

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BIRD NOTES

Editor: Graeme Chapman

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MEETINGS

The Annual Meeting this year was held at the Pinewood Lodge, Maida Vale which proved to be an excellent venue. Sixty one members and friends joined in a buffet dinner and the ensuing meeting elected a new committee consisting of Stephen Davies (Chairman), Dom Serventy (Vice Chairman), Joan Seabrook (Secretary), Arthur Fewster (Treasurer), Graeme Chapman, Jeremy Talbot and Doug Watkins. The highlight of the evening was presented by Bert and Babs Wells. Entitled "the Wild West" this spectacular audio-visual presentation involving the use of four projectors and a vast array of ancillary gear, delighted the audience with a fast moving panorama of Western Australian wildlife. To those regulars of past years whose absence was noticeable - bad luck, you missed out on a memorable evening.

The next quarterly meeting will take place at Cygnet Hall, Hackett Drive, Crawley at 8.00 pm on 30th March. Boyd Wykes of W.A.I.T. will speak on the Helmeted Honeyeater.

Also at this meeting we propose to discuss and announce details of the forthcoming local excursions which, if they receive the support we expect, will take place every month in areas within easy reach of Perth.

EXCURSIONS

The first of the local outings for 1981 will take place on Saturday March 7th when we shall have a look at forest birds near Pickering Brook. Meet at the Mundaring Weir Lookout (south side) at 8.00000 am. Leader: Graeme Chapman.

This will be a morning outing only. Provided local outings are sufficiently well attended, we hope to run them monthly, each led by an experienced ornithologist and the venues chosen so as to cover the range of habitats within easy reach of Perth. In particular, beginners will be welcome to these outings and we hope to encourage newcomers to the W.A. Group to join in our activities.

OBSERVATIONS

Great Crested Grebes have moved into the Perth (and presumably other places) area this season and can be seen easily on several of the metropolitan lakes where they have been reported nesting. Lake Monger in particular is an excellent spot to see this attractive, and active! species. Around the island at the south-western corner of the lake, several pairs are nesting and one nest can be watched easily from the grassy verge. The question has been posed of where these birds have come from, the eastern states being the most likely guess. Reports of this species, particularly breeding records, from other parts of W.A. would be most welcome.

White-fronted Honeyeaters were seen in the Mukinbudin area in the last week of January undergoing a very large-scale southerly movement. Mainly immature birds with dull brown, spotty bibs, they were following treelines between the wheat paddocks, along roadways and vegetated crests of ridges (particularly). Several counts revealed a rate of approx. 50 per minute always heading south. This figure adds up to many thousands per day at a given place! In October 1970, I saw a very similar movement of the same species and on that occasion I estimated 20,000 birds passed through in the day. The question arises of course, where from? and where to?

After the bumper season just experienced in so much of the mulga zone in the past six months it needs little imagination to predict where they have come from. Presumably the birds are travelling south in search of food and no doubt will stop when they find flowering shrubs, which at this time of year after our dry season in the south-west, won't be far short of the south coast. This note is printed to alert you to the situation in the hope that someone may make other observations further south; however circumstantial they will all help in tracing the movement of these birds. Areas around Southern Cross and Merredin have had recent heavy rain but at this time of year, it is unlikely that many plants will flower soon enough to be an attraction.

Other species such as Crimson Chats and Masked Woodswallows are also moving into the wheatbelt this season and trips to the north-eastern fringe of the cleared areas will probably reward you with the odd Pied Honeyeater etc. as well as the more usual nomadic species.

#### SYSTEM SIX ATLAS

Those atlassers who are keen to get out not too far from Perth and help in the local bird atlas are reminded that the local organiser is

Doug Watkins  
55, Northampton Street,  
East Victoria Park, 6101  
'phone 361 3453

#### NIGHT HERONS ON THE INCREASE?

Vaughan Knapp writes from Australind that there appears to be changes in the night heron/egret numbers at the nesting rookery on nearby Leschenault Estuary.

This breeding season (1980-81) the population of Night Herons, formerly only about 30 in number, has increased to approx. 200 and they have extended their nesting period. Conversely, the White Egrets have declined this season. Several years ago, there were approx. 15 pairs nesting which built up to a peak of about 50 pairs in 1979-80, when they continued nesting until March. This season, there are only 15-20 pairs and they started nesting very late and had well-grown young in the nests in late January.

He suggests that perhaps another White Egret rookery has sprung up elsewhere in the district.

We would welcome comments from any member who can add to this information.