

Western Australian Bird Notes

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

No 85 March 1998

ARCTIC WARBLER AT BROOME: FIRST MAINLAND RECORD

It's confirmed — one shouldn't go anywhere without one's 'binos', and that includes the loo! From my vantage point on the morning of 23 January, I spied through the fly screen a bird that I didn't immediately recognise, foraging quietly at the base of a Bauhinia (*Lysiphyllum cunninghamii*). I asked Jan to pass my binoculars and when I trained them on the bird was nearly dethroned! Hopping around, not seven metres away was a *Phylloscopus* (Leaf) Warbler. Being of Pommy stock, that bit was easy, but which one? This was going to be an ID problem, but a hardship that I was prepared to suffer, even if it was my birthday.

Both of us, still naked (I am sorry but rare bird reports must be accurate) crept from window to window viewing and frantically scribbling notes and sketches. The bird stayed in view for about two minutes before moving a short distance, but out of view. We quickly donned clothes and went out for what were further brief views. Left with the impression that the bird was an Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*) we knew that a confirmed ID would be tricky. Deciding that our best chance would be to catch the bird and carry out detailed measurements and plumage descriptions we quickly put up one net. We got further good views at 9.30 am, one hour and fifty minutes after we had first seen the bird and took further detailed notes. We ventured a further two mist nets and the bird duly obliged by flying into one of them. Fifty photographs and numerous data sheets later the bird flew off strongly into

a nearby Pindan Wattle (*Acacia eriopoda*). After a shake to rid itself of my presence it began to forage again.

We saw the bird on the two subsequent days at 18:00 (24/1/98) and 13:10 (25/1/98) but have not seen it since.

The obvious field characteristics were as follows:

Longish body, smaller than Clamorous Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus stentoreus*).

Long, not broad, pale yellow supercilium from in front of the eye, curving down to and on to the sides of the nape. Yellow ear-coverts streaked with olive grey.

Yellow wash on chin, faint streaking on breast, and a pale belly. Olive upperparts.

Largish bill showing an orangey base to lower mandible with dark horn upper.

Pinkish pale legs.

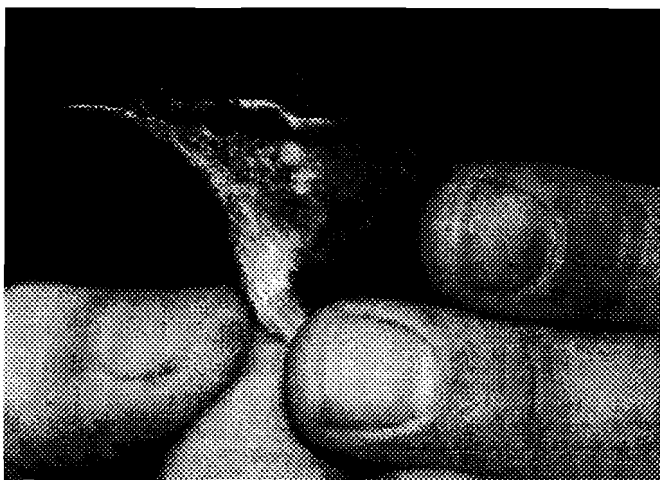
Pale yellow incomplete wing bar.

The bird called on a couple of occasions. Each time the call was a harsh, distinctive and relatively loud scolding 'trrrrick trrrrick' or 'chrrrick chrrrick'.

In the hand we were able to refine some of the details: the legs were pale with the rear of the tarsus being a very pale yellow, the wing showed five

secondary coverts tipped pale yellow, the fifth primary was not emarginated and the pale belly had a yellow wash.

All the indications were that the bird was an Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*). After release, with the use of reference material (including Cramp 1982, Harris *et al.* 1990, King *et al.* 1989, Pizzey and Knight 1997, Simpson and Day 1995 and Slater *et al.* 1986), data



sheets, primary projection and wing formulae, we concluded that it really was an Arctic Warbler. This appears to be the first record for mainland Australia (other reports have come from Scott Reef, an oil rig off Dampier, Ashmore Reef and the Lacepede Islands).

Other similar *Phylloscopus* warblers to identify from Arctic are Greenish Warbler (*P. trochiloides*) and Large-billed Leaf-Warbler (*P. magnirostris*). Large-billed is a sedentary species with a different facial pattern and would be unexpected in such latitudes. Greenish, the more likely, can be ruled out on the wing formulae and the emarginated 5th primary (not emarginated in the Arctic); calls are also different.

So the lesson from all of this, bar the necessity for detailed measurements and meticulous note-taking, is never, never go **anywhere** without your binoculars!

Acknowledgments:

Thanks to Mavis Russell, George Swann and Janet Sparrow for field identification and processing assistance, David Eades for telephone advice on photographic recording and data collection and Phil Joy for spreading the glad tidings via the internet.

References:

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- Harris, A., Tucker, L. and Vinicombe, K. 1990. *The Macmillan Field Guide to Bird Identification*. Macmillan Press.
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Chris Hassell

Editors' note: three full colour pictures of this bird can be found on the internet at <http://cygnus.uwa.edu.au/~austecol/observatories/broome.htm>

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.

Perhaps the most exciting reports this issue are not one, but three, reports of *Phylloscopus* warblers, probably all **Arctic Warblers**. Also, two **House Swifts** have just been reported from Broome, but details were not to hand at the time of going to press. If confirmed, this will be a first record for WA.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Freckled Duck - 4, 23/11/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, TK * 5, 27/12/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, GM, JP (highest number recorded at this wetland)

Australasian Shoveler - 810, 20/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC (highest number recorded at this wetland)

Grey Teal - 15 500, 25/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK (highest number recorded at this wetland)

Chestnut Teal - 5, 22/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - FO

Hoary-headed Grebe - 3386, 20/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC (highest number recorded at this wetland)

Southern Giant-Petrel - 1, 26/12/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Great-winged Petrel - 1-2 birds on 4 days 24/11 - 16/12/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

White-headed Petrel - 1, 21/11 and 1, 12/12/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Prion sp. - 1, 24/11/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Hutton's Shearwater - 10, 21/11 and 10, 24/11/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Little Shearwater - 1, 9/11/97, beachwashed, Yokinup Bay, Cape Arid National Park (Esperance) - AR

Black-browed Albatross - 1, 11/12/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP (unusual at this time of year)

Whistling Kite - 1, 14/1/98, Herdsman Lake (Stirling) - RD & others (Is this species increasing in numbers in Perth, after a decline in recent times?)

Spotted Harrier - 1, 23/12/97, Port Kennedy (Rockingham) - RN

Peregrine Falcon - 1 male, defending a stick nest in a gum tree, 27/1/98, near Harrismith (Kulin) - MB

Buff-banded Rail - 1, 26/10 - 9/11, Jerdacuttup River, south of Springdale Road, Hopetoun (Ravensthorpe) - LHo, JH (rarely reported from east of Albany)

Australian Spotted Crane - 1, 26/11/97, waterhole at Pine Hill, northern part of Cape Arid National Park (Esperance) - AR

Australian Bustard - 1, immature, 8/2/98, Bibra Lake (Cockburn) - BBa, MaC

Black-tailed Godwit - 27, 23/11/97, Coodanup (Mandurah) - RN * 19, 2/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - FO

Common Greenshank - 50+, 2/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - FO

Red-necked Stint - 3000+, 3/1/98, Alfred Cove (Melville) - FO (high number for this site in recent times)

Long-toed Stint - 19, 20/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC (highest number recorded for several years)

Pectoral Sandpiper - 1, 14/1/98, Herdsman Lake (Stirling) - RD & others (unusual at Herdsman Lake)

Black-winged Stilt - 2000+, 2/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - FO (highest number recorded for this species at McLarty)

Red-necked Avocet - 1250+, 2/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - FO * 5150, 20/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC * 5500, 8/2/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, JD (apparently the highest number recorded at a single wetland in south-west WA)

Grey Plover - 3, 22/11/97, Forrestdale Lake (Armadale-Kelmscott) - BBa

Hooded Plover - 29 including 2 juveniles, 23/11/97, Crystal Lake (Esperance) - EBOG per AR * 2, 2/1/98, Kilcarnup Beach (Augusta-Margaret River) - RN * 2, 3/1/98, Cowaramup Bay (Augusta-Margaret River) - DM * c. 90, 5/1/98, Bennetts Lake, Dunn Rock Nature Reserve (Lake Grace) - JB, JuB * 1 adult, 10/1/98, Lake Cooloongup (Rockingham) - MS * 222 including 30 immatures, 6/2/98, at a dry lake near Mullet Lake (Esperance) - AR

Red-kneed Dotterel - 1, 28/12/97, Carine Swamp (Stirling) - CNe (first record for this wetland) * 5, 2/12/97, Pelican Point, Swan estuary (Subiaco) - FO (first record for Pelican Point)

Banded Lapwing - 2 with 2 chicks, 2/1/98, farmland near Kilcarnup Beach (Augusta-Margaret River) - RN

Oriental Pratincole - 1, Herdsman Lake (Stirling) - JB, JuB (details elsewhere in this issue)

Gull-billed Tern - 3, 18/1/98, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JB, JuB (not previously reported from McLarty)

possible **Common Tern** - 1, 12/10/97, Ewans Lake (nr Mullet Lake), Esperance Lakes NR (Esperance) - AR (Note: a detailed description is needed to confidently identify terns from this group, for which there are very few records from the south coast (see eg WABN 83: 12-14))

Southern Emu-wren - 1+, 6/11/97, Ellis Brook (Gosnells) - HvW

Red-capped Robin - 1+, 6/11/97, Ellis Brook (Gosnells) - HvW

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin - 2, 28/12/97, Carine Swamp (Stirling) - CNe (first record for this wetland)

European Goldfinch - 2, 5/97, Maylands (Stirling) - DD (possibly escaped from an aviary)

Fairy Martin - 1, 9/12/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TD, MaC & BAWA excursion

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

Black Swan - 1, 13/12/97, Port Hedland, in backyard pool (Port Hedland) - DG (not often recorded in this area)

Black-breasted Buzzard - 1, 17/12/97, De Grey River crossing on the Yarrie - Marble Bar road (East Pilbara) - MC

Grey Falcon - 2 (male and female), 12/11/97, 53 km S of Nullagine (East Pilbara) - JB, WB * 3 (2 adults and 1 juvenile), 20/11/97 Meentheena Station, c. 80 km E of Marble Bar (East Pilbara) - JB, WB

Caspian Tern - 4, 15/12/97, De Grey River crossing on the Yarrie - Marble Bar road (East Pilbara) - MC

Black-eared Cuckoo - 1, 17/12/97, De Grey River crossing on the Yarrie - Marble Bar road (East Pilbara) - MC

KIMBERLEY

Australian Shelduck - 1, 21/1/98, Broome (Broome) - BBO

Intermediate Egret - 6, 6/1/98, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Buff-banded Rail - 1, 14/1/98, Argyle diamond mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Purple Swamphen - 50+, 21/12/97, tailings dam at Argyle diamond mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Barn Owl - 1, 28/1/98, Broome airport (Broome) - BBO (uncommon near Broome)

Red-necked Phalarope - 8-10/1/98, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO (details elsewhere in this issue)

White-throated Needletail - 1, 25/1/98, Broome (Broome) - BBO (rarely recorded in the Kimberley; details elsewhere in this issue)

White-browed Robin - 1, 10/12/97, near the office at Argyle diamond mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (first record for Argyle)

Phylloscopus warblers - 1 probable Arctic, 17/12/97, Lacepede Islands (photographs taken) - GS * 1 probable Arctic, 23/1/98 Broome (Broome) (see lead article in this issue: first record of a *Phylloscopus* warbler from mainland Australia)

ASHMORE REEF

067 **Tahiti Petrel** - 11/97 - JD

088 **Bulwer's Petrel** - 11/97 - JD

124 **Abbott's Booby** - 11/97 - JD

195 **Buff-banded Rail** - 11/97, common on W island - JD

424 **Common Koel** - feathers of a female bird, 11/97 - JD

447 **Collocalia** sp. - 1, 11/97 - JD

781 **Arctic Warbler** - 2, 11/97 (detailed description taken) - JD

OBSERVERS

AR = Allan Rose	JH = Jon Houghton
BBa = Bryan Barrett	JP = Jane Prince
BBO = Broome Bird Observ	LHo = Liz Houghton
CNe = Clive Nealon	MaC= Margery Clegg
DD = Dan Drakes	MB = Mike Bamford
DG = Debbie Gowans	MC = Mike Craig
EBOG = Esperance Bird Observers Group	
FO = Frank O'Connor	MS = Marcus Singor
GM = Glenn Moore	RD = Robert Davis
GS = George Swann	RN=Richard Nowotny
HvW = Hank van Wees	RP = Ross Payton
JB = John Blyth	TD = Tom Delaney
JuB = Judy Blyth	TK - Tony Kirkby
JD = John Darnell	WB = Walter Boles

Obituary

F Norman Robinson

Norman was born in England on 22 October 1911, and after studying economics and languages at Cambridge, joined the British and American Tobacco Company and was stationed in Singapore from where he travelled widely in Malaya, Thailand and Borneo. After three and a half horrific years in a POW camp on Sumatra, he was not allowed to remain in the tropics, on doctor's orders, and the family settled in Australia.

After two years with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Norman transferred to the newly formed Wildlife Survey Section of CSIRO. Early in the 1960s Norman was encouraged by Harry Frith to develop his early interests in radio towards the newly emerging subject of sound recording. They used these techniques in an intensive study of Superb Lyrebirds in the Tidbinbilla Fauna Reserve near Canberra to explain the use of song by lyrebirds in the defence of territory and in attracting a mate.

In 1965 Norman moved to Western Australia where he devoted his expertise in sound recording to establishing a reliable census method for the Noisy Scrub-bird (renowned for its invisibility!), then on the verge of extinction.

After his retirement from CSIRO in 1971 he and Joan spent the winters in Kalbarri, where Norman continued to record a wide variety of bird-song, returning to Perth for the summer. During his time at Tidbinbilla, Norman had amassed many miles of tape-recorded lyrebird songs and he spent much of the last 30 years analysing these calls, to explain the widespread use of mimicry and developing a theory on the evolution of bird song.

The peak of Norman's achievement has been the initiation and establishment of the archival collection of recordings of animal sounds now held in The Australian National Collection in Canberra. Besides his personal research efforts in sound recording a variety of birds, Norman was extremely generous with his time and advice to others; he attended meetings of the WA Group

whenever he was able and spoke to them on several occasions.

Norman will be sadly missed by his many friends. He died in his sleep after a brief illness, on 1 December 1997. He is survived by his wife Joan, daughter Shona and grandchildren Ben, Gus and Emily.

A full obituary and bibliography will appear in *Emu*.

Ian Rowley

WA Group Reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA-WA GROUP COMMITTEE

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

It is through the committee that the business of 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:

Junior ornithologists group — being progressed by Clive Napier who is arranging a field morning with interested biology teachers from several schools to give them an insight into the use of birding as an educational tool.

Scholarships for university students to attend observatory courses — two students attended the December course at Eyre Bird Observatory; the timing of the Broome courses did not fit in with students' study programmes although it is hoped that this can be rectified for at least one of the 1998 grants (subject to the students arranging their own transport).

Indexes of WA Bird Notes 1995-1997 and WA rare/unusual sightings — these two booklets are being progressed as time permits.

Launch of *Birding Sites Around Perth* — see report elsewhere.

Perry House maintenance — Max Bailey has been busy arranging for the carpeting of the office and the updating of the road entry sign to reflect our change of name.

Annual remote excursions — the Research Sub-committee (convenor Mike Bamford) has been asked to consider such excursions and members are encouraged to send in suggestions for these excursions which will be evaluated by the sub-committee, particularly as to how they would relate to surveys for the proposed No 2 Atlas of Australian Birds project.

Grants — Allan Jones continues to make submissions for funding for various projects including new rural brochures, a formal study of Lake McLarty and a Western Ground Parrot study at Waychinicup, as well as a revised submission for Birds of the Swan Catchment.

Trading Table — a sub-committee has been formed to organise the printing and commissioning of new artwork and the printing of new bird cards.

Printing of WA Bird Notes — our typesetter, Roger Watson, is helping our secretary, Margaret Philippon, to take over the role of typesetting; Roger, we wish you well and thank you for your dedication over the past few years in getting this newsletter into print.

Treasurer — and another change in our workers! Jane Venter is 'indoctrinating' Greg Wyllie and Mary Vaughan as to the intricacies of Pastel, the accounting program used by all Birds Australia groups; Greg's nomination will be put to the AGM in February 1998 and hopefully endorsed.

Finances — see elsewhere for the Treasurer's report.

Hooded Plover project — heavy rain in December in the Esperance area is making it difficult for the local group to find Hooded Plovers, a problem for the flagging programme.

Conservation:

- Mike Bamford has been appointed to the Wetlands Coordinating Committee set up by CALM.

- Lake McLarty — meetings with CALM representatives have been held recently and procedures are being put in place for the education of developers/prospective purchasers as to the special value of this area and the need for its protection.

- Amarillo — this development will be proceeding.

- Milyu Reserve — a jet ski area has been approved by the Dept of Transport just north of Milyu where most of the Swan River's remaining waders roost and discussions are continuing with the City of South Perth.

- Fairy-terns at Rous Head — Mike Bamford and Clive Napier will be meeting with the appropriate person at the Fremantle Port Authority in an endeavour to ensure the future protection of the nesting sites in this area.

Clive Napier

TREASURER'S REPORT

The WA Group had a successful financial year in 1997 with everything in accordance with budget.

The outstanding feature of the year was the increase in the number and value of the grants received by the Group. This may necessitate a change in the method of accounting for the grants in the financial statements in the future.

The introduction of the computer accounting software during the year will be an important tool for a more efficient financial system that is compatible with the system used by the Birds Australia national office and some of the other groups in Australia. Those familiar with previous years' statements will notice a different format in the 1997 statement.

Due to family commitments I have resigned as Treasurer of the Group. I have enjoyed my year as Group Treasurer and thank members, in particular Max Bailey and the Committee, for their support during the year.

I would like to express my best wishes to the next Treasurer.

Jane Venter

BOOK LAUNCH

Several times delayed, the launch of *Birdwatching Sites Around Perth* finally happened on 26 November 1997 — and it was worth the waiting. A big marquee was erected for the occasion in front of Perry House, and the event itself proved to be a pleasant combination of efficiency and excitement.

The lectern at the front was adorned with the logos of BAWAG and University Press, whose joint efforts had produced the second edition of the book. Neat rows of

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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 MSWord format; a style sheet is available from Perry House to guide writers regarding format
- WABN uses Birds Australia recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.

Deadline for the June 1998 Issue
1 May 1998
at Perry House

chairs, an array of displays of our current projects, and an interested crowd of people, including many of the book's sponsors, completed the scene. Speeches were short, covering all the essentials mixed with a dash of

humour. Then the Governor of WA, Major General Michael Jeffery, gave a very entertaining account of his boyhood entanglements with birdlife before officially launching *BSAP*.

As the sales table hummed with activity, a catered morning tea was enjoyed — and then suddenly it was all over as people dashed off to other commitments.

Many thanks are due to all those *BAWAG* volunteers, too numerous to mention individually, who contributed so much to producing the second edition of *BSAP*. However, the publications committee headed by the indefatigable Allan Jones certainly deserves a special mention. The innumerable hours that he, Claire Mercer, Max Bailey and Phyllis Bentley laboured, painstakingly attending to all the details, will be appreciated by all who use this handy little book.

If you are not one of the 250 happy owners of *BSAP* already, you can buy a copy through our bookshop at Perry House. It sells at \$20 — which includes postage if you order through our office.

Judy Blyth

WA BIRDS ON FARMS UPDATE

The survey of birds on farms and in road verges is progressing steadily. Many of the 105 surveyors currently involved have said that they enjoy the surveys and I always enjoy the notes and letters that often accompany the results. Some news is bad — of too much/too little rain, untimely storms and poor prices. Some are of interesting bird sightings such as an unusually large group of Western Rosellas (116) and of Dusky Woodswallows (105) last autumn at a Kojonup farm. Special pleasure has been found in learning to identify and even to see more species, and in observing the progress of nesting including, for one lucky surveyor, the growth and development of a Wedge-tailed Eagle chick. A Gingin farmer noted that White-winged Fairy-wrens whose nest proved subject to wetting inside from the garden sprinkler, built an additional lean-to to solve the problem.

Survey records received for farms and road verges (January 1998)

No of surveys	6	5	4	3	2	1
Farms	5	24	17	29	20	5
Verge sites	0	0	0	33	111	16

The goal is eight surveys per site.

The total number of farms being surveyed in WA is more than the 100 indicated here as a few are corresponding directly with the national coordinator. There are 160 Twenty Minute (0.5 ha) road verge sites.

Survey Data. The survey data are being entered in the Birds Australia head office, Melbourne, using the Paradox Database system. A copy of the WA data was sent to me last November, current to September. As yet it

is not possible to extract much information or do any useful analysis. Each land manager and surveyor will receive a mini-report at the conclusion of the survey. It will summarise the bird records from his/her property or sites. It is also likely to show records from 'nearby' properties and offer additional comment such as identifying those bird species that respond to changes in farm management. There will also be an overall WA report.

If you have a query for the database please let me know.

In the Fifty Hectare farm sites south of Exmouth, 169 species have so far been recorded. (Nearly all sites are well south of Exmouth.) The Kimberley site adds a further 43 species.

Brenda Newbey, WA Coordinator

Book Review

THE BIRDS OF PREY OF AUSTRALIA: A FIELD GUIDE, BY STEPHEN DEBUS

Birds of prey, or diurnal raptors, capture the imagination of human beings all over the world, and there are a number of very good books on the order Falconiformes for Australia. These range from the large, beautiful (and expensive) monograph by Graeme Morris, to the small black and white identification guide by Gordon Beruldsen. The group has also been treated exhaustively in Volume 2 of the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Stephen Debus' book is based heavily on that account, and all of the colour plates of raptors are included.

Stephen is a well-known research scientist, much of whose work has been on birds of prey. He is also a foundation member of the Australasian Raptor Association and an active member of Birds Australia. Perhaps as a result of this combination, Stephen's book is an excellent amalgam of high quality information, and a presentation that is very readable and should not frighten off anyone with the slightest interest in birds. A short glossary deals clearly with all of the words that may be new to readers.

This small book (152 pages) is extremely well presented, with a short but very informative summary of raptors as a group in the first chapter, and then a chapter for each of the identifiable sub-groups, the largest of which is the true falcons with six Australian members. Each chapter begins with a brief description of the distinctive characteristics shared by members of the family, genus or group of genera with which it deals. We found the summary of the taxonomy or relationships both within and between sub-groups especially interesting. After all, birdwatchers try to develop short-cuts to the identification of birds, and the most useful of these is relationship. If we know the features that make a falcon a falcon it will be much easier for us to identify the less

well-known members of the genus when we come across them. The study of relationships is also a great guide to help us understand why a certain species looks and behaves as it does.

After the introduction to each chapter, there is a very readable and interesting summary, usually three to four pages long, of the information known about each species. The headings are Description, Distribution, Food and hunting, Behaviour, Breeding and Threats and conservation.

As a field guide it is not surprising that Description often makes up almost half of the whole species summary. A significant part of this section is the comparison of easily confused birds. Perhaps the species chosen for this comparison were not quite as comprehensive as they might have been. In particular, given the tendency for Whistling Kites to stray out over coastal seas and for Ospreys to reach some non-marine wetlands, some comment about the diagnostic differences between those two species would have been useful, as they can be confused at a distance.

The information in the shorter descriptive sections is extremely well chosen and will both help to identify the species and help the reader appreciate the special qualities of each one.

Although the HANZAB plates are reduced to slightly less than half their original size, they are still clear and attractive, and they are supplemented by photographs and line drawings to illustrate key features of each species.

A thoughtful and thought-provoking concluding chapter discusses human impacts on birds of prey and possible solutions.

While we have not exhaustively read every word or checked every reference in the Bibliography, we did look for lapses in clarity of expression and for errors, both in the text and in the captions to illustrations. The book appears to be superbly edited and we found only one typographical error, and that a very minor one.

One thing that we think would have improved this book is the presentation of a distribution map with the description of each species. Nevertheless, given that anyone using this book will almost certainly have one of the comprehensive field guides with distribution maps, this is a minor problem. This book is less a conventional field guide than a detailed guide to the identification and understanding of a particular group of birds which many people find hard to identify.

Despite the abundance of books on Australian raptors, this small book is likely to be much used, both at home and in the field, by new and experienced birdwatchers alike. It is published by Oxford University Press, Melbourne, in association with Birds Australia, and the recommended retail price is \$19.95.

John Blyth and Allan Burbidge

Members' Contributions

A BOX OF PARDALOTES

Three years ago I designed and built a nest box for pardalotes. These delightful, little birds have a marked preference for a small hole in a large tree. Such holes are often the result of an old, long dead branch finally becoming dislodged after decay and insects have taken their toll. Subsequently the tree begins to close the hole with an overgrowth of new bark and sap wood. A pair of pardalotes once nested in the large Wandoo tree on our block in just such a situation but after three years the entrance was too small and now every trace of the hole has disappeared.

In order to cater for my intended tenants I built a wooden box about 30 cm long by 15 cm wide and 15 cm high. I tapered it towards the entrance end to allow water to run off. For the entrance I made a 2.5 cm hole and added an extra thickness of wood around it. I carved the extra thickness to resemble the ridge of bark found around tree holes. This feature provides a secure perch should the bird need to stop outside the entrance before entering.



Striated Pardalote

Photograph by Philip Morling

I placed this attractive property on the large tree at a height of about 5 m above the ground. It catches some morning sun but is well shaded during the day. Within a month of completion, to my delight, I had my first residents. Since then at least six broods have been raised in the box.

There was one extended period when the nest box remained vacant even though I saw birds viewing the premises on a number of occasions. On inspection I found that a bird had died in the box some time before. I cleaned it out and it was soon in use again.

The Striated Pardalote is one of those small birds which must be seen at close range to be appreciated. It

has the most brilliant yellow around its head with a splash of red on the shoulder to set it off. With birds in residence it is easy to watch them closely.

The box is a straight-forward project for a handyman to build but I think a suitable site is as important as the building specifications when it comes to attracting a client. As more and more habitat is destroyed it may be that the pressure can be eased by projects such as this. Now then, what sort of hole does a Red-capped Parrot favour?

Philip Morling

WOODY ISLAND REVISITED, NOVEMBER 1997

Woody Island is a CALM reserve 15 km from Esperance and part of it is leased to Mackenzies Island Cruises who run daily catamaran trips there and have tents for hire with basic facilities. The bird list stands at 25 species and the caretakers, Kev and Margaret Howells, are keen to hear of any additions. I had a two-night stay there in the off-season, which allowed full enjoyment of the wooded walk trails where Brown Quails cross the path and Brush Bronzewing can be heard. The Granite bottlebrushes (*Melaleuca elliptica*) were flowering and many New Holland Honeyeaters and Silvereyes were seen in them.



Black-faced Cormorant

Drawn by Diane Beckingham

In the seabird nesting area Pacific Gulls were sitting on eggs and two Sooty Oystercatchers were defending a nest. Many burrows of Little Penguins and Flesh-footed Shearwaters were noted. Several cliff tops were strewn with the broken Turban shells which Pacific Gulls habitually drop and feed from.

BAWAG members last visited the island in January 1996 (see Max Bailey's report in WABN March 1996) and since then a float-valve operated birdbath has been erected in the tent area. It is on a high column provided by Esperance woodturners and all day it was attracting a rapid succession of bathing Silvereyes and New Holland Honeyeaters with the occasional Spotted Pardalote and Red-eared Firetail coming down from the yate and moort

trees overhead. A perfect example of the pleasure a well-placed birdbath can bring to all.

On the trip to and from the island, Cape Barren Geese were seen on grassed areas of Cull Island; a White-bellied Sea-Eagle's nest was seen on Charlie Island and a Black-faced Cormorant was sitting on a nest in a cavern on isolated rocks. Close views of sea lions, fur seals and leaping Common Dolphins added to the interest and are virtually guaranteed by the tour operators.

Diane Beckingham

RETRACTION

Some months ago I published an article in Bird Notes in which I said I possibly saw a Sandstone Shrike-thrush in the vicinity of Broome Bird Observatory during a visit there in September 1996.

Now, after discussing the sighting with Bryce Wells, a former warden at Broome, and David W Eades, Sub-editor, Field Identification section, HANZAB, I believe I made a mistake. The bird I saw was probably a Little Shrike-thrush.

Tom Delaney

BOOBOOKS IN SWAN VIEW

We have recently had the pleasure of watching a family of Southern Boobooks from the day the young left the nest. After a rowdy Grey Butcherbird lead us to the daylight roost of an adult Boobook we were able to see it often as it frequented the same few trees for three weeks or so. You can imagine our delight when we found three young birds with the adult. The young birds were a bit short of tail feathers and looked a little 'fluffy' but were very alert. We were able to approach quite close and take a lot of photographs in a short time without alarming the adult bird. The young birds watched us closely; they wove their heads back and forth the better to judge our position as we stood quite still to watch them.

When darkness fell the 'chirring', insect-like call of the young birds drew us outside to watch as the parents swooped about gathering food. We stood on a high point and the adult birds passed within a few feet of us on several occasions. If their wings make any noise at all it is at a very low frequency and is felt rather than heard. On the second day we could not find their daytime roost. We thought the family had gone but they returned to the open space in our block that evening. For the next two weeks we were able to find at least one of them each afternoon.

The young birds took some time to master their large wings. Each short flight was an adventure and each landing a trial. They always subjected us to close scrutiny when we first appeared and on more than one occasion they have swooped close to us, perhaps for a better look. Most of the food the adults provide is small. One night it was flying beetles caught in mid air, with only occasional larger prey.

Unfortunately one of the three fledglings managed to drown itself in our swimming pool. It seems to have happened during the day and it might have sought a

perch inside the shadecloth dome covering the pool. It would have flown against the mesh until it became exhausted. It was probably unable to take wing in the short drop to the water and was trapped.

For the final two weeks we had the company of one chick and one adult. The other two birds had moved out. Perhaps this is a response to the need for territory to support the extra mouths. Since each parent now has only one chick to look after they should have a good chance of survival.

Philip Morling

FOOD OF THE RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO — NO 1

In response to your request for information from members on the feeding habits of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, my observation is as follows:

A few years ago, prior to the big bushfire at Bungendore Park, I was a frequent visitor to that area. Many times while I was there, small flocks of these birds flew in to feed. I spent quite a lot of time observing them and particularly noticed that — at least while I watched — they fed only on Jarrah nuts. It was left to Red-capped Parrots and Australian Ringnecks to make use of the many Marri trees in the park.

Mavis Norgard

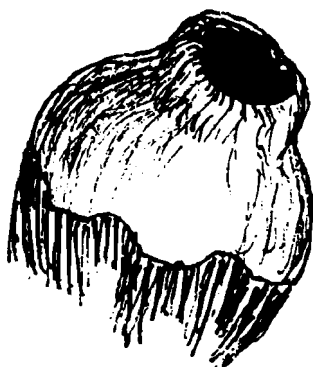
FOOD OF THE RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOOS — NO 2

In reply to G F Mees and your editorial note (*WA Bird Notes*, 84) I submit the following:

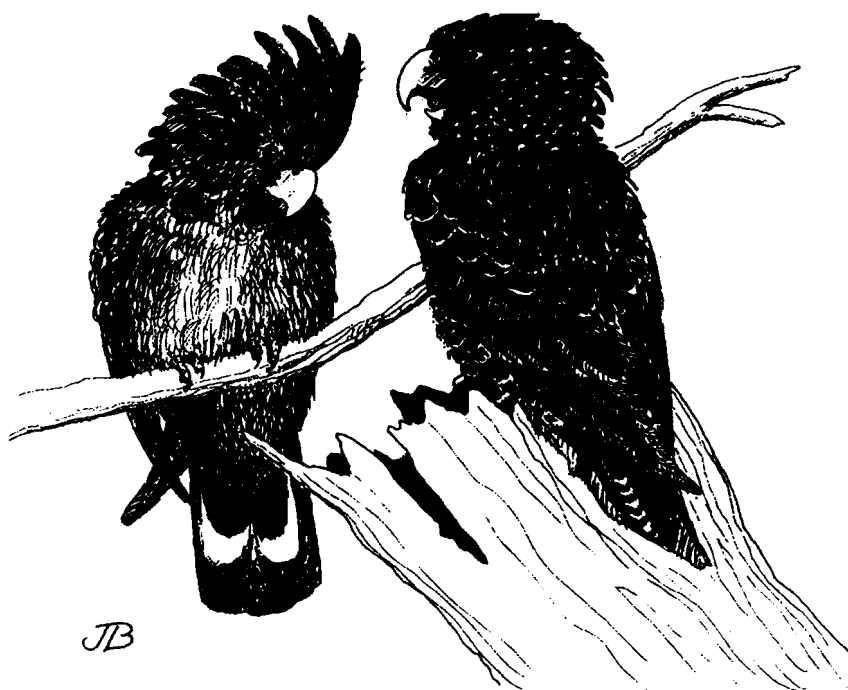
On the evening of 9 August 1969 I observed near the old sawmill town of Banksiadale a flock of 30 Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*) feeding on the nuts of the Jarrah tree. The falling debris sounded like a crackling fire when it hit the ground litter.

Storr and Johnstone (1988) state that the cockatoo is attracted to seeding Marri and Storr (1991) states that the species is attracted to seeding Marri and Jarrah.

Mary Bremner observed the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo feeding on Marri nuts at Piesse Brook during mid-September to mid-October 1995 (*WA Bird Notes* 77:6).



Marri fruit from which Red-tailed Black-cockatoos have taken seeds.
Drawn by Gabriel Magyar



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos
Drawn by Judy Blyth

References:

- Storr, G.M. 1991. Birds of the South-West Division of Western Australia. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* no. 35.
Storr, G.M. and Johnstone, R.E. Birds of the Swan Coastal Plain and adjacent seas and islands. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl.* no. 28.

Robert Stranger

FOOD OF THE RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO — NO 3

After reading G F Mees' contribution in *WA Bird Notes* No 84, I would like to make the following contribution:

I run an interpretive bushwalking business in the Boranup area of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park south of Margaret River. Over the past few years I have been watching the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and until this summer had observed them only feeding on the nuts of Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and occasionally Karri (*E. diversicolor*).

I have now seen them eating Marri seeds (*E. calophylla*). Unlike the Long-billed Black-Cockatoos (white-tails) who skilfully fish seeds from the operculum of the Marri without tearing into it, I have seen the red-tails extracting seeds in two ways: 1) biting the nuts open diagonally and 2) biting off and discarding the top half of the nut (see illustration).

The largest gathering of red-tails I have seen is 22 birds. As yet I have not found any nests of red-tails. I have observed several Long-billed Black-Cockatoos nesting in hollows in the Karris, however there appear to be few of these suitable hollows in the Boranup forest.

Gabriel Magyar



The Long-billed Black-Cockatoo is a specialised feeder on large fruited eucalypts, especially the Marri.

Drawn by Pam Free

HOODED PLOVERS AT YALGORUP NATIONAL PARK

The thoughts that led to this article actually began during an early morning visit in February to Lake Cooloongup. Being so early, it was quiet, with little traffic on the old Mandurah road. The sun was just rising above the Tuart trees but even at this time of the morning the heat was oppressive, made worse by the reflection of Lake Cooloongup's white lake bed which was drying out fast. I moved along the eastern edge of the lake bed towards the last remaining pool of water where a group of waders were feeding. The ground was firmer here and the light was from behind. The drying lake bed stretched all around and further out, a group of Red-capped Plovers were slowly moving across the mud, each taking turns to run a few metres and then stop. In the distance the surface had already started to shimmer but beyond the plovers there was a solitary, overweight looking bird that somehow did not fit in. The only solution was to venture out onto the muddy lake bed, a tiring process as each footstep sunk deep into the mud. Finally the bird was close enough to identify and it turned out to be an immature Hooded Plover (*Thinornis rubricollis*), which made all the exertion worthwhile. Still not a plover usually found near Perth and I could not help wondering where it had come from.

In my mind, Hooded Plovers were associated with distant places such as remote inland salt lakes or isolated beaches along the south coast.

As it turned out Hooded Plovers could be found much closer to home. Bill Russell, one of our fellow members, has been counting waders in Yalgorup National Park for many years. This has resulted in a

valuable and extensive local data base, which he has kindly made available to the West Australian Wader Study Group. The data collected concerns Hooded Plover numbers and their presence and distribution within Yalgorup National Park.

A comparison showed that Lake Cooloongup and Lake Walyungup have a lot in common with the lakes in Yalgorup National Park. They are all located on a limestone base, shallow, saline and with a sparsely vegetated lake perimeter.

Yalgorup National Park is between the Old Coast Road and the Indian Ocean, starting south of Mandurah and stretching towards Myalup. It includes many lakes of different sizes, the biggest being Lake Clifton and Lake Preston, which are found between long, low sand and limestone ridges running parallel to the ocean.

There is a chain of smaller lakes between Lake Clifton and Lake Preston and these run north to south: Lake Pollard, Martins Tank Lake, Lake Yalgorup, Lake Hayward and Lake Newnham. These lakes are saline. It was around these smaller lakes where the Hooded Plovers were most often found.

Habitat description

The lakes are generally situated in Tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) and Jarrah (*E. marginata*) forest with an understorey of peppermint.

The immediate surroundings of the lake are made up of thickets of saltwater paperbarks (*Melaleuca cuticularis*) that in places extend to the water's edge. The edge of the lakes varies in width, depending on rainfall and the season of the year. The lakes are located on a substratum of limestone that is exposed in places. The composition of the shores varies from stretches of bare and exposed limestone base to pockets with an accumulation of limestone sand and muddy sediment in which samphire and young paperbark saplings grow. Other areas of shoreline fall somewhere in between with large areas having sparse vegetation and being largely covered in rough limestone gravel. Large swarms of black flies can be found where samphire and sedges grow.

Breeding

The incubation period for Hooded Plovers lasts from 27 to 28 days, fledging occurs from 31 to 36 days and the young generally leave the parental territory once fledged (Marchant and Higgins, 1993, page 909)

The Hooded Plover bred in Yalgorup National Park during 1996 and 1997. Two separate breeding sites were identified within the park. If historical records are included breeding has been confirmed at three separate lakes. Runners were sighted from early March to early April in 1996 and from late January to early March in 1997. Runners were often seen in areas of scattered seedling *Melaleuca*. The observation dates of runners indicates that breeding in Yalgorup National Park did not commence till mid-summer. A nest with three eggs was first found on 4 January 1997.

Rainfall was low during the winter months of 1997 and this was probably the reason that Hooded Plovers commenced breeding early in the 1997/98 season. A nest

with two eggs was located on 29 November 1997 in beach shale about seven metres from the water's edge. This nest was five weeks earlier than the one found in the previous breeding season. The eggs of the clutch had a green colouration rather than the sandy colouration indicated in some books. The green colouration of eggs was also reported from the clutch located in early 1997 (F Pridham and

D Rule personal communication). Marchant and Higgins (1993) report that eggs are lustreless, putty-white or pale yellowish-grey with fairly evenly distributed irregularly-shaped dots, spots and markings of black or brownish black with a few small underlying markings of inky grey.

On the south coast (roughly from Esperance to Walpole) Hooded Plovers breed mostly in spring and early summer (Newbey, 1996) which is earlier than breeding recorded in Yalgorup National Park.

Numbers and Distribution in Yalgorup

Comments in this article are based on a total of 205 Hooded Plover observations made in the Yalgorup National Park from 1979 to 1997. The bulk of the observations however stem from the period 1994 to 1997. Hooded Plovers were not sighted during 31 visits. Figure 1 shows the distribution of observations between the lakes with Martins Tank Lake accounting for nearly half of all sightings. Table 1 shows the distribution of records of Hooded Plovers at each lake in each month.

Lake Pollard (1994-1997):

Trends: Most sightings were made during the month of February. Lake Pollard is one of the lakes where suitable habitat remained available during winter. This was only found along the eastern edge of the lake. Both adults and immature birds were sighted.

Months not recorded: March, June, July, October

Highest count: 37 in February.

Percentage of total sightings: 7.3%

Breeding: No.

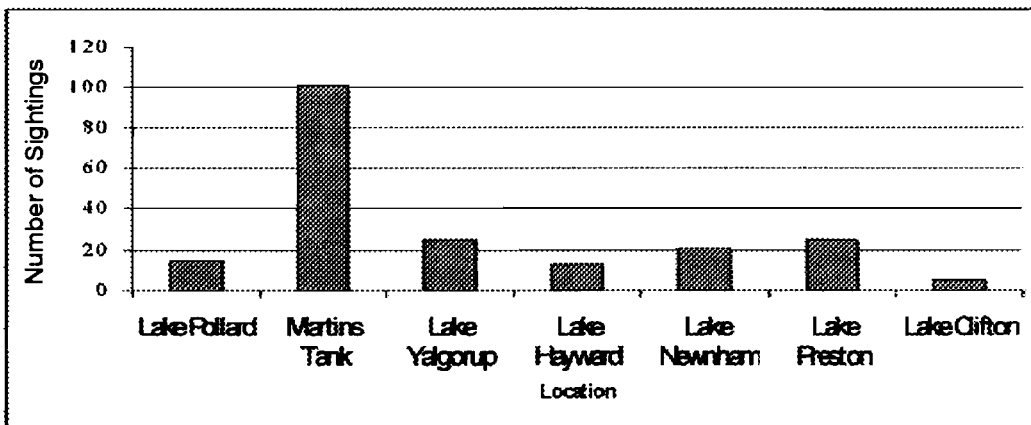


Figure 1: Sightings of Hooded Plovers at individual lakes in Yalgorup National Park

Martins Tank Lake (1992-1997):

Trends: Seemed to be the Hooded Plovers' preferred lake when suitable habitat was available. Suitable habitat such as open sandy limestone areas was found along the southern and part of the eastern edge over winter. Observations were from every month of the year. Both adults and immature birds sighted.

Months not recorded: None.

Highest count: 36 in February.

Percentage of total sightings: 49.3%

Breeding: Yes (1996 and 1997)

Lake Yalgorup (1993-1997):

Trends: The highest counts were made from October to January. Hooded Plovers showed a preference for the south-western edge and the south-eastern corner of the lake where they were often found. Both adult and immature birds were observed.

Months not recorded: February, March, April, July.

Highest count: 30 in December.

Percentage of total sightings: 12.2%

Breeding: No.

Lake Hayward (1990-1997):

Trends: Most observations were made in October and November. Scattered sightings during autumn and winter.

Months not recorded: January, February, July, August, December.

Highest count: 17 in October.

Percentage of total sightings: 6.3%

Breeding: No.

Lake	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Martins Tank	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Lake Preston	P	P	P	P				P	P		P	P
Lake Pollard	P	P		P	P			P	P		P	P
Lake Yalgorup	P				P	P		P	P	P	P	P
Lake Hayward			P	P	P	P			P	P	P	
Lake Newnham	P		P	P					P	P	P	P
Lake Clifton			P		P					P		P

Table 1: Presence of Hooded Plovers at seven wetlands in Yalgorup National Park (P = present).

Lake Newnham (1994-1997):

Trends: Sightings were made mainly during summer months. Hooded Plovers were present from September through to April, but were most abundant during January. Both adults and immature birds were noted.

Months not recorded: February, May, June, July, August.

Highest count: 12 in October.

Percentage of total sightings: 10.2%

Breeding: Yes (1997).

Lake Preston (1985 to 1997):

Trends: Lake Preston is divided by a causeway and these observations include sightings from both Lake Preston (North) and Lake Preston (South). Some of the highest counts were from this site. January is the month with most sightings

Months not recorded: May, June, July, October.

Highest count: 44 in April.

Percentage of total sightings: 12.2%

Breeding: Yes (1990).

Lake Clifton (1979 to 1993):

Trends: Very few observations were from this lake and most of these were from the 1980s.

Months not recorded: January, February, April, June, July, August, September, November.

Highest count: 8 in October.

Percentage of total sightings: 2.4%

Breeding: No

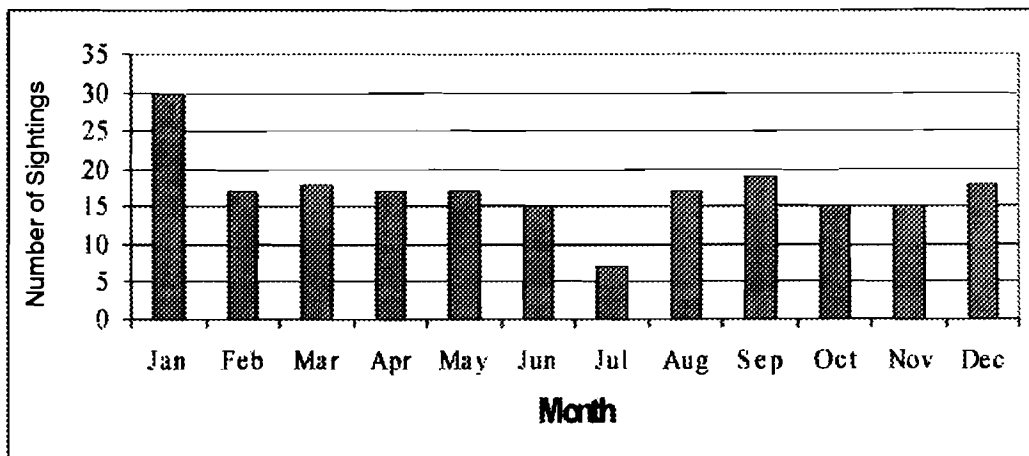


Figure 2: Monthly distribution of numbers of sightings of Hooded Plovers in Yalgorup National Park

observations have been made all year round in the Yalgorup National Park, suggesting that the population may be sedentary and stable.

The majority of sightings of Hooded Plover were made on the eastern and south eastern margins of the lakes (Lake Yalgorup, Lake Hayward and Lake Newnham). The reason for this preference is unknown. One reason might be the impact that different levels of salinity in the lakes have on the distribution and availability of food. According to the local ranger, the salinity levels on the western sides of the lakes are higher than on the eastern sides. The water on the eastern sides is decidedly fresher.

Hooded Plover were frequently seen in the company of Red-capped Plovers. The preferred habitat around the lakes comprised open sandy limestone areas close to the water but occasionally Hooded Plovers were seen up to 30 metres from the water. The Hooded Plovers were quite often seen roosting on or among limestone rocks.

During the winter months numbers of Hooded Plover

fluctuated as they moved around the park in search of suitable habitat which was determined by water levels in the lakes (B Russell, personal comments.)

Frank Pridham has noted that Hooded Plovers tended to flock after they had been disturbed.

Most observations of Hooded Plover originate from January, the least from July. Figure 2 illustrates the monthly spread of sightings throughout the Park.

Data indicates that Hooded Plovers display a high degree of mobility between sites within the Park. Figure 3 presents the highest and lowest counts at Martins Tank Lake and shows how large fluctuations can take place at one site over a short time.

Sedentary population versus transitional population

The fluctuating numbers of Hooded Plovers in

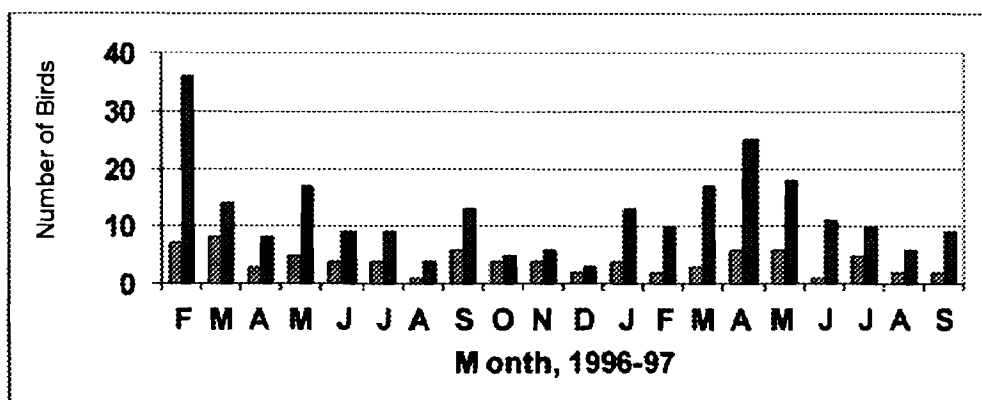


Figure 3: Minimum and maximum monthly counts of Hooded Plovers at Martins Tank, Yalgorup National Park, February 1996 to September 1997

Discussion

The Hooded Plover population in Yalgorup National Park is unique as it occupies a different type of habitat to the one generally associated with Hooded Plovers. You could call it a 'forest population' as the lakes it frequents are surrounded by thick bush. Hooded Plover

Yalgorup National Park have not been adequately explained and pose more questions than answers. Some issues are discussed below.

It is possible that a sedentary and stable population of Hooded Plovers resides in Yalgorup National Park. The data suggest that around 20 Hooded Plovers live in the park during winter and spring. These numbers increase over summer to around 35 and then taper off during autumn.

Counts show an imbalance between the number of adult and immature birds. This could mean that not all adult birds breed in the Park or that there is a high failure rate among breeding pairs.

If the number of immature birds counted represent young solely raised in the park, the estimate of breeding pairs would need to be revised upwards. Only one or two pairs have been found breeding in the park. The highest numbers of immature birds counted was 14 in April/May 1997.

Little information is available from Lake Clifton and Lake Preston due to their size and these lakes may well provide additional breeding sites for Hooded Plovers. The smaller lakes have been covered comprehensively and breeding sites are known.

The increase in the number of Hooded Plovers at the end of summer and autumn could result from a congregation of the local population at the end of the breeding season. Alternatively, the residential population of Hooded Plover could be supplemented by birds from outside the Park at the end of summer. It would be interesting to know where all the immature birds in Yalgorup National Park come from.

Hooded Plovers breed on the south coast from August to November and on the west coast the egg laying is predominantly done in spring (Newbey 1996). The increase of Hooded Plovers in Yalgorup National Park occurs shortly after the breeding season for southern coastal birds has ended. Furthermore the December to February period coincides with a heavy increase in tourism on the beaches along the Cape Naturaliste/ Margaret River and Augusta coastline. Could a combination of these factors result in Hooded Plovers moving to the drying lakes of Yalgorup National Park for refuge?

There is some evidence to suggest movement up the Swan Coastal Plain by immature birds at this time of the year. Local observers have noted that flocks of Hooded Plovers tend to stay out of the way of the still locally breeding Hooded Plovers.

When visiting these lakes, members should ensure disturbance of the Hooded Plovers is kept to a minimum especially during the breeding season. The margins of the lakes are particularly vulnerable areas. The Hooded Plover is listed as a threatened species.

Acknowledgment: The West Australian Wader Study Group warmly thanks Bill Russell, Frank Pridham and Dick Rule for all the data and information they have provided about Hooded Plovers. Comments accompanying their observations provided further insight into the plovers' behaviour and status within the park.

References:

- Marchant, S and Higgins, P.J. (eds). 1993. Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic birds. Vol 2. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
Newbey, B.J. (1996). Report on Hooded Plover Project. June 1994 to March 1996 RAOU (WA group).
Western Australian Bird Notes 79, Suppl.

Marcus Singor

INTELLIGENT HONEYEATERS

Having read the contribution "Cooperation between honeyeater species" in the March 1997 issue (no 81) of WABN, I would like to provide further information on the intelligent behaviour of members of this family.

The Singing Honeyeater is very common in Perth suburbs. The pairs establish and maintain a territory year round and, given abundant food supplies of honey and insects, will breed continuously throughout the summer making three or four nests during that period. They are

fiercely territorial and drive out all rivals. The battles involve both members of a pair. If an intruder is injured or unable to flee, they will peck it to death. I have observed the severity of the attacks several times in my garden at Joondanna. The resident pair have learned to drive intruders into a pane of glass at the top of the partly enclosed stairs of the house. The resident pair knows a gap in the window through which they fly, but the intruder invariably hits the pane of glass, suffering injury, shock and often death.

The resident pair tried unsuccessfully to drive away a pair of Willy Wagtails which nested in the garden during October.

The Singing Honeyeater readily adapts to human presence and follows me around the garden at close range looking for food.

Many observations lead me to believe Singing Honeyeaters have intelligent behaviour equivalent to larger birds such as Australian Magpies.

Barbara Reif

HOW'S THAT?

Lord Howe Island, measuring 10 km by 2 km lies some 700 km NE of Sydney (about opposite Newcastle in NSW) in the Tasman Sea and is World Heritage listed. Its chief claim to fame is that offshore lies one of the southernmost coral reefs, with an abundance of fish from both the temperate and tropical zones. This in turn leads to a large number of seabirds. Information boards in the Visitor Centre on the island list 18 species of land birds and 14 of sea birds. With summer temperatures in the 20s, an almost constant cool sea breeze, lots of sun, and



Singing Honeyeater
Drawn by Judy Blyth

rain showers, vegetation grows vigorously. Most of the island consists of National Park. At the southern end of the island, Mt Gower rises up to 875 m and offers a really rugged climb for the athletic. At the other end is Mt Eliza at 147 m, festooned with resting and nesting Sooty Terns. Throughout the day in their nesting season (October to March), there may be dozens of Sooty Terns soaring over the island, amusing themselves in the thermal currents. In the rest of the year, as a pelagic species, they are away at sea. At one end of Ned's Beach (the most popular bathing beach on the island), there are hundreds of Sooty Tern nests among the pebbles above high tide mark. (There is in fact no nest as such, only a depression that the bird sits in.) I spent the first week of January 1998 on the island, by which time eggs had hatched and well-grown nestlings stood around in dark grey speckled with white.

By contrast, White Terns (snow-white all over, with black beak, legs and eye) nested in less windy spots on branches along the main thoroughfare (Lagoon Road). Again, there was no proper nest. An egg is laid precariously in the fork of a tree, often a Norfolk Island pine, and the chick spends all day (until it learns to fly) perched immobile on the branch, waiting to be fed.

Other sea birds included the Black-winged Petrel, Red-tailed Tropicbird, and Common Noddy, but I'm not sure if I saw the Black Noddy among the hundreds of birds wheeling around North Head. I certainly saw at least a dozen Grey Ternlets there. At Muttonbird Point, large numbers of Masked Boobies nested on the headland, with the females honking and the males whistling.

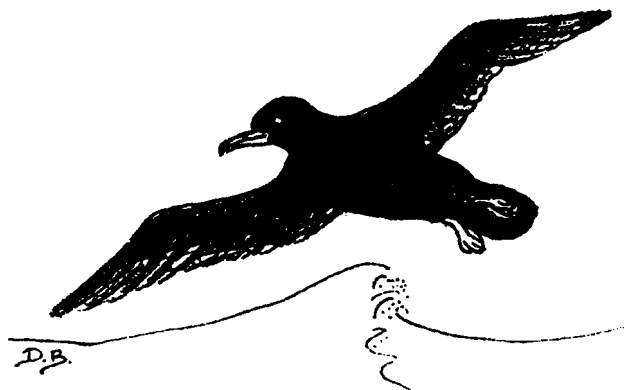
Apart from tourism, a main source of income for the Island Board lies in the production and worldwide sale of *Kentia* palms which are indigenous there, growing up to 15 m in height and covering large areas of the island. But few land birds seem to frequent the palm; most were to be found in the other types of trees, especially the huge *Ficus* trees with prop roots. According to the Visitor Centre, there is no clear indication how the land birds arrived on the island. The original flightless birds like the White Gallinule were wiped out by early seafarers, mostly whalers and sealers. The Woodhen (of the Rail family) is the only survivor, now numbering over 200 after a low of six some years ago. I was lucky enough to see one ambling across a paddock, away from its usual forest habitat. Two years ago, I had several views of one that used to forage in the evenings in the guest-house garden, apparently unimpeded by the two rings on each leg.

The remaining land birds were an unusual mixture. One of the commonest was the Golden Whistler, followed by Blackbirds and Song Thrushes. An early morning booming produced Emerald Ground Doves. The only small bird was the Silvereye. Magpie-larks appeared in the few paddocks on the island and also in trees. In forested areas, Pied Currawongs came close to inspect, giving vent to non-typical cries. It looked as if isolated evolution on the island had led to several species forgetting what their particular call should be. At first, I was mystified by the unusual call of the Golden Whistler until I identified the bird itself.

In the short grass round the airfield and nearby, there were Ruddy Turnstones, Whimbrels, Lesser Golden Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Swampheens and Buff-banded Rails. I was unable to discover whether these were all resident or whether they migrated across the ocean. The same applied to the numerous Welcome Swallows; there was no sign of their nests on the island.

A White-faced Heron was seen a couple of times, likewise Sacred Kingfishers. I think I saw all the 18 species of land birds but was not so lucky with the sea birds, since some like the Providence Petrel come to the island to breed at a different time of year.

Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, which spend all day at sea, nest in burrows in the sandy soil in the flatter parts of the island, even some hundreds of metres inland. In several places, the ground is honey-combed, with footprints leading to burrows, often among the roots of trees. Presumably the roots help to prevent the sandy soil collapsing. At night, the bird's mournful cries were commonplace. On New Year's Eve, I stood on the shore at dusk as these



Flesh-footed Shearwater

Drawn by Diane Beckingham

Flesh-footed Shearwaters were nesting in November 1997 on Woody Island in the Recherche Archipelago off Esperance.

shearwaters circled round at great speed. One by one, they would swoop to the ground and start to waddle into the forest on their short legs, sometimes stopping for a rest. Using a small torch, I approached one bird and even stroked its back before it resumed its ungainly progress inland. Canoeing to Blackburn Island in the lagoon, I had intended to walk across the island, but desisted when I discovered shearwater eggs lying about in depressions and adult birds sitting under grass tussocks.

For all the wealth of birds and vegetation on Lord Howe Island, there were surprising omissions. There were no gulls, magpies, kookaburras, parrots; no Eucalyptus trees or native shrubs that I could identify from WA experience. It was quite a different habitat that seemed to be more tropical than temperate. All worth a visit at the right time of year.

Brian Wilson

MAGPIES CLIMB TREES

Amongst a group of Australian Magpies (18 strong) occupying the oval of Edith Cowan University at Churchlands as part of their territory, are two birds which cannot fly. I often wondered why they were not easy prey for cats and foxes until I saw them climb trees.

Any of the Marri or Jarrah trees around the oval which grow at an angle of about 70 degrees can be climbed by the magpies. They grasp the rough bark with their claws and walk straight up the tree, pausing sometimes for a rest as the climbing takes great effort.

One magpie, a male, has deformed wings (an apparent birth defect) and has managed to live a more or less normal life in spite of the handicap. The other flightless magpie is a two-year old female with a broken wing. This female seemed to learn the trick of tree climbing from the deformed-wing male. I have observed both magpies from 1995 to 1997, during which time tree climbing was a daily practice.

Barbara Reif

FOOD PREFERENCES OF AUSTRALIAN RAVENS

In September 1997, Australian Ravens were observed at Churchlands eating winged white ants (termites) as fast as they emerged from a nest in the ground. A week later at Joondalup a raven was seen eating a hairy black caterpillar, first rubbing the hairs off on the ground. At other times ravens have cracked open garden snails for food. On several occasions ravens have cornered a Laughing Turtle-Dove in the driveway of my house at Joondanna. The dove was killed and eaten. Often the victim is a young dove, but adults are also taken. The ravens also raid the nests of the Laughing Turtle-Dove for eggs.

Barbara Reif

MYSTERY BIRD — WINDY HARBOUR

On 11 December 1997, I was walking on the shoreline at Windy Harbour, south of Northcliffe, when I came upon a small, pure white bird crouched on rocks near some seaweed.

My first thought was it would turn out to be an aviary escapee, but when it flew off to another rock only three metres away, I had time to observe it from the side and could not give a name to it.

I saw a yellow, finely pointed bill and no other significant markings. Leg and eye colour were not obvious. I had no camera, no binoculars and no witnesses, yet was given the chance to observe it for a few minutes before it flew up and away to the east. Although it was about the size of a swallow, its tail did not appear swallow-like as it flew off. An albino something? How tantalising!

Diane Beckingham

HOODED PLOVERS AT BENNETTS LAKE, DUNN ROCK NATURE RESERVE

On 5 January we visited Bennetts Lake, which at this time of year is shallow and very saline. At about the same

time of year last year we saw three Hooded Plovers here, so we were not surprised when quite quickly we saw several on this recent visit. What did surprise us, as it is not a very inviting looking lake, bare, salty and wind-swept, was that the further we scanned around with the telescope the more Hooded Plovers we saw. Our final total was 90, but it is quite possible that we missed birds on the far side of the lake, so this is a minimum figure. About thirty of these birds appeared to be immature, so the question arises as to whether the birds bred at this lake. We have no information on this point.

There were other birds at the lake, of most interest being about 700 Banded Stilts. Despite examining in great detail every one of the 1400 legs (well, it felt like it) we did not see a single leg flag, but there were several birds in non-breeding plumage and these were probably young from the breeding event at Lake Ballard in 1996.

John and Judy Blyth

HAND-HELD GPS UNITS

Have you been birding and wanted to know precisely where you are so that you can return there again (eg, a Malleefowl mound)? Have you been walking in flat featureless mulga and not been exactly sure where your car is? Do you participate in the Birds of Prey (BOP) Watch survey and need to know what degree of latitude and longitude you are in? Are you joining the second Atlas project starting this year and want an easy way of determining what block you are in? Then a GPS unit may be of benefit for you.

The Global Positioning System was set up by the US Department of Defence (DoD) in the 1970s. It consists of a network of satellites, which transmit the precise time and their precise location. A receiver can determine its location to within a metre by 'locking on' to three or more satellites. However, the DoD has a Selective Availability (SA) option that reduces the accuracy to within 100 metres. This is more than accurate enough for most of the possible applications above. The altitude is quite imprecise, and probably only useful for determining if you are high enough for certain species (eg, Golden Bowerbird).

The last few years have seen the development of hand held receivers and, like all new technology, the prices are dropping and the functionality is increasing. A very good unit can now be bought for \$355 plus accessories.

There is a good variety of units from different manufacturers to choose from. The Eagle Explorer, Garmin 12XL and Magellan GPS 2000XL are the newer models, with the Trimble ScoutMaster being slightly older but likely to be updated shortly. The Garmin 12XL is a later model than, and superior to the Garmin 38 and Garmin 45XL. The Garmin is the standard against which all other units are compared, although most reviews available on the www now recommend the Eagle Explorer. They are all 12 channel units. They will all display the current location as a latitude and longitude. They all will store waypoints, and show you the distance and direction back to them.

The main criteria to compare are the time to determine the position; their ability to obtain and retain their 'lock' in difficult conditions (eg, in the car, in a forest or near cliffs); the battery life (7 to 24 hours) and a display of remaining life; water resistance (rain proof versus water proof); the ease of use; available accessories (holster; cigarette lighter adaptor); number of points that can be stored; and of course the price. Features that are likely to be available soon include the sunrise and sunset times, an odometer for how far you have walked, and possibly the tide times!

I bought the Eagle Explorer, but I strongly recommend that you assess the above (and any newer) models against your own requirements. If you have access to the www then start at the <http://powerup.com.au/~galaw/gps.htm> web site. One piece of advice is to ring around the larger fishing tackle shops to get the best price. The Birds Australia office in Melbourne is now selling the Magellan units.

Frank O'Connor

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL AT BROOME

On 25 January an unusual bird was seen hawking insects over Pindan Woodland bordering Roebuck Bay, in the company of small numbers of Tree Martins (*Hirundo nigricans*). Its size, 18 cm plus by sight, and long scythe like wings immediately placed it as a swift.

The bird was observed at 17:03–17:08 hours at a distance of about three metres above two observers using Zeiss 10x50 and Zeiss 8x40 binoculars under conditions of low 100% cloud cover.

Other characteristics seen by both observers in the field included a white throat and white flanks which appeared to join white vent and undertail coverts. The tail appeared short and blunt during normal flight. When the bird stalled the tail was rounded when fanned and one observer clearly saw short spines. The bird's back was a dirty grey/white, clearly paler than the dark of the head, wing, rump and uppertail.

This is the first sighting of a White-throated Needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) for the Broome area (70 kilometre radius). On the morning of 9 November 1997 one bird of this species was seen 30 km east of Mid Lagoon by George Swann (pers. comm.) approximately 150 km north of Broome.

Chris Hassell and Janet Sparrow

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE: SECOND RECORD FOR BROOME

On 9 January Berkeley Fitzhardinge, Bernie Scott (Vic) and Tony Smith (Tas) reported seeing a phalarope on Roebuck Bay the previous day (08/01/98). They believed the bird to be a Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) and had observed it using a remnant tidal pool. The only previous sighting in the area was of two birds in the Broome Sewage Ponds in December 1994 (Collins 1995).

We followed the directions on where to find the bird and got frustratingly short views. Our 15 second view

made it apparent that the bird was a phalarope but of which species we couldn't be sure. We returned to the same pool at 06:25 on 10 January and the bird was there. We watched the bird for seven minutes with Kowa spotting scopes under calm and clear conditions. At no time was it stationary but fed frenetically on the edge of the pool. It appeared to be taking prey in the air as well as from the surface of the mud. It swam across the pool once.

The behaviour coupled with the shortish neck, short legs, dark eye surround and line through the ear coverts confirmed it to be one of the phalaropes. Other field identification marks noted were as follows:

Very fine black bill, white lores, white forecrown, black eye patch extending through ear coverts and a little beyond. Sides of crown above the eye white, hindcrown streaked grey, nape had diffuse grey streaking down to mantle. The underparts of the bird were bright white from chin to undertail coverts except for a few broad grey streaks on the flanks. The legs were black/grey. The mantle and back, upperwing coverts and scapulars were grey with broad white streaking and thin black lines. The primaries were black in the closed wing.

The bird flushed when a Brahminy Kite flew into the area. It was not seen in flight, our view being blocked by trees.

After studying our notes and various reference texts (Hayman *et al.* 1986, Rosair and Cottridge 1995 and Simpson and Day 1995) we are confident of the bird being a Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*). The very fine entirely black bill, black/grey legs and broad white streaking (feather edges) on the back precluded Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*).

This is the first sighting of this species in Roebuck Bay and the second for the Broome area.

References:

- Collins, P. 1995. *The Birds of Broome: An Annotated List*. Broome Bird Observatory, Broome.
Hayman, P., Marchant, J. and Prater, T. 1986. *Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World*. Christopher Helm, London.
Rosair, D. and Cottridge, D. 1995. *Hamlyn Photographic Guide to the Waders of the World*. Hamlyn, London.
Simpson, K. and Day, N. 1995. *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Viking, Ringwood.

Chris Hassell and Janet Sparrow

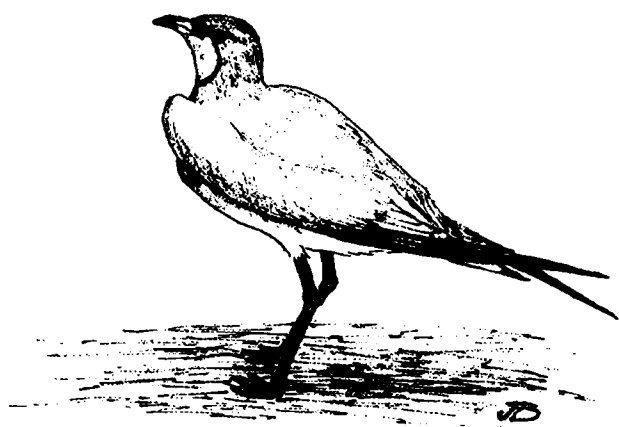
ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE AT HERDSMAN LAKE

During the weekend of the great wader count for 1998 (8 February) we counted waders around Herdsman Lake. The water level in the lake was low, with many of the flats or meres that are most attractive to wading birds being dry. Nevertheless, there were areas of edge around the deep moats and comparatively restricted sandy and muddy banks associated with them that provided some habitat for these birds.

One of the best of these areas was on the western side of the lake and is known as a good place to see crakes. So it proved on this day, with two of each of Australian

Spotted and Spotless Crakes giving excellent views of themselves over about an hour, and a Buff-banded Rail showing itself occasionally.

While watching the crakes through the telescope we saw in the same view a brownish bird of approximately the same size which was extremely difficult to pick up against the background of the mud on which it stood. It quickly became apparent that this new bird was a pratincole, as its strangely shaped bill and enormously long, black-tipped wings could be seen. Once it turned to face us and stood upright we could clearly see the lovely gingery-fawn bib outlined by a bold black line starting below each eye that identified it as an adult Oriental Pratincole in breeding plumage.



Oriental Pratincole
Drawn by Judy Blyth

The pratincole interspersed periods of standing quite still with short bursts of almost frenetic activity. Among its most characteristic movements were little jumps straight into the air, at which time it would raise its wings high, exposing shining chestnut underwing coverts as well as the white rump and short forked tail with black tips. It appeared to be trying to take flying insects from just above the mud, and the little jumps looked as though the bird may have been in pursuit of those insects that tried to escape upwards. It frequently extended the jumps to short flights of one to about three metres, but never moved far. For the three-quarters of an hour for which we watched it, the pratincole remained on the same mud bank, that had 14 species of birds either roosting or feeding on it.

Oriental Pratincoles come to northern Australia in tens of thousands in late spring and early summer and disperse southwards, frequently reaching Carnarvon in significant numbers. There have been a few other reports of sightings from the southwest and from around Perth, but as far as we know this is the first record from Herdsman Lake.

John and Judy Blyth

LAKE McLARTY

Allan Burbidge and Mike Craig have shown (WABN 78: 10-13) that Lake McLarty on its own meets or exceeds

the criteria laid down by the Ramsar convention as being a Wetland of International Importance for both resident and migrant shorebirds during the southern summer. (The lake is already a part of the Peel-Yalgorup Wetland of International Importance). However, there is still a need for more information to be made available, to enable management of the lake to adequately cater for the needs of waterbirds.

As anyone who has visited the lake during this time will know, the main congregations of shorebirds, particularly smaller species (Red-necked Stints, Curlew and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers) tend to feed on the mudflats along the eastern and south-eastern sides of the lake as the water evaporates during summer. The larger shorebirds (Red-necked Avocets, Black-winged Stilts and Common Greenshanks) are usually more evenly distributed around the lake. The eastern and south-eastern side is also a regular breeding area for Red-capped Plovers, and on at least two occasions, Black-fronted Dotterels.

What is probably less understood is the way in which other waterbirds (ducks, Eurasian Coots, Black Swans, etc) use the lake during the winter and early spring when water levels are at a peak. Of special interest is the high numbers of birds using the paperbark thickets along the western side. This side of the lake is closest to and most likely to be adversely affected by the recent land subdivision.

During the winter and spring of 1997 I counted birds on the lake with the following results:

Date	Paperbark	Total on lake
29/8/97	1739	2969
28/9/97	3339	4282

(The figures for 'Paperbark' are birds flushed from the paperbark thicket on the western side of the lake.)

As can be seen from these figures, most (about 70%) of the birds using the lake at this time of year are to be found inside the paperbark thickets along the western side. Very few birds were seen along the northern, southern and eastern edges of the lake, which also have similar paperbarks. For example, on 29 August 1997, after wading around the lake on the offshore side of the paperbarks, starting at the south end and working east then north, only 20 coots were seen until reaching the western side, where 1739 birds were flushed. On 28 September 1997 the number of birds inside the paperbarks at this side had almost doubled. Most birds were Eurasian Coots and Grey Teal, which probably use the area as a daytime roost.

Again, on 26 October 1997 the number of birds seemed to have increased but the paperbark wasn't fully worked. This was to avoid disturbing a breeding colony of Little Pied Cormorants. Also flushed on this day was a Freckled Duck. There were about 14 000 birds of which

about 8000 were Australian Shelducks, many of which were in moult and flightless. The greatest concentration of these was in the south-western corner.

During times of high water levels (winter-spring) the western side of Lake McLarty seems to be the most important and densely populated area of the lake. At present there is very little in the way of a buffer zone between this side and the new subdivision. The road is only metres away from the water's edge in some places.

Below are several breeding records additional to those listed in WABN No 78:

Species	Date	Comment
Little Pied Cormorant	26/10/97	9 nests (5 with eggs)
Pacific Black Duck	29/8/97	5 downy chicks
	28/9/97	4 downy chicks
	26/10/97	9 downy chicks
Grey Teal	29/8/97	8 downy chicks
Australian Shelduck	28/9/97	7, 5 downy chicks
Black-fronted Plover	28/12/93	2 x C/1, 1 x C/2 eggs

Tony Kirkby

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS AT LYONS RIVER

We would like to report several significant sightings made at Edithanna Pool on the Lyons River on Gifford Creek pastoral station about 10 km north of Cobra homestead.

On 24 August 1997 we were birdwatching at about 1.00 pm at the pool when we saw a single Dusky Moorhen swimming amongst reeds fringing an island in the centre of the pool. It was unmistakable with its grey-black plumage and orange-red bill and was definitely not a native-hen. We were surprised to see it this far north.

A few minutes later we sighted a group of about 20 finches feeding in grasses and unidentified herbaceous plants on the north side of the pool. We could not immediately identify them but after watching for some 20 minutes we identified them as juvenile Star Finches.

There was not a single adult amongst them, but having bred these birds in captivity we were positive about our identification. The birds were pale brown in colour, with rusty red tails which they flicked from side to side. Their erect posture when perched was also typical of Star Finches. One or two birds were beginning to show red on the face. Other birdwatchers camped at Mt Augustus Tourist Resort reported adult Star Finches near the dry riverbed of the Lyons River upstream from our sighting.

It would seem that Star Finches would be at the extreme southern limits of their range (usually quoted as

from the Ashburton River, north) at this point. The sighting of a sizeable group of juveniles was in keeping with our observation that the countryside was in very good condition due to recent rains and many species were breeding or had bred already.

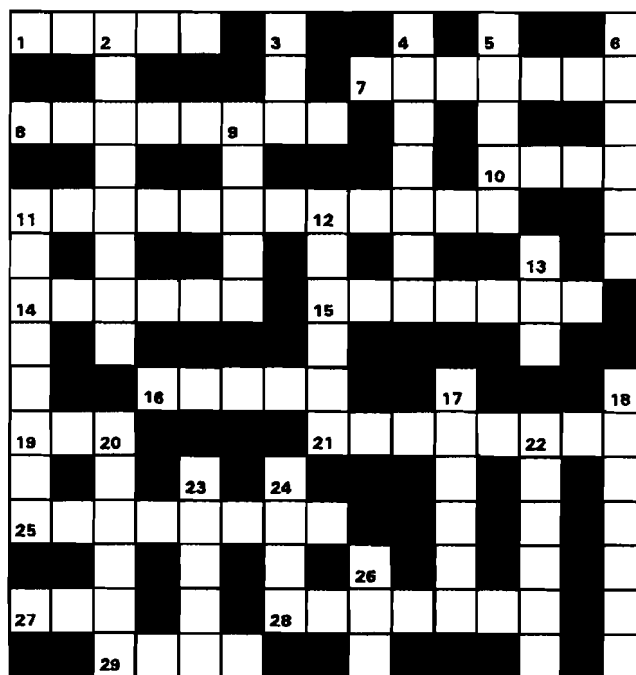
At the same location (Edithanna Pool) we observed two Darter chicks in a nest in a River Red Gum overhanging the pool. There were four nests of Little Pied Cormorants close by in the same tree. There was an adult at each nest, but we did not disturb them to determine nest contents.

Also of interest within the nearby Mt Augustus National Park was a group of more than 200 Straw-necked Ibis who flew into Gum Creek at dusk.

Peter and Carol Phillips

Crossword No 12

Pam Agar



CLUES ACROSS

- House name of WA Group office.
- Northern forest where you may see Crested Shrike-tits.
- People exercising dogs may do this to a plover's nest.
- This Peron Peninsula project will help protect Malleefowl.
- Two are offered annually to university students.
- Striped breast or encircled leg.
- An Emu is known to be this.
- Northern section of flyway linking Australia and Siberia.
- Code name for a current raptor survey.
- Bank of computer records.
- Many of our waders breed in this hemisphere.
- Initials of NSW observatory.

28. Station visited by WA Group in 1997.
29. Parrots have two pointing forwards and two pointing backwards.

CLUES DOWN

2. Unusual visitor to Vasse Estuary, April '97.
3. Coloured substance for marking birds.
4. Comparative description of wader size.
5. May affect numbers of waders to be seen.
6. Metallic colouring of some cuckoos.
9. In the Emu family, it's the male which will do this.
11. On-going survey of Perth metropolitan area.
12. Not the first time seen, but nearly.
13. A wader chick soon learns to do this.
17. It's frustrating for a rarity to do this as soon as you identify it.
18. 1997 survey of Roebuck Bay invertebrates.
20. Species known to damage grass trees.
22. Small but keen birding group based south of Perth.
23. Number of forward-pointing toes of song-birds.
24. Family of tiny, colourful males but drab females.
26. Number of species of sittella in WA.

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

Twenty-one members of the Albany Bird Group had a successful outing on 11 November 1997. We met at the Narrikup Store, travelled about 5-6 km down Spencer Road to Booth's property. Lake Eyrie, our main target area, is situated some distance behind the farm house, and surrounded by Melaleucas, farming land and some swampy country.

The weather wasn't very helpful. This came as quite a shock. It wasn't the usual beautiful Tuesday, but was blowing a cold south-easterly wind and drizzly for most of the day. The grey clouds made it hard to see the bush birds.

The water birds were there in large numbers. People were excited to see a lone Hooded Plover on the edge of the lake on the far side.

After our visit to Lake Eyrie we travelled on up Spencer Road to the Spencer Road Reserve then on to Sheep Wash Reserve. We managed to see a few little bush birds to add to the list.

A total for the day: 54 species.

Next outing on 9 December 1997, Two Peoples Bay for the Christmas picnic.

Vivian McCormick

REMEMBER

Broome and Eyre Bird Observatories
have wonderful programmes.
Refer to our Perry House office for details
of courses, etc

Notices

THANK YOU, ROGER AND MARIAN

For the last three years, Roger Watson, with assistance from his wife Marian, has been typesetting *WA Bird Notes*. Their experience in this area has brought extra professionalism to our layout. Other interests and changed circumstances, as well as the enthusiasm of Margaret Philippon, now enable Roger and Marian to reduce their commitment to WABN. Margaret has taken on the typesetting as well as typing of WABN, with assistance and advice as needed from Roger. On behalf of the WA Group Committee and members, the editors wish to thank Roger and Marian for their considerable contribution to production of the last twelve issues of *WA Bird Notes*.

SUBMISSION OF MATERIAL ON DISK

It would be appreciated if contributors, when submitting articles on disk, would separate the written text from any accompanying photos, drawings, graphs, etc, by saving each item as a separate file in its own format. This would assist greatly in the typesetting of the newsletter. Thank you.

WESTERN GROUND PARROT SURVEY AT WAYCHINICUP AND MANYPEAKS



WWF World Wide Fund
For Nature Australia
ACN 001 584 074

The WA Group and Albany Bird Group have been successful in receiving a grant from World Wide Fund for Nature WA to survey the distribution of Ground Parrots at Waychinicup and Manypeaks. The grant is one of several 1998 grants that have been offered in Western Australia by WWF for community involvement in conservation of threatened species and ecological communities. Shapelle McNee has been nominated as coordinator for the project. Vivian McCormick from the Albany Bird Group will be assisting in coordinating people's participation in the project.

We know there are Ground Parrots at Waychinicup and Manypeaks (as well as the Noisy Scrub-birds, Western Bristlebirds and Western Whipbirds!). However, we only have opportunistic records at a few locations. A survey of the distribution of Ground Parrots will contribute vital information to future management plans for the Waychinicup and Manypeaks Reserves.

The Albany Bird Group and WA Group would like to invite people to volunteer to be 'Ground Parrot Listeners' for this project. This is an opportunity to discover first hand the unique habits of this quite unusual

and rare parrot. As Ground Parrot Listeners we will visit potential Ground Parrot sites to listen for their calls after the sun has set. As the Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters cease their calling at dusk the Ground Parrots will start to give their long, ascending call. The Ground Parrot continues to call into the stillness (!?) of the falling dark up to 45 minutes after the sun has set. A unique experience, which is even more appreciated when the weather is good (which we hope it will be).

We need your help to cover the large area involved. We are aiming for a team of six to ten people each night. **Three listening sessions are planned during autumn:** two in **April** (tentatively for 3-5 April and 16-19 April) which include the weekends either side of Easter, and one in the second half of **May** (tentatively for 21-24 May). These dates include week and weekend nights to suit those who have a preference for either, or you can join in for all of the three or four nights. We anticipate camping out. Some nights may be spent at the Cheyne Beach Caravan Park.

If you would like to participate please contact:

Shapelle McNee Ph (08) 9457 5008

or

Vivian McCormick Ph (08) 9844 1073

to indicate your interest and when you would be available.

LAKE MCLARTY: IMPORTANT WETLAND UNDER THREAT

In terms of its importance for birds, Lake McLarty is one of the two or three most important freshwater wetlands in southern Western Australia, and fulfils the criteria for Ramsar wetlands (see article in WABN 78: 10-13). However, it is under increasing threat from adjacent and nearby urban developments that are progressing with little recognition of the lake's values and need for protection and management. Accordingly, a group of Birds Australia members led by Colin Davis is gathering data on the lake, to try and assist CALM, other agencies and private landowners to manage existing and potential impacts. If you are planning to visit the lake, please let us have a copy of your observations. Colin Davis can advise you concerning current activities that you could be involved in. If you have records of birds seen on previous visits to Lake McLarty, we would also like to be able to add these to the database. Please forward any information for the database to Michael Craig at 5 Monument St, Mosman Park 6012, telephone (08) 9384 5398.

COLOUR BANDED GREAT EGRETS

I am conducting research on a bird colony of Great Egrets at the Perth Zoo. In order to obtain information on their distribution I have banded and colour marked, with a purple spray, juvenile/adult birds. A metal band has been placed on the upper part on one leg and a red band on the other.

If anyone sights these banded Great Egrets, please note the time of day, location, behaviour (foraging,

flying, preening), any breeding plumage present, and whether the bird is dead or alive. Please inform Robyn Phillimore on (08) 9343 5335 or (08) 9342 7499, or write to:

43 Sherington Road,

Greenwood, Perth, Western Australia 6024

WATERBIRDS OF THE JANDAKOT WETLANDS: HELP WANTED

We are currently surveying waterbirds on a number of wetlands in the Jandakot area for the Water and Rivers Commission. This is part of a programme to monitor environmental impacts of the extraction of water from the Jandakot Mound. Surveys take place 3-4 times a year and we are always looking for help. Anyone wishing to participate should contact us on (08) 9309 3671. This is an ongoing project and we are looking for people who can commit themselves to a site or sites. We can pay fuel costs.

Mandy and Mike Bamford

BIRDS AUSTRALIA ANNUAL CAMPOUT: GERALDTON, 21-28 SEPTEMBER

The 1998 Annual Congress and Campout were to have been held in New Zealand, but have been cancelled. Instead, a campout will be held in the Geraldton area.

The Campout will include numerous visits to good birding spots and wildflower places. There will be two optional 2-day boat trips to the Abrolhos Islands, to view their spectacular seabird colonies.

A bus will run from Perth for those requiring transport. Accommodation will be at your choice of the Greenough Resort (which has an on-site cafeteria and restaurant) or the Greenough River Caravan Park (chalets, cabins, on-site vans, caravan and campsites, and on-site shop).

A brochure with full details and including costs and application forms will be available in March from the Birds Australia WA Group office. Space on the boat trips is limited (15 persons per trip) and bookings will be accepted on a 'first in best dressed' basis.

WA PROJECT OFFICER FOR NEW ATLAS OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS PROJECT

The Commonwealth Government has provided funds to Birds Australia to conduct another Atlas of Australian Birds. The first day of bird atlassing is planned for Saturday 1 August 1998.

The Atlas Project will be co-ordinated by four salaried staff and a team of volunteer regional organisers. The salaried staff will be a full-time National Project Co-ordinator (based in Melbourne) and half-time Project Officers based in Perth, Sydney and Brisbane.

The WA Project Officer's position will be advertised in the *West Australian* Newspaper in mid- to late-April with a view of the successful applicant starting in mid-June. This person will be based in the Perth Office of Birds Australia. The position is for four years initially and, although it is only half-time in the first year, it is likely to become full-time in the second year.

The Project Officer will help co-ordinate the collection and storage of bird atlas information from Western Australia. In doing so, he/she will provide administrative support to the volunteer regional co-ordinators and the National Project Co-ordinator, as well as feeding back information to WA Atlassers. Experience in project management with proven effective volunteer liaison skills, computer data-basing skills, proficient report writing and oral communication skills, and a driver's licence are essential. A university honours degree in biology or the equivalent is preferable.

Salary: \$16,000 plus 7% super in first year (half-time). Position becoming full-time in second year coupled with an incremental annual salary increase.

Further information about how to apply for this position, duty statements and selection criteria will be available from the Perth Office from 13 April.

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia-WA Group between 30 October 1997 and 3 February 1998. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

W Bancroft, S Brown, V Brown, J Cousin, B Crouch, R Flanagan, B Gilham, D Heeger, N Kennedy, H Kent, A S D Legge, S M Legge, G Liddelow, P I Llorens, G K Luha, M Nield-Siddal and family, M O'Connor, J Pascall, J Priest, A Sarafin, D Smithdale, M Stone, N Sutherland

Snippets

From *The Tattler*, No 13, November 1997

Australian North-west Expedition '98

The next NW Australia Wader Expedition will take place from 1 August to 31 October 1998. The programme will again consist of regular banding and appropriate counting of waders and terns at three locations (Broome, 80 Mile Beach and Port Hedland Saltworks). This will be the first expedition to the NW to cover the whole arrival period of migratory waders from their northern breeding grounds. Waders will be banded, leg-flagged and be examined for moult, biometrics and weight. Detailed information of arrival dates, and weights, of adults and juvenile birds will give good indications of which birds are using the NW as a migratory stopover site on their way to non-breeding ("wintering") areas further south. The early catches will provide information on the non-breeding birds which have spent the May-July period in the NW for the first time. Less frequently captured species will be targeted such as Little Curlew, Oriental Plover, Whimbrel, Greenshank, Sanderling, Eastern Curlew, Grey Plover, Marsh Sandpiper and Black-tailed Godwit.

Towards the end of the period the proportion of the capture of juvenile birds will provide information on breeding success.

Terns will be integrated into the programme after the successful '96 work on eight species of terns. The itinerary for the 13-week period will include: Broome/Roebuck Bay (including Bush Point and Roebuck Plains) 41 days (16 rest days), 80 Mile Beach/Anna Plains 33 days (3 rest days) and Port Hedland Saltworks 7 days (2 rest days). In all 11 days will be used travelling between sites. Overseas experts will again add to the interest of the expedition including six cannon-netting experts from the Highland Ringing Group in the UK.

More people are needed for this expedition, especially in October. As it is important to plan well ahead, anyone interested in taking part in the '98 expedition should contact Clive Minton as soon as possible at:

165 Dalgety Road, Beaumaris, Vic 3193

Tel/Fax: (03) 9589 4901

E-mail: mintons@ozemail.com.au

Observatory Reports

BROOME

After our annual leave, Chris and I were happy to be back at Roebuck Bay amongst the birds and bush. The December rains had already greened the vegetation and there was a promise of more to come. At this time of year, with the shorebirds filling the beaches and the prospect of storms and strong winds, anything can turn up. The rainy season brings high levels of activity in birds, reptiles and mammals and despite the sometimes steamy weather, the Observatory is a really exciting place to be.

Just a matter of days after our return three birdwatchers, two visiting and one local, called in to BBO. We pointed them in the direction of the shorebirds and told them about what was around. There were still Yellow Wagtails and Swinhoe's Snipe at the sewage pond and we had been seeing good numbers of Broad-billed Sandpipers on the Bay. They caught up with many of the species they wanted to see plus what they thought must be a phalarope. Chris and I, using their accurate directions, found the bird twice and had excellent views of a Red-necked Phalarope using a remnant tidal pool to swim and feed in (see separate article in this issue).

This was an added bonus to the thousands of waders lining the beaches. It didn't take us long to get our eye back in as we hadn't managed to resist wader watching at Alfred Cove before our return. There are waders in their thousands: high counts of Bar and Black-tailed Godwits, Greater Sand Plovers and Red-necked Stints, and in amongst them a few Asiatic Dowitchers and good numbers of Broad-billed Sandpipers. Having missed a research month we were keen to get out with the cannon-

net to establish what proportion of juvenile birds would be in any sample. The target species for the BBO, as part of the Australian Wader Study Group's banding project, are Greater Sand Plovers, Terek Sandpipers and Red Knot. After a cannon-net catch that looked like it would yield Greater Sand Plovers we were reminded that the birds may have a different agenda and we caught only one. Any disappointment was offset by the seventeen Broad-billed Sandpipers, bringing the catch total to 66 birds.

Unfortunately all banding activities were postponed as we sat out first cyclone Tiffany and then Les. As with all clouds there is a silver lining, including cyclonic ones! Fork-tailed Swifts came in on the front of the storm and we had a count of over 100 birds.

In the Observatory grounds we are hearing and seeing a great deal of activity. Restless Flycatchers are nesting, as are the Willie Wagtails. Jonathan Woods, a student on industry placement from his Eco-tourism degree, found a Pheasant Coucal nest with three healthy chicks. We have recorded five of the parasitic cuckoos in and around in the Observatory: Black-eared, Little Bronze, Horsfield's Bronze, Pallid and Brush Cuckoos were active and calling.

With an exciting year ahead we were relishing the prospect of our 300th bird for the Observatory list but could not have been prepared for what happened next. At 7.30 am on the morning of 23 January our bird appeared. As if understanding the importance of the event it hopped around in the tree outside the Warden's chalet as if to say "submit this record if you dare". The consensus is that the bird was an Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*) (see lead article in this issue). It will never know that it was probably the best birthday present ever for Chris. The 23rd of January will now be Arctic Warbler Day! Those of you who have visited the Observatory know that we have a 'Twitcher's Tax' where new birds for one's life list are taxed at various rates. The Arctic Warbler is taxed at \$5 (I know a few people who would gladly pay for its inclusion on their life list!).

The Warbler only just pipped two further new bird reports for our list, all vying for the 300th position. White-plumed Honeyeaters have been reported from Coconut Well and above the Pindan woodland Chris and I were treated to spectacular views of a White-throated Needletail (see separate article in this issue).

So, Chris Hassell wins the T-shirt for the 300th bird! He will be proudly sporting one of our handsome BBO T-shirts (kindly printed by Rod Smith and volunteers) during work hours. Although I am loath to offer T-shirts for any further additions to the BBO list, a new record, which is also new for mainland Australia, will be rewarded. Better get some more printed now the gauntlet has been thrown! Whether you win or buy the T-shirt we hope to see you this year for some exciting and quality birding.

Stop Press.... Stop Press..... We are now able to take enquiries and bookings through e-mail. The BBO address is: bbo@tpgi.com.au

Janet Sparrow

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

A spell of hot weather during January's bat course with Doug Watkins played havoc both with the course participants and the birdlife, with more than one bird dying from heat exhaustion as temperatures soared up to 48°C in the shade. On the other hand we were all treated to an 'armchair' show as exhausted birds sought relief from the heat in the shade of the observatory's verandahs. A combination of various honeyeaters, Welcome Swallows, Tree Martins, Major Mitchell's Cockatoos, Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens and even a Brown Goshawk quietly shared the shade. In the cool of the evening, course participants were at it again as bats were caught and recorded.

Fortunately by the end of the week temperatures had dropped as our dune stabilisation course got underway.

Approximately 20 trailer loads of seaweed were used to help stabilise the newly seeded dunes. Not bad for a beach normally void of all seaweed at this time of year, although some thanks must go to the fact that it is the windiest year for some eight years!

In recent weeks the heavily flowering Melaleuca has been joined with an abundance of Eucalypt blossom which has seen the welcome return of Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and Red Wattlebirds.

The warm nights have also been productive and we are often sighting Southern Boobooks and Tawny Frogmouths, with the occasional sighting of Owlet and Spotted Nightjars.

... thanks to the relief Wardens during our time of need ...

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Gwen and Graham Goodreid, Alex Morrison and Jan Rodda for their invaluable help in acting as relief wardens during our time of need over the Christmas and New Year period.

We would also like to thank everyone for their response to our article for donations in the last *WA Bird Notes*; they have been gratefully received and are presently hard at work.

A sincere thanks must also go to Allan Burbidge for his invaluable work in setting up Eyre's web page which can be located at:

<http://cygnus.uwa.edu.au/~austecol/observatories/eyre.htm>

The new web site is a great way to keep up with the activities at Eyre and new course information for 1998, which includes *Birding for Beginners* with the wardens in March, *Focus on Birds* with Peter Sandilands in April and *Natural History* with Kevn Griffiths in June. So why not join us for one of our many courses or just for a relaxing holiday?

For more information please contact EBO on (08) 9039 3450 or view our web site.

James and Debbie Brownlie

Excursion Reports

KOJONUP CAMPOUT, 8-9 November 1997

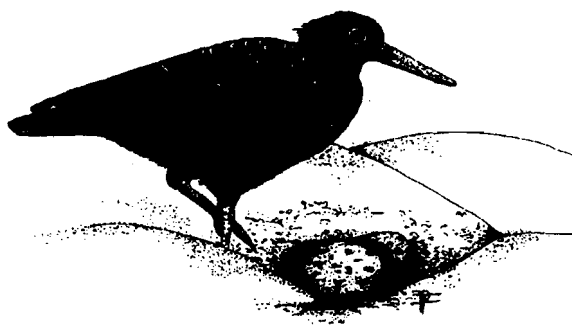
During the weekend 26 members congregated at Cherry Tree Pool Youth Camp near Kojonup. Our objective was to survey the nearby 330 hectare Wandoo forest block, recently purchased by the Tasmanian-based Australian Bush Heritage Fund. Our leader was Wayne Zadow who throughout the weekend demonstrated his unique ability to find bird nests. Without his help very few of the 20 nesting species would have been located. As it was, we saw 80 species, 20 of which had nests in the vicinity of the campsite and Heritage block. A further 12 species, six of which had nests, were seen on Sunday afternoon in the Shire of Woodanilling on Wayne's own property. We would like to thank Wayne for introducing us to this interesting area and locating such a range of nests — from the huge Wedge-tailed Eagle's to the minute Weebill's which the bird was still lining with feathers.

Bryan Barrett

(The directions for the Kojonup campout in November 1997 were given in detail in *WA Bird Notes*, together with what people might expect to see during the weekend. However, no mention was made as to the reason for the visit. During the spring of 1996, The Australian Bush Heritage Fund, based in Hobart, became interested in the purchase of a block of Wandoo forest in Western Australia. The area was surveyed by experts in natural history who reported that the 330 hectare block was in prime condition. It consisted of various types of Wandoo woodland with an understorey of open scrubland, Melaleuca thickets, herbs, heaths, sedges and endemic flowering plants and orchids, with very few weeds. The reports suggested that the area was capable of supporting at least 80 species of birds, together with mammals, frogs and reptiles. As a result, the Fund purchased the block for \$50,000, the money being raised by public subscription.

Having been advised of the purchase of this land, we wrote asking for permission to hold a campout in the area and see what we could find. In due course permission was granted, provided we asked Wayne Zadow to lead the walk as he had been involved in the initial surveys and was continuing to monitor the area. We were also asked to report back to the Fund what species we had seen during our visit. This we have now done.)

Bryan Barrett



Sooty Oystercatcher

Drawn by Pam Free

Sooty Oystercatchers were seen during the Walpole Inlet boat trip in September 1997.

WOODMAN POINT, 13 November 1997

The weather report forecast fine conditions and a maximum of 24 degrees. Nine stalwarts didn't believe a word of it and arrived with plenty of warm clothing to match the overcast skies and strong easterly breeze. Led by Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg, we made a loop through the bush of the reserve, including the former quarantine station and ammunition depot, seeing Red-capped Parrot, Inland Thornbill, Rufous Whistler, Splendid Fairy-wren, various other bush birds, and four species of raptor (a pale-bellied Kestrel, Black-shouldered Kite, Little Eagle and Whistling Kite).

We returned to a line-up of five Subarus (birdwatcher's choice) before driving on to the end of the track at Woodman Point where we walked along the beach to the westerly point, with the wind behind us. Sheltering in the lee of rocks, piles of dead seagrass, and in hollows were Crested and Caspian Terns, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, Red-necked Stints, Grey Plovers, Greater Sand Plovers and Red-capped Plovers. A pair of Fairy Terns sat tight on the sand at the edge of the water, allowing us to approach quite close and note that one had, and the other hadn't, a black tip to the yellow beak (breeding and non-breeding; one of them must have been disappointed). Not to be overlooked were Pied and Little Pied Cormorants and a Great Cormorant. Altogether 40 species were seen. It rained on the drive home.

Brian Wilson

LAKE JOONDALUP, 23 November 1997

Thirteen lucky people, including a visitor and a new member, had a great morning birding in bush and lakeside environments. Highlights were:

Two large, fully-feathered Whistling Kite chicks still in the nest.

Masses of Eurasian Coots, probably over one thousand, in a raft in the centre of the lake.

Large numbers of Great Crested Grebes, over twenty, resting in calm water close to the lake edge, providing great views of these beautiful birds.

Perfect views of a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, back and front, through telescopes, gave newer members the opportunity to study a usually hard-to-see species.

Total for the morning was 68 species (exactly the same number as seen on an outing here in February 1997).

Tom Delaney

BUNGENDORE PARK, 29 November 1997

In spite of the very pleasant day, our visit to Bungendore Park at the end of November produced only a total of 24 species of birds. The usually quite numerous Rufous Treecreepers were only seen by dint of a great deal of

searching, and neither Western Yellow nor Scarlet Robins were sighted. However, we were rewarded by good views of Western Spinebills, lots of Striated Pardalotes and a male Golden Whistler. It was very evident that Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos were in the area by the large quantity of chewed Marri nuts scattered around, and several birds were seen and heard.

A rather disappointing morning's birding in an area which is usually very productive. However, the 14 people in the group enjoyed the walk and Les did his best to find the birds for us.

Margery Clegg

LAKE McLARTY, 7 December 1997

Sunday 7 December proved to be a pleasant day in spite of the 28 degrees forecast as an early sea breeze kept the temperature down. Twenty-one members attended the excursion which was led by Les Harris.

The lake held more water than many of us had ever seen before, being full from bank to bank, and the surrounding bush was under water. Because of these conditions there was a dearth of waders as no mud was exposed and we only saw approximately 200 to 300 Black-winged Stilts. Five other wader species were noted but only in very small numbers — several Common Greenshanks, a few Black-fronted Dotterels and 2-3 Red-kneed Dotterels. We saw two Black-tailed Native-hens, a species rarely seen at McLarty.

Les first led us to an area of the reserve seldom visited at the northern end of the lake where we saw a number of bush birds among the banksia woodland. Altogether we found 63 species of birds on and around the lake, many of which were ducks, grebes and swans, all in considerable numbers.

Two of the better sightings were a White-bellied Sea-Eagle which flew over as we lunched beside the lake, and at least one Fairy Martin seen by some of the group. Two Little Corellas were also sighted (previously reported by M Craig in WABN No 84).

Bryan Barrett

STAR SWAMP, 11 December 1997

Seven people turned up for this mid-week walk despite the rather hot and humid conditions and with Christmas looming around the corner.

We managed to identify 31 species of birds. Very good, considering also that this area was badly and extensively burnt about six weeks earlier. Some of the usual birds were absent as their habitat had been destroyed.

The highlights were the number of raptors: one Whistling Kite, one Little Eagle, two immature Australian Hobbies and two Nankeen Kestrels. To identify them took a lot of time and interesting discussions.

Thank you, Neil and Chris Porteous, for leading this walk.

Hank van Wees

BIBRA LAKE, 21 December 1997

On a warm Sunday morning 17 members met at Bibra Lake, with the prospect of spotting a good variety of bush and water birds. The walk circumnavigated over a third of the lake and besides the usual water birds, most members got relatively good sightings of a Little Grassbird and a Clamorous Reed-Warbler. Out on the jetty, the muddy shores were checked in anticipation of waders, but numerous Black-fronted Dotterels and several Greenshanks were the only ones to be spotted. Sixty-four birds in total had been seen by midday, including for many, the first sightings of the summer of Rainbow Bee-eaters.

This walk had been led in previous years by the late Peter Anson and thanks go to Clive Napier for taking over this pleasant walk with its abundance of species.

Liz Bowles

HERDSMAN LAKE, 14 January 1998

'Pec' or Sharpie?

Before our walk started it was announced that a Pectoral Sandpiper had been seen nearby, and was being observed by some members of Birds Australia. So it was with interest that the walk started because, for most of the members present, the 'Pec' was quite a rare bird. The writer had not seen one for about five years. We soon found the bird at the water's edge and immediately everybody was unsure of its identification. But the final consensus was that it was a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Close by were a Wood Sandpiper and a Red-kneed Dotterel. Seeing them together was a real bonus.

The walk continued with the group finally noting 53 species for the morning. On the way back we had a closer, clearer view of the Pec/Sharpie with the sun behind us. We all started to doubt our first identification when we could see no trace of a chestnut crown, more yellow showed at the base of the bill, the head seemed more domed and the demarcation between breast and belly seemed more distinct. So we all changed back to calling it a Pectoral Sandpiper. For the writer it remains an uncertain identification.

A dozen members, including one new, were able to enjoy a most interesting challenge on what was a very pleasant morning's walk.

Tom Delaney

AUGUSTA CAMPOUT, 23-26 January 1998

Twenty members enjoyed the Australia Day long weekend at Augusta in fine summer weather exploring the forests, beaches, estuary, heath areas, headlands and rivers of the Leeuwin region, resulting in a grand total of 110 species of birds sighted. As always, there were a number of highlights.

At the Waterwheel we were treated to the rare sight of a family of four Southern Emu-wrens huddled cosily together on a branch in low scrub — the lovely light blue throat of the male and the striped colours on the head and wings clear in the afternoon light.

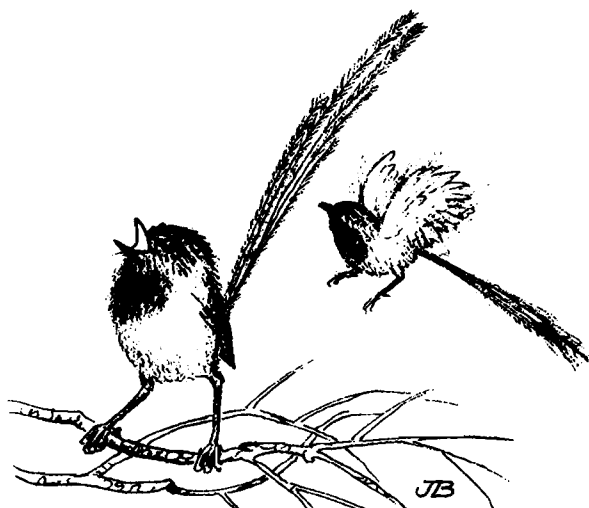
In the tall forest of Boranup we marvelled at an Inland Thornbill feeding 'its young' — in this case a

very large baby in the form of a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo. The metallic green of its wing feathers shone through the dappled forest light, as it passively received any food that was on offer.

Other species sighted included Rock Parrots, numerous Red-winged Fairy-wrens a stone's throw from camp, Fairy and Bridled Terns, the Purple-crowned Lorikeet, a Southern Boobook, Red-eared Firetails, a Black Swan, White-winged Trillers, a family of Pacific Gulls and many more.

Altogether a satisfying weekend of exploring a variety of habitats by day and stories round the campfire at night. Our thanks go to Chris, recently returned from the east to her home in Margaret River, who planned the itinerary.

Heather Galluccio



Southern Emu-wren
Drawn by Judy Blyth

Coming Events

Saturday 28 February–Monday 2 March, Campout, Lake Muir

Be self-sufficient in food and water, also camping gear. Lake Muir is about 60 km south-east of Manjimup. The farmer has limited accommodation — please book your own. The farmer's name is Basil Hanekamp (08) 9777 1105. Little Bittern and Australasian Bittern have been seen in the area with thousands of waterfowl. Please phone the office (9383 7749) nearer the time to ask for directions.

Leader: Lee Fontanini

Sunday 8 March, Half-day Excursion, Lake Gwelup

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park at the corner of Stoneham Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road).

An opportunity to see both waterbirds and bushbirds, and maybe the Little Bittern?

Leader: Clive Nealon

Thursday 12 March, Mid-week Walk, Stoney Brook

Meet at 8:30 am on Mills Road at Cohunu Wildlife Park car park.

Mavis Norgard will lead us from here to Stoney Brook.

Leader: Mavis Norgard

Have you bought a copy of the new edition of

Birding Sites Around Perth

yet — Only \$19.95 (incl postage) from Perry House

Tel: (08) 9383 7749

Sunday 15 March, Half-day Excursion, Lake Coogee

Meet at 8:30 am on the southern side of Mayor Road, Munster (50 m west of Hamilton Road).

This is quite a diverse area, with over 100 species having been seen on the lake and in surrounding bushland. Nine species of raptors have been sighted.

Leaders: Jan and Dave Crossley

Sunday 22 March, Full-day Excursion, Pipidinny Road, Eglinton

Turn left off Yanchep Road into Pipidinny Road, Eglinton (an hour's drive from Perth). We will meet at 8:30 am at the end of Pipidinny Road (approximately 5 km from the turnoff). Be prepared to pay a small fee to enter the picnic area for lunch.

We'll look at four habitats during the day: the coastal dunes for Variegated Fairy-wrens, White-browed Scrubwrens, etc; the heath for White-winged Fairy-wrens, Tawny-crowned and White-cheeked Honeyeaters; the swamp for waterfowl, and a part of Yanchep National Park which few people visit.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

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.

Sunday 29 March, Full day Excursion, Peel Inlet Boat Trip

Early booking is required; the deadline is 1 March, so phone the Birds Australia office, 9383 7749, and leave your name, phone number and number of people who will be attending. Cost and meeting directions will be given to you.

Leader: Clive Napier

Saturday 4 April, Half-Day Excursion, Webb's Lease, Jarrahdale

Meet at 9:00 am in the car park.

Travel from Armadale on the South West Highway.

Turn left into Jarrahdale Road. Go through Jarrahdale. After approximately 5.5 km, turn right into Acacia Road (the next right turn past Blue Rock Road). Keep to the left to get to the car park.

This is a new area, where Red-eared Firetails, White-breasted Robins and Red-winged Fairy-wrens are regularly seen.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Easter Campout, Friday–Monday 10–13 April, Bimbijy Station, via Beacon

Bimbijy is a working sheep station approximately 500 km north-east of Perth. A range of accommodation is available, campers and caravanners are catered for, and there are comfortable shearers' quarters and a cottage with a fully self-contained kitchen. The ablution blocks have hot showers. Meals can be purchased by arrangement.

We've booked camping and caravan sites for 20-30 people at \$8 per person per night. If you would like to stay in the shearers' quarters (\$15 per person per night; 4 to a room) or the cottage (details unknown), please make your own arrangements by phoning the station owners, Kirsten and Andrew Tunstill, on (08) 9667 1022.

Everyone attending this campout must ring the Birds Australia office (9383 7749) to let us know how many will be in your party.

A suggested route is to travel north-east from Perth via Goomalling and Wyalkatchem to Trayning. Then head north to Beacon. (Note that Beacon is the last place to purchase petrol on your way to Bimbijy, which is approximately another 100 km further.) From Beacon, go west on the Bonnie Rock-Burakin Road. Approximately 3.5 km west of the town, turn right into the Bimbijy Road. Follow this road about 100 km to the station. RAOU signposts will guide you.

Over 72 species can be seen here, including bustards, Pied and Black Honeyeaters, Red-backed Kingfishers, White-browed Tree-creepers, Cockatiels, Redthroats, and Bourke's Parrots.

Leader: to be announced.

Sunday 19 April, Full-day Excursion, Wannamal Lake

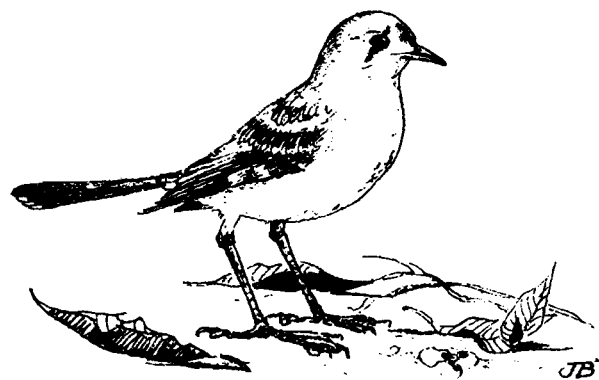
From Bindoon, take the Great Northern Highway for approximately 20 km, then turn left into Hay Flat Road. Meet at 9:30 am at Udumung Reserve, about 100 m along Hay Flat Road — the point will be signposted.

We'll be looking at the reserve first, then travelling on to the lake.

Leaders: Bruce Buchanan and Clive Napier

Sunday – Saturday 19–25 April, Focus on Birds (Autumn), Eyre Bird Observatory

Escape to Eyre and become involved in a study of the distribution of the birds south of the Nullarbor Plain. The fifth in a series of seasonal studies, this course combines bird watching and censusing with an appreciation of the natural environment in a remote location. Participants will visit sites with differing landforms and vegetation to



Southern Scrub-robin
Drawn by Judy Blyth

confirm data from previous courses. Information gained over the duration of the project will be used to determine whether some species of birds are restricted to particular areas and whether they require special or additional protection.

The balmy days of Autumn are the ideal time for a participative holiday, watching and identifying birds in the different vegetation types near Eyre and enjoying the scenery. You don't have to be a birdwatcher to participate and learn from this course as assistance in field identification will be given.

Birds seen on the previous Autumn course in the project included Spotted Harrier, Brown Falcon, Sooty Oystercatcher, Double-banded Plover, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Mulga Parrot, Jacky Winter, Western Yellow Robin, Southern Scrub-robin, Chestnut Quail-thrush, Crested Bellbird and Little Crow.

Leader: Peter Sandilands

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.

Wednesday 22 April, Mid-Week Walk, North Lake

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

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday – Monday 25–27 April, Anzac Day Long-Weekend Campout at Leschenault Inlet, Australind

We'll be based at the Leschenault Inlet Caravan Park, 2 Cathedral Avenue (Scenic Drive), approximately 10 km north of the Australind post office. Please book your own camping or caravan site (on-site vans and

chalets also available) by phoning (08) 9797 1095. Please also ring the Birds Australia office (9383 7749) to let us know how many will be in your party.

Should be good birdwatching, as the area has a diversity of habitats.

Leader: Clive Napier

Sunday 3 May, Half-Day Excursion, Big Carine Lake

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park off Beach Road, Carine.

106 species have been recorded here, including the three ibis, Buff-banded Rail, Freckled Duck and several raptors. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Saturday 9 May, Full-day Excursion, Flynn Road Bushland

Meet at 9:00 am on the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about one kilometre on the Perth side of The Lakes turnoff, ie, the York Road turnoff.

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

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Wednesday 13 May, Mid-week Excursion, Ellis Brook Reserve, Gosnells

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin.

This interesting site for bush birds, close to Perth, may have some species not often seen in the metropolitan area.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 17 May, Full-day Pelagic Seabird Trip

Meet at Hillarys Boat Harbour at 7:00 am. We will leave at 7:30 am from near Underwater World and return at about 4:00 pm. There is a limit of 23 people.

Booking is essential. The cost is expected to be \$60 (more if fewer than 22 book) and is required three weeks before the event. Book by phoning Frank O'Connor on (08) 9386 5694 or 9482 1445. Future trips are possible on Sunday 14 June, 12 July and 9 August.

Call Frank if you are interested in these trips.

Sunday 17 May, Full-Day Excursion, Yalgorup National Park

Meet at 9:00 am at the corner of the Old Coast Road and White Hill Road, 9.7 km south of the Dawesville Cut. The round trip from Perth is 200 km.

This is a flat walk of approximately 12 km to Swan Pond, adjacent to Lake Clifton, through tuart and peppermint woodland. We should see a representation of the area's bush birds and a few waders if we're lucky.

We'll drive to see the 'stromatolites' on the east side of the lake on the way home.

Bring your lunch and something to drink. I'll boil a billy at lunch time.

Phone Sue Abbotts on (08) 9444 1607 if you require further details.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 24 May, Half-Day Excursion, Burswood Open Spaces

Meet at 9:00 am in the car park near the Park Board Administration Building, on Resort Drive. We'll be looking at the bird life which has returned to the public parks and gardens which occupy the site of the former Rivervale Dump.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

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.

Saturday 30 May – Monday 1 June, Campout, Torbay Bay

To be organised by the Albany Group of Birds Australia.

Leader: To be announced

Saturday 6 June, Half-Day Excursion, Helena Valley, Boya

Meet at 9:00 am at the car park, 600 m beyond the sealed section of Helena Valley Road. (The unsealed section is negotiable for conventional vehicles provided care is taken.) If you wish, park just off the end of the bitumen and walk to the parking area.

To reach Helena Valley Road, use Map 15, reference K9, in the 1993 UBD, or Map 253, reference F14, in 1997 UBD.

Take Ridge Hill Road or Helena Valley Road, or Scott Road. Follow Helena Valley Road east up the River valley.

The distance we'll walk will be about 5 km, but those who'd like a shorter walk can return earlier.

Leader: Wendy Napier

Sunday 14 June, Half-day Excursion, Bickley Brook Reservoir

Meet at 8:30 am at the turning circle, next to the children's camp. From Perth travelling on the Tonkin Highway, turn left into Gosnells Road East (Reservoir is signposted), then left into Reservoir Road and right into Maddington/Hardinge Road.

We have a good chance of seeing Southern Emu-wrens, Red-browed Finches, plus all our favourite bush birds.

Leaders: Marjorie and Gordon Wilson



Little Penguins
drawn by Diane Beekingham



Thursday 18 June, Mid-week Walk, Yellagonga National Park and Lake Joondalup

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: to be announced

Sunday 21 June, Half-day Excursion, North Mole, Fremantle

Meet at 8:30 am. We aim to spend a couple of hours looking for seabirds. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Ian Standring

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

John Brooke has travelled widely in search of rare and exciting birds. Last year he visited Kenya, where it is possible to see over 300 species in a day, and saw many beautiful and interesting birds. John will show us some of the birds he saw on the trip and discuss some of the best sites to go.

Saturday 27 June, Half-day Excursion, Stinton Cascades Nature Reserve, Karragullen

Meet at 8:30 am in Gardiner Road, about 200 m past the intersection with Brookton Highway (13 km from Albany Highway). This is a CALM reserve of jarrah and a good area for birds. Bring lunch.

Leader: John and Helen Start

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

John Darnell has travelled widely around the state studying and recording seabirds. We all have trouble identifying seabirds and John will use his expertise to point out the identification criteria need to separate some of the more difficult seabird groups

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

Phil Withers is an Associate Professor in the Zoology Department at the University of Western Australia. During his scientific career he has published widely on the principles of bird flight and the physiological adaptations of desert birds. During his talk Phil will present some of the more interesting aspect of his research which has seen him travel to many parts of the globe.

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

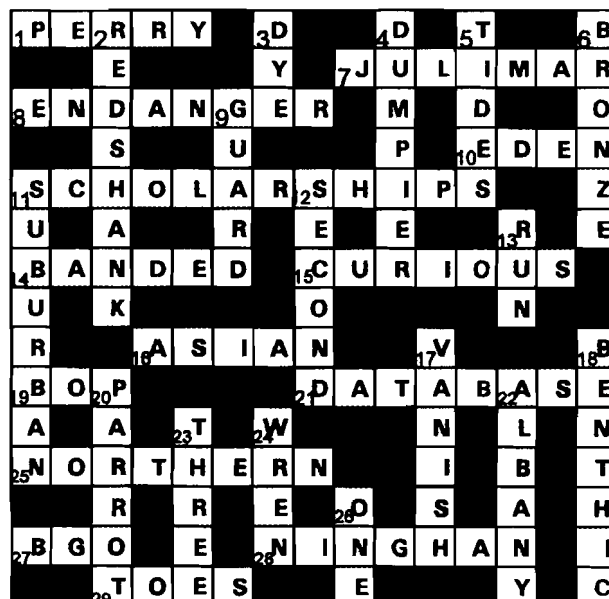
NOTE: 3rd Mon as 28th Queens Birthday holiday

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

Monday–Monday 21–28 September, Birds Australia Annual Campout, Geraldton

See elsewhere in this issue for details.

Crossword Answers No 12



FALCON TOURS

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