

Western Australian Bird Notes



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WADER STUDY GROUP SURVEYS AT LAKE MACLEOD, MARCH 2004

A monitoring program introduced by Dampier Salt Limited (DSL) in 1999 has established that a range of water birds and waders depend on the Lake MacLeod wetlands. The impressive species list and population counts continue to increase. A total of 124 species have been recorded on the DSL lease during the monitoring program. This includes 29 species that are listed under a number of international agreements, to which Australia is a signatory. The area identified as the Northern Ponds is currently under evaluation for possible listing as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

The permanent waters of Lake MacLeod are situated north of Carnarvon and approximately 25 km inland from the Indian Ocean at latitude 23° 57'S, longitude 113° 38'E. The wetlands are located centrally on the Western Australian branch of the Australian East Asian Flyway thus providing a valuable refuge for migratory and coastal and inland waterbird communities.

This report describes the results of a recent survey, conducted between March 18th and 24th 2004. Results from earlier surveys are reported in WA Bird Notes by Davis *et al.* (2001) and Davis (2003).

2004 Survey Personnel

Eight observers were involved in the 2004 surveys: Colin Davis, Tony Kirkby, Chris Hassell (Birds Australia), Vicki Hood, Eve Cookson (DSL Dampier), Lillian McGinn, Les George (DSL Lake Macleod) and Dave Bauer (Arid Landscapes).

Methods

Light dinghies were used to convey observers into the survey areas. Observations were made using telescopes and binoculars. Bird counts were made each day and an assessment of species numbers was calculated at the end of the survey.



Black Swans on the southern Swan Coastal Plain.
Photo courtesy Robyn Pickering

Monitoring was conducted each day at Jacks Vent and adjacent channels, Site 3 Pelican Beach, Site 4 Godwit Beach, Site 5 Egret Point, Site 6 Oystercatcher Flat and Site 9 Dogleg Channel. More detailed descriptions of sites, and a map, are provided in a previous report (Davis 2003).

Single day (one visit only) counts were conducted at Goat Bay and Duck Flat.

A brief monitoring trip was made to the Northern Pond vents on 20/03/04.

Counts were conducted at a variety of habitats along the access track for bush birds on 21/3/04 and 23/3/04.

Opportunistic observations were also made each day, while travelling to and from the lake.

Weather

Conditions were generally fine with light south to south westerly winds in the afternoons. Cloud cover and strengthening southerly winds developed during the last two days of the survey.

Water levels were low throughout the Central Basin (Cygnet Pond) area. Southerly winds caused an increase of approximately 20 cm in water levels on the final day.

The 2004 March survey coincided with the forming and subsequent movement of Cyclone Fay off the Western Australian coast. Three earlier cyclones had already resulted in widespread inland flooding at northern interior, Pilbara and east Gascoyne locations. However, little rain had resulted from these occurrences in the survey area.

In areas fringing the lake, stressed flora and paucity of fauna reflected the low rainfall conditions of the last three years.

Data on weather conditions in the survey area were provided by DSL Lake Macleod (Table 1).

Table 1. Weather conditions at Lake MacLeod during the survey period in March 2004

Date	Barometric pressure	Temp max	Humidity	Wind direction
18/03/04	1012.1	26.2	92	S
19/3/04	1009.5			SW
20/03/04	1010.1	27.5	92	S
21/03/04	1011.2	28.7	88	SSW
22/03/04	1011	22.5	89	S
23/03/04	1009.1	30.1	89	S
24/03/04	1011.5	29.4	96	S

Context for this Report

Deductions on the movements and subsequent behaviour of waterbird species in this report are interpretations based on data researched by others.

Lake MacLeod is situated north of the mulga eucalypt line and south of Eighty Mile Beach. Both features represent significant avian biogeographical boundaries. Some waterbird species that are found at Lake MacLeod are also found in the Kimberley and in the south west of the State. For example, it is quite feasible that two groups of Red-necked Avocets could arrive at the lake after being raised in widely different habitats and could therefore display a difference in behaviour when responding to identical climatic changes.

Observations at Areas Surveyed

* Indicates one representative only of a species.

Vents channels and mangroves

Passerines:

Dusky Gerygone, Yellow White-eye, White-breasted Woodswallow, Mangrove Fantail, Torresian Crow, Little Crow and Little Grassbird were observed.

Non Passerines:

Black Swan, Darter, Great Cormorant*, Little Black Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant*, Australian Pelican, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Striated Heron, Grey Teal and Sacred Kingfisher.

Waders: Common Greenshank, Common Sandpiper.

Comments:

The recording of an adult and an immature Striated Heron could indicate the return of this species after mangrove habitats were decimated by cyclonic flooding in 2000.

White-bellied Sea-Eagles have moved their roost from the western side of the channels to tall mangroves on the north-west side. The old nest is no longer visible at the original site.

There has been an increase in the numbers of Mangrove Fantails and Little Grassbirds since October 2003.

Site 3. Pelican Beach

This site is situated at 23° 56.08' S, 113° 39.46' E at the south west end of a 1.5 km mud bank running into the north east corner of the central basin. The southern end of this mud bank leads into a wide channel fringed with dead mangroves.

These mangroves provide a windbreak protection against winds from the south west. It is a favoured resting area for Australian Pelican and Caspian Tern. Wader species feed along the continuing shoreline running north east.

To the east an expanse of normally dry mud runs back into low halophytes, scattered stunted mangroves and slightly raised patches of wind blown sand.

Birds at this site:

Black Swan, Australian Pelican, Little Egret*, Caspian Tern, Silver Gull, Pied Oystercatcher.

Comments:

A small flock of Red-necked Stints was seen flying south, and a Common Greenshank was heard. There were groups of Black Swans in the open waters to the north and south west, and a small group of Australian Pelicans was loafing on south end of the beach.

Site 4. Godwit Beach to Linda's Creek

The survey area is a wide mud flat behind Godwit Beach 23° 57.12' S, 113° 38.85' E. It includes the area running south east to Linda's Creek. Water is blown into Linda's Creek by south west winds, then flows out onto the mudbank in a wide shallow sheet. As this water builds up it spills back into the open water via a small channel at Godwit Beach. This process creates an ideal feeding habitat for waterbirds and waders. Pelicans are often present on the sand bar.

Table 2A. Waterbirds recorded at Lake MacLeod, November 1999 to March 2004

	Nov-99	Sep-00	Oct-01	Jan-02	Sep-02	Mar-03	Oct-03	Mar-04
Pelicans - Family Pelecanidae								
1 Australian Pelican	338	1600	300	100	600	551	402	180
Anhingas (Darters) - Family Anhingidae								
2 Darter	5	8	12	2	20	20	40	12
Cormorants - Family Phalacrocoracidae								
3 Pied Cormorant	502	650	200	150	450	321	321	350
4 Little Pied Cormorant	0	3	12	8	30	0	1	1
5 Great Cormorant	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	1
6 Little Black Cormorant	85	200	83	122	300	488	2488	757
Grebes - Family Podicipedidae								
7 Hoary-headed Grebe	0	3	3	0	60	96	47	0
8 Australasian Grebe	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0
9 Great Crested Grebe	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	1
Geese, Swans, Ducks - Family Anatidae								
10 Black Swan	15	1	100	178	400	572	582	350
11 Australian Shelduck	0	5	0	0	12	0	0	0
12 Hardhead	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
13 Pacific Black Duck	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
14 Pink-eared Duck	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
15 Grey Teal	6	31	4	0	0	504	77	2
16 Chestnut Teal	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Rails, Crakes, Swamphens, Coots - Family Rallidae								
17 Buff-banded Rail	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
18 Eurasian Coot	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	3
Hérons, Egrets, Bitterns - Family Ardeidae								
19 White-necked Heron	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
20 White-faced Heron	18	2	6	4	5	2	2	1
21 Little Egret	22	170	32	20	70	229	69	112
22 Great Egret	13	150	5	16	30	4	15	10
23 Striated Heron	21	25	8	0	1	0	0	2
24 Nankeen Night Heron	0	100	3	0	50	2	0	0
Ibises, Spoonbills - Family Plataleidae								
25 Straw-necked Ibis	0	0	0	0	28	0	0	0
Yearly waterbird totals	1031	2953	771	602	2119	2790	4046	1784

Birds at this site:

Australian Pelican, Little Egret, Great Egret, White-faced Heron*, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Greenshank, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Little Stint*, Long-toed Stint*, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper*, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Red-capped Plover, Silver Gull, Caspian Tern.

Comments:

Most of the birds observed were feeding in the shallow water to the east of the drainage channel. Numbers were generally below those recorded during the surveys in March and October 2003. Very few Curlew Sandpipers were observed when compared with previous surveys. Also recorded were <1000 Red-necked Stints, some with breeding plumage and 40 Grey Plovers, a record number for this site. A Pectoral Sandpiper was recorded feeding among the mixed flock.

A Long-toed Stint was seen and photographed at Linda's Creek. A short land based excursion was made from Linda's Creek to 23° 58.02' S. 113° 38.39' E at Tern Bay. Skeletal remains of a Fairy Tern and Curlew Sandpiper were found

there. Invertebrate samples were also collected for identification.

No passerines were seen among the dead mangroves running west from the creek, which was unusual.

Site 5. Egret Point

Egret Point juts out between the open water of the central basin and Tern Bay. It is situated at the north east limit of the mud barrier between the central basin and the southern basin at 23° 58.00' S 113° 38.37' E. Shallow water and deep mud surround the point, making access difficult. A bar at the tip of the point is sometimes exposed by winds from the north and north east.

There is a stand of dead mangroves on the southern side of the point, and this is a favoured feeding and loafing area for both waterbird and wader species.

Birds at this site:

Very few birds were found actually at Egret Point. A small mixed flock of Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits accompanied by Red and Great Knots, Red-necked Avocet, and Black-winged Stilt, was recorded each day in the

shallow water east of the point. Some of the migratory species were showing breeding plumage. These birds were all loafing/sheltering out of the southerly winds. Small parties of Red-necked Stint, Australian Pelican and Little Egret were scattered along the mudbank running south towards Oystercatcher Flat.

A flock of 40 White-winged Black Terns flew out of Tern Bay going south past Heron Point, into the open water area on 23/03/04.

Site 6. Oystercatcher Flat

This is that part of the mud barrier sited centrally between Egret Point and the Dogleg Channel. It is a wide, open area of the mud flats, scattered with shallow sheets of water. This site provided foraging opportunities for both waterbirds and waders. Banded Stilt, egrets, Australian Pelican and terns were particularly attracted into this location.

Birds at this site:

Waterbirds: Australian Pelican, Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Little and Great Egret, Silver Gull, Caspian Tern, Fairy Tern, Whiskered Tern, White-winged Black Tern.

Waders: Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, Common Greenshank, Ruddy Turnstone, Red and Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Pied Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Red-capped Plover.

Comments:

A flock of 700 Little Black Cormorants was resting in the north east on two occasions. Little Egret, <200, were busily feeding on small fish trapped in shallow pools in the centre of the mudflats.

Waders: 1000 Red-necked Stints were feeding along edges of mudbank. Two distant flocks of mainly Red-necked Stints were feeding/flying over the flats leading towards the southern basin Ibis Pond. Thirty Broad-billed Sandpipers, some in breeding plumage, were preening directly in front of the observers.

Sites 8 and 9. Dogleg Channel

Dogleg Channel is a shallow channel running from the central basin to within approximately 500 m of the southern basin. Wide mudflats extend to the north east and south west on each side of the channel. This is another habitat usually favoured by the smaller wader species, including Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. We

have obtained sightings of the Little Stint and Broad-billed Sandpiper in this area during previous surveys.

Comments:

Three visits were made to the Dogleg Channel during the survey. On 20/03/04 observers walked along the mud bank as far as possible towards the southern basin. A few Red-necked Stints were seen around the dead mangroves at the edges of the channel. No birds were seen between the end of the channel and the southern basin.

Goat Bay

A land based survey was made into this area on 21/03/04.

Birds at this site:

Passerines: Little Grassbird, Yellow White eye, Mangrove Fantail, Little Crow.

Waterbirds: Black Swan, Australian Pelican, Little Black Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, Little Egret, Great Egret.

Waders: Common Greenshank.

Comments: Soft mud restricted access to this site. Future movement in this area might be made easier with canoes.

Population Changes and Movements

Tables 2A, B, C summarise changes in numbers of waterbirds, waders and raptors throughout the surveys from November 1999 to March 2004. The following graphs (Figs. 1, 2,3) show fluctuations in bird numbers for selected species at Lake MacLeod since 1999.

Birds selected for display in these graphs represent different food requirements from the food web at the lake. There is also diverse habitat usage between the different species. Differences occur even between birds of the same family (see also Table 2A-C). The numbers of the Pied Cormorant (a resident) are almost static, while Little Black Cormorant populations fluctuate with seasonal changes. Two terns, Caspian and Fairy, have different dietary requirements.

The graphs also show the effects of two climatic disruptions, the flooding of the Lake in 2000, and the impact in 2004 of inland cyclonic rainfall. On both occasions bird populations have significantly fallen in response to these events.

Most species are sensitive to both regular seasonal changes and certain irregular unseasonal changes. For example the occurrence of heavy cyclonic rains has had a marked effect on waterbird behaviour. Climatic phenomena, often at

Table 2B. Raptors at Lake MacLeod, November 1999 to March 2004

Hawks, Eagles, Osprey - Family Accipitridae

101 Brahminy Kite	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
102 Whistling Kite	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
103 Osprey	0	3	0	0	0	2	3	1
104 White-bellied Sea-Eagle	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
105 Swamp Harrier	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
106 Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
107 Australian Hobby	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Yearly raptor totals	5	7	3	3	3	8	7	3

Table 2C. Waders, gulls and terns at Lake MacLeod, November 1999 to March 2004

	Northern Ponds, Central Basin, Southern Basin, Locations							
	Nov-99	Sep-00	Oct-01	Jan-02	Sep-02	Mar-03	Oct-03	Mar-04
Godwits, Curlews, Snipe, Phalaropes,								
- Family Scolopacidae								
26 Bar-tailed Godwit	386	18	60	54	160	3	26	65
27 Black-tailed Godwit	14	0	12	0	0	0	0	66
28 Eastern Curlew	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
29 Common Greenshank	235	300	120	30	40	72	70	62
30 Marsh Sandpiper	3	0	43	0	10	2	1	0
31 Wood Sandpiper	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32 Common Sandpiper	6	2	5	2	2	7	20	2
33 Terek Sandpiper	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
34 Grey-tailed Tattler	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
35 Ruddy Turnstone	37	10	50	2	25	2	3	6
36 Red Knot	137	8	660	0	515	187	668	150
37 Great knot	211	39	38	0	75	10	60	83
38 Sanderling	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
39 Little Stint	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
40 Red-necked Stint	2350	6000	4	250	3340	6206	6440	6000
41 Long -toed Stint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
42 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	214	10	21	3	50	23	205	8
43 Pectoral Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
44 Broad-billed Sandpiper	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	30
45 Curlew Sandpiper	18392	40000	2000	70	8000	16690	26283	485
Oystercatchers - Family Haematopodidae								
46 Pied Oystercatcher	6	2	2	1	6	6	6	6
Stilts, Avocets - Family Recurvirostridae								
47 Black-winged Stilt	5	500	284	530	1000	79	885	230
48 Banded Stilt	2042	8000	0	600	6000	15645	16204	1
49 Red-necked Avocet	0	70	0	402	346	778	214	28
Plovers, Dotterels, Lapwings - Family Charadriidae								
50 Pacific Golden Plover	3	0	5	0	1	0	0	0
51 Grey Plover	31	0	40	0	14	18	5	60
52 Red-capped Plover	114	500	24	70	300	454	442	400
53 Mongolian Plover	3	0	0	0	17	0	4	0
54 Greater Sand Plover	12	0	3	0	35	3	6	0
55 Oriental Plover	33	0	12	0	0	0	0	0
56 Red-kneed Dotterel	0	0	0	0	14	2	5	0
57 Banded Lapwing	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	0
66 Inland Dotterel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Gulls, Terns - Family Laridae								
58 Sliver Gull	292	300	50	20	60	4	8	10
59 Whiskered Tern	75	50	65	13	90	230	66	10
60 White-winged Black Tern	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	44
61 Caspian Tern	346	40	50	20	45	9	46	50
62 Gull-billed Tern	14	30	1	0	30	0	0	0
63 Crested Tern	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
64 Fairy Tern	92	5	71	57	40	422	63	110
65 Common Tern	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified Waders	5500	2500	11400	34	40000	7700	8000	
Yearly totals	30563	58399	15024	2158	60224	48553	59731	7915

Fig. 1: Selected waterbirds at Lake Macleod

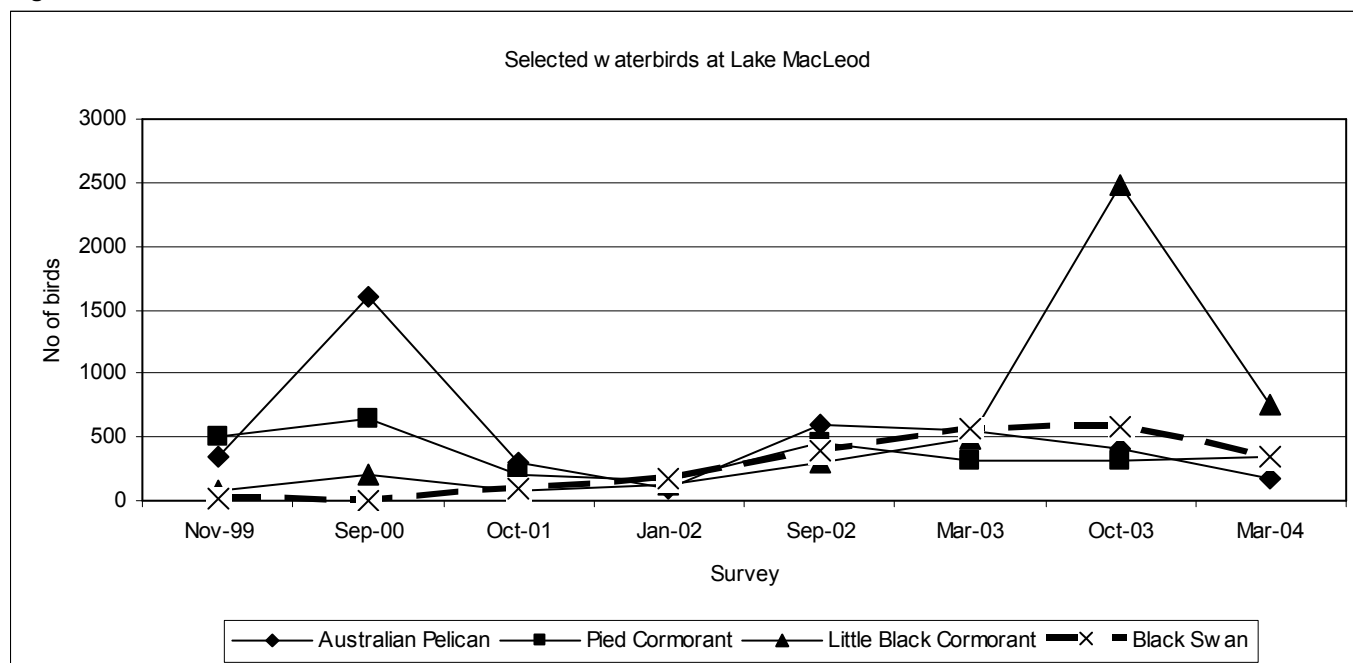


Fig. 2: Selected waders at Lake Macleod

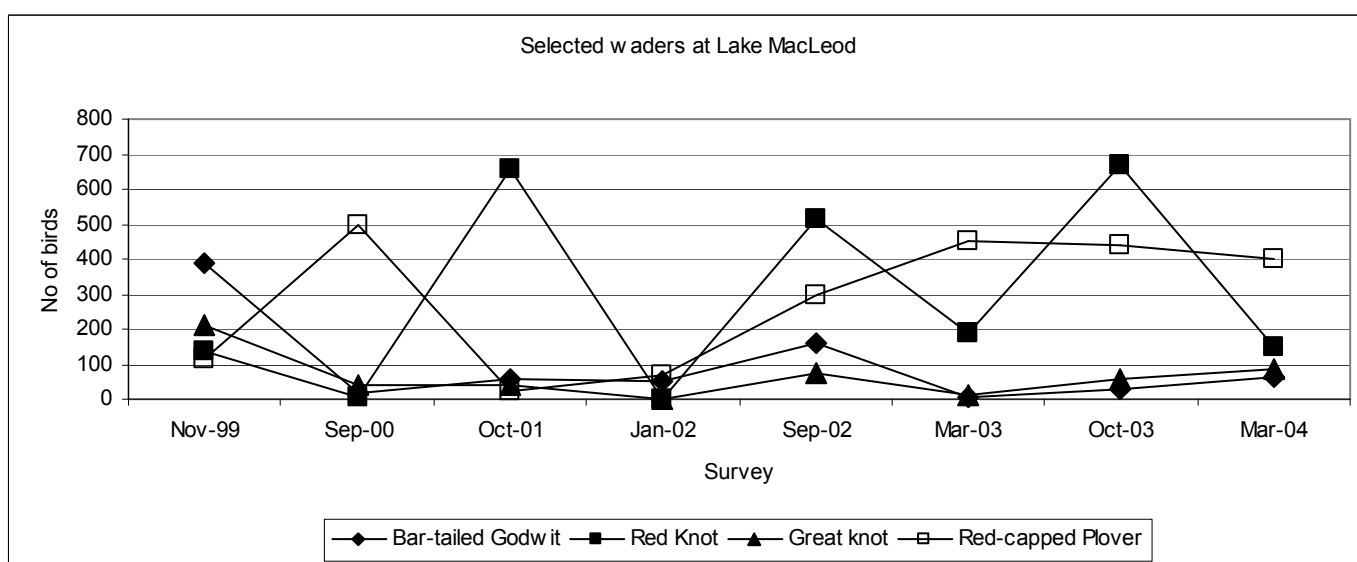
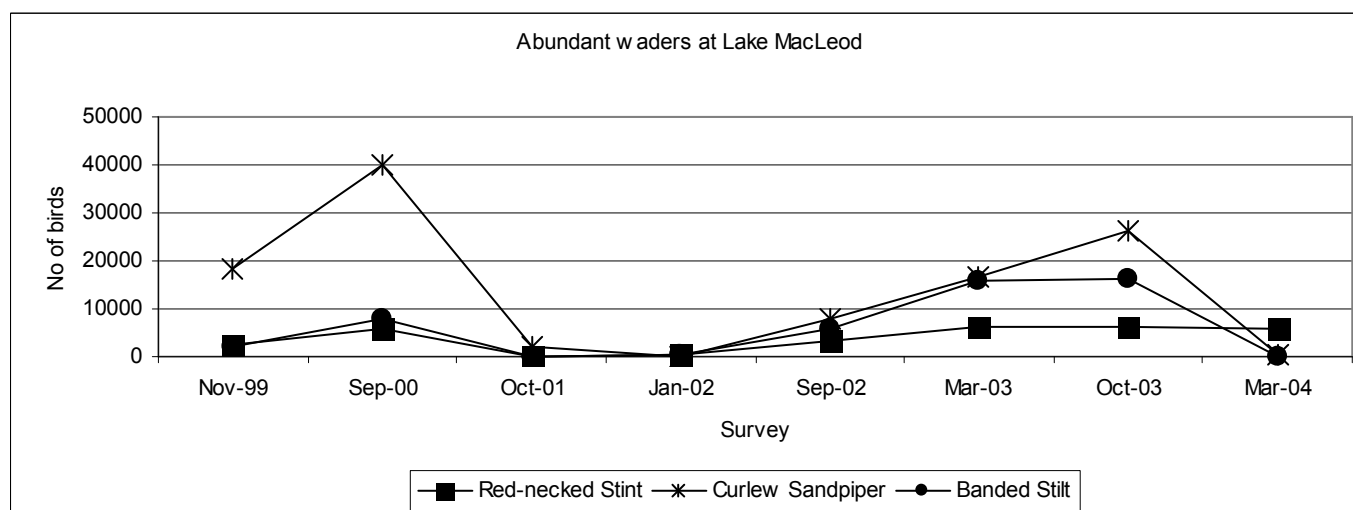


Fig. 3: Abundant waders at Lake Macleod



locations distant from the birds' habitat, can trigger an immediate breeding response, resulting in the departure of adult birds within days. This departure behaviour is demonstrated in Table 3 where comparisons from four waterbird species and four wader species were taken during the October 2003 and March 2004 survey. Each species showed various degrees of movement from the lake. Brief comments on the eight species are provided below.

Population fluctuation of most species was a feature of the March 2004 survey. The most obvious was an almost complete exodus of the two most numerous wader species recorded during previous surveys, Curlew Sandpipers and Banded Stilts. Conversely certain other wader species had increased in numbers and three new species (Long-toed Stint, Pectoral Sandpiper and Inland Dotterel) were added to our wader list.

Black Swan

Past observations of Black Swans have revealed high numbers of flightless birds but no indications of breeding. This would suggest Lake MacLeod is used specifically as a moulting site.

The 40% departure rate between October 2003 and March 2004 could indicate a movement of adult birds to areas more conducive to breeding. Observations of this species in the proposed November survey will be interesting.

Grey Teal

This species is highly influenced by climatic change. The almost 100% departure rate indicated a typical movement response to a newly established wetland.

Little Black Cormorant

This species' numbers were known to decrease after the occurrence of inland rains when adult birds moved to freshwater locations to breed. There were 2488 Little Black Cormorants congregated at the lake in October 2003. The 70% departure rate by March 2004 equates to 1731 birds. This is more than the previous (Sept 2000) highest total of Little Black Cormorants we had found at the lake. The remaining birds were probably immature and non breeding adults.

Black-winged Stilt

Studies on southern populations of this species have found it to be seasonally mobile, moving to coastal sites in summer

and leaving in mid winter. The opposite seasonal movements are displayed by Kimberley birds. Black-winged Stilts are also influenced by unseasonal heavy rainfall. Like the species above, those remaining at the lake are probably non breeding birds.

Banded Stilt

The preferred habitat of the Banded Stilt is saline or hypersaline waters. Sporadic breeding takes place on a large scale after the flooding of normally dry inland salt lakes. The 100% departure rate suggests commencement of a breeding event and typical dispersal behaviour of the species. Attention should be focused on reports of inland breeding this year and the numbers of immature birds at Lake MacLeod during the next survey.

Red-necked Avocet

Little is known of this species' movements, but they are known to disperse after heavy rainfall and are opportunistic breeders. Marchant and Higgins (1993) state that breeding only occurs below 23° S, while Johnstone and Storr (1998) show the same species breeding as far north as Sandfire (19° 46' S, 121° 5' E).

Curlew Sandpiper

Curlew Sandpipers breed, during June and July, in the central high arctic coastal tundra regions of Siberia. Birds begin leaving their various wintering habitats in March. Migration departure dates fluctuate from year to year, but departure is usually completed by mid April. The previously mentioned climatic conditions probably influenced a majority of the birds to leave Lake MacLeod before 18th March this year to congregate at their northern flyway departure sites.

Bushbirds

Survey areas included closed heath, open heath, limestone ridges, low shrubland and open grassland, plus brackish wetland habitat created at two mine site locations.

Birds recorded (Table 4) were typical Carnarvon Basin arid zone species. Fieldwrens, fairy-wrens, Richard's Pipits, Singing Honeyeaters and Chiming Wedgebills were the most common birds encountered.

The sighting of six Australian Dotterels in the 2004 survey by Les George enabled all of us to observe this rarely seen

Table 3: Movements between surveys

Species	Birds counted			Proportion departed, 10/03 – 03/04
	Mar 2003	Oct 2003	Mar 2004	
Black Swan	572	582	350	40%
Australian Pelican	551	402	180	54%
Little Black Cormorant	488	2488	757	70%
Black-winged Stilt	79	885	230	75%
Red-necked Avocet	778	214	28	86%
Curlew Sandpiper	16690	26283	485	98%
Grey Teal	504	77	1	99%
Banded Stilt	15645	16204	1	>99%

Table 4. Bushbirds at Lake MacLeod, November 1999 to March 2004

Observers	Davis/ Kirkby	Davis/ Kirkby/ Singor	Davis/ Kirkby	Davis/ Kirkby	Davis/ Kirkby	Davis/ Kirkby	Davis/ Kirkby	Davis/ Kirkby/ Hassell
Dates	Nov 8- 12 1999	Sept 17- 22 2000	Oct 24- 27 2001	Jan 18- 21 2002	Sept 20- 23 2002	March 14- 18 2003	Oct 10-14 2003	March 18- 24 2004
Emu	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quail spp	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0
Black-breasted Buzzard	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0
Black-shouldered Kite	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whistling Kite	✓	✓	0	0	✓	0	0	0
Spotted Harrier	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0
Swamp Harrier	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	0
Wedge-tailed Eagle	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	✓	0
Brown Falcon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	✓
Australian Hobby	0	✓	✓	✓	0	0	✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	0	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0
Nankeen Kestrel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Australian Bustard	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	✓	✓
Common Bronzewing	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0		0
Crested Pigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Galah	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	0	✓	✓
Little Corella	✓	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	0
Budgerigar	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pallid Cuckoo	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0
Horsfields Bronze cuckoo	✓	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0
Sacred Kingfisher	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0
Red-backed Kingfisher	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓
Variegated Fairy wren	✓	✓	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
White-winged Fairy wren	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Redthroat	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓
Rufous Fieldwren	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓	0
Striated Pardalote	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	✓
Dusky Gerygone	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	0	✓
Singing Honeyeater	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Pied Honeyeater	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	✓
Crimson Chat	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0
Orange Chat	✓	✓	0	✓	✓	0	✓	0
Red-capped Robin	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0
White-browed Babbler	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Chiming Wedgebill	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Crested Bellbird	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	✓
Grey Shrike-thrush	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓
Willie Wagtail	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0
Grey Fantail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	✓
Mangrove Fantail	✓	✓	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	✓	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
White-winged Triller	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	0	✓
White-breasted Woodswallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Little Woodswallow	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	✓
Masked Woodswallow	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	✓
Pied Butcherbird	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Magpielark	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	✓
Corvid sp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0
Little Crow	0	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Richards Pipit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zebra Finch	✓	✓	0	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Welcome Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
White-backed Swallow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓
Tree Martin	✓	✓	✓	0	0	✓	0	✓
Little Grassbird	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
Brown Songlark	✓	✓	0	0	✓	0	0	✓
Rufous Songlark	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0
Yellow White-eye	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Silvereye	✓	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	0

species. These birds were found in sparse open herbland, beside the access track at 24° 6.08' S 113° 32.18' E. Although little is known of this bird's movements, it is known to associate in small mixed groups after breeding. It prefers dry, flat, arid country and has been known to move from its inland environment when fresh growth appears after rainfall. We can only speculate as to the bird's vagrant or resident status.

Conclusions

Lake MacLeod is a unique wetland. The occurrence of mangrove vegetation 20 km from the ocean and its underground aquifers providing a permanent source of sea water, are features not seen at the mostly ephemeral inland Australian lakes. Its remote and inhospitable location provides a barrier to casual off road visitors and the general public thereby ensuring a reasonable degree of protection from human interference.

This means most of the changes that occur are due to natural phenomena resulting from climatic influences within and around the boundaries of the lake. Cyclonic disturbances have affected the flora and topography of the various habitats, sometimes quite drastically. The lake's ecology is able to cope with these natural disturbances and they are absorbed with the passing seasons.

Indeed, these occurrences have resulted in little change in the abundance of bird life. Species and bird numbers have remained remarkably constant since our first visit and can be favourably compared with data obtained during the intensive 1987 expedition (Jaensch and Vervest 1990).

The most obvious threat to the lake would be future access by the general public. This could result in a degraded habitat from intrusion of off-road vehicles, habitat disturbance and discarded rubbish. Other threats come from feral species. Foxes have been seen frequently on the western edges of the lake and cats were evident for the first time at the boat launch area in 2004. Destruction of flora by goats is noticeable in some areas along the breakaway.

This is how the explorer Lt George Gray, described Lake MacLeod in 1837 in the somewhat quaint terms of the day:

I could, even with a good telescope, see no limits to this lake and, with the exception of the numerous beautiful islands with which it was studded...distinguish nothing like rising land anywhere between N by E and SE. The Lake had a glossy and fairy-like appearance, and I sat down...to contemplate this great water, which the eye of a European now for the first time rested.

It appeared as if nature had heaped up the narrow and lofty sand barrier ...to shut out from the eyes of a man...the land which lay beyond it.

Conversely, in the 1970s, during the mine construction by TEXADA workers from United States of America, on finding themselves sinking into a seemingly bottomless hole in the mud, coined the phrase "Clackwacker Country" inferring the presence of subterranean "critters" living in the slime. Today's visitors negotiating the waterways, or treading the mudbanks, might not expound their feelings in the same lyrical manner as Lt Gray, or their apprehension as colourfully as the Americans. Most however, in spite of the harshness and hazards of its terrain, find a fascination in this unique wetland.

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Colin Davis



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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 (<birdswa.iinet.net.au> as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in the next 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 major highlight was a **Rose-coloured Starling** found and photographed by Joy Tansey while leading a Broome Bird Observatory tour at Lake Eda near Broome in early September. It was relocated the afternoon of the same day, but it was thought to have moved on until it was found again nearly three weeks later by Chris Hassell, and then by a number of people who flew to Broome over the next few days. This is a new species for Australia.

The major highlight in the metropolitan area was a **South Polar Skua** seen on the August pelagic seabird trip from Hillarys. This is believed to be the 5th record for Western Australia.

An **Elegant Parrot** was reported well north of its usual range in the Pilbara, and there were several records of **Grey Fantails** in and near the Pilbara.

METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

Black-tailed Native-hen – 1, 15/10/04, Big Carine Swamp (Carine) – FO (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

Painted Button Quail – adult with 2 chicks, 2/11/04, Whiteman Park (Whiteman) – MB

Square-tailed Kite – 1, 19/08/04, Burns Beach heath (Iluka) – ABu, JR (uncommon on the Swan Coastal Plain)

SOUTH POLAR SKUA – 1, 08/08/04, Hillarys pelagic – FO, BR, AC *et al.* (5th record for WA; BARC submission)

Whiskered Tern – 1, Lake Joondalup (Wanneroo) – CG, MG * 1 in breeding plumage, 19/10/04, Woodman Point (Munster) – FO *et al.* (uncommon near Perth)

Lesser Noddy – 1, 12/06/04, North Mole (North Fremantle) – BR (very uncommon near Perth)

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo – 11, 4/10/04, bushland NE of Thomsons Lake (Beeliar) – MW

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo – 1, March-October 2004, near Lake Goollellal (Kingsley) – MB (presumed escapee)

Elegant Parrot – 1, 05/10/04, North Lake (North Lake) – BS (occurs only patchily in the metropolitan area)

Rainbow Bee-eater – 8, 18/09/04, Whiteman Park (Whiteman) – RD, MM (early return)

Red-capped Robin – 2 pairs and young, 02/10/04, Neaves Road, Melaleuca Park (Pinjar) – PJ (rarely reported breeding in the metropolitan area)

ARID ZONE

Black Falcon – 1, 10/07/04, unallocated Crown land E of Roy Hill Station (East Pilbara) – MC

Elegant Parrot – 1, 10/07/04, Roy Hill Station (East Pilbara) – MC (north of usual range)

Red-browed Pardalote – 2, 8/08/04, edge of Lake Way, Lake Way Station (Wiluna) – CG, MG (near southern limit)

Redthroat – 2, 13/07/04, unallocated Crown land E of Roy Hill Station (East Pilbara) – MC * 1, 4/10/04, near Ettamurra Creek crossing on North West Coastal Highway (N of Fortescue) – ABu * 1, 25/10/04, 30 km NW of Paraburdoo (22 57 54/117 27 31) – MG (all three records close to N limit)

Southern Whiteface – 2, 13/07/04, unallocated Crown land E of Roy Hill Station (East Pilbara) – MC * 3, 14* 3, 14/07/04, Balfour Downs (East Pilbara) – RT (both north of usual range)

Grey-crowned Babbler – 2 parties, 24/07/04, 2.2 km and 6.2 km N of Wanjarri HS (Leonora) – CG, MG (near southern limit)

White-browed Babbler – 25/10/04, 30 km NW of Paraburdoo (22 57 54/117 27 31) – MG * 3, 13/07/04, unallocated Crown land E of Roy Hill Station (East Pilbara) – MC (both records close to N limit)

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush – 1, 26/10/04, 25 km N of Paraburdoo (23 02 54/117 38 10) – MG (close to N limit)

GREY FANTAIL – presumed *preissi* – 1, 13/07/04, unallocated Crown land E of Roy Hill Station (East Pilbara) – MC * 1, 30/07/04, Blue Hills, W of Well 5 (East Pilbara) – CG, MG

GREY FANTAIL – *albicauda* – 1, 03/08/04, Talbot Rockhole (East Pilbara) – CG, MG, SM * 1, 25/10/04, 30 km NW of Paraburdoo (22 57 54/117 27 31) – MG (Grey Fantails of any subspecies are rare in the East Pilbara – Little Sandy Desert)

KIMBERLEY

Stubble Quail – 1, 26/09/04, Roebuck Plains Station (Broome) – AB *et al.* (uncommon in West Kimberley)

Great Cormorant – 1, 27/09/04, Crescent Lake Waterbank Station (Broome) – FO (uncommon in West Kimberley)

Spotless Crake – 1, 22/09/04, Crab Creek mangroves (Broome) – BBO (uncommon in West Kimberley)

Painted Snipe – 13 immatures, 22/08/04, Lake Eda (Broome) – GS * 16, 30/08/04, Lake Eda (Broome) – GS (high counts)

Oriental Plover – 3, 15/09/04, Kupungarri sewage ponds (Derby – West Kimberley) – DH * 24, 22/09/04, Mt Barnett airstrip (Derby – West Kimberley) – DH (early returns inland)

Dollarbird – 1, 24/09/04, Mt Barnett camp ground (Derby – West Kimberley) – DH (early return)

Gouldian Finch – 5, 15/09/04, Kupungarri sewage ponds (Derby – West Kimberley) – DH (endangered)

Star Finch – 6, 01/07/04, Nookanbah (Derby – West Kimberley) – DH (uncommon in West Kimberley)
Little Grassbird – 1, 01/07/04, Nookanbah (Derby – West Kimberley) – DH (uncommon in West Kimberley)
Golden-headed Cisticola – 1, 2/10/04, 15 km SW of Larranganni Bluff (Halls Creek) – MC (near southern limit in E Kimberley)
ROSE-COLOURED STARLING – 1, 03/09/04 to 26/09/04, Lake Eda (Broome) – JT *et al.* (good photos taken, good views obtained by a number of reliable observers – 1st record for Australia; BARC Submission)

OBSERVERS

AB = Adrian Boyle	GS = George Swann
ABu = Allan Burbidge	JT = Joy Tansey
AC = Alan Collins	MB = Mike Bamford
BARC = Birds Australia Rarities Committee	MC = Michael Craig
BBO = Broome Bird Observatory	MG = Martin Gole
BR = Bill Rutherford	MM = Myles Menz
BS = Bill Smith	MW = Matt Williams
CG = Cheryl Gole	PJ = Peter Jacoby
DH = Don Hadden	RD = Rob Davis
FO = Frank O'Connor	RT = Roy Teale
	SM = Sue Mather



From the CEO's Desk



Hello again to all Birds Australia WA members.

1. Projects—Brief Update

The 2004 State of Australian Birds Report is progressing well. The theme for this year is Wetland Birds and the report will be distributed to members with your December Wingspan. Last year we distributed the 2003 report to all federal politicians, all local government chief executive officers, all bird atlasers, all Birds Australia members and key selected State government officials and politicians. We will be doing the same with the coming report.

We are pleased to announce the Federal Government has agreed to fund our Threatened Bird Network for at least a further two years.

We have also obtained a grant from the Tony and Lisette Lewis Foundation to develop a website titled *Birddata*. The site will allow members, students and others to access data from our Atlas of Australian Birds for a myriad of uses. It will also allow input of bird sightings data. Work has commenced and we are aiming for a launch in the first half of 2005. Look out for *Birddata* !

Recent funds have been raised for Yellow Chat surveys in Queensland, the continuation of our Cowra Woodlands project and a grant in NSW to take the Birds in Backyards project online.

Birds Australia Western Australia (Inc) has secured further funds for the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo conservation project.

During National Science week, which coincided with the Athens Olympic Games, we competed and presented a migratory birds education project titled Olympic Birds for the Murray Darling Basin Commission. The project was a great success and the school kids that took part enjoyed it immensely. It was so successful we are presently discussing with the Commission how we might give it a wider application.

In conjunction with the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) we recently launched a pocket guide to the birds of

Canberra and hope to raise funds to replicate this for each capital city in Australia where needed, working with local groups.

Our 12-year project the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds is nearing completion with the seventh volume to be published in early 2005. This last volume features bowerbirds, finches and woodswallows to name some.

2. Events

For the best up to date information on Birds Australia activities around the country don't forget to use our online calendar of events on our website.

The 2005 Members Day and AGM will be held on Sat 28 May 2005 in Cairns far north Queensland. More details will follow soon but for members who reside outside Queensland you may wish to consider booking your airfares soon. Having lived in Cairns for 11 years I can vouch that the birding is stupendous!

The location and date for the 2005 National Congress and campout will be announced soon.

The Congress held in Toowoomba last month was a great success with many interesting presentations. The theme was Birds, Biodiversity and Brigalow.

3. National Conservation Priorities

Birds Australia was recently involved in the production of a report that set out a review of progress at the Federal Government level towards meeting biodiversity conservation goals. It also highlighted priorities for the future. This important document will be discussed with the Federal Government.

4. Raffle

The 2004 Birds Australia raffle is now out. Members will have received either tickets or a brochure (depending on permit conditions for your particular state or territory). Again there are some great prizes so please support our work by supporting the raffle. It is a crucial fundraiser for us.

5. Excess stock available free

Here at national office we have excess copies of our publication *The Action Plan for Australian Birds*. It sets out conservation actions needed to save our 155 threatened bird species. If you would like a free copy and are prepared to pay for the postage (between \$5 and \$12 depending on where you are) please contact Michelle Sweeny at national office on (03) 9882 2622.

Finally, it is time for me to say goodbye—I am moving on as CEO of Birds Australia and expect to finish up around Xmas time. I have enjoyed my time with BA enormously but I am

looking forward to some time off which I have planned. Thank you to everybody who helped me enjoy my time here and I wish Birds Australia the best for the future. It is a truly wonderful organisation.

Jim Downey
Chief Executive Officer, Birds Australia

Note: On behalf of WA members, the BAWA Committee wishes to thank Jim for his support of regional groups and for his helpful responses to numerous questions from BAWA. We wish him well in all his future endeavours.



Birds Australia WA Inc Reports



BAWA INC COMMITTEE REPORT

I almost feel like an impostor writing this committee report as work and family commitments have kept me away from a number of committee and general meetings, but that is as it should be in a voluntary organisation. Volunteers can only give what and when they are able; and that goes for the Chairperson too! Fortunately, the rest of the committee and particularly Vice-Chair Rob Davis have been able to carry on, while it seems to be in the nature of BAWA that people just make things happen. The contents of *Bird Notes* are a testament to that.

The day-to-day business of BAWA—general meetings, excursions of all sorts, finances, the activities of project officers, publication of WABN, applications for grants and the handling of correspondence—may just seem to happen, but it only appears that way because a rather small group of devoted members makes them happen. I am in awe of these people! They are the ‘doers’ and while some of them are on the BAWA committee, many are not. This might seem odd, but one of the reasons for the existence of the BAWA committee and my position of Chairperson is to support members who want to get out and do something for the organisation and for birds. Support can mean anything from giving what is effectively a rubber stamp approval to a fund-raising idea, to providing direction and policy on issues that affect all our members.

BAWA needs members with the time and inclination to make things happen, whether or not they are formally on the BAWA committee, but BAWA also needs the central committee to support these people. I mention this now because, as you may already have guessed, the Annual General Meeting is fast approaching and that means nominations for election to the BAWA committee will soon be called. We are always in need of people with time, skills of any sort but, above all, enthusiasm, to help support BAWA. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to talk about what is involved in being on the committee, but in essence, being on the committee should be an opportunity to help make things happen for the benefit of BAWA and our birds.

Mike Bamford, Chair, BAWA Inc.

LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

New & Noteworthy

Young, S. *An Essential Guide to Bird Photography*
— includes advice on choosing equipment, photographic techniques, setting up a hide, etc. Also generously illustrated. Class No. 778.9 YOU

Nielsen, L. *Birding Australia: a Directory for Birders*
— useful reference for any BA member intending to visit other parts of Australia. It lists significant birding sites and a lot of other useful information such as road distances, where to stay, and contact details for many local tourist and birding organisations throughout Australia. Class No. 598.0994 NEI

Rogers et al., *Life Along Land's Edge*
— a beautifully illustrated book by CALM on the birds and other wildlife which inhabit the shores of Roebuck Bay near Broome. 598.00941 ROG

Debus, S. *The Birds of Prey of Australia: a Field Guide*
— this small book includes 26 colour plates from vol II of HANZAB and profiles the biology and behaviour of each species. 598.92 DEB

(Copies of Debus's book are also on sale from the WA Office of Birds Australia at Perry Lakes)

LIBRARY HOURS: Mon - Fri 9.30 - 12.30

Stewart Houghton

BIRD SEMINAR

Are We Keen!!

Imagine my surprise at seeing an elderly lady arriving for the classes driving a moped and finding out that she had travelled all the way from Helena Valley to Floreat! Not to be out done Jane Wooding, a new member, arrived in a wheelchair. Having signed up for the classes, Jane was not about to miss the lectures when she unfortunately fell and broke an ankle. We also had two members from Bullsbrook and one from Chittering.

Our second Bird Seminar for Adult Learners Week was held in the Tamala Room of the newly opened Western Australian Ecology Centre in Bold Park, Floreat. On the first day, Brice Wells and Frank O'Connor gave informative lectures, covering all the basics, for beginners. The second day was devoted to a lecture on bush birds followed by a walk in Bold Park. The class was divided into small groups, each with an experienced leader, to help them identify the birds and put learning into practice. The third day on water and wader birds followed the same itinerary, with a walk at Herdsman Lake. As the waders had not yet arrived a fourth day was not viable. Fifteen people completed our evaluation forms, as follows:

	VG	G	Sat	Unsat
Organisation of course	14			
Benefit and information gained from the course	10	5		
Leader	10	4		
Do you think you will follow up your interest in birds?	14 Yes			

The popularity of these courses ensures that the Public Relations Sub-Committee will continue them next year with one in the autumn and one in spring. We hope to arrange a course somewhere in the Darling Hills to give people in those areas a chance to attend. Many thanks for the invaluable support from our walk leaders Barry Angus, David and Joyce Ballard, Valerie Hemsley, Frank O'Connor, Jennifer Muir, Ian Rudd, Hank Van Wees, Brice Wells and Brian Wilson.

Elsa Dabbs
Public Relations Sub-Committee

“HAVE-A-GO-DAY”

October 26th and “Have-a-go-Day” for Seniors held at Burswood Park was here again and as usual Birds Australia WA was in attendance. The weather was kinder this year and temperatures only reached 26oC by the late afternoon, unlike last year when we suffered through a 40oC hot afternoon.

This year it was the wind we had to contend with and we were constantly collecting flying papers and battenning them down. Brice Wells arrived early and managed to erect the tent with help from a neighbouring party. By the time I arrived all was in order — lucky me. The wind made it impossible to show off our new poster which had to be laid flat on the table.

It was a good day with many people stopping by with questions. We

helped to identify a bird they had seen in their gardens or talk about the problem with Rainbow Lorikeets. All our literature and BAWA leaflets quickly disappeared. Brice led a bird walk, much to the delight of American visitors eager to learn our birds.

As we packed up at the end of the day we agreed it was time well spent due to the interest shown by the public and YES, we will be there next year.

Elsa Dabbs
Public Relations Sub-Committee

DARLINGTON ARTS FESTIVAL Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 November

With a howling gale and the threat of rain (which at any other time would have been most welcome) we erected the BAWA ‘marquee’, clutched escaping papers and hung on to flapping books, and generally prepared ourselves for the Festival.

This is an annual event in Darlington, and while the emphasis is to encourage local art, there are all sorts of other stall holders, conservation groups and community groups as well, not to mention the obligatory wine bar and beer garden. Thousands of people, young and old and in between, attend during the weekend, wandering amongst the stalls, looking, listening, tasting, climbing rocks, riding camels and hopefully sharing bird experiences or sightings with us or receiving information from and about Birds Australia.

It is a great venue, and we chatted to lots of people. We sold a few books, but the ‘draw cards’ definitely were the bird cards, both Christmas and blank. In fact, Sunday morning necessitated replenishing from the office, and many thanks to Barbara Anderson for being there.

Many thanks indeed to Pat Bennett, Eggie and Rob Boggs, Faith and Peter Carney, Ronnie Mishkin, Alyson and Ed Paull, Ted Stewart-Wynne, Penny and Jeff Towells and Brian Wilson who so willingly assisted, both on Saturday and Sunday. All very much appreciated and so important to making it such a successful weekend.

Stella Stewart-Wynne



Alex Sarre with Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo,
Darlington Arts Festival

Photo courtesy Stella Stewart-Wynne

BUDDING BIRDERS

“I have a bird mad class”, says Jenny Croker, the teacher at City Beach Primary School. “I have a bird mad class; can you please come and give them a slide show and talk?”. Frank O'Connor, Brice Wells and I gathered up our gear and trotted along to the school. We have visited a number of schools this

year and as always have found the primary children eager to learn and listen to our talks. They enjoy seeing the slides and are happy to tell us which birds they have in their gardens. When questions are asked by Frank there is no shortage of hands offering answers. After the slide show we issue out binoculars and take a walk around the school grounds. This school was fortunate to have several nests, some of which had already been located by the children. They were all recorded along with a bird list for them to watch in the future..

It is a pleasure to visit these schools along with other schools in our School Conservation Project and know that seeds have been sown for the future birders.

Elsa Dabbs
Public Relations Sub-Committee



Some dedicated volunteers at the Darlington Arts Festival:
L-R: Ian Rudd, Ed Paull, Ted Stewart-Wynne and
Alyson Paull, plus the 'star', a Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo.
Photo courtesy Stella Stewart-Wynne



BAWA Projects



Extract from Birds Australia's Volunteer Newsletter #19,
September 2004

ONGOING ATLAS

After a lull in surveys being submitted at the end of the main Atlas period, the number of forms received has increased in recent months, now averaging around 800 surveys per week. Please continue Atlassing and encourage other birdwatchers to take part. Every week, we receive new registrations and many of these new recruits are becoming very valuable contributors.

Which surveys are important?

All surveys are important and we encourage Atlassers to submit forms using any of the Atlas survey methods available. These different types of data are being put to many good uses by researchers, students, consultants etc. – see the regular column 'Atlas Applications'.

During the Atlas period, the 2 ha search method was encouraged and we are keen to promote this type of survey. It is important that the Intensive Atlas sites (2 ha sites where repeated surveys are undertaken) are maintained and revisited, and if possible new ones established.

We can report that 707 people responded to our survey of Atlasers, almost all of whom were volunteers. One particularly interesting result relates to volunteer skills. It was clear that respondents' bird identification skills increased as a result of their contribution to the Atlas. 79.4% of respondents reported that their bird identification skills had improved, while other improved skills were reported in the use of Global Positioning Systems (24.4%), optical equipment (32.7%), cameras (6.7%), computers (7.7%), maps (11.3%), compasses (2.9%), boats (0.7%), and off-road vehicles (5.6%). Bush skills (7.1%), vegetation identification

(30.3%) and first aid skills (1.9%) had also improved. Twenty seven respondents identified a diverse range of other skills which had improved, including interpersonal skills and record keeping.

ATLAS APPLICATIONS

Atlas data assists shorebird conservation networks

Warren Lee Long, Shorebird Flyway Officer, East Asian-Australasian Flyway, reports:

The Atlas of Australian Birds database has been contributing directly to development of an international network of sites for shorebird conservation in the East Asian-Australasian Migratory Waterbird Flyway. Reliability of Atlas data on shorebird numbers at key sites has been critical to assist government agencies and land managers to confidently and simply nominate new sites to participate in the "Shorebird Site Network".

HISTORY TURNS ANOTHER CORNER FOR THE WESTERN GROUND PARROT

In 1912 a Western Ground Parrot nest was located near Wilson's Inlet and the nest and four white eggs were photographed. This account, with accompanying photograph, was published in *Emu* in 1914. This was the last time a Western Ground Parrot nest was ever reported.

In October 2004, a team of nine volunteers and CALM staff entered the Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP) to try and locate an active (or recently vacated) Western Ground Parrot nest. This skilled team included Ray Garstone, Wayne Zadow and Brenda Newbey. Other members included Brent Barrett (Project Leader) Sarah Comer (CALM Albany) and Peter Wilkins (Ranger-in-Charge, FRNP).

With recently compiled methodologies we set about locating birds and searching suitable habitat for nests. This technique was a modification of a number of successful methods used in the past. It was a long, hot and tiring task for all and the dedication of the team was unfaltering.

The results spoke for themselves, with 33 flushing events from between six and ten birds. Many juveniles were located and their plumage matched with information collected from the eastern subspecies. This suggests that nesting had already occurred and that young fledglings were remaining with a parent, or in close proximity to nesting sites. The location of two very young birds was of particular importance. These are likely to have been very close to the nest and may even still roost in the nest at night. A detailed search of the surrounding area may result in an old nest. The location is currently sensitive with young birds needing to be fed by adults. Due to the risk of leading predators to the young no detailed searches were conducted at the time of discovery.

Two historically significant events occurred. Researcher Brent Barrett photographed one juvenile on the ground and also shot a short video clip of a juvenile in flight. This is the first 'wild' bird photograph and film ever collected of the Western Ground Parrot. All other images are of birds restrained during banding. These images will assist the project by raising awareness of the species. They will be incorporated into the current education programs, such as the museum display and survey information packs.

Anyone who is interested in receiving up to date information on the plight of the species should contact Brenda Newbey and become a member of the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot group. It is free to join and a great way to show your support. Newsletter recipients are often the first to receive new information following Western Ground Parrot survey trips.



Western Ground Parrot filmed in flight.
Photo courtesy Brent Barrett

Please consider joining the Western Ground Parrot Recovery Project team in March 2005 when they survey Cape Arid National Park (CANP). All survey trips are fully supported with food and group equipment and some assistance towards transport. Research trips into CANP will commence in March and run until May. These will be seven to ten days in length. Weather permitting, ongoing surveys are conducted in Waychinicup National Park on Thursday evenings (departing Albany). Please contact Brent Barrett on ph. 0429 842 451 or <brentb@calm.wa.gov.au> for further information on any dates or participation enquiries. To assist the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, or simply to obtain further information, contact Brenda Newbey on tel. 9337 5673, e-mail <wgparrot@iinet.net.au> or Anne Bondin on tel. 9844 1793, e-mail <albanybirds@hotmail.com>.

Brent Barrett



Members' Contributions



PLEASE REPORT LORIKEETS

The Rainbow Lorikeet Working Group is seeking assistance from interest groups in determining the distribution and concentration of Rainbow Lorikeets in the south-west of WA. This information will be used to both present a case for funding and to develop effective control strategies.

Members have been asked to report lorikeets because of their heightened observational skills.

Rainbow Lorikeets favour open forest and woodland habitats and adapt well to urban environments and parklands. The birds are quite noisy, continuously screeching while in flight and when at a food source. They have a swift direct flight with rapid whirring wing beats and display flashes of dark green and bright red. They have a scarlet bill, streaky blue head, yellow-green or orange-red nape, blue belly, red-orange chest and 'trousers'.

Lorikeet reports should include information about the date and specific location, the estimated number of birds, whether this is the first time you have seen them in the area, any damage they were doing, and if you have heard the birds late in the afternoon and/or early in the morning (this indicates the presence of a roost).

Reports can be made by ringing the Birds Australia office on tel. 9383 7749 between 9:30 am and 12:30 pm weekdays.

Further information can be obtained from the Rainbow Lorikeet Working Group's executive officer on tel. 9366 2301.

More information is available from Farmnote 08/2002 'Rainbow Lorikeets' on the Department of Agriculture website at http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/IKMP/PW/VP/BIRD/FN008_2002.PDF.

WELSHPOOL DRAINAGE PONDS

In the past, the Welshpool industrial area consisted of Banksia stands and paperbark swamps. As the locality was developed, drainage canals were dug and linked to catchment ponds.

Over the past year (2003-2004) these ponds were surveyed to see which water birds were using them for breeding, feeding and roosting.

The drainage ponds are the responsibility of the Water Authority and are located in the City of Canning along Orrong Road. They were in locations of little disturbance and some were fenced.

The rapid variation in water levels posed a challenge for birds during the breeding season as the inflow of storm water after rain caused flooding of some breeding sites. Birds that established safe nesting sites when water levels were high, found these exposed when water levels dropped. For example the nests of a Black Swan and Black-winged Stilt were predated by a fox when they became accessible after water levels had subsided.

There were several points of interest arising from this survey. Black-winged Stilt bred at two sites. Australasian Grebe was found to raise more than one brood a season at two sites. The drainage ponds were popular with Australasian Shelduck. Bird numbers were highest over summer.

The behaviour of Black-fronted Dotterels at three sites indicated that they were breeding in the vicinity of the drainage ponds. Gravel areas and vacant land adjacent to the sumps were the most likely locations.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Great Egret, White-faced Heron and Nankeen Night Heron were found to frequent the ponds.

The survey results are presented in Tables 1-4.

Locations Surveyed

Site 1: 'Sling-Rig'

This pond is located on Mills Street between Welshpool Road and Orrong Road next to the Sling-Rig building. A large peninsula extends into the pond and there are small typha clumps. This site contained water throughout summer though water levels did drop. The presence of frogs was recorded.

Previously this wetland was much larger but the section along Welshpool Road was filled in and reclaimed.

Nineteen species were recorded at this pond (Table 1).

Breeding species included the Australasian Grebe, Black Swan, Eurasian Coot, Pacific Black Duck, Wood Duck and Black-winged Stilt.

Black Swans were found nesting in early August 2004.

Australasian Grebes bred twice, first noted on 7 December 2003 with two juveniles near a nest, and then on 11 April 2004 there were two adults with two recently hatched young.

A pair of Australian Wood Ducks were suspected of breeding nearby and taking their young down to the pond.

A Black-winged Stilt's nest with four eggs was found on 5 September 2004. The Black-winged Stilt has bred here before when the wetland was larger. On 22 October 2000, three nests with eggs were seen and on 26 November 2000 four juveniles were seen.

Site 2: 'Gunns Timber'

This pond is located on the corner of Ballantyne Road and 455 Orrong Road next to Gunns Timber (formerly Westwoods.) The site contained water throughout summer. There are no islands, and embankments are steep and grassy.

Fourteen species were recorded on the wetland (Table 2), and three of these attempted breeding: Australasian Grebe, Eurasian Coot, Pacific Black Duck.

The main usage of this area is as a summer refuge for ducks, coots and grebes.

Site 3: 'Pilbara Street'

The pond is located next to 101-103 Pilbara Street off Orrong Road next to the Australia Post Business Centre. It dried out partly over summer with exposed mudflats. There are two islands in the pond, which has a typha fringe and is surrounded on three sides by trees. Frogs were heard.

Twenty species of waterbirds were recorded (Table 3).

A small population of White-cheeked Honeyeaters were present near the Post Office.

Breeding species were the Australasian Grebe, Purple Swampphen, Eurasian Coot and Pacific Black Duck.

During summer and autumn Australasian Shelduck and Black-winged Stilt congregated at the pond in numbers.

Site 4: 'Jasons Windows'

This pond is located along Orrong Road between McDowell Street and Felspar Street behind Jasons Windows. It dries out partly over summer exposing mudflats. There is a large island with extensive typha growth along the edges. Frogs were recorded.

A total of 17 species was recorded on this pond (Table 4). Breeding species included Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Australasian Shoveler, Black-winged Stilt and Black-fronted Dotterel.

Black Swans commenced nest building (2004) but abandoned the site when water levels dropped.

It is a breeding site for Black-wings Stilts. Up to five pairs of breeding Black-winged Stilts were observed in early November 2003. There has been limited breeding success due to fluctuating water levels. Juvenile Black-winged Stilts were seen on 18 January 2004. Stilts were found breeding again in October 2004 when water levels had subsided.

Dusky Moorhens were observed nest building here in October 2003.

Black-fronted Dotterels with three juveniles seen in early November 2003 might have bred in the surrounding industrial area and brought the juveniles down to the pond.

Over summer and autumn Grey Teal numbers increased to 73.

Table 1: Numbers of birds seen at the Sling-Rig pond, 2003-2004

	2003 14-Jun	2003 13-Jul	2003 14-Sep	2003 5-Oct	2003 9-Nov	2003 7-Dec	2004 18-Jan	2004 29-Feb	2004 14-Mar	2004 11-Apr	2004 8-May	2004 6-Jun	2004 4-Jul	2004 8-Aug	2004 5-Sep	2004 10-Oct
Australian Pelican						1										
Little Black Cormorant				1			1	3			3					
Little Pied Cormorant																1
Australasian Grebe		1	1		2*	2*	6*	7	4	2*	3	2	2	1	2	2
Black Swan			1								1			2*	2*	
Australian Shelduck	2	2	2			3	5							2	2	
Pacific Black Duck	3			1	1*	15	11	15	15	8	4	2		2		4
Grey Teal	2					4	6	8	3	12	1	1				
Australasian Shoveler						2	6	3								
Hardhead										1						1
Australian Wood Duck		4			2*	1		2		4					1	5
Purple Swamphen															1	
Eurasian Coot		2	6	4	3	3	2	2	4	7	4	2	4	4	3	4*
White-faced Heron						1	1		1	1	1					
Great Egret	1						1			1						
Australian White Ibis										1						
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1			1		3				5	3			1		
Black-winged Stilt	2		1		2	13	10	7	1	5				2	4*	4
Black-fronted Dotterel	4		2		3	1	2	2			2					4
Total	15	9	13	7	13	49	51	49	28	47	22	7	6	14	15	25

(* denotes breeding)

Table 2: Numbers of birds seen at Gunns Timber pond, 2003-2004.

	2003 13-Jul	2003 14-Sep	2003 5-Oct	2003 9-Nov	2003 7-Dec	2004 18-Jan	2004 29-Feb	2004 14-Mar	2004 8-May	2004 4-Jul	2004 18-Jul	2004 8-Aug	2004 5-Sep	2004 26-Sep	2004 10-Oct	2004 24-Oct
Australian Pelican								1								
Little Pied Cormorant						2	1 flying									
Little Black Cormorant				4	2	4	2								1	
Australasian Grebe	3	2	2*	2*	4*	5	12	present	9	12	11	12	2	2	2	2
Black Swan			1		2		1	2								
Australian Shelduck		2	28	3	73	22	3	3		2			2	2	55	40
Pacific Black Duck	2	1*	1*	6*	18	7	17	present	10	2	2	3	6	3*	2	5*
Grey Teal	2	2	2		4	1	12	present	4							
Australasian Shoveler	4	2	2	4		3	11	12	7			2	2	1	1	
Hardhead	3	5	1	2	6	5	6	present	10	4		2		3	2	
Dusky Moorhen	1							1	1							
Eurasian Coot	21	21	23*	20*	28	36	52	42	5	7	7	5	6	4	4	5*
Black-winged Stilt						2										
Black-fronted Dotterel			1	1												
Total	36	35	61	42	137	87	117	61	46	27	20	24	18	15	67	52

(* denotes breeding)

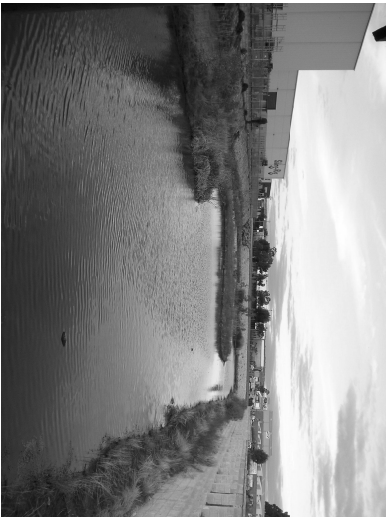
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Table 3: Number of birds seen at the Pilbara Street pond, 2003-2004/

Table 3: Number of birds seen at the Pilbara Street pond, 2003-2004.																		
	2003 13-Jul	2003 14-Sep	2003 5-Oct	2003 9-Nov	2003 7-Dec	2004 18-Jan	2004 31-Jan	2004 29-Feb	2004 14-Mar	2004 11-Apr	2004 8-May	2004 6-Jun	2004 4-Jul	2004 18-Jul	2004 8-Aug	2004 5-Sep	2004 26-Sep	2004 10-Oct
Australian Pelican					2	1	2											
Little Black Cormorant						1								1				2
Australasian Grebe					1	1						2	4	3	3	1	2	3
Black Swan	2		1			1			1		1	2	2	2	2	1		
Australian Shelduck	2	5	12	14	47	38	102	145	62	7	18	19	4	3	7	2	4	
Pacific Black Duck	6	4*	11*	15*	20*	11		1	1		2	8	5	13	6	4	3	14
Grey Teal	1	2	1	1		18	30	23	26		26	12		1			2	1
Australasian Shoveler			1	5	5	11									4	2	1	1
Hardhead																4	3	2
Dusky Moorhen	1				1			1			2	1	1	3	3	2	3	1
Purple Swamphen	1	1		1	3*	3	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	3	1	2	2*	2*
Eurasian Coot	39	29	22*	23*	22*	23*	17	4			4	33	43	51	42	29	22*	25*
White-faced Heron					1	1												
Great Egret		1						1			1							
Little Egret								1										
Nankeen Night Heron				1		1												
Australian White Ibis							2	15	9	1	4							
Yellow-billed Spoonbill						2	1	1	2		1							
Black-winged Stilt					4	13	23	29	36	28	20	2				2	5	5
Black-fronted Dotterel			2	1	3			7	12	10	8	1		1	3	4		
Total	52	42	50	61	109	125	179	230	151	47	90	82	62	80	72	53	47	56
							incompl.											

Table 4: Number of birds seen at the Jasons Window pond, 2003-2004.

	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004
	14-Sep	5-Oct	18-Oct	9-Nov	7-Dec	14-Dec	18-Jan	31-Jan	14-Mar	11-Apr	23 May.	6-Jun	4-Jul	15-Aug	12-Sep	26-Sep	10-Oct	24-Oct
Little Pied Cormorant							1											
Little Black Cormorant				1	1	1												
Australasian Grebe											1							
Black Swan	2														2*	2		
Australian Shelduck	31	21	1			3					2	2			31	7	7	8
Pacific Black Duck	5	1	4	5	2	2	3	6	13	7	35	29	6	1	12	12	8	11
Grey Teal	3	1	4	4	20	37	43	46	73	63	36	12	1	1	6	22	20	31
Australasian Shoveler	1		1								2					3	1	3*
Australian Wood Duck					2	17	1	11	2									
Dusky Moorhen		2*	1	1	3	2	1	1			4		1	4	3	2	5*	3
Purple Swamphen			1	2	1	2								1		1	1	2
Eurasian Coot	8	3	4	1							1			6	6*	3*	5*	4*
Great Egret		1		1														
Australian White Ibis								9										
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1																	
Black-winged Stilt	2	4	4	10*	8*	10*	7*	5*	4*	4					4	4	5	12*
Black-fronted Dotterel				1*	3	3	3	12	3	10		1		1		1	1	2
Total	53	33	20	26	40	77	59	90	95	84	81	44	8	14	64	57	53	76
(* denotes breeding)																		



Site 1: Sling Rig, Welshpool.
Photo courtesy Marcus Singor



Site 3: Pilbara Street, Welshpool.
Photo courtesy Marcus Singor

Australian Shelducks frequented the location over spring for moulting.

Site 5

This was the smallest site surveyed. It is a small drainage sump located between Poole Street and Orrong Road. It contained water throughout summer. There are no islands, and it is surrounded by steep grass embankments.

Breeding species: Australasian Grebe, Eurasian Coot, Grey Teal.

Australasian Grebes bred twice in the season. They were observed on 18 January 2004 with three juveniles and on 14 March 2004 with three recently hatched young. Eurasian Coots were seen with five juveniles on 9 November 2003 and a nest with seven eggs was located at the base of an embankment on 18 January 2004. Grey Teal were seen with five ducklings on 5 September 2004.

Marcus Singor

MALLEEFOWL AT LORNA GLEN

Malleefowl live in arid and semi-arid areas of Western Australia. In the south-west they maintain a large incubating mound for approximately nine months of the year, each egg taking 90 days to incubate. Their diet, as found from roadkills by Jessica van Derwag, Curtin University, is 67% seeds, the rest invertebrates and plant material.

Malleefowl have recently been seen at Lorna Glen 26°S 121°E in miniritchie and spinifex country. The area has not been burnt for 20 years. The temperatures vary between – 4° C and 56°C. There is no leaf litter either in the immediate area or even in the surrounding more dense mulga shrubland. There are large circles of *Triodia basedowii* 1.5 metre diameter completely filled in with still attached dead spinifex to a depth 15 cm.

There are plenty of invertebrates and plenty of seed for their diet but how do they incubate their eggs? A two-day search in the area revealed no leaf litter and no mounds. Malleefowl mounds are present at 26°S nearer to the coast in shrubland.

What could have been Malleefowl tracks were seen around these large in-filled *Triodia* circles. Do they use this dead vegetation during incubation?

Conditions for incubation of Malleefowl eggs must vary greatly at 26°S between the arid 121°E and the more coastal area at 116°E. There would also probably be similar differences at 32°S between 121°E and 117°E.

At Lorna Glen there are Honours students investigating other fauna. Could the Malleefowl at 26°S 121°E be a worthy Honours subject?

Mary Bremner

SWANS IN THE SOUTH METROPOLITAN AREA 2004

Over the past few years we have lost 40-60 cygnets per year at Thomsons Lake, which is south of Perth in the suburb of Success. Many cygnets are not mature enough to fly over the reserve fence when the lake dries out during late spring or early summer. They then either die due to dehydration or are predated by native and feral fauna.

During the last few years local conservationists, CALM and the Beeliar Regional Park Community Advisory Committee have improved the management of this Ramsar listed lake to reduce cygnet deaths. This spring I decided to count adult swans on local lakes to help determine the potential importance of Thomsons Lake to swan breeding in the Beeliar Regional Park. I will be visiting Thomsons Lake in November and December to count cygnet numbers so that we have an estimate of cygnets that may need to be rescued when the lake dries (probably in December or January).

My counts are summarised in the table below.

Lake	Date	No. of adult swans
*Bibra Lake	4/9/04	25
*Booragoon Lake	22/9/04	0
Blue Gum Lake	22/9/04	4
*Forrestdale Lake	2/10/04	199
Kogolup Lake	18/9/04	2 (north eye) + 2 (south eye)
Little Rush Lake	5/9/04	2
Lake Coogee	25/9/04	1 (main lake) + 2 (north swamp)
*Lake Mt Brown	3/10/04	0
*Manning Lake	30/9/04	1
*North Lake	4/9/04	13 - Note 11 active nests this spring (Neil Goldsborough pers. comm.)
Piney Lakes	30/9/04	0
*South Lake	29/8/04	1
*Thomsons Lake	19/9/04	447
Yangebup Lake	28/8/04	2
Total		697

* = The number of swans counted may be lower than the actual number as there are hidden areas!

This data show that Thomsons Lake is likely to be an important Black Swan breeding site within the south metropolitan area. It would be interesting to see how important it is over a wider area. I would be keen to collate adult swan counts from other birdwatchers and possibly put a similar article in the next bird notes. Obviously I would acknowledge the supplier of each data set. Please send me any data on adult swans or nests collected over the nesting period of July to October 2004, or cygnets seen, particularly in November or December, via email <dockersone@smartchat.net.au> or telephone (08 9417 2820).

Robyn Pickering

GEERANING NATURE RESERVE

Caesar would have appreciated Geeraning Nature Reserve for it is in three parts. However, the parts marked on the map are in the midst of a large untouched area of bush (about 10 x 10 km) and the 'authorities' treat the entire area as one reserve, which it will become officially at some future time.

The reserve is a little remote for coastal dwellers, despite being served by good roads, being about 120 km north of Merredin or 80 km north-west of Bencubbin. The remoteness is accentuated by a small sign at the northern boundary, which is on the State Barrier Fence, informing the birder that the area is equipped with steel-jawed traps coated with strychnine. Assuming the sign was the standard one referring to 1080 being present (it is), I failed to read the sign until leaving that part of the reserve. Moral: read the signs.

Anne and I have visited Geeraning three times: 9–14 May 2003, 20–22 April 2004 and 23–24 September 2004, all dates inclusive. It has a large rock, a breakaway, a creek and a good variety of vegetation, from grassland (the result of some early clearing), dense scrub near the rock to open bushland with tall trees. The rock itself is used by raptors, particularly Wedge-tailed Eagles, as a source of lift. On sunny early mornings the upwards thermal created by the rock attracts the eagles which fly low over the trees to the rock, spiralling upwards on a thermal. Australian Magpies, Nankeen Kestrels and Australian Ravens display similar behaviours.

On our first visit we were informed by a farmer about 20 km south of the Reserve that until some five years previously Major Mitchell Cockatoos were frequently around his home, but that they had ceased to visit. Consequently we were pleased to observe eight of these birds on our most recent visit at the extreme north boundary of the reserve. Possibly the species has contracted northwards.

Bird observing at Geeraning, like many marginal areas, takes rather more walking about than more favoured places (compare the Stirling Ranges where we saw 34 species in

two hours), but we find the country attractive and with sufficient birds to make visits worthwhile. We have seen over 40 species on each visit, with a species total of 53:

Emu, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon, Australian Hobby, Nankeen Kestrel, Banded Lapwing, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Galah, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Australian Ringneck, Pallid Cuckoo, Splendid Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote, Weebill, Western Gerygone, Inland Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Southern Whiteface, Red Wattlebird, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Red-capped Robin, Western Yellow Robin, White-browed Babbler, Crested Bellbird, Varied Sittella, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Black-faced Woodswallow, Dusky Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Grey Currawong, Australian Raven, Little Crow, Richard's Pipit, Zebra Finch, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin.

Bruce Buchanan

SCRUBWREN MIMICKING A KINGFISHER

On Saturday 4 July I was at the Waychinicup Inlet camp ground east of Albany. We had thrown a few biscuit crumbs on the ground and they were being taken by Red-winged Fairy-wrens, White-browed Scrubwrens and White-breasted Robins. Very close by I heard a call that sounded like a Sacred Kingfisher. We had seen two over-wintering Sacred Kingfishers shortly before, down at the inlet. I looked for the bird that had made the call and saw that it was a White-browed Scrubwren. It made the call about 6 times in 2 or 3 minutes. I have never known a scrubwren to mimic before, but this call was a very good version of the most common call of the Sacred Kingfisher.

Frank O'Connor



What's in a Name?



By Geronticus

As this is the December issue it's an opportunity to introduce those birds with names we could associate with Christmas. Let's eliminate the 'Christmas Island' birds as being too obvious and concentrate on those species found within Australia. We might start with the '**Herald**' Petrel and the '**Star**' Finch, both of which could share an association with the nativity and Christmas carols. The next bird to come to mind is the **Mistletoebird**, the colourful little fellow that leaves small calling cards stuck among the foliage. Mistletoe we know is placed over doorways at Christmas giving one the opportunity to land a smacker on Yuletide visitors.

We come up with these three species without a problem. However from here on birds with a connection to the festive season are hard to find.

Not really wanting to fall back on French Hens, Turtle Doves, or Partridges in pear trees, let us cast our net to birds dwelling beyond Australian shores. This proves to be almost as difficult. To establish any connection we have to resort to similarities between our birds and Santa's bearing, formal attire or facial hair. We know Santa as a rather rotund character dressed in colourful clothes flitting through the skies at Christmas time and climbing in and out of chimney stacks. The first species that I came across was the Puff birds

of South America namely the **'White-whiskered'** and the **'Colourful'**. Santa, particularly when encountered in the local shopping centre, seems pretty well padded or puffed up.

I note there always seems to be an owl flitting around Santa's workshop and noting the elfin characteristics of his 'little' helpers have deduced this species must be a North American **Elf Owl**. Alf, the Elf Owl, fits the bill.

Plectrophenax nivalis, The Snow Bunting is the world's northernmost breeding land bird and therefore would turn up in Santa's neck of the woods as would another bird living above the snow line, the Snow Pigeon.

Another North American species that might be associated with Christmas could be *Seiurus aurocapillus*, the Oven Bird. This is not a bird that is plucked and stuffed then baked until the juices run, but a species that builds a nest in the shape of a traditional bread oven, a must for the traditional Christmas pudding.

If we have included the Herald Petrels, how can we disallow the Trumpeters? These South American birds are known to dance, strut and turn somersaults as well as imitate the brass section of the WASO. A must, I would think, on the guest list for any Christmas gathering.

Lastly I have included *Chaetura pelagical*, the Chimney Swift, a bird that is well aware of the fat guy in the red suit. On hearing the tinkling of sleigh bells and a distant "Ho, Ho, Ho", *Chaetura pelagical* leaves the safety of the stack until the jolly old gent has done his business.

So, there we have it. If readers have any suggestions for birds that could be added to this Christmas list I'm sure their choices can be taken on board. In fact, I'm ready to offer a bottle of wine for the best addition to our Christmas birds. Entries will be judged by the editors and the winning contribution printed in our March issue.

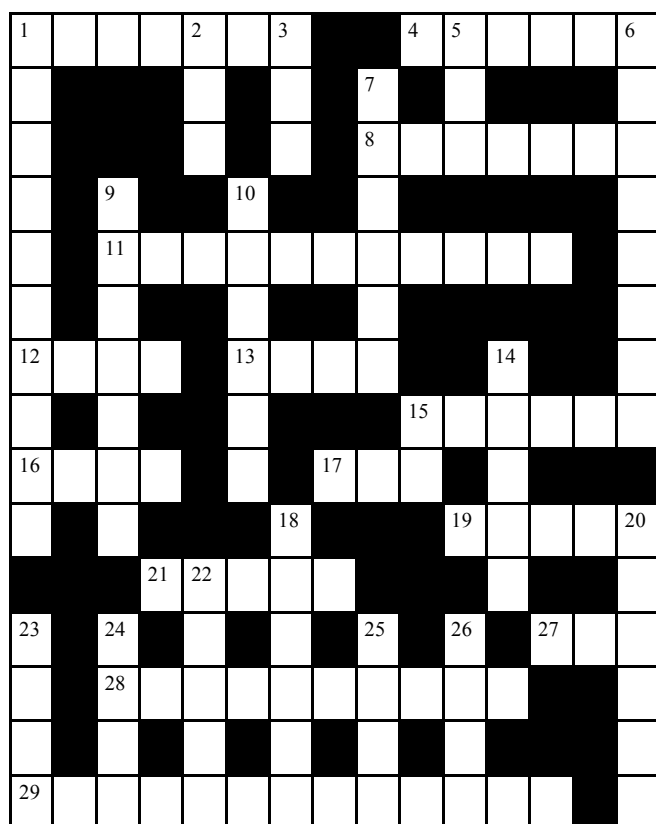
Merry Christmas to all Geronticus



Crossword No 39



By Pam Agar



Clues Across

1. Gregarious parrot.
4. Season ducks usually move inland.
8. Breast bone.
11. Building for study of natural phenomena.
12. Basic colour of Australian goose.
13. Nature of preferred habitat of wedgebills.
15. Highly visible colour of wader leg flag.
16. Trees favoured by Pardalotes.
17. To possess.
19. Hang in the air.
21. May be offensive in a breeding colony.
27. Abbreviation for numbers.
28. Family name of pigeon and doves.
29. Not members of the higher songbirds.


Clues Down

1. To gather.
2. Location of Ground Parrot nest.
3. Goal.
5. To employ.
6. First described race of species.
7. Safe refuge for water-birds.
9. Parrot species.
10. Argument or discussion.
14. May allow closer access to water-birds.
18. Specialized feathers for display.
20. Deliver from danger.
22. Form of Acacia.
23. Purpose of a series of alarm calls.
24. To look across a wide area.
25. Perch for cormorants.
26. Swallow, annual Kimberley visitor.

Call for Nominations for Committee, AGM 2005

Would you like to help BAWA by nominating for a role on the Committee?

If so, please send in your nomination to the Secretary prior to 21 February if possible, or else nominate at the AGM on 28 February.




New BAWA Premises

Our new address is:

167 Perry Lakes Drive
Floreat WA 6014

Access is via Perry Lakes Drive. Turn into Perry Lakes Drive from Oceanic Drive, and take the first turning on the right towards the Eco Centre. Pass the centre and follow the driveway through to Perry House. The new building is the one next door to it.



Annual Hooded Plover Count

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 February 2005

The Annual Hooded Plover count has become a Birds Australia tradition.

This year we intend to make our Hooded Plover count the biggest and best ever.

Please participate and enjoy the experience.

For details contact: Marcus Singor
Tel: 93622742

e-mail: msingor@iprimus.com.au

Survey sheet is enclosed in this issue

EIGHTH ANNUAL CORELLA COUNT

We need your help!

Sunday 27th March 2005

Starting 3:30 pm

The 2002 and 2004 counts suggest significant recent increases in both feral species of corellas around Perth. But the number of counters has been declining! Please help with this year's count if you can – these surveys have real value in keeping track of corella numbers and influencing management. And it is easy: with a good view, Little Corellas and (Eastern) Long-billed Corellas are readily identified. If views are distant, or of flying birds, total numbers are still useful.

Control of feral corellas has been proceeding for the last two years, with 322 Little Corellas and 109 Long-billed Corellas being removed from the wild population so far. It is important for as large a number of counters as possible to continue to track distribution and numbers that will help to monitor the effectiveness of this program in reducing populations.

It would also be good to have some counters in Mandurah, Bunbury, Busselton and Albany where feral flocks have been reported and may be increasing in size.

See WABN 86, June 1998 for background information and identification hints and WABN 87, (September 1998), 90 (June 1999), 94 (June 2000), 98 (June 2001), 102 (June 2002), and 111 (September 2004) for reports on earlier corella surveys.

If you know of a place that you regularly or often see corellas, or would be happy to be assigned to an area we already know about, please take part in an organised count at as many places as possible on 27th March! Counting begins at 3:30 pm and ends when it gets too dark to identify corellas.

We will identify the species of all corellas seen, and count the number of each species, at each site at approximately the same time on the same day. Please record details of roosting sites, location and number of birds. If birds move away from your area please note the direction of movement and the time at which they leave. Similarly, with corellas that come to your area during the count, note the direction from which they come and the time of arrival.

Please put the date into your diary now!

Contact John Blyth

Phone (work 9405 5161 – home 9381 6293);

Facs 9306 1641 Email johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au



Perth Metropolitan Area Bird Surveys

Observers needed for Round Three

Birds Australia WA is contributing important bird survey information for biodiversity conservation planning in the Perth Metropolitan Region. You too can be a part of a great project. Round Three of this interesting project will commence with surveys for new sites in February 2005.

Nominations from local governments have already been received. In Round Three, we will be surveying local reserves in at least 19 Perth area councils.

ABOUT THE SURVEYS

Each site is surveyed each month for one year

Most sites have two observers, or sets of observers, who alternate (thus observers do six surveys in the year at two month intervals)

Smaller sites can be surveyed by individual birdwatchers. Larger sites are generally surveyed by small groups

One of the hallmarks of this project so far has been the enjoyment experienced by many observers who get together with a small group to do a survey every two months

Experienced and less experienced observers or beginners are all welcome

Surveys start February 2005 and finish January 2006 (allocation of sites to observers will start December 2004 and be complete during January 2005)

If you live in or near the Perth area, then its bushland and wetlands are your backyard. Help us to help protect it by helping with bird surveys. Queries and expressions of interest: *Contact:*

Cheryl Gole, PBP Bird Surveys Coordinator
Tel/Fax: 9293 4958
Mobile: 0428 934 95
Email: cgole@westnet.com.au

SOUTH COAST HOODED PLOVER CAMPOUT

**Saturday 26th February to
Monday 7th March 2005**

The main aim of this campout is to survey the likely Hooded Plover sites between Hopetoun and Stokes Inlet but there should be opportunities to look for other birds. It is proposed that we have several different camp sites during this trip and that we will pool vehicles when appropriate.

We will meet late in the afternoon of Saturday 26th at Poplar farm, 50 km east of Ravensthorpe, on the south side of the South Coast Highway just past West Point Rd to the north and Bedford Harbour Rd to the south. The gate will be unlocked. Facilities here are a shower and toilet. We will also include camping at the Munglinup Beach Holiday Park.

Following the south coast surveys and depending on rainfall, we will either survey around the Lake King system or the lake system north of Esperance.

Campers will need to be self sufficient.

For people living in Perth we will meet one week prior to departure to fine tune the route and camping arrangements. There is a limit of 10 people for this campout.

If you are interested in being a part of this campout phone or email *Sue Mather*:

Telephone: 08 9389 6416
Email <mather@cygnus.uwa.edu.au>
Phyllis Bentley and Sue Mather

SUNDAY 19 DECEMBER CHRISTMAS FUNCTION PERRY HOUSE

A BARBECUE WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY
19 DECEMBER AT PERRY HOUSE
COMMENCING 5:00 PM.

BYO MEAT, DRINKS AND SALADS

ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!

SQUARWK



The Eyre Bird Observatory Management Committee
has still got something to say!!!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND DONATIONS.

The response from members was great.

We were able to have several 'parcels' of donations
for a raffle at the Castledare Family Fun Day held
in September.

Amount raised from train rides: \$756.00

Amount raised from raffle: \$125.50

SQUARWK, THANK YOU.



In 2002, as a member of Birds Queensland, the artist visited Newhaven with Emu Tours and reflecting how she could contribute significantly to this project, Virginia developed the idea of making a series of paintings of Newhaven and donating 25% of sales to the project.

Ten works have been completed and a limited number of smaller ones will become available. These are original oil paintings on canvas. They are unframed and can be rolled for posting.

For further information:

Email: vrpaints@hotmail.com
Phone: (07) 3822 2896 www.bushwood.com.au

Artist's note:
Colours in the
brochure are
as close to the
paintings as
our technology
permits.



2. 820mm x 610mm \$575

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between
1 August to 31 October 2004. We look forward to
meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

City of Melville - Library Services, R Aitken,
K Anderson, J & K Anderson, C Ballinger, J Bamford,
S Barnard, B Bilney, J & P Botha, P Botha, J Bowley,
S C Breden, M Cacavas, A Collins, N Conrau, Y
Davies, H Duncan, B Fitzgerald, L & M Gilna, M
Gilna, A Hemsley, G Hodges, G Holton, M & G
Holton, P Jacobsen, C Kilbee, V Kleber, B Bilney, S
Mark, O & S Mark, V Mather, F McHutchison, D
McKirdy, H Millett, T Moncrieff, S Murphy, Y Sitko
& J Bowley, S Skirrow, D Taggart



ALBANY BIRD GROUP

August Outing, Pallinup River/Boxwood Hill

After having postponed this trip due to bad weather, a sunny morning greeted 14 of us when we met at the Bakers Junction Roadhouse. Our destination was about an hour's drive north-east of Albany. Stopping at the Pallinup River Bridge, we saw rafts of Eurasian Coots and Hoary-headed Grebes in the river. In nearby bushland we found Striated Pardalotes, Weebills and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters, species we do not usually see closer to Albany. The calls of a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo reminded us that spring was just around the corner.

Our final destination was a Boxwood Hill property bordering the Pallinup River. Whilst birdlife proved to be rather limited on the property, we all cherished the moment when a Square-tailed Kite decided to take a closer look at us, gliding by at low height. Another highlight was seeing White-eared Honeyeaters, a species not usually found in Albany.

On our way home we explored a small part of the Pallinup River Reserve where we had seen Malleefowl in the past. The Malleefowl remained elusive, but we saw a Rufous Whistler, a beautifully coloured male Splendid Fairy-wren and Red-eared Firetails.

Ann Bondin

common bird in the south coast heaths, emu-wrens are not seen all that often north of the Porongurups. It was probably too early for the Regent Parrots we had hoped to see, but other parrots were numerous. A total of 51 species were recorded before we headed back to Albany in the early afternoon.

Ann Bondin

October Outing, Cranbrook

A group of 15 of us, including two children, met at Mount Barker Tourist Bureau on Tuesday, 12 October. We then went on to a large property belonging to Carol Threthowan near the Gordon River, in the Cranbrook area.

It was very dry, but an interesting walk brought up a total of 45 species of birds. We saw a Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest with one young looking over the edge. We also saw a White-faced Heron's nest with one young, several Magpie-lark's nests and a Yellow Robin's nest.

The day was very blustery, not ideal for birdwatching, but the rain kept off most of the time. On the way home Lake Matilda was visited, and a Chestnut Teal with five young was seen. Most waterfowl were too distant to identify, but there were Grey Teal, Shovelers, Musk and Blue-billed Ducks. A Willie Wagtail nest was found right underneath the viewing platform. It had three eggs in it. No wonder the nearby pair of Willie Wagtails were so upset when we arrived.

Liz and Charlie Davies

September Outing, Twin Creeks Community Reserve

To help with ongoing fauna and flora surveys, our group decided to revisit the Twin Creeks, one of our popular birding spots north of Albany. Weather conditions were ideal when we unlocked the gate to the reserve. Travelling along the access track, we were greeted by a Scarlet Robin. After a quick stop near the dam, which was devoid of birdlife apart from a pair of Pacific Black Ducks, we spotted Red-eared Firetails, Western Wattlebirds and Western Spinebills in the adjacent heathland. Leaving the conventional cars behind we proceeded by 4WD to the northern end of the reserve. However, after a fairly dry winter the creek crossing wasn't much of an adventure.

Our survey of Wandoo woodland produced sightings of all four species of cuckoos found in the region, a highlight being the courtship display of several Shining Bronze-Cuckoos. Potential hosts for the cuckoos also abounded, ranging from White-browed Scrubwrens to Splendid Fairy-wrens and Yellow-rumped Thornbills. The latter had already built a nest. Tree Martins and Striated Pardalotes were busy inspecting and lining tree hollows, and the resident pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles had built a new nest this year. However, it did not appear to contain any young.

Our attempts to find Blue-breasted Fairy-wren failed, but there was a surprise sighting of Southern Emu-wrens. A very



Sittellas feeding chicks in nest,
Stirling Range National Park
Drawing by Charlie Davies



THOMSONS LAKE, 7 August

A cold start turned into a still, sunny winter's day ideal for a bird walk. Eleven Birds Australia members and three visitors enjoyed the walk on which we saw 38 species. The majority were bushbirds with the highlight being a Fan-tailed Cuckoo that sat and called to its mate while the whole group had an excellent look from only 20 metres away.

John Lauri

HILLARYS PELAGIC, 8 August

This trip will always be remembered for the sensational views of Dwarf Minke Whales. The birding highlight was a South Polar Skua, a major rarity for Western Australia. The seabirds were more reminiscent of a September trip with Flesh-footed Shearwater, Little Shearwater, Fairy Tern and many White-faced Storm-Petrels. Otherwise the general birding was slow. We also saw Southern Giant-Petrel, Great-winged Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Hutton's Shearwater, Black-browed Albatross, Shy Albatross, Yellow-nosed Albatross and Great Skua.

The next pelagic from Hillarys will probably be on the last Sunday in June 2005. Contact Frank O'Connor for details on <foconnor@iinet.net.au> or 9386 5694.

Frank O'Connor

WATERFORD, 11 August

Despite the wet and windy night preceding our walk, the weather was kind to the three walkers who joined Barry and me for the Waterford walk on Thursday 11 August.

The river was high, the marshland between the walk path and the river edge were very wet and the waves were lapping the small viewing jetty at the far end of our route.

Two Australian Wood Ducks were looking for a nest in the undergrowth, White-cheeked Honeyeaters were vying with their singing cousins for the nectar in the grevillea and bottlebrush flowers, the Australian Magpies were very vocal and seemed to have several nests in the high branches of the gum trees and two Red-capped Parrots were enjoying a meal of gumnuts. We saw a total of 36 species which included three new to the leader's list—Little Grassbird, Western Gerygone and a Rufous Whistler.

The wind was rather cold so after a quick bird count we all went home for morning tea!

Molly Angus

HELENA VALLEY, 28 August

The day was fine and clear after good rains during the previous week. We walked along the north side of the Helena River to the Pipehead Dam along the very good road. Twenty-eight people attended including six visitors who had been attracted by the notice in the local newspapers.

Birds were a little slow to appear because of the cold morning, but were soon starting to call and move about. We had good views of Golden and Rufous Whistlers and there were several good sightings of Spotted Pardalotes, which seem to be more common than the Striated this year. Three species of cuckoo were heard and seen, the Fan-tailed, Horsfield's and Shining Bronze.

No birds were seen on the dam, but a pair of Australian Wood Ducks flew along the river. The dam was overflowing and with the noise of the pumping station we could not hear much when we paused for a break by the dam. However Splendid Fairy-wrens and Red-winged Fairy-wrens were seen by the river. White-naped Honeyeaters were active in the tall eucalypts. The parrots were represented by Australian Ringnecks, Red-capped Parrots and Galahs, and thankfully no Rainbow Lorikeets. We saw 34 species in all.

Thank you to all the experienced birders who helped the visitors to see and identify birds. Perhaps some of them will join us in the future.

Wendy Napier

MARTIN (ARMADALE), NEAR COHUNA WILDLIFE PARK, 12 September

On a cold but sunny morning, 19 birders met in the Cohuna Wildlife Park car park for a birding walk in nearby Darling Scarp bushland under the leadership of David Ballard.

The group, at times split into two, walked along gravel tracks through reasonably healthy woodland with many wildflowers, with the knowledge of a wildflower expert as a bonus.

Among the 39 species of birds recorded by the group during the 3 hour 20 minutes walk, were Square-tailed Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle being harassed by Australian Raven, then Magpie-lark, and typical woodland (some now less common) species such as Common Bronzewing, Red-capped Parrot, Spotted Pardalote, Scarlet Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush, Golden Whistler and others. The thornbills: Inland, Western, and Yellow-rumped were also recorded.

A nesting Western Thornbill was seen in what seemed to be a rather vulnerable position. It had built its tiny nest in the low fork of a Sheoak tree, very close to the ground on a rise above the track. The nest was occupied by an adult, so our visit was short to reduce disturbance.

At 11:05 am, five black-cockatoos were recorded, at least one of which was confirmed as a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. The Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo and the two white-tailed black-cockatoos are threatened or near threatened and endemic to Western Australia. This record will be lodged with Cockatoo Care (www.cockatoocare.com), a project by WA Museum and the Water Corporation for obtaining reliable data from interested persons, on these species, for research to assist in their protection.

Many thanks, David for leading us on an interesting, enjoyable excursion.

Jennifer Muir

PINNAROO MEMORIAL PARK, 16 September

As this walk was advertised in local papers I expected a good crowd but nearly 50 people turned up which was surprising.

Because of the big number of extra eyes we managed to record 41 species of birds. As far as I know this is the highest total for a single walk at this site. The first highlight, right at the start of the walk, was a pair of Australian Shelducks showing off their brilliant colours against the green lawn.

Other highlights were a pair of Brown Goshawks circling overhead going higher and higher, some Galahs, two Tawny Frogmouths (although not seen by all) and a Little Pied Cormorant catching and swallowing a yabbie.

I would say all the visitors enjoyed the walk and learned a lot. A thank you to my wife, Dorothy and to Michael Hancock for their assistance. It would have been difficult to manage the number of people without their help.

Hank van Wees

MT CLAREMONT, 18 September

The planned walk through Campbell Barracks was unfortunately cancelled because of rifle range activity but the alternate walk was certainly worthwhile for the 16 people who set out on this beautiful spring morning. The monthly mist-netting and bird banding was in progress and we were fortunate to see the gathering of data and banding being carried out by a team of volunteers.

This site was badly burnt in February 2002 and has been monitored, in conjunction with the Botanical Gardens and Parks Authority (BPGA), for 12 years.

Of interest in the 32 species seen were the raptors, Little Eagle, Brown Goshawk, Black-shouldered Kite and Australian Hobby.

Thanks go to Boyd Wykes who shared his wealth of knowledge about this site with us and made the morning very interesting.

Sue Mather

LAKE LESCHENAULTIA, 26 September

As usual for this time of the year, it was a cold start but improved as the walk got under way. While we were waiting in the Chidlow's hotel car park, we were entertained by a number of Little (Western) Wattle birds in a nearby Coral Tree. There was a good turn out of 24 members plus an overseas visitor.

On entering the park we were greeted by a pair of Great Crested Grebes on the corner of the Lake. There were only a few other water birds but the bush bird tally rose steadily all morning to an excellent total of 52 species including Long-billed Black Cockatoos (Baudins), all the thornbills and the Splendid Fairy-wren.

After a leisurely lunch in the park picnic area we had a short walk at the Flynn Road site which did not yield many extra species but we all had a good earful and eyeful of a very persistent Palid Cuckoo.

Our thanks to Sue Abbotts for a very enjoyable outing.

Dave Ballard



Robin's nest, Karara.
Drawing by Pam Agar

KARARA STATION CAMPOUT, 1-4 October

The Pindan—red dirt as far as the eye can see and billowing clouds of red dust behind us. We have arrived at Karara Station boundary with some kilometres to go, over cattle grids (thankfully no longer needed) and passed silent windmills—disconnected and with sails silent in the sky.

Every time you stop and the dust clears, the sounds of birds can be heard. The lonesome call of the Crested Bellbird and the chirruping of the Red-capped Robin; these both proved to be the birds most seen or heard on the station.

Passing the new homestead, where a golf weekend was in progress on dirt greens, we followed the dirt track to the old Karara Homestead site where the shearing shed, houses and remnants of the ablution block for the shearers still stand.

Here we were greeted by the efficient organisation of Ed and Alyson Paull and co-leaders Pam and George Agar. The roofless shower and toilets had been swept and cleaned and a blue tarp slung across the shower room to provide a modest walkway to the toilets. Hot and cold water and the stars above, what more could any one ask?

Thirty people took part in the weekend surveys. Caravans, campervans and tents spread out around the old buildings.

At night the stars were bright above, Southern Boobooks, Spotted Nightjars and other birds called and in the morning we were woken by the carolling of the Pied Butcherbirds—a birdwatcher's paradise.

A competition was started to guess the number of species of birds that would be found up to Monday midday. Some people were supremely optimistic 120!! (no names), others ranged from very depressing to reasonable with a visitor from South Africa being the likely winner. Everybody felt included, as each night Pam and Alyson had organised little gifts as rewards for outstanding valour, unusual sightings or hard work, eg, the lighting of the fire under the 'donkey' for our evening hot shower.

Some of the highlights of the weekend were seeing three Malleefowl, each in a different area of the station; two Malleefowl mounds, one fairly recent but the other ancient; Michael Morcombe's location of an Australian Hobby's nest quite close to the camp; Terry Giles seeing a Western Yellow Robin after crawling on his hands and knees through thick scrub to locate the bird while Eleanor's whistling conversation with the robin kept it occupied; the visit to Camel Soak, an artificial rock hole created to water camels during the building of the second rabbit proof fence; climbing to the top of the John Forrest Lookout, used as a compass point during his exploration trips—you really can see for miles.

An unsuccessful attempt to locate an active Malleefowl nest was organised by Niel and Eleanor Adams at two of the Malleefowl sites with a 60 metre 'walk in' by enthusiastic birders but the litter on the ground was very sparse.

Walking through the bush it was amazing to see all the dead underbrush and even smaller trees. The drought of a few years ago has really taken a toll and it will be some time, with hopefully some good seasons, before the station bush is really healthy again. Everywhere we went on the station there were the skeletons of emus that had died during this time, a legacy of the harshness of the Australian outback. The one compensation was the beautiful wildflowers; everlastings like a magic carpet and shrubs and trees glowing with colour.

The time spent visiting and researching the station, studying the maps and the different vegetation areas, to be in a position to organise and allocate people to do this comprehensive bird survey for CALM must have been considerable and hats off and all praise to Alyson, Ed, Pam and George for a wonderfully relaxed and rewarding weekend. Their work will still go on, collating all the information and writing a report for CALM.

The number of species seen eventually totalled 80 and David Free with 79 species was the competition winner.



Karara Campout.

Photo courtesy Eleanor and Niel Adams

KENT ST WEIR, 24 October

Twenty-three people took full advantage of a beautiful spring morning that provided perfect conditions for a walk around the Canning River. Plenty of waterbirds and bushbirds were seen, and spring had certainly sprung! Numerous birds were seen nesting and young chicks were observed displaying their voracious appetites as harried parents searched for food. Many of the common waterbirds were seen along the river, such as Grey Teal, Great Egret and several Little Black Cormorants feeding below the weir. Amongst the Purple Swampheens and Dusky Moorhens, a Buff-banded Rail was seen by an observant birder. The bird emerged from the sedge bank, only after the intrepid group had walked by, and then promptly disappeared before word could be passed around! We had absolutely fantastic views of several Red-capped Parrots as they moved amongst the top of the fringing sheoaks, and one could truly appreciate the vivid colours of the male in the bright sunlight. Uninterrupted views of Striated Pardalotes were had as three postured, calling to each other, as they investigated a tall eucalypt tree for hollows. Male and female White-winged Trillers were also seen foraging amongst the foliage of the eucalypts.

One highlight of the walk was pin-pointing, not the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo that was calling, but the one that perched at the top of a tree preening itself in the mid-morning warmth. The second highlight was patiently waiting for the flitting movement and final sighting of a male Variegated Fairy-wren!! And hardly absorbing this exciting news, we were surprised to find a resident dugite, in superb condition emerge from the vegetation not 2 m from where we were all standing! Whew!

All in all 52 species were seen and of these, eight species were at some stage of breeding. What a morning!!

Eleanor Adams

Carole Elliott



Observatory Reports



EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Family Fun Day at Castledare

– publicity and fundraiser for Eyre Bird Observatory



Displays by Eyre Bird Observatory and BAWA were presented to the public on 19 September at the Castledare Miniature Railway. Guided bird walks in this attractive wetland area were conducted by BA volunteers, and rides on the miniature railway were available. Proceeds from those ticket sales were kindly donated to Eyre Bird Observatory. Many lucky winners walked away with valuable prizes from raffles that were held throughout the day.

Those who attended were treated to an interesting time. Adding to the attractions were the displays of Two Rivers Catchment Group, Canning River Volunteers, Wilson Wetland Volunteers and WA Conservation for Raptors.

Our raffles raised \$125.50 and the train rides \$756. We express our gratitude to the management of the Castledare Miniature Railway for their generosity.

Elsa Dabbs directed our efforts. She contributed much time, expertise and effort in making it all happen. Thanks, Elsa.



Coming Events



Important Note re Campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BAWA Office (9383 7749) of the number in their party and when they will arrive. When members arrive without notice it makes it difficult for leaders who have made arrangements only for the people on the list, so if you are unsure, put your name down. You can always cancel, and then we can advise the next person on the waiting list. With this information we will be able to ensure the group will be together and 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.

Thursday 9 December: Bibra Lake, Cockburn Mid-week Morning Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake off Progress Drive. Bibra Lake is a part of the Beeliar Wetlands chain and a large number of bushbirds and waterbirds can be seen here. This walk is especially suitable for new and potential members. Binoculars can be provided if you don't have your own.

For members and general public.

Leader: Clive Napier

Sunday 12 December: Wungong George, Bedfordale Full day Excursion

Meet at 7:30 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam, at the end of Admiral Road (off Albany Highway). Over 90 species of birds have been recorded here, including Red-eared Firetail, White-breasted Robin and Red-winged Fairy-wren. Several raptors have also been seen.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Saturday 18 December: Herdsman Lake—Bird Banding Half-day Outing

Meet at 7.00 am at the car park near the tennis courts off Herdsman Parade (take the first right turn after turning into Herdsman Parade from Jon Sanders Drive). We will spend the morning with the Herdsman Lake banding group studying this fascinating aspect of ornithology. Both passerines and non-passerines are expected to be caught. Birding opportunities will arise during lulls in catching.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Bill Rutherford

Sunday 19 December: Christmas function, Perry House

A barbecue will be held on Sunday 19 December at Perry House commencing 5:00 pm. BYO meat, drinks and salad—all members welcome!

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.

**Sunday 2 January 2005: Big Carine Lake, Stirling
Half-day Excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am in the car park off Beach Road, Carine. Over 80 species have been recorded at this lake, including the three ibis, Buff-banded Rail, several species of duck, and various raptors. Don't forget your telescope, if you have one.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Clive Nealon

**Saturday 8 January: Garden Island
Full day Excursion**

This is one of the few opportunities to look at the bird life on Garden Island. Meet at the Garden Island Causeway at 8:30 am. We will car pool from there to reduce the number of cars on the island. It is proposed that we visit the following sites: Bouche View, Beagle Road beach, the small boat harbour to see the penguin colony, some history and some forest at Stirling's Well and Gilbert Point for waders and terns. We may be able to have a swim there. We will visit Point Atwick for Osprey. We will have lunch at Cape Markham where there is shade and toilets. Bring lunch, drinks, hat, bathers and telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Boyd Wykes

**Sunday 16 January: Ascot Waters, Belmont
Half-day Excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the end of Tidewater Way. To reach the area from Great Eastern Highway, turn into Stoneham St, then into Resolution Drive, and left into Tidewater Way. Continue through two roundabouts, over the bridge and up into the car park at the top of the rise. Buff-banded Rail have been seen here, and several raptors.

For members and the general public.

Leader: John Stewart

**Sunday 23 January: Alfred Cove, Melville
Half-day Excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast) off Burke Drive, Attadale. There should be plenty of migratory waders and waterbirds around the river, and there are always bushbirds in the park. Buff-banded Rail breed here, and should also be seen.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Les Harris

**Monday 24 January: State Tennis Centre, Burswood
Meeting, 7:30 pm**

Wes Bancroft, a member, will give an illustrated talk entitled The Hole Truth: Shearwater Burrows on Rottnest Island.

**Wednesday 26 January: Wellard Wetlands, Baldi
Mid-week Morning Excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am at the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on the northern side of Zig Zag Rd, 1 km from St. Albans Rd. Coming from Perth, turn left off the Freeway into Mundijong Rd, then right into St. Albans Rd. There should be plenty of bushbirds and waterbirds here, as well as several species of raptor. We could also see some waders if the water level has dropped to expose areas of mud.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris

**Saturday 29 to Monday
31 January: Albany
Campout**

This campout is the normal Australia Day campout. We will be based at the Kalgan River Chalets and Caravan Park as advised in the last issue of WABN. If you intend to join us, BOOK NOW. School holidays will be over but it could still be crowded. The park

telephone number is 9844 7937. Their website is <www.caravan-wa.com.au/krcp.html>.

The Albany Group, including Anne Bondin, Ray Garstone and friends, will be leading us on the usual searches, plus an excursion to see, or possibly to hear, the Western Ground Parrot and other south coast wonders such as the Western Bristlebird.

The last Albany campout in 2003 saw us record 147 species during the weekend. This was an all-time record for a BAWA campout. Can we beat it in 2005?

For extra details check the September issue of WA Bird Notes.

Please phone 9383 7749 to notify the office of your intention to attend.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Clive Napier

**Saturday 29 January: Blackwall Reach, Bicton
Half-day Excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at the junction of Kent St and Blackwall Reach Parade. A pleasant walk above the Swan River along a



Where are the Striated Pardalotes? York, 22 August 2004.

Photo courtesy Molly Angus

bush track, which is noted for its population of White-cheeked Honeyeaters. We will also look for waders along the Point Walter beach.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Eric Pyatt

Thursday 3 to Sunday 6 February: Rottneest Wader Count

The list for this is now full.

Members and guests only.

Leader: John Lauri

Sunday 6 February: Lake McLarty, Murray Full Day Excursion

Meet at 7:30 am at the gate into the Lake McLarty Reserve-- look for the BAWA sign. Travel on the South West Highway through Pinjarra, turning right along the Old Bunbury Rd (5 km south of Pinjarra) then right into Mills Rd (fourth road). Continue along Mills Rd for approximately 10 km until you see the BAWA sign on the right. Take your lunch, Wellington boots or old shoes, sun hat, insect repellent, water and telescope. There should be a variety of waders at the lake, as well as many waterbirds and bushbirds.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Les Harris

Saturday 12 February: Pelican Point Sanctuary, Crawley Half-day Excursion and Breakfast

Meet at 7:00 am at the entrance to the Sanctuary west of the Mounts Bay Sailing Club at the end of Australia II Drive, off Hackett Drive, Crawley. We will look for waders that visit this area each summer, and for the Variegated Fairy-wrens that can sometimes be seen in the adjacent bush. A barbeque area will be reserved near the Matilda Bay gazebo. Bring your own sausages and refreshments for a picnic breakfast.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Charles Merriam

Wednesday 16 February: Woodman Point, Munster Mid-week Morning Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at Woodman Point on Jervoise Bay. Turn right off Cockburn Rd, into O'Kane Court, then left into Jervoise Bay Cove, and almost immediately right into Woodman Point Rd. Drive right to the end of the road into the Woodman Point car park. We will walk along the beach to Woodman Spit and back along the other side to Cockburn Cement Jetty to look for waders and seabirds. Bring you telescopes.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris

Saturday 19 February: Lake Clifton

Full Day Excursion: Annual Hooded Plover Survey

Meet at 8:00 am at the boardwalk at Lake Clifton near the stromatolites. From Perth, drive south through Mandurah, over the Dawesville Cut, and turn right into Mount John Rd. Drive to the end where there is a boardwalk.

From here we will divide into teams to survey Lake Clifton, assisting the Hooded Plover Management Group gather information about this vulnerable species. Added interest will be in trying to spot birds with leg bands that have been banded over the last two years to determine their movement around the lake system. Please ring Dick Rule if you are thinking of participating because, if there are enough people, we will divide into two parties to cover a greater area.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Dick Rule (Phone 9581 1894)

Sunday 20 February: Bibra Lake, Cockburn Half-day Excursion

Meet at 7:30 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake off Progress Drive. Bibra Lake is part of the Beelihar Wetlands chain and a large number of bushbirds and waterbirds can be seen here. The complete walk around the lake could take about three and a half hours, so bring water, hats, suitable footwear, etc. Snakes can be around here.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Wynton Maddeford

Saturday 26 February: Lake Joondalup Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at Neil Hawkins Park in the car park at the end of Boas Avenue. We have seen up to 69 species here. There are always many waterbirds and bushbirds to be seen around this large lake, and there could be waders as well. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Saturday 26 February to Monday 7 March: South Coast Hooded Plover Campout
(Participants limited to 10)

This is part of the annual Hooded Plover survey covering the south coast between Hopetoun and Stokes Inlet. It is proposed that we have several camps along the coast and then, depending on rainfall, either survey possible Hooded Plover sites around the Lake King system, or the lake system north east of Esperance. Please phone Sue Mather 9389 6416 if you are interested in participating in all or part of this campout.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Sue Mather and Phyllis Bentley

Monday 28 February: State Tennis Centre, Burswood Meeting, 7:30 pm and Annual General Meeting

Professor Jonathan Majer, Head of the Department of Environmental Biology, Curtin University, will give an illustrated talk entitled Unravelling the Impact of Birds on Insect Levels in Trees.

The Annual General Meeting will also take place. For further details, see **Notices**.

Saturday 5 to Monday 7 March: Pemberton Campout

It is three years since we had a campout at Pemberton in the cooler south-west. The caravan park is situated in lovely Karri forest, with Red-eared Firetails and White-breasted Robins along the creek. Besides the Karri forest, we will also visit coastal heath and some more accessible parts of the D'Entrecasteaux National Park. A trip is planned to Windy Harbour covering some of the south coast for the Hooded Plover count.

Bookings for powered and unpowered sites are not necessary, but cabins need to be booked.

Ring Pemberton Caravan Park on 9776 1300.

Please also phone 9383 7749 to notify the office of your intention to attend.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 6 March: Lake Monger; Town of Cambridge Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the most westerly car park off Lake Monger Drive, just before reaching Gregory St. This is a good opportunity to view many species of ducks and other waterbirds.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Robert Davis

Saturday 12 March: Mindarie Keys, Wanneroo Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park on the southern side of Mindarie Keys. Travel north along Marmion Avenue, turning left into Anchorage Drive, left into Long Beach Promenade and the car park is on the only track on the right at the Tuart Grove picnic area. This will be a two to three hour walk along the coast looking for seabirds and bushbirds. Variegated and Splendid Fairy-wrens and White-browed

Scrubwrens should be seen.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Neil Hamilton

Wednesday 16 March: Garvey Park, Belmont Mid-week Morning Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park next to the Rowing Club, at the western end of Fauntleroy Avenue, off Great Eastern Highway. This area has a good variety of waterbirds and

bushbirds. Sixty-seven species have been recorded here since 1977, including the Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake and Mistletoebird.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Hank van Wees



A Great Egret watching out for a meal, Australind, July 2004.

Photo courtesy Molly Angus

Saturday 19 March: Peel Inlet Full Day Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the western end of the Mandurah Estuary Bridge (the new bridge on the Mandurah Bypass). Drive over the bridge and turn right into Old Coast Rd, then right again into Leisure Way and park under the bridge. We will first look around the bird-hides and the

boardwalk. The shore at Coodanup, Nairns and Creery Wetlands will also be visited. Don't forget insect repellent, your telescope if you have one, and come and learn about waders!

For members and guests only.

Leader: Dick Rule

Friday 25 to Monday 28 March: Margaret River Easter Weekend Campout

The Capes region in the south west has a wide variety of great bird habitats. During the weekend we shall visit several Conservation Park/National Parks around the Margaret River area, including a section of the Margaret River itself, discovering birds in the Karri, Marri, and Jarrah forests.

We will also walk a small section of the spectacular and rugged Cape to Cape Track to look at the coastal heath and peppermint thickets. As it will be summer most creeks will not be running. Red-eared Firetails, Red-winged Fairywrens, Crested Shrike-tits, and Western Yellow and White-breasted Robins are often seen in the area.

The campout will be held on a rural property near Margaret River township. Basic facilities will be available. If you don't intend to camp then accommodation should be booked early as Margaret River is a popular destination at Easter.

Those wishing to attend must put their names on the list as usual (phone 9383 7749) and further instructions will be mailed.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Chris Wilder (Phone 9757 3804)
<cwilderone@yahoo.com.au>*

**Friday 25 to Monday 28 March: Mt Barker
Easter Weekend Campout**

This is a new venue for a BAWA camp and will suit those who prefer good accommodation and a more relaxed type of campout. The Mt Barker Caravan Park has the usual powered sites, as well as campsites, chalets and cabins. Opposite the Caravan Park is an excellent motel with views of the Porongurups. The town has two hotels with motel-type accommodation.

The excursion will radiate from Mt Barker to several lakes and a variety of habitats, including a day trip to the Porongurups. Various woodland areas will be visited ranging from White Gum to Karri, and sandplain areas should provide further variation.

As usual it is advisable to book early as Easter is a busy tourist time, although as Mt Barker is not on the coast, it should be less crowded (telephone: 98511691). The leaders lived near Mt Barker for seven years, so should be able to navigate the best spots. Please also phone 9383 7749 to notify the office of your intention to attend.

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier will be on site
late Thursday.*

**Sunday 27 March: Herdsman Lake, Stirling
Half-day Excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am in the Maurice Hamer car park. Turn off Pearson St into Falcon Avenue, then right into Lakeside Rd. The car park is on the left, opposite Heron Place.

This is one of the waterbird refuges that never dries up at the end of summer. If the water level is down some interesting waders may be seen, such as the Wood Sandpiper. In the summer of 2002-3, a large number of Freckled Ducks were here for many weeks. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Sunday 27 March: Eighth Corella Count

Time: 3.30pm to dark. We aim to locate, identify and count as many as possible of the two species of corellas present in feral populations around Perth or in other coastal towns such as Mandurah, Bunbury and Albany.

Contact John Blyth to be allocated a site or suggest one of which you know.

Leader: John Blyth

**Monday 28 March: State Tennis Centre, Burswood
Meeting, 7:30 pm**

Frank O'Connor, a member, will give an illustrated talk entitled Migratory Waders Visiting WA.

Join Chris Hassell of

**TURNSTONE
NATURE
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And you will have the opportunity to share his enthusiasm and intimate knowledge of the birds of Broome and **beyond!**

In conjunction with Odyssey Travel, Chris hosts tours to the fantastic Island of **Sri Lanka** and annually offers his 8-day **Birding in Broome** program during peak southward migration.

Visit www.turnstonenaturediscovery.com.au/ for more details, or contact Chris direct:

Tel: (08) 9192 8585
E-mail: turnstone@wn.com.au
PO Box 3089, Broome, WA, 6725

Chris continues to offer exciting birdwatching experiences around Broome including:

- ◆ Shorebirds of Roebuck Bay
- ◆ Mangroves and Mudflats
- ◆ Wetland and Woodlands
- ◆ Grasslands and Claypans

Chris is an excellent field ornithologist. He has over nine years experience guiding and researching in the Broome area. This experience and his infectious enthusiasm makes him an outstanding interpreter.

Chris looks forward to hearing from you.



Lunch at the home of Eggy and Rob Beggs,
Talbot Road, York.
Photo courtesy Molly Angus



Crossword Answers No 39

1 Corella, 4 autumn, 8 sternum, 11 observatory, 12 grey, 13 arid, 15 orange, 16 tall, 17 own, 19 hover, 21 smell, 27 nos, 28 Columbidae, 29 non-passerines.

Down

1 congregate, 2 low, 3 aim, 5 use, 6 nominate, 7 island, 9 Rosella, 10 debate, 14 canoe, 18 plumes, 20 rescue, 22 mulga, 23 warn, 24 scan, 25 pier, 26 barn.

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Signature

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415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East, Vic 3123

8/2003



Opportunities for Volunteers



This 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
- ◆ **Eyre Bird Observatory relief wardens** — contact
 - * Shapelle McNee Phone 9494 1286, e-mail <mshapelle@hotmail.com>
 - * or Rod Smith Phone 9447 3804, e-mail <rodjoyce@optusnet.com.au>
- ◆ **Atlas** — surveys for this are continuing — contact Cheryl Gole
Phone 9293 4958, e-mail <cgole@westnet.com.au>
- ◆ **Excursion Leaders** — contact Sue Abbotts 9444 1607, e-mail <sabbotts1@bigpond.com>
- ◆ **Monthly Meeting Speakers** — contact Brian Wilson 9293 1094
- ◆ **Western Ground Parrot Project** — surveys in the Cape Arid area from March-June 2005. Approximately 5 trips of 7-10 days in length. Ongoing surveys of the Waychinicup area from Albany every Thursday. Contact:
 - * Brent Barrett 9842 4519 e-mail <brentb@calm.wa.gov.au>
 - * Brenda Newbey 9337 5673 e-mail <wgparrot@iinet.net.au>
 - * Anne Bondin 9844 1793 e-mail <albanybirds@hotmail.com>
- ◆ **Public Relations Sub-committee** — graphic artist, reporter — contact Brice Wells 9255 3710

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Office:

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NOTE NEW ADDRESS!

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Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**—a copy on disk 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 the BAWA Office)

March 2005 issue : 1 February
June 2005 issue: 1 May
September 2005 issue: 1 August
December 2005 issue: 1 November

Advertising Rates

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

Calendar of Events

Thu 9 Dec: Bibra Lake, Cockburn, Mid-week Morning Excursion
Sun 12 Dec: Wungong George, Bedfordale, Full day Excursion
Sat 18 Dec: Herdsman Lake—Bird Banding, Half-day Outing
Sun 19 Dec: Christmas function, Perry House
NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.
Sun 2 Jan 2005: Big Carine Lake, Stirling, Half-day Excursion
Sat 8 Jan: Garden Island, Full day Excursion
Sun 16 Jan: Ascot Waters, Belmont, Half-day Excursion
Sun 23 Jan: Alfred Cove, Melville, Half-day Excursion
Mon 24 Jan: State Tennis Centre, Burswood, Meeting, 7:30 pm
Wed 26 Jan: Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis, Mid-week Morning Excursion
Sat 29 Jan – Mon 31 Jan: Albany, Campout
Sat 29 Jan: Blackwall Reach, Bicton, Half-day Excursion
Thu 3 – Sun 6 Feb: Rottnest, Wader Count
Sun 6 Feb: Lake McLarty, Murray, Full Day Excursion
Sat 12 Feb: Pelican Point Sanctuary, Crawley, Half-day Excursion and Breakfast
Wed 16 Feb: Woodman Point, Munster, Mid-week Morning Excursion
Sat 19 Feb: Lake Clifton, Full Day Excursion: Annual Hooded Plover Survey
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Sat 26 Feb: Lake Joondalup, Half-day Excursion
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