

Western Australian Bird Notes

Number 23
September, 1982

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

Registered by
Australia Post
Publication No. WBH1453

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

COMING MEETINGS

Meetings will be held on the waterfront at the corner of Hackett Drive and Stirling Highway, Crawley, beginning at 8.00 p.m.

Monday, September 27 -

John Dell of the W.A. Museum will speak on "Birds of the Jarrah Forest".

Annual Dinner and Meeting:

Friday, January 7 will be the date for the most popular of all our meetings and we envisage a similar sort of outdoor occasion as last January. The venue is yet to be decided. Does anybody have a big outdoor area or garden which they would like to offer for the occasion? If so, please ring Joan Seabrook on 299 6816.

COMING EXCURSIONS

Saturday, September 18 - Eagle Hawk Flats & Karakin Lakes:

Leader: Roger Jaensch. Full day excursion including waterbird training, completing a round trip of about 275km 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 shall start by looking at coastal-plain scrub north-east of Lancelin and later move on to the Karakin Lakes. R. J. will not be continuing on to look at wetland nature reserves in the Eneabba and Watheroo districts but will be happy to guide people to these places. Please contact him beforehand if interested.

October 1-4: Long weekend at Waroona:

Bookings are still available for some of the accommodation at Waroona Hotel. The weekend promises to be an interesting one and anyone who does not have the details from the last newsletter (No. 22) should contact Stephen Davies, Waters Upton, Mt. Helena 6555 as soon as possible.

Saturday, November 20 - Point Waylen/Alfred Cove:

Meet at the Pt. Waylen Park carpark at 8.00 a.m. for a half day outing. Steve Keeling will show observers the interesting natural features of the area, discuss management problems and assist with identification of water birds (particularly waders, if present).

Saturday, December 4 - Wannamal Lake and wetlands, Gingin Shire.

Meet at the Bindoon Hotel carpark (4km north of Bindoon on the Great Northern Highway and 86km from the Perth G.P.O.) at 8.00 a.m. We will proceed a further 33km to Wannamal Lake Nature Reserve where we will spend some time looking at water and bush birds. During the afternoon we will probably investigate a variety of small lakes and bush spots near Bindoon.

CORRIGENDUM

Our apologies to the Kwinana-Rockingham-Murray Branch (KRM) of the W.A. Naturalists' Club for incorrectly referring to their group as the Rockingham-Esperance-Murray Branch etc. in the last issue of W.A.B.N. (page 7).

FIELD OFFICER ABSENCE

I anticipate being absent from the RAOU Waterbird Project office from 6th December to after the New Year as I will be taking annual holidays at that time. Part of this leave will probably be spent at the RAOU headquarters in Melbourne.

Other periods of absence that I have planned in 1982 are:

1. 28 September - 4 October (Great Southern and Waroona).
2. 9 October - 13 October (Northern reserves).
3. 8 November - 12 November (Esperance region).

Roger Jaensch

JUNE MEETING

On 28 June over 70 people attended the RAOU meeting at Cynot Hall, where Graeme Chapman spoke on "Birds of the Salmon Gum Woodlands". Among the points made were that: Salmon Gum is often closely associated with Gimlet (*E. salubris*) and growing together they often indicate heavy soils of particular value to wheatbelt wheat/sheep farmers. Consequently, much of the salmon gum woodlands have been cleared for agriculture, a process which is still continuing. The total salmon gum woodlands are now greatly reduced in quantity and those remaining are often coveted by farmers. However, these woodlands are of particular importance to a wide range of birds as a vital food resource at certain times of the year. The importance of the woodlands is now recognised and efforts to restore growth have commenced. The uselessness of the single tree in the paddock for regeneration and the destructiveness of sheep both by grazing and soil compaction was emphasised. The talk was illustrated by a range of colour slides of the salmon gum habitat and the birds of the area. None of the slides was less than very good and many were magnificent. A most enjoyable evening.

Bruce Buchanan

LAKE CHITTERING - JULIMAR FOREST EXCURSION REPORT - SATURDAY 12 JUNE, 1982

Despite the forecast of stormy weather, a dozen or so stalwarts turned out on what proved to be a pleasant winter's day, firstly at Lake Chittering, then on to Lake Wannamal and finally to lunch and a wander through parts of the Julimar State Forest. The reward for perseverance came quickly, when after only a few minutes at Lake Chittering, Roger Jaensch spotted a number of Freckled Ducks and good views were obtained by everybody through his spotting scope. A careful scanning of the lake revealed a total of 145 Freckled Ducks, one of the biggest flocks seen in W.A. Twenty-two other species were seen there and perhaps the most noteworthy being 12 Yellow-billed Spoonbills, 30 Sacred Ibis and three flocks of Black Swans.

Later in the morning, a walk up the east side of Lake Wannamal revealed large numbers of ducks, mainly Pink-eared (500+) and Aust. Shovelers (500-800) with a few Grey Teal, Coots, Black Swans and a lone male Darter, and in all sixteen species. The large number of artificial nest boxes erected in trees around the lake bore testament to much hard work by the Field and Game Association of W.A. who are conducting trials with different designs of nest boxes. After a sunny stop for lunch at the northern end of the Julimar Forest, a walk through the wandoo was quite disappointing — very few birds indeed, either in number or variety. This was not surprising as one couldn't help but wonder about the lack of diversity in the understorey, both in variety and physically. The shrub layer was mostly little more than 50cm high which offered little cover for birds. Presumably this is the result of forestry management. Later in the afternoon, after driving along a forest track a few kilometres, we reached a pocket of forest which had a great variety of shrubs, some up to 5m high and in this area birds were numerous, although only a dozen species were seen during our short stay.

G.C.

GOOMALLING AND TOODYAY DISTRICTS EXCURSION REPORT

Saturday, July 10, 1982:

With a heavy fog upon us, 11 bird watchers including a visiting U.S. naval officer departed from Midland and made our way to Northam where we met 15 country members including our excursion leader for the day, Lindsay Milhinch. Moving on through the gloom, we reached Goomalling where thankfully the mist was dispersing and the countryside could be appreciated.

From a vantage point at the southern end of Lake Walyormouring, Lindsay explained how this basin only became a lake through the clearing of the surrounding land and how the effects of salt were killing off the vegetation. Making our lunch break meeting point Oak Park (picnic area) adjacent to the lake, members then branched out in several directions to observe the local birds. The water level was low and well out beyond the dead tree perimeter.

Amongst the 52 species of birds seen here, interesting sightings were a coloured male Chestnut Teal, two male Australasian Shovelers, two Little Button-quail, 40 Red-necked Shits, two Mulga Parrots, White-winged Fairy-wrens, and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters.

We later drove to the Wongamins Reserve near Toodyay where unfortunately only one hour could be spared. Again Lindsay briefed us on the significance of this area before we dispersed for observations amongst the varied flora communities which included wandoo, jarrah and sandplain heath. I would recommend this reserve for a more thorough survey on a future excursion. Sixteen species of birds were seen here with some notable sightings being the Western Spinebill, White-necked Honeyeater and White-winged Fairy-Wren.

We finished the excursion at Jim Masters' property, "Glen Avon", near Toodyay on the Avon River. Here we saw a very good example of how considerate farmers can encourage water birds to utilise farm dams by the planting of shrubs and trees around the edges and making small inlets for nesting and roosting security.

Ten species of water birds were seen on the dams at which Jim keeps a careful watch for seasonal changes in both species and abundance. The local shire has largely banned boats from using the large pool on the river at "Glen Avon". This should afford some protection to nesting cormorants.

Seventy species of birds were seen during this excursion — our thanks to Lindsay and Jim for their guidance. We look forward to another meeting with our new birding acquaintances from the Northam-Toodyay region. The U.S. Navy Officer, Tom, much appreciated the outing and left with a greater knowledge of W.A. birds and birdos.

David James

DOBADERRY NATURE RESERVE EXCURSION REPORT — SATURDAY 7th AUGUST, 1982

Sixteen "birdos" proved to have undaunted spirits on the excursion to Dobaderry Nature Reserve where they were faced with a constant drizzle. But after all, it was perfect bird watching weather — there was no wind.

Dobaderry Nature Reserve is predominantly wandoo with areas of well developed mid-storey and understorey. Flowering dryandras were a major component of the mid-storey. We were greeted at our rather wet destination with the calling of several cuckoos and four species were identified during the visit. Honeyeaters put on entertaining shows among the dryandras, with Tawny-crowned and Yellow-plumed the most striking of the six species observed. Also seen were two Masked Stilts in a colourful chasing flight.

If the rain and wet understorey did not provide a moist enough environment, Dobaderry Swamp, with its 40cm of water, certainly did. Some people, not satisfied with being only half wet, capitalised on the opportunity of getting totally wet, but unfortunately no waterbirds were seen at the swamp.

Thus we returned with a rewarding list of 18 species (some birds and out). Even with a rewarding list of 18 species, some will still say that wet weather is only good for ducks. A stop for lunch further down Dale West Road towards Kelmescott brought the total bird species list to 27. Well done everybody for their show of "undampable" spirits.

Shapelle McIvor & Doug Watkins

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Courses at Eyre in the next three months are as follows:

29 August-4 September: BIRD BANDING. Perry de Reberia and Peter Congreve. Mist netting, banding, measuring, moult and recording. The course will involve extensive field work and will emphasise the correct method of extracting birds from the net and their handling.

5-11 September: BIRDS IN THE LANDSCAPE, Eileen Brooker. An Art Course led by a Tasmanian artist who has years of experience, a Diploma of Art and Teachers Certificate. She has held exhibitions in Hobart. The course will be in the medium of painting and students will be expected to bring their own paints and impediments.

26 September-2 October: SOUND RECORDING. Ian Rocks. The equipment for this course is available in the field, and editing. The use of recorded calls to call up birds.

30 October-6 November: SHORE BIRDS. Jim Lane and Peter Congreve. Aspects of the behaviour and identification of shore birds and the use of cannon nets. Ageing and sexing of the bird in the hand.

5-11 December: FIELD ORNITHOLOGY. Dr. Stephen Davies and Peter Congreve. The course will cover practical aspects of census techniques, watching and recording bird behaviour and the writing up of results.

Eyre badly needs a good set of spanners, metric Whitworth and A.F. Any kindly person who would like to donate complete sets or a whole kit should contact Stephen Davies who has the details. The full set costs about \$190 but ring, open-ended or socket spanners can be bought separately in each standard. The sets cost about \$30 each.

