

Western Australian Bird Notes

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Quarterly Newsletter of the W.A. Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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CHAIRMAN : Dr. S. J. J. F. Davies, "Waters Upton", Mt. Helena, 6555.
SECRETARY: Mrs. J. Seabrook, 15 Rabone Way, Boya, 6056. Ph. 299 6816
EDITORS : Graeme Chapman, P.O. Box 10, Glen Forrest, 6071. Ph. 298 8491
Roger Jaensch, 69 Lanark St., Coolbinia, 6050. Ph. 444 9936

NEW RAOU WATERBIRD PROJECT OFFICE

Over the weekend of 15-16th of May, 1982, the RAOU Waterbird Project Office changed from its previous address to its new location at:

69 Lanark Street, (red brick house at the junction
Coolbinia, W.A. 6050 of Carnarvon Crescent and
Telephone (09) 444 9936 Lanark Street)

This should be a more convenient location for RAOU members and Waterbird Project participants to drop in on — so please do! As the Field Officer Roger Jaensch also now lives at this address, you may contact him after hours on the same telephone number. A telephone answering machine will soon be installed to enable you to leave detailed messages if he is not in when you ring.

COMING MEETINGS

The June meeting will be held at Gygnat Hall, on the waterfront, near the corner of Hackett Drive and Stirling Highway, beginning at 8.00 p.m.

Monday, 28th June — Graeme Chapman will present an illustrated talk: "Birds of the Salmon Gum Woodlands". Graeme has been studying the breeding ecology of cockatoos in the Mukinbudin area and hence is well acquainted with the salmon gum country.

There is some doubt as to whether the September meeting can be held in Gygnat Hall — please check the September issue of this newsletter for confirmation of venue.

Monday, 27th September — John Dell of the W.A. Museum will speak on "Birds of the Jarrah Forest".

Annual Dinner & Meeting — An early reminder that this prestigious but quite inexpensive event will be coming up early in January 1983. It will probably be along similar lines to the 1982 gathering. Please watch the September and December issues of this newsletter for booking details.

COMING EXCURSIONS

Our programme for the next quarter includes two longer-distance excursions in order to encourage country members and interested persons to participate.

1. Saturday, July 10th — Northam/Goomalling area — We plan to visit Lake Walyourm for waterbird training and also the Wongamine Reserve. Meet at 7.30 a.m. at the city end of Centrepoint carpark, opposite the Midland Town Hall, Great Eastern Highway, to organise vehicles. We hope to have our

leader Lindsay Mitchell outside the Northam Post Office (239 Fitzgerald Street) at 9.00 a.m. — look for people with binoculars! This will be a full day excursion, travelling approximately 275 km in the round trip to the Midland Town Hall.

2. Saturday, August 7th — Dobaderry Nature Reserve (off Brookton Highway, about half-way between Mt. Dale and Beverley) — Half-day bush birds excursion: distance to reserve from Kelmscott is about 70 km. Meet at 8.00 a.m. at the first parking opportunity just past the intersection of Canning Road and Brookton Highway, Karragullen. A return trip via the York Road may be organised.

3. Saturday, September 18th — Eagle Hawk Flats & Karakin Lakes — Leader: Roger Jaensch. Full day excursion including waterbird training, completing a round trip of about 275 km from the Perth G.P.O. Meet at 8.30 a.m. at the south side of the bridge over the Moore River, on the Lancelin Road. Those wishing to rationalise vehicles or requiring a lift should meet at 69 Lanark Street, Coolbinia at 7.00 a.m. We will start by looking at coastal-plain scrub north-east of Lancelin and will later move on to the Karakin Lakes.

R.J. may be continuing on to look at wetland nature reserves in the Eneabba and Watheroo districts over the following two or three days. He will be happy to guide people to these places: please contact him beforehand if interested.

4. See also under "Training" in the Waterbird Project report in this issue.

North West Wader Studies Expedition — Spring 1982 (see also p. 1, WABN No. 21).

Opportunities still exist for people to join the second RAOU spring wader expedition to the NW over the period 1st to 11th September 1982. There is a possibility that group transport could be arranged if numbers are sufficient, and also a chance that funds for petrol expenses could be allocated to drivers of four-wheel-drive vehicles joining the expedition. No prior experience at wader banding is needed. However, we would ask that expeditioners be prepared to participate for the whole of the eleven day study period.

If interested, please contact the Field Officer in Coolbinia immediately.

WAROONA WEEKEND — OCTOBER 1-4, 1982

The RAOU, W.A. Group, will hold a weekend conference at the Waroona Hotel on the Queen's Birthday weekend, October 1-4. Most time will be devoted to Benger Swamp and its birds. A large part of Benger Swamp, W.A.'s largest southern fresh water wetland, has been purchased by the W.A. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife who are developing management plans for the area.

The weekend will provide an opportunity for RAOU members to talk with Dr. Andrew Burbidge, the Chief Wildlife Research Officer, and Jim Lane, the Waterfowl Research Officer as well as to hear about the Birds of Benger from Eric Sedgwick. Eric has known the swamp and its birds well for many years and is willing to help us during the weekend.

The weekend will also follow up the series of talks this year on the woodlands and forests of the south-west, with an excursion to the coastal tuart forests near Waroona.

The provisional programme is:

Friday, October 1 from 5.00 p.m. Arrive.
6.00 p.m. Dinner.
8.00 p.m. Talk on local birds and Benger Swamp by Eric Sedgwick.

Saturday, October 2 8.00 a.m. Breakfast.
All day excursion to Benger Swamp. Cut lunch available.
7.00 p.m. Group Dinner.

Sunday, October 3 8.00 a.m. Breakfast.
All day excursion Benger and surrounding woodland. Cut lunch available.
6.00 p.m. Dinner.
8.00 p.m. Discussion on Benger Swamp with contributions by Dr. A. A. Burbidge and J. A. K. Lane.

Monday, October 4 8.00 a.m. Breakfast.
Excursion to tuart woodland. Cut lunch available. Return to Perth.

Accommodation will be in the Waroona Hotel on the S.W. Highway. 11 Single rooms, 3 flats (2 single beds, 4 single beds; 1 double and 2 x two single beds), two twin rooms and one double room are available. Prices are:

Single room	\$12.00 per night
Single room/bathroom	\$16.00 per night
Flats	\$10.00 per person
Twin Rooms	\$10.00 per person
Double Room	\$20.00
Breakfast	\$ 4.00
Cut-Lunch	\$ 4.00
Dinner	\$ 6.00
Saturday Dinner	\$ 8.00

Bookings should be made as soon as possible to Stephen Davies, Waters Upton, Mount Helena, W.A. 6555, stating the type of accommodation preferred and enclosing a \$5.00 per person deposit. I shall assume that you want full board for the whole period of the conference unless you otherwise indicate. Each participant will be responsible for settling their own account with Mr. John Blackburn, the hotel manager, but we have arranged for him to hold all accommodation for us at present.

Stephen Davies.

MARCH MEETING

Sixty members and their friends attended the first of this year's evening lectures on Monday, March 29th. Dr. Rex Wooller spoke about his work on the birds of the Karri forest. He discussed the factors that control the diversity of species living in the forest and the abundance of those that do. His talk was illustrated with some beautiful photographs and promoted a lively discussion of the effects of developmental changes on the forest and its birds.

MAY MEETING

An enthusiastic group gathered at Cypriot Hall on the 3rd of May to hear the evening lecture on the birds of the Karri forest.

Zimbabwe. Val's work is largely un-funded but is supported by an experienced team of volunteers.

The Black Eagle *Aquila verreauxi* is a little smaller than our Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax* and it feeds almost exclusively on the hyrax, a mammal sharing the same rocky habitat as the eagles. Black Eagles frequently nest at exposed sites on huge rock domes. In order to monitor the progress of eggs and young at these sites, skills in rock-climbing had to be developed within the study team. Collectors of Black Eagle eggs were partly deterred by volunteers writing on the eggs with felt pens. The Matopos study team now had detailed knowledge of eagle territories in the Matopos and factors affecting breeding success there (e.g. rainfall). It is now experimenting with techniques for marking and identifying individual birds.

Val produced her captive-bred chick by shooting a movie film of a wild female eagle that allowed her to handle its eggs and even stroke it, whilst it was still sitting on the nest!

TORBAY CAMPOUT REPORT February 27th - March 1st, 1982

Forty people attended the RAOU's long weekend camp at Torbay. Participants included members from Ongerup, Albany, Tenterden, Denmark, Manjimup (foresters), Boyup Brook, Williams and Perth. The venue for the campout was the Woodbury - Boston Environmental School, a superbly out-fitted camp-hall on Torbay Hill, with a spectacular panorama of the rugged Torbay coast.

Light showers on the Saturday did not dampen the enthusiasm of those who investigated nearby karri stands. They were rewarded with good views of feeding Crested Shrike-tits, and Elegant Parrots. Spreading out over the swampy heath near Lake William, observers saw Red-eared Fire-tails and surrounded a family of Southern Emu-wrens, but alas they did not flush any Ground Parrots!

Waterbirds were the focus of attention on the second day and a trek to Lake Pleasant View near Many Peaks resulted in two Australasian (Brown) Bitterns being flushed from the sedge and seen in flight by all observers. Spotless Crakes were observed at the muddy edges of a bed of spike Twig-rush (*Baumea*).

Moving on to salt marsh at Emu and Rushy Points near Albany, we encountered roosting Great Knots, Large Sand Plovers and Bar-tailed Godwits which were comfortably viewed with tripod-mounted spotting scopes. While observers were creeping closer to the waders, a group of Rock Parrots left beside the party, affording brilliant views. We visited an Osprey nest beside Torbay Inlet on the way back to camp and found an immature bird perched tightly in a nearby dead tree.

Car loads went into Albany on two nights to help Ken Mills mist-net waders at Emu Point (see his report this issue).

On the way back to Perth we visited the extensive Lake Muir Wetlands Nature Reserves complex and birds seen included Blue-billed Ducks and Great Crested Grebes on Byenup Lagoon.

The campout generated great interest in bird studies in the South Coast region and several people joined the Waterbird Project team. We are most grateful to the Woodbury family for their hospitality at Torbay and we wish them all the best with their venture.

LAKE FORRESTDAL E EXCURSION REPORT Saturday, 13th March, 1982

Delayed distribution of the March issue of W.A.B.N. prevented the announcement of this RAOU excursion, but those present at the February outing were informed and a small group (including several "new faces") subsequently turned out on March 13th.

Lake Forrestdale had dried back past the edges of most reedbeds, enabling observers to easily circumnavigate it. Waterbirds had reached peak numbers in the shallow conditions and 28 species were identified. Detailed counts by David James on the following day produced a total of 14,800 birds of which about one-third were waders, one-third ducks and swans and not quite one-third Grebes.

