

Western Australian Bird Notes

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

No 90 June 1999

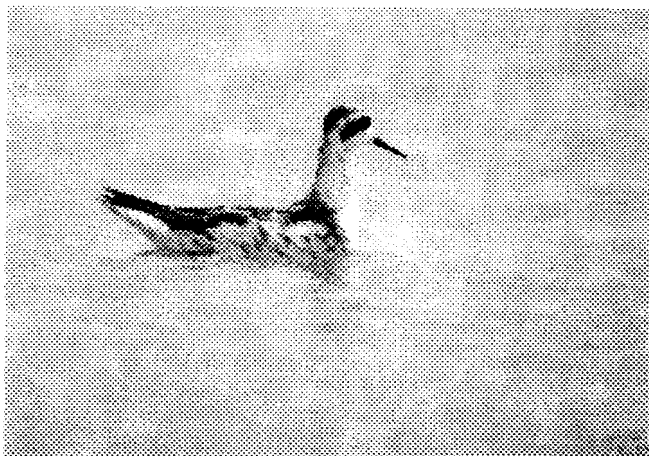
ONE-FOOTED RED-NECKED PHALAROPE AT JUNCTION POOL, BROOME

On 17 December 1998 while checking a small scrape situated on the edge of the Dampier Creek Saltmarsh, I noticed a phalarope swimming about in the shallow water feeding actively. On closer inspection with a telescope it became obvious that this bird was a Red-necked Phalarope.

A few other wader species were also present at the pool including two Greenshanks, one Marsh Sandpiper and four Red-necked Stints, all in non-breeding plumage, and two pairs of Red-capped Plovers in full breeding plumage. I used the Red-necked Stints to make a comparison on general size and bill length. The phalarope's bill, although the same colour as the stint's (black), was a completely different shape, coming to a fine point, almost needle-like (like a Marsh Sandpiper) and also longer and straight. The phalarope was also slightly larger than the Red-necked Stint, and showed the classic phalarope mark behind the eye broadening and curving downwards towards the neck. The white neck and under-tail coverts contrasted with the strongly mottled flank and darker half collar from the



Red-necked Phalarope
Photos by George Swann



mantle to the upper part of the breast. The nape was a dark brown setting off the white forehead. The nape colour narrowed to a thin dark line running down the back of the neck, and the upper parts were quite dark with white edging to some of the scapulars. When flying the phalarope showed a narrow white wing bar and white flanks to the rump. The relatively long needle-like all dark bill, dark upperpart colouration and the collar effect merging into the breast suggests the bird could be a juvenile Red-necked Phalarope moulting into adult winter plumage. The continuation of a prominent eye stripe, long bill (see photo) and general colouration eliminate other phalaropes as possibilities.

On several occasions I observed the bird move to the edge of the shallow pool and wade rather than swim. On first observing this I noticed the bird having some difficulty and then realised that its left foot was missing just above the hind toe on the tarsus. If I had not witnessed

this I would not have believed that the bird was incapacitated in any way. The bird was feeding actively, was bright in appearance, swam with no difficulty and generally appeared to be normal and healthy. It was a pleasure to see this petite and confiding wader enjoying a good feed and probably recovering from the effect of cyclone Thelma.

This bird remained at the pool until 19 December 1998.

George Swann

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

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

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

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Freckled Duck - 1, 21/4/99, Herdsman Lake (Stirling) - KJ

Brown Booby - 1, 22/10/99, Pelsaert Island, Houtman Abrolhos - JW and others (description supplied; this record is about 1000 km further south than earlier records)

Little Pied Cormorant - 14 pairs nesting in a Moreton Bay Fig, 6/3/99, Peninsula Hotel, Mandurah (Mandurah) - MS

Cattle Egret - 2, 27/4/99, in a cattle paddock c. 12 km W of Esperance (present since early March) (Esperance) - KD

Glossy Ibis - 1, 15/4/99, Ellendale Pool, with three Yellow-billed Spoonbills (Greenough) - DB

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 29/1/99, North Fremantle (Fremantle) - RM (unusual for coastal plain near Perth)

Hooded Plover - 10, 4/4/99, un-named lake near Lake Quaderwardup (Plantagenet) - CD

Pacific Gull - 31 (including 24 immatures), 10/2/99, Lancelin (Gingin) - DB

Crested Pigeon - 1, 7/3/99, Holmes Street, rural Gosnells (Gosnells) - MS (unusual in metro area)

Long-billed Black-Cockatoo - 10, 22/4/99, Fox's Lair, Narrogin (Narrogin) - JB, AAB (long way east for this species)

Galah - 2, early April 99, 5 km N of Yallingup (Busselton) - MC (escaped birds or natural expansion?)

White-fronted Honeyeater - 2 feeding on blossom of *Eucalyptus occidentalis*, 1/5/99, c. 5 km SE of Ravensthorpe (Ravensthorpe) - RJ per BN (rarely recorded in this area)

Western Yellow Robin - 2, 4/4/99, 6.8 km SWW of White Wells Station HS (Perenjori) - CG, MG (near NE limit of distribution)

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

Australian White Ibis - 1, 7/4/99, Madura (Dundas) - EBO, TT (unusual on the Nullarbor)

Banded Stilt - c. 7000 pairs breeding, early April 99, Goongarrie (Menzies) - KC, REJ (colony later abandoned)

Double-banded Plover - 1, 9/4/99, Kanidal Beach, near Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - EBO

KIMBERLEY

Great Crested Grebe - 1, 3/99, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO * 1, 10/3/99, Taylor's Lagoon (Broome) - JS (not often recorded near Broome)

Black Bittern - 1, 20/3/99, Lake Eda (Broome) - JS (rarely recorded this far W)

Bush-hen - 1, 12/10/98, Silent Grove, King Leopold Range (Derby - West Kimberley) - JS (see details elsewhere in this issue)

White-browed Crake - 1, 5/3/99, Nimalaica Well, near Broome (Broome) - JS (see details elsewhere in this issue)

Australian Pratincole - 4, 3/5/99, Argyle Diamond Mine (Alluvials Mining Area) (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - FO

Variegated Fairy-wren - 2, 2/5/99, Devil Devil Spring, Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - FO (at limit of range in this area)

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Lesser Frigatebird - several adults (males and females), 13/4/99, around the cliffs between the settlement and the golf course - GB

Pied Heron - 1 adult, in breeding plumage, 9/4/99 at the Resort (near the Settlement) - MB

White-breasted Waterhen - 4 adults and 4 half-grown chicks, 12/4/99, at Poon Saan (near the Settlement) - MB

OBSERVERS

AAB = Andrew Burbidge

BN = Brenda Newbey

CD = Colin Davis

CG = Cheryl Gole

DB = Di Beckingham

EBO = Eyre Bird Observatory

FO = Frank O'Connor

GB = Geoff Byrne

JB = John Blyth

KC = Kevin Coate

KD = Kate Dawson

KJ = Keven Jordan

JS = Jonny Schoenjahn

JW = John Walter

MB = Mike Bamford

MC = Mike Craig

MG = Martin Gole

MS = Marcus Singor

RJ = Rosemary Jasper

REJ = Ron Johnstone

RM = Roger McGovern

TT = Tim Thorpe

WA Group Reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA (WA GROUP) ANNUAL REPORT

1998 was one of those years when most things went according to plan. This was largely due to an excellent team operating in all fields of our work.

The Committee responsible for the overall operation was largely unchanged, with Clive Nealon continuing as Vice Chairman, Margaret Philippon (Secretary, *WA Bird Notes* typesetter and numerous other tasks), Mary Vaughan (Bookkeeper) doing a splendid job with guidance from the Treasurer Greg Wyllie and playing a major role in the organisation of the Greenough Campout. A special thanks to Wendy Napier for completing her tenth year as Volunteer Organiser. She has continued in this role as well as covering the onerous task of being the Chairman's Wife. Sue Abbotts continued to assist the Excursions sub-committee as well as doing most of the work towards incorporation of the WA Group. Max Bailey remains Office Manager and despite threatening to resign every time someone upsets the phone system or photocopier, will, we hope, continue in this or some other equally useful role. Dr Mike Bamford balanced a busy professional life with his duties as Research and Conservation coordinator and has overseen the rebirth of the Research sub-committee. John Blyth finds time from his work on threatened species and communities with CALM to be joint editor of *WA Bird Notes* and to assist with much of the technical and scientific detail. Bill McRoberts has continued as coordinator of the Excursions Sub-committee, and, apart from some great plans for 1999, has assisted with around 60 excursions in 1998 ranging from week-long campouts in remote national parks to short walks for interested elderly people. Rod Smith has continued his work in the mechanics of WABN distribution and following his retirement from teaching we expect great things from him in 1999.

These are the up-front people but behind them is an army of volunteers all contributing to the success of the Group. Any list will be incomplete but Dr Allan Burbidge who is a research scientist with CALM, is joint editor of WABN and also heads the local Rarities committee which now has to deal with Western Australian Atlas oddities. Allan is also an adviser on things scientific. Judy Blyth has contributed magnificently to promotion as Publicity and Education Officer by arranging many displays and talks. Liz Walker has taken over as Librarian and our in-house computer expert is Richard Chyne who has overseen the introduction of the new machine and our links to the internet. No list would be complete without Allan Jones who, through his efforts in extracting grants from various organisations, keeps the operation financial.

Colin Davis continues to organise the Wader Studies and Frank O'Connor organises regular pelagic trips.

Brenda Newbey and Shapelle McNee have assisted with the professional management of several projects which have been well received.

Lastly but by no means least is the band of volunteers who provide the person power to produce the data for the various projects. Many drive vast distances to survey farms, road verges, search for Hooded Plovers or provide Atlas data. Others staff the office on a regular basis and answer the phone or sell stock from the shop. Some others spend long days on stalls at various venues or take walks during such functions as Spring Fling. My special thanks to my wife Wendy for the assistance she has given me during the last three years while Chairman and also for the great job she has done for 10 years as Office Volunteer organiser.

Birds on Farms has almost finished and the Road Verge survey for the WA Main Roads Department is also nearly complete. Both of these will be written up and in the case of the BOF project we hope to run a series of country meetings at which we can hand over the information to the participants and encourage them to continue to provide additional habitat for birds. The second report of the Hooded Plover survey is complete and included as a supplement to this issue of WABN. A new study of the WA Ground Parrot population has been undertaken by Shapelle McNee and, as described in the item elsewhere in this issue, we plan to take the results to the people who are interested and who live in the areas and establish Friends groups, etc. The first report of this work is also with this newsletter as a supplement.

A study of the Short-billed (Carnaby's) Black-Cockatoo is planned for 1999. This is meant to follow up some of the early work done by Dr Denis Saunders of CSIRO and hopefully determine the age of the remaining flock.

Numerous additional brochures have been produced at the request of various tourist bureaux and Allan Jones' Grants Sub-committee reached its highest point when it was asked by the Kings Park Board to produce a coloured brochure for that area.

Financially the year has been satisfactory. Grants from our WA sources have been sufficient to fund all our projects and to date they are operating within their budgets. Our general revenue has been improved by the printing and increased sale of new cards. The new designs were painted by Judy Blyth and proved very popular. Over 10 000 cards have been sold this year. The Group assisted both WA observatories with \$500 each for their UK publicity trip and again funded students attending observatory courses. Assistance has been provided to Cheryl Gole for printing and considerable general office costs for her Atlas work. The WA Office now has a new state-of-the-art computer (at least it was six months ago) and we are on the internet.

One of the major functions of the year was the National Campout at Greenough. This has been given publicity in other places but with over 100 attending and over 50 from the east it proved to be a considerable success.

The WA Group continues to increase in numbers and strength. Due to our being the only birding association in WA we operate somewhat differently to many other groups but while adding more social birding to our calendar we still have increased the number and importance of the scientific work done by the Group.

There have been many other items that have occupied group members over the last year with numerous conservation matters taking much time and effort on the part of members. Clive Nealon's Suburban Bird Survey is reaching huge proportions with over 200 000 records in from about 130 sources and is being used by several agencies and people. The Database of Birds of WA continues to be accessed by various bodies including CALM. Each month our meetings attract increasing numbers of members to hear interesting guest speakers and to keep in touch with the activities, while several members give talks to both adult and school groups on matters ornithological.

This is my final report as Chair as, in keeping with our constitution, I will not be standing for re-election, having served three years. My most sincere thanks to all those who have so selflessly supported our Group during this period and may our progress long continue.

Clive Napier

BIRDS AUSTRALIA – WA GROUP COMMITTEE

On behalf of the 1999 Committee I would like to thank Clive Napier and Max Bailey, who both stood down from the committee this year, for their tireless and patient contributions to the running of the WA group.

Clive spent a number of years on the committee, culminating in a three year term as Chairman. I am quickly learning exactly how much time and effort Clive must have devoted to his duties as chairman to maintain the consistently high level of achievement. Add to that the additional duties that he undertook as a member of the council of the national body and it is easy to understand why Clive considers he has now, finally, retired from full-time employment.

Max, too spent a number of years on committee and proved to be a most effective and conscientious office manager. Under his management, the office has operated with a minimum of fuss and a great deal of efficiency.

Max intended to relinquish the office manager post when he left the committee, but has continued to do what is necessary as we still look for a willing volunteer to take on the position.

We are fortunate that both Clive and Max continue to contribute their energies and experience to the group, and I hope that they see fit to maintain their contributions for many years to come.

Clive Nealon
1999 Chairman, WA Group

BIRDS ON FARMS PROJECT: PROGRESS REPORT MAY 1999

The Birds on Farm (BOF) project is in its final phase. After 1 June 1999, no more farm data will be received. Just over 100 WA farms took part. Eight seasonal surveys were

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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
- except for Observations, contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.
- the full Editorial Policy is stated in WABN 74:10-12

Deadline for the September 1999 Issue
1 August 1999
at Perry House

completed on the majority of these. Most others have had five or more surveys done, so there is a substantial dataset.

In WA at least 103 volunteers were involved in farm surveys. Of these one third are non-members of Birds Australia. At least five others became members during the course of the project. Two thirds of the farms are owned/managed by non-members, two of them by mining companies.

Many kilometres were travelled by some of the volunteers and lots of interesting observations have been made. As an example, Joyce White of Dongara noted that on 19 January 1999, a hot day after several other hot days,

she heard a flock of Banded Lapwings (Plovers) early in the morning. At 10:00 am she found them. Between 50 and 60 birds were in the river shallows, cooling off. They were gone the next day. It is the third year that such a visit has been noted.

A start has been made on sending out individualised mini-reports to the surveyors and farmers. The main aim is to return most of the information gathered from each farm to the land manager so that use may be made of it locally. As well, up to four Bird Days will be held in country areas (see box).

The scientific report of the national BOF project is being prepared by Dr Geoff Barrett. The WA coordinator intends to compile an overall WA report later in the year.

The Main Roads WA survey of 161 half hectare sites, which is being run in conjunction with BOF, is being very well supported by 28 volunteers; the coordinator surveys 45 sites. This survey will end by 1 September 1999.

From an early look at some of the data it appears that highest numbers of birds are in the verges in autumn, and least in summer.

I have enjoyed the contact (mainly by old-fashioned snail mail correspondence) with volunteers as survey forms passed between us.

Brendy Newbey
WA Coordinator
BIRDS ON FARMS PROJECT

WESTERN GROUND PARROT NEWS




Natural Heritage Trust
Helping Communities Help Australia



Following the recent surveys of Western Ground Parrots at Waychinicup/Manypeaks a Friends of the Ground Parrot group has now been formed in the Albany area.

Tim Hunt is the local contact for the Friends and Sarah Comer will be the database coordinator.

Regular surveys of the Waychinicup/Manypeaks area will be continued and members aim to make personal contact with farmers in the area.

Eventually the Friends will include members from across the south including Esperance and Walpole. This active community group can help to protect habitat, maintain a long-term community monitoring program and provide information on fire regimes suitable for ground parrots.

We have received confirmation of a grant from the Threatened Species Network to carry out surveys at Cape Arid for Western Ground Parrots.



Joyce White dressed for road verge survey on busy Brand Highway near Dongara
Photo by Joyce White

Shapelle McNee will continue to be the WA Group Coordinator for the whole Western Ground Parrot program along the south coast.

Allan Jones
GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE
CONVENOR

MID SUMMER WADER COUNT, FEBRUARY 1999 ROTTNEST LOCATIONS

On 7 February the 1999 mid summer wader count was held, with groups of observers around the state visiting wader habitats in nearby or distant locations to count shorebirds. The count is held each February to monitor waders at the peak of their summer migration.

As part of the survey 20 Birds Australia-WA members made the journey over to Rottnest Island. Once again thanks to UWA's Dept of Zoology, the WSG had the use of the research station facilities at Wadjemup Hill as a base for the count.

The program got under way with a small advance party travelling to the island on 4 February. This group was able to not only make themselves familiar with the areas they would be checking on the day of the count but also to lay claim to the best beds in the east wing of the research station.

The following day numbers were boosted by the arrival of more members from the mainland. That evening a trip was arranged to Cape Vlaming at the western end of the island to watch Wedge-tailed Shearwaters returning to their nesting sites. A windswept vigil at dusk by the group was rewarded with the arrival of the home-coming flocks. Each bird soundlessly materialised from the darkness before disappearing unerringly into its nesting burrow; a most impressive experience for those watching.

On Saturday the last members arrived and parties of birders spent the day seeking out the Rottnest avifauna. A bird count later revealed that over the three days 57 species had been seen by the group.

On Sunday morning the count got under way with the first teams being taken to their pre-selected wader habitats. All observers were positioned by 0700 hrs at the eastern end of each site and counting commenced.

COUNTRY MEMBERS — BIRDS ON FARMS BIRD DAYS

Bird Days are to be held in Coorow and Corrigin and/or Merredin. One or two more could be held in October 1999. There is no set plan — they could include talks on the results of the Birds on Farms project — birds in farm remnants and revegetation, local birds, birds as sustainability indicators, slides, a display, school visit, looking at birds locally. It could be in conjunction with another local event. If you are interested, contact Brenda Newbey via the BAWAG office on 9383 7749.

These sites included the salt lakes, sandy beaches, reef platforms and stacks as well as three swamps: Bulldozer, Salmon and Bickley.

All sites monitored during last year's count were monitored this year.

After discussion with the Rottnest environmental staff the survey areas on southern beach areas from Henrietta Rocks to Fairbridge Bluff were extended to include Green Island.

The reef areas were checked westward from Armstrong Bay to Charlotte Point.

Ricey Beach, Stark Bay, Rocky Bay, Eagle Bay, Cape Vlaming, Radar Reef and Wilson Bay were also monitored.

Care was taken not to disturb birds or overlap the areas under observation.

Waders were counted as the observers moved along the shorelines to the western end of each location. They were then met and taken back to base where tallies and count sheets were filled in.

The count was completed at 1000 hrs.

The 20 members involved were Clive and Wendy Napier, Maggie Cashman-Bailes, Tom Delaney, John Stewart, Richard and Lorraine Chyne, Mary Vaughan, Cath Pegs, Clair Gerrish, Mavis Norgard, Darryl James, Liz Walker, Wladys and Aye Aye Sarafin, Max Bailey, Kate Creed, Marie Sharpe, Clive Nealon and Colin Davis.

Results

The Rottnest count showed an increase in the numbers of most shorebirds compared to the 1998 survey. The Banded Lapwing, Black-winged Stilt and Banded Stilt were the only species for which numbers fell below the 1998 figures (see table). Some of the more interesting records were as follows:

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)

Slight increase in numbers compared to last year.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Four birds foraging on the reefs at the western end of the island.

Two Whimbrels were seen at the same cliff top area at Cape Vlaming preparing to roost approximately 15 m north of the turnstones.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

This species was not seen at any of the salt lakes or beach locations. Solitary birds were observed at Bulldozer and Salmon Swamps.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Solitary birds seen at Porpoise Bay and Lake Vincent.

One bird also seen at the sewage plant on 6 February 1999 (not included in count figures).

Grey-tailed Tattler (*Heteroscelus brevipes*)

This species was reported at four sites with a combined tally of 15 birds.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

Over 100% increase on 1998 figures. An interesting observation was made at Cape Vlaming. During a visit to this area at dusk, Ruddy Turnstones were seen, gathered in two bunched groups of upwards of 50 birds, among short vegetation at the top of the limestone cliff face.

On the morning of the count only 5 Ruddy Turnstones were seen between Armstrong Bay and Wilson Bay, but a combined total from the remaining locations resulted in a tally of 438 birds. This could indicate that this species roosts at the western end of the island.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

This year Sanderlings were seen at three locations: Porpoise Bay, Salmon Bay and Cape Vlaming. A total of 125 birds was a 60% increase on last year's count.

Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*)

The most numerous trans-equatorial migrant, this species showed over 100% increase on 1998 figures. Usually reported around the edges of the salt lakes. Eight birds were seen foraging on exposed reef at Cape Vlaming.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

An increase in this species' numbers from a total of 90 birds last year to 134 birds this year.

Pied Oystercatcher (*Haematopus longirostris*)

Scattered solitary birds on coastal sites. Grouped birds on Lake Bagdad.

Banded Stilt (*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*)

There was a decrease of about 60% on 1998 figures. Rottnest environmental staff noted an exodus of half of this species' numbers after heavy rain in the Esperance area during January. This behaviour has been previously documented by Denis Saunders and Perry de Rebeira.

The main flock plus solitary birds were checked for leg flags each day without success. A disturbing observation made each morning was the number of dead Banded Stilts found below the power lines running across the causeway (highest number 12 dead birds on 6 February 1999).

The probable cause was birds flying between lakes after dark as it was noted that the flock became active when the wind dropped in late afternoon.

Red-necked Avocet (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*)

The 20 seen was more than recorded last year.

A pair of birds with two downy young were sighted at Lake Negri.

Red-capped Plover (*Charadrius ruficapillus*)

A high concentration of birds reported at Serpentine Lake.

Evidence of breeding at Lake Bagdad (runners).

Lesser Sand Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*)

Solitary bird seen with Large Sand Plover and Red-capped Plovers on southern side of the causeway.

Greater Sand Plover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*)

Seven birds seen between SW side of Government House Lake and the NE corner of Lake Hershell.

Banded Lapwing (*Vanellus tricolor*)

Only seen on airstrip verges. This species was absent from the golf course adjacent to Garden Lake where it was seen last year.

The count resulted with a tally of 20 wader species and a total of 3412 birds. The highest number of species recorded was at Lake Bagdad, where there were ten wader species including six Grey-tailed Tattlers, a Terek Sandpiper and a Pacific Golden Plover.

Observations were made easier by the helpful advice given by Rottnest Environmental Manager Claire Wright and staff member Chas Hanson.

Colin Davis

TABLE: ROTTNEST MID SUMMER WADER COUNT, 1999

ROTTNEST MID SUMMER WADER COUNT 1999															
	G/H Lake	C/way	Serp	Hersch	Bagdad East	Bagdad	Porpse	Salmon	Reef	Lake	Total	Bird Total			
Species at each site	North	South	Areas	Lake	Lake	North	South	West	Bay	Bay	Plats	Vincent	Spec		
Pied Oystercatcher							6	1	2	1	1		11		
Banded Lapwing		15	These birds sighted on the grassed runway verge during the survey of Gov House Lake										15		
Grey Plover	1	4	1		2	1	2	5	3	3			24		
Golden Plover						1				1			1		
Lesser Sand Plover			0							1			1		
Greater Sand Plover	1	3	3										7		
Red-capped Plover	95	7	6	265	6	15	3	30*		3		1	431		
Black-winged Stilt			2										2		
Banded Stilt	1100				4	1	1						1107		
Red-necked Avocet					2		2	16*					20		
Ruddy Turnstone	119	10		31	35	54	12	34	32	23	5	12	367		
Whimbrel										1	3		4		
Tattler sp					3	6	5	3			3		20		
Common Sandpiper									1			1	2		
Greenshank													2		
1 Greenshank seen at Bulldozer swamp 1 Greenshank seen at Salmon swamp 6/2/99															
Terek Sandpiper							1						1		
Bar-tailed Godwit										7			7		
Red-necked Stint	213	128	81		101	68	40	453		2	8	21	1115		
Curlw Sandpiper		65	52		1	3	7	13					141		
Sanderling									19	75	31		125		
BIRDS AT EACH SITE	1529	232	145	296	154	156	72	553	59	116	54	35	3402		
Government House Lake: Two groups of observers N & S starting from eastern end. Includes runway verges															
Causeway : Two observers from east causeway to east end of Lake Serpentine (includes Pearse Lake)															
Lake Serpentine: Two observers starting from eastern end of lake															
Lake Herschell: Three observers from eastern end includes Garden Lake & southern golf course area															
Bagdad Area A: Three observers east along northern side to Padbury flat															
Bagdad Area B: Two observers east along southern side to Lake Vincent															
Bagdad Area C: Two observers Padbury Flat to Lake Vincent includes Lake Negri															
Lake Vincent: Two observers East to Lake Negri															
Porpoise Bay: Three observers from Henrietta Rocks to Salmon Point															
Salmon Bay: Two observers from Salmon Point to Green Island															
Reef Platforms: Armstrong Bay, Charlotte Point, Ricey Beach, Wilson Bay, Eagle Bay, Point Vlaming															

SECOND CORELLA COUNT

Twenty two BAWAG members spent two or so hours on Saturday 17 April searching a large number of sites from which corellas have been reported in the last few months. The results are summarised in Table 1 below. Most observers used a combination of driving, to cover as many separate sites as possible, and walking at specific sites to cover as much area as possible. After some discussion, I believe that all identifications as to which species was seen are reliable. In the Table, 'new' refers to birds that I have no reason to think would have been counted twice.

Long-billed Corella
Photo by Peter Fullagar



Table 1: Results of the Perth metropolitan corella count, 17/4/99.

Observers	Sites	Results
Ian and Eleanor Rowley	Parks and open areas on both sides of Swan River from Guildford to Middle Swan Bridge. Ending at Stirling Square, Guildford	A total of approximately 650 Little, and about 40 Long-billed Corellas, although this may have been an underestimate; all apparently roosting in Stirling Square.
Maggie Cashman-Bailes	Lilac Hill Park	Total of about 800 Little and 3 Long-billed Corellas. Only 150 of these were 'new' birds. Roosting as above.
Kim Easton	Along Swan River from Sandy Beach Reserve to Point Reserve	About 300 Little (100 probably 'new') and 160 - 200 Long-billed Corellas, mainly around Point Reserve.
Tony Godfrey	Along Swan River from Garvey Park to Ascot Waters	No corellas
Brenda Newbey	Lower Swan River, from Preston Point to Point Walter Reserve	144 Little and 85 Long-billed Corellas.
Jean-Paul Orsini	Allen Park, Cottesloe	Four unidentified corellas in flight
Ben Carr	Blackwall Reach etc on lower Swan; Chidley Point, Minim Cove, Green Place Reserve, Bayview Park, along Bayview Tce	61 Long-billed Corellas, of which 46 had flown across the river by 4.30. Thus it is possible that these were among those counted by Brenda Newbey.
Stuart Houghton	Seaview Golf Course	No corellas
Audrey Turner	Manning Lake	No corellas
Ray Flanagan	Point Resolution, Nedlands Golf Course, Shenton Park Lake	No corellas
David Lamont	Freshwater Bay, Claremont	36 Little Corellas
Allan Burbidge	Lake Joondalup	12 Long-billed Corellas
Clive Nealon	Carine Open Space; Lake Gwelup	No corellas
Sue Abbotts	Lake Monger	About 300 corellas, probably all Little. SW corner of the lake
Clive and Wendy Napier	Canning River Flats; Kent Street Weir and eastwards	94 Long-billed Corellas
Bryan Barrett and Marjory Clegg	Canning River; Kent Street Weir to Canning mouth	33 Long-billed Corellas: probably included in the 94 above.
John and Judy Blyth	Baldivis, Mundijong etc.	No corellas

As for last year, there were no sustainable reports of Western Corellas, with all long-billed forms proving to be (eastern) Long-billed Corellas. Significantly, the total number recorded for these and Little Corellas are considerably higher this year than last year (Table 2).

Table 2. Total numbers recorded for each species of corella in counts in 1998 and 1999

Species	1998	1999
Long-billed Corella	About 140	409-532
Little Corella	About 820	1380 to 1584

The range given for this year's results starts from what I consider an absolute minimum, where all birds likely to have been counted twice, or for which species identification was not possible, have been excluded. The higher range includes other birds for each species that may have been counted twice, but still does not include those that I think are highly likely to have been counted twice. There are, of course, several possible explanations for the higher count in 1999.

1. It could simply be that by chance more corellas happened to be in the places searched this year than were there last year. There are many more places around Perth than we will ever have people to search thoroughly and we might have missed more birds last year even if they were still around the Metropolitan area.
2. Because last year's count was two months later, and following good winter rain, it is possible that a significant proportion of the Metropolitan birds had left the large flocks and begun breeding. In this case they may have gone to different places, and/or become more cryptic in their behaviour.
3. Finally, numbers of each species may have actually increased from one year to the next, by either or both of successful breeding and continuing release of aviary birds.

Clearly, any one or combination of the reasons suggested above could have resulted in the observed change from one year to the next. However, although explanations 1 and 2 may have contributed to lower numbers in 1998, I doubt that they explain all of the difference. In both years I had been receiving reports, or counting myself, corellas in various places around Perth and this year's preliminary observations indicated that more corellas were being seen than at the same time last year. It is true that the number actually reported for the count in 1998 was perhaps only about two thirds of what I had expected based on the earlier observations. This difference may well have been due to explanations 1 and 2, but, prior to the 1998 count, I would have been surprised if it had been as large as this year's has been.

Whatever the reasons for the discrepancy between the two years, it is certain that the lower of the two estimates given for each species in Table 2 for this year represent underestimates — it is highly unlikely that every corella in or around Perth was seen and counted on the 17th of April! On this basis my assessment of the significance of the

numbers is rather different to last year, when I concluded that the genie may not have been quite out of the bottle. With minimum populations for the two most abundant species of 409 and 1380 it is clear that one or two more good breeding seasons could result in one to several thousand birds of each species, with the growth curve reaching the almost vertical stage.

One issue that this year's count, along with information received before the count, has, I think, shed some light on is the structure of the populations of the Little and Long-billed Corellas around Perth. For the Little Corella there is some evidence that the birds are very mobile and flocks at the two places that they are most abundant seem to vary inversely — very large numbers at Lake Monger seem to be matched with relatively small flocks around Guildford and vice versa. I believe that most of the Little Corellas seen elsewhere along or near the Swan and northwards probably return at various times to one or other of the 'parent' flocks. I am only aware of four current roosting sites for Little Corellas: Stirling Square in Guildford, Lake Monger, Subiaco Primary School and a site shared with Long-billed Corellas near the Canning Highway in Bicton.

On the other hand, the Long-billed Corellas appear to have significant, more or less resident, populations at four or more different places. Known places are: around Blackwall Reach on the lower Swan and north to Cottesloe; Canning Regional Park, especially near and around the Kent Street Weir; the middle reaches of the Swan, especially Point Reserve; and Lake Joondalup. The first three populations seem to be around one hundred or more while that at Lake Joondalup is still under 20. There are a number of reports of Long-billed Corellas (including observations by Judy and myself) from wetlands around Baldivis and Mundijong and south to Anstey Swamp. While we were unsuccessful on the day in finding corellas at these places I believe one or more populations exist in them, well south of the metropolitan area. More observations from south of Perth would be valuable.

I am also interested to learn of roosting sites, especially for the Long-billed Corella. At present it appears that there is one site near the Canning Highway in Bicton that seems to be used by birds from Point Walter, one at Stirling Square, Guildford (shared with Little Corellas) and one or more in Canning Regional Park. In the latter, birds roost at Kent Street Weir and elsewhere along the Canning where there are large trees.

The prize for performance above and beyond the call of duty goes to David Lamont, who, a couple of days before the count was forced to go into hospital for a knee operation. However, you can't keep a good corella counter down — from his hospital bed David saw and counted a flock of Little Corellas that were probably not counted by anyone else. Many thanks to everyone who took part in this second corella count, and to those who contributed information beforehand on which to plan the count. There is no doubt that we now have a better idea of the status of feral corellas around Perth than we did before the two counts and that it is worth continuing annual monitoring.

John Blyth

HEALTHWAY GRANT



We are pleased to advise members that we have received a grant of \$2000 from Healthway to assist with the cost of community activities such as walks, talks, displays, school

programs and special events such as Bird Week.

The grant will also be used for costs involved with country visits in October to publicise the Birds on Farms report at present being written by Brenda Newbey.

Many thanks, Healthway.

HOODED PLOVER NEWS

Included with this issue is your copy of the Hooded Plover Report No 2 prepared by Marcus Singor.



Members are asked to note the following requests from the Hooded Plover Sub-committee:

- Please continue to send in reports of sightings to Phyllis Bentley at our Perth office.
- We are very anxious to obtain reports of sightings and breeding records from inland lakes during winter months.
- If visiting inlets and estuaries on the south coast keep a sharp lookout for Hooded Plovers.

We are considering the following for future action:

- Production of a brochure to raise awareness of Hooded Plover breeding areas by national parks staff, shires, 4-wheel drive clubs, etc.
- New assessment of the population of Hooded Plovers in Western Australia in view of the information available in this report.
- A thorough survey of Hooded Plovers at Lakes Preston and Clifton and exploration of the possibility of a banding/flagging program in the area.

We would also like to hear from any members interested in the study of distribution of *Coxiella* and its correlation with the distribution of Hooded Plovers. Shirley Slack-Smith of the WA Museum is willing to help with advice for anyone interested.

Allan Jones
for Hooded Plover Sub-committee

LIBRARY REPORT

The following publications have been accessioned since the last report:

- Perup Forest, Lake Muir and Unicup Nature Reserve: Draft Management Plan, 1998, CALM
- *Rangeflash*, Issue 6, November 1998
- *Narpulungup News*, Fitzgerald National Park newsletter, February 1999

- *Emu*, RAOU journal, vol 99, Part 1, March 1999
- *Bush Heritage News*, Autumn 1999
- Perth's Bush Plan, Dec 1998, vol 2, Parts A, B & C
- Cumberland Bird Observers Club newsletter, vol 20, Nos 3 & 4, Nov-December 1998/January-February 1999
- Australian Sea Bird Group newsletter, No 33, January 1999
- South Australian Ornithological Association newsletter, Nos 168 & 169, December 1998 and March 1999
- *Flyway*, Broome Bird Observatory newsletter
- Birds Australia Northern NSW Group newsletter, No 22, January 1999
- *Galah*, Birds Australia in-house newsletter, Nos 32 & 33, February & March 1999
- *The Greener Times*, Conservation Council newsletter, February & March 1999
- *Wingspan*, Birds Australia journal, vol 9, No 1, March 1999
- *Queensland Wader*, No 27, Autumn 1999
- Perth's Greenways, Strategic Plan, Final Report
- Green Plan, City of Melville, vols 1 & 2
- Regional Forest Agreements Bill 1998, Senator Andrew Bartlett
- *The Bird Observer*, Bird Observers Club newsletter, Nos 793 & 794, January-February and March 1999
- *The Web*, Threatened Species newsletter, March 1999
- *The Harrier*, Conservation Network newsletter, vol 1, No 1, Summer 1999
- *Riverview*, Swan River Trust newsletter, December 1998
- *Contact Call*, Birds North Queensland Group newsletter, March 1999
- Rotamah Network newsletter, No 17, February 1999
- RGC Wetlands Centre, reports 42-44 and 46 on Taylors Lake, Cadjepot Pool, Capel, and Waterbird Usage of Lakes, February 1999
- CALM News, January-February 1999
- Hooded Plover Report No 2, 1996-1999, Birds Australia-WA Group, Marcus Singor
- Western Ground Parrot Survey at Waychinicup and Manypeaks, April to October 1998, Birds Australia-WA Group, Shapelle McNee
- The First Five Years, Harold & Dennings, Malleefowl Preservation Group
- World Birdwatch Magazine, March and December 1998 (donated by Brian Wilson)

Liz Walker
LIBRARIAN

Book Reviews

***Vincent Serventy: An Australian Life. Memoirs of a naturalist, conservationist, traveller and writer.* Fremantle Arts Centre Press. \$19.95**

Vin's autobiography takes us on a journey through his life as an educationist, writer and lobbyist in almost every major conservation cause of the past 50 years. It describes his exploits and his friendships with numerous well-known people: naturalists, conservationists, writers and artists.

After outlining his family and childhood days, Vin takes us on a tour of his activities, travels and achievements. There are descriptions of his early days of involvement in conservation in Perth and Western Australia: the reinvigoration of the WA Naturalists' Club, the fights to save Kings Park from the construction of a swimming pool (won) and to prevent the 'reclamation' of parts of the Swan River for roads (unfortunately lost). Vin was a qualified teacher and his involvement with the Gould League inspired many children to an interest in nature. He was one of the driving forces behind the Naturalists' Club's Wildlife Shows, held for many years in the Perth Town Hall, that had a profound effect on children and adults alike in those times before TV. One Wildlife Show led to the rediscovery of the Western Swamp Tortoise, brought in for identification by an interested boy. Later in life Vin took part in the launching of WWF in Australia and was a Commissioner of the Australian Heritage Commission.

Passions in his early days included the Houtman Abrolhos and seabirds and *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds* (1971), jointly authored with brother Dom and John Warham, has long been one of my 'bibles'. Vin has communicated aspects of science and conservation to thousands of Australians through his many books, some of which have become icons. *A continent in danger* (1966) is one; another is *Dryandra*, the story of an Australian forest (1970).

Vin describes the part he played in pioneering TV wildlife programs. His 'Nature Walkabout' series, filmed in 1965 for Channel 9 in Sydney, was shown for several years, but unfortunately they were filmed in black-and-white and did not survive the arrival of colour TV. At this time Vin, wife Carol and family moved from Perth to Sydney and Vin became involved in many local conservation issues. However, Western Australia remained his first love and he has often returned here, sometimes to participate in public debate on a hot conservation issue of the day.

Vin states that modesty is not one of his failings. This is reflected in his very personal approach to issues and sometimes results in a failure to acknowledge the contributions of others to conservation achievements. His descriptions of conservation events are sometimes simplistic and occasionally they are incorrect. For example, his outline of the saving of the Lesueur area from coal mining and its subsequent declaration as a national

park is superficial, fails to acknowledge the enormous amount of work done by many people and organisations and incorrectly attributes its declaration to the 'the collapse of the Western Australian (Labor) government in the WA Inc scandal'—in fact Labor pushed a Bill through Parliament to have the area declared a national park and the Liberal and National parties voted against it.

These minor points aside, Vin's autobiography is well worth reading as a personal view of his life and dedication to conservation, as well as providing insights into how conservation has been and can be achieved in the public and political arenas.

Andrew Burbidge

***R.E. Johnstone and G.M. Storr. Handbook of Western Australian Birds. Volume 1. Non-passerines (Emu to Dollarbird).* Published 1998, Western Australian Museum.**

From its settlement by Europeans in 1829 to 1890, Western Australia changed very little. The net rate of increase of the population was the lowest for any other colony or state, the extent and rate of clearing of native vegetation was limited and slow, and few significant exotic species were introduced. All this changed 100 years ago with the establishment of responsible government in 1890 and the discovery of gold in 1892. These events had two important consequences: a natural history museum was founded in 1892 so that there was at last a state-based official repository for specimens; and the rapid improvement in infrastructure encouraged several competent ornithologists (T. Carter, F. Whitlock and H. Whittell) to settle. The improved cultural environment progressively nurtured the development of local talent in later generations, eg, D. Serventy, H. Butler and J. Ford.

As Western Australia was being developed (ie, the original vegetation was being cleared), there was usually an ornithologist (starting with Gilbert in 1839) working close to the frontier, collecting species new to science and preparing lists of the species encountered. Consequently, this state (almost one-third the area of Australia) has in my opinion the best documented history of environmental change, as reflected in ornithological knowledge, of any jurisdiction in Australia.

Johnstone and Storr's newly published book is a grand synthesis of the fruits of the labour of scores of ornithologists, egg collectors and bird watchers. Ron Johnstone has worked for 28 years at the WA Museum and Glen Storr was curator there for 24 years, so that they collaborated for 20 years. Within the limits of available space (about 30 – 800 cm² per species) is a feather-by-feather description and concise notes on habitat, status, food and feeding, breeding and measurements of external body parts. 338 species are included, of which 312 are illustrated, in colour where appropriate and in the case of raptors and waders twice to show their appearance in flight. The egg (sometimes several to show variation) of 198 species is photographed in colour (30 plates).

Other pleasing features of the book are: the quality of the 60 black and white paintings of young birds, groups of

birds, birds in flight, details of beaks, wing or tail patterns or display postures; the high standard of the 45 plates; and the virtual absence of typographical or other errors. This is not a book that has been recycled from other handbooks; instead it leaves a strong impression that every bird specimen and egg in the WA Museum and every record published about WA birds have been carefully scrutinised. In short, this book oozes authoritativeness.

Shortcomings of the book are few. I would have liked a WA distribution map for each species (not just 157 species) and the shaded zones on the maps to show (as dots) the actual localities where each species was observed or collected. Different shading could also have been used to indicate contractions or expansions in original distributions, instead of noting these in the text. This information and improved presentation would have helped the reader judge more readily the significance of new observations made in the field. Second, it would have been useful to use numerical superscripts in the species accounts to link with the bibliography. This would facilitate checking of the basis of unusual records such as outliers.

The species accounts are introduced by a 26 page digest about the climate, vegetation, landforms, avifauna and movements of bird species. The only disappointment here is the perpetuation of myths about unlogged forests and the objectives of prescribed burning in forests.

The book is well designed, with 2 columns per page. Together with the comprehensive index, it is easy to access information.

Johnstone and Storr's handbook is a worthy successor to Serventy and Whittell's handbook, which went through five editions between 1948 and 1976. It continues the tradition of WA being the best served state in Australia from an ornithological perspective. I strongly recommend purchase by anyone interested in seeking to improve their knowledge about birds in WA.

I look forward to publication of the second volume on the passerine bird species recorded in WA.

Ian Abbott

Members' Contributions

BUSH-HEN IN THE KIMBERLEY

On 12 October 1998, myself and two visiting bird watchers from Switzerland were checking a small pool at Silent Grove, King Leopold Ranges, when we saw an unusual crane-like bird. We had prolonged and unobstructed views of the bird at a distance of about 20 metres while it was in grassy vegetation near the water. It then disappeared into the vegetation, but re-appeared about five minutes later, this time only about 12 metres from us. It was about 11:30 am, so the light was good and I was able to get excellent views with my Zeiss 10 x 40 binocular.

The bird had no striking feature on it — no white spots on the flanks, and no barred under tail coverts. The bill

was dull green and the legs almost the same colour. We didn't see any red or orange on the bill. The under-tail coverts were rufous, the remainder of the underside dark grey, and the upper side dark greyish-brownish. The legs appeared long and the bird sometimes stood in water up to the belly. The bird did flick the tail, but not nervously.

We checked the field guides we had with us (Slater *et al.*, Simpson and Day) and concluded that the bird was a Bush-hen (*Amaurornis olivaceus*).

There are few previous reports of the Bush-hen from the Kimberley. Hooper (1985) described what appeared to be a Bush-hen on Mitchell Plateau and Jaensch (1989) cited several unconfirmed reports including one from the King Leopold Ranges and nine from the lower Ord. Recently, Johnstone and Storr (1998) were able to report confirmed breeding in the East Kimberley.

References

- Hooper, N. 1985. Bush-hen *Gallinula olivacea* in the Kimberley, Western Australia. Australian Bird Watcher 11(7), 243-244.
- Jaensch, R.P. 1989. Birds of wetlands and grasslands in the Kimberley Division, Western Australia: some records of interest, 1981-1988. RAOU Report No. 61.
- Johnstone, R.E. and Storr, G.M. 1998. Handbook of Western Australian Birds. Vol. 1. Non-Passerines (Emu to Dollarbird). Western Australian Museum, Perth.

Jonny Schoenjahn

IDENTIFICATION OF CROWS AND RAVENS

Three corvids occur in Western Australia: Torresian Crow, Little Crow and Australian Raven. Both crows occur throughout much of the arid parts of the state, and pose considerable problems in identification. Australian Ravens occur almost entirely south of the mulga-eucalypt line (i.e. south and west of a line from south of Shark Bay to near Kalgoorlie and also east in a narrow band along the coast and into South Australia). However, Little Crows can be found in the Western Australian wheatbelt during summer and autumn, and this can also pose identification problems. Torresian Crows and Australian Ravens do not usually occur together. (However, note that all three WA species can be found together in some areas, including on the lower Wooramel River and in parts of the Eastern Goldfields.) The usual problems therefore are Torresian compared with Little Crow, and Australian Raven compared with Little Crow. This leads to two questions — (1) how can they be distinguished?, and (2) what is the best way to approach recording of these species for the Atlas?

Extensive information on the ecology, morphology, calls and behaviour of all Australian corvids has been provided by Ian Rowley and his co-workers (Rowley *et al.* 1973). Problems and solutions concerning field identification are well covered by Curry (1978) and Debus (1995), and the newer field guides cover this subject fairly well. Of the above, the article by Stephen Debus in *Wingspan* is especially recommended. However, as a number of Atlas contributors have been having some

problems in this area, the following is an attempt to summarise the major points to look for in Western Australia. This is not a comprehensive account of the subject - it is an introduction only, and observers, especially those likely to encounter either of the two crows, are strongly encouraged to refer to the *Wingspan* article referred to above.

Identification

Plumage differences are of little help — all three species are black, with black bills, and they can be difficult or impossible to distinguish while perched. Size does not help much — Australian Ravens are usually larger than Torresian Crows, which are usually larger than Little Crows, but there is considerable variation and some overlap between species. As a result, various other characters must be used, including habits, voice and flight. Particularly when trying to distinguish between the crows, it is important to use as many characters as possible, and to listen to as many calls as possible, as they each have quite a repertoire. And be aware that you will not be able to accurately identify every individual corvid you see or hear.

Because of the similarities between the three species and need to use a number of characters, this is a case where knowing at least one of the species well is an enormous advantage. So, find yourself a site where you are confident one of the three is dominant and make yourself very familiar with it. Australian Ravens are common and easily observed all year in Perth (eg, at Kings Park they are easily approached very closely as they have become very used to humans) and in and near most south-western towns, and this provides excellent opportunities to learn their habits and vocal repertoire. Similarly, the Little Crow is the common species around many inland towns and service stations such as Denham, the Overlander Roadhouse and Mount Magnet. And although there are some minor geographical differences between northern and central birds, the Torresian Crow is the only corvid found in the northern Kimberley, and this provides an opportunity to become familiar with it in a setting with minimal identification problems. If you know one of the species well, you will be much quicker to detect either of the other species, and to determine how it is different from the one you are familiar with. And remember, take good notes *before* you consult your field guide or other reference materials!

Australian Raven

This is the easiest to pick among the Western Australian species. Adult Australian Ravens have pendulous throat hackles that are obviously longer than those of all other Australian corvids. These hackles are particularly obvious when the bird is calling from a perch, proclaiming ownership of its territory. The call given in this situation is most distinctive, being a relatively high-pitched yet powerful slow 'aah.. aah.. aah..' of three to four notes, with the last drawn-out and descending in a 'dying' finish. It is often given from a horizontal posture on a prominent perch, and with the throat hackles conspicuously fanned. In different situations a variety of other calls are given.

Australian Ravens are territorial residents, usually occurring in small family groups, although larger aggregations can occur, particularly around rubbish tips or other concentrated sources of food. However, if you see a large flock of corvids in flight, suspect it to be a flock of Little Crows.

Little Crow

As aptly described by Stephen Debus, the Little Crow utters "a baritone, nasal, rapid *nark-nark-nark-nark..* with each note slightly prolonged; it is flat, hoarse and monotonous, and often given from a low perch or on the ground". This call usually includes from one to three syllables, but much longer calls can be heard. A single 'crock' is often given by birds heading off in flight, and they also have a rapid, high-pitched, three-note 'kup-kup-kup' and other calls including warbling and creaking sounds.

The Little Crow is a sociable nomad, and can often be seen in flocks, sometimes consisting of up to several hundred birds. They can sometimes be seen soaring in spirals or performing diving aerobatics. It is the common corvid of many outback towns south of the Kimberley, and in these situations it can become rather confiding. Examples of places where this occurs include Denham, the Overlander Roadhouse and Mount Magnet. Such situations are excellent opportunities to become familiar with this species. (But note that Torresian Crows can also occur around human habitation.) Generally speaking, the Little Crow in Western Australia is more catholic in its choice of habitat than is the Torresian Crow, which is generally around major watercourses or other areas where eucalypts are prominent.

Compared with the Torresian Crow, the Little Crow appears more agile and buoyant in flight, and is more blunt-winged, with a slender tail.

Torresian Crow

Torresian Crows are tenors, and Peter Curry describes their calls as being more musical than those of Little Crows, having a laughing or barking quality. The usual call is a rapid, nasal 'uk-uk-uk-uk' of more than three notes, sometimes finishing with longer notes. They also give longer caws, a harsh, nasal 'arr..arr..arr..' followed by prolonged notes, and on other occasions can give high-pitched, yodelling calls. Note that while calls of the Torresian Crow are included on some commercially available tape recordings, these are usually from eastern Australian birds. Western birds may differ to some extent, but the general character of the calls as given on these tapes is still distinctive.

The Torresian Crow often shuffles its folded wings upon alighting — but note that the Little Crow may occasionally re-adjust its wing tips after alighting.

Unlike the Little Crow, adults of this species are territorial residents, and therefore usually occur in groups of from 1-5 birds. However, young birds may move around, and larger flocks can occur.

The Torresian Crow is said to glide lazily on drooped wings, while the Australian Raven glides on almost level wings with up-curved primaries.

Atlas recording

If you are confident enough to report which species you have seen (ie, 100% sure), please state the characters you have used to make the identification(s) of corvids on each data sheet where you record any of these species. That way, anyone using the Atlas data will have more confidence in the identifications you have made, and it will also reduce the number of Unusual Record Report Forms that observers are asked to complete!

If you are not 100% sure, you have two options. The first is to provide a provisional identification together with as much information as you can from your field observations. In other words, the kind of information asked for on an Unusual Record Report Form. This way, those people checking the data can make an informed decision about what you saw and heard. The second option is to record the observation as "crow or raven species". You may also wish to add any notes about what you did see or hear. No observer can provide an accurate identification of absolutely every bird seen or heard (the bird might not have called at all or you might not have got a very good look at it), so listing records as "crow or raven species" is a realistic option. Such data are still useful for the Atlas, and definitely better than erroneous data. The main thing to bear in mind is to be conservative and avoid possible errors.

Conclusions

- (1) With care, Western Australian crows and ravens can be distinguished reliably, but you should not expect to be able to confidently identify every single one you see.
- (1) When recording for the Atlas, please state which characters you have used to identify these species, and if you are not 100% sure of the identification, simply record the observation as "crow or raven species".

References

- Curry, P. J. 1978. On the field characters of Little and Torresian Crows in central Western Australia. *Australian Bird Watcher* 7(8), 265-269.
- Debus, S. 1995. Crows and ravens. *Wingspan* 5(4), 38-42.
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Allan Burbidge

BIRDS OF THE BANKSIADALE AREA IN THE 1960s

Introduction

Banksiadale was a small town which built up around the Working Railways Sawmill No 2 in State Forest No 14 during 1912 and 1913. It was situated 6.5 km north of Dwellingup but in June 1963 the sawmill burnt down and some 300-400 people left the town during the following year. This exodus accelerated when nearly all the houses were transferred to Dwellingup in 1964 and 1965. Only a few houses and residents remained but they were also gone by 1970. The site is now under the waters of the South Dandalup Dam.

Banksiadale was 16 km inside the western border of the Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) forest. It covered some

75 ha; small and adjacent farmlets totalled some 50 ha and there were a few more scattered clearings nearby. The whole of the cleared land was negligible in comparison with the vast amount of Jarrah forest surrounding it. The birdlife is therefore worth recording because ornithologists in the past, except Kimber (1972) have lumped all birds together, and did not delineate between the birds of the Jarrah and those that are intruders and alien to the forest.

A small dam, which has now been breached, some 2.5 km north of Banksiadale supplied it with water and the northern boundary of the town was 0.8 km from the South Dandalup River. My casual observations were made in September and early October 1964, November and December 1968 and January to August 1969.

The area has been logged and fired by Europeans since settlement and the Aborigines fired it for 7,000 years (Kimber 1972). It is however typical, rather homogenous Jarrah forest drained by numerous watercourses, which together with their peculiar vegetation form a distinctive ecological feature, and the area can thus be divided into two habitats:

a) The forest/woodland of slopes and ridges — consisting of Jarrah and Marri *Eucalyptus calophylla* with an understory of Banksia and Allocasuarina and a ground cover of Acacia, Macrozamia, Xanthorrhoea, fern, etc. (Referred to as 'woodland' in the annotated list below).

b) The watercourses — with their denser vegetation consisting of species preferring damper conditions.

The birdlife can be divided into that typical of the Jarrah forest and that which has intruded into it after settlement. I follow Kimber (1972) and put the birds into categories, but only use three instead of four: 1) Birds of the Jarrah forest, 2) Intruders into the Jarrah and 3) Birds of the dam only.

Birds of the Jarrah Forest

Pacific Black Duck — rare, once on river, once on dam and flying along valleys

Australasian Grebe — very rare; once on river

Darter — rare, once on river, once on dam

Little Pied Cormorant — uncommon, few times on river, mostly on dam

White-faced Heron — uncommon but ranges widely over marshes

Whistling Kite — very rare, once only

Brown Goshawk — uncommon

Little Eagle — rare, only seen a few times

Australian Hobby — very rare, once only

Common Bronzewing — uncommon, singles and pairs

Long-billed Black-Cockatoo — common, small flocks up to 100

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo — very common, groups, small flocks up to 100

Purple-crowned Lorikeet — uncommon

Western Rosella — uncommon but thinly distributed through the area

Australian Ringneck — common, thinly and generally distributed

Red-capped Parrot — common, pairs and small flocks up to 25

Pallid Cuckoo — very rare, heard calling only in September 1964

Fan-tailed Cuckoo — common, thinly and generally distributed

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo — uncommon, heard calling only

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo — uncommon, generally distributed

Tawny Frogmouth — rare, sometimes heard calling

Australian Owlet-nightjar — rare

Sacred Kingfisher — thinly and generally distributed

Rainbow Bee-eater — thinly and generally distributed

Rufous Treecreeper — uncommon, woodlands

Splendid Fairy-wren — very common, generally distributed

Red-winged Fairy-wren — common in watercourses, may range into woodland

Striated Pardalote — common, woodland

White-browed Scrubwren — common in riverine thickets, rare in woodland

Weebill — very rare, heard calling, twice only

Western Gerygone — common, generally distributed

Inland Thornbill — common, generally distributed

Western Thornbill — very common, generally distributed

Red Wattlebird — uncommon, woodland, generally distributed

Little Wattlebird — very common, riverine thickets, may range out of them

White-naped Honeyeater — Uncommon, woodland

Brown Honeyeater — uncommon, woodland, pairs

New Holland Honeyeater — very common, riverine thickets, may range out

Western Spinebill — very common, generally distributed

Scarlet Robin — common in woodland, may range into riverine thickets

Western Yellow Robin — thinly distributed woodland inhabitant only

White-breasted Robin — common, riverine thickets, may range out of them

Varied Sittella — rare, pairs and small flocks, woodland

Golden Whistler — common and generally distributed

Grey Shrike-thrush — common, generally distributed

Grey Fantail — very common, likes riverine thickets

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike — uncommon, generally distributed

Dusky Woodswallow — uncommon, small flocks, generally distributed

Grey Currawong — uncommon, pairs, small groups, generally distributed

Australian Raven — thinly and generally distributed, likes clearings

Red-eared Firetail — moderately common, riverine thickets, may range out

Tree Martin — common, small flocks up to 100

Silveryeye — common, likes thickets, small to moderate flocks

Intruders into the Jarrah Forest

Laughing Kookaburra — thinly and generally distributed, woodland

Yellow-rumped Thornbill — small flocks, clearings

Willie Wagtail — rare resident, only in Banksiadale

Magpie-lark — uncommon, clearings only

Grey Butcherbird — uncommon, clearings only

Australian Magpie — a few families, clearings

Richard's Pipit — very rare, once only in the town clearing

Birds of the Dam Only

Musk Duck — one, resident

Black Swan — two, once only

Grey Teal — two, once only

Purple Swamphen — one or two, twice only

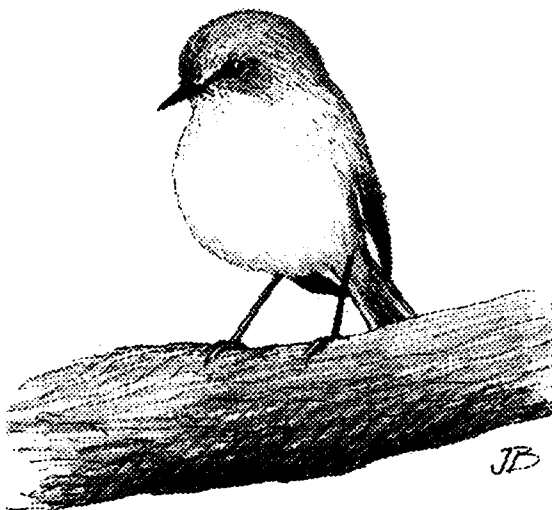
General Notes on Distribution

The Shining and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos, Sacred Kingfisher and bee-eater are recognised migrants that vacate the Jarrah forest during winter, and southern Western Australia generally, and the Tree Martin, Western Gerygone, Striated Pardalote and Dusky Woodswallow also seem to vacate the Jarrah forest during some of the winter months.

Of the 48 diurnal species recorded by me as being of the Jarrah forest proper, six are largely confined to and dependent on the riverine thickets. These are the Red-winged Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrub-wren, White-breasted Robin, New Holland Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird and Red-eared Firetail, and they only range out of the thickets for short distances.

The numerous vehicle tracks in the area, many of which are no longer used, are a boon to certain insectivorous and seed-eating species, because the tracks are mostly bare or have little debris and cover on them, and hence the insects have little or no cover. Species that take advantage of this are the White-breasted, Yellow and Scarlet Robins, Splendid and Red-winged Fairy-wrens and Western Thornbill. The Western Rosella and Red-eared Firetail also forage over the tracks.

The Purple-crowned Lorikeet and the Long-billed Black-Cockatoo are nomads and the Red-capped Parrot and Brown Honeyeater showed nomadism too. The Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike and the Varied Sittella had a peculiar irregular occurrence and



White-breasted Robin, common at Banksiadale and a feature of the Hoffman's Mill campout.
Drawing by Judy Blyth

the Common Bronzewing obviously doesn't like the Jarrah forest.

At the latitude of Banksiadale the western edge of the Jarrah forest is congruent with the western edge of the Darling Range Plateau, and the eastern edge of the Swan Coastal Plain adjoins them. It was formerly forested, most of the remaining trees being Marri and is now primarily cleared or grazed by livestock

Species seen on this cleared land which range up to but not into the Jarrah proper are the Black-shouldered Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Elegant Parrot, Welcome Swallow, Rufous Whistler, Red-capped Robin and Black-faced Woodswallow. They are all potential edge species which may range into the Jarrah after extensive clearing, and some of them have already done this in the northern part of the forest, such as at Wooroloo (Sedgwick 1956) and around areas such as Dwellingup (Kimber 1972).

Of the common species the Splendid Fairy-wren, Inland and Western Thornbills and the Western Spinebill may be equally common in habitats outside the Jarrah forest, while the Golden Whistler, White-breasted Robin, Red-winged Fairy-wren, New Holland Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird and Red-eared Firetail find the forest an optimum environment. The New Holland Honeyeater and Little Wattlebird also seem to irrupt onto the coastal plain at indefinite times.

Discussion

Kimber (1972) made his observations in State Forest within 24 km of Dwellingup. Therefore my Banksiadale observations are a subset of his and with the exception of the swampphen, I didn't record any species that he didn't. However his area around Dwellingup contains much cleared land and farmland and therefore I consider my birdlist to be more representative of the Jarrah forest before settlement.

Kimber (1972) and I present our bird lists in a way that better facilitates comparison and interpretation of the Jarrah forest avifauna, for earlier ornithologists, such as Sedgwick (1968), simply lumped all the birds together in an overall list, and this is unsatisfactory.

Kimber (1972) and I differ however in the categorisation of some species. For instance he considers the Yellow-rumped Thornbill to be a bird of the forest, whereas I consider it to be an intruder into the Jarrah. Also, Kimber believes the Splendid Fairy-wren to be a bird of the riverine thickets, whereas I consider it to be a bird of the forest that only ranges into the thickets some of the time.

Species recorded in the forest by Kimber (1972) and not by me are the Emu, Collared Sparrowhawk, Brown Falcon, Malleefowl, Brush Bronzewing, Regent Parrot, Elegant Parrot, Southern Boobook, Welcome Swallow, White-winged Triller, Spotted Pardalote and Brown-headed Honeyeater. Some of these species, namely, the Elegant Grass Parrot and Welcome Swallow are definitely intruders into the Jarrah, while the Regent Parrot may occasionally occur there, but not usually (Serventy and Whittell 1976). And I would like to see some of the others such as the Brown Falcon, White-winged Triller and Brown-headed Honeyeater in relation to cleared land and

farmland before categorising them. Two of them however, the Southern Boobook and the Spotted Pardalote, are birds that I know by sight and sound but didn't record.

Species recorded in the marshes and riverine thickets by Kimber (1972) but not by me are the Brown Quail (Johnstone and Storr [1998] disallow this record but Blakers et al. [1984] accept it) Spotless Crake and Little Grassbird. Presumably I simply overlooked them, even though I know the latter well by both sight and sound.

Kimber lists 14 species as being of the dams and rivers but many would not occur there if the dams didn't.

Of the seven species that I consider to be alien and intruders into the Jarrah, Kimber (1972) lists five as being birds of clearings and forest edges, thereby confirming my claim. The five species are Richard's Pipit, Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird and Australian Magpie, and the latter four are edge species but are obviously within the Jarrah forest and not just on the perimeter. They occur naturally over the Swan Coastal Plain, are common species there and have only penetrated the forest here because of the attractions of the clearings in and around Banksiadale. Of the other two, the Laughing Kookaburra is a special case, it being introduced, and the Yellow-rumped Thornbill is considered by Kimber to be a bird of the forest and not the clearings. However, the Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Australian Magpie will range into areas of the forest which have been burnt, and where the litter is comparatively sparse.

Less obvious are the natural edge species such as the Western Rosella, Australian Ringneck, Grey Currawong and Australian Raven, which all ranged into Banksiadale in search of food. Also there are species that range out of the riverine thickets into the adjacent woodland, those two features forming a natural edge within the forest. These are the Red-winged Fairy-wren, Red-eared Firetail, New Holland Honeyeater and Little Wattlebird, the latter two ranging out of the thickets to feed on nearby Banksia.

The White-breasted Robin will also range out of the thickets and into the woodland for up to 0.4 km. One species, the Splendid Fairy-wren, does the reverse. It ranges into the thickets from the woodland.

Obviously the principles espoused here can be extended to any large tract of homogenous vegetation, and this should be done for our forests at least, because the continual clearing of our native forests is resulting in the favouring of "open, dry country birds over forested, wet-country birds" (Storr and Johnstone 1988). It is creating habitat that will attract these dry country birds, such as here at Banksiadale, and hence confuse ornithologists further (Sedgwick 1968).

Conclusion

An historical bird list for the Jarrah forest of the Banksiadale area in the 1960s is presented. The birds have been categorised in a way that allows direct comparison to Kimber (1972), who listed his birds in categories too. Our presentation of our bird lists is superior to the works of other ornithologists who have lumped all their species into one overall list.

The true Jarrah forest species of birds are delineated from the seven species that are alien and intruders into the

forest, and which exist as edge species. Those species that ranged into Banksiadale from the surrounding woodland are cited, as also are species frequenting a natural edge within the Jarrah forest. Species of birds that may become edge specialists within the Jarrah forest after further clearing of it are cited.

Future studies of the Jarrah forest birdlife need to be done in vast areas of the forest which are relatively free from the effects of human agency, and observers should delineate between species natural to the Jarrah and those that are alien to it.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the firm of Hawker Siddeley Building Supplies Pty Ltd for courtesies and information about Banksiadale, to Mr A Harris, then Conservator of Forests, for permission to use Banksiadale as a camp, and to Mr R Royce, then of the Department of Agriculture, for identifying some of the flora for me. I am indebted to the late Dr G Storr, then of the WA Museum, for valuable advice, and the same to the late Dr D Serventy, then of CSIRO, and for enticing me to do the survey.

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Robert H. Stranger

FAIRY-WRENS FEEDING ON ANT EGGS AND LARVAE

While walking a section of the Bibbulmun Track in the Piesse Brook area on 2 May, we noticed two Splendid Fairy-wrens feeding on the stony track. The birds seemed unconcerned by our presence and continued to feed as we gradually moved closer. They were observed from a distance of about three metres, in good light, with binoculars, for about 15 minutes.

At first we were puzzled by the behaviour of the birds. They hopped briskly in all directions within a small area, but when we looked more closely we could see that they were feeding among a trail of ants. The ants were approximately 1 cm long and reddish in colour with black abdomens. We wondered whether the wrens were eating the ants but

could see no evidence of the birds 'juggling' the ants prior to swallowing them, or of any part of the ants protruding from the birds' bills. Even more puzzling was the fact that the birds seemed to be eating something white, not dark. We noticed that the birds seemed to peck at an ant, then make a flicking movement with the bill, following up not the ant, but something else.

Further observation showed that every sixth or seventh ant was carrying something white — an egg or a tiny ant larva. We realised then that the wrens were simply relieving the ants of their burdens as they passed, while keeping out of their way by continually hopping about.

George and Pam Agar

PARROTS EATING NIGHTSHADE

During the second corella count, we were listening near an area on the outskirts of Mundijong that we had been told corellas had been seen recently. An adjacent rather overgrazed paddock had many quite vigorous plants of black fruited nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), most bearing both ripe fruit and flowers, and we saw several Red-capped Parrots around these plants. We were watching a male Red-capped Parrot in full breeding plumage climbing around in the *Solanum*, when two Regent Parrots landed on the ground among the largest of the *Solanum* plants about 20 m from the red-cap. We were able to watch both species of parrots feeding on the same species of plant for over half an hour.

The Red-capped Parrot, being very short legged, was extremely awkward on the ground although it did walk from plant to plant among the *Solanum*, seeking flowers on which it fed, without appearing to have any interest in the ripe or unripe fruit. Most of the flowers were towards the tops of the *solanum* plants and the red-cap usually climbed up twenty or more centimetres and took the flowers while perched quite comfortably on the plant.

On the other hand the Regent Parrots, both being taller and feeding exclusively on the ripe berries, many of which



Regent Parrot feeding on *Solanum* berries.
Drawing by Judy Blyth

grew lower on the plants than the flowers, usually fed from the plants while standing on the ground beside it. We felt that the berries were swallowed whole, although it did seem as though occasionally one of the birds would let a berry drop to the ground after manipulating it in the bill for some seconds. It is possible that the birds were extracting the pulp and/or seeds from the berries and dropping the empty skins.

Given the wide range of foods quoted in HANZAB Volume 4 as being eaten by Regent Parrots the observation of them feeding on the solanum was not surprising. In fact, there are several examples of the species eating solanum fruit or seeds reported in HANZAB.

However, the feeding behaviour of the Red-capped Parrot was rather more unusual. Its food as reported in HANZAB is less diverse, and heavily based around the seeds of various eucalypts.

The fruit of *Solanum nigrum* is reported to be poisonous when green, but edible, and one assumes, more palatable, when black and ripe. Certainly the Regent Parrots took only the riper fruit. We do not know of any reports on the edibility or otherwise of the flowers of this species, but it seems that, at least to Red-capped Parrots, they are both safe to eat and palatable. *Solanum nigrum* is widely spread on disturbed land throughout the wetter agricultural areas and in some cases could now constitute a significant food resource for native birds in late autumn, when other food may be in short supply.

John and Judy Blyth

POSSIBLE BARN SWALLOW AT GLEN FORREST

We are familiar with the Welcome Swallow, so when we saw an unusual swallow on our clothesline at Springside Crescent, Glen Forrest, on 7 December 1998, we immediately noticed that this bird had different markings. The bird was observed for about 25-30 minutes from about 1530 hours. During this time, it did not shift position. It spent most of the time preening its feathers. It was alert to our movements but did not seem concerned as we moved around. We were each able to observe the bird through binoculars from a distance of about 10 metres.

The length of the bird was estimated at 15-18 cm. It had a black head with a light orange face and throat and an orange triangle above the eyes. The black on the head surrounded the eyes. Its chest was white. A distinct black band across the chest separated the orange face and throat from the white chest. The back appeared glossy black with a bluish tinge. The wing feathers were a dark brown. The beak was short, straight and black.

After the bird had departed, we went inside and individually noted down our observations; on subsequent examination, they were found to be the same. We then consulted our field guides. It did not take long to identify the bird as a Barn Swallow, but we were perplexed that our field guides indicated that this species only occurs in northern Australia. After discussion with Perry and Alma de Rebeira, who live nearby, it was concluded that this bird might indeed have been a Barn Swallow. It is interesting to note that there had been cyclonic activity in the north-west

a few days prior to the sighting — tropical cyclone Billy crossed the coast north-east of Onslow, travelling south, on 5 December. This extreme weather may have driven the bird south.

Faye and Trevor Lemke

Editors' note: WABN 37:1 includes the first report (supported by a description and photograph) of a Barn Swallow in the south-west of the state — a single bird at Thomsons Lake in January 1986.

The present report is interesting because, although it appears to relate to a Barn Swallow, some features are not described or do not match a Barn Swallow. In particular, while this bird was described as having the black on the head surrounding the eyes (ie, matching a Barn Swallow) it also had an orange triangle above the eyes (ie, matching a Welcome Swallow). In the Barn Swallow, the chestnut on the forehead is less extensive, being almost entirely in front of the eyes, whereas in the Welcome it extends to above the eye. Also, in the Welcome, the chestnut on the side of the throat is more extensive. Barn Swallows have longer tail streamers than Welcome Swallows and have white or greyish white underwing coverts (not greyish white with a brown tinge as in the Welcome). This gives the underwing of the Barn a noticeably paler and more striking appearance, and is a useful field character. These features were not noted for the Glen Forrest bird.

It is also interesting to note the appearance of a suspected Barn Swallow reported two years ago from Mt Martha, Victoria. This bird had unusual amounts of dark markings on the chest and a paler central and lower belly than normal. However, it also had dark centres to a number of undertail coverts and pale grey flanks. The distribution of rufous in the lower ear covert region was also too extensive for a Barn Swallow and, notably, it lacked white underwing coverts. It was therefore concluded that the Mt Martha bird was an unusual Welcome Swallow. Readers should be aware of the possibility of unusual Welcome Swallows.

WHITE-BROWED CRAKE NEAR BROOME

I saw a crake that I identified as a White-browed Crake, *Porzana cinerea*, at Nimalaica Well, near Broome, on 5 March 1999. Because I was already familiar with the species and its calls in the Kununurra area, and had heard that the species had previously been reported from Nimalaica, I did not make written notes. However, I subsequently realised that there are very few reports of this species west of the Ord River catchment, and there appears to be only one published report from the West Kimberley (a juvenile bird at Lake Eda on 19/2/89 (WABN 50: 3)). Because of the paucity of published records, this sighting is worth reporting. The following notes were written from memory.

The day was fine and sunny, with good light and visibility. There was no wind. At about 9 am my attention was drawn by a constant calling coming from the green reeds, which were about a metre tall. The calls were coming from the flooded outskirts of the lagoon, where the water was about 30 cm deep. I stood motionless for a while and eventually a crake came into view. It climbed along the reeds, sometimes grabbing a couple of reed-stems to get enough support. The bird made its way along the edge of the reeds well in view of where I was standing. From the call I had already identified it as a White-browed Crake.

Watching it, I easily saw that it was an adult of this species. The most striking feature was the head pattern. There was a white line underneath the eye, extending beyond the eye, another shorter white line from the base of the bill to the eye separated by a black stripe from the lower white line, and a black forehead. The bill colour was horn-yellow with red at the base, and the feet greenish. There was a red eye ring. The breast and belly were light grey and the undertail a light brown-cream. The back was brown with dark 'scales'.

At first I was surprised how confident the bird was despite the close range of maybe 8-10 m. But I remember that it is easy to get close views of this species at Lake Kununurra as well, with some patience. Saying this, I also remember that the bird I saw at Lake Gladstone on 7 November 1997 was very shy, but there were only very few reeds there to give cover.

On the day, I briefly checked my copy of the 'Slater' field guide, and was happy with my identification. Later, at home, I looked at the new 'Pizzey and Knight', but I think the bird looked more like the picture in the 'Slater' guide.

Jonny Schoenjahn

BIRDING'S LIGHTER MOMENTS

That remarkable doyen of the excursion committee, Mr Bryan Barrett, contacted me last year suggesting I lead a Sunday outing to Lake McLarty during the 1998-99 wader season. How could I refuse when Bryan gives up so much of his own time leading excursions. Duly in December Bird Notes was the promise of a day observing waterbirds and shorebird rarities at Lake McLarty, a site well known for its diversity of species and regular high bird counts in summer. "A piece of cake" I thought at the time.

OFFICE MANAGER

A great opportunity!

Birds Australia-WA Group needs a volunteer to fill the position of office manager.

The duty is primarily to see that Perry House is kept with supplies necessary for the smooth running of a well-appointed office and act as coordinator for the volunteers who attend the office 9:30 am -12:30 pm Monday to Friday.

The position does not require visiting on a daily basis but regular weekly attendance is necessary (or desirable).

Living relatively close to Perry House (in Bold Park) may be considered an advantage.

The present incumbent has held the position for five years and feels the opportunity to contribute towards BAWAG should be offered to another willing person.

Expressions of interest to BAWAG Secretary:

Margaret Philippon

Tel/Fax: 9375 2068

Email: colmar@upnaway.com

Consequently on Sunday 21 February 1999 I found myself standing before 12 wader enthusiasts gathered at the junction of the Old Coast Road and Bunbury Road.

As their intrepid leader I was feeling a bit under the pump for various reasons; my last trip to the lake had been a disaster when the transmission failed on the Toyota. Today could almost be a repeat as the lake that only two weeks ago boasted a population of 20 000 birds was now bone dry.

After explaining these dismal facts to the familiar and unfamiliar faces before me, I led the group off in convoy towards our destination.

A stop at Mills Road on the way to the lake proved rewarding with a variety of bushbirds plus good viewing of a Brown Goshawk. I started to feel slightly confident. Arriving at McLarty, sure enough, we were afforded marvellous views of the bottom of the lake but the absence of waterbirds and waders was rather obvious.

Not to be deterred our stalwart group were soon scanning the area with telescopes and binoculars. Their efforts were rewarded by the sighting of a Wedge-tailed Eagle (a species rarely seen at the lake), various bushbirds and, sure enough, on the far side of the lake, waders — five lonely Red-capped Plovers. I had heard of the ecstatic birdo's description of "An exaltation of Larks". These birds could be summed up as "A depression of Plovers".

With nothing to lose it was decided to visit the Harvey Inlet, just over the hill to the west. Here we were greeted by a high tide, two White-faced Herons, a Great Egret and a small flock of Red-necked Stints flying north. Dare I say "A smattering of stints". Deciding to follow the stints, our convoy sped north toward Austin Bay and Point Grey. Arriving at the edge of the estuary we were encouraged by an area of exposed mud running into the water and a mixed group of Great and Little Egrets preening on a small sandbar.

We were discouraged by a rather persistent mosquito population, each trying to emulate a miniature Frankenstein. A liberal application of insect repellent and once more we were engaged in the search for the elusive waders.

Out on the estuary in the distant heat haze Black Swans and shelducks honked sarcastically as we squinted through our optics. We were rewarded with the sighting of six Red-necked Stints, four Red-capped Plovers and half a dozen Greenshanks loafing near the egrets. Encouraging but still a long way from anything like an exaltation.

Moving on from the friendly Point Grey mosquitos and now rather desperate for a shorebird sighting our convoy made its way toward Coodanup on the Peel Inlet. Missing the turnoff on the way in I managed to lead my bemused group on a tour of the back streets of that delightful suburb, before arriving at the foreshore park. After a light lunch (yes, I'd left the bulk of it at home in the refrigerator) and a brief repose under the trees, we were once more on the road for the short trip to Nairns at the mouth of the Serpentine River. It was here, after searching the sandbars at the side of the channel, our persistence was rewarded with the sighting of a group of Grey Plovers sheltering in the weed. Scanning on, our elusive waders

were revealed. More Grey Plovers, Red-capped Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Eastern Curlews, Greenshanks, Red-necked Avocets, Black-winged Stilts, Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers plus Caspian, Crested and Fairy Terns. I could say my neck was saved at Nairns.

Thanks to those members who came along on the day and eventually witnessed a satisfying and enjoyable outcome to "A day's birding at Lake McLarty". Our tally of sightings from the five locations was 66 species with a respectable number of waders and waterbirds.

As for Lake McLarty – well, Mr Barrett, maybe next year ...

Colin Davis

NOISY SCRUB-BIRD EXPERIENCES AT WAYCHINICUP

On Sunday 4 April at 10:00 am on a track through heath and eucalypts which were no more than 2 m high wending our way down to the Waychinicup River 34°53' 118°19' we had a brief sighting of a male Noisy Scrub-bird. Later in the afternoon at 3:00 pm on Lookout Point Cheyne Backbeach, about 8 km east, a male appeared on the track from dense undergrowth and was viewed for about three minutes. About five minutes later a juvenile appeared on the track. None of these three birds seen was vocal.

However on Monday 5 April at Mermaid Point 34°55' 118°24' 4 km south-west of Cheyne Beach in a gully vegetated with eucalypts, again no more than 2 m high, at 7:00 am there was a wonderful chorus of birdsong lasting for at least 20 minutes. Birds seen in and around these eucalypts were male and juvenile Noisy Scrub-birds, emu-wrens and parrots.

Above all the bird chatter could be heard a very loud territorial call coming from these eucalypts and being answered with a similar call coming from the direction of Lookout Point in a north-easterly direction. This loud distinctive call coming from both directions at different intervals was very like the Western Bristlebird which I had heard previously at Two Peoples Bay, on this occasion actually seeing the bird at song. However at Waychinicup on no occasion did I actually see the bird at song.

Was this territorial call and answering call a mimicry by the Noisy Scrub-bird of the Western Bristlebird or were there Western Bristlebirds unseen?

M H Bremner

OBSERVATIONS OF BREEDING BEHAVIOUR IN AUSTRALASIAN GREBES (*Podiceps novaehollandiae*)

On 19 visits, from 4 February until 9 April 1999, I observed a pair of Australasian Grebes and their young at a lake, in a parkland setting, some 1000 metres from the western end of the Estuary Road Bridge, Mandurah.

On 4 February my attention was drawn to an uncovered nest with, apparently, a single egg and an adult grebe on the lake nearby. The nest was no more than a metre from the bank in a location frequented by walkers, many with dogs. From 4 February until 7 February the adult grebe thwarted any attempts to establish whether additional eggs were being laid by sitting until I was a few

metres off and then, in departing, adroitly flicking a pad of vegetation over the nest. The covering appeared a cohesive patch rather than individual pieces requiring arrangement. To avoid excessive disturbance of the grebe, I avoided loitering at the site until 25 February.

On 25 February I found the nest to be uncovered, with one egg visible and two adults on the lake at a distance of about 4 metres, and assumed, incorrectly, that the nest had been disturbed by passers by or their dogs. On 4 March two adults, together with two chicks, were visible. One adult carried a chick on its back with another swimming close behind. The second adult was engaged in frequent diving displays at a small party of inoffensive Pacific Black Ducks swimming nearby.

On 9 March I observed the two adults accompanied by three chicks, one of which was considerably smaller than its siblings. This was the only occasion that the third small chick was observed. By 28 March the two surviving chicks had their typical striped appearance and, because of their dry plumage, appeared larger than the adults which were sleek from repeated diving.

My concentrated grebe-watching ended on 9 April, by which date a typical formation of one juvenile to one adult had been established. On no occasion did I see juveniles diving, although on a single occasion, one juvenile fluttered purposefully for about 10 metres, with clear space between its feet and the lake surface. (I do not intend, on this flimsiest of evidence to suggest that juveniles fly before they dive!)

I can record more confidently the difficulty of determining clutch size (without unwarranted disturbance). A second observation, based on prolonged watching, is that it was not infrequent for incubation to take place through a layer of nest-covering vegetation.

Regarding grebe vocalisation, apart from the well-known "chittering" of the adults, there was an occasional sequence of four or five ringing "chips" made usually at a too-close dog. A frequent vocalisation of the chicks was a continuous sequence of high pitched "chips" used in soliciting food while adults were diving. This soliciting-call was most intense between 9 March and 28 March.

Compared with HANZAB Volume 1 Part A records, the breeding occurrence which I observed was late, and the inferred clutch size of three eggs was below average. (HANZAB records that, for Western Australia, the laying season is from August to February, peaking in November, and the average clutch size 4.3.)

Frank Pridham

TRIP TO THE ABROLHOS ISLANDS — VIEWS OF SOME BIRDS AUSTRALIA VISITORS — QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

The Birds Australia Campout in Geraldton during September 1998 included an optional two-day visit to the Abrolhos Islands. One group of 40 people made the trip in poor weather and seas so rough that one member was severely injured on the boat. A second group went later in perfect weather. All accommodation was on fishing vessels. This questionnaire was drawn up and distributed

to delegates in order to explore the opinions of members of Birds Australia, a highly informed specialist group, about the visit to the islands. Forty-four people, over half of those who visited the islands, were good enough to complete the questionnaire, and we thought that the results might be of general interest.

We were a mature lot and well educated. All of us were over 40 years old (and the majority, 64%, over 60 years). 3 respondents had PhDs, and altogether three quarters of respondents had tertiary education qualifications. There were more women than men (64% were women).

Almost half were from the Eastern States and had travelled thousands of kilometres to be there. 45% were from the Eastern States.

The Abrolhos group is composed of 122 islands, roughly forming three coral atolls. We visited three islands, Pelsaert, Basile and Robinson Islands, in the southern group. Pelsaert Island is exposed and storm-swept. 11 km long, often only 200 m wide and less than 5 m high. It consists of unconsolidated broken coral washed up into a series of longitudinal dune ridges, here and there incorporating pools surrounded by samphire. There are groves of small mangroves along the western coast and in those places where there is a shallow soil covering, it is covered with a low wind-blown plant cover. Many bird species nest on the island including the rare Lesser Noddy. Basile and Robinson Islands are tiny, and built up with fishermen's houses, jetties and toilets that discharge directly into the sea. The fishermen only live on the islands during the crayfishing season between March and July, so the islands were uninhabited during our visit.

The great majority of respondents were visiting the islands for the first time, and greatly enjoyed the trip. 88% wished to visit the islands again. The notoriously uncomfortable boat trip affected people remarkably little. A few people expressed reservations about the voyage and one decided never to repeat it. The majority, 79%, were totally undeterred by the trip itself, scoring 0 on a scale of 0-5.

A series of questions concerned the attractions of the islands. Not surprisingly everyone was keen to see the birdlife, and the birdwatching was considered a success. On the 0-5 scale, 67% rated their satisfaction at 5, 23% at 4, 10% at 3.

Birdwatchers are definitely not fishermen, nor are they particularly interested in diving or snorkelling. More than half expressed no interest whatever in fishing, and 73%

assessed their interest at 0 or 1 on the scale of 0-5. Regarding diving or snorkelling, a quarter of respondents expressed no interest at all, and a half assessed their interest at 0 or 1.

However, everyone was interested in the history of this extraordinary place. About 90% of those who replied to this question gave 3, 4 or 5 as their level of interest on a scale of 0-5.

Respondents were asked whether any other facets of the islands interested them. Ten were interested in the plants, animals, sealife and ecology, and 4 in the preservation, conservation and future of the islands. One respondent wanted to socialise, others sought solitude.

The final group of questions concerned tourism on the islands. The islands we visited had no facilities for tourists — not even toilets. These islands are most inviting, but obviously fragile. The contradictory emotions engendered were reflected in opinions towards tourism on the islands. 38% of respondents very much wanted to stay on an island, while 35% very much did not. (There were 40 replies to this question. On a scale of 0-5, 15 stated 5, ie, very much, and 14 stated 0, ie, not at all.) Similarly many felt that toilets should be provided, with 44% rating this as 5 whilst 33% were dead set against the provision of toilets, scoring 0.

Members voted against other development on the islands. One half (49%) felt that no camping should be allowed. 81% felt that there should not be an airport on the islands and 95% did not want a hotel, motel or shops. A "boatel" was proposed by one respondent.

Respondents who felt that some facilities should be provided generally felt that these should be restricted to one island.

Respondents were very concerned about the vulnerability of the birds. 84% of respondents felt that birdwatchers should be accompanied by an expert, both to inform them about birds and even more to protect the birds. It is interesting that even among such an informed and conservation-conscious group as Birds Australia, some respondents were concerned that our visit should have had tighter controls. There were reports that at least 4 nesting burrows were inadvertently destroyed by tramping, an Osprey nest was poked with a stick, and Caspian Terns were frightened off their nest for so long that the bolder Silver Gulls were able to attack their chicks.

Members were invited to add any comments on the back of the sheet, and the people who added "There is a screaming need for protection" and "the long-term welfare of the islands must be considered above quick commercial gain" reflected 56 other comments. Members suggested that:

- these islands should not be used as a tourist destination at all (several replies);
- only some islands or some areas should be visited; perhaps there could be one 'sacrificial island';
- any tourism should be strictly controlled;
- the number of visitors should be limited;
- visitors should be accompanied;
- visitors should be educated — by means of signs on the islands and the mainland, by a talk given before

Books Needed

At least two copies of the first Atlas of Australian Birds (1984) are needed by current Atlas Regional Organisers. They are happy to pay for the cost of the books.

Copies of the Western Australian Museum regional lists are also needed. Copies of 'Birds of the South-West Division' would be particularly useful.

Contact Cheryl Gole (Tel/Fax: 9293 4958)

landing, by strict monitoring; one respondent suggested registration with a ranger who could give instructions about what was permissible, as in the Cocos Islands;

- walkways should be installed;
- building should not be allowed on any more islands;
- sewage should not be discharged directly into the sea (5 replies); holding tanks were recommended, and composting toilets on the islands;
- aeroplanes should not be permitted to frighten nesting seabirds from their nests (4 replies).

Two members commented in different vein, suggesting that the islands were too windswept and bleak for much tourism, and that the rough 4-hour boat trip would deter most visitors. Only large boats could manage the trip but good dinghies were necessary to access the shallow reefs around the islands. Commercial tourism may even help to preserve the islands and it would provide alternative income for fishermen.

Warmest thanks to those who responded.

Elizabeth Rippey

TEETH TO THE RESCUE — BUT AN UNGRATEFUL CASPIAN TERN

While walking along the Swan near Burswood I came across a single immature Caspian Tern standing quietly on the grass. I guessed there was something wrong and on getting closer the bird tried to take off but flopped over unable to raise one wing. Grabbing it I found a fishhook embedded in the bird's back and fishing line looped around one wing. A heavy floater was dangling from the end of the line.

To free the bird the line had to be cut as it was too tangled to undo. Quick thinking decided that the only cutting tools available were my front teeth. So with head hard against the bird I gnawed at the line, eventually cutting it after a minute or two. I removed the hook and soon pulled the line free. The wing was free and then the bird grabbed my finger with its strong bill drawing blood. It then took off and flew strongly across the river. Seeing the bird free I soon forgot my bleeding finger.

Tom Delaney

WHITE-PLUMED HONEYEATER — OUT OF RANGE AT WANJARRI?

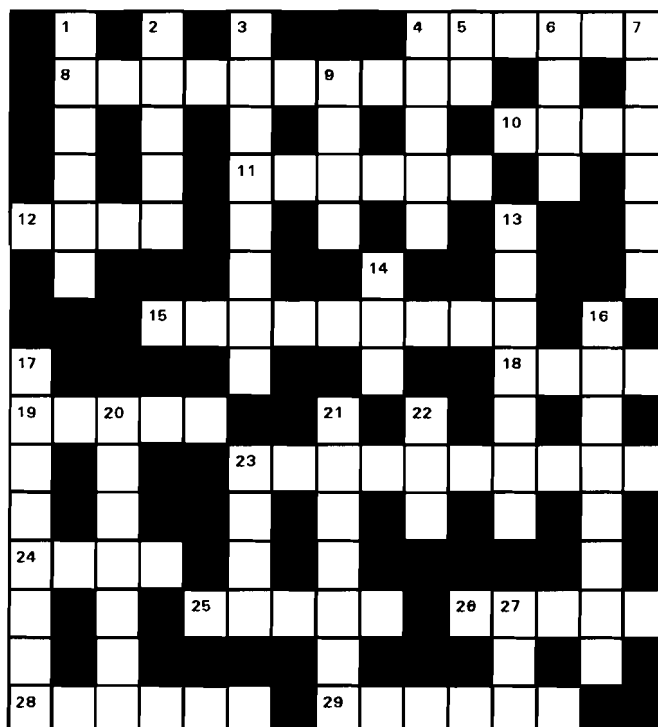
Between December 1998 and March 1999 I made several trips to Jones Creek, a creek lined by river red gums that runs through the north western corner of the Wanjarri Nature Reserve in the northern part of the Eastern Goldfields (~100 km south of Wiluna). Near the junction of Jones and Six Mile creeks, just west of the Wanjarri boundary, a group of six to eight White-plumed Honeyeaters, including three juveniles, was present for each of four 20 minute, 2 hectare Atlas surveys. Other White-plumed Honeyeaters were present along Jones Creek within Wanjarri. The area lies within grid block 27/120 and no White-plumed Honeyeaters were recorded in this block in the 1978-1982 Atlas. They were recorded in the block immediately to the north (a minimum of 40 km away) but not in the blocks to the east or west.

However, Moriarty (1972, Emu 72, 2-7) records the species as being a resident at Wanjarri and it is also recorded in the BAWAG data base at Wanjarri for 10/1990 and 8/1991 and was seen during the 10/1998 BAWAG Wanjarri excursion. Clearly my observations do not record an extension of range for this species as might be concluded from a comparison of past and present Atlas data. The data may represent local movements at the edge of the White-plumed Honeyeater's range or merely provide records for a block not adequately surveyed in the previous Atlas.

Martin Gole

Crossword No 17

by Pam Agar



Clues across

- Helpful attribute in distinguishing species.
- Act of brooding.
- Some waterbirds build one as access to nest.
- Material of waterproof boots.
- Dark-coloured head and throat.
- Parts of a bird's bill.
- Some birds seem to indulge in this.
- To hang in the air.
- A distinctive feature that identifies a bird is this.
- Ancient instrument, providing name for a bird.
- Curved coral reef enclosing a lagoon.
- Many of the insects eaten by ibis may be ...
- Decayed.
- To turn head freely from side to side, as an owl does.

Clues down

1. Sight.
2. Rebuke noisily.
3. Abnormal.
4. Brood of quail.
5. A bird provides warmth by sitting ... eggs.
6. Most common shape of eggs.
7. The plumage of a duck ... water when dry.
9. Hollow, cylindrical nostril of albatross.
13. A wise parent will do this with faecal sacs of offspring.
14. Abbreviation for name of a WA observatory.
16. Degree of saltiness.
17. One particular kite has a black one.
20. Rarely occurring in this area.
21. Long neck feathers.
22. No. of stork species found in Australia.
23. One's habitual food.
27. A Willie Wagtail has a white stripe above his.

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

February 1999 outing

The Albany Bird Group had the first outing for 1999 on 9 February. Twenty people attended. Our destination was Booth's farm off Spencer Road to visit Lake Eyrie.

The morning was overcast with a breeze and some light drizzly rain, but pleasant.

We walked the 2-3 km around Lake Eyrie which took 2-2½ hours of easy walking. The waterbirds were there in hundreds. A swan sitting on four eggs seemed unusual for this time of the year.

We observed a Peregrine Falcon hunting. The result of a fresh kill was found not far from the lake on the edge of the vegetation. Not much of a Banded Stilt remained.

Birds counted: Black Swan: 136; Yellow-billed Spoonbill: 40; Red-necked Avocet: 80/100; Black-winged Stilt: 183; Australasian Shoveler: more than 100.

Vivian McCormick

March 1999 outing

Seventeen of us met on 9 March at Morley Beach, where the water was higher than anyone had seen it before. Tim Hunt has been doing a wader count there for some five years, and has never seen the water so high. Far fewer birds than usual were there, although there was quite a variety of species, including Fairy Terns, Curlew Sandpipers, Greenshanks and a Sea-Eagle.

We then went to the Hay River Mouth, before driving to Nenamup Inlet, where we saw 15 Red-necked Avocets, 85 Black-winged Stilts, 5 Banded Stilts, a couple of Bar-tailed Godwits, Australasian Shovelers and Yellow-billed Spoonbills.

We had lunch nearby on the Wilson Inlet, where we saw 32 Great Crested Grebes and a group of White-faced Herons. The final count was 54 species. An enjoyable day.

Liz and Charlie Davies

April 1999 outing

Twenty-two people met at the Manypeaks car park at 8:00 am on 9 April. Led by Tim Hunt, we went to Lake Pleasant View. Here Tim organised an Atlas search with small groups placed around the lake. We were there for an hour. Thirty-six species were recorded.

More atlassing took place down Homestead Road with ten cars placed one kilometre apart. Approximately 33 birds were recorded here.

We proceeded from there to Normans Beach for lunch and a bird check. A total of 40 species were recorded for Homestead Road and Normans Beach.

For some of the group it was their first experience with the Atlas. This gave purpose to our outing. Thanks to Tim Hunt.

Next month we meet at Eden Road on 11 May where there will be more atlassing!

The weather was just right. The company was great. A very pleasant day was had by all.

Vivian McCormick

MANDURAH BIRDWATCHERS GROUP

Winter Program, 1999

Sat 12 Jun Meet at corner Watson Drive and Pinjarra Road, Barragup to visit Black Lake.

Sat 10 Jul Meet at corner Yungerup Road and Pinjarra Road to visit South Yunderup.

Sat 14 Aug Meet at boat ramp at corner Leslie Street and Waterside Drive to go to Yalgorup National Park ... IF FINE.
Erskine Conservation area ... IF INCLEMENT.

Those wishing to make an extended visit should bring lunch.

Sat 11 Sep Meet at Premier Hotel, Williams Road, Pinjarra to visit Marrinup-Dwellingup. Those wishing to make an extended visit should bring lunch.

All starting times at 8:00 am.

Contact: Dick Rule 9581 1894 John Taylor 9535 8708

Are there Bird Lists in your Notebook?

Are there bird lists in your notebook which have not been submitted as Atlas surveys and were compiled after 1 August 1998? If so, and you would like to contribute them to the Atlas Project, call Cheryl Gole (Tel: 9293 4958). Some of your lists might be a valuable contribution to the Atlas: call Cheryl to discuss how the lists might be included.

And if you have done surveys for the Atlas and have not sent them in because of time constraints, call your RO if you would like a volunteer to fill out the forms for you.

Notices

CONFERENCES

Owls 2000: The biology, conservation and cultural significance of owls.

Manning Clark Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 19-23 January 2000. Presented by the Australasian Raptor Association.



SHOC 2000: Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress, Griffith University (Nathan Campus), Brisbane, 27 June – 2 July 2000. Presented by Birds Australia.

CUSTOM PLATES FOR MOTOR VEHICLES — EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Birds Australia-WA Group has the opportunity to make available vehicle plates with a design such as the one reproduced here. Members could purchase a pair for \$150.00. In so doing BAWAG would make a profit of \$50.00 which would be directed to a special project, such as the provision of additional support for the Atlas project in WA.

Example only



The custom plates may be transferred from one vehicle to another provided that arrangements are made with Transport Licensing.

A minimum order of ten pairs of plates must be ordered by BAWAG before they would be manufactured and made available to members. If you are interested please contact the WA Group office on 9383 7749.

This project will only proceed if we are sure of selling at least ten pairs of plates.

NEW AUSTRALIAN CUCKOO WEBSITE

Lesley and Michael Brooker have created a fascinating web site to do with cuckoos. This site will tell you how to distinguish cuckoo eggs and nestlings (including pictures of nestlings at different ages). There is a comprehensive list of hosts for each Australian cuckoo species and extensive database of records of cuckoo parasitism from

throughout Australia. The web site can be found at <http://www.users.bigpond.com/LesMikeBrooker/cuckoos.htm>

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia-WA Group between 29 January and 30 April 1999. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

H Adamson, P J Agnew, P Bazley, P Berridge, J Braid, M Britza, L Chapman, M Daniel, G Daniel, W de Burgh, J Delaporte, K Easton, L Falconer, F Falconer, L Frizzell, G Hall, J Hawkes, A Hewgill, P Higginson, S Huber, M Hutchinson, A Jackson, J L Kershaw, J King, H Knight, M D Levitt, C Lukies, S Margaret, B M Marshall, J Martin, A Mason, D Mclachlan, D Mead-Hunter, R Miller, N Miller, J Nealon, J O'Donoghue, S Payne, W Pooley, G Rance, J Rawlings, A Read, E Reid, K Roller, I Rudd, A Sands, T Sands, R Schmidt, J Schultz, J Van Der Waag, F Waycott, B Webster, J Wilde, M Wilton.

WA BIRD NOTES ADVERTISING RATES

¼ page	\$30.00
½ page	\$50.00
Full page	\$90.00

Observatory Reports

OBSERVATORIES CONFERENCE

The Birds Australia Observatories Conference was held this year on 18-19 February at Rotamah Island Bird Observatory. The idea of the conference is for observatory wardens and management committees to get together with each other and with representatives of Council and national office, to compare notes and assist each other with ideas, information, etc.

There was a good WA contingent, with Chris Hassell and Tracy Stolman from Broome, Alex Bisgrove from Eyre, Shapelle McNee from the Eyre Management Committee, Clive Napier representing Council and the WA Group, and Allan Burbidge representing the national Research Committee. Wendy Napier was also there — providing able support in the kitchen and elsewhere.

The conference was very positive, and there were lots of good ideas and suggestions about ways to improve advertising, visitor services, research and monitoring activities, etc. The observatory wardens are committed and dedicated, so this is bound to make your next visit to an observatory more interesting!

One thing we noticed was that there is increasing interaction between the state and regional groups (such as BAWAG) and the observatories, to the benefit of Birds Australia as a whole. The WA Group has been at the forefront of this trend, which is helping to raise the profile of everyone concerned.

Allan Burbidge and Clive Napier

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Once again we have the opportunity to boast to all the readers and bird lovers out there about all the wonderful birds we have been sighting in 1999. We hope this incessant boasting will lure you into scheduling the Broome Bird Observatory into your next holiday program, so you too can share the birds of Broome.



Up until recently we were experiencing an extended wet season which created a fabulous wetland habitat on the Roebuck Plains Station north of the observatory. At the end of last year the plains were burnt in a bush fire and all that remained was a layer of ash; today the plains are divided into wet marshy and drier grassy areas. Species recorded range from Whiskered and White-winged Black Terns, Red-kneed Dotterels, Marsh Sandpipers, Whimbrel, Australian Pratincole, Black-necked Stork (Jabiru), egrets, over 12 species of raptors including Square-tailed Kite (uncommon in the area), Australian Bustard, and nesting quail.

Some of the more exciting observations have been of White-browed Woodswallows sighted around the observatory migrating with Masked Woodswallows. A White-browed Crake was seen in a nearby swamp on 10 April, a rare sighting. Six Flock Bronzewing were seen flying over Roebuck Plains, also rare in the area. And, just last week a Pied Heron was spied in Crab Creek, one of only a few sightings in Broome.

These sightings and more will be but a few in Australia that will help in the formation of the new Atlas. The observatory, especially our assistant warden Adrian Boyle, is clocking up a huge number of Atlas sheets.

This time of year is an important one for the most famous birds of Broome, the migratory waders. We are just now seeing the tail (feathers) end of the northward migrating birds leaving the bay. A most spectacular sight as those who have witnessed this phenomenon will know. Although the majority of the waders have departed the bay, we are privileged to share the bay with first and second year birds who will remain in the beautiful Roebuck Bay over winter. The final numbers for migration are yet to be tallied, but the record for a two-hour period was four and a half thousand birds heading north.

Always exciting times at the observatory with new species being added to the list each year. Please, if you are in the north-west drop in and say "g'day" — you are always welcome and we may even give away secrets about where to see those elusive birds!

Tracy Stolman and Al Dermer

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Eyre has lived up to its reputation as the place where time is forgotten. It has now been three months since we arrived. February and March were quiet in terms of visitors, giving us time to explore the area. April has flashed by in a blur of people coming and going, so that we lost track of time for various deadlines.



At present we have rocks in our head, well, really rocks on our mind! First it was Rock Parrots, which popped out of the scrub behind the primary dunes but never when others wanted to see them. Now it is rocks, rocks, rocks. The rain from the cyclones had little effect on the track (actually improved it) but a short thunderstorm on the last Saturday of April certainly made up for it. Our arms may appear to be a little longer than normal as a result of carting rocks around to try to fill the large holes that are beside the track on the scarp and Green Bottle Junction. It is quite soul destroying to load the Hi Lux with rocks only to see them disappear into a chasm like grains of sand. It is a long, slow process but we hope to repair the worst of it before the winter rains.

While track building we have been able to birdwatch between rocks with lots of Brown-headed, White-fronted and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters around the scarp track. Low flying Purple-crowned Lorikeets are a health hazard as they use the track as a flyway.

High tides and masses of seaweed have meant beach counts being done from the primary dunes. Red-necked Avocets, Banded Stilts and Double-banded Plovers have been present, while a highlight was the sighting of an orange flagged Red-necked Stint.

It is not unusual for birders to travel long distances to see a bird, but here at Eyre it can be to see a fairly common one. An early morning phone call from Tom Torpie at Madura Roadhouse alerted us to the presence of an Australian White Ibis on their sewage ponds. On our arrival we were confronted by a very dirty and bedraggled ibis being harassed by Australian Ravens. Not a usual sight out this way. Another unusual visitor has been a solitary Galah with a flock of Major Mitchell Cockatoos. Records show one being seen around this time of the year in the past.

Spotted Nightjars, Southern Boobooks, Tawny Frogmouths, Australian Owlet-Nightjars and a probable Barn Owl have been seen on night journeys to and from Cocklebidy. Raptors have kept us entertained with their Welcome Swallow hunting.

These are just a sample of the happenings at Eyre — each day brings new experiences, one never knows what will turn up. We are constantly searching for that elusive, yet to be discovered Inland Penguin flying through the Mallee. Why not come out and help us find it? Perhaps join us in one of our interesting courses (see March newsletter for details). Should you not have a four-wheel drive we can pick you up for an overnight stay (or three or four) or alternatively meet you off the Greyhound bus.

Almost everyone heard that Babe went to New York but few have heard that B.A.B.E. is hopefully coming to

Eyre. NO, not a talking pig but batteries. The solar batteries have passed their use-by date and showing their age. Rather than run the generator for power or revert to the Telegraph Station days of kero lamps and candles the Buy A Battery For Eyre campaign is being formulated. Further details will be available in the near future.

Phone or fax us for any queries on (08) 9039 3450 (ph), (08) 9039 3440 (fax). Please let the phone ring for a long while as we may be busy and often can't get to it immediately. The answering machine will be on if we are going to be too busy, so leave a message (please talk slowly as the transmission sometimes distorts the message and we can't always decipher it) and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

PS. Despite the reports that Eyre is consistently recording the lowest temperatures in the state, it is very pleasant out here.

Alex Bisgrove and Rob Stogdale

Excursion Reports

WELLARD WETLANDS, 14 February

This land was once totally cleared for agriculture, then mined for clay for Alcoa's alumina refinery. It is gratifying to see Alcoa's commitment to rehabilitation and conservation of flora and fauna especially birdlife, made possible with assistance from specialist expertise including RAOU (BAWAG), the Wetlands Conservation Society, Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Murdoch University and CALM, to ensure the long term viability of this valuable wetland.

Over 100 species have been found here, with two more to add to the list, being the Dusky Moorhen and Pied Butcherbird. A group of 12 observers wandered slowly through, splitting into small groups, taking in all the lakes, vegetation and surrounding farmland. A raptor or two hovered around as the many water birds made their moves when threatened.

Two of us remained a long time hoping for closer and longer glimpses of two Spotless Crakes. What we saw was a Baillon's Crake, quickly moving a metre one way, back again, then gone for good. The positive features were its definite dark and white striped lower belly, and small size. A must for the others to later look at in the area. That done, Baillon's Crake didn't show again, though three Spotless Crakes did, with immature Dusky Moorhens and Purple Swampheens also present.

Among the reeds of the farthest lake Clamorous Reed-warblers and Splendid Fairy-wrens shared the same territory. A Common Sandpiper was seen on a distant shore.

Thanks to Les Harris for finding this alternative to Amarillo Pool, Baldvis, where access problems arose. Word was put around far and wide of the change of birding

site, so hopefully no one was put out, and a happy time of birding had all round.

Fifty-three species were seen on the morning.

Maggie Cashman-Bailes

BICKLEY BROOK, 17 February

Neil Porteous led 16 members through the area along the made-up track and further over a rough, stony path into the hills. During the morning, 28 species of birds were seen, the most plentiful of which were Rainbow Bee-eaters. Both Red-winged and Splendid Fairy-wrens were found, but none of the males of either was in breeding plumage.

A Little Eagle flew in lazy circles high overhead giving everyone an excellent view.

The area was very dry and there was no water in the creek. Neil is to be commended for being able to indicate areas which held a few species that might not otherwise have been seen.

A member of the group

CARBUNUP CAMPOUT, Labour Day Weekend, 27 February-2 March



Forest Rise Chalets, Caribunup,
Labour Day Weekend Campout, March 1999
Drawing by Pam Agar

LAKE COOGEE, 14 March

Twenty-five birders were keen to make the most of a beautiful morning at Lake Coogee. The water levels in the lake were quite high in comparison to other lakes in the Beeliar Regional Park, due to regular topping up, believed to be by the Water Authority. An algal bloom early in summer, when water levels were considerably lower, appears to have created a good food source as it rots, and the numbers of common ducks such as Grey Teal and Pacific Black Duck are higher than seen over the past ten years.

The highlight of the day was an excellent sighting by nearly all members of the party of a Barn Owl, which rose

from its roosting cover to sit on a branch in full view for about 15 minutes before flying off.

The diverse raptor population was again in evidence with sightings of Brown Goshawk, Australian Kestrel, Australian Hobby, Black-shouldered Kite, a pair of Whistling Kites and Marsh Harrier. The count for the morning was a creditable 50 species.

Jan and Dave Crossley

LAKE YANGEBUP, 17 March

Nine members and a visitor from the UK walked right around the lake — about 3 km. We followed the shore but failed to find the Little Ringed Plover seen here in January.

We saw 51 species, 52 if you include 3 domestic geese, including 4 raptors. There were numerous Musk Ducks, Australian Shelduck, Pink-eared Ducks and lesser numbers of Grey Teal and Blue-billed Ducks. Only a few Australasian Shovelers were seen. Freckled Duck seen here at the same time last year were absent. Small numbers of Red-necked Stints, Red-capped Plovers and Black-fronted Plovers were scattered around the shore. All the stints and red-caps were at the eastern end adjoining the scouring works. The black-fronteds were spread around the shore. A mystery bird was seen, possibly a Brown Songlark.

Yangebup is strange in that most of the birds favour the eastern, possibly the most polluted, end while the west end is very quiet. The water is said to be badly polluted from chemicals seeping in from the scouring works. This may explain the total absence of any cormorants and Dusky Moorhen with only one Purple Swamphen seen.

The good news is that the scouring works is relocating in the middle of the year. The vacant land will become partly parkland. Hopefully the pollutants will be removed over the years because with the fast drying up of Thomsons and Kogolup this lake is one of the few which retains water all the year.

Another highlight was the sighting of up to 20 White-fronted Chats feeding along the shore.

Tom Delaney

EASTER CAMPOUT, MERREDIN, 2-5 April

Easter 1999 saw a group of about 20 people led by Maggie Cashman-Bailes meeting at the Merredin Caravan Park to look for birds in the eastern wheatbelt and whatever remnant bushland reserves were within striking distance.

The early arrivals on Thursday had the whole of Friday to investigate Chiddarcooping Reserve, a most attractive area of bushland north-east of Merredin. We saw most of the usual wheatbelt birds with the highlights being a Malleefowl standing by the roadside, a Shy Heathwren, Mulga Parrots and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters. Due to the heavy rains experienced a week or two before there were places where water was pouring across the roads and in one part of the reserve it was thought wiser to backtrack rather than risk being bogged. Grass was shooting in all the paddocks, giving an attractive tinge of green to the

landscape. We visited a farm in the area and saw Southern Whiteface and Zebra Finches on the edge of a breakaway.

On Friday most of the campers had arrived and we were joined by Heather Adamson who lives in the area and does biological surveys in patches of remnant bushland for Land for Wildlife. Heather took us to Tank Hill Reserve and her expert knowledge of the area was most helpful. We saw Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Southern Scrub-robins and White-eared Honeyeaters, and in a patch of Salmon Gum woodland Elegant Parrots were numerous and they appeared to be seeking out nesting holes. Crested Bellbirds were heard at almost every location.

We drove east to Westonia and did an Atlas survey of the town while having a morning tea break in a pleasant little park. Northwards again to Sandford Rock, which was our lunch stop and here we saw Redthroats, Red-capped Robins, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and many others. The rock had pools of water at its base and a thick grove of casuarinas growing there.

One of the delights of birding in the wheatbelt is to hear the calls of the Pied Butcherbird. These were very much in evidence on the Sunday morning when we visited a tree plantation near Merredin and the nearby sewage ponds. The tree plantation had young eucalypts bursting into flower and these were busy with Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Singing and Brown Honeyeaters and Red Wattlebirds. At the sewage ponds we saw Australian Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, and Grey Teal, Black-winged Stilts and Black-fronted Dotterels as well as Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes.

We again drove north to Lake Champion and Lake Brown where we stopped for lunch under some shady trees. The lakes were vast and at one spot were being used for water ski-ing, so the birds were well spread out. A Gilberts Whistler, very rare now in the wheatbelt, was sighted and Pink-eared Ducks and avocets were seen on the lakes.

Birds of prey were not numerous, but several pairs of Wedge-tailed Eagles were seen as well as Nankeen Kestrels, an Australian Hobby, a Peregrine Falcon and a Brown Falcon.



A happy group at the Merredin campout
Photo by Molly Angus

Most people visited the Merredin Peak Reserve at some time during the weekend. It is a huge granite rock surrounded by bushland near the town and has fine stands of Salmon Gums and Gimlets. We were told it is a 7000 acre reserve, so it is a good refuge for bush birds near the town. Splendid Fairy-wrens and many other birds were seen there and a brief spotlighting excursion one evening produced one Tawny Frogmouth.

On Sunday evening we were given a talk by Peter Fogarty, who is a bird artist from Zimbabwe, in which he compared the similarities between Australian and African bird species and showed us some of his paintings of them. Sincere thanks were given to Maggie for arranging the campout for us and to Heather for contributing her expert local knowledge. A total of 83 species of birds were seen and a most enjoyable time had by all.

Wendy Napier

CARINE OPEN SPACE, 15 April

Seven people turned out on a fine, moderately windy day for a pleasant mid-week stroll. The water level was quite low and water birds were thinly scattered. A flock of about 20 Black-winged Stilts were present. On the sight of a Hobby they took to the air and headed south. Surprisingly the Hobby was the only raptor seen.

We concluded the walk around the little lake which held a lot more water and most of the water birds were gathered here including Musk Ducks, Dusky Moorhens and a Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Clamorous Reed-warblers were heard and a Little Grassbird seen — 42 species in all.

Kim Easton

HOFFMAN'S MILL CAMPOUT, 24-26 April

What a bonus, not only beautiful balmy autumn weather, not only a delightful camp site, not only hearing two Noisy Scrub-birds, but also two members of the group actually catching a glimpse of a little brown number scuttling across the track. A great weekend for birders.

Some campers arrived at the campsite on Friday and were off to an early bird walk on Saturday, whilst the rest of the 16 participants arrived during Saturday. The campsite, along the edge of the creek, was ideal as we were surrounded by both Splendid and Red-winged Fairy-wrens, White-breasted Robins and the occasional Golden Whistler. All this without even getting out of the chair!

Most of the walks concentrated on likely Noisy Scrub-bird sites, dense tea tree and reedy gullies along creeks. The Noisy Scrub-bird was finally located along the north track where the transmission lines cross the creek. This was after Clive had confused all other campers by strolling around with a ghetto blaster tucked under his arm but had failed to acquire the appropriate hair do (try dying it green next time, Clive) to go with the ghetto blaster image. David had fortunately brought with him a tape of the call that is quite distinctive, and we had all listened to this around the camp fire. So when the male birds answered the tape, calling intermittently, and moved closer and closer to where the group was standing, there was no doubt in any one's mind about what the call was. Then a quick scuffle

and flit and the bird flew across our track. CALM has released birds in this area, a classic Noisy Scrub-bird habitat, to try and establish another population away from Two Peoples Bay and the nearby south coast. The area has been baited for foxes and the dense thickets of tea tree and sedges in this location give them an environment where they have a fair chance of breeding and establishing a new colony.

In all 39 birds were identified, not a lot, but probably reflecting the time of the year. Amongst those identified were good sightings of both the male and female Western Spinebill, Western Gerygone, Western Yellow Robin, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, a small flock of Varied Sittellas, Red-eared Firetails, the brilliant Western Rosella and Red-capped Parrots.

CALM kindly dropped off firewood for the camp so each evening everyone gathered around the campfire sharing nibbles and nonsense, enjoying each other's company and especially appreciating the beautiful campsite. A big thank you to both John Blyth and Clive Napier who so ably led this campout and were prepared to go down there beforehand ensuring that it was a worthwhile weekend.

Sue Mather

LOWLANDS, 1 May

Twenty bird seekers took the opportunity to visit the private property of Lowlands, on the Serpentine River west of Mardella. On arrival we met the owner, Miss Midge Richardson, who runs the historical homestead and the 1000 ha bushland along the river. It is Perth Bushplan site 368.

After introductions, Mark Angeloni and Bryan Barrett briefed us about the property and its special attributes, like the Western Yellow Robin now rare on the coastal plain and the several species of native mammals still found there.

With Mark's guidance we then ambled along a track south of the river, east to the boundary, through lovely old stands of flooded gum, banksia and jarrah forest. Crossing over the flowing river to the north side, we then wandered back to the homestead for lunch along the entrance road.

Those who stayed after lunch then walked north from the river through dense banksia woodland before returning for afternoon tea and discussions. A total of 42 bird species were seen and several grey kangaroos — but no Western Yellow Robins. There's a lot of bush down there we didn't explore.

Some notable sightings were Golden Whistler, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle and Scarlet Robin. The bird list for the day will be sent in for the Atlas.

Many thanks to Midge and Mark for their kind hospitality and access to the property.

David James

The ABC Science Division is promoting an interest in birds with its new web site, *Backyard Birdwatch - the birds of urban Australia*. Check it out at:
www2.abc.net.au/science/birds

Coming Events

Important note re campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts **must** notify the BA Office of the number in their party and when they will arrive. With this information we will be able to make sure the group will be together and when to expect people.

Saturday–Monday 5–7 June — Campout, Mount Gibson Station

The turnoff to Mt Gibson Station is 74 km north-east of Wubin along the Great Northern Highway, heading for Payne's Find. The homestead is 27 km from the main road, heading due east from the highway. Please close gates that are shut and follow the signs. The road into the station is a good graded road. (Fill up your petrol tank at Wubin.)

There is a bush camp 2 km from the homestead with basic toilets and a bucket shower. A shearing shed is also available.

In 1997, five partners bought the station with the aim of conservation and land-care. Some work has already been carried out to document the birds of the area, which should be similar to those seen at nearby Ninghan Station last year.

Please phone the Birds Australia office to register numbers and obtain further details.

Leader: Clive Napier

Saturday 12 June — Half-day Excursion, The Spectacles, Kwinana

Meet in the main car park on McLaughlan Road at 8:30 am. Proceed along the Kwinana Freeway to the Anketell crossroad, some 30 km south of Perth. Turn right into Anketell Road, travel about 2 km, then turn left into McLaughlan Road. Over 100 species of birds have been sighted.

It's a nice place for lunch so bring some!

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Wednesday 16 June — Mid-week Walk, Burswood Open Spaces

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

Leader: Mary Vaughan

Sunday 20 June — Half-day Excursion, Star Swamp, North Beach

Meet at 8.30 am at the Hope Street entrance. Star Swamp has Tuart woodland, mixed-Banksia woodland, and heath.

Leader: Dee Smith

Sunday 27 June — Half-day Excursion, Herdsman Lake

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park at the tennis courts, off Herdsman Parade, near the corner of Jon Sanders Drive (E6 on Map 59, *Streetsmart* Perth 1996 Street Directory).

This is a long half-day walk, and lunch back at the cars will be late, so bring nibblies and water to tide yourself over. You should be rewarded by a good mix of waterbirds and bushbirds.

Leaders: John and Judy Blyth

Monday 28 June Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Professor Harry Recher, head of the Department of Natural Sciences, Edith Cowan University (Joondalup), will speak on a subject to be announced.

Saturday 3 July — Raptor Identification Workshop — Full Day, Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, Wembley, 10:00 am–3:00 pm

John Dell, from the Western Australian Museum, will lead this full-day Atlas workshop on the birds of prey, a notoriously tricky group of birds. John will provide Museum specimens to aid identification. Morning tea is provided: bring your own lunch and your binoculars in case some of the local raptors put on a lunch-time display. Cost: \$5 to cover venue costs. Course limit: strictly 25. Bookings: Birds Australia (WA) office: Tel 9383 7749. Payment must follow telephone bookings within one week for telephone bookings to be kept. Two different raptor identification books will be available for sale.

Sunday 4 July — Half-day Excursion, Woodman Point

Meet at 9:00 am at the end of the gravel road. We will then walk to Wapet Groyne. Bring your telescopes to look for sea birds. Before leaving we will walk through the adjacent bush.

Depending on the weather, we may also visit the North Mole at Fremantle.

Leader: Ian Standring

Saturday 10 July — Half-day Excursion, Lake Monger

Meet at 9:00 am at the most westerly car park off Lake Monger Drive, just before reaching Gregory Street. A good opportunity to view many species of ducks and other waterbirds.

Leader: Norah Brockman

Sunday 11 July — Hillarys Pelagic Trip

This is always the best trip of the year with many albatross (Yellow-nosed and possibly Shy and Black-browed), petrels (Soft-plumaged, Great-winged and possibly Cape and Kerguelen), storm-petrels (Wilson's or White-faced), giant-petrels (both possible), skuas and possibly prions.

The trip leaves at 7:00 am (note the earlier time) from near Underwater World at Hillarys Boat Harbour and returns by 4:00 pm. There is a limit of 23 people. Booking is essential. The cost is \$65 and is required one week before the event (I will send you the details). Book by

email (foconnor@iinet.net.au) or by phoning Frank O'Connor on (08) 9386 5694 or (08) 9482 1445. The last trip for the year is expected to be Sunday 5 September.

Wednesday 14 July — Mid-week Walk, North Lake

Meet at 9:00 am at the car park on Progress Drive. Nearly 80 species of birds have been seen here.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 18 July — Half-day Excursion, John Forrest National Park

Meet at 9:00 am at the main picnic/BBQ area past the tavern. Travel east along Great Eastern Highway over Greenmount Hill. Turn left into Park Road at the second sign for John Forrest National Park and Tavern.

Leader: Perry de Rebeira

Sunday 25 July — Half-day Excursion, Bibra Lake

Meet at 9:00 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake, off Progress Drive. Bibra Lake is part of the Beeliiar Wetlands Chain and a large number of water and bush birds can be observed here.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Monday 26 July Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

John Blyth, a co-editor of *WA Bird Notes* and based at CALM's Threatened Species and Communities Unit at Woodvale, will speak on "Rare and Threatened Birds of WA". John and Allan Burbidge are putting the finishing touches to a new Bush Book of the same title. John will discuss which birds are threatened, the reasons for that status, actions in train to recover them and the role that BAWAG is increasingly playing in recovery efforts.

Saturday 31 July — Birdwatching for Beginners — Half-day Excursion, Helena Valley, Boya

Meet at 8:30 am at parking space 600 m beyond the sealed section of Helena Valley Road. This unsealed section is negotiable for normal vehicles provided care is taken. If you wish, park just off the end of the bitumen road and walk to the parking area. The walking distance is about 5 km: wear sturdy shoes and bring a drink and snack.

Follow Helena Valley Road east past the Helena Valley Primary School from the roundabout junction of Helena Valley Road and Ridge Hill Road, Helena Valley.

The focus of this excursion is birdwatching for beginners, but the lovely Helena Valley has a representative sample of birds typical for the hills forest and streamlines, and three leaders will give ample opportunity for both beginning and experienced birdwatchers to enjoy the day.

Leaders: Cheryl Gole, Michael Brooker and Bill McRoberts

Sunday 8 August — Full-day Excursion, Bashfords Nature Reserve, near Lancelin

Meet at 9:30 am at the junction of Nilgen and Sapper Roads (new Travellers Atlas Map 79, C5).

This is a small reserve, 36 km north-east of Lancelin. The reserve combines banksia woodland, coastal heath and a swampy area with old-growth eucalypts which provide nesting sites for several parrot species. A Barn Owl has been sighted in the area as well as wrens, robins and various honeyeaters.

Leader: Colin Davis

Thursday 12 August — Half-day Excursion, Stoney Brook, Roleystone

Meet at 9:00 am on Mills Road at Cohunu Wildlife Park car park. Mavis will then lead the group to the site.

Leader: Mavis Norgard

Sunday 15 August — Full-day Excursion, Talbot Brook near York

On this excursion we will visit the property of Eggy and Rob Boggs which was previously visited by members in 1996. To reach the property travel along Great Eastern Highway to The Lakes turnoff to York, continue along the Great Southern Highway, turn right into Cut-Hill Road (before reaching York). Turn right into Talbot Road, and travel about 10 km. Then turn left into Talbot Hall Road. Continue about 2 km to Talbot Hall. We will meet here at 10:00 am.

Leader: Clive Napier

Saturday 21 August — Half-day Excursion, Bungendore Nature Reserve, Bedfordale

Meet at 8:30 am at the entrance to the Reserve on Adiniral Road, just past the entrance to the Emmaus Christian School on the right-hand side going towards the dam.

Birds not common on the coastal plain can be seen here, such as Rufous Treecreepers and Western Yellow Robins.

Leader: Les Harris

Monday 23 August Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Mike Bamford, an environmentalist and vice-chairman of BAWAG, will speak on "Birds and Fire".

Saturday–Sunday 28–29 August — Short Weekend Campout, Nugadong Nature Reserve, Dalwallinu

Nugadong Nature Reserve, close to Dalwallinu, is a four square kilometre patch of bush which is now well-known for its large numbers of resident Malleefowl. At this pleasant time of the year we can expect all sorts of other active birds in this attractive bushland. A great atlassing opportunity!

If you intend to be there please contact Rod Smith (9447 3804) or the BAWAG office for details of times, meeting place and accommodation.

(A separate Malleefowl survey is planned for 9-10 October — see below.)

Leader: Rod Smith

Saturday 4 September — Half-day Excursion, Lake Joondalup and Yellagonga Regional Park

Meet at 8:30 am at Neil Hawkins Park, in the car park at the end of Boas Avenue. Lots of bird species should be seen on and around this large lake.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Sunday 12 September — Full-day Excursion, Brookton Highway Reserve

Meet at 9:30 am at the junction of Strange Road and Brookton Highway (new Travellers Atlas Map 55 B3). This reserve is mainly wandoo woodland and contains many species of birds. Distance from Albany Highway turnoff is approximately 106 km.

Leader: John Ashford or Bryan Barrett

Wednesday 15 September — Mid-week Excursion, Lowlands Estate, Serpentine

The owner, Midge Richardson, has again invited us to visit her large property adjacent to the Serpentine River where Golden Whistlers and Western Yellow Robins (not commonly seen on the coastal plain) have been sighted. Many other bushbirds should be nesting here in the spring and lots of waterbirds use the river.

Meet at the entrance to the property at 8:00 am. Lowlands is approximately one hour from Perth. Turn off Thomas Road, Oakford, into Kargotich Road, then travel south for 14 km to the T-junction with Lowlands Road (a No Through road). Turn right — the entrance to the property is approximately 3 km further on. Please arrive promptly as this is private property.

Leader: David James

Sunday 19 September — Full-day Excursion, Yalgorup National Park

Meet at 9:30 am at the first information bay along the Preston Beach Road, a right-hand turn off the Old Coast Road, some 60 km south of Mandurah. This is the southern end of the Yalgorup National Park which should hold some interesting bushbirds. Hooded Plovers may also be seen at Lake Preston.

Leader: Frank Pridham

Monday 20 September Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Note: 3rd Monday due to the public holiday on the following Monday.

Robyn Phillimore of CALM and doing an MSc at Edith Cowan University, will be speaking on her area of research which is egrets and herons in general including those at the Perth Zoo.

Friday-Monday 24-27 September — Campout, Perenjori

This small northern wheatbelt town has got smaller over the years but is the centre of a spectacular wildflower area which should be at its best at the end of September. Thirty km due east of the town, farmland development ends and there are large salt lakes which, after the early rains this

year, should have numbers of waterbirds. Around this area are large areas of sparse eucalypt woodland which should have considerable numbers of nesting birds.

On the way home on Monday 27th we have been invited to visit the property of Alison and John Doley east of Coorow. There has been a large revegetation program for many years and the property is noted for nesting Short-billed Black-Cockatoos and many other species. It will be an ideal stop on the way back to Perth which can be reached easily in the afternoon.

Please make your own bookings at the Perenjori Caravan Park, phone 9973 1193, and advise the BA office of your intention to join the campout. Perenjori is approximately 348 km NE of Perth.

Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier

Saturday-Sunday 9-10 October — Campout, Wubin-Dalwallinu area

The North Central Malleefowl Preservation Group based in Wubin-Dalwallinu would like to invite all interested Birds Australia members to assist them with their annual Malleefowl Survey. A campout is proposed for 9-10 October.

Your assistance will be most welcome with visits planned to Nugadong, Maya and Old Well Reserves.

The campout will involve a substantial amount of walking. Visitors are encouraged to bring strong boots, a compass, sharp eyes (for birds and wildflowers) and a good sense of humour.

If you would like to participate, please contact:

Sandra McKenzie on (08) 9387 6444

or email: wwfperth@ozemail.com.au



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Monday 25 October Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Jim Lane of CALM works from the Busselton Office and will speak on "Birdlife and Management of the Vasse-Wonnerup Wetlands".

Monday 22 November Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Andre Schmitz, manager of the Karakamia Sanctuary, Chidlow, will speak on "Management of the Fauna of Paruna and Karakamia Sanctuaries".

Atlas Help Needed

The vetting of Atlas Record Forms in the Birds Australia office is an important part of the Atlas Project. Vetting is a two-part process consisting of the vetting of bird records and the checking of general and positional data. The Atlas needs you if you have an excellent regional knowledge of birds, or if you know your way around maps and would like to help check survey site positions using office maps and computer programs. Vetting is usually an enjoyable group effort and occasional or regular help is welcome.

Occasional Atlas help is also needed for an hour or two on Tuesdays in Perry House. This involves Atlas 'housekeeping' tasks such as sending out forms, opening mail, making up Atlas kits, etc.

If you would like to be involved with the vetting of records, or would like to offer a little time in the Perry House office for the Atlas Project, contact Cheryl Gole: Tel/Fax 9293 4958; email mailto:gole@starwon.com.au

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Crossword Answers No 17

ACROSS

4 colour, 8 incubation, 10 ramp, 11 rubber, 12 hood, 15 mandibles, 18 play, 19 hover, 23 diagnostic, 24 lyre, 25 atoll, 26 pests, 28 rotten, 29 swivel.

DOWN

1 vision, 2 scold, 3 aberrant, 4 covey, 5 on, 6 oval, 7 repels, 9 tube, 13 dispose, 14 EBO, 16 salinity, 17 shoulder, 20 vagrant, 21 hackles, 22 one, 23 diet, 27 eye.



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