

# Western Australian Bird Notes



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



**No 106 June 2003**

**ISSN 1445-3983**

## Contents

<i>Observations</i>	p3	<i>BAWA Projects</i>	p7	<i>New Members</i>	p25	<i>Crossword Answers</i>	p35
<i>Letters to the Editors</i>	p5	<i>Members' Contributions</i>	p12	<i>Country Groups</i>	p25	<i>Opportunities for Vols</i>	p36
<i>From the CEO's Desk</i>	p6	<i>What's In a Name?</i>	p21	<i>Excursion Reports</i>	p26	<i>Calendar of Events</i>	p36
<i>BAWA Reports</i>	p6	<i>Crossword</i>	p22	<i>Observatory Reports</i>	p30		
		<i>Notices</i>	p23	<i>Coming Events</i>	p32		

## 'HOODIE' HELPERS RECOGNISED—WEST AUSTRALIAN COASTAL AWARDS 2002



*More than 200 dedicated volunteers were acknowledged recently through two awards to BAWA's Hooded Plover project.*

The West Australian Coastal Awards acknowledge excellence in coastal management by individuals, community groups, local government and government agencies.

The Coastal Awards are coordinated by the Coastwest Program and the Western Australian Planning Commission.

Hooded Plovers are dependent on our beaches for breeding, as a place to raise their young and for feeding. The status of a Hooded Plover population is a good indicator of the quality and health of our coastal and marine environment.

Birds Australia WA Inc has recently completed its two-year project,

*Reducing Threats to Hooded Plovers at Beaches and Coastal Lakes.* Our project was considered to have made a significant contribution towards the protection and management of West Australia's Hooded Plover and coastal environment. We had fostered a sense of ownership by the local community and established five autonomous Hooded Plover management groups. We had targeted the causes rather than the symptoms of environmental

problems. The Bremer Bay group in particular had accomplished good results in this area.

In view of these achievements Birds Australia WA Inc was nominated for a Western Australian Coastal Award 2002.

The formal award presentation ceremony was held on Wednesday 23 April 2003.

I had the privilege of representing Birds Australia on the night. When Birds Australia



Alannah MacTiernan, MLA, presenting the West Australian Coastal Awards to Marcus Singor for the BAWA Hooded Plover project.

*Photo courtesy Dept for Planning & Infrastructure*

was announced as an award winner I was filled with pride and absolutely delighted when later that evening we received a second award.

Both awards were presented by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alannah MacTiernan MLA.

Award categories:

1. Birds Australia WA Inc was the regional winner for the Peel/South West in the category, *Outstanding Coastal Group Effort*.

The Outstanding Coastal Group Effort was awarded to Birds Australia for significant contribution to projects that have led to the improvement of the coastal environment.

2. Birds Australia WA Inc was the regional winner for the South Coast in the category, *Outstanding Coastal Project*.

The Outstanding Coastal Project was awarded to Birds Australia for excellence in activities that have contributed to the significant improvement of the local coastal environments.

Many people have been instrumental in the successful outcome of the Hooded Plover project, not least all our members who participate in our annual surveys and donate their valuable time and resources. The West Australian Coastal Awards 2002 recognise the collective contribution made by all members of Birds Australia and affiliated groups in their pursuit of knowledge and conservation.

The support we received from Denmark Environment Centre Inc, Margaret River Environment Centre, Busselton-Dunsborough Environment Centre, Walpole-Nornalup National Park Association, Esperance Bird

Observers Club, Local Environment Action Forum (Esperance), Shire of Busselton, Shire of Manjimup, Shire of Denmark, Shire of Augusta-Margaret River and the Department of Conservation and Land Management, all contributed to Birds Australia receiving the award and I thank you sincerely.

A special mention must be made of the members of the Hooded Plover Sub-Committee past and present who have kept the project focused and on budget since 1994: Max Bailey, Phyllis Bentley (our longest serving member), David Free, Allan Jones, Sandra McKenzie, Brenda Newbey, Julie Raines (our project officer) and our newest committee members John Lauri and Trevor Stoneman.

Thanks also to our Hooded Plover regional coordinators who provide leadership in their districts: Dick Rule (Yalgorup), Tony France (Myalup), Lida Feist (Margaret River), Chris Wilder and Sue Abbotts (Augusta), Geoff Fernie (Walpole), Alan Cohen (Denmark), Anne Bondin (Albany), Anne Gadsby (Bremer Bay), Greg Bannon (Esperance) and their many volunteers.

The awards are on display at Perry House.

**Marcus Singor**  
**Chairperson, Hooded Plover Sub-Committee**

Editors' note: Another part of Birds Australia, **Broome Bird Observatory**, has been a partner in a project to map the mud flat invertebrates in Roebuck Bay, as these are a critical resource for migrating waders. This project received two awards, presented to the project leaders, Environs Kimberley and CALM, for Outstanding Coastal Group Effort and Outstanding Coastal Project for the Pilbara – Kimberley region. Congratulations to BBO for their part in this very successful project.



## Observations

This list has been compiled by the Observations Committee. Metropolitan suburbs or shires are in parentheses. Please report interesting observations to Frank O'Connor (9386 5694 or preferably sightings@iinet.net.au) or to the BAWA office (9383 7749). Sightings are included on the BAWA web site (<http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>) as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in the next issue of WABN.

The 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*).

**Highlights.** The outstanding sighting in this edition was a **Grey Heron** seen briefly at Broome. This is the third reported sighting for WA (and Australia) in the past 12 months.

The most unusual sighting in the metropolitan area was an **Eastern Reef Egret** on the Swan River. There were several sightings of **Fork-tailed Swifts** during March when thunderstorms were in the vicinity. **Chestnut Teal** were reported at a number of locations, and **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters** moved on to the Swan Coastal Plain in March and April. The large flock of **Freckled Ducks** disappeared from Herdsman Lake in late January following significant rain that extended from the Pilbara through to the eastern wheatbelt and the goldfields. There was a large influx of **Pacific Black Ducks** to Herdsman Lake in mid April. Where did they come from?

There was another sighting of **Masked Lapwings** in the south west at Albany. They are a rare visitor to the south west mainly between October and April. Two **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** seen near Two People's Bay are rare for the south coast. A **Masked Owl** was seen at the BAWA campout in Augusta. There were more exceptional wader counts at Lake McLarty near Pinjarra before it dried up, confirming the international importance of this wetland that may be under threat from nearby development.

**Red-rumped Swallows** were recorded again in Broome. Chris Hassell travelled around the Kimberley coast seeing several shearwaters including **Short-tailed Shearwaters** which are rarely seen in the Kimberley. Large numbers of waterbirds were reported on the ephemeral wetlands on Roebuck Plains Station.

A **Common Blackbird** seen at the Eyre Bird Observatory is highly unusual in WA and most unexpected at Eyre. An **Inland Dotterel** was seen near Eyre well south of its normal range.

### METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

**Musk Duck** – 127, 30/03/03, Alfred Cove (Alfred Cove) – TM \* 171, 21/04/03, Alfred Cove (Alfred Cove) – WM (high numbers for Swan River)

**Freckled Duck** – 1, 06/03/03, Lake Yangebup (Yangebup) – CS \* 3, 16/03/03, Lake Yangebup (Yangebup) – RP \* 2, 18/04/03, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – WM (1<sup>st</sup> returns after large flock left Herdsman Lake at the end of January)

**Pacific Black Duck** – 3000+, 18/04/03, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – WM (large aggregations occur in October to April)

**Eastern Reef Egret** – 1 grey, 29/03/03, Milyu Nature Reserve (South Perth) – MC \* 1 grey, 09/04/03, Mounts Bay Road near old Swan Brewery (Kings Park) – WB (very unusual on the Swan River)

**Chestnut Teal** – 1 male, 23/01/03, Alfred Cove (Alfred Cove) – JG \* 2+, 23/03/03, Maylands Yacht Club (Maylands) – WM, FO \* 1 male, 18/04/03, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – WM (uncommon on Swan Coastal Plain)

**Spotted Harrier** – 1, 12/04/03, Port Kennedy Golf Course (Port Kennedy) – WM (rare on Swan Coastal Plain)

**Pacific Golden Plover** – 25, 01/02/03, Creery Island (Erskine) – MB (high number in the south west)

**Roseate Tern** – 1, 23/03/03, Cape Vlamingh (Rottneest Island) – TM \* 5, 13/04/03, Cape Vlamingh (Rottneest Island) – WB (expanding range in south west)

**Little and Long-billed Corella** – ~2000, 21/04/03, Lilac Hill (Caversham) – WM (very large flock – about 7 Little to 1 Long-billed)

**Fork-tailed Swift** – 19, 08/03/03, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – BR \* 4, 09/03/03, Star Swamp (North Beach) – MH \* 30, 21/03/03, Breckler Park (Dianella) – HvW \* 5, 22/03/03, Whiteman Park (Whiteman) – BR (uncommon in the south west)

**White-naped Honeyeater** – 1+, 10/04/03 to 30/04/03, Plover Way (Kingsley) – MB (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

**Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** – 4, 24/03/03 and 13/04/03, Breckler Park (Dianella) – HvW \* 1, 21/04/03, Pinnaroo Valley (Padbury) – RP (uncommon visitor in the metropolitan area)

**White-fronted Chat** – 60, 18/03/03, Floreat Waters (Herdsman) – WM (high number in the metropolitan area)

**European Goldfinch** – 3, 14/04/03, Robinson Reserve (Tuart Hill) – BS (new location in the metropolitan area)

### SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

**Hutton's Shearwater** – 80+, 04/04/03 (16:00 to 16:30), Bald Island (Albany) – FO (migrating west in lines of up to 18)

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** – 2, 10/02/03, Little Beach (Albany) – MM (rare on the south coast)

**Red-necked Stint** – ~10 600, 16/01/03, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MC (high number)

**Long-toed Stint** – 1, 11/02/03, Morley Beach, Wilson Inlet (Albany) – FAB

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** – ~6000, 16/01/03, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MC (high number)

**Black-winged Stilt** – ~5400, 16/01/03, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MC (high number)

**MASKED LAPWING** – 2 (subspecies *novaehollandiae*), 10/03/03-08/05/03; near Lake Seppings (Albany) – RG and DM (rare in the south west)

**Rainbow Lorikeet** – 1, 24/03/03, Margaret River (Augusta – Margaret River) – CW (reported to Dept of Agriculture)

**Masked Owl** – 1, 01/03/03, Flinders Bay Caravan Park (Augusta – Margaret River) – BAWA (rarely reported in the south west)

**Fork-tailed Swift** – 1, 10/03/03, Elleker (Albany) – MAN (uncommon in the south west)

**Chestnut-rumped Thornbill** – 5, 03/03/03, Pumphrey's Bridge (Wandering) – FO (west of normal range)

## ARID ZONE

**Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** – 1, 18/12/02, off Kanidal Beach near EBO (Dundas) – EBO (see WABN 105; rare in WA; beach washed next day)

**Inland Dotterel** – 1, 12/04/03, 1 km west of EBO (Dundas) – EBO (uncommon on coast)

**Hooded Plover** – 12, 19/04/03, Hamersley Lakes system, Mt Jackson Station (Yilgarn) – CMG \* 22, 25/04/03, Lake Deborah West, Ennuin Station (Yilgarn) – CMG (high numbers inland)

**Rufous Treecreeper** – 1, 23/04/03, 35 km NNW of Diemals Station Homestead (Menzies) – CMG (north of normal range)

**Blue-breasted Fairy-wren** – 4, 25/04/03, Kawana Station, 10km NW of Ennuin Station Homestead (Yilgarn) – CMG (northern limit of range)

**Slender-billed Thornbill** – 2+ (twice), 22/04/03, Lake Barlee middle arm (Menzies) – CMG \* 1+ , 23/04/03, Lake Barlee west arm (Sandstone) – CMG (uncommonly reported in this area)

**Red Wattlebird** – 2, 23/04/03, 35 km NNW of Diemals Station Homestead (Menzies) – CMG (north of normal range)

**Grey-fronted Honeyeater** – 2, 21/04/03, 10 km E of Diemals Station Homestead (Menzies) – CMG (southern limit of range)

**Gilbert's Whistler** – 1, 23/04/03, 35 km NNW of Diemals Station Homestead (Menzies) – CMG (north of normal range)

**Dusky Woodswallow** – 8, 23/04/03, 35 km NNW of Diemals Station Homestead (Menzies) – CMG (north of normal range)

**Star Finch** – 3, 06/04/03, Coonarrie Creek near Redmont Camp (East Pilbara) – RT

**COMMON BLACKBIRD** – 1 male, 23 to 24/10/02, EBO bird bath (Dundas) – EBO (seen by some visiting English birders and the wardens, and reported to Dept of Agriculture)

## KIMBERLEY

**Streaked Shearwater** – 9, 26/02/03, north of Cape Londonderry (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CH

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** – 1, 26/02/03, north of Cape Londonderry (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CH

**Short-tailed Shearwater** – 4, 26/02/03, north of Cape Londonderry (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CH (rare in the Kimberley)

**GREY HERON** – 1, 13/04/03, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – CN (see details elsewhere in this issue; BARC submission required)

**Glossy Ibis** – ~1500, 08/04/03, Roebuck Plains near Great Northern Highway (Broome) – BBO (very high number)

**Asian Dowitcher** – 200, 11/04/03, Crab Creek (Broome) – CH (high number)

**Black-winged Stilt** – ~6000, 17/04/03, Roebuck Plains near Great Northern Highway (Broome) – BBO (high number)

**RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** – 1, 28/02/03, sewage ponds (Broome) – HJB \* 1, 01/03/03, sewage ponds (Broome) – GS (BARC submission required)

## OBSERVERS

BARC = BA Rareities C'tee

BAWA = BAWA Excursion

BBO = Broome Bird Observatory

BR = Bill Rutherford

BS = Barry Stanley

CH = Chris Hassell

CMG = Cheryl & Martin Gole

CN = Clive Nealon

CS = Claire Stevenson

CW = Christine Wilder

DM = David McNamara

EBO = Eyre Bird Observatory

FAB = Fred & Anne Bondin

FO = Frank O'Connor

GS = George Swann

HJB = Hilary & John Brooke

HvW = Hank van Wees

JG = Jean Gooch

MAN = Michael & Ada Nield

MB = Mike Bamford

MC = Michael Craig

MH = Michael Hancock

MM = Myles Menz

RG = Ray Garstone

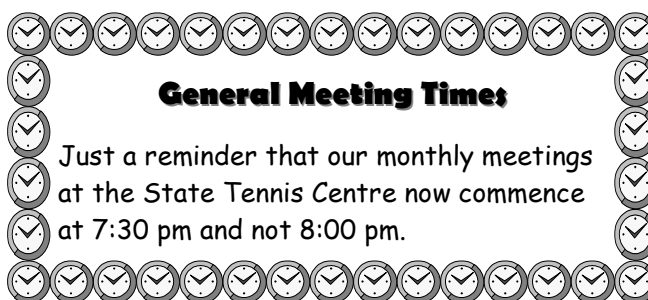
RP = Ryan Phillips

RT = Roy Teale

TM = Tim Murphy

WB = Wes Bancroft

WM = Wynton Maddeford



## Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors

### Thanks for the memories!

Jackye Meinecke and Robert Hull travelled from Las Cruces, New Mexico (USA) to Australia in December 2002. Robert is still in the country, working at Alice Springs.

We used the 'web' to arrange the birding on our trip and are very impressed with the Birds Australia organisation. From Sydney, we travelled to Perth and on to Albany, WA to visit a friend. Our trip took us back through Perth and to Alice Springs, NT.

In Albany, we met with Ann and Fred Bondin—they were kind enough to invite us out with them for a morning check of one of their favourite areas. Ann is truly a priceless resource; with her expertise we saw far more birds than we would have on our own. To be sure we would have had a good walk by ourselves, but Ann's knowledge helped us find the more elusive species.

In Perth we stayed at the Sullivan's Motel, just below Kings Park. Across the street is a nice pond area and we enjoyed many walks looking at what may be familiar birds to the locals—most of these thrill us anyway. Darters on the nest was a special event. A Laughing Kookaburra at Kings Park was memorable.

In Alice Springs, Jackye met with Will and Anne Cormack, who showed her many species at the water treatment ponds. We have seen both Royal and Yellow Spoonbills in the area. Since we live in the desert in the States, we enjoy the Alice environment—even in summer!

We appreciate the quality of information from Birds Australia and the guides available for printing. Putting us in contact with area specialists has enhanced our experience beyond measure. We intend to return to Australia and will, no doubt, be involved with your organisations again.

Anybody who manages to get to New Mexico (see Bosque del Apache reserve) should contact us in Las Cruces so that we may attempt to extend the same hospitality to visitors from Australia. Thanks!

**Robert Hull and Jackye Meinecke**

Dear Editors

After the AGM in February Mike Bamford made some interesting observations about wader behaviour on the Swan River. In response to a question, he also pointed out that the Mariner's Cove housing development near Mandurah has produced significant environmental benefits for wading birds in the area known as the Creery wetlands.

It is worth recalling that, prior to development, most of this area consisted of degraded samphire flats littered with old car bodies. It was also open to trail bike riders and feral and domestic animals. The northern part of the site is now occupied by housing but 94 hectares of wetland adjacent to Peel Inlet have been set aside for nature conservation. Rubbish has been removed, hides and walkways have been installed and the whole area is now protected by a water barrier and vermin-proof electric fencing.

In any objective assessment, this is a win-win situation. Unfortunately, however, the present outcome has been reached only after a long and bitter struggle between the developers and local environmentalists which, at one stage, involved an inconclusive referendum.

There are lessons to be learned from this experience. Far too often environmental issues invoke a knee-jerk negative reaction when a willingness to compromise would ensure a better outcome.

**Stewart Houghton**



Albany campout—getting an excellent view of a Spotted Crake and a Spotless Crake on the edge of the lake on North's farm.  
Photo courtesy Molly Angus

## From the CEO's Desk

A heartfelt congratulations to Birds Australia WA Group for the recent coastal awards for the Hooded Plover project. A terrific effort and appropriate recognition for all the hard work and effort that has gone in.

It has been a busy time here at national office over the past couple of months.

Members should have recently received the Birds Australia new look annual report for 2002. We are interested in your feedback on the new format and during this year we will be using it as a promotional tool that highlights BA's activities nationally.

On the project front we have a number of new ones underway and these include funding to bring together the various databases on wader counts built up over many years. We have also obtained funding to monitor Ramsar wetlands here in Victoria. In addition, we are holding various discussions with Environment Australia about using birds as a way to better integrate biodiversity into catchment management plans.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress to all members we are still anxious to receive your atlas surveys. The atlas continues and the data set is vital for a report we are releasing later this year on the state of Australian birds. Please keep those survey forms coming in. While on atlasing, we have also prepared a summary presentation for each state on preliminary results from the atlas. If you are giving a presentation to a group and could present the talk please contact Mike Weston at national office.

Could I also draw our attention to the BA website, which has a number of new features including a calendar of events for BA activities nationally. We have a number of important events coming up and the website is a great way to stay in touch. I also urge WA group to make use of the facility for event promotion.

Finally, you will receive (or already have) some important material in the mail which explains a vital project for which we are attempting to raise funds. Please consider the material you receive and, if you can, please help.

**Jim Downey**

## Birds Australia WA Inc Reports

### CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The AGM saw some changes to the committee including the retirement of Clive Nealon, to whom we owe thanks for his many years of service. However, he hasn't quite got away, as he is still on the BA Council and is an important link for us with the national body. Brice Wells and Wes Bancroft also stepped down, but have become heavily involved in the new public relations sub-committee. Our new committee members are Les Hogben and Andrew Huggett, who are hopefully not regretting their decision! This leaves one vacancy and I would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to fill this position. Current committee composition is:

Chair: Mike Bamford  
Vice-Chair: Rob Davis  
Secretary: Liz Walker  
Treasurer: Mary Vaughan  
Committee members:  
Carol Elliott  
Sue Mather  
Frank O'Connor  
Jenny Wilcox  
Andrew Huggett  
Les Hogben

Committee meetings are held from 5:00 pm until about 8:00 pm, usually on the Wednesday before the General Meeting, and we deal with issues that are often a long way

from bird watching and conservation. We talk about money quite a lot, plans for future projects, problems with the new computer, problems with the old computer, and all sorts of things that probably make very uninteresting reading but are necessary for the operation of BAWA. Despite this, meetings are often stimulating because so much is happening, and always seem to end in the car park with the last huddle of three or four people exchanging ideas.

Many of the issues dealt with by the committee are reported on elsewhere in bird notes, but following are the highlights from our May agenda.

In the **business arising** section, which is a euphemism for items we didn't get on to in the previous meeting, we plan to review the recommendations that arose from the planning sessions held in late 2001/2002. We have achieved some of those recommendations, such as setting up research and publicity sub-committees, but it is important to check on ourselves.

In the **Treasurer's Report**, there are the usual statements meticulously prepared by Mary Vaughan.

The **Correspondence** section includes lists of letters sent out regarding various conservation issues.

Under **Reports**, the Chairman rambles on about BAWA involvement in the Malleefowl Network and the coming regional groups meeting, while the Conservation and

Research Committee reports on plans for a brochure on the topic of feeding wild birds. We have recently been successful in obtaining several grants, while there are brief reports tabled from the five projects currently being run by BAWA.

Excursions are dealt with briefly, and under **General Business** there is discussion about the 2003 Open Day or a similar public event.

Juggling BAWA business with the rest of my life leaves little time for birdwatching, but I'm lucky enough that our bush garden has grown to the stage where the birds come to me. We have Western Spinebills and White-naped Honeyeaters in the garden today, and last week there were two adult Red-capped Parrots feeding from a "Silver Princess" (*Eucalyptus caesia*) just 5 m outside my study window.

**Mike Bamford**  
Chair, BAWA Inc.



Bridled Tern at Penguin Island,  
January 2003  
Photo courtesy Molly Angus

## BAWA Projects

### RESULTS OF HOODED PLOVER SURVEY, FEBRUARY /MARCH 2003



The dry conditions that were a hallmark of last year's summer survey continued through the winter months and made this year even drier. Comments like, "the surrounding country is roasted dry" and "local wetlands are bone dry" were often heard leading up to the survey. This year the Hooded Plover summer survey was held from Saturday 22 February 2003 to Sunday 2 March 2003.

One objective of the survey is to monitor the number of juvenile birds and runners. The number of juveniles counted is particularly important as it gives us some indication of the season's breeding success and the population's accretion rate. What was the impact going to be of all those dry inland lakes on the breeding success of the Hooded Plover and the status of the population in general? This year 6.3 % of birds sighted were juveniles. If however the high number of juveniles (9) from Yalgorup National Park are excluded, the proportion of juveniles for the rest of the State drops to only 3.8 %.

The following table provides a comparison of data collected over our previous summer surveys.

Summer survey	Adults and (Juveniles)	% of Juveniles	Total
January 1995	2093		2093
Jan/Feb 1996	1555 (131)	8.4%	1686
February 1998	514 (39)	7.6%	553
March 2002	691 (39)	5.3%	730
Feb/March 2003	344 (23)	6.3%	367

#### Survey Results, February/March 2003

Hooded Plovers were recorded breeding at Lake Benje-Benjenup and in Yalgorup National Park. The southern part of Lake Preston had the highest recorded breeding concentration of Hooded Plovers in the State. Local observers estimated that in the 2002-03 season up to 14 pairs nested in the southern part of Yalgorup National Park and were reasonably confident that a minimum of seven juveniles fledged in the southern part of Lake Preston.

Runners were recorded at Duck Pond and Lake Newnham and two juveniles at Boundary Lake. The additional Hooded Plovers found breeding in the northern part of Yalgorup National Park brings the total breeding population for the Park close to 16 pairs.

For the second year in a row, Tony France noted a pair was laying a third clutch after the first two breeding attempts had failed.

Expectations for the Esperance region were high, based on the results of past surveys. In late November 2002 Hooded Plovers were congregating around the Esperance Lakes:

Lake Carbul (63), Lake Kubitch (2), Lake Gore (87), Helms Aboretum Lake (3) and Lake Benje-Benjenup (66). A total of 221 Hooded Plovers in the Esperance region seemed to bode well for the season (Buchanan, 2003). As it turned out, Esperance had the second highest count but nowhere near the expected numbers.

In comparison to last year's summer survey Hooded Plover numbers were down in Yalgorup National Park. They remained the same on the beaches between Cape Naturaliste to Augusta and around the Esperance Lakes. Lower numbers were recorded from inland lakes and the beaches from Stokes Inlet to Cape Le Grande.

Volunteers checked beaches for the presence of Hooded Plovers from Shark Bay in the north to Cape Arid in the east.

The number of survey forms (240) that were received at Perry House are testimony to the success of the survey. In addition to the survey sheets, we received numerous reports on the status of inland- and coastal lakes. Although most lakes were dry these reports did allow us to focus our efforts.

The response was overwhelming and I thank everyone for their contributions. A special word of thanks for the Hooded Plover regional coordinators who organised the volunteers in their districts: Dick Rule (Yalgorup), Tony France (Myalup), Lida Feist (Margaret River), Sue Abbotts (Augusta), Geoff Fernie (Walpole), Alan Cohen (Denmark), Anne Bondin (Albany), Anne Gadsby (Bremer Bay), Greg Bannon (Esperance), Phyllis Bentley and the members of the Hooded Plover Sub-Committee.

The support and assistance received each year from the Department of Conservation and Land Management and their staff is invaluable—in particular Carl Beck and his Shark Bay volunteers, Steve Dutton at Yalgorup National Park, Allan Rose and the many other National Park Rangers who helped out, thank you.

#### References

Buchanan, B. (2003) Waterbirding at Esperance, *Western Australian Bird Notes* 105: 18-20.

**Marcus Singor**  
Chairperson, Hooded Plover Sub-Committee

### WANTED

At the AGM of Birds Australia WA Group last February, not all the committee places were filled. We really need a full committee to handle the activities of the organisation.

If you are prepared to volunteer for this position, please contact Liz Walker, our Secretary,  
on 9444 8920.

**Table: Results of dry season Hooded Plover survey, February/March 2003.**

Areas	Numbers: Dry season survey Feb/March 2003
Shark Bay to Perth:	No sightings
Wetlands between Rockingham & Mandurah:	No sightings
Beaches from Mandurah to Leschenault Inlet:	2 juveniles
Yalgorup National Park (Yalgorup HPMR*):	111 (includes 9 juveniles)
Geographe Bay:	2 adults
Beaches from Cape Naturaliste to Augusta (Naturaliste-Augusta HPMR):	45 (includes 1 juvenile)
Beaches from Augusta to Broke Inlet:	5 adults
Beaches from Broke Inlet (Walpole) to Beaufort Inlet (east of Albany) (Walpole-Denmark HPMR):	31 (includes 4 juveniles) Broke Inlet & Nornalup Inlet not surveyed
Beaches from Beaufort Inlet to Hopetoun (Bremer Bay-Hopetoun HPMR):	24 (includes 3 juveniles)
Beaches east of Hopetoun to Stokes Inlet	15 adults
Beaches Stokes Inlet to Cape Le Grande:	13 adults
Esperance Lakes (Lake Gore system to Mullet Lake) (Esperance HPMR):	101 (includes 3 juveniles)
Beaches east of Cape Le Grande:	6 adults
Inland lakes in south-west of the state:	12 (includes 1 juvenile)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>367 (includes 23 juveniles)</b>
*Note: HPMR = Hooded Plover Management Region	

## PERTH BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

### Perth Metropolitan Area Bird Surveys

#### Observers needed

Birds Australia WA is assisting the WA Local Government Association by doing bird surveys in selected areas of remnant bushland in the Perth metropolitan area.

New sites are being added to the project. You may register your interest in case a site near you needs surveying. Surveys are generally done once every two months, with two sets of observers alternating monthly for each site.

Are you interested in putting your name on the list? If so, contact

Cheryl Gole, Bird Surveys Coordinator  
Tel/Fax: 9293 4958 Email: [gole@starwon.com.au](mailto:gole@starwon.com.au)

## WESTERN GROUND PARROTS: BAD NEWS



Work done on Waychinicup / Manypeaks in spring 2001 and 2002 indicated that the population of Western Ground Parrots (WGP) there had declined since 1998 (see WABN 105: 12). However, it was difficult to be sure what was happening as these surveys were conducted at a different time of year from surveys in 1998.

The autumn 2003 survey was planned to give a ready comparison with work done in April 1998 when calling was better than it had been in spring of that year.

The survey has now been completed. Results are worse than anticipated. Despite a doubling of the effort of April 1998, only four birds were found: three were heard and one was seen.

In April 1998, of 58 survey sessions, 24 different sites were found to be positive. This autumn's surveyors would find it hard to believe that 240 calls were heard and a minimum of 29 WGP was estimated (McNee 1999). The equivalent survey period in 2003 was more comprehensive. There were twice as many survey sessions (115) of which two were positive. Only eight calls were heard, none at full volume.

(A survey session here means one recorder in one site at the optimal time for hearing the parrots call. The survey is done by hearing the parrots call. Co-ordinates of each site are recorded so that each site can be mapped.)

The 2003 survey had the advantage of searching where birds had been found before. Sites where birds had been located prior to 1998 were also surveyed and some surveys were conducted in vegetation that had been too recently burnt to support WGP in 1998. The sites positive in 1998 had not been burnt. The decline can not readily be explained.

On the positive side, there was excellent volunteer support from Birds Australia members and others. People who hadn't seen a sunrise for years made a heroic effort to do morning listening. There were volunteers from Perth, Katanning, Bremer Bay, Townsville, Seattle and an impressive turnout from Albany.

In one survey area, much confusion was created by an influx of seabirds calling at the best ground parrot calling times. It took some time to conclude that these were Great-winged Petrels in considerable numbers and well inland. They were possibly occupied with pre-breeding behaviour, normally associated with islands.

So all is far from well with WGP and if you are not already a Friend of the Western Ground Parrot, please consider adding your name to the list (no joining fee). It is a community group dedicated to the recovery of this West Australian endemic bird. WGP Friends will be offered more information about the bird, and about future surveys, past research, current recovery actions, etc. Contact Brenda Newbey (9337 5673 or sfryc@iinet.net.au)

## Reference

McNee, S. A. (1999) Report on Western Ground Parrot survey at Waychinicup and Manypeaks. April to October 1998. Birds Australia WA Group. *Western Australian Bird Notes* Supplement No. 3. (WABN No. 90, June 1999).

**Brenda Newbey**



Inland Dotterel on limestone, Eyre  
Photo courtesy of Bea Myers and Ian Tarbin, Wardens

## MID SUMMER WADER COUNT, 2003

Attempting to count the waders along the West Australian coastline could be thought to be either an exercise in futility or extreme optimism; add a number of inland lakes, then biting off more than you can chew would not be far off the mark.

The surveys that started off in a small way in 1997 have grown, and useful information is emerging from the surveys. This year waders were monitored at coastal locations between Port Hedland and Esperance and a number of inland lakes. In the Kimberley four sites were added to the list by the Kununurra SEEKS group (Save Endangered East Kimberley Species).

The number of locations surveyed hardly changed from last year's survey. However the number of participants involved in the count has increased, resulting in a more detailed count. Thanks to all who have contributed their expertise and time to this program. A special thanks to representatives from bodies outside of BAWA, namely Carl Beck from CALM Denham and Richard and Liz McLellan from WWF. Finally it would be amiss not to mention Phyllis Bentley and the Hooded Plover observers' network for their input at the inland locations.

Table: WA Mid Summer Wader Count, February 2003

This year observers at some south-west wetlands have reported encouraging signs of an increase in wader numbers. Some of the trans-equatorial migrants that had been hard to find over the past two years were turning up at a variety of sites. It was therefore understandable that these sightings of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Pectoral Sandpiper and an occasional Ruff, along with large flocks of Red-necked Stints caused a certain amount of twitching among the wader watching fraternity. These findings were also reflected during the 2003 mid-summer wader count by a significant increase in the number of sightings when a total of 68 579 birds were reported compared to the 32 426 birds for the 2002 count (see table). In addition to the increase in the number of birds some of the interesting observations that came to light during the 2003 count were:

an Australian Pratincole at Cervantes,

83 Pied Oystercatchers at Alfred Cove (SEMP),

300 Broad-bill Sandpipers seen at Port Hedland and

30% of the birds in a flock of 11 000 Banded Stilts at Lake Preston were in juvenile plumage.

This added interest has prompted the commencement of mid-winter wader counts, to monitor waders and over wintering trans-equatorial migrants in particular; these surveys are already conducted in mid-June at Albany, SEMP and Rottnest Island. For those who are interested in braving the elements and monitoring the same sites they monitored in February, the mid-winter count will be held between mid and late June. Contact Colin Davis on 9330 1482 for details.

This is a great opportunity to invite those with an interest in waders to become involved in the wader study group's activities.

As well as the mid summer and mid winter counts, we are also concerned in the safeguarding of threatened wetlands.

New BA members are encouraged to join a "Get to know your waders" camp to be held at Rottnest on 26–29 June; experienced observers will help you with wader identification. Accommodation is available at very reasonable rates. Contact Colin Davis 93301482 for more information

Colin Davis

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### ***Atlas of Australian Birds***

#### ***More Atlas surveys are needed!***

Birds Australia is planning to commence a project to report on the State of Australian Birds. This project requires comparisons of bird status over time, and the Atlas data set is the major source of data. So please keep those Atlas sheets rolling in – they *are* important, and they will be used.

Contact Cheryl Gole – telephone 9293 4958  
or email [gole@starwon.com.au](mailto:gole@starwon.com.au)

## Members' Contributions

### RAPTOR FEST

Pat and I are living in a Wandoo bushland area surrounded by farmland and wheatfields, where we frequently hear Stubble Quail calling, day and night. We have often wondered if the harvest attracts many freeloaders, so when harvesting was in full swing last year, we went for a bit of a drive late one afternoon (15 January 2002) to see what was around.

Along View Range Road (NW of Kendenup) we saw the following:

- 2 Swamp Harriers
- 1 Black Falcon
- 2 Peregrines (both adults, presumed pair by size difference, perched near each other in the same tree)
- 1 Spotted Harrier
- 1 Brown Falcon.

Along Red Gum Pass Road, we saw a small adult male Collared Sparrowhawk perched on a fence post nearby and, nearer the ranges, a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles.

It was only when we got home and went through the books that we realised that Black Falcons are not that usual down here, so I'll add our impressions.

We first saw the bird at a distance intermittently behind some roadside trees (silhouette: raven or raptor). The location was 7-8 km NW of Kendenup. As we approached the area we had a good view of the bird flying ahead and above us and then alongside. I'm not sure what I was expecting to see, but as we got nearer I thought the outline from behind suggested goshawk (gliding, stiff wings bent slightly down) but the colour was way out. As we closed and the bird moved off to the right we got a good view of the wings (broad with narrow tips); it was obviously a falcon and as it flew alongside us I thought Black Falcon. It alighted in a tree nearby where we had a good view for a few minutes before it flew off behind us out of sight. Its uniform matt black colouration was the main feature.

I have seen a Black Falcon once before (in the hand and then flying free at the Werrabee sewage farm) and we see Brown Falcons around here frequently. We have never seen a dark morph Brown Falcon, so can't make a direct comparison, but there was nothing about this bird to suggest a Brown Falcon to either of us, its fluent flight and posture being more suggestive of a Peregrine if anything.

**Bob Horwood**

### A HOVERING HONEYEATER

The Brown Honeyeater is the only honeyeater I know that can hover while feeding from flowers.

This ability contrasts with the very limited fluttering of the Singing Honeyeater and the Red Wattlebird as they pick a spider from a web or from under the eaves of a building. The Western Spinebill can also semi-hover momentarily (HANZAB vol. V, pp. 1119, 1121) and on a still day in the Jarrah forest the fluttering sound made by its wings is diagnostic of it. But in my experience the abilities of the three don't compare to the hovering ability of the Brown, the latter's making one think of a hummingbird. In fact I consulted literature to see if they were related, but they aren't.

I first observed a Brown Honeyeater hovering in my garden at Wilson in the 1970s. The bird was feeding from the thin tubular flowers of an Emu-bush *Eremophila*, and I was quite surprised, not being able to recall seeing such before, except in hummingbirds on TV.

A few years later a local birdwatcher published his observation on a Brown Honeyeater hovering while feeding from flowers, and concluded that the bird must have had an injury or two in a leg or two, and that it had consequently been forced into hovering.

Subsequently C. Edwards (1988; WABN no 48) wrote: "...the sight of

a Brown Honeyeater taking nectar from a tall blackboy spike, while its whirring wings held it steady in mid-air. It backed off, horizontally, a few inches, then shunted forward again to another tiny flower...Is this hummingbird-like behaviour common in Brown Honeyeaters?"

Thus another observer was sufficiently moved to record his or her observation and also likened the bird's behaviour to that of a hummingbird. I didn't learn of this observation until very recently but in the mid 1990s I observed a Brown Honeyeater hovering while feeding from the blossom of a Flooded Gum *Eucalyptus rudis* in Bardon Park, Maylands. Subsequently I saw another feeding similarly from the open flowers of a *Lantana*, so the birds feed that way from both native and exotic flora. Further, on one occasion a bird flew out from a Flooded Gum, perhaps half a metre or so, hovered normally, and plucked an insect from mid-air.

This ability to hover would seem to be an advantage to the Brown Honeyeater, because it can then access flowers that would otherwise be difficult to reach, for the weight of the



Banded Stilt, Eyre

Photo courtesy Bea Myers and  
Ian Tarbin, Wardens

bird on the slender stems of the Emu-bush causes the flowers to bend away from it. In view of this hovering ability the species would seem to be more of a nectar feeder than other local honeyeaters, and it can therefore practice a more selective or specialised diet over a greater range of plants.

Also, an omnivorous species such as the Singing Honeyeater can be sedentary, but the more specialised Brown Honeyeater needs to be of a more mobile habit, unless, as in Perth, it has a reliable food supply for much of the year. And it is now known to be at least partly resident in Perth during the winter months; that is, not all individuals migrate or move from Perth at that time.

At Maylands however the Brown Honeyeater does vacate the area for five or six weeks in the spring, but it is not a fixed time because it varies from September to November. Perhaps it breeds then and I once observed this at the Bird Sanctuary in Bayswater.

**Robert Stranger**



Western Pygmy Possum, Eyre  
Photo courtesy Bea Myers and  
Ian Tarbin, Wardens

### ***Do you have some understanding of databases?***

Can you design and run queries in Microsoft Access?

Occasionally, we need help with such tasks, usually at Perry House. If you think you could help, please contact Allan Burbidge, telephone 9405 5109 (BH), 9306 1642 (AH) or austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au to discuss.

## **BIRDS OF MARY CARROLL PARK**

Mary Carroll Park is a small nature reserve in the City of Gosnells. It is a remnant of the extensive paperbark wetlands that were once found in the Gosnells district.

The park with its small lake and abundant wildlife was named after a well loved Gosnells school teacher and amateur naturalist (McDonald and Cooper, 1988). The lake is fringed by dense stands of paperbark trees and the main access is off Eudoria Street.

This article is written in memory of Romano M. Pini, a keen local birdwatcher who left me his notes and observation records. These were collected in the late eighties and provide an insight into the local bird

population. The observations range from 13 September 1986 to 26 December 1988 with a total of 52 species recorded.

The Magpie-lark is not presented in the accompanying tables but was recorded at this location on 27 June 1987. A personal visit to the lake on 19 April 2003 yielded three additional species – Western Gerygone, Inland Thornbill and Yellow-rumped Thornbill.

Some information on the lake's water levels were provided: September 1986 lake full, March 1987 lake full, August 1987 lake full, March 1988 water level very low.

The records are presented in two tables (see pages 14 and 15).

Breeding results:

### *Black Swan*

Black Swan was recorded breeding in 1986, 1987 and 1988. Cygnets were seen in September 1986 and August 1987. A Black Swan was sitting on a nest in the middle of lake on 26 June 1988.

### *Pacific Black Duck*

Breeding was noted in 1986 and 1987. Pacific Black Ducks seen with juveniles on 13 September 1986 and 12 September 1987

### *Grey Teal*

Grey Teal with 14 duckling (few days old) seen on 13 September 1986.

### *Hardhead*

Possible breeding record for the lake: on 1 January 1987 two adults were seen with two quite grown up young.

### *Pink-eared Duck*

Breeding was observed in 1987. On 12 July 1987 Pink-eared Duck sighted with two young which were days old.

### *Musk Duck*

Breeding recorded in 1988: female with one young on 8 October 1988.

### *Dusky Moorhen*

Observed on 3 October 1986 with three young chicks.

### *Purple Swamphen*

Seen with young on 3 October 1986, 12 September 1987 and 1988.

### *Eurasian Coot*

Breeding noted in 1986, 1987 and 1988. More than one pair observed breeding at the lake.

Records for 16 November 1986 state that two pairs still on nest and a lot of young at different stages of maturity. Eurasian Coot on nest on 12 September 1987. Seen with juveniles on 3 October 1986, 16 November 1986 and 8 October 1988.

### Reference

McDonald, G. and Cooper, W.S. 1988. *The Gosnells Story*. City of Gosnells.

**Marcus Singor**

Table 1: Mary Carroll Park, Observations 13 Sep 1986 to 4 Jul 1987

**Table 2: Mary Carroll Park, Observations 12 Jul 1987 to 26 Dec 1988**

## POSSIBLE WANDERING TATTLER AT LAKE THETIS

I visited Lake Thetis near Cervantes briefly on the afternoon of Friday 13 December 2002 with a Coate's Wildlife Tour en route to the Abrolhos. While watching a small group of waders on a rocky stromatolite outcrop on the edge of the lake, I noticed an unusual looking tattler, which appeared to differ from a 'normal' Grey-tailed Tattler that was also present.

The unusual tattler was conspicuously darker, and browner. The legs were grey, the bill was the same length as that of the Grey-tailed Tattler, but uniformly dark and quite noticeably heavier, especially at the base. The Grey-tailed Tattler had yellow legs and a yellowish base to the lower mandible. The folded wings of the unusual tattler were the same length as the tail (I particularly noted this feature, as I had been reading in preparation for a trip to Cape York, where Wandering Tattlers are a possibility. Grey-ailed Tattlers generally have wings shorter than the tail at rest, and the Wandering longer, but there is overlap in the wing length between the two species. The bird did not bob in the fashion of a Common Sandpiper. Exaggerated bobbing is apparently a characteristic of the Wandering Tattler, but this bird was not agitated or wary. Unfortunately time, and the nearby presence of roosting or nesting Fairy Terns, prohibited an attempt to flush the bird to get a possible call.

I appreciate that Wandering Tattlers have not been seen in Western Australia, but extreme vagrancy is a wader characteristic! Rick Curtis, the leader of the Coate's Tour, also saw the bird, and agreed with me that it looked unusual, especially with respect to the conspicuously heavy bill. A subsequent examination of the only available Wandering Tattler skin in the WA Museum did not help as it was of a bird in breeding plumage, and both bill and legs were badly faded. Even legs of Grey-tailed Tattler skins were discoloured.

John Brooke

## 'PORPOISE BEHAVIOUR' IN THE WESTERN YELLOW ROBIN

In Australia, approximately a third of terrestrial birds are thought to be co-operative breeders. They have engendered a great deal of research interest, because co-operative behaviour may at first seem altruistic. Co-operative breeding is where additional birds assist at the nest by feeding nestlings and performing nest defence and territorial duties (Ford 1989). Altruism can be thought of as a self-sacrificing behaviour. Genetically this could be undesirable in an individual or species, because it would increase the fitness of another at the expense of its own fitness.

Apparent altruism in birds has frequently motivated further research, which ultimately explains the phenomenon in

terms of benefit to the individual (Russell and Rowley 1988; Rowley and Russell 2002). Examples of altruistic or epimeletic behaviour (caring for others) have to my knowledge only been put forward for humans and cetaceans. For example, Troesch (2001) reported that a group of 15 Rough-toothed Dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*), carried and protected a dead calf, for several days. The calf was either still born or died shortly after birth. The female supporting the calf received help from all members of the group over five days, which included holding the calf at the surface and defending the corpse from seagulls. This type of epimeletic behaviour is not unheard of in cetaceans, but it is rarely seen or reported.

During a pilot study on the nesting ecology of woodland birds at Dryandra State Forest, I observed a Western Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria griseogularis*) possibly attempting to feed a dead juvenile Yellow-plumed Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus ornatus*). To my knowledge there are no reports of epimeletic behaviour between species (excluding humans).

I observed an adult male Western Yellow Robin perched on a horizontal branch approximately two metres from the ground. It was holding a spider in its beak. I was approximately 10 metres from the bird, watching it with field binoculars and by eye for more than 20 minutes. I was waiting for it to either feed the female or go directly to the nest. I could also see the female and she was not on and did not approach a nest. Finally, the male flew to the ground behind a shrub about five metres from my location with the spider still in its beak. At this point I presumed it was feeding a fledgling on the ground. So I moved directly to observe the spot where it had landed, hoping to find the fledgling. The male Western Yellow Robin had landed beside a dead bird, which I took to be a dead juvenile Western Yellow Robin that the adult had been trying to feed. The dead spider was on the ground beside the dead bird; the adult Western Yellow Robins had left the immediate area (50 m radius). I thoroughly surveyed an area of 20 m radius in search of another fledgling, which I did not detect and I collected what I presumed was a dead juvenile (still warm) for a post mortem. Then, I eagerly sought out my supervisor, Professor Harry Recher. When he saw the specimen he questioned my identification with a satisfied smile, the kind someone has when they know you have got it wrong. I held the specimen up in its plastic bag and he re-identified it as a Yellow-plumed Honeyeater. I then enquired why was a Western Yellow Robin feeding a dead Yellow-plumed Honeyeater? To which Professor Recher minimally and dismissively replied, "porpoise behaviour!"

### Acknowledgements

I thank Jarrad Cousin and Alexander Watson for comments on the manuscript. The Centre for Ecosystem Management and the School of Natural Sciences at Edith Cowan University gave financial support.

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<http://www.netzeitung.de/servlets/page?section=23&item=163370>.

Graham R Fulton

### MAGELLAN CORMORANT AT HOUTMANS ABROLHOS

I visited Houtmans Abrolhos on 14 and 15 December 2002 with a Coate's Wildlife Tour. On the morning of 14 December at about 7:45 am we were at about 113° 51'E 28°47'S sailing from near Morley Island in the Easter Group towards Pelsaert Island in the Pelsaert Group aboard the *Abrolhos Odyssey* when an unusual cormorant flew from west to east across the stern of the vessel between 50 and 100 m away.

This bird was unusual in having a bright red face or bill, and a sharply defined white shield on the under body. The neck was black with a very sharp cut-off with the white of the upper breast. The underwings were dark. I managed to get the bird in my binoculars (Jenoptik 8x30 wide angle), but because I had been by myself at the rear of the fly-deck, enjoying the ambience of the journey and the surroundings, I was unable to attract the attention of my husband or Rick Curtis, the tour leader, even though they were at the forward end of the same deck. When I explained what I had seen, and asked which cormorant had a red face and sharp black-white cut-off on the neck, they both agreed that it was not an Australian cormorant. I immediately drew a sketch of what I had seen for them.

The cormorant was similar in size to a Pied Cormorant, and flew in a similar manner, with the neck straight and outstretched. It flew with continuous reasonably quick wingbeats typical of other cormorants I have seen. It was flying purposefully to the right, without banking or deviating. It flew at about eye-height for me, estimated to be 5–8 m above the water, so that I could clearly see the underside. Certainly it flew higher than the numerous Lesser Noddies that were leaving their breeding colony on Wooded Island to feed at sea.

Visibility was excellent with a moderate overcast breaking up, low sun angle and with the sun at a benign angle (the boat was heading about 150°). There was a light breeze but almost no swell resulting in very calm conditions. The bird was in view for about 15 seconds.

Even though I was sure it was a cormorant, we checked a field guide for other possibilities such as Magpie Goose (white underwings), Black Swan (black abdomen, white wingtips), Brown Booby (white underwing, no red on face) or Frigate Bird (wrong jizz, neck and wing shape).

When we returned home, we checked the cormorants in *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of the World* by Gerald Tuck and Hermann Heinzel. I have no doubt that what I saw was a Magellan Cormorant or Rock Shag (*Phalacrocorax magellanicus*), even though this bird breeds on the coasts of Chile, Argentina and the Falkland Islands.

My husband then contacted John Darnell at the Western Australian Museum. In order to check the identification we consulted several more comprehensive books (*Seabirds—An Identification Guide* by Peter Harrison, *Photographic Handbook of the Seabirds of the World*

by Jim Endicott and David Tipling, *Oceanic Birds of South America* by Robert Cushman Murphy and *Cormorants, Darters and Pelicans of the World* by Paul A Johnsgard). Other possibilities rejected included the Campbell Island Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax campbellii*) (no red on face, but otherwise similar) and the Guanay Cormorant (*P. bouganvillii*) (white on throat, red face very much smaller). Of particular interest was the photograph in Endicott and Tipling, which confirmed the mail-box red of the large facial area. The description in this book read in part "Lower breast and belly white, usually sharply demarcated at pectoral from dark head; undertail-coverts and thighs blackish. Bill blackish; facial skin red, bordered with black; gular red". Harrison noted the black underwing. In a comprehensive account Murphy observed that "birds of this species always fly very low over the water" and "the birds neither sail nor soar, but rather beat along steadily with the head stretched straight forward and held a little lower than the neck".

Coincidentally, on 15 February 2003 the ABC screened the final episode of *Richard Morecroft Goes Wild*, which covered the shores of South America. One scene briefly showed a nesting colony of these cormorants that, while not named, were clearly Magellan Cormorants. I noticed that the red facial area was not as striking as the bird I had seen (nor as that in Endicott and Tipling), but that there was a lot of colour variation between individuals.



Grey Fantail, Augusta  
 Photo courtesy Molly Angus

In spite of the unlikelihood of a vagrant of this species reaching Australia, I remain convinced that the bird I saw was a Magellan Cormorant.

This record has been submitted to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) for consideration as the first Australian record of the species.

Hilary Brooke

## PREDATION OF SPOTTED TURTLE-DOVE BY THE RAVEN

There are few records of native birds preying on the introduced turtle-doves, especially the Spotted Turtle-Dove. Hence the following observation is worth recording.

In late September of 1989 a pair of Spotted Turtle-Doves built a nest in a Native Peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) very close to my balcony. They hatched and raised a nestling almost to a fledgling but the nest and nestling were discovered by a pair of Australian Ravens, one of which attacked the nestling and pecked at its head. The nestling tried to escape from the raven by leaving the nest and it worked its way down into denser foliage. But the raven followed the nestling and continued to peck at its head. After a minute or two the nestling worked its way out of the tree and fell to the ground, but was again followed by the raven, which continued to peck it about the head and was no longer impeded by foliage.

The dove then fluttered over the ground, which was mostly lawn, for some 15 metres but couldn't find any cover, and thus couldn't escape from the raven. It was obviously going to be a prolonged and brutal business so I scared away the raven, which was most reluctant to leave its potential prey, and took possession of the dove. Both parents of the dove were present during the whole of this attempted predation but made no attempt to defend or help it.

The English ornithologist Derek Goodwin has also informed me of observations made by him on corvids and columbids in England. On two occasions he has seen a Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) fly from its nest, which presumably contained eggs or young—he guessed the latter—and attack a Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*), which has similar habits to our Australian Raven. On one occasion the crow had alighted in the tree with the nest, and the pigeon crashed into the crow, hitting it with its wings and trying to drive it away. On the second occasion a crow had alighted some 15-20 metres from the pigeon's nest, and the pigeon crashed into the crow in an attempt to knock it off its perch. Usually Wood Pigeons fear crows

and move some distance away if one comes near them. Also, when Collared Turtle-Doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*) are breeding they will often attack the European Magpie (*Pica pica*) if birds approach a nest containing eggs or young.

The Wood Pigeon is many times larger than our introduced turtle-doves, but in view of our raven's predation on them, perhaps they do not have an instinctive behaviour to deal with the raven, or perhaps they haven't yet learnt that it is a deadly predator. And it seems to me that our formerly very wary raven has not only increased its numbers in the metropolitan area, but has become a very bold scavenger as well as a predator.

Robert Stranger



Searching in the canopy for birds at Boranup Forest near Augusta  
Photo courtesy Molly Angus

## GREY HERON (*ARDEA CINEREA*) AT BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

At approximately 0645 hours on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2003 I was on the beach at Broome Bird Observatory, about 200 m west of the track leading from the beach back to the observatory, scanning for anything that moved.

I noticed a large dark heron in flight, coming out of the sun and heading towards the west. The bird was flying at a height of 20–30 m, roughly following the water line. Initially I thought 'Great Egret in silhouette' but the bird seemed too large and heavy. As the viewing angle improved, and the bird was sideways on and moving

past, I could see that it was a large heron with broad wings. The secondaries and primaries were dark grey or black, above and below. The upper wing-coverts were mid grey and the under wing covers appeared to be lighter-whitish. The legs trailed noticeably past the end of the tail.

The bird continued towards the west, past the observatory, towards the point. Some three or four minutes later it returned and flew past west to east retracing its track along the beach. The light was much improved and a much clearer and more detailed view was obtained.

The bill was pale yellowish and there was a dark stripe along the side of the head through the eye. The crown and chin areas were white and the neck, curved back in typical heron fashion, was white with heavy black streaking. The wings were as already described, but the leading underside was more clearly pale (whitish) faintly washed with pale rufous. I did not notice any 'navigation light' effect on the leading edge of the wings. The legs were yellowish and long, trailing well past the end of the tail.

The flight was typical of a heron, but seemed very heavy—not as buoyant as either White-faced Heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) or Great Egret (*Ardea alba*). There was, at the same time, a white-phase Eastern Reef Egret (*Egretta sacra*) foraging in the rocks at the water's edge, and although it's difficult to compare size between a flying and a standing bird, I estimated that the flying bird was almost twice the size of the Eastern Reef Egret.

If I had been asked before I went to Broome what I expected to see, the Grey Heron would not have appeared on the radar. In fact, after the first west to east pass, my intention was to say nothing because I was quite puzzled by what I had seen. However, on the return flight, in addition to the better view obtained with the improved light conditions, the jizz was that of the Grey Herons that were reasonably common in Africa (Zambia and Zimbabwe) where I spent a number of years birding.

Clive Nealon

Editors' note: See WABN 103 for previous records of Grey Herons, including details of the first convincing sighting in Australia.

## MORE ESPERANCE LAKES

Anne and I went to Esperance to survey lakes for the February Hooded Plover count, seeing 40 in all.

We also visited lakes we had noted in November 2002 but not examined, only to find the majority dry (and none with birds), despite being marked as permanent on the map, no doubt the result of a very dry year.

We were told good rains several days prior to our arrival had resulted in the departure of many waterbirds. This appeared borne out by the total absence of any waterbirds at Lakes Kubitch and Gidon, 21 Hooded Plovers at Lake Carbul only (dry) and a mere 631 waterbirds at Lake Gore, with six species: Black Swan 55, Australian Shelduck 456, Curlew Sandpiper 3, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 1, Red-necked Stint 97, Hooded Plover 19. Although all these lakes were smaller than in November, substantial areas of water remained and the bird numbers were less than anticipated.

Mainbenup Swamp was also smaller and its outlying shallow/marshy areas were dry, but despite being smaller than any of the above lakes, it had more than double their total number of birds at 1460 of 24 species. Outstanding among these were 8 Glossy Ibis, a species not recorded in the Atlas (1984) square. The other 23 species were Musk Duck 9, Black Swan 66, Australian Shelduck 299, Pacific Black Duck 53, Grey Teal 75, Chestnut Teal (males) 33\*, Pink-eared Duck 5, Hardhead 10\*, Hoary-headed Grebe 120, Great-crested Grebe 6\*, Darter 1\*, Little Pied Cormorant 3\*, Little Black Cormorant 6, Australian Pelican 22\*, White-faced Heron 5, Great Egret 3, Australian White Ibis 6, Yellow-billed Spoonbill 24,

Eurasian Coot 665, Common Greenshank 2, Common Sandpiper 1, Black-winged Stilt 27, Black-fronted Dotterel 11. The species marked with an \* are additional to those reported in November 2002, resulting in a total of 31 waterbird species for the swamp. This is a good number after only two surveys.

We also found our way to Lake Williamup, easy of access with permission of the landowner (though in one place the track possibly needs better clearance for a non-4WD). A circular lake about 300 m in diameter, it is 'sunk' approximately 5-6 m below the surrounding land. There is a surrounding small beach which becomes a moderate size in the north, all of which has living melaleuca. There were seven species: Australian Shelduck 93, Pacific Black Duck 28, Grey Teal 104, Chestnut Teal (males) 11, Hoary-headed Grebe 16, Black-winged Stilt 28, Red-necked Avocet 148. These were good numbers, particularly compared with Lake Gore.

Before leaving we looked at that part of Lake Windabout accessible from the Esperance Gold Course. This proved worthwhile as there were 13 Cape Barren Geese (most of whom were tearing up parts of the greens), 27 Great Egrets, over 100 Musk Ducks and 92 Freckled Ducks among others. The Freckled Ducks were not in a densely vegetated area as is common, but on a small beach sheltered by low melaleuca. Consequently as we approached, rather than the more usual avoidance of paddling gently away, immediately on leaving the beach they flew. After two circuits of the area they departed to another section of the lake, so providing us with our first real view of airborne Freckled Duck, despite having seen them many times.

It all confirmed Esperance as a good waterbirding locality.

Bruce Buchanan

## RED-NECKED AVOCET AT BIBRA LAKE 2003

Large numbers of Red-necked Avocets have again made Bibra Lake their temporary home during the late dry summer and early autumn of 2003. This year numbers were greater than last. (See "Avocets at Bibra Lake" *Western Australian Bird Notes*, June 2002.)

On 21 February about 50 were feeding frantically in a tightly packed raft at the southern end of the lake. A week earlier 25 had been sighted at nearby North Lake but these had disappeared.

On 1 March, a total of approximately 500 were seen in two densely packed groups and the feeding was frenzied. Thereafter numbers gradually dropped and the feeding appeared more relaxed. On 8 and 31 March, 5 and 16 April up to 300, 170, 160 and 100 respectively were seen on the lake but none since.

Good rainfalls of 40 mm over 29-30 March and 34 mm over 10-12 April have not covered much of the exposed

muddy lake bottom which seemed more extensive than in 2002. Red-necked Avocets fed 50-100 metres from the south eastern and southern shores. Towards the lake centre at the more exposed northern end Yellow-billed Spoonbills and Great Egrets were standing feeding.

**Marion Shaw**

## **DUCKS GALORE AND A 'GREEN-BILLED SPOONBILL' AT HERDSMAN LAKE**

Good Friday proved to be a birding omen a couple of years ago when I was fortunate to see a Barking Owl at Blue Gum Lake. So when I headed off to Herdsman Lake on Good Friday 2003 (18 April) I was hoping for something special and I was not disappointed.

As soon as I approached the part of Herdsman Lake known as Floreat Waters I was surprised by the very large numbers of ducks on and near the two lakes in this part of Herdsman Lake. I was further surprised when the majority of the ducks were Pacific Black Ducks and not Grey Teal as I had initially thought. In a scene that Alfred Hitchcock would have gladly accepted for his classic film, *Birds*, the ducks were everywhere in very large numbers both resting on the banks and on the lake's surface.

A quick count revealed about 1300 Pacific Black Ducks, the largest congregation I have seen of this species. Due to their nervous and flighty nature it appeared most of the ducks were not from other Perth metro lakes but possibly from more remote inland locations.

Walking around the lakes the constant sight of hundreds of ducks and associated activity and noise was very obvious and was commented upon by some regular walkers. At the barge lake the Great Cormorants were in full breeding plumage and display. I counted 27 occupied nests (most appeared to be incubating) and about 65 cormorants in total.

In addition to the Pacific Black Ducks, other ducks recorded in order of abundance were Grey Teal, Australasian Shoveler, Australian Wood Duck, Australian Shelduck, Hardhead, Blue-billed Duck and Musk Duck.

Towards the end of the walk it got better when I spotted a superb male Chestnut Teal resting on a bank. This is the first time I have seen this teal at Herdsman and only the second time around Perth.

With the large numbers of Pacific Black Ducks I should not have been surprised when I noticed an unusual looking one, or a hybrid, that generally had the main body feather colours reversed, giving the duck a very light appearance.

I then moved to the Maurice Hamer Park section of Herdsman and ticked off a pair of Pink-eared Ducks and then my attention was drawn to those attractive and relatively uncommon ibis, the Glossy Ibis. A good sized flock of 22 were feeding and resting to the west of the car park.

I then came across Ryan Phillips and as we were chatting another birder, Paul Marty, appeared. He had just seen two Freckled Ducks in the traditional spot and kindly directed us to where the 'Freckleds' were resting on a fallen tree, that until recent times had been a permanent upright fixture at the end of the short fenced walkway.

The Freckled Ducks were the 11th duck species seen that morning and is the highest number of duck species I have recorded at the one location on a single visit. (If the domestic duck is included, the total was 12.)

This together with probably another 2000 Pacific Black Ducks at the Maurice Hamer Park section capped off a great morning's birding.

Oh, and the 'Green-billed Spoonbill'? One of the first birds I had seen at Floreat Waters was an apparent Yellow-billed Spoonbill feeding at the edge of the barge lake. When it turned and faced me however, I was confronted with a green-billed spoonbill. After a couple of seconds of thoughts of new species and birding fame, the reason for the apparent new species was evident at the shoreline (where the spoonbill had been feeding). A very thick mixture of green algae had accumulated and some had coated the bill of the spoonbill as if it had been painted on.

For the record a total of 52 species were recorded, which is slightly below average for autumn. It is relevant to note I recorded an impressive 60 species on 30 March 2003, which confirms Herdsman Lake's status as one of Perth's outstanding waterbird habitats. I again visited the sites on 20 April with Frank O'Connor and the Chestnut Teal, large numbers of Pacific Black Ducks, including the unusual plumaged duck, Glossy Ibis and Freckled Ducks were seen, but alas I could not show Frank the 'Green-billed Spoonbill'!

I can hardly wait for Good Friday 2004!

**Wynton Maddeford**

## **POSSIBLE WESTERN SANDPIPER ON ROTTNEST ISLAND**

My wife and I spent an enjoyable Sunday on 23 March cycling around the lakes of Rottnest Island looking for migratory waders. There was very little on offer apart from numerous Ruddy Turnstones and Red-necked Stints, many of which were coming into breeding plumage. We only found three or four isolated Sanderlings with the stints, five or six Curlew Sandpipers, three Grey Plovers and but a single Grey-tailed Tattler—far fewer than we have seen on previous visits.

However, close to the end of our day, on the rocky north shore of Lake Baghdad, we spotted the rear end of a wader that looked distinctly different. It was about the same size as a stint, but plumper, and the upper parts were brownish and boldly marked recalling a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. As I approached to within about 20 m to get a better look, it turned briefly before flying off. I was immediately struck

by the heavy down-turned bill, longer than that of a stint, but shorter and not so fine as that of a nearby much larger Curlew Sandpiper. I looked for but could not see the bifurcated double eyebrow characteristic of a Broad-billed Sandpiper. Unfortunately we did not notice the leg colour. When it flew, the bird looked similar to a Red-necked Stint, with white edges to the rump, but with a much less clearly defined white wing bar. (This characteristic eliminated the possibility of a Sanderling in breeding plumage.) Lack of time frustratingly mitigated against us re-finding the bird for a better look.

When we returned home, we consulted various field guides, including Pizzey & Knight, Morcombe, Slater and

*Shorebirds* by Hayman, Marchant & Prater, which confirmed my suspicion that we had probably seen a Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*). I am familiar with the species, having observed and photographed it on several occasions in California in 1999. A critical viewing of my slides reinforced my suspicion that our mystery bird was indeed an errant Western Sandpiper.

We returned to the island on Saturday 5 April and conducted an exhaustive search of the lake shores, especially those of Lake Baghdad, for anything different among the stints, but without success.

John Brooke

## What's In a Name?

### WHAT'S IN A NAME? (Continued from last issue)

Having to a degree digested a little Shakespeare, dogs and ducks in our last issue we will continue our delving in Duckland before moving to other far away species with strange sounding names.

Ducks belong to the family Anatidae as do geese and swans. Now let us deal with some of the eighteen duck species commonly seen in Australia. These are included in nine genera—*Anas*, *Aythya*, *Biziura*, *Chenonetta*, *Dendrocygna*, *Malacorhynchus*, *Nettapus*, *Oxyura*, *Stictonetta* and *Tadorna*. We will translate some of these Latin genera into everyday good old English/Australian terms—some terms are good examples of avian description, some in my opinion are a bit ambiguous. We will start with the genus *Anas*, the largest of the anatid genera with about 40 species world wide.

***Anas***—(Latin meaning—a duck). Good, we can't go wrong there, a duck is a duck, so let's take for an example the Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchos* (Latin meaning beaked duck). Hmm ... don't all ducks have a beak? Without causing too many feathers to fly, the discoverer could have named the bird possibly *Anas duranteii* and we of the birding fraternity would be quite at home looking for a duck with the largest beak on the pond, but there are other features of this duck that should be explored. Now I know some readers associate shovelers with navvies in blue tee shirts and will not be happy with the tail end of this name, however I think Blue-winged Shoveler is more descriptive than "beaked duck" and by emphasising the bird's splendid plumage, rather than its monstrous honker, definitely more polite. Pity the official name is Australasian Shoveler.

No doubt we could continue the pros and cons of these names, but let's try another example, the gregarious little Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*) we all know so well. With an Australia wide distribution it's possibly the most commonly seen of our ducks. Strangely *gibberifrons* doesn't mean a fern growing in the outback; its meaning is

"humped forehead". Once again the more widely used 'Grey Teal' seems a less personal description and by not emphasising the physical imperfections of the bird's cranium would tend to soothe an agitated anatid inferiority complex. We couldn't be more gracious than that, or could we?

Our next subject *Anas superciliosa* (Latin meaning—eye-browed duck) has nothing to do with Walt Disney or Julie Andrews. The Pacific Black Duck was named by Gmelin in 1789 after being originally named by Latham in 1785. It took just four years to bring the black duck down to earth. Latham's "Disdainfully Superior Duck" became Gmelin's "Eye-browed Duck", a lesson for us all. Today we find both scientific and common names are apt—we can instantly recognise our *Anas* and the bird hasn't had any embarrassing features emphasised. We might try others in the *Anas* genus later but for now we move on; suffice to say Donald's girl friend might be *Anas Annie* sorry Daisy.

***Aythya*** (ay'-thee-ah) (Latin meaning—diving bird). There are 14 of the *Aythya* genus represented in the northern hemisphere, but sadly only one in Australia, *Aythya australis* ('southern diving bird'). This time the Latin name although not entirely satisfactory seems rather more applicable than the deprecating 'Hardhead' we all use, a description one would think more suited to a martial arts combatant than a duck.

***Biziura*** (biz'-ee-ue'-rah). The sole member of this genus is the poor old Musk Duck who was living a rather uneventful life at Albany and known simply as Coatchuck by the locals. Unfortunately in 1791 Coatchuck happened to be swimming rather too close to a certain Archibald Menzies who had sailed into King Georges Sound with Captain Vancouver. Archie promptly added our feathered friend to his collection of specimens, unkindly lumping him into the *Anas* genus (the most common lot among the ducks—horrors!). To make matters worse he further denigrated our hero by crudely calling his most prized feature, the gular pouch, a "Pendulous Wattle" and naming him *Anas carunculata*. It was probably at this time, due to

no fault of his own, he received the equally obnoxious common name of “Musk Duck” (arguably by the ships lower deck fraternity), on account of the rather bad smell permeating the ship after he’d been brought aboard; I mean, who knows where he’d been shot? In 1796 things got a little better when the naturalist George Shaw replaced *carunculata* with *lobata*; however, he was still regarded as being closely related to the vulgar *Anas* clan. Well all the text books seem to reach a dead end at this point. No one knows when, what, why, or by whom, however these days we find our lad Coatchuck removed from the annals of the *Anas* and restored into his rightful heritage with a genus of his own—*Biziura*.

Now apparently there is no Latin origin for *Biziura*. Certainly those Royal Navy fellows never had a hand in it.

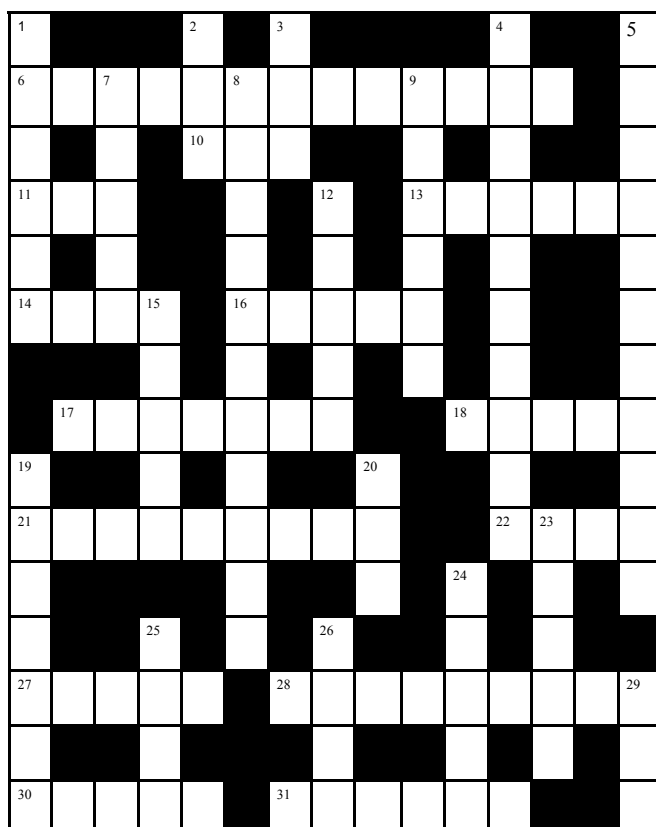
I think this name was given to our hero by the French or Spanish seafarers of that era as they were poking around the south of the state at the same time. Now the French Bizarro means fantastic handsome. The Spanish even better, gallant and brave which leads us to, I think, the most appropriate name. The (Basque) Bizar means bearded, much more polite than “pendulous wattle”. What better description for our hero than that of a brave gallant bearded fellow purposefully paddling the waterways of Duckdom. Some might say an odd, far-fetched bird, I say a fantastic fellow. Yes the continentals got it right. Good on you *Biziura lobata*.

Continued next issue. Geronticus welcomes readers’ input to “What’s in a name”.

‘Geronticus’

## Crossword No 33

By Pam Agar



### Clues Across

6. Committee project for 2002.
10. Extremity.
11. Feeling on seeing a huge breeding colony?
13. Not conducive to birding.
14. Small hovering raptors.
16. Navigational means of waders?
17. This breeding plumage may indicate it's all over!
18. Essential.
21. Seasonal source of nectar.
22. To give out.
27. Food of gleaners.
28. Conspicuous.
30. Incorrect.
31. Small needle-like shafts extending from tail of one swift.

### Clues Down

1. Parrot noise.
2. Consumed.
3. Sometimes a form of greeting between pairs.
4. To do in order of importance.
5. It could happen.
7. A cuckoo may do this to a host's egg.
8. Necessary to do if a sighting seems unusual.
9. Not always easy.
12. To stop suddenly.
15. Part of name of a wide-spread cuckoo.
19. You could see four different species in WA.
20. Request.
23. Honeyeater species; only one in WA.
24. On rocks, it may or may not concern a wader.
25. You're likely to find an emu in this sort of country.
26. Purpose of a mist net.
29. A pardalote may be seen feeding in this part of the tree.

## Notices

### BA RESEARCH & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

At the recent meeting of the national Birds Australia Research and Conservation Committee meeting, a very broad range of issues were discussed.

Amongst the more interesting for BAWA members was the proposal to compile a list and map of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Australia, based on the criteria used by BirdLife International elsewhere in the world. Stephen Garnett has undertaken a pilot project in north Queensland with the assistance of BA's North Queensland group. The pilot project is not yet complete, but so far a number of sites have been identified based on concentrations of waterbirds and significant populations of threatened species. Completion of the pilot project will result in useful experience gained in applying the criteria in Australia. The intent is that this experience is then used to extend the project to other parts of Australia, including WA.

The classification of Australian birds into IUCN threat categories is inconsistent between the different States of Australia, and at the national level there have been difficulties in getting the Action Plan results into the Commonwealth's legislative framework. BA is therefore setting up a BA Threatened Bird List Committee to take the lead on this issue and facilitate the transfer of knowledge into the Commonwealth regulations. This will also assist State agencies and others concerned with the conservation of threatened birds in Australia.

Another new initiative that is being pursued is an annual report related to the State of Australia's Birds. This is intended to be a report card on how our birds are coping with changes in the Australian environment, and will be of considerable use to governments and anyone interested in bird conservation in Australia. It will draw heavily on Atlas data, but to be really effective, we need many more Atlas sheets to be submitted, to enable ongoing monitoring of the success (or otherwise) of broad scale conservation initiatives such as the NHT program. So, don't forget to keep those sheets rolling in!

Many other issues were also discussed at the meeting, including HANZAB (good progress is being made on Volume 7), AOC meetings, Emu, research and conservation priorities, the Stuart Leslie Bird Research awards, etc.

BAWA members wishing to become involved in any of the above projects, or who simply wish to know more about them, should contact John Blyth (9381 6293 (AH)) or Allan Burbidge (9405 5109 (BH), 9306 1642 (AH) or [austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au](mailto:austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au)).

Allan Burbidge

### BLACK SWAN PROJECT—WELLARD

On behalf of Greenskills Inc, Men of the Trees, The Peel Harvey Catchment Council and the Rockingham Regional Environment Centre we are coordinating the **Project Black Swan**—a strategic and comprehensive revegetation initiative to rehabilitate a degraded wetland and create a valuable environment for the Black Swan whose habitat has been greatly reduced in the local region through excessive clearing and drainage works. In addition the site is critically important as it is part of a major Point Source Pollution Site for the Peel Harvey Estuary, contributing major amounts of the pollutants, nitrogen and phosphorus into this waterway. The proposed planting of 14 000 native trees, shrubs and rushes will help significantly to reduce this problem and create valuable Black Swan habitat as well as becoming a valuable carbon sink for the area—taking carbon from emissions and thus helping to reduce global warming.

#### Major Tasks

- ◆ Planting 12 000 locally endemic trees and shrubs
- ◆ 2000 sedges and rushes
- ◆ Organise our major community tree planting festival—"Activate" with City Farm; this will include design of promotion and planting layout and management
- ◆ Rock pitching 'armouring' of drainage line detour into the wetlands
- ◆ Bird surveys

#### Timeline

Mid June to early July—main planting

Mid August - to early September—planting of rushes and sedges

#### Volunteers

We need volunteers to help plant seedlings at the site! We would also welcome Birds Australia to visit the site and provide advice on design of the revegetation (ie, to meet the habitat requirements of Black Swans and other waterbirds that utilise the area) and identify other waterbird species.

For more information, please contact Tracey or Donna at Green Skills on 9529 3820.

### **Where are our artists and photographers?**

**We need your drawings and photos for WABN, especially if they relate to an article.**



## Australasian Ornithological Conference 2003



Manning Clarke Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, Australia  
Wednesday 10 to Saturday 13 December 2003

### Keynote speakers

Andrew Cockburn — *Evolutionary ecology*  
David Lindenmayer — *Landscape ecology*  
Trevor Worthy — *Paleoecology*

### Call for Abstracts

The program allows for 45 speakers, including symposia. Selection of spoken presentations and symposia will be made by the organising committee on merit. Delegates unsuccessful in gaining a place in the spoken sessions will be offered the chance to present a poster in the poster session. Notifications will be sent out 10 September 2003.

**Closing date for receipt of abstracts: 20 August 2003**

### Conference information

Please direct enquiries to:

Penny Olsen, email: penny.olsen@anu.edu.au,  
School of Botany and Zoology, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200

Denis Saunders, email: denis.saunders@csiro.au

and Nick Nicholls, email: nick.nicholls@csiro.au,  
CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, GPO Box 284, Canberra City, ACT 2601

### New Zealand contacts

Kerry-Jayne Wilson Wilsok@lincoln.ac.nz

Paul Scofield pscofield@cantmus.govt.nz

The Australasian Wader Studies Group will hold their 2-day conference immediately following AOC 2003, at the same venue. Contact Phil Straw: pstraw@optusnet.com.au for details.

AOC website:  
[www.birdsaustralia.com.au/aoc/](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/aoc/)



## Cassowaries, kangaroos and seal pups are preparing to strut their stuff

... for a modelling fee.

A unique new photographic competition, **ANZANG Nature and Landscape Photographer of the Year – 2004**, is putting native flora and fauna of Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and New Guinea in the frame. And profits from this annual competition will be donated to conservation organisations to preserve natural habitat for native flora and fauna.

ANZANG Nature is an organisation focused on the unique natural heritage of the bioregion of Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and New Guinea – continents and islands flung from the great southern continent of Gondwana Land over 50 million years ago in which, due to long periods of isolation, remarkable flora and fauna have evolved.

ANZANG Nature chairman Dr Stuart Miller said the organisation wished to highlight the region's extraordinary legacy by encouraging the photography of the region's nature and wilderness, raising public awareness of its natural heritage, and providing financial support for nature conservation in the region.

"Profit from the competition and exhibitions is to be donated to conservation organisations actively purchasing and managing natural habitat in the region for the express purpose of providing sanctuary to native flora and fauna," Dr Miller said.

"A lot of conservation action in the past has focused on specific species such as the panda or the tiger. I think people are beginning to realise that although it is important to focus on endangered species, it is just as important to preserve their environment, containing all its complex biodiversity, for species to live naturally."

ANZANG Nature will select and exhibit the highest quality photographs of animals, plants and landscapes taken in the region. Total cash prizes worth \$17,000 are being offered for winning photographs in nine different sections. The competition is open to all photographers, amateur or professional, of any age or nationality.

Animals and photographers will benefit from the new ANZANG Nature competition but so too will nature lovers. All winning and highly commended entries will form a major exhibition to be displayed in public museums and galleries nationally and internationally. Its tour starts at the Western Australian Museum in October 2004.

Dr Miller said the rewards of the competition were aimed squarely at plants and animals but regional tourism could receive a boost after the exhibition raised the profile overseas of the natural wonders on offer here.

The nine competition categories are: Animal Behaviour, Animal Portrait, Botanical Subject, Underwater Subject, Wilderness Landscape, Threatened or Endangered Animals or Plants, Black and White, Digital Camera Photography and Junior Photography for entrants under 18 years of age.

Judges will consider the photographic technique, and the aesthetic, artistic and unique quality of all images. The overall winner of the competition will be the photographer of the image judged the best of all nine section-winning images and will be named 'ANZANG Nature and Landscape Photographer of the Year – 2004'. The overall winner will receive \$5000 in addition to the \$1000 section prize.

The closing date for entries is May 1, 2004, giving photographers a full cycle of seasons from which to choose their subjects.

Sponsorship is being sought from corporations, organisations and individuals who support ANZANG Nature's aims. Supporting sponsors will be recognised throughout the competition and associated exhibitions.

For more information about **ANZANG Nature and Landscape Photographer of the Year – 2004**:

visit the website: [www.anzangnature.com](http://www.anzangnature.com)

or contact ANZANG Nature on telephone: +61 (0)8 9321 3685 or mobile +61 (0) 408 511724 or email: [compete@anzangnature.com](mailto:compete@anzangnature.com)

## NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between 1 February and 30 April 2003. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

A Aitken, L Anderson, S Angel, D Ballard, J Ballard, R B Day, C Day, J Forbes, L G George, G Gunther, P Hallen, J Hunt, R Hunter, E Kohary, L Lewis, D Lines, B Lines, B Lunt, J Lynas, B Manson, D Naudi, J Peck, G Pitt, D Russell, D Shalders, H J Wainwright, M Wake, M Wieclaw



Darter nesting on Blackwood River, Augusta  
*Photo courtesy Molly Angus*

## Country Groups

### ALBANY BIRD GROUP

#### March outing

On Tuesday 11 March, 22 of us met on a very warm day. First we went to the Riverview Golf Club. Trying to keep in the shade as much as possible, we did see a few birds, but found many more on a shady path leading out of the Club. We then went to the Lower Kalgan bridge and after a 'cuppa' went on the walk-way under the bridge, where we saw a few water birds including eight Grey-tailed Tattlers. The wind was pretty strong by then, the temperature reaching 40 (not what we are accustomed to in Albany) and so we called it a day. We saw 37 species.

**Liz Davies**

we had been sitting the night before, two of our members saw a Ground Parrot flying low across the track.

Over the two days 18 of us had some quite good birding, and 59 species were seen altogether. The highlight, of course, was the Noisy Scrub-bird, which was calling loudly, and several people were lucky enough to catch sight of it.

**Charlie Davies**

#### April outing

There was a short campout at Cheynes Beach in April.

A few members joined Brenda Newbey to help in her Ground Parrot project for a couple of nights, with very little evidence of Ground Parrots calling. However, on both evenings, as it got dark, many unidentified birds were heard flying overhead and calling. They were about the size of an Australian Magpie. It has since been suggested that they were probably Great-winged Petrels. Then one morning, driving along the track where



Albany Bird Group members with Brenda Newbey at  
Cheynes Beach, April 2003  
*Photo courtesy Charlie Davies*

## Excursion Reports

### CHERRY TREE POOL CAMPOUT, KOJONUP, 9-10 November 2002

The site for this campout was on the edge of the small Carlecatup River where we set up at Cherry Tree Pool. A series of long pools made this a pleasant spot with plenty of room for everyone to spread out. The dormitories, a large kitchen and BBQ, provided excellent facilities for the 30 people attending.

The campsite was an ideal place for good birding. The more notable species of birds seen in the area were a number of Restless Flycatchers with young, Shining Bronze-cuckoo and Grey Shrike-thrush, as well as both Rufous and Golden Whistler. Despite the gun club clay pigeon shooting competition at this location the previous week, there were four species of duck, Hoary-headed Grebe, Eurasian Coot and White-faced Heron on the pool.

Early on Saturday morning, the group, including some visitors from Katanning and Bridgetown, joined Wayne Zadow who led us to the nearby Bush Heritage block that consists of 400 hectares of mixed wandoo woodland and scrub. We parked on the southern boundary and immediately Wayne began showing us nests he had scouted out a few days before. Splendid Fairy-wrens in a dense bush only centimetres from the ground, a Varied Sittella nest high in a dead fork of a tree and a Jacky Winter nest only a metre from the ground, out in the open on a dead branch with two young, wonderfully camouflaged, was just the beginning. A Brown Falcon flew low over the area affording good views.

Nesting species seen either sitting on eggs or feeding young included Regent Parrot, Western Rosella, Australian Ringneck, Rainbow Bee-eater, Rufous Treecreeper, Weebill, Inland and Western Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, White-fronted Chat, Scarlet Robin, Red-capped Robin, Western Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, White-winged Triller, Dusky Woodswallow, Australian Magpie and Tree Martin. A total of 29 breeding species were recorded for the weekend, mostly on the Heritage Block.

In the evening Wayne lit a large BBQ and Peta, his wife, brought an array of beautiful salads from their farm. A fire always seems to add to the social occasion and this was no

exception. A few hardy members went night-spotting around the area, but the only thing seen was the occasional rabbit.

On Sunday morning, which was fortunately quite a bit cooler, Wayne led us this time along the northern edge of the river. A few of us got a bit muddy crossing a small creek, but we continued on upstream and saw a number of waterbirds, including Little Pied Cormorant and White-faced Heron. We saw a huge Wedge-tailed Eagle nest which wasn't in use, but the bones of previous meals could be seen beneath.

When everyone returned, a final bird count was made and the winner was Viv McCormick with a total of 76 species for the weekend.

Again thanks to Wayne for leading the weekend, for his time and expertise in finding nests. Many of us learned a great deal about bird behaviour and will keep a sharper eye out for signs of breeding in future.

**Sue Abbotts**

Editors' note: The above report was inadvertently omitted from the last issue of WABN; our apologies to Sue and campout participants.



Albany campout—looking at waders in the shallow water near Rushy Point; wind farm in the background.

*Photo courtesy Molly Angus*

### HERDSMAN LAKE, 1 February

A big group managed an early start to the Herdsman Lake walk. The water level had dropped quite a bit, however the only waders seen were numerous Black-fronted Dotterels, Black-winged Stilts and a single Red-necked Avocet flying past. A Buff-banded Rail was seen on a large mud bank. We had good looks at a Black-tailed Native-hen and three Freckled Ducks were still present. Several heron and ibis species were seen. Our raptors were a Black-shouldered Kite and a Swamp Harrier.

There was little variety in bushbirds—Striated Pardalote, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and three species of honeyeater. An Australian Pelican flew in at morning tea, bringing the count to 56 with an air temperature of more than 32°C.

A small group of enthusiasts continued on and found a White-winged Triller out of breeding plumage and at Floreat Waters, Pink-eared Duck and Australian Wood Duck.

**Claire Gerrish**

## CARNAC ISLAND, 2 and 23 February

On 2 February 27 enthusiasts gathered at B Shed, Fremantle Harbour, to catch a ferry bound for Carnac Island. The trips, run by Oceanic Cruises, feature a walk along the beach with a marine biologist, and the chance to see Sea Lions, plus the local birds. In fact, there were two young men aboard for this purpose.

However, we immediately ran into a considerable snag. The dinghy which was to take us ashore in groups had a crack in the bottom and rapidly took on water when loaded. This meant that very few people were able to get ashore and those who did found it a somewhat hazardous undertaking. The projected run around the island was never a possibility. In addition, the beach was extremely small and, with one end taken up by male Sea Lions and the centre by breeding Fairy Terns, movement was very limited. However, we did find a dozen species of birds and the lunch was delicious.

We were impressed by the attitude of the two young men and their endeavour to get us another trip because of the difficulties we experienced. To their credit, and also the management of Oceanic Cruises, this was arranged and a second cruise was arranged for 23 February.

On this second trip to Carnac Island the weather was much better—it was sunny but a very strong south-east wind made for quite a bumpy ride. The 15 birders were ferried ashore in small groups in ‘rubber duckies’ and spent some time on the small beach. Unfortunately, most of the young Fairy Terns had fledged and only a small number of immature Bridled Terns were seen. So the count was quite small although we did add a Black-shouldered Kite to the list—it was sheltering from the strong wind in a low acacia bush.

Brice Wells

## AUGUSTA CAMPOUT, 1-3 March

We were surprised to find 28 people at the campout, most staying at the Flinders Bay Caravan Park at the ‘quiet’ end. On Saturday morning the wind was blowing quite hard but the Rock Parrots at the old water wheel near Cape Leeuwin were wonderful to see as they came down to drink and wash at the fresh water pools. Around the camp White-breasted Robin, Splendid Fairy-wren, White-browed Scubwren, Southern Emu-wren and New Holland Honeyeater were everywhere. Flying overhead were Purple-crowned Lorikeet and Baudin’s (Long-billed) Black-Cockatoo.

On Saturday afternoon Chris Wilder showed us a national park, near Augusta off Caves Road, which consisted of mixed Marri, Karri and Jarrah Forrest. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo followed us for about 30 minutes ensuring all had good views. White-naped Honeyeaters appeared to be eating the red gum from a large Marri tree to which they kept returning. Scarlet Robin, New Holland Honeyeater, Golden Whistler, Spotted Pardalote and Varied Sittella (nesting) were seen in this beautiful piece of forest.

On Sunday morning we boarded the ‘Miss Flinders’ for a two-hour trip up the Blackwood River to Molloy Island. The wind had died down and 32 species were seen including Red-necked Avocet, Red-necked Stint, a flock of Sanderling, Pied Oystercatcher, Banded Stilt, Curlew Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and one Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on the sand banks in the middle of the estuary. Darters were breeding in the trees but the highlight was the large White-bellied Sea-Eagle sitting on a dead tree on the river edge.

After an early lunch we left for Boranup Forest, almost losing half the convoy but eventually all arriving at the lookout. We walked down to the campsite along the road and saw Western Rosella, Splendid and Red-winged Fairy-wren. We then drove north through Boranup Forest and four Rufous Treecreepers, White-breasted Robin and Dusky Woodswallow with young flying onto the track and above it—a real feast of viewing particularly as the treecreepers were new birds for some. We then went on to see the 20-30 Bridled Terns at Cosy Corner.

Following the Bird Call on Sunday evening we had dispersed to our various camps when Wayne Zadow was ‘swooped’ by a large pale owl that then landed on some nearby trees. About half a dozen people were lucky enough to see it and Wayne was confident to call it a Masked Owl. Wayne described it as having a darker back than a Barn Owl, very powerful legs and feet and its behaviour was as he had seen previously in Masked Owl. Of course, many of us went looking with spotlights but it was not seen again.

On Monday morning 16 people did a 16 km walk of the coastline for a Hooded Plover Survey. Four birds were found, two near Skippy Rock and two on the Augusta side of the light house. Also seen were Whimbrel, Australasian Gannet and Pacific Gull. Most people packed and then headed home.

Chris took a small group to Scott River on the other side of the Blackwood in the afternoon where Emu, Australian Shelduck, Painted Button-quail, Elegant Parrot, Swamp Harrier, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Western Spinebill and Black faced Woodswallow were added to the list. A total of 101 species were seen over the weekend.

Many thanks to Chris Wilder for her usual high standard of organisation—including the boat trip, her enthusiasm and humour.

Sue Abbotts

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## LAKE JOONDALUP, 9 March

Surprises at Joondalup!

Sixteen heat-battered birds defied the soaring temperatures and were rewarded with good sightings of rarities for the area, for example, about ten of both Fork-tailed Swifts and Yellow-throated Miners.

The water level was the lowest I've seen it and the south end was completely dry. Waterbird numbers were well down. Many common

species were totally absent, for example, Little Pied Cormorant, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Black-fronted and Red-capped Dotterel, Brown Honeyeater and Little Corella. Where have they gone?

So total species were well down on last year— 56 species against 69 last year. It was rewarding to welcome three new members on their first outing with the WA Group and a visitor from California.

Thank you to the hardy souls who came along.

**Tom Delaney**

Editors' note: A total of about 200 eastern Long-billed Corellas were seen in this area during the recent corella count (6 April 2003), and smaller numbers are seen regularly around Lake Joondalup. However, there have been no confirmed sightings of Little Corellas in the Joondalup area for some time.



Searching for bushbirds at 'the Spring' at Augusta

*Photo courtesy Molly Angus*

could find nothing and heard no calls. But it was a very pleasant evening with a light cool breeze and we all enjoyed the bright moonlight on the calm river as we walked along the bank.

**Jan Rogers**

## BURSWOOD OPEN SPACES, 19 March

Good luck at Burswood! Burswood open spaces has become a wonderful haven for birds requiring fresh water for drinking, a reliable source of food from the lakes and grazing from the surrounding lawns.

Six members did the walk on a day, cool initially, but promising to become hot and uncomfortable later. In a short time we saw 32

species on the lakes and lawns and picked up four more along the river. Nothing sensational seen. Less common species like Little Egret, Great Crested Grebe, and Yellow-billed Spoonbill, which are normally seen there were not found. There were lots of Blue-billed and Musk Ducks in the calm areas near the reeds. Plenty of grebes, most of which seemed to be immature, and we had trouble picking out a definite Hoary-headed.

Burswood is a good place to get an interesting list in a short time. Ideal for beginners, or a place to bring visitors who want birding nice and easy.

Thanks to Bryan Barrett for arranging this walk.

**Tom Delaney**

## REG BOND RESERVE, VIVEASH, 15 March

In the late afternoon of 15 March, a group of 23 met in a new area for us, a little to the north from the former surveys we have done. We wished to discover what nocturnal birds were present. On our first walk before dark we sighted 31 species, the highlights being a very good view of a Nankeen Kestrel that remained perched for long enough for all to see clearly. Tony Bennett was in the best position to sight a Dusky Moorhen. Plenty of good views were had of Darters and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes with only two species of duck present, these being Pacific Black and Australian Wood Duck.

After a quick snack and armed with torches, we set out again in search of anything nocturnal. Unfortunately we

## BIBRA LAKE WALK, 5 April

On a perfect autumn morning 31 people joined Brice Wells on a delightful ramble around Bibra Lake. This is a very popular walk and the reason was obvious when the final tally showed 62 species were seen.

All the usual waterbirds were in attendance and the total was increased by five species of raptor – Black-shouldered Kite, Whistling Kite, Swamp Harrier, Brown Goshawk and Nankeen Kestrel were seen by all or some of the group. Red-necked Avocets were present and a Whiskered Tern could be seen hawking over the very shallow lake water. While there is still sufficient water for many species it was noticeable that the diving ducks were absent. Since the



Searching for Rock Parrots at the Old Water Wheel at Augusta

*Photo courtesy Molly Angus*

walk reasonable rains have been received and hopefully the Lake has reached its lowest level for this year.

Thanks to Brice for leading an excellent walk.

**Clive Napier**

#### **JAURDI STATION—EASTER CAMPOUT, 18–21 April**

Able led by Clive Napier, 24 of us visited the CALM-managed Jaurdi Station. Drought has reduced the numbers of birds and marsupials according to the ecologist from CALM who kindly arranged to cart water to our tanks and even put on a new shower rose for us. A big thank you to CALM from us all. We had some cloudy days but only a few spots of rain with daytime temperature around 30 degrees and cool nights.

On Good Friday those who had arrived early went out to Johnnies Dam in the morning. There were abundant Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters and Purple-crowned Lorikeets in the Gimlets. Nothing on the dam which had some water in it, but some White-backed Swallows flew over and then to our delight we tracked down the Gilbert's Whistler, a first for some of us.

We then went out to breakaway country where a miner's camp was set up. Little Woodswallows were seen and as we were leaving we saw a Peregrine Falcon perched in a tree above us on the rocks. Close to our camp we saw Richard's Pipit and White-fronted Chat.

On Saturday we now had all our group and a full day was planned. Firstly we revisited Johnnies Dam so that everyone could see the Gilbert's

Whistler. Then to Nortons Dam and on to Ive Rocks for lunch. We were delighted with the sight of hundreds of Lesser Wanderer butterflies alighting on the vegetation on the dam walls.

We ended the day with a barbecue meal and a visit from Ray Kent, a gold prospector/miner who had held a lease on Jaurdi for 18 years, working it on a part time basis. It was great to hear his story and some of us visited his camp on the Monday afternoon.

By now we were wondering where all the waterbirds had gone. So on Sunday Clive took us west along the railway line road to Darrine Soak. On the way out a culvert under the railway line provided us with some interesting but deserted Fairy Martin nests at head height—we could even see the soft grassy feathery lining in the base of the bottle-shaped nests but no Fairy Martins.

We saw the usual bushbirds but the lakes and soak were dry.



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Eureka— quite by chance, two of us on the return journey to our campsite, whilst checking out a culvert found a natural lake on the other side where there were five species of duck, (Australian Shelduck, Pink-eared, Grey Teal, Pacific Black, and Australian Wood Duck), Hoary-headed Grebe and Black-fronted Dotterel.

Monday was our last day and some of us had to head back to Perth. In a late walk in some spinifex country west of the campsite Clive and Wendy saw a Malleefowl.

The final bird count was 65—five raptors, nine honeyeaters including a White-eared and a White-fronted. Crested Bellbird, Regent Parrot, and the Ground Cuckoo-shrike were some of the other species seen. The past three surveys had listed a total of 82 species but the maximum numbers on previous surveys had been 68 so with drought conditions we were very happy.

When leaving Jaurdi on Tuesday morning Les and Sandra Hogben slowed to let two kangaroos pass over the road and to their astonishment two Chestnut Quail-thrush also passed into the leaf litter alongside the road. These were seen also by Mavis Norgaard and myself. We all spent about ten minutes with a clear view of the two birds foraging in the litter just a few metres from the road—the “cream on the cake” for us all.

**Ray Flanagan**

### **ANZAC DAY CAMPOUT, PIESSEVILLE, SHIRE OF WAGIN**

This weekend campout was run jointly by Rae and Bob Clark and David Secomb. The cooperation and banter between David and Bob provided some light entertainment in between some serious birding. There were 14 members who availed themselves of Rae and Bob's hospitality camping on their farm, which they affectionately call Sandpatch. These lucky people live in the country where they see every day many birds that city dwellers have to travel many kilometres to see. To wake up in the morning

and experience the dawn chorus that included Restless Flycatcher, White-browed Babbler, Grey Shrike-thrush and Yellow-rumped Thornbill was an experience to remember. To walk a short distance around their 100-acre block and the adjoining CALM reserve and see Elegant Parrot, Western Rosella, Western Yellow Robin, Painted Button-quail and Rufus Treecreeper was also a memory to take away from the campout.

Besides this on-call birding opportunity Bob and David had organised a number of trips to remnant bush reserves in and around Wagin. These ranged from the Arthur River which was not running but had sufficient pools of deep water to provide a number of waterbirds, to the local sewerage works where amongst the normal Eurasian Coot, Pacific Black Duck, Australian Shelduck and Grey Teal was a Pink-eared Duck.

Probably the highlight for the group was late on Saturday afternoon. Bob had decided that another spot along the Arthur River was worth a look. We were in a convoy of four cars, which got stretched out somewhat. The last two cars hadn't caught up when a call came through on the two-way that the two cars behind had stopped to look at the birds that we had been told we might see sometime over the weekend. A slightly incredulous Bob let out a mild expletive when this message was passed onto him and we rushed back to get a good look at two very obliging Mulga Parrots, a male in all his splendour and his less brightly coloured mate. They were in a line of trees that separated two paddocks and had been feeding in the stubble from last season. Two other bird species, recorded in the area, that are worth noting were Tawny-crowned Honeyeater in a low Banksia heath and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

The group of 14 members recorded 81 species of birds and enjoyed this campout tremendously. Many thanks go to Rae and Bob for making everyone feel so welcome. To David and birding widow wife Mary, thank you for a great weekend of birding around Wagin.

**Brendan Kinsella**

## **Observatory Reports**

### **BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY**

Broome, beautiful one day, better the next, and then there's the birds!

The new team of Wardens has been in place since the end of March, but have not yet acclimatised to the beauty of the place or become tired of birding.

Even now we still have Common Redshanks, Asian Dowitchers and Broad-billed Sandpipers to be found by the persistent and observant. Migration has ended and is



missed by staff as the daily watch was often a party atmosphere and enjoyed by non-birders for the amazing life spectacle that it is. The plains at the end of the wet season were truly spectacular with many thousands of Black-winged Stilts and Glossy Ibis. The sewage ponds provided highlights with Yellow Wagtails and Oriental Pratincoles up until the end of April. As we gear up for the tourist season, we are looking forward to enthusing others with the wonderful world of birds, and are enjoying the drop in humidity and temperature. There are still many thousands of birds on the bay and for birdwatchers it is the

perfect time to test your skills, knowledge and powers of observation as they lose their breeding plumage and become various shades of brown and grey.

Come and visit—we would love to share with you the pleasures of our backyard.

Joy Tansey

## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

“Orange flags!” we both said with excitement; this was our first sighting of flagged wading birds. Two Red-necked Stints in a group of 22 each had metal bands on their lower left leg and an orange flag on the upper right leg.

The sighting was 12 km west of Eyre Bird Observatory on Kanidal Beach while doing our weekly beach count. These birds were banded in Victoria, and the resighting was at a distance of approximately 1825 km, with a bearing of 285 degrees, from the marking location. Both birds were in breeding plumage, and we guess were on their way to Siberia for the breeding season.

On the following week, six more orange flagged Red-necked Stints were sighted in three separate locations among flocks varying from 11 to 100. The sightings have been reported to the Australasian Wader Studies Group via Clive and Pat Minton.

On the last occasion we also saw eight Red-necked Avocets and one Banded Stilt in breeding plumage. In the nine months we have now been wardens at Eyre Bird Observatory we have done the Kanidal Beach count weekly, as it has been done for many years. We and our guests never come home disappointed, as there is always something exciting to see.

The beach constantly changes and should never be taken for granted. During the autumn and winter weed washes in and out, bringing with it a whole new experience. Birds tend to shelter in the clumps of weed and they are difficult to spot. They are so well camouflaged, especially if they stand still. Beach combing can reveal all sorts of interesting things especially after a storm. We quite often find cuttlefish in varying sizes, often with teeth marks down the side. Cuttlefish apparently are a favourite food of dolphins. We quite often see pods of dolphins feeding in

the shallows. We look forward to the arrival of the giants of the deep, the Southern Right Whales. Several cows and calves usually spend time at Twilight Cove and have been seen off-shore near the observatory.

After perfect Easter weather with every day in the high 20s the temperatures increased to the low 30s even into May for an ‘Indian summer’. Of late we have had some rather fresh mornings but when the sky is blue and sun is shining the temperature quickly climbs to provide a very pleasant day.

The birds have become very industrious, and two different groups of White-browed Babblers have been building nests. They are busy at work all day, then abandon the new home. Maybe the lady of the house is very fussy. The Welcome Swallows are now back around the house during the day. They seemed to spend time elsewhere during the summer days, but now seem to be checking out the best place for nesting, investigating every possible nook and cranny. Other birds have returned, including Fan-tailed Cuckoos, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and Grey Fantails.

Large flocks of 100 Major Mitchell’s Cockatoos have been seen near the observatory, and feeding on the green seed pods of the *Acacia cyclops* in April.

After a strong NW wind we saw an Inland Dotterel on the limestone flat only 1 ½ km from the observatory. We have

had guests travel hundreds of kilometres out of their way to see one of these striking looking birds, only to be disappointed by not seeing one. and we just stumbled across this one while out walking.

In January some new style Pygmy Possum boxes or tubes were placed in the mallee trees near the observatory. We have checked them regularly and, by the end of February, found that a Western Pygmy Possum had made one tube her home. On checking again, we found that she had filled the tube with leaves

and next check she was huddled in the corner with four young. These young Pygmy Possums have delighted many onlookers young and old alike.

We have had some of the most stunning sunrises and sunsets of late and as we have our own ‘Eyre’s Rock’ (well, sand dune!) that changes colour with the last rays of evening light, we now have happy hour sunset seats so guests can enjoy a drink and chat and watch ‘Joseph’s coat’ change colour. We usually then retire to the lounge room to be warmed by the open fire. When are you coming to Eyre?

Bea Myers and Ian Tarbin, Wardens



Red-necked Stints with orange flags, Eyre

Photo courtesy Bea Myers and  
Ian Tarbin, Wardens

## 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 will know when to expect people.

### New Members

Please let the leaders know that you are a new member and don't hesitate to ask for assistance with bird sightings.

### Saturday 7 June—Full day Excursion, Noble Falls, Red Hill Picnic Area and Wandoo Heights, Shire of Swan

Meet at 8:30 am at the Noble Falls parking area. This is about 1 hour's drive from Perth city, along the Toodyay Road, left past Gidgegannup to the signposted reserve. The walk will follow the creek line to the north, then return through the woodland area to the car park for morning tea.

After morning tea we will drive to the Red Hill picnic area for a brief survey of this 3 ha site. This site is on the left side of the Toodyay Road going west and is just past the turnoff to the Red Hill disposal site.

We will then drive further back towards Perth to the Wandoo Heights house. The gate will be open. This is a 22-ha uncleared block vested in the Swan Shire. It is 13 km from Midland off the Toodyay Road. Travelling west, turn right into Campersic Road, then right into Loton Road to the intersection with Range Road. The block is on the north-east corner of this intersection and access is from Range Road (Streetsmart Map 257 D10). Take morning tea and lunch.

*Leader: Sue Mather*

### Sunday 15 June—Half-day Excursion, Webb's Lease, Jarrahdale

Meet at 9:00 am in the car park. Travel from Armadale on the South Western Highway. Turn left into Jarrahdale Road and go through Jarrahdale township. After approximately 5.5 km, turn right into Acacia Road (the next right turn past Blue Rock Road). Keep to the left to get to the car park.

The Red-eared Firetail, White-breasted Robin and Red-winged Fairy-wren are regularly seen here.

*Leader: Dave Crossley*

### Saturday 21 June—Half-day Excursion, Ellis Brook Reserve, Gosnells

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin (StreetSmart Map 436 D5). There are now three walks in this area and we will look at one of these on this visit. It is a popular area where a variety of bushbirds can be seen—some of them not often seen near

Perth such as Red-eared and Red-browed Firetail, Red-capped and Scarlet Robin.

*Leader: Les Harris*

### Sunday 22 June—Pelagic Seabird Excursion, Hillarys Boat Harbour

The trip leaves at 7:00 am sharp from near AQWA at Hillarys Boat Harbour, and returns at about 3:30 pm. There is a limit of 30 people. Booking is essential. The cost is expected to be \$70 and is required one week before the event. Book by contacting Frank O'Connor on foconnor@iinet.net.au or 9386 5694.

Last year in June we saw three species of albatross, two species of prion, two species of storm-petrel and five species of petrel.

*Leader: Frank O'Connor*

### Monday 23 June Meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 7:30 pm

Perry de Rebeira, formerly of the CSIRO, will speak on aspects of bird banding in WA.

### Sunday 29 June—Half-day Excursion, North Mole and Woodman Point

Meet at 8:30 am at the end of North Mole, near the lighthouse. We will look for seabirds here, and may go on to look at the birds at Woodman Point. Bring telescopes if you have them.

*Leader: Les Harris*

### Saturday 5 July—Half-day Excursion, Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury

Meet at 8:30 am at the first car park off Whitfords Avenue (StreetSmart Map 251 A8) (on the right-hand side through the entrance). An interesting park where gardens and lawns are flanked by natural woodland of Tuarts and Banksias. About 65 species of birds have been seen in the area, including Yellow-throated Miners.

*Leader: Rod Smith*

### Sunday 13 July—Half-day Excursion, Bold Park

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park on Scenic Drive, Reabold Hill (StreetSmart Map 341 A10), for a walk in Bold Park. This is a pleasant and interesting walk close to Birds Australia's back door.

*Leader: Tom Delaney*

### Saturday 19 July—Half-day Excursion, Jandakot Regional Park, Forrestdale

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Ranford Road and Hale Road (StreetSmart Map 465 A9), next to the poultry farm. Debbie will show us round areas where she sees Tawny-crowned and other Honeyeaters, Splendid Fairy-wrens and

several raptors. Bring your lunch if you wish to extend the walk.

*Leader: Debbie Walker*

**Monday 21 July Meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 7:30 pm**

Dr Robert Lambeck, Greening Australia, in company with Arlene Moncrieff, will speak on a topic to be announced.

**Sunday 27 July—Half-day Excursion, Lake Gwelup**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at the corner of Stoneham Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road) (StreetSmart Map 311 B6). We should see waterbirds, bushbirds and several raptors are usually seen here.

*Leader: Clive Nealon*

**Saturday 2 August—Half-day Excursion, Acourt Road Reserves, Banjup**

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Acourt and Nicholson Roads, Banjup (StreetSmart Map 464 B8). We will look at two reserves acquired by CALM who have asked for a list of the birds we see here. The area consists mainly of banksia woodland and heath. Kangaroos inhabit the area so take insect repellent as there are sure to be ticks!

*Leader: David James*

**Sunday 3 August—Pelagic Seabird Excursion, Hillarys Boat Harbour**

The trip leaves at 7:00 am sharp from near AQWA at Hillarys Boat Harbour, and returns at about 3:30 pm. There is a limit of 30 people. Booking is essential. The cost is expected to be \$70 and is required one week before the event. Book by contacting Frank O'Connor on foconnor@iinet.net.au or 9386 5694.

Last year in August we saw three species of albatross, five species of shearwater, one species of prion, two species of storm-petrel and five species of petrel.

*Leader: Frank O'Connor*

**Sunday 10 August—Full-day Excursion, Walyunga National Park**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at the end of Walyunga Road (off Great Northern Hwy, Upper Swan, near Bungarah Pool) (StreetSmart Map 227 E4). Be prepared to pay an entrance fee into the Park.

The National Park lies along the Darling Scarp. The Avon River bounds one part of the planned walk which includes good areas of Wandoo so we should see a variety of birds.

*Leader: Les Harris*

**Thursday 14 August—Mid-week Excursion, Alan Anderson Park, Darling Range Regional Park**

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park near Alan Anderson Park between Lawnbrook and Pomeroy Roads, Walliston (StreetSmart Map 408 B4). It is easily accessed from Welshpool Road.

This is a new venue for our group for a two-hour plus walk on flatish country covering 34 hectares. Fifty species have been counted here in two years.

*Leader: Michael Hancock*

**Saturday 16 August—Half-day Excursion, Thomsons Lake, Beeliar**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park off Russell Road, between Pearse and Hammond Roads (StreetSmart Map 492 B8). This is a good area for bushbirds and waterbirds.

*Leader: Dee Smith*

**Sunday 24 August—Full-day Excursion, Yarra Road North, Shire of York**

Meet at 9:00 am on the corner of Yarra Road and Great Southern Highway, about 13 km beyond The Lakes turnoff, ie the York Road turnoff. We will look at various areas of Wandoo woodland where Crested Shrike-tits and Hooded Robins have been seen.

*Leader: Bryan Barrett*

**Monday 25 August Meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 7:30 pm**

BAWA member Brian Wilson will speak on birds encountered on a recent sea trip to the North Pacific (Kokkaido, Kuril Islands, Kamchatka, Pribiloff and Aleutian Islands, Alaska).

**Saturday 30 August—Half-day Excursion, Lake Coogee**

Meet at 8:30 am in Fawcett Road, 100 m from Mayor Road (StreetSmart Map 491 A2). Nearly 100 species of birds have been seen on and around this lake, including nine raptors. It is a large lake and has a path right round it so some people may wish to do the full circuit.

*Leaders: Jan and Dave Crossley*

**Sunday 7 September—Half-day Excursion, Lower Helena Catchment Area**

Drive through Midland east along the Great Eastern Highway. Once you have begun to climb Greenmount Hill watch for Scott Street—Welbourne Park Hall is on the corner. Turn right and continue until you come to the roundabout just past tennis courts on your right. Turn left into Clayton Road and drive to the end. Turn right into Victor Road and continue until you reach a locked gate. You have arrived! Turn round and park on the right hand side of the road. (StreetSmart Map 348 A8).

Meet here at 8:30 am. Bring morning tea and we will have it at the Pipehead Dam.

*Leader: Brice Wells*

**Saturday 13 September—Full-day Excursion, Lowlands Estate, Serpentine**

The owner, Midge Richardson, has invited us to visit her large property adjacent to the Serpentine River where Golden Whistlers and Western Yellow Robins (not commonly seen on the coastal plain) have been seen on

previous excursions. Many other bushbirds should be nesting here in the spring and lots of waterbirds use the river.

Meet at the entrance to the property at 8:30 am. Lowlands is approximately one hour from Perth. Turn off Thomas Road, Oakford, into Kargotich Road, then travel south for 14 km to the T-junction with Lowlands Road (a No Through road) (StreetSmart Map 615 B7). Turn right—the entrance to the property is approximately 3 km further on. Please arrive promptly as this is private property.

*Leader: David James*

**Saturday-Sunday 13-14 September – WWF Koorda Bioblitz, Moningarín Reserve**

BA WA will again participate in the annual Bioblitz organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). A Bioblitz is a biodiversity inventory 'sample' done over a 24 hour period. This year's Bioblitz is at Moningarín Reserve, 20 km NE of Koorda. BA WA will do the bird surveys for the Blitz, although you may switch to other activities if you wish (e.g. plants, reptiles). Bird surveys will be done by 4-5 teams.

Camping accommodation for tents, campers and caravans is available at the tennis courts at the reserve. Some accommodation is available at the Koorda Hotel (make your own bookings). Be self-contained. Water, BBQ plates, fire and toilet facilities available. Arrive Friday evening or Saturday morning, for a late Saturday morning start. Finish: early Sunday afternoon.

Total number of participants limited to 20. Expressions of interest from prospective team leaders welcome. Bird surveys coordinator: Cheryl Gole

Bookings for places: phone Perry House (9387 7749)

Expressions of interest for leaders: Cheryl: (9293 4958).

**Sunday 14 September—Spring Fling, Perry House/Bold Park, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm**

Hosted by the Wildflower Society—lots of beautiful native plants for sale. Wildflower and bird walks throughout the day.

**Thursday 18 September—Mid-week Excursion, North Lake**

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park on Progress Drive, just off Farrington Road (StreetSmart Map 432 A10). We will walk round this small lake where about 80 bush and waterbirds have been seen.

*Leader: Bryan Barrett*

**Sunday 21 September—Full-day Walk from Nanga Bridge along the Murray River**

Meet at 8:30 am at the Dwellingup Hotel. From Perth, drive down the South Western Highway to North Dandalup. Turn left to Dwellingup. Allow one hour of driving time from Armadale (about 70 km one way).

This will be about a 12 km undulating walk down a creek and along the Murray River. We will follow a good track through Jarrah, Marri and Banksia, with beautiful views of the river.

Bushbirds seen in this area include Striated and Spotted Pardalote, Red-eared Firetail, Red-winged Fairy-wren, White-breasted Robin and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Bring lunch and a minimum of 1 litre of water. Sue will boil a billy at lunch-time for everyone.

*Leader: Sue Abbotts (9444 1607)*

**Sunday 21 September—Full-day Excursion, Albany Pelagic Trip**

A pelagic seabird trip has been organised from Emu Point, Albany. We will be heading out to the continental shelf, 26 nm offshore. 10 to 20 pelagic species are expected with several species of albatross, petrel and shearwater assured.

The trip leaves at 7:00 am and returns at 4:00 pm. There is a limit of 12 people. Booking is essential. The cost is expected to be \$105.

*Leader: Frank O'Connor  
(9386 5694 or foconnor@iinet.net.au)*

**Monday 22 September Meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 7:30 pm**

Leonie McMahon, Project Officer of the WA Group, will speak about her work on Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo.

**Saturday 27 to Monday 29 September—Campout at Cheyne Beach**

Cheyne Beach is a fishing village on the edge of the Waychinicup National Park east of Albany. The campout is primarily to see the Noisy Scrub-bird, Western Bristlebird and Western Whipbird. Ground Parrot have been heard and seen here at a recent survey, but in much reduced numbers. These birds are notoriously secretive and difficult to see so the campout is strictly limited to 20 people.

For bookings and more information contact the leaders on 9444 1607.

*Leaders: Sue Abbotts and Sue Clegg*

**FOR SALE!**

**HANZAB Volume 6**

1 copy for sale at the special price of \$260.00

Contact Sue Mather 9389 6416



## ANZANG Nature and Landscape Photographer of the Year-2004

**ANZANG Nature** is organising an annual international nature and landscape photographic competition and subsequent exhibition at state museums and other high profile venues. To enter the competition photographs or digital images must be of subjects taken within the bioregion of **Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and New Guinea**. Cash prizes totalling **SEVENTEEN THOUSAND AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS** are available for winning entries.

ANZANG Nature wishes to encourage excellence in nature and landscape photography. Profit from the exhibitions will be donated to nature conservation organisations that are actively purchasing and managing natural habitat in the region for the express purpose of providing sanctuary to native flora and fauna.

There are nine sections in the competition

- ◆ Animal Behaviour.
- ◆ Animal Portrait.
- ◆ Botanical Subject.
- ◆ Underwater Subject.
- ◆ Wilderness Landscape.
- ◆ Threatened or Endangered Animals or Plants.
- ◆ Black and White Photography.
- ◆ Digital Camera Photography.
- ◆ Junior Photography.

### Entries close 1/5/04

For competition rules, entry forms and further information contact

Website [www.anzangnature.com](http://www.anzangnature.com)

Email [compete@anzangnature.com](mailto:compete@anzangnature.com)

Telephone/Fax +61(0) 8 9321 3685

Postal address ANZANG Nature  
GPO Box 2828  
PERTH Western Australia 6001

## Crossword Answers No 33

### Across

6 questionnaire, 10 end, 11 awe, 13 crowds, 14 kites, 16 stars, 17 partial, 18 vital, 21 woodlands, 22 emit, 27 lerps, 28 prominent, 30 wrong, 31 spines.

### Down

1 squawk, 2 ate, 3 nod, 4 prioritise, 5 possibility, 7 eject, 8 investigate, 9 access, 12 stall, 15 eared, 19 swallow, 20 ask, 23 miner, 24 slime, 25 open, 26 trap, 29 top.

## Birds Australia Western Australia (Inc) (A DIVISION OF ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION)

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\*Concession card number(s) .....  
(Full-time student, Health Care or Pension card)

**Post to:** Birds Australia Membership  
415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East, Vic 3123

6/2002

## Opportunities for Volunteers

This new section gives members an avenue to advertise for voluntary assistance with projects, surveys, initiatives, office.

- ◆ **Office — manning the desk** — contact Wendy Napier  
Phone 9332 7265
- ◆ **Perth Biodiversity Project** — contact Cheryl Gole  
Phone 9293 4958, Email [gole@starwon.com.au](mailto:gole@starwon.com.au)
- ◆ **Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project** — contact Leonie McMahon  
Phone 9287 2448 or 0438 678492,  
Email [ljmcmahon@bigpond.com](mailto:ljmcmahon@bigpond.com)
- ◆ **Eyre Bird Observatory relief wardens** — contact  
\* Shapelle McNee Phone 9494 1286, Email [mshapelle@hotmail.com](mailto:mshapelle@hotmail.com)  
\* or Rod Smith Phone 9447 3804,  
Email [rodjoyce@optusnet.com.au](mailto:rodjoyce@optusnet.com.au)
- ◆ **Western Ground Parrot**, 1-12 April — contact Brenda Newbey  
Phone 9337 5673, Email [sfryc@iinet.net.au](mailto:sfryc@iinet.net.au)

- ◆ **Noisy Scrub Bird** — contact Sarah Comer Phone 9842 4500,  
Email [sarahc@calm.wa.gov.au](mailto:sarahc@calm.wa.gov.au)
- ◆ **Atlas** — surveys for this are continuing — contact Cheryl Gole  
Phone 9293 4958, Email [gole@starwon.com.au](mailto:gole@starwon.com.au)
- ◆ **BAWA Committee** — we need a full Committee — contact the  
Secretary, Liz Walker Phone 9444 8920

## Calendar of Events

- Saturday 7 June**—Full day excursion, Noble Falls, Red Hill Picnic Area and Wandoo Heights, Shire of Swan
- Sunday 15 June**—Half-day excursion, Webb's Lease, Jarrahdale
- Saturday 21 June**—Half-day excursion, Ellis Brook Reserve, Gosnells
- Sunday 22 June**—Pelagic Seabird Excursion, Hillarys Boat Harbour
- Monday 23 June Meeting**—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 7:30 pm
- Sunday 29 June**—Half-day Excursion, North Mole and Woodman Point
- Saturday 5 July**—Half-day excursion, Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury
- Sunday 13 July**—Half-day excursion, Bold Park
- Saturday 19 July**—Half-day excursion, Jandakot Regional Park, Forrestdale
- Monday 21 July Meeting**—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 7:30 pm
- Sunday 27 July**—Half-day excursion, Lake Gwelup
- Saturday 2 August**—Half-day excursion, Acourt Road Reserves, Banjup
- Sunday 3 August**—Pelagic Seabird Excursion, Hillarys Boat Harbour
- Sunday 10 August**—Full-day Excursion, Walyunga National Park
- Thursday 14 August**—Mid-week Excursion, Alan Anderson Park, Darling Range Regional Park
- Saturday 16 August**—Half-day Excursion, Thomsons Lake, Beeliar
- Sunday 24 August**—Full-day Excursion, Yarra Road North, Shire of York
- Monday 25 August Meeting**—State Tennis Centre, Burswood
- Saturday 30 August**—Half-day Excursion, Lake Coogee
- Sunday 7 September**—Half-day Excursion, Lower Helena Catchment Area
- Saturday 13 September**—Full-day Excursion, Lowlands Estate, Serpentine
- Sunday 14 September**—*Spring Fling*, Bold Park/Perry House
- Saturday-Sunday 13-14 September**—WWF Koorda Bioblitz, Moningarín Reserve
- Thursday 18 September**—Mid-week Excursion, North Lake
- Sunday 21 September**—Full-day Walk from Nanga Bridge along the Murray River
- Sunday 21 September**—Full-day Excursion, Albany Pelagic Trip
- Monday 22 September Meeting**—State Tennis Centre, Burswood
- Saturday 27 to Monday 29 September**—Campout at Cheyne Beach

### Birds Australia Western Australia Inc

#### Office, Perry House

71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat WA 6014

Hours: Monday-Friday 9:30 am to 12:30 pm  
Telephone: (08) 9383 7749  
Facsimile: (08) 9387 8412  
Email: [birdswa@iinet.net.au](mailto:birdswa@iinet.net.au)

#### Birds Australia WA Home Page:

<http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>

**Chairman:** Mike Bamford  
23 Plover Way, Kingsley WA 6026  
Tel: (08) 9309 3671  
E-mail: [mabce@ca.com.au](mailto:mabce@ca.com.au)

**Joint Editors:** Allan Burbidge  
Tel: (08) 9405 5109 (w)  
Tel/Fax: (08) 9306 1642 (h)  
Fax: (08) 9306 1641 (w)  
E-mail: [austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au](mailto:austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au)

Suzanne Mather  
Tel: (08) 9389 6416  
E-mail: [mather@cygnus.uwa.edu.au](mailto:mather@cygnus.uwa.edu.au)

**Production:** Margaret Philippon

**Distribution:** Rod Smith

#### 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 or emailed would assist, especially if in MSWord as a document **without** styles.
- WABN uses Birds Australia recommended English names
- except for Observations, contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.
- Full Editorial Policy is stated in WABN 74:10-12

#### Printing Deadlines (at Perry House)

September 2003 issue: 1 August  
December 2003 issue: 1 November  
March 2004 issue: 1 February  
June 2004 issue: 1 May

### Advertising Rates

1/4 page	\$30.00
1/2 page	\$50.00
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Printed by Executive Press: Tel (08) 9275 8044