

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of
Birds Australia Western Australia Inc
(a division of Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

No 100 December 2001

ISSN 1445-3983

The first **100** issues and beyond

WABN has come a long way since the first edition in 1944—from a single double-sided sheet written occasionally by the Editor, to a regular quarterly of at least 24 pages, filled with items of general birding interest written by members of the group. Of course, the WA group has also changed considerably over the same time, from a handful of mainly professional ornithologists, to over 700 people, including many professional ornithologists but dominated numerically by amateur birdwatchers.

There have been six different editors or pairs of editors since Issue 1 in June 1944. Dr Dom Serventy was the first, with the newsletter beginning at two typed pages (see insert in this issue) and growing to four under his editorship. It concentrated on reports of approximately quarterly meetings, including an interesting summary of the night's talk.

There was a big gap from Issue 5 of June 1947 to Issue 6 of May 1978, when Bird Notes were reinstated under the editorship of Graeme Chapman. Graeme maintained the newsletter as a two-page, simply presented leaflet, mainly aimed at notices of coming events and issues of significance to the first Atlas project that was in full swing during Graham's editorship. It was obvious that the WA Group was an active and growing organisation

during this time and Observations reported by members became a feature of the newsletter.

Graeme Chapman was joined by Roger Jaensch as joint editor in September 1981 for Issue 19, an arrangement that continued until Issue 29, March 1984. This was an important time in the development of Bird

Notes, because many of the features that are present today began during this period of joint editorship. The double column format, in multiples of four pages and a front page featuring the Black Swan (drawn by Perry de Rebeira) alongside the title and date, made the newsletter immediately recognisable. During this editorship line drawings, tables, graphs and figures began to appear regularly, as did black and white photographs of birds. Many of these were of excellent quality, being taken by people such as Graeme Chapman and Bert and Babs Wells. Other innovations included a formal Observations section, similar to today's, Members' Contributions, and Excursion Reports. The newsletter came out quarterly, in the same months as it does now, and reports from members of observations of and about birds became a major feature, often reporting first records for various species in Western Australia or in major regions of the State. These were reported in a way that made them



One of the most widespread birds in Australia, the Brown Falcon is reported in this issue from Cobra and Bidgemia Stations, Christmas Tree Well and Ellis Brook.

Drawing by Judy Blyth

important records. The significance of observation of distribution and behaviour first reported in Bird Notes is now widely recognised and regularly quoted in, among other publications, HANZAB!

Roger Jaensch became sole editor in March 1984, for Issue 29, and retained the role until Issue 36 in December 1985. All of the features begun during the period of joint editorship were retained and the newsletter was maintained at 12, or occasionally 16, pages.

Bruce Buchanan, who was to become WABN's longest serving editor, began in March 1986 with Issue 37. Bruce maintained the standards set during the two previous editorial periods, and high quality black and white photos were a feature of the newsletter during this time. Paid advertisements of activities relevant to birdwatching were first included during Bruce's time as editor and the great bulk of features and sections present in Bird Notes today were there by the end of it. A major highlight of this period was the production by Bruce of the Index to WABN 1943-1993, as a contribution to the 50th Anniversary of the Western Australian Group. This was a great achievement and is extremely useful to those seeking access to the significant sightings and other records over the years.

The present editors took over from Bruce Buchanan in 1995, with Issue 73. Changes since that time have included the beginning of the Supplement series with detailed reports on BAWA projects and the Atlas News, a redesigned front page featuring a third colour (red) and an illustration on all issues. We have been very fortunate to have had great support in the form of members' contributions, so that 28 pages has become an almost standard size, with two bumper issues reaching 36 pages. Art work by members, particularly of birds, has become a significant feature of the newsletter.

This 100th edition is a very appropriate time to consider the future direction for *WA Bird Notes*, and we are seeking input from members, for whom and by whom Bird Notes are produced, as to what form it might take for the beginning of its next hundred issues. We list a number of questions below that might help to focus reader's thoughts.

- Is the current balance of the newsletter, between standard items such as coming events and excursion reports, and actual informative articles about birds, satisfactory to most members?
- Is WABN too long? If we wanted to shorten WABN, or find space for new features, what sort of current material might we exclude?
- Are there other specific items or sections we might include? These could include summaries of monthly meetings, especially the most interesting points from the evenings' talks. Would anyone offer to write up such a regular summary?
- Might we seek regular or occasional guest articles written by well known bird watchers and/or professional ornithologists, or perhaps include interesting items from other newsletters or journals more frequently?
- Do members like the art work, and/or wish to see more photographs?

- Could the format of the newsletter be modernised, perhaps by more colour, better quality paper, innovative use of different texts and styles etc.?
- Should the WA Group committee be asked to find ways to subsidise the newsletter to a small extent if additional size and improved quality cost more than we currently gain from subscriptions, or would members agree to pay more per copy?
- As an alternative to the last dot point, might we seek to defray costs by running more paid advertisements, or even look for sponsorships, as *Wingspan* does to support its full colour format?

This edition highlights some of the memorable moments for a number of birdwatchers, and features contributions from several long-serving members about their activities and favourite memories of group activities. We think this collection of reminiscences gives a good picture of the WA Group as a whole, its strengths and how it has evolved over the years. They illustrate clearly how completely the group depends on the involvement of its members, and that many significant achievements by the group have required considerable time and effort from many people.

WA Bird Notes is no exception to this rule. For it to continue to serve the needs of members, it needs, first and foremost, the time and effort of many contributors and a dedicated editorial team. WABN has grown to such an extent that compiling, editing and proof-reading a single issue is a very time consuming task. The tireless contribution of Margaret Philippon, our combined typist, electronic type setter and lay-out coordinator, makes her an integral part of a three-member editorial team. The tedious task of enveloping and mailing out is conducted in a timely manner by Rod Smith and his team of volunteers, and Rod also keeps a watchful eye over the finances of the newsletter.

To paraphrase Dom Serventy's comments in WABN No. 1, Bird Notes should have the serious aim of making us better ornithologists as well as providing entertainment. "We shall find our hobby much more interesting the more we know about it" (Dom Serventy, WABN No.1.) This comment is still true and relevant today.

WABN's contribution to members, and ultimately to improved knowledge and conservation of birds, requires ongoing input from many people who enjoy both birdwatching and providing practical support to the WA group. We look forward to lots of ideas for improvement to WABN and, in the not too distant future, to a new team of enthusiastic editorial volunteers keen to put their stamp upon our newsletter!

John Blyth and Allan Burbidge

Editors' note: Thank you to Diane Beckingham, George and Pam Agar and others for suggestions concerning the possible content of this issue, WABN No. 100, produced coincidentally in the centenary year of the RAOU / Birds Australia.

Obituary

GRAHAM PIZZEY, died 12 November 2001

Hugo Phillipps has advised Birds Australia members that Graham Pizzey died on this date, peacefully at his home in Dunkeld, western Victoria, aged 71. Graham's association with RAOU / Birds Australia goes back a long way; he became a member in 1948, served on Council from 1969 to 1975 and was on the Records Appraisal Committee from 1975 to 1979. He also contributed articles and photographs to *Wingspan*, the latest being Norman Wettenhall's obituary in March this year. Graham was widely known throughout the Australian birding community for his field guides and several books.

Our condolences go to his wife Sue and to other members of his family.

Editors' note: See photograph elsewhere in this issue, showing Graham Pizzey participating in the expedition to capture the first Noisy Scrub-bird at Two Peoples Bay, January 1964.

and valued, united in a common cause, which now is the conservation of birds and their habitats, and an appreciation of at least one facet of birds, their lives and their ecology.

The observations of the day should be recorded, so that comparisons, like the two Atlases for Mandurah, can be made, and WABN does this. Further, there is some discussion of articles, and this is good and healthy, and provides additional information. Some of the data and information are of a good standard, and WABN can also nurture the younger members, who can begin and learn their craft, and develop and hone their skills as observers, recorders and publishers.

Perhaps one day WABN could be in two parts; one, the newsletter, and the other a mini-*Emu* (Emulet?). But the latter should cater for everyone who wants to contribute, or it will end up like the *Emu*: a very specialised publication which only caters for the professional and very educated. And this is important because we, Birds Australia, should maintain, recruit and encourage as many members as possible, each one valued and united in a common cause. We need to make our membership base as broad as possible, not make it into a specialised and secular one, and thus not able to financially support itself.

Robert Stranger

Letters to the Editors

SHOULD WABN BE JUST A NEWSLETTER?

Dear Sir

I think that the answer to that should be an emphatic "No!" WABN is and should continue to be a repository for local observations on birds, from the artistic, aesthetic and romantic, to the serious and scientific. As ornithologists we should be able to accommodate and understand such a diverse range of articles. And what sort of society would only publish the serious and scientific? This is perhaps exemplified by comparing the data of the Historical Atlas to that of the First Field Atlas Scheme at Mandurah. During the first 75 years of the 20th century over 2500 observations were published by the ornithologists of the day. But during the five years 1977-1981, over 8000 observations were made and recorded, the precise ratio of the latter to the former being 3:1. This says a lot about the enthusiasm of the first Field Atlas observers and is a good indication of what these people, almost all amateurs, can do when organised. And the ranks of the observers contained many of the more artistic or romantic people, those who were interested in birds but whose outlook was not so deadly serious. WABN already caters for such a mix of people, no matter what their profession or background. All members are valuable

CHANGES IN STATUS

Dear Sir

I am writing to you with a few observations which I have been making for a while now. We have lived in Armadale for over 20 years. I am a keen gardener who also keeps an eye on our 'Feathered Friends'.

For a number of years I have noticed that the flocks of White-tailed Black-Cockatoos have been getting progressively smaller as the winters have passed. A few of them appear during the summer months, which I am sure didn't happen previously.

Recently I have been noticing a small number of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos around—in the gardens. They have been in a neighbour's garden eating the ripe seeds on a Cape Lilac.

While it has been common to see these birds in the bush around Canning Dam, I have not noticed them in the suburbs before.

Finally, the number of Rainbow Lorikeets appears to be increasing quickly. Recently, we have been seeing and hearing them over Armadale on a daily basis. I believe their numbers have increased noticeably over the past 12 months or so.

I would certainly welcome your comments on the above.

Roger Cockeram



BIRD TALK

from Penny Towells

Shop now, tomorrow it's a new estate.

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 No. 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.

Note: BAWA is establishing its own web site (see elsewhere in this issue), and part of the site will include recent sightings. To make this of value to members, please send any interesting sightings directly to Frank O'Connor, foconnor@iinet.net.au. Frank will also co-ordinate the collation of the most interesting of these for inclusion into WABN.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Malleefowl – 1, 6/09/01, Maughan Nature Reserve, S of Merredin (Merredin) - DB

Radjah Shelduck (escapee) – 1, 27/06/01, Bayswater Bird Sanctuary (Bayswater) – ES * 27-28/07/01, Neil Hawkins Park, Lake Joondalup (Joondalup) – KC * 1, 31/08/01, East Perth Common (between Trinity College and the Causeway) (Perth) – TB (Two observers (KC and TB) reported that the bird seen was banded, and it seems likely that these three sightings relate to the same bird, apparently an escapee from the Zoo)

Great-winged Petrel – 100+ (60+ in one flock), 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip * (race *gouldi*) - 1, 5/8/2001, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Soft-plumaged Petrel – 38 (20 at one stop), 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Flesh-footed Shearwater – 2, 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Hutton's Shearwater – 45 (12 sightings up to 10 birds), 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Shy Albatross (race *salvini*) – 1, 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Yellow-nosed Albatross (race *bassi*) – 280 (70 at one stop), 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

White-faced Storm-Petrel – 22 (10 at one stop), 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Nankeen Night Heron – 1, 19/9/01, Thomson Bay Jetty, Rottnest Island – PE (very unusual for Rottnest)

Little Bittern – 1, 29/10/01, calling from *Typha* on the edge of an artificial pond, James Spiers Drive, Wanneroo (Wanneroo) – AB (first record for this wetland)

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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 2002 Issue

1 February 2002 at Perry House

Advertising Rates

1/4 page	\$30.00
1/2 page	\$50.00
Full page	\$90.00

Wedge-tailed Eagle – nest with 1 young, 11/10/01, Whiteman Park (Swan) - JW

Terek Sandpiper – 2, 10/01, Alfred Cove (Melville) – CD

Red-necked Phalarope – 1, 2/11/01, Government House Lake, Rottnest Island – BC, CS

Great Skua – 36 (9 at one stop), 5/8/01, Hillarys Pelagic Trip – FO *et al.*

Silver Gull – 1 chick, 10-14 days old, 12/08/01, Hillarys Boat Harbour (Joondalup) Jake Bamford, Mike Bamford (mainland breeding records are unusual; not previously recorded breeding at this site)

Whiskered Tern – 7, 29/09/01, Herdsman Lake (Stirling) - FO

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo – 3, 30/09/01, 10 km S of Dawesville on the Old Coast Road (Mandurah) – AB (unusual on western side of coastal plain)

Red-capped Robin – 2 instances of parasitism by Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, 18/10/01, Goodenough Nature Reserve, ca 12 km NE of Pingelly (Pingelly) – JC

Hooded Robin – 3, 22/08/01, NE part of Dryandra Forest (Williams) - JC

Western Yellow Robin – 1, 25/08/01, Elachbutting Nature Reserve, Bonnie Rock (Mukinbudin) – DB * 1, 7/09/01, Maughan Nature Reserve, S of Merredin (Merredin) – DB * 1, 7/09/01, Muntadgin town bush (SE of Merredin) (Merredin) – DB

Masked Woodswallow – 1, 30/09/01, Goods Road (near Flynn Road near Lakes Roadhouse) (Mundaring) – FO (not often recorded this far south-west)

Pied Butcherbird – 2, 30/09/01, York to Northam Road (York) – FO (near limit of range)

Rufous Songlark – 1 (dead), 3/11/01, Nedlands (Nedlands) – JWi, RD

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

Black-breasted Buzzard – 1, 25/10/01, Lake MacLeod (Carnarvon) – CD, SS

Brahminy Kite – 1, 10/01, Yandi mine, ca 130 km N of Newman (East Pilbara) – BM (unusual inland)

Grey Falcon – 2, 11/07/01, Roy Hill Station (East Pilbara) - LH, AH

Red-necked Phalarope – 3, 20/10/01, Dampier Salt Pond 1A (Port Hedland) – CD, SS * 30+, 11/01, Port Hedland Salt Works (Port Hedland) - AWSG

Oriental Plover – 12, 25/10/01, Lake MacLeod (Carnarvon) – CD, SS

Rufous-crowned Emu-wren – 2+, 22/10/01, at the Shaw River crossing on the Hedland to Marble Bar Road (East Pilbara) - MBa

Star Finch – about 40-50, mostly immatures, 16/07/01 and 17/07/01, Carawine Gorge, Oakover River (East Pilbara) – LH, AH

KIMBERLEY

Masked Owl – 2 adults feeding a young bird, 26/07/01, grid block 17/124 (Derby – West Kimberley) – JS

Grass Owl – 7, 10/01, Roebuck Plains Station near BBO (Broome) - ABo

ASHMORE REEF

The following sightings were from a recent trip led by George Swann and Mike Carter. A number of them are subject to detailed reports to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC). In addition, there was a possible sighting of Jouanin's Petrel, a species extremely difficult to separate from Bulwer's Petrel.

Tahiti Petrel – 29, 10/01 – GS, MC *et al.*

Bulwer's Petrel – 23, 10/01 – GS, MC *et al.*

Leach's Storm-Petrel – 1, 10/01 – GS, MC *et al.*

Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel – 2, 10/01 – GS, MC *et al.*

Red-tailed Tropicbird – 5 pairs, 10/01, apparently breeding, West Island – GS, MC *et al.*

White-tailed Tropicbird – 1 pair, 10/01, West Island – GS, MC *et al.*

Arctic Tern – 3, 10/01 – GS, MC *et al.*

Arctic Warbler – 3, West Island – GS, MC *et al.*

COCOS-KEELING ISLANDS

Oriental Pratincole – 10, 28/10/01, West Island (airport) – MBa

STOP PRESS: POSSIBLE ADDITION TO AUSTRALIAN LIST

George Swann, Mike Carter and others have just returned from Ashmore Reef with news of sighting of a possible Petchora Pipit (*Anthus gustavi*) on West Island, Ashmore Reef on the 4th of November. If confirmed, this would be an Australian first. Some observers also saw a *Locustella* warbler, yet to be identified. More details next issue.

Observers

AB = Allan Burbidge

ABo = Adrian Boyle

AH = Anna Hassan

AWSG = Australian Wader Study Group

BC = Bruce Cox

BM = Brendan Metcalf

CD = Colin Davis

CS = Colin Scouter

DB = Diane Beckingham

ES = Eric Singleton

FO = Frank O'Connor

GS = George Swann

JB = Jake Bamford

JC = Jarrad Cousin

JS = Jonny Schoenjahnn

JW = John Whyte

JWi = Jeni Wilcox

KC = Kathryn Clarke

LH = Lee Hassan

MBa = Mike Bamford

MC = Mike Carter

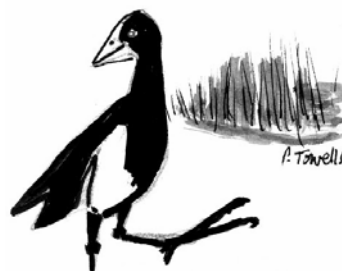
PE = Peter Ewin

RD = Rob Davis

SS = Stuart Simmonds

TB = Tim Blake

BIRD TALK
from Penny Towells
So my feet's too big!



WA Group reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA WA INC COMMITTEE

The committee continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month at Perry House. The committee is charged with conducting the activities of the group on behalf of its members and we welcome any items that you feel should be considered by the committee for action.

This year has been a busy one. It's been busy not only for the WA group, but also for the whole national organisation, of which we are part. Birds Australia's centenary year has coincided with the centenary of Federation in Australia.

We were fortunate in being asked to host the 2001 Annual General Meeting of Birds Australia and we were able to showcase some excellent research and study work being carried out in WA.

In late October the Honourable Julie Bishop MP, Federal Member for Curtin and the electorate that contains Bold Park, officially opened the new walk in Bold Park, the Camel Lake Heritage Trail. The establishment of the trail was a joint project of Birds Australia WA Inc, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the Wildflower Society, and Friends of Bold Park Bushland Inc. The project was funded under a grant from the Commonwealth Centenary of Federation Project, and tied in very conveniently with our own centenary celebrations.

While it is rewarding to look back over the past hundred years at the achievements of the RAOU, and now Birds Australia, it is far more important to look forward and to set our sights on the next hundred years, and to put in place plans for that future.

Looking back we may feel satisfied with our collective contributions. We have been instrumental in putting in place a large number of conservation initiatives for birds and their habitats. We have arguably increased public awareness of birds and their significance in our lives. We have added much to the understanding, both scientific and anecdotal, of birds and their behaviour.

Looking back we should also view with dismay how much of our birds' habitat has been, and is still being, destroyed. After one hundred years we still have a membership that represents at best 0.05% of the total population. Every day questions are asked about our birds and their habits for which we have no answers.

I'm sure that you are all also aware that the national body, in this centenary year, is facing serious cash-flow problems. Our new CEO Jim Downey is currently addressing these problems. The actions being taken are necessary to ensure the viability of Birds Australia for the future. Some of the actions taken have been painful and stressful, but we need to support Jim and his staff, especially through these times. To that end, the committee agreed to a request from Jim and the council to accept a reduction in the subscription rebate to the WA group. The plan is that the reduction will be for one year. A review of the state of the nation then will dictate whether or not we revert to the previous level of rebate.

This reduction will, necessarily, place an additional burden on our group. We need to devise ways of augmenting our income to cover this reduction and to help cover the increases in operating expenses incurred this year while maintaining our ability to provide the services we think our members require.

Bearing all these facts in mind our centenary offers us the perfect excuse to examine our organisation in WA.

How can we secure the future health of the group? What do we, the members, want the group to do? What do we expect from the group? What are we prepared to invest in the group to achieve our goals?

The committee has already put in motion a series of activities that we hope will help us in these deliberations. Below is an article by Alison Day reporting on a planning session that Alison generously facilitated for us. We decided that the initial meeting should be limited to committee members, sub-committee members, and the most active and prominent volunteers. When I tell you that from 31 invitations we had 27 acceptances, and those who declined were all unavailable due to prior commitments, you will understand that there is an enormous will to contribute to the group and its future.

The first meeting was held, as you will see in the article, to identify those areas of activity considered essential to the future of the group, those that are desirable, those that would be nice to have, and any activities that we currently carry out but are seen as unnecessary.

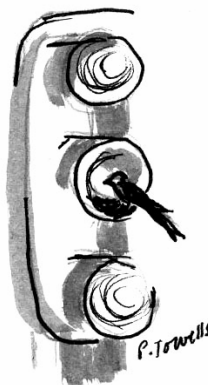
The 27 people who attended represented as broad a cross section of our membership as is possible. A broad range of issues was discussed and those considered important were considered important by all—young and old, scientist and bird watcher.

We hope that a second meeting, tentatively scheduled for early February 2002, will be attended by a large number of our members. At the second meeting we hope to take the results from the first and develop plans that meet the membership's views and requirements.

I believe that it is important that we all, with our shared interest in birds, make time to ensure that the group can define a set of common goals and satisfy a membership committed to achieving those goals.

To conclude, my thanks to all those who have contributed over the year, and helped make my duties as chairman easier. I wish you all an enjoyable holiday season, and a bright and prosperous 2002, and may you catch up with all those birds that have proved elusive in the past.

Clive Nealon
Chairman



BIRD TALK
from Penny Towells
Swallows love the bright

CLARIFYING THE FUTURE ROLE OF BAWA — YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SAY!

What is the current role of BAWA? What are its strengths? What problems does it face? Are there opportunities for change and improvement?

These are just some of the questions being considered by Birds Australia WA as it undertakes a strategic planning process to clarify its future role.

Initiated by the BAWA Committee, the process to examine BAWA and identify any needs and opportunities for new directions will give all members an opportunity to have their say.

The process commenced with a four-hour workshop on Saturday October 13 involving committee members, project officers and those involved in the day-to-day operations of the group.

The broader membership now has an opportunity to participate in the process.

You are encouraged to do this by:

- Reading the summary of the workshop outcomes provided below and contacting the committee with your views about BAWA — particularly suggestions for change and priorities — before the end of January 2002.

Write c/- of the Perth Office at Perry House, 71 Oceanic drive, Floreat WA 6014 or e-mail to birdswa@iinet.net.au (our new e-mail address from December).

- Attending a second workshop in early February (date to be announced).

This workshop will address the key issues raised in the first workshop, and in the submissions received from members, and will identify specific actions and priorities for the future. Contact the Office (9383 7749) if you are interested in attending the workshop and details will be forwarded to you in 2002.

Following the workshop and AGM in February, the BAWA Committee will undertake further work to clarify and implement new directions.

Outcomes of the October Workshop

At the October workshop, participants were asked to address a number of questions.

A summary of the responses to these questions is provided below. This summary is somewhat lengthy — to do justice to the ideas generated by the workshop and to stimulate ideas by WABN readers.

How would you describe the current role of BAWA Inc?

A number of roles were distinguished:

- Conservation
- Member services
- Research
- Communication (education, information dissemination, linkages, promotion)
- Maintaining financial viability.

What are the essential tasks?

Activities undertaken to achieve the identified roles include:

- Conservation — undertaking projects, providing advice to the public, providing informed comment for plans, community education, advocacy
- Member services — providing excursions to meet a wide range of needs, monthly meetings, *WA Bird Notes*, the library, providing information, the volunteer pool, the office (as a vital presence and focus for the organisation), the committee and sub-committees
- Research — undertaking short and long term research projects, supporting researchers (professionals and amateurs)
- Communication — community education, response to public requests for information, links to other organisations, links to country members, production of brochures
- Maintaining financial viability — fundraising, obtaining grants, link to national office.

What are the strengths of the organisation?

- Membership — volunteers, steady flow of new members, range of expertise in membership, long-term and loyal members.
- Activities — research projects, educational activities and material, bird watching activities, Members Day 2001, monthly meetings, relationships with other organisations, involvement in observatories, WABN, fund raising, WA Database.
- Organisation issues — independence, financial situation, good reputation, service to members, successful in obtaining funds for research projects, good relationships with relevant Government bodies.

What are the (internal and external) problems facing the organisation?

- Membership — metropolitan orientated organisation — need to liaise more with country areas and groups, need more active members, difficulties in getting people to take management or leadership roles, need to look after new members better, need to attract young members, lack of data on membership.
- Organisation issues — lack of secure office accommodation, financially conservative, need a financial plan, cost of membership, low profile, could have better relationship with other organisations (eg, share facilities), lack of proper funding and support from the national office, concern about financial and management problems at the national office.

What are the opportunities for change/improvement?

Conservation

- Consider linkages with other conservation-orientated groups
- Use WABN to provide information about broader conservation news
- Serve on advisory committees
- Use observatories more
- Be more pro-active
- Make submissions on environmental and planning reports
- Consider need for a conservation committee
- Be involved in activities to raise community awareness

Member services

- The volunteer army is the core of the organisation. Can break jobs into 'bite-sized' pieces to encourage people and make tasks more manageable. Can be specific about tasks that need to be done and advertise them in WABN
- Attract younger members
- Improve services to country members
- Structure membership types to suit different members (eg, youth, country)
- Have a range of initiatives for new members
- Institute system of data collection on membership. Could have a questionnaire for members
- Have better access to national office membership data
- Many Atlas volunteers are not members (send copy of WABN and letter).

Research

- Prime focus — conservation (threatened species, regional birds under threat)
- Need to be more pro-active
- Can bring in country members and urban members
- Prioritise projects to suit resources (research committee). Are there too many projects? Need to consider quality rather than quantity
- Can participate in more long-term studies
- Improve accessibility to WA Database
- Surveys — have landowners apply for BAWA assistance and expertise.

Communication

- Make excursions more purposeful (important educational opportunity)
- More advocacy/lobbying using expertise and linkages
- Education (younger members and public)
- Make WABN more widely available
- Encourage more member contributions to WABN
- Promote organisation and activities through community papers, radio, Perth Weekly magazine, shopping centres, schools etc
- Glossy brochure to promote BAWA
- Walks for non-members
- Push bird brochures
- Internet — website for BAWA
- Need for a publicity group? Need for more coordination of communications?
- Link with Education Dept (upper primary)
- Use other organisations' newsletters for promotion
- Joint excursions with other groups
- Open up some speaking events to the public
- Links with research students at Universities
- Communicate with non active members on their needs and wishes.

Financial

- Need to increase sales. Institute regular fund raising activities in addition to card and book sales
- Make money from our services and activities (eg, bird walks open to public, birds for beginners courses, etc, responses to public requests, Database)
- Eco-tourism opportunities
- Linkages with other groups (financial benefits)
- Provide expertise to Landcare groups in exchange for cost of fuel and accommodation

- Arrange financial support for members working on public relations, library, etc
- Get a higher % of funds from HQ (than current %)
- Limit % of grants used in administration
- Need a financial policy and plan.

Organisational issues

- Office — vital, central, physical identity — need to secure
- Consider paid staff at office (in conjunction with volunteers)
- Possible change to committees? Review delegation?
- Possible committees — executive, research, activities, conservation
- Vital to raise profile. Can have reinforcement of group through regular publicity
- Address issues relating to BAWA v BA (as a national organisation)/Address relationship with national office/Consider more state autonomy
- Strengthen Committee support to volunteers and give proper acknowledgement
- Job descriptions for volunteers, especially those in management roles, such as Librarian, PR person, etc.

What are the current priorities?

The following priorities have been identified at this stage:

- Financial plan
- Links to observatories
- Publicity plan
- Recruit from Atlas members
- Clearer definition of priorities for all to be aware of
- Brochure
- Encourage younger members
- Attract and look after volunteers
- Internet — bird brochures
- Format of monthly meetings (eg, more audience involvement).

We are looking forward to feedback from you on these issues, and to further involvement of members in the planning process.

Alison Day

MID-SUMMER WADER COUNT 2001

The results of the 2001 Mid-Summer Wader Count were encouraging with reports of some unusual sightings and a possible increase in wader numbers when compared with last year's count. The following review of the program reveals the normal pluses and minuses — happily the pluses out-weigh the minuses.

The bad news — for various reasons we didn't receive count sheets from some of last year's observers but we have added three new locations to our site list to balance the ledger.

A big loss to our survey program is the departure of Tim Hunt who has moved on to the east. Tim had been sending in reports from Wilson's Inlet since our first count in 1998 and his well-presented data will be sorely missed.

The normal in-depth mid-summer survey was not conducted at the regular Broome sites or along the Eighty Mile Beach this year and has resulted in a lower count for

the Kimberley region. The Roebuck Bay figures were obtained from the afternoon wader count at the Broome Bird Observatory on 11 February.

At the other end of the line we lost contact with Eyre Bird Observatory and so missed the Kanidal Beach report. Also missed was a little bit on the middle of our coastline where a few of last year's observers seem to have dropped out of the 2001 program.

The good news is we have some positive results from the big bit in the middle. Here is an overview of all results, presented in Table 1, starting in the far north of the state and moving south down the WA coast.

Simon Wilson holds our record for the state's most northerly based observer by monitoring sites at Napier Broome Bay. This outpost at the top of WA has resulted in our first Beach Stone-curlew sightings (for a Mid-Summer Wader Count) with reports of a total of eight birds from two of Simon's sites.

Thanks to Philip Brace we have added Port Hedland to our list of survey sites. Philip had an up and down day when on completion of his count he found himself locked in behind a fence surrounding his site at Cargill Salt. Faced with scaling the fence and a 20 km walk he was saved by the arrival of two workmen. Broad-billed Sandpipers were among the species on Phil's list providing the upside of the day. Phil also organises the less traumatic Karratha counts at Nicol Bay with encouraging results.

It seems there are still no BA observers between Karratha and Perth but we did get sightings from Cervantes when Cheryl and Martin Gole stopped at Lake Thetis and reported a lone Long-toed Stint among the waders there.

Swan Estuary observers reported an increase on last year's count. Let's hope that recent moves to protect Alfred Cove and the Attadale foreshore will see a continuation of this trend with a return of birds to the river.

Numbers were up at the Canning River and metropolitan lakes with a total of 1479 birds. Metropolitan wetland counts were made at Lakes Gnangara, Joondalup north, Joondalup south, Bibra, Little Rush, Northlake, Forrestdale, Cooloongup, Thomsons and Kogolup plus Bodkin Park and the Wellard wetlands. Thanks to those who contributed their time on the day and for the prompt return of reports from these locations.

Rottneet was once again impressive with a total of 18 species and a count of 2760 waders.

At Woodmans Point there was an unusual sighting of nine Pacific Golden Plovers among the 11 species found there.

Mandurah Birders took the honours for the most species at a site by equalling the Roebuck Bay count with 19 species from their sites around the Peel Inlet, Lake Goegrup and Point Roberts.

Lake McLarty once again revealed a high wader presence with 3460 birds and 11 species reported plus the only Black-tailed Godwit sightings in the south-west.

Bill Russell came up with 64 Hooded Plovers and a total of 533 birds at Yalgourup. Later in the month an

intensive search by the Mandurah Birders revealed 181 Hooded Plovers at this location (see Bird Notes No 98 June issue).

Seven Eastern Curlews were among the species reported at Leschenault Inlet — thanks Rita and George.

Carl Beck from CALM Walpole organises Nornalup-Walpole surveys and has added Broke Inlet to our site list. Waders have been hard to find at Walpole since our first count in 1998 but the varied number of waterbird species included with the wader count were gratefully accepted by our colleagues in the 'Atlasing group'.

A big increase in wader numbers was reported from Wilsons Inlet with a total of 5347 birds. We have mentioned the efforts of Tim Hunt at this site; it's to be hoped that we can find someone to carry on observations in this area. At Albany, Vic Smith's two locations have proved to be a particular haven for Great Knot and Red Knot. Thirteen species and 1308 birds were reported at the Albany sites (see Table 1).

Our stalwart observers at the 12 inland locations should be commended for their mid-summer monitoring efforts at the mostly dry inland lakes. The inland surveys included Lakes Logue, Indoon, Coyrecup, Ewlyamartup, Wagin, Quarbin, Toolibin, Walbying, Taarblin, Bokan, Yornaning, Yenyening and Mears, plus the Benger Swamp and Corackine Swamp and the Katanning reservoir and sewage plant. Well done to all involved.

Alan Rose visited two Esperance beaches with few waders to report but 480 Sanderlings put the icing on the cake taking the total birds to 570. Suzanne and Robert Mather added their waders from the Oldfield River (a first for this location) to the Esperance area.

The total number of waders in the south west of the state came to 20 613. This is an increase of 3270 birds above last year's count. Considering that 6769 birds in last year's figures came from Vasse-Wonnerup sites that weren't monitored this year, it could be argued that the increase is considerable. It should be remembered that these figures show trends from the monitored locations and an indication of the state's wader population can only be surmised. It is, however, an encouraging small increase.

It is quite evident there has been a fall off in numbers of the migratory waders when these figures are compared to pre-1998 surveys, a fact that should concern all members.

We really do need more information on the migrant species and the habitats that support them. This means we need more observers at wetlands and coastal inlets and beaches. If there is such a site near you, let's get down there and become familiar with its bird life. It might be too late in just a few years time.

In conclusion thanks to all who participated; there are too many members involved to acknowledge all those concerned. We hope to have you back for next year's wader count.

The 2002 mid-summer count will be held on Sunday 10 February.

Table 1. MID-SUMMER WADER COUNT: KIMBERLEY TO KANIDAL BEACH, 2001

	Kimberley		Port Hedland	Nicol Bay	Lake Thetis	Rottnest	Wdms Point	Swan Est	CanR Metro lakes	Peel Point Robts	Lake McLarty	Yalg N.P.	Lesc Inlet	Walp Norm	Broke Inlet	Wilson Inlet	Albany		Inland Lakes	Esp areas	Number of species from the combined sites:			
	Napier	Roebuck															Royal Harbour	Oyster			TOTALS			
	Bays	13	19	14	8	7	18	11	8	6	19	11	8	11	3	2	8	11	13	6	8	KIMBERLEY	SW and INLAND	COMBINED
Number of species																								
Black-tailed Godwit	0	1400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1400	11	1411
Bar-tailed Godwit	90	9000	25	160	0	5	0	7	0	62	0	0	21	0	0	0	0	7	18	0	0	9275	120	9395
Whimbrel	12	100	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	114	1	115
Eastern Curlew	5	20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	9	35
Marsh Sandpiper	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	14	24
Common Greenshank	2	80	1	0	5	0	1	8	13	11	15	5	8	0	0	117	16	34	20	6	83	259	342	
Wood Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	4	
Terek Sandpiper	0	40	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	0	43	
Common Sandpiper	2	8	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	3	1	0	10	20	30	
Grey-tailed Tattler	12	300	0	60	2	6	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	372	23	395	
Ruddy Turnstone	2	60	0	40	2	430	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	102	448	550	
Great Knot	0	2600	0	120	0	5	0	47	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	290	200	0	0	2720	549	3269	
Red Knot	0	300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	65	50	0	0	300	170	470	
Sanderling	0	0	0	0	0	67	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	480	0	552	552	
Red-necked Stint	1	150	750	0	0	1324	17	20	0	116	2086	250	110	0	0	3663	20	350	0	0	901	7956	8857	
Long-toed Stint	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	0	0	500	0	0	0	0	0	0	53	7	0	2	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	500	88	588	
Curlew Sandpiper	0	40	500	0	0	345	6	45	0	2	234	1	4	0	0	9	0	80	0	0	540	726	1266	
Broad-billed Sandpiper	0	4	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	16	
Red-necked Phalarope	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	
Beach Stone-curlew	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	8	
Pied Oystercatcher	0	12	0	5	0	6	1	8	0	5	0	0	6	5	4	0	6	41	0	28	17	110	127	
Sooty Oystercatcher	0	10	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6	0	15	9	24	
Black-winged Stilt	1	0	40	0	1	2	0	22	714	435	758	11	1	1	0	206	0	0	109	0	41	2260	2301	
Banded Stilt	0	0	1000	0	0	418	0	0	633	0	5	40	0	0	0	316	0	0	0	0	1000	1412	2412	
Red-necked Avocet	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	12	146	114	0	0	0	375	0	0	1	0	0	652	652	
Pacific Golden Plover	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	0	0	30	30	
Grey Plover	15	11	0	0	0	14	6	17	0	26	0	0	50	0	0	0	15	47	0	0	26	175	201	
Red-capped Plover	8		250	0	40	113	22	0	82	32	188	48	83	0	19	635	0	4	1	60	258	1327	1585	
Lesser Sand Plover	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	10	
Greater Sand Plover	9	130	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	16	0	0	141	22	163	
Black-fronted Dotterel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	62	62	
Hooded Plover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	71	71	
Banded Lapwing	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	23	23	
Oriental Pratincole	0	0	400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	0	400	
Unidentified waders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3500	3500	
LOCATION TOTALS	167	14267	3493	393	53	2760	79	174	1479	4338	3460	533	295	11	23	5347	450	858	598		18320	20613	38933	

As usual, country coastal participants can choose their date a week either side of the 10th depending on local conditions (tides, weather, etc). It has been suggested that the inland lakes be monitored before they dry out. We will adopt the idea for this year and move the date forward to December or early January. This could give an account of the movements of resident species such as Banded Stilt, Red-necked Avocet and Red-kneed Dotterels. **Country members interested in moving their programs forward should contact Colin Davis.**

We also would like to invite new members with an interest in waders to participate in the survey. The Rottneest count is usually well and truly booked out in advance but this year we will make provision for new members to join the Rottneest group. We have accommodation available between 7 and 10 January for a limited number on a first come first served basis. For those wanting to become familiar with waders this is a great opportunity to do so.

So set aside 10 February 2002, select a wetland you are familiar with and return the accompanying form ASAP. Colin Davis can be contacted on 9330 1482 after hours.

HOODED PLOVER PROJECT

There was wind and rain but we still found 'Hoodies'!

We braved the rain and braved the wind and found 77 Hooded Plovers in Yalgorup National Park on the long weekend in September. Although we found more 'Hoodies' than last September (49), there were still far fewer than the 181 found in summer earlier this year. The count data are still consistent with the idea that Yalgorup National Park will probably support more Hooded Plovers in summer, when the inland lakes have dried up, than in the wet season. The next survey in early March will tell. Many thanks to Phyllis Bentley, Allan and Michael Burbidge, Tony France, Greg Harewood, Jim and Verna Howell, Margaret and Neville Jones, Frank Pridham, Dick Rule, Bill Russell, Wally and Aye Aye Sarafin, Margaret Simmons and Maureen and Ernie Wilde for their great efforts.

Please help with the State Hooded Plover count 2 – 10 March 2002

Between 2–10 March 2001 we will again attempt to count 'Hoodies' on the coastline and on the coastal lakes of southern Western Australia as we did in February 2000. We are happy to accept records from anywhere in the state, but the survey is focussed on the area between Mandurah and Esperance. We will conduct the counts over a period of about two weeks. The dates are set to coincide with the long weekend in March (2–4 March 2002) to encourage people to venture out of Perth. In particular, we encourage people to help with counts along the coastline and lakes near Esperance. We desperately need help in this isolated area as it is potentially great Hooded Plover habitat. Please contact me on 9306 5819 and volunteer now. It will be great to hear from you.

**Julie Raines
Project Officer**

CARNABY'S BLACK-COCKATOO PROJECT

The second stage of the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo recovery program started in August. Initial work included further raising of public awareness about the plight of the cockatoo and tapping public knowledge of sightings by attending rural shows and publishing articles in rural newspapers and newsletters.

Generally, people have been quite interested and forthcoming with information. Their responses to the knowledge that Carnaby's are endangered vary between two extremes. Many people have first hand knowledge and awareness of population decreases in their regions. On the other hand, several say; "I know why they're endangered everywhere else. It's because they're all at my place."

Nest searches have now commenced and will continue through to December. They began in the northern sandplains and will move down to the southern wheatbelt. The majority of the searches will be in the northern sandplains.

The recovery team recently received notification that funding for the next year of the project has been granted by the NHT.

**Leonie McMahon
Project Officer**

LIBRARY REPORT

Additions to the Library and Pamphlet Stand since August 2001

Pamphlet stand

Yellow Throat, Birds Tasmania Newsletter for May 2001

Western Wildlife, July 2001

Fly Way, May 2001, August 2001

Naturalist news, Sept 2001

Malleefowl matters, No 25

Planning News, Aug 2001

Community Information 2001–2002 Town of Cambridge

Riverview, No 24. Swan River Trust

Bird Notes, No 40. Birds Australia, Southern NSW and ACT

World Birdwatch, Vol 22, No 4, Vol 23, No 2

Library

598.723 *Wingspan*, Vol 11, No 2, June 2001 & No 3

598.994 *Birds Australia*, 2000 Annual Report

598.3 *Queensland Wader*, Issue 36, Winter 2001

598.9944 *Cumberland Bird Observers Club*, Vol 23 (1)

598.723 *Bird Observer*, August 2001

598.07232 *Colour flagging protocol for migratory shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian flyway*

598.65 *Pigeons of Australia—the bronzewings*

598.9943 *Contact Call*

Video

- 598.8 *Australia's birds—woodlands* Video
- 598.3 *Australia's birds—wetlands* Video
- 598.4 *Australia's birds—seashore* Video
- 598.71 *Cockatoos of Australia* Video
- 598.09943 *Lure of the Daintree* Video
- 598.9943 *Birds of tropical north Queensland* Video
- 598.994 *101 Australian birds* Video
- 598.4 *Kakadu world of waterbirds* Video
- 598.9931 *Hand guide to the birds of New Zealand*

Emu

Contents of *Emu* Volume 101 part 3 (2001): This edition contains a number of articles of interest to local members, particularly the article by Belinda Brooker on scrub-robins at Peron Peninsula. *Emu* can be read or photocopied (but not borrowed) at Perry House.

- Biology of the Southern Scrub-robin (*Drymodes brunneopygia*) at Peron Peninsula, Western Australia.
B. Brooker 181
- Breeding biology and nesting success of the Eastern Yellow Robin and the New Holland Honeyeater in a southern Victorian woodland.
L. Berry 191
- Pied Currawongs and the decline of native birds.
K.L. Bayly and D.T. Blumstein 199
- The montane avifauna of west New Britain with special reference to the Nakanai Mountains.
K.D. Bishop and D.N. Jones 205
- Variability in provisioning rates to nestlings in the cooperatively breeding Rufous Treecreeper, *Climacteris rufa*.
G.W. Luck 221
- Population estimates of Yellow-eyed Penguins, *Megadyptes antipodes*, on Campbell Island, 1987-98.
P.J. Moore, D.J. Fletcher and J. Amey 225
- New distributional ranges for Melanesian birds.
G. Dutson 237
- Egg size, incubation periods and hatching success of Little Penguins, *Eudyptula minor*.
A. Kemp and P. Dann 249
- Daytime incubation temperatures in nests of the Nankeen Kestrel, *Falco cenchroides*.
P.D. Olsen and G.B. Baker 255
- Spatial and temporal variation in migrant raptors on Java, Indonesia.
V. Nijman 259
- Juvenile helping behaviour in the Dusky Moorhen, *Gallinula tenebrosa*.
D.A. Putland and A.W. Goldizen 265

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia WA between 1 August and 31 October 2001. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

J Agostinelli, J Bailey, M A Bondin, V S Campagna, J Carruthers, S Crook, F Day, K Edward, P D Eygenraam, A Gibson, M J Harcourt-Smith, H J Hayes, M Hayes, E Hodgson, W D Hodgson, B Kent, R Le Breton, D Macauley, L Macauley, J Mackintosh, M Mackintosh, J Melling, P Mioduszewski, S Reynolds, I Sharp, H Sheiner, L Stanley, W van der Jagt, B Walker, C D Walker, S White, D Williams, K Wilson

Historical notes

Since issue no. 1 of *Western Australian Bird Notes* in 1944, much of ornithological interest has happened in Western Australia and in the Western Australian group. This segment of WABN includes an account by Bruce Buchanan concerning an even earlier, and little known, ornithological society. Inserted elsewhere in this issue is a copy of WABN No. 1 from 1944 – a little slimmer than today's issues! We have also reproduced the Foreword that was written by Vincent Serventy for the *Index to Western Australian Bird Notes, the first 50 years, 1943 to 1993*. Further on in this issue we have included reminiscences and memorable moments contributed by a range of members, some of long standing.

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1885

In the year in which the RAOU celebrates its first 100 years, it is well to recall those who blazed the trail. One of these precursors was the Ornithological Society, active in Western Australia in 1884 and 1885 (at least).

Information about the Society is sparse. It is not even mentioned in *The history of Western Australian ornithology* in Serventy and Whittell (1976) (*Birds of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth), which volume categorises “the period between Gilbert's departure in 1843 until well towards the end of the century, [as] a barren one in local ornithology” (p. 39).

Clearly this overstates the position. The Society had a President (and presumably other officers) but the only names known of those involved are Rev. Gerald Cornwell Nicolay (who may have been the President), L B Franklyn of Albany and Frank Wittenoom of the Upper Murchison (possibly of Yuin Station, founded by the Wittenoom family).

Nearly 100 years before the publication of the RAOU Atlas in 1984, in early 1885 the Western Australian

Government sent out a circular to “settlers” asking them to send in bird observations on forms provided by the Government. A letter on similar lines was sent to the Ornithological Society requesting they establish systematic ornithological observations in Western Australia.

These ‘Atlas’ style reports were “collected gratuitously by a large number of gentlemen”, including the three named above. Wittenoom and Franklyn received “a further supply of forms” in April 1885 so they could report “any new species of birds” and give “further particulars about those you mention”. Both “waterfowl” and other birds were involved.

Unfortunately none of the ornithological lists made have survived to be inspected in Western Australia today. Even most of the correspondence is missing from the Public Records Office. The record keepers doubtless saw bird observations as a very peripheral activity.

The material collected by the Government was sent to the Ornithological Society in Vienna.

This appears to have been an outcome of the First International Ornithological Congress held in Vienna in 1884. Presumably one of the Congress resolutions was that information should be gathered from governments around the globe. The RAOU Library does not have a copy of the Congress Proceedings which might reveal the basis for the WA collection of material in 1885.

Given that the collection of WA material took place after the conclusion of the First Congress it is possible the results of a world-wide data collection were to be presented to the Second International Congress, which was held in Budapest in 1891.

It is remotely possible that in some archive in Vienna or Budapest remain the results of the 1885 Western Australian ‘Atlas’ compiled by the members of the Ornithological Society and others.

Quotations are from the Colonial Secretary’s Office archives in the Public Records Office, Perth.

Bruce Buchanan

FOREWORD

(FROM INDEX TO WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BIRD NOTES, THE FIRST 50 YEARS, 1943-1993)

It seems so short a time since 22 May 1943. We were all fascinated by our love of birds, an affection which has enlivened my life since that time. My joy of the Earth has owed much to bird study, not only in Australia but around the world.

Those magic moments when I first stood in the mangroves of Pelsaert Island to watch the Lesser Noddies swirl above me. Of the gentle billing by a Short-tailed Shearwater which deep in its burrow had mistaken my probing fingers for its returning mate. Of Peter Scott at Slimbridge, uttering a call which sent a duck flying out of its pen to land in his arms. The memories are endless. Yet how much I owed to good friends. Among these were the nine gathered in May 1943 to begin our deeper study of birds.

Major Whittell had accused some of us as being only cockyologists. He was one of those gifted amateurs who in

previous generations had dominated serious bird study; the best type of military man who brought to birds the same dedication he brought to his army career. He had come to Australia because the independent bearing of Australian soldiers on the Western Front convinced him that here was a new world which had giants in it.

Present too, that Grand Old Man of science, Ludwig Glauert who had seen the brilliance of my brother when a shy sixteen year old and sponsored his later career. Olive Seymour, whose quiet competence had been a bulwark in my own task as Director of the Nature Advisory Service and whose keen observations were enhanced by her skill as an artist. Clarrie Eakins, who as headmaster threw the full weight of the Correspondence School behind our efforts to nurse the educational fledgling, the Gould League, into full vigour. And Clee Jenkins who has continued to the present day to bring his literary and scientific skills to educate the public in natural history.

And my brother, whose ornithological standing as one of the world’s greatest bird workers gave our own contributions so much strength. Yet he did have one weakness. Although he wrote so brilliantly, he was reluctant to tackle the larger task of creating books.

Major Whittell encouraged him to co-operate on the *Birds of Western Australia*, described at that time as the best regional handbook in the world. I encouraged him into beginning work on the *Handbook of Australian Seabirds*, when with the addition of John Warham, we were able to produce what some critics described as the finest national book on this group of birds.

I tried to get him to work on his great love, the Short-tailed Shearwater which he studied for more than forty years, making it among the best known of all bird species. Death took him too soon, but at least I have finished the manuscript, titled *Song of the shearwater* which I hope will be his memorial.

I am sure all of us would have agreed that our bonding into a group helped our enjoyment of birds. You who continue this work will be worthy successors.

I only hope you may have as much fun and excitement as we had and, for those of us remaining, still do.

Vincent Serventy

BIRD TALK
from Penny Towells
Sshh, I’m thinking up a
new joke.



Reminiscences

The time of the 100th issue of *Western Australian Bird Notes* is perhaps a time for reflection on past memories and achievements connected with members of the Western Australian Group of the RAOU, now BAWA. We hope the following anecdotes will bring back fond memories for older members and some insights for newer members.

CONGRESS AND CAMPOUT, 1970

Early in 1970 I took a call from Glen Storr at the WA Museum. Could I come in and talk about the RAOU? Well, yes, I couldn't see any harm in that. I had published in *Emu* from time to time and even been to a Congress in Canberra, but had no close association with the group. After all, WA was a long way from any of their activities. Glen was there and so was Julian Ford. They sat me in one of those ancient Museum chairs, fixed me with stern eyes and said, "The RAOU Congress is in WA this year. We think you should organise the meeting and excursion."

Oh!!!

The meeting was no problem; organising scientific meetings usually take half a day and this one was no exception. The excursion was more difficult. I decided it should be in the arid zone. I knew Tom Moriarty of Wanjarri Station, made famous in Jock Marshall's *Journey among Men*. He had a place up there. I sent him a telegram:

28th January 1970

TO TOM MORIARTY, KATHLEEN VALLEY, WA
FROM STEPHEN DAVIES, CSIRO, PERTH

RAOU proposes holding annual congress and campout in Western Australia late August early September this year stop Kathleen Valley has been suggested as possible site for campout Stop would you consider welcoming about 30 people for a week at that time? We should provide all camping, living and transport facilities but would be grateful of your guidance and participation in field work Stop if agreeable in principle will write and arrange to make prior visit to you during March to discuss details Stop Regards

REPLY PAID

He ran the post office at Kathleen Valley so the reply came quickly:

29th January 1970

FOR DR STEPHEN DAVIES

FROM TOM MORIARTY, KATHLEEN VALLEY, WA

Delighted to have you all here stop Will give all help possible.

And that was how the WA Group, as we know it today, took off.

Kathleen Valley was eventually gazetted as the Wanjarri Nature Reserve, partly on the basis of information supplied by the RAOU.

Other important events were set in train at that time, too. I came back from Wanjarri in a party with Graeme Smith, Rosemary (RAOU Secretary) and Peter Balmford,

and others. We stopped the night at the Dalwallinu Hotel. At dinner that evening Rosemary received a cable from Europe saying "IOC (International Ornithological Congress) accepts Australia's invitation to host 1974 IOC in Canberra".

Stephen Davies

EARLY DAYS AT EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

By the mid-1970s Stephen Davies and the Field Investigation Committee (now Research Committee) of the RAOU had decided that bird observatories were needed in Australia. Stephen found that the old telegraph station at Eyre was available, and in a suitable location, but in need of repair and with an unknown owner. This, of course, did not deter Stephen. Coincidentally, the Post Office Historical Society also became interested at about the same time, and this led to contact with Bill Graham, who had family connections with the site and had the construction skills necessary to supervise the needed repairs.

Stephen was very good at enthusing other people about the project, and so in early 1977, I found myself at Eyre, in the company of an enthusiastic group including Stephen Davies, Bill Graham, Rosemary and Peter Balmford (from Melbourne), Peter Congreve and Simon Nevill, nailing sheets of iron to the roof and making the scarp passable to vehicles. By the end of our trip, the roof was sound and part of the building was habitable. There was much to be done, but Eyre was on its way.

One day, in between bashing nails into old roof timbers that had gone extremely hard due to long exposure to the elements, we noticed some honeyeaters coming in to some water we had left in a container. In need of some ornithological diversions, we put up a few mist nets and caught and banded, for the first time, some of the birds occurring at Eyre. This was a small but significant beginning to Eyre's long term research and monitoring program that has since provided much valuable and interesting data.

The rest, as they say, is history. Twenty-four years after that first expedition to fix the roof, the first RAOU bird observatory is still operating, thousands of birds have been banded and thousands of visitor nights have resulted in major volunteer participation in the research and educational activities of the observatory.

Allan Burbidge

WHERE BIRDING CAN TAKE YOU

I shall always be grateful to Birds Australia for introducing me to a whole new world. It was the first Atlas survey and the enthusiastic leadership of Stephen Davies that got me into birdwatching. The Western Australian group in the 1970s and '80s was a very diverse yet close-knit collection of individuals—professional biologists, amateur birders of long standing, post-graduate students and novices like myself. The patience and the sharing of knowledge on the part of the first three with the latter meant we learnt quickly.

Since then I have enjoyed some great sightings, watching birds not only in this state but also all over the globe, because whenever I travel I make sure I pack a field guide to the birds of the countries where I am going. Consequently I've found myself high up in a tree hide in Ecuador surrounded by colourful trogons and tanagers; on the Sub-Antarctic islands almost on speaking terms with the penguins (they are so tame); watching Royal Albatrosses landing and taking off from Taiaroa Head near Dunedin; spotting a Redshank on a beach in Denmark and wondering if it is the same one that was almost lost in the crowd of waders at Roebuck Bay; at dusk watching the clouds of noisy shearwaters returning to their burrows on Bruny Island.

I've had some frustrating times, too—tearing up and down the Dandenongs looking for a Powerful Owl after attending a Council meeting in Melbourne; scrambling up the thick, heath-covered slopes of Yallingup listening and looking for Rufous Bristlebirds; trying to find Black Grass-wrens in what was alleged to be the perfect habitat for them.

I've been treated to some wonderful, unexpected moments that make up for the few disappointments, such as a small flock of Puffins on a beautiful spring day flying low over a remarkably flat North Sea off the coast of Northumberland and our small ship being surrounded by diving gannets near the island of St Kilda, and, after turning a bend in the Lawley River near Admiralty Gulf seeing a pair of Grey Goshawks, a grey as well as a white morph roosting in the mangroves.

But perhaps the most memorable was during a Coate's Wildlife tour to the Kimberley when we came upon a waterhole in the late afternoon with a large flock of Budgerigars and Cockatiels taking it in turns to drink. Suddenly an alarm call and a cloud of swirling grey, green and yellow wings rose and immediately something dark flashed through it. "It's a Peregrine", someone cried. Sure enough, circling back was a Peregrine Falcon making a second swift pass through the terrified flock. It was on its third pass that it was able to secure its prey and retired to dismember it on a dead tree nearby. It was almost a relief to know that the sacrifice of one of its number meant that the rest of the flock was for a very short time safe from its predator.

Yes, birdwatching gives one colour, excitement and drama.

Barbara Hale

THE FIRST ATLAS

Early in 1977 a few lines appeared in the *West Australian* asking people interested in birds to take part in a new survey to be called the Atlas of Australian Birds. At that time Clive and I didn't even own binoculars or a good field guide, but I rang the contact number and Stephen Davies encouraged us to be involved in the first Atlas of Australian Birds. We had so much to learn to start with, but with the help of experienced birders like Stephen, Ian Edgar, Joanna Seabrook, Noela Marr and others we learned fairly quickly. At that time Clive was visiting farms all

over the state regularly and he was able to send in lists from widespread locations.

Our first birding weekend was a very civilised affair at Tinglewood Lodge near Walpole where we attended a Conference of the RAOU Western Australian Chapter, the highlight of which was a delicious dinner with menu in French. One of our early birding triumphs was identifying a Gilbert's Whistler at Warne River in the Murchison. We received an URRF for this and it wasn't until we produced an on-the-spot recording of the bird's call that the sighting was accepted. As our knowledge increased so did our interest and from then on we were hooked.

Wendy Napier

ART EXHIBITIONS

Another great memory but from a slightly more recent date relates to the 'Art Exhibitions'. By 1983 Margaret and Brian Wilson had retired to Perth and Margaret's great organisational talents were quickly borrowed by the WA Group. Her ability to raise funds was no better illustrated than by the Art Exhibitions. The first was in July 1986. Most WA artists were contacted and many entered work. Naturally if we were to hold an exhibition Margaret demanded that we hold it in the best place — the Perth Concert Hall. Also it was to be held when the maximum number of concerts were being held. Also quite naturally, as far as Margaret was concerned, the only person to open the exhibition was the Governor. It all went off smoothly. Our ladies, dressed in village milkmaid dresses and mob caps, sold vast numbers of cards to the patrons. The exhibitions went for a week with three concert nights and open for most of every day. They were very successful both financially and from the advertising point of view. Also the best set of six paintings was chosen for the next year's card set.

We ran these exhibitions for three consecutive years and greatly enhanced the WA Group's bank account. It was exhausting but very worthwhile.

Clive Napier

NEW BEGINNINGS

I was informed the WA branch of the RAOU had about 32 members, over half of whom were 'inactive'. Did I wish to join? I did. I was then invited to a meeting (which had its share of the inactive members), but more importantly the presence of Graeme Chapman and Roger Jaensch. The meeting planned "the first of our local excursions" for it was hoped "to make these local outings a regular event". (from WABN No. 19). Led by Graeme Chapman and Roger Jaensch on 31 October 1981, in addition to Anne and myself, there were 21 others.

Graeme called up Splendid Fairy-wren with a tape recorder and frequently demonstrated his knowledge of calls. Graeme always carried a small tape recorder and used it for any unfamiliar or unusual call, so that his call recognition was as good as his photography.

The local excursions continued and Roger began training observers for the South-west Waterbird Survey,

aided by Peter Curry from time to time. It was the beginning of the regeneration of the WA Branch, which owes very much to Roger's encouragement of beginners, training skills and enthusiasm.

We are pleased to have four of Graeme Chapman's photographs on our walls to remind us of those new beginnings, 20 years ago.

Bruce Buchanan

BACKWARD FLIGHT

It must have been 1982 when, on leave in WA from my job in Hong Kong, I saw in the West Australian a brief notice from the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (forerunner of Birds Australia) inviting people to join the Union. Not being union-minded (although I was already a member of a trade union), I was put off by the title but, after nearly 20 years as a member of the Hong Kong Birdwatching Society, I overcame my scruples and applied, becoming a resident of WA in the following year.

In those days, the WA Group of the RAOU languished in cramped offices (modest rent) at Canning Bridge. There were periodical birdwatching outings but not as frequent as at present. Membership was a few hundred. Emphasis was on the need to involve members in scientific surveys; the current one then was a duck count. On the other hand, there was little or no effort in the field of conservation. To a newcomer like myself, the WA Group seemed to be geared to the scientific study of birds without regard to the fact that, if you failed to preserve habitat, there would eventually be no wild birds left to study (or watch). And you can't preserve habitat unless you persuade politicians and other decision-makers of the need for conservation. So, in addition to scientific study (which is needed in any case to support the argument for conservation), it is equally important to be able to reach the ear of the decision-makers. How you do that is another matter. As a conservative reputable organisation, the RAOU frowned on joining demonstrations. Why not support the Conservation Council and let them agitate on our behalf? They are good at it. Likewise the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The early days in Canning Bridge came to an end when the landlord wished to take over the premises at a higher rent beyond what the WA Group could afford. The Group's only real income seemed to be the 15% of members' subscriptions paid back to us by the RAOU's head office in Melbourne (housed in a decaying residential

building in Moonee Ponds. I knew it well, having to go there quarterly for the first half of my six years on the RAOU Council). Head office kept the remaining 85%. The Canning Bridge premises were too small for us, with boxes of survey papers in all the corners and sagging bookshelves. We therefore started to look for larger alternative premises at a rent we could afford, following up leads in the Royal Commonwealth Society, Boy Scouts at

Pelican Point, and Herdsman Lake; they all fell through. Eventually, in company with the WA Wildflower Society, we made contact with the Perth City Council which in those days was responsible for the upkeep of the Perry Lakes area. The Council offered our two societies the use of our present offices in Perry House which had lain empty and neglected for some time. At its own expense, the Council renovated the premises and charged only a nominal rent. Shortly after I joined the RAOU, Barbara Hale who was chairman of the WA Group invited me to take over responsibility for

obtaining and placing bird books on sale for members. In this capacity, I was a frequent visitor to book wholesalers all over Perth, buying up bundles of books not only on Australian birds but also on birds in adjoining countries which members might visit. The books were then sold at meetings at a figure slightly below the retail price in bookshops. This modest profit was a welcome addition to the WA Group's finances but it seldom reached even three figures in a year. I was invited to join the WA Group's committee to fill a vacancy in mid-term, and took the opportunity to seek permission to set up an expanded trading table. Margaret, my late wife, had pointed out to me that a trading table which functioned only at meetings could never hope to produce any useful income for the Group from the limited clientele of 30 or 40 members attending meetings. When all those members had purchased their bird books, there was unlikely to be much more income. It was necessary for the trading table to be taken to other functions (not necessarily bird ones) to reach a wider public.

We began with the King's Park Wildflower Festival which in those days ran for five days and charged no admission fee. The committee had earlier agreed to my wife and I organising the production of a car sticker and bird cards. For this purpose, we approached a wildlife artist, Joan Jordan, who lived in Mundaring. She painted a male Splendid Fairy-wren which we bought, together with the right to reproduce it. This became the model for the car sticker. Knowing nothing about printing, it took me repeated trips to photographic and printing places to get the



Dun Munro, Roger Jaensch and Joy Fleay at Lake MacLeod for the RAOU Remote Wetland Survey, October 1987

Photo courtesy Rose Jones

job done. For the cards, Joan Jordan painted a few, and my wife and I toured around a number of potential artists (eg, Martyn Thompson, Bryony Fremlin) and secured more. It required tact and some firmness to decline offers from other artists whose work was clearly not up to standard.

On the first day of the King's Park Festival, we sold something like \$5000 worth of cards and other items from the trading table. Together with the volunteers, we were run off our feet. Sales dropped a bit on the remaining days but at the end we had made more than the total income of the Group for the past several years. This provided the basis of the Group's present financial stability. Sadly the King's Park organisers became so jealous of our success compared to their own stalls that, after a year or two, they declined to offer us stall space.

On the basis of this success, Margaret and I then approached a string of suppliers for trading table items (all with bird motifs) such as mugs, tea towels, writing paper, diaries, notepads, etc. Every item had to be first tested in small numbers on the trading table to judge whether it sold well. We then took the trading table to fairs and festivals around WA, from Albany to the wheatbelt, loading up the station wagon (Subaru of course) with a trestle table and cartons of goods. We did well at some functions; at others indifferently. But this did not matter unduly, provided that we also drew public attention to birds and the need for conservation. At one fair in a country town, a man asked where the money went to. "Do you put it in your pockets?" "No," I said, "it goes to this society" and I pointed to the large banner above the stall, with the words "Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union". "Ah," the man commented, "cancer is a dreadful thing". His wife put him right.

We took the trading table on more than one occasion to functions organised by one or other of the two caged bird societies in Perth, each with about 2000 members. (The WA Group at that time numbered about 500.) It was an eye-opener to see the strange colour schemes on familiar bird species as a result of selective breeding. Likewise the prices charged and paid for cage furniture and foodstuffs. Proceedings at one function were disrupted when a parrot escaped and flew round the ceiling, upsetting the remaining caged birds.

Publicity about the RAOU and birds went hand in hand with the trading table. Judy Blyth supplied pictures and informative notices for the new display panels that the committee approved from the extra funds available. The WA Group was able to finance even more surveys, pamphlets, and equipment for the office in Perry House, including the database on a new computer organised by Clive Napier. Membership climbed to over 800, with the majority in and around Perth. Although most members do not attend meetings, this is of no consequence. They are supporters of the WA Group, probably watch birds in their garden or the local reserve, and generally help spread the word. Their subscriptions (and they themselves) are most welcome.

As part of the drive to raise funds and publicise birds, the committee for two or three years ran an exhibition of bird pictures in part of the Perth Concert Hall. Wildlife

artists were invited to supply pictures and sculptures of birds, for sale at prices set by the artists, subject to a percentage of the price coming to the WA Group. The Governor of WA opened the first exhibition. To ensure a fair standard of exhibits, a small sub-committee vetted all entries, setting aside those not up to the mark. This had unfortunate results in one case. The sculptor of a dreadful-looking swan or egret (difficult to tell which) found that his entry had been hidden away in a recess, together with a few other horrors. His subsequent display of indignation was truly artistic but it had no effect. Sales generally went very well, so much so that, in my haste, I forgot to place a red "sold" sticker on a painting and then sold it again to a second buyer who was not pleased at my subsequent retraction and apology. But the problems of organising such an exhibition were so never-ending that no similar exhibitions have been attempted again, apart from the fact that the market had probably been saturated and we were competing with long-established picture galleries.

Whereas other Australian states may have more than one birdwatching society operating in their area, WA is fortunate in having no such competition, other than the WA Naturalists' Club (which is concerned with a wider field than birds). The WA Group therefore appears to be on a sound footing, but one weakness is its lack of a section for young birdwatchers. It would make sense to attract youth to birdwatching so as to ensure a continuing supply of members in future. It is not enough to attract only adults. The Gould League aims at primary school children. There is a case for the WA Group's setting up a separate Young People's Section of secondary school students, with reduced subscriptions and its own outings (led by adults). This would follow the similar successful organisation forming part of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (in Britain). But it depends firstly on persuading Melbourne to provide for a reduced subscription for young members, and secondly on securing a suitable adult member willing to undertake the task of organising such a Section in WA. Where is he/she?

The WA Group could hardly function if it were not for the dedicated work of its volunteers, from office-bearers of the committee, to those who staff the office on weekday mornings, those who provide tea and coffee at meetings, those who undertake surveys, the working group connected with the production of *WA Bird Notes*, the computer experts handling the database, and a host of others who give their time and effort to making the Group the vibrant viable entity that it is. We owe them a deep debt of gratitude and look forward to more of the same on our onward flight.

Brian Wilson

BIRD TALK
from Penny Towells
I like things in black
and white.



MIGRATION TIME

In earlier days when the WA Group's office was still in Canning Bridge, the premises were too small to hold full committee meetings. It was necessary to look elsewhere. At one stage when John Blyth was chairman, committee meetings used to be held in the evenings in a vacant classroom on the first floor of the Perth Modern School in Roberts Road. To get into the classroom which was locked out of school hours, the watchman had to be warned beforehand to leave the door unlocked.

On one occasion, the door was found to be locked, nor could the watchman be found. Committee members scouted around till they found another unlocked classroom. But no sooner were we settled there than another group of people turned up, claiming that they had booked the room.

We therefore roamed round again, eventually finding an unlocked hall. This suited our purpose, except that it contained no chairs. So we sat on the side of the raised dais of a platform. But it happened to be winter. Darkness fell in no time, we could find no lights, and it became freezing cold. The few switches that we discovered did not operate any lights. We persevered with the meeting in the dark, hoping that the secretary (me) could remember enough later to produce minutes.

A small incident in the line of duty.

Brian Wilson

WESTERN GROUND PARROT

Since 1990, Western Ground Parrots have been recorded in only two locations — the Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP) and Waychinicup National Park.

In the early 1980s FRNP was smaller. Nearly all the Ground Parrot records were from north of the existing park in vacant Crown land (VCL). Suddenly the government of the day decided to release land for agriculture and the VCL north of FRNP was designated as future farmland. Roads were built and farm blocks were surveyed.

Meanwhile a small but dedicated group, dismayed by this turn of events, worked to halt the process. Each member of the group believed that the north Fitzgerald was far more valuable as bushland than it would be as marginal farmland. My focus was on the area as Ground Parrot habitat and RAOU help was sought.

At first there was scepticism that Ground Parrots could actually be living in habitat that did not include swamps. A team of members came to listen for the elusive parrots with some success. A method of actually seeing some Ground Parrots was tried. Roger Jaensch brought along the biggest rope most of us had ever seen. At Barren Grounds rope had been used for flushing Ground Parrots as a censuring technique. The idea is that the rope is held at points about 15 m apart then everyone proceeds at a measured pace, the line remaining straight, and the Ground Parrots fleeing visibly. Unfortunately the rope was very heavy, the scattered mallee of the north Fitzgerald proved far too dense, the line was extremely crooked and not one Ground Parrot was flushed.

In March 1983, RAOU published a conservation statement on the Ground Parrot, which identified a lack of

knowledge about the bird's distribution and status in Western Australia. About this time the World Wildlife Fund began using a photo of Ground Parrot chicks as the eye-catcher in their advertising campaigns. This was very convenient grist to the mill especially as Western Ground Parrots were probably so much more threatened than the photographed eastern birds. No-one knew for sure.

Most significantly, the Western Australian Department of Fisheries and Wildlife provided funding for the RAOU (WA) to undertake a seven month survey to investigate the current distribution and status of the species in response to concerns about the effect on the species of the land-use changes that were proposed. Doug Watkins was appointed project officer.

Meanwhile some of the proposed north Fitzgerald farmland had been re-surveyed as some was shown to be too sandy for wheat and sheep farming in such a wind-prone area. This provided an invaluable delay. There was a change of government but that alone was not enough to stop the land release. It seemed that Doug's project would entail interviewing new-land farmers about the parrots seen as they bulldozed and burnt the bush. The crucial breakthrough was publicity and a question in the House about the absurdity of undertaking a study on the distribution and status of the Ground Parrot after the land release had been executed in the very area where most of the birds seemed, from recent records, to be.

And so a six-month moratorium on that land release was put into effect less than a day before the release was to occur. That land is now a part of FRNP and home to most of Western Australia's Ground Parrots. The RAOU (WA) can be justly proud of its role in this story — a story that could so easily have had a very different outcome.

Brenda Newbey

BEGINNINGS AT BBO

When Gail and I arrived back in Broome to start Broome Bird Observatory after 13 months at Eyre, we realised we had quite a chore in front of us. It was late February 1988 in the middle of the wet season, and hot. We had two chalets on the site, but no toilets, water, electricity or flywires! There was very little in the way of household necessities, and very little money to purchase them. We even had to use our own vehicle to run into town every day for water using jerrycans. It was a daunting prospect. Into this bleak scenario came the WA group. It would be nice to mention names but that would preclude many who helped without our knowing, so we prefer to simply talk about BAWA.

There was a raffle organised from Perth that, despite the difficulties of distance, garnered over \$2000. One of the Monday meetings was given over to promoting the observatory with a nice cash consequence, but even better, heightened awareness of the new observatory. Then there was the tour bus that turned up one day, containing not only many of the stalwarts of the group but also household effects that gave us a starting point in our furnishing of the chalets. It wasn't long before we were receiving tee-shirts,

with the BBO logo, created for us by one of our members and silk screened by another. Who could forget the wonderful hand-painted shirts that were an instant success.

In the midst of an incredibly difficult period, we were showered with kindness and support. We have never forgotten, nor ceased to be grateful. Anything that we can give to the group as volunteers now we are back in Perth is part of our 'thank you' to Birds Australia WA group.

Brice and Gail Wells

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

The sight of dozens of Spotted Nightjars weaving in front of our 4WD on the Shay Gap road, after sunset, July 2000.

Diane Beckingham

In 1978, the first (temporary) toilet at Eyre Bird Observatory, made of sheets of corrugated iron thrown together and with the roughly hand-painted inscription "Tin Sheet House".

Allan Burbidge

... searching without success, over a period two months, for Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens between Jack's waterhole (WA) and north Queensland ... then finding a dozen of them on the ranger's lawn, enjoying the sprinklers, at Lawn Hill National Park.

... trying to break it gently to a group of American tourists, that they hadn't really seen lots of Cassowaries on the road out to Wallaman Falls ... just Brush Turkeys; and that, no, the red noses they had seen on cars weren't to scare off the kangaroos!

... marvelling at the size of a Jungle Fowl nest on Cape York ... 12 m across and about 4 m high.

... being told to 'hang up our binoculars' if we didn't see Black Grasswrens at Surveyor's Pool, on the Mitchell Plateau. We didn't see them ... but we're still birdwatching!

... losing enthusiasm for Pallid Cuckoos after one called 48 times in succession, from just above our tent, one moonlit night at Niagara Dam (Eastern Goldfields).

... being puzzled by the excited birder (already overloaded with new species names

at Kakadu), who rushed into the ladies' ablution block and announced that she had just seen a Spangled Booby.

... being amazed at the number of Straw-necked Ibis breeding at Lake Chandala. Thousands of birds circled the sky above the lake, and just as many more filled the nests crowded along the branches of each paperbark.

... being puzzled by the strange, but impressive duck seen at Lake Chandala; and not appreciating the significance till much later, of the first sighting of a Northern Pintail in Australia!

... being horrified by the Hobby which zoomed through the picnic area and whipped off a Willie Wagtail for its lunch, while the poor wagtail was lustily serenading its mate.

George and Pam Agar

From Robert H Stranger (RHS)

"You're too far away!": Professor Donald Farner, a colleague of Dr Dominic Serventy, criticising me when a flock of Zebra Finches flew around the nets instead of into them. However, we eventually managed to catch as many as he wanted. York, 1958.

"They're very expensive birds!": The cynical comment of a passing farmer, noting that there were many of us, including Harry Butler, because the farmer thought that we were all being paid for our labours, when in fact they were all voluntary. York, 1958.

"And by the time I've finished with them they will be a lot more expensive!": Dr Farner responding to the cynical farmer. York, 1958.

"There's a bird in the net!": Sydney Erickson when he saw a Noisy Scrub-bird in our mist net. Two Peoples Bay, 1964.

A clear view of a male Noisy Scrub-bird, on a pathway, two metres from where I was sitting. Two Peoples Bay, 1964.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! It's biting me!": Dr Serventy loudly complaining when being attacked by a ferocious Red-eared Firetail which he was removing from a net. Two Peoples Bay, 1964.

While at Two Peoples Bay we caught a Western Bristlebird in a net. It was quite beautiful but I didn't



Harry Shugg, Dom Serventy, Robert Stranger, Harley Webster, Vincent Serventy, Graham Pizzey and Rica Erickson preparing to catch a Noisy Scrub-bird, Two Peoples Bay, January 1964.

Photo: Sydney Erickson

know what it was, and was therefore a bit embarrassed. However Dr Serventy came to the net and identified it, and we then banded and released it. 1964.

I once did some minor work on Dr Serventy's residence in Everett Street, Nedlands, and he rewarded me, not with money, but with an autographed copy of the latest edition of Birds of WA, which was of course preferred and appreciated.

Dr Serventy firmly believed that when one was in the field one should only pursue the one subject or objective. Doing more was never on his itinerary.

Dr Serventy was a real bird lover and used to enthusiastically exclaim that his favourite was roast chicken served with white sauce.

Overheard: Several eminent ornithologists had been observing a rare species and Dr Serventy used to remark that after they had completed their observations, one of them called out: "Oh! If only we had a gun!"

Corvus coro-no-idea: At a bird group meeting one night, someone brought the corpse of a Corvid, and no one could tell if it was a Crow species, or a Raven (*Corvus coronoides*). Until Dr Serventy examined it, and then, in that conservative humour of his, he identified it as *Corvus coro-no-idea*.

"The mills of God grind slowly": Dr Serventy's standard reply to anyone complaining that something was taking a long time.

"Don't you have faith in our postal service?": Always Dr Serventy's reply to me if I asked him if he received my letter(s).

"Take your pick!": Dr Serventy's Christmas invitation to one, to select a book from his library. Which we mostly did.

WABN crosswords: The only ones I have ever been able to do.

An eminent and leading behaviourist bought a pair of Domestic Turtle-Doves, with the intention of observing and recording their breeding behaviour. But time went by and the birds didn't behave, and our behaviourist was

frustrated and became curious as to why they wouldn't. Finally the pair was shown to Derek Goodwin, an expert on Columbids, who immediately saw the problem. The "pair" of birds were both males!

A Red-necked Stint banded in a previous year was trapped on Pelican Point by me at Christmas of 1959. Dr Serventy

was very excited about this retrap and notified the press. When they arrived he showed them in a book the species' breeding range in the northern hemisphere, and informed them of the species' migration between there and here. The press seemed a little sceptical of what Dr Serventy was telling them however and they asked questions. So he showed them the description of the species in his book. But it was written in Russian, and so they couldn't obtain any extra knowledge other than what he was telling them. Nedlands, 1959.



Harley Webster, Robert Stranger and Dom Serventy
examining the first Noisy Scrub-bird caught,
Two Peoples Bay, 5 January 1964.

Photo: Sydney Erickson

A neighbour once brought me the corpse of a hawk that he had killed in his pigeon coop. It was either a Collared Sparrowhawk or a Brown Goshawk but I showed the bird to Dr Serventy and proudly proclaimed that it was a goshawk. He then looked at the bird's toes and said that it was a sparrowhawk. He then gave me a friendly smile and took much pleasure in telling me that I had erred. Nedlands, 1961.

We often visited Pelican Point, trapping waders in summer and otherwise making lists of the bird life there. One day I found a large egg there, subsequently showed it to Dr Serventy and told him that it must be that of a pelican. He immediately went onto the offensive and humorously derided me: "It was on Pelican Point so therefore it must be a pelican's. Is that what you're saying?" I conceded that it was and he then humorously asked me if I thought it could be a swan's egg. Chastened, I agreed that it could be because swans sometimes occur there. He then gave me the task of identifying what species of bird had laid it. And yes! It was a swan's.

A muttonbird egg: At one time Dr Serventy had Short-tailed Shearwaters under lights, it being an experiment to see if they could be artificially induced to breed. As time passed by no eggs were laid and we were thinking about why not. Then Barney came in to the laboratory one day, a beaming smile on his face and an egg in his hand. Everyone was thrilled until Dr Serventy examined the egg and pronounced that it was the egg of the Domestic Fowl.

And he laughed at what he thought was a joke on him, by us. But none of us planted the egg and we never did learn who did.

While standing at the rear of my van while drinking water, I heard a bit of a flutter behind me. And there, in all its magnificence, was a fully plumaged male Turquoise Fairy-wren. I considered it to be of greater beauty than our Splendid Fairy-wren, also of incredible splendour. The Turquoise is now classed as a sub-species of the Splendid, but of no less splendour. Eyre Peninsula, SA, 1977.

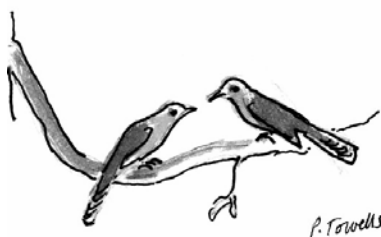
Nocturnal Diamond Doves: Having driven my van into a bog in the Kimberley, one night, say about 2000 to 2100 hrs, I decided to stay there and review the situation next day. Thus I had time to look around and could see quite plainly because the moon was full and there was sufficient light to do so. Not far away was a large pool of water, also on the road, and Diamond Doves were drinking by the light of the moon. They were not of one flock however because individuals continued to arrive, drink, and then depart again. Fitzroy Crossing, mid-year, 1978.

One morning when camped by a patch of rainforest in Queensland I saw a pair of Black-breasted Button-quail. They were in plain view, scratched and pecked into the litter and completely ignored me. What a good start to the day! North-east Queensland, 1980.

A turkey dinner: Early one morning I found a dead Brush Turkey on the road near where I was camped in Queensland. It had to have been killed overnight and may have been one of the two that I had excitedly observed near my camp at dusk the previous night. It was imperative that I collect any feather lice on it so I deloused it at my camp that night. Then, because I hadn't eaten any dinner, I barbecued it and ate two fillets cut from its breast. Delicious! North-east Queensland, 1980.

An unafraid Tiger Snake: I was assisting Lexie Nicholls during some of her work on the double-broodedness of Silver Gulls on Carnac Island. Tiger Snakes were everywhere and on the island they are largely unafraid of people. With Lexie leading we were working our way between some small bushes and suddenly a large Tiger Snake, which was completely black above, threw itself on top of the vegetation just in front of Lexie, and really frightened her. She turned around, flung herself at me, and loudly uttered a few expletives that a lady shouldn't. Carnac Island, 1973.

Robert Stranger



BIRD TALK
from Penny Towells
Yes, dear, I heard you
the first eight times!

GULLS CARRYING FISH

*There was a bird-watcher named Stranger
Who said gulls, with their feet,
carry Blowfish
It put his reputation in danger.
Those who'd not seen gulls do this
With no fish
Found it hard to swallow,
They cried "Does he expect us
To believe him?"
No never! It surely
must follow
He lies or his optics
Deceive him!*

D.G.

The above doggerel verse was written by Derek Goodwin in reference to my blunder in saying that the Silver Gull picks up Blowfish with its feet (Feeding of the Silver Gull on the Blowfish. WA Naturalist, 1970). The gulls pick them up with their beaks, of course! Only Derek Goodwin and Lexie Nicholls pointed it out to me, but another person unkindly said that I shouldn't worry about it because no-one would believe it anyway!

I corrected the error in a subsequent paper.

(Derek Goodwin was an English ornithologist and long-time member of the 'Bird Room' of the British Museum of Natural History. He liked to compose doggerel verse, but is better known for his books *Columbids of the World*, *Crows of the World*, *Estrildid Finches of the World* and numerous other publications on birds. He was in Australia for part of the British Museum's Harold Hall Expeditions in the 1960s.)

Robert Stranger

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON BEING A MEMBER FOR OVER HALF A LIFETIME

Like many members, I joined BA (then the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union) during the first Atlas. With that project around Australia, and the South-West Waterbird Project in WA, it was an exciting time within the organisation. There was also the Wader Study Group, with the first of the North-West expeditions, an Australia-wide count programme and a very active local group, the WA Wader Study Group, initiated by the late Jeremy Talbot. Eyre Bird Observatory had recently been established and WA members of BA were drawn together. Excursions started to happen, an office was established and over the years, the WA Group began to take on projects of its own.

Of course, there have been downs as well as ups from that time to the present, but I have remained a member, although not, I'm afraid, a very active one. I haven't gone on a bird walk, to an observatory or on a campout for over a decade, and I only get to half the general meetings despite being on the Committee. It might seem that I get very little out of being a member, but that brings me to the point of this personal perspective.

I didn't join BA, and I don't remain a member, because of what I can get from the organisation. I rarely have time to read *Wingspan* and I only skim through *WA Bird Notes*, while my weekends are usually too hectic for bird walks. I would really like to take a week off and spend it with the family at Eyre, a place I first visited in 1977 and where I lived for a month in 1980, but maybe next year.

The point to my membership is that by being a member, I support an organisation that is doing the sorts of things that I think need to be done. Several people have recently commented that we have a lot of inactive members and have discussed ways to get them involved. I'm not sure they need this. I think that a lot of members simply want to belong to an organisation that is active in conservation, research, education and providing for birdwatchers, but don't really want to, or haven't the time, to do these things themselves. Given the importance of having a large membership, perhaps this is something we need to think about.

Mike Bamford



Australian Hobby seen at the Mokami Nature Reserve
Drawing by Diane Beckingham

At each site, as one approached, there was the initial clamour of Galahs and Australian Ringnecks guarding their nest hollows in salmon-gums. Then the other usual suspects — Weebill, Striated Pardalote, Tree Martin, White-browed Babbler, Grey Shrike-thrush and Australian

Raven could soon be heard. After a lull, a pair of Elegant Parrots (Sites 1, 2, 3) were seen to fly off to another high branch, making only a faint 'tsit' call. (They should be called Discreet Parrots!) Searching around the shrubs of *Exocarpos* and *Melaleuca* turned up the smaller birds: Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Red-capped Robin, and perhaps a Grey Fantail or Willie Wagtail. At the very end the rewards would turn up: an Australian Hobby perched on a horizontal branch of a salmon-gum (Sites 2, 3); a pair of Mulga Parrots in a pose a photographer

dreams of (Sites 1, 4); a few Varied Sittellas suddenly appearing in gimlet trees (Sites 3, 4); and a Jacky Winter actively feeding at ground level (Site 4 only).

An average of 14 species was recorded for each site.

Once again, I'm grateful to the Atlas Project for motivating me to camp in gravel pits and old rubbish dumps, with frosty nights and ice on the gear in the morning!

Diane Beckingham

Members' contributions

A WHEATBELT TRIP — EAST OF KELLERBERRIN, 6–10 September

My bumper sticker reads: "I Stop For Elegant Parrots!" And who wouldn't?

Close views of these attractive golden-olive parrots, and learning how to spot them before they fly off so quietly, were a feature of a recent trip. Usually when in the wheatbelt, I head for the granite rock outcrops, but this time our Atlas Regional Officer pointed me in the direction of a different kind of habitat — woodlands of salmon-gum and gimlet trees. Cheryl Gole wanted more surveys of several specific CALM biodiversity sites related to the Salinity Action Plan. This concentrated the mind wonderfully. I did two-hectare surveys in late afternoon and early morning: 1. Mt Hampton Nature Reserve (SE of Merredin), 2. Buller Road (NW of Bruce Rock), 3. Mokami Nature Reserve (SW of Bruce Rock) and 4. Arthur Road (NE of Kellerberrin). A similar pattern of observations emerged.

ROADKILL SCAVENGERS

It is a common experience when travelling early in the morning on country roads to see a scavenging party on the road ahead. On a car approaching the party feasting on a recently killed kangaroo, the first to slink away is the feral cat, followed by the fox and always last the Wedge-tailed Eagle which rises majestically into the air at the last moment before the vehicle arrives.

This year 2001 has been a year of drought and fewer birds of prey have been in evidence. On 10 August on a gravel road south of Wiluna the scavenging party ahead revealed a surprise: Pied Butcherbirds and Magpie-larks and no birds of prey.

North of Wiluna at Carnarvon Range, where there had been devastating bushfires six months previously followed by lack of rain, there was a large mosaic revealing very little revegetation, resulting in a paucity of birdlife and very few birds of prey. In fact, in the more vegetated areas of the mosaic, complete bodies of kangaroos and a camel were mummified and showed very little predation.

Mary Bremner

RUFOUS TREECREEPERS

There used to be a song entitled “Where have all the flowers gone...?” The same could well be said of the Rufous Treecreepers at Flynn Road, in the Shire of Mundaring. When we first visited the area in 1986 the species was a common sight, but not so nowadays.

We first visited the two chosen areas in March 1986 and have since been there over 80 times. During our earlier visits we only recorded that the species was present, but we began to realise that these records gave no indication of the health of any of the species in the areas. So since 1989 our records have indicated the numbers of each bird species seen on each visit.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s we always saw treecreepers throughout the region, to the extent that our counts often exceeded 10 or more individuals but, for the past six to eight years, their numbers have been declining to the extent that now only one or two birds are seen.

This decline coincided with the observation that, in the mid-90s, the area became a popular area for illicit cutting of firewood and most of the fallen timber and dead trees disappeared—all we could find was pathetic little heaps of sawdust. This, in our opinion, is one of the reasons for the decline of the species. There could be many others as Flynn Road now suffers from such ‘entrancing’ sports as trail bike riding, and Rally Australia, where noise seems to be the principal by-product.

Bryan Barrett

Editors' note: This is a very interesting observation, and one that highlights the importance of long-term observations. Gary Luck, in his PhD D thesis on Rufous Treecreepers at Dryandra, suggested that fallen logs were really important for shelter for recently fledged Rufous Treecreepers and could be a critical factor in breeding success. Gary predicted that loss of fallen logs would lead to local population decline, but he was not able to test this. Bryan's observations from Flynn Road are consistent with Gary's prediction, and suggest that, if we wish to maintain treecreeper populations at Flynn Road, careful management of timber resources is required.

BIDGEMIA 23–26 JULY AND COBRA 27–30 JULY

Anne and I stayed at Bidgemia station (pronounced Bidgee-myah, presumably deriving from the Aboriginal, Bidge's place or home) from 22–26 July inclusive. The station homestead stands on the bank of the Gascoyne River, about 10 km east of Gascoyne Junction. From 27–30 July inclusive we travelled some 150 km nor-west (in a straight line, longer by road) to Cobra Station. Cobra homestead is the former Bangemall Hotel.

One of the disadvantages of birding in semi-arid areas is that it is difficult to ascertain in advance how ‘semi’ the area is. As it occasioned Bidgemia had experienced a poor year and Cobra has had three poor years in succession. The result was a noticeable absence of flowering trees and shrubs, the exceptions being *Hakea suberea* (the Cork Tree) and *Acacia victoriae* (Prickly Acacia). Because of the overall paucity of flowers, honeyeaters flew often to the flowering acacia, apparently finding it much more attractive than the flowers of the Cork Tree. We had not

previously seen such frequent acacia usage: it must have resulted from the poor season and lack of alternative. Near and in the river beds *Crotalaria cunninghamii* bloomed with attractive greenish flowers. Called the Green Birdflower (because of the flower shape) it seemed of no interest to birds.

The general flora of both stations is similar, both have rivers and creeks lined with River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and other trees, while away from these wetter areas there is low arid shrubland, interspersed with areas of gravel or stone. Bidgemia is a working cattle station in the process of being ‘converted’ from a sheep station. Cobra until two years ago was a sheep station, but is now owned by CALM and is almost completely without stock. This appears to have resulted in a large increase in the kangaroo/wallaby population, but as the wells are not being maintained, they will eventually cease to operate (some have already) and it seems probable the marsupial numbers will then decline.

One positive result of de-stocking is the re-growth of plants and grasses on areas of bare stone and gravel despite the recent poor seasons. Although still small, with a good season or two, Cobra will transform. It is worth adding that a disadvantage of the ownership change is that the station tracks are not maintained, limiting or preventing access to large areas of the station.

The two stations, having similar flora, had 40 species in common, nearly 64.5% of the total of 62 bushbird species seen on the two stations.

Bidgemia contains a large area of Gascoyne River, which in wetter times would have several large and deep pools, but in this drier year there was one large deep pool and a number of shallow ones. These were used by waterbirds. These were Grey Teal (flock of 8), Darter (1), Little Pied Cormorant (small numbers), Little Black Cormorant (in groups of 3 to 9), Great Cormorant (1), Australian Pelican (2), White-faced Heron (several pairs), Great Egret (1), Nankeen Night Heron (4), Yellow-billed Spoonbill (2) and Black-fronted Dotterel (several small groups).

In the south-west it seems the Whistling Kite ought to be categorised as a waterbird, being seen so frequently in association with water and uncommonly away from it. In the Gascoyne the most common raptor over the rather desiccated country was the Whistling Kite, often seen in pairs. The next most common was the Wedge-tailed Eagle, also often in pairs, though in the almost complete absence of rabbits, their Gascoyne diet must be different to the south-west. Ian Rowley (1990, *Behavioural Ecology of the Galah*, Surrey Beatty/CSIRO) mentions the Wedge-tailed Eagle as the “chief avian predator” (p.149) of the Galah. At both stations there were many Galahs, some mobs at Cobra coming to water (at a well-windmill) and roost in the evening exceeding 500 birds.

A single Black-breasted Buzzard was seen some 3 km north of the Cobra boundary on Mt Augustus Station (into which one has to go in order to reach a part of Cobra). This species is not recorded within the Atlas (1984) square.

The bushbird species common to each station were Emu, Whistling Kite, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed

Eagle, Brown Falcon, Australian Hobby, Nankeen Kestrel, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Spinifex Pigeon, Galah, Little Corella, Australian Ringneck, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Red-backed Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Splendid Fairy-wren, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Red-capped Robin, Crested Bellbird, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Willie Wagtail, Australian Magpie-lark, Grey Fantail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Black-faced Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Little Crow, Richard's Pipit, Zebra Finch, Welcome Swallow, Fairy Martin and Rufous Songlark.

A Grey Fantail was seen on both stations (which are in different Atlas squares). The Grey Fantail was not recorded in either square for the Atlas (1984). Their presence in adjacent squares suggests they are resident in the area although in small numbers.

Species seen at Bidgemia (which has the advantage of Gascoyne River bank areas) which were not seen at Cobra were Peaceful Dove, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Southern Boobook, Barn Owl, Rainbow Bee-eater, Black-tailed Treecreeper, White-winged Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote, Western Gerygone, Slaty-backed Thornbill, White-browed Babbler, Chiming Wedgebill, White-winged Triller, Masked Woodswallow and Torresian Crow (based on call, wing shuffling and solitary, non-soaring behaviour—the Little Crows were mainly in flocks, varying from 10 to 300).

Of these Bidgemia-only species, the Black-tailed Treecreeper is noteworthy. Two birds were seen together near the centre of the Gascoyne River bed (which is about 1 km wide). This species was not recorded in the Atlas (1984) and the nearest Atlas record is over 200 km away, although there are some more recent records from near Winnamia Pool.

Species seen only at Cobra were Common Bronzewing, Diamond Dove, Bourke's Parrot, Variegated Fairy-wren, Grey Butcherbird, Spotted Bowerbird and Tree Martin.

The Spotted Bowerbird, another species unrecorded in the Atlas (1984) square, obligingly flew into a bare tree by which we were standing, to perch less than 4 m away — too close to focus the binoculars. There it inspected us at leisure, between hunting insects in the bark, until we moved off.

Finding birds in the semi-arid country is time consuming (and was hot at times) and 37% of the species recorded at Bidgemia were seen on one day only, and usually once only. Similarly at Cobra, 38% were one day only species. However for those who enjoy the type of country both stations are interesting and would be much

more so after a good season.

Our thanks to Jane and Lachlan McTaggart of Bidgemia and Mrs A Lang of Cobra for their assistance.

Bruce Buchanan



Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes are seen commonly throughout the station country.

Drawing by Pam Free

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS NEAR MANDURAH

The following are interesting sightings I have made over the last few months.

(1) On 22 August, while searching for Hooded Plovers at Boundary Lake in the Yalgorup National Park, I came across a pair of Inland Dotterels. First one came out of the reeds and then the other. We stood silently observing each other for at least five minutes before they decided I was not worth

observing and they retired into the reeds. The black breast markings were a little fuzzy so I am presuming they were coming into full adult plumage. This is very unusual habitat for Inland Dotterels — this species is normally associated with bare, open areas. However, there is a two hectare bare claypan immediately adjacent to the reeds, and I assume the birds were just taking temporary shelter.

(2) During 8–15 September I saw three times and heard another three times a Buff-banded Rail in the reeds at Soldiers Cove, Mandurah. Then, on 10 November I saw two downy young.

(3) Pied Oystercatchers have bred again at Soldiers Cove. This is the third year in a row but there only appears to be one chick this year.

Dick Rule

AN UNUSUAL NEST RECORD

During August this year, a pair of Grey Shrike-thrushes built their nest on a shelf above the gas cylinders against the wall of my house (see photographs below). The cylinders are in a roofed patio area which is screened by a vine but the nest area is devoid of vegetation. The nest was about 1.5 metres from the most frequently used door in the house.

The first egg was laid on 4 September and the second on 6 September. A bird was sitting tight from 7 September on and both eggs hatched on 25 September. By 7 October, the adults had ceased to brood the chicks during the day and both chicks left the nest on 12 October. They perched in vegetation close to the nest for a day or two before disappearing into the surrounding coastal acacia vegetation.

What I presume are the same two adult birds appear to have started to build a second nest in a more conventional area, low in a melaleuca in the garden.

Bill Russell

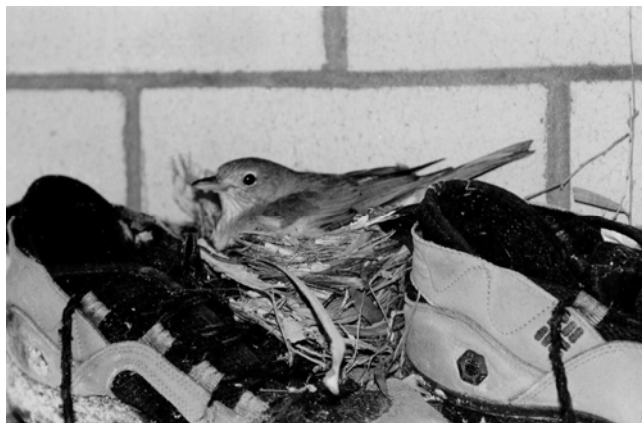


THE INTRODUCED EASTERN LONG-BILLED CORELLA AT NEIL HAWKINS PARK IN JOONDALUP

I have been living in this area since 1984 and first observed and reported Eastern Long-billed Corellas in the Joondalup area in 1993, when I saw eleven birds in Perry's Paddock, on the east side of Lake Joondalup. The species is now thriving in a number of areas around Perth.

My personal observations of this species have been around Lake Joondalup and especially in the public picnic area of Neil Hawkins Park, Joondalup. This picnic area has increased in popularity so much that now it's a popular place for the general public to bring their overseas and interstate visitors to feed birds and kangaroos. In observations on the local Twenty Eight Parrot or Australian Ringneck, it too has increased its feeding routines by accepting seed from the public. The numbers of Australian Ringnecks feeding from the public were low to start with, but you can now see fifty or more parrots feeding. So tame are these birds that even bus tours make it a regular stopping spot.

For the last seven years numbers of Long-billed Corellas in Neil Hawkins Park have been increasing and the park now has over 110 corellas coming in and feeding from the public. This increase has probably been helped along by the public providing extra seeds. At the annual corella count in 2000, I counted 75 plus. In 2001, I counted 110 plus with a number of adult pairs feeding at least two young birds each. Who knows what numbers I will see after this breeding season?



These Grey Shrike-thrushes have chosen an unusual nest site!

Photograph by Bill Russell

I have watched with interest how the main two parrot species are interacting with the public and each other. I know from experience how aggressive the Eastern Long-billed Corella can be and get the feeling that the Australian Ringneck is being forced out to the outer feeding circles.

I believe that if this species continues to increase, as we have seen the Rainbow Lorikeet do, a number of local species may be pushed out, pressured or continue to decline as the corellas increase and urban sprawl continues. The annual corella count has shown some indications of where the corella is spreading. It will be interesting to see over the next few years, if numbers continue to grow, what impact the Eastern Long-billed Corella will have in this State.

Neil Hamilton

BIRDING IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA

As a PhD student in the Department of Zoology, UWA, I was incredibly lucky to have the opportunity recently (July/August) to travel to Phoenix, Arizona, enabling me to work in the lab of Professor Glenn Walsberg at Arizona State University. Here I was able to learn new skills and use equipment unavailable in Australia to investigate the biophysical properties of animal pelts (Numbats, not birds I'm afraid). However, I was very excited about the prospect of seeing a whole range of new and exciting bird species. So off I went, armed with a very old copy of *A Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America* kindly loaned to me by my supervisor. But I had no idea just how lucky I was to be.

Having never been overseas before, in fact having never flown before, I was rather nervous about the trip—it really was a very, very long way to travel all alone for your first flight! "But think of all the exciting new species you will see," I kept reminding myself, flicking through the field guide for the hundredth time. Finally I arrived, and couldn't wait to step out of the airport — every bird would be a new twitch! However, the first three birds I saw in the

US were feral pigeons—I was so disappointed! The disappointment was short-lived though. Professor Walsberg is a keen ornithologist, President of the Cooper Ornithological Society and had been the editor of *The Condor* for many years. I couldn't have asked for a better guide to the local birds. He was a mine of information, and I learnt an unbelievable amount about Arizona's birds (as well as mammals, botany, geography, history, reptiles, geology and politics) during my stay.

My exotic bird list soon grew. Inca and White-winged Doves were feeding on the back lawn when I got up early the next morning. On our walk through the university campus to the lab I was delighted to see Mockingbirds and Mourning Doves, species previously known to me only through words of songs. And then there were the Boat-tailed Grackles, wandering about the small areas of lawn, reminding me of the Australian Magpies at home in their behaviour and nature (although they looked completely different). House Sparrows and Starlings were everywhere.

After working hard in the lab, I was able to escape for a few days, bravely hiring a car (driving on the 'wrong' side of the road) and setting off alone, first towards Tucson to explore the Sonoran desert. Travelling along Interstate 10 at 140 km per hour, something appeared in front of me. In the split second before I hit it I recognised it—a Roadrunner—my first and I had killed it! I was quite devastated. Roadrunners may be a match for coyotes, but cars are another story. I did see three more Roadrunners while in the Saguaro National Park, just out of Tucson. These all remained safe and well. They are quite fearless, and would stand very close to the car, allowing me a terrific view. They were wonderful birds, bigger than I expected, with bright beady eyes and long legs. The Sonoran Desert was beautiful, and teeming with life. Cactus Wrens were everywhere, Gila Woodpeckers perched on the sides of giant Saguaro cactus and I even spotted a Cardinal, his scarlet plumage bright against the green desert landscape. A Gambel's Quail, top-knot bobbing, lead his family into the safety of the prickly vegetation as I approached. A trip north through Sedona and Flagstaff to the Petrified Forest National Park turned up Canyon and Rock Wrens, as well as Common Crows and Ravens. These birds have unusual calls, very different to our Australian Ravens.

After some more work in the lab, Professor Walsberg invited me to visit his family at their mountain home (a retreat from the sauna of the Sonoran Desert summer) in Parks, north west of Flagstaff. This was the most wonderful week, with some fantastic birding (and also some great mammals as well: elk, mule deer, tree squirrels, raccoons, skunks, rock squirrels, prairie dogs, grey fox, pronghorn antelope and gophers). Turkey Vultures circled the road all the way from Phoenix to Flagstaff. Mountain Bluebirds were nesting by the letterbox while beautiful blue Steller's Jays ruled the roost in the Ponderosa pines. Scott's Orioles, Band-tailed Pigeons, Hepatic Tanagers, Yellow Robins, Grey-headed Juncos, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Nuthatches and Hairy Woodpeckers could all be watched from the veranda. But best of all were the tiny hummingbirds. Rufous Hummingbirds were constantly

visiting the feeder hung from a large pine, only 2 metres from my spot on the front porch. I spent literally hours sitting watching these tiny but fierce creatures defending this source of energy from other hummers. Their little wings whistled as they chased each other all over the front yard. Every few minutes they would return to the feeder, dipping their bills into the artificial flowers around its rim to drink the sweet sugar water, returning again and again till dusk was well advanced. They were just exquisite, and quite unafraid of humans, allowing a wonderful opportunity to see these unbelievably tiny birds very close.

But the best twitch was still to come. Professor Walsberg kindly offered to take me to visit the Grand Canyon (a definite 'must' for all tourists to Arizona). We had no sooner hopped out of the car than he spotted a Pinyon Jay for me. Later that afternoon, after much sightseeing, we stopped for an ice cream, and it was while sitting on the edge of the canyon, eating our ice creams (protecting them from the hungry rock squirrels) and enjoying the magnificent view, that we saw IT. IT was a Californian Condor! This magnificent bird circled around, before landing on the wall of the canyon, just below us. Professor Walsberg said that it was a young bird, and only the second that he had ever seen. In the early 1980s, only 6 Californian Condors remained in the wild. These birds were captured and added to a captive population of only 16 birds, and a breeding program was begun to save the species from extinction. The birds bred well in captivity, and several juvenile birds have been released at two sites, one in California and one just north of the Grand Canyon National Park. Today there are 25 Californian Condors in Arizona, one of which I was lucky enough to see. Californian Condors live for about 70 years, and are communal, young birds learning necessary survival skills from older individuals. As all the released birds are so young, it is really encouraging that they seem to be doing so well. The biggest problem so far has been lead poisoning, resulting in the deaths of four birds. Hunting is very big in America, and lead shot in animal carcasses consumed by the condors resulted in high levels of lead in their systems. Research is being carried out into alternative forms of ammunition to overcome this problem. On a brighter note, this year one pair of condors produced an egg, nesting on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. This was the first Californian Condor egg produced in the wild for two decades. Unfortunately the egg was broken, probably due to the inexperience of the parents. The birds are still very young, and it is hoped that as they mature they will eventually breed successfully. 'Our' condor stayed on the wall of the canyon for some time, before finally taking off again, soaring effortlessly on its enormous wings. We were to glimpse this bird (identified by his patagial tags) once more before we returned, over Mather Point. I really couldn't believe my luck, to see such a rare and magnificent bird. I was expecting to see lots of exciting American bird species, but never dreamt that I would be able to watch a Californian Condor in its own habitat.

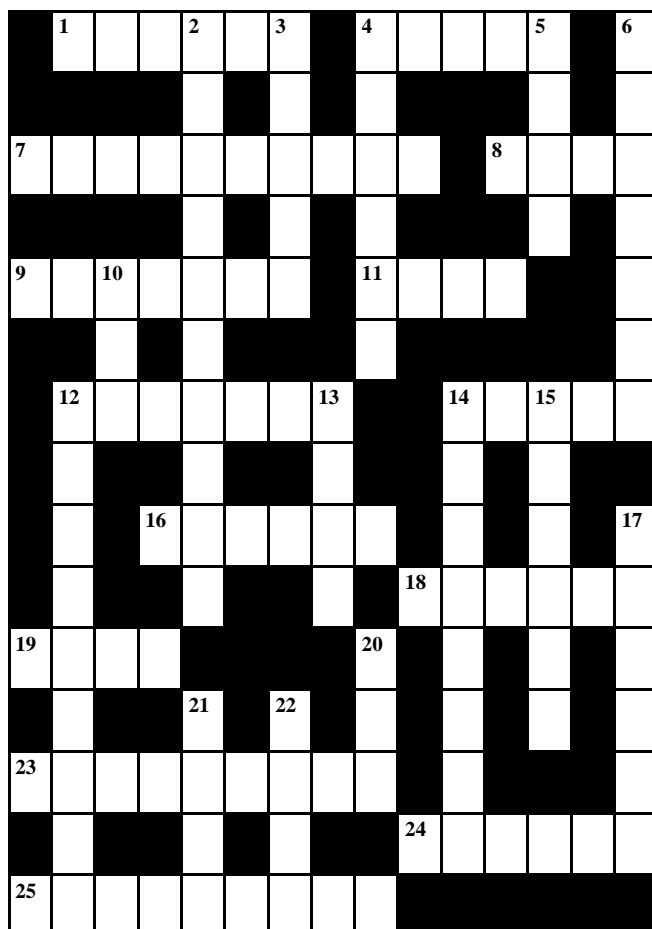
My trip soon came to an end, and I had to return to the cold winter weather here in Perth (it ranged from 40 to

48°C in Phoenix every day) to continue my research. I really did have the most wonderful time while I was away, seeing lots of new species, and discovering that the trip really wasn't as scary as I had feared! I found that bird watching in another country is challenging. I hadn't realised how familiar I had become with the general characteristics of bird groups at home. Features of birds, such as flight pattern, behaviour and the overall 'gizz' of the bird are incredibly useful tools in guiding you to a correct identification. Combined with a familiar field guide, identification of a species, even a new one, from a familiar family is much easier task. In America I had no idea. So many of the birds were unfamiliar and it was incredibly hard to identify some species on my own. It was like starting bird watching again from scratch—an interesting learning experience. I am grateful to Professor Walsberg for allowing me to work in his lab, and especially for taking the time to find all sorts of American birds (and other animals) for me to see, as well as telling me all about their physiology, behaviour, ecology, etc. I still can't believe that he managed to find a Californian Condor—definitely the highlight of my trip!

Chris Cooper

Crossword No 27

By Pam Agar



CLUES ACROSS

1. Useful bill measurement to identify sea-birds.
4. To make, create.
7. At risk.
8. Egg shape.
9. Large raptor found in NW of WA.
11. Made use of.
12. Amusing to watch.
14. State of nesting colony, caused by presence of gull.
16. Reddish.
18. Very uncommon species.
19. Sustenance.
23. One of whistling duck species.
24. May be surprising how far you did this, to find sightings.
25. Type of law needed to protect wildlife.

CLUES DOWN

2. Enjoying the company of others.
3. Alternative reason for record.
4. Introduced species, common in Sydney.
5. To enter the water steeply.
6. Ocean going.
10. Site of evening visit in early 2001.
12. Diving bird of the coast and inland.
13. Opposite to soft.
14. Former name of Shy Heathwren.
15. You may be asked to do this with an unusual record.
17. Cross-bred.
20. May contain food for a ground-dweller.
21. Coastal bird often seen along Swan Estuary.
22. A pigeon may prefer its berries this way.

Notices

BAWA WEB SITE AND REVISED BIRD GUIDES

Your committee has approved the development of a web site for our organisation. After investigating many internet service providers it has been decided to change our ISP from Starwon to iiNet.

From December our new e-mail address is birdswa@iinet.net.au

The new web site is at <http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>

Frank O'Connor has been asked to develop the web site. Frank will consult with the committee, Rob Davis and the national office. Your input will be very much appreciated. Our web site will be available from December.



Sponsored by
Lotteries Commission

The catalyst that led to the decision for a web site was the desire to publish our large series of WA bird guide brochures so that they are available to a much wider audience. This will lead to a reduction in reprinting costs, which have been a problem. The bird guides will be updated more often as the information changes. Allan Jones has been the driving force behind the development of this outstanding asset for our group. Allan has obtained a grant from the Lotteries Commission to fund the revision of all the brochures and to convert them to a format that can be published on our web site.

There are currently 60 bird guides and bird lists for many areas of the state. These will rapidly be put on our web site as the information is updated. Allan is also pursuing options for the development of further bird guides to fill some of the gaps. The new bird guides can be developed at one-tenth the cost by publishing them on the web rather than printing and distributing 2000 copies. We welcome suggestions and the information for the publication of more bird guides.

The bird guides will be the main focus for the web site, but much more will be done. We will promote our organisation, our greeting cards, our projects, our activities (meetings, excursions, WABN, library, WA Database) and WA sightings. We will provide links to the sites already established by Eyre Bird Observatory and Broome Bird Observatory (at

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

We are aware that many members do not have direct access to the internet. This is your chance to ask your local library or community centre about how to use the facilities that they provide for you.

We look forward to your comments. Please send them to the office at birdswa@iinet.net.au or to Frank at foconnor@iinet.net.au

NEW BAWA COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER

Since Gail and I returned from the north after 16 years' absence, I've been on the lookout for a task to keep me busy during my retirement. For that reason I was happy to accept the position of Community Liaison Officer when it was offered to me early in September.

I am mindful of time restraints and also the high standard set by Judy Blyth during her time in the job. If members of BAWA are happy for me to at least attempt to do the job, I am eager to do my best.

Even though Gail and I have been members of Birds Australia for around 20 years, we have been absent from Perth for 75% of that time. Since that means we are relatively unknown to the bulk of the

membership, a short pen picture of our roles over those 20 years may be appropriate.

Before we left Perth, we had become active running bird walks but were otherwise fairly quiet. Since then we have served as wardens at Eyre, and were the pioneer wardens at Broome. When we left Broome in 1991, while Gail went back to her profession of nursing, Brice took up every job that was offered. This included working on such projects as the Gouldian Finch recovery program, the Red Goshawk project, Roadside Remnants surveys, and Rainforest bird surveys. He also conducted bird watching trips from Darwin to the south-west of WA and made five boat trips over the North Kimberley as a lecturer on the local birds and the history of the region.

In February this year, we returned to Perth. We have bought a home here and expect to finally settle down in the city of our birth.

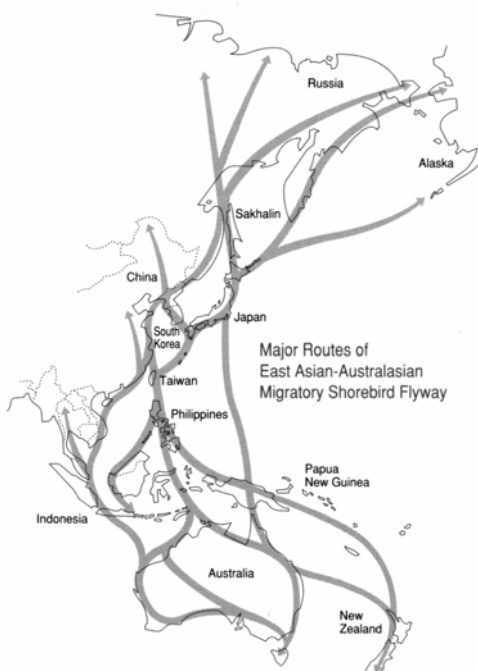
We need people to assist in a range of fields. If you feel you have something to offer, please contact Brice by telephone (9255 3710) or leave a message at Perry House.

Brice and Gail Wells

THE EAST ASIAN-AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY WADER FLAGGING PROGRAM

Under a Flyway-wide program small plastic flags have been placed on the legs of waders. Each country or region has been given a colour combination code. At the moment Alaska, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand are flagging waders.

The program has been hugely successful in tracing the movements of waders, the timing of migrations of different populations, and the locations of breeding areas and non-breeding areas. It is clarifying many hitherto unanswerable questions about waders. The new knowledge is feeding directly into our understanding of the conservation needs of waders.



There are estimated to be about 60 000 waders that are alive today carrying flags. A massive increased effort is needed everywhere to search for flagged birds, and anybody can do it. There are still huge gaps in the search coverage in many places in the Flyway, and even in large parts of Australia. Also, in some places people are becoming apathetic to looking for flags, simply because many have been seen before.

Every flag sighting is valuable. The more flags that are reported from one locality the more useful are the data, as they can then be used for calculating such aspects as migration timing, proportions of populations using sites, partial northward migration of immature birds, and much more. Please do not however report flag sightings from near to

Great Hooded Plover Count 2nd – 10th March 2002

All welcome. We especially need people to venture into the Esperance area.

For details contact:

Julie Raines tel. 9306 5819

places of banding, at least in Australia, unless they are inland.

Negative sightings are also of use and this has not hitherto been recognised. For example, the first stop off location for many wader species from southern Australia is still unknown. Negative sightings from the northern coasts of Australia will prove that many do not stop there (which we suspect). Where then is their first stop off in Asia? In many cases we do not know because we receive hardly any reports from SE Asia — does this mean they are not stopping there, or is it simply because they are not being looked for?

Details about the flagging program, the colour combinations used, an electronic reporting form and who to send sightings to, are shown on the Australasian Wader Studies Group website at:

www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/index.htm

You will also now be able to report negative sightings on the form.

For sightings within Australia, please send to Clive Minton, preferably by e-mail <mintons@ozemail.com.au>. Fax (03 9589 4901) or mail (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Victoria 3193, Australia) can also be used.

For sightings in other countries, these can also be sent to Clive Minton (especially if birds are thought to be of Australian origin) or to the Banding Scheme in that country. All sightings will be promptly acknowledged.

A massive effort has gone into flagging the birds. Please can everybody throughout the Flyway also put in a massive effort into finding them again.

Rosalind Jessop (Chair,
Australasian Wader Studies Group)

Jim Wilson (Chair, AWSG Scientific Committee)

WA BIRD RESEARCH FORUM

Do you have a project on birds? Would you like to meet other people who are carrying out similar projects?

Your project might be a simple monitoring or survey project or it might be an academic study for a thesis or for scientific publication. Many of us, whatever our bird related project might be, would like to know who else is working on similar projects, or would like to develop better contacts for advice, collaboration or assistance.

In order to help develop better contacts between such people, we propose to hold an informal forum, tentatively scheduled for March 2002. The venue is yet to be determined—it will depend in part on the number of people wanting to attend.

Anyone studying birds is welcome to attend—the only requirement is that you be prepared to spend a few minutes describing to the group what you are trying to achieve with your project, and some idea of results to date. It is an opportunity to seek volunteers, collaborators, etc to assist with your project.

We hope to make this a stimulating and interesting day - but its success will depend on you, the potential participant! If you are interested, please let one of us know:

- Wes Bancroft (9380 1493 BH, 9389 7939 AH, wes@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)
- Allan Burbidge (9405 5100 BH, 9306 1642 AH, austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au)
- Rob Davis (9380 1493 BH, 9389 5553 AH, robjen@iinet.net.au)
- Chris Norwood (9459 8537)
- Jennifer Wilcox (9389 5553 AH, robjen@iinet.net.au)

Bird Atlas: 2002 and Beyond

The first phase of the Atlas of Australian Birds draws to a close at the end of 2001 but the Atlas will continue beyond that date, probably for some years, and your contributions are welcome and needed.

All records submitted before May 2002 will be used for bird distribution information for the Atlas book.

Complete surveys or single records are all useful. We particularly need records for the following:

- **Seabirds: breeding records, or sight records, all species all areas**
- **Breeding records for all species in all regions, including the Swan Coastal Plain and Perth. We have few breeding records for some species, including some very common birds. If they've been breeding in your backyard, or somewhere else, and you can give us a date and location, please send in the record.**
- **Sight and breeding records for WA's threatened birds (see enclosed WA Atlas newsletter for a species list)**

The Atlas is a valuable tool for the conservation of WA's birds. Your contribution is important. It's not too late to help!

Rarities, expansions of known range, and breeding records in unexpected locations may require additional information.

Want an Atlas kit, or want to know more?

Contact Cheryl Gole, WA Atlas Coordinator
BA WA, 71 Oceanic Drive, FLOREAT WA 6014
Tel/Fax: 9293 4958 (all hours);
email: gole@starwon.com.au

Or:

Call into the BA office on Tuesdays (not January)

SHORT SUMMARY OF THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The most recent Birds Australia Council meeting was held in Melbourne on the weekend of 25 August. A range of issues were discussed and decided including recommendations from the new CEO. This is a short summary of some of the main points.

Motions were passed in relation to observatories including exploring possibilities for greater involvement of State agencies to assist with operating costs. Council also discussed the re-negotiation of the lease for Rotamah Island observatory.

Regional groups were asked to consider a cut in the subsidy paid from national office for a period of one year. In addition, *Wingspan* rates will be slightly increased next year to cover increases in postage and CPI rises.

A range of matters in relation to our new reserve Newhaven were resolved. These included budgets, fundraising and volunteer issues. Council resolved that until a management plan was completed, the number of volunteers at Newhaven be limited to ten at any one time.

The Australian Wader Studies Group submitted new rules for consideration. These were set aside pending a number of queries.

A discussion paper was tabled by the Council sub-committee looking into how best to develop lines of communication across the many facets of Birds Australia. The group will come back to the next Council meeting.

Council established a sub-committee to work on ways to keep the atlas going after completion of our current contract with Environment Australia.

Council also noted the ongoing pressure of raising the required funds every month to complete HANZAB and requested the CEO to investigate ways in which we could make the job easier for all concerned.

Finally, slight changes were made to our membership structure to make student membership more attractive.

The next meeting will be held in Canberra on the weekend of 8 and 9 December 2001.

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

Redmond, 11 September

The September outing was dedicated to atlassing. Ten members split into small groups and recorded the birds in the area reaching from Redmond to the Hay River.

A total of 55 species were recorded. Whilst no unusual sightings were recorded we managed to survey ten blocks that had not previously been atlassed.

Anne Bondin
Albany Bird Group

Warriup Road, 9 October

Seven people in three cars left the Bakers Junction car park at 8:00 am to proceed to Warriup Road, which is east of Many Peaks and off the Hassell Highway.

We started with the first car at 8:45 am taking 45 minutes within 500 m of GPS reading 34°42'17" S 118° 20'31" E.

It was a productive outing with a total of 53 species seen between the seven members.

We survived a few showers of rain but the cars were never very far away.

Besides the birds there, the wildflowers were plentiful and of all sorts.

After all meeting up for an Atlas call, we had a picnic lunch and then came home satisfied with the results and the day.

Vivian McCormick
Albany Bird Group

Observatory reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Once again we must thank two of our departing Assistant Wardens, Natalie Pawlik and Antony Williams, for their time and efforts at the observatory. From 15 December the caretakers will be Mavis Russell and Phil Joy, until suitable wardens are found and welcomed to the observatory early next year.

Well it's that time again, the wet is on its way! The humidity is slightly ever increasing, the mosquitoes are becoming more evident (much to our displeasure) along with increased sightings of reptiles, mainly lizards and geckos, and amphibians. Which is giving one particular warden grief with their daily chorus at 5 am, just outside his window. Who needs alarm clocks when you've got Green Treefrogs!

Tens of thousands of migratory shorebirds have arrived at the shores of Roebuck Bay, much to the delight of the wardens and participants in the Australian Wader Studies Group, who are currently present at the observatory. Many of the shorebirds have arrived so exhausted that they are unable to fly any further, providing dinner for the ever watchful Brahminy Kites and White-bellied Sea-Eagles. Apart from taking the occasional shorebird, White-bellied Sea-Eagles have also been seen carrying sea-snakes on many occasions flying over the observatory.

Some of the more interesting birds seen returning to Roebuck Bay and the surrounding area from their Arctic migration include great numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits, Red-necked Stints, Grey and Pacific Golden Plovers, Little Curlews (especially on the inland wetlands), Oriental



Plovers, Asian Dowitchers and Oriental Pratincoles (seen regularly at the sewerage works). Yellow Wagtail, Wood Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Barn Swallow and snipe sp. (yet to be identified) have also been seen fairly regularly at the sewerage works.

The Australian Wader Study Group (AWSG) North-west Wader and Tern 2001 Expedition is coming to an end after several weeks of catching, flagging and releasing birds. Some fascinating birds caught and observed throughout the duration of the expedition in Roebuck Bay included several shorebirds with orange leg flags (previously caught in Victoria), yellow over orange leg flags (previously caught in South Australia) and one bird that has been caught previously in Korea (orange over white). On one of the nearby lakes, the AWSG team caught over 100 Little Curlews, which were once again observed thoroughly, flagged and released.

Trips away from Broome were also very productive with just over 400 Roseate Terns caught on the Lacepede Islands, where 25 000 of this particular species were observed along with thousands of breeding Brown Boobies and Common Noddies, numerous Lesser Frigatebirds with chicks on nests. These birds were not the only ones breeding on the islands, as Green Turtles were also in abundance swimming around and laying eggs in the sand.

On the other hand, the trip down to Port Hedland Saltworks saw a very interesting catch of 22 Red-necked Phalaropes.

This year's *Welcome Back the Waders* workshops were successful with everybody going away with over 120 species ranging from Flock Bronzewing to Long-toed Stint. Various habitats were visited including inland wetlands, mangroves, shoreline and the sweet smelling Broome sewerage works, which is always good for waders returning from their long flight.

Next year's workshops are filling quickly, with only a few places left on the *Wave the Waders Goodbye* workshop (15-19 April), while the other workshops have plenty of vacancies still available. These include:

- *Banding Fieldcraft*, lead by the experienced Perry & Alma de Rebeira (20-24 May)
- *Welcome Back the Waders* (19-23 September & 4-8 October)

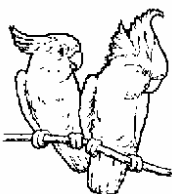
Luke Paterson and Antony Williams
Assistant Wardens

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

We left you last time with the "Whales of Eyre".

Sadly for us, the seven or so Southern Right Whales and their calves that graced our shore over the past few months have departed to make the long trek south. What indelible memories they leave us with and who knows, maybe they will return next year.

Spring is definitely upon us though and a marvellous time we've been having. Naturally, there is a significant amount of nesting/breeding activity and it is a joy to see good quantities of young fledging, and taking to the air.



Unfortunately the Welcome Swallows are making heavy weather of things with a high mortality rate among the young possibly due to a coolish October along with a lack of food.

Speaking of heavy weather - the occasional storm that comes up from the depths of the Southern Ocean at this time of year has thrown up some very interesting finds. Generally they are seabirds that have succumbed to the fury of nature and have then washed ashore: Blue Petrels, prions and the like, but a Dwarf Sperm Whale? Not often seen even at sea, they are primarily a deep water whale that sinks quickly below the surface when approached. At 2.5 m long this adult was probably fully grown.

Live action on the beach is prolific!

Certainly the waders are visiting *en masse* and it is good to see a number of birds sporting orange or orange/yellow flags.

New sightings include Common Greenshank, Ruddy Turnstone, Great and Red Knots, Pink-eared Ducks, Whimbrel, Sharp-tailed and Terek Sandpipers, Grey-tailed Tattler and Grey and Oriental Plovers.

Another beach highlight has been the appearance of 'runners' or Red-capped Plover chicks. These balls of fluff with matchsticks for legs are an absolute joy to watch as they sprint up and down the beach, ducking down behind a seaweed pile when they think you're not watching.

The 'Magic Moment' to date, however, has been to watch, over a period of five weeks, the progress of a Grey Currawong chick. Maturing from a tiny bag of pink into a fluffy ball of grey whose beak grew and grew, it was a delight to see this downy juvenile eventually take flight.

Better still is to see it now, still going strong, trailing along after its parents as they search out food for it and themselves.

October was a very busy month on the human front too with our regular bird banding course kicking it all off. The course runs for six days and mist nets are spread in a number of different areas around the homestead. All participants, whether here for the duration or a few days, enjoyed themselves immensely. Naturally, large numbers of Silvereyes and New Holland Honeyeaters were caught but there were a number of interesting 'new' captures and re-traps.

While not netted or expected, a Baillon's Crake also turned up at the beginning of the month. Somewhat of a

WARDENS: Eyre Bird Observatory

Should a vacancy occur, the positions of Wardens of Eyre Bird Observatory will become available in 2002.

Set in the mallee woodlands of Nuytsland Nature Reserve on the Nullarbor Coast, south of Cocklebidy and 550 km east of Norseman WA, the observatory has a beautiful natural setting close to the coastal dunes. Wardens must be able to cater for guests, maintain vehicles and a small solar plant, and promote the positive spirit of Eyre. The work is hard at times, and the financial benefits low, but a couple who can share tasks equitably will find this a rewarding adventure.

Please contact Shapelle McNee (08) 9433 1372
(mshapelle@hotmail.com) or Rod Smith (08) 9447 3804
(rodjoyce@optusnet.com.au)

rarity for this area, we assume it was blown in on the strong north-westerly winds we'd been having for the previous few days. While it recovered its strength it delighted us by popping up quite regularly around the homestead.

We love to read all the interesting contributions made by you, the members, finding your experiences of nature fascinating.

Here at 'Eyre Bird' we are in the perfect position to see many such snapshots of nature in action.

Have you ever seen a raven take down another bird?

Perhaps it was the necessity to provide food for youngsters, or, just too good an opportunity to pass up but we witnessed, from the comfort of the veranda, one of the local Australian Ravens bring down one of our other locals, a Major Mitchell's Cockatoo. The speed at which everything happened was astonishing. The Major Mitchell flew low over the house and into the large birdbath on the roof of the underground water tank. With evident feather wear and looking quite bedraggled, it was set upon instantly by a raven. You could sense the reluctance of the Major Mitchell to take to the air again but eventually it took flight, with the raven in hot pursuit. A brief aerial 'dogfight' ensued where the raven continually made passing snatches at the Major Mitchell's wing, ultimately with success. A couple of rather plaintive squawks were the final calls of a beautiful bird.

Sad as the spectacle was, we felt fortunate to have witnessed such an event. Naturally scenes like these are played out at all levels of nature and the demise of one sees the continuance of the other.

Like the night we watched enthralled as a Barking Gecko, having snared a spider the size of its own head, then commenced to swallow the thing whole. This process

lasted for nearly 15 minutes, and was accompanied by much body contorting!

Or, walking merrily along one of the self-guided walks we saw a 'Jacky Lizard' face down in a hole. Expecting it to jump up and race away upon hearing us, our jaws nearly hit the sand when it did an about face and started to drop five eggs down the hole right in front of us, without batting an eyelid!!

Even now, at this very moment, just returned to the keyboard having been called away to watch a Shingleback lizard enjoying a little refreshment under the balmy sky from the bird bath.

Who said Eyre was for the birds?!

Paul and Helen Evans

Excursion reports

COMBINED KIMBERLEY CAMPOUT, JULY 2001

From 11 to 18 July about 20 members of Birds Australia joined a combined campout organised by Kevin Coate. Other groups taking part were the Kimberley Society, the WA Naturalists Club and the WA Wildflower Society. Sue Abbots kindly took upon herself the time consuming task of co-ordinating the participation of Birds Australia members.

One month before the start we met at the Westrail lecture theatre for a comprehensive briefing by Kevin, at which useful literature was handed out.

The base camp was Kingston Rest Station, situated between the Carr Boyd and Deception Ranges about 70 km south of Kununurra on the Great Northern Highway. There were three options for getting to Kingston Rest: drive, fly to Kununurra and hire a car, or go in the Coates Tours bus. Pam and I opted to drive, allowing two weeks to get there via the Broome Bird Observatory and the Gibb River Road.

The campsite at Kingston Rest was by the diversion dam, a beautiful Melaleuca-fringed and water-lily filled reservoir that had abundant resident bird life and a few freshwater crocodiles. Drinking water was collected at the homestead, about a kilometre away and there were basic ablution facilities at the campsite: the channel from the dam to the farm was perfect for a cooling bathe at the end of a hot day.

On the first day we were shown around the farms and immediate environs. Thereafter we split into two or three groups each day and visited some of the fascinating and rugged country around. Each evening we enjoyed an informative lecture on some aspect of the



Comb-crested Jacanas were a highlight of the Combined Kimberley Campout.

Drawing by Pam Free

Kimberley region. One highlight of the week was a day trip from Kununurra up the Ord River to the Lake Argyle Dam. On another day we were taken by an Aboriginal elder into the Deception Ranges where we viewed Aboriginal art. Parry Creek and Marglu Lagoon, near Wyndham, proved very productive birding areas. On a free day some birders took a look at El Questro Station, enjoying the hot springs and the outstandingly beautiful Emma Gorge, reached by a tough hike up a rocky path.

Each evening after the lecture Sue called the birders together for a bird count. About 160 species were recorded, many of which were new to several members of the group. Highlights included Flock Bronzewing, Banded and Bar-breasted Honeyeaters, Comb-crested Jacana, White-browed Crane, White-quilled Rock-Pigeon, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Brolgas and many others. Flocks of eight species of finches were common at the farm and we saw 16 species of raptors in the week. However, for us at least, the Gouldian Finch and Black Falcon remained elusive.

On Sunday 28 October an enjoyable reunion evening was held at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, where we reminisced over a few drinks and a roast dinner.

Many thanks to Kevin Coate, our hosts the Garstone family, and to Sue Abbotts for making the trip such a success.

David Free

WEBB'S LEASE, JARRAHDALE, 29 July

Despite grey and threatening skies over the city, when the 16 birders arrived at Webb's Lease at 9:00 am, they were greeted by blue skies and sunshine.

This area is just over 5 km east of Jarrahdale and was the site of a market garden from 1930 until the mid fifties. Apart from one metal chimney stack lying in the grass, there is no sign of the house where the Webb family lived with their family of seven children. What they have left are numerous clumps of jonquils, snowdrops and other bulbs scattered over the cleared area where vegetables used to grow, now replanted with various native trees and shrubs. It is a birder's paradise!

We saw a pair of Scarlet Robins busy building a nest and Golden Whistlers enchanted us several times with their brilliant colours and distinctive call. We had a clear view of a Spotted Pardalote and later saw the neat entrance to its nest in a mound of dirt. Just as we were completing the bird count, a Brown Goshawk flew over to bring our total to the magical thirty! Two other species were heard but not seen.

A very pleasant two hours in the bush — with thanks to Dave and Jan Crossley for their friendly leadership.

Molly Angus



A brilliantly coloured Golden Whistler attracted attention during the excursion to Webb's Lease.

Drawing by Pam Free

CHRISTMAS TREE WELL, 4 August (1)

Ten of us met at Christmas Tree Well before going on to a number of sites along Yarra Road.

In spite of adverse climatic predictions, the weather was pleasantly warm if somewhat windy. We had expected to find the Hakea in full bloom, but found only small patches, probably because of the preceding dry years and below average rainfall this year.

However, we did see nine species of honeyeater in our fairly disappointing total of 37 birds for the day.

Probably the most interesting sighting was Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, especially for someone who is only used to finding them in heath.

A friendly pale morph Brown Falcon gave us excellent close range views as another highlight.

Brice Wells

CHRISTMAS TREE WELL – YARRA ROAD, 4 August (2)

On Saturday 4 August, 10 people went birding along Yarra Road, not far past Christmas Tree Well. After leaving the rain behind in Perth, the day was fine and prospects looked good. At our first stop, the first of many, Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters were seen and, along with Striated Pardalotes, provided most of the background sound. A Golden Whistler had us searching, as did a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Les and Eric, who had abandoned our party for the other side of the road, made the first sighting for the day of a Yellow Robin.

As we returned to the cars, the wind picked up and became quite cold. For the rest of the day, though it did not rain, the birds were not in abundance. The wrens proved elusive, the Purple-crowned Lorikeets did a fly pass and the Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters were sighted by most of the party.

Around lunchtime the Dusky Woodswallows entertained us with their acrobatic flight and we found Rufous Treecreepers.

However it wasn't till on the way home, with an impromptu stop by some dryandra that THE sighting occurred. Les spotted a Brown Falcon perched in a tree, some distance away. Just as everyone had the bird in their sights, it flew to a closer perch but inconveniently had the sun behind it. This very curious bird then came in for a closer look and perched in a tree not 5 metres away, giving a superb view to all and stayed some considerable time. Thank you to Brice and Gail for leading this excursion.

Coral Lukies

HILLARYS PELAGIC TRIP, 5 August

A forecast of three metre swells was fortunately worse than we experienced. This was one of the best pelagic trips that we have had from Hillarys with 10 pelagic species plus Great Skua and Australasian Gannet.

There were many highlights. The biggest was a sighting of a Shy (Salvin's) Albatross, which is very rarely sighted in WA. A sighting of a Great-winged Petrel (race *gouldi*) is also rare as far north as Perth. This was seen amongst a flock of 60+ Great-winged Petrels. There were birds everywhere and it was hard to think of which way to look in case something new appeared. We saw more Yellow-nosed Albatross than before, and good numbers of Soft-plumaged Petrels. Two Flesh-footed Shearwaters were early arrivals, and more than 20 White-faced Storm-Petrels were also slightly early. There were small numbers of Hutton's Shearwaters at most stops flying south as they returned to New Zealand. At one stop we had nine Great Skuas beside the boat with a band visible on the left leg of one. Other sightings were two Southern Giant-Petrels, 12 Cape Petrels and a few Wilson's Storm-Petrels.

The next trip is expected to be in mid June 2002.

Frank O'Connor

CANNINGTON REGIONAL PARK, 16 August

It was a clear, crisp morning when the 16 walkers, including three first timers, met at the Kent Street Weir Bridge on the Canning River for the mid week bird walk. We crossed the footbridge and headed towards Cannington along the path near the river. This proved to be very wet and muddy in patches but such inconveniences did not deter our intrepid leader, Bryan, so we all 'sloshed' on regardless!

We saw several Australian Shelducks high in the branches of a dead tree, two pelicans enjoying the fast flowing water of the river, several Laughing Kookaburras with unusually bright blue wings, and a Sacred Kingfisher. The tiny birds were present in the trees — Striated Pardalotes, Western Gerygones, Grey Fantails and Silvereyes. We had a good view of a goshawk but a second raptor could not be identified.

On the return walk from the footbridge at Willcock Street we kept to the bitumen path. On this section we had a splendid view of two Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes and then in the car park, during the bird count, we clearly saw a Mistletoebird. In all we saw 41 species.

Thank you, again, to Bryan and Margery for their excellent leadership.

Molly Angus

WAMBYN RESERVE, 19 August

Wambyn Reserve is situated on the Great Southern Highway, 30 km from The Lakes on the way to York. Because it is at the interface of Jarrah scarp and Wandoo wheatbelt habitats, it represents an interesting location worthy of periodic visits. In this way, species movements and trends can be detected. It offers a blend of micro-environments ranging from open Powderbark and Wandoo parkland through breakaway terrain to dense Hakea scrub, where you can expect to locate characteristic species in each case.

A party of 18 visited the reserve in a period following relatively heavy rains. The weather was sunny and warm, some early blossom was in evidence, and the birds were out and about. The York end of the reserve was surveyed in the morning, and revealed good sightings of Yellow-rumped Thornbill, (with signs of breeding), Rufous Treecreeper (also in breeding mode), as well as Scarlet, and Red-capped Robins, Red and Western Wattlebirds, and Rufous Whistler. Highlights included an extended viewing of Painted Button-Quail, overhead shots of Nankeen Kestrel, Black-shouldered Kite and Wedge-tailed Eagle, and a troupe of Western Corellas just passing through. In the Hakea at the front, New Holland and White-cheeked

Honeyeaters were raucously making their presence felt, and along with Western Spinebills disported in their characteristic environment.

Before lunch, the party moved to the Lakes end of the reserve, and carried out an initial foray into old growth Wandoo parkland, which yielded sightings of Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Elegant Parrot, and Galah, as well as a party of White-browed Babblers circling their nesting sites protectively.

After lunch, in the warmth of early afternoon sun, the party penetrated the reserve interior, and came upon a zone of activity, where Black-faced Woodswallow, Varied Sittella and Restless Flycatcher seized the moment just before an alarm

curfew heralded the arrival of a Peregrine Falcon. Striated Pardalotes manned the upper canopy, and Splendid Fairy-wrens darted through the heath understory.

A total of 49 species was recorded, including three additions to the existing database. Thanks go to CALM for supplying background data on the reserve, which deserves to be flagged for a further visit in the next excursion period.

John Ashford



Extended views of a Painted Button-Quail were a highlight of the Wambyn excursion

Drawing by Pam Free

**We hope to see you at the BA Christmas
barbecue on Sunday 16 December.**

JURIEN BAY WEEKEND, 31 August– 3 September

Twenty-five people started spring 2001 with a weekend of birding at Jurien Bay. Clive and Wendy had done all the hard work, finding good sites for us. We worked, too — an 8:30 start on Saturday morning ending around 5:00 pm with a lunch break. Some atlassing was also accomplished.

Close to the shoreline White-winged Fairy-wrens were seen, dotterels tried not to be detected and terns near small islands were seen diving in spectacular fashion.

Very different country in the afternoon, this time flat, green paddocks abounding in well-hidden pools. Probably most of the duck species were spotted here, a big thrill being a Chestnut Teal. Two Pied Butcherbirds sat on a grey, bare branched tree and we all practised fence hopping after two hours of happy birding.

During the weekend many wildflowers were seen. Orchids were especially beautiful.

Wooded areas on Sunday morning gave us many more birds, two specials being Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

We finished the weekend together about 12:30 pm, having counted 74 species.

Everyone had an invigorating and most enjoyable weekend. Thank you, Clive and Wendy.



Chestnut Teal seen during the
Jurien campout
Drawing by Penny Towells

Penny Towells

FLYNN ROAD, 15 September

After early morning drizzle, our group of 11 members had a reasonable day's birding. We looked at two areas, both of which were known to the members present. The first stop proved the best and pairs of both Hooded Robins and nesting Western Yellow Robins were seen, together with a sighting of Crested Shrike-tits in the Wandoo. During the two-hour search a total of 34 species was recorded.

We then drove to our second area and walked again to record only 26 species. To our surprise, two more Crested Shrike-tits were seen in areas where they had not previously been recorded.

The only pair of Rufous Treecreepers was also found, together with a persistent Restless Flycatcher that called during our lunch break. A total of 41 species was recorded during the day.

Bryan Barrett

ALFRED COVE, 20 September

On a warm spring day, 16 members met at the car park at Alfred Cove. Many birds were calling around the area and Buff-banded Rails were sighted in the nearby reeds. A pair of Willie Wagtails was nesting in a Melaleuca, and Australian Magpies also had a nest in a Tuart tree over the pathway.

Les led the group through the samphire in the cove and we scoured the river edges for waders. A few were seen, including a Common Sandpiper and several Common Greenshanks. We moved round to look at the sandbanks where there were lots of Pied Oystercatchers and Black-winged Stilts but only a few Grey Plovers (some still in breeding colours), Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers.

Lots of cormorants—Little Pied, Little Black, and Great—were resting on the sandbanks together with Australian Pelicans and Crested and Caspian Terns.

Further round we saw a male Splendid Fairy-wren in brilliant colour, with several females, in a clump of bamboo on the bank, and Yellow-rumped Thornbills were in the same vicinity. Walking back along the path we had a great view of a male Red-capped Parrot, and there were Galahs, Australian Ringnecks and Rainbow Lorikeets all competing for nesting hollows in the Tuart trees.

We had a total of 43 species for the morning, which was a satisfying count considering that there were so few waders. As usual, our thanks to Les for his very able leadership.

Margery Clegg



Searching for waders at Alfred Cove, 21 Jan 2001
Photograph courtesy Molly Angus

ELLIS BROOK, 14 October

Conditions were perfect for 18 of us walking in Ellis Brook reserve. We had constant beautiful bird song and found nests of Weebill and Yellow-rumped Thornbill. Other species were seen nesting, including Mistletoebirds. It's the season for sure!

Sightings were continuous along striated, rocky paths that crossed clear streams showing lovely pebbles and stones. Wildflowers were abundant and on climbing higher we spotted a Square-tailed Kite, Little Eagle, Whistling Kite and a Brown Falcon — at intervals of course!

A highlight was the Red-browed Finches that vied for our attention with Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters and Splendid Fairy-wrens.

Over 50 species were seen and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the outing. We thank Les Harris for his enthusiasm and for leading us. It was a beautiful half day.

Penny Towells

GARVEY PARK, 18 October

An Australian Hobby chasing a kookaburra greeted the 12 walkers as they assembled in the car park at 8:30 am. Galahs were calling loudly and cormorants were basking in the sunshine as we followed the path next to the river towards the Tonkin Highway bridge. As we strolled along we were rewarded with clear sightings of a Rufous Whistler, a pelican asleep on the opposite bank, a Brown Goshawk flying purposefully, a splendid view of a gleaming male Darter, several groups of wood duck and a very close inspection of an Australian White Ibis feeding in a creek.

On the return walk we deviated to view some small lakes where two families of Grey Teal ducklings were seen. Several busy colonies of bees were seen in the trees as well as a Striated Pardalote near its nest hole in a dead branch and other hollows in use by Galahs and kookaburras.

A total of 44 species were seen — many thanks to Hank for leading the walk.

Molly Angus

BUNGENDORE NATURE RESERVE, 20 October

Seventeen vehicles carrying 30 members drove through the reserve barrier and parked in the information area. We split into two groups and walked the "Robin Ramble" track in opposite directions.

Birds in Jarrah/Marri forest are neither abundant nor easy to see and we had to work hard for the 26 species recorded. Well done, everyone. Scarlet Robins, Red-capped Parrots and Western Spinebills were seen in very small numbers. Before the very hot fire that swept through the reserve seven years ago, these species were quite common. Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos flew overhead and we had a fleeting view of a Collared Sparrowhawk.



Reconciling the bird count at Ellis Brook.

Photograph by Molly Angus

At one point Margery and a Gould's Monitor gave each other a fright. Luckily it only moved a few metres off the track, giving a number of members a good view.

We then drove, under the leadership of Les Harris, to the south-east corner of the reserve and walked a little-used track to a point where we had a wonderful view over the Wungong Gorge and managed to push the bird list up to 29. Unfortunately we failed to see Rufous Treecreepers which are still present but less common since the fire.

The day had started with clear skies and a light breeze but by 11 o'clock clouds began to build up. We drove out of the reserve and down to the Wungong Dam lower picnic area for 'smoko' after which some members left, but 13 remained to do a 20-minute Atlas survey of the recreational site opposite the picnic area. This proved most rewarding with birds everywhere including both species of pardalote and two families of Splendid Fairy-wrens. Twenty-one species were recorded in the time allowed.

John and Helen Start

Classified ads

This section is for members wishing to buy or sell items relating to birds or birdwatching. Please keep items to less than about four lines. Non-commercial activities only. Editors.

Free Wingspans

Ian Rowley has some duplicate copies of *Wingspan* that he would like to go to a good home. The issues available are from No.1 in 1991 to the present, with some gaps.

Single issues will only be available if no-one wants the whole lot. Please ring 08 92793820 at a civilised hour.

Ian and Eleanor Rowley

Coming events

Important note re campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BA Office (9383 7749) 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 know when to expect people.

Saturday 1 December—Full day excursion, Amarillo Pool, Baldavis

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. Look for the BA sign.

Please be punctual as the gate will be locked after us!

We will look for waders along the mudflats of the river. Long-toed Stints and Wood Sandpipers are usually seen here, as well as plenty of waterbirds. Long trousers and boots/wellingtons are recommended as snakes have been seen in the area. Hat, insect repellent and water should be carried. Bring your lunch.

Leader: Les Harris

Wednesday 5 December—Mid-week walk, Market Garden Swamps, Spearwood

Meet at 9:00 am on the corner of Pennlake Drive and Brenzi Court (under the power lines), on the edge of Market Garden Swamps. Chris Beaton, Environmental Officer for the City of Cockburn, will meet the group and open a gate into the reserve to allow cars to be parked off the road. Chris will then join us to walk around this quite large lake and swamp to look for waterbirds and bushbirds. Over 30 species have already been seen here.

Leader: Brenda Newbey

Saturday 8 December—Half-day excursion, Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale

Meet at 8:30 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam, at the end of Admiral Road (off Albany Highway), Bedfordale. An excellent site for Red-eared Firetails, White-breasted Robins and Red-winged Fairy-wrens. Over 90 different species have been recorded here.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Sunday 16 December—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. There should be plenty of waders here, and there are also many bushbirds in the area. Please bring telescopes if you have them.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 16 December—Christmas function

A barbecue to celebrate the end of BA's Centenary Year will be held on Sunday 16 December at Perry House,

commencing at 6:30 pm. BYO meat and drinks—all members welcome!

Sunday 30 December—Half-day excursion, Thomsons Lake, Beeliar

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park off Russell Road, between Pearse and Hammond Roads. A good area for bushbirds, waders and waterbirds.

Leader: Brice Wells

Sunday 13 January 2002—Full day excursion, Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

Meet at 8:00 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 your lunch, 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 waterbirds and bushbirds.

Leader: Colin Davis

Saturday 19 January—Half day excursion, Woodman Point, Munster

Meet at 8:00 am at the end of the gravel road. We will then walk along the beach to Wapet Groyne to look for waders and seabirds on the point, so bring your telescopes.

Leader: Les Harris

Monday 21 January 2002 meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Note the date.

Long-standing member John Brooke will give a talk entitled "An Amateur's Guide to Bird Photography". John will show a series of bird slides, especially of waders, taken over the years.

Friday–Monday 25–28 January —Australia Day Campout at Bremer Bay

It is traditional for Birds Australia to have a campout on the south coast during this weekend, and this year we have chosen Bremer Bay. Cabins, caravan and tent sites are available at the very attractive caravan park. Supplies are available in the little town. Good birding in many habitats, ranging from waders to Western Bristlebirds, can be enjoyed. Bring telescopes and insect repellent.

The shortest route, via Borden and the Stirling Range Road, is now almost fully sealed (14 km of good gravel only). Watch for the sign 8 km south of Borden. Check your Travellers Atlas maps 20/21.

EARLY booking at the Bremer Bay Caravan Park (phone: (08) 9837 4018) will be essential and is your responsibility. Also, please advise the Birds Australia office (9383 7749) the number in your party and when you will arrive.

Leader: Clive Napier

Sunday 3 February 2002—Half-day excursion, Wellard Wetlands, Balddivis

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, Balddivis. There should be plenty of waterbirds, bushbirds, and perhaps some waders. Several species of raptors are also often seen here.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 10 February—Full day Wader Count around the Peel Inlet

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the western end of the Mandurah Estuary Bridge (under the bridge). We will first look around the recently developed bird-hides and the boardwalk associated with them. The shore at Coodanup may also be visited by those wishing to extend the excursion after lunch. Don't forget hats, insect repellent, old shoes/'wellies', and lunch. Bring your telescope and come and learn about waders!

Leader: Frank Pridham

Saturday 16 February—Half-day excursion, Lake Joondalup

Meet at 8:00 am at Neil Hawkins Park, in the car park at the end of Boas Avenue. Lots of waterbirds and bushbirds can be seen on and around this large lake.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Wednesday 20 February—Mid-week excursion, Bayswater Bird Sanctuary

Meet at 8:00 am at the Swan River end of King William Street, Bayswater. Parking is available in Slade Road, off King William Street.

This reserve was created in 1977 by Eric Singleton in conjunction with the Bayswater Council. It consists of waterways, paved paths (suitable for wheelchairs), a bird hide and an artificial island. Many waterbirds breed in the reserve, and we could see crakes and rails, as well as some raptors. The total species list is about 100.

Leader: Hank van Wees

Sunday 24 February—Full day excursion, Amarillo Pool, Balddivis

Meet at 8:30 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. Look for the BA sign. Please be punctual, as the gate will be locked after us!

We will look for waders along the mudflats of the river. Long-toed Stints and Wood Sandpipers are usually seen here, as well as plenty of waterbirds. Long trousers and boots/wellingtons are recommended as snakes have been seen in the area. Hat, insect repellent and water should be carried. Bring your lunch.

Leader: Les Harris

BIRD TALK
from Penny Towells
Quite a few of us to
the kg.



Monday 25 February meeting & Annual General Meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Amanda Bamford, member and former committee secretary, will speak on "Hybridisation of ducks".

NOTE

Nominations are invited for positions on the Committee for the coming year.

Saturday-Monday 2-4 March—Campout at Pemberton

We will be based at the Pemberton Caravan Park. The Park has on-site bungalows, fully contained and serviced cabins, budget cabins, as well as powered and non-powered sites for tents and caravans.

Book your own accommodation by ringing 9776 1300 as early as possible as Pemberton is popular at this time of year. Tell them that you are with the Birds Australia group. A deposit is required for cabin bookings. Please advise the Birds Australia office (9383 7749) to let us know how many will be in your party and when you will arrive.

Besides the karri forest, we will visit coastal heath and some more accessible parts of the D'Entrecasteaux National Park.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

2 – 10 March—Great Hooded Plover Count

All welcome. We specially need people to venture into the Esperance area. The timing of the survey overlaps the March long weekend to enable members to travel to distant sites such as those in the Esperance area. For details, please contact Julie Raines tel. 9306 5819.

Sunday 10 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. We will look for waders before they commence their migration north, and for bushbirds. Buff-banded Rails are also often seen in the area.

Leader: Les Harris

Saturday 16 March—Half-day excursion, Herdsman Lake

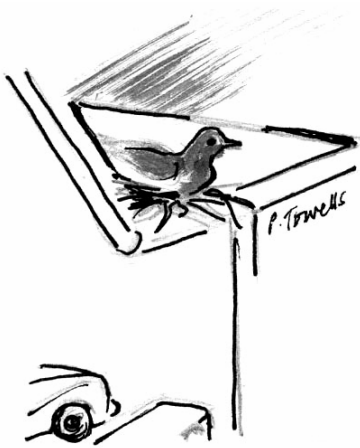
Meet at 7:30 am in Maurice Hamer Park. Turn off Pearson Street into Falcon Avenue, turn right at the T intersection into Lakeside Road. Continue to the car park at the end of the road.

This is one of the waterbird refuges that never dries up at the end of summer. If the water level is down, some interesting waders may be seen, such as Wood Sandpiper. Last summer a Freckled Duck was here for many weeks. We may walk further around to the northern end looking for crakes, depending on the weather. Please bring your telescope.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Wednesday 20 March—Mid-week excursion, Ascot Waters, Belmont

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the end of Tidewater Way. To reach the area from Great Eastern Highway, turn into



BIRD TALK
from Penny Towells
Doves like the high
life, they start young!

Stoneham Street, then into Resolution Drive, and left into Tidewater Way. Continue through two roundabouts, cross the bridge and up to the car park at the top of the rise.

We might see Buff-banded Rails, and a Black-shouldered Kite has nested in the area.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Sunday 24 March—Banding morning at Yanchep National Park

Meet at the park after 7:30 am.

Travel to Yanchep National Park and go through the main entrance. By explaining that you are visiting the banding site you will be admitted free of charge. Those at the banding on the day are regarded as volunteers and will be registered as such on a list of names which will be passed on to the Park management.

The banding site is reached by driving to the northern end of the golf course, just beyond the fairways on each side of the road. Please go to the banding station on the western side.

Banding has been conducted in Yanchep National Park for many years, resulting in a growing understanding of movement and development of many of our bird species. Visitors will be shown the procedures used at the nets and at the banding table. Perry de Rebeira, Rod Smith and others will be on hand to answer your questions.

Leader: Rod Smith

Monday 25 March meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Colin Davis, a member, will speak on the results of the seasonal surveys in which he participated on the birds of Lake MacLeod in the north-west of WA.

Friday-Monday 29 March-1April—Easter Campout at Nanga Station

CALM has asked BAWAG to assist with bird surveys of the numerous stations that have come under their management. We have chosen one of the best to start with. Nanga Station, situated at the base of Shark Bay, will be ideal for a late Easter campout. There is an excellent caravan park still operational within the station boundary, and we can use this as a base to explore the property.

Cabins, etc, are available, but early booking will be essential. As usual, please make your own bookings at

Nanga Bay Resort, phone (08) 9948 3992. This will be a 'working' campout and some of us will stay on to complete the survey.

More details in the March 2002 edition of *WA Bird Notes*.

Leader: Clive Napier

Monday 22 April meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Joe Tonga, a local expert on the topic, will speak on "Nest boxes for birds". In view of the continuing clearance of bush and the dwindling number of suitable trees for nests and nesting holes, this is an important issue.

Monday 27 May meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Dr John Long, Palaeontologist (Vertebrates) of the WA Museum, will speak on "The early evolution of birds".

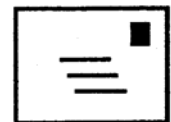
Monday 24 June meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Bob Goodale, zoologist, will speak on "Birds of the world in my care as Curator of Birds, Cologne Zoo, West Germany".

Monday 22 July meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Michael Morcombe, wildlife photographer and member, will give an illustrated talk with slides of his photographs.

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Crossword Answers No 27

Across

1 length, 4 build, 7 vulnerable, 8 oval, 9 buzzard, 11 used,
12 comical, 14 havoc, 16 rufous, 18 rarity, 19 food, 23
wandering, 24 walked, 25 stringent.

Down

2 gregarious, 3 heard, 4 bulbul, 5 dive, 6 pelagic, 10 zoo,
12 cormorant, 13 loud, 14 hylacola, 15 verify, 17 hybrid,
20 log, 21 tern, 22 ripe.

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Here's to the next 100 issues!

Western Australian Bird Notes

No. 1.

PERTH, W.A.

June, 1944

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Western Australian Branch of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union will be held at the Museum, Perth, on Saturday, July 1, 1944, at 2.15 p.m. Major Whittell will preside.

- AGENDA: 1. The study of Silver-eyes by Trapping and Banding, by Messrs. V. N. Serventy and L. J. McHugh. (Preliminary reading: *The Emu*, vol. 42, April, 1943, p. 194).
2. Albatrosses: Discussion on problems of identification, led by Mr. L. Glauret and Dr. D. L. Serventy.

REPORTS OF PROCEEDINGS

INAUGURAL MEETING, MAY 22, 1943

The following persons attended the meeting at the Museum on May 22, 1943, convened by the President (Major H. M. Whittell): Major Whittell, Misses O. Seymour and N. Fletcher (Victoria); Dr. D. L. Serventy and Messrs. G. Doepel C. Eakins, E. Edmondson, L. Glauret, C. F. H. Jenkins and V. N. Serventy (State Secretary).

Major Whittell briefly described the aims and organisation of the R.A.O.U. and indicated the reasons for the calling of the meeting, the first of its kind in the State. He hoped that in future regular meetings would be held, and so develop a strong group of ornithologists in Western Australia. He then called on members present and visitors to outline their activities in bird work and offered suggestions for local activities. Miss Fletcher described the Bird Observers Club in Victoria. Mr. Edmondson traced the development of the W.A. Gould League, and Mr. Eakins described how Correspondence Classes were furthering bird study.

Dr. Serventy, at the instance of the chairman, outlined a plan for the future conduct of the meetings. He wished to avoid the profitless type of meeting so often found in natural history organisations. The meetings should have the serious aim of making us better ornithologists as well as providing an evening of entertainment. Bird people in Australia do not read enough about their subject, therefore they lack the theoretical background which is needed to get the best out of their observing. A great deal of effort is collectively expended in field-work, involving time, money, etc., and we should capitalise all this to the fullest extent. It was proposed to organise the future meetings of the R.A.O.U. in Perth so as to include discussions, under direction, or tutorials, in the various subjects needed for a fuller understanding of birds in the field or of specimens in the study. We shall find our hobby much more interesting the more we know about it. It was hoped to include a theoretical and practical topic at each meeting.

The proposal was discussed with approval and Dr. Serventy and Messrs. Glauret and V. Serventy were appointed a committee to handle the organisation of future meetings.

SECOND MEETING, JULY 24, 1943

At the second meeting of the branch, held at the Museum, on July 24, 1943, at 2.30 p.m. Dr. D. L. Serventy presided and led discussions on territory and the genus *Acanthiza*.

TERRITORY IN BIRDLIFE

The following is a summary of Dr. Serventy's remarks: That birds have parcels of ground or territories which they jealously guard for themselves while nesting, may seem quite an obvious fact. Actually, however, the idea of territory as a factor in the life cycle of birds is quite a new one, at least as far as the average birdlover is concerned, and it means much more than merely keeping enemies away from the nest. The idea of territory may be very effectively introduced by an incident which happened in one of the local Museum classes. A boy mentioned that Robins fight other birds at nesting time. Which other birds he was asked, Hawks, Magpies? Instead of giving the conventional answer, the keen young observer replied, other Robins. That was the essence of territory. A plot of ground, centred around the site of the nest, is defended by the male, sometimes the female also, against other males of the same species.

The best introduction to the study of territory for the average birdlover is given in James Fisher's "Watching Birds" obtainable in the Pelican series. It should be in the hands

of everybody at all interested in the field study of birds. A typical life cycle for an average territory bird was as follows:

First the individual was a member of a cooperative food-seeking flock, in which the birds did not sing. In the Spring the flocks began to break up and the males would leave and begin to pay visits to suitable small areas of their summer habitat. Finally the males left the flock altogether and stayed permanently in their territories, singing vigorously from various points of vantage in it. Thus the area became parcelled among the males. When any one intruded into the sphere of influence of another, aggressive reactions followed. There was a good deal of chasing about, but frequently no real combats. The intruding birds seemed conscious of the fact they were trespassers and put up no resistance until they got back past their frontier line; then the roles were reversed.

It was now the female's turn to leave the flock. She was attracted by the singing male and eventually she attached herself to one particular partner. When a male thus acquired a mate he usually ceased to sing. Those males possessing gaudy colours and special ornaments also stopped displaying them when the female became a resident. Generally the only occasions when the male would sing henceforth were when other males approached, and song and display were then a signal to aggressive intentions. The purpose of song was essentially to advertise the possession of territory, and the reaction of birds hearing it depended on their sex. A male bird hearing the song is made aware that a male is in possession and is challenging his approach; a female, on the other hand, is made aware that here is an unmated male with a territory and she is attracted to the spot. This theory now superseded the old idea that bright colours and display played a part in sexual selection and that females chose as their mates the best singers and most gaudy males.

In the northern hemisphere, where the subject had been most studied, birds usually held territories only in the spring and summer nesting period, after which the territories were dissolved and the birds joined up again into nomadic or migratory flocks. However, there were many birds which were sedentary and did not form flocks. Study of some of these species revealed that they defended territories for the whole of the year. A consequence of this was that the males would sing all the year round. In the case of the American Mocking-bird males and females has separate territories in the winter, when both sang. In the spring when the female joined the male but did not share in the defence of the nesting territory she did not sing.

Very little work had been done in Australia, Mr. C. A. Flemming's work on the Silver-eye in New Zealand being practically a pioneer effort on an Australian bird. His work showed that the territory cycle in the Silver-eye compared fairly closely to a typical northern hemisphere bird maintaining only spring and early summer territories. Generally Australian ornithologists have not accepted the territory theory too enthusiastically for the interpretation of their bird observations. In particular they are averse to accepting the fact that song is purely utilitarian and serves merely to advertise the possession of territory. Here in Australia birds sing for a greater part of the year than in Europe and visiting ornithologists are impressed by the number of birds to be heard singing in our autumn and winter months. To my mind this suggests one of two things: Some of our honeyeaters, for example, have very prolonged breeding seasons. The Tawny-crowned and New Holland Honeyeaters may have individuals nesting almost at any month of the year; therefore, these particular birds would be singing. Secondly, territories may be defended permanently, all the year round. Therefore song as "a distance threat" to rival males would continue all the year. We have, as a matter of fact, few birds that are migratory; those that are strictly sedentary might well hold permanent territories.

The field ahead of us is a big one. We should organize our observations with the territory theory at the back of our minds as a working hypothesis, without clinging to every feature of overseas interpretation as indisputable dogma. Note the facts according to whether or not they are consistent

with any particular theory or territory. Attempt to determine whether territory is held only in the nesting season or at other times. Note whether birds are singing during any field excursion you make. Build song charts for particular species. This is now being done by New Zealand bird-watchers and the information should give us important clues as to whether such species are permanent territory holders or not.

Some individuals may hold permanent territories and others of the same species in other districts may not, as in the American Mocking-bird, the food capacity of an area determining whether a bird can afford to remain sedentary or not. Close attention should be paid to display or posturing. Try and distinguish whether the actions serve the purpose of threat behaviour to other males or are directed towards the female, or both. Do these things occur before or after mating, etc. Accurately record everything which seems to be pertinent and make it clear in your notes what is observation and what is conjecture or interpretation.

IDENTIFICATION OF THORNBILLS (*Acanthiza*)

In a discussion of problems of field identification of these birds, Dr. Serventy summarised the field appearance of the local species as follows:

Yellow-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*)—The only local species with a bright yellow rump; spotted forehead and a white eyebrow.

Brown Thornbill (*A. pusilla*). In most books this is referred to as the Broad-tailed Thornbill (*A. apicalis*), but the latter like Whitlock's Thornbill (*A. whitlocki*) and others are only geographical races of the widespread Brown Thornbill. It is the only Thornbill which has streaked underparts; the rump is an inconspicuous brown and the tail is often carried cocked in the manner of a Blue Wren.

Western Thornbill (*A. inornata*). A plain little bird having unstreaked yellow-buff underparts and the back of a brownish olive.

The above three are the only ones to be found in the South-West; inland and further north are three additional species:

Chestnut-tailed Thornbill (*A. uropygialis*). This has a chestnut rump much brighter than the Brown Thornbill but the bird differs from that species in having no streaks on the breast. Also it does not cock its tail.

Thick billed Thornbill (*A. robustirostris*). This also has a chestnut rump but differs from all other Thornbills in having characteristic blue-grey upper parts. The crown is streaked. The species has not been recorded south of the Yalgoo district.

Slender-billed or Sapphire Thornbill (*A. morgani* or *iredalei*). A plain-coloured bird with a buff rump, looking like a very bleached form of the Yellow-tailed Thornbill; otherwise no conspicuous markings visible in the field; underparts unstreaked. It is largely confined to the sapphire margins of inland salt lakes but has not been seen south of the Eastern Goldfields.

THIRD MEETING, MAY 27, 1944.

This meeting, deferred on several occasions, was held at the Museum on May 27, at 7.30 p.m. Major Whitell presiding. The subjects discussed were Display in Bird-life and problems of identification of beach-drifted petrels.

BIRD DISPLAY

The following is a summary of a talk by Mr. V. N. Serventy, B.Sc. The topic was considered under three headings:

(a) Types of display.

(b) Value of display.

(c) Evolution of display.

(a) is becoming more and more widely known, although little is known of Australian birds. (b) and (c) are still matters for discussion.

The Equipment Birds Use in Display

(a) Voice, and noises produced by drumming the beak, and air whistling through feathers.

(b) Plumage, legs, bill, inside of mouth, and any special adornments.

(c) Special posture of body usually associated with (b).

(d) Actual physical contact of some sort.

(e) Use of some external object such as food presentation, nesting material, or bower.

Physiological and Mental Abilities.

Sight, touch, taste, hearing are well developed, but smell not at all in most birds except the petrels. Mental ability is probably on the same plane as a reptile. It can perform elaborate but purely instinctive acts. Educability is low.

Types of Display

(a) Courtship feeding—its food value is unimportant—and it is possibly connected with the presentation of nesting material. It is a possible reappearance of infantile behaviour as an adult sexual ceremony.

(b) Ceremonial gaping—bright colours associated with the mouth may be both stimulators and indicators for food placement.

(c) Posturing—a common type of display.

(d) Song.

(e) Greeting Ceremonies.

(f) Dancing.

(g) Flight.

Display type is determined to a large extent by mode of living.

Significance

The main drives in animals are food, sex and self preservation in that order:—

Display

(a) Replaces actual fighting.

(b) Serves as an advertisement to the female;

(c) but primarily display seems necessary to complete the sexual cycle—to achieve coordination throughout the breeding season.

Mechanics of Display

The "releaser concept" has been formulated by Dr. Konrad Lorenz. Postures, movements, etc., are "releasers" which switch on specific reactions, in an associate bird (this may be a child, parent, brother or sister, sex or social associate). There is an inevitable response to a releaser. The "releasers" are like a combination lock which requires a definite series of manipulations to open it—a series which it is almost impossible to find by chance. The Releasers must be unmistakable. One modification is that by damming up a reaction. Steps in the chain of releasers may be skipped, i.e., reactions have a threshold of intensity (an analogy is the series of steps which can under certain conditions be taken in one bound:—possibly this may be completely useless from a biological point of view as experiments so far have only perceived the fact that sexual union does occur, not that it was a successful fertilisation or that it was of value in keeping the pair united).

There are therefore two chains: (a) chain of releasers; (b) corresponding chain of thresholds.

(Criticism. Releasers are not single acts but rather a pattern of stimuli. Individual variations of the pattern do not affect the successful result).

Recommended for further study, "Bird Display," by E. A. Armstrong, Cambridge University Press, 1942. In the Emu vol. XLIII, p. 88, 91-92 types of display in two local birds are described.

IDENTIFICATION OF PETRELS

Major Whitell, Dr. Serventy and Mr. Glaucert discussed a series of Museum skins of local petrels and pointed out various features aiding identification. Wherever possible beach-drifted sea birds should be preserved and despatched to the Museum or some local ornithologist able to turn them into skins. When found on the beach, bedraggled and smothered in sand, they may appear unprezentable and hopeless. However when carried along in the wind, and after they have had an opportunity of drying out, their appearance is quite transformed and many make good specimens. All such material should be carefully identified even if eventually it is necessary to discard it.

NEW AND NOTES

Retain this and later copies of the "Bird Notes" and keep them in a binder or file for reference. Only a limited number of copies are issued and if at any time you find no further use for them please return to the State Secretary (Mr. V. N. Serventy, 34 Onslow Road, Subiaco). They will be made available to new members.

Members are invited to suggest topics for discussion at the meetings, both for the theoretical subject and the group of birds for the practical discussion.

Our member, Mr. Ken Buller has recently returned from a lengthy journey along the Canning Stock Route where he was able to make an important collection of specimens. Another member, Mr. I. Carnaby, recently demobilised from the A.I.F. has during his army service visited areas of great ornithological interest in the northern part of the State. Mr. C. F. H. Jenkins is absent on a long country trip.

Recent letters from P/O Stan White and F/O E. A. Sedwick both with the R.A.A.F. "somewhere in Australia" indicate that they are actively engaged in ornithological pursuits in the areas where they are stationed.