

# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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## SQUARE-TAILED KITE IN SUBURBS

On December 24th 1989 at 9.30 am in the suburb of Queen's Park, I was on my way to the corner shop to buy a newspaper. As I was passing a vacant block of land, a large raptor flew low over my head.

The wings were long and upswept, very dark on the upper surface. The tail was long and square cut. It appeared to be the Square-tailed Kite seen previously in the area earlier in the month.

The bird swept over me but turned sharply when it had passed a small tree ten metres away. As it banked around to the left its face was seen to be white, confirming its identity.

It approached very slowly keeping about 3 metres off the ground. Almost stationary, it thrust its legs into the side of the tree and appeared to drop in. Just as easily, the bird lifted off and moved to perch in a nearby larger tree.

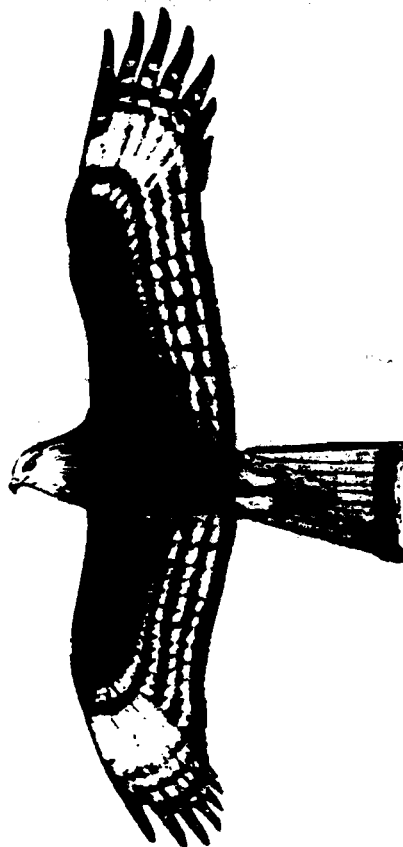
I went over to get a closer look and it was then I realised the Square-tailed Kite had made a kill. I went to get my binoculars, telescope and camera and when I returned the bird was in the same position in the process of tearing up and eating its meal.

I set up the telescope quietly hoping to avoid disturbance. The Square-tailed Kite stopped to watch but once I was set up it continued with its meal. The prey appeared to be a Laughing Turtle-dove judging by the plumage and was eaten in its entirety. At one stage the Square-tailed Kite tried to swallow a wing whole: however, after a few attempts gave up and tore the wing in half before swallowing.

**J. Hunt**

J. Hunt also writes of having seen a Square-tailed Kite over Queens Park on 4 December 1989 where it was mobbed successively by Australian Magpies, Australian Ravens and attacked by an Australian Kestrel.

(Ed.)



*Square-tailed Kite by Nicholas Day from "The Birds of Australia" by Simpson K, Day N (1984) L. O'Neill Pty Ltd, Victoria*

## 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 October 1989 to February 1990.

Compiled by Rodney Vervest.

### DOWN SOUTH

**Great-winged Petrel** - 1, 18/10/89, City Beach: beach-washed remains - GMi

**Cattle Egret** - 1, 16/10/89, Stirling Road swamp, Forestdale - DJ

**Great Egret** - 20, 27/11/89, Coolinup Swamp, Esperance: 25 nests with eggs and young - RV

**Eastern Reef Egret** - 1, 7/1/90, 0.5km north of Whitfords Sea Sports Club - GL \* 2, 29/1/90, Moore River, Guilderton - CW, JP

**Rufous Night Heron** - 27/11/89, Coolinup Swamp, Esperance: 60 nests with eggs and young - RV  
**Little Bittern** - 1, 11/6/89, Kogolup Lake - DJ  
**Australasian Bittern** - 2, 10/11/89, Bengier Swamp - ES  
**Glossy Ibis** - 1, 5/12/89, Amarillo Pool - JH, CW  
**Straw-necked Ibis** - 60, 27/10/89, Great Southern Highway between Beverley and York - KS  
**Royal Spoonbill** - 1, 10/1/90, Amarillo Pool - JH \* 1, 10/2/90, Herdsman Lake - CW et al  
**Freckled Duck** - 5, 26/11/89, Crackers Swamp (Gingin): two adults and 3 young - RS  
**Chestnut Teal** - 1, 1/1/90, Karriburyup Reserve: male bird - JS, HS \* 1, 14/1/90, Herdsman Lake: male bird - RN  
**Square-tailed Kite** - 1, 19/10/89, Yanchep National Park - AB \* 2, 24/11/89, near Cosy Corner, south of Hamelin Bay - AB \* 1, 19/12/89, Walpole, Hazelvale Road - JS, HS \* 1, 4&13&24/12/89, Queens Park - JH  
**Black-breasted Buzzard** - 1, 6/9/89, Peak Charles area - SN  
**Brown Goshawk** - 1, 3/12/89, Stony Brook, Roleystone: nest used by Goshawks during the last two summers - RS  
**Collared Sparrowhawk** - 1, 26/10/89, Harvey District: dead bird - FO  
**White-bellied Sea-Eagle** - 1, 3/12/89, Vasse Estuary: nesting with small chick - BBa, MC \* 1, 28/12/89, Amarillo Pool - JH, TK, PW \* 1, 1/1/90, Karriburyup Reserve: a second year bird - JS, HS  
**Wedge-tailed Eagle** - 2, 4/2/90, Malaga: flying with model plane DW  
**Little Eagle** - 2, 9/12/89, Lake Cooloongup: one light phase, one dark phase displaying together - RAOU outing \* 1, 23/12/89, Bickley valley - JS, HS \* 1, 7/2/90, Deepwater Lagoon, Gingin: light phase bird - RV  
**Spotted Harrier** - 1, 2/2/90, Herdsman Lake - EMC  
**Peregrine Falcon** - 2, 10/9/89, NE of Kalgoorlie: pair nesting - MG \* 1, 20/11/89, Mandurah Road, near Lake Cooloongup - GMi \* 1, 10/1/90, Amarillo Pool - JH \* 1, 10/1/90, Alfred Cove - JH \* 1, 13/1/90, top of Wesfeeds silo, Bentley - JH  
**Mallee Fowl** - 26/10/89, Dunn Rock Nature Reserve: one active and two old mounds - MG \* 2/11/89, Tarin Rock Nature Reserve: one active and one old mound - MG  
**Stubble Quail** - 3&17/12/89 Kelmscott area - GM  
**Buff-banded Rail** - 1, Dec 89? Frankland area: dead bird brought in by cat - RW \* 3, 6/12/89, Canning River, Riverton Bridge - JH  
**Australian Crane** - 3, 26-28/11/89, Eucla sewage pond - APB  
**Pied Oystercatcher** - 41, 7/1/90, Alfred Cove - JH  
**Lesser Golden Plover** - 1, 13-14/11/89, Alfred Cove - GMi, PRH  
**Red-kneed Dotterel** - 11, 17/12/89, Hurstview Lake - BBu  
**Hooded Plover** - 104, 26/10/89, Dunn Rock Nature Reserve: included immatures - MG  
**Large Sand Plover** - 3, 22/11/89, Alfred Cove - JH  
**Black-fronted Plover** - 30+, 5/12/89, Amarillo Pool - JH, CW \* 9, 27/1/90, Ballanup Lake - RS  
**Red-necked Avocet** - 300+, 10/12/89, mouth of Murray River - JS, HS \* 81, 16/12/89, Amarillo Pool - JH, TK \* 2, 12/1/90, Kwinana Beach - RN  
**Whimbrel** - 1, 9/12/89, Penguin Island - RAOU outing  
**Wood Sandpiper** - 7, 26/11/89, Amarillo Pool - JH, TK \* 50+, 5/12/89, McLarty Lake - JH, CW \* 8, 17/12/89, Hurstview Lake - BBu  
**Marsh Sandpiper** - 45, 5/12/89, McLarty Lake - JH, CW  
**Terek Sandpiper** - 1, 10/11/89, Woodman Point - DN \* 1, 16/1/90, Alfred Cove - JH \* 2, 16/1/90, Pelican Point - MB, KC, PB  
**Red Knot** - 5, 10/11/89, Woodman Point - DN  
**Long-toed Stint** - 5, 26/11/89, Amarillo Pool - JH, TK \* 17, 5/12/89, Amarillo Pool - JH, CW \* 3, 14/12/89, Alfred Cove - TK  
**Pacific Gull** - 1, 18/8/89, rocky coast near Gingin - MO  
**Kelp Gull** - 1, 26/10/89, Lucky Bay, Alfred Cove: mature adult in breeding plumage - FW  
**White-winged Tern** - 20, 1-13/1/90, Thompsons Lake - MB, KC  
**Common Tern** - 21, 5/12/89, Mandurah boat harbour - JH, CW  
**Roseate Tern** - 2, 26/11/89, Mandurah boat harbour - FO  
**Fairy Tern** - 200, 26/11/89, Mandurah area: nesting - FO  
**Crested Pigeon** - 6, 30/10/89, Greenlands Road, Pinjarra - GMi  
**Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo** - 50, 14/11/89, Wungong Dam - PRH  
**Little Corella** - 2, 11/11/89, 20/11/89, Kelmscott area - GM  
**Rainbow Lorikeet** - 2, 31/12/89, Applecross garden: one adult and one fledgling - KH  
**Purple-crowned Lorikeet** - 3, 19/12/89, Pelican Point - MB, TD, KC, PB \* 12, 13-14/1/90, Dalkeith Reserve - PB  
**Cockatiel** - 1, 9/2/90, Bibra Lake - RV, JR  
**Crimson Rosella** - 1, 14/1/90, Lake Joondalup South - RN  
**Pallid Cuckoo** - 3, 19/12/89, Walpole - JS, HS  
**Fan-tailed Cuckoo** - 2, 26/10/89, Nanga Mill camping area - FO  
**Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** - 2, 19/10/89, Dryandra - GMi  
**Fork-tailed Swift** - 100+, 9/2/90, Lake Valley Drive, Edgewater - GL \* 50, 10/2/90, Bold Park - JH et al  
**White-backed Swallow** - 2, 29/9/89, Merilup Reserve, north of Nyabing - MG  
**White-winged Triller** - 2, 9/1/90, Queens Park - JH  
**Scarlet Robin** - 2, Edgewater: with 3 fledglings - AT  
**Western Yellow Robin** - 3, 1/12/89, Stony Brook, Roleystone: two adults and 1 immature - RS  
**Crested Shrike-tit** - 1, Dec 89? Cowaramup area - BBa, MC  
**Variegated Fairy-wren** - 3, 21/10/89, Douglas Road, Gosnells - FO  
**Red-winged Fairy-wren** - 1, 16/12/89, top car park, Canning Dam - JS, HS  
**Yellow-throated Miner** - 1, 15/10/89, Old Bunbury Road - GMi  
**Red-eared Firetail** - 2, 22/10/89, Etmilyn Siding (Hotham Valley Railway) - HF \* 2, 26/10/89, Nanga Mill camping area - FO \* 1, 28/12/89, Bickley Reservoir - RS  
**Black-faced Woodswallow** - 10/1/90, Bibra Drive near Bibra Lake - JD

#### UP NORTH

**Chestnut Rail** - 1, 30/9/89, Cockburn Creek - KO  
**Redshank** - 1, 4/8/89, Gascoyne River mouth, Carnarvon - RG  
**Emerald Dove** - 1, 30/9/89, Cockburn Creek - KO  
**Common Koel** - 2, 4/11/89, Dunham River Gorge - KO  
**Channel-billed Cuckoo** - 2, 4/11/89, Dunham River Gorge - KO  
**Dollarbird** - 1, 7/10/89, Mandorah (Northern Territory) - KO

\* 2, 22/10/89, Wyndham - KO

Shining Flycatcher - 2, 4/11/89, Dunham River Gorge - KO

Purple-crowned Fairy-wren - Aug 89, Drysdale River Station - AT

Spangled Drongo - 1, 4/11/89, Dunham River Gorge - KO

Grey Butcherbird - 4, 1/10/89, Cockburn Creek - KO

#### KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

AB - Allan Burbidge	JP - Julian Pegler
APB - Agric Protection Board	JS - John
AT - A Turner	JR - John Rogers
BBa - Bryan Barrett	KC - Kate Creek
BBu - Bruce Buchanan	KH - Katherine Highman
CW - Chris Wilder	KO - Kimberley Observer
DJ - David James	KS - Kath Shadbolt
DN - Doug Nash	MB - Max Bailey
DW - David White	MC - Margery Clegg
EMc - Eric McCrum	MG - Mal Graham
ES - Eric Sedgewick	Mo - Margaret Owen
FO - Frank O'Connor	PB - Phyllis Bentley
FW - Frank Walker	PRH - Peel Howden
GL - Graham Little	PW - Paul Wyke
GM - Greg Marston	RG - Ray Garstone
GMI - George Miller	RN - Richard Nowotny
HF - Helen Frederiksen	RS - Rod Smith
HS - Helen Start	RV - Rodney Vervest
GL - Graham Little	RW - Rita Watkins
GM - George Miller	SN - Simon Nevill
JC - Jim Chance	TD - Tom Delaney
JD - Jack Donohoe	TK - Tony Kirkby
JH - Jack Hunt	

## WATERBIRD STUDIES

### ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNT

10 - 18 MARCH 1990

The March count, (first for the decade!), is scheduled for the period 10-18 March 1990. I hope all will be available for surveys in your block/s.

I am currently processing data from the November 89 Count. Over 200 observers were involved and in excess of 1000 data sheets will soon be entered on computer. If you have not sent in your data for November can you please post it in as soon as possible.

We are still eager to hear from more country people, particularly those that can help in areas including Bremer Bay, Hopetoun/Ravensthorpe and Esperance. Outlying parts of the study area are difficult to cover and any assistance would be much appreciated.

Any new recruits should contact, as soon as possible please, the RAOU, 218/15 Ogilvie Road, Canning Bridge 6153, telephone 364.6202 (all hours).

R. Vervest,  
Chief, Duck Department

### SCOPEWEST

We are now well underway with the new waterbird project and thanks are due to all SCOPEWESTERS for their survey efforts.

Many of you discovered new wetlands during the inaugural survey in October 1989 and in many cases I have adjusted the list to incorporate those wetlands. We have now finalised this list and it will remain fixed for the duration of the project.

Response to the questionnaire generally reflected that most people are satisfied with allocations and that there are few problems with the data booklet or survey sheets. I am usually available to discuss any aspects of SCOPEWEST, so please ring the office if you have any questions.

I had hoped to report in more detail but due to time restraints and other project commitments, a typed report will be sent prior to the April count. Remember SCOPEWEST will be on the agenda for the March meeting.

If you have any outstanding data or you feel dissatisfied with your allocation, please contact me quickly.

Volunteers are still needed for SCOPEWEST so now is the time to get behind this important and interesting research. Our wetlands and our waterbirds need your active involvement.

R. Vervest

## OBSERVATORY REPORTS

### BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

On Tuesday, 16th January Gail was driving in the early morning when she saw two Blue-winged Kookaburra on the ground near the road. As she drove they flew in front of the car and to her astonishment one was carrying a beer can in its beak. It was carrying it vertically. We wondered whether it had its upper mandible jammed in the top opening, but decided the angle precluded that. We have no explanation as to why the Blue-winged Kookaburra was "carrying the can".

At BBO, we have had Grey-crowned Babblers come to drink at the bird bath on several occasions. Never the whole group, simply one or two, while others feed in the tree above. They take a long drink on each occasion. Can any readers comment on whether this is usual behaviour. We have never seen Grey-crowned Babblers drinking elsewhere in Australia.

We've come to expect Gallinago Snipe sp. to turn up around Broome at the onset of the 'Wet' - and had 3 at the sewerage ponds during December. However we were surprised to find one on the town oval at 10.00 am early in January. It was literally surrounded by activity but seemed unperturbed until we tried to get close enough for a photograph.

Some of our Great Bowerbirds are excellent mimics and often display their lilac crown and run through their extensive repertoires when bathing at the birdbath. We've got one splendid adult who mimics at least a dozen other birds including White-bellied Sea Eagle, Brahminy and Whistling Kites, Pied Butcherbird and Restless Flycatcher, including their occasional grating growl. It also does a good cat and throws in a dog as well.

Hearing a bird obviously involved in mimicry in our *Ventilago viminalis* tree recently, we expected a Great Bowerbird but found an adult Olive-backed Oriole instead. It lacked the variety of the Great Bowerbird, but its mimicry was easily recognisable. It specialised in parrots - e.g. Red-winged Parrot and Red-collared Lorikeet, but its Pied Butcherbird was also excellent.

The Little Ringed Plover is still at the Wildlife Park, but it has almost completed its moult into breeding plumage and looks a very different bird from the one we first saw in September last year and every month since then.

Our first course list and Broome brochures are now finished write to BBO or pick one up at the WA Group Office.

G. Hooper and B. Wells

## NOTICES

### COMMITTEE 1990

Chairman	B Wilson
Vice-Chairman	J Blyth
Secretary	C Wilder
Treasurer	B Hale
Committee Members	A Burbidge R Denny A Jones D Kingston R Smith R Van Delft

### RAOU CONGRESS 1991

#### The Conservation of Australian Birds

The 1991 Congress will be held in Perth at Kingswood College, one of the residential colleges of UWA, which offers a wide range of accommodation from air-conditioned twin rooms with communal facilities to those with private facilities and air-conditioning.

The university campus is on the Swan River near Pelican Pt., a good birding site, and backs on to Kings Park. Early risers can choose between bush and water birds for their pre-breakfast walk. The campus is within easy reach, by bus or car, of Perth city and the South Perth Caravan Park.

The campout following the congress will be centred around Albany (approximately 400km from Perth). It commences on September 22nd and concludes on September 27th.

Mark your calendars now and to give the organiser an early estimate of numbers attending please inform:

The Organiser  
RAOU Congress 1991  
Room 218, 15 Ogilvie Road  
CANNING BRIDGE WA 6153

Anyone wishing to present a paper is invited to do so and should contact Allan Burbidge via the above address.

#### NON PROTECTED FAUNA

The Government Gazette of 5 January 1990 gives notice that certain birds "shall not be protected fauna throughout the whole of the State".

Essentially the list is of introduced species and includes, Spotted Turtle-dove and Laughing Turtle-dove (both common, particularly in the Perth metropolitan area) and Chestnut-breasted Mannikin (also reported from time to time in the Perth metropolitan area). The other species listed do not appear to be established in the wild in WA.

#### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The Department of Conservation and Land Management, South Coast Region is seeking volunteers to assist with a project to translocate Noisy Scrub Birds in June/July 1990.

If you are interested contact Alan Danks 098-464276 or Terry Passmore 098-417133 for further information.

#### CORRECTION

The correct address of Roger and Sue-Ellen Jaensch is:  
4 Lorong 5/4C, 46000  
PETALING JAYA  
MALAYSIA  
(i.e. NOT 5/AC, 4600 as in WABN No 52 December 1989.)

#### BIRD BANDING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA - 1990

CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology is studying avian populations in remnants of vegetation and road verges in the wheat-belt of Western Australia.

Dr Denis Saunders is in charge of the research programme while Perry de Rebeira is the Senior Technical Officer running the bird banding project within the major programme.

Anyone wishing to acquire or extend their experience in bird banding techniques are invited to join Perry on banding trips to the study area near Kellerberrin.

Field trip dates for 1990 are:-  
19-23 March  
21-25 May  
18-22 June  
23-27 July  
17-21 September  
5-9 November

Transport and accommodation on field trips is provided free of charge. A Field Allowance of \$10/day will be paid to volunteers. The maximum number of volunteers per trip is three.

Enquiries can be directed to:-

Perry de Rebeira  
CSIRO  
LMB 4, P.O.  
MIDLAND WA 6056  
AUSTRALIA  
Telephone: (09) 252 0107  
Fax: (09) 252 0134

## SOUND REVIEW

### DAWN CHORUS

Australian Bird Calls Series-5

Stereo Cassette by John Hutchinson

Price \$11.00 (\$13.00 posted).

Brockman St, BALINGUP 6253.

All of John's discs and cassettes have been of high quality but this is undoubtedly his best so far. Dawn choruses are often confusing to listen to on tape but by careful stereo recording Hutchinson has produced a series that makes pleasant listening and provides nostalgic memories of past encounters with birds around the country.

This is one of the few cassettes in my collection that I can listen to for pleasure and relaxation. At the same time it provides a challenge of identification, for some birds present are not mentioned in the accompanying data sheet and some that are included are not heard. This is particularly notable in Side-2, Cooloola National Park, where I could not hear the Noisy Friarbird but the Little Wattlebird, though not mentioned, was conspicuous.

Among the many fine recordings of individual birds, that of the Splendid Fairy-wren in the opening chorus is outstanding and on quality alone this ranks as among the best commercial cassette of bird song so far produced in this country.

F. Robinson

## MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

### EXTENSION OF THE RANGE OF THE THICK-BILLED GRASSWREN

On the 18 September 1989 I located a nesting pair of Thick-billed Grasswren on the west side of the Great Northern Highway some thirty kilometres south of the Overlander Roadhouse. This is about 150 km south of Denham where I had seen them on previous occasions.

The country was flat, open dry mulga scrub. The birds had a nest built in a mulga shrub one metre from the ground. The nest was deep, cup shaped and made of grass, quite unlike other nests that I had seen at Denham. There was no attempt at a dome; the nest was not unlike that of a Pied Honeyeater. The nest contained two eggs which were being incubated. The sitting bird could not be approached closer than a few metres before it dropped to the ground to run swiftly across the open to the shelter of dense mulga scrub.

R. Garstone

### SOME BIRD OBSERVATIONS MADE AT WHITE WELLS STATION

During the RAOU excursion to White Wells Station north-east of Wubin in mid-September 1989 some 85 species were recorded. Earlier in the year many of these species had been seen about the area, together with a few others, giving a total list of 91 species sighted - a good result in this dry country for a short period of observation without much surface water about.

Most of White Wells Station is situated within the grid of Lat.29.30 South + Long.116.30 East and checking the list with the data available in The Atlas of Australian Birds, (Blakers et al 1984) shows 23 not there recorded and with a further 20 shown to breed. This result probably indicates the limited earlier records. Little is published about the range and seasonal movement of many species that inhabit the belt of inner pastoral country that extends all the way around the edge of the north-eastern wheatbelt, from the lower Murchison River to Bullfinch.

In this inner pastoral belt, intermingling of Eyrean dry country species and the mixed Bassian/Eyrean species of the wetter wheatbelt country occurs. Much of this belt, which extends out to the Mulga/Eucalypt line (see Serventy & Whittell 1976) from Tallering Peak around through Mt Singleton and Lake Moore then eastwards beyond Mt Jackson, is still relatively unchanged by pastoral activity and is often densely vegetated, a very fertile area for those interested in avian bio-geography.

The White Wells area, including the Mt Gibson Range nearby, has examples of all the main habitats of the region. The area has large areas of sandplain and acacia woodland, extensive salt lake country at the northern end a more limited area of open eucalyptus woodland and mallee, with occasional laterite 'breakaways' and granite rock exposures. Given reasonably intensive observation over say five years, including one or two wet seasons, it would not be surprising if considerably more species were to be found to utilise the area at one time or another, many being waterbirds.

A few species first recorded last year are of particular interest. The sighting of Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters and Grey-fronted Honeyeaters in open eucalyptus forest extends their previously known ranges one degree north for the former and a degree west for the latter. The unconfirmed sighting of a White-cheeked Honeyeater places it a degree further eastward than usual; it does move further south on occasions. It was not surprising to find Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters (?from the

west) and Black and Pied Honeyeaters (?from the north) about the flowering bush of the sandplains. Many of these species of birds appear to move beyond their more usual area of occupation into this belt of country, probably influenced by the flowering of plants. However, very little is accurately known of the timing and direction of their movement.

There is some evidence that White-fronted Honeyeaters, also quite common here, move in mass across the eastern wheatbelt. Both Black and Pied Honeyeaters appear to move south-eastwards in the wheatbelt fringe country as the flowering of most shrubland seasonally moves south in late spring, at least as far as Southern Cross, but such movements are not known to be regular. The sighting of a Hooded Plover near Lake Monger shows this bird must move a good deal about the often dry lake systems of the region.

It was also interesting to find Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Elegant Parrot and Purple-crowned Lorikeet this far north, and a Shining Bronze-cuckoo a bit further eastward than usual of its generally accepted migration area. It is quite possible that new records of these birds may be made further north in this belt over winter and spring.

Finally, two much more sedentary birds were of interest in this fringe country. Southern Scrub-robin and Western Yellow Robin were found in thick tea-tree scrub adjacent to a small breakaway. Northward there is quite a gap in sightings until the birds are reported in similar dry country near Mary Springs north of the Murchison River Bridge. A few still may remain in the gap, possibly in the country from Rothsay to Gullewa. Other sedentary species yet to be reported in the general area surrounding Lake Monger (at the limits of their range) are Shy Hylacola to the south and Chiming Wedgebill to the north.

There is much still to be learned about the birdlife of the area and further south in the Eastern Goldfields towards Lake Johnstone. Some species can be frustratingly hard to find and sometimes not there at all when they are expected. Life can be hard out there for birds and birdos alike. However, Bruce Boucher's hospitality can make birding very pleasant at White Wells and I thank the organisers for the very interesting excursion they organised for us.

### J. Masters

Emu		Change of status to Breeding
Straw-necked Ibis	1°E	
Whistling Kite	1°E	Fills gap
Brown Goshawk	1°E	Breeding in area
Collared Sparrowhawk	1°E	Fills gap
Spotted Harrier	1°E	Fills gap
Brown Falcon		Change of status - breeds in area
Hooded Plover		Not previously recorded in area
Common Bronzewing		Change of status - breeds in area
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	1°E	
Regent Parrot		Change of status - breeds in area
Bourke's Parrot		Change of status - breeds in area
Elegant Parrot	1°N	
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1°N	
Shining-Bronze Cuckoo	1°NE	
Red-backed Kingfisher	1°E	
Sacred Kingfisher	1°E	
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike		Change of status - breeds

	in area
Southern Scrub-robin	1°N
Hooded Robin	1°E
Jacky Winter	1°E Fills gap-breeds in area
White-browed Babbler	Change of status - breeds in area
Splendid Fairy-wren	Change of status - breeds in area
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Change of status - breeds in area
Southern Whiteface	Change of status - breeds in area
Varied Sittella	1°E
Rufous Treecreeper	Change of status - breeds in area
Yellow-throated Miner	Change of status - breeds in area
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	1°N
Grey-fronted Honeyeater	1°W
Brown-headed Honeyeater	1°E
White-cheeked Honeyeater	1°E (unconfirmed)
White-fronted Honeyeater	1°E Fills gap
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	1°E Fills gap
Black Honeyeater	1°SW
Pied Honeyeater	1°E Fills gap
White-fronted Chat	Change of status - breeds in area
Striated Pardalote	Change of status - breeds in area
Zebra Finch	Change of status - breeds in area
Grey Butcherbird	Change of status - breeds in area
Pied Butcherbird	Change of status - breeds in area
Australian Magpie	Change of status - breeds in area

#### References:

Blakers M, Davies S J J F, Reilly P N (1984), *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, RAOU: Melbourne University Press  
 Serventy D L and Whittell H M (1976), *Birds of Western Australia*: UWA Press, Perth

#### "DEAD DUCK" DISPLAY BY MALE CHESTNUT TEAL

Human presence within three metres of a duck family can lead to the male of the family feigning injury whilst the female paddles away with her brood of ducklings. This was last observed by myself at Lake Joondalup, south of Ocean Reef Road one November early morning when a male Freckled Duck put on an impressive display whilst a female and her brood moved off.

I had not before witnessed a "Dead Duck" display. Recently at Yarawindah Pool south of New Norcia on 26 November 1989 at 7am such a display was performed by a male Chestnut Teal.

The male lay flat on the water surface, tail, neck and bill, but paddling slowly forward. The male was about 1.5 metres from the female which was shepherding six ducklings aged about ten days.

Once we passed by, the male resumed upright swimming posture and led the way for the ducklings to follow with the female in the rear.

M.H. Bremner

#### UNUSUAL AUSTRALIAN RAVEN BEHAVIOUR

During the recent Christmas holidays, from our caravan hide in C.A.L.M.'s Coalmine Beach caravan park within the Walpole-Nornalup National Park, 1.5km south of Walpole, we observed an Australian Raven. It was a young dark-eyed bird which was eating food scraps left on a tree stump adjacent to our caravan. Having eaten a number of food scraps the Australian Raven selected another morsel, held it in its beak and flew into one of the camp site's peppermints (*Agonis flexuosa*).

The food morsel was pushed into a crevice formed at the horizontal branch on which the Australian Raven was standing and one of the vertical trunks. The food was then covered with leaf litter obtained from the horizontal branch. The bird then preened and flew away.

The "larder" was located at an estimated height of 4 metres. Retrieval of the stored food was not observed.

Is this normal behaviour or one induced by the abundance of food left by the camp's residents?

G. Marston

#### GURAGA AGAIN

Visiting Guraga in November 1989 (for the Great Duck Count) two further species were seen - Hooded Plover and Large Sand Plover.

There were three Hooded Plovers, not quite in adult plumage, which together with other northerly sightings, adds weight to the idea that there is a group of Hooded Plover breeding and resident in the northerly sandplain lakes.

One Large Sand Plover was seen among a large group of Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers.

This brings the waterbird species total to 51, thus making Guraga equal 6th of the 197 Reserves reported in the South West Waterbird Survey Jaensch R.P., Vervest R.M., Hewish M.J. 1988 *Waterbirds in Nature Reserves of South-Western Australia* 1981-1985 RAOU Report No. 30.

B. Buchanan

#### AUSTRALIAN RAVENS AND DUCKLINGS

Regarding Australian Raven taking baby ducks (see WABN No. 52 December 1989 p.7). I have witnessed this with Maned Duck, Australian Shelduck and Pacific Black Duck. With the Australian Shelduck and Maned Duck the Australian Raven dropped a duckling after the tooting of a car horn in one case and after the firing of a rifle in the other.

The Australian Shelduck duckling was taken home and successfully raised and released to the wild. The Maned Duck duckling was placed on a dam and adult birds came to it about ten minutes later.

In the Pacific Black Duck case, two Australian Ravens were swooping on ducklings as an adult duck led them to water along a fence line. An Australian Raven seized a duckling but in take off the Australian Raven hit a wire fence and dropped the duckling. The Australian Ravens were frightened off and the duckling was apparently none the worse. I watched the ducklings to the water and there was no further attack.

I have also witnessed Australian Raven killing Australian Magpie-lark chicks and also young finches. Being opportunistic, many young birds may be vulnerable to attack by Australian Raven as well as Grey Butcherbird and Laughing Kookaburra.

N.J. Tyer

## SOME OBSERVATIONS OF COLLARED SPARROWHAWKS AT WANNAMAL

My attention was first drawn to a clump of Marri trees (*E. calophylla*) by loud bird calls - "kikiki". As I approached a male and a female Collared Sparrowhawk (the sex determined by noticeable size difference) flew out over my head, both calling. It was mid September 1988.

As the calls came from the trees quite frequently I thought nesting might be in progress, an idea supported by the remarks of Pizzey (1980). After a considerable time in searching in the clump (70 metres x 30 metres and with 35 living trees and a number dead) I finally found the nest. Obvious when seen, it could only be clearly discerned from the ground from two locations, both with a narrow angle of view. The understorey was mainly an open wild oat area, with some low re-growth of marri, casuarina and jam trees.

Both male and female birds sat on the nest, which was quite deeply cup-shaped, the male when sitting almost lost to view, the female very obvious, with tail, body and head clearly visible. This was the use of the nest of another species: Collared Sparrowhawks build platform nests (Serventy & Whittell 1976).

I was only able to visit the site at week-ends but noticed that each week-end morning at least (at about 5.30am) a Collared Sparrowhawk would fly from the trees to a Flooded Gum (*E. rudis*) some 30 metres away and always on the side of the tree furthest from the nest, break off a twig with leaves, apparently by walking along until the twig broke or by pulling with the bill while flapping the wings vigorously (usually this second method). The leafy twig was taken to the nest where the fresh leaves could be clearly seen around the nest edge - the nest being about 12 metres from the ground. As sitting continued matters seemed promising, but in late October 1988 (the last weekend) no Collared Sparrowhawk was sitting and they were not seen at the nest again.

Hollands (1984) had not recorded the re-use of a nest by the Collared Sparrowhawk (though others have done so), so I did not have great hopes of a return.

However on 3 September 1989 similar loud calling from the same group of trees prompted investigation. Two Collared Sparrowhawks were calling to each other while fluttering about upper branches. The following week-end this behaviour was again occurring (9 September) and the male Collared Sparrowhawk was observed calling persistently from a tree fork where a number of small sticks appeared to have been placed about a dead branch, fallen and jammed in the fork. To my surprise and pleasure on 10 September I saw the 1988 nest was re-occupied and the female bird sitting.

The 1988 pattern was now repeated. Both sexes sat on the nest and about 5.15am each week-end morning fresh leaves were collected from the same Flooded Gum, in the same manner and from the same place.

This sitting pattern continued through October and into November. During the first weekend in November the female was observed carrying prey back to the nest area where the male was sitting, but I did not see whether the prey was passed on to the sitting bird. I was beginning to seek what literature I could find on the incubation time for the Collared Sparrowhawk as Serventy and Whittell's (1976) nineteen days was, at this time apparently well exceeded.

The next week-end, the nest was apparently deserted and no bird was found sitting despite frequent visits. It seemed to be as in 1988, when, not long before returning to Perth, I saw a female Collared Sparrowhawk standing on the edge of the nest, reaching down into it and jerking her head up and down. The following week-end (25 November) revealed no sign of life at

the nest despite frequent visits, nor were any adult birds seen. Consequently I was delighted to see three Collared Sparrowhawk chicks in the nest during the 2 December week-end, being attended by the female. Two of the chicks had brown streaked heads and brown crescents down each side of the breast (resembling a Tawny-crowned Honeyeater breast markings), their wings and back being brownish but otherwise covered in a cream-buff down. The third chick had no noticeable brown at all, entirely cream-buff down. After deciding I was a menace and swooping at me, following a loud "kikiki" call, (the female looked huge approaching through the binoculars and I ducked early), the female settled to brood the chicks, apparently having some difficulty in fitting them in the space, from the shuffling and movement.

The male bird brought prey which was exchanged in the air off the nest about 30 metres from it. On one occasion after this exchange the male circled slowly upward on a thermal, though to no great height, before gliding from view. Hollands (1984) describes this behaviour as territorial.

Next week-end the all cream-buff chick had developed the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater markings, while the other two were much more fully marked brown right across the breast. The adult pair exchanged food off the nest, which provoked considerable noise from the chicks. The female still brooded the chicks from time to time and swooped at me from a branch near the nest, this time without warning call.

On 15 December the two older (?) darker plumaged birds were fluttering heavily in adjacent trees (one eating a bird) while the third, still not as dark as the others remained in the nest. The following day (16 December) all three chicks were on nearby trees and flapping laboriously from one tree branch to another. The male swooped at me.

By the following week-end all three young birds were flying more strongly and on the morning of 23 December all were engaged in what could be described as early morning flying exercises. The birds flew through the home clump of trees, swooping low and twisting between and round branches, calling continuously and apparently at times chasing each other. This behaviour continued daily until 5 January (I was then on holiday and could observe daily). The birds were accompanied in their morning flying by one parent on most occasions, once by both.

"Exercises" usually started about 5.15am and lasted about ten minutes.

Between 23 December and 5 January the young birds noticeably increased in flying strength and agility. While awaiting food during the day the young birds also "exercised" but less vigorously, and it was interesting to see how their skills in alighting and security in perching increased over the same period. One feature was the apparent wish to perch on one leg, which all the chicks frequently attempted, even in the face of 20 knot winds (usually with little success) and which seemed to be associated with periods of less alertness.

Other features of the growth to independence were the hawking of insects, swooping on leaves blown from the marri trees and chasing other birds on small trees about 30 metres from the "home" clump. Generally Port Lincoln Ringnecks were either attacked by a sudden irruption from a branch or by flying slowly over trees containing them, to flush them from cover, then to give chase. The Port Lincoln Ringnecks seemed alarmed and gave loud warning calls but their flight speed, even from a standing start, was greatly in excess of the young Collared Sparrowhawks. Interestingly, while awaiting food and engaged in hawking insects, leaves and bird chasing Western Gerygone and Silvereye came into the "home" clump of Marri trees on several occasions. Their calls could be clearly

