



# 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 Babblers 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 Narembeen (Narembeen) – 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

### **Birds Australia–WA Group Office, Perry House**

71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat WA 6014

Hours: Monday-Friday 9:30 am to 12.30 pm

Telephone: (08) 9383 7749

Facsimile: (08) 9387 8412

Email: [birdswa@starwon.com.au](mailto:birdswa@starwon.com.au)

Birds Australia Home Page:

<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au>

Chairman:

Clive Nealon

35 Hilarion Road, Duncraig WA 6023

Tel: (08) 9448 5921

E-mail: [clivenealon@bigpond.com](mailto:clivenealon@bigpond.com)

Joint Editors:

John Blyth

Tel: (08) 9405 5100 (w)

Tel: (08) 9381 6293 (h)

Fax: (08) 9306 1641 (w)

E-mail: [johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au](mailto:johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au)

Allan Burbidge

Tel: (08) 9405 5109 (w)

Tel/Fax: (08) 9306 1642 (h)

Fax: (08) 9306 1641 (w)

E-mail: [austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au](mailto:austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au)

#### **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 Sewerage 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 Bennets	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





