

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BIRD NOTES

Number 9, February 1979.

Meetings

The next quarterly meeting will be held in the CSIRO Lecture Hall at Underwood Avenue, Floreat Park on Monday, April 2nd at 8.00 p.m.

Dr. David Keast of the University of Western Australia, Department of Microbiology, will speak on "The role of birds as possible vectors of diseases of man and domestic stock".

PLEASE NOTE THE MEETING DATE WHICH IS A WEEK LATER THAN NORMAL.

At the Annual Meeting held on January 5th the committee was re-elected unopposed with Dr. Stephen Davies as Chairman. In addition, Mr. Arthur Fewster kindly agreed to act as Treasurer, a task becoming increasingly exacting as the activities of the W.A. Group expand.

1979 RAOU Congress at Kalgoorlie

Intending participants are asked to send in their applications without delay. You should have received the form with the December Newsletter. Your prompt reply will:-

1. Ensure you a seat and/or bed which will be allotted in order of receipt of application.
2. Spread the work load of the Secretary who will be very busy doing other things at the last minute.
3. Allow the committee to make suitable arrangements should there be unexpected numbers.

More details of the Congress timetable are shown in the accompanying RAOU Newsletter. Note that the accommodation at Kalgoorlie is from dinner on Friday until breakfast on Sunday. Address all applications, queries, requests for forms, etc. to Mrs. Joan Seabrook, 36 Rabone Way, Boya, W.A. 6056. Phone (09) 299.6816.

W.A. Wader Banding Group

This group has been formed with the aim of co-ordinating wader banding around the W.A. coast in the hope that movement patterns can be determined. We still need more participants for areas such as Esperance and Carnarvon (or further north), so if you live in one of these areas and would like to join in, please let Stephen Davies know at Waters Upton, Mt. Helena, W.A. 6555.

Eyre Bird Observatory

Latest item on the want list for Eyre is lounge furniture. We can pick it up in the metro. area so please let Stephen Davies know if you have anything to spare to make life out there more comfortable.

Two courses will be held at Eyre in the spring. The first one starting on Sunday, October 7th will cover field ornithology including mist-netting

techniques, watching and notetaking, nest finding, bird identification and the writing up of results. Course leaders will be John Martindale, Peter Curry and Stephen Davies. The second course, starting on Sunday, October 14th will be on recording bird song and will cover such topics as field recording, the use and care of equipment, editing, choice of equipment and other recording techniques. The course leader will be Norman Robinson. Each course will run from Sunday afternoon to the following Saturday morning to allow people to use the weekend to get to and from Cocklebiddy. Each course will be limited to 20 people and bookings will be accepted in order of receipt. The inclusive cost for each course will be \$80. Applications should be directed to the Warden, Eyre Bird Observatory, Cocklebiddy, via Norseman, W.A. 6443 as soon as possible.

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Dick and Molly Brown run a farm just out of Manjimup where much of their time is devoted to bird study. Visitors are most welcome. To get there, take the Pemberton road from Manjimup and after approx. 2 miles, turn left at the Middlesex Hall turn-off. Continue for about 3 miles. Their house has a big palm tree growing out front, and R.M.B. 253 opposite the gate.

Crows and Ravens in W.A.

Reports keep on coming in where the corvids seen in an area are listed simply Corvus sp. which is, of course, quite useless. The only method of identifying all species in the field is still on their calls, although the throat hackles of the Australian Raven are diagnostic when it is calling.

Over most of W.A. it is only possible to encounter two species together, i.e. Raven and Little Crow in the south and Crow and Little Crow in the north. Along the dividing line which is roughly the Mulga-Eucalypt line (see Birds of W.A. p.53) all three can occur.

In the south, the Raven is the only bird usually recorded the year round, the Little Crow being a summer visitor to coastal regions although this year, few Little Crows have come as far as Perth. The calls of these two species are quite easy to differentiate usually the Raven has a rather slow aaaah aaaaah aaaaah fairly high pitched and not easy to imitate unless you want to look like an idiot. Little Crows have a very nasal and clipped nark-nark-nark and quite easy for a male human to imitate.

In the north, the Crow and Little Crow need a discerning ear but are quite easy after a little practice. The Crow is even more clipped than the Little Crow and hard to put into words oh -oh -oh or uk -uk -uk very high pitched and not easy to imitate. Crows are the least common of our corvids in W.A. (except in the far north) and are always associated with permanent water. For good Australian Crow calls listen to John Hutchinson's record (or tape) Australian Bird Calls, series one, Western Australia.

Incidentally, on the trip from Perth to Port Hedland the main coastal highway passes through relatively treeless coastal plain once you leave the eucalypt zone about 100 miles north of Geraldton. Nearly all the corvids you will see from then on, particularly those feeding on road kills are Little Crows. If you can't remember the calls, then record them and play them back later. This is the best way of learning.