The last 50 years has seen a dramatic decline in numbers of Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoos across their range. Local extinctions have occurred at a number of nesting sites, foraging flocks have decreased in size substantially and some speculate that these flocks consist of a disproportionately high number of geriatric birds. The decline of the species is inextricably linked with the degradation and fragmentation that the south western landscape has seen over the last century; these long-lived and seemingly habitual birds have not fared well in a fast changing environment.

Conservation measures such as revegetation, fencing off remnant vegetation to exclude stock and natural hollow repair have been carried out with the explicit intention of retaining and improving habitat utilised by Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoos. The rationale for this work is thus: Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoos reach 58 cm in length and are obligate hollow breeders, the size of the hollows required dictates that the tree they select is at least 100-200 years old. For a pair to raise a healthy chick, adequate food resources must be found within a 12 km radius of the nesting site and these foraging sites need to be visually linked by patches of remnant vegetation. It is critical that all nesting tree vegetation and adequate food resources are retained at nesting sites. Protecting these sites from any further degradation is imperative.

Increasingly, artificial hollows have been suggested and utilised as an offset for the destruction of current nesting sites, and well intentioned community members are hanging nest hollows in areas where the birds do not breed yet we still don’t know if this is an effective recovery action for the species. As there is a clear need to determine how effective artificial hollows are, we have begun a trial project within BAWA’s Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project.

In partnership with Gondwana Link, Bush Heritage Australia and Greening Australia and two private landholders, the Recovery Project has implemented a long term trial to test the validity of hanging artificial hollows in areas where Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoos do not currently nest. We have hung five artificial hollows at each of five sites on the South Coast. Protecting these sites from any further degradation is imperative.

Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo chicks in artificial nest box. 
Photo: Raana Scott
All artificial hollows were hung with heights to the entrance of the hollow ranging between 3.5 and 6 metres on one of three tree species, Yate (Eucalyptus occidentalis), Wandoo (E. wandoo) and Marri (Corymbia calophylla). All are positioned to be sheltered from the winter/spring prevailing wind and to take advantage of the morning sun. Two sacrificial chewing posts were provided per artificial hollow, but only one was used with each, as in most instances there would be no room for the nesting bird if both were used.

One nesting season into the trial and we have some interesting results. The 15 hollows at the non-nesting sites show no sign of any inspection by Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo yet at the eucalypt woodland, all five hollows had obvious sign of inspection as every sacrificial chew post had chewings taken out. Within weeks of hanging the hollows at this site, one artificial hollow had been taken up by a pair and two chicks survived to only a few weeks before perishing after a very cold snap. Later in the season a second hollow was taken up and the twins fledged in January.

We have, therefore, confirmed that Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoos can use nest boxes successfully, as has been found elsewhere. With the nest boxes put up in areas where breeding does not currently occur, it is probably still too early to tell how successful this might be. These are long-lived birds, and they may still come to use these sites. Artificial hollow monitoring and maintenance will continue in the future with assistance from Bush Heritage Australia and Gondwana Link and private landholders.

Raana Scott

Volunteer call for Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo nest monitoring, we need your help this season! (October & November 2009)

The Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project is entering the 2009 nesting season and with only one project officer we need your help as we monitor sites across the south west during October and November.

We need experienced volunteers to lead small groups, particularly if you are familiar with a site.

We also need experienced and new volunteers to assist team leaders with nesting surveys.

There are sites across the south west region so trips can be just overnight or for up to a week and we require a minimum of two people per survey. All volunteers must be reasonably fit, have their own reliable vehicle and be self sufficient (camping gear, food, etc).

For more details, please contact:

Raana Scott on 0427 707 047 or 08 9071 6129 or r.scott@birdsaustralia.com.au.
Ian Cecil Robert Rowley was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on 6 February 1926 and was educated at Wellington College in Berkshire. He completed one year of an arts degree at Cambridge University before joining the Royal Navy in 1943. He served on various landing craft in Combined Operations across the English Channel for the Normandy landings.

Ian came to Australia in March 1949 and undertook a degree in Agricultural Science at Melbourne University. Ian’s lifetime passion for birds had been kindled early in life during a holiday on Exmoor with his father and it was during his undergraduate days in Melbourne that Roy Wheeler introduced him to Australian birds. On graduation in 1952, Ian joined the fledgling CSIRO Wildlife Survey Section, his task being to investigate methods of rabbit control. His leader at that time, Francis Ratcliffe, encouraged the research staff to spend a proportion of their time on a study of their own choice. And so Ian began his pioneering study on the Superb Fairy-wren in the grounds of the CSIRO laboratory in Canberra, which resulted in the first published study of an Australian cooperative breeding species. The work raised considerable international interest and Ian became a major player in the study of cooperative breeding birds. This was the start of Ian’s long and productive research on the ecology and behaviour of around 15 species of Australian birds, particularly fairy-wrens, corvids and cockatoos. His modus operandi, “to study the ecology, social organisation and demography of a colour-banded population” has since been followed in countless other Australian ornithological studies. Ian helped with the development of the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme and held one of the earliest banding licences (No 5).

In 1961, Ian began his research on Australian corvids which included a taxonomic review of the genus, the addition of a new species (Corvus mellori), the description of the five Australian species’ distribution and the provision of a comparative account of their ecology and social organisation. His personal choice at this time was to study the White-winged Chough, another cooperatively breeding species.

In 1969, Harry Frith, then Chief of the Division of Wildlife Research, told Ian that if he wanted to continue working on birds he would have to move to Western Australia to work on the Galah, “the last available pest species”. Accordingly, Ian moved to the Helena Valley laboratory and began his eight year study of the ecology and social organisation of the Galah at Manmanning, which he completed in 1977. During this time, Ian published his first book Bird Life, a review of the Australian bird species which, to that date, had been studied in detail. In 1990, he published a second book containing the results of the Galah research, Behavioural Ecology of the Galah. Between 1978 and 1991 Ian studied the ecology and social behaviour of the Major Mitchell Cockatoo in the Yandegin district. This was his first official conservation project; all his earlier official studies had been of species deemed to be pests of economic importance.

During his cockatoo research, Ian continued his interest in cooperative breeding species and, in 1973, began a study of the Splendid Fairy-wren on a section of the Darling Scarp between Gooseberry Hill and the Helena River. This project became official in 1982 and it was expanded into a broader study of cooperative breeding in fairy-wrens and the impact of wildfire on small passerines. In its heyday in the mid 1980s, the Gooseberry Hill area of 120 ha contained more than 100 adult individually colour-banded wrens living in 32 territories, for which reproductive output and movements were recorded and their progeny banded. Over 2000 different wrens were banded during the course of this study and those now present on Ian’s original 1973 area are still being monitored.

With his wife, Eleanor, Ian also studied the threatened Purple-crowned Fairy-wren on the Drysdale River in the Kimberley and on the Gregory River in Queensland, the White-winged Fairy-wren at Pipidinny, the Red-winged Fairy-wren at Manjimup in collaboration with Dick and Molly Brown, and the Blue-breasted Fairy-wren in Dryandra State Forest. The results of these studies were included in their 1997 monograph Fairy-wrens and Grasswrens. Until quite recently, Ian and Eleanor had been conducting a study of the social organisation and breeding of the Australian Magpie on the flood plains at the confluence of the Swan and Helena Rivers near their home in Guildford.

Ian was a long term member of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (Birds Australia) and was elected a Fellow in 1989. In 1991, he was awarded the inaugural D. L. Serventy Medal for excellence in Australian ornithological publications. Between 1990 and 2000, he was the last independent editor of Emu before the journal moved to CSIRO Publishing. He was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union in 1974, in recognition of his work on communal breeding and was involved with the International Ornithological Committee for a number of years. In 2005, Ian and Eleanor each received a W. Roy Wheeler Medallion awarded by the Bird Observers Club of Australia for excellence in field ornithology.

Ian’s boundless enthusiasm and delight in ornithology encouraged many to study birds and the meticulous methodologies he developed benefitted their research. In his quiet, self-deprecating way, he was always willing to offer assistance and advice to both professionals and amateurs. Ian died on 29 May 2009. He had not been well for some time and his death came after a short period in hospital. He is survived by his wife, Eleanor.

Michael Brooker

Editors’ note: A more detailed obituary will be published in Emu Austral Ornithology.
Dear Editors

Wendy Napier (WABN 130:11) is not the only person who misses Pam Agar’s crossword puzzles. They are the only ones I have ever been able to get near completion, though I admit I sometimes had to cheat a bit for a word or two, or three or four.

Hopefully, BAWA contains a member who can carry on from Pam for those of us, at least, who can no longer tread the terrain and see birds in the flesh — or should I say, in their feathers?

Robert Stranger

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Book review

‘A BIRD’S EYE VIEW OF ROTTNEST ISLAND’

Witten and published by the Rottnest Island Authority, with input from Birds Australia Western Australia, this little book (40 pages) is beautifully edited and presented. With many excellent photographs and interesting text it is likely to be attractive to holidaying families and visitors from overseas, as well as to established birdwatchers. Recommended retail price is $5.95, and it should be a must-have for everyone visiting Rottnest.

‘A Bird’s Eye View of Rottnest Island’ provides a brief but interesting Introduction, including a description of the Island, and then illustrates and discusses all 54 species classed as residents or regular visitors, grouped into habitat types on the Island. Habitat types are named but not illustrated or described in any detail, and descriptions of birds are not as comprehensive as in ‘Birds of Rottnest Island’ 1993 by Denis Saunders and Perry de Rebeira. Both books list birds in relation to particular habitat types: the coast, the salt lakes, the woodlands, the heath and the settlement being common to each book, while “the Birds of the Swamps” listed in Saunders and de Rebeira (1993) are treated within “Other Species” in the new book. Again, much more detail, and a map of habitat types on the Island, are provided by Saunders and de Rebeira.

Nevertheless, the information presented in this new book is very well selected, both to enable identification and to excite interest in people with even a passing interest in natural history. For example, the following description of Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) is bound to capture the imagination: “... one of the more famous species of shorebird to visit the island. In 2007 a female Bar-tailed Godwit in New Zealand was fixed with a long-life transmitter in an attempt to find out more about her migratory patterns. The results were astonishing. She travelled over 29,000 km on her annual journey to northern breeding grounds in the Arctic. On her return leg to New Zealand, she travelled 11,200 km in just 8 days. Quite a feat for a bird weighing in at just 300 gm!” (Page 10). It certainly is. Even in an air conditioned motor car we might hesitate to try to drive around Australia from Perth (via Melbourne, Rockhampton, Mount Isa, Katherine and Broome) in eight days, averaging 1400 km per day—with only one driver—and no re-fuelling stops!

It is now 16 years since the second edition of ‘Birds of Rottnest Island’ by Denis Saunders and Perry de Rebeira was published, and because the new book also gives information on every regularly occurring species, some interesting changes in the bird fauna over this time are apparent. Saunders and de Rebeira reported 49 species of birds as occurring regularly, while the new publication refers to “54 species which live on or regularly visit the island”.

Only two species recorded by Saunders and de Rebeira as regularly occurring are not in the new book. Of these two, the Whimbrel is a transequatorial wader, referred to in the older book as a regular visitor in numbers fewer than ten, so it is hard to know whether this is a significant change or not. Similarly, the description of Black Swan in Saunders and de Rebeira notes that during the late 1960s and 1980s there were up to 12 birds in most years, ending with the death of a single remaining bird in 1989. The absence of a list of all species recorded over the period of Birds Australia surveys in...
A Bird’s Eye View of Rottnest makes it difficult to analyse whether changes such as the two above are significant or essentially random fluctuations. However, such analysis is now available in a recent paper by Saunders and de Rebeira (2009).

Of the seven ‘new’ regularly seen birds listed in ‘A Bird’s Eye View of Rottnest’ and not at all in the earlier book, perhaps the most interesting is the Painted Button-quail, referred to as being first seen on the Island in 2002 and having increased in numbers and distribution since that time. Saunders and de Rebeira (2009) refer to it as an uncommon resident so presumably it is now breeding on the Island. Two other ‘new regulars’ are the Black-winged Stilt and Galah, both listed as vagrants by Saunders and de Rebeira. Both of these are referred to as regularly occurring in the new book, and Saunders and de Rebeira (2009) have confirmed that the Galah is now a breeding resident. The other four ‘new regulars’, Red-necked Phalarope, Sanderling, Common Sandpiper and Common Greenshank, are all transequatorial migrants.

Both books emphasise the very high conservation value of Rottnest Island, and this is reinforced by recent work showing that significant evolution is occurring on the Island in several species. Perhaps the most interesting of this work is that by Baker et al. (2003), reporting the development by Western Gerygones of an entirely different song type to that used on the mainland (although the mainland form is still also used on the Island). This has happened within the 55 years since Western Gerygones colonised Rottnest, and it is quite possible that the new calls, having evolved so rapidly, may entirely replace the mainland calls, in which case complete speciation could be the eventual result. Including the recent colonisation of the Island by the Painted Button-quail, many natural experiments are now occurring, and the significance of Rottnest Island for scientific research and conservation is increasing with time. ‘A Bird’s Eye View of Rottnest Island’ will give much pleasure to visitors to the Island and enhance the likelihood of these values being protected.

References


John Blyth

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**Digital photos**

When submitting electronic images for possible use in WABN, please use a medium to high resolution, eg, 300 dpi, as this provides a clear reproduction.

Most digital cameras provide an option for selecting the resolution. Low resolution images generally are used only for display on computer monitors and not for printing.

When emailing photos, please send them separately and not embedded in Word documents.
Observations

This list has been compiled by the WA Rarities Committee. Metropolitan suburbs or shires are in parentheses. Please report interesting observations to Frank O’Connor (9386 5694 or preferably sightings@birdswa.com.au or to the BAWA office (9383 7749). Sightings are included on the BAWA web site (birdswa.com.au) soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in the next WABN.


Highlights. There seems to have been a small influx of Black Kites in the south west from early May. One was photographed at Baldivis. Possibly the same bird was seen a few times in Forrestdale. Other reports at the Narrows Bridge, Gingin and Bridgetown have not been sufficiently documented for inclusion here. If you see a Black Kite in the south, please try to photograph it.

The series of severe winter storms in July fortunately did not cause any beach washed birds to be reported. The only bird of note was a report of a possible prion seen off City Beach. A Bush Stone-curlew seen in Mt Hawthorn and a Brush Bronzewing seen in Como could possibly be avian releases but no bands were seen. The Ground Cuckoo-shrike reported near Walyunga NP appears to be the first record for the metropolitan area for more than a decade.

Masked Lapwings were reported near Esperance. The only other record near Esperance was in January 2003 (WABN 105). It was also the eastern subspecies.

The Peaceful Dove reported on Kanidal Beach by the Eyre Bird Observatory wardens is very unusual for the area and well outside its normal range.

Several people have travelled the Gary Highway and have reported Princess Parrots in the vicinity of Jupiter Well.

The Chinese Pond Heron photographed on a vessel near Scott Reef is the second record for Western Australia.

The previous record was at Broome in late March 2008 (WABN 126). It has also been recorded on Cocos Island, Christmas Island and the Northern Territory.

A Eurasian Curlew was seen in Broome. The only other records in Australia have been on 80 Mile Beach between November 2007 (WABN 125) and December 2008 (WABN 129). These are likely to have been the same individual, but the Broome bird was identified as a juvenile and is therefore a different individual.

April and May produced a number of very unusual sightings on Christmas Island. If accepted by BARC, the Forest Wagtail will be the first record for Australia and the Citrine Wagtail the fourth record for Australia. A Little Ringed Plover was the second record for the island.

METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

Brush Bronzewing – 1, 22/04/09, near Canning Bridge Scout Hall (Como) – MC (rare in the metropolitan area)

Wilson’s Storm-Petrel – 200+, 25/05/09, Sperm Whale carcass off Scarborough – DC (high count)

Black Kite – 1, 02/05/09 to 14/06/09, photographed at ALCOA Wellard Wetlands (Baldivis) – DF * 1, 11/05/09 and 02/06/09, Nicholson Road (Forrestdale) – DW (uncommon in the south west)

Bush Stone-curlew – 1, 24/06/09, Scarborough Beach Road (Mt Hawthorn) – RP (very rare in the metropolitan area)

Arctic Jaeger – 1, 29/06/09, Woodman Point (Munster) – MC (uncommon in winter)

Common Noddy – 1, 20/06/09, Hillarys Boat Harbour (Hillarys) – RP (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

Ground Cuckoo-shrike – 1, 15/07/09, Great Northern Highway near Walyunga NP (Bullsbrook) – DJ (scarce in the metropolitan area)

SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Masked Lapwing – 2, subspecies novaehollandiae, 12/07/09, Mullet Lake NR (Esperance) – PT, RF (uncommon in the south west)

Common Noddy – 2, 23/05/09, Ocean Beach (Denmark) – GT (rare on the south coast; photographs)

ARID ZONE

White-faced Storm-Petrel – 1, 27/05/09, Atwood Eagle oil rig off Dampier (Roebourne) – DR (northern most record for Western Australia)

Southern Giant-Petrel – 1, 20/06/09, at sea off Exmouth (Exmouth) – LS, CB (edge of range; photographs)

Soft-plumaged Petrel – 5+, 06/09 to 07/09, at sea off Exmouth (Exmouth) – LS, CB (edge of range; photographs)

Peaceful Dove – 1, 02/06/09, Kanidal Beach, near Eyre (Dundas) – AM (outside normal range)

Black-chinned Honeyeater – 5, subspecies laetior, 30/06/09, 44 km E of Jupiter Well (East Pilbara) – JAK (east of normal range)

KIMBERLEY

EURASIAN CURLEW – 1 juvenile or first-year bird, 13/04/09 to 09/05/2009, Roebuck Plains and Roebuck Bay (Broome) – GS et al.
(2nd record for Australia if accepted by BARC)

CHINESE POND HERON – 1 in breeding plumage, 13/03/09, on vessel near Scott Reef – GL et al. (2nd record for Western Australia if accepted by BARC; photographs)

Buff-sided Robin – 1, 20/06/09, garden near Derby (Derby – West Kimberley) – BAC (unusual; photographs)

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Little Ringed Plover – 1, 21-23/04/09, LB3 – DH, LP (2nd record for Christmas Island)

Collared Kingfisher – 2, 24/05/09, near Settlement – LP (uncommon on Christmas Island; photographs)

Green-headed Yellow Wagtail – 1, subspecies macronyx, 03/05/09, near settlement – IM (this subspecies has only very rarely been reported in Australia)

COCOS ISLANDS

JAVAN POND HERON – 2, 03/05/09, Bechat Besar swamp, West Island – IM (still there)

FOREST WAGTAIL – 1, 17/05/09, Blowholes Track – LP (1st record for Australia if accepted by BARC; photographs)

CITRINE WAGTAIL – 1 female, 11/05/09, near LB3 – LP (4th record for Australia if accepted by BARC; 1st record for Christmas Island; photographs)

OBSERVERS

AM = Alex Morrison
BAC = Beryl Ah Chee
CB = Chris Burton
DC = Doug Coughran
DF = David Free
DH = David Helliar (UK)
DJ = Darryl Jones
DR = Dave Rae
DW = Debbie Walker
GL = Greg Lambert
GS = George Swann
GT = Geoff Taylor
IM = Ian McAllan (Victoria)
JAK = Jon and Anne King
LP = Lisa Preston
LS = Louise Smith
MC = Martin Cake
PT = Peter Taylor
RF = Rose Ferrell
RP = Ryan Phillips
BARC = Birds Australia Rarities Committee

It is hoped that in the near future BAWA may be able to start an Avon Branch and thus complete coverage of the South West region. If any member would like to volunteer to act as convenor of a Kalgoorlie Branch, a Mid West Branch, a North West Branch or a Kimberley Branch, then I would be very pleased to hear from them.

If we are able to establish all these branches then I am confident that Birds Australia Western Australia would truly deserve that title and, more importantly, make membership of BA a more significant and fulfilling feature in the lives of our country members. I would hope that it would also improve our efforts to enjoy, understand and conserve our Western Australian birds.

Bruce Haynes

LATE NEWS

I am pleased to acknowledge a private donation of $1,000 to assist in the recovery of the Western Ground Parrot.
SUMMARY OF AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN SURVEYS 2008/9

Introduction

Targeted surveys for Australasian Bitterns were conducted by BAWA volunteers and DEC staff at 38 wetlands in south west Western Australia during 2008/9. Another four wetlands were assessed quickly to determine if suitable habitat existed. Most wetlands surveyed were those where Australasian Bitterns have been previously recorded; however, several other wetlands near Manjimup and on the Swan Coastal Plain were also surveyed.

Australasian Bitterns are known to be present in four main regions in Western Australia. These are the Swan Coastal Plain, the Muir-Unicup wetlands near Manjimup, the south-west coast from Augusta to Bremer Bay and the south-east coast from Esperance to Cape Arid.

A set of sound recording equipment was bought by BAWA in October 2008 to help in the confirmation of records where volunteers are not sufficiently experienced to confirm calls of the species or where calls are being heard by experienced observers but only faintly. This equipment was bought with the proceeds of a donation from Richard Baxter after a group of 12 BAWA members booked a birding tour to Christmas Island and Cocos Island. BAWA general funds also assisted to fund this equipment.

Methods

Two methods are being used to survey for Australasian Bitterns. The first is twilight listening surveys where participants sit quietly at a wetland and listen for any of the booming calls of male Australasian Bitterns. The second is day surveys where participants walk through wetlands near or within sedges and rushes and try to hear, see or flush bitterns. In both cases any calls or sight records of Australian Little Bitterns are also noted as this species is also very cryptic, scarce and uses similar habitat.

Results

During 2008/9 Australasian Bitterns were confirmed as being present at Benger Swamp, Kulunilup Swamp, Toordit-Gurrup and Poorginup Swamp complex, Byenup Lagoon, Boat Harbour Swamp, Lake Pleasant View and Mettler Lake. Australian Little Bitterns were recorded at Herdsman Lake, Nine Mile Lake, Cobertup Swamp, Kulunilup Swamp, Boat Harbour Swamp, Lake Pleasant View, Mettler Lake and Shark Lake.

Recordings of calling Australasian Bitterns were made at Benger Swamp (Nicole Lincoln September 2008 and Robyn Pickering November 2008) and Kulunilup Swamp (David Secomb December 2008). The sound spectrum of the recording from Kulunilup Swamp and one of the Benger Swamp recordings have been analysed and will be used as a reference for future analysis of recordings, along with recordings commercially available. David Secomb also recorded calls of an Australian Little Bittern at Kulunilup Swamp in December 2008.

Other information

In March 2009 Birds Australia submitted a nomination to the Australian Government to have the Australasian Bittern listed nationally under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act as endangered. John Blyth is drafting a nomination for the species to be ‘uplisted’ in the Western Australian legislation from vulnerable to endangered.

Future work

Over the next three years further surveys are planned with the aim of determining present range, population and current wetlands of interest. Some of this work will require funding and this will be sought for the 2010/11 and 2011/12 survey periods. Assessments of habitat characteristics are also required in order to provide information on which to base future conservation work.

Acknowledgements

The following people have conducted surveys in 2008/9: Sue Abbotts, Logan Anderson, Dianne Ashford, Robin Ashford, John Blyth, Judy Blyth, Mark Blythman, Anne Bondin, Fred Bondin, Tony Bush, Martin Cake, Maureen Cawley, Ted Cawley, Alan Clarke (DEC Science Division), Alan Collins, Sarah Comer (DEC South Coast), Saul Cowen, David Crossley, Jan Crossley, Tom Delaney, Rose Ferrell, Stewart Ford, Alan Galbraith, John Graff, Cecelia Grant, Russel Hanley, Roger Hearn (DEC Warren), Andrew Hobbs, Jill Hobbs, Roger Jaensch (Wetlands International), Brad Kneebone, Maris Lava, Nicole Lincoln (DEC Southwest), John Litherland, Rod McGregor, Ada Nield, Michael Nield, Chris Reidy, Diane Reidy, Rob Schmidt, Leanne Scott, David Secomb, Erica Shedley, Jeff Spencer, Cameron Tiller (DEC South Coast), Debbie Walker, Eric Wheatley, Gillian Wheatley, Ian Wheeler (DEC Warren), Gavin White, Sue Young and Wayne Zadow.

John Blyth, Allan Burbidge, Cheryl Gole, Roger Hearn, Andrew Hobbs, Roger Jaensch, Jim Lane, Dale Roberts, David Secomb, Andrew Silcocks and Kim Williams have also assisted or provided advice to the project.

Robyn Pickering

BAWA SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AT AOC

Editors’ Note: At the conclusion of the Australasian Ornithological Conference that was hosted by BAWA and held in Perth in December 2007, there were surplus funds. The decision was made to allocate $5000 of this money to sponsor postgraduate student participation in the next AOC to be held in Armidale, NSW from 30 November to 4 December 2009.

The recipients of this $500 per person sponsorship for the 2009 AOC are Kathryn Napier, Jessica Lee and Olya Milenkaya, all doctoral candidates.
In applying for this sponsorship the students were asked to submit an outline of their work and progress to date. These are published below to give readers an indication of some of the interesting work that students are doing in Western Australia.

**Mistletoebird interactions: bartering food resources for seed dispersal**

Mistletoes are a keystone resource in Australian forests and woodlands, with 74 mistletoe species of the Loranthaceae family found in Australia (see Watson 2001 and references within). Loranthaceous mistletoes have strong co-evolutionary relationships with birds as both pollinators and seed dispersers. Most species are pollinated by birds and a varying degree of specificity to their avian pollinators is shown within the family. The intimate association between mistletoes and their pollinators has warranted suggestions that long term negative consequences for both interacting organisms and perhaps indeed the entire ecosystem may ensue if this balance were disrupted. Mistletoe distributions and infection intensity are governed by the interaction of the behaviour of birds that provide pollination and seed dispersal services, as well as a number of landscape factors (ie, forest fragmentation, fire history, clearing and management practices) affecting host plant distribution, size and condition. Greater understanding of the behaviour and physiology of birds that consume mistletoe resources will contribute to understanding the nutritional resources they provide for birds, the factors that determine how mistletoes are distributed across the landscape, and help better predict how distributions may be altered by future changes in land use and climate change.

In my PhD, I intend to study the digestive physiology and ecology of avian mistletoe seed dispersers. The specific objectives of my PhD project are to:

1. **Identify which bird species are the primary pollinators and seed dispersers** of Western Australian mistletoes and quantify the contribution of mistletoes to the nutrition of primary avian patrons.

2. **Assess the digestive processing of mistletoe fruits** by a selection of bird species that consume these resources in the wild (Mistletoebirds, Singing Honeyeaters and Silvereyes) – investigating the relationship between nutritional composition and handling to improve our understanding of the potential role these birds play in mistletoe dispersal.

The first experiments being undertaken are investigating the sugar preferences of mistletoe feeders. Nectarivorous and frugivorous birds ingest up to a third of their body mass in sugar daily to meet their energy requirements. Due to the massive volumes of diet ingested, food composition therefore has a great impact on digestive function and therefore preferences for one diet over another. To date, we know nothing about the sugar preferences of birds that regularly feed on mistletoe fruit. The diverse sugar composition of mistletoe fruit also suggests that dietary preference will be a significant factor driving how much mistletoe fruit is consumed by birds over other food sources. For example, alternative flowering or fruiting plants may compete with mistletoes in terms of generalist feeders. Improving our understanding of bird preferences as well as the sugar composition of mistletoe nectar and fruit may indicate why mistletoes attract specific bird species as pollinators or seed dispersers.

At AOC 2009 I will present details of the sugar preferences of Silvereyes, compared with known results from three Australian nectarivorous species - New Holland Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, and Rainbow Lorikeet (see Fleming et al. 2008). Further experiments assessing the digestive physiology of Silvereyes will be completed this year, with studies to be repeated with Singing Honeyeaters and Mistletoebirds in 2010.

**References**


Kathryn Napier  
School of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences  
Murdoch University

**Using resource production landscapes to conserve black cockatoos**

This study, which commenced in 2008 and will conclude by early 2011, uses three threatened WA black cockatoo species (Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo, Baudin’s Black-Cockatoo and the Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo) as a model for achieving biodiversity conservation in fragmented production landscapes.

Stationed at Boddington Gold Mine, 130 km south-east of Perth in WA, the study addresses the impact of gold-mining activities. These activities include a recent expansion project involving clearing of native forest, which had a localised, but intensive impact on the surrounding environment. This is coupled with an extensive and challenging rehabilitation period striving for a full restoration of the site’s original environmental features, although some, such as large hollows in mature trees, will require a long time to develop.

As all three black cockatoo species occur at the site, the study presents a good opportunity for assessing the impacts of mining on black cockatoos, and developing conservation and restoration management strategies.

The project will address the issue through experimental and observational studies directed at three key issues in managing impacts and restoring habitat:

1. Protecting and enhancing roosting and breeding habitat, including assessing the effectiveness of artificial nest hollows (ANHs) as a viable and effective mitigation option for black cockatoo conservation. Interviews with people who have experience with ANH have been completed as a guide to best practice in design and placement of ANH and a field experiment to enhance habitat by providing ANH is underway at Boddington. Further results are expected by the end of this year.
(2) Understanding cockatoo foraging/feeding biology and the effects of food availability on cockatoos, with a view to enhancing food resources in rehabilitated areas, and how the three species interact and use the mine-site and the different landscape elements bordering the mining tenement (ie, Sotico pine plantation, agricultural paddocks and remnant State forests). Studies of feeding behaviour in regeneration plots began earlier this year. While it is too early to report results with any confidence, trends may be apparent by December 2009.

(3) Examining the role of artificial/natural water availability in determining suitability of feeding and breeding habitat by identifying key dawn/dusk drinking areas, as well as the effects of tailings dams on cockatoo ecology by investigating the provision of artificial watering points as an alternative water source, especially around the tailings area in summer. Experiments will commence in early 2010.

If successful, the approach will contribute to our understanding of the impacts that gold-mining have on the breeding, feeding and drinking ecologies of these cockatoos, as well as the means for integrating production and conservation in these landscapes by developing and establishing industry best practice principles (ie, mitigation, offset or avoidance options).

The approach of identifying key habitat requirements and encouraging them in restoration activities will serve as a model for the conservation of other large, mobile animals in resource production landscapes.

Jessica Lee
Murdoch University

Does health predict reproductive success and longevity in the Crimson Finch (Neochmia phaeton)?

Populations exposed to environmental stressors may be more likely to contain individuals that are chronically stressed and/or in poor condition. If these individuals experience reduced breeding success and longevity, then such populations are prone to decline. If we validate the link between individual health and reproductive success and longevity, then we could identify stressed populations and mobilize conservation efforts before it’s too late.

I am exploring this question in the Crimson Finch (Neochmia phaeton) at Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary in the Kimberley. Individuals are monitored for nesting activity, longevity and dispersal. During the different stages of the breeding cycle, I sample individuals for various health indices including condition, fat, hematocrit, hemoglobin concentration, plasma protein, and white and red blood cell parameters. My aims are to (a) present Crimson Finch breeding biology and life history data, (b) describe the baseline health parameters for this species and their correlates, and (c) test if these health measures can predict reproductive success and longevity.

At the AOC in 2009, I have the pleasure of presenting detailed breeding biology of Crimson Finches in the context of life history theory and the differences between tropical/southern hemisphere birds and their northern hemisphere counterparts.

The Crimson Finch stands out by having a large clutch size despite having a high predation rate and low adult mortality. I suggest that other factors may affect clutch size and that the exploration of life histories that differ from the norm may be particularly helpful in understanding latitudinal differences in these strategies.

Olya Milenkaya
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia, USA

An Exhibition of Watercolours by
Sue Kalab
at KINGFISHER GALLERY

"Wings of the Morning"
Jarrah, Djtis-djtis & Jerusalem

Sue’s work is soft realism and brings a sense of contemplation. These watercolour paintings show in pictorial form experiences in the Holy Land and the timeless nature of Australian Nature – an inexplicable nexus

Wednesday 11th - Sunday 29th November
Opening event 6 p.m. Wednesday 11th
by David McCall, Anglican Bishop of Bunbury

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IMPORTANT OF RESERVES AND REMNANT BUSHLAND

I received an autographed gift copy of Simon J Nevill’s ‘Birds of the Greater South West’ and on reading through this book I found minor printing errors. I might add that this book should be recommended to all who have an interest in finding birds in the area this book covers. I decided to notify Simon of these printing errors via email and added a list of species I have recorded in the Gascoyne region, including some pelagic species that Simon had purposefully omitted.

Further communication stemmed from this email and I related that his book had inspired me to want to visit many of the birding sites he had listed. Some of these places are familiar to me from childhood memories and early teens. I related how stark the countryside looks to me every time I visit during summer months, with paddocks of golden stubble after the grain harvest and very little else. Even roadside vegetation is disappearing in some areas. Simon informed me that there was a mere 3% of natural vegetation left in this part of the wheatbelt, a fact that I was not aware of. I also related the loss of some species seen in particular areas of the family farm that are no longer present there today, and general decline in some other species. The family farmland falls in the corner of four different shires: Corrigin, Bruce Rock, Narembeen and Kondinin.

I recall rare birds such as Malleefowl being present though not often seen. I found an old mound amongst a small remnant patch of scrub some years ago and reflected on how different the landscape looked in days gone by. There was still a lot of uncleared land back then. The only reason I think this remnant patch remained was that there was also a large granite outcrop within this remnant and therefore little arable land could be gained from clearing it. On relating this to my father he said the last Malleefowl he saw was in about 1975. One species I saw last year that didn’t exist in the area in those years to the best of my knowledge was Inland Dotterel. On relating some of my more exciting finds during that visit I reflected on the loss of Malleefowl in the area. One of my brothers then told me that they are still present there; he had seen six near a reserve area abutting our land while harvesting the previous summer.

This reserve had become one of my favoured places to look for birds during my visits.

So when I had to go south earlier this year I spent some time combing through the western end of this reserve hoping to find some evidence of Malleefowl. The most likely chance was of finding a nest mound, or at least that is what I thought. Instead I was lucky enough to see a bird; I could scarcely believe it even after that which my brother had related to me. This really was an exciting find. No mounds were seen through the section of reserve I covered, most of which seemed to lack sufficient leaf litter to be attractive to a prospective nest builder. Nevertheless, there must be an active mound or mounds within this or other nearby reserves given the right seasonal conditions. The reserve I refer to does have a name my father told me, but he doesn’t know what it is. I simply refer to it as Sedgwick’s Reserve, taken from the family who once owned the largest portion of this land. This reserve is surrounded by private land and has no public road access.

I found another such large vegetated area on Google Earth that I assume is also a reserve and also surrounded by private land. Other large areas of native bush in the general area are Billericay Nature Reserve to the east, Bendinger Nature Reserve to the south east and North Karlgarin Nature Reserve further east again. One of my cousins told me that Malleefowl are occasionally seen around Bendinger Nature Reserve so I conclude that there is a strong chance that all of these remnant selections of natural vegetation are the only reason that this species has managed to persist in a vastly altered landscape.

Habitat destruction is the main reason for the decline of this iconic species, though there is also the threat of introduced predators such as the feral cat and fox. In that same section of reserve I found the Malleefowl, I also saw a fox and one wonders how large a toll they might take on newly hatched young.

It is amazing to think that these birds have been able to cope with all the hardship that nature dishes out to them and then mankind wreaked havoc on their habitat. These birds have not had the benefit of conservationist bodies trying to create habitat corridors such as the Gondwana project in the south west yet they are still hanging on.

Let us hope that they continue to maintain a population with a large enough gene pool to persist for many more years to come.

Les George
HOODED PLOVERS
BREEDING
NEAR NEWMAN ROCK

On 15 July 2009 I found a pair of Hooded Plovers breeding at a small, 2.5 ha salt lake 7.5 km south of Newman Rock, 45 km west of Balladonia Roadhouse. This is near the eastern limit of sightings of Hooded Plovers.

The nest with three eggs was on a small island about 10 metres from the shoreline (see photos). The island was vegetated with mainly dead shrubs. There was water in the lake due to recent rains, but it was shallow, with a maximum depth of 30 cm. The water was salty and contained small shrimp like crustaceans.

This is similar to records of other inland sites where Hooded Plovers are known to have bred on small islands and near fallen branches. This may be a strategy to minimise predation.

There are many lakes in this area, but most are inaccessible. Another two or three lakes I was able to reach had no evidence of Hooded Plovers. These lakes were larger, with no islands, so I wondered whether the presence of islands might be important for the breeding of Hooded Plovers in this area.

Greg Harewood

REFLECTIONS ON WAGTAILS

The Nyungar people (the Aboriginals of the South West) call these birds djiti-djitis after the sound they make, like “Chitty-chitty”. In Bunbury our Aboriginal primary school is called Djiti-djiti School.

In the Pilbara, the Nyangumarta women know that when the wagtail returns it brings winter, and it’s time to get out the blankets. They call it “Jittirr”, also because of the call.

‘Wags’ are cheerful and friendly; their call is a sweetness intrinsically Australian.

Once I saw on a t-shirt, “Tambellup—The Friendly Town”, with a picture of a Willie Wagtail. I wonder if the town of Tambellup still has the logo. I loved it at the time.

We have the Willie Wagtails nesting in our garden. We call them Mr and Mrs Nelson. Last summer they nested over the back door and it was hazardous to negotiate the pathway, but fun. One bird in this pair has been here since 1999. He, or she, comes in and sits quietly sheltering on the veranda during wild winter weather and squalls that come in from the ocean.

Sue Kalab

SPINY-CHEEKED HONEYEATER IN THE AVON VALLEY

Masters and Milhinch in their paper “Birds of the Shire of Northam” advise that the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (Acanthagenys rufogularis) is an uncommon visitor to the Avon Valley. Between 1–14 June 2009, my wife and I noted a single bird on our property at West Toodyay. Further sightings in recent months have included two birds around Egoline homestead during November 2008, and two birds near Mt Omni in June 2009. (J. Masters, pers. comm.).

Reference

Max Howard

BLACK COCKATOOS

I read with interest of the leucistic black cockatoo reported at Bridgetown by Deb Parry (WA Bird Notes vol. 130 June 2009).

At the moment the two birds are becoming cosy again, and they are ‘bipping’ the Magpies and becoming agitated when they come into the garden. So, it’s that time of the year again!

Sue Kalab

Black-cockatoo.
Photo: Gillian Pitt
I have also puzzled over a white-headed cockatoo in a flock of black cockatoos which frequent our patch in Wandi.

I had assumed the white feathers indicated old age and observed that often the white-headed cockatoo was leading the others of the 20+ flock.

My photos were taken in August 2008. Do these flocks wander as far as Bridgetown, I wonder?

Gillian Pitt

WATERBIRDS AT MOODIARRUP NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-EAST

We concluded a three-year replication of the South-West Waterbird Survey (SWWS) of Broadwater in February 2005. Our repeat survey made it apparent that from the time of the SWWS (1981-1985) there had been considerable change. This being so, we decided to undertake another multi-year replication survey in order to ascertain whether the changes evident at Broadwater were repeated elsewhere.

We decided on Moodiarrup South-East but counted Moodiarrup North-West as well. Moodiarrup South-East had earlier been found to have a maximum number of birds of 684, but with a total of 31 waterbird species, 11 of which were breeding, including White-necked Heron in two of the three years covered, it seemed a promising prospect. It was essentially a rain maintained swamp with occasional overflow from Lake Towerrinning. Being 122 km along the line of latitude from the coast, we felt it would be an interesting contrast to Broadwater, less than two km from the coast.

Our surveys commenced in November 2004 and in the next four consecutive months we observed a total of 22 species, with a January 2005 maximum number of waterbirds of 1532, of which 1200 were Grey Teal. However the general aspect of the swamp was not reassuring, having no living vegetation and the water, rather than appearing a normal black, increasingly gained a green/yellow appearance. After missing a survey in March 2005, the following three months produced an average total of 27 waterbirds and only four species. It was evident the swamp was dying.

South-East Moodiarrup lies east of a shallow ridge that comprises part of the eastern border of Lake Towerrinning. Although in the wettest years the lake overflowed into the adjacent S-E Moodiarrup, this was a rarity and as salt water is heavier than fresh, the overflows were of fresh water. However in a desire to remove saline water from the upper inputs of the Arthur River, whose flats to the east of Lake Towerrinning are now very saline, and to provide recreation for the local towns-people, parts of the Morhup and Cordering Creeks were diverted from the Arthur River through an 18 kilometre man-made/enhanced channel, into Moodiarrup North-West, from which swamp a deep channel was dug into the adjacent Lake Towerrinning. This was completed in 1993 and with the resulting additional water depth, Lake Towerrinning was officially declared open for water-skiing in September.

The additional waters not only raised the levels and changed the waterbird aspects of Lake Towerrinning throughout the year, but also increased its salinity. The extra water from the river diversions ensured Lake Towerrinning overflowed into the South-East swamp in most years, rather than as previously, from time to time. In addition, because of the additional water in each wet season, an overall rise occurred in the level of Lake Towerrinning, flooding the vegetation around the lake, not to mention large areas of Moodiarrup North-West, while also cutting the farm property adjacent to the lake into two.

It is difficult to understand why all this was not foreseen. The solution to the perceived problems was to cut a permanent overflow channel from Lake Towerrinning to Moodiarrup South-East. As a result water flowed over every year from Towerrinning to the South-East swamp. This change wholly altered the water levels/salinity of Moodiarrup South-East and it commenced dying. We were simply present to witness the death-throes, the extinction of the wetland having taken from late 1993 to early 2005.

We therefore confined our attentions to Moodiarrup North-West. During the SWWS, that is well before the creek diversion, the swamp was reported to support 40 species, ten breeding species (Black Swan, Australasian Shelduck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Australasian Grebe, Little Black Cormorant, Red-capped Plover, Black-fronted Dotterel, Red-kneed Dotterel, Little Grassbird) and a maximum of all the species using the swamp of 3704.

![Figure 1: The average monthly numbers of waterbirds at Moodiarrup North-West in 1981-85 (SWWS; dotted line) and in 2004-09 (solid line).](image)
Moodiarrup North-West at its maximum level is some 650 metres east-west and 320 metres north-south. At these times the whole area is covered with water, bar a few small islands, but for most of the year rather less than half of the swamp has water. The scrub that once covered the western, shallow side of the swamp and the trees on the northern edge, which sheltered some of the breeding species, are now virtually wholly absent, being drowned/dead as a result of the stream diversions mentioned above.

We surveyed Moodiarrup North-West from November 2004 to March 2009, unfortunately omitting 2007 entirely on account of illness. We recorded 44 species, five breeding species (Black Swan, Australian Shelduck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Red-capped Plover) and with a maximum of all the species of 6256, over half this figure being Grey Teal. These results were very different to those of the SWWS.

With the exception of Red-capped Plover the breeding species we observed raised their young outside the Swamp reserve in wet areas to the west and walked their young to Moodiarrup North-West at a suitable time, so it is debatable whether the breeding we observed could be said to be attributable to the swamp proper.

The SWWS surveys of Moodiarrup were bi-monthly. The SWWS numbers given in Figures 1 and 2 for the months without survey were generated by using the average of the missing months of the surveys either side.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that our surveys, compared with those of the SWWS, had significantly greater numbers of waterbirds in the summer months, especially December, January and February and greater species numbers in the wetter months of May, June and July. The most likely hypothesis to account for these changes is that since the SWWS the number of healthy or suitable wetlands available at large to waterbirds has declined, leading to concentration at the remaining suitable venues.

During the SWWS only two actual surveys of Moodiarrup NW exceeded 1000 birds, both in March, whereas our surveys had over 1000 birds seven times: January twice, February twice, March once, and December twice. The highest total waterbird count during the SWWS was 1512 (March) compared with our 4611 (February). Our maxima for two other months also exceeded the SWWS maximum, with 3378 in January and 1874 in December.

The maxima of all species seen in our surveys and during the SWWS are shown in Table 1.

The maximum figures show our surveys to have had greater numbers for 19 species, but lesser numbers for 22, despite the increase in species observed. The reduction in the numbers of diving species (Musk Duck, Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebe, Australasian Darter, Little Pied, Great and Little Black Cormorant) is striking. The figures for these species alone make it apparent there has been much change to Moodiarrup North-West since 1981-1985.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>81-85 SWWS</th>
<th>04-09 A &amp; B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musk Duck</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freckled Duck</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Swan</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Shelduck</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Wood Duck</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink-eared Duck</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasian Shoveler</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Teal</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>3400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chestnut Teal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Black Duck</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardhead</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-billed Duck</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australasian Grebe</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoary-headed Grebe</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Crested Grebe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasian Darter</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Pied Cormorant</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Cormorant</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Black Cormorant</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Pelican</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>White-necked Heron</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Great Egret</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>White-faced Heron</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Egret</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian White Ibis</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straw-necked Ibis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-billed Spoonbill</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swamp Harrier</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-tailed Native-hen</td>
<td>122</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasian Coot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black-winged Stilt</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-necked Avocet</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banded Stilt</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-capped Plover</td>
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<td>Black-fronted Dotterel</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-kneed Dotterel</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Sandpiper</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Greenshank</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Sandpiper</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-necked Stint</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp-tailed Sandpiper</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curlew Sandpiper</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Gull</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Grassbird</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total maxima</td>
<td>3704</td>
<td>6256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total species</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Comparison of the maximum numbers of all waterbird species seen at Moodiarrup North-West in 1981-1985 and 2004-2009 surveys.
Table 2: Bushbird species observed at Moodiarrup North-West 2004-2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-shouldered Kite</td>
<td>White-browed Babbler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whistling Kite</td>
<td>White-browed Babbler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Goshawk</td>
<td>Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike</td>
</tr>
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<td>Wedge-tailed Eagle</td>
<td>White-winged Triller</td>
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<td>Little Eagle</td>
<td>Golden Whistler</td>
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<td>Australian Hobby</td>
<td>Rufous Whistler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peregrine Falcon</td>
<td>Grey Shrike-thrush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo</td>
<td>Black-faced Woodswallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Rosella</td>
<td>Dusky Woodswallow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Ringneck</td>
<td>Grey Butcherbird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-capped Parrot</td>
<td>Australian Magpie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegant Parrot</td>
<td>Grey Fantail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo</td>
<td>Willie Wagtail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shining Bronze-Cuckoo</td>
<td>Australian Raven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallid Cuckoo</td>
<td>Restless Flycatcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Bee-eater</td>
<td>Magpie-lark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splendid Fairy-wren</td>
<td>Scarlet Robin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Gerygone</td>
<td>Red-capped Robin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing Honeyeater</td>
<td>Rufous Songlark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-throated Miner</td>
<td>Silvereye</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Wattlebird</td>
<td>Welcome Swallow</td>
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<tr>
<td>White-fronted Chat</td>
<td>Tree Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Holland Honeyeater</td>
<td>Australasian Pipit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Moodiarrup North-West is lined with trees on the east and south and there is a treed hill to the north. In the course of our surveys we observed, as a secondary activity, any bushbird species that were evident. Our 44 waterbird species remained ahead of the bushbirds until our last two surveys when a series of bushbird sightings reversed the trend. The 47 bushbird species observed are listed in Table 2.

We have commented previously that much change has occurred since the SWWS. Moodiarrup SE and NW reinforce this view. Essentially the data of the SWWS are now seriously out of date.

Anne and Bruce Buchanan

A BAD SMELL FOR WILDLIFE

Editors’ note: This article was brought to our attention by Michael Hancock, and is reproduced from Land for Wildlife South East Queensland, January 2008, page 4. We would be interested to hear if any of our readers have experience of interactions between dogs and native birds in bushland settings, either positive or negative.

Do domestic dogs reduce the number of birds on a property? Do predators smell bad to native wildlife? A couple of recent studies have found some answers, and raised more questions, about these topics.

Scent marking by carnivores is usually done with a combination of urine, faeces or glandular secretions. The scent marks are typically left and re-marked on objects along a predator’s regular pathway. These scents provide information to wildlife about identity, territorial boundaries, reproductive state and social status.

International research has shown that co-evolution has lead to many small mammal species avoiding the scent marks of their main predators. One would therefore assume that Australia’s native mammals have little ability to detect and avoid introduced mammalian predators such as foxes and cats because these prey and predators have not co-evolved together. Our small mammals have not yet evolved behavioural adaptations to avoid these introduced predators.

In line with international research, past Australian studies have shown that native rodents do not avoid odours of introduced predators such as foxes, cats and dogs. However, it was unknown if native small mammals would have a similar lack of reaction to native predators such as quolls.

In a recent study, the Tiger Quoll was the native predator of focus and small native mammals were the native prey. Traps were treated with either Tiger Quoll faeces or were left untreated. Native rodent species included Bush Rat (Rattus fuscipes), Swamp Rat (Rattus lutreolus) and Eastern Chestnut Mouse (Pseudomys gracilicaudatus). The results showed that these 3 rodent species did avoid Tiger Quoll odours. Co-evolution theory would support this finding.

To complicate matters, this recent study also treated some traps with fox faeces. The results were surprising. Contrary to previous findings, this study showed that the three native rodent species did avoid fox odours. What does this mean? Are native rodents learning to avoid foxes? Is this a recent evolutionary response? Is there a common scent component in both fox and quoll odours? Are the reasons for wildlife behaviours simply too complex to distil through research? Basically, a final position on if, and how, native rodents detect and avoid foxes is still debatable.

The research also studied the behaviour of the marsupial Brown Antechinus (Antechinus stuartii) by treating traps with both Tiger Quoll and fox faeces. In contrast to the native rodents, the antechinus showed no response to either predator odour. Thus, the study concluded that predator odour avoidance might not have evolved in marsupials.

Another study, north of Sydney, identified that walking dogs in bushland, significantly reduces bird diversity and abundance. Walking a dog in bushland can cause a 35% reduction in the number of bird species, and a 41% reduction in the number of individual birds in the area. This affect occurred in both areas where dog walking is common and where it was not, indicating birds do not become accustomed to disturbance by dogs. The research did not identify if this is due to their physical presence or if it too is scent related.

The above results indicate that the presence of dogs may reduce bird diversity and abundance, but does not answer why this is so. Further research is definitely still required to provide dog-owners, land managers and pest animal controllers with more accurate information about predator and prey interactions in Australia.

Future research into predator-prey interactions may be able to provide us with new opportunities to manage and conserve our native species. One such opportunity may be the potential to spray road surfaces with artificial predator scents to deter native wildlife and reduce road-kill incidences.

References

THE GHOST OF THE BOOBOOK

During the summer months at our place in Julimar, our sliding glass doors had received scant attention. The film of dust that had covered the surface of the glass had gone unnoticed. On a rain soaked evening in early June, at around 7:00 pm, the veranda light was on. About half a dozen or so ghost moths were flying up and down and around our glass doors — probably attracted by the light, or just trying to keep dry. One of these finger-thick sized moths stretched the tape at 11cm body length. Ginny and I had not been watching the evening news for more then a few minutes when all of a sudden a Southern Boobook flew from its wet perch three metres away in a Marri sapling and collided into the glass door. Thankfully, the owl appeared unhurt as it gathered itself and flew away into the night, minus the moth! Wet feathers and a very dusty glass door, made for this ghostly image. I heard a boobook the following night — hopefully the same one.

John Barnett
Notices

Saturday 10th to Monday 12th October
Rottnest Island bushbird count

We are attempting to establish the size and distribution of the population of Golden Whistler and Red-capped Robin on Rottnest Island. This survey will replace the bushbird counts that have occurred in recent years in conjunction with the shorebird counts. By doing this work during the breeding season of these birds it is hoped that we will have a better chance of detecting them as they should be calling more than we have experienced in the past.

Twenty people will be need for this count. There is accommodation at approximately $16.50 per night at the UWA Research Station. This offers cooking facilities, refrigerators and bathrooms. You need to bring your own food or buy it on arrival. Transport around the island will be provided and the Research Station is easily accessible by bus or on foot.

This is always a fun weekend. If you are interested in attending please register you name and contact details at the office.

For members only.

Leader: Sue Mather

RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO AROUND PERTH

The WA Museum is seeing red—Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos! Recent extensive movements of the Forest Red-tail Calyptorhynchus banksii naso have been observed around the Perth metropolitan area since the beginning of the 2008/09 summer season. The movement of the cockatoos from the Darling Range onto the Swan Coastal Plain has increased greatly over the last few years, both in the numbers of birds involved and their distribution on the plain. In the metropolitan area the movements appeared to be localised to Kewdale, Queens Park, Canning, Willetton and surrounding areas. More recent observations suggest that the birds are increasing their distribution west and north, with sightings during December and January reported from Bayswater, Ascot, Kings Park, Jandakot, Herdsman and City Beach. The occurrence of Red-tails in and around the Kewdale and Kensington areas is noticeably more frequent and regular than recorded in previous years.

The WA Museum would appreciate any observations of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos in the south-west, in particular the Perth metropolitan area and Swan Coastal Plain. Please record the following details;

- number of birds
- date and time
- location
- behaviour (ie, feeding) and direction travelling
- were red tail feathers observed?

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos can be distinguished from the locally more common Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo by their overall larger size, bill and crest, and slower, deeper flight. Females and juveniles are speckled with yellow and orange, and bright orange barred tail. The males are solid glossy black with fiery-red bands on the tail. They do not have a conspicuous cheek patch. The call is a rolling “kar-raack”.


To report sightings or request a copy of sighting record forms, please contact the Ornithology Department at the WA Museum on 08 9212 3700 or clare.stevenson@museum.wa.gov.au.

Editors’ note: If you observe Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos in a particularly unusual location, or have extensive observations from a particular locality, or notes on feeding on the Swan Coastal Plain, consider also writing a paragraph or two for WABN, as this will be of interest to other members.

BEGINNERS CLASSES – PRESENTED BY THE BAWA COMMUNITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE AT CANNING RIVER ECO EDUCATION CENTRE

Bird Identification Workshops – The Wonder of Birds

Saturday October 10th – Part 1:

Bird Seminar for Beginners

Presentation—“The Wonder of Birds” followed by talks covering all the basic knowledge items, including bird identification, field guides, binoculars, common terms and jizz. This is a great way to start bird watching. Learn to identify the birds in your garden or revise your own knowledge. Bird watching is a wonderful fascinating hobby.

TIME: Registration 8.45am. Program 9.00am – 12.30pm

VENUE: Canning River Eco Education Centre, - off Kent Rd,
Wilson, Canning River Regional Park

Sat October 17th - Part 2:

Bird Seminar on Bird Identification, What is that Bird?

Presentation on Bushbirds and Waterbirds

This seminar in our bird series will assist with the identification of bush and water bird species. There will be a presentation followed by a field walk. Binoculars will be available to borrow. Gold coin donation.

TIME: Registration. 8.45am. Program 9.00am – 12.30pm

VENUE: Canning River Eco Education Centre, - off Kent Rd,
Wilson, Canning River Regional Park

Bird guides and cards will be available to buy.

BOOKING – phone Tanya: 9461 7160
or Email: tporter@canning.wa.gov.au

STATE YOUR NAME, A CONTACT NUMBER AND THE DATE OF THE SESSIONS YOU WISH TO ATTEND.
COMBINED CHARITIES’ CARD SHOP
Trading at Bank of Queensland
111 St George’s Terrace, Perth
Monday–Friday
7 September – October: 10.00 am – 3.00 pm
November – 17 December: 9.30 am – 4.00 pm
Telephone: 9263 6417 (shop)
or our website: www.charitycardswa.org.au

Sunday 13th December: BAWA Christmas barbecue
A barbecue will be held on
Sunday, 13th December
at Peregrine House,
commencing at 6:00 pm
BYO meat, drinks and salads
All members are welcome!
For members and guests only

Birds of the Greater South West
New bird book now available at the Birds WA office at Peregrine House.
Simon Nevill has produced a pocket 305 page soft cover guide to the Birds of the Greater South West. It has a protective plastic jacket and strong stitched back.
The area covered by this publication includes the south-west region, extending to Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie and Esperance.
Following an introductory section on general topics, the main guide book section proper includes 304 species photographed with text and distribution maps including known subspecies. It covers the vast majority of birds possible to see but does not include pelagic or some extremely rare vagrants.
It retails from Birds Australia for $34.95.
Australasian Bittern Project
Survey Campouts 2009

Volunteers are required for weekend surveys for the Australasian Bittern and Little Bittern at key wetlands in the south-west undertaken in conjunction with DEC staff. Surveys will be on Friday and Saturday evenings, starting near sunset and finishing approximately two hours after sunset. A survey on the Saturday morning may also be conducted. Volunteers must have good hearing and good mobility for these night-time surveys.

Albany 2 to 4 October. For further details and to register, contact Robyn Pickering:

pickyang@smartchat.net.au
or telephone 0405 395 286.

Muir-Unicup Wetlands (near Manjimup) 27 to 29 November. For further details and to register, contact Peter Taylor:

goodoldpete@westnet.com.au
or telephone 9772 4788
and mobile 0428 345 245.
**ALBANY BIRD GROUP**

**April outing, Twin Creeks Reserve, The Porongurups**
A small group of 13 of us visited Twin Creeks Reserve in the Porongurups on a cloudy but windless day. We had very good views of Scarlet, Western Yellow and White-breasted Robins. Painted Button-quail were also seen, and all the usual bushbirds. The total for the day was 43 species.

_Liz and Charlie Davies_

**May outing, Manypeaks area**
A small group set out to explore the birdlife along Pfeiffer Road near Manypeaks. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Grey Butcherbird both allowed us good views as did many of the smaller bushbirds usually found along road verges. A track leading into the Sisters Reserve provided us with sightings of most of the region’s parrot species. Stopping along Mt Pleasant Rd we found Scarlet and White-breasted Robins. We finished the outing at the Upper Kalgan Bridge where we saw a Darter. The total count for the day was 45 species.

_Anne Bondin_

**June outing, Narrikup**
We had a wonderful sunny day for a return visit to Charlie Hick’s farm on Chorkerup Road, Narrikup. We last visited his farm in April last year, and since then he has done a lot of work improving his farm with fencing off more areas of bushland. He had recently received four inches of rain, so everything was looking good. We saw the usual bushbirds and an Australian Hobby, but no other raptors except a Wedge-tailed Eagle. Thirty-seven species were seen altogether.

_Liz and Charlie Davies_

**July outing, Riverview golf course, Albany**
A walk through Riverview golf course provided us with the opportunity to look at Inland, Western and Yellow-rumped Thornbills, all in the same tree—no excuses for not being able to tell them apart from now on! Scarlet Robins were calling without pause and a pair of Western Yellow Robins was also found. Spotted Pardalotes proved difficult to see, but after moving on to the nearby Pony Club we all enjoyed good views. There we also added White-breasted Robin to our tally and enjoyed the company of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

_Anne Bondin_

**LOWER SOUTH WEST BIRD GROUP**

**May 2009 outing: Bridgetown Jarrah Park**
A very quiet start to our survey of this small reserve, to the west of Bridgetown, and we were concerned that we were going to record fewer species than the 11 members in attendance! However, as the day warmed up, the birds began to appear, culminating in great views of a pair of Crested Shrike-tits. Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos were ever audible and seen frequently as were White-naped Honeyeaters. Both Western and Red Wattlebirds were seen and other highlights included White-browed Babblers, Varied Sittellas and White-breasted Robin. Only 22 species in the end but a pleasant morning’s birding nonetheless.

**June 2009 outing: Haddleton and Wild Horse Swamp Nature Reserves**
An hour or so’s drive east of Bridgetown lies Haddleton Nature Reserve in the Blackwood Valley, and the destination for our June outing. Members travelled from Wagin, Katanning, Pemberton, Donnybrook and Bridgetown to attend and were rewarded with close-up views of three thornbill species: Inland, Western and Yellow-rumped, as well as Weebills and Western Gerygones. Relatively quiet at this time of year and with the rain threatening, we moved to Wild Horse Swamp on the Blackwood River, accessed through private land. The flood plains were inundated to some degree but the birdlife was worth the wet feet. Restless Flycatcher, Varied Sittellas and both Red-capped and Scarlet Robins were seen as well as Golden and Rufous Whistlers and Grey Shrike-thrush. A total of 47 species were recorded for the day.

**July 2009 outing: Dingup Nature Reserve, Manjimup**
A pleasantly sunny winter’s morning at a rarely visited reserve and we were barely out of the cars when we were greeted by the sound of a Crested Shrike-tit in nearby Flooded Gums. Great views of a single female were had by all seven of us. A month prior, a pair had been seen here but on this occasion, no sign of the male. The rest of the morning was spent walking the boundary track with just a brief shower to remind us that it was still winter. Highlights were the three robins (Western Yellow, Scarlet and White-breasted), Red-winged and Splendid Fairy-wrens and, unusual in the Lower South West, a lone Brown Falcon sweeping down the Wilgarup valley. The Wilgarup River itself was in full flood but on the main dam, where the water was calmer, were a handful of ducks and Australasian Grebes. Rain held off while we sat and had lunch and drew up the total of 31 species accounted for during the walk.

**Future outings**
Outings are held monthly on the third Sunday. Contact either Peter Taylor (9772 4788) or Erica Shedley (9761 7512) for details.

_Peter Taylor_
FLOREAT LAKES (HERDSMAN’S LAKE—PONY CLUB), 9 May

Twenty five birdwatchers enjoyed seeing 64 species of waterbirds and bushbirds around the lakes. The dredger that was home to coromants for several years is no longer there.

Nine species of ducks, all three species of grebes, ibis, Australasian Darters and three coromant species were seen. Great Cormorants had white breeding patches on the tops of their legs. No Royal Spoonbills were present, but adult Yellow-billed Spoonbills were. Buff-banded Rail and Spotless Crake were also sighted.

Four raptor and three wader species were also seen. Happily, the Red-capped Plovers still are around despite building works, dogs and cats. Australasian Pipits are surviving, too.

Weebills, Western Gerygone, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and four honeyeater species were heard and seen along with several other bushbirds. We made contact with the Saturday morning banding group near the Settler’s Cottage. They were busy with birds in the nets, but we established that Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and Variegated Fairy-wrens had not been seen in the area for several years.

Claire Gerrish

GLENEAGLE REST AREA, 17 May

Twenty four people, including three visitors, met on a cool, calm, fine morning. It soon became clear that birding would be difficult with very few birds heard calling. This was put down to the total lack of rain for nearly a month. Great views were had of Western Rosella, White-breasted Robin, Western Yellow Robin and Scarlet Robin but most other species were difficult to locate and to observe clearly. The tally of 28 species also included the south west endemics Baudin’s Black-Cockatoo, Red-capped Parrot, Red-winged Fairy-wren, Western Wattlebird, Western Spinebill and Western Thornbill but only a few people had good views of these species.

Frank O’Connor

BICKLEY BROOK, 24 May

On a sunny, but decidedly chilly morning 16 members enjoyed a very pleasant walk at Bickley Brook.

The birds were few and far between, but we managed to see 28 species. These included several Dusky Woodswallows cuddled up on a branch, some stunning Red-capped Parrots and five species of honeyeater. A fine pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles flew over at the end to keep up our record of a raptor at morning tea!

Many thanks to John and Ruth for guiding us.

Maureen Cawley

MT GIBSON SANCTUARY CAMPOUT, 29 May–1 June

The Foundation Day long weekend campout was held at Mt Gibson Sanctuary, an AWC property 75 km north of Wubin.

Numbers were limited to 20 members who were tasked with surveying 12 designated sites of differing vegetation and landscape. Split into two groups we surveyed six sites each on the Saturday then reversed them on the Sunday giving everyone a chance to visit a number of habitats. Other surveys were completed for the campsite itself plus special locations such as Mushroom Rocks, Condamne Dam and a number of sites along the Barrier Fence with varying fire history.

Some highlights were a Malleefowl (seen by just one group), Grey-fronted and Pied Honeyeaters, Chestnut Quail-thrush, White-backed Swallows and a pair of Major Mitchell’s Cockatoos that flew through the campsite one lunchtime, stirring all the bird photographers into a flurry of activity. White-fronted and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters were recorded almost everywhere we went as were Weebills and Chestnut-rumped Thornbills. At the designated survey sites, a total of 48 species were recorded while 71 were accounted for throughout the weekend. Persistence in a long history of BAWA campout tipping competitions finally paid off for John Litherland who correctly guessed the magic number and took home the prize!

An excellently run weekend, making all the hard work of monitoring thoroughly enjoyable, was a credit to our leaders, John and Ruth Luyer, who worked tirelessly in coordinating the group and provided us with all the much needed maps and background information. Thanks also to our hosts, AWC Ecologist, Manda, and camp caretakers, Stan and Mary for their hospitality and for providing us with a wonderful dinner.

Peter Taylor

DONGARA CAMPOUT, 30 May–1 June

Nineteen members gathered for what turned out to be a very enjoyable weekend.

The first morning saw a walk up the estuary within the town itself, and back down the other side. There was plenty of variety, including two egrets that caused much discussion as to their identity, but eventually proved to be Cattle Egrets. In the afternoon, we went south and east, stopping at various places Paul had scouted out the week before, adding to the list as we went. The previous count for Dongara was looking threatened.

Sunday saw us at Coal Seam reserve. A pair of Peregrine Falcons glided past almost below us as we stood at the lookout and again we kept adding to the list, including a flock of Banded Lapwings flying overhead, and Diamond Doves near the watercourse. We went on to Ellendale Pool, shouldering aside campers to see Peregrine Falcon again, and the Musk Duck Paul saw the previous week.

Monday morning, with the numbers thinning we went to the mouth of the Greenough River. There were a few more.
additions to the list and finally the remaining nine people caught up with the elusive Black-fronted Dotterel. The count was done then for 101 birds, a record for this particular campout. Well done, Maureen, for your brilliant prediction.

Many thanks to Paul Marty for a very well planned and led campout.

Maris Lauva

BOLD PARK, 14 June

Despite a chilly start, 26 people, including six visitors and a very enthusiastic nine-year old, enjoyed walking several of the trails in this area. Great views of a Little Eagle were enjoyed by some and most had excellent views of Red-capped Parrot and both Spotted and Striated Pardalotes.

A total of 37 species including three raptors and five honeyeaters were seen but spinebills, fairy-wrens and scrubwrens remained elusive.

George and Pam Agar

TOMATO LAKE, 18 June

Seventeen members showed up on quite a miserable morning. The local news photographer took more photos than all the birders combined!

The drizzle and rain didn’t dampen our spirits, however, and we all enjoyed the walk around a very pleasant, well developed lake. There weren’t any spectacular birds, but considering the weather we were pleased to see a couple of raptors and 34 species in all. That turned to 35 as we were wrapping up the bird call and sharp eyed Maureen saw an Australasian Darter alighting on the lake off in the distance through the drizzle.

Many thanks to Barry and Molly for the interesting morning.

Maris Lauva

FLYNN ROAD, MUNDARING, 20 June

A forecast of rain resulted in a low turn-out, with only ten members braving the elements for a walk in the Wandoo at Flynn Road. In the end, the weather was relatively mild, with only one major shower passing through during the walk, and participants were treated to some excellent sightings. Elegant Parrots and Rufous Treecreepers were sighted early and continued to be seen throughout the walk, whilst at one stage a flurry of activity resulted in sightings of Restless Flycatcher, at least two Crested Shrike-tits, Varied Sittellas and a Peregrine Falcon. Some observers also managed sightings of Emu, Hooded Robin and Painted Button-quail.

Most of the group moved on to a second site for lunch, but few new birds were recorded. In the end, the day’s count was 37 species, with thanks going to Charles Merriam for leading another excellent walk at this site.

John Graff

PINNAROO VALLEY MEMORIAL PARK, PADBURY, 5 July

Eighteen members met in cool winter sunshine at Pinnaroo Valley. Much of the park has been developed over recent years but there is still good Tuart forest on the west side.

A total of 39 species were seen and included views of Collared Sparrowhawk and Brown Goshawk. None of the birds were calling much but we were able to see Rufous Whistler, Mistletoebird and Western Gerygone. Australian Wood Ducks were looking for nesting hollows but were being given a hard time by Rainbow Lorikeets, Galahs and Little Corellas claiming ownership. A Little Eagle flew overhead during morning tea allowing all to see its identifying plumage.

Sue Abbotts

ST RONAN’S NATURE RESERVE, 18 July

Twenty one people saw 49 species at St Ronan’s Nature Reserve. Brown-headed and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters were two of the eight honeyeaters and two wattlebirds seen. Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Western Yellow Robins, Red-capped Robins, Rufous Treecreepers and a Southern Boobook all made appearances. A highlight after lunch was when a Peregrine Falcon flew out of the Wandoo into the neighbouring paddock where it was then chased by a Brown Falcon!

Half of the group stopped at Mt Observation on the way home and added Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Western Thornbill, Western Gerygone and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo! Near the bird hide an unusual adult male Golden Whistler with a cream breast took everyone’s attention. Total species for the day was 53.

Robyn Pickering

CHRISTMAS TREE WELL, 2 August

Twenty-three people enjoyed rambling through Wandoo – Jarrah forest in cool, lightly overcast conditions that were good for birding but unfortunately birds were not numerous.

At Christmas Tree Well some of the group had excellent views of Varied Sittellas while sparsely-flowering Dryandra enabled views of seven honeyeater species, including Western Spinebill and Yellow-plumed Honeyeater.

A brief search of the area near Willies Road failed to find the elusive Crested Shrike-tit or Hooded Robin so the group moved on to another site along Qualen Road. Four parrot species and the Rufous Treecreeper were recorded here, bringing the total for the day to 42 species.

George and Pam Agar
The past few months have flown by since I arrived at the end of April but they say it does when you’re having fun! The observatory has a great relaxed atmosphere which the visitors and guests have really appreciated, mixed in with some great bird watching as well.

Unfortunately, the batteries for the solar panel power system finally gave up the ghost as soon as I arrived and the observatory has been relying on the generator for power. The day arrived when the new batteries and solar panels were installed but to our dismay the inverter then collapsed and now we are awaiting the arrival of a new one to be installed in the next few weeks so that we may once again make use of one of the greatest natural resources we have – the sun. The new equipment is very expensive to replace and the observatory would like to thank all those members who donated money towards the maintenance of the system over the last year.

We were visited by the Chief Scientist for WA, Lyn Beazley, who was on a tour of the area and wanted to visit to see us. Lyn was most impressed with the way in which the observatory operates, its objectives and the work that it does within a local, national and international context. The hummingbird cake provided by Andrea Spencer our Chair person also went down a treat as we watched birds and wallabies coming to the baths outside the shadehouse! Lyn was interested to hear more about the full survey of the benthic fauna in the bay carried out by DEC and the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) and that we continue to monitor the benthic fauna at two sample sites as part of our commitment to monitoring the health of the bay.

Bush bird banding has been re-established at the observatory as both Matt Slaymaker (Assistant warden) and myself are fully licensed banders and so we have dusted off the mist nets and banding equipment and restarted banding around the observatory as well as re-introduced the constant effort ringing at the mangroves near One Tree. The visitors to the observatory have enjoyed being able to ‘get up close and personal’ with the bush birds and see bird research taking place first hand. A surprise find whilst mist netting around the observatory grounds was a juvenile Red-headed Honeyeater normally found in the mangroves around Broome, presumably making a local dispersal movement.

The summer holidays are nearly over now, and the observatory has continued to attract a high number of people wishing to camp or use the accommodation. The chalet has had a real make over, by a great couple of volunteers who re-hung doors, revamped the kitchen cupboards, straightened window frames, and started the external painting process which was completed by successive camp ground hosts. This is yet another way in which dedicated volunteers have come to give their free time to help keep the observatory up and running so that it can continue to offer high quality accommodation and services.

As well as a high turnover of guests, two very enthusiastic university groups stayed; one from Notre Dame and another from La Trobe. Both groups were shown the shorebirds of the bay and managed to participate in a cannon netting session for shorebirds, providing the highlight of their stay. As part of their studies, they braved the mud flats to sample the benthic fauna to find out what it really is that attracts thousands of birds to the area and why we should protect high tide roosts for these long distance migrants.

Shore birds have not always been easy to see this year, and this is possibly due to the increased pressures they face in the bay, which has forced some of them to roost elsewhere. The majority of the birds here at this time of year are in their first year of life and will not breed this year, so they stay around the bay continuing to take advantage of the good feeding opportunities. Alongside the commoner waders, up to 20 Asian Dowitchers, 30 Broad-billed Sandpipers and Red-necked Avocets were recorded almost daily.

In other bird news, a Square-tailed Kite was seen near Gantheaum Point while a White-backed Swallow, the third record for Broome, was watched with Tree Martins cruising the beach at One Tree. Welcome Swallow, Red-capped Robin, Black Honeyeater and Yellow-billed Spoonbill are just some of the other unusual species seen in the area over the last few months. Our BLOG ‘Flyway’ has further details of these and other sightings accessible through the observatory website www.broomebirdobservatory.com.

Some cause for concern was an oil spill that affected some of the beaches around Broome with globules of sticky tar washing ashore. Although it could have been a lot worse than it was, some waders, terns and gulls were seen with oil on their plumage and some waders were caught carrying smudges of oil. DEC are still investigating the source of the pollution but with the aid of modern science it should be possible to identify where it came from, provided it came from a vessel that registered locally.

The highly popular Birds of Broome Region course is being held again in October but was over-subscribed, so we decided to develop two shorter courses, one in September and another in October, which will also look at the birds of the Broome area. The courses coincide with the direct flights from Melbourne and Sydney making it a bit easier to travel to the observatory. Even now spaces are still available, so why not reserve your place now by phone or email.

As I write this, the breeding waders are beginning to return and there are some brilliantly coloured Curlew Sandpipers, Greater Sand Plovers and Red-necked Stints brightening up the wader flocks. The Australian Wader Study Group will be arriving shortly after the main arrival of waders in November, to band and colour-flag birds, so watch out for marked birds when out birding and send in any sightings you might see. Remember, every sighting counts!

Nik Ward
This last quarter has seen a flurry of activity to find caretakers for May, June and July. A medical situation prevented our planned caretakers from taking up their position. Our gratitude goes to Alex and June Morrison who, with just five days’ notice, managed to be at Eyre for the handover from Ali and Ian Muirhead. Richard and Jacqui Pemberton relieved them in July.

Our roster is now back on track with Nick and Rachel Hill taking up their positions at the beginning of August.

Eyre has hosted a day for DEC regional staff who were camped out at Burnabbie. The Caretakers gave them an insight into Eyre as an observatory and the research work carried out there. A thank you message from Klaus Tiedemann (Manager, Esperance District) indicated the group had enjoyed their day at Eyre.

Dune restoration work is still on offer with free accommodation for interested people willing to participate.

There are always on-going field studies.

Come to Eyre and “get involved”

Or join a course

Alma de Rebeira
Chair, Eyre Management Committee.

Caretakers’ report

June and Alex Morrison, May 21st – July 4th 2009

It was with some trepidation that we set off for Eyre. Poor Alex had been looking forward to getting home and relaxing after a trekking holiday in Nepal only to find that five days after arriving back in Australia he was heading east for a stint at Eyre Bird Observatory (EBO).

Fortunately we have been to EBO many times before and have helped out in previous emergencies but this was the first time that we were doing it on our own. Our thanks to Ian and Ali Muirhead for the very intense tuition. They must have been as mentally exhausted as we were after the all too brief five days’ handover.

On our first day out to Cocklebiddy to collect the stores and mail we decided to stick to the microwave tower road to get an idea of how long the return trip via the dump and Crystal Ponds would take—bearing in mind we had to be back in time to check and put away the groceries before the 4.00 pm weather. We were disappointed at the lack of birds around the microwave tower but were amply recompensed when on turning onto the highway we saw a large grey bird coursing along the roadside ditch. We stopped right alongside it and identified it as a Spotted Harrier—only the second time we have seen one. We were glad we had not taken the Haig track that day. Other birds of note seen on the trips to Cocklebiddy were a Ground Cuckoo-shrike and at Crystal Ponds a Red-necked Avocet.

For the first couple of weeks the weather was warm and sunny and there was an endless procession of birds to the birdbaths. Countless Silvereyeves, New Holland and Singing Honeyeaters as well as White-browed Scrubwrens, Australian Ravens, Grey Currawongs, Spotted Pardalotes, Brown, Brown-headed, White-eared and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Red Wattledbirds and everyone’s favourite the Major Mitchell’s Cockatoos. It was the one bird all our guests wanted to photograph. We also recorded both Golden and Rufous Whistlers. Although we never saw them at the birdbaths, Weebills could often be heard.

The Collared Sparrowhawk also came in quite often and seemed unconcerned at people moving on the verandah and the clicking of cameras. As always the first and last call of the day was made by the Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

When the warm weather went, so did the birds—after all, who wants to have a cold bath when there is a bitterly cold wind blowing. When the gales and rain ceased and warm weather returned, so did the birds.

Having our morning ‘cuppa’ on the north verandah one morning we were alerted by the sound of a different and very noisy call. We managed to get the binoculars on the familiar black and white colouring of a White-winged Triller as it flew along below the low western dunes. We only heard and saw it once at EBO though we did see one above the scarp.

For much of our stay we had very high daytime tides and it was difficult to get along the beach. We tried going after the afternoon weather recording one time but saw no waders except a Banded Stilt with some Eastern Reef Egrets up towards Nine Mile. It was dusk by the time we reached the far end. With more favourable tides the count was more productive with several kilometres producing Red-capped Plovers as well as Pacific Gull, Silver Gull, Crested Tern, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Australasian Gannets, Red-necked Stint, a Sanderling and the seemingly inevitable White-faced Herons at Nine Mile.

Whilst having our lunch at Nine Mile on one occasion a Peaceful Dove walked around our feet, apparently a rarity only having been recorded previously at EBO half a dozen times. The most notable bushbird seen on the beach run was a Mistletoebird, again at Nine Mile.

It was interesting to see the change in the beach each time we did a count. Gales and the high tides dramatically changed it, cutting into the fore dunes and allowing space enough for a vehicle to pass between the boat wreck and the dune. One time there were huge piles of weed all along the beach and much of the weed banks at Nine Mile had vanished. The next time the beach was scoured clean of both the weed and the hummocks of vegetation. The boat wreck is getting more deeply embedded in the sand, with the deck now only a step up from beach level.
Getting up before a chilly dawn to do the weather did have some compensation as we saw many spectacular sunrises and one stormy day “Joseph” was framed by a fully formed rainbow. Fantastic cloud formations produced some wonderful photographic opportunities up on the dunes, especially towards sunset.

We left Eyre in the capable hands of Richard and Jacqui Pemberton and I still remember returning with Richard from the Cocklebiddy run to the smell of freshly baked scones and blueberry muffins and other delights, which seemed to cover every available surface in the kitchen, and Jacqui announcing she had had a wonderful day!

June and Alex Morrison

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS COURSES COMING UP AT EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

DUNE RESTORATION Special price FREE!!!!
15th November – 21st November ’09 Facilitated by George and Pam Agar
An application for a grant from Coast Care has been successful and Eyre will run two Dune Restoration Workshops, one in November 2009 and the other in January 2010. The maximum number of participants will be six for each session. The grant will cover accommodation and meals for those participants willing to work four hours a day. There will also be a small fuel subsidy per vehicle.

This special offer is for people who love the outdoors and the environment. The tasks will include seed collection (for future planting) and seaweed (for spreading on the dunes). Hurry, we can only take six on each session. Ring the Caretakers to secure your place. Get involved.

FIELD TECHNIQUES IN BIRD STUDIES
29th November – 5th December 2009 Facilitated by Stephen Davies
One of our longest running courses and always well attended. On this course you learn a variety of methods to study birds and be introduced to a range of census techniques. You will also be assisted with bird identification skills, encouraged to participate in bird banding and take part in on-going recording procedures at the observatory. Course limited to eight participants.

For Sale!
Bird Cards!

Only $1.00 each including envelope!
Contact our office on 9383 7749 or visit our website:
birdsaustralia.com.au/the-organisation/western-australia.html and see our full range of cards
Coming events

**Important note re campouts**

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BAWA Office (9383 7749) of the number in their party and when they will arrive. If you are unsure, put your name down as you can always cancel.

An emergency contact number should also be provided in case of accident.

**New members**

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

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**Saturday 5 September: Lake Gwelup, Stirling**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the corner of Stoneman Street and Huntriss Road, north of Karrinyup Road. We should see waterbirds and bushbirds, and raptors are often seen here. The lake dries up in summer, but it should be interesting after some winter rain.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Sue Abbotts*

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**Sunday 6 September: Hillarys Pelagic**

This is your chance to see albatross and petrels close up. Bring your camera and lunch. The Blue Juice Charters boat leaves at 7:00 am and we return at about 3:30 pm. We will head nearly 60 km offshore to the trench west of Rottnest to look for seabirds and cetaceans. There will be a limit of 27 people. The cost will be approximately $90.

Book by contacting Alan Collins on 9291 4219 or alaninoz@iinet.net.au.

*Leader: Alan Collins*

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**Saturday 12 September: King’s Park, Perth**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the northern end of Forrest Drive, opposite the Pioneer Women’s Memorial in the Botanic Gardens, near the junction of Lovekin Drive. There should be a variety of bushbirds in the area.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Charles Merriam*

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**Monday 14 September: Paganoni Swamp, Karnup**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am. Take the left hand turn off Mandurah Road onto Paganoni Road. Proceed 1.3 km to the sign on the right (there are power lines here). Parking is along Paganoni Road. We will be looking for Western Yellow Robin and Grey Currawong among many others in this area of diverse habitats.

This excursion is in conjunction with the Friends of Paganoni Swamp.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Mary Vaughan*

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**Thursday 17 September: Little Rush Lake, Yangebup**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am near the playground on the western side of this small wooded lake. Little Rush Lake is part of the Beeliar Regional Park. If travelling south, turn right off North Lake Road, into Osprey Drive, right into Dotterel Way, then right into Grassbird Loop. There is a path around the lake, and we should see plenty of waterbirds and bushbirds. Fifty species of birds have been seen here. Bring morning tea.

For members and the general public.

*Leaders: Barry and Molly Angus*

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**Sunday 20 September: Boyagarring Conservation Park, Brookton**  
**Full-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am along Pike Rd, just past the western boundary of the park. Travel from Perth along the Brookton Hwy approximately 59 km and turn right into Pike Rd (about 3 km past the turn-off to Beverley) and then travel for about 7 km along Pike Rd until just after the large wooden sign saying Boyagarring Conservation Park. We will walk through a range of habitats here which should provide an interesting mix of sightings. For those who wish, we will continue on to a second site for lunch and another walk through Wandoo woodland.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: John Graff*

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**Monday 21 September: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat**

Geoff Barrett, of the Department of Environment and Conservation, will give an illustrated talk entitled “Birds and the ecosystem in the Swan region”.

Meeting, 7:30 pm

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**Saturday 26 to Sunday 27 September: Billyacatting campout**

Billyacatting Nature Reserve is a large area of Wheatbelt bushland centred on a large granite rock. It is about 270 km NE of Perth. Travel via Toodyay, Dowerin, Trayning and Kununoppin or via Great Eastern Highway turning left at Kellerberrin to Trayning. From Kununoppin travel east for 2 km, Turn north on the Mukinbudin Rd. Continue for 8 km watching for Kidd Road on right and follow the BAWA signs. This is a bush camp and there are NO facilities. Seventy six species have been recorded and the flowers and orchids can be excellent.

The leaders will be present on the Thursday evening and those interested can join to explore several uncharted reserves in the area on Monday.
Coming events, ctd

Please notify the office on 9383 7749 of your intention to attend as numbers will be limited.
For members and guests only.

Leaders: Wendy and Clive Napier

Sunday 27 September: Wireless Hill Park, Ardross and Blue Gum Lake, Booragoon
Half-day excursion
Meet at 7:30 am at the first car park on the right hand side of Telefunken Drive. From Risleys Street turn west into Almondbury Road and go straight through the roundabout onto Telefunken Rd and into Wireless Hill Park. Sixty species of birds have been seen here. We will then continue a short drive to Blue Gum Lake to look for waterbirds and raptors.
For members and guests only.

Leader: Sean Van Alphen

Saturday 3 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 Road. Park in the picnic area on the left hand side of the road, just after the Dell Forest sign. This area has been surveyed since 1987, and is predominately 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: Alan Galbraith

Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 October: Albany Pelagic
Meet at Emu Point Boat Harbour, Albany at 6:45 am for a 7:00 am departure. We will travel off-shore to the edge of the shelf looking for albatross, petrels and shearwaters and return at around 4:00 pm.
There is a limit of 18 people for the boat and if we get enough people we will run trips on both days. The cost will depend on the number of people; $140 if there are 18 people and $165 if there are 15 people. Bring your binoculars, camera and lunch.
Book by contacting Alan Collins on alaninoz@iinet.net.au or 9291 4219.
Please indicate which day (Saturday or Sunday) you would prefer or if you want to go on both trips.

Leaders: Alan Collins and Frank O’Connor

Saturday 10 – to Monday 12 October: Rottnest Island bushbird count
See “Notices” for details.

Leader: Sue Mather

Saturday 10 – Sunday 11 October: Wongan Hills
Short weekend campout
Wongan Hills, in the wheatbelt, is approximately 185 km north-east of Perth. The surrounding area includes habitat such as woodland, flat-topped hills, rocky areas and salt lakes. There may still be wildflowers to enjoy as well.
A variety of accommodation is available at the Wongan Hills Caravan Park. Please phone 9671 1009 to make your own reservations.
Book early—the area is popular in spring.
Please notify the office on 9383 7749 of your intention to attend as numbers will be limited.
For members and guests only.

Leaders: Pam and George Agar

Sunday 11 October: Karakamia Sanctuary, Chidlow
Half-day excursion
Meet at 8:30 am at the car park for the Visitors Centre. Drive east along Great Eastern Highway through Mundaring and Sawyers Valley. Turn left into Old Northam Road at the sign for Chidlow. Turn left into Northcoate Road past the Chidlow oval and then first right past the primary school into Lilydale Road. Karakamia is 4.25 km down Lilydale Road 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. Allow for one hour to drive from Perth city.
Karakamia is owned by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) and we will carry out some bird surveys and there may be rare mammals about, too.
AWC members will be joining us and a sausage sizzle lunch will be provided.
For members and guests only

Leaders: Paul Marty and Dave and Jan Crossley

Thursday 15 October: Victoria Reservoir, Canning Mills
Half-day excursion
Meet at 8:00 am in the car park beside the information board at the entrance to the dam. From Perth, travel east along Welshpool Road to the T-junction at Canning Road, turn right and travel for about 200 m to Masonmill Road. Continue along this road for several km, following the signs to the dam past the rose nursery, to the entrance to the car park. We will follow several walking tracks in this area.
For members and the general public.

Leaders: Ted and Maureen Cawley

Sunday 18 October: Bootine Road Nature Reserve, Gingin
Full day excursion
Meet at 8:00 am at the Bootine Road Nature Reserve. The Bootine Road turnoff from Brand Highway is well sign-posted, about 100 km north of Perth, and is virtually opposite the Boonanarring Road turnoff. Travel 8.4 km along Bootine Road to reach the nature reserve and park in the cleared limestone area (near the first gate) on the right hand side of the road before crossing the creek.
This reserve has supported up to four species of fairy-wrens. The outing should provide a reasonably good selection of bushbirds, as well as some experience in separating...
fairy-wrens of the chestnut-shouldered group. We will also drop into Timaru Nature Reserve on the way back to Perth.

Bring lunch, lots of water, and long pants or gaiters to protect against snakes and grass seeds.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: John and Judy Blyth

Saturday 24 October: Herdsman Lake, Stirling
Half-day excursion
Meet at 8:00 am in the Maurice Hamer car park. Turn off Pearson Street into Falcon Avenue, then right into Lakeside Road. The car park is on the left, opposite Heron Place. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Sunday 25 October: Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis
Night walk
Meet at 6:30 pm at the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on the northern side of Zigzag Road. Coming from Perth, turn left off the Freeway into Mundijong Road, then right into St Albans Road. Turn right into Zig Zag Road and the car park is in the right approximately 1 km from St Albans Road. We will look for night birds, including the chance of Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth and possibly Eastern Barn Owl. Bring a small torch.

For members and guests only.

Leader: John Graff

Monday 26 October: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat
Meeting, 7:30 pm
Sue Mather, a member and joint editor of WA Bird Notes, will talk on “Honeyeaters and mistletoe in the arid zone of Western Australia”.

Sunday 1 November: Collins Road, Brookton Highway
Half-day excursion
Meet at 9:30 am on Collins Road. Park on the left hand side of Collins Road about 1 km from Brookton Highway. The Collins Road turnoff is about 50 km from the junction of Brookton Highway and Canning Road, on the right hand side coming from Perth. If you reach the turnoff to Beverley you have gone too far! We will walk through this area of Wandoo woodland where 61 species have been recorded, including Blue-breasted Fairy-wren and Crested Shrike-tit.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Michael Brooker

Saturday 7 November: Forrestdale Lake
Half-day excursion
Meet at 8:30 am at Moor Street car park. From Perth, drive south down the Freeway, turning left into Armadale Road. Continue on across Nicholson Road, then just over 1 km along turn right into Weld Street, then second left into Loftus Street, and then right into Moore Street.

There should be plenty of waterbirds, bushbirds and possibly some raptors. The wildflowers should be good, too.

Bring morning tea, telescopes if you have them and rubber boots, as it will probably be muddy.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Robyn Pickering

Sunday 15 November: Wannamal Lake, Gingin
Half-day excursion.
Meet at 8:30 am on Jackson Road near the corner of the Bindoon Moora Road. From Perth go up Great Northern Highway. After Bindoon turn left into Mooliabeenee Road and then right into the Bindoon Moora Road. Jackson Road is on the left 2 km after Wannamal Road West.

There should be a good variety of bushbirds and waterbirds.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Max Howard

Thursday 19 November: Woodman Point, Cockburn
Half-day excursion
Meet at 9:30 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 Road. Drive to the end of the road and take the last left to the car park.

We will walk along the beach to the point, and back along the other side to Cockburn Cement Jetty to look for waders and seabirds. Bring your telescopes.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Robyn Pickering

Sunday 22 November: Alfred Cove, Melville
Half-day excursion
Meet at 8:00 am in the car park in Troy Park next to the Oval, off Burke Drive, Attadale. There should be migratory waders and waterbirds around the river, and there are always bushbirds in the park.

For members and the general public.

Leader: John Graff
Monday 23 November: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat
Meeting, 7:30 pm

Maris Lauva, a member, will give an illustrated talk entitled “Birding in the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island”.

Saturday 28 November: Bibra Lake, Cockburn
Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:00 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake off Progress Drive. Bibra Lake is a part of the Beeliar Wetlands chain and a large number of bushbirds and waterbirds can be seen here. Bring water, hats, suitable footwear, etc. Snakes have been seen around here.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Wynton Maddeford

Saturday 5 December: Bull Creek Wetlands, Melville
Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am at Brockman Park Reserve. Travel along Leach Highway and turn south into Karel Avenue then turn right into Brockman Avenue. Turn right into Stringfellow Drive, then first right into Mossman Crescent.

This walk follows Bull Creek, winds in behind the playing fields of All Saints College, then through Reg Bourke Reserve and around Richard Lewis Park, which is a Lions Club rehabilitation project and memorial arboretum.

The creek has Flooded Gums, Jarrah, Marri, paperbarks and Casuarinas along its banks. Splendid Fairy-wrens, Western Wattlebirds, White-faced Herons and Yellow-rumped Thornbills have been recorded here.

Bring water, sun screen and morning tea.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Keogh

Saturday 28 – Sunday 29 November: Abrolhos Islands, Geraldton
Pelagic

The Houtman Abrolhos is a breeding ground for many seabirds including both the Lesser and Common Noddy on Pelsaert Island.

The MV Oceania is a 27 m custom built expedition vessel. It is a catamaran which gives it good stability and spacious interior. The boat will depart early in the morning of 28 November and return in the afternoon of Sunday 29. The Oceania sleeps 26 people for the 2 day cruise from Geraldton. There are 3 double cabins, 7 twin cabins, plus shared accommodation in 4 and 6 berth cabins. The cost will be $630 per person for double and twin cabins, $530 for a bed in the 4 and 6 berth cabins. The cost includes meals. If you wish to stay on board the Friday night before the trip it is an additional $35 and does not include an evening meal.

Everyone makes their own way to and from Geraldton. The sea crossing to the islands can be rough and takes approximately 3 hours.

This is the first time the Excursions Committee has organised this kind of trip and we anticipate that it will be very popular. If there are enough interested people we will have another trip next year.

Please call Coates Wildlife Tours on 9330 6066 or email coates@iinet.net.au to book your berth.

Leaders: Alan Collins- and Sue Abbotts

Sunday 13 December: Canning River Regional Park, Wilson
Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am at the Kent Street Weir car park. The walk follows a 5 km circuit along the Canning River, viewing a large selection of bush and waterbirds, hopefully with sightings of the elusive Spotless Crake.

For members and the general public.

Leaders: George and Pam Agar

Twitchathon: Saturday 12 – Sunday 13 December

See details elsewhere in this edition of Western Australian Bird Notes.

Sunday 13 December: BAWA Christmas Barbecue

The annual Christmas barbecue this year will be held as usual, at Peregrine House, at about 6:00 pm, on the lawn at the rear of the building. Bring your own food and drink, and chairs if possible.

The twitchathon will finish at the barbecue and winners of the various categories announced.

All members welcome.

Sunday 20 December: Big Carine Lake, Carine
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park off Beach Road, Carine. Over 80 species have been recorded at this lake, including the three ibis, Buff-banded Rail and various raptors. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Note: no meeting in December
Coming events, ctd

Sunday 27 December: Waterford Foreshore, Salter Point
Half-day excursion
Meet at the Curtin University Boat Shed at 7:30 am. To reach the parking area travel along Manning Road and turn left into Elderfield Road which is on the western side of Trinity College playing fields. Proceed to the end of this street and the parking area is on the right hand side. The walk will proceed along the river front for about 1 km and return via a nearby park.

Bring morning tea because, if time permits, we will move to Salter Point where further species may be seen.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Saturday 2 January 2010: Thomson’s Lake, Cockburn
Half-day excursion
Meet at 7:30 am in the car park on Russell Road. From Kwinana Freeway turn west into Russell Road, continue approximately 3 km to the car park on the right. If you reach Pearse Road you have gone too far.

There are a good variety of bushbirds, waterbirds and perhaps a few waders.

Bring your scope (if you have one) and rubber boots or old sneakers as it will be muddy.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Robyn Pickering

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### Swarovski Optics well below new cost!

Binoculars, SLC 10X42WB. Excellent condition, unused since full service by Swarovski Austria. Case immaculate. $1,300.

Spotting scope, AT80HD with 20-60X eyepiece. Comes with bonus soft case, balance beam and red dot sight for easy bird location. This is top of the range of the previous model (grey) scope. Excellent condition. $2,750.

Call David Free 9384 5160

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### Western Australian Bird Notes Subscription Form

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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- WA Members $12.00
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**Post to:** Birds Australia Membership 60 Leicester St, Carlton VIC 3053 02/2007
Opportunities for volunteers

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

- **Atlas** — surveys for this are continuing — contact Cheryl Gole 9293 4958, e-mail cgole@westnet.com.au
- **Monthly meeting speakers** — contact Brian Wilson 9293 1094
- **Community Education Committee** — committee members and administration help wanted — contact Elsa Dabbs e-mail dabchic6@bigpond.net.au
- **Excursion leaders** — contact Sue Abbotts 9444 1607, e-mail suechat@bigpond.net.au
- **Carnaby’s Black-Cockatoo** nest monitoring — Oct/Nov — contact Raana Scott 0427 707 047 or 08 9071 6129
- **Rottnest Island bushbird count** — 10-12 Oct — contact Sue Mather 9389 6416

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Birds Australia Western Australia

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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; do not embed pictures or graphics in MS Word;
- contributions to be sent direct to the Editors, either at the office or by email:
  
  Sue Mather: suzannemather@bigpond.com
  Allan Burbidge: allanb99@bigpond.net.au

- 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 2009 issue: 1 November
March 2010 issue: 1 February
June 2010 issue: 1 May
September 2010 issue: 1 August

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**Advertising Rates**

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

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**Calendar of events**

**Sat 5 Sep**: Lake Gwelup, Stirling, Half-day excursion
**Sun 6 Sep**: Hillarys Pelagic
**Sat 12 Sep**: King’s Park, Perth, Half-day excursion
**Mon 14 Sep**: Paganoni Swamp, Kumpur, Half-day excursion
**Thu 17 Sep**: Little Rush Lake, Yangebup, Half-day excursion
**Sun 20 Sep**: Boyagarring Conservation Park, Brookton, Full-day excursion
**Mon 21 Sep**: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat, Meeting, 7:30 pm
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**Sat 3 and Sun 4 Oct**: Albany Pelagic
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**Sat 10 – Sun 11 Oct**: Wongan Hills, Short weekend campout
**Sun 11 Oct**: Karakamia Sanctuary, Chidlow, Half-day excursion
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**Sat 28 – Sun 29 Nov**: Abrolhos Islands, Geraldton, Pegallic
**Sat 5 Dec**: Bull Creek Wetlands, Melville, Half-day excursion
**Thu 10 Dec**: Star Swamp, North Beach, Stirling, Half-day excursion
**Sun 13 Dec**: Canning River Regional Park, Wilson, Half-day excursion
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**Note: no meeting in Dec**

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