

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of Birds Australia - WA Group
(a division of Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

No 83 September 1997

EASTERN CURLEWS NEAR MANDURAH

The West Australian Wader Study Group has nominated the Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*) as a species of special interest.

This outline has been written to provide some background information for members who are interested in participating in monitoring Eastern Curlew populations and movements in Western Australia.

Although the emphasis in this article is on the lower south west, this is by no means meant to discourage members residing in the northern parts of our State from participating in the survey. If anything, the opposite holds true, as little information is available from the areas between Karratha and Perth.

The Eastern Curlew is the largest wader to visit our shores and has been listed internationally as a species of special concern. A general decline in numbers has been noticed in both their Russian breeding grounds (Gerasimov *et al.*, 1997) and their Australian overwintering grounds. The fact that it is a large and slow bird make it a favourite game species for waterfowl hunters in Russia, where as recently as 1989 the Eastern Curlew was still listed as a gamebird. Statutory protection from legal hunters is now provided. Hunting also formerly took place in Tasmania (Lane, 1987, page 89).

The preferred habitats for Eastern Curlews in Australia are estuarine mudflats and samphire marshes. They are very sensitive to disturbance of any kind and quick to take flight.

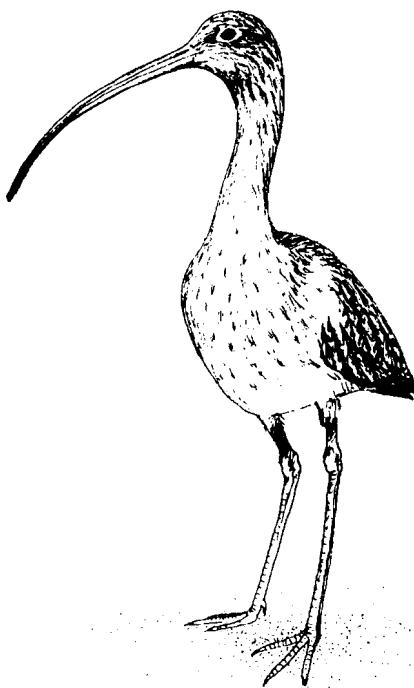
Unfortunately most known sites coincide with popular recreational areas.

In Western Australia Eastern Curlews are most common at Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach (Watkins 1993). Around Carnarvon and Shark Bay they still number in the hundreds out on the mangrove mudflats, but become much less common the further south you go.

Nevertheless, Eastern Curlews have been observed at a number of locations in the south west corner of Western Australia. The best known sites are the northern Peel Inlet (in particular Austin Bay, Coodanup Beach and Sticks Channel), Alfred Cove Nature Reserve, the southern Leschenault Inlet (especially the mouth of the Preston River) and Oyster Harbour (mouth of the King River). It probably frequents other sites that need to be identified; for example I have a sighting of one Eastern Curlew on the beach at Woodman Point (29 March 1997) during its northward migration.

The highest count recorded for the lower south west was 23 birds at the mouth of the King River, Albany (Jaensch *et al.*, 1993). This observation was made back in 1988. Generally only one or two Eastern Curlews are found in the Albany area according to the national wader counts. Another high count was 16 Eastern Curlews at Coodanup, Mandurah (Kirkby, 1992).

The mouth of the Preston River and Leschenault Inlet used to produce regular observations of Eastern Curlews,



The Eastern Curlew is the most spectacular of the transequatorial migrants
Drawn by Judy Blyth

but recent sightings are missing.

Arrival of migrating birds occurs around August in northern parts of our State and Eastern Curlews arrive at the Peel Inlet from mid-September onwards.

Regular counts of Eastern Curlews have been held around the Creery wetlands during the years 1994 to 1997 and are continuing. For the seasonal trends in numbers of Eastern Curlew around the Creery wetlands see Figure 1, which shows a highest count of 11.

One location where you can regularly see Eastern Curlews is on the small island in Sticks Channel opposite Mandurah Quay. You will often find an Eastern Curlew roosting on a small sandy spit or foraging in the samphire where they are not always easily detected.

Observations made during the winter of 1996 and 1997 indicate that some Eastern Curlews overwinter in the northern Peel Inlet. There is another winter record from June 1991 (Hunt and Kirkby, 1991) suggesting that the species may overwinter on a regular basis in the northern Peel Inlet. The Peel Inlet seems to be the last stronghold in the south west for the Eastern Curlew.

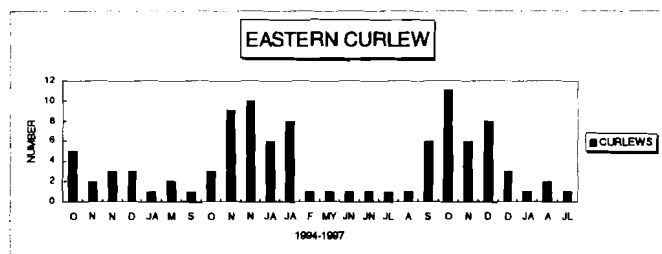


Fig. 1. Seasonal trends of Eastern Curlews around Creery wetlands.

It is interesting to note that the local Aboriginal tribe at Mandurah had a native name (Wid-joo-on-ong) for the Eastern Curlew (Serventy *et al.* 1976). Could this be an indication that the bird was much more common in the past or was it the bird's loud and mournful cry that drew their attention?

Preliminary data seem to indicate that the distribution of Eastern Curlews in the northern Peel Inlet area has remained largely the same during the past ten years.

An interesting update on Eastern Curlew research is provided in the April 1997 issue of the *Tattler* (Anon. 1997). Lightweight satellite transmitters are currently used in an international project to track Eastern Curlew on their northward migration. The birds are tracked from Moreton Bay, Queensland as they head for their breeding grounds. One bird was monitored while migrating from Queensland to China and then into the Russian Federation. Another moved up to the Philippines and then travelled on to northern China. Our Eastern Curlews are not likely to follow the same route.

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Serventy, D.L. and Whittell, H. M. 1976. Birds of Western Australia. Fifth edition. University of Western Australia Press, Perth.

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Marcus Singor

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.

Observers are reminded that, for rarely seen or difficult to identify species, adequate documentation is required for inclusion in WABN. For example, new records, or records of species rarely recorded in the south-west should be accompanied by a description of what was *actually seen* and reasons for the identification. Note that a statement to the effect that what was seen fitted a description in a field guide is a statement about what is in a field guide, and does not tell the editors what you actually saw. Providing extra details also assists the editors to provide extra information to readers.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Malleefowl — 2, 25-29/1/97, McDougall Nature Reserve, 12 km N of Nyabing (Kent) — RP, AP * 1, 18/5/97, 40 km N of Beacon (Mt Marshall) — RD * 1, 18/7/97, Tampus, c. 30 km N of Beacon (Mt Marshall) — RD

Freckled Duck — 1, 25/1/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC * 1, 30/7/97, Herdsman Lake — JD

Chestnut Teal — 7, 23/2/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC, GM

Australasian Shoveler — 157, 20/5/97, Mullet Lake (Esperance) — SN

Fiordland Penguin — 1 beachwashed (later died, specimen given to the museum), 16/7/97, Yeagerup dunes, west of Windy Harbour (Manjimup) — LHn

White-headed Petrel — 95 on 15 days from 15/2/97 to 26/3/97 with a maximum of 20 on 23/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 1, 17/3/97, Canal Rocks (Busselton) — RP

Soft-plumaged Petrel — 12, 20-30 km W of Rottnest I. — PPT

Kerguelen Petrel — 1, 21/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 4, 16/3/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP

Grey Petrel — 2, 22/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP

White-chinned Petrel — 2, 21/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 1, 16/3/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 3, 25/5/97, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) — FO

Little Shearwater — 3, 20/7/97, near Rottnest Island — PPT

Black-browed Albatross — 4 immatures, 27/6/97, 20 km W of Hillarys — FO

Yellow-nosed Albatross — 1 adult of nominate subspecies, 20/7/97, 20 km W of Rottnest I. — PPT (first confirmed record of this subspecies for Western Australia: more details will be published in next issue of WABN.)

Wilson's Storm-Petrel — 1, 23/5/97, North Mole (Fremantle) — FO * 6, 31/5/97, Point Peron (Rockingham) — FO * 1, 31/5/97 and 2/6/97, North Mole (Fremantle) — IS * 1, 5/6/97, Busselton Jetty (Busselton) — MC, GM * 6, 27/6/97, 20 km W of Hillarys — FO * 1, 20/7/97, N of Rottnest I. — PPT

Red-tailed Tropicbird — 2, 25/5/97, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) — FO

Australian Bustard — 1, 19/5/97, Victoria Road, Wattle Grove (Kalamunda) — JC

Black-tailed Godwit — 5, 24/5/97, Kogolup Swamp (Cockburn) — FO * 6, 15/6/97, Alfred Cove (Melville) — BB * 6, 6/97, Kogolup Swamp (Cockburn) — LH

Pectoral Sandpiper — 16, 19/3/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC, GM * 20, 11/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC, GM

Pomarine Jaeger — 2, 16/3/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP

Arctic Jaeger — 2, 15/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 1, 17/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 1, 18/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 6, 16/3/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP

Lesser Crested Tern — 1 adult, non-breeding, Woodman Point (Cockburn) — TK

Common Noddy — 1, 20/5/97, North Fremantle Primary School (Fremantle) — DP

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo — 1000+, 20/5/97, Beacon-Bencubbin Road, c. 15 km N of Beacon (Mt Marshall) — RD

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo — 31, 11/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC, GM

Regent Parrot — 50 (feeding on *Solanum* fruits), 13/6/97, North Dandalup (Murray) — VW

Varied Sittella — 1, 22/6/97, Jarrad Street, Cottesloe (Cottesloe) — IS

Red-eared Firetail — 2, 20/7/97, Victoria Dam, Canning Mills (Kalamunda) — MB, KC

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

Grey Falcon — 2, 25/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

Inland Dotterel — 6, 4/6/97, Cooralya Station, N of Carnarvon (Carnarvon) — TK (unusual this far west)

Splendid Fairy-wren — 23, 13-26/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

Redthroat — 3, 13-24/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

Slender-billed Thornbill — 4, 1/5/97, Lake Annean (Meekatharra) — MC

Orange Chat — 40, 1/5/97, Lake Annean (Meekatharra) — MC

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush — 2, 21/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

KIMBERLEY

King Quail — 1, 11/2/97, 1.5 km N of Ivanhoe Crossing (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Oriental Cuckoo — 10, 9/2/97, banks of the Ord River 31 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Channel-billed Cuckoo — 4, 9/2/97, banks of the Ord River 31 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Green-backed Gerygone — 2, 17/10/96, N end of Weaber Plain 48 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 2, 8/2/97, N end of Weaber Plain 48 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Lemon-bellied Flycatcher (nominate race) — 3, 9/2/97, vine thicket 50 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Lemon-bellied Flycatcher (Kimberley race) — 6, 13/2/97, Wyndham wharf (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Grey Butcherbird (silver-backed subspecies) — 3, 17/10/96, N end of Weaber Plain 48 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Star Finch — 800, 16/10/96, irrigation channel 32 km NNE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Yellow-rumped Mannikin — 44, 16/10/96, irrigation channel 32 km NNE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Pictorella Mannikin — 33, 18/10/96, Keep River Plain 33 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Barn Swallow — 50, 9/2/97, Kununurra Airport (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Tawny Grassbird — 8, 16/10/96, irrigation channel 32 km NNE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 7, 12/2/97, 2 km N of Ivanhoe Crossing (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Zitting Cisticola — 3+, 8-10/2/97, Kununurra Airport (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 4 (including female carrying nest material), 9/2/97, Carlton Plain 39 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 22, 13/2/97, Parry Lagoon Nature Reserve (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

OBSERVERS

AP = Ann Payton

BB = Bryan Barrett

DP = Deborah Perry

FO = Frank O'Connor

GM = Glenn Moore

IS = Ian Standring

JD = John Darnell

KC = Kate Creed

LH = Les Harris

LHn = Leslie Harrison

MB = Max Bailey

MC = Michael Craig

PPT = Perth Pelagic Trip

RD = Robert Davis

RP = Ross Payton

SN = Simon Nevill

TK = Tony Kirkby

VW = Vivian Wells

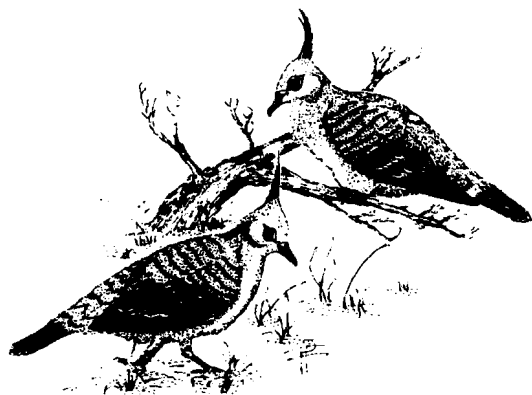
Letters to the Editors

I thought you might be interested in this story. On Friday 30 May, my friend Toni, her 5-year-old son Gordon and I drove to Wilga to hunt for white (albino) fairy-wrens. We parked the car and walked down the track between the farm fence and the bush, watching and listening. No wrens were seen, although there were Grey Fantails, cockatoos, Australian Ravens and Australian Ringnecks. We returned through the bush and over the fence, searching the old homestead garden and the orchard, seeing Red Wattle-birds, Magpies and Mudlarks, Golden Whistler, Scarlet Robin, Western Yellow Robin, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Fantail, and one party of normally coloured Splendid Fairy-wrens.

Walking back we thought we would sit in the sun to have our picnic. But Gordon insisted he had to decide and his choice was the car. To keep the peace we all sat in the car. Lo and behold, down the track we had walked, came three white wrens and two normally coloured Splendid Fairy-wrens. They worked their way along the fenceline until they were under the old pine tree near the car, no more than 4 m away, and we had an excellent view. They appeared all white with a light brown bill and a dark eye and the feathers on the back appeared slightly ruffled and grey white. The two normal wrens interacted with them as one party. My camera is not equipped with telephoto lens, so all I got were some pictures of the general scene.

It was exciting to watch them and to find them exactly where we had been told to look.

Are albino fairy-wrens common? Do you or your readers have any information on them?



The Crested Pigeon continues to expand throughout agricultural areas in the south-west, as reported by several members in this issue

Drawn by Pam Free

Crested Pigeons have increased in numbers and range in the Burekup/Waterloo/Dardanup area in the past 15 years. I have seen 15 to 20 birds feeding on one farm in Waterloo. They appear to enjoy areas where concentrates are being used to feed young stock.

On 17 June I saw a Sacred Kingfisher feeding from the powerline on beetles. They usually depart April/May and don't return till August/September on this property.

Olga Green

As one of your usually non-contributing members I felt I did have to report an interesting sighting which I stumbled upon in urban Gwelup on 25 April this year.

I was visiting a colleague when I observed a raptor-like silhouette hovering over the neighbouring house before depositing an object on the lateral arm of a rooftop television aerial and leaving again. I borrowed some binoculars and awaited the return. Within five minutes a Nankeen (Australian) Kestrel perched on the television aerial and proceeded to consume the "object" which I identified as a mouse. The kestrel continued to eat its meal and I watched with great fascination for another 5-10 minutes.

I have not seen a Nankeen Kestrel in your "Observations" column for some time, so I wondered whether this sighting might be of interest to you and your readers.

Roy Junckerstorff

Obituary

CLEE FRANCIS HOWARD JENKINS

With the passing of Clee Jenkins on 13 July 1997, Australia lost one of its most widely known ornithologists. For over 60 years his newspaper articles have interested and educated their readers. His first, on cormorants and the fishing industry, was published in the *West Australian* in June 1936 and his last, earlier this year, was also in the *West Australian*. He gave many radio and television interviews, over 1200 by 1997, and worked tirelessly to promote the principles of conservation to the general public and the public service alike.

Clee was born in Adelaide in 1908, moved to Western Australia with his parents in 1926, and in 1929 became a cadet at the Western Australian Museum. He married 'Billy' Eileen Alice Bowley in 1939 and their daughter, Gillian, is still working as a botanist in Perth. Clee moved from the Museum to the Department of Agriculture in 1933 and became Government Entomologist in 1939, remaining in that post until he became Chief of the Biological Services Division of the Department in 1964. He retired in 1973. As well as publishing numerous articles on birds in the *Emu* and other journals, he made two significant contributions to ornithology in Western Australia. With Ludwig Glauert he published the original description of the eggs of the Banded Stilt in 1931, a bird whose breeding remained a mystery until a colony was discovered by Ivan Carnaby on Lake Grace. On 22 May 1943, Clee was one of the ten who met to found the Western Australian Group of the RAOU (Birds Australia), a group that has certainly heeded the warning given by Dr Dom Serventy to that meeting, that "the group should avoid the profitless type of meeting so often found in natural history organisations".

Clee was a man of great integrity, good humour and clear vision in whatever he did. Whether as President respectively of the WA National Parks Authority, the Zoological Gardens Board of WA or the WA Gould League, or as Government Entomologist, he brooked no questionable policies or passive resistance that would frustrate goals that he saw as progressive and desirable. He will be remembered as a great gentleman with a genuine interest in the good of his fellows and of his fellow creatures.

Stephen Davies

WA Group Reports

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 Birds Australia-WA Group is managed. Matters for consideration by the committee should be communicated to the office with adequate time for distribution to committee members.

Recent committee meetings have dealt with the following:

Birds on Farms Project — being progressed by Brenda Newbey, with 95 farms involved in the project, as well as the Main Roads Department contract for surveys of road verges.

Survey of Suburban Birds Project — Clive Nealon had processed 90,000-odd records so far on the database although some of the greater metropolitan area is not well covered; about 215 species have been recorded including 10-12 escapees.

Birding Sites Around Perth Revised Edition — now at the printers and to be launched on 28 October at Perry House by the Governor.

Provision of scholarships for university students to cover course fees at WA observatories — Mike Bamford received several applications for grants and Brad Cox (Broome) and Chris Powell (Eyre) have been the recipients for 1997.

Junior ornithologists — Clive Napier is encouraging interest by groups of students from two schools south of the river in setting up an informal junior ornithologists group.

Finances — the Treasurer's report follows this section; the capital expenditure item of \$2290 relates to the purchase of a new photocopier (long overdue!); Jane Venter is now using the accounting package *Pastel* purchased through HQ; since the 6-monthly report was received, HQ has reimbursed the WA Group with its share of membership dues and WABN subscriptions.

Conservation — areas considered during the quarter included Byenup Lagoon, Lake Muir, Amarillo Pool, Lake McLarty, Peel deviation, Whiteman Park, Swan Marine Park, remnant bushland in Coolbellup area off Roe Hwy; the City of Melville has advised that it has erected signs at Alfred Cove prohibiting dogs in the area, following a request from the WA Group; the State Government's 1997 budget provided for funds to maintain six metropolitan regional parks, viz, Herdsman Lake, Yellagonga, Canning River, Beeliar, Rockingham Lakes and Jandakot Botanic Park and a letter has been sent to the Environment Minister congratulating the Government on this decision and offering our assistance in planning the management of these parks to protect the birds of these areas.

Purchase of 'Gluepot' by Birds Australia — members' donations have been very generous with sufficient received to cover cost of purchase by HQ.

Search for new volunteers — nine members have come forward to assist with duties/projects, and also two new birdwalk leaders.

Trading Table — requires the attention of a dedicated volunteer who is not working fulltime; new bird cards are needed to stimulate renewed interest in purchase.

Database of WA Birds (DABWA) — Richard Chyne has taken over the management of this database and is working on upgrading so as to provide access to mapping systems.

Excursions — have been well received by members and the Excursions Sub-committee is now trying out short weekend campouts.

Twitchathon 1996 — the WA Group Committee has distributed its share of proceeds from monies raised during this event, to the Eyre and Broome Bird Observatories, with each receiving \$150.

Clive Napier

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following income and expenditure statement for the period 1 January to 30 June 1997 is presented for the information of members:

	1997 ytd \$	1996 \$
CASH AT BANK at 1/1/97 b/f	6,683.31	
PLUS RECEIPTS Functions	47.60	661.35
Book Sales	512.00	5,116.80
WABN	120.00	6,227.00
Trading Table	4,735.52	10,418.68
Membership	40.00	4,488.60
Interest	7.62	1,650.57
Donations	50.00	1,651.11
Grants	8,680.00	10,729.96
Other	281.45	69.50
TOTAL RECEIPTS	14,474.19	41,013.57
LESS EXPENDITURE		
WABN Printing	2,314.86	4,264.18
Postage, Phone, Stamps	836.36	513.45
Capital Expenditure	2,290.00	0
Functions	246.74	1,209.72
Bank Charges	34.60	108.15
Donations, Subs	0	125.00
Book Purchases	791.75	2,370.37
Rent	581.22	626.18
Utilities	1,106.90	937.03
Projects	5,633.04	14,560.81
Accounting	500.00	300.00
Trading Table Expenses	88.00	4,671.80
Insurance	0	307.41
Petty Cash	54.00	635.90
Depreciation	0	1,108.00
Copier Service	0	495.61
Computer Requisites	0	204.75
Sundries	244.60	104.30
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	14,722.07	32,542.66
BALANCE ON HAND	6,435.43	8,470.91

Jane Venter, Treasurer

BIRDS ON FARMS

Since the last report there have been many changes. The deadline for new participants has passed. The final total of farms involved through the WA coordinator is 95, just in excess of the goal of 90. There are a few other WA farms that joined the program earlier so the real WA total is over 100. The spread of farms has increased to the north. Ajana and Northampton are now included. Some people who began last spring have already completed four surveys, i.e., the half-way mark. By the time you are reading this, every site should have been

surveyed once.

The 161 Main Roads verge Twenty-Minute sites have been selected. Many volunteers are now involved in surveying them. More are needed. I would like to hear from anyone who could help with sites on the Great Eastern Highway between Northam and Tammin, on Albany Highway near Arthur River and Tenterden; and also between Dalwallinu and Wubin. Just one site (to be surveyed seasonally) would be helpful.

Timing of surveys on the day.

For the purposes of the survey it is best not to be too regular in your habits. If you do a series of sites on the one day, it is suggested that you vary the sequence. The example below could be coincidence being a sample of one but is interesting nevertheless. I surveyed five comparable Main Roads revegetation sites near York on the morning of 8 May:

Time	No of Species	No of Individuals
7.50	7	29
8.35	8	21
9.40	4	19
10.20	5	12
11.25	3	5

Acknowledgements

The money situation has improved dramatically. The Gordon Reid Foundation provided funding both to help with the last minute flurry to get the required number of farms registered before the cut-off date, and to continue with the project.

The basic function of the Gordon Reid Foundation for Conservation is to encourage and sustain action by community organisations, to conserve and restore indigenous plants, animals and micro organisms and their natural environments in Western Australia.

Brenda Newbey

WA Coordinator, Birds on Farms Project

PUBLICATIONS REPORT

Birding Sites Around Perth

The launch of this publication has now been changed to Tuesday 28 October 1997 at 10:00 am.

Guests will include representatives of State and Local Government departments and company organisations, which have supported the Bird Australia-WA Group in this and other projects.

It will be an opportunity to acknowledge the support of our sponsors in this and other projects and to have displays of our current activities and research projects and to publicise our Birds Australia-WA Group.

ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME

To assist the organisers with catering, would you please advise the office on (08) 9383 7749 by 4 October if you are attending.

Allan K Jones
for Organising Sub-committee

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN WADER STUDY GROUP (WAWSG)

The WAWSG aims to raise the profile of wader research in Western Australia and to gain a better understanding of wader movements within our State.

The Group has therefore initiated a number of projects, which will continue over the next few years. These will complement the existing projects already run by our local Birds Australia group and extend the range of choice of birding activities available to members.

You are encouraged to participate in one of the local, national or international wader projects as listed below.

1. The National Wader Counts

The national wader counts are held during February and June of each year. These counts monitor the wader populations at different sites around Australia and assist in predicting population trends and fluctuations. For example, during the summer of 1996 a total of 172 sites were counted over 28 designated areas. The national count results are published once a year in *The Stilt*. You may have seen the local results of our last summer count in the previous issue of *Western Australian Bird Notes*. More sites and participants are keenly sought to make this program even more successful. The representation of our State in the national wader counts is presently relatively small. The next national wader count is planned for the weekend 7/8 February 1998.

2. Banded Stilts

Back in April 1995 tens of thousands of Banded Stilts nested at Lake Ballard, near Menzies. Many were banded and leg-flagged in order to trace their dispersal after the breeding season had finished. The leg-flags are small, made of stiff, yellow plastic and located on the left tibia. The WAWSG continues to monitor Banded Stilts for yellow leg-flags and for that matter any other waders with leg-flags. Please keep a lookout for flagged Banded Stilts. All information will be passed on to CALM who are currently doing the research and hopefully we will be able to gain a better understanding of the movements of Banded Stilts.

Information we are grateful to receive is location, date, and total number of Banded Stilts seen, the number with leg-flags, and any other information of possible interest.

3. Special Interest Species

Australia works closely with other countries situated along the East Asian-Australian Flyway in order to protect critical bird habitat and conduct joint migration research. A flyway can best be described as the migratory routes waders follow from their Siberian breeding grounds to their overwintering grounds in Australia. Australia has signed migratory bird agreements with both Japan (JAMBA) and China (CAMBA). At a joint meeting held earlier this year between these countries it was decided to nominate the Eastern Curlew and Grey-tailed Tattler as special interest species. The West Australian Wader Study Group intends to collect as much data as possible in support of these programs and RAOU members are encouraged to participate. In addition the Pacific Golden Plover has been added as a species of special local interest as this plover is showing both a local and national decline in numbers. Information that would greatly assist and extend our knowledge on any of these species is location, date, number, and any other

comments of interest, e.g., plumage, feeding habits, disturbances etc.

4. Hooded Plover Project

The formal Hooded Plover project was largely brought to a conclusion with the publication of the "Report on Hooded Plover Project" June 1994 to March 1996 (RAOU, WA Group) by B.J. Newbey.

This species continues to be monitored in an attempt to increase our knowledge and to protect the bird's major habitats. The Esperance Bird Observers group has been asked to continue regular monitoring of nearby lakes at which Hooded Plovers are known to congregate in summer.

As part of the continuing research into this nationally vulnerable species another banding project is planned for January 1998 near Esperance. Leg-flagging will be included.

5. Regular Count Projects

The purpose of this project is to build up a local wader database, which will ultimately lead to a better understanding of wader movements within the State.

For instance, the movement and fluctuation in numbers of the Red-necked Stint intrigues many wader watchers.

Members are encouraged to nominate a wader site and conduct regular wader counts (fortnightly if possible).

The lakes north of the Swan River offer a particular challenge to anyone wishing to start up their own regular counts project. Wader data from these lakes are very scant and surveys could provide some new and interesting findings.

For example, wader sites monitored during June 1997 showed a group of Black-tailed Godwits moving from Lake McLarty to Lake Kogolup and then on to Alfred Cove all in a matter of weeks. Where did they go to from there? Closer surveillance of other lakes might have provided the answers especially if water levels had remained low. Regular wader counts have shown that most wader species can still be located near Perth even during the winter months, admittedly with a bit of perseverance.

By the time you read this article the first flocks of waders will be arriving in Perth and at other locations in the south western corner of our State. There is no time like the present to nominate yourself for your favourite wader project(s).

Count sheets and instructions will be issued to interested parties and participants will be kept informed of results and findings through regular publications in WABN.

Further information on any of the projects can be obtained from Colin Davis, c/- WAWSG, 199 Kitchener Road, Booragoon 6154.

Don't forget the national survey on 7/8 February 1998!

West Australian Wader Study Group, Perth.

VALE JEREMY TALBOT

We are very sad to have to report the sudden death of Jeremy Talbot on Friday 15 August 1997. Jeremy was one of our most active and hard-working members and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Our deepest sympathy to Val, Richard and Clare. We will have a full obituary in the next issue of WABN.

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Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**—a copy on disk of word processed documents would assist, especially if in MS Word format. A style sheet is available from Perry House to guide writers regarding format
- WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.

Deadline for the December 1997 Issue

**1 November 1997
at Perry House**

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

BOOK REVIEW:

PIZZEY AND KNIGHT FIELD GUIDE

The long-awaited revision of Graham Pizzey's field guide is at last available — and it was worth waiting for. It really is a major revision, with largely re-written (and shortened) text and a completely new set of plates, this time by Frank Knight.

Unlike its predecessor, in which you had to look in three different places to find the illustration, the text and the map for a given bird, the new edition has all three on a double

page. This is a significant improvement on the first edition, making it much more useful as a field guide. Typically, there are three or four species per page, compared with the six or seven typical of the other major Australian bird field guides. This provides a pleasant, uncluttered impression. However, the sizes of the illustrations are not much bigger, if at all, than in other field guides, for two reasons. In some plates, there is a lot of space between illustrations, but in others, there are simply a lot of birds. For example, on the plate with Superb, Princess and Regent Parrots and Cockatiel, there are eight birds perched and eight in flight (i.e., four birds per species).

Without having examined the plates in detail, they appear quite good for a field guide, but in some (e.g., the fantails on p.448 and finches on p.491) the colours appear somewhat 'murky' as if covered by a not quite transparent film. Many birds are shown perched, while many others are shown without a perch, and this sometimes looks a bit odd (e.g., Bowers Shrike-thrush on p.439), although this is arguably of little relevance in a field guide. What is of relevance is that the 'jizz' of the birds is not always shown well. An example of this is on the fantail plate (p.448) where the appearance of all four species seems a little stilted, and the differences not captured well. Good features include the many flight illustrations, raptor flight silhouettes as well as underwing patterns, and many immature birds (e.g., the crakes and rails on pp.149-155).

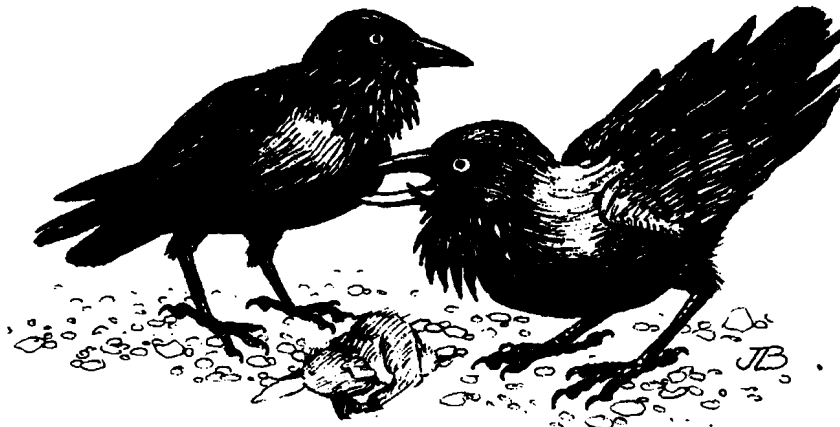
The birds are arranged in (almost) the same order as in the Christidis and Boles checklist, and with almost the same names. A few species are 'out of order' because they are placed with other species with which they might be confused (e.g., Magpie-lark with Australian Magpie; Spangled Drongo with Trumpet Manucode). Departures from the names used in the official checklist are few and apparently idiosyncratic; e.g., the Australian Ringneck is divided in the field guide into the "Eastern Ringneck" and "Western Ringneck" without comment, other than the statement that hybrids occur between the two.

One of the strengths of the first edition was the description of calls, which was excellent, with vivid descriptions based primarily on Graham Pizzey's extensive field experience. This is still in the present edition, but unfortunately a little diluted, mainly through being shortened. Many observers would argue that it would have been better to completely retain and augment this section (for example with sonagrams for problematic species such as Oriental Reed-Warblers or for Short-billed and Long-billed Black-Cockatoos) and leave out the 20-odd pages on 'Family Introductions' which are not really necessary in a field guide. Although some text has been shortened, much of the behavioural, distributional and other information about each species, for which the first edition was outstanding, has

been retained. This is still the best of the Australian bird field guides in this regard.

Unfortunately, the maps are not of the same standard as the text or plates. Errors are many, and extend from quite minor to serious. An example of the former is that the WA

distributions of Brown Quail (on the mainland) and Bush-hen are shown as somewhat more extensive than reality. An example of where distributions are not complete is where some island populations are indicated by arrows, while others, such as Brown Quail and Bar-shouldered Dove on Pilbara islands, are not. One of the worst examples of incorrect maps is on p.252, where the Squatter



Australian Ravens are highly intelligent birds, but can still be taken in by images of themselves
Drawn by Judy Blyth

Pigeon, Partridge Pigeon and Flock Bronzewing are all shown (erroneously) as occurring in Tasmania! Another bad example is that of Latham's Snipe, shown as occurring throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara, extending south to Perth. A bit enthusiastic, for a species having only one or two confirmed records in this State! In some instances, the text is correct, but the map wrong (e.g., Ground Parrot). More attention to detail in the maps would be appropriate, as might different levels of shading to show differences in breeding versus non-breeding ranges or areas where the species may sometimes be seen during irruptions, or to show historical versus current range. Different levels of shading in distribution maps are used only two or three times in the whole book.

The book concludes with a glossary, bibliography (with many useful references, although it is not clear why some equally useful ones were excluded), addresses of birdwatching organisations, a useful gazetteer and indexes to common and scientific names.

The book measures about 15.5 x 24 x 3 cm and weighs almost 1.1 kg — perhaps a bit big and heavy for a field guide, but it does have an attractive shower-proof cover.

Overall, we like the book, and recommend it as a general field guide which serious birders will find hard to resist (but take care with the distribution maps!).

Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight: *The Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Angus and Robertson. Available for \$25 - \$35; the WA office of Birds Australia has it at \$30.

Allan Burbidge and John Blyth

AGGRESSIVE DISPLAY IN AUSTRALIAN RAVENS

While parking a car at the Carine Glades Shopping Centre we were attracted to the behaviour of two Australian Ravens. These birds were under the covered way outside the tavern, one remaining still and quiet, the other bobbing and ducking with its beak open. We watched from the car for several minutes before deciding to look closer. It had become clear that what

had at first seemed to be some sort of mating display, presumably by the male, was not aimed at the other raven and that the two birds remained about a metre and a half apart at all times. On leaving the car we immediately established that the displaying bird was keeping up a continuous cawing, loud and persistent. At the same time it was lowering its head and advancing a few paces forward then backward with its wings partly opened. The effect was an almost stylised dance pattern. As we neared the two birds we could see that the display was directed, at close range, to the floor length window of the tavern and that due to the lighting at the time and the dark background inside the room there was a very clear and distinct mirror image of the displaying raven. His efforts were being directed to an adversary who was equally as adept and determined as he was. At this point the 'two' birds came to blows, with the window being pecked very violently. To save the aggressor from injury we quietly walked towards them until they moved away, about 10 to 15 metres. The presumed male even had time to display at another part of the window as he moved off. The two ravens remained on the ground and as soon as we moved away from the area both returned to the original spot and the display started again. The pecking on the window could be heard over 20 metres away. As more people moved through the area the display became more intermittent but only ceased when someone settled in the room behind the window and obviously upset the image. Both birds then retired to the local Lemon-scented Gums. Throughout the whole time both ravens were within one to two metres of each other, one being completely passive but remaining one of the actors in the drama, the other willing, after a number of minutes of active display, to use force to drive off the 'intruder'.

Bob and Edna Fergie

REAPPEARANCE OF THE WILLIE WAGTAIL IN SOUTHERN WEMBLEY

In August 1995 my mother, Mrs L C Stranger, who lives in Salvado Road, southern Wembley, told me that she and some of her neighbours had recently seen the Willie Wagtail there. This was of considerable interest to me because the species had disappeared from the area some 40 years ago, in 1956/7. From that time I had never seen the species anywhere near Wembley. And in October 1989 the late Dr Glenn Storr informed me (pers. comm.) that "I miss them in Perth, after growing up with them in Adelaide". This confirms that the species did not occur in that part of Wembley, near Rutter Park where he lived at that time, and until comparatively recently.

Prior to 1956/7 the Willie Wagtail had been a feature of the area and relatively common. Everyone, no matter how far they were removed from nature, could name it and people really believed that it did call out "sweet, pretty creature". The bird was a favourite with everyone. Then in 1956/7 the area was sprayed with insecticide to eradicate the Argentine Ant and not long after that the Willie Wagtail could no longer be seen at Wembley. Many people believed that the ant poison had wiped it out, a side effect of the ant campaign, much to the disappointment of all those who had previously cherished it. And in fact the only Willie Wagtails that I knew of in the region were two pairs, or may be a family of four, which frequented the horse stables near Perry Lakes and the surrounding, partly cleared bush. I do not know if that area

had also been sprayed but it probably was.

In 1958 the Kewdale area was also sprayed with the poison and I took it upon myself to monitor four Willie Wagtails which were resident near a lake adjacent to a poultry farm where I then worked. And those Willie Wagtails survived unharmed as best I could judge, for some time. However, around the farm several dead Laughing Doves and a few Spotted Doves were found on the day after the spraying and during the following week or so. Presumably the doves had eaten grain or other food which had been sprayed. Another factor which may have been involved in the Wembley area, at least, was the disappearance of the horses which used to be stabled locally and used by both the grocer and the baker.

But now the Willie Wagtail has returned to Wembley and has occupied the Salvado Road and Jolimont Lake areas for the last two years. And my general assessment is that the Wembley of today is much less suitable than in 1956/7.

I have also received recent reports of the species being present at Manning, Como and Salter Point, also reputed to be reappearances. But I don't know the history of the bird there so cannot judge its status.

It would be of considerable interest if other metropolitan observers also published the long-term presence, absence or reappearance of Willie-the-Wagtail in their areas.

R H Stranger

TAWNY FROGMOUTHS NESTING NEAR ALBANY

I would like to present further pertinent facts on the Tawny Frogmouth family nesting in my garden near Albany, as first described in the article by Charlie Davies (WABN 81:8) and comment on the Correction by the Editors (WABN 82:10).

As there are variations in size and colour throughout the range of the Tawny Frogmouth (Blakers *et al* 1984; Slater *et al* 1986), I think one must be careful in applying Schodde and Mason's (1980) generalisation that males are usually larger than females. I offer the following observations to illustrate that the smaller bird can be the male.

Late on the evening of 8 September, the day when the sitting bird was first seen, the bird(s) were heard calling 'Koooroo' high in the tree. With a spotlight and binoculars both birds were seen apparently copulating. The smaller bird dismounted, flew down to near the nest, shook out its feathers and commenced brooding while the larger bird remained above perhaps a minute before flying off.

By comparison, the smaller bird was more brightly marked with brown and black on the throat and side of neck and had pale centimetre-sized patches on the greater and primary wing coverts; these were not present on the larger bird which was more uniformly grey with dark shafts to the grey coverts. The appearance of the smaller bird as described above is consistent with Schodde and Mason's (1990) description of male plumage, and that of the larger bird consistent with their description of female plumage. These differences are illustrated in some of the hundred or so flash tele-photographs I subsequently took once the eggs had hatched and were useful points to look for on occasions when it was difficult to judge size by comparison. Incidentally, neither electronic flash nor a powerful spotlight played on the nest seemed to disturb either adult bird. Flash photographs showed that the palates of the young were a conspicuous bright yellow, fading to cream by the time the young left the nest.



The larger and plainer bird is assumed to be female
Photograph by Vic Smith

During the eight weeks I had the nest under observation (200+ hours) I never saw the smaller more timid bird at the nest during the day. The larger more placid bird was always on the nest during the day, even sitting stoically through two gales when the nest branch moved as much as a metre vertically with each gust and through torrential rain when the sitting bird was absolutely drenched and glistened with water. The sitting bird accepted me, rarely posturing cryptically when I walked past the nest several times each day.



The smaller and darker bird is apparently male
Photograph by Vic Smith

I could view all this at a distance of fifteen metres, through binoculars or telescope from the comfort of my house, level with the sitting bird. The nest, four metres vertically from the ground, on a horizontal branch of a *Eucalyptus lehmanii* which grew from the foot of a steep bank, was the usual sparse platform of twigs, but built on and around several of the tree's large warty fruits, which added stability.

During the two months, a pair of Red Wattlebirds raised two broods in the top of a *Corymbia ficifolia*, the nests of the two species only four metres apart. There was no conflict between the two species, yet the wattlebirds very successfully kept away undesirable birds like Ravens and Grey Currawongs.

When the young frogmouths were half grown, the larger adult was heard calling on several occasions for no apparent

reason from a branch twenty metres from the nest. It became agitated once when wisps of smoke from the chimney drifted over the nest. The call, a persistently repeated disyllabic 'Kooo-rooo' went on for several minutes each time.

References:

- Blakers, M., Davies, S.J.J.F. and Reilly, P.N. 1984. The Atlas of Australian Birds. RAOU and MUP, Melbourne.
Schodde, R. and Mason, I.J. 1980. Nocturnal Birds of Australia. Lansdowne, Melbourne.
Slater, P., Slater, P. and Slater, R. 1986. The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds. Rigby, Dee Why West, NSW.

Vic Smith

LITTLE BITTERN SIGHTING: AN ANNUAL EVENT?

On Sunday 16 March, a small number of people on a mid-afternoon Naturalists' Club excursion saw a juvenile Little Bittern from the new observation platform on the south side of Lake Gwelup. The bird was clinging sideways to a *Typha* stalk and was jabbing at prey in the water. Apart from the overall striations of its plumage, this small bittern was noticeable for its yellowish colour. We observed the bittern for about two minutes before noise made it retreat into the *Typha* bed.

The bird was spotted with a Kowa TSN 3 series spotting scope with 20-60 zoom lens at a distance of approximately 30-40 metres. The weather was clear but cloudy and mild, following an earlier shower of rain.

This is the second Little Bittern we have found at Lake Gwelup. The first — another juvenile — was also seen on the fringes of the south-west *Typha* beds, but spotted from a greater distance from the northern shore of the lake. On both occasions we found the bitterns by scanning the *Typha* beds slowly with a spotting scope. The first bird was seen exactly one year before by most members of a morning RAOU excursion on Sunday 17 March 1996! Any volunteers for a Lake Gwelup excursion on Sunday 15 March 1998?

Cheryl and Martin Gole

EXPANDING PIGEONS

1. Crested Pigeon

For over 25 years I owned a farm at Nyabing and during that period I made weekly trips from Bunbury to Nyabing where I spent about three days each week.

There were no Crested Pigeons in the Nyabing district when I started farming. I had read reports in the literature of their movement south through the agricultural areas and it was no surprise when I first sighted some on the farm.

They soon became a familiar sight, not only in my district. After about five years they also appeared in Bunbury and at Busselton at the Vasse.

They have been present here in Dunsborough where I now live for at least ten years. They have also been present in Augusta for that period.

Not one day would pass here that I would not observe one either flying across the Point Dalling area to the south of the adjoining Meelup Reserve or crossing Gifford Road when I drive to the shop in Dunsborough. I have seen them in the Cape Farm area of Point Naturaliste but never on the heath area of the very point.

They are regularly seen when I visit the nearby Broadwater

Reserve, always seeing two or three there.

On occasions I have also seen Crested Pigeons in the vicinity of Wise's Winery on Eagle Bay Road. They have been either on the ground feeding, perched on a wire, or flying.

Ross Payton

2. More on Crested Pigeons

To follow up the recent discussion on Crested Pigeons in the south-west, I would like to add my observations. In July 1996, I observed one individual very early in the morning in the grounds of the Dunsborough Caravan Park next to the golf course. The pigeon was wandering around the quiet grounds, picking at the disturbed soil. I am not able to offer any further observations, but perhaps this will clarify the fact that they are found around the Dunsborough area, not much farther than the individuals sighted in Busselton by G F Mees and V J Mees-Balchin in WABN No 82.

Robert Davis

Editor's note

See also reference to Crested Pigeons in letter to Editors from Olga Green.

3. Laughing Turtle-doves

During recent field work at Beacon in the wheatbelt, I observed two Laughing Turtle-doves. One was seen flying alongside the car, in a field, and the other was seen feeding on the veranda of a farmhouse. Beacon is the farthest north-easterly wheatbelt town, and is right near the Emu-proof fence. These birds have not often been seen around this area, and perhaps this represents a range extension in progress. On a similar note, I observed a Laughing Turtle-dove at the Monkey Mia resort in Shark Bay, in October 1996, and it would seem that they are also colonising this area. Does anyone else have any interesting observations on the range of this species?

Robert Davis

COMB-CRESTED JACANA NEAR BROOME

On Friday 13 June, Gordon Graham (CALM's Kununurra-based, Kimberley Region Ecologist), Tim Willing (CALM Conservation Officer, Broome) and I made a brief visit to Lake Campion (17°52'S, 122°45'E), 56 km east-north-east of Broome.

From 4.00-4.45 pm we scanned the lake from the northern shore with binoculars and compiled a list of birds present and rough estimates of their numbers. I had reached 20 species when the bright red comb of an adult Comb-crested Jacana *Irediparra gallinacea* came into view, approximately 100 metres distant, out among the Spiny Mudgrass *Pseudoraphis spinescens* (an aquatic perennial grass to 40 cm) that covered much of the lake.

It did not occur to me that this was an unusual observation as the distance (730 km) from Kununurra (where jacanas are common) to Broome seemed small after my journey from Busselton. Gordon and Tim, however, knew that the bird was way out of its normal range so all three of us spent the next few minutes observing it. Although the bird was 100 m away and for much of the time was partially or wholly obscured by mudgrass, we were able to see enough of its very distinctive



The Comb-crested Jacana is the latest bird to be added to the Broome Bird Observatory list
Drawn by Val Talbot

red comb, and its head, neck and upper body colours and silhouette to be sure it was a 'comb-crested'.

Later that evening we reported the sighting to the Broome Bird Observatory. It caused some excitement as this was a new addition to the observatory's list (of birds recorded within a 70 km radius). Next morning, at first light, BBO Warden Chris Hassell and several other enthusiasts drove out to the lake. They also saw the bird and were confident of its identity.

According to Marchant and Higgins (1993), the Comb-crested Jacana is normally found only as far west (in Australia) as the north-east Kimberley around the Ord River and Lake Argyle, with stragglers recorded in the west and north-west Kimberley between Munkeyarra Swamp (near Derby) and the Lower Drysdale River. The Lake Campion record is approximately 110 km further west than Munkeyarra (and further from the Drysdale).

Lake Campion is on the Roebuck Plains pastoral lease and permission is required from the manager to visit.

Reference:

Marchant, S. and Higgins, P.J. (eds). 1993. Handbook of Australian New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol 2. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Jim Lane

MAJOR MITCHELL'S COCKATOOS

On 23 June I saw 15 Major Mitchell's Cockatoos on the side of Bimbijy road, approximately 30 km north of Beacon. Locals say that even in this area, it is highly unusual to see these birds south of the Emu proof fence, and especially flying over cleared land as I subsequently saw this group doing. Locals also have not often seen more than one or two birds. Another local told me of a flock of 30 Major Mitchells on his property near the fence (about 40 km north of Beacon) on 22 June. Perhaps the near drought conditions around this area at the moment are forcing the birds south of the fence?

Robert Davis

ARCTIC TERNS AT SOUTH MOLE FREMANTLE

Summary

Two small terns were seen flying about the end of the South Mole, Fremantle on 5 August 1996. One was seen at close range the following morning at rest, enabling a number of photographs to be taken. Presumably the same bird was seen in the afternoon in flight. Field notes were made each time. The birds were viewed for about two hours in total. The birds were identified as Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea*. Some of the identification literature is confusing, even apparently contradictory at times.

Background

At about 4:30 pm on 5 August 1996 my wife and I arrived at the South Mole, Fremantle when we noticed a small tern flying about the end of the rocky roadway/breakwater. The tern was flying into a very strong wind close to the rocks and just above the level of the roadway enabling close views more or less at eye level. Soon another tern joined it. This one was similar in size and structure but was in a different plumage, the most obvious difference being its white forehead and forecrown instead of a fully black cap. It was also lighter grey on the underparts with no obvious white cheek. They appeared to be the same species. The birds were sometimes in close proximity and at one stage a succession of alarm/scolding calls was heard. I did not make a note of these calls but I later heard what was probably a similar call, much abbreviated — a quiet but raspy, rather sharp “yip”, singly or repeated once or twice. This call was once repeated five or six times when the second tern was nearby. The birds flew into the wind with strong, rather rapid wing-beats, their bodies rising and falling, and worked their way to the end of the Mole, on the exposed (southern) side. They hovered and flew about for some time, then wheeled around and with the wind flew back along the Mole towards the shore and then back again to the end. This process was repeated a few times. They often plunged into the water as though actively feeding but I did not see them catch any fish.

The following morning a tern was seen at rest on rocks at the end of the Mole (see photograph) and late in the afternoon what was probably the same bird was seen in flight. The bird was again working into the wind flying about 1-2m above the water. It made many sudden dives into the water. It often step-hovered in a vertical plane then dived. Once, the bird dived immediately again after gaining perhaps 30 cm height from the previous dive. It also was seen twice in a suspended hover without wing movement for 1-2 seconds. It once turned back on itself 180° to dive and once caught a silver fish c. 4 cm long. The description of this second tern is a combination of notes taken on both days.

Descriptions

Tern 1

Size: A small tern, larger than the diminutive Fairy Tern, about the size of a Roseate or Common or Arctic Tern.

Head: forehead and crown black giving capped appearance.

Upper parts and wings: Wings, back and mantle grey contrasting with white rump and central tail. Thin black trailing edge to primaries on upperwings and underwings. White margins to secondaries on upperwing. Black leading edge to outermost primary forming a fine line (outer web only?).

Tail: Rump and central tail white. Outer tail appeared grey, or not as strongly white. Thin dark edge (outer web?) to

outermost tail feather. Tail deeply forked, with elongated outer tail feathers.

Underparts: Breast and abdomen pearl grey slightly mottled grey and white (uneven appearance). Cheek patch white between grey breast and black cap.

Bill: Black. The gape was red on one bird but it was not noted which one.

Legs: Appeared dark (black?). Unable to distinguish any colour.

Call: Quiet but raspy, rather sharp ‘yip’, singly or one to two times. Was also repeated several times (5-6+?) in alarm/scolding notes when the second tern was nearby.

Tern 2 (see photograph)

Head: Forehead and forecrown white, contrasting with black hindcrown. At close range when perched, some small specks of black amongst the white forecrown.

Upper parts and wings: Back and mantle and wings pale grey. Dark tips to trailing edge of all but 1-2 primaries in flight. In flight, dusky carpal bar (extending to lesser upper primary coverts?) on otherwise grey wings. The white rump contrasted with the grey upper-parts. Once when the bird was viewed from side on just below eye level, the outer wing appeared marginally darker than the inner wings and there was an indistinct darker shaded patch on the secondaries. These latter two features were not noticed at other times and may have been the effect of reflected light. White leading edge to the inner wing seen from front on.

Underwings: Whitish with some light grey mottling. Harris *et al.* (1993) state that the Arctic Tern is snow white on the underwing and describe the Common Tern as having silver-grey underwings. The angle of the late afternoon sun, reflected light or the effect of shadow may have affected the impression of colouring. At one stage the sun was directly behind the bird when the whole of the wings looked strongly translucent.

Tail: Deeply forked with elongated outer tail feathers. Appeared white like the rump but there was a greyish wash on the outer tail and tail tips. Dark thin edge to outermost tail feather(s).

Underparts: Breast and belly whitish with irregular mottling of pale grey but far less grey than the first bird and with no obvious white cheek.

Bill: Black.

Legs: Small, red-brown to red-black. The bird was seen from directly behind in flight at one stage enabling very good close views of the legs tucked up, which then looked more red, especially the webs.

Call: A single quiet ‘yip’ was heard.

Similar species

There are several similar species of this size, viz, Arctic, Common, Antarctic, Roseate, White-fronted and the three marsh terns (Whiskered, White-winged Black and Black).

Certain plumages of the marsh terns can resemble the Arctic Tern but they differ in being broader and shorter-winged with short, slightly forked or squarish tails, and longish legs.

The White-fronted Tern of New Zealand and south-eastern Australia is larger and paler than both the Common and Arctic Terns and lacks the noticeable dusky trailing edge to the underside of the primaries of those species (Harrison 1987, p.266). At rest, the folded primaries show a broad continuous white edge along their upper sides (Harrison 1987, p.266), similar to the Roseate Tern, but lacking in the Common and Arctic Terns.

The Roseate Tern differs from the Common and Arctic Terns in its paler overall plumage and its wholly white primaries on the underwings (Harrison 1987, p.265), having no distinct dark trailing edge on the underwing (Carter and Eades 1994, p.17). This species can look almost white in certain lights. At rest, it is slender and attenuated; the forehead slopes gently onto its long, slender, pointed and slightly down curved bill, heightening the bird's drawn out appearance. By contrast the Arctic Tern has a compact, neck-less posture with a rounded head and a short bill. The legs are longish in Roseate but very short in the Arctic.

In general shape and proportion the Antarctic Tern is similar to the Arctic Tern but bigger and bulkier, with longer and heavier bill, legs, and feet (HANZAB, p.677). It also appears that the bill, legs and feet of the former are bright red in the adult breeding plumage and similar or reddish-black in non breeding plumage; the legs and feet probably never completely black (HANZAB pp. 677, 688). Other differences are described in HANZAB.



A non-breeding Arctic Tern seen at the North Mole, Fremantle
Photo by Bev Standing

The Antarctic Tern is widespread in the subantarctic and Antarctic regions of the South Atlantic and southern Indian Ocean, and in the seas south of New Zealand. It ranges north to the coasts of south-east South America and southern Africa. There are only two Australian records, both specimens; one at Metricup in south-west WA in 1978 and one at South Casuarina Island, off Kangaroo Island SA in 1982 (HANZAB, p.679). Given its distribution in other parts of the southern oceans, its similarity to the Common and Arctic Terns, and the lack of field experience by Australian observers, it is possible that this species reaches the southern Australian coast in small numbers but is overlooked.

Compared with the Arctic Tern, the Common Tern gives a more angular and 'virile' general impression (Olsen and Larsson 1994, p.77). The latter is slightly but distinctly larger and sturdier than the former, with longer bill, neck and legs; in flight the adult is distinctly longer-winged and shorter-tailed. The Arctic Tern is more delicate, shorter-legged and more reminiscent of a marsh tern *Chlidonias* (Harris *et al.* 1993, p.133). On the underwing, the degree of translucency and the extent of the black trailing edge differ between the two species. In the Common Tern the black trailing edge is broad and smudgy and stops at the 4th to 6th primary. In the Arctic Tern,

this black line is narrow and clear-cut and extends farther toward the secondaries (to c. 2nd or 3rd primary) (Carter and Eades 1994, p.16). In the Common Tern, against the light, only the inner primaries are translucent, whereas the whole of the primaries of the Arctic Tern are translucent when strongly backlit. This is an excellent character in good light but at full stretch in flight the normally opaque outer primaries of the Common Tern may show streaks of light momentarily, thus increasing the apparent extent of translucency (Carter and Eades 1994, p.17).

The terns were seen feeding, making many sudden dives but often step-hovering in the manner described by Kirkham and Nisbet (1987) as conspicuous at a considerable range. They noted this method was not used by either the Common or Roseate Terns while fishing (northern hemisphere data). By contrast the Common Tern frequently plunge-dives directly from a hovering position or executes a complete turn or figure-of-eight pattern before hovering and diving (Kirkham and Nisbet 1987).

Identification

A number of characteristics identify the birds as Arctic Terns. Firstly, in flight the two terns looked delicate and graceful, the long tail streamers heightening this impression, notwithstanding the rather rapid wing-beats in the face of the strong winds. By contrast, the Common Tern looks larger and sturdier and is broader winged and its long wings produce an easy, languid flight action. The Arctic Tern has slightly shallower, quicker wing-beats, but differences depend on conditions and must be used with caution (Harris *et al.* 1993, p.133). Secondly, there was a narrow black trailing edge to nearly all the primaries on the underwings rather than a broad smudgy trailing edge and the impression was of translucency across the primaries rather than confined to a patch on the inner primaries. Thirdly, at rest (see photographs), strong evidence is provided by the delicate, compact, almost neck-less, round headed appearance of the bird. The legs are very short and the bill is short and fine without any obvious gonyes.

The combination of the above plumage and structural features, in flight and at rest, identifies the birds as Arctic Terns and enables differentiation from other similar terns.

Other sightings in the Perth area

To my knowledge there have been three recorded sightings of the Arctic Tern in the Perth area since two birds were seen off Rottnest Island on a pelagic trip in October 1985. Two birds in non-breeding plumage were seen at the Mandurah Boat Harbour on 9 July 1991 (Hunt and Augustine 1991) and one in breeding plumage was seen at the same location on 25 July 1991 (Hunt and Howden 1991). On 12 July and again on 28 July 1991, the author saw two birds at the same location, each time one in breeding and one in non-breeding plumage. These observations indicate there were at least three different birds present at Mandurah in July 1991. Common Terns were also present which afforded an excellent opportunity for comparison between the two species both at rest and in flight. On 3 August 1991, two birds were seen at the South Mole Fremantle, one in breeding, the other in non-breeding plumage (Standing and Standing 1991). It is interesting that this latest sighting in 1996 was also during mid winter at the South Mole and was again of two birds in different plumage.

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Ian Standring

Editors' note: The 'commic' terns can be extremely difficult to identify, as this article shows. Members seeing any species in this group are encouraged to refer to HANZAB Vol. 3, Wingspan 16 and the above article when attempting identifications.

BIRDS OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

During a recent trip to the UK we decided to break our journey in Dubai, for a couple of days. We had been told about the wealth of birdlife in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and arranged for a conducted tour of bird locations.

We arrived late at night in Dubai, but still managed to be ready by 7:00 am for the arrival of Colin Richardson, the leading ornithologist in the UAE, who was to be our guide for the next five hours. Colin is the author of *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates*, an excellent reference book for anyone visiting Dubai.

We were to visit three locations, the first being the much publicised Emirates golf course, which is an oasis of green amidst the rolling sand dunes. The lush fairways nourished by a million gallons of water a day, and established trees plus several lakes provide sanctuary for a wide range of birds. During a two-hour stroll we listed more than 20 species including a Hoopoe, White-cheeked Bulbul, Red-vented Bulbul, Redstart, and Spotted Flycatcher.

Our guide then provided morning coffee and biscuits before taking us to the Zabeel fish ponds, a series of square ponds used for water treatment. Here we were able to see a variety of ducks, herons and egrets. We then moved on to an area called Khor Dubai, which is the head of a tidal creek, a 300 hectare area of shallow lagoons and mud flats, and a feeding ground for thousands of shore birds. Our guide had provided a telescope, and this enabled us to have some excellent viewing of the wide range of waders, many only temporary residents on their way north. We also saw a flock of Greater Flamingoes, the property of Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, ruler of the UAE and a keen supporter of environmental care.

By now the sun was high in the sky and the temperature rising accordingly and our tour came to its conclusion. Our guide had proved to be a charming host and displayed a great

knowledge of the birds of the Arab States. Later in the day he faxed us a list of the 71 species of birds seen at the three locations. I can certainly recommend anyone visiting Dubai to avail themselves of a similar tour.

David Row

CURBUR STATION, MURCHISON AREA, 19 JUNE-4 JULY 1997

Curbur sheep and cattle station is 255 km north of Mullewa and 50 km north of Murchison Shire offices. Anyone travelling this road may find Curbur a pleasant place to stop and enjoy viewing birds in a healthy mulga habitat.

During my afternoon walks along tracks to Gwindi Bore, Two-mile Bore and Ecori Well, I sighted some 48 species.

At Ecori Well, only 300 m from the homestead, I saw several Emus, Mulga and Bourke's Parrots, a Black-eared Cuckoo, a Southern Boobook, Red-capped Robins, Rufous Whistlers, Crested Bellbirds, Chiming Wedgebills and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters. I have rarely had birds come out as close to look at me!

Around the homestead, Australian Hobbys nest in the telephone mast and every morning one hears a chorus of White-plumed Honeyeaters, Grey Shrike-thrushes, White-browed Babblers and Rufous Songlarks.

While walking the fenceline to Gwindi Bore, I saw Splendid Fairy-wrens, Redthroats, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, Southern Whitefaces in close proximity and further on several White-browed Treecreepers.

Some water remaining in Lake Breberrie to the north attracted both Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes. A Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest was seen quite low in a flooded gum here.

Arrangements to camp near the homestead or in the shearers' quarters may be made by phoning Simone and Kerris Keynes on (08) 9963 7970. If passing through Murchison, do not miss the one kilometre circuit of the Botanic Rangeland Vegetation Walk. It is an excellent way of becoming familiar with the various mulga and associated species.

Diane Beckingham

HUNGRY HOBBY

At 5:00 pm on 29 July, 500 m along the road to Willie Creek off the Cape Leveque road on the Dampier Peninsula, four of us witnessed an Australian Hobby (*Falco longipennis*) eating dirt, small stones and charred wood fragments.

The Hobby was seen initially at a distance on the road and I stopped the car for a close view. Driving slowly forward I got within 1.5 m of the bird before it flew, but only a further 8 m from our vehicle. The bird was reluctant to fly and we initially wondered if it was injured or sick. We drove forward slowly and got within about 6 m of the bird. Using 8 x 40 and 10 x 50 binoculars, we watched as it waddled awkwardly around the Pindan dirt road and picked up small stones and pieces of charred wood and swallowed them. The bird also scraped soil from the road using its lower mandible and ate this as well. On at least 15 different occasions the bird seemed to swallow its 'prey' and appeared to be using sight to identify and select items to eat. The Hobby moved around on the road in making its selection and was more reminiscent of a plover than a bird of prey.

We assume that this behaviour can only be associated with filling its crop. If any one has information on this kind of behaviour in birds of prey, please let us know.

After its initial reluctance to fly and 15 minutes of close views of this behaviour the bird suddenly flew off strongly into the woodland. The bird had been totally undisturbed by our presence and only seemed to leave after it had eaten its fill.

Chris Hassell

NOISY SCRUB-BIRD CALLING AT NIGHT

In mid May 1997 I was on a tour with Falcon Tours and we camped for two nights near Cheyne Beach, about 50 km east of Albany. Noisy Scrub-birds could be heard calling after dark on both evenings and at all times during the night when I awoke. Has this been documented before?

Frank O'Connor

WESTERN BRISTLEBIRD CALLS

In mid May 1997 at Waychinicup east of Albany, I heard a Western Bristlebird call a few times about 100 metres away at about 8:30 am. It called a few more times about 10 minutes later, and again about 10 minutes later when I estimated the approximate location of the call. I walked about 30 metres through the heath to the location and waited. About 12 minutes later it called again about 5 metres or so in front of me. This time, each call was immediately followed by two short notes (whistles?) from a low mallee about 8 metres to my right and also a single click on my left. I tried to locate the birds but I saw nothing. I waited another 10 minutes and then left as I was late for breakfast. I assumed that the two notes were the answering reply by a female to the male's call, and that possibly the click was a warning call of a third bird?

Later in the morning the group returned to the location and the male called again, followed by another male close to the track about 50 metres away. We closed in on the male near the track. We located the bird on the edge of the tall *Hakea* heath beside the track. Again, I heard the two-note reply, but only a couple of times, and I heard no clicks. We never saw the bird when it called, but we did get to see it in the open as it moved (on or within 30 cm of the ground) between calls.

The next morning we tried for the bird again. This time we located the bird at the base of a low heath mallee very close to the track. We were about 10 metres away next to a taller mallee. Again, the male's call was followed several times by the two notes much closer to us.

Frank O'Connor

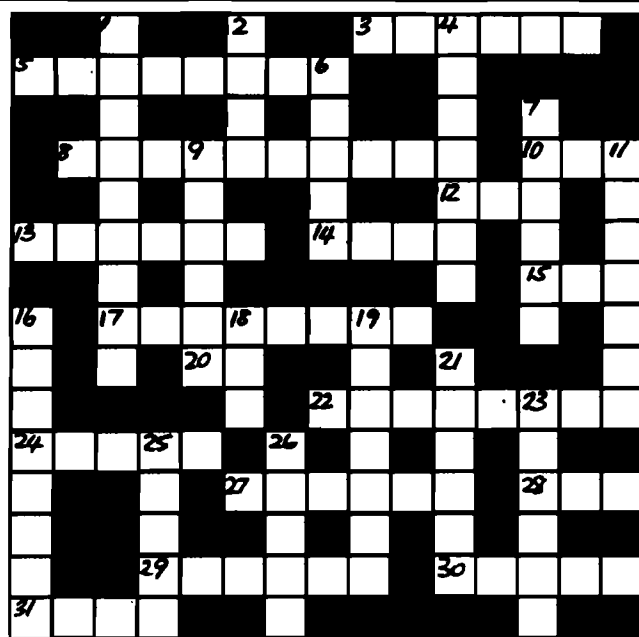
Editors' note: Readers wanting more information on calls of the Western Bristlebird will find it in Graeme Smith's article in Emu 87, 111-118.

BOOKS - BUY, BROWSE OR READ

The long-awaited major revision of the 'Pizzey' Field Guide to Birds of Australia is now available from Perry House at \$30. Many other authoritative books on Australian birds, including Slater and Simpson and Day field guides are also available, along with other items of birding interest. There is also a small ornithological library.

Call in to Perry House and have a browse some weekday morning.

Crossword No 10 by Pam Agar



Clues Across

3. Cove in Perth area, well known for waders.
5. Lake campout site, March 1997.
8. A very active, small wader.
10. Waders may follow the water out on this tide.
12. Crakes, rails, moorhens and coots are ... members of the family Rallidae.
13. A male Orange Chat has a black one.
14. Many birds do this in the heat of the day.
15. Substance secreted by gland at base of tail in some waterbirds.
17. Large, conspicuously coloured duck of southern Australia.
20. A pelican is ... large it needs a long take-off path.
22. Well-camouflaged nocturnal bird.
24. One parrot owns a scarlet one.
27. Swallows are happy to use these as alternative nest-sites.
28. Eyre Bird Observatory (abbreviation).
29. Part of previously accepted name for Rock Dove.
30. To find a Night Parrot would be one come true!
31. Rock Parrots commonly feed among these.

Clues Down

1. Large seabird.
2. Emus have vestigial wings ... true or false?
4. Names a ship and a bird.
6. Extreme north or south region.
7. Colour of New Holland Honeyeater wing-patch.
9. Male ducks.
11. Wetland chain south of Perth.
16. Duck, more common in Murray-Darling Basin than in southern WA.
18. Common feature of forest frequented by logrunners.
19. Colour of one of chats.
21. Pursued.
23. Uncommon seabird visitor to WA from the Arctic.
25. *Gallinago* is the generic name of these birds.
26. Shape of Yellow-rumped Thornbill nest.

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

Lake Seppings, Frenchman Bay Road

Eighteen of the Albany Bird Group met at Lake Seppings on 13 May. It was a cloudy day with bursts of sunshine.

On the lake we found 64 Blue-billed Ducks, 46 Musk Ducks and 65 Black Swans, among many other birds.

Then we walked along the new part of the Bibbulmun Track off Frenchman Bay Road running along the shore of Princess Royal Harbour, where we had a beautiful view of Great Egrets and Yellow-billed Spoonbills together in a large, dead tree. Quite a few gulls, terns and waterbirds rested on a sandy spit nearby.

At the Rotary Camp we had another walk before lunch, where we were rewarded with an immature White-bellied Sea-Eagle flying low overhead.

A good day was had, and 64 species were recorded.

Charlie Davies

We were greeted by about 5-6 Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos eating their way through Jarrah nuts and lots of evidence where they had been. Other birds of interest were 3-4 pairs of Scarlet Robins, a group of 10-12 Varied Sittellas, a White-breasted Robin, Striated Pardalote and Inland, Western and Yellow-rumped Thornbills. Twenty-five species were seen here and there were 34 species for the day.

Our next stop was off Hunton Road. Mount Boyle Reserve runs along a part of the Upper Kalgan River. It is just a small piece of remnant bush, which promises to be better in the springtime. It offered 13 species.

Next was the Pockalarup Road Reserve which has a sandpit and is in the Mount Mason area. There is timbered woodland and a disused gravel pit, which has had some planting attention by the Albany Wildflower Society a few years ago. Twenty-three to 25 Elegant Parrots were among the ten species seen.

The day was enjoyed by all.

The next meeting is an indoor meeting on 6 July, yet to be arranged.

Viv McCormick
for the Albany Bird Group

Notices

CORRIGENDA

The article 'Terns at Eyre' on pages 8-9 of the last issue (WABN 82) was written by Peter Sandilands. Our apologies to Peter for accidentally omitting his name.

Editors

HELP NEEDED

Please consider if you could offer some time to help in any of the following community events. If we are to take part in these events, even in something as close to our hearts as Spring Fling at our own headquarters, we **must** have some volunteers!

Sunday, 14 September — SPRING FLING, Perry House.

The WA Wildflower Society put on this great event, and invite us to participate with bird walks around Bold Park/Perry Lakes. We also have our trading table in the big marquee.

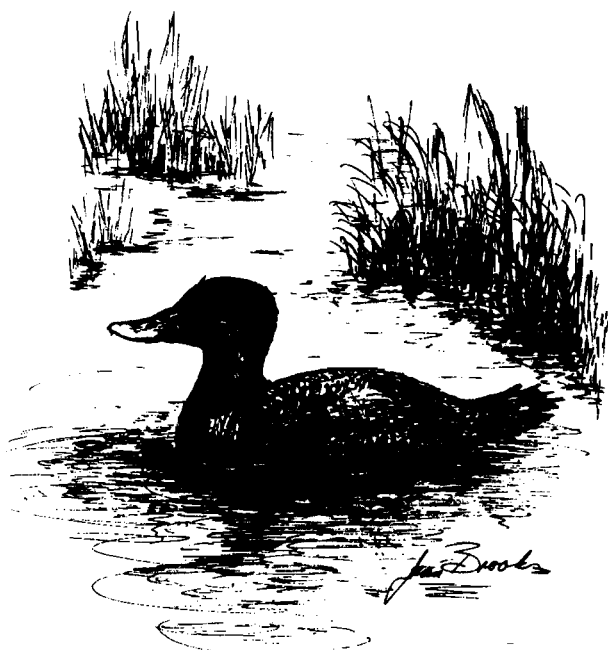
Sunday, 28 September — EARTHFEST '97, Gosnells.

Pioneer Park, Astley Street, Gosnells, 10 am - 4 pm. BAWAG would have a photographic display of local birds, and a trading table.

October 19- 25 — BIRD WEEK.

We plan another Open Day at Perry House on **Sunday, 19 October**, and will offer free bird walks to the public at 8.30 am, 10.00 am, 3.30 pm and 5.00 pm. Visitors will be shown around our office, and there will be several photographic displays (plus trading table if enough volunteers materialise.) Morning/afternoon teas will be available.

Please ring Judy Blyth on 9381 6293 if you can help.



When conditions are right, the small, diving Blue-billed Duck can gather in large numbers in urban wetlands such as Lake Monger in Perth and Lake Sepping in Albany

Drawn by Jean Brooks

Riverview Golf Course, Mt Boyle Reserve, Pockalarup Road Reserve

On 10 June at 8:00 am a group of 15 birdwatchers met at the Riverview Golf Course which is situated just beyond Bakers Junction on the Great Southern Highway.

The day was sunny with no wind until much later in the morning.

TWITCHATHON AND END-OF-YEAR BBQ

Saturday 13 December at 4 pm

to Sunday 14 December at 4 pm — WA

It's that time of the year again. A few variations this year to encourage as many as possible to take part in this fun day. Get a team together — minimum of three and maximum of four people and join the challenge to see how many species you can see in the 24-hour period. If you don't have a team and would like to participate, call the office and register your interest. Cost is \$10 per team with monies going to helping Colin Davis with his very worthwhile wader count in February.

There will be a second contest for members who do not want to rush off into the setting sun and chase owls all night. We will have a competition for the most birds seen with an 18-km radius of Perth GPO.

There will be a handicap allowance for any team with a junior in it.

All members are welcome at the BBQ at 6:00 pm at Perry House on Sunday when the winners will be declared. A special invitation is extended to our volunteers and to new members. We will provide BBQ, salad, buttered buns, tea and coffee. Please bring your own meat and drinks.

A special request to country members. Form a team in your area and give the City slickers a run for it. We are a trusting lot and will believe almost any bird sighted except Gouldian Finches at Albany (or Noisy Scrub-birds at Wyndham).

Please advise the office of your entry, or if you are coming to the Christmas and Thanks-to-the-Volunteers BBQ.

Organisers: Sue Abbotts, Clive and Wendy Napier

NEW WESTERN SUBURBS BIRD SURVEY

A new bird survey specifically to record birds in remnant bushland in the area between Kings Park and Bold Park was announced at the last meeting of Birds Australia WA by John Dell and Boyd Wykes. The specific aim of this survey is to record bird activity in remnants of varying size between these two main conservation reserves. Surveys in Kings Park and Bold Park have shown that habitat-sensitive species have declined or disappeared markedly from Kings Park and to a lesser degree from Bold Park. Of special conservation concern is the requirement by birds for these corridor remnants.

This survey will be conducted at nominated bushlands on set dates and times (perhaps monthly) so that the whole region is surveyed simultaneously. Data recording sheets will be provided to ensure consistency of data. Bushland areas being considered are those between Herdsman Lake and Mt Claremont. Ideally it would be best to choose areas closest to the observer's home.

The survey will be coordinated by John Dell, Boyd Wykes and Ray Wills (plant ecologist at Kings Park). At the beginning of the survey a short workshop will be conducted on identification of difficult species as well as identification of the main plant species in the area. Some members indicated their willingness to participate at the last meeting. Others who wish to assist are invited to notify John Dell on (08) 9370 2080.

DAMAGE TO GRASS TREES BY BIRDS

Information is being sought concerning damage to grass-trees (*Xanthorrhoea* species) by birds.

Wendy Porter, a student at Edith Cowan University, is studying the incidence of what appears to be parrot damage to grass-trees. In some areas, grass-trees are found stripped of their leaves, which can result in their death.

Have you seen this occur? If so, Wendy would like to hear about it, because she would like to find out where and when it occurs, which species are responsible, and why.

If you can help with any information please contact:

Wendy Porter
56 King George Street
Innaloo WA 6018
Tel.: 9446 7991

THREAT TO CAIRNS FORESHORE

The Esplanade foreshore in Cairns is again under threat of development. The Cairns birders are asking for assistance. They would like people to write letters (one paragraph would be sufficient) to the Mayor, Cairns City Council, 151 Abbott Street, Cairns North Queensland 4870 and to Premier Rob Borbidge, Level 15, 100 George Street, Brisbane Queensland 4000. The Cairns BOCA, PO Box 2910, Cairns North Queensland 4870 would appreciate a copy.

The Cairns foreshore was originally created by clearing the mangroves (I believe this was about 100 years ago), and it is kept clear by weeding out any regrowth annually. This complicates the situation, but there are extensive areas of mangroves that still remain in the area, and few suitable sites for migratory waders. Development would leave neither. A detailed development plan has yet to be proposed, but the common suggestion is to create a wider area of parkland including a swimming pool, plus a sandy beach.

The Esplanade is now a significant site for migratory waders in Queensland. The waders are the subject of the JAMBA and CAMBA treaties for the protection of migratory birds. The site is also being proposed as a Ramsar site for the protection of waterbirds. It is internationally significant for Whimbrels (>1% of estimated world population), and nationally significant for Common Sandpiper and Pacific Golden Plover.

On a personal level, the Cairns foreshore is one of the best birding sites that I have visited in Australia. It is easily accessible, and you can see 50 species in a short time. My highlights have been Beach Stone-Curlew (a threatened species) and Broad-billed Sandpiper. It has also been the site where rare vagrants to Australia such as Laughing and Franklin's Gulls have been sighted.

There is a small bird interpretive centre. It is probably wishful thinking, but it would be nice to think that the foreshore could be the basis of a major facility to educate people about the importance of birds, and their associated habitats.

So please send a letter to the addresses at the top of this article, asking that the foreshore mudflat is not developed, and supporting the proposal that it be declared a Ramsar site because of its importance to waterbirds. Letters could also be sent to The Editor, Cairns Post, 22-24 Abbott Street, Cairns North Queensland 4870; Hon. Brian Littleproud, Minister for the Environment, 160 Ann Street, Brisbane Queensland 4000; Cairns Chamber of Commerce, 38 Grafton Street, Cairns North Queensland 4870. Thanks for your assistance.

Frank O'Connor

BIRDING WESTERN AUSTRALIA WWW SITE

I have begun to create my WWW site to document my knowledge so far of the birds of Western Australia. The URL is 'http://www.iinet.net.au/~foconnor/'. It will include information about sites to bird in WA (I expect there to be more than 500 eventually), and brief notes on where to find each species in WA. It also includes the information about the pelagic trips that I organise, plus some trip reports that I happen to write.

For more information about birding and the internet, refer to the article by Allan Burbidge in WABN December 1996.

Frank O'Connor (foconnor@iinet.net.au)



Willie Wagtails appear to have made a comeback in some Perth suburbs in the last ten years. (See the article by R H Stranger in the Members Contributions)

Drawn by Pam Free

NOTICES FROM WESTERN BANDERS NEWS, NO. 16

Newsletter of the Western Banders Association

Banding Courses are being conducted at WA's two bird observatories again this year: two at Eyre (July and October) and one at Broome (June). The courses are designed to be entertainment for the curious, a learning experience for beginners and workshops for qualified banders.

Dryandra Weekend: This will take place in November or December to take advantage of the opportunity to catch species that are not available at mist net level during winter. Anthony Bougher has again offered to coordinate this activity. More news at a later date.

Eyre Bird Observatory Report 6 1988-1992 is available at the cost of \$12. Includes bird observations and banding activity for the period. Contact Rod Smith.

Proposed Computer Workshop: A number of our members have acquired copies of Ken Rogers' SHEBA Program and are having mixed results when using it. The time seems to be approaching when a workshop can be organised to discuss results achieved to date and difficulties experienced. A date will be set after discussion among Committee members.



WWF

**World Wide Fund
For Nature Australia**

ACN 001 594 074

FURTHER HOODED PLOVER SURVEYS

A grant from the WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE AUSTRALIA will enable us to carry out a further Western Australian survey of the Hooded Plover.

We are hopeful that members will again support the program as they did in 1995 to make that survey such a great success.

Full details of the program will be outlined in March 1998 in WABN. Briefly here it is —

In February 1998 a survey of Hooded Plovers will be carried out as part of the State-wide Wader Study Count (see June WABN and article on WAWSG in this issue).

Flagging of Hooded Plovers will be carried out at Esperance in February 1998 by Allan Rose with the help of volunteers.

In July/August 1998, at a time to be determined in early 1998, there will be a survey throughout coastal, inland and more remote areas. We hope to locate flagged birds from Esperance in these surveys.

In a letter from the Executive Director of CALM we have been advised that as part of its extensive predation control program (operation Western Shield) CALM is establishing fox baiting programs for the Esperance area including Lake Gore.

With the support of members, the community and CALM we anticipate that this further survey will add to our knowledge of the movement and habitat requirements of this interesting species.

This project is funded by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Australia "*Small Grants for Community Involvement in Conservation of Threatened Species and Ecological Communities*" administered by the Threatened Species Network.

**Allan K Jones
for Hooded Plover Sub-committee**

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia-WA Group between 14 January and 7 August 1997. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

A Abbott, P Ammundsen, P Baker, G W Bannon, P and A Bennett, C Bonham, B Brooker, D Bruce, T Candeias, C Cornwell, B Cox, J Dunsmore, A Ferreira, D Greenwood, V Hemsley, G Jackson, M E Keay, K Kennedy, T Leedham, M Lester, J Lewis, G Luck, F Marchant, D Marshall, D Mathwin, D Mitchell, S Monterrubio, P and S Murray, J R and J R Nettelton, S Norris, Y Oehlers, A C Pockley, W Radcliffe, C G Reid, J D W and J Robinson, M Rossetto, R Sadleir, M Shaw, R Smart, B Sommer, J Thomas, L Trinder, P Tuffin, O Vachez, J Venter, H Watt, B Wedderburn, S and G F Wilson.

Observatory Reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Winter in Broome can hardly be described as winter by many people's standards but this year we have been caught out a couple of times and five-degree overnight temperatures have sent us dashing for a woolly jumper.

One of our coldest nights was after our National Shorebird Census count at Eighty Mile Beach. The count was a strange experience as the normal flocks of shorebirds were nowhere to be seen. Instead, after covering over 11 km, we had turned up a few Red-capped Plovers and a pair of Pied Oystercatchers. We were beginning to feel a little panicky when in the distance there loomed a flock of over 7000 shorebirds. The birds were inconveniently close together but relaxed enough to allow a difficult but ultimately successful count. The final count was 7500 shorebirds.

Next morning, as the sun rose, we headed for the Anna Plains homestead. Earlier in the year Clive "wader study" Minton had been offered a flight over the station to count the amazing number of birds gathering there after the big wet season. As Clive was not going to be up in Broome we were lucky enough to take his place. The flight in a four-seater Cessna promised to be smooth, as there would be minimal turbulence in the early morning.

Sandfire Flats, an area of normally arid bush on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, held a lake, 20 km in length and a kilometre wide. The count turned up 10 000 ducks (up to half were in eclipse and gathered in huge rafts), 450 Pelicans, 800 Ibis and 15 500 shorebirds of which 11 500 were Black-winged Stilts. We are very grateful to Anna Plains staff and management for giving us access to their plane and pilot and facilitating this important count.

As with Eighty Mile Beach, the winter census for Roebuck Bay was low: only 3400 shorebirds. This low count was despite the experienced eyes of Danny Rogers and Mark Barter. Since then the birds seen on the northern beaches of the bay seem to have doubled and species which were almost impossible to find have been sighted regularly again. Another phenomenon of this winter season has been the large numbers of birds in breeding plumage. This is particularly the case for the Great Knot, many of whom have the plumages normally associated with pre-migration — a bonus for the many birdwatchers visiting the Observatory but a conundrum for Theunis Peirsma, Great Knot and wader feeding expert, who could only theorise on the possible reasons.

Theunis was at the Observatory for Roebim '97, a project to map the benthic fauna, geology and sedimentology of the bay. This project will identify the invertebrate species important to shorebirds in their feeding ecology and provide us with baseline information to monitor the health of the intertidal mudflats. A possible 500 invertebrate species indicate that Roebuck Bay may be the most bio-diverse intertidal system so far studied, not only in Australia but throughout the world. The project links to monthly mud

sampling already carried out by BBO staff and volunteers and will be used by Danny Rogers in his PhD on wader foraging. The strong research element of Broome Bird Observatory's work looks set to continue.

New birds for the Broome list are not common but with a current list of 296 species this is hardly surprising. The Broome Bird Observatory list is now one more species richer, as a Comb-crested Jacana was spotted out on one of the ephemeral lakes to the east of the Observatory (see article elsewhere in this issue). The magic 300 gets closer! Uncommon birds for the Broome list this winter are Grey Fantail and Pied Heron. The Fantail was seen on the fenceline and in the Observatory, where it conveniently flew into a mist net. Much discussion and photography was entered into but as yet there has been no decision on whether the bird is a South East or South West migrant. The Pied Heron was seen flying toward Crab Creek on an early morning guided Malurus Walk. A juvenile bird, it had no dark crown but trailed the distinctive orange-yellow legs.

In the last few weeks, three species of bird have decided the Broome Bird Observatory is the place to raise a family. A pair of Singing Honeyeaters has already fledged two young from a nest in front of the guest chalet, Restless Flycatchers are currently nest-building behind the Woodside units and a Rufous Whistler is building at the beginning of the Malurus walk. A pair of Brahminy Kites has successfully built a nest in the mangroves at the beginning of Crab Creek. We watched with some trepidation as the nest building was undertaken on a series of low to medium tides. Luck rather than judgement may have been involved when the spring tide failed to reach the nest level by a matter of 50 cm. The nest is quite low and accessible and has been checked on two occasions; two chalky white eggs were seen.

Ospreys, too, are nesting and Broome now boasts many nests. One of the pairs using the meteorological towers seems to have switched allegiance and built on the second tower. Black-shouldered Kites have been seen on the tower but even with our new super KOWA scope the angle is too difficult to see whether they are using it as a nest site, although we suspect they are.

One of the bonuses of being a Warden is that we have stopped travelling and get to watch bird behaviour as well as seeing new species. On a recent day trip to Willie Creek, we had to slow to a stop when an Australian Hobby refused to leave the road in front of the vehicle. The Hobby wandered around pecking at the ground in a way more reminiscent of a chicken than a raptor. We studied the bird through binoculars as it scraped up Pindan soil with its lower mandible and appeared to eat this along with bits of charred wood and small stones. (For more details see Hungry Hobby in Members Contributions this issue. Eds)

It is a short winter really and birdwatching on a crisp morning has its attractions. Soon the adult shorebirds will be returning to our northern beaches and the temperatures warming up. Once again we will pack away those hastily grabbed woolly jumpers and prepare for some warmer watching. See you here.

Janet Sparrow and Chris Hassell

Excursion Reports

BAYSWATER BIRD RESERVE, 4 April

A large group of keen birders gathered at the end of King William Street, Bayswater on a fine, sunny morning, ideal for the observers to spread out around this artificial wetland, which resulted from old clay diggings and subsequent surrounding landfill. This reserve is a haven for ducks in particular, with numbers of Pink-ears and Australasian Shovelers as well as seven other species of the group.

A small presence of at least two of the small rails was not observed on this occasion, due to water levels being raised by recent rains.

The tally of 49 species was not remarkable for this reserve, and the sight of an Osprey in the distance took our day's count to 50. That so many birds remain in spite of continual 'development' of the surrounding landfill areas into attractive parkland, is remarkable. Frequent use of the area for dog exercising, suggests an earlier start for birding visits, which are always very rewarding here.

Gordon Elliott

BICKLEY BROOK RESERVOIR, 14 May

On Wednesday 14 May Neil Porteous led a group of ten people, including an unbanded eastern states visitor, at Bickley Brook Reservoir. It was a glorious, sunny morning with a light breeze. It was a perfect way to see the area recovering from a partial burnout in the early summer. Over 30 species were seen including a pair of Mistletoebirds and a Red-eared Firetail at the top of a tree. Six different honeyeaters were seen, with good views of New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeaters for comparison. We encountered Splendid Fairy-wrens all along the walk. They were not yet in breeding plumage. There was a brief glimpse of a Red-winged Fairy-wren, which had been heard several times. The brook was flowing well and Scarlet Robins were nearby. We flushed a Common Bronzewing here.

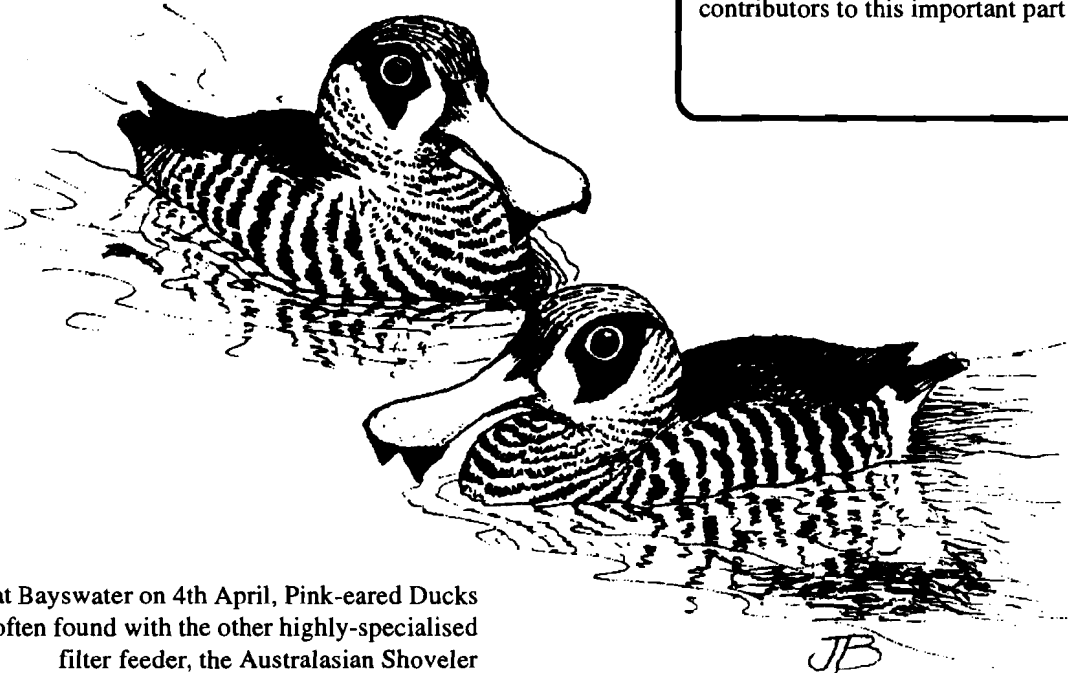
We heard many Striated Pardalotes and the occasional Western Gerygone, but they were not seen. Weebills, Western and Yellow-rumped Thornbills and of course, a Grey Fantail, were seen. Our eastern states visitor was delighted with good sightings of a Rufous Whistler and also a Grey Shrike-thrush. He liked our parrots, seeing the Australian Ringneck, Western Rosella and the Red-capped Parrot. Our only raptor was an Australian Hobby.

Claire Gerrish

ILLUSTRATORS NEEDED

We think the contributions of our artistic members are as important in keeping our newsletter attractive and interesting to members as the stories and notices. If you can draw birds, or their habitat, especially to illustrate a story or excursion report, we would love to have more contributors to this important part of WABN.

Editors



As at Bayswater on 4th April, Pink-eared Ducks are often found with the other highly-specialised filter feeder, the Australasian Shoveler

Drawn by Judy Blyth

HERDSMAN LAKE, 18 June

Our group of 11 birders was given an international flavour by having Helm from South Africa and Ken Scrivener from Kuala Lumpur. It was a cool and dry winter morning, and although the area between Heron Place and Halcyon Way lacks variety of habitat, the rewards were several.

The list was a respectable 43 species. We were able to get good views of eight Glossy Ibis feeding by probing the grass enthusiastically along with the usual hordes of Eurasian Coot.

Raptors were also in evidence, Swamp Harrier, Whistling Kite which put up a flock of ground-feeding Corellas, Australian Hobby, Collared Sparrowhawk and a Black-shouldered Kite feeding on something with a long tail in a dead tree. It took us some time to see any swallows or martins as they were all flying very high, and somewhat surprising absentees in such a location were Dusky Moorhen and egrets.

Max Bailey

NORTH MOLE, 6 July

Twelve people attended this outing. The highlights were excellent views of Australasian Gannets, particularly a fine adult overhead, and five Great Skuas. The latter were flying about, close to the mole, but were also seen in the water. At one stage, three skuas landed in the water less than 30 m away, where some Silver Gulls had gathered around a couple of cuttlefish floating in the water. The gulls retreated several metres while the skuas appeared to eat the cuttlefish or the remains of the attached flesh. A Caspian Tern descended upon and briefly harassed one of the skuas, which had just taken off from the feeding. Few other species were seen but this is the nature of seabird watching and observing interesting behaviour like the above is the reward.

Ian Standring

WEST TALBOT ROAD, 12 July

It was an overcast and chilly day when Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg led 15 stalwarts to an area of wandoo forest lying either side of a road off the West Talbot Road, which is on the way to York. After birding there, we moved on to another wandoo forest and creek on the road itself. Although the day was unpromising, with rain threatening but happily never arriving, the number of bushbirds was reasonable: altogether 38 species, with four Wedge-tailed Eagles at one stage circling overhead.

There were sightings of White-naped and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters, Hooded and Western Yellow Robins, and Grey Shrike-thrush, but few parrots other than the Australian Ringneck. The area is thought to hold a larger potential on a sunnier day.

Brian Wilson

HILLARYS PELAGIC TRIP, Sunday 20 July

It was a beautiful fine warm day after a cold start. A good day with good views of Great Skuas, Great-winged Petrels, Soft-plumaged Petrels, one Southern Giant-Petrel and a Black-browed Albatross. The highlight was the high number of Yellow-nosed Albatrosses that came close to the boat, including one of the Atlantic subspecies *chlororhynchos*. The

numbers of Australasian Gannets and Crested Terns well offshore were interesting. A few people saw Little Shearwater and a Wilson's Storm-Petrel. Further (probably three) trips will be organised in 1998 between May and September. For details contact Frank O'Connor on (08) 9386 5694 or (08) 9482 1445.

Frank O'Connor

JOONDALUP, 26 July

The scheduled birdwalk for 26 July was disappointing in terms of members present — only ten — but we were well rewarded in seeing a pair of Long-billed Corellas perched in a tall Tuart tree. We were unable to ascertain if they were looking for a nesting hollow as they flew away shortly after being sighted. A single Little Corella was sighted separately.

The day was cold and cloudy but the rain kept off until nearly the end of the walk. We saw 50 species compared with 68 seen in the last walk here in February. Many common species were conspicuous by their absence, viz, no Singing Honeyeater, Great Egret or fairy-wren. Few ducks were seen — no Hardheads, Shovelers or Pink-eared Ducks. They could have spread out to more secluded wetlands for nesting.

Still, it was a lovely, refreshing walk, much enjoyed by the participants. Thanks very much to Richard and Liz for bringing their telescope along. Theirs was a marvellous effort to pick up a pair of Black-shouldered Kites on the far side of the lake — the light was quite bad at this distance.

Tom Delaney

HELENA VALLEY ROAD, 3 August

At the end of the sealed section of the Helena Valley Road, south of the Helena River in the locality of Piesse Brook, a group of about 20 people discovered a tranquil, 'remote' bushland area within the Lower Helena water catchment area.

It was a warm, sunny day and following paths marked by the Kalamunda Shire we passed through open jarrah-marri woodland and then heath with numerous granitic outcrops and wildflowers in bloom. Our five kilometre walk took us eastwards on a path above the Lower Helena Pipehead Dam and then in a clockwise circuit on undulating tracks (some moderately steep!) back to the parking area.

Forty-four species were counted in the 3-hour walk. Highlights included Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Western Rosella, Elegant Parrot, Red-capped Parrot, Splendid Fairy-wren, Scarlet Robin, Varied Sittella, White-naped Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater and Brown Honeyeater.

Thanks go to Wendy Napier for introducing a new birding location to the BAWAG. Thanks also to the birding 'veterans' who so generously shared their knowledge and experience with those of us who are novices.

Alison Day

Coming Events

Wednesday 3 September — Mid-week Walk, Wellard Wetlands, Baldavis

Meet at 8:30 am at the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on the northern side of Zigzag Road, 1 km from St Alban's Road, Baldavis.

There should be plenty of waterbirds and bushbirds breeding.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 7 September — Half-day Excursion, Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale

Meet at 8:30 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam, at the end of Admiral Road (off Albany Highway), Bedfordale.

This is an excellent site for Red-eared Firetails and White-breasted Robins. Ninety-two different species have been seen at this site. Wedge-tailed Eagles are again being sighted — since at least one bird was shot and fire destroyed their nest.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Saturday/Sunday 13/14 September — Julimar Conservation Park Campout

Enjoy a spring weekend in the forest. Easy access is from Bindoon/Dewars Pool Road, turn off on Munyerring Spring Road (B2 Map 70, *Travellers' Atlas*). This is a reasonable, gravel road. Follow RAOU signs to camp site. No water or facilities are available. Permission for tents, campers, caravans has been obtained from CALM.

Arrive Friday evening 12 September or Saturday morning and stay as long as you like. Night spotting for owls and nightjars.

Ring the office to be on the list for this campout.

Leader: Allan Burbidge

Sunday 14 September — Spring Fling, Perry House

Masses of beautiful native flowers provided and arranged by the WA Wildflower Society and bird walks around Bold Park/Perry Lakes every hour. Helpers needed.

Thursday/Friday 18/19 September — Mid-West Expo, Mingenew.

The WA Group will have a display at this big country show. If you are up that way drop in and have a look.

Sunday 21 September — Full-day Walk from Nanga Bridge along the Murray River

Meet at 8:30 am at the Dwellingup Hotel. From Perth, drive down the South West Highway to North Dandalup. Turn left to Dwellingup. Allow one hour of driving time from Armadale (about 70 km one-way).

This will be a 12-km undulating walk down a creek and along the Murray River. We'll follow a good track through Jarrah, Marri and *Banksia*, with beautiful views of the river.

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

Bring lunch and a minimum of one litre of water. I'll boil a billy at lunch time for everyone.

Leader: Sue Abbotts (08) 9444 1607

Monday 22 September Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Dr Douglas Hey, a retired Director of Nature Conservation for the Cape Province of South Africa, will speak about the fauna and flora of that beautiful province and in doing so will pay special attention to its birdlife.

Thursday 25 September — Mid-week Excursion, Piesse Brook, Kalamunda

Meet at 8:30 am at the junction of Hummerston Road and Schipp Road at the southern end of Kalamunda National Park. Take Mundaring Weir Road from Kalamunda and turn left into Hummerston Road. Possible sightings of Golden Whistlers, the introduced Red-browed Firetails, and other bushbirds.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday/Monday 27-29 September — Campout at Stirling Range National Park, with continuation at Walpole on Tuesday 30 September-Saturday 4 October

This is a brilliant time of year to visit the Stirlings, home to a great many species of birds and plants. We will be staying at the Stirling Range Caravan Park, itself a haven for birdlife. A range of accommodation is available. We have booked camping sites, but if you require powered sites for caravans or on-site accommodation, please book your own by phoning the caravan park on (08) 9827 9229. You should do this as soon as possible as Spring in the Stirlings books out FAST! Please let the Birds Australia office know if you are coming and the numbers in your party by phoning (08) 9383 7749.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Continuation to Walpole — Tuesday 30 September-Saturday 4 October

Walpole is situated 423 km south east of Perth in the heart of the Nornalup National Park. This is a picturesque area with tranquil waterways and magnificent Karri and Tingle forest, home to many birds.

The venue at Walpole will be the Coalmine Beach Caravan Park, which has cabins, on-site vans, powered and unpowered sites, barbeques, and a camp kitchen. The Park is set amongst peppermint trees and is close to the beach.

A camping area with shelter has been booked. However, if you need powered caravan sites or on-site accommodation, you are requested to book your own by phoning the caravan park on (08) 9840 1026. If you are coming, please let the Birds Australia office know, with numbers in your party, by phoning (08) 9383 7749. Further information can be obtained from Maggie Cashman-Bailes on (08) 9272 4723.

Leader: Maggie Cashman-Bailes

Sunday 5 October — Half-day Excursion to North Lake

Meet at the car park on Progress Drive at 8:30 am. Nearly 80 species have been seen here.

Leader: Neil Porteous

Thursday 9 October — Mid-Week Excursion to Alfred Cove

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast), off Burke Drive, Attadale.

This is one in a series of outings to identify some of the waders that spend their summer in the Southern Hemisphere. Bring your telescope if you have one.

Leader: Les Harris

Saturday/Sunday 11/12 October — Campout at Lancelin

Please book your own campsites at Lancelin Caravan Park, Gingin Road; phone (08) 9655 1056.

The first official trip will be out to the island at about 1 pm on Saturday to see Rock Parrots and shearwaters. There will be walks in the morning, and also on Sunday.

Leaders: Di Beckingham, Nick Dunlop, and Colin Davies

Saturday 18 October — Half-day Excursion to Alfred Cove

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast), off Burke Drive, Attadale.

This is another of a series of outings to identify some of the waders that spend their summer in the Southern Hemisphere. Bring your telescope if you have one.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 19 October — Open Day at Perry House

As usual, we will celebrate the beginning of International Bird Week by providing free bird walks to the public at 8:30 am, 10:00 am, 3:30 pm and 5:00 pm. Visitors will be shown around our office, and there will be several photographic displays. Morning/afternoon teas will be available. Helpers needed.

Leader: Judy Blyth

Saturday/Sunday 25/26 October — Campout at Wongan Hills

Please book your own caravan sites at Wongan Hills Caravan Park, Fenton Street, north of the post office; phone (08) 9671 1009.

Clive Napier knows this area very well, and will be taking us to several different areas of interest.

Leader: Clive Napier

Monday 27 October Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Dr Andrew Burbidge, the Director of the WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit at CALM's Wildlife Research Centre, will discuss the birds of the Montebello Islands and CALM's Seabird Breeding Islands Database.



Above is the whole family of Tawny Frogmouths featured in the article by Vic Smith on pages 9 and 10 of this issue

Sunday 2 November — Full-day Excursion to Coodanup, Mandurah

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at the southern end of Wanjeep Street, Coodanup, on the shores of the Peel Inlet. From Perth, follow the Fremantle-Mandurah Road and turn left onto Pinjarra Road. Travel about 1 km until you reach the Wanjeep Street turnoff on your right. The return distance from Perth is about 180 km.

Don't forget a hat, insect repellent, old shoes/wellies, and lunch. Bring your telescope and come and learn about waders!

Leader: Frank Pridham

Saturday/Sunday 8/9 November — Campout to the Kojonup Area

From Perth, travel south on the Albany Highway, and turn left into Cherry Tree Pool Road, which is about 15 km north of Kojonup. You should see a sign that points to "Camp", but I will post RAOU signs as well. Follow these signs for about 15 km until you arrive at the camp.

We've booked dormitory-style accommodation at the Youth Camp, which includes toilets, hot showers, kitchen, and fridges. You will need to be self-sufficient, as there are no shops nearby. Bring your own sleeping bag and pillow. Power is available for caravans.

People will be welcome from Friday night onwards. Cost is approximately \$3 per person per night.

Please phone the Birds Australia office on (08) 9383 7749 and let them know how many people are in your party and how long you'll wish to stay.

About 130 species have been recorded for this area.

Leader: Wayne Zadow

Wednesday 12 November — Mid-week Excursion to Woodman Point Reserve, Cockburn

Meet at 8:00 am at the entrance to Woodman Point Recreation Camp, off Cockburn Road, south of the caravan park.

We will start by looking for bushbirds in the reserve of tuart woodland and native cypress, and then head over to the point to look for seabirds (don't forget your telescopes for this part).

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 15 November — Half-day Excursion to Thomsons Lake, Beeliar

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park off Russell Road, between Pearse and Hammond Roads. A good area for bushbirds, waders, and waterbirds.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Sunday 23 November — Half-Day Excursion to Joondalup Lake

Meet at 8:30 am at Neil Hawkins Park, in the car park at the end of Boas Avenue. A chance to see the birdlife of Lake Joondalup. This is a good spot for a picnic.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Monday 24 November Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Dr Stephen Ambrose, who studied White-browed Scrubwrens in three different locations in WA for his PhD thesis and later became known for his co-ordination of the

Australian Bird Count, will be talking either about the Australian Bird Count or about RAOU research programmes (including those in WA) or both.

Saturday 29 November — Half-day Walk at Bungendore Park

Meet at 8:00 am at the Park entrance on Admiral Road, just past the entrance to the Emmaus Christian School, on the right-hand side going towards the dam. Birds not common on the coastal plain can be seen here, such as Rufous Treecreepers and Western Yellow Robins.

Leaders: Marjorie and Gordon Wilson

Sunday 7 December — Full-day Excursion to Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

Meet at 8:30 am at the intersection of South Western Highway and the Old Bunbury Road, approximately 5 km south of Pinjarra, then turn right into the parking area.

We hope to see a variety of waders and other water and bushbirds. There are occasional rarities to be seen on this large shallow lake.

Wellington boots/old shoes are recommended, plus hats, insect repellent and water. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Colin Davis

Thursday 11 December — Mid-week Excursion to Star Swamp and Trigg Bushland

Meet at 8:30 am at the Hope Street entrance.

Star Swamp has tuart woodland, mixed-Banksia woodland, and heath.

Leader: Neil Porteous

Saturday/Sunday 13/14 December — Twitchathon and End-of-Year BBQ

Begin at 4:00 pm Saturday and end at 4:00 pm Sunday. Join us afterwards in a WA Group end-of-year party at Perry House at 6:00 pm Sunday. See full details in Notices.

Organisers: Sue Abbotts, Clive and Wendy Napier

Sunday 21 December — Half-Day Excursion to Bibra Lake

Meet at 8:00 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake, off Progress Drive.

Bibra Lake is part of the Beeliar Wetlands Chain, and a large number of water and bushbirds can be observed.

Leader: Clive Napier

NO DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 4 January 1998 — Half-day Walk at Wellard Wetlands, Baldvis

Meet at 8:00 am at the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on the northern side of Zigzag Road, 1 km from St Alban's Road, Baldvis.

There should be plenty of waterbirds and bushbirds.

Bring your lunch and we'll call in at Woodman Point afterwards.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 11 January — Full-day Excursion to Penguin Island

A charter ferry will leave the Mersey Point Jetty, off Arcadia Drive, Shoalwater, at **9:30 am sharp** for a one-and-a-half hour cruise of prime birding spots in Warnbro Sound, landing on Penguin Island at 11:00 am for an island walk. We will then have lunch — bring your own as no food or drink is available on the island. After lunch we'll have an opportunity to visit the new penguin-viewing facility.

Ferries return to the mainland regularly at hourly intervals.

The cost of the one-and-a-half hour cruise and return trip is approximately \$20.00. Please advise Clive Napier by 3 January if you wish to participate.

Leader: Clive Napier (phone (08) 9332 7265)

Saturday 17 January — Half-day Excursion to Pelican Point, Crawley

Meet at 8:00 am at the gazebo, opposite Mounts Bay Sailing Club, at the end of Australia II Drive, off Hackett Drive, Crawley.

For many years, Max Bailey has been looking at the waders, which inhabit Pelican Point each summer. He'll lead us through the area and help us to identify the various migratory and bush birds. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Max Bailey

Monday 19 January 1998 Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

NOTE: 3rd Monday as 26th Australia Day holiday

Belinda Brooker has been carrying out research on Thick-billed Grasswrens on Peron Peninsula in Shark Bay and will be discussing aspects of their breeding cycle, how their diet compares with that of other bird species in the area and why the species has disappeared from much of its former range.

Saturday/Monday 24/26 January — Campout at Augusta

Please book your own campsite at the Flinders Bay Caravan Park, Albany Terrace, Augusta on (08) 9758 1733. More information will be given in the next WABN.

Leader: To be announced

Monday 23 February Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

John Blyth, a prominent member of the Group for many years and a member of CALM's Threatened Species and Communities Unit, has been searching for, and collecting information on, the Night Parrot. His talk will, among other things, explain how we can assist in the search for this parrot, which is probably Australia's rarest and least known bird species.

Monday 23 March Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

David Lamont is the executive officer of CALM's Roadside Conservation Committee and has been studying Rainbow Lorikeets, which he describes as an evolving pest species in this State. What David has to say about this native of eastern Australia will be of particular interest because of its rapid spread through the metropolitan area.

**Monday 20 April Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**

NOTE: 3rd Monday as 27th is Anzac Day holiday

Grant Pearson, the Manager of CALM's Woodvale Research Centre, will talk about the setting up of a research programme to study the mudflats of Roebuck Bay near Broome and the huge numbers of migrant waders which feed on them, a project in which Grant has been heavily involved. The researchers, who will be using a hovercraft to travel about their study area, will be based at the Broome Bird Observatory and its new laboratory.

**Monday 25 May Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Dr Ken McNamara, the head of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at the Western Australian Museum, will discuss recent advances in our knowledge of the early evolution of birds.

**Monday 22 June Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Speaker to be arranged.

**Monday 27 July Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Speaker to be arranged.

**Monday 24 August Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Speaker to be arranged.

**Future Excursion — Last Week in August, 1998 —
Kathleen Valley (otherwise known as Wanjarri Nature Reserve)**

Wanjarri is approximately 200 km north of Leonora, and 750 km northeast of Perth, one-way.

Come and enjoy arid-zone birding and wildflowers at their best.

Further details available nearer the time.

Leader: To be announced

**Monday 21 September Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**

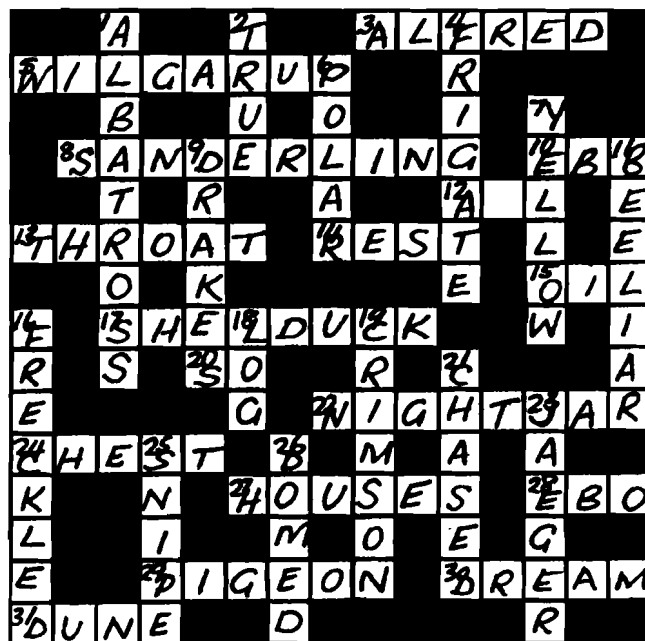
NOTE: 3rd Monday as 28th Queen's Birthday holiday

Julie Raines, who has been assessing wetlands for their importance to birds in southern Australia, including this State, for the RAOU/Birds Australia, will be telling us about her findings.

If you would like to learn more about waders, come to the Broome Bird Observatory for the 'Welcome the Waders Back' course being run by the wardens,
14th to 19th September, 1997.

For further details, contact the wardens, Jan or Chris, on telephone 08 9193-5600, facsimile 08 9192-3364 or at PO Box 1313, Broome WA 6725.

Crossword Answers



CUSTOMS
WATCH
1800 06 1800

WATCH
OUT FOR
AUSTRALIA

CUSTOMS WATCH UPDATE

Customs Watch has been officially operating for almost two years. It is time to take stock and let you all know what progress is being made. Firstly, we would like to thank all of you who have passed on information to us by use of the toll free number or by direct contact. All reports have been investigated and wherever possible results have been conveyed back to their source.

Australia wide the results of the Customs Watch programme have been very encouraging. There have been many major seizures as a result of information from the public. These have included seizures totalling more than 64 kg of heroin and more than 22 tonnes of cannabis. Numerous detections of bird and reptile smuggling have also been reported.

Do not be discouraged if you have yet to witness any suspicious activity. Just keep those eyes and ears open on your travels and report any unusual or suspicious incidents to us as soon as possible ... we will do the rest!

Good luck and remember ... WATCH OUT FOR AUSTRALIA!

Just a reminder, you can use our free 24-hour contact number 1800 06 1800 or if you prefer you can contact us during office hours on (08) 9430 1572

**Adrian Dandeker
John Richards
Community Participation Unit
Australian Customs Service**



Birds Australia
CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE



Supported by
BUSHNELL

Fund-raising the enjoyable way

Now there is a way you can raise money without asking friends or relatives, and best of all it happens as you enjoy your birdwatching. Birds Australia is hosting the Australian leg of the NTT World Bird Count in conjunction with BirdLife International and the Wild Bird Society of Japan.

In the World Bird Watch, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT), a Japanese private telecom company, contributes approximately \$10 for every species sighted by participating teams. In 1996 approximately US\$44,000 was raised for BirdLife International with 5,317 reported species. Along the way a lot of birders had the fun and satisfaction of birdwatching for a worthwhile cause.

Anyone is welcome to join the Birds Australia team, a nationwide group who will incorporate their listing into a range of normal birding excursions scheduled for the weekend of October 4th & 5th. Birds Australia will collate our list through Ms Sue Robinson at the National Office. If you would like to help raise money for our Birdlife Partners then all you need to do is to record the following from your birding over the weekend of October 4 & 5, 1997:

1. Your name and address
2. Number of participants if you are a group
3. Date and place of your birdwatching
4. Species of birds you saw or heard (English names and scientific names)
5. Your comments on birds or birdwatching (optional)

Reports should be submitted by October 24 by email (raou@raou.com.au), on disk (Word or Excel for Windows) or faxed or mailed to the National Office. Scientific names will be filled in by the National Office if you prefer.



Incorporating the 3rd NTT "World Bird Count"



Wildflower Society
of WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Inc.)

Spring Fling

Celebrating the beginning of spring

🌻 **Demonstrations & Displays**

Growing plants from seed
Know what soil is in your backyard
Floral Displays

🌻 **Childrens Activities**

Make gum nut toys
Paint sand picture

🌻 **Plants & Seeds for Sale**

Local wildflower seeds
Some unusual plants

🌻 **Cut Wildflowers for Sale**

Banksia, Geraldton Wax,
Dryandra, Verticordia

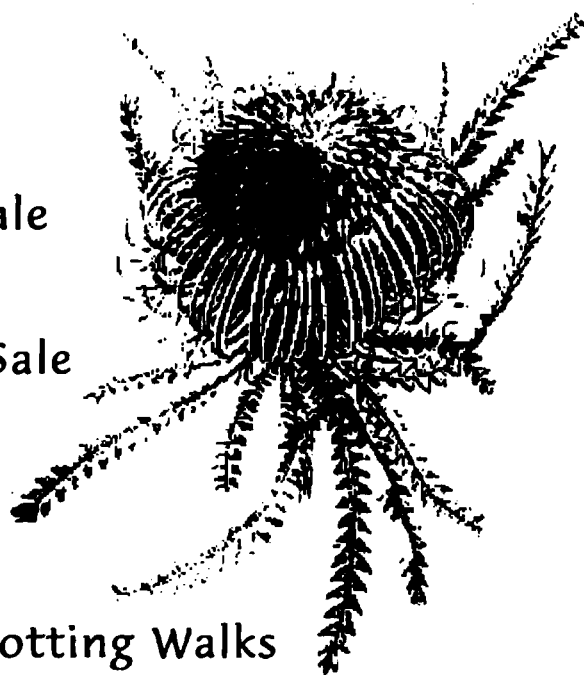
🌻 **Souvenirs for Sale**

Calenders, books, fridge
magnets, posters

🌻 **Wildflower & Bird Spotting Walks**

A walk every half hour

🌻 **Tea Towels, Shopping Bags, Aprons, T-shirts,
Windcheaters with wildflower prints**



Sunday, 14th September, 1997

9:30am — 4:00pm

Perry House, 71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat Park

All enquiries to the Wildflower Society of W.A. (Inc.) Ph 9383 7979

After Hours: Sybil Speak Ph 9444 1495

DENMARK



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Self-contained cottages — all linen supplied.
From \$45 double, \$5 extra person

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Birds Australia
WA Group Members
EXTRA 10% OFF

FOR SALE

SOUND EQUIPMENT designed for recording and playback of bird calls in the field

SENNHEISER Directional microphone ME 88, SONY WALKMAN professional tape recorder, SPEAKER portable, designed by professional sound engineer to cover bird frequencies, EARPHONES, leads, batteries, complete with specification manual, some unused TDK metal tapes, plus recordings of whipbird, bristlebird. Used only a few times.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT

Two rare high-speed STROBE outfits, a twin infra-red beams shutter release, designed for close-up flight photography in the field.

For further details, phone Bert Wells (08) 9400 3451 or
write to 51 RAAFA Estate, Baltimore Pde.
Merriwa WA 6030



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21 DAYS (CAMPING)

1-21 June '98 13 days \$1980

Ext. to Darwin 8 days \$1218

Broome, private Kimberley cattle stations, Kununurra, Gregory National Park, Katherine, South Kakadu Park, Litchfield and Darwin. Sightings of Red Goshawk, Black Grasswren, Black Bittern, Asian Dowicher, Gouldian Finch, Yellow Chat, Grey Falcon, Letterwing Kite, Princess Parrot, Spinifexbird, Inland Dotterel and Banded Whiteface made our '96 Kimberley tour a success. This time travelling to Darwin may give us Hooded Parrot, White-throated Grasswren, White-lined Honeyeater etc.

KENYA — 17 days

(Optional extension 3 nights coast)

Zimbabwe — Vic Falls Ext. 3 days

13th Jan to 1st Feb 1999

The best tour in Africa so far, with a top Kenyan guide, simply the best game viewing and an amazing quantity of bird species. We had over 550 species for the last trip and it could have been more but the game viewing was so good.

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Incl. a boat trip to the Abrolhos Islands

11 days (6 days accom. 5 days camping and return flight
Geraldton Perth)

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We will see many wildflowers and the trip out to the Abrolhos coincides with one of Australia's birding wonders; thousands of breeding Common and Lesser Noddies as well as other sea birds.

Send for the itinerary you require

Please note that our overseas tours are 70-80% birding,
10-20% game viewing and 10% cultural interest.

All tours led by Simon Nevill

Unit 7 - 432 South Terrace
South Fremantle WA 6162
Ph/Fax: (08) 9336 3882