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OUT ON THE BORDER: KEEPING STARLINGS OUT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Common Starling is one of the world's worst invasive alien species. Currently, there are sparse numbers of starlings across the Nullarbor Plain and two 'founder' populations near Esperance. These pose a significant risk to agriculture, the environment and the community of Western Australia. The Department of Agriculture and the Agriculture Protection Board have successfully strategically managed starlings in WA since 1971. At the 13th Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference, held in May this year in Wellington, New Zealand, Andrew Woolnough and others presented a paper summarising work on starlings in WA. This paper was published in pages 183-189 of the Conference Proceedings. A slightly edited version is reprinted here, with permission of the authors and conference organisers. It outlines the past, current and future management and research strategies used to keep WA free from starlings.

The IUCN (World Conservation Union) considers the Common (or European) Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*; henceforth referred to as the starling) to be one of the world's worst 100 invasive species, and only one of three birds to share this dubious honour (Lowe *et al.* 2000).

Since the 1850s, the starling has become a global pest through human assisted introductions, with approximately 30% of all available terrestrial habitats now inhabited by this bird (Fear 1984). It has demonstrated its capacity for continental colonisations, with North America colonised in a little over 100 years (Long 1981).

In Australia, starlings were introduced to Victoria (1856-1871), New South Wales (1880) and South Australia (1881) by acclimatisation societies (Long 1981). These introductions were successful and, as in North America, the starling rapidly became

established in south-eastern Australia (Figure 1). Fortunately for Western Australia (WA), the Bureau of Agriculture placed the starling on the list of prohibited imports in 1895 and, despite a subsequent unsuccessful attempt by the WA Acclimatisation Committee to introduce them in 1898 (Long 1988), starlings have yet to successfully colonise WA. The main reason



Common Starlings
Photo courtesy Marion Massam

the westward continental expansion of starlings has been halted is because of the natural barriers of the Nullarbor Plain, which literally translates as 'treeless plain', and the arid interior of Australia.

Starlings have the ability to move vast distances over reasonably short periods of time. For example, starlings annually migrate from Poland to Algeria, a distance of 2700 km (Feare 1984). In Australia, one example of a large-scale movement was by a starling banded in Mallala, in South Australia, which was then recaptured four months later at Mundrabilla on the Nullarbor Plain in WA, a distance of 986 km (Pryde and Massam, unpublished). There have also been other records of large-scale unassisted movements of starlings arriving in WA, such as the 1936 record of a starling shot at Gingin, approximately 80 kilometres north of Perth (Long 1981). Prior to 1971, apart from an occasional bird, such as the Gingin example, starlings were not an issue for WA, but since this time they became a major focus of pest animal management strategies.

OPERATIONS

The 1970s—Beginning of Starling Management in WA

The period of the early 1970s coincided with the improvement of the Eyre Highway across the Nullarbor, from a gravel road to a bitumen road. We speculate that this, combined with high rainfall episodes, resulted in improved westward passage of starlings because of increased water and food resources associated with increased road traffic and infrastructure development across the Nullarbor Plain. In October 1971, 26 starlings were destroyed in the Condingup area, east of Esperance (Figure 2). This represented the first serious threat of a founding population of starlings in WA.

Small numbers of starlings were shot, netted and trapped at Condingup from 1971 to 1976. In response to this incursion, and with considerable foresight, the Agriculture Protection Board (APB)

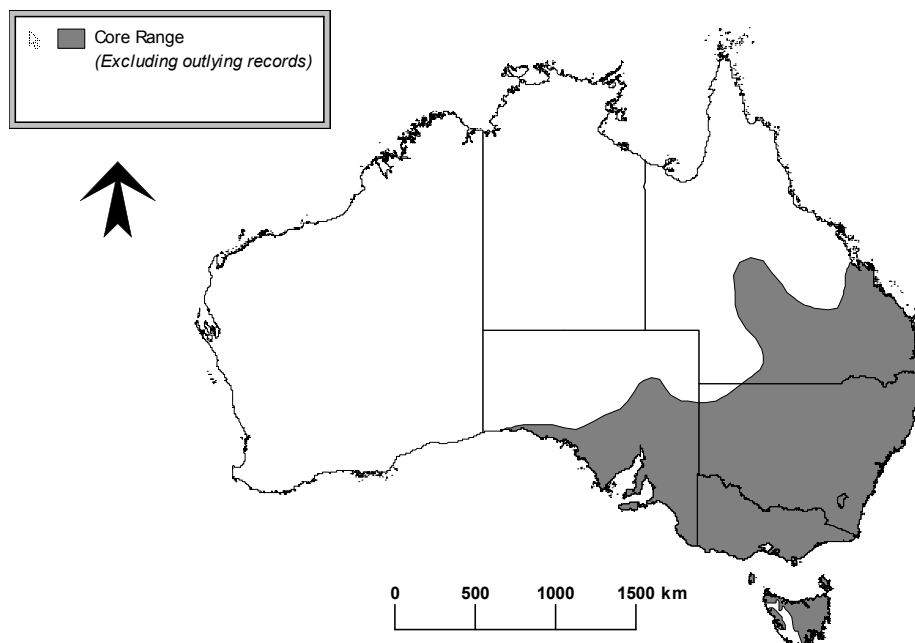


Figure 1. Stylised current distribution of Common Starlings in Australia, excluding outlying populations in Far North Queensland and Western Australia. Map adapted from the Atlas of Australian Birds, Birds Australia (www.birdsaustralia.com.au, retrieved 23/02/05).

of WA implemented a preventative strategy in 1975 and began the long campaign of starling control based at Eucla (Figure 2). This highly successful and proactive control operation is one of the few examples of a long-term commitment to prevent the establishment of a serious vertebrate pest. Over 30 years, the starling control program based out of Eucla has removed 53 646 potential invaders.

The 1980s and 1990s—Problems and Solutions

Despite the considerable professional activities of the Eucla-based control team, starlings were again found

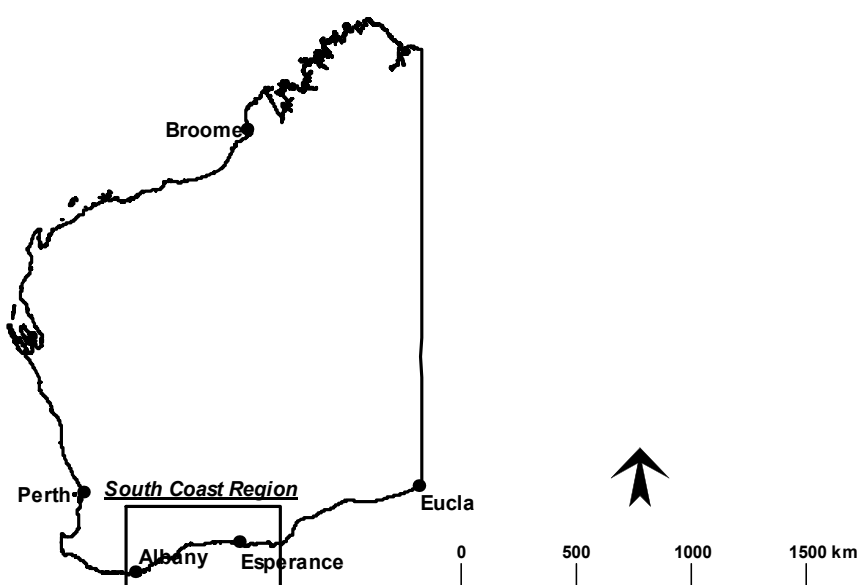


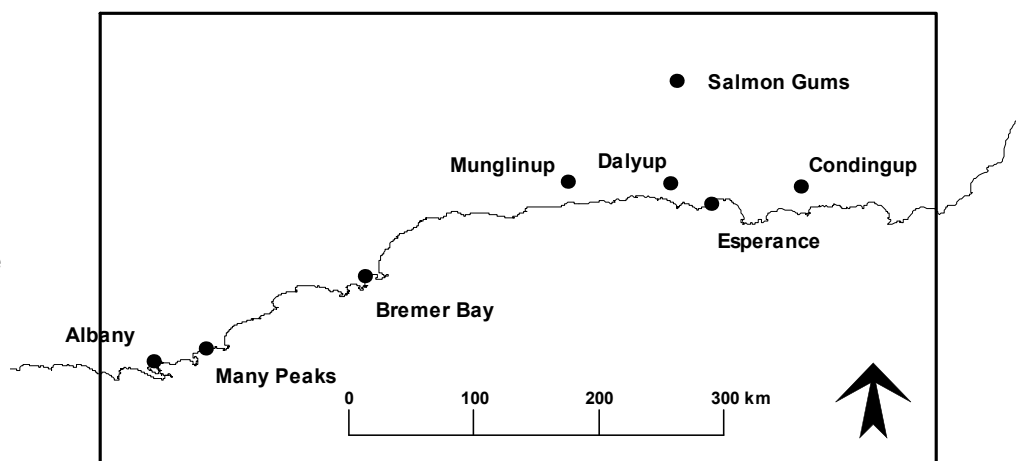
Figure 2. Key areas of interest in Western Australia showing the State (A) and the South Coast Region (B).

A. (see above)

at Condingup in 1982. Based on the number of birds taken between 1982 and 1984 (N = 164), it could be debated that this population was part of the original population first detected in 1971 rather than a new infestation. Because starlings are moderately sized (around 70 grams), and can become very cryptic in behaviour once persecuted, at very low density (less than 10 birds) they can be almost impossible to detect without considerable skill, effort, local knowledge and time. It is possible that the original population was reduced to just a few birds and that in the intervening years (1977 to 1982) successfully bred to a detectable population size. Alternatively, these birds represented a second invasive wave of starlings. The size (number of birds) and flock structure (e.g. age composition) necessary for a successful founding population is not well understood.

B.

South Coast Region



The 1980s saw an increased urgency to control and eradicate starlings in WA. Not only were starlings found again at Condingup in 1982, but in 1986 new populations were also found west (Dalyup) and north (Salmon Gums) of Esperance (Figure 2B). These populations were rapidly and successfully controlled.

Age	Control Method	Manypeaks*†	Hendry's	Dillon Bay
Adult	Shooting		87.3	95.8
	Lure Cages		10.9	4.2
	Netting (Mist & Cannon)		0.0	0.0
	Destruction of Nests		0.0	0.0
	Other		1.8	0.0
	Total Number of Birds		55	24
Juvenile	Shooting		14.5	13.3
	Lure Cages		33.9	33.3
	Netting (Mist & Cannon)		0.0	53.3
	Destruction of Nests		50.0	0.0
	Other		1.6	0.0
	Total Number of Birds		62	15
Adult and Juvenile (Combined Data)	Shooting	16.3	48.7	64.1
	Lure Cages	0.0	23.1	15.4
	Netting (Mist & Cannon)	83.7	0.0	20.5
	Destruction at Nests	0.0	26.5	0.0
	Other	0.0	1.7	0.0
	Total Number of Birds	43	117	39

Table 1. Success of control methods, as a percentage, used in the outbreak in the Bremer Bay (Hendry's and Dillon Bay localities only; 1988 to 1991) and Manypeaks (1987 to 1988) region of Western Australia. Note that 'effort' may not necessarily be uniform between control techniques. *Manypeaks data did not separate adults from juveniles. †Another flock of 23 birds (not indicated in the table) was discovered after the first flock. These birds were subsequently shot.

One of the most alarming starling incidents to date occurred in 1987, when a flock of starlings was confirmed at Manypeaks, east of Albany (Figure 2). This is the furthest west a population of starlings has become established in WA. Using many techniques, combined with a great deal of planning, patience, surveillance and team work, this single cohesive flock was eradicated in a six month campaign. In terms of control techniques, considerable success was gained with both mist and cannon netting (Table 1), with shooting proving to be successful to remove the final birds. When a second flock was discovered at Manypeaks in late 1988, shooting was successfully used to remove these birds. The apparent key to success was that the known roost area was not disturbed during the control effort, which limited the risk of the birds being dispersed through persecution and allowed the control team members to keep the flock under constant surveillance.

Also in 1988, another population of starlings was discovered at Bremer Bay (Figure 2). Again, a major incident response was initiated and the population was eradicated. The Bremer Bay campaign was a longer effort, taking 34 months and it required considerable resources and staff to achieve success. Again, a variety of techniques were used to achieve eradication (Table 1). In this operation, shooting was the most effective means of removing adult starlings, whereas the juvenile birds (and nestlings) were more susceptible to trapping, netting and destruction at nests. These, and other data from ongoing control efforts, demonstrate that trapping clearly has an age-bias towards naïve juvenile birds over the more cautious adults.

Contrasting the Bremer Bay and the Manypeaks incidents, the value of using more than one control technique is apparent (Table 1), since not all control techniques are necessarily equal or applicable in different habitats. The development of control techniques is also an area in need of further research. It is also evident that local eradication of founding populations of starlings is achievable, given the right conditions, skills, resources and commitment.

Past and Current Challenges

The Bremer Bay and Manypeaks control efforts are clear highlights in the successes of starling management in WA. However, the challenges of persistent incursions at Condingup and, more recently, Munglinup, are ongoing. Since starlings were first found at Condingup in 1971, control efforts have destroyed starlings in 24 out of 34 years, including the 5 year starling-free hiatus between 1977 and 1981. Up until 2004, 1195 starlings were destroyed at Condingup alone. More recently, control efforts began on a major population at Munglinup, since it was first detected in 2001. Between 2001 and 2004, 671 birds were destroyed at Munglinup. The eradication of this population

represents a logistical, technical and resource challenge for the Department of Agriculture and the community of WA.

A key question is: why were some control operations successful in eradicating populations of starlings and others apparently not as successful? There is no simple answer to this. The successful control programs at Manypeaks and Bremer Bay were generally dealing with one coherent flock of starlings. The Munglinup population, for example, has at least nine flocks of birds operating independently of each other (A. Woolnough and K. Rose unpublished). Flock complexity, combined with confounding variables such as habitat complexity, ethical and health and safety restrictions in the use of some techniques, cross land tenure issues, staffing, and resourcing issues make the management of control options even more challenging for operational and management staff.

Research and Development

Research related to starlings in WA has generally been reactive rather than proactive. New incursions and the potential risk of a founder population becoming well established have driven research, with pulses of research in the late 1980s and now since 2002. Although a precautionary principle would suggest proactive research is preferable (Calver *et al.* 1999), there have been some recent successes with research that will potentially have important benefits to starling management in WA.

Judas Starlings

In 1989, a trial investigated the Judas technique for Common Starlings (Lowe 1990). It was initiated as a potential tool for use in the Bremer Bay incident. This trial was largely unsuccessful for two reasons. The major limitation, at the time, was the excessive weight of the radio transmitter package (approximately 5 g). The excess weight of the radio-package generally impeded flight capabilities of the radio-tagged birds. The second reason was that captive birds were used as Judas animals. Captive birds were used because they could be easily transported and released at the site of infestation and quickly locate the rogue flock. In reality, the prolonged period of captivity affected their behaviour such that they were probably incapable of free-ranging activities without a period of 'retraining' or adjustment. As a result the Judas technique was not developed further.

Taking advantage of the increased miniaturisation of radio packages (1.4 g compared with 5 g used in the previous study), the Judas technique was revisited in 2002. Prior to field trials, a comprehensive captive trial investigated the optimum way to attach radio transmitters to starlings. Results suggested that a particular harness design was the best all-round attachment technique (Woolnough *et al.* 2004) and subsequent field trials proved its success. Two recent field trials, using wild caught Judas birds,

demonstrated that the Judas technique could be used in conjunction with the suite of techniques used to control starlings.

Molecular Tools—An Integrated Approach to Pest Management

Apart from the obvious conclusion that the original source of starlings in WA was eastern Australia, most likely South Australia, we currently have very little understanding of where starlings in WA come from, and by which route and when they arrived. Understanding the population dynamics of the source population offers great potential to improve the effectiveness of control and preventative strategies for WA. If the locality of the source of the infestation can be identified, broad-scale control options such as avicides (eg, Lapidge *et al.*, 2005) might be utilised to reduce the threat of potential invasions.

In collaboration with the University of New South Wales and the South Australian Animal and Plant Control Commission, we are currently using molecular techniques to determine the genetic profiles of birds to be used as tools to map the genetic demographic structure of the Common Starling throughout Australia (see Rollins *et al.*, 2005). Information derived through this research programme will be used to develop more target-specific and habitat-specific control procedures.

The long-term goal is to marry molecular approaches with control technique development in an integrated approach to pest animal management. Combined with a strategic plan and stakeholder engagement, an integrated approach should ultimately lead to the prevention of Common Starlings becoming an established economic, social and environmental pest in WA.

Future Challenges

Like other examples of border protection, the key challenge is convincing the community, industry and governments that the costs of prevention far outweigh the potential costs of the pest becoming established. If starlings became established in WA the costs could be high—Australia wide, starlings currently account for agricultural losses of at least \$10 million annually (Bomford and Hart 2002). In 2003/04, the Department of Agriculture spent \$418 000 on the operational control of starlings. Even though this figure is considerable, it has essentially remained static for nearly 20 years, and therefore represents a real decline in available resources. This is the modern reality of competing needs and priority setting for government agencies. The challenge then becomes how to engage the broader community and industry to address the 'actual' decline in funding. Without ongoing commitment and financial support, the reality will be that starlings will become widely established in WA, and the costs to agriculture, the community and the environment would be high.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many staff (too numerous to mention) from the Department of Agriculture and Agriculture Protection Board that have worked on the starling programme since 1971. These staff members have contributed to a long and generally successful campaign, and are the source of the data reported in this paper. We also thank Ken Rose, Laurie Twigg and Peter Thomson for comments on early drafts, Colin Parry for providing personal notes on the Manypeaks incident, and Ted Knight for his recollections of the same incident. We would also like to acknowledge the current starling team of Bianca Donald, Ken Franklin, Ray Gwynne, Ted Knight, Harry Little, Ron Pryde and Noel Rennie (South Coast Region), Doug Bryan, Harvey Gurney and Lynton Gurney (Eucla), Win Kirkpatrick, Tim Lowe and Ken Rose (Research), and William Sherwin, Ron Sinclair and Lee Ann Rollins (Molecular Ecology).

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Andrew P Woolnough, Marion C Massam,
Ron L Payne and Greg S Pickles



Letters to the Editors



WHY WE WANT TO CONSERVE BIRDS AND WILDLIFE!

With the incessant and never ending pressures on the natural environment and its wildlife, numerous organisations and individuals all over the world are fighting a constant and non-stop battle... Why do such organisations and individuals often go to extreme measures and incredible levels of commitment to try to preserve our special and unique but often diminishing natural world and its inhabitants?

It perhaps is a relatively broad but probably accurate observation to make, that money makes the world go around and hence anything that does not have an economic or monetary value is often devalued, discarded or ignored. The conservation of birds and all things natural is usually on a collision course with any man made activity that has a major objective of generating economic wealth or facilitating an infrastructure 'asset' to enable humans to work and live. Such practices are continuing relatively unabated at a level that the environment cannot sustain even in the short term, without even considering the medium to longer-term consequences.

Be it forestry, fishing, mining, agricultural, pastoral, real estate, infrastructure or other man made industrial activity or pursuit, the economic necessity or greed will almost always inevitably lead to the economic rationalists winning out due to the economic justification and creation of jobs argument.

That is why our forests are disappearing, rivers are being dammed, trees and native bush are being cleared, seas are being polluted, open plains are being grazed upon by foreign stock, our lakes are drying out and why we have global warming.

Against this awesome and never ending force why or what is it that motivates the guardians and protectors of our natural environment to battle on regardless?

Is it because they see birds and other wildlife as health indicators of our worldly environment? Is it because they wish for their children and grandchildren to experience all the good things associated with the natural world? Is it because they

have some vested interest, be it economic, social or community? Is it because in the forests one day a future cure for certain types of cancer may be discovered? Is it because the maintenance of as much biodiversity as possible is generally considered a desirable objective to have? Is it because it gives a purpose in someone's life that enables a person to be able to try and make a difference to the world?

Well the answer could well be any or all of the above or something else. I believe it is something else as I recently had a first class example of this 'something else'.

Whilst driving to work early one May morning I was forced to slow down due to some seriously high road speed bumps in suburban Wembley, near where I was working. This was fortunate as I could then see and hear that superb bird, the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. There was a flock of about 40, some flying and calling out and others were busily trying to extract whatever seeds they could get from an assortment of suburban trees, including bottlebrush and olive trees. Seeing and hearing these superb large parrots mingling in suburbia was a terrific sight, made more special because of their now unfortunate decline.

However as a seasoned birder, I am already a convert to an appreciation of such natural events. What made it extra special for me however was an early morning 30-something, apparent non birder female who had stopped in her tracks and had her eyes and ears firmly affixed to a few of the cockatoos feeding in a street tree less than ten metres from her. She seemed almost in a trance and did not see me slowly driving past. What made it special was the loveliest and most natural smile that covered her face. A simple observation of a few cockatoos in a tree had made her day and the delight she was feeling was obvious to see. Her day had been made more enjoyable, interesting and rewarding due to this basic yet exhilarating observation.

So I think that is why we love birds and wish to conserve them and all other things natural.

Wynton Maddeford

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. This was a quiet quarter. An **Olive-backed Oriole** photographed at the Eyre Bird Observatory bird bath is an extraordinary record. A **Masked Owl** seen in Henderson is also highly unusual.

There were some interesting sightings during the Winter Wader Count at Rottneest Island in early June. The other highlights in the metropolitan area were **Whiskered Tern**, some over wintering migratory waders and **Purple-crowned Lorikeets**.

In the south west, there were numerous sightings of **Australian Bustards** (too many to list here). **Cattle Egrets** are continuing to increase. A large flock of **Roseate Terns** at Hutt River is unusual for the mainland, especially in winter.

In the north-west, there was an extraordinary flock of **Freckled Ducks** at Newman.

In the Kimberley, the sightings of **Grey Fantails** near the Argyle Diamond Mine are a long way north of their usual range. There were sightings of several less commonly seen species.

METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

Glossy Ibis – 60, 01/07/05, Floreat Waters (Herdsmen) – WM (numbers increasing)

Spotless Crake – 1, 05/06/05, Barker Swamp (Rottneest Island) – SH (1st record at Rottneest)

Painted Button-quail – 1, 05/06/05, near Barker Swamp (Rottneest Island) – BAWA (regular recent sightings suggest possibly resident at Rottneest)

Black-tailed Godwit – 1, 19/07/05, Point Waylen (Attadale) – CoH (uncommon in the south west in winter)

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper – 4, 20/06/05, Attadale foreshore (Attadale) – CoH (uncommon in the south west in winter)

Roseate Tern – breeding, 05/06/05, Bathurst Point (Rottneest Island) – BAWA (bred here last year also in winter)

Whiskered Tern – 190, 08/05/05, Nairns (Coodanup) – AC (high number for the south west)

Masked Owl – 1, 20/07/05, Austal Shipyards (Henderson) – MN (rarely reported in WA) (see elsewhere in this issue)

Purple-crowned Lorikeet – 5, 05/05/05, Brockman Park (Bullcreek) – DH * 1, 26/06/05, Bicton Quarantine Park (Bicton) – MM (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

Grey Fantail – 1, 05/06/05, Barker Swamp (Rottneest Island) – BAWA (uncommon at Rottneest)

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin – 2, 20/06/05, Karrinyup Swamp (Karrinyup) – HvW

White-backed Swallow – 2, 26/06/05, ALCOA Wellard Wetlands (Baldivis) – MN (uncommon south of Perth)

SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Freckled Duck – 6, 09/05/05, Woody Lake (Esperance) – SvA, KR (uncommon at Esperance)

Cattle Egret – 23, 25/05/05, Australind Bypass (Bunbury) – BRu (high count in the south west)

Black-tailed Godwit – 1, 29/06/05, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MC

(uncommon in the south west in winter)

Roseate Tern – 800, 05/06/05, Hutt River mouth (Northampton) – LB (high count)

Budgerigar – 8, 30/04/05, Pingelly Bullaring Road (Pingelly) – RLC (uncommon in the south west)

Hooded Robin – 4, 07/05/05, Salt River Road (Cranbrook) – DS (edge of range)

ARID ZONE

Plumed Whistling-Duck – 800, 12/06/05, "house dam", Winning Station (Carnarvon) – LG et al. * 1200, 12/06/05, Murraditch (=Moundditch?) Lake, Winning Station (Carnarvon) LG et al. * 400, 28/07/05, Coomeroo Pool, Brickhouse Station (Carnarvon) – LG (high numbers for this region)

Freckled Duck – 450, 29/05/05, Ophthalmia Dam (East Pilbara) – SB (very high count)

Musk Duck – 1, 29/05/05, Ophthalmia Dam (East Pilbara) – SB (uncommon in the Pilbara)

Australasian Gannet – 1, 3/07/05, near Koks Island, Shark Bay (Shark Bay) – BD (northern limit of distribution; rarely reported in this area)

Red-kneed Dotterel – 300, 12/06/05, Murraditch (=Moundditch?) Lake, Winning Station (Carnarvon) LG et al.

White-fronted Chat – 10, 09/06/05, Lake Austin (Cue) – GB (uncommon this far north)

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLE – 1, 03/06/05, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) – EBO (vagrant) (see elsewhere in this issue)

KIMBERLEY

Australasian Shoveler – 3, 21/05/05, Nimilaica Claypan (Broome) – CH et al. (rare in the Kimberley)

Great Crested Grebe – 1, 08/05/05, King George River (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – KC * 6,

17/06/05, Argyle Diamonds Tailings Dam (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM * 3,
18/06/05, Argyle Diamonds Jacko's Dam (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – JM, FO (uncommon in the Kimberley)

Black Falcon – 1, 17/06/05, Argyle Diamonds Administration (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – JM, FO * 1, 19/06/05, Lake Argyle (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM (1st records for Argyle)

Red-necked Avocet – 40+, 17/06/05, Argyle Diamonds Tailings Dam (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM (2nd record at Argyle)

Banded Lapwing – 1, 23/07/05, Broome Golf Course (Broome) – RP (uncommon in the West Kimberley)

Flock Bronzewing – 3, 21/05/05, Lake Eda (Broome) – CH et al. (uncommon in the West Kimberley)

Crimson Chat – 10+, 16/06/05, near Argyle Diamonds Tailings Dam (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM (2nd record at Argyle, four other sightings in the area in the next few days)

Red-capped Robin – 2 pairs, 17/06/05, near Larranganni Bluff (Halls Creek) – RT (uncommon in the East Kimberley)

Grey Fantail – 1, 17/06/05, Limestone Creek (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM * 2, 18/06/05, Limestone Creek (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM (1st records for Argyle)

White-browed Woodswallow – 6, 15/06/05, near Argyle Diamonds village (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM * 6, 16/06/05, near Argyle Diamonds Tailings Dam (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM * 10, 19/06/05, near Argyle Diamonds Alluvials Plant (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO, JM (uncommon in WA)

Golden-headed Cisticola – 3, 17/06/05, near Larranganni Bluff (Halls Creek) – RT (uncommon in this area)



Immature Olive-backed Oriole at Eyre, June 2005.
(see also Members' Contributions for details).

Photo courtesy George White

OBSERVERS

AC = Alan Collins	KR = Ken Read
BAWA = BAWA Excursion	LB = Linda Back
BD = Ben Drew	LG = Les George
BRu = Bill Russell	MC = Michael Craig
CH = Chris Hassell	MM = Myles Menz
CoH = Colin Heinzman	MN = Mark Newman
DH = David Henderson	RLC = Richard & Lorraine
DS = David Secomb	Chyne
EBO = Eyre Bird Observatory	RP = Ryan Phillips
FO = Frank O'Connor	RT = Roy Teale
GB = Gary Babic (Thailand)	SB = Scott Baker
HvW = Hank van Wees	SH = Stewart Houghton
JM = Jennifer Muir	SvA = Sean van Alphen
KC = Kevin Coate	WM = Wynton Maddeford



Addendum



The following paragraph should be added to the 'Acknowledgements' on page 9 of the article on the Lake MacLeod surveys in the last issue of WABN (no 114):

The plaque to be erected at the Lake MacLeod site in honour of Col Davis was the idea of Les George, DSL employee and survey participant. Col introduced Les to the joys of shorebirds. The plaque was funded by the DSL Environment Department and will be put in place during the survey this September.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Since I last wrote, things have been very busy on the Birds Australia front.

I was fortunate enough to be able to represent BAWA at the Regional Groups meeting and AGM in Cairns in May. This proved to be a fruitful and interesting meeting that culminated with a momentous decision, due in no small way to the efforts of the WA group. The prime topic of discussion at this meeting was on the proposed new funding arrangements for regional groups, post 2006. The proposed new strategy involved groups bidding for a limited pool of funds (a total of 7.5% of all membership) each year. This system would not only have created a lot of extra work for regional groups (that would have to spend time putting submissions for funding together), but would have also created a lot more work for national office. I put forward my opinion that this was an unfair system as potentially a group could be left with no money for that year. I like the idea of a merit-based system, but there does need to be a guaranteed minimum level of funding to keep regional groups alive first! The primary outcome of the meeting was strong lobbying by all regional groups to request Council to overturn its decision on funding. I received a letter from our new President, Allison Russell-French, shortly after returning from this meeting, outlining that Council had accepted the regional groups' concerns and had overturned their previous decision on funding arrangements. The current situation is that we will now continue to receive 7.5% of our membership per year. Future options have yet to be discussed. I feel this is a good outcome for now, however, and we should be pleased that Council does listen to the strong feelings of regional groups on this issue. This issue also demonstrated to me the strength that comes from our unity as a national group. Without such cooperation and resolve over this issue, it is unlikely in my opinion that Council would have budged. It is important to remember there are many benefits to working with our friends in other states and territories!

A number of members of the regional groups meetings expressed admiration for the activities of the WA group, in particular our education activities that have been so competently run by Brice Wells, Elsa Dabbs and their committee. There was a clear desire to learn from our group, which has often set the standard in these areas, and I indicated that we would be very happy to share our knowledge with others whenever requested.

Lastly, WA has been 'dobb'd in' to host the Congress and Campout in September 2006 and the AGM in 2007. Although not enthused at the amount

of work this will create for me, I am delighted to have the opportunity to showcase our group to the rest of Australia and look forward to working with all of you to develop some exciting programs and activities for these forthcoming events. Until next time, enjoy spring and happy birdwatching.

Rob Davis



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TIME FOR BIRDWATCHIN

ROTTNEST WADER AND BUSHBIRD SURVEY 4-6 JUNE 2005.

Eleven Birds Australia members conducted the bi-annual wader and bushbird survey between 4-6 June 2005. The survey sites were those monitored over recent years — 12 wader sites (Table 1) and 12 regeneration sites (Table 2). Table 3 covers non-wading species recorded at the wader sites plus three sites where significant sightings were recorded.

The 12 wader sites surveyed encompassed all the island's lakes and the coastline habitats used by waders. The results suggested that the lakes continue to be important sites for the Banded Stilt and an over wintering habitat for trans-equatorial migratory species. The presence of 55 Pied Oystercatchers compared with four at the February 2005 survey, perhaps indicated the importance of the island for this species in the winter. Twenty-four of these birds were foraging in the

grassland habitat of Site 8, suggesting that this was a preferred winter foraging habitat.

The bushbird surveys showed, through species richness, the value of the older regenerated Sites 1, 2 and 5. The presence of the non-resident Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Grey Fantail and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike also indicated the value of these sites. The Fan-tailed Cuckoo was recorded calling in several areas of the island suggesting a higher presence than the recorded number (4). Site 11, adjacent to the waste area, was dominated by Australian Raven (10), Silver Gull overhead and plastic bags. The presence of White-browed Scrubwrens (6) in the thickly revegetated *Melaleuca* sp. at the small Site 8 suggested the value of this habitat for this species. There were no birds recorded in the established *Eucalyptus* of Site 7. Painted Button-quails were seen at only two sites, not including Site 2 where it was recorded in February 2005. No

TABLE 1: ROTTNEST WINTER WADER COUNT, 4 June 2005

Species	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	Site 8	Site 9	Site 10	Site 11	Site 12	Total
Bar-tailed Godwit										2			2
Ruddy Turnstone						17				3			20
Red-necked Stint					15	40							55
Curlew Sandpiper						2							2
Pied Oystercatcher	1	1		1	9	7		24		6	2	4	55
Black-winged Stilt						5							5
Banded Stilt		1	1		6	372	26						406
Red-necked Avocet		1			1								2
Red-capped Plover	4			7	2	6		3					22
Banded Lapwing	5			2	3			21					31
Total	10	3	1	10	36	449	26	48	0	11	2	4	600

Site 1: Government House Lake

Site 2: Garden Lake

Site 3: Serpentine Lake

Site 4: Causeway/Pearse Lake

Site 5: Herschel Lake

Site 6: Lake Bagdad

Site 7: Lake Vincent

Site 8: Oval/Golf Links/Airstrip

Site 9: Pink Lake/Lake Negri

Site 10: West End Bays

Site 11: Porpoise Bay

Site 12: Salmon Bay

scrapes were found at this site. Perhaps this species has a smaller resident population or it disperses to other areas on the island during the winter. Sacred Kingfishers were recorded at a number of sites confirming that this species over winters on the island. Galahs seem to be increasing on the island.

Table 3 (page 12) has been included in these results because of the significant sightings. Australian Shelduck (179) continue to use both the lake and beach habitats on the island. Crested Terns were observed with newly fledged chicks and Roseate Terns were nesting on the cliffs at Bathurst Point.

One Spotless Crake was seen at Bickley Swamp and this appears to be the first record of this species on the island. The conservative count of 719 Silver Gulls indicated that the size of this population could be a problem, particularly to nesting terns. A congregation of ten Ospreys was seen soaring high and calling above the main lighthouse.

Birds Australia WA (Inc) would like to acknowledge and thank the Rottne Island Authority and the School of Animal Biology at the University of Western Australia for their assistance with information and facilities.

Suzanne Mather

TABLE 2: Rottnest Winter Bushbird Count, 5 June 2005

TABLE 2: ROTTNEST WINTER BUSHBIRD COUNT, 5 June 2005													
Species	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	Site 8	Site 9	Site 10	Site 11	Site 12	Total
Common Pheasant	1	1						2					4
Nankeen Kestrel									1				1
Painted Button-quail				1			1						2
Laughing Turtle-Dove	1	3			2	4		6	6	2	3		27
Fan-tailed Cuckoo		2											2
Sacred Kingfisher	1	3			2								6
White-browed Scrubwren	12	10	4	3	8	1	4	6	2	3	3		56
Western Gerygone	3	2	1	3	6						1	1	17
Singing Honeyeater	14	15	1	1	10	3	6	11	1	1	2		65
White-fronted Chat		1											1
Red-capped Robin	2	5	3	4	9		6	4	3				36
Golden Whistler	2	3	2	2	2								11
Grey Fantail					1								1
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike					1		8						9
Australian Raven	3	20	4	5	7	12	8	4		4	10		77
Richard's Pipit					2								2
Welcome Swallow	20	20	5		16			4		2	1	1	69
Tree Martin		1						2			1	2	6
Silvereye	16		8	19			2	2	2		1		50
Total	75	86	28	38	66	20	35	41	15	12	22	4	388
Site 1: Anniversary Park Site 2: Kingston Site 3: East of Barker Swamp/north side of centre line fence. Site 4: east of Barker Swamp/south side of centre line fence. Site 5: Fire site Site 6: Beekeepers block Site 7: West of Oliver Hill, Old Barracks/Lighthouse swamp/NW corner 30 00'27". 115 30' 20" Site 8: Forbes Hill area/32 00' 13". 115 30' 59" Site 9: Forbes Hill area/32 00'10". 115 31' 04"/NE corner adjacent to refuge area Site 10: Forbes Hill area Site 11: Forbes Hill area Site 12: Forbes Hill area													

TABLE 3: Rottnest Winter Survey, 4–6 June 2005: SPECIES NOT INCLUDED IN WATERBIRD COUNT

Species	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	Site 8	Site 9	Site 10	Site 11	Site 12	Site 13	Site 14	Site 15	Total
Common Pheasant					1											1
Australian Shelduck	19	4	15	5	21	82	8	2	13		2		2	6		179
Pacific Black Duck									1				6			7
Grey Teal									3				12			15
Hoary-headed Grebe						5										5
Southern Giant-Petrel										2						2
Australasian Gannett										4						4
Pied Cormorant										6		2				8
Australian Pelican															2	2
Eastern Reef Egret												1				1
Osprey			1	1		1				2	1	2				8
Nankeen Kestrel				1	1											2
Spotless Crake														1		1
Silver Gull	145	40	190	180	?	52	5	2	9	40	2	54				719+
Caspian Tern	9					1				2						12
Crested Tern	2	1		16		640*				100		12				771
Roseate Tern															1*	1
Fairy Tern						4										4
Laughing Turtle-Dove					3	5		7								16
Spotted Turtle-Dove		1														1
Galah				20								6				26
Fantail Cuckoo			1	1												2
White-browed S-wren	6			5			2		3					4		20
Singing Honeyeater				7	?	4	4			2						17+
White-fronted Chat	8			2	9	12		1						4		36
Red-capped Robin				2			2							1		5
Black-f Cuckoo-shrike						1										1
Australian Raven	2			16	?	13	4	3	8					1		47+
Welcome Swallow	20	10		15		50		20		20	10					145+
Silvereye				3			2									5
* Breeding																
Site 5: Herschel Lake						Site 11: Porpoise Bay										
Site 6: Lake Bagdad						Site 12: Salmon Bay										
Site 7: Lake Vincent/Lake Sirius						Site 13: Barker Swamp										
Site 8: Oval/Golf Links/Airstrip						Site 14: Bickley Swamp										
Site 9: Pink Lake/Lake Negri						Site 15: Bathurst Pt/Thomson Bay										
Site 10: West End Bays																

OUR MIGRATORY WADERS NEED YOUR HELP

Waders are one of the most interesting groups of birds and present a special conservation problem. International cooperation is required to ensure effective conservation because their migration covers most of the globe.

With development proceeding at breakneck speed along the east Asian coast, thus threatening populations in the East-Asia-Pacific Flyway, we need an accurate monitoring program to determine populations trends of migratory species in the flyway. As a result the Australian Wader Study Group is conducting a review of its wader monitoring program to ensure that counts can accurately track wader populations in Australia. The Western Australian Wader Study Group (WAWSG) will coordinate this program in this state. We are looking for regional organisers and counters to help us with this program. We have prepared a list of potential areas that we would like to count. So if you are interested in being either a regional organiser or a counter and you come from the following areas:

(1) Esperance, (2) Albany, (3) Busselton, (4) Bunbury, (5) Mandurah, (6) South Metropolitan, (7) North Metropolitan, (8) Wheatbelt (Katanning), (9) Kalgoorlie, (10) Jurien, (11) Carnarvon, (12) Onslow, (13) Karratha, (14) Port Hedland, (15) Broome, (16) Fitzroy Crossing, (17) Derby or (18) Kununurra,

then we would like to hear from you. However this list is not exhaustive so if you come from outside these areas, but are keen to be involved, then please contact us. The more counters we have, and the more sites we cover, the more likely we are to detect population trends in our migratory waders. We are planning to conduct the counts on 2-3 weekends a year but, if you feel you can only commit to less time, please contact us anyway as any contribution will be valuable. If you are not confident with identification, we are planning to hold workshops on wader identification and you may be able to team up with someone and learn that way. In addition, there are opportunities to become involved in the Hooded Plover project, wader banding or the identification of important areas for waders. If you are interested in participating, or would like to know more, please contact either:

Michael Craig
School of Biological Sciences
Murdoch University, Murdoch 6150
Ph: 9360 2605 (W) or 9272 2608 (H)
or 0424 465 542 (Mob)
Email: <mccraig@myrealbox.com>

or
Bill Rutherford
199 Daglish Street, Wembley 6014
Ph: 0438 910 252 (Mob)

If you are interested, please get involved; the waders need your help!

WESTERN GROUND PARROT

(a) New population found in Nuytsland Nature Reserve



A 'new' (previously unknown) population of these critically endangered birds was found in June by the BAWA expedition to Nuytsland Nature Reserve (NNR), east of Cape Arid National Park. Only five other populations are currently known, so the find is very significant.

In May 2003 one or two Ground Parrots were found in NNR, not far west of Israelite Bay. This find led to the push to do more survey work in the area to determine just how important it was to the species. Extensive searching of that area in May this year again yielded only one or two birds, and they were either not calling much or moving around quite a lot. In June there was only one unconfirmed record there, which was disappointing. However, on the first listening session at a new and promising location several calls were heard by two surveyors. The next evening six surveyors were placed near where the first two had been, and all heard several calls. The parrots began calling unusually early, and included in their repertoire a call that was unfamiliar to the experienced surveyors. As usual, the Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters had mastered competent imitations of all the Ground Parrot calls, which kept the survey team on their toes. A wider survey of this area yielded more Ground Parrots, though some sites that looked good on the satellite image yielded none.

Both the May and June surveys were curtailed due to severe weather.

It is essential to know where these birds are so that steps can be taken to aid their recovery to a level that is viable in the long term. There is hope as there is plenty of habitat, mostly within reserves. A major problem is that most of it is often at an unsuitable fire age. Foxes and cats are also certain to be a big factor in pruning the number of Ground Parrots. These too are potentially more manageable now than in the past.

A third trip is being run in the NNR series. Objectives will include finishing the survey of the new population to



BAWA's Ground Parrot survey team in June, minus photographer Paul Setchell.

Standing: John Tucker, David Chemello (leader), Rowan Dawson, Peter Wilshaw, Anne Gadsby, James Macready, Brenda Newbey.

Seated: Petra Sommers.

Photo courtesy Paul Setchell

determine its extent, surveying a new area where there was an unconfirmed record in May, and exploring a previously untried area. Volunteers are being sought for the trip which will run from 1 to 10 November if conditions are suitable. For more information contact Brenda Newbey 9337 5673.

The BAWA project to search for Western Ground Parrots in Nuytsland Nature Reserve has been funded by Lotterywest.

Brenda Newbey

(b) Western Ground Parrots in Cape Arid National Park

The months of March through to June 2005 were very busy for the Western Ground Parrot Recovery Project. These four months saw a hive of activity centred around Cape Arid National Park (CANP). This large scale survey effort extended as far as Cape Le Grande National Park where suspected Ground Parrot feed sign was located, but no birds recorded.

Critical knowledge regarding bird location and habitat needs was gathered in conjunction with a very successful execution of the Nuytsland Nature Reserve surveys by the 'Friends of the Western Ground Parrot' and BAWA.

The evidence collected during this survey season indicated that the population of Ground Parrots in Cape Arid occupies a similar total area to that found in Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP). Ground Parrot habitat in CANP was found to have very similar parameters, vegetation structure and species composition, to the FRNP environment. The results of last year's FRNP survey allowed researchers to predict where some birds occurred in CANP and allowed more concentrated surveys of suitable habitat.

When the recent large scale fires removed huge tracts of suitable habitat from the landscape in CANP it was feared that most of the birds were lost. Results from a BAWA expedition in 2003 gave new hope that birds had survived the fires and were concentrated in the small patches of remaining vegetation. The results of the surveys in 2005 show a greater spread of birds than first assumed. Consequently the survival potential of this critically endangered parrot is better than the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team first thought. The ability of these birds to hold on in the presence of such adversity indicates that any help we give to the remaining populations, through predator control and fire management, will continue to secure their future on the south coast of WA.

Plans are being drawn up to increase fox baiting through the breeding season, the timing of which was documented last year. Furthermore, a major meeting of fire management and nature conservation co-ordinators is planned in August. This will seek solutions to the current problem of limited suitable habitat and continued risk of future large scale fires. Through good knowledge of occupied habitat in our two largest populations, FRNP and CANP, gained from two years of solid survey, we are now at a stage where our management actions will actively conserve this cryptic endemic.

The next two months will see further field work conducted back in Fitzgerald River National Park with the intention of better understanding the breeding season and habitat requirements of nesting Western Ground Parrots.

We will be conducting further work in 2005 and are planning some operations in 2006. All survey trips are fully supported with food and group equipment and some assistance towards transport. Weather permitting, ongoing surveys are conducted in Waychinicup NP on Thursday evenings (departing Albany). Please contact Brent Barrett on ph. 0429 842 451 or <brentb@calm.wa.gov.au> for further information on dates and participation. 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

PROJECT OFFICERS LEAVING

Long-standing BAWA project officers Julie Raines and Leonie McMahon have recently left their positions for new adventures, Julie leaving in May and Leonie in August.

Julie worked with the BAWA Hooded Plover Sub-committee for about five years, during which time she compiled the Hooded Plover Management Plan with input from local groups, and helped these groups initiate local management activities. She brought the Walpole region into the project, and also helped raise extra funds for the project. Her experience in project management was of considerable value to the team, and it was during this time that the project was awarded two Western Australian Coastal Awards, raising the profile of the project even further.

Leonie has worked with the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team, and has achieved outstanding success in mobilising local communities in various parts of the wheatbelt, discovering new breeding sites and delivering on ground conservation measures for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos. Awareness of the plight of the cockatoos have been raised considerably through Leonie's efforts. Leonie is going on to be a farmer's partner in the Bremer Bay area, and is looking forward to the birth of her baby in September.

Both Julie and Leonie brought a lot of extra people from coastal and wheatbelt communities into these projects, thus raising the profile of BAWA and both projects. They assisted BAWA in keeping these activities on track and in focus, ensuring greater impact. BAWA thanks them both for their significant input in these important projects, and wishes them well in their future endeavours.

CARNABY'S BLACK-COCKATOO PROJECT

Helen Pitman has been appointed as the new Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Officer and will be commencing shortly, taking over from Leonie. Helen has previously worked with WWF. For the moment, she can be contacted via the BAWA office, ie telephone 9383 7749, email birdswa@iinet.net.au.

A second project officer will also be appointed shortly. This person will work on the Swan Coastal Plain in a large project with a need for lots of volunteers doing a range of activities. This is an important and exciting new project! Watch out for more details in the next issue of WABN.

RECENT STUDIES IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIRDS

There have been a number of articles in recent scientific publications about the impact of climate change on birds, including a series of reports in the British Ornithologists' Union publication *Ibis* (Rehfishch *et al.* 2004) and in *Emu* (Chambers *et al.* 2005). All of these papers review a large number of studies thereby providing an overview of the situation.

Although there have been many predictions about possible impacts of climate change on birds and other fauna, there have also been some documented changes in bird biology over the last century or less. The difficulty that many scientists have is determining whether recent changes in bird biology are due to climate change or to other environmental changes such as habitat destruction.

Both the British and Australian papers highlight the following general changes, which may be a result of climate change:

- changes in distribution (generally a small shift to cooler areas);
- changes to movement patterns (not migrating as far or not migrating any more);
- changes in abundance;
- changes to egg-laying times, incubation times and other breeding characteristics (egg size, success etc);
- changes in behaviour;
- changes in bird physiology and morphology (eg. lower body weights needed to keep warm).

The article in *Emu* highlights many examples where other scientists or observers have shown that climate change has changed the habits or biology of our Western Australian birds. Some of these include:

- changes in distribution and local population declines in the Regent Parrot and the inland subspecies of the Western Rosella;
- range expansions of Red-tailed Tropicbird, Bridled Tern and Roseate Tern;
- double nesting or protracted breeding seasons for Little Penguin, Pied Cormorant, Silver Gull, Crested Tern and Roseate Tern.

The *Emu* article also produced a table of potential changes to Western Australian bird distributions due to climate change which was taken from an article by G W Arnold in a 1988 CSIRO publication.

Of the British articles one particular change stood out for its closeness to home and relative magnitude. It reports that on Campbell Island in the Southern Ocean a 94% population decline in Rockhopper Penguins is associated with rises in sea surface temperatures and declines in fish availability (Cunningham and Moors 1994). It should be noted that the Rockhopper Penguin has a large range and Campbell Island is one of many islands that it inhabits, but this change may represent a range change.

The British Ornithologists' Union reports can be freely accessed on the web at <www.bou.org.uk> and choosing the *Ibis* link. On the *Ibis* page there is a button titled "Climate Change and Coastal Birds".

As a group interested in birds, often recording observations, we may be able to contribute to the knowledge about many environmental changes including climate change. In particular anyone who has recorded migration or breeding records over a long period of time may notice steady changes in, for example, times of arrival, departure or nesting, which are not just due to unseasonal years.

But we can also refer to notes by other observers and make comparisons. This is the essence of scientific knowledge that is built up over long periods of time with observers leap frogging to new

knowledge off the backs of others! Recently I bought a copy of Serventy and Whittell's *Birds of Western Australia*. There were several observations here that appear quite different from the situation today, even to a fairly amateurish observer like myself! Following are examples of these differences.

- The migratory Grey-tailed Tattler is more plentiful in the northern parts of the state, but some individuals have been seen on the Swan River estuary, noting an example from 1931. This wording appears to indicate that they are quite rare around Perth or further south but this wader is it is now regularly seen at Woodman's Point over summer and even extends to the south coast (Barrett *et al* 2003).
- The range of the Malleefowl in 1948 extended north to Cape Farquhar (between Carnarvon and Coral Bay) whilst *The New Atlas of Australian Birds* shows them no further north than Hamelin Pool (south of Monkey Mia). This is about a 300 km range shift to the south.
- The southern range of the Crested Pigeon in 1948 had extended to Coorow (prior to this it had a southern limit of Geraldton) but it now extends throughout the south-west, an extension of over 600 km. This example is interesting as it could be a result of habitat changes and/or climate change.



Black-winged Stilt adult and juvenile,
Yangebup Lake.
Photo courtesy Robyn Pickering

- The range and migration pattern of the White-tailed Black-Cockatoo (entered as one species only in 1948) is very different from today. Serventy and Whittell note that it spends the summer in the south-west corner and moves through Perth between March and June (which is why it was called the rainbird) on its way north. It then moves back through Perth between August and November, returning to the south-west. Today we can see at least a few of these birds in Perth for the whole year with the very large flocks arriving in spring and leaving in autumn. The over wintering in Perth may indicate a response to climate change; however, the extension north to Perth over summer is contradictory to climate change. The summer shift to the north may be due to reduced habitat in the south-west corner. These changes only highlight the need to take into account the many variables that may lead to changes in biology or behaviour.

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Robyn Pickering

COCKATOO DAY, MAY 2005

On Sunday 15 May large flocks of white-tailed black-cockatoos and corellas were on the move. Was this in readiness for a seasonal nomadic move or was there a connection with the good rains experienced in the first half of the month of May—98 mm? It had not rained for 48 hours.

At Pinjar Park, just north of Pederick Road, Wanneroo, when dark nimbostratus clouds were gathering in the west, at 9:30 am more than 550 white-tailed black-cockatoos (presumably Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos) flew west. They were in small groups of seven to nine birds and flew immediately over Pinjar Park from the north-west corner of Gngangara Pine Plantation. Another 80 birds took roost at the top of dead trees in the park itself. Drizzly rain commenced an hour later.

On the same day at 4:15 pm, after almost continuous drizzly rain for five hours, 260 corellas, mainly Little Corellas (only

six possible Western Corellas counted) were digging with their beaks on the lawn of Perry Lakes Reserve at the corner of Oceanic Drive and Alderbury Street, Floreat. And still more birds were arriving in groups of five to seven. It was noted that some birds were swallowing earthworms. After about 30 minutes of feeding, each bird separately would fly up and roost on the electric wires along Oceanic Drive adjacent to the park. Finally there was almost 50 m of electric wires in Oceanic Drive covered with corellas west of Alderbury Street.

Ethology is always exciting in that there are many lessons for us to learn; different animals have various well developed senses far exceeding that of human development. Dogs are well recognised for their enhanced sense of smell aiding us with medical conditions, environmental problems and drugs. Birds with their enhanced eyesight and hearing respond quickly to meteorological conditions. Should we be doing more to understand these enhanced avian senses particularly for help in the area of natural disasters?

Mary H Bremner

BIRD IDENTIFICATION CHALLENGES

Every now and then, just when we think we're getting smart about bird identification, something comes along just to make you feel humble again. In November 2004, in company with a well-known eastern states birder (who will remain nameless to protect his reputation!), we were travelling through bushland to the north of Holleaton, an old town site and mine site NNE of Narembene. On the side of the road we found the carcass of a bird we took to be a young raptor but were not able to identify to species level. As the carcass was rather smelly, and we didn't want to collect it, we took some photographs and later sent them to Ron Johnstone at the WA Museum. Which raptor was this? we asked. The answer was: a bantam hen, possibly taken there by a fox or other predator.

And the score? Chooks 1, experienced birdwatchers 0.

We're still laughing!

Cheryl and Martin Gole

RAVEN'S MEAL

At dusk on 26 June last, I observed a group of three Australian Ravens foraging on the shoreline at Point Walter. One of them found a dark object in the weed bank on the beach and started to peck steadily at it. This bird was very protective of its prize and kept the other birds away, all the time continuing to attack the object. Eventually, the centre of attention turned out to be a mussel shell, which the Australian Raven finally, after about 25 minutes of continual attack, managed to break into, consuming the contents.

This is the first time that I have observed such behaviour, but I wonder whether there are any previous records of Australian Ravens feeding on molluscs.

Gordon Baker

CLIMATE CHANGE?

I have been waiting and watching with interest, since the end of April, for the first signs of breeding after the rainfall events that have made the countryside around Carnarvon look so lush.

I had seen some nest renovations being undertaken for some time and birds at the nest but it was not until 21 June that seeing a Little Crow on the nest, I could say that incubation apparently had begun. The nest on a power pole alongside Dampier Salt's haul road at the 16 km mark seems to be the first in use every year. It is not known whether it is the same pair of birds every time. It is a common sight to see Little Crows and Nankeen Kestrels vying for nest sites along this power line, choosing an existing nest and trying to defend it from other interested parties, even though Nankeen Kestrels tend to nest considerably later. I saw a pair of Nankeen Kestrels copulating in early June, giving rise to speculation that this year things might be different, but nothing came of it. As May had been unusually warm, daytime temperature still reaching 30 degrees on occasions, I thought anything could happen.

I had seen Banded Lapwings sounding their alarm on the golf course, presumably nesting, but a week later all was quiet. We had another 48 mm of rain and the golf course was awash. If nesting was underway it had failed here, but at Lake MacLeod I saw Banded Lapwings with runners on 22 June. All these birds are highly visible due to their size. Other smaller species have been seen and heard in display, both Brown and Rufous Songlarks in particular and, for the first time, I saw a Richard's Pipit in display also, though no song was heard.

I thought it to be early for those birds that are breeding, but where is the relevant information? I remember finding a Laughing Turtle-Dove nest with eggs on 7 July 2003, this being the previous earliest nesting I have known, and it was so cold back then. Another bird that has become a common sight is the Pallid Cuckoo; an older friend of mine refers to them as "rain birds", exclaiming that we don't need them as they only mean that we're going to get more rain.

Though he is not a birder he reflects on his past experience of seeing this bird and the rainfall events of that era, before my arrival in Carnarvon. I also remember hearing a weather forecaster on the radio, speaking of the complex low that brought the 'opening rains' mentioned earlier, as "being a return to weather patterns of 30 years ago". Perhaps these events have all happened previously. Looking at nesting times in field guides and in the *New Atlas of Australian Birds*, it appears that it is not unusual for either of these species. In fairness field guides can only generalise and in some cases they may have different breeding months for a species by location, in the south or north. The *Atlas* reflects a lack of data, at least for some species.

Having read Bruce Buchanan's contribution to WABN 114 regarding bird lists, I have to admit that I have had thoughts along these lines for quite some time and I concur with much of what he had to say. The Carnarvon list contains over 200 birds, including migratory species, found in a 50 km radius of the township. I have seen most of these birds in the last four years, yet there are those that still elude me. Not all are necessarily rare birds but are almost certainly very uncommon. Having said that, there are also birds that I have seen here that are not listed in our local birdwatchers brochure. These too would fall into the uncommon category.

I downloaded the BAWA bird list for the Exmouth region from the internet. This guide also lists what would be considered rarities, for example, Letter-winged Kite. It is listed as Va (vagrant) Ra (rare) and after this, "Learmouth '43"; I presume that to mean that it was recorded in 1943 at Learmonth. Some of the other species listed have similar information such as southern or northern limit, occurrence in an isolated population or found on such and such island. There are two species listed with "single" after their status, these being Little Stint Irr (irregular) U (Uncommon) and Common Redshank Vi (visitor) Ra (rare). The "single" I presume to be of single sightings or single birds. Why is their status different? I have seen a Little Stint at Lake MacLeod but the redshank is one of those on the Carnarvon list that still eludes me, even though I have heard that it has been seen again in June this year and reported at our local CALM office.

I rely heavily on the Records of the Western Australian Museum Supplement No 61: 371-448 (2000) *Birds of the Southern Carnarvon Basin, Western Australia: distribution, status and historical changes* for information. I make the assumption that this document aided in the compilation of the Carnarvon bird list and so too, could be updated. One of my greater triumphs was the discovery of the Chestnut Teal at Carnarvon. The said document states 'formerly occurring'; this species had not been recorded since pre 1916.

Bruce's idea of "using *New Atlas* information, to determine 'rules' for the 'unusuality' of a species"

may be the best we can do for now but even the *New Atlas* has a lack of information. By this I mean that there are some areas that have not been surveyed, for example looking up some of the Ramsar listed wetlands shows that some have had no surveys done. This I find extraordinary, as these became Ramsar wetlands due to their importance to birds.

Changes are occurring all the time, so if more people were to record their observations when they visited their favourite spots and submitted them for the ongoing *Atlas* project then we will be that much closer to knowing the true status of our birds and where they occur.

Les George



Chestnut Teal in company with Grey Teal
and Pacific Black Duck

Photo courtesy Les George

LAKE KING OVER THE JUNE LONG WEEKEND

After scratching our heads on where we could go on the June long weekend, an article in *WA Bird Notes* on Lake King came to mind. Looking around in our books, we decided to stay Friday and Saturday at Mt Madden about 23 km to the south, then Lake King on the Sunday night.

Mt Madden is a large reserve of mostly heath with tall mallees in the gullies, surrounding an extensive granite outcrop. This is still used for water collection. The flowering tall mallees in the creek line attracted numerous New Holland Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebirds and Purple-crowned Lorikeets. The surrounding heath/ low shrub had Southern Scrub-robins calling everywhere. Redthroats were heard regularly but very sporadically. Purple-gaped and White-eared Honeyeaters were spread evenly through the reserve. On Sunday morning I was delighted by a pair of Spotted Harriers quartering the reserve, to the displeasure of the parrots, particularly the Australian Ringnecks, and Grey Currawongs. This protest continued when a Collared Sparrowhawk settled in. Painted Button-quails, Elegant Parrots, Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens and a White-cheeked Honeyeater were also recorded.

There were nature reserves nearby that one could explore. Pallarup had a nice picnic area just off the Ravensthorpe Road. Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens, Purple-gaped and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, and Golden Whistlers were seen there. We visited Lake Pallarup, which was half full, but birds were very scarce there as at Lake Stennett. The area had a short historical drive with a brochure holding descriptive information. Heavy showers through Saturday afternoon washed out any plans for the remainder of the day. Mt Madden had 18 mm of rain and now a benign creek crossing had an impressive flow of water. Towing a camper trailer out the following morning could be tricky.

I was surprised how small the town of Lake King was but the community building and houses looked modern and clean. The caravan park was very pleasant and quiet. The attraction for me was the marked walking trails. When the birds became a little slow, finding the numbered pegs that identified flora species provided a pleasant entertainment. Of the four walks, the two longer ones, 3.6 km each, gave a good representation of what could be seen there. Walk 2 takes one through woodlands where we saw Regent Parrots, Galahs, Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters and Chestnut-rumped Thornbills. We also saw a well marked Pallid Cuckoo, which I first thought was immature. With further reading I was surprised that there is a second plumage type and I had seen a dark phase female. Walk 3 was mostly mallee and low shrub. I saw Western Yellow Robins, more Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens and White-eared Honeyeaters, but

Purple-gaped Honeyeaters were very scarce. While squeaking up a Southern Scrub-robin, a Shy Heathwren came and continued to feed about 2-3 m from my feet.

On a short walk from the caravan park on Monday morning we had magic views of Southern Scrub-robins, Redthroats and Shy Heathwrens amongst others. A Redthroat was also heard regularly in the bush at the corner of Hyden and Lake Grace Roads.

On the way home very little was in Lake King itself but Lake Grace had about 3000 Banded Stilts and 150 Red-capped Plovers.

Lake King is almost surrounded by bush plus several reserves such as nature reserves in a short drive. Totals for each area were Mt Madden 37 species, Pallarup 31 species and Lake King 43 species.

David Secomb

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLE AT EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

For nearly five weeks, from the 3rd of June until the 5th of July 2005, three Olive-backed Orioles appeared at Eyre. They were conveniently observed from the kitchen window and from the north verandah, as they took advantage of the bird bath under the large Acacia. Some sightings were also

made in the mallee a few kilometres north of the observatory by members of the Malleefowl survey party. They appeared to be confident in the company of other birds and seemed determined to make the most of their opportunity to use the bird baths.

Photographers were on hand to record this event, and provided sufficient pictorial evidence to enable conclusive identification of the birds. Excellent professional video recordings were also made. The initial identification from the photographs was made by John Blyth, with backing from Michael Brooker.

The Olive-backed Oriole's range is quite extensive—from the Kimberley eastward to northern Queensland and south to Victoria then westwards to Kangaroo Island and the Mt Lofty Ranges in

South Australia. The birds at Eyre were about 1000 km west of the normal distribution in southern Australia. This also represents the first record of this species in southern Western Australia.

From an examination of the photographs taken at Eyre, Ron Johnstone and John Darnell (Western Australian Museum) believe that, based on the head patterns, it is likely that the



Immature Olive-backed Oriole at Eyre, June 2005.

Photo courtesy George White

birds at Eyre came from eastern Australia rather than northern Australia. The dark iris and only a tinge of pink on the bill suggested that the birds were immature.

Rod Smith

HOODED PLOVERS—RUNNERS AND SWIMMERS

On 26 February 2003, while counting for the Hooded Plover survey at Duck Pond in Yalgorup National Park, Mavis Russell, Gordon Baker and I observed some unusual behaviour of a Hooded Plover runner swimming.

The Duck Pond had dried up into puddles and the two adults and two runners had moved out into the almost dry lake to avoid the observers. Unfortunately, while the parents could wade through the puddles, 'rear-end Charlie', the smaller of the two runners, was left behind and was racing to catch up. On entering one of the deeper puddles he/she found that it could not touch the bottom. Its body sunk deeper into the water and it commenced swimming with just its head above water. Its style was a rapid leg kick, which propelled it through the water at a reasonable speed. The first puddle was about two metres across at the deeper part. While trying to catch up to the parents it repeated the performance across two more puddles of about the same size. It was obvious to us that it was not running through a deeper patch but was swimming until its feet hit the bottom again.

Dick Rule

PARROTS ON THE BEACH

Whilst walking along the beach at Geographe Bay, east of Dunsborough, I saw a flock of ten Western Rosellas fly up from the beach. This is an unusual habitat in which to find Western Rosellas, although there was bush, mainly Peppermint trees, back from the beach.

On closer observation I noted that the birds were feeding on the seeds of Sea Rocket. Some were foraging around the base of the plants and some were sitting on the bush. It was July and the bushes were dead.

I observed the same behaviour over the following days and in addition noted that Australian Ringnecks were feeding on the same bushes.

Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima* is a pioneering plant species, often found on the upper reaches of sandy beaches close to the fore dunes. It is a small succulent plant that has small clusters of lilac flowers. When it dies off its woody bush carries a prolific load of seed pods.

I haven't been able to find any reference to Sea Rocket seed as a food source for these parrots. HANZAB does not mention it as a food source for either of these species, but does note that it is used as a food plant by the Rock Parrot, which does frequently forage on beaches.

Marcus Singor

ATTACHED TO PINK AND GREY FEATHERS

August 2003, an event happened on our farm that marked the lives of our whole family. A Galah flew down from a flock and landed on the driveway and walked up to my husband (an avid Galah hater as they are not originally from this area—near Pingrup in the Lower Great Southern—and they do a lot of damage). He was pretty taken aback to say the least when the bird hopped onto his extended hand and said "Hello, what-are-you-doing? Dance Cocky Dance Cocky".

From that moment on, 'Cocky-Boy' (as he called himself) became a member of our family. I swear that I did advertise the fact that he had found us and if anyone knew where his family were, to get in touch. I knew that somewhere, someone's heart was breaking to have lost such a wonderful character. Cocky would dance, talk, whistle, cuddle, squawk, walk everywhere and loved a tickle ... in fact he did most things—but he hated flying!

We first kept him on our closed-in veranda for six months and still no one came forward to claim him, so we splashed out on a \$250 cage for him and it was positioned outside, much to his horror—I think he was hand-raised indoors, as he was not comfortable outside! He was right near the backdoor so there was plenty of traffic anyway. We left his door open during the day and closed it at night.



Galah at home in Pingrup
Photo courtesy Deborah Badger

Cocky took off in fright one day when a huge flock of Galahs flew low overhead and he found himself flying. It was truly a pathetic sight to see the entire family at the base of a Salmon Gum tree, the front end loader positioned underneath it, and the arms extended full out, my husband standing high up on top of those arms with a stick, trying to coax the bird down. The poor fellow was terrified ... he wanted so much to come down but did not know how. Anyway, to cut a long story short, he was rescued and then we cut his wing for his own safety after this happened again a few months later!! He really did not know that he was a bird. He would sidle up to the dog's nose insistent on a tickle—but the dog just lowered her ears and stayed dead still!

Cocky stayed with us for 2.5 years and then recently one morning I walked outside to see pink and grey feathers on the lawn. I was devastated to say the least. The workers told us that they had seen a massive feral cat at the workshop earlier that week. Poor Cocky never had a chance.

Well, hanging out the washing will never be the same again—to walk outside and not hear “what are you doing?” or having him climb up to the wash-basket and throw clothes and pegs out! To weed the garden and not have him helping, to paint without him taking control of my art room, or to hear him break out in laughter when someone was laughing.

It was amazing how such a small creature, with such a huge attitude, could make such an impression on a family—young and old! We will miss him. If any reader did have such a bird who went missing, I want you to know that he had a great home for those years and he was very much loved.

Although we have lost our Galah, there are other interesting birds around. This includes a pair of Bush Stone-Curlews in residence in the five acres behind our house. They have been there for four years and produced some young too—so it is very exciting. I think they have lost their young one this year due to the same feral cat—so that cat has to be caught soon!

One change we have noticed this year is that we have had a lot more Regent Parrots, perhaps due to the excess water that is around.

Deborah Badger

MASKED OWL

On 20 July this year, at around 3.30 after clocking off work at the Austal Shipyards at Henderson, I noticed a large owl flying around the car park. It then swooped into some large scaffolding frames to the north of the car park. I even turned to a work colleague and said “That’s a big owl”.

I crept slowly to where the owl was perched and got about 10 feet away from it. I could tell from its large hulk of a body, feathered legs, massive feet, coppery brown colour on its back, dark speckles on its chest, and clearly defined face ring that it was a Masked Owl not a Barn Owl. I watched it for about five minutes before it was spooked and slowly flew off before getting mobbed by gulls. Judging from the time of day and its slow movement, it was most likely sick.

Masked Owls are rarely reported on the Swan Coastal Plain, but Ron Johnstone (WA Museum) received one collected from Munster in May. He believes that it is possible that there is some movement out of the south-west in autumn-winter.

Mark Newman

AUSTRALIAN WOOD DUCKS SEARCHING FOR A HOME

On 31 July, a fine, sunny day, the loud calls of an Australian Wood Duck aroused me from my inner-city garden in Subiaco. I was very surprised when I located the call—the female bird was perched on top of the brick chimney of a suburban house and was obviously inspecting it as a possible nest site. The male joined her and some more serious inspection went on accompanied by vocals. Then they flew next door to inspect another chimney top in Bedford Avenue.

Finally, I saw them fly off in the direction of Kings Park—a wise decision!

Diane Beckingham

INLAND THORNBILL IMITATING SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO

On Thursday 19 May 2005 I was at Bungendore Park at the end of Blake Street off Admiral Road in Bedfordale. I heard what sounded like a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo calling very close by. I thought that this was very unusual for May so I located the bird calling in a nearby sheoak. I was surprised to see that it was an Inland Thornbill.

It is well known that Inland Thornbills are accomplished mimics, and I have previously had personal experience of an Inland Thornbill imitating the call of an Elegant Parrot at Bungendore Park, and a Grey Honeyeater at Yalgoo. However, I was surprised to hear this species mimicking a cuckoo out of season.

Frank O'Connor

HITCH HIKING BEE-EATERS

While returning to Broome from visiting the Lacepede Islands in the late afternoon of 15 May, a flock of seven tired looking Rainbow Bee-eaters was spotted trailing behind the boat. Before long they took refuge on the boat and made themselves at home. At the time we were out of sight of land. Although late in the season, these birds were probably migrating north to Indonesia. At this time of year they are commonly seen in the Kimberley where many stop over.

Last year in September I found them nesting in sand banks up from a beach on the Slate Islands, near Kuri Bay. They are one of the prettiest of birds, with a very distinctive call, and I was pleased to see these unexpected guests settling in for the night on board the boat. We arrived off Cable Beach at Broome some time before dawn and presumably the bee-eaters left at this point, as nothing more was seen of them.

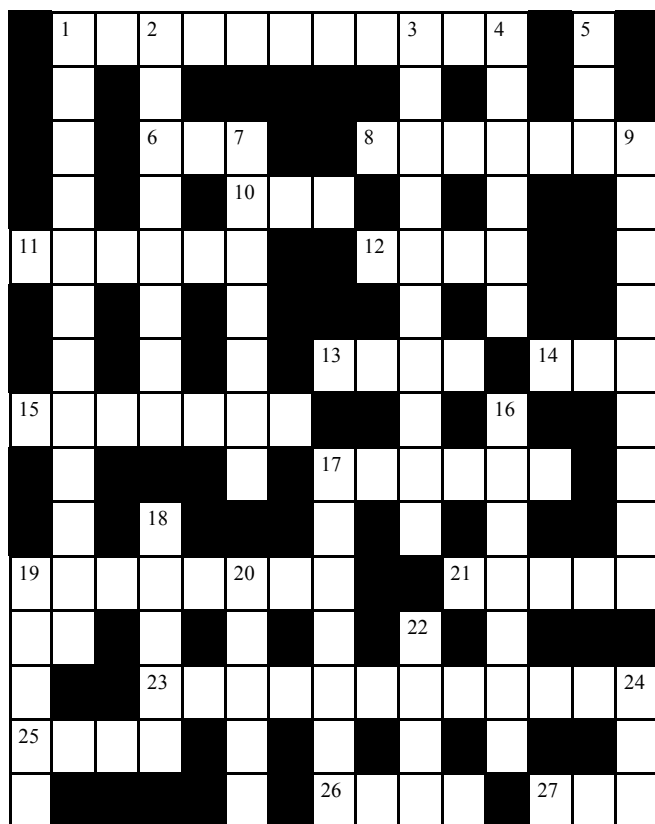
Kevin Coate



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Thomsons Lake
Photo courtesy Robyn Pickering



By Pam Agar



Clues across

1. Occurring in extreme north and south.
6. Nest sites of fairy-wrens.
8. A falcon does it by diving.
10. To make a mistake.
11. Often enjoyed by birders.
12. Fleshy structure at base of upper beak.
13. New information.
14. Sheltered side.
15. Stately bird of plains.
17. One would assume a cap.
19. Nature of woodswallows.
21. Restores birds to health.
23. A new sighting may be cause for it.
25. Nest attribute.
26. To ooze.
27. Little activity in this weather.

Clues down

1. An offering.
2. Appropriate information.
3. Kite occurring sometimes in NW.
4. Likely to be well-informed.
5. To question.
7. Wetlands south of Perth.
9. Natural clean-up agent.
16. Price for egg-collecting.
17. In shelducks, they're chestnut.
18. This sighting is cause for excitement.
19. Useful for identification.
20. Off-putting in swampy locations.
22. Nature of head of ibis.
24. Item of capture.

BIRDS AUSTRALIA (WA) INC.



Please make a note of our new address!

Peregrine House
167 Perry Lakes Drive
Floreat WA 6014
Tel: (08) 9383 7749
Fax: (08) 9387 8412
Email: <birdswa@iinet.net.au>
Website: <<http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>>



WANTED—CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

One of the core functions of Birds Australia WA is the conservation of birds and their habitats. For some time, we have had an excellent Conservation and Research Sub-committee (CRC) that has met often and had some major successes. Many of our members are professional scientists or otherwise busy people and we have found ourselves frequently short of people power.

We are thus appealing to any members with an interest in bird conservation to consider joining the CRC. You do not need to be a scientist, although you should have the ability to discuss research projects, as well as the time to assist.

We are particularly seeking people who are interested in helping with correspondence, taking minutes, making phone calls and reading the occasional management plan. Anything you can offer us is greatly appreciated, however.

Please send any expressions of interest, including your details and brief background to Rob Davis via the BAWA Office or email him on <rob@graduate.uwa.edu.au>.

BAWA Web Site Administrator

Are you interested in maintaining the BAWA web site?

I have looked after the web site for the first three years. It is time for fresh and enthusiastic ideas.

There are several issues to be addressed. Some parts of the web site were outlined but have not been completed. We are approaching the National Office to see if our web site can be incorporated with the national site, although we will continue to maintain our content. We are looking for the best way to make large reports available. We need someone to thoroughly review the current web site, make a list of suggestions, and then to follow them through.

Call or email me if you are interested and would like further details.

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

ALERT: AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI)

You will have read in newspapers that a 'bird flu' which is communicable to humans has been diagnosed in SE Asia and China.

In fact, 'bird flu' has now broken out 100 km E of Bali. This represents the closest the virus has come to Australia so far.

AI viruses are often recovered from apparently healthy migratory waterfowl, waders and seabirds worldwide, but this new one is particularly virulent.

Without causing undue alarm, it is important therefore that all people involved in handling waterbirds and similar species are aware of the possibilities.

A recent issue of *Nature* (26 May 2005) includes a series of articles on avian influenza and the risk of a pandemic (ie, worldwide) outbreak of human influenza caused by changes in the virus. These articles in *Nature* make several interesting points:

- ◆ As no specific vaccine is available at present, it is plausible that millions of people could be killed in developed, as well as undeveloped, countries within months of a significant change in the virus, which could happen anytime.
- ◆ Given that there has been little progress in public health response, the potential for panic is great, particularly given the impact of television and the internet.
- ◆ The coalition of FAO, OIE and WHO is shaky, and it is unsure of its role in these situations.
- ◆ Thousands of wild birds have been found dead, apparently due to AI, and millions of domestic poultry have been culled in Asia.
- ◆ Each human case that occurs in Asia is a threat; already more than 50 people have been confirmed killed from AI in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia. There may also have been deaths in China.
- ◆ An efficient and effective outbreak-management strategy is urgently needed.

Conclusion

- ◆ You should be concerned if involved in handling sick migratory birds.
- ◆ Bird carers should be informed about AI.
- ◆ Deaths of migratory birds should be considered suspicious, and referred to a veterinarian.

Tom Spalding

Editors' note: Bird flu has now been reported from the Ural Mountains in Russia, meaning that it is even more likely that migratory birds could spread the virus to Europe and the Middle East.

Proposed Camp Out — Search for Starlings, November

The Common Starling is listed as one of the world's worst 100 invasive alien species by the IUCN (World Conservation Union). Starlings represent a significant biosecurity risk to agriculture, the environment and the community of Western Australia.

There are currently two populations established at Munglinup and Condinup. Even though ongoing control efforts continue to reduce these populations, recent evidence suggests that there may be more starlings in the area than originally thought. Consequently, there is an urgent need to increase control efforts, engage the community to assist with surveillance and detection, and develop new and improved tools for control through research.

The Area

The proposed surveillance area is centred on Munglinup, approximately 110 km west of Esperance, and ranges from Hopetoun and the edge of the Fitzgerald River National Park in the west, to the Dalyup River in the east, and Cascade in the north.

Accommodation will be at the eco-friendly Munglinup Beach Caravan Park <www.munglinupbeach.com>, which offers a variety of comfortable and well appointed accommodation: holiday cottages and units, fully self contained, park cabins, backpackers, powered sites and tent areas. A small shop for basic provisions is available at the park office and for your entertainment a small video and games library is provided.

The Team

The proposed project requires experienced eyes to describe the avifauna of the Munglinup area and search for starlings. The project therefore needs a skilled organisation like Birds Australia to be involved in the project. We would also be seeking to engage the regional Birds Australia members based in Esperance and Albany, as well as Esperance-based conservation organisations.

We have had preliminary discussions with CALM officers at Esperance and have support for their involvement as well. The Department of Agriculture will be the prime facilitators of the project.

Funding

The project is financially supported by the South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team (SCRIPT) through the National Heritage Trust and the Department of Agriculture. SCRIPT funding will meet the costs of Department of Agriculture staff and vehicles to facilitate the campout. **Funding will also allow us to cover the costs of accommodation of campout participants and any costs to Birds Australia for organisation and publicity.** We also intend to invite Australia's foremost pest bird biologist, Dr Ron Sinclair, to participate and provide an informative talk during the campout. **We also intend to provide a wrap BBQ dinner on the final night of the campout.**

Unfortunately, funding cannot extend to the travel costs for Birds Australia members to get to Munglinup.

Key Contacts

Marion Massam	Executive Officer of the State Starling Management Advisory Committee, Phone (08) 9366 2301, E-mail < mmassam@agric.wa.gov.au >
Garry Gray	SCRIPT Starling Project Officer, Phone (08) 9366 2338 E-mail < ggray@agric.wa.gov.au >
Andrew Woolnough	SCRIPT Starling Project Scientist, Phone (08) 9366 2327 E-mail < awoolnough@agric.wa.gov.au >

Australasian Ornithological Conference 2005



Birds Australia

is committed to holding biennial conferences that provide a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian-based researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region.

Blenheim, New Zealand 6–10 December 2005

This conference is a joint Ornithological Society of New Zealand and Birds Australia initiative to promote ornithology. The Australasian Wader Studies Group will hold their two-day conference immediately following the AOC 2005 at Nelson, from 11th to 13th December. The ASC is the conference of the Australasian Wader Study Group and is focused on shorebird research and conservation.

Both conferences will have post-conference field excursions. Following the AOC these include boat trips off Kaikoura to see seabirds, Marlborough Sounds launch trips to see inshore seabirds and rare forest species surviving on predator-free islands, and the opportunity to visit a Department of Conservation Mainland Island project. After the ASC a two-day trip to Farewell Spit will be run. People attending both conferences will be in a position to join AOC field trips before the ASC conference.

You are invited to express your interest in attending these conferences, and presenting a paper by visiting the OSZN web site, or by writing to the conference co-ordinator:

Sue Bell

35 Selmes Rd, RD 3, Blenheim, New Zealand
<wmiiblenheim@clear.net.nz>

NOISY SCRUB-BIRD SURVEYS

As a result of recent wildfires in the Albany area there will be opportunities for volunteers to participate in post-fire surveys of Noisy Scrub-birds, Western Whipbirds and Western Bristlebirds on the south coast.

In addition there will be work on the Noisy Scrub-bird translocation program during this time. All work will be conducted between April and November.

Volunteers will need to have a reasonable level of personal fitness.

Accommodation will be provided at Two Peoples Bay Research Quarters, and volunteers are asked to participate for at least a week.

For further information contact Sarah Comer:
sarahc@calm.wa.gov.au or (08) 9842 4500.

Directions for excursion on 9 October 2005

KARAKAMIA sanctuary



Australian Wildlife Conservancy
Lot 201 Lilydale Rd, Chidlow 6556
ABN: 36 068 572 556
Ph: 9572 3169 Fax: 9572 3107
Email: sanctuaries@australianwildlife.org
Web: www.australianwildlife.org

DIRECTIONS

(allow 1 hour from Perth CBD)

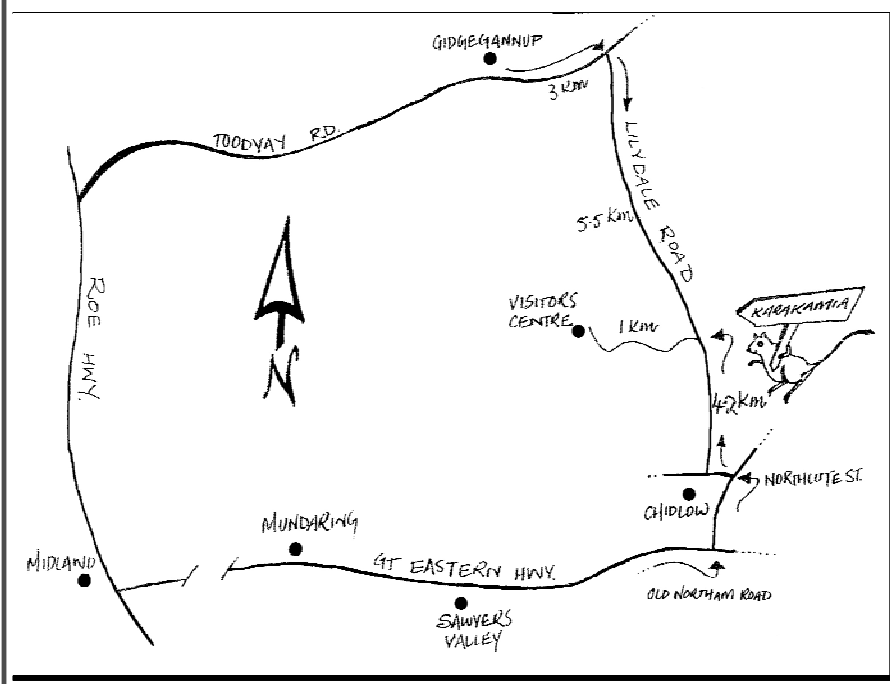
1) From Great Eastern Highway

Drive east along Great Eastern Hwy through Mundaring and Sawyers Valley. Turn left into Old Northam Rd at the sign to Chidlow. Turn left into Northcote Road (past the Chidlow Oval). The first right (past the Primary School) is Lilydale Rd. Karakamia is 4.25 km down Lilydale Rd on the left hand side. Firmly press the white button and come through the electronic gate, up the gravel drive for about 1 km to the Visitors Centre.

2) From Toodyay Rd

Travel along Toodyay Rd from Roe Hwy (in Midland). Approximately 3 km past Gidgegannup turn right into Lilydale Rd. Travel 5.5 km along Lilydale to Karakamia on the right hand side. Firmly press the white button and come through the electronic gate, up the gravel drive for about 1 km to the Visitors Centre.

*** Please note that the staff office is located in the house 200m north of the visitors centre.**



Darlington Arts Festival

**November, Saturday 5th
and Sunday 6th**

This Festival has become one of the Hills' most popular annual events.

Although the emphasis is on Arts and Crafts, it is a venue that provides good exposure for groups such as Birds Australia.

We will need volunteers for each of the days, to chat to people, hopefully answer questions, sell cards and bird books etc.

If you can spare a couple of hours and would like to be part of this enjoyable occasion please phone Stella or Ted on 9295-4438.

COLOUR BANDED WILLIE WAGTAILS

Have you seen a colourful Willie Wagtail?

I am currently doing my PhD on individual recognition using bird song and last year I colour banded 72 Willie Wagtails at Herdsman Lake. Most of the birds I banded were juveniles and have now dispersed away from where they were caught. So, I need your help in finding them again!

Birds were caught at various locations around Herdsman Lake, but they are known to travel up to 5 km, and already I have had sightings of my birds in nearby gardens.

The birds have a colour band on each leg, plus a metal band on the right leg. If you see a bird matching this description then please contact me with its location – even if you don't see exactly what the colours are the information is still very helpful. You can contact me at

<foxe02@student.uwa.edu.au> or on 0427 947 009.

Liz Fox

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between 1 May to 31 July 2005. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

A Bologa, M Bouette, M Bray, L Cunningham, B Diepeveen, E Gerbaz, J Hales, C Heap, A & J Hobbs, A & I Mayo, P McMinn, B Pearce, J Sanders, K, M & R Towers, Mrs Trudgen, T Tyson.



Country Groups



ALBANY BIRD GROUP

July 2005 Outing

Fourteen of us enjoyed a glorious, sunny day. It was a bit cold, but the birds were out in profusion. We went to Kambellup and saw 45 species. The Kalgan River was flowing gently in its course, though debris caught on trees and bushes showed evidence of its recent flooding. Perhaps the most exciting sighting was a Peregrine Falcon. No Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens were spotted, though they have been seen in that area before, but Splendid Fairy-wrens and emu-wrens were seen.

Charlie Davies

KATANNING BIRDOS (BADGEBUP BIRDING BODS)

July Outing to Carmeticup

About 15 people including five youngsters attended an outing to an area NE of Woodanilling known locally as Carmeticup. The day was very cool and overcast but this didn't dampen

people's enthusiasm. We were greeted at our first destination, King Rock Nature Reserve, by a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo. During our visit we were tantalised by Spotted Pardalotes, and Singing and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters. We watched a Grey Shrike-thrush trying to work out the best way to dispose of a large grub. Some were intrigued by the Varied Sittella's bright orange feet and had a look at a Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest as a pair soared nearby.

After morning tea we visited two of Eric Grossley's bush blocks. Grey Fantails, as usual, were great 'look at me' birds but we had a male Restless Flycatcher that gave a gala performance. Every one could clearly see the light buff on the upper chest. There were some close contenders, namely a male Rufous Whistler and several Striated Pardalotes. We had good views of Western and Inland Thornbills close together, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo feeding on the ground, Western Gerygone and Western Yellow Robin. Unfortunately the bustard that had been visiting for about a month couldn't be found.

Total for the day was 46 species.

David Secomb



Excursion Reports



DRYANDRA CAMPOUT, 23–25 April

Dryandra Woodland is a 22 000 ha State Forest located 180 km south-east of Perth and 30 km north-west of Narrogin. This wonderful open woodland of Wandoo, Powder Bark Wandoo, Brown Mallet (natural and planted), sheoak and minor areas of Jarrah and Marri, is home to a number of threatened fauna species. Lateritic breakaways provide a diverse flora habitat featuring many Dryandra species, and *Dryandra formosa* was in full flower.

A group of about 19 members, and a few friends, thoroughly enjoyed three days observing bushbirds in a very relaxing environment. Most camped under the full moon near the Congelin Dam, although a few stayed in the Woodland cottages and enjoyed open fires and hot water! Some members were privileged to visit Barna Mia on the first evening, where the intriguing Bilbies, boodies, Western Barred Bandicoots and Banded Hare-wallabies were seen at close hand in a special sanctuary managed by CALM.

Leader David Secomb then guided us around the Dryandra Woodland, and several nearby reserves, over the next three days, stopping at various habitats to investigate the inhabitants. A total of 69 bird species were observed within the Dryandra Woodland State Forest over the weekend, while

a further 11 species were recorded on adjoining farming properties and nearby reserves. Only five species of wetland birds were observed on small dams in and around the Woodland.

Of particular interest was the 12 species of honeyeaters observed, often with three or four species in close proximity. These included the White-naped, Brown-headed, Brown, White-eared, New Holland, White-cheeked, Yellow-plumed, Tawny-crowned and Singing Honeyeaters, Western Spinebill, Western (Little) Wattlebird and Red Wattlebird. A few shrub species were in flower, including species of *Dryandra*, *Leucopogon* and *Astroloma*, and these were keenly sought, especially by the more nectar dependent Brown and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters. We were able to observe the honeyeaters quite closely, and get to know the less common species, especially the White-eared, Yellow-plumed and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters. It appeared that the more aggressive honeyeaters (New Holland, wattlebirds and Yellow-plumed) were dominating the taller Dryandra shrubs, while the smaller honeyeater species competed with Silvereyes for the lower flowering shrubs.

The parrots were also well represented, with eight species observed, including a beautiful Regent Parrot, which was seen

quietly tending its large hollow in an old wandoo tree. Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Elegant Parrots, Australian Ringnecks and Red-capped Parrots, Western Rosellas and Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos were observed, but not in large numbers.

David gave us an interesting lesson on the subtle differences between the Splendid and Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens, as both species were present and easily observed. Other closely related species observed in close proximity, were the Red-capped and Scarlet Robins, the Striated and Spotted Pardalotes, and the Western, Chestnut-rumped and Inland Thornbills. This was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about these species and compare plumage and foraging behaviours. David, Wayne Zadow and Frank O'Connor freely shared their knowledge of birds with other members and pointed out many species we would not have seen in their absence.

A few members were fortunate to see a Crested Shrike-tit, which quickly vanished and was neither heard nor seen again, despite extensive surveys. The delightful Rufous Treecreepers and White-browed Babblers were regularly seen busily foraging in wandoo bark and leaf litter, while Jacky Winters were observed closer to the woodland edges and on adjoining farmland. Some species more commonly seen further east were found unexpectedly at Dryandra, including the Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, White-eared Honeyeater and Blue-breasted Fairy-wren. Other species that were great to see in this area included Restless Flycatchers, Western Yellow Robins, a Peregrine Falcon and a Brush Bronzewing.

One highlight was the eerie call of the Bush Stone-Curlew each night under full moon. These birds were later found lurking on the edge of the Dryandra Village, in the Brown Mallet woodland. We were able to observe and photograph these surreptitious birds during the day, despite their effective camouflage, as they slowly stalked around. We also saw several Echidnas, heard many Western Spotted Frogs calling continuously, but unfortunately could not find the elusive Numbats. Wayne also tracked down a Western Marsh Frog calling in its burrow while we were spotlighting for owls.

The ultimate highlight, for David, Wayne and myself, was tracking down and spotlighting a Barking Owl in open wandoo woodland on the last evening. David had heard the characteristic barking the night before, so we headed out at 5:30 pm with tape and spotlight to listen. By driving slowly around some of the woodland perimeter, we could hear it call intermittently and infer its general location. After an hour and a half of patient listening, and several false leads, we walked excitedly under full moonshine into the woodland for about 700 m. Just as the barking got louder, Wayne spotted the owl staring down at us from a branch in a large wandoo. We

exchanged stares for barely a minute under spotlight, long enough to see clearly the grey streaky belly and large yellow eyes, and then it quietly flew off. This was a first sighting for Dryandra. We returned to camp feeling very satisfied, with a good excuse for being late for bird call.

Many thanks to David Secomb for leading, and to Sue Mather and Sue Abbotts for organising, this very interesting and enjoyable campout. A special thanks also to Frank O'Connor and Wayne Zadow for sharing their enthusiasm and considerable knowledge of local birds.

Erica Shedley

PARUNA SANCTUARY, 7 May

Thirty-two keen birdwatchers met on an overcast but ideal temperatured day for this walk. There was a choice of an easy walk of a couple of kilometres or a longer walk of six and a half kilometres. Both walks included a lot of well-laid sleeper steps as the paths followed the side of the hill.

Birds were not exactly thick on the ground but 42 species were seen including Painted Button-quail, Elegant Parrot, White-naped, Brown-headed and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters, Rufous Treecreeper, Golden and Rufous Whistlers and White-breasted Robin. A few waterbirds were seen as there was water in the dam, but the creeks were dry.

Alyson Paull



Bush Stone-Curlew at Dryandra.

Photo courtesy Alex Morrison

THE SPECTACLES, KWINANA, 28 May

About 18 members and two guests from Townsville discovered the mess last week's tornado had made at The Spectacles on 28 May. Trees had been broken and thrown in all directions through the bush surrounding the lakes, and the boardwalk could not even be seen, so great was the number of branches and trees lying across it. We split into two groups led by Paul Marty and Les Harris and spent a delightful three hours exploring the damage and looking for the 42 different bird species that proved to be very hard to find.

The most exciting sightings were the brightly coloured Scarlet Robin, Spotted Pardalote, Australian Ringneck and the beautiful blue tails of the female and juvenile Splendid Fairy-wrens. Fan-tailed Cuckoos were heard and clearly seen.

Just near the end of our walk two members saw a pair of quails scratching around some broken banksia branches and then just for one last highlight we saw a flock of Varied Sittella running up and down a tree not 10 m from where the bird list was being called.

Lyn Sellars

ROTTNEST WINTER WADER COUNT CAMPOUT, 4 June

When we set off on the Rottneest ferry on Friday, there were many misgivings due to the heavy skies and terrible weather forecast. However, against all the odds, the rain held off and we even had some sunshine until the storm clouds followed the ferry home on Monday.

It was pleasing to note that the team was a good balance of old hands and new faces, for some it was their first campout, and I am sure that they will be coming on more in the future.

The serious side of the job was to cover a total of 12 wader sites and 12 bush sites where regeneration work had been done. This was achieved by good organisation, a brilliant taxi driver called Sue, and a lot of leg work. We were rewarded by finding 50 species. The highlights were an active breeding colony of Crested Terns, large numbers of Banded Stilts, a group of about 10 Qspreys giving a flying display above the lighthouse, Fan-tailed Cuckoos playing hide and seek all over the island and finally a shy Spotless Crake.

On the social side we all had a lovely dinner at the tearooms to celebrate Rob's birthday, after which we all enjoyed his birthday cake back at the camp where the ladies made his evening memorable with a dance routine that even the legendary Salome could not match.

All participants had a rewarding and enjoyable weekend and thanked Rob and Sue for their hard work and organisation.

David Ballard

WARRIEDAR CAMPOUT, 4–6 June; KADJI KADJI 7–9 June.

This campout had it all!

Spectacular thunderstorms, heavy downpours, streaming campsites, impressive sunsets (and sunrises), starry nights (in between the cloudbanks), fog, sunny days (sometimes), double rainbows, red mud and roads that looked more like creeks at times, more fresh rain water than we neededand fortunately, close to 30 friendly, resourceful and very tolerant people.

Warriedar is one of a series of pastoral leases acquired by the Department of Conservation and Land Management in recent years, several of which have been surveyed by members of Birds Australia. The 27 people who participated in this campout enabled us to complete 53 surveys, covering nine different vegetation zones, in order to provide CALM with data indicating which species are present in each zone.

The zones included large areas of mulga and acacia species, samphire, saltbush and bluebush and some areas of woodland (York Gum and Red Mallee). Visits were also made to the margins of Mongers Lake on the eastern boundary, areas of breakaway country and some good quality bushland around Warriedar Hill. Some even found time to scale the heights of Warriedar Hill and enjoy the extensive views.

Among the more interesting sightings were good views of Redthroats, Chestnut-rumped and Slaty-backed Thornbills, Crested Bellbird, Southern Whiteface, Black-eared and Pallid Cuckoos, both White-browed and Grey-crowned Babblers, Mulga Parrots and a small flock of Regent Parrots. Nesting evidence was also noted for Yellow-rumped and Chestnut-rumped Thornbills.

We had known of a Malleefowl mound, that looked to be active when visited in late March. Everyone had an opportunity to visit the mound but only a few were lucky enough to see two birds working the mound. A bonus was the discovery of a second large mound, not

in use at present but thought to have been used within the last year or two.

On the optional extension to the Warriedar Campout, 28 similar surveys were carried out on Kadji Kadji Pastoral Lease, approximately 80 m to the west.

Much of Kadji Kadji is gravelly rises or claypans, which border a salt lake system. However it encompasses a large range of vegetation types: melaleuca and acacia shrublands, samphire, York Gum and mallee, cypress pine, casuarina and spinifex. Unfortunately, three more days of rain meant access was impossible to many areas and some vegetation types were not surveyed. Perhaps that partially accounted for the total species list of 59, as opposed to 69 at Warriedar.

Black-tailed Native Hens were seen around the Kadji Kadji homestead and the dam. Raptors featured more strongly here with five species recorded. Three species of fairy-wren, four thornbill species and six honeyeaters, plus White-fronted Chats were also noted.

As we were able to use the homestead, evening get-togethers were again scheduled, having been missed on most occasions at Warriedar because it rained each evening.

Thanks to all those who weathered the rain and trying conditions, and made the campout memorable, such as the chef extraordinaire who produced wonderful hot soup for 14 one lunch time.

PS: We have reservations about the toilet-roll-flavoured Milo produced by another aspiring chef who is obviously adept at packing items into every available space, including the kettle!

Pam Agar



Frank O'Connor, Lorraine Marshall, David and Joyce Ballard – all enjoying a cuppa during the Rottneest campout, June 2005.

Photo courtesy Shirley Guy

HILLARYS PELAGIC TRIP, 26 June

The sea conditions were very good. The highlight for many were the excellent views of Humpback Whales and the sighting of four species of dolphins feeding where there was a large congregation of Yellow-nosed Albatross and Australasian Gannets. There were high numbers of Soft-plumaged Petrels. Photographic conditions were generally very good.

The seabirds seen were Southern Giant-Petrel, Cape Petrel, Great-winged Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Shy Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Yellow-nosed Albatross and Wilson's Storm-Petrel plus Australasian Gannet and Great Skua.

For details of future trips contact Frank O'Connor on <foconnor@iinet.net.au> or (08) 9386 5694.

YARRA ROAD (CHRISTMAS TREE WELL), BROOKTON, 26 June

Pam and George Agar led a very enjoyable day out. For a start it was a sunny day with a temperature that was perfect for walking and birdwatching.

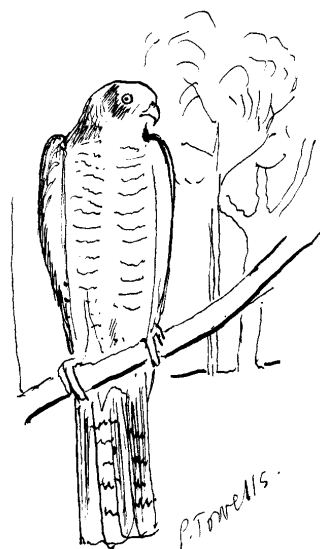
We met at Christmas Tree Well off the Brookton Highway, an attractive spot for morning tea, but less so for birds.

What there were, were around the car park and included Western Spinebills, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. One or two people saw a Painted Button-Quail. We then drove on Willies Road off Yarra Road. After crossing a brook, which was quickly covered with branches by members displaying beaver like qualities, plus the help of George's strong right arm, we were all across with dry feet. I overheard a remark that it was well worth it—to hold hands with George.

We were immediately rewarded by a sighting of a Hooded Robin, plus a Scarlet Robin, Rufous Treecreepers, Golden and Rufous Whistlers and finally we watched a Crested Shrike-tit busy building a nest—terrific!

After lunch a depleted group continued down Yarra Road and saw what seemed like almost all the local honeyeaters: Yellow-plumed, Brown-headed, White-naped, Brown, Singing, New Holland and Tawny-crowned—indulging in a nectar feeding frenzy among the blossom.

Finally a few of us spent quite a few minutes admiring a Western Yellow Robin who seemed as pleased with himself, quite rightly, as we were. A great day with a total of 42 species.



Collared Sparrow-hawk
Drawing by Penny Towells

Pat Bennett

PINNAROO VALLEY, 10 July

Nineteen of us set off in bright sunshine for a walk through Pinnaroo Valley.

The calls were beautiful and were from everywhere. We were soon busily recording. All the usual bushbirds were seen plus both pardalotes and both corellas.

A Collared Sparrow-hawk caused panic amongst the parrots and high perchers. It was amusing to note the difference in sizes when the Collared Sparrow-hawk and Australian Ravens were seen on adjacent branches! Later on a pair of Collared Sparrow-hawks circled overhead.

We collected 37 birds for our notes, had morning tea and enjoyed our walk very much.

Hank van Wees

KALAMUNDA NATIONAL PARK, PIESSE BROOK, 17 July

It was a fine, sunny morning although cool in the shade and muddy underfoot after the previous day's rain, as some 20 people walked as far as just beyond where the Bibbulman track crosses, and back again. This yielded 30 species including Mistletoebird, Golden Whistler, Red-winged and Splendid

Fairy-wren, and Western Thornbill. Arriving back at the cars, we were welcomed by the first sighting of a Laughing Kookaburra sitting waiting in a nearby tree for what he could gather from those indulging in morning tea.

Brian Wilson

WHITEMAN PARK WALK, 31 July

A beautiful, sunny morning was ours as 15 of us took the walk. Perfect for birds, our list soon grew. Specials were Peregrine Falcon, Australian Hobby, Brown Falcon and Nankeen Kestrel. The usual bushbirds were many with plenty of close-ups. Spotted Pardalote and Robins, Red-capped and Scarlet, stayed long enough to be admired.

After a lunch break, nine people carried on further around the lakes and to the bird hide.

Our list was close to 60. It was good to see all those ibis flying together.

We had a most enjoyable day and thank Lesley and Michael Brooker for taking us.

Penny Towells

Crossword Answers No 42

Across

1 circumpolar, 6 low, 8 attacks, 10 err, 11 travel, 12 cere, 13 news, 14 lee, 15 bustard, 17 bonnet, 19 sociable, 21 carer, 23 satisfaction, 25 neat, 26 seep, 27 hot.

Down

1 contribution, 2 relevant, 3 letterwing, 4 reader, 5 ask, 7 Wellard, 9 scavenger, 16 penalty, 17 breasts, 18 first, 19 sound, 20 bites, 22 bare, 24 net.

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY NEEDS HELP

Eyre Bird Observatory Management Committee is seeking new committee members who:

1. are able to attend monthly meetings on a regular basis (currently held Monday afternoon before BAWA meeting, 5pm at Peregrine House, but considering Sunday afternoon);
2. have a knowledge of and love for Eyre Bird Observatory;
3. are prepared to contribute time and energy to undertake tasks that assist in the management and forward planning of Eyre Bird Observatory; for example, conservation works, publicity, liaison with caretakers, etc.

If you are even vaguely interested, please contact **Catherine Van Delft** on 9279 9913 or by email vandelft@iinet.net.au

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EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

This year Eyre Bird Observatory has been the recipient of some significant generosity. The most recent is that of the Toyota Land Cruiser which was bequeathed to Eyre by Colin Davis, who died at the end of 2004.



On his visits to Eyre, Colin was impressed by the opportunities that Eyre offers for bird studies and was keen that its continued existence be assured. He was well aware that keeping the observatory supplied with 4WD vehicles is a large, regular expense. In bequeathing his vehicle to Eyre Bird Observatory Colin has provided it with a valuable asset.

Many thanks Colin, Betty and Sue.

Eyre Bird Observatory Management Committee



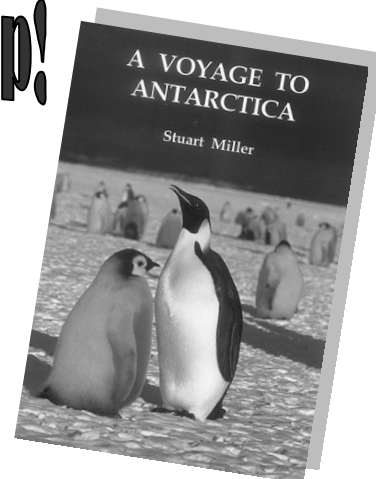
Eyre's latest vehicle at the top of the recently-improved escarpment track, July 2005.
Photo courtesy Leon Sherwood



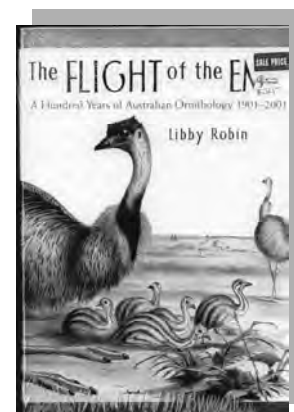
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Coming Events



Important Note re Campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BA Office (9383 7749) of the number in their party and when they will arrive. 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 will know when to expect people.

New Members

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

Sunday 4 September: Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale

Full day excursion

Meet at 8:00 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 10 September: Flynn Road, Mundaring

Full day excursion

Meet at 9:00 am at the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about 1 km on the Perth side of "The Lakes" turn-off, i.e. the York Road turn-off. We will look at several areas of wandoo woodland, where three species of robin are often seen, and sometimes Crested Shrike-tit.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Charles Merriam

Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September: Short weekend campout at Dryandra

The Publicity Sub-committee, in conjunction with Land for Wildlife and CALM, are holding a bird seminar focused on bird identification, and BAWA members are invited. The weekend includes a visit to Barna-mia. For more information see Notices. Contact Brice Wells on 9255 3710.

For members and local people.

Leader: Brice Wells

Thursday 15 September: North Lake Half-day excursion

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

For members and the general public.

Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier

Sunday 18 September: Ellis Brook Reserve, Gosnells

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin. There are three walks in the area and we will look at one of these on this visit. It is a popular area, where a variety of bush birds can be seen. Some of them are not often seen near Perth, such as Red-eared and Red-browed Firetail, Red-capped and Scarlet Robin.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris

Monday 19 September: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat Meeting, 7:30 pm

David Stewart, a producer of bird call tapes, will launch his new CD *Australian Bird Calls – South Western* which will be coordinated with slides of the birds concerned. He will describe his work, sound recording techniques, and the sort of equipment normally used.

Sat 24–26 September: Lake Unicap and Lake Muir, Manjimup

Long weekend campout

The Lake Muir/Unicap wetlands and surrounding nature reserves are approximately 70 km east of Manjimup. Due to many requests this campout is a repeat of last year's, but we plan to survey some of the reserves we didn't have sufficient time for last year.

This area has records of Australasian Bittern, last recorded in 1983/84, so we will be keen to determine if this species is still persisting here. The endangered southern subspecies of the long-billed Western Corella (Muir's Corella) is common in the area.

A house is available with sleeping, cooking and toilet facilities. There is plenty of room for tents and caravans around the house. All roads and tracks are accessible to 2WD vehicles.

People wishing to register their interest should notify the office leaving contact details. An information sheet will be sent out when you register your interest. This was a great weekend last year.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Peter Taylor

Sunday 25 September: Karnup and Balddivis Reserves

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the parking area just around the corner in Karnup Road off Balddivis Road. Follow Kwinana Freeway until it becomes Safety Bay Road. Turn left at Balddivis Road roundabout, and

travel approx 6 km to Karnup Road on the left. Western Yellow Robins have been seen here. Returning back along Baldivis Road towards Perth, it is 8 km to Baldivis Reserve, where there are shady picnic tables and toilets. We can do more birding in that reserve. Both reserves are being monitored for the Perth Biodiversity Project.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Mary Vaughan

Sat 24–26 September: Cheyne Beach, Albany

Long weekend campout

Cheyne Beach is a fishing village on the edge of the Waychinicup National Park, east of Albany. It has a caravan park, with some chalets and cabins as well as the usual caravan and camping facilities.

The Waychinicup Park has a good selection of bird species, including the hard to find endemics, such as the Western Whipbird, Western Bristlebird, and Noisy Scrub-bird. We cannot guarantee seeing all of the above, but it will be fun trying. Wildflowers should be great at this time of the year. For those wishing to stay in cabins or chalets, please book immediately to avoid disappointment. The telephone number for the caravan park is 9846 1247, and the postal address is Cheynes Beach Caravan Park, 12 Bald Island Road, Cheynes WA 6328. Activities will be organised from Saturday morning to Monday midday.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier

Sunday 2 October: Bold Park Bird Watch, Cambridge

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the Peregrine House car park off Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat. The aim of this excursion is to do a comprehensive survey of all Bold Park. A minimum of 28 people is needed for this important task. We will break into seven groups, each with a leader. Each group will do 20 minute, 2 ha surveys of their site,

recording both the species seen and the habitat used.

The survey will be followed by a sausage sizzle provided by the Botanic Parks and Garden Authority (BGPA).

If you would like to participate in this excursion could you please leave your name at the BAWA office so we can pre-organise groups and leaders.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Robert Davis and Sue Mather

Sunday 9 October: Karakamia Sanctuary, Chidlow

Late afternoon excursion

Meet at 4:30 pm at the car park for the Visitors' Centre. See Notices (page 24) for directions. We will have a short bird walk before going on the guided walk at 5:45 pm.

The walk follows rocky bush tracks and takes about two hours to complete, with a number of stops along the way. It will be followed by a cup of tea and a quick chat. Some hills are encountered along the route, and the ground can be slippery. Participants need to be relatively fit and stable on their feet.

A small torch, although not essential, can be useful for finding your footing along the tracks at night. All spotlights required are supplied.

The cost is \$15 adults, \$10 concession, and \$40 family (2 adults and 2 children) payable by cash, EFTPOS, cheque or credit card (Visa, Mastercard, Bankcard and American Express).

Please note that Karakamia is a non-smoking venue.

For members and the general public.

Leader: John Dell

Wednesday 12 October: Lake Claremont, Swanbourne

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the northern end of Stirling Road, Claremont. We will look at the waterbirds and bushbirds around this pleasant suburban lake.

For members and the general public.

Leader: David Free

Saturday 15 October: Canning River Regional Park, Wilson
Half-day excursion

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

For members and the general public.

Leader: George Agar

Sunday 23 October: Dell Forest, Kalamunda

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at Dell Forest, just off Mundaring Road, 9 km from Kalamunda along Mundaring Weir Rd. Park in the picnic area on the left of the road, just after the Dell Forest sign. This area has been surveyed since 1987, and is predominantly jarrah forest with stands of wandoo along the gully. Over 70 species have been recorded in the area, including Emu, Painted Button-quail, and many of the south-west endemics. The excursion will finish about 1:00 pm, so bring lunch if you wish.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sean Van Alphen

Monday 24 October: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat
Meeting, 7:30 pm

Saul Frank, principal of a Perth camera shop, will demonstrate various types of binoculars, telescopes, tripods, cameras and attachments that might assist birdwatchers in their hobby. Members will have a chance at the meeting to examine the exhibits.

Saturday 29 October: Kings Park, Perth

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the Botanic Gardens car park, across the road from the Pioneer Women's Memorial. We will visit several

areas in the park. There should be a variety of bushbirds in the area, and some species may be nesting.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Frank O'Connor

Saturday 5 November: John Forrest National Park

Half-day excursion

Meet at 9:00 am at the main picnic/BBQ area past the tavern. Travel east along Great Eastern Highway over Greenmount Hill. Turn left into Park Road at the second sign for John Forrest National Park and Tavern. The usual car entry fee will be waived if you explain that you are with BAWA for the bird survey. We hope to see a variety of bushbirds and some waterbirds. The species list for the national park is 87.

You may also be interested to visit the Darlington Arts Festival, which is being held on this day: BAWA has an information stand there.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Charles Merriam

Sunday 13 November: Alfred Cove, Melville

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park in Troy Park, (by the radio mast) off Burke Drive, Attadale. There should be plenty of waders and waterbirds round the river, and there are always bushbirds in the park. Buff-banded Rails have been seen here.

For members and the general public

Leader: Les Harris

Wednesday 16 November: 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. Please bring a telescope if you have one

For members and the general public.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Sunday 20 November: Paganoni Swamp, Karnup

Half or full day excursion

We will meet at 8:30 am Take the left hand turn off Mandurah Road onto Paganoni Road. This is after the right hand turnoff, from Perth, to Golden Bay.

Proceed 1.3 km until you see the Paganoni Swamp sign, on the right (there are power lines here).

Parking along Paganoni Road.

We will be looking for Western Yellow Robin and Grey Currawong, among many others in this area of diverse habitats.

The first circuit will be approx. 2 hours. Another walk across the road will take us up to lunch time.

There is a lunch area, with toilets, and those who wish can continue on to the Anstey Swamp area, off Fletcher Road, in the afternoon.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Mary Vaughan

Monday to Saturday: 26 November–4 December Search for Starlings: Week-long campout at Munglinup

This campout is being organised jointly by BAWA and the Department of Agriculture. Accommodation costs for members at the Munglinup Caravan Park will be met by the Department of Agriculture. See Notices for details. We need at least 12 people for this campout, so that we can break into two groups for the surveys. This is a little visited, but interesting section of the south coast.

People wishing to register their interest should notify the BAWA office (9383 7749) and leave contact details. An information sheet will be sent out to you prior to the campout.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Mather

Sunday 27 November: 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 a part of the Beeliar Wetlands chain, and a large number of bushbirds and waterbirds can be seen here. The complete walk around the lake could take over two and half hours, so bring water, hats, etc. Also have suitable footwear, as there are plenty of "Snakes have been seen in this area" signs around the lake.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Wynton Maddeford

Monday 28 November: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat Meeting, 7:30 pm

Mavis Norgard, a member, will give an illustrated talk entitled *Journeys in North America*, showing slides of birds and other fauna and flora that she has photographed during travels in the USA, Canada and Alaska.

Sunday 4 December: 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 down the South West Highway through Pinjarra, turning right along the Old Bunbury Rd (5 km south of Pinjarra), then right into Mills Road (fourth road). Continue along Mills Rd for approximately 10 km until you see the BAWA sign on the right. Take lunch, Wellington boots or old shoes, sun hats, insect repellent, water and telescopes. There should be a variety of waders at the lake, as well as many waterbirds and bushbirds.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Les Harris

Wednesday 7 December: Garvey Park, Ascot

Half-day 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. Species recorded here have included Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake, and Mistletoebird.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Hank van Wees

Saturday 10 December: Woodman Point and Kogolup Swamp, Cockburn

Half or full day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am in the car park at Woodman Point, on Jervoise Bay. Turn right off Cockburn Road, into O'Kane Court, then left into Jervoise Bay Cove, and almost immediately right into Woodman Point Rd. Drive to the end of the road into 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 sea birds. Bring your telescopes.

Later, we will travel to Kogolup Swamp on Beeliar Drive to look for the many crakes and rails that have been seen there in the Typha. There should also be plenty of waterbirds, and perhaps some waders. Those wishing to bring their lunch could go on to nearby Yangebup Lake, where there is a car park and grassed area, a pleasant place for lunch. There should also be lots of waterbirds on this large lake.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 11 December: BAWA Christmas barbecue

A barbecue will be held on Sunday, 11 December, at Peregrine House, commencing at 5:00 pm. BYO meat,

drinks, and salads: all members are welcome!

For members and guests only.

There will be no monthly meeting in December

Saturday 31 December: Star Swamp, North Beach Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am at the off-street parking area, opposite the primary school, in North Beach Road. This parking area is adjacent to Charles Riley Reserve (a sporting venue), 1 km west of Marmion Avenue. Star Swamp has tuart woodland, mixed banksia woodland, and heath. A variety of bushbirds and raptors have been seen here.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Rod Smith

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Chris looks forward to hearing from you.

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

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Are you joining Birds Australia for the first time, or renewing your membership?

Do you wish to receive *Western Australian Bird Notes*?

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Post to: Birds Australia Membership
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.

- ◆ **Eyre Bird Observatory volunteer caretakers** – contact
 - * Caroline Comstock Phone 9450 5086,
e-mail <caro@iinet.net.au>
 - * or Rod Smith Phone 9447 3804,
e-mail <rodjoyce@bigpond.net.au>
- ◆ **Atlas** – surveys for this are continuing – contact Cheryl Gole
Phone 9293 4958, e-mail <cgoale@westnet.com.au>
- ◆ **Excursion Leaders** – contact Sue Abbotts 9444 1607,
e-mail <sabbotts1@bigpond.com>
- ◆ **Monthly Meeting Speakers** – contact Brian Wilson 9293 1094
- ◆ **Noisy Scrub-bird** – contact Sarah Comer (see details under Notices)
- ◆ **Public Relations Sub-committee** – graphic artist, members willing to visit schools, set up displays, attend shows and help with administration – contact Elsa Dabbs e-mail <dabchic5@bigpond.net.au>
- ◆ **Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project** – a range of assistance is required including attendance at agricultural shows, databasing, surveys – contact Helen Pitman at Peregrine House 9383 7749 or e-mail <birdswa@iinet.net.au>
- ◆ **BAWA Web Site Administrator** – call or email me if you are interested and would like further details – Frank O'Connor (9386 5694 or foconnor@iinet.net.au) (see also Notices)
- ◆ **Western Ground Parrot search** in Nuytsland Nature Reserve: expedition 1 – 10 November – for more information contact Brenda Newbey 9337 5673; e-mail wgparrot@iinet.net.au

Birds Australia Western Australia Inc

Office: **Peregrine House**

167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat WA 6014

NOTE NEW ADDRESS!

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Distribution: Rod Smith

Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**—a copy on disk or emailed would assist, especially if in MSWord as a document **without** styles.
- WABN uses Birds Australia recommended English names
- except for Observations, contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.
- Full Editorial Policy is stated in WABN 74:10-12

Printing Deadlines (at the BAWA Office)

December 2005 issue: 1 November

March 2006 issue: 1 February

June 2006 issue: 1 May

September 2006 issue: 1 August

Calendar of Events

Sun 4 Sep: Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale, Full day excursion

Sat 10 Sep: Flynn Road, Mundaring, Full day excursion

Sat 10 & Sun 11 Sep: Short weekend campout at Dryandra

Thu 15 Sep: North Lake, Half-day excursion

Sun 18 Sep: Ellis Brook Reserve, Gosnells, Half-day excursion

Mon 19 Sep: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting,
7:30 pm

Sat 24-26 Sep: Lake Unicum and Lake Muir, Manjimup, Long weekend campout

Sun 25 Sep: Karnup and Baldivis Reserves, Half-day excursion

Sat 24-26 Sep: Cheyne Beach, Albany, Long weekend campout

Sun 2 Oct: Bold Park Bird Watch, Cambridge, Half-day excursion

Sun 9 Oct: Karakamia Sanctuary, Chidlow, Late afternoon excursion

Wed 12 Oct: Lake Claremont, Swanbourne, Half-day excursion

Sat 15 Oct: Canning River Regional Park, Wilson, Half-day excursion

Sun 23 Oct: Dell Forest, Kalamunda, Half-day excursion

Mon 24 Oct: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting,
7:30 pm

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