



Western Australian Bird Notes

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

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ROVING BUDGERIGARS

Towards the end of May we were travelling up the coast to Broome. About 50km north of Carnarvon we came upon large flocks of budgerigars and were fortunate to find a waterhole where they were coming in for water. It was a thrilling sight for everyone in our group to observe flock after flock of noisy but delightful greenish-yellow birds on their flight to drink, completely disregarding our presence no more than ten metres away. One of the earliest flocks to come by was conservatively estimated to number 2,000 birds, but most consisted of 100 to 200 birds.

For about an hour and a half we stayed (if time had allowed we would have willingly stayed for a week), and in that time with only short durations of a minute or so there was a steady stream of budgies arriving and departing. At times the sky was dotted with masses of the small parrots. The noisy chattering and sound of wing beats as entire flocks wheeled and turned in formation stayed with us for some time afterwards as we continued our drive.

Budgerigars could be seen everywhere as we drove along, but after about 40 km they were not as plentiful.

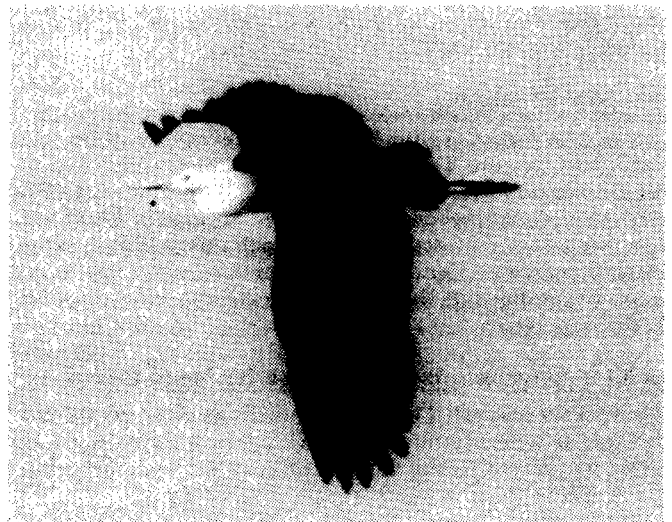
North of Port Hedland on 26 May '85, we camped on the De Grey River and were witness to a migratory surge of budgies all heading in a northerly direction. During the day we passed hundreds of flocks consisting of up to 100 and 200 birds. When we turned off to Cape Keraudren at about 1 p.m., flocks of budgerigars were still passing overhead.

Next day on returning to the main road, in marked contrast there was not a budgie to be seen. However, just before arriving at the Wallal turnoff to the Eighty-Mile Beach, we once more caught up with the northerly migration. We arrived at the beach at 2.10 p.m. on 27 May. Next morning several large flocks flew over our camp just behind the dunes. Presumably between Wallal and Sandfire Flats, the birds had turned east as we saw no more between there and Broome. On enquiring at Sandfire Roadhouse we learned that none had been noticed in the area. It was interesting to speculate as to where they were going or what happened to them.

Kevin Coate,
21 Acanthus Road,
Willetton 6155

THE HERONS ARE HERE

Pacific Heron — 1, 15/6, Pipidiny Rd, near Yanchep.
— 1, 19/6, Alfred Cove (Metro).
— 1, 6/7, flying SE over Canning Highway in Como (Metro).



A Pacific Heron on the move.

- 23, 6/7, Pipidiny Swamp, near Yanchep.
- 6, 6/7, Gwelup Lake (Metro).
- 1, 7/7, Brockman River (Chittering).
- 1, 13/7, marsh beside Freeway, near Erindale Road (Metro).
- 1, 15/7, 2 km S of Wannamal (Gingin).
- 1, 15/7, Popanyinning (Cuballing): 'first sighting for this district'.
- 30, early August, wet pastures near Mundijong Road, E of Rockingham.
- 2, 4/8, Manning Lake (Metro).
- 1, 20/8, Welshpool (Metro).

A minor invasion of Pacific Herons has been evident in the South-West this winter. Since mid-June, Pacific Herons have been noted about the west-coastal plain at many sites, up to 30 being sighted in any one area.

In recent years, Pacific Herons have appeared at wet pastures of the coastal plain in mid-spring, often arriving in a short period of a few days. Therefore, the current invasion is much earlier than usual.

We cannot be certain from whence the herons come, even in a 'normal' year. It seems possible though, that many could come from the Murchison and Gascoyne regions, or further north in the Kimberley Division. The wet season in the far north is at the opposite time of year to the wet season in the far south of the State.

Extended rains in the Murchison and Gascoyne in early 1984 led to prolonged breeding of waterbirds in wetlands of those

catchments. A minor influx of Native-hens to the South-West Division in the spring of 1984 was possibly evidence of dispersal of waterbirds from the Murchison and Gascoyne. However, observers reported many more Black-tailed Native-hens in the Murchison and Gascoyne early in 1984, than were seen in the south late in 1984. The completion of this waterbird dispersal may only be occurring now, twelve months after the end of breeding.

A similar explanation could apply to Pacific Herons. Failure of the wet season in the Kimberley early in 1985 also might have driven herons southward. For an account of an invasion of herons in 1975 see 'W.A. Naturalist' Vol. 16, pp. 28-30.

COMING MEETINGS

Monday 30 September

Simon Nevill will show 6 x 7 large-format slides taken on his recent journey through north and central Australia. Emphasis will be given to raptors that he encountered, and impressive wilderness areas such as Mitchell Plateau.

Simon is the W.A. representative for the Australasian Raptor Association, a sub-group of the RAOU which conducts research into our nocturnal and diurnal birds-of-prey.

Film Evening: Monday 21 October

As part of National Bird Week, a film evening will be held in the Ross Lecture Theatre, Physics Building, University of Western Australia (Fairway Entrance 3). Two excellent RSPB videos entitled 'Masterbuilders' and 'The Language of Birds' will be shown in this multi-screen theatre, each running for approximately 55 minutes. Visitors are welcome and supper will be included in the admission charge of \$3.00 (children and pensioners \$1.00).

Sunday 3 November: Social Afternoon for Metro Birders

Bring your chops! This meeting will revolve around the Barbeque area next to the Kings Park Administration Building where some project results will be on display and computer print-outs available. Meet at the barbeque area at 2 p.m.

COMING EXCURSIONS

Excursions and campouts are directed toward both country and metropolitan localities and aim to provide experience in bird recognition and appreciation to members and newcomers. Information gathered on the day is often used for specific management or educational purposes.

Interested newcomers are always welcome at any event and experienced birdwatchers are only too pleased to assist with identification of unfamiliar birds.

Codes: MBP = part of the programme of the metropolitan Bird Project, organised by Project Officer Ron Van Delft.

RAOU = 'standard' RAOU excursion.

MBP/RAOU = joint excursion of MBP and RAOU.

Saturday 21 September: Pipidiny Road, Eglinton (RAOU)

Meet at the junction of Pipidiny Road and Yanchep Road, Eglinton at 8 am. You can find it on Map 7 of the 1985 MSD! We will search the heath, tuart forest and wetlands for White-winged Fairy-wren, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and waterbirds. Excursion Organiser: Brice Wells.

Sunday 22nd September: Bayswater Bird Sanctuary (MBP/RAOU)

This will be a joint excursion with 'People and Plants', a group of disabled people who have taken to gardening and other ac-

tivities to lead a varied life. Birdwatching is an activity almost anybody can do, and birds themselves move and migrate making sites more interesting. Meet at 11 am at the Swan River end of King William Street.

Saturday 12 October: Roleystone Ramble and Barbeque (MBP/RAOU)

From ridge top sites to rock pools of the Canning River, three metrobirders have combined to show the delights of the birds of Roleystone. Come and look for a Western Yellow Robin. Meet at 8 am at the corner of Douglas Road and Canning Mills Road, Gosnells. For latecomers we will be leaving for the next site at approximately 9.45 am. BYO lunch in Roleystone — BBQ facilities and view provided. Excursion organiser: Elizabeth King.

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 October: Watheroo National Park (RAOU weekender)

The RAOU received a call from Bob Rickman, the Park Ranger, requesting our help to produce a bird list for the park as no bird list currently exists. Bob and the new Ranger Ross McGill have arranged a camping site and will accompany us on some of the surveys. You need to be fully self sufficient in food, water, sleeping gear (i.e. tent and sleeping bag) and cooking equipment. Ground fires are **not** permitted. Meet at 9.30 am on Saturday at the Shire Office in Moora. Please contact the organiser if you would like to arrive later. Organiser: Ron Van Delft.

Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 October: National Twitchathon and Bird Week Barbeque

This year the Metro Bird Tally, now known as the National Twitchathon, will be held as a separate fun(d) raising event. See separate section of the newsletter for details.

Saturday 2 November: Bengier Swamp (RAOU Day Trip)

It's getting late in the year, so don't miss this chance to get your feet wet once more before the water dries up.

The Dept. of Conservation and Land Management is presently preparing a management plan for Bengier Swamp. Doug Watkins (Consultant for CALM) is involved in the production of this Plan and will lead the outing. As well as some good birding, do come along and contribute any ideas you have on the area.

Highlights: Brown Bitterns? Freckled Ducks? Emu-wrens? Tiger Snakes! Meeting at 0700, at the Service Station, corner of Forrest Rd/Nicholson Rd., Forrestdale (To share cars). Also meeting at 0900, at the end of Swamp Rd., (beginning of the water), Bengier. Turn off South West Hwy immediately south of Bengier Service Station. Bring your lunch and boots.

Saturday 9 November: Forrestdale Lake (RAOU/MBP)

Meet at the south end of Moore Street at 8 am. Jenny Bartle of the Dept. of Conservation and Land Management is presently working on a management plan for the Lake and will endeavour to attend.

Sunday 10 November: Noranda Wetlands (MBP)

Once again a Metro Birder has highlighted a good bird spot through regular surveys. Peter Golos will lead this walk through his site located near the corner of Widgee Road and Della Road, Noranda. Scarlet Robin, Rufous Whistler, Western Spinebill and Grey Butcherbird are amongst the species regularly seen. Meet at the corner at 2 pm. Excursion leader: Peter Golos.

Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 November: Karakin/Wanarie/Gingin (RAOU weekend or day trip)

Meet at 10.00 am on Saturday at the 'K.W. Road' turn-off on the Perth to Lancelin Road (north of Ledge Point turn; at least 1.5 hours from Perth). We will look at the coastal heath

and then Karakin Lake until 3.00 pm. At the Wanerie Rd Sanctuary in West Gingin we will camp overnight. Nesting spoonbills and cormorants should be seen here. Sunday's programme is flexible, starting at 8.30 am.

If anyone would like to stay overnight on Friday at Lancelin for an early beach walk, limited house and camping facilities may be available. Organiser: Diane Beckingham, phone 381 9035.

Saturday 30 November: Three Park Search and Social Night

The Three Park Search is a novel idea in which teams choose three parks from a list of seven and try to find as many birds as possible within those chosen parks during a twelve hour period. This event will be followed by a **SPIT ROAST** and social night (Christmas Party) at Geoff Shannon's place, 29 Waldemar St., Gwelup. Cost is \$10 for adults, \$5 for secondary school children and is free for primary school children.

Advance bookings must be made to the RAOU Office in Perth by 20 November.

The parks from which you may choose are Yanchep, Thomsons Lake, Herdsman Lake, Bold Park, Kings Park, Alfred Cove and Kalamunda National Park. Boundary maps for each of these locations will be provided to each team.

Saturday 7 December: Peel Inlet (RAOU)

Meet at 0800 at the southern end of Wanjeep Street, Coodanup, beside the Inlet. Turn right, off the Mandurah-Pinjarra Rd, into Wanjeep Street, just after leaving Mandurah. If you get to the Serpentine River Bridge before turning, then you have missed Wanjeep Street.

Bring a hat, insect repellent and wading shoes or boots. We plan to visit sites renowned for Little Egrets, Pectoral Sandpipers, Ruffs, Regent Parrots and Brown Quail; mainly on the north and south-east sides of Peel Inlet. An all day trip. Organiser: Roger Jaensch.

24-27 January 1986: Bus trip to Twertup, Fitzgerald River National Park

We propose to hire the services of Kevin Coate and his 19-seater bus to travel to the Twertup Field Studies Centre in the Fitzgerald R National Park. This January long-weekend excursion will leave Perth at noon on Friday and return on the Monday evening. Twertup's spongolite brick house will accommodate 12 people, and has toilet, cooking and water facilities. The area is a unique wilderness with mallee heath, steep breakaways, yate-lined creeks and waterholes.

The total cost will be \$66.00 including transport, lodge fees and all food except the Friday main meal. Reservation is essential and should be made as soon as possible with Diane on 381 9035 (5-8 pm, weekdays). Anyone wishing to travel in their own vehicle must be totally self-sufficient and a \$12.00 fee will apply. Again, please contact Diane Beckingham.

MEETING REPORTS

At the meeting of 24 June, **Dr Denis Saunders** of C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife and Rangelands Research Division gave an interesting talk on the birdlife of Rottnest Island. Dr Saunders drew on his long experience in recording changes in avifauna on the island. He emphasized that there is still much work to be done in comparing species resident on Rottnest with those on the mainland. Members showed their appreciation and interest by plying Dr Saunders with many questions at the end of his illustrated address.

On 5 August, **Ron Johnstone** of the W.A. Museum spoke on the identification of seabirds and their distribution in relation to the coastline of Western Australia. He noted that in recent years several species had been recorded for the first time and that far too little is known of the range and life-cycle of many seabirds. His talk was illustrated with some magnificent slides and study skins from the Museum's ornithological collection. It was particularly relevant for those members who have expressed an interest in forming a seabird group and arranging boat-trips to the edge of the continental shelf.

EXCURSION REPORTS

Chittering Lake and Moondyne Nature Reserves, 25 May

Chittering Lake, although extensive in size is not ideal for a group of people to view, due to the large thick stands of paper-bark which make close approach virtually impossible. Fortunately Mr and Mrs J. Ward of Lakeside Farm, gave us permission, and incidentally any other members of RAOU, to walk over their land, so we were able to view in total comfort.

In about two hours 20 members and interested friends were able to sight 45 species, 17 of which will be included in the Water-bird Survey. The highlights from the waterbirds sighted were about 150 Black-winged Stilts and 60 Yellow-billed Spoonbills. New and older members were delighted with the antics of a group of Mistletoebirds which were flying round the farmyard. We were interested to have some of them perch on a low fence and swoop low over the ground. This is not typical behaviour in our experience. Any comments? The other highlights included a Little Eagle being mobbed by a group of Magpies and a pair of Ravens, and a freshly road-killed Barn Owl. This gave the group the opportunity to really appreciate the loveliness of this soft-plumaged bird.

Our visit to Moondyne Nature Reserve was spoilt by the lateness of our arrival and the overcast conditions which prevailed. However the reserve itself was quite spectacular, with a good range of habitats. We were able to add a further 8 species to our overall list, including Rufous Treecreepers and an early Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

The outing concluded in an almost blissful atmosphere as we sat on the edge of the Avon Valley, watching a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles sweeping along the opposite valley wall.

The possibilities of Moondyne seem excellent. There is no bird list in existence. If some members were able to visit the reserve on a fairly regular basis it could be a rewarding and most valuable exercise.

**Brian Barrett
Brice Wells**

Tutanning Nature Reserve, 22 June

A misty day greeted the birdos who gathered at Pingelly at 9.30 a.m. Local wildlife officer Leon Silvester then led the cavalcade of 15 vehicles to the central part of the Tutanning Nature Reserve. Although half of the group of 40 were from Perth, others had come from Dardanup, Popanyinning, Beverley and the Pingelly district.

Leon outlined the history of the reserve, mentioning that botanical surveys of the reserve had been made as early as 1910. The Tutanning Nature Reserve is a good representative remnant of the landscape of the western wheatbelt prior to clearing for agriculture. Its picturesque patchwork of vegetation includes powderbark, wandoo and Casuarina woodland, complex sand-plain and gravel heath ('kwongan'), jam country, and eerie forests of mallet around the rocky ridges.

After a stroll adjacent to the eastern boundary, the party drove through the reserve to the research station where observations continued after lunch. As the skies cleared, birds became more active and a total of 38 species was realized.

Highlights for the day were seven warbler-types, including four species of thornbill (Inland, Chestnut-rumped, Yellow-rumped, Western); three 'robins' (Red-capped, Scarlet, Western Yellow); and twelve honeyeater-types (e.g. White-eared Honeyeater). A booming Brush Bronzewing led several observers astray, while some were fortunate to glimpse both Splendid and Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens. Western Spinebills were especially active and vocal.

The RAOU was able to add four species to the birdlist for the reserve: Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Restless Flycatcher, Spotted Pardalote and Barn Owl.

Most of the group climbed Boyagin Rock on the way home, enjoying the panorama of woodland, green fields and granite monoliths. A solitary Richard's Pipit pursued a beetle atop the Rock, while others added to our day's list were Mistletoebird and Black-shouldered Kite.

R.J.

METRO BIRDER NEWS

Further preliminary analysis has been undertaken since the last newsletter. One hundred and seventy-nine species have now been recorded from the 770 surveys entered into the computer.

Forty-seven of the species recorded are known or suspected to undertake seasonal movements. Migratory waders account for 21 of these species. Several "movements" relate to seasonal expansion and contraction of the range of the species. Further data is needed for approximately nine species to help clarify our understanding of bird movement in Perth.

Thirteen of the 179 species recorded were not present in Perth before 1895. Five species have been introduced or have been aviary escapees. The remainder have colonized Perth in response to environmental changes throughout the State.

Ten species considered "resident" by Alexander in his article *The birds of the Swan River District, Western Australia* published in 1921 have not been recorded by the Metro Bird surveys. Further analysis will be undertaken to determine how many species live in the bushland surrounding Perth but are not found in the developed areas around Perth.

Progress has been made towards answering the two most commonly asked questions; **Where do I go to SEE BIRDS and where can I SEE SPECIES X?** All species data was examined on a site basis and where a species was recorded on about 75% of all ONE DAY surveys, it was considered to be a RELIABLE SPECIES. Some 96 species can be reliably found in Perth although the actual number varies with the season. I feel sure that this number will be increased with the next entry of computer forms.

The distribution of every species has been mapped, showing where the species was found during summer and during autumn. Highlights of the mapping were:

- A pattern of autumn dispersal was noted for several species;
- The Willie Wagtail was only seen at 3 sites in the hills during summer and autumn. It was recorded at many locations on the Swan Coastal plain during this period.
- The Grey Shrike-thrush, Scarlet Robin and Red-capped Robin were notably absent from urbanized areas.
- The Tawny Frogmouth and Southern Boobook still occur in several urban parks.
- White-winged Fairy-wrens only occur along the coast up to 5 km inland.
- Common Bronzings are present at the South Perth Golf Course.
- Red-capped Parrots are not recorded north of the river, west of the Freeway and south of Hepburn Avenue, yet often recorded elsewhere.

Several unusually high recording rates have been noted. During April, Golden Whistlers were recorded more frequently than usual. The Australian Kestrel and Red-capped Robin were recorded more frequently than usual in May but the data from June is insufficient to determine if the high frequency of recording will continue.

During the next few months efforts will be directed to ensuring continuation of Metro Bird Project funding beyond October 1985, entering computer data and maintaining a reasonable level of publicity.

Remember that there is ANOTHER METRO BIRDERS MEETING on Sunday 3rd of November. Full details are given in the Coming Meetings section of this newsletter. I hope to see you there.

All participants will receive sufficient survey forms to continue surveys until January 1986. Keep up the good work and I wish you pleasant birding.

Ron Van Delft

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

The first half of 1985 was a most exciting time at Eyre, due largely to a prolific flowering of eucalypt. An almost sickly sweet scent pervaded the whole area and from March to June there was

a constant cacophony of contented honeyeaters, burbling, whistling, chortling and scolding in almost every part of the area. White-fronted Honeyeaters easily outnumbered all other members of their family combined.

First indications of an invasion were loose flocks of 10-20 White-fronteds flying past the Observatory in late January, then over 200 early morning on 5th February. On 12th February I travelled the 80 km westwards to Caiguna via the old cliff-top telegraph line. The eucalypt was bursting into flower, the abundant Melaleuca and mistletoe was dripping with blossom and the whole coastal belt was seething with White-fronted Honeyeaters and to a lesser extent Red Wattlebirds and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters. In addition to those in the scrub, there was a continuous stream blogging eastwards, sample counts giving an hourly rate of 1,500 White-fronteds, 300 Red Wattlebirds and 180 Spiny-cheeks. By mid-March honeyeater movement seemed to have stopped: they had all got here!

So far this year I have banded over 500 White-fronteds within 1 km of the Observatory and I estimate that our home area (2 km radius around base) must have held well in excess of 2,000 White-fronteds. Among all these honeyeaters we have caught six and seen at least two more Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, only once previously recorded in the area, in 1974 at Twilight Cove.

Both Striated and Yellow-rumped Pardalotes have moved into and through the area in mixed flocks of up to 100 during the period, greatly augmenting the local population of each, and Silvereyes have also been particularly abundant. The drinking-pool by the south verandah of the Observatory has been a hive of activity, with droves of honeyeaters and Silvereyes coming in to quench their sweet thirst. However, can anyone offer an explanation why only two White-fronted Honeyeaters have been seen to drink, and then extremely briefly, while all the other species of honeyeaters except the Tawny-crowns have been regular at the pool?

Although numbers of honeyeaters decreased markedly in July, large aggregations persisted in pockets along the dune fringe and in the dunes to the east and west.

Brown, New Holland, Purple-gaped and White-eared Honeyeaters all bred during autumn. Weebill youngsters fledged in the first week in June and Yellow-rumped Pardalotes bred in July.

Seven species have been added to the Eyre list since the end of January. First came an Australasian Grebe at Cocklebiddy sewage pool from 2nd to 16th February. A Black-shouldered Kite was next, east of Burnabbie below the escarpment on 18th February.

We found the next new bird on 29 April, an immature Marsh Harrier drifting steadily westwards along the foredunes. Then on 20th May that successful world explorer, the Cattle Egret, turned up. In fact it was first seen standing on the fence rail outside my bedroom, but it clearly didn't rate the chances of a meal highly as it quickly flew off eastwards along the dunes (perhaps it knew Madura is a cattle-station!).

Greatest thrill came on 10th June when I found six Scarlet-chested Parrots: they were feeding on the ground among fairly dense shrubs near the edge of the mallee on the track to Cocklebiddy. They were fairly approachable and afforded terrific views on the ground and perched in a bush. Four were still there on 15th June, but I have not been able to find them subsequently.

A Black-tailed Godwit on the beach from 14th to 21st June was, surprisingly, a new bird for Eyre. Lastly, on 12th July, I was at Twilight Cove with a visitor when we found two Australian Crakes: being a very great distance from the nearest swamp they were making do with the tiny fresh-water pools which the Emus keep open.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes have been unusually numerous on the Tableland with a westerly movement of 48 on 14th May and counts of 55 on 12th June and 80 on 4th July. At least 11 Ground Cuckoo-shrikes were seen there on 12th June. The Tableland mallee has also produced two Rufous Whistlers (rather rare here) and a Restless Flycatcher, only the second ever. A Peaceful Dove trapped at the Observatory on 23rd June had wandered a long

way out of its normal range, but there have been three previous records.

Now that winter is here the sea is warming up (in the seabird sense) with a beach-washed Grey Petrel on 7th July and beach-washed Little Shearwater on 15th July; also an unidentified prion zipping past close inshore on 15th.

Finally, I had the good fortune to find a gathering of 40 Australian Bustards near Cocklebidy on 30th June: I'd like to think the collective noun for bustards is an "illegitimacy".

So, to all those birders who thought about visiting Eyre but didn't, you should've! There is always an ornithological surprise up Eyre's sleeve.

Nick Dymond



Observers visiting the Shark Bay region enjoyed the antics of Chiming Wedgebills, best remembered for their repetitive "did-you-get drunk" calls. See Members' Contributions.

Filming Wildlife Course — Bob Goodale — 3-9 November

This course will vary in approach including practice, theory, demonstration, viewing and active discussion around 16 mm movie-making and still photography of natural history subjects.

Just prior to the course Bob Goodale will have been on an overseas trip observing B.B.C. Natural History Unit, Oxford Scientific Films and several European Television wildlife divisions, where he will have collected data on the latest developments in natural history filming.

Bob has worked on twenty wildlife documentaries in the last eight years, with FILM AUSTRALIA and FILM CENTRE (Perth). He started wildlife still-photography in Cologne Zoological Gardens (West Germany) in 1967.

As the current cost of a half hour wildlife documentary is approximately \$95,000, this course will concentrate on uses of equipment and approaches to wild subjects using hides and portable studios. We will not be making a movie, but some films will be shown.

EYRE COURSES

13-19 October — Nests and Territories
 3-9 November — Filming Wildlife
 early December — Field Ornithology
 The Warden can be contacted on 090 393 450.

SEA-BIRDERS WASB

As a result of the increase in interest in seabirds and the successful boat-trips of recent months I would like to form the Western Australian Sea-Birders (WASB). This would be a casual band of hardy (?) birders who might like to concentrate, to some extent, on seabirds. The aims of the group would be to organise

regular, and hopefully cheap, boat-trips and also gather data on interesting sightings. A broadsheet might be possible, at a nominal charge to cover postage, if there is sufficient response.

The seabird groups in the Eastern States are now very active with as many as four boat-trips a month being organised.

Seabird species and their movement off the coast of WA provide a great opportunity to make a significant contribution to the knowledge of birdlife. You can so easily be a part of an exciting area of birdwatching which has hardly been tapped.

If you are a **photographer**, seabird trips will give you every opportunity to get close shots of often very large birds, often actively feeding.

Seabirds may well be 'good' during those dreadful bleak months of winter when everything else is off the boil. At this time, especially after stormy weather, a walk along the beach can be rewarding.

Steve Keeling
Ph 291 7592

THE WADER STUDY GROUP

Reports from the Wader Study Group have been absent from the last few issues of WA Bird Notes, not because nothing has been happening with waders but because we have all been too busy to write about them.

The last National Wader Count of the Australian Wader Studies Programme was held in July and discussions are presently underway to decide upon the future of Wader Studies in Australia. The next few months should see the release of reports on some of the work undertaken in the four years of the National Wader Programme and a Handbook of waders in Australia is being prepared.

Whatever happens to wader study on a national scale, the WAWSG will continue monitoring waders in the Perth area, and further afield whenever possible, through banding and counting.

The last (1984/85) banding season was not an outstanding success, with only 171 captures made (see table). However, contained within this small number were some interesting birds. For example, two of the six Red-necked Stints which were recaptures, had been banded at Pelican Point by Jim Lane in late 1975! Both were recaptured at Pelican Point just over nine years after they were first caught. Another interesting capture of the season was a Sanderling at Pelican Point, a species rarely seen on the Swan Estuary and even more rarely banded.

The small total catch made last season was due mostly to lack of effort rather than to any shortage of birds. We are therefore planning to try a little harder in the 1985/86 season. Anyone is welcome to come banding, and those of you who have expressed interest in the past may receive phone-calls to tell you when we are going out and how much we'd like to see you up to your knees (or deeper) in mud. The banding programme of the WAWSG provides you with an opportunity to get a little closer than usual to some very interesting birds and is also helping us to better understand how waders fit into the local environment.

Results of the 1984/85 banding season

Species	Total caught	New birds	Recaptures	
			within season	from earlier seasons
Red-capped Plover	13	10	1	2
Black-winged Stilt	3	3		
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	1		
Sanderling	1	1		
Red-necked Stint	98	92		6
Curlew Sandpiper	55	52	1	2
	171	159		

BIRD REPORT

I would like to make an apology for the lack of communication about the 1983-84 Bird Report for Western Australia. An overwhelming amount of information has been received, for which we are grateful. Unfortunately, no further progress is likely to be made until we determine a more effective method for processing the incoming observations.

Geoff Shannon

LOOKING AHEAD THE 1986 AGM

Each year at the RAOU's Annual General Meeting in May a new Council is elected. Usually only some of the members of the Council retire each year, because the Articles under which the RAOU is run provide for each officer and councillor to be elected for a two year term. Only the President is elected for three years. This system usually ensures some continuity on the Council, while allowing the gradual infusion of new blood. In 1986, through a sequence of chances, the positions of all officers except the Editor, and all councillors will be vacant and open for nomination. So the 1986 Annual General Meeting to be held in association with the Scientific Day in Canberra, will be a specially busy one.

The Council is not designed to provide state representation. Its membership is drawn from a national organisation and it needs to have on it people who can contribute many different talents. The councillors play a great part in the running of the RAOU. As Director I am continually consulting one or other of them, seeking their advice and their active help in some task or endeavour. Once the RAOU was run entirely by the councillors. It now has one full-time and three part-time staff but the number of people needed to carry out its varied functions is much greater. Councillors therefore need to be able to devote some time to RAOU affairs between the four Council meetings.

Because the RAOU needs councillors with diverse talents it has for the last ten years taken the view that it may need to pay part of the cost of their travel to Council meetings. That is how the travel item in the RAOU accounts is spent. When possible it encourages councillors to get travel funds from their institution or business but when this is impossible the RAOU will reimburse up to 75% of the councillor's travel costs, the maximum reimbursement being 75% of the economy return air fare between home and the Council meeting. People can be reassured that they will not have to pay all their travel costs if they are elected to Council.

Each year the outgoing Council circulates a set of nominations for officers and councillors. In choosing these names it takes account of the balance it sees as desirable between amateur and professional, practical and creative; it spreads its choices geographically and through the professions and abilities as experience has shown necessary. The Council's list of nominations is a starting point, to ensure that the Annual General Meeting does not convene without some thought being given to the composition of next year's Council.

The Council welcomes other nominations and the point of this article is to encourage people to come forward. It is also to provide an essential piece of information about proxy voting. At each Annual General Meeting about a hundred people attend and two hundred proxies are submitted. Many members only know people nominated for office as names on a piece of paper, so they simply vote or complete their proxies by following the Council's list. This means that if you are nominating yourself or someone else outside the Council's list, you will need to work quite hard to encourage others who agree with your nomination to submit their

proxies to support it. Do not underestimate the value of proxies. Almost all recent RAOU elections have been decided by them.

Finally, remember that we are in the game to help Australia's birds. If you wish to nominate someone, choose a person who is constructive and active. Australia is full of knockers. On a Council they could waste a great deal of time and frustrate many worthwhile activities. We have all, individually and corporately, made mistakes but there have been more successes. Australia's birds have benefited greatly from the surge of activity in the RAOU since 1968. The officers and councillors are playing a vital role in that surge. Help to keep the good ones coming forward.

Stephen Davies

NATIONAL TWITCHATHON AND BIRD WEEK BARBEQUE

Many members will remember the fun, challenge and exhaustion of the 1984 Bird Tally held before our annual social night. The National Twitchathon is to be held along similar lines except that it is also a fund raising event! Teams are requested to hound their friends with sponsorship forms that ask people to offer a certain amount of money (negotiable) for each bird seen by the team. The W.A. Group Committee will determine which projects receive the proceeds (e.g. Library Noticeboards, National Nest Record Scheme, etc.).

Twitchathon participants form teams of any size and try to see as many birds as possible within 24 hours and within 30 kms from Perth G.P.O. This is followed by a barbeque where tall tales are told of birds that were unfortunately only seen by one member of the team (each bird must be seen and verified by two or more team members!).

This year the Twitchathon starts at 5 p.m. on Saturday 26 October and finishes on 27 October at 5 p.m. at the barbeque area at the Children's Playground in Kings Park. BYO meat, salad and drinks. Those who would like to participate should contact **Ron Van Delft at the RAOU by October 8**. A charge of \$2 per team will be made to cover postage of the rules, sponsor sheet and tally cards.

It will be very interesting to compare the results of this survey with the 1984 tally undertaken in December!

WATERBIRDS

Report by Field Officer
Roger Jaensch

1. What's Happening?

In the period since the June Newsletter was prepared, I have mainly been doing three things — chasing up, checking and querying outstanding data; fixing up the printouts which show all data received since 1981; and planning the contents and format of the final report.

Although I have been in touch with more than 35 observers concerning queries about certain records, I have not been able to communicate to other participants. I can only offer my apologies. Unfortunately, until the report is finished, I won't be able to improve greatly in this matter.

Many interesting aspects of waterbird usage of wetlands are emerging in the four years of counts from 200 or so wetland reserves. These will be explained in the final report (to be ready by Dec. 85) and in subsequent publications.

Alas, we are no closer to knowing whether the RAOU will be granted the money that it needs to undertake new waterbird studies in 1986. These **new projects** could include:

- (1) Annual Waterfowl Count — covering a broad selection of wetlands in southern WA, particularly sites known to be important for waterbirds, on a nine day period in autumn. This will become an index to show long term changes in duck numbers.

- (2) Expeditions to wetlands of the Kimberley and Pilbara — to assess the importance of these wetlands for waterbirds. We hope to look in some detail at Lake Argyle in August-September 1986. Participants will need to be largely self-supportive.
- (3) Concerted searches for species which the 1981-85 Project showed as being uncommon or rare: e.g. Chestnut Teal, Black Bittern.

Stay tuned to the December issue for developments!

2. What should I do if I still want to count Waterbirds?

As mentioned in the June 1985 newsletter, we hope to continue to collect counts of waterbirds in southern W.A. Some 21 observers have already indicated that they wish to continue their counts at wetland nature reserves. Others are keen to investigate non-reserve areas.

If you are interested in any way, please drop me a line or two.

Our AIMS with the ONGOING MONITORING programme are:

- (a) to collate counts of waterbirds at wetland nature reserves where observers are keen to continue, ideally every two months. This information is helpful to those responsible for the management of the reserves and the birds therein.
- (b) to include in (a), reserves containing wetlands that we have found to be important for waterbirds, as well as a representative sample of reserves with different wetland environments. If necessary, these would be covered by recruitment of new observers or redirection of current observers. Inclusion of these wetlands will enable us to perform particularly useful analyses on results for each species of waterbird.
- (c) that, where possible, we include wetlands outside of the reserve system which are known to be important for waterbirds (e.g. Hardy Inlet, Oyster Harbour).

Comprehensive data might justify preservation of these wetlands.

- (d) that some (e.g. at least 10) wetlands continue to receive regular, consistent coverage. Smaller, easily managed wetlands would be most appropriate. These counts could be analysed in great detail.
- (e) to incorporate anecdotal information from occasional or opportunistic visits to any other wetlands in the south of W.A. We expect that the RAOU will maintain the most comprehensive set of waterbird count data in the State.

OBSERVATIONS

The following records have been partly vetted and will receive further scrutiny before they are considered for the Bird Report series. Observers are encouraged to submit copies of field notes with all accounts of unusual sightings. Individual observers will be acknowledged in the Bird Reports.

This series mainly covers autumn and winter of 1985. Shire names are given in brackets.

1. Southern W.A. (South-West and Eucla)

- Shy Albatross — several, mid-August, Rottnest.
 Giant-Petrel sp. — 1, 1/7, found dead at Rottnest.
 — 2, 3/7, Shoalwater Bay.
 White-headed Petrel — 1, 28/5, Gage Roads, off Fremantle.
 Little Shearwater — nesting on Penguin Island, Shoalwater Bay, 11/8: one active burrow.
 Pacific Heron — 1, 15/6, Pipidinny Rd, near Yanchip.
 — 1, 19/6, Alfred Cove (Metro).
 — 1, 6/7, flying SE over Canning Highway in Como (Metro).
 — 23, 6/7, Pipidinny Swamp, near Yanchep.

- 6, 6/7, Gwelup Lake (Metro).
 — 1, 7/7, Brockman River (Chittering).
 — 1, 13/7, marsh beside Freeway, near Erindale Road (Metro).
 — 1, 15/7, 2 km S of Wannamal (Gingin).
 — 1, 15/7, Popanyinning (Cuballing): 'first sighting for this district'.
 — 30, early August, wet pastures near Mundijong Road, E of Rockingham.
 — 2, 4/8, Manning Lake (Metro).
 — 1, 20/8, Welshpool (Metro).
 — 1, autumn 85, Wellstead, E of Albany.
- Cattle Egret — 1, 7/7, Brockman River (Chittering).
- Glossy Ibis — 2 pairs, 24/5, Esperance Golf Course.
 — 1, 25-27/6, Cape Le Grand Nat. Park.
- Cape Barren Goose — 2, 29/6-10/8, Herdsman L (Metro). Escapees or wild wanderers?
- Wandering Whistling-Duck — 71, 17/7, between Northam & Narembeen.
 — May, Shark Bay region.
- Black-shouldered Kite — 6, 10/6, North Island, Abrolhos Group.
 — 1, 14/7, Wembley: spiralling & going northwards; immature.
- Black-breasted Buzzard — 26 in 200 km near Mundrabilla Station, 10 in one group, 23/8.
- White-bellied Sea-Eagle — 1 male seen as it was killed by a passing car, 1/4/1984, 2 km S of Yanchep National Park. Escapee?
- Wedge-tailed Eagle — 1, 13/7, Forrest Beach Rd, near Capel.
- King Quail — 6, late May, Beacon Is., Abrolhos: fed on oatmeal by wife of fisherman; unafraid, sometimes entering huts.
- Buff-banded Rail — 2, 17/8, North Lake.
 — early August, Goodale Sanctuary (Murray): new species here.
 — 3, 13/7, St Helena Rd, Waterloo (Dardanup): first for many years.
- Spotless Crake — 1, 28/6, at edge of town of Katanning, calling after sunset.
 — 1, 29/6, road verge near Badgerbup (Kent): calling at 0130.
- Black-tailed Native-hen — 5, 26/4, Albany: feeding on grassed area near the brig 'Amity'.
 — 9, 10/6, North Island, Abrolhos Group.
- Bush Thick-knee (Stone-curlew) — 5, late May, Rottnest West End.
 — 1, 22/8, Point Dundas (Metro).
- Sooty Oystercatcher — 1, late June, small pond near Dalyup R, Esperance: over-wintering?
 — 3, 10/8, Point Dundas (Metro).
 — 1, 12/7, Creery Island, near Coodanup (Murray): foraging with stilts and Greenshanks; predominantly non-breeding

