

Western Australian Bird Notes

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

No 92 December 1999

MURALGARRA, LAVERTON DOWNS AND ROWLES LAGOON

Muralgarra (126 000 hectares) is three minutes (about 5 km) south of Laverton Downs (198 000 hectares). Longitudinally, however, Laverton Downs is eastwards by over 5 degrees, in excess of 500 km. Given this distance it was something of a surprise to find the flora of both stations to be so similar: both have *Acacia* (especially *mulga*), *Eremophila*, *Cassia*, saltbush, etc.

The year 1999 was not a good rain/growth one for Laverton Downs (none of the usual everlastings flowered) and the smaller shrubs and grasses looked rather impoverished. By contrast the more westerly Muralgarra had a fairly wet season, resulting in a good native grass cover, flowering everlastings, *eremophila* and shrubs. Both stations have similar stony wash and grassy plains characteristic of the arid areas and both have some deep red sands. These are extensive in the western area of Laverton Downs, with high sand ridges up to eight metres requiring 4WD to cross them. They carry *spinifex* with fine stands of *E. gongylocarpa*, although some had *E. youngiana* flowering in both red and yellow forms at the time of our visit (1-5 September inclusive). The small area



The Wedge-tailed Eagle is common throughout the arid zone, including the areas referred to in this article.

Drawing by Pam Free

of red sand found at Muralgarra also had *spinifex* but supported *acacias* and especially *Grevillea eriostachya*, which was flowering at the time of our visit (27 September–1 October inclusive). Most of these *grevilleas* were large, some of tree proportions, being over eight metres in height.

Given the similarity of flora some commonality of bird life was to be expected and the following 37 species were observed on both stations: Emu, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon, Australian Hobby, Nankeen Kestrel, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Budgerigar, Bourke's Parrot, Pallid Cuckoo, Red-backed Kingfisher, White-winged Fairy-wren, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Southern Whiteface, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Crimson Chat, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, White-browed Babbler, Crested Bellbird, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Black-faced Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Richard's Pipit, Zebra Finch and Welcome Swallow.

The weather at Laverton Downs was very adverse for the first two days, gale force westerly winds being succeeded by a very cool southerly. This weather resulted in few birds being seen on those days, but we still made

See page 2 for
Notice of Annual General Meeting
28 February 2000

two additions to the Atlas (1984) square. Near the Laverton Downs homestead is a small dam. On the first day this contained a single Australasian Grebe in breeding plumage. It remained for 24 hours before departing, to be the first recorded in the square. Early on the following day, at a most scenic feature named on the map as Giles Breakaway, two Dusky Woodswallows alighted on a shrub only a metre from where we sat. These two are also additional to the Atlas (1984) square. The breakaway acts as a windbreak and creates flows of water such that trees and shrubs grow at the foot of the 'cliffs' and provide cover for numerous of the smaller species: thornbills, Weebill, whitefaces, etc.

It is possible that the strong winds also brought in the two large flocks of Crimson Chats seen, with about 200 birds in each.

Laverton Downs is no longer a 'working' sheep station and only one of the station windmills was pumping water. As might be expected this was attended regularly by Zebra Finches, Crested Pigeons and Emus, but also by Western Bowerbirds, as magnificently caparisoned a bird as could be wished, especially when they perched within five metres of where we sat. A group of four Western Bowerbirds remained in the general vicinity of the water trough and although their reported diet does not appear to necessitate frequent access to water, to the trough they often resorted.

A feature of Laverton Downs is that it has former mines within its boundaries. One of these is the former Poseidon Mine, now to our surprise a heritage area. At another deserted open cut mine, to which access was 'impeded' by a single strand of drooping wire, it was possible to stand near the edge and look down some 30-40 metres to the now flooded area. (Not too near the edge as parts are subsiding to the abyss.) Near the edge was a small acacia and it frequently filled with Zebra Finches, who after some vocal exchange, fluttered down in parties to the water to drink. On safe return another party would make the descent. We did not see other species using the water in this way, but given the absence of operative windmills, it seems likely they would do so. Welcome Swallows drank by skimming the water, but this seems rather different.

Birds seen at Laverton and not seen at Muralgarra were Australian Ringneck, Mulga Parrot, Striated Pardalote, Weebill, Grey-fronted Honeyeater (especially near the *E. youngiana*), Grey Currawong, Western Bowerbird, White-backed Swallow and Tree Martin. At Laverton Downs 49 species in total were observed.

On leaving Laverton Downs we visited Rowles Lagoon. It is difficult to take a waterbird area seriously when it is open to water skiing (although we recognise the pressures upon CALM). The water level was high and most views of the lagoon were wholly impeded by high and flowering melaleuca, doubtless very attractive, but irritating when endeavouring to see the open water. Black Swan and Eurasian Coot had young and the other waterbirds seen were Musk Duck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Hardhead and Hoary-headed Grebe. At Carnage Lake Australian Shelducks were added to this list.

BIRDS AUSTRALIA-WA GROUP

**Annual General Meeting
Monday 28 February 2000
State Tennis Centre, Bolton Ave,
Burswood**

NOTICE & AGENDA

APOLOGIES

CONFIRMATION, MINUTES, ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 22 FEBRUARY 1999

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

ANNUAL REPORTS

- Chairman
- Treasurer — Audited Accounts for the Year Ended 31 December 1999

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

- Chairman
- Vice Chairman
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- 7 Committee Members

GENERAL BUSINESS

M Philippon
Hon Secretary, Birds Australia-WA Group

Rowles Lagoon may well be a good waterbird refuge area at hot and low water times of the year when viewing access is likely to be better, but it would be a large lake even then and probably not worth a visit unless equipped with a boat.

Muralgarra, having had a good year, seemed very plentifully supplied with Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and Red-capped Robins and their young. Three species not recorded in the Atlas (1984) were observed: Black-shouldered Kite (one, cruising past the homestead and trying to effect a perch on a springy aerial), Yellow-rumped Thornbill (in several locations, in one of which a young bird was being fed) and Grey-crowned Babbler. Babblers were fairly plentiful and for the first three days only parties of Grey-crowned were seen and heard, to the point where it seemed some error must have been made in the first Atlas, which showed only White-browed Babbler for this block. As a result, each babbler sighting/hearing

was followed up carefully, so that on the fourth day the one (and only) party of White-browed Babblers was found.

Muralgarra also has a mine within its boundary. Unlike Laverton Downs the mine is working. Water is plentiful underground and as the mine has both underground and open-cut operations it has to dispose of much water. The cleaned water is pumped by pipeline at the rate of 60 litres per second to Lake Wownaminga (c.116°53' and 28°30'), a very large lake (14 km long and 1.5 km wide), formerly occasional, which is marked but not named on the 1:250 000 map sheet 'Yalgoo'. A new and extensive wetland has been created. The lake occupies a large shallow depression, so that high and low water are widely separated. Consequently, at the time of our visit the actual water's edge was some distance from firm ground. Not anticipating a new wetland in the Murchison we did not have our telescope, nor means of getting through the soft mud to the water's edge and we may well have failed to see any smaller species of shorebird. Black-fronted Dotterels were breeding near a group of flooded claypans on the station (with a nest containing three eggs in the rutted edge of the adjacent road) and it is likely this species was at the lake. We only looked at the southerly parts of the lake to which easy access can be obtained.

Lake Wownaminga had over 150 Black Swans including many cygnets. Some adults appeared to be still sitting on nests. There were also several flocks of Black-winged Stilts that appeared to have bred there, judging from the number of young birds seen and the remains of their egg-shells around parts of the shoreline. Also present were Australian Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Hoary-headed Grebe and Whiskered Tern.

Unfortunately the new wetland has not been regularly monitored from a bird viewpoint, although size would make this difficult.

Muralgarra has a section within the 116° Atlas square as well as the 117°. Birds that failed to make this distinction were Budgerigar, Black-eared Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Pied Honeyeater and Masked Woodswallow (all in the 116° square, contrary to the Atlas 1984).

Non-waterbird species observed at Muralgarra and not seen at Laverton Downs were Black-shouldered Kite, Banded Lapwing, Diamond Dove, Cockatiel, Black-eared Cuckoo (one being fed by White-winged Fairy-wren), Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Splendid Fairy-wren, Redthroat, Inland Thornbill, Pied Honeyeater, Orange Chat, Chiming Wedgebill, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush (fortunately calling loudly to enable it to be found in the acacia scrub), White-winged Triller, Masked Woodswallow (hundreds), Australian Raven, Rufous Songlark and Grey-crowned Babbler. At Muralgarra 64 species in all were observed.

One sighting of Wedge-tailed Eagle was memorable. There were usually 4-5 of this species over Lake Wownaminga. There we observed two, one of which flew a little above and behind the other before swooping and apparently, at first sight, attempting to peck the crown of the lower bird. Both came quite low and then we noticed the birds appeared to contact their necks. This action was

repeated four times in all before the swooping bird swung before the other. They then locked talons and cartwheeled three times before parting to regain height and soar away together. HANZAB (Vol 2, 1993) reports "cartwheeling rare" (p.172).

We are grateful to Gayle and Maitland Abbott (Laverton Downs) and Judy and John Morrissey (Muralgarra) for their help and hospitality. For those like us who like the arid shrublands, both stations are well worth a visit.

A & B Buchanan

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

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

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

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Malleefowl – 1, 8/10/99, 20 km NE of Narembreen (Narembreen) – RS (the sighting of this banded bird was near where it was banded 3 yrs and 10 mths before) * 2, 21/10/99, shire reserve 12 km E of Latham (Perenjori) – AHB * 1, 28/8/99, 5 km N of Maya (Perenjori) – GA

Chestnut Teal – 1 male, 3 females, Aug 99, 12.6 km from Wubin on the Wubin-Paynes Find Road (30°01'29", 116°47'14") (Dalwallinu) – CG, MG (north-east of previously recorded range in the SW)

Hardhead – 1+, 8/99, 7 km SE of Morawa (Morawa) – GA * 2, 21/10/99, Rabbit Proof Fence Road, NE of Wubin (Dalwallinu) – AHB (unusual this far north-east; near NE limit)

Cape Petrel – 16, 5/9/99, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Kerguelen Petrel – 1, 2/7/99, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) – RP

White-chinned Petrel – 2, 27/7/99, Sugarloaf Rock (Busselton) – RP

Black-browed Albatross – 15, 5/9/99, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Shy Albatross - 9, 5/9/99, Hillarys Pelagic Trip - FO *et al.*

Spotted Harrier - 4, 12/10/99, 30 km W of Esperance (Esperance) - ABi, RSt

Hooded Plover - 2, 21/8/99, about 15 km south of Wyalkatchem, on the bank of a large salt lake (Wyalkatchem) - BM * 3, Aug 99, 30.6 km from Wubin on the Wubin-Paynes Find Road (29°32'13", 117°09'43") (Dalwallinu) - CG, MG

Gull-billed Tern - 42, 23/9/99, 4 km N of Ballidu (Wongan-Ballidu) - JM * 4, 23/9/99, Badgerin Rock, W of Koorda (Koorda) - DB

Roseate Tern - 2, 5/9/99, Hillarys Pelagic Trip (unusual this early) - FO *et al.*

Arctic Tern - 1, 5/9/99, Hillarys Pelagic Trip (photos) - FO, JD, BR *et al.* (full details recorded)

Purple-crowned Lorikeet - 1, in company of Rainbow Lorikeets, 2/10/99, Swanbourne (Nedlands) - J-PO

Budgerigar - 4, 26/10/99, 6 km NW of Ongerup (Gnowangerup) - BN

Red-backed Kingfisher - 2, 27/8/99, 20 km W of Morawa (Morawa) - GA

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater - 1, c. 2 km N of Cervantes (Dandaragan) - BR

Pied Honeyeater - several birds, 13/8/99, Yanneymooning Hill (30°42'19", 118°33'23"); feeding in *Calothamnus* sp in thick vegetation at base of rock. (Mukinbudin) - CG, MG * 1, 6/10/99, 40 km SW of Marvel Loch (Yilgarn) - ABi, RSt * 2, 28/8/99, Koolanooka Dam NR (Morawa) - GA * 6+, 28/8/99, 5 km N of Maya (Perenjori) - GA (there seems to have been an irruption of Pied and Black Honeyeaters and Crimson Chats following a good breeding season)

Crimson Chat - 12+, 28/8/99, Jones Lake Road, SE of Morawa (Morawa) - GA

White-breasted Robin - 1 adult on 16/10/99 and 1 juvenile (still with some rufous feathers), both caught in mist nets, Yanchep NP, near golf course (Wanneroo) - BH *et al.* (unusual in this area)

European Goldfinch - 1, 26/9/99, on a fence on the south side of the Old Yanchep Road, near the boundary of Yanchep National Park and a field of carrots (31°33'45"S, 115°42'00"E) (Wanneroo) - BH, PH

White-backed Swallow - 1 (in the company of Welcome Swallows), 7/6/99, Herdsman Lake (Stirling) - RK

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

Plumed Whistling-Duck - c. 40, 9/99, Bilyuin Pool, Murchison River (25°54', 118°39') (Meekatharra) - MS, JSt; same location, c. 40 on 18/8/99, 28 on 14/9/99 and 42 on 3/11/99 - GW (few records this far south)

Freckled Duck - 6, 19/10/99, 40 km East of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB * 4, 30/8/99, near Rowles Lagoon Conservation Park (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - SK

Black Swan - 700, with lots of cygnets, 20/10/99, East of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Australian Pelican - 7000, some with young, 20/10/99, East of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB (young in a single creche of about 70 chicks all still without feathers)

Great Egret - 1000, 20/10/99, East of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 23-25/10/99, Eyre (Dundas) - DS, EBO

Black Falcon - 2, 22/9/99, Lake Cohen. (Ngaanyatjarraku) - CH * 1, 10/10/99, 20 kms NE of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH

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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 March 2000 Issue
1 February 2000 at Perry House**

Advertising Rates

1/4 page \$30.00

1/2 page \$50.00

Full page \$90.00

Peregrine Falcon - 2 at nest with 2 downy chicks, 17/9/99, Mt Allott, Gibson Desert. (Wiluna) - CH

Buff-banded Rail - 11-22/10/99, on very small bodies of water and reeds east of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB * 1, 25/8 - 13/9/99, in bird bath, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - EBO

Baillon's Crane - 11-22/10/99, on very small bodies of water and reeds east of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Australian Spotted Crane - 11-22/10/99, on very small bodies of water and reeds east of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Spotless Crane - 11-22/10/99, on very small bodies of water and reeds east of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Black-tailed Native-hen - 1, 15/10/99, Deralinya, 50 km S of Balladonia (Dundas) - ABi, RSt

Little Button-quail - 1, 25-26/10/99, in bird bath, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - EBO

Bar-tailed Godwit - 3, 20/9/99, Austin Downs Station, on a small claypan (27°25', 117°39') in company with 14 Common Greenshanks, Pink-eared Duck, Grey Teal, and a few other water birds (Cue) - CG, MG (unusual this far from the coast; no previous inland records for Gascoyne region)

Little Ringed Plover - 1, possibly 2 birds, 12-18/10/99, East of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Oriental Plover - 5, 21/9/99, near Lake Cohen (Ngaanyatjarraku) - CH

Inland Dotterel - 7, 3/10/99, Balgar pastoral lease (N of Arubiddy) (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - ABi, RSt

Naretha Blue Bonnet - 2, 4/10/99, Kitchener (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - ABi, RSt

Pheasant Coucal - 1, 29/8/99, B Gorge, Hammersley Range, near Wittenoom (Ashburton) - JP

Barn Owl - 2 heard, 22-23/9/99, in eucalypt woodland on Dalgara Station (27°51', 116°57') (Yalgoo) - AP, CG, MG *et al.* (rare in this area)

White-browed Treecreeper - 2, 16/8/99, Lake Barlee-Youanmi Downs Road (28°58'45", 118°52'21") (Sandstone) - CG, MG * 1, 18/9/99, Milly Milly Station, on the Bingarra-Cue Road (26°10', 116°27'), in tall mulga (Murchison) - VD, BS

Variiegated Fairy-wren - 3+, 17/8/99, in thickish vegetation in one spot along the Warne River on Narndee Station (28°59'14", 118°15'43") (Mt Magnet) - CG, MG (very few records S and E of Yalgoo and Mt Magnet)

Inland Thornbill - 1, 16/10/99, and 3, 20/10/99, 30 km East of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Slaty-backed Thornbill - 15/8/99, Diemals Station, 29°41'34", 119°28'47" (Menzies) - CG, MG

Slender-billed Thornbill - 4, 3/10/99, Arubiddy (Dundas) - ABi, RSt * 3, 3/10/99, Balgar pastoral lease (N of Arubiddy) (Kalgoorlie - Boulder) - ABi, RSt

Orange Chat - 3, 21/10/99, East of Sandfire RH (Broome / East Pilbara) - CH, AB

Grey-crowned Babbler - 1 group, 12/9/99, Barnong Station, within 500 m radius of shearers' quarters (28°37', 116°16') (Yalgoo) - MG * 1 small group, 24/9/99,

northern tip of Lake Monger just off the Yalgoo-Ninghan Road (29°09', 117°12') on a vegetated island in the salt lake system (Yalgoo) - CG, MG (uncommon this far south)

Fairy Martin - 2, 10/10/99, and 1, 16/10/99, Eyre (Dundas) - PS, EBO (unusual in this area)

KIMBERLEY

Glossy Ibis - 200+, 30/4/99, 6 Mile Causeway, Wyndham (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - GB

Pacific Baza - 1, 19/7/99, Kingston Rest Station (near Kununurra) (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - JDP * 1, 28/8/99, 10 km north of Kalumburu (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - SW

Black Falcon - up to 6, 5/9/99, on Roebuck Plains, within a couple of days of extensive fires (Broome) - BBO

Baillon's Crane - 2+, 24/8/99, Nimalaica Swamp (Broome) - JS (unusual in Broome area)

Spotless Crane - 1+, 24/8/99, Nimalaica Swamp (Broome) - JS (first record for SW Kimberley; description supplied)

Little Curlew - 100s, all 10/99, Broome town (Broome) - CH

Common Redshank - 1, 11/10/99 and 20/10/99, Eighty Mile Beach (Broome) - DR

Asian Dowitcher - 1, 13/10/99, Eighty Mile Beach (Broome) - DR

Pectoral Sandpiper - 1, 7/10/99, Broome Sewerage Works (Broome) - BBO

Red-necked Phalarope - 1, Aug-Sep 99, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Painted Snipe - male on nest, 12/08/99, east of Broome (Broome) - nest found by CH where birds 1st seen by GS approx. two weeks before this; male last seen by BBO on 25/09/99

Red-kneed Dotterel - 25+, 30/8/99, Argyle Diamonds tailings dam (very high number for this area) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Yellow Chat - up to 1060, Aug-Sep 99, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Sandstone Shrike-thrush - 2, 30/8/99, near Argyle Diamonds tailings dam (excellent views beside road plus calling) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Northern Fantail - 1, 26/9/99, Devil Devil Spring Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Ground Cuckoo-shrike - 1, 10/8/99, 40 km NE of Halls Creek (Halls Creek) - CB

Yellow Wagtail - 1, 30/9/99 (first for season), Broome Sewage Works (Broome) - BBO * 2 (probably subspecies *simillima*), 16/10/99, Kalumburu sewage ponds (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - SW

Gouldian Finch - 1 immature, 12/8/99, Warri Park Wyndham (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - CB

White-backed Swallow - 7/10/99, Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) - BBO

Welcome Swallow - 1, 13/8/99, Halls Creek sewage ponds (Halls Creek) - CH * 1, 18/8/99, Kununurra sewage ponds (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - CH (these are late records for the Kimberley)

OBSERVERS

AB = Adrian Boyle	GB = GC Breen
ABi = Alex Bisgrove	GS = George Swann
AHB = Allan Burbidge	GW = Gordon Wells
AP = Allyson Paul	JD = John Darnell
BBO = Broome Bird Observatory	JDP = Judy Du Plessis
BH = Bob Horwood	JM = Jim Masters
BM = Brenden Metcalf	JP = Jenny Peters
BM = Bill McRoberts	J-PO = Jean-Paul Orsini
BN = Brenda Newbey	JS = Jonny Schoenjahn
BR = Bill Rutherford	JSt = Jo Stone
BS = Barbara Stoneman	MG = Martin Gole
CB = Christopher Bennetts	MS = Mike Stone
CD = Chris Doughty	PH = Pat Horwood
CG = Cheryl Gole	PS = Peter Sandilands
CH = Chris Hassell	RK = Richard King
DB = Diane Beckingham	RP = Ross Payton
DR = Danny Rogers	RS = Rod Smith
DS = David Secomb	RSt = Rob Stogdale
EBO = Eyre Bird Observatory	SK = Sue Keogh
FO = Frank O'Connor	SW = Simon Wilson
GA = George Agar	VD = Viv Dare

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sirs

Magpies in colour

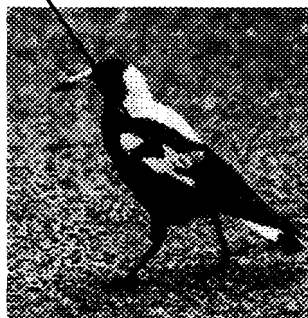
About six weeks' ago we were approached by near neighbours concerning coloured magpies which had been sighted in Padbury Road, Greenmount. Our reaction was disbelief — however, after several visits to the area, we were lucky enough to find two males with green and yellow on the wing feathers!

We made brief mention of this at the last Burswood meeting. However, we recently were able to photograph the two birds.

The colouring appears to be "natural"? but how it has occurred is beyond our knowledge or comprehension.

We look forward to discussing all this with anyone who has any suggestions.

Pat and Tony Bennett



*Photos taken by
Tony Bennett*

Dear Sirs

The long weekend camp at Perenjori, from a New South Welsh perspective

We have been on the road for a few months now and we enjoy the odd birdwatching outing whenever we get the chance. While at Broome, some good ladies mentioned the BAWA group camp at a little place, whose name we couldn't pronounce, called Perenjori 350 km north of Perth. We heard that Western Australians are very friendly people. We certainly were made very welcome and everyone was only too willing to have a chat.

We also wanted to see the wildflowers that the south-west corner is famous for. We were delighted with the magnificent display of colour of blues, yellows and whites. Masses of everlastings that were far too dainty to walk on. Some birdwatchers were also very good wildflower watchers as they reeled off the names, of which many escaped us.

Not to be outdone by all the beauty of the wildflowers were the electric blue of the Splendid Fairy-wren, the magic colours of the Mulga Parrot and the antics of the Black-tailed Native-hen. The Black, Pied and White-fronted Honeyeaters teased us. Flocks of Masked Woodswallows visited us and vocal Galahs, Western Corellas and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos surrounded us.

Many thanks to Clive and Wendy for a great weekend; Bob and Ray for putting up with us each day.

From two very happy travellers who enjoyed the weekend at a little place whose name we still cannot pronounce.

Two NSW visitors

WA Group Reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA – WA GROUP COMMITTEE

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

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

Recent committee meetings have dealt with the following:

Proposal to incorporate — following adoption by the extraordinary general meeting of members on 25 October, the proposal has been advertised in the Public Notices section of *The West Australian* on 3 November 1999 and the draft constitution submitted to the Ministry for Fair Trading for approval.

Atlas of Australian Birds #2 Project — see separate supplement for report from the WA coordinator, Cheryl Gole.

New members' night, 15 November at State Tennis Centre — invitations have been sent to members who have

joined the WA Group since 1 November 1998 so that they can become conversant with the wide sphere of activities in which they can be involved.

Birds on Farms project — Brenda Newbey's report on the WA section of this national project will be officially launched on 24 November by Mr Rex Edmondson, Chairperson of the Soil and Land Conservation Council; the report is enclosed as a Supplement to Bird Notes.

Conservation — Wetlands Coordinating Committee — Mike Bamford advises that this joint government/community committee, which met recently, appears to be a worthwhile vehicle for bringing together all the various departments responsible for Wetlands in the state.

Suburban Bird Survey — continuing, with more than 240 000 records now entered into the database.

Education/Public Relations:

- a display in Piccadilly Arcade was mounted at the end of September for a period of one month;
- local birds displays were developed for Koorda Local Agricultural Show and the Mount Marshall Show in September;
- details of National Bird Week have been sent to the *West Australian*, the *Subiaco Post* and *News Chronicle*;
- a photographic display of local birds was mounted at Kalamunda Library by Richard King;
- National Threatened Species Day activity included a display of the Western Ground Parrot survey, the Malleefowl survey and the Hooded Plover survey at the Museum of Western Australia;
- a display has been upgraded for *Birds on Farms* ready for the launch of the report on 24 November;
- the Hazelmere Progress Association, Anne Marshall, is producing a book on the *National Values of Threats to Hazelmere* and the committee has agreed to use of BA resources such as slides provided due acknowledgment is given;
- Clive Napier has given talks at Perth Zoo, Manjimup, Murdoch University and will also be speaking at the Busselton Naturalists Club in November.

Promotion by optics firm through mailout to members — the committee felt this was worthwhile due to the exposure available by having a display window at Piccadilly Cameras in the city, with all costs of the promotion being borne by the firm which did not have access to the members' list.

Grants Sub-committee:

- the sub-committee continues to submit applications for funding of projects including the Gordon Reid Foundation for a minor grant to publish brochures requested;
- all parties (Kings Park Board, Wildflower Society and Friends of Bold Park) have given authority for the Centenary Walk, Bold Park joint project to proceed for completion in October 2001;
- the Town of Cambridge 2000 Grant Program has been discussed and interest is being shown in

production of a full-colour brochure, *Birds of Bold Park and Perry Lakes*;

- Allan Jones recently visited Walpole to discuss the formation of a local group of enthusiasts and to deliver material for the Wader Group, Atlas and the Museum.

British Birdwatching Fair — a grant of \$1000 was approved towards costs for the Australian observatories to be represented at this event by two BA members.

Student grants to attend Eyre Bird Observatory course — grants were approved for Danika Loomes and Rodger Walker to attend the *Field Techniques in Bird Studies* course being run by Dr Stephen Davies 28 November to 4 December this year.

Resignation of the Office Manager — our long-serving Office Manager, Max Bailey, will be formally resigning as from the February 2000 AGM — we invite a member who lives near Perry House to step forward and volunteer for this position which generally entails about two hours per week for checking up on stationery requirements together with making sure that the photocopier is serviced regularly.

Trading Table — cards sold well at the recent Kings Park Wildflower Festival with a cheque arriving for \$1231, and more cards are required for sale at the Combined Charities Christmas Card Shop in the city.

Excursions — see *Coming Events* for summary for the next quarter.

WA Bird Notes — subscriptions have been amended to:

WA subscribers	\$10.00 per annum
Eastern States subscribers	\$13.00 per annum
Overseas subscribers	\$18.00 per annum

Estate of the late Alfred Lindsay Milhinch — Mr Milhinch, formerly of Northam, has bequeathed his written observations and records concerning his ornithological hobby to Birds Australia WA Group; these records relate particularly to the wheatbelt and information is being extracted for inclusion in the Database of WA Birds, together with miscellaneous reports and books which can be added to the Perry House library.

Christmas barbecue — this will be held on Sunday 19 December, 6.30 pm at Perry House — bring your own meat and drinks.

Clive Nealon
Chairman, WA Group

Making Birds Australia Grow

Our CEO, Donald Coventry, hopes to establish an Australia-wide working committee to develop ways of promoting the organisation, to increase our membership and strengthen and broaden our support base.

Anyone interested in joining the new committee, who has ideas on how to identify and reach audiences at local, regional, state and national levels, should contact the WA Group Chairman, Clive Nealon, for further details.

MID SUMMER WADER COUNT — FEBRUARY 1999 — BROOME REPORT

The results of the 1999 midsummer wader count have come back to haunt me. Just when I thought it had been all tied up, finalised and finished, I received some mail from Chris Hassell in Broome.

Now, along with the news of his forays into the hinterlands at Mandora Marsh including mouth watering sightings of Painted Snipe, etc, were two queries. The first was "What's happened to the mid summer wader count figures from Broome?" Secondly, would this lack of information cause members in Perth to think "Broomies" spent their February bird observations at Cable Beach? Or words to that effect.

Well, of course the sun tan will always set tongues wagging, Chris. Yes, the figures were missing in September Bird Notes and, no, I certainly wouldn't try to wriggle out of this glaring omission by blaming Australia Post, Picky Editors, or the Millenium Bug. The truth is... I was saving the article for Bird Notes December issue as a Christmas present.

Now for the record and those who would like to know what Chris and Jan were really doing on 7 February, here are the late, rather impressive Kimberley mid summer wader count data.

These observations were made at three locations in Roebuck Bay and four five-kilometre long sections of the Eighty-mile Beach (see table). The sightings are reassuring in light of the rather low wader numbers reported from the rest of the state during the count. Broome and environs yielded a final total of 72 924 shorebirds.

Additional large flocks of waders were seen moving beyond the high tide roosts into the inaccessible flood plain country behind the Crab Creek mangroves. If a way of penetrating this area could have been found to enable the counting of these birds, the final Roebuck Bay numbers would be even more impressive.

Many thanks, Chris and Jan, for the great effort.

Colin Davis

Mid Summer Wader Count February 1999

Broome Bird Observatory

	ROEBUCK BAY LOCATIONS			ANNA PLAINS – SOUTH ALONG 80 MILE BEACH					GRAND TOTALS
	NORTH SHORES	TOWN BCH TO PORT	CRAB CREEK DAMPIER CRK	0 - 5KM	5 - 10KM	10 - 15KM	15 - 20KM	80 MILE BEACH TOTAL	
Pied Oystercatcher	4		24		4			4	32
Sooty Oystercatcher	14		29						43
Grey Plover	11	3	165	60	45	100		205	384
Pacific Golden Plover						20		20	20
Lesser Sand Plover	2	5							7
Greater Sand Plover	1160	240	2500	360	200	2915		3475	7375
Oriental Plover						2		2	2
Red-capped Plover		90		10				10	100
Ruddy Turnstone	50	6	200	15	5	50		70	
Eastern Curlew	1	2	50	5	35	95		135	188
Whimbrel	10		45	5				5	60
Grey-tailed Tattler	275	60	1000	110	80	670		860	2195
Common Sandpiper	1	1	4						6
Common Greenshank			50	25	575	160		760	810
Terek Sandpiper	130	5	300	5		1140		1145	1580
Black-tailed Godwit	115		4000						4115
Bar-tailed Godwit	3150	1880	6200	3000	2140	6550		11690	22920
Red Knot	650	10	550						1210
Great Knot	2150	2550	7000	660	1285	5170		7115	18815
Red-necked Stint	1170	50	2250	700	200	240		1140	4610
Curlew Sandpiper	5	110	470	100	115			215	800
Sanderling				6	3	1		10	10
Broad-billed Sandpiper	1		15						16
Asian Dowitcher	2		4						6
Unidentified	1500						5835	5835	7335
	10401	5012	24865					32696	72974

BIRD WEEK CELEBRATION

On a warm spring day on 27 October, over 60 people attended a bird walk at Wireless Hill in the City of Melville.

We were fortunate that members were in sufficient numbers to divide the walkers into four groups under the leadership of Peel Howden, Mavis Norgard, Sue Keogh and Allan and Rose Jones.

Although Wireless Hill is not recognised as one of the best birdwatching areas, we were able to see Rainbow Bee-eaters in full flight and several birds breeding. The most attractive features of the area are the wonderful river views and the wildflowers and prepared gravel walks in this very important bushland remnant in the centre of the City of Melville.

Remember if taking a walk always send a notice to your local Community Newspaper and to Grassroots in the Eureka section of Monday's *West Australian*. The large number present indicates the popularity of local newspapers and the nature section of the *West Australian*.

Thanks to the helpers.

Allan K Jones

NATIONAL BIRD WEEK ACTIVITIES

As well as the Wireless Hill walk, two free public bird walks were offered on 31 October at **Bold Park and Perry Lakes** to mark National Bird Week. Notices in Grassroots in The West Australian and in the Subiaco Post drew small groups of interested beginners to both the 8am and 4 pm walks which were led by John and Judy Blyth and Clive Nealon. A photographic display of local birds was mounted on the veranda of Perry House, giving some beginner birdwatchers a good opportunity to sharpen up their search image before we set off.

The highlight of the day was magnificent views of a pair of Little Eagles. With or without binoculars, the morning group saw very well the tri-coloured underwing pattern (and big 'W') as the raptors flew over our heads as if curious about us. While the eagles were simultaneously visible for quite some time without sign of interacting, we were once treated to a view of apparently nuptial flight, including a momentary interlocking of talons after which the birds tumbled downwards briefly before resuming normal flight.

Over the day, 36 species were observed. The only species 'unusual' to the area was a lone White-necked Heron in the shallows of the northern Perry Lake. At first glimpse, the lake looked more like a paddock - but when we looked more closely, quite a bit of water could be seen. Grey Teal and Black Duck pairs, both with flotillas of fluffy ducklings pattered about in the nearly invisible channels. Purple Swampheens and Eurasian Coot could also be seen with fluffy young. On the bank near the deep pool at the southern end were some Australian Shelducks with ducklings. A Grey Butcherbird nest was observed in a small tree beside the lake.

There was much evidence of spring fever too up on the hill. Striated Pardalotes were seen dashing in and out of two tiny hollows in one old tree. A Red Wattlebird nest

was spotted on the later walk - and in it were two unflighted but feathered chicks. In checking this, unfortunately the two young occupants flung themselves out of the nest in fright. The story had a happy ending though as we were able to gently return the chicks to their nest where they stayed, and the parent birds were close by. A Magpie-lark was sitting in its neat mud nest in a pine tree - and in the same tree was an exquisite little nest 'spun' of fine material and occupied by a Willie Wagtail.

Counting a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets which were using a nest hollow in an old eucalypt, there were 11 breeding records on this day. Perhaps a later visit could make this a dozen by addition of those Little Eagles!

Judy Blyth

FOCUS ON BIRDS (SPRING), 17-23 October at Eyre

The course started in excellent weather for birdwatching —light cloud, light south-westerly breeze, minimum 14.1° C, maximum 32.4° C. The strength of the dawn chorus (around 5 am) and the amount of flowering in the habitat immediately surrounding the observatory suggested that this was going to be a visit to remember. Twenty seven species of birds, two of reptiles and one mammal were entered in the course log that day including eight species of honeyeaters. However, the deterioration of the weather over the remainder of the course put the possibility of doubling that total out of reach. The next day saw the maximum drop to 20.7° C and it remained within a degree or two of this for the rest of the week. The minimum temperatures were not conducive to evening walks listening for night birds either, with -0.7° C being recorded on Wednesday night.

The effect of all this was that fewer birds — both species and numbers — were being recorded in the various habitats visited. Even those calling were more difficult to locate. Apart from one or two individuals the flock of Tree Martins that had been present around the observatory on day one had gone by day three.

Considerable areas of mallee on the Roe Plain and the Hampton Tableland were searched during the week and notable absentees from the course log were parrots with the exception of the Major Mitchell Cockatoo. This is the first time that this has occurred.

Highlights of the course were few but those that occurred were memorable. Apart from Rob regaling us with tales of the "grave of the recalcitrant camper", the second day brought an incredible experience when we stopped at Green Bottle Junction after descending the scarp. While standing next to the vehicle, about twelve Varied Sittellas flew around us almost landing on our hands and heads. Try as we might we could not see any indication of nesting in the nearby mallee.

On Thursday, a young Brown Falcon came in to drink at a rock pool on the Hampton Tableland, landing within ten metres of us. It then proceeded to walk around the pool, pausing every so often to drink. As it did so the distance between it and the course participants reduced to about 5 metres. Having had a good drink and a close look at us, it

flew to a nearby tree where it remained for the next ten minutes. Binoculars were unnecessary for good views of all the markings of this dark-phase Brown Falcon.

Species regularly recorded (seven or more sites) were Yellow-rumped Pardalote (sub-species of Spotted), White-browed Scrubwren, Weebill, Inland Thornbill, Grey Shrike-thrush and Grey Currawong. Less common species recorded included Brown Falcon, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Jacky Winter, White-winged Triller and Dusky Woodswallow. The species seen at the most sites was the Weebill while the most numerous was the White-fronted Honeyeater. Forty three species of birds, one of mammals and five of reptiles were recorded at the sites. The next course in the series will be held in July 2000.

Peter Sandilands
Course Leader

LIBRARY REPORT

The following publications have been accessioned since the last report:

- Birds Australia Annual Report, 1998
- Kalbarri National Park Draft Management Plan
- BOCA Appeal Pamphlet: Bird Environment Education Centre, Victoria
- Riverview and Swan River Action Plan, May 1999
- Swan Avon Information Sheet No 7/99
- Bird Usage of the Alcoa Wellard Wetlands, January 1997
- Northern Territory Best Practice Guidelines: Reducing impact of tailings storage on avian wild life, October 1998
- ESA99: Ecological Connections: Handbook of Ecological Society, October 1999
- Mount Eliza Escarpment Restoration Plan, April 1999
- Australian Zoological Reviews, No 2, 1989, Royal Zoological Society, NSW
- CALM Science Division, Strategic Plan, 1999-2004
- Waterbirds in Nature Reserves, 1981-85, RAOU Report No 30 (Library)
- National Land and Water Resources Audit 1998-9 Annual Report
- RGC Wetlands Centre, Capel WA, May 1999 report
- *The Harrier*, Conservation Network newsletter, vol 1 No 3, Winter 1999
- *The Greener Times*, Conservation Council newsletter, July, August, October 1999
- Cumberland Bird Observers Club newsletter, vol 20 No 6, May/June; vol 21:1, July/August 1999
- *Victorian Babbler*, BA Vic Group newsletter, Nos 51, 52, June, September 1999
- *The Bird Observer*, Bird Observers Club newsletter, Nos 798-801, July-October 1999
- *The Tattler*, Wader Study group newsletter, Nos 19/20, April/July 1999
- *The Web*, Threatened Species Network newsletter, July 1999
- Lake Mealup Preservation Society newsletter, vol 12 No 3, July 1999

- *Malleefowl Matter*, Malleefowl Preservation Group newsletter
- *Galah*, BA in-house newsletter, Nos 36-38, July-October 1999
- *Bush Heritage News*, Spring 1999
- *The Emu*, BA journal, vol 99 Part 3, September 1999
- CALM News, March/April 1999
- Rockingham Environment Centre newsletter, No 8, July 1999
- *Wingspan*, BA journal, vol 9 Nos 2, 3, June and September 1999
- African-Eurasian Migratory Water Birds Agreement newsletter, Issue 5
- International Birdlife Update Nos 11/12
- South Australian Ornithological Association newsletter, No 171, September 1999
- *Contact Call*, BA Nth Queensland, September 1999
- Perth's Bushplan newsletter, May 1999
- *Boobook*, Australasian Raptor Association journal, vol 19(1), April 1999
- *Ecoplan News*, Issue 31, Spring 1999
- RSPB Fellows News UK, Autumn 1999

Liz Walker
Librarian

Members' Contributions

THE CORELLA PUZZLE

The early morning reveille for most birds appears to be governed by the sun and the emission of light waves.

Around the metropolitan area in early spring when birds are most active, a general twittering of birds occurs approximately 90 minutes before the official time of sunrise. The loud, territorial call of the Singing Honeyeater comes approximately 60 minutes before official sunrise but well after first light as registered by our human eyes. Territorial calls of other species follow later.

However, the early morning times when the corellas leave their night roosting sites vary considerably from day to day and do not appear to be governed by sunrise, moonphase or weather. These observations have been made over the years as the birds screech past the Wembley home on the east and always flying north.

Following the "corella count" 17 April 1999 in which I recorded a nil count at Perry Lakes (a very unusual occurrence for Perry Lakes), I recorded a few times of the flypast:

Apr 18	6.15
Apr 21	5.00
Apr 22	4.55

July 1999:	Sunrise approximately 7.11	
	New moon 13/7/99, Full moon 28/7/99	
Jul 15	6.30	Jul 23 6.30
Jul 18	5.30	Jul 25 6.45
Jul 19	6.00	Jul 30 6.15

August 1999: Sunrise approximately 6.50

New moon 11/8/99, Full moon 27/8/99

Aug 16	6.00	Aug 24	5.45
Aug 17	5.30	Aug 26	5.10
Aug 22	4.15	Aug 27	5.30

Mary Bremner

MAGPIE-LARK NESTING BEHAVIOUR

On 24 September 1999, at Dalgara Station, while on an atlas trip of the Murchison region with a number of other atlasers, I observed a black and white bird approach a largish stick nest about 8 metres from the ground in a mature mulga and prepare to brood. Assuming at first that the bird was a Magpie, I was very surprised to find that it was a Magpie-lark. Almost doubting the evidence of eyes and binoculars, I erected the spotting scope and then sought the agreement of the lunching atlasers. If the truth be told, there was initially more interest in lunch in the shade from the hot noonday sun, but yes, there was no doubt that the brooding bird was a female Magpie-lark. But was there a possibility that the bird, although appearing to be brooding, might just be sitting in the nest? And, if the bird was brooding, had it lined the stick nest with mud? Finally, if the nest was built by a corvid, as the group (now drawn away from lunch) assumed, would it be the nest of a Little Crow, which we thought always used mud in nest construction?

Nothing daunted, and unable to leave these questions unanswered, our intrepid tree-climber Clinton Richter scaled the tree and, risking not only his own limbs but those of the tree, inspected the nest. Woven together with relatively small sticks, the nest was roughly a conical shape with a rounded end. On Clinton's estimation, the internal diameter of the nest bowl was approximately 15 cms and the depth 10-12 cms. There was no evidence of mud in the nest: it was lined with strips of stringy bark that appeared relatively fresh, as they were a light orange-brown rather than the grey we thought they might be if aged. We collected a sample of the bark, which we assumed to be mulga. Three nestlings were in the nest, one considerably larger and older than its siblings and covered with black pin feathers. The remaining two nestlings were unfeathered. After we retreated from the site, the female Magpie-lark returned to brood.

Although none of us had observed behaviour of this kind before, it is not unknown. The WA Museum holds several records of Magpie-lark brooding in the nests of Little Crow and Australian Raven in the arid zone and wheatbelt. A photograph of the nest at Dalgara Station later enabled Ron Johnstone to identify it as that of a Little

Crow. Ron also pointed out that Little Crows do not invariably build nests lined with mud. It is probable that the older black-quilled nestling was a Little Crow chick hatched from an egg abandoned by the Little Crow adults and subsequently incubated by the Magpie-lark.

Many thanks to Ron Johnstone, Western Australian Museum, for nest identification advice and information on similar records, and to Clinton Richter, whose tree-climbing abilities made many of these observations possible.

Cheryl Gole

The Year 2000 Birds Australia calendar is a colourful addition to a Christmas stocking, or at only \$19.95, an ideal calendar for personal use.

JUVENILE OR IMMATURE PEREGRINE FALCONS?

On a recent trip to Mount Elvire Station 200 odd km west of Menzies, we observed two Peregrine Falcons perched above a large stick nest in a large dead tree, emergent above the surrounding mulga woodland. The nest may have been an old one built by Wedge-tailed Eagles, but did not seem to be quite big enough or made of large enough sticks. Perhaps it was an old Spotted Harrier nest. In any case, it may have been taken over by the Peregrines, who, like all Falcons, do not build a nest of their own.

The falcons were very quiet in behaviour and allowed a close approach under the tree. One of them flew and landed a short distance away but soon returned to its original place in the first tree. Upon inspection it was obvious that they were young birds, having a lot of brown in all plumage except that of the white throat, and mainly vertical streaking down the front rather than the horizontal, wavy black lines of adult Peregrines. Their ceres and eye rings were pale blue, but their legs were quite bright yellow. Descriptions in HANZAB and elsewhere provide descriptions of adult and immature plumage, but not of juvenile plumage. We assume from this that juvenile and immature birds are more or less identical in plumage. In any case, our birds differed from the descriptions of immature birds by the legs being bright yellow and not blue as in some descriptions or dull yellow as in HANZAB. Perhaps this implies that our two birds were older immatures, but they certainly did not act like it, having the trustingness of very young birds.

At no stage did we see an obviously adult Peregrine Falcon nearby and this raises two questions. First, given the



Nest of Little Crow that was used by breeding Magpie-Lark
Photo by Viv Dare

well-known aggression by breeding peregrines towards intruders around their nest sites, why weren't we attacked by the adults if the birds we saw were more or less dependent juveniles? Secondly, if the birds were not juveniles, but older immatures, is it possible that they were a pair, preparing to nest?

John and Judy Blyth

Have you seen the new website for the WA Naturalists' Club?

www.wanats.iinet.net.au

TO BONNIE ROCK AND BEYOND,

19-24 September

I spent a week in the wheatbelt doing Atlas surveys at the following sites; a wonderful outing due to the good, seasonal conditions for flowers and birds.

Durrocoppin Nature Reserve, 16 km N of Kellerberrin: Elegant Parrots, Jacky Winter, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Red-capped Robin.

Billyacatting Nature Reserve, S of Mukinbudin: Cockatiel, Mulga Parrot, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Pied, Black, White-eared, White-fronted Honeyeater, Crimson Chat, and Fairy Martins collecting mud.

Geeranning Rock Nature Reserve, NE of Bonnie Rock: Red-backed Kingfisher, Pied, Black and White-fronted Honeyeater, Crested Bellbird. Note that the track in is now virtually 4WD only.

Beringbooding Hill, SE of Bonnie Rock: Budgerigars in and out of hollows, Pied Honeyeaters, and Fairy Martins busy collecting mud.

Badgerin Rock, 12 km W of Koorda: Cockatiel, Elegant Parrot, Mulga Parrot, many bright male White-winged Fairy-wrens, Crimson Chats, and a Black-winged Stilt harassing a Gull-billed Tern.

Oak Park, N of Goomalling: Mulga Parrots, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and more Budgerigars.

Rufous Songlarks and White-winged Trillers were very vocal and obvious everywhere. Mosquitoes were also in abundance because of the recent rains, and creeks and ephemeral wetlands prevented travel on a few of the side roads. Thirty km north of Wialki I saw six Regent Parrots in woodland and heard a Spotted Nightjar call repeatedly from 7-9 pm.

Red-capped Robins everywhere were raising young and I found one nest with young in Durrocoppin Reserve, a site I am keen to re-visit in the future.

Diane Beckingham

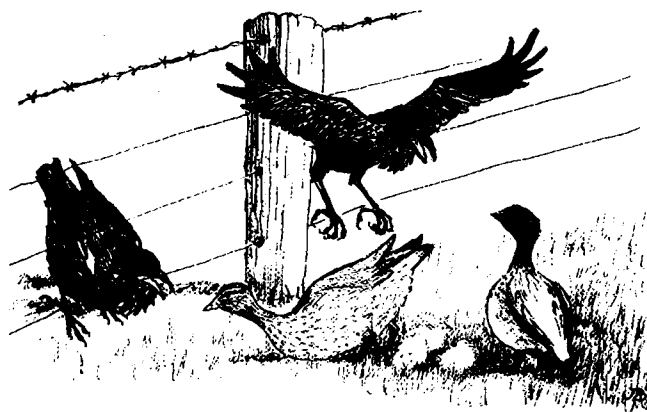
RAPACIOUS RAVENS

While walking up St Vincents Avenue from Lake Monger (4.8.99), I met a pair of Australian Shelducks guiding their eleven fluffy ducklings down the hill towards the lake. Not far behind them was a man carrying a yard broom. It was evident that he had taken the role of Duckling Guardian very seriously. Unfortunately no cars came along so I didn't see him signal with his broom to make the traffic stop! He had yet to shepherd the duck family across Lake

Monger Drive, so the broom might have come in handy then.

When this kind man was close enough, I asked him about the ducks. He explained that they had nested in a hollow in his neighbour's tree. He had watched them most anxiously as there were 'crows' in the area giving the duck family a hard time. One chick had already been eaten - so he was immensely relieved that the shelduck parents were at last taking their clutch down to the comparative safety of the lake.

On another occasion I saw at first hand the predatory habits of Australian Ravens. John and I were on a holiday (in September 1990) in the wheatbelt and exploring the Dongalocking Nature Reserve. From a track around the edge of the reserve, we could see into the adjacent undulating farmland. Near the bottom of a hill, about 100 metres away, a family of Australian Wood Ducks were bobbing about on a dam. On the bank of the dam was a flock of other Wood Ducks, but these were unencumbered by parenthood. We remained in our vehicle and fixed our binoculars on the scene.



**Australian Ravens attacking Australian Wood Duck ducklings.
Drawing by Judy Blyth.**

For some reason, the flock flew off and was soon out of sight. The remaining pair with their five fluffy ducklings, seemed restless, wanting to fly away with the flock but unable to do so unless they deserted their young. Instead, they led their ducklings off the water and into the adjacent paddock. A pair of Australian Ravens watched from their perch on a nearby fence.

Then the awful process started - with one raven distracting the parent ducks the other raven would move in and take a duckling, swallowing it whole in a very short time. The female Wood Duck seemed to be more prepared than the male parent to confront the ravens - but could only face one at a time. In the meantime the other corvid would take another duckling.

It was so difficult not to interfere, and ravens must eat of course. From having five ducklings, the distressed Wood Ducks soon had none. While such predation is happening all the time in spring, it is hard to see it in front of your eyes.

Judy Blyth

**The WA Group Committee
and the WABN staff
extend the compliments
of the season to all
members.**

RUDALL RIVER NATIONAL PARK

While on a wildlife tour here in late August, we saw 60 of a possible 90 species of birds and were amazed at the vastness and the beauty of the landscape.

At our base camp at Tjinkulatjatjarra Pool we shared the water with a pair of Red-backed Kingfishers, a pair of Australasian Grebes and flocks of Zebra and Painted Finches. Most nights we heard the Bush Stone-curlew calling and after dark Little Button-quail rustled through the knee-high kangaroo grass around our tents.

On our day trips we would see several Spotted Harriers and Brown Falcons, flocks of Budgerigars, some Masked Woodswallows, Pied, Black and White-fronted Honeyeaters and always several Bustards. (Wild camels, too, but few euros and no Emus at all.)

At two sites (Hanging Rock and Desert Queen Baths), we saw in reality what we had often read about in WABN — a female Black Honeyeater coming down to an old campfire for ash. (Possibly a dietary supplement before egg-laying.)

Of course getting to and from Rudall River is half the fun. A three-day stopover at Carrawine Gorge on the Oakover River let us see a pair of Black-necked Storks, Diamond and Peaceful Doves, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Grey-crowned Babblers, Star Finches, White-breasted and Little Woodswallows and Fairy Martins. At Running Waters nearby a Black-tailed Treecreeper caused excitement.

South of Kumarina an Australian Pratincole was seen on a claypan. In the vicinity of Wiluna and Sandstone we had several good sightings of Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes and also Bourke's Parrots. A pair of Hooded Robins was seen at Lake Annean. A Redthroat was seen feeding an immature Cuckoo, probably Black-eared, north of Dalwallinu.

Diane Beckingham, Phyllis Bentley, Norah Brockman

CRESTED SHRIKE-TIT AT KALUMBURU

These were found along the creek near the Pago Mission ruins north of Kalumburu in the north-west Kimberley on 17/5/99. The location was at 52 254780E, 8436413N. I noticed the bird when I heard a very unusual call. There were two birds calling to each other but I only observed a single bird (the other was approximately 500 m away). The call sounded like "but pureeeep pureeeep" or sometimes simply "pureeeep" repeated. Each call was answered by

another bird in the distance, ie they appeared to be contact calls. The bird I observed was in a tall open eucalypt tree and did not appear to be foraging. Its plumage was bright yellow and black. The bird was observed in riverine vegetation of tall eucalypts along a creek.

Tom Vigilante

Editors' note: This interesting sighting was reported briefly in the 'Observations' section of the last issue of WABN. The above provides extra detail.

WADER OBSERVATION, BREMER BAY

On 10 July at 10:45 am at Wellstead Estuary, Bremer Bay I observed a wader that was different; one that I have not seen before. It was standing at the edge of the water on a shelly/sandy beach near the caravan park at Bremer Bay. There were Australian Pelicans in the distance, and a few Silver Gulls floating on the water 10-12 m away. Conditions were sunny, warm in the sun and cold in the shade, with a slight breeze.

The bird was about 6-7 m away across a pathway. It had clearly seen me, but I was not in the open. I observed it with binoculars for no longer than two minutes. The following is from my notes made at the time.

Boat landing.

Medium-sized (Common Sandpiper size) wader. Pale grey above: slight buff streaking on breast. Dark eye. Long upcurved bill, lighter proximally. Yellow legs, longish but not like Stilt or Greenshank. No eyebrow. Flew low over water obscured by vegetation. No vocalisation heard. Active bobbing — very similar to Common Sandpiper. The bird had a 'purposeful' walk — not like little waders, not in a hurry.

I looked for the bird again, but couldn't see it, so sat down to write the description and look at the book (in that order!).

According to Pizzey and Knight, *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, it was a Terek Sandpiper. I have never seen one here in the summer and assumed that an over-wintering one would be uncommon, so I contacted Vic Smith in Albany to discuss it. After having read my notes to him, he agreed that it was a Terek Sandpiper, and uncommon.

As I was alone at the time of the sighting, there is no other confirmation.

Anne Gadsby

The Atlas is great, but don't forget other interesting projects that BAWAG members can enjoy and contribute to. These include:

Malleefowl monitoring:	Contact Sandra McKenzie Rod Smith
Wader surveys:	Contact Colin Davis
Lake McLarty surveys:	Contact Colin Davis
Hooded Plover project:	Contact Phyllis Bentley
Ground Parrot project:	Contact Shapelle McNea

PELICANS IN THE KIMBERLEY

During the month of June, I resided on Kimberley Downs Station, 90 km east of Derby. The family members were interested in the environment and so all visits to lagoons, waterholes, swamps, rivers and going on windmill runs were very rewarding.

As there were no cats at the homestead, there were many corellas, Double-bar Finches, Galahs, doves, Red-backed Fairy-wrens and Black-faced Woodswallows; also Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes, Willy Wagtail, Restless Flycatchers, White-gaped Honeyeater family, Pied Butcherbird, Rainbow Bee-eaters and occasional visits from a Collared Sparrowhawk which sent the other birds into a tizz! However, we did see four cats in other areas on the station.

When I first arrived at the station, frogs were still in abundance and the resident perentie was observed digging in the garden for them, while at night a small python was seen on a beam in the bathroom with two distinct bulges in it!

One day (10 June) we travelled on a rough track across a large flat paddock, inaccessible during the wet season, to check on a swamp (Duffers Pool) that had been widened and deepened to give year-round water to the cattle. There were no trees in this area, only a few half-dead stunted shrubs and thick clumps of grass. On the water were Plumed Whistling-Ducks, Pacific Black Ducks, Australasian Grebes, a White-faced Heron and Australian Pelicans. The latter numbered at least 500 and this included adults, immatures and chicks. As we slowly progressed closer on foot, the adults and 'teenagers' slid into the water while the downy chicks huddled together on the bank where they looked like a bundle of white fluffy balls. We sat down, and after a while the adults returned to the bank and closed in on the chicks. Other pelicans flew in, no doubt from other water holes where we had noticed them fishing at other times. Further along the bank a Whistling Kite was feeding on a very dead chick.

Nearby in the paddock were Masked Lapwings, Red-kneed Dotterels, Magpie-larks and an Australian Pratincole; a group of Brolgas had flown out before we even arrived at the pool, even though we had left the vehicle approximately 200 m away. All in all, quite an amazing sight! Altogether, we compiled a list of 90 birds.

Many thanks to my hosts.

Florence Robinson

THE GIBSON DESERT: JUST ADD WATER!

Between 11 and 26 September I had the pleasure of joining a natural history tour of the Gibson Desert with North West Safaris. I will only concentrate on one aspect of the trip, as to report on all the great scenery, plants, reptiles and cultural sights we saw would fill WABN! The tour was very relaxed with Janet Morris and Peter Kelly, the owners and tour leaders, willing to stop and indulge everyone's interests.

On the afternoon of 21 September we were thrilled and surprised to find that Lake Cohen (550 km ESE of Newman) had water in it. This water was acting as a very strong magnet to the birds from many kilometres around

and was teeming with life. A quick look in the dying light of a beautiful sunset whetted our appetites for the following morning's birding.

We slept fitfully as Dingoes howled and prowled around our camp that night. The day dawned with sunshine and blue sky and we set off to the lake with binoculars, telescopes and cameras at the ready; even the botanists were keen for a spot of birding!

One of the first things we saw was an Australian Hobby, breakfasting on a small passerine. Shortly after this Peter spied a distant Black Falcon, perched. We all tentatively agreed it was indeed a Black Falcon from the lack of tarsus on show and the absence of any facial markings but we were keen to see it in flight, as it was a distant view. The bird didn't oblige immediately but once it did, it gave us brilliant views for minutes at a time for the rest of the morning. No barring what-soever on underwing or tail and the very different flight to Brown Falcon can easily be used to confirm a sighting. Once one has seen a Black Falcon in flight one can never confuse it with dark phase Brown Falcon ever again! Later in the morning we watched two Black Falcons tearing through flocks of Zebra Finches. They were surprisingly unsuccessful at catching prey but it made a wonderful spectacle.

Whistling Kites were breeding in a big Coolabah Tree in the middle of the lake and their regular lazy flights over the water spooked 2000 ducks into the air. Fifteen hundred Grey Teal and 500 Pink-eared Ducks and one Hardhead made up the total. The damp ground at the edge of the lake was proving a fertile feeding ground for a mixed flock of Black-faced Woodswallows, Richard's Pipits, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Zebra Finches, Magpie-larks and White-winged Trillers. In the Coolabahs were lots more Yellow-throated Miners, White-plumed, Singing, Spiny-cheeked and White-fronted Honeyeaters, Willy Wagtails and Little Grassbird. Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo were calling clearly. Thirty Whiskered Terns in breeding plumage were dipping in to the lake to feed but no nests were seen as we waded around.

Both Tree and Fairy Martins were present, darting enthusiastically around. Small numbers of Glossy and Straw-necked Ibis flew in to probe in the soft bed of the lake. I was expecting to see Black-tailed Native-hen and eventually 12 showed themselves amongst some long grass. Flocks of 'Budgies' swept around in startling green and yellow calling constantly. The whole area was further enhanced by some lovely shorebirds; resident species were Black-fronted Dotterel, Red-kneed Dotterel, Australian Pratincole and Black-winged Stilt. There were two species of migratory shorebirds present: Common Greenshank and, possibly the most unexpected bird we saw on the whole trip, Oriental Plover. We had first encountered them on the previous day, when a sharp-eyed botanist spotted five individuals five metres from the track on some burnt ground (I knew botanists must have some use!!!)

Thanks to North West Safaris for the invitation and to the charming and educational company of my fellow travellers.

Chris Hassell

ROWLES LAGOON 99

On 29 August we travelled to Coolgardie and headed north along the Coolgardie North Road for 75 km to Credo Station. Rowles Lagoon Conservation Park was resumed from Credo Station some time after Freckled Ducks were discovered breeding there in 1972. Rowles Lagoon Conservation Park consists of about 10 000 acres with four separate lakes, Clear Lake, Muddy Lake, Carnage Lake and of course Rowles Lagoon which is used for water skiing as it has a large area of open water. In 1992 28 inches of rain fell and this year 16 inches with fairly good seasons in between. As a result of this year's rain all the lakes joined up. There is thick tea tree in and around the lakes giving wonderful protection for waterbirds. There are now a lot of dead trees in the lakes as a result of being too

**"... delighted to find four
Freckled Ducks ..."**

wet for too long in 1992. The conservation park has been fenced off and the regrowth is excellent around the edges; some of the eucalypts would be nearly two metres high.

We camped on the edge of Muddy Lake and were constantly entertained by the antics of coots, swans with cygnets, a hobby taking something from the water, and a pair of 'willies' finishing off their nest on a dry branch over the water and being very bossy to everyone else. Musk Duck (displaying), Hoary-headed Grebe, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Shoveler, Pacific Black Duck, Australian Shelduck (B), Black-tailed Native-hen (B) were all seen.

We walked to Boggy Dam some two kilometres north-east of our camp and were delighted to find four Freckled Ducks swimming in and out of tea tree which is in the middle of the overflow which in turn floods back behind the dam and joins Muddy Lake. Three females and one male were seen, the male looking very handsome with his red breeding colour on his bill. The slightly peaked head was very obvious, also. The next day we returned to the dam and observed them again for about 30 minutes. They moved out quite away from their cover and mixed with Grey Teal, Pink-eared Ducks and Australasian Shovelers.

Every tree, plant and bush on Credo seemed to be in flower or going to seed, hence everything in the bird world was either displaying, mating, nesting or feeding young. The bushbirds were many with a Brown Falcon sitting on its nest, with very noisy change overs with its mate. Other observations of breeding included an Australian Raven sitting tight, a Jacky Winter just starting its nest only a metre from the ground, Magpie-larks' nests standing out with the very red mud, Southern Whitefaces feeding young, and a pair of Banded Lapwings with the smallest of chicks. An Australian Hobby caught a Red-backed Kingfisher, sat in a tree on a dry branch and pulled it apart, dropping feathers and other not-wanted bits to the ground.

In all, 70 species were seen over the four days.

Sue Keogh

COURTING CUCKOOS

In mid-August this year, we camped overnight about 50 kms west of Menzies amid some good tallish mulga. The morning chorus of Pied Butcherbird, Rufous Whistler, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Splendid Fairy-wrens, Crested Bellbirds, and others including the much heard call of Pallid Cuckoo greeted us the next day - and we soon set off on our bird walk in the vicinity to make sure these songsters made it into the Atlas.

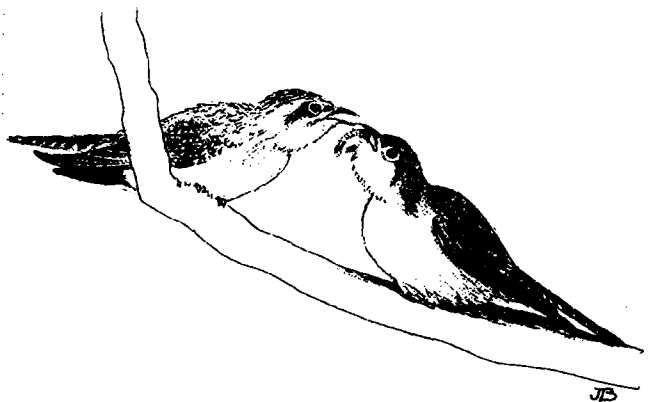
Returning to camp, we noticed a rather unattractive, repetitive and rapid "yap-yap-yap", and determined to find the source of this call. The cacophony was most unlike the familiar ascending call of a Pallid Cuckoo but this proved to be the bird responsible. The calls led us to look at a low branch within the nearby mulga stand where a cuckoo was squatting - and a very agitated female Red-capped Robin was fluttering around it, but not attempting to feed it. We supposed the robin was agitated by the proximity of the cuckoo to its nest.

The cuckoo had several features that made us think it was a young bird — its crown was heavily streaked, its eye-ring a pale yellow, the feathers around the white patch on its nape showed pale rufous edging and there was warmish brown scalloping near the hind edge of the dark, downward line through the eye. Further, bright flecking and spots were visible on its wing coverts and secondaries.

Soon a second Pallid Cuckoo arrived with a juicy caterpillar in its bill and this morsel was passed to the first cuckoo. At this stage, the robin disappeared from the scene.

The second Pallid Cuckoo was coloured the normal greys and whites of a full adult. It soon flew a short distance away, captured another long caterpillar from a bough and returned to feed the first cuckoo, which had remained on its low perch. We realised that it was the mobile, obviously adult cuckoo that was making all the yapping noise. This cycle was repeated until at least seven caterpillars had been consumed by the stationary cuckoo - after which it followed the other one over to the source of the food.

We wondered at first if we had witnessed an adult cuckoo feeding its young - which would have been an exciting observation - or was this little scene a matter of



Adult, presumed male, Pallid Cuckoo feeding a presumed female immature bird of the same species.
Drawing by Judy Blyth.

courtship behaviour? There was no hint of the hungry persistent begging calls that are usually noisily emitted by a dependent parasitic cuckoo once out of the host nest.

Lord (1956) has reported several observations of a male Pallid Cuckoo calling, and feeding a female, with copulation following in some cases. In checking behaviour of Pallid Cuckoo in HANZAB (Higgins 1999), we found further references to courtship feeding. Several authors were quoted as having recorded males feeding females during courtship. One observation quoted in HANZAB was similar to ours, and another reported a case where the recipient cuckoo made no calls during a prolonged period of observation although it was fed several times. HANZAB also noted that such behaviour had at times been, probably wrongly, interpreted as adult feeding fledgling. There appears to be no convincing evidence for 'deliberate' parental feeding among parasitic cuckoos.

A summary of present knowledge on this question for parasitic cuckoos in general can be found in Handbook of Birds of the World, Volume 4 (del Hoyo *et al.* 1997, page 536). It states: "Although parasitic cuckoos do not raise their own young, the adult males occasionally feed fledged young cuckoos of their own species, either a lone, calling fledgling or one calling while its foster parents are feeding it. This behaviour appears to be misdirected courtship feeding by the cuckoo. These males, usually of the crested cuckoos, or the glossy cuckoos and bronze-cuckoos, belong to the species which also feed caterpillars to their females, and they feed the young as if they were potential mates. Adult parasitic cuckoos do not feed young cuckoos which are still in the nest."

For our observation there is still the possibility that the bird being fed was a female, who although immature, was old enough to breed and that the feeding was true rather than "misdirected" courtship behaviour. Perhaps one reason to consider this possibility is that the bird being fed was not calling, as described for dependent young birds in the quotation above. Klapste (1981) referred to 'true courtship feeding' between an adult plumaged Pallid Cuckoo (presumed male) and a browner, apparently immature, presumed female. However, Klapste (1981) did not refer to seeing copulation, and we did not observe it either, so it is not clear whether these immature females were capable of breeding or not. There is probably no reason to assume that Pallid Cuckoos in immature plumage do not breed as there are many species in which this occurs. Further, Serventy (1958) reported feeding, followed by copulation, of an apparently not fully mature female Shining Bronze Cuckoo by a mature male of the same species.

Our thanks to Michael and Lesley Brooker for providing a number of references to reports of feeding of their own species by adult cuckoos.

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Judy and John Blyth

HISTORICAL NOTES ON SOME MANDURAH BIRDLIFE

Introduction

During the period 1965 to 1980 I visited Mandurah frequently on weekends and holidays. My casual observations were augmented by observations on the birdlife while accompanying professional fishermen in the Peel Inlet throughout the year, and the inshore waters during the summers. I also accompanied professional crayfishermen who ranged up to 30 km from the coast, which approximates the 25-fathom contour locally. These adventures resulted from marrying into the Renfrey family of Mandurah, a family of fisher-folk.

My time there overlapped that of the first Bird Atlas scheme (1977-1981) and countless observers have maintained a good coverage of the area since then, mostly in *WA Bird Notes*. Also since then Storr and Johnstone have published three masterful works on the birdlife of the Swan Coastal Plain, the South-West of WA and Western Australian Birds: non Passerines. Consequently I confine my observations to the period 1965 to 1975 and believe that my notes are worth recording.

The Notes

Emu: Formerly abundant and extensively shot by the earlier settlers. It still occurred to the east of Mandurah and west of the Peel and Harvey estuaries until the 1970s, and it still occurs in the more remote areas.

Musk Duck: The fishermen tell me that birds are sometimes seen walking through the bush, presumably when moving from one body of water to another. These observations agree with Serventy and Whittell (1976).

Black Swan: Not as common since the earlier days but it will still form moderate flocks on the estuaries. Fishermen dislike them because when feeding they cause irregularities in the bottom of the estuaries, and this reduces the effectiveness of the fishermen's nets.

Australasian Shoveler: Small numbers over the plain but it will form moderate flocks of hundreds and more on the broad-waters of the Serpentine River.

Australasian Grebe: Moderately common over the plain and it ranges up the rivers, well into the Jarrah forest.

Hoary-headed Grebe: Flocks of up to 300 still winter in the Peel Inlet and a few still entangle in the fishermen's nets, but not as commonly as in the 1950s, which may reflect a decline in this species.

Great Crested Grebe: An uncommon species but the older fishermen remember it and claim that it sometimes occurs on oceanic beaches.

Little Penguin: Not commonly seen and usually as single birds sparsely distributed. It is more often seen in coastal waters during the summer.

Cape Petrel: Moderately common, scavenges offal, ventures close to shore.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater: The commonest seen but infrequently beached. It is probably this species that the fishermen report from the Peel Inlet.

Huttons Shearwater: One bird washed up onto the beach in the early 1970s.

Black-browed Albatross: The second commonest albatross species locally, scavenges offal.

Yellow-nosed Albatross: The commonest species locally and juveniles occur here. It will scavenge offal.

Shy Albatross: One bird washed up onto the beach in the early 1970s.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel: Common at sea and tamely scavenges offal from the crayboats, which it approaches closely and fearlessly.

Australasian Gannet: Uncommon, singles, pairs, small numbers, doesn't feed on offal.

Darter: Serventy (1948) states that it was abundant at Mandurah but was probably referring to roosting sites between the old traffic bridge and the inlet. Otherwise it is not abundant now, usually being seen as single birds or pairs. It doesn't trouble the fishermen (Stranger 1992) and ascends the rivers into the Jarrah forest.

Little Pied Cormorant: Large flocks will form on the estuaries and it ranges up the rivers into the Jarrah forest. It does not trouble the fishermen (Stranger 1992).

Pied Cormorant: Common along the coast and on the estuaries. It does not range far from the coast and shelters from storms in the Peel Inlet and the area between the bar and the inlet. Up to 100 birds may position themselves along a net and ravage it. It readily takes discarded fish too and does not scare easily, often not until a bird or two is shot. The birds fully realise the association between a net and fish, and will position themselves along a net being run out or set, even before any fish have meshed themselves. It is a nuisance to fishermen and sometimes will strip such prized fishes as the King George Whiting from the nets (Stranger 1992).

Little Black Cormorant: Quite common over the plain and will form moderate flocks on the estuaries, where it may engage in mass fishing displays. It does not trouble the fishermen (Stranger 1992).

Great Cormorant: Rather scarce over the plain but occurs on the larger bodies of water and, more rarely, will frequent coastal beaches. It doesn't really trouble the fishermen even though it may take a few fish from the nets, readily accepts discarded fish and is easily scared (Stranger 1992).

Australian Pelican: There seems to have been an increase in its numbers on the estuaries in recent years. Some birds winter here and it has bred locally (Serventy and Whittell 1976). The species seems to have benefited from settlement and readily consumes all fishes caught

and/or discarded by the fishermen, except for the Common Blowfish (Stranger 1992).

Little Egret: In April of 1969 a lone bird was continually present between the bar and the inlet during that month.

Eastern Reef Egret: An uncommon species but sometimes seen on the coastal beaches and in the Peel Inlet. One white phased bird stayed for several weeks and the species will perch on fishing boats.

Nankeen Night Heron: It will attend lighted fishing boats on the lower Murray River, and will eat the small fish discarded during prawning operations.

Osprey: Seen over the estuaries and Lake Goegrup. It appears to be resident at Wannanup and there are reports of it nesting there.

Painted Button-quail: A roadkill near Serpentine in the early 1970s.

Dusky Moorhen: Small numbers over the plain and it frequents the margins of the rivers, where suitable.

Eurasian Coot: Small numbers varying up to moderate flocks on the estuaries. (Refer to Stranger (1995) for its seasonal abundance on the Swan River at Perth.)

Pacific Golden Plover: Rare compared to the Grey Plover but small numbers sometimes.

Grey Plover: Small numbers, groups sometimes. Frequents the channel between the bar and the inlet, rarely oceanic beaches.

Hooded Plover: Uncommon but small numbers sometimes on coastal beaches.

Whimbrel: Infrequently encountered, small numbers usually but sometimes small groups. It will frequent the coastal sand dunes, apparently sheltering from the wind at such times.

Eastern Curlew: Rare but sometimes between the bar and the inlet. (Formerly it occurred on the mudflats adjacent to Mary Street, Hall's Head.)

Marsh Sandpiper: Very rare but between the bar and the inlet.

Terek Sandpiper: Rare, singles or pairs. Mostly on the mudflats near the bar (see Eastern Curlew above).

Grey-tailed Tattler: Uncommon, singles and pairs usually but sometimes groups of ten or so.

Red Knot: Small numbers varying up to flocks of several hundred.

Red-necked Stint: Small numbers varying up to flocks of 1000 or so.

Banded Stilt: Of irregular occurrence, usually large to very large flocks.

Common Bronzewing: Singly or in pairs but groups of 10-15 near stock facilities, especially watering points.

Regent Parrot: Flocks of 50-75 birds east of Mandurah.

Red-capped Parrot: Normally confined to the Jarrah forest, but over the plain sometimes, even to the coastal dunes.

Rock Parrot: Small numbers on the beaches north of Mandurah.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo: Normally confined to the Jarrah forest but may range over the plain in winter.

Red-winged Fairy-wren: Fairly common in the riverine thickets in the Jarrah forest, but no longer occurs on the plain.

White-browed Scrub-wren: Fairly common in the riverine gullies of the Jarrah forest, and in the coastal thickets.

Dusky Woodswallow: Common in the Jarrah forest and ranges west to the delta of the Murray River.

Grey Currawong: Moderately common in the Jarrah forest and still occurred in the bushland south of Mandurah until recently.

Red-eared Firetail: Moderately common in the riverine thickets in the Jarrah forest, but no longer found on the plain.

Tree Martin: Smallish numbers usually but sometimes in very large flocks of many hundreds if not thousands.

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Robert H Stranger

BLUE-BREASTED FAIRY-WRENS IN THE GOLDFIELDS

During a week long stay on Jaurdi Station in August this year, we observed Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens on two occasions, once two or three km to the east of the homestead and the second at Mount Finnerty, (on the summit!) about 19km north of the homestead. We identified the species by the rich purple crown and ear coverts and, on one occasion, by the obviously blue breast, of the adult male, and by the lack of contrast between the mid-brown bill and lores of female birds.

These observation are not totally unexpected as the species has been recorded on Jaurdi Station before including Birds Australia camp-outs, and near Bungalbin Hill, about 70km north-west of Jaurdi Homestead (Dell and How 1985). Further, there are significant areas of Acacia heathland, albeit rather species poor, in a number of places on Jaurdi and other areas to the east and north-west. Nevertheless, we thought the observation was worth reporting to remind people not to assume that Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens are confined to the more diverse heaths of the wheatbelt proper, or that any chestnut shouldered fairy-wren north of the trans-line is

automatically a variegated! It is also a reminder of the importance of being able to separate this species from the variegated in the field in order to ensure that the new atlas can clarify the distribution of these two very difficult species.

Reference

Dell, J and How, R. A. 1985. *Vertebrate Fauna in The Biological Survey of the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia: Part 3 Jackson-Kalgoorlie Study Area*. Records of the Western Australian Museum, Supplement number 23

John and Judy Blyth

Help!

Do you live near Perry House (Floreat/Wembley area)?

Can you offer about two hours per week for:

- topping up office stationery supplies
- checking photocopier
- on-call contact for liaison with Kings Park Board for building maintenance

If so, please give our secretary Margaret Philippon a call on 9375 2068 for more details on this important aspect of our volunteer duties.

Max Bailey has been doing this job for the WA Group for quite a few years and thinks it's time to hand over as from February 2000.

NATURE SOUND

David Stewart & Associates

CD : Bird Calls of the Broome Region (New Release)

David Stewart, Nature Sound, spent 6 weeks at Broome Bird Observatory during March/April 1999 recording calls of single species flocks of shorebirds as they left on their northern migration. This CD is a result of that visit and contains 82 species (calls of 42 shorebird species as well as calls of 40 local bush birds, particularly the endemics).

Total length - 69 minutes.

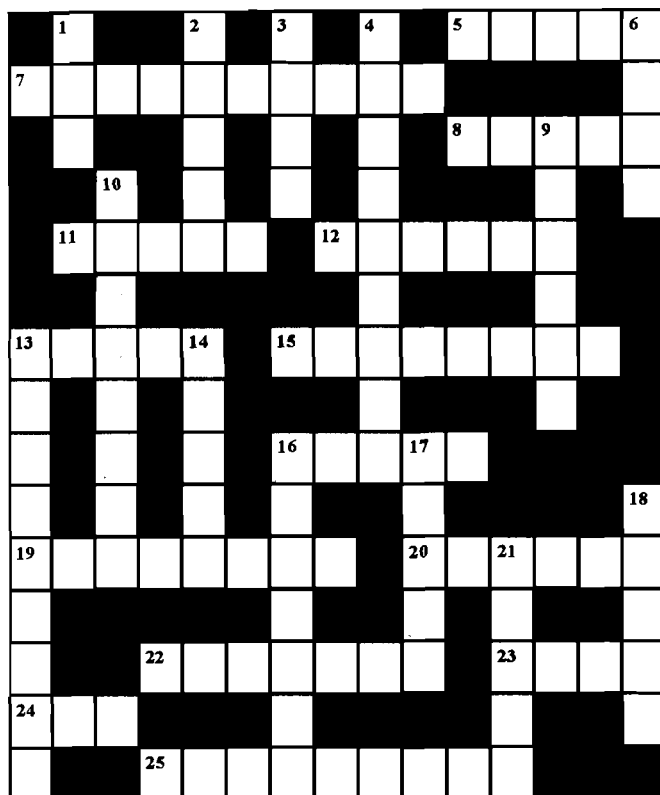
Price \$25.95 plus \$2.00 postage

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P O Box 256, Mullumbimby NSW 2482

Phone/Fax (02) 6684 0127 or email :
davidstewart@naturesound.com.au
website : www.naturesound.com.au

Crossword No 19

by Pam Agar.



Clues across

5. Africa and Eurasia to Indonesia form the old one.
7. Zone between high and low tide marks.
8. One who does this to binoculars would be most upset.
11. Describes cheek of a particular honeyeater.
12. Popular nest site of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike.
13. Hooded Plovers nest on these beaches.
15. Generic name of grass parrots.
16. Nest site of some waterbirds.
19. Principles of classification.
20. Careful observation will often provide this.
22. Lake noted for waders.
23. A wet, windy morning may not be a good one.
24. Rump colour of Spotted Pardalote.
25. State of being kept in confinement.

Clues down

1. Extremity.
2. Topmost part of head.
3. May affect one's ability to hear bird calls.
4. Drinking point for birds in arid country.
6. Circular facial feature of an owl.
9. One exists to record nesting details.
10. Low vegetation, common in Pilbara.
13. Safe place.
14. Too long for, such as a massed sighting of flamingoes.
16. Small remaining area of bushland.

17. Keeping one may provide evidence of change in an area.
18. Long-legged bird with stately carriage.
21. Dull black.

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

Our outing for August was the Redmond Hay River Road with leader Tim Hunt. We had six cars and 14 participants and Tim organised an Atlas search along this road. Forty-six species were recorded. The outing finished with a walk along the Hay River.

The October outing was to Frank Smith's property at Cranbrook. Frank and his wife have a dedication to the bush. Over the last 30 years areas of the farm have been closed off from stock and cropping, keeping the bush in its natural state. The results are a privilege to see. There were wildflowers and birds in profusion.

Twenty-two members were met by Frank at the first stop at 30 acre bush block. He spoke to us about the area and how it had been managed. He took just a few people to see a special area in the middle of his farm showing what can be done with conservation.

Frank took the group back to his home where we were made welcome by Trixie, Frank's wife.

For the farm we saw 57 species including Jacky Winters breeding. The highlights of the day were the orchids. We saw so many different varieties.

We are grateful to Frank Smith for giving us his time and making it possible for us to see his special woodlands.

Vivian McCormick

Notices

BILL McROBERTS RETIRES

Dear Members

This will be my last quarter as the convener of the Excursions and Campouts Committee, after having done this job for the last seven years.

I would like to thank Sue Abbotts, Bryan Barrett, Margery Clegg and Clive Napier for forwarding suggestions and for their assistance in organising leaders.

I give special thanks to my wife, Karen, for typing up the excursion notes and getting them off promptly to Margaret Philippon, for inclusion in *WA Bird Notes*.

Happy Birding

Bill McRoberts

SUPPLEMENTS TO WA BIRD NOTES

In recent years WABN has included an increasing amount of supplementary material including reports on WA Group projects (eg Hooded Plover survey reports) and other items such as *The Atlasser*.

In order to raise the profile of this important information, and to make it easier to keep track of it, we are changing the way in which we label these documents.

The Atlasser will continue to be referred to in the following format: 'Supplement to *Western Australian Bird Notes* No x, date'. For this issue, this will be 'Supplement to *Western Australian Bird Notes* No 92, December 1999'. (It will retain its own on-going numbering system).

Reports on projects will be numbered individually in the following format: '*Western Australian Bird Notes* Supplement No. x, date'.

Other material (data sheets, etc) inserted into WABN will not be numbered.

A full listing of project reports follows (with earlier issues numbered retrospectively):

1. Jaensch, R., Merrifield, J. and Raines, J. Waterbirds of South-western Australia: highest numbers counted, 1981-1992. (WABN No. 68, December 1993).
2. Newbey, B.J. Report on Hooded Plover Project June 1994 to March 1996 RAOU (WA Group). (WABN No. 79, September 1996).
3. McNee, S.A. Report on Western Ground Parrot Survey at Waychinicup and Manypeaks. April to October 1998. Birds Australia, WA Group. (WABN No. 90, June 1999).
4. Singor, M. Hooded Plover Report No 2, 1996-1999. (WABN No. 90, June 1999).
5. Newbey, B.J. Birds Australia Birds on Farms Project in Western Australia 1996-1999. (WABN No. 92, December 1999).

Please number your existing copies accordingly.

John Blyth and Allan Burbidge
Editors

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST — RESEARCH PROJECT COORDINATORS

The Western Australian Group of Birds Australia sets up research projects and surveys that are funded by grants from various organisations.

Some projects require the appointment of a full or part-time research project coordinator for the overall management of the project and the writing of a final report.

We have current applications being considered for funding and these include a major one on the Hooded Plover that includes the preparation of strategies for protection and monitoring of the species.

Members and non-members who have qualifications for the position of coordinator of projects are advised to write to:

Michael Brooker
Birds Australia-WA Group
71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat WA 6014

Mark the envelope confidential.

Your curriculum vitae and areas of interest should be included.

You will be advised of coming projects when we have been notified that they have been successfully funded.

Allan K Jones
Grants Sub-committee

CONFERENCES

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS 27 June - 2 July 2000, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Birds Australia is presenting the 2nd Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress (SHOC) in Brisbane next year.

This Congress aims to bring together Southern Hemisphere ornithologists from around the globe to discuss research and conservation of birds in a distinctly southern fashion. With plenary speakers and symposium organisers confirmed from Southern Africa, South America and Australia, SHOC will be a truly international event. This major Congress will be held in Brisbane and hosted by the Queensland Ornithological Society.

Eminent ornithologists will give six plenary addresses:

- Dr. Mark Burgman, AUSTRALIA: Population viability analysis for bird conservation.
 - Dr. Alan Kemp, SOUTH AFRICA: Sustainability of avian populations.
 - Dr Pablo Yorio, ARGENTINA: Seabird conservation.
 - Dr. Eleanor Russell, AUSTRALIA: Avian life histories.
 - Dr. Phil Hockey, SOUTH AFRICA: Southern approaches to migration.
 - Dr Manuel Nores, ARGENTINA: Species richness in the Amazonian bird fauna from an evolutionary perspective.
- As well open sessions, the programme includes the following symposia (Convenors as indicated):
- Megapodes: past, present and future (Darryl Jones <D.Jones@mailbox.gu> Rene Dekker <dekker@nnm.nl>)
 - Ratite biology (David Westcott <david.westcott@tfrc.csiro.au> Peter Sharp <peter.sharp@bbsrc.acuk>)
 - Threatened species recovery programs in the Southern Hemisphere: are they working? (Jeremy Thompson <Jeremy.Thompson@env.qld.gov.au> Richard Hill <rhill@iconnect.net.au>)
 - Life history and ecology of Southern Hemisphere seabirds (Kees Hulsman <K.Hulsman@mailbox.gu.edu.au> Diego Montalti <montalti@ilpla.edu.ar>)
 - Shorebird migrations between the hemispheres (Jim Wilson <j.wilson@dynamite.com.au>)
 - Biogeography - Gondwanan radiations (Leo Joseph <joseph@acnatsci.org>)
 - Systematics of Southern Hemisphere groups (Leo Joseph <joseph@acnatsci.org>)



- Birds on the edge: fragmentation and disturbance (Richard Loyn <rhl@dce.vic.gov.au> Leon Bennun <eanhs@AfricaOnline.Co.Ke>)
- Mating systems and co-operative breeding (Robert Magrath <Robert.Magrath@anu.edu.au> Morne du Plessis <morne@botzoo.uct.ac.za>)
- Southern Hemisphere migration: mirror image or new paradigm? (Ursula Munro <Ursula.Munro@uts.edu.au> Hugh Dingle <rdhdingle@ucdavis.edu>)
- Ecology of birds in human-dominated landscapes (Carla Catterall <C.Catterall@mailbox.gu.edu.au>)
- Seabird conservation issues in the Southern Hemisphere (Eric Woehler <eric_woe@antdiv.gov.au> Steve Emslie)
- Southern perspective on avian life histories (Professor Hugh Ford <hford@metz.une.edu.au>)
- Physiological correlates of avian life histories (Bill Buttemer <bill_buttemer@uow.edu.au>)

Those interested in contributing to these symposia are invited to contact the convenors directly. Details of abstract formats required can be found at the SHOC 2000 website (<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/shoc>) as can registration brochures and all other information on the Congress. Information can also be obtained from the SHOC 2000 Congress Secretariat:

Conventions Queensland, PO Box 4044,
ST LUCIA SOUTH, QLD 4067
Phone: +61 (0)7 3870 8831; Fax: +61 (0)7 3870 9514;
Email: shoc2000@conqld.org.au

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NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia-WA Group between 1 September and 31 October 1999. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

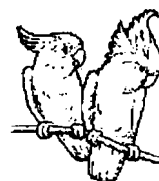
D Badger, L J Barker, B Bramley, S Cooper, J Coutts, P Davies, C Durrant, G C Hart, N Jamieson, A Jones, B Morrison, M Newman, P Ollivier, P Patterson, F B Plumb, M Redfern, B Rosair, C Stevenson, G Taylor, S Vigilante, A Worts

We also welcome members who have moved to WA from other states: G Kelso, P Wilkins, J Worrall and R Glass

Observatory Reports

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

"What species of birds have you got down there? Oh, we've seen all those, there is no point in coming." This is a response we often get when answering the phone. Eyre may not have any birds that cannot be seen elsewhere but there are surprises awaiting those who make the trip, as quite often unexpected close up views can be obtained of birds that normally are just a flash across one's binoculars. For a fortnight visitors were entertained as a Buff-banded Rail casually walked around the house and bathed, oblivious of the fascinated audience. Recently there was great excitement as a Little Button-quail appeared in the bird bath, proceeded to forage on the sand then slowly walk past the verandah, close enough to see all the markings without binoculars, then for three days a Square-tailed Kite soared over the house at close range. These are just a part of the serendipity that is Eyre.



Spring came with a rush — young of many species now fledged or near fledged include Red-capped Plovers, Pied Oystercatchers, White-winged Trillers, Red Wattlebirds and of course Welcome Swallows. While some species are still building nests, others are sitting on eggs. Beach walks have produced some interesting sightings — Whimbrel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Curlew Sandpiper and lots of Red-necked Stints. A change from the usual Pied Cormorant was a few Great Cormorant. Night birds are being seen again — Spotted Nightjar and Owlet-Nightjar on the same trip. Flesh-footed Shearwater and White-headed Petrel have been found beach-washed. Meanwhile at Twilight Cove the Southern Right Whales have been seen with their calves.

Nature's Sketchbook and *Banding with Perry and Alma* courses were very busy times then, after an all too short fortnight's holiday away, *Focus on Birds* started. *Field Techniques in Bird Studies* still has a few vacancies. Don't forget *Greening the Dunes* in January (where a few

hours work earns you a 50% reduction in accommodation costs) followed by *Going Batty on the Nullarbor*. Contact the observatory for details.

Should anyone updating their computer and printer wish to donate the old one to Eyre (provided it is Y2K compatible) please call us to arrange freight.

This being our last contribution to *WA Bird Notes*, we would like to thank many people for their support: the donors to the Buy A Battery for Eyre campaign (their generosity over the last three months means we are over a quarter of the way to our goal); the many visitors who have made our stay both enjoyable and interesting; the staff and management of Cocklebiddy Roadhouse and CALM Esperance for their continuing support for Eyre; Eucla and Norseman Police for their friendly visits; Jim and Verna Howell for looking after Eyre and Simon Nevill for putting up with us while we had a break; Birds Australia for having the vision to establish an observatory in such a beautiful place; the management committee for appointing us Wardens so that we could have a great experience; Shapelle McNee and Becky Hayward for their cheery phone calls when at times it felt like everyone had forgotten us. No doubt there will be some tears shed as we drive out the track in January for a three-month stint at Gluepot before heading home to Queensland and then Europe but a part of Eyre will remain with us and hopefully we will be able to return.

If you have yet to visit Eyre or have been thinking of coming again but never seem to get around to it, we urge you to make it your New Year's resolution as your support will ensure that Eyre, built in the 19th century and rejuvenated in the 20th century, will continue into the 21st century.

Alex Bisgrove and Rob Stogdale

Excursion Reports

BASHFORD NATURE RESERVE, 8 August

Bashfords provided a really fun day under the brilliant leadership of Colin Davis, well known for the extraordinary amount of time and effort which he is devoting to the study of our waders and waterbirds. Bashfords is really 'his' as the reserve was unknown to the WA Group until Colin introduced it to us in 1994.

The 'fun' was partially achieved during the initial approach along a track of deep, loose sand which proved somewhat difficult for the 2WDs — some drivers were wiser by the time their vehicles had been coaxed into the reserve with the help of Colin's 4WD.

Once there, the 19 of us were conducted around the area and found, and heard, 36 species. Perhaps the most interesting sightings were a pair of Black-shouldered Kites perched high in a dead tree and a circulating Australian Hobby. A nest of a pair of Australian Wood Duck was



For the past three years, a Barn Owl has been observed roosting in the hollow of this tuart tree at Bashford Nature Reserve. Fresh pellets were found below on 8/8/1999.

Drawing by Diane Beckingham

found and people were able to see into the hollow with the help of Colin's ladder — the nest contained seven eggs. The resident Barn Owl, which has been observed roosting in the hollow of a tuart tree for the past three years, was not sighted, but fresh pellets were found below the hollow. (see Diane Beckingham's sketch).

The bush in the nearby Nilgen Reserve is well worth a visit as several other species were sighted on this day. Much of the area is under the protection of CALM but it is not easy to gain access as there are no tracks into the bush.

Bryan Barrett

MID-WEEK WALK, STONY BROOK, 12 August

The group who met for this walk were blessed with a beautiful, mild and sunny spring day, and in keeping with the weather and season, the birds were in full voice. We were constantly surrounded by the sounds of calling Golden Whistlers, Western Spinebills and Pardalotes (both Spotted and Striated) and from time to time some were close enough to give us good viewing. One of our first sightings was of a Galah poking its head out of a nesting hole in a tall, dead tree. We later saw Yellow-rumped Thornbills building a nest and a pair of Scarlet Robins taking food to a more distant nest. Fan-tailed and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos were plentiful and also much heard.

We were only able to find one species of Fairy-wren, the Splendid, although the Red-winged species had been seen on a 'reccy' shortly before the day of the walk. Among other birds seen were Red-capped and Australian Ringneck Parrots, a White-breasted Robin, Brown Honeyeaters and Grey Fantails. At the end of the walk, as we enjoyed morning tea, we added New Holland Honeyeater and Mistletoebirds to our list which altogether totalled 31 species. They were all bushbirds with the exception of Australian Shelducks that flew noisily through the area.

Mavis Norgard

TALBOT BROOK, 15 August

Thanks to the hospitable Eggy and Rob Boggs, a fortunate group of intrepid birders (it was a cold and squally day) once again had the privilege of visiting this lovely block of land. In spite of the weather the birding was quite successful, although not as good as previously.

In all, 35 species were sighted including Scarlet and Red-capped Robins, Rufous and Golden Whistlers, Little and Red Wattlebirds, White-naped, Brown, White-cheeked and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters, Western Gerygone, Splendid Fairy-wren, Weebills and Inland and Yellow-rumped Thornbills.

An added delight were the wildflowers. Among the ten orchid species identified were pink fairy, jug, donkey and spider orchids and, with them, the promise of spring!

Darryl James

THE BUNGENDORE WALK, 21 August

At the most recent walk, 18 members attended on a cold but sunny morning. Thirty-eight species were recorded, two of the more notable being the Square-tailed Kite and Western Yellow Robin. Again, the Rufous Treecreeper was not observed at this location.

This pleasant outing was marred by the break-in of members' cars while we were away. Permission has been granted for us to leave our cars at a nearby property on our next visit.

Les Harris

HILLARYS PELAGIC TRIP, 5 September

An excellent trip with a very good variety of species. The major highlights were an adult Arctic Tern plus some Humpback Whales and a possible Minke Whale. There were very good numbers of albatross including Shy and Black-browed Albatross. The petrels were not as common as expected after the storms late in the week but we saw Cape Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Great-winged Petrel and White-faced Storm-Petrel. The shearwaters had returned early along with a couple of Roseate Terns. For details of future trips contact Frank O'Connor on foconnor@iinet.net.au or (08) 9386 5694.

Frank O'Connor

YALGORUP NATIONAL PARK, 19 September

Yalgorup National Park was at its brilliant spring best for our visit of 19 September. A small group tramped its diverse habitats — the Tuart/Peppermint forest, the limestone uplands and several of its less frequented lakes.

The number of bird species observed was, at 34, quite unremarkable, but typical perhaps of the year's 'late season'. Song birds were tuning up sufficiently to attract the cuckoos that greatly favour this park, and we had several good close-up views of Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo.

Waders were very few at the shorelines visited, confined to a single Red-necked Stint and a scatter of Red-capped Plovers; we did, however, have a distant view of a solitary Hooded Plover, confirmation, if one were needed, of Yalgorup's year-round reliability as a habitat of this species.

Frank Pridham

PERENJORI CAMPOUT, 24-27 September

The Perenjori Caravan Park manager put out the big welcoming mat ensuring that all the locals knew of the impending arrival of the 'bird people'. Twenty-nine folk, including two from NSW, one from England and several members of the Albany branch attended this weekend.

Two groups were formed on Saturday. Clive led one group north and Wendy led the other on a full-day trip east of the town. These activities were switched on the Sunday.

The first stops during the eastern trip were at two bodies of water that had, among others, dozens of Black-tailed Native-hens, Pink-eared Ducks, Red-kneed Dotterels, Variagated Fairy-wrens, and nesting Spotted Harriers.

Spectacular specimens of Wreath Leschenaultia were growing on the gravel road to Camel Rock which is a granite rock surrounded by mulga-like scrub. Mulga Parrot, Black Honeyeater, Redthroat and Masked Woodswallow were some of the species seen. This was a delightful area to lunch and followed by a spectacular thunder and lighting episode that swept over us in a half-hour period.

We then continued our day and drove to John Forrest Lookout where we saw Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, White-fronted Honeyeaters, a juvenile Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and Inland Thornbills, to name just a few.

On Sunday Wendy's group, which I was part of again, drove north following the route that Clive's group took on Saturday. Several stops were made along remnant bushland to the north of town where we saw among others, White-browed Babblers, White-fronted Honeyeaters, Splendid and Variagated Fairy-wrens. Further along, a stand of Salmon Gums was animated by many Western Corellas, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and Galahs.

After lunch, we drove to the west of Perenjori, stopping at a body of water that had, among others, Pink-eared Ducks, Pied Butcherbirds (nesting), Fairy Martins (nesting) and a Black Swan with cygnets.

A delightful cross country drive through a reserve led us to a gravel pit that had dozens of the Wreath Leschenaultia in full bloom, a Grey Shrike-thrush, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills and Yellow-rumped Thornbills.

On Sunday evening the townsfolk put on a yummy dinner for the 'bird people' with the proceeds going towards their local Christmas stocking.

On Monday we had a leisurely drive via Caron Dam to Alison and John Doley's farm near Coorow. We visited wetlands on their property then lunched in a renovated barn near their house. Their property is an inspiration as to what can be achieved with revegetation and fencing remnant vegetation. Short-billed Black-Cockatoos (Carnaby's) were nesting there and some of us were fortunate to view a chick in a nest hollow.

The weather progressively worsened over the weekend, but it did not deter us from having a great campout with 110 species seen.

Congratulations to Wendy and Clive for another memorable campout.

Dee Smith

RAY MARSHALL PARK, VIVEASH, 6 October

With a good, fine morning this midweek excursion tempted five people to walk beside the Swan River. The water level was high and waterbirds dominated, with Australian Wood Duck and young giving a good display. We were pleased with the number of Sacred Kingfisher sightings. They seemed to be everywhere along the banks. A lot of the birds gave us good, easy viewing including a Little Corella in a hollow tree letting us check out the length of its bill.

The small lake adjacent to the river did not yield many species, but amongst these was a Great Egret. Black-shouldered Kites and Nankeen Kestrels were much in evidence over the open, grassy areas. Richard's Pipits were in their element on the nearby oval. In all, 44 species were recorded.

Jan Rogers

ALFRED COVE, 17 October

Alfred Cove is one of the most popular birding sites in Perth. On this occasion, about 20 people accompanied Les Harris on a short walk along the foreshore and through a neighbouring grove of trees. Although the river was relatively high after recent rains, three or four sandbanks attracted the usual population of cormorants, pelicans and ibis, as well as waders from the northern hemisphere. The most conspicuous were a number of Grey Plovers still in breeding plumage. Greenshanks, Great Knots, Curlew Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint could also be identified, while a Yellow-billed Spoonbill and several Australian White Ibis were seen feeding in the samphire near the radio mast.

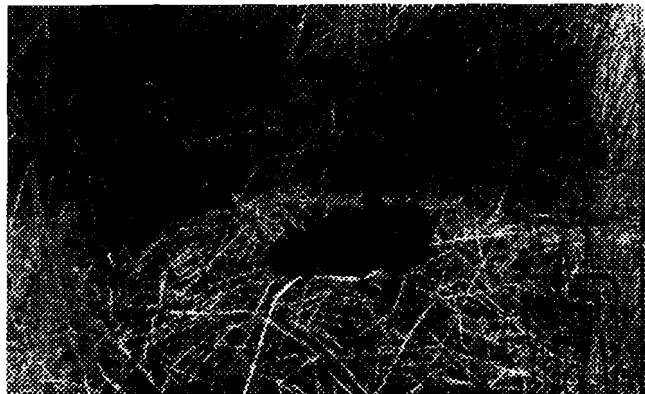
About mid morning, the group got good views of a Brown Goshawk flying over the playing fields and, shortly afterwards, a Whistling Kite was seen to pick up a dead herring from the river and deposit it on the grass about 100 metres from where the group was standing. Unfortunately, it proved to be in an advanced state of decay and the bird soon abandoned it.

The trees on the southern side of Troy Park harboured a number of bushbirds, including Red-capped Parrot, Rainbow Bee-eater, Western Gerygone, Striated Pardalote and Yellow-rumped Thornbills. The nest of a Black-faced

Cuckoo-Shrike was found near the parking area and several Tree Martins were seen emerging from nest-holes in the same area.

In all, a total of 51 bird species was recorded.

Stewart Houghton



Despite the numbers of people and dogs that visit Lake Monger, Black Swans nest around the perimeter of the lake in most years. Even swans with nests in the most disturbance-prone areas are often successful in rearing young.

Photo by Molly Angus.

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.

Sunday 5 December — Full-day Excursion, Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

Meet at 7:30 am! at the gate into the Lake McLarty Reserve — look for the BA sign. Travel on the South West Highway through Pinjarra, turning right along the Old Bunbury Road (5 km south of Pinjarra), then right into Mills Road (fourth road). Continue along Mills Road for approximately 10 km until you see the BA sign.

Take wellington boots/old shoes, sun hats, insect repellent, water and telescopes.

There should be a variety of waders at the lake, as well as many water and bush birds.

Leader: Colin Davis

Saturday 11 December — Full-day Excursion, Yanchep National Park

We have been asked to do regular surveys of the birds in the recreational areas of the park. Meet in the park at 9:30 am. At the entrance gate say that you are a BA volunteer and there will be no charge. Turn left at the first

roundabout and meet in the car park on the right-hand side, near the park office. Look for the BA sign.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Wednesday 15 December — Mid week Walk, Full-day Excursion, Amarillo Pool, Baldivis

Meet at 9:00 am at entrance to Amarillo Farm on Serpentine River. Travel south on Mandurah Road, turning left into Paganoni Road. Travel several kilometres then turn right into Vine Road.

We will search for waders along the mudflats of the river. Long trousers and boots or wellingtons are recommended — snakes have been seen in the area. Hat, insect repellent and water should be carried. Bring lunch.

Another area will be looked into in the afternoon if necessary.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 19 December — Half-Day Excursion, Webb's Lease, Jarrahdale

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park.

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

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

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Sunday 19 December — Christmas Function

A barbecue will be held on Sunday 19 December commencing at 6:30 pm at Perry House. BYO meat and drinks — all members welcome.

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

Saturday 8 January 2000 — Half-day Excursion, Woodman Point

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

We will walk out to Woodman Point looking for waders and seabirds. Bring telescopes.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 16 January — Half-day Excursion, Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis

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

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Tuesday 18 January — Mid-week Walk, Perth Zoo

Meet at 8:30 am outside the main entrance to the Zoo. Neil Hamilton, who has been in charge of the breeding program for White and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, will meet us and take us into the grounds (be prepared to pay a small fee). Neil will then explain what he does and help us to

distinguish between the two White-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

Leader: Neil Hamilton

Saturday 22 January — Full-day Excursion, Amarillo Pool, Baldivis

Meet at 9:00 am at the entrance to Amarillo Farm on the Serpentine River. Travel south on Mandurah Road, turning left into Paganoni Road. Travel several kilometres then turn right into Vine Road.

We will search for waders along the mudflats of the river. Long trousers and boots or wellingtons are recommended — snakes have been seen in the area. Hat, insect repellent and water should be carried. Bring your lunch.

This is provisional only, subject to our gaining permission from the owners. Failing that, we will go to Coodanup on the Peel Estuary.

All persons intending to come should ring the Office during the week to find out the exact location and how to get there.

Leader: Les Harris

Monday 24 January 2000 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".

Sunday 30 January — Mid summer wader count

People taking part in this survey **MUST** contact Colin Davis (9330 1482) before 16 January.

Sunday 6 February — Full-day Excursion, Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

Meet at 7:30 am! at the gate into the Lake McLarty Reserve — look for the BA sign. Travel on the South West Highway through Pinjarra, turning right along the Old Bunbury Road (5 km south of Pinjarra), then right into Mills Road (fourth road). Continue along Mills Road for approximately 10 km until you see the BA sign.

Take wellington boots/old shoes, sun hats, insect repellent, water and telescopes.

There should be a variety of waders at the lake, as well as many water and bush birds.

Leader: To be announced

Saturday 12 February — Full-day Excursion, Penguin Island

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

Ferries return to the mainland regularly at hourly intervals. The cost of the one and a half hour cruise and return trip is \$25.00.

Please ring our Perry House office (9383 7749) no later than 5 February and put your name on the list if you wish to participate. **Booking is essential!**

Leader: Clive Napier (Phone: 9332 7265)

Thursday 17 February — Mid-week Walk, Kent Street Weir, Wilson

Meet at 8:00 am at the Kent Street Weir car park, near the Canning River, to explore the varied birdlife of the Canning Wetlands.

Leader: Neil Porteous

Saturday 20 February — Half-day Excursion, Big Carine Lake

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park off Beach Road, Carine.

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

Leader: Clive Nealon

Sunday 27 February — Full-day Excursion, 'Bootline Road' Nature Reserve, Gingin

Meet at 8:00 am at the new reserve on the northern side of Bootline Road 8.4 km west of the Brand Highway (at A, 0.5, Map 69, in the Western Australian Travellers Atlas). A hand painted "CALM" is visible on a large tree near the gate and nature reserve sign, about 100 metres past the creek crossing. The Bootline Road turnoff from the Brand Highway is well signposted, about 100 km north of Perth city and is virtually opposite the Boonanning Road turn off. Bring lunch, lots of water and long pants or gaiters to protect against snakes and grass seeds.

This reserve supports four species of fairy-wrens. The outing should provide a reasonably good selection of bush birds as well as some experience in separating fairy-wrens of the red-shouldered group — a must for atlassers in the south west!

Leaders: John and Judy Blyth

Monday 28 February AGM and Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Sandra McKenzie, head of the Threatened Species Network/WWF in Perth, will speak on aspects of her work.

NOMINATIONS ARE INVITED FROM MEMBERS FOR POSITIONS ON THE COMMITTEE.

Saturday–Monday 4–6 March — Campout, Busselton

The long weekend at this time of the year provides an opportunity to see the Vasse–Wonnerup Estuary system with a diverse range of both waterbirds and waders. Jim Lane from the CALM Busselton office has agreed to show us the birds on the estuary including his best Long-toed Stint area. We can also expect to see Spotless Crane, Spotted Crane and Buff-Banded Rail. Bring telescopes.

We will also look at the bushland near the coast, go to Sugarloaf to see the Red-tailed Tropicbird and do the night possum trail off Layman Road so bring a torch or spotlight.

Contact the office to book and for accommodation details by Friday 19 February — phone 9383 7749. Accommodation is difficult to get so this is essential.

Leader : Sue Abbotts

Saturday 11 March — Half-day Excursion, Alfred Cove

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast) off Burke Drive, Attadale. A last chance to look for migratory waders before they return to their breeding grounds in Siberia — hopefully some will already be in their breeding plumage. Bring your telescopes.

Leader: Les Harris

Thursday 16 March — Mid-week Walk, Blackwall Reach, Bicton

Meet at 8:30 am at the junction of Kent Street and Blackwall Reach Parade. A new area to look for waders along the river and bushbirds.

Leader: Eric Pyatt

Sunday 19 March — Full-day Excursion, Yanchep National Park

This will be the second of the regular surveys we have been asked to do of the birds in the recreational areas of the park. Meet in the park at 9:00 am. At the entrance gate say that you are a BA volunteer and there will be no charge. Turn left at the first roundabout and meet in the car park on the right-hand side, near the Park Office. Look for the BA sign.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 26 March — Half-day Excursion, Wungong Gorge, Bedforddale

Meet at 8:00 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam, at the end of Admiral Road (off Albany Highway). Bedforddale.

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

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Monday 27 March Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Michael Brooker, of the CSIRO (Wildlife and Ecology) and a member of the Committee, will speak on "The Biology of the Blue-breasted Fairy-wren in a fragmented landscape near Wyalkatchem".

Monday 17 April Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Speaker to be announced.

Note: 3rd Monday owing to a public holiday on the following Monday (Easter Monday).

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

Ian McLean, Conservation Ecologist, Natural Heritage Division, King's Park, will speak on "In search of the Fiordland Crested Penguin".

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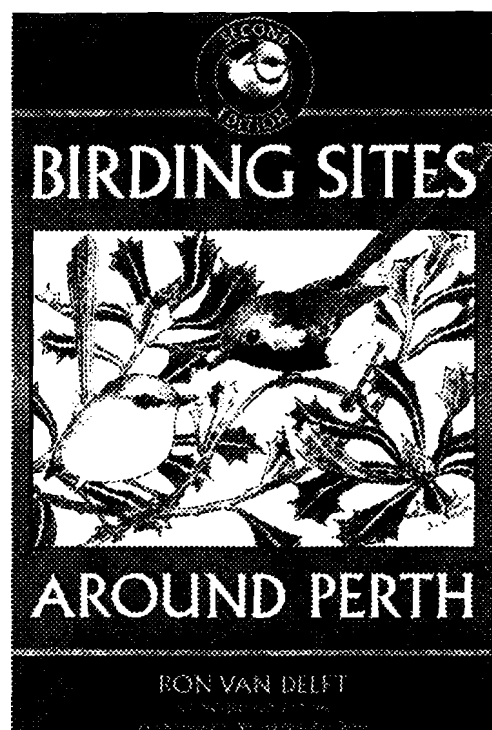
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Christmas Barbecue 19 December

Don't forget BAWAG's Christmas gathering on Sunday 19 December, 6:30 pm — our last for the 20th century!

Come along and help to make it a rousing success.

PS: Mosquito repellent is likely to be useful!

Crossword Answers No 19

Across

5 world, 7 intertidal, 8 loses, 11 spiny, 12 branch, 13 sandy, 15 Neophema, 16 reeds, 19 taxonomy, 20 answer, 22 McLarty, 23 omen, 24, red, 25 captivity.

Down

1 end, 2 crown, 3 wind, 4 waterhole, 6 disc, 9 scheme, 10 spinifex, 13 sanctuary, 14 yearn, 16 remnant, 17 diary, 18 crane, 21 sooty,

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