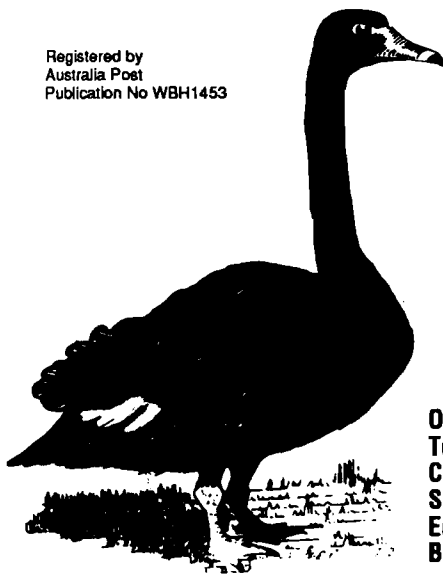


Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union



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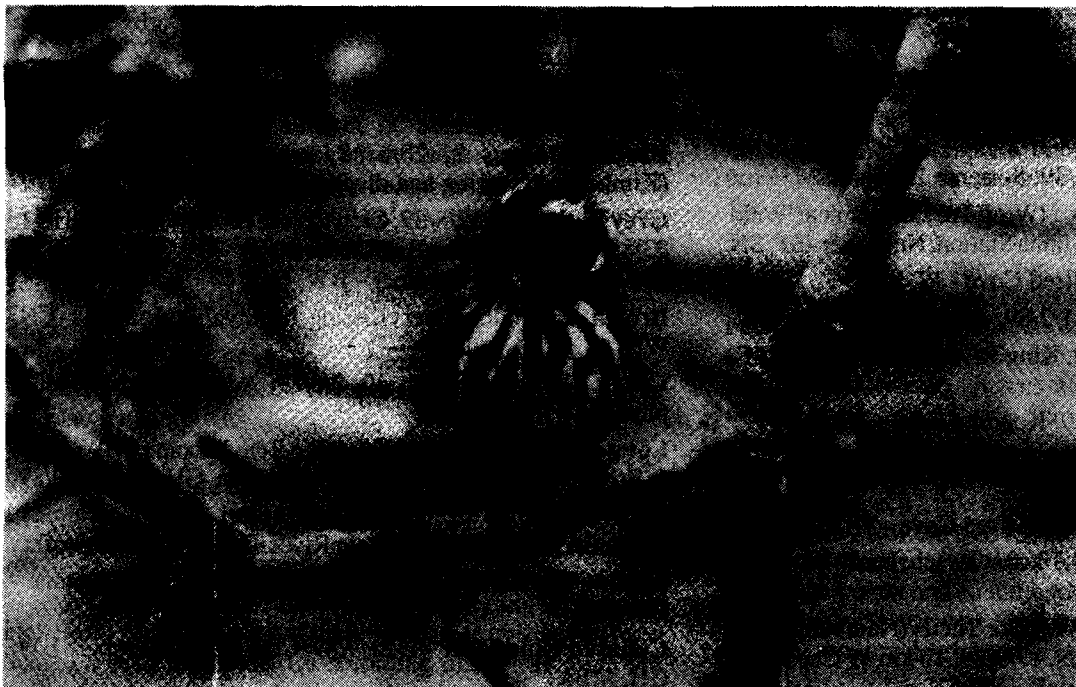
NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER REPORT

- 17.8.89 Found nest of New Holland Honeyeater, 3 eggs, coloured dusty pink, brown speckles on the large end of 2, but the 3rd egg was nearly all brown. Nest shallow cup-shaped, made from small twigs, dry grass and lined with wool.
- 26.8.89 Eggs hatched, brown fluffy bodies. Both honeyeaters feeding them.
- 27.8.89 8am Chick with the biggest head was 1cm across its abdomen. The other 2 were weak with no abdomens. Removed the "odd" chick, certain it was a cuckoo.
2pm The two remaining chicks were stronger and had rounder abdomens.
- 1.9.89 Chicks have doubled their size, eyes still closed.
- 2.9.89 Took photos of the young birds, the parent birds very protective, peck my fingers when I parted the fern for the snapshot.
- 6.9.89 Eyes of the young are open, well feathered.
- 8.9.89 While taking a photo of the young in the nest one hopped out. I put it for safety in a plum tree. The other then hopped out and fluttered across to the same tree.
- 10.9.89 Female (?) New Holland Honeyeater building nest in fuschia bush 17 to 18 metres from previous nest.
- 13.9.89 1 egg in the new nest.
- 15.9.89 3 eggs in new nest. All look alike.
- 24.9.89 Only 2 eggs in the nest.
- 29.9.89 Two chicks hatched, 14 days after the eggs were laid. The female (?) is so used to me looking in it stays on the nest. The other bird eyes me off from a nearby fig tree.

D. Lawrence

A number of items of interest emerge from the above report. The lining of the nest with wool may not have been previously specifically reported. Recher (1979) writes "lined with soft material" (p.496), Beruldsen (1980) "lined with finely shredded bark and other fine soft dry material" (p.383) and Pizzey (1980) "lined with soft white or brownish plant down" (p.345). The time to fledging (14 days) and the time of incubation (14 days) is in accordance with the periods given by Recher (1979) and Serventy & Whittell (1976). The apparent early start on a new nest also accords with the above authorities.

(Ed.)



References:

- Beruldsen G. (1980) *A field guide to nests and eggs of Australian birds*, Rigby Publishers Ltd., Australia.
- Pizzey G. & Doyle R. (1980) *A field guide to the birds of Australia*, Collins, Sydney.
- Recher J.T. (1979) in *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*, Readers Digest Services Pty Ltd, Sydney.
- Serventy D.L. and Whittell H.M. (1976) *Birds of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth.

OBSERVATIONS

Please send details of sightings to 'Observations Officer' at the W.A. Office of the RAOU. Unusual sightings should be accompanied by field notes. Preliminary checking of the following observations has been undertaken but further scrutiny should be given prior to inclusion in any official or technical report. This list of observations mainly covers the period from August to November 1989.

Compiled by Rodney Vervest.

DOWN SOUTH

Grey-headed Albatross - 1, 21/9/89, Floreat Beach: juvenile - GM

White-faced Storm-Petrel - 1, 18/9/89, Leighton Beach: beach-washed - GM

Cattle Egret - 8, 23/8/89, Austin Bay N.R. (Peel Inlet) - RV, DMu * 1, 21/9/89, wetland south of Bibra Lake: in breeding plumage - SF, SN

Little Egret - 1, 4/8/89, Lake Joondalup - GM * 4, 23/8/89, Robert Bay, Peel Inlet - RV, DMu * pair, 18/10/89, West Corio Swamp (Pinjarra): breeding - RV, GP

Eastern Reef Egret - 1, 8/9/89, Geraldton Harbour - GB

Glossy Ibis - 4, 27/7/89, Herdsman Lake - EM * 4, 22/10/89, Herdsman Lake - GM

Chestnut Teal - 4, October 89, Lake Cronin: 1 male, 3 females - BWi * 1, 13/8/89, Lake Claremont - DM * 3, 26/9/89, Torbay Inlet - LB * 1, Hurstview Lake (Dandaragan) - BBu, ABu

Pink-eared Duck - 1, 13/9/89, Alfred Cove - JH

Osprey - 1, 26/3/89, Alfred Cove - IS, BWi * 1, 15/5/89, Lake Monger - IS, BWi * 1, 20/9/89, Point Dundas: fishing - KH

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 5-6/11/88, Dryandra - SF, AF, JN, DN, IS, BWi * 1, 3/9/89, 20 km SE Ravensthorpe DK, RJ, RR * 1, 19/10/89, Yanchep National Park: hunting over heathland - AB

Little Eagle - 1, 19/8/89, Hepburn Heights woodland (Metro) - NR, NRU

Grey Falcon - 15/5/89, 90 km E Wongawol Station - KC

Spotted Harrier - 1, 19/9/89, Stirling Range N.P. - SF, SN

Malleefowl - 1, 9/9/89, 1 km E Zanthus Siding: walking slowly in front of vehicle - SF, SN

Buff-banded Rail - 1, 17/9/89, Clarkson Reserve, Maylands - MW * 1, 13/10/89, Alfred Cove - PRH

Australian Bustard - 1, 9/9/89, 50 km S Zanthus Siding: with dependant chick - SF, SN

Bush Thick-knee - 2, 24/6/89, Dryandra - JHi, RH, IS, BWi

Large Sand Plover - 1, 20/9/89, Sorrento Beach - GM

Inland Dotterel - 2, 24/7/89, NW of Tuckanurra near Weld Ranges - LB * 3, 10/9/89, Rawlinna Station, Nullarbor - SF, SN

Banded Stilt - 8, 11/2/89, Alfred Cove - IS, BWi

Red-necked Avocet - 95+, 11/2/89, Alfred Cove - IS, BWi

Eastern Curlew - 2, 20/9/89, King River Inlet, Albany - SF, SN

Wood Sandpiper - 2, 5/10/89, Kogolup Lake - JH

Common Sandpiper - 2, 2/9/89, Lake Thetis (Nambung N.P.) - GB

Terek Sandpiper - 1, 13/10/89, Alfred Cove - PRH, JD

Common Noddy - 1, 28/9/89, Floreat Beach: beach-washed - GM

Whiskered Tern - 18, 21/8/89, Lake Theits (Nambung N.P.) - AF, JN, DN, IS * ca. 50 pairs, 17/9/89, 10 km W Cape Arid N.P.: collecting nesting materials - SF, SN

Little Corella - 120+, 6/4/89, Yokine - IS

Rainbow Lorikeet - 4, 3/8/89, Balcatta - IS

Regent Parrot - 5, 9/9/89, 2 km E Zanthus Siding - SF, SN

Alexandra's Parrot - 7, 2/6/89, 50 km S Lake Tobin (Canning Stock Route) - JS

Western Rosella - 1, 14/10/89, Beermullah Lake (Gingin) - BBu

Bourke's Parrot - 40, 12/5/89, dam near Sandstone - KC

Blue Bonnet - several pairs, 10/9/89, between Zanthus Siding and Rawlinna Station, Nullarbor - SF, SN

Southern Boobook - 1, 30/5/89, Stirling St. Perth - IS

Rainbow Bee-eater - 70, 11/10/89, Wanneroo - ID

White-backed Swallow - 1, 3/8/89, Herdsman Lake - GM (1 pair seen roosting 1/8/89 - EM), 2 in nest 7/9/89 sandpit nr Wannamal West Road Gingin - BBu

Ground Cuckoo-shrike - 2, 10/9/89, Rawlinna Station, Nullarbor: feeding 3 chicks - SF, SN

Western Yellow Robin - 10/5/89, White Wells Station - KC

Crested Shrike-tit - 3, 20/8/89, Julimar State Forest - GL, GM * 1, 5-6/11/88, Dryandra - IS

Cinnamon Quail-thrush - 17/5/89, Mt Beadell (Gunbarrel Highway) - KC

Western Whipbird - 1, 3/9/89, 20 km SE Ravensthorpe - DK, RJ, RR

Shy Hylacola - 1, 30/9/89, Old Ongerup Road, Fitzgerald River N.P. - LB

Slaty-backed Thornbill - 15/5/89, Wongawol Creek, E of Wiluna - KC

Banded White-face - 40 km E Carnegie Station - KC

White-cheeked Honeyeater - 2, 2/7/89, Lake Monger - IS, BWi

Grey Honeyeater - 11/5/89, seen at Mount Magnet - KC

Pied Honeyeater - 21/5/89, W.A. border SE Giles - KC

Red-eared Firetail - 1, 3/9/89, 20 km SE Ravensthorpe - RJ, RR * 1, 22/10/89, Lesley near Boulder Rock - TK

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin - 1, 23/10/89, Lake Neerabup - NR

UP NORTH

Masked Booby - 7/6/89, Adele Island - KC

Cattle Egret - 1, 21/6/89, 26/7/89, 16/8/89, Derby Sewerage Works - BW, GH

Black Bittern - 1, 26/12/88, Dog Chain Creek, King Leopold Ranges - JMc

Pacific Baza - 2, 20/6/88, mouth of Glenelg River (Kimberley): soaring and displaying over woodland - AB

Grey Falcon - 2, 12/8/89, Cran Creek, Broome - BW, GH * 1, 23/8/89, over Broome Bird Observatory - BW, GH * 1, 10/9/89, 2 km W of Observatory - BW, GH

Brolga - 2, Lyndon River crossing, Minilya/Exmouth Rd - CN, WN

Lesser Golden Plover - 40, 7/6/89, Adele Island: breeding plumage - KC

Long-toed Stint - 3, 6/10/89, Lake Eda, Broome - BW, GH * 1, 7/10/89, Derby Sewerage Works - BW, GH * 1, 16/10/89, Broome Sewerage Ponds - BW, GH

Emerald Dove - 10/6/89, Sale River - KC

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo - 1, 2/10/89, Crab Creek, Broome - BW, GH

Collared Kingfisher - 1, 21/9/89, Crab Creek, Broome - BW, GH, MBa

Rainbow Pitta - 10/6/89, Sale River - KC
Yellow Wagtail - 3, 11/10/89, Derby Sewerage Works - JMc, BW, GH
Kimberley Flycatcher - 2, July to mid-August and early October, Crab Creek, Broome - BW, GH et al
White-winged Fairy-wren - 140 km E of Fitzroy Crossing - JMc
Little Crow - 1, 31/8/89, Broome Bird Observatory - BW, GH

KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

AB - Allan Burbidge	JHi - Jan Hill
AF - Austin Fincham	JMc - Jock McLaren
BBu - Bruce & Anne Buchanan	JN - Jane Newsome
BW - Brice Wells	JS - J. Skinner
BWi - Bev Wilcox	KC - Kevin Coate
CN - Clive Napier	KH - Katherine Highman
DK - Dot Kingston	LB - Lola Broadhurst
DM - Dusty Millar	MB - Mike Bamford
DMu - Don Munro	MW - Mark Whackett
DN - David Newsome	NR - Norman Robinson
EM - Eric McCrum	NRu - Norma Rundle
GB - Gordon Baker	PRH - Peel Howden
GH - Gail Hooper	RH - Rob Hill
GL - Graham Little	RJ - Rosemary Jasper
GM - George Miller	RR - Ron Richards
GP - Grant Pearson	RV - Rodney Vervest
ID - Ian Davis	SF - Sandra Fincham
IS - Ian Standring	SN - Simon Nevill
JD - Jack Donohoe	TK - Tony Kirkby
JH - Jack Hunt	WN - Wendy Napier

WATERBIRD STUDIES

SCOPEWEST

Research Officer, Rodney Vervest reports -

The new waterbird study is gathering momentum and I am busy with processing the incoming data. Good coverage of the study area has been achieved and a feature of the initial batch of returned sheets is the amount of breeding information collected. The field record book has met with approval and with some refinements to it and the wetland set we should be on target for a streamlined operation in January and the following survey periods. Remember that I am available to discuss any questions or suggestions you may have regarding SCOPEWEST and would welcome your communication. There is still some outstanding data and I would urge all SCOPEWESTERS to get their sheets in quickly. A more detailed report on results for October and the January survey in the March newsletter.

Wing-tagged Birds Part of the SCOPEWEST project is devoted to waterbird movement studies and recently a number of birds have been wing-tagged. Please keep your eyes out for Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Straw-necked and Sacred Ibis, White-faced Herons and Great Egrets with yellow wing tags. The tags have two letters (inscribed in black) and will appear high up on the folded wing of these species. Provision has been made on your data sheet for recording this information but

please contact me if you see birds outside the survey periods.

ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNT

The Duck Master reports -

By the time this note reaches you every duck, swan and coot in the South-west and Eucla Land Division in the period 18-26 November 1989 will have been counted!! Well almost, anyway. In March 1990 we will again be asking you to find every duck, swan and coot you counted in November 1989 plus those others you may have missed. Contact your local Duck Master at the RAOU office to join the team of duck counters.

OBSERVATORY REPORTS

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Little Ringed Plover

On September 29th of this year, a party of four from BBO visited the Pearl Coast Wildlife Park. We were doing the regular count of wild birds that take advantage of the lakes built in the park in 1987. The party consisted of Norma Duff, Margery Clegg, Bryan Barrett and Brice Wells. Just before the lakes is a small ponded area that has been planted with reeds. As we passed them Bryan noticed a bird near a Common Sandpiper, and asked, "what's that?" My initial response was to say, "it could be a Large Sand Plover." A second look, however, showed me to be very wide of the mark. What we were looking at was a very exciting bird indeed. There was no doubt that it was a plover, the large dark eyes, strong black beak, and its posture made this likely. The feature that made it exciting was the ring that extended from the throat and completely encircled the head. Its colour was cream rather than white and fairly uniform around the nape. The chin was also creamy, and the forehead cream, strongly speckled brown. The supercilia was poorly marked and whitish rather than yellow. The nearby Common Sandpiper gave us a good size comparison. We judged the bird to be much smaller, nearer the size of a Red-capped Plover. Like the Common Sandpiper there was a white peak in front of the wing. The leading edge of the shoulder had a narrow black line, with a pale mark running across the shoulder. The rest of the wing was mottled brown with a black tip to the primaries. The wings ended level with the tail. The tail itself was white underneath, (as indeed was the whole of the belly) brown above with a distinct black terminal band on top. There was a dark line between the cream throat and the incomplete breastband. The back was pale brown. The leg colour can only be described as pinkish/orange. The most obvious behaviour was the plover's habit of tapping the mud with its feet. First one foot then the other. It did this all the time we were watching. The only other trait we noticed was an infrequent "bob" rather like the Common Sandpiper, but not nearly as pronounced. Gail Hooper and I subsequently saw the bird on the 30th September. I saw it again on the 4th and 9th of October. It was also seen by Brian Kane and members of the Wildlife Parks bird staff, including the manager Graham Taylor. Efforts to get close enough to photograph the bird were unsuccessful. We concluded that we were looking at a Little Ringed Plover, probably an immature bird. When I saw the bird for the last time (9th October) I was with Rod Smith. We went from the park to the Broome Sewerage ponds and found another of the same species. Its general appearance was similar to the one described, but the eye-ring was much brighter, being undeniably yellow. It could

have been an adult in non-breeding plumage. This second bird was also seen by Brian Kane (later on the 9th) and George Swann (16th).

B. Wells

Something we've meant to report but never have until now. Coming back from Perth on the 20th February 1989, we reached the edge of Roebuck Plain right on dusk. Suddenly we were surrounded by Oriental Pratincoles all hawking across the plain, picking up the grasshoppers, moths etc. that were there in countless thousands. We ran through this vast mass of birds for about 15 kms. At times we estimated that the birds spread out for about half a kilometre on either side of the roadway. As a conservative "guesstimate" we thought there were not less than 50,000 birds. As far as we could ascertain they were all Orientals. From then on we scarcely saw one in the Broome area. We assume that we caught the birds massing to begin their migration back to their breeding grounds.

G. Hooper & B. Wells

Telephone

The BBO is now on the telephone. Ring 091 935 600.

First Course at Broome

The first course at Broome will be held from 21-27 April 1990, Wave the Waders Goodbye. Watch waders leave for their breeding grounds. Possible opportunities to see Asian Dowitcher, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Redshank and many others too numerous to mention. Join an exciting and enjoyable historic first course. Cost including meals and local transport \$260. Telephone 091 935 600 for enquiries and bookings.

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Birding at Eyre in summer is exciting. You can see up to eleven honeyeater species and many other bush bird species from the Observatory windows. The coastal location makes Eyre pleasant in summer and the seabreeze can always be relied upon. Interesting activities planned for this summer are:-

Christmas at Eyre

24-30 December 1989 \$200.00

There are still places left on this Xmas course. Escape the Christmas rush and bustle and enjoy the birds and beauty of Eyre. Father Xmas usually finds his way to Eyre for a spot of Xmas birding and he insists on a special Xmas feast.

RAOU Nullarbor Honeyeater Banding Expedition

3-31 January 1990

Eyre is the central point of the most ambitious bird banding project ever attempted in Australia. Eyre will be one of the many banding stations across the Nullarbor operating throughout the month of January 1990. There are still places at Eyre, particularly in the last two weeks of the month. You can be part of this exciting project. Previous banding experience is not essential and experience can be gained.

Dune Stabilization Workparties

January-February 1990

Discount rates will be offered to guests who joint these workparties. The aim is to continue the excellent work done in previous years. The discount requires you to spend 4 hours per

day high on the majestic white dunes planting seed, enjoying the panorama, breathing fresh sea air and getting fit. This leaves plenty of time for birding and sightseeing. Visit Eyre this summer with the added bonus of the congenial company of the Warden, Ian Ashton, and his assistant, Arvi Pocock. Phone 090 393450 for details and bookings.

NOTICES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be on Monday 5th February, 1990. All committee positions will be declared vacant and office bearers will be elected for the coming year. Signed nominations should be handed to the Secretary beforehand up till the start of the meeting.

1991 NATIONAL RAOU CONGRESS

The 1991 National RAOU Congress will be held in Perth on 20-22 September 1991. Mark these dates in your diary.

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

DECLINE IN NUMBERS OF AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE

We have observed a decline in the number of Australian Magpies in our locality, Middlesex near Manjimup. No species study has been undertaken but nests have been recorded annually since 1974.

On the perimeter of our property there were five groups, now there are only two and the carolling we used to hear is very much missed today. The disappearance of old known groups has been repeated throughout our 5km study area and lack of breeding success was confirmed in the annual road casualty list. In 1984-85 we picked up 6 juvenile magpies killed on the road but last year none at all.

This breeding season we are attempting a census of local Australian Magpie groups, not individuals and in the consideration of possible causes of the decline it would be a great help if we knew whether it is a local occurrence or part of a more general decline. Have you, in and around Perth and elsewhere, as many Australian Magpies groups today as 15 years ago?

R.J. & M.N. Brown

WA Bird Notes would be interested to hear from subscribers about their knowledge of variations in Australian Magpie populations. Any letters will be passed on to the Browns.

(Ed.)

PELICAN POINT : JULY 1988 TO JUNE 1989

The Pelican Point reserve was visited 44 times during 40 weeks of the period under review. Most of the visits were made at 5.30pm, or during the winter in the afternoon.

In the course of the year, 57 species were seen bringing the total bird species recorded to 78 in the 6 years since 1 July 1983, when records began to be kept of all species seen. Prior to that date, only sightings of water birds were recorded, the change

being brought about by participation in the Metropolitan Bird Survey.

Observations of interest for the year were one male Chestnut-breasted Mannikin seen in November 1988, a Little Corella which made a brief landing on the foreshore in January 1989 and Rainbow Lorikeets which flew over the reserve. All of these were new for my list of species for Pelican Point. An Australasian Shoveler, a second record, was present on the lagoon in February 1989 and an Osprey, flying downstream and over the reserve on four occasions, was a welcome record after an absence of at least 6 years. Excellent views were obtained several times during January and February 1989 of Large Sand and Mongolian Plovers at close range and in the same field of the binoculars.

Transequatorial waders are no longer a certainty for the reserve as can be seen from the list below. Only one record of a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, only two records each of Red Knot and Great Knot and seven of Curlew Sandpiper were obtained.

A paper in The Western Australian Naturalist (Bailey & Creed 1989) compares bird lists made at Pelican Point since 1971 with lists made by Job in 1966-68, Serventy in 1936 and Alexander in 1921. Somewhat surprisingly, Serventy recorded Grey Plover as a new species for the Swan River in 1936.

M. Bailey et al.

References:

Bailey, M. & Creed, K.E. (1989) *Observations of bird species at Pelican Point*. West.Aust.Nat. 17, p229-232.

Bird species showing Number of weeks present

Silver Gull	40	
Crested Tern	34	
Laughing Turtle-Dove	33	
Little Pied Cormorant	32	seen >75% of weeks visited
Black-winged Stilt	32	
Welcome Swallow	32	
Singing Honeyeater	32	
Pacific Black Duck	31	
Caspian Tern	31	
Grey Teal	28	
Pied Oystercatcher	28	
Little Black Cormorant	24	seen 50-75% of weeks visited
Red-capped Plover	22	
Grey Plover	21	
Tree Martin	21	
Great Cormorant	19	
Australian Pelican	18	
Red-necked Stint	18	
Variiegated Fairy-wren	17	
Brown Honeyeater	14	
Australian Magpie	14	seen 25-50% of weeks visited
Rainbow bee-eater	13	
Red Wattlebird	12	
Large Sand Plover	10	
Greenshank	10	
Fairy Tern	10	
Darter	9	
Bar-tailed Godwit	8	
Red-necked Avocet	7	
Curlew Sandpiper	7	
White-faced Heron	6	seen 10-25% of weeks visited

Port Lincoln Ringneck	6	
Rufous Night-heron	5	
Osprey	4	
Spotted Turtle-Dove	4	
Pied Cormorant	3	
Sacred Ibis	3	
Australian Shelduck	3	
Mongolian Plover	3	
Galah	3	seen 5-10% of weeks visited
Mallard	3	
Common Sandpiper	2	
Red Knot	2	
Great Knot	2	
Laughing Kookaburra	2	
Australian Raven	2	
Australasian Shoveler	1	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	
White-tailed Black Cockatoo	1	
Little Corella	1	
Rainbow Lorikeet	1	
Willie Wagtail	1	seen <5% of weeks visited
Western Gerygone	1	
Striated Pardalote	1	
Silvereye	1	
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	1	
Australian Magpie-lark	1	

Total of 57 species present in 40 weeks of visits

	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Nº of weeks visited	1	3	2	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	2	2

GURAGA : A Footnote

In West Australian Bird Notes No. 51 September 1989 an article on observations at Lake Guraga was included. The article contained some speculation on the length of time the lake has been important to Australian Shelduck because of the name Guraga (being Aboriginal for the bird).

Shortly after this I was surprised to find, on talking with an inhabitant of the locality for over thirty years that locally Guraga had no name, although generally referred to as 'The Salt Lake'. Being a lake with no outlet, compared to some others nearby, this appellation was understandable, but being unnamed, when it is clearly marked Guraga on the published maps of the district was a surprise.

I am indebted to G.M. Storr of the Western Australian Museum for informing me that the name Guraga was suggested by him to the Lands Department "a few years ago". He took the name from the aboriginal word for Australian Shelduck in Serventy D.L. and Whittell H.M., *Birds of Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, knowing the lake to be important for the birds.

B. Buchanan

AUSTRALIAN HOBBY TAKES BUDGERIGAR

On 1st November 1988 towards dusk, Bev Wilcox and I had just left home by car when we saw a raptor in a dead tree on the edge of the West Australian Golf Course, Yokine. We returned to get binoculars through which the raptor was soon identified as an Australian Hobby by its buff partial collar and forehead and small size. It appeared to be an immature because of its overall browner appearance with rufous tinge, having a dark brown crown and brown upperparts. Hollands (1984) states immature birds have their upperpart feathers edged with brown

and a tawny crown.

After a minute or two it flew at canopy height parallel with the road along the southern edge of the golf course (Raymond Street) to perch on top of a telegraph pole about 90 metres away. We approached in the car and pulled onto a nature strip and watched the bird for some little time. Suddenly it flew from the pole at a small bird whose yellowness at first puzzled me. Although the low position of the sun did not make observation ideal, the small bird called and this, together with its manner of flight, enabled it to be recognised as a Budgerigar. The Australian Hobby and the pursued flew over the road and into the front yard of the nearest house, which contained possible cover in the form of several small eucalypts, but before reaching cover the Australian Hobby had caught the Budgerigar.

In view of its yellowness and location in a suburb of Perth, the Budgerigar was probably an escapee of the domestic yellow variety, rather than a wild bird, which is mostly green and yellow. The Australian Hobby paused briefly on the guttering of the house, about 25 metres from the telegraph pole, with its prey in its talons before flying back over the trees and into the golf course where it was lost from view. Several seconds later what was possibly another Australian Hobby was seen briefly over the golf course coming from another direction, before also disappearing from view.

Hollands (1984) states that the attacks of the Australian Hobby are almost always directed against other birds. The observation described above was in the late afternoon when the sun was low although it was not sunset. Hollands (1984) makes the interesting point that the Australian Hobby has a "noticeably large eye and it is not surprising to find it hunting in the half light of dawn and dusk when potential victims become more vulnerable as they move from or to their roosts, hampered by their inferior vision" (p.158). He also describes the hunting of big flying insects, probably beetles, in fast fading light until darkness.

I. Standring

Reference:

Hollands, D (1984), *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne.

The following 3 contributions were held over from WABN N° 51 because of lack of space.

LAKE MCLEOD

I have continued to visit Lake McLeod over the past few years. Roland Hill, Marie Gullin and myself have visited a total of 7 times since the RAOU expedition (see WABN N° 44, December 1987).

We really love the place, though our birding efforts are hampered by lack of a boat. We walk to the same point each time and observe what is feeding there. A most interesting visit was over the June long weekend. The southern upwelling was perfectly still, whereas we have always been able to discern it in the past. Also, the lake itself seemed to be much lower.

We saw many clouds of stilt (?) over the mudflats, and at least 100 Australian Pelican. In close, the only birds of note were 8 Curlew Sandpiper feeding on the lake's edge and 30-40 Red-capped Plovers. We also saw about 20 Ruddy Turnstone and (as we usually do) Caspian Tern and Little and Great Egret.

R. Duffy

LITTLE BITTERN FLUSHED BY HORSES

While carrying out a waterbird survey of South Kogolup Lake on the 11th June 1989 (2.30 pm), I was standing beside a dense thicket of typha, looking across the typha at open water further out. Several horses galloped past my position alongside the shoreline. A very pale coloured Little Bittern flew up from immediately in front of me and fluttered across the typha reeds to drop out of sight approximately 8 metres further away. The weather was cold and overcast which may account for the presence of the bird at the margin of the lake at that time of day.

D. James

RETURN TO BILLYACATTING

The 1988 RAOU outing to Billyacatting nature reserve was not the success everyone had hoped due to wet weather. Three of the party who attended made plans to re-visit the area at a later date. In June of 1989 these plans were realised.

Billyacatting nature reserve is 270 kms north-east of Perth in the Kunnunoppin-Muckinbudin area. Vegetation is a mixture of low dense scrub with taller trees and mallee interspersed with rocky outcrops. Billyacatting is surrounded by farmland which gives the impression that the area is a reserve by default owing to its unsuitability for farming. The land is owned by CALM but no ranger is present. The ranger at Narrogin assumes responsibility for the area. We saw 40 species of birds, with a number of drier country residents. A species of note was Malleefowl. Some were seen crossing the road together some distance off. Unfortunately we never saw them again. These birds are said to wander through the gates onto farms quite often according to the local farmers and appear to be relatively common.

A pair of White-fronted Chat attempted to draw us with a broken wing display, the reason being two young unable to fly. We felt surprised that breeding had taken place so early and a record of this was sent to the Nest Record Scheme.

Southern Scrub-robins were secretive as always but surprisingly common considering the number and size of cat paw prints in evidence.

Raptors were few, only a group of Wedge-tailed Eagles and a Brown Falcon were seen.

Due to camping being discouraged on nature reserves (quite rightly so) we made camp at the base of Yarragin Rock close by. Habitat here was more open being adjacent to cleared areas. We soon realised that although close to Billyacatting, the bird species differed and as a result the two areas were surveyed independently.

As the name suggests, Yarragin Rock is a large granite boulder and being so close we had excellent views of a number of raptors using thermals produced to gain height. Wedge-tailed Eagles were seen most days. Others seen were Australian Kestrel, Australian Hobby, Whistling Kite and a glimpse of a pair of Spotted Harriers in the distance. Mulga Parrots were seen most days. Redthroat and Southern Whiteface were seen regularly and Zebra Finches were occasional visitors.

A pair of Chestnut-rumped Thornbill were seen paying particularly attention to a dead limb of a tree. We soon realised the limb was hollow and they were preparing a nest inside.

Night birds picked out with a spotlight were Tawny Frogmouth and Southern Boobook. An Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo was the only cuckoo identified although we were sure we had heard a Black-eared Cuckoo. Fifty species were seen at Yarragin Rock.

The five days spent at Billyacatting nature reserve and Yarragin Rock were very enjoyable. However, we feel that early spring would be a far better time to revisit, during nesting

time. Anybody planning to do some camping/birdwatching not too far away couldn't do much better than this area and they would be helping to build up a picture of species use of this not so well known nature reserve.

L. Harris, J. Hunt, C. Wilder

NALLAN STATION REVISITED

I visited Nallan in late October 1987 (WA Bird Notes N° 45). By visiting a month earlier this time, I hoped for more breeding records. Winter rains had been good so not only was Nallan Lake full but the adjacent claypans, on either side of the Great Northern Highway were flooded. The wildflowers were out in profusion and most trees were bearing fruit.

Breeding was well underway with most species feeding young already out of the nest. Nomadic species such as Pied and White-fronted Honeyeater and Crimson Chats were common. Interesting breeding records included Pink-eared Duck with six ducklings and a young Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo being fed by Slaty-backed Thornbill.

A Buff-banded Rail active in the homestead garden at dawn and dusk was only the sixth record for the Gascoyne region and the only inland record, all previous being in the vicinity of Shark Bay (Storr 1985). This bird was probably on passage as it vanished after being observed for a week.

I recorded 72 species for the eight days I spent at Nallan and combined with my 1987 visit, the total species list now numbers 94 for the station. The highlight of this visit was a party of ten Inland Dotterels. Other good sightings included Black Honeyeater, Diamond Dove, Spotted Bowerbird and Bourke's Parrot. A side trip to Jungar Pool turned up Little Button-quail, Red-backed Kingfisher and Wood Sandpiper.

A full species list, notes and mud maps are at the RAOU office.

J.R. Boughey

Reference:

Storr, G.M. (1985) Records of the WA Museum Supplement No. 21, *Birds of the Gascoyne Region, Western Australia*. W.A. Museum, Perth.

Nallan Station Species List -

Emu - common and widespread
Hoary-headed Grebe - breeding at Nallan Lake and flooded areas
Pacific Heron - one or two in flooded areas
White-faced Heron - one or two in flooded areas
Straw-necked Ibis - highest count - four birds
Pacific Black Duck - small numbers in flooded areas
Grey Teal - Small numbers
Australasian Shoveler - two birds
Pink-eared Duck - breeding (six ducklings). Small numbers
Hardhead - two birds
Maned Duck - small numbers. Highest count - six birds
Wedge-tailed Eagle - two birds soaring
Brown Falcon - two birds
Australian Kestrel - one sighting
Buff-banded Rail - one active in homestead garden at dawn and dusk. Vanished after one week.
Eurasian Coot - two birds
Banded Lapwing - common on flat, stony, sparsely vegetated area near 'Marshall's Well'.
Red-kneed Dotterel - small numbers in flooded areas
Inland Dotterel - party of ten birds near 'Marshall's Well' on sparsely vegetated, stony plain
Black-fronted Plover - common in flooded areas
Black-winged Stilt - highest count - six birds

Whiskered Tern - one bird at Nallan Lake in breeding plumage
Feral Pigeon - one sighting of three birds
Diamond Dove - small numbers: Acacia scrub and thicket areas
Common Bronzewing - small numbers in Acacia scrub
Crested Pigeon - common and widespread
Galah - common and widespread (especially near wells).
Breeding
Cockatiel - small numbers
Port Lincoln Ringneck - small numbers
Mulga Parrot - common breeding (often using old water pipes for nesting)
Bourke's Parrot - small numbers. Late afternoon near Judas Well
Black-eared Cuckoo - one sighting
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo - one young bird being fed by Slaty-backed Thornbill
Welcome Swallow - common near water
Tree Martin - fairly common near water
Fairy Martin - common near water. Breeding
Richard's Pipit - small numbers
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike - one sighting
White-winged triller - common in small groups, widespread
Red-capped Robin - common, widespread. Breeding
Hooded Robin - small numbers
Rufous Whistler - common and widespread
Grey Shrike Thrush - fairly common and widespread
Crested Bellbird - common and widespread
Willie Wagtail - fairly common
Grey-crowned Babbler - common
White-browed Babbler - common
Rufous Songlark - common at Nallan Lake only
Splended Fairy-wren - fairly common
Variegated Fairy-wren - fairly common
White-winged Fairy-wren - two birds near Marshall's Well
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill - common
Slaty-backed Thornbill - fairly common. Breeding
Yellow-rumped Thornbill - fairly common
Southern Whiteface - common and widespread
Varied Sitella - one bird only
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater - common
Yellow-throated Miner - common. Breeding
Singing Honeyeater - common
White-plumed Honeyeater - common
White-fronted Honeyeater - common in Acacia scrub.
Breeding
Black Honeyeater - one male only
Pied Honeyeater - Fairly common. Widespread
Crimson Chat - common near Marshall's Well. Uncommon elsewhere. Breeding.
Zebra Finch - Abundant near water. Breeding
Spotted Bowerbird - small numbers
Australian Magpie-lark - fairly common. Breeding
Masked Woodswallow - groups of up to 20 birds
Black-faced Woodswallow - small groups
Pied Butcherbird - breeding near homestead
Australian Magpie - pair breeding near homestead
Little Crow - common and widespread

INTERSPECIES AGGRESSION

On 16th September, I was driving along the Mogumber-Moora Road, about 14 kilometres south of Wannamal. There was a dam to the right with lots of winter wet both sides of the road.

An Australian Raven flew in front of the car. A largish object about 6-8cm long and fluffy, hung from the raven's beak.

Immediately behind the raven, and perilously close to the car bonnet, flew a Pacific Black Duck. It was very agitated and called loudly. I looked towards the raven. In the moment before

