots looked dead, and the ground bare from summer fires. Altogether it was an unprepossessing prospect and I could not muster much enthusiasm for my role as leader on this outing.

But the rains came, despite the forecasters' pessimism, and they were still threatening when about 20 optimists gathered in the right car park. I remark on this for I had been telling everyone who asked for guidance that the meeting place was in the car park opposite the children's playground with the large boat and a climbing frame made of logs. When I arrived, council workmen were renovating the sandy area from which they had removed every trace of wooden structures the previous afternoon.

As usual there were large numbers of swans and coots around the more public areas but, for the first time, not a single Wood Duck. However, the Australasian Shovelers were in abundance. There were at least 200 in one flock towards the northern end of the lake and one estimate was made of about 700 including many roosting in the fringing undergrowth. Pacific Black Duck were there in plenty, but only a scattering of Grey Teal and we saw no Pink-eared Ducks in the northern and eastern areas. Some fortunate few had a good long look at a Buff-banded Rail near the new viewing platform although none was seen in the areas that we had previously found them. But Willie Wagtails were again everywhere in remarkable numbers, and Purple Swamphens were prominent.

The large area of muddy foreshore adjacent to the boardwalk had been well moistened by the rain and was providing plenty of food for the multitude of Silver Gulls who seem to have crowded out the other species of this habitat and there were only a few plovers and Black-winged Stilts with them although, unusual for the area, a Straw-necked Ibis was seen hereabouts. Here, we began to see raptors and had excellent views of a young Whistling Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk and Swamp Harrier. On this, the eastern side of the lake, were good numbers of bush birds, particularly Splendid Fairy-wrens (but only one solitary male in full colour), Grey Fantails and New Holland Honeyeaters.

From here on, the attention was less on the birds than on the lowering clouds, but we were still taken by surprise when the heavens opened and transformed a group of birdwatchers on a leisurely walk to a motley mob in sodden flight. Despite this sudden end to our observing, the final count on a wilting checklist showed that Bibra Lake remained true to its reputation as a top birding spot for we had seen 52 species.

Peter Anson

AVON VALLEY AND TOODYAY 28 May

The Avon Valley National Park walk 28 May had to be cancelled as the Ranger in charge had closed the park. We were told that, due to the fire which had swept through the area during the summer, many trees had become unsafe and a danger to the public.

Jim Masters came to the rescue and invited the RAOU to visit his property, 'Glen Avon', at Toodyay. Jim showed us his dam which, due to the drought, was very low but still held sufficient water to attract Yellow-billed Spoonbills, a White-faced Heron and several cormorants. We then walked along the edge of the Avon River finding more water birds and some bush birds.

At about 11 am heavy rain started to fall which drove the group into one of the Masters' sheds where we sat in comfortable lounge chairs to partake of an early lunch. The storm eventually passed and Jim took us to a newly-opened picnic/BBQ area nearby on the Avon to see more birds and in particular several Mistletoebirds which most members were able to see.

Without Jim's help the day would have been a disaster and the organisers are very grateful for his help.

Bryan Barrett

BOORAGOON LAKE 7 June

On 7 June, after the previous day had been wet and windy, nine intrepid birdwatchers met to view the bird life on Booragoon Lake. Luckily the morning was fine and sunny and everyone was able to have good close views of three Nankeen Night Herons roosting on the edge of a nearby thicket.

From the end of the boardwalk we could see a large colony of nesting Great Cormorants, and nearby some 300 roosting Little Black Cormorants which, although they had finished nesting, still use the vegetation through the day and parties fly continuously to and from the river. A few – not more than 30 – Little Pied Cormorants were also present. At the western end of the lake we saw nine Darters with at least two nests containing young.

Twenty-eight species were seen including a Swamp Harrier and a beautiful male Red-capped Parrot in full plumage.

Bryan Barrett

FLYNN ROAD, MUNDARING 18 June

A sunny but somewhat cool winter's morning saw a good turnout for this full day's bird walk in mainly wandoo woodland.

The first of the three sites we visited proved to be a little disappointing. Too cold perhaps?

Site number 2 was much more rewarding. The highlight was the sighting of three different types of robin in the same area.

The third site we visited was a patch of heathland where White-cheeked Honeyeaters and a juvenile Western Spinebill were sighted. As we were leaving a Peregrine Falcon was seen swooping low over a nearby paddock.

In all 39 species were recorded.

M D Waller

WUNGONG GORGE 2 July

On a sunny, cool morning, 26 members set off down the gorge. We split into two groups: one took the high road and one took the low. We met in the orchard.

On the way we saw Splendid Fairy-wrens, Golden and Rufous Whistlers, and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. While we were looking around the orchard, we heard, then saw, six Red-eared Firetails feeding in the paddock across the river. Everyone had good views; for a few, it was their first-ever sighting.

Further down the gorge we saw White-breasted, Yellow, and Scarlet Robins, Western Rosellas, and White and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

It was good to see greenery sprouting up after the bad fire seven months previously.

We saw a total of 46 species and had a very good morning's birding.

I'd like to thank the members for supporting our walks.

Bill McRoberts

KARAKAMIA SANCTUARY 9 July

Ten members arrived on a cold, rainy winter's day. Andre and Lorita Schmitz treated us to a stove fire while explaining Karakamia's story. When the rain let up, we walked through Jarrah forest, where a possum was seen, and evidence of several native mammals was pointed out. We also learned of fox-control methods, native mammal re-introductions, and were shown a variety of plant species.

Our walk met with intermittent showers, which made good birding a challenge; however, 36 species were seen, including Short-billed (Carnaby's) Black-Cockatoos, Red-capped Parrots, Scarlet Robins, and Western Spinebills. Prize sightings were a Grey Currawong and a Western Rosella – this bird only being seen here on one previous occasion.

Many thanks to Lorita and Andre for a very interesting and informative day.

Karen McRoberts

BAYSWATER (ERIC SINGLETON) BIRD SANCTUARY 12 July

A hardy group of eight people defied the elements and had an enjoyable visit to the sanctuary. Strong winds and rain squalls made it difficult to spot many bush birds. But the conditions did not disturb the waterbirds and the group was able to sit comfortably in the bird hide and get close-up views

of male Blue-billed Ducks displaying, Hardheads, Pink-eared Ducks, Swamphen, Moorhen, Coots, etc. Reed-Warblers were silent but two birds were seen feeding in the open at the base of the reeds.

A walk around the sanctuary and down to the river was interrupted by heavy rain. While sheltering in the lee side of his on-site office, the foreman invited us in to inspect the plans of the major development taking place in the area. Thousands of shrubs and trees are to be planted. Disappointing news was given about a private land owner who refused over two million dollars for the beautiful paperbark swamp adjacent to the sanctuary.

It was interesting to see two Pink-eared Ducks entering nest boxes (old five-gallon drums) provided, so we should see plenty of young in a few weeks.

A total of 27 species were seen during our visit. This, strangely, was three less than seen by the leader (alone) on a visit the previous day.

Thank you once again to Eric Singleton, who is ill at present, for helping create this beautiful sanctuary.

Tom Delaney

Coming Events

Sunday 27 August – "Spring Fling" in Bold Park 9.30 am to 4.00 pm

The Wildflower Society of WA's SPRING FLING in Bold Park next to our joint office in Perry House. The RAOU will be offering guided bird walks and will have displays and a trading table. A great event for nature lovers.

Leader: Peter Anson

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 Hill 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

Thursday 14 September – Mid-week walk at Lake Gwelup

Meet at 8.30 am at the car park at the corner of Stoneham Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road). An opportunity to see both water birds and bush birds, many of which may be nesting.

Leader: Eric Banfield

Sunday 24 September – Full-day walk from Nanga Bridge to Scarp Pool, along the Murray River

Meet at 8.30 am at the Dwellingup Hotel. From Perth, drive down the Southwest Highway to North Dandalup. Turn left to Dwellingup.

This will be a 16 km undulating walk along the Murray River on a good track through Jarrah, Marri, and *Banksia* bush, with beautiful views of the river. It is a return walk, so you can choose your own distance. Bring lunch and a minimum of 1 litre of water.

Bush birds seen in this area include Striated and Spotted Pardalote, Red-eared Firetail, Red-winged Fairy-wren, White-breasted Robin, Brush Bronzewing, and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

I'll boil a billy at lunch time.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

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.

Wednesday 27 September – Mid-week walk in John Forrest National Park (Banding)

Meet at 7.30 am at the main picnic/BBQ area past the tavern. Travel east along Great Eastern Highway over Greenmount Hill. Turn left into Park Road at the second sign for John Forrest National Park and Tavern. This will be another opportunity to watch Perry and his team banding bush birds. The first meeting in autumn proved so popular that Perry has agreed to take two more meetings.

Leader: Perry de Rebeira

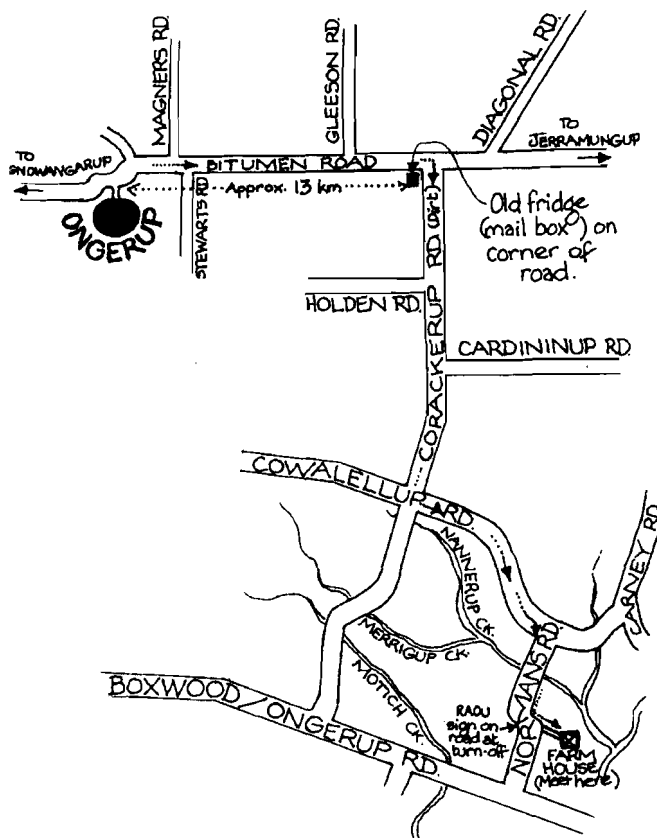
30 September/2 October – Malleefowl camp-out

Meet 12 noon or thereabouts on Saturday 30 at the farmhouse adjacent to Peniup reserve, about 50 km south-east of Ongerup (see map).

Accommodation is available in the house, with four bedrooms and plenty of floor space. Bring your own bedding, clothes and food. There is also plenty of camping space for those shy types who don't want to share a room. Water, toilet and hot showers all available. There will be a barbecue set up, but bring a camping stove if you have one.

This long weekend gives us the opportunity to combine some birdwatching in the little known Peniup reserve (over 6500 ha and intended to be vested in CALM as a nature reserve) with some practical work related to the conservation of Malleefowl. The very active local Malleefowl Preservation Group intends to establish a study area of about 300 ha on the

reserve, locate and mark all Malleefowl mounds and record all relevant information. The dense bushland will be searched using the 'human-chain' system, so bring protective clothing (jeans, long-sleeved shirt, robust footwear and gloves suggested), water bottle and compass.



Ongerup has some special attractions over this period, including an international standard shearing competition and a week-long wildflower display, with over 400 local species displayed and named. There will be plenty to do (including marking more Malleefowl mounds!) for those who want to stay longer, which they are welcome to do.

Leader: John Blyth, but for more local information contact:

Susanne Dennings

phone (098) 28 2083, fax (098) 28 2082.

Thursday 12 October – Mid-week walk at Burswood Open Spaces

Meet at 8.30 am outside the Park Board Administration Building. Parking available about 100 metres to the left and right of the building. We will be looking at the bird life which has returned to the public parks and gardens which occupy the site of the former Rivervale Dump.

Leader: Jennie Marsland

Saturday 14 October – Full-day excursion to Pipidinny Road, Eglinton

Meet at 8.30 am at the junction of Pipidinny Road and Yanchep Road, Eglinton (an hour's drive from Perth).

We will look at four habitats during the day: the coastal dunes for Variegated Fairy-wrens, scrubwrens, etc; the heath for White-winged Fairy-wrens, Tawny-crowned, and White-

cheeked Honeyeaters; the swamp for waterfowl; and a part of Yanchep National Park which few people visit.

Be prepared to pay a small fee to enter the picnic area for lunch.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 21 October – 2 Half-day walks at Alfred Cove, Attadale, and Woodman Point

Meet at 8 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast) off Burke Drive, Attadale.

This will be an opportunity to identify migratory waders in this important area of the Swan River. There should be a good chance to see some rarities as the waders start to disperse. This is the time when your telescope is really worth having.

If people are keen to go down to Woodman Point in the afternoon, Michael will be leaving Alfred Cove about noon.

Leader: Michael Craig

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 during our summer, are then less distinctive.

Wednesday 25 October – Mid-week walk in John Forrest National Park (Banding)

Meet at 7.30 am – see 27 September notice for all details as this is a repeat visit for those who may not have been able to attend before.

Leader: Perry de Rebeira

Thursday 2 November – Mid-week walk at Lake Monger

Meet at 8 am at the most-westerly car park off Lake Monger Drive, just before reaching Gregory Street. This will be a good opportunity to view many species of duck and other water birds.

Leader: Norah Brockman

Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 November – Malleefowl Mounds – Search in Moorine Rock area

A new search location is being arranged for Malleefowl mounds in the Moorine Rock region. Moorine Rock is on the Great Eastern Highway about 20 minutes west of Southern Cross, while the search area is south of Moorine Rock.

Those attending will have to be self-sufficient. We will have a farm to camp on but it is advisable to bring enough drinking water for the weekend.

Please contact Rod Smith on (09) 397 5319/293 2777 for details.

Sunday 5 November – Full-day excursion to Austin Bay Nature Reserve, Eastern Peel Inlet

Meet at 8.30 am at the end of Beacham Road (some older maps show this as Grey's Road). Beacham Road (signposted) is the second turnoff to the right after crossing the Murray River, travelling towards Pinjarra on the main Mandurah-Pinjarra Road. It's 12.7 km from Mandurah via the Perth-Bunbury Road, and 3.1 km east of the Murray River. The distance along Beacham Road (winding, but follow your nose) from the Pinjarra Road to the meeting point is about 7 km. Round trip from Perth about 200 km.

The area provides a combination of estuarine waters and flats, coastal scrub, woodland, and freshwater wetlands; we should find a good range of birds.

This is Ross River virus country, so bring ample mosquito repellent and long clothes. Gumboots will probably be needed as well.

Leaders: John and Judy Blyth

Saturday 11 November – Full-day excursion to Karakin Lake and Doopiter Swamp

Meet at 9 am at the entrance to the gravel pits on KW Road, which branches off Lancelin Road, some 7 km south of Lancelin (the gravel pits are about 300 m from the junction on the left-hand side).

We will look at the heathland around the pit for Shy Heathwrens and fairy-wrens. White-backed Swallows have bred in the sand pits, as have Red-backed Kingfishers.

We'll then proceed further along KW Road to Lake Karakin which, when wet, can hold many species of duck, waders, etc, some of which breed in the area. The grove at the southern end of the lake is sometimes the home of a very large colony of Nankeen Night Heron.

After lunch we'll drive on to Doopiter Swamp.

Be prepared to travel approximately 300 or more km from Perth.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 18 November – Full-day excursion to Wannamal Lake and Other Areas

Meet at 8 am at Bullsbrook, where the Chittering Valley Road diverges to the right from the Great Northern Highway.

It would help if people could "double-up", leaving some cars at Bullsbrook.

This should be a very interesting area.

Leader: Clive Napier

Wednesday 22 November – Mid-week walk at Ellis Brook Reserve, Gosnells

Meet at 8 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin. This interesting site for bush birds close to Perth may have some species not often seen in the metropolitan area.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 26 November – Half-day walk at Alfred Cove, Attadale

Meet at 8 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast) off Burke Drive, Attadale.

This is our second of two outings to identify some of the waders that spend their summer in the southern hemisphere.

Leader: Norma Duff

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.

Saturday/Sunday 2/3 December – WA Twitchathon 3 pm Sat to 3 pm Sun and End-of-Year BBQ

The WA Twitchathon will be held during December as part of our end-of-year programme. So start getting your teams together – minimum of three and maximum of four. If you do not have a team but would like to participate contact John Blyth (405 5161) or Trevor Stoneman (387 2467). It is suggested that each team contributes 10¢ per species of bird seen during the 24-hour period with monies raised going to support the Hooded Plover Project.

A celebratory, pre-Christmas barbecue will be held at Perry House on the Sunday commencing at 5 pm when the winner will be declared.

Anyone from WA who wishes to participate in the national Twitchathon to be held in October can do so through RAOU HQ.

Sunday 10 December – Half-day walk at Mary Carroll Park Lake and Wright Lake, Gosnells

Meet at 8.30 am in the car park off Eudoria Street, Gosnells.

This is a small but important wetland in the metropolitan area, with over 38 species of waterbird on its list.

We'll then go to Wright Lake for an hour or so, where we may see waders at this time of year.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

NOTE:

NO DECEMBER EVENING MEETING

Monday 22 January 1996 Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Our chairman, Brian Wilson, continues to watch birds in out-of-the-way parts of the world and will on this occasion report to us on what he saw in the Galapagos Islands, the unusual animal life of which played such an important part in Charles Darwin's thinking on the subject of evolution.

Monday 26 February Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Jiri Lochman, whose striking photographs of scenery and wildlife will be familiar to readers of the CALM journal *Land scope* and other publications, will show slides of birds and discuss the circumstances in which he took them.

Monday 25 March Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Dr Graeme Smith of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology at Helena Valley conducted research on the Noisy Scrub-bird in the 1970s and was involved in censuses of that species and of the Western Bristlebird until 1988. In addition, recent work in Two Peoples Bay has given him a valuable historical perspective on the birdlife of this most important nature reserve. His talk will concentrate on the general ecology of the three rare bird species to be found in that reserve, namely, the Noisy-Scrub-bird, the Western Bristlebird and the Western Whipbird.

Monday 22 April Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

As was announced on page 19 of the last issue of *WA Bird Notes*, tens of thousands of Banded Stilts nested at Lake Ballard near Menzies following cyclonic rain early in 1995. Jim Lane of CALM (who recently spoke to us about Black Swans at the Vasse Estuary, Busselton) will describe this memorable breeding event and what it has added to our knowledge of this unusual wader species.

Monday 27 May Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Associate Professor Ron Wooller of Murdoch University will describe the landmark study on Short-tailed Shearwaters (Muttonbirds) begun by the late Dom Serventy (one of the most important figures in WA ornithology) in 1974 and still continuing today. Although the study is conducted in Bass Strait and the shearwaters which are its subject breed only in small numbers in WA in the Archipelago of the Recherche, the findings about this bird's natural history have implications for other shearwaters and seabirds generally.

Monday 24 June Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Speaker to be arranged.

Monday 22 July Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Andy Chapman of CALM in Kalgoorlie works in an area with major salt lake systems and a high diversity of eucalypts and will be telling us about the changes which have taken place in the birdlife of that area since European settlement.

Crossword Solution



CALLING ALL WRITERS

Are you thinking about writing a research article, general interest article or observation notes for WABN (or elsewhere)?

Do you need help with:

- researching techniques
- organising and editing material
- knowing what to write or
- how to write it?

Then for friendly advice or encouragement with your writing contact:

- the WABN Editors (John Blyth or Allan Burbidge) on tel. 405 5100 or
- the RAOU (WA Group) Research Subcommittee (Allan Burbidge tel 405 5100 or Mike and Mandy Bamford tel. 309 3671).



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