



Western Australian Bird Notes

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

Gull-billed Tern, again nesting in the South West

The Gull-billed Tern are again nesting on a small island in the unnamed lake within the Stirling Range National Park, the same location as in 1988 (reported in W.A. Bird Notes number 49, March 1989).

On the 24 November 1990 I visited the unnamed lake and waded through 300 millimetres of water to the island. At first Silver Gull began to harrass me, but shortly afterwards a few Gull-billed Tern were overhead.

In 1988 the tern nests were located at the western end of the island. This year 6 nests were located in the centre, on the north side of the island. There were also 6 nests in 1988. Two nests were amongst small patches of dry grass and both of these made extensive use of dry grass as nesting material. The other 4 nests were constructed of small granite chips with a very small amount of grass used as lining. Five nests had 2 eggs and one had one chick and an egg half a metre away.

A total of 8 adult Gull-billed Tern were seen in the area.

The use of different amounts of grass and granite chips seemed to be determined by the closeness of the actual nest sites to either dry grass clumps or granite rock on the island.

It may be that this island is a regular breeding site for the Gull-billed Tern when sufficient water surrounds the island.

A. Rose

Yellow-rumped Thornbill versus Shining Bronze-Cuckoo

At 0715 hours on the 30 October 1990 a thump was heard on the front window of our house in the Stirling Range National Park. When I looked out of the window a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo was lying on the verandah and to my surprise a Yellow-rumped Thornbill was standing on top of it, pecking at it and very vocal. Another Yellow-rumped Thornbill in a nearby Eucalyptus wandoo was also very noisy. The cuckoo was dead.

The Yellow-rumped Thornbill had a nest in the Wandoo near the verandah and I assumed that the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (later identified as a female Shining Bronze-Cuckoo) was attempting to parasitise the Yellow-rumped Thornbill nest.

The cuckoo had a well developed brood patch and later inspection revealed a pale blue egg in the oviduct.

The cuckoo's wing length (104mm), tail length (70mm) and head bill (35.2) measurements were taken, but eye colour was not.

A. Rose

OBSERVATIONS

Please send details of sightings to 'Observations Officer' at the W.A. Office of the RAOU. Please provide details of number, location, date and other relevant notes. 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 1990 to January 1991.

Compiled by Rodney Vervest.

DOWN SOUTH

Hoary-headed Grebe - 600, 18/12/90, Lake McLarty - MCr
Red-tailed Tropicbird - 4, 9/12/90, Pelsaert Island - DM
Pacific Heron - 25, 3/12/90, Lake Forrestdale - TK * 1,

23/12/90, Alfred Cove - TP, CW

Great Egret - 85, 3/1/91, Lake McLarty - JH, TK

Eastern Reef Egret - 1, 20/1/91, Lake Joondalup South - RN, PT

Rufous Night Heron - 60, 4/1/91, Kogolup Lake - DJ

Little Bittern - 1, 27/12/90, Thomsons Lake - MCr

Sacred Ibis - 200+, 29/10/90, Manjimup - AM

Freckled Duck - 2 pair with 5 and 4 downy runners respectively, 4/9/90, Scots Lake, Watheroo - PS * 1, 13/10/90, The Spectacles - DJ * 6, 28/10/90, Gibbs Road Swamp - DJ * 2, 19/12/90, Gibbs Road Swamp - PH * 1, 23/1/91, McCarleys Swamp - FD

Chestnut Teal - 2 with 6 downy young, 20/9/90, Carra-bunyup NR (Peel-Harvey) - JS, HS * 1 male in eclipse plumage, 12/1/91, Thomsons Lake - JH et al

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**ADVICE FOR
CONTRIBUTORS**

The Editor requests contributors to note the following -

- * copy concerning W.A. birds may be published; sightings etc in respect of birds outside W.A. will not normally be included.
- * write legibly or type, **DOUBLE SPACED.**
- * use RAOU recommended English names for W.A. birds - a list is available at the W.A. RAOU Office.
- * copy will be edited where considered appropriate.

**DEADLINE FOR JUNE 1991 ISSUE
IS FRIDAY 19TH APRIL 1990**

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 25/11/90, Wungong Gorge - BB et al * 2, 26/1/91, Martin - RS
Brown Goshawk - nesting, 5/12/90, Kings Park - PH * 1, 6/12/90, Riverton Bridge - JH
Collared Sparrowhawk - 1, 6/12/90, Riverton Bridge - JH
Little Eagle - 1 pair (1 light and 1 dark phase), 6/12/90, Riverton Bridge - JH
Peregrine Falcon - 1, 21/10/90, Blue Gum Lake, Booragoon - MC et al * 1, 29/11/90, Herdsman Lake - FO * 1, 14/1/91, Wesfeeds Silo Bentley - JH * 1, 28/1/91, The Esplanade Perth - GL, IL * 1, 10/2/91, Wesfeeds Silo Bentley - JH
Malleefowl - 1 pair, 14/11/90, Dryandra - BB, MC et al
Buff-banded Rail - 1 pair with young, 6/12/90, Riverton Bridge - JH
Baillon's Crake - 10, 27/12/90, Thomsons Lake - MCr
Spotless Crake - 2 immatures, 25/12/90, Perry Lakes - SF, AF * 22, 27/12/90, Thomsons Lake - MCr
Red-kneed Dotterel - 19, 3/1/91, Amarillo Pool - JH, TK
Hooded Plover - 14 nests with eggs, 23/11/90, Station Lake, Esperance - BM
Red-capped Plover - 1500, 21/12/90, on beach near Mill Point Road Freeway turnoff - MO
Eastern Curlew - 3, 23/1/91, Australind - GL
Wood Sandpiper - 1, 23/12/90, Herdsman Lake - RN, PT * 60, 27/12/90, Lake McLarty - MCr * 51, 3/1/91, Lake McLarty - JH, TK
Grey-tailed Tattler - 1, 28/12/90, Coodanup area (Peel Inlet) - DM
Terek Sandpiper - 1, 20/11/90, Attadale foreshore - JD
Black-tailed Godwit - 3, 16/1/91, Thomsons Lake - PH
Bar-tailed Godwit - 250, 5/11/90, Alfred Cove - FO * 400+, 3-4/12/90, Peel Harvey Inlet - FO
Pectoral Sandpiper - 1, 4/1/91, Kogolup Lake - DJ * 2, 16/1/91, Kogolup Lake - PH
Long-toed Stint - 2, 3/12/90, Lake Forrestdale - TK * 11, 22/12/90, Lake Forrestdale - TK, DJ * 24, 3/1/91, Amarillo Pool - JH, TK * 29, 5/1/91, Kogolup Lake - DJ * 10, 16/1/91, Kogolup Lake - PH
Sanderling - 11, 3/1/91, Two Rocks - DM
Arctic Jaeger - 1, 20/1/91, Woodman Point - RN

Pomarine Jaeger - 3, 15/1/91, Point Anne, Fitzgerald River N.P. - SN
Common Tern - 17, 28/12/90, sea wall at Mandurah - DM
Fairy Tern - 2 breeding colonies, North Mole - LH
Brush Bronzewing - 2, 26/12/90, Molloy Island - BF, DJ
Little Corella - 75+, 20/11/90, Maddington - ML * 200+, 27/11/90, Lilac Park Cricket Oval - AM
Regent Parrot - 49, 20/11/90, Wandii - MU * 7, 4/12/90, Moora - CM
Budgerigar - 6 at Bluff Knoll turnoff in Stirling Range N.P. - AR * 200, 4/12/90, Moora - CM
Crimson Rosella - 1 Male, 18/1/91, Wungong Gorge - BMC
Mulga Parrot - 3, 22/11/90, Mt Harding NR - PJ
Pallid Cuckoo - large young in Willie Wagtail's nest, 22/11/90, Mt Harding NR - PJ
Southern Boobook - 2 juveniles, 12/11/90, Dryandra - BB, MC et al
Fork-tailed Swift - 10-12, 8/1/91, Burns Beach - MR
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike - 20, 21/12/90, Kelmscott - GM
White-winged Triller - several pairs, 22/11/90, Mt Harding NR - PJ
White-browed Babbler - family party, 22/11/90, Duck Pool nr Meenaar Hill - PJ * family party, 22/11/90, Mt Harding NR - PJ
Rufous Songlark - 1 singing male, 22/11/90, nr Meenaar Hill - PJ
White-winged Fairy-wren - 2, 14/10/90, Lake Joondalup - MBr
Southern Emu-wren - 3, 26/12/90, Molloy Island - BF, DJ * 1 pair, 27/12/90, near Margaret River - JHu, CW
Red Wattlebird - 2 feeding on bees, 8/10/90, 21/10/90, Lake Joondalup - NH
Varied Sittella - 6, 8/10/90, Lake Joondalup - NH
Spotted Pardalote - 2 feeding young, 5/11/90, Applecross garden - FO
Zebra Finch - 11, 30/12/90, Kelmscott - GM
Black-faced Woodswallow - 200+ in small groups, 3/12/90, Murray/Waroona Shires - FO

UP NORTH

Black Bittern - 1, 14/11/90, Crossing Pool, Millstream Chichester N.P. - JB
Bush Thick-knee - 1, 16/11/90, Snake Creek, Millstream Chichester N.P. - JB
Ruff - 1, 14/11/90, Camp Curlewis Sewerage Farm, Millstream Chichester N.P. - JB
Rufous-crowned Emu-wren - 3, July 90, Well 49 - Canning Stock Route - BMe
Red-browed Pardalote - 1, 26/11/90, Argyle Minesite - FO

KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| AM - A Malcolm | JHu - Jenny Hunt |
| AR - Allan Rose | JS - John Start |
| BB - Bryan Barrett | LH - Les Harris |
| BF - Bryony Fremlin | MBr - Mary Bremner |
| BM - Bob Malone | MC - Margery Clegg |
| BMe - Barbara Meredith | MCr - Michael Craig |
| BMc - Bill McRoberts | ML - Mark Lane |
| CM - Claire Mercer | MO - Margaret Owen |
| CW - Chris Wilder | MR - Mavis Russell |
| DJ - David James | MU - Murray Unkovich |
| DM - Dusty Millar | NH - Neil Hamilton |
| FD - Frank Doyle | PH - Peel Howden |
| FO - Frank O'Connor | PJ - Peter Jacoby |
| GL - Graham Little | PS - Paul Sinderberry |
| GM - Greg Marston | PT - Patricia Todd |
| HS - Helen Start | RN - Richard Nowotny |
| IL - Ingrid Little | RS - Rod Smith |
| JD - Jack Donohoe | SN - Simon Nevill |
| JH - Jack Hunt | TK - Tony Kirkby |
| | TP - Thelma Palmer |

RAOU CONGRESS 1991



A number of people have already registered for the Congress. A surcharge of \$5 for late registration is now applicable.

If further details are required please contact the RAOU (WA Group).

If you intend to be at the Congress please register soon.

WATERBIRD STUDIES

SCOPEWEST

Greetings to all SCOPEWESTERS

As I write this, the last batch of January 91 data is being entered and once again full coverage of SCOPEWEST sites has been achieved. Many small wetlands were dry in January 91 and larger, more permanent wetlands have been markedly lower than the previous January count.

Spectacular concentrations of waterbirds at some metropolitan wetlands have resulted, i.e. 18,500 individuals counted on Thomsons Lake. Several lakes in the study area held more than 2000 waterbirds.

Some 1500 surveys have been achieved so far with up to 150 people involved. Analysis of the data has yet to begin in earnest so statistics of waterbird usage on individual wetlands is not readily available yet. I hope to enter major SCOPEWEST sites onto my PC soon and generate user-friendly tables. If at any stage you would like summary information for your site or sites nearby, please ring me at the office and I will endeavour to provide details.

A diary of special waterbird surveys is currently being drawn up and will be posted out with the April allocations. SCOPEWEST participants are encouraged to attend these outings which will specialise in field survey techniques. The first of these - a major survey of the Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary will have been conducted by the time you receive this issue of WA Bird Notes.

Please ring and book your place on future surveys some of which will have limited numbers.

ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNT

Data have been entered for the November 90 count and I would especially like to thank Rose Jones and Chris Wilder for helping out at short notice.

The tally for individual waterfowl species from 980 wetlands amass to a total of ca. 195,000 birds (* see note below). The count is a record for any November count thus far and is possibly a reflection of earlier widespread breeding activity. Rainfall in the winter months preceeding the count was average to above average in the southern half of W.A. providing good breeding opportunities. Temperatures were generally above average throughout the study area in September/November 90. A comparison of evaporation rates between November 89 and November 90 (see Meteorological Bureau Reports) show a marked increase in 1990. This may have

resulted in an early contraction of birds (Black Swan, Grey Teal and Eurasian Coot) to wetlands in late November 90, hence a larger total. The increase in the number of Hardhead (almost double) may be the result of influx from outside the study area. The low number of Blue-billed Duck appears to be a decrease in representation in their most significant region (Gingin) though data are still to come in.

Preliminary figures for November 90 (including previously established November totals) are presented below:

| | NOV 90 | NOV 89 | NOV 88 |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Black Swan | 17,602 | 12,432 | 11,820 |
| Freckled Duck | 2 | 13 | 63 |
| Australian Shelduck | 83,405 | 87,929 | 75,599 |
| Pacific Black Duck | 21,208 | 22,127 | 13,832 |
| Grey Teal | 46,613 | 39,284 | 26,121 |
| Chestnut Teal | 853 | 1,196 | 618 |
| Australasian Shoveler | 564 | 648 | 410 |
| Pink-eared Duck | 4,906 | 5,044 | 1,500 |
| Hardhead | 1,318 | 760 | 1,028 |
| Maned Duck | 4,353 | 6,612 | 7,042 |
| Blue-billed Duck | 261 | 610 | 420 |
| Musk Duck | 754 | 1,289 | 617 |
| exotic ducks | 358 | 427 | 484 |
| unidentified ducks | 196 | 22 | 153 |
| Eurasian Coot | 13,570 | 11,716 | 8,050 |
| TOTALS | 195,963 | 190,109 | 147,757 |

The 1991 March Count (9th - 17th) is the last count under the present contract with CALM. Many observers have expressed dismay at the prospect of discontinuing the duck counts. We do however have another proposal which is now being considered and I hope to be able to report on progress with it soon.

For those of you active in the waterbird research program me, I would like to take an opportunity to ask you to encourage at least one other person to become involved with RAOU research activities. This is a meaningful and effective way of expressing your conservation initiative - while we encroach on every corner of our natural heritage, our native birds depend on it.

* Data sheets are still outstanding and I urge participants to send them in as soon as possible so we can adjust our figures for the Report.

Rodney Vervest
Waterbirds Officer

OBSERVATORY REPORTS

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

All readers will be aware that Gail and I plan to leave Broome Bird Observatory halfway through April and go back to more-or-less "normal" living. We have been Wardens for a little over four years. In the main we have enjoyed the experience and we have certainly met a lot of wonderful people and have made many friends. We take this opportunity to thank all the members of the RAOU (WA Group) for their support and kindness and in particular the past and present members of the State Committee for their assistance, expressed in a multitude of ways.

BIRD BANDING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA - 1991

As Wardens we expect to see the unexpected in the realm of bird sightings. We believe Broome will see and record a number of unusual birds in the coming years. Nevertheless we were amazed on the 26th November, 1990 when banding in a garden on the northern edge of Broome townsite to catch an adult Rose-crowned Fruit-dove in our nets. Our first thought was that it was an escapee from the Wildlife Park, but an enquiry proved that it was not. Storr (1980) states that small numbers are sometimes found at Cygnet Bay - about 200 km to the north. It seems likely that birds were forced further south to look for food after our near drought conditions. Rose-crowned Fruit-doves eat a high proportion of purple and black berries (up to 90%) and can live in very small areas of rain forest (as small as 2 hectares) according to the Atlas of Australian Birds [Blakers et al (1984)]. There is a significant area of Terminalia trees (both petiolaris and ferdinandiana) in Hidden Valley adjacent to our banding area.

A second bird that must be considered out of the ordinary is a young Ruff, first seen at the Broome sewerage ponds on 3rd December. Subsequently it was seen on the 4th and 5th. No-one visited the ponds again until we took Rod Smith and Dr. Gerard Boere there on 1st January 1991. We were pleased when Gerard was able to confirm our find as an immature Ruff, a bird he had banded many times in the Netherlands. It was still present on 18th January as was the Little Ringed Plover at the Wildlife Park.

In closing we wish to record our heartfelt thanks to all those who worked on Rod Smith's T-shirt and tea towel teams. We don't know who all of you are, but you have our sincere thanks. If we add a little extra for Rod and Norma for their extra efforts we are sure all will understand.

G. and B. Wells

References:

- Storr G M (1980), *Birds of the Kimberley Division, Western Australia*, WA Museum, Special Publication 11, Perth.
Blakers M, Davies S J J F & Reilly P N (1984), *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria.

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Eyre has been a hive of activity since the beginning of our Christmas course. Most of our visitors were not experienced bird watchers so we had the pleasure of introducing them to the joys of bird watching. On our day trip to Twilight Cove we were rewarded with sightings of six species of wader, including over 50 Sooty Oystercatcher, over 30 each of Pied Oystercatcher, Silver Gull and Crested Tern, two White-bellied Sea-Eagle and two Whiskered Tern. In the cave was the Southern Boobook and soaring above the cliffs were eight Wedge-tailed Eagle. By the end of the week the visitors had seen a Pygmy Possum, observed the banding of some birds and collected seeds and spread them over the dunes.

Our attention then became focussed on the night sky. It was time for the Star Gazing course and even though there was a full moon at the beginning of the week we all had a good look through the telescope at the various constellations. To see Jupiter with four of its moons was particularly exciting.

For the past two weeks we have had a large group of busy workers collecting seed and spreading it over the shifting sands. We're not quite sure whether the increased number of Pink Cockatoo is related to the availability of water or the recently spread seed

This year's course brochure is now available. Please telephone if you'd like a copy. We look forward to hearing from you.

G. and G. Goodreid

Qualified banders, trainees or interested birdos, or students wishing to acquire or extend their bird-banding experience, are invited to join Perry on banding trips to the study area near Kellerberrin.

Field trip dates for 1991 are:-

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 18-22 March | 15-26 April |
| 13-17 May | 17-21 June |
| 15-19 July | 16-20 September |
| 04-08 November | |

Transport and accommodation on field trips is provided free of charge. A Field Allowance of \$10/day will be paid to volunteers except for the April expedition, which will be differently structured. The maximum number of volunteers per trip is three.

Enquiries can be directed to:-

Perry de Rebeira

CSIRO

LMB 4, PO

MIDLAND WA 6056

AUSTRALIA

Telephone: (09) 252 0107 Fax: (09) 252 0134

BIRD BANDING PROGRAMME KELLERBERRIN

This is an outline of the work carried out by the Division of Wildlife and Ecology of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), and provides some details of the bird banding programme at Kellerberrin.

The Division's laboratory in Western Australia is studying the effects of habitat reduction and fragmentation on the distribution and abundance of native animals in the grain producing area of Western Australia. This work is based at Kellerberrin in the central wheatbelt, 200 km east of Perth. Over 93% of the local original woodland, mallee and heath vegetation has been cleared for farming. Our research programme focuses on the ecology of remnants of native vegetation to see if they constitute a conservation network.

The avian population study is supervised by Dr. Denis A. Saunders, Officer-in-Charge of our regional laboratory at Helena Valley, near Perth. I am the Senior Technical Officer responsible for conducting bird-banding in the 625 square km study area. The aim is to identify the habitat requirements and movement patterns of individual species in a patchy environment. Some species are confined to isolated "islands" of remnant bush while others utilise a range of seasonally available resources, using road verge corridors to move around the region. This is one of the few studies of birds at landscape level.

The banding programme began in March 1985 and has continued with 4-day banding sessions each month between March and November inclusive. Low catch rates and high temperatures preclude banding during summer months.

I have been working with volunteer assistants since 1987. Some of these are skilled amateur banders but the majority had no prior experience of handling birds in mist nets. I have devised a teaching procedure that enables beginners to quickly become proficient with safe handling techniques of birds and equipment. Volunteers are not left unsupervised and are expected, in fact encouraged, to recognise limitations and to request assistance should difficulties arise. The welfare of the birds is my first priority; all else flows from that.

To date over 5,000 birds have been banded with a recovery (retrap) rate of about 18%. Mortalities are low, less than 0.4% and I strive to have it lower. None of these casualties can be attributed to handling error.

The most commonly encountered species are honeyeaters. Because trapping is confined to the use of 30mm mist nets, most of the birds caught weigh less than 300gm. This means that a lot of small to medium sized passerines are banded, occasionally parrots and, rarely, nightjars, swallows, martins, cuckoos and kingfishers. We have netted only one raptor - a Brown Goshawk.

An attempt is made to find nests. To date very few pulli have been banded. Observations of colour-banded birds supplements our retrap data, and a bird list is recorded for each study site used.

The dates for 1991 field trips are given. The most productive times are April to June and August to October, the latter being the best time for wildflowers in W.A.

Field trips commence with departure from Helena Valley at about 0830 hrs on a Monday morning with 3 volunteers who each receive A\$10 allowance per day. Volunteers are expected to supply their own food, bedding and personal gear. Beds, mattresses, cutlery, crockery, cooking facilities and cold storage are all provided on site free of charge; food cost-sharing can be arranged.

Arrival at the field station, 40 km north of Kellerberrin is about midday. After sorting gear and eating lunch the team will set nets at a chosen study site and operate there until dusk, when the nets will be furled and tied before returning to the field station for the night.

Lights on is about 45 minutes before dawn - 0430 to 0545 hrs depending on the season. Breakfast is simple with the least noise possible. Other research teams share the field station and some of them work late at night, so they appreciate a sleep-in.

Nets are opened before sunrise and are operated until about 1100 hrs, when they are closed, packed and the site cleared before lunch at the field station. After lunch a new study site is used. This pattern is repeated each day with time set aside on Friday to clean the field station before departure to Perth at about 1400 hrs. Arrival at Helena Valley is about 1630-1700 hrs.

Transport to and from Helena Valley is the responsibility of volunteers.

Should you have any further questions about the programme, conditions and facilities, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Perry de Rebeira
Senior Technical Officer

BBC BQ

1. Which grebe has recently colonised New Zealand?
2. Which WA bird occasionally catches rain in its bill for drinking?
3. Which mainly fish eating bird in WA can throw fish into the air to catch head first to swallow?
4. Do Pacific Herons nest colonially or solitarily?
5. Which heron may follow Sacred Ibis, defend the ibis against attack and even peck the ibis if it stops foraging?
6. What is the difference in usage by Black Swan of their nests when colonially nesting rather than when using a single territorial nest?
7. Which, if any, of Great, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorant possesses a crest?
8. What is the usual size of territory defended by Australian Shelduck when rearing a brood?
9. Do Pink-eared Duck form life-long monogamous associations?
10. At what time of day do Pacific Black Duck usually feed?

HARGREAVES (HARLEY) OGIWEY WEBSTER

My association with Harley dates back to the 1920's when we were both in the same year at Bunbury High School. Harley may have been a foundation member of the school. I came from the eastern states in 1924. The school was founded in 1923.

We were later associated when teaching in Collie. He was Headmaster of the Wilson Park - Collie School when I was at the Collie Primary School. We both applied for the position of Headmaster of the Albany Primary School. He was successful, and went on to rediscover the Noisy Scrub-bird (I had already encountered the Rufous Scrub-bird on the Lamington Plateau).

Later he introduced my elder son, Lindsay, and I, to the Noisy Scrub-bird. Harley went ahead breaking scrub, Lindsay followed and I brought up the rear. Lindsay picked up a nest which Harley had disturbed. Harley said "Give it to your father. He is impatient to feel the inside!" I felt the inside and encountered the 'papier mache' lining of the nest. This was the first nest located, and is described in the "W.A. Naturalist", Vol. 9, para 1. The Rufous Scrub-bird also lines its nest with 'cardboard', which was what Harley had in mind.

Harley made a considerable contribution to the ornithological literature in both 'Emu' and 'W.A. Naturalist'.

Eric H. Sedgwick

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 1990

This has been an interesting year, with most activity directed towards supporting the Lesueur Forum of which the W.A. Group is a member. The Forum consists of a number of conservation groups and others, trying to persuade the State Government to refuse the application by CRA to establish an open cut coal mine and electricity generating station on a large part of an area at Mt Lesueur which lies near the coast about 200 kms north of Perth and close to Jurien. In recognition of its richness in plant life and to a lesser extent of birds, the area has for many years been recommended as a National Park, but has not been declared.

The Lesueur Forum lobbied hard throughout the year and was partly successful, in that the State Energy Commission has on economic grounds, rejected the proposal for a power station there. The Environmental Protection Agency has recommended that open cut mining be prohibited there and that the area be declared a National Park. The Minister for the Environment, who apparently will decide the matter, has not yet done so. In the meantime, CRA and the mining lobby are pressing the theme that the area with the coal deposits should be excised from the proposed National Park. It happens that this is precisely the part richest in flowers and woodland, and therefore of greatest value for birds. I've gone into some detail about this because it's one of the biggest conservation issues to come our way and we still await the outcome. Members have supported our efforts splendidly and I am most grateful for the help. I and other members of the Committee have attended meetings of the Lesueur Forum throughout the year.

Still on the subject of conservation, there was a call at the AGM in 1990 for the W.A. Group to be associated with the proposed Yellagonga Regional Park, north near Wanneroo. By arrangement with the Department of Planning and Urban-Development, Mike and Mandy Bamford were engaged to make a study of bird life in the area and to provide material to help the Department in producing a management plan. We still await the plan.

Comments were sent to various Departments on draft management plans for a number of places including Shark Bay Marine Park and Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve, Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, Swan Estuary Marine Park. More recently, a letter was sent to the W.A. Premier, asking that the Government's recent approval of mining in three National Parks should be withdrawn and that the grant of approval for mining exploration in Class A nature reserves should in future require the agreement of both Houses of Parliament and not just that of two Ministers. The Premier's reply did not accept these requests and went no further than stating that "no mineral exploration will take place in areas of outstanding conservation value". It is a pity that this apparently does not apply to Mt Lesueur.

Our computerised data bank of bird lists in National Parks, nature reserves and other well-defined areas continues to mount, under the direction of Clive Napier, with help from volunteers who also staff the Canning Bridge office on week-day mornings. Without their willing help and that of Wendy Napier, who organises the roster, the office simply would not function. The fact that the office is so neat and tidy, despite the cramped conditions is a tribute to Rose Jones, the office manager, who works long hours.

In the course of the year the Committee approved the purchase of 16 pairs of binoculars for use by students in bird walks conducted by members for schools. This is part of our drive to encourage students to take an interest in birds and to join the RAOU.

Earlier in the year, we thought we were well on the way to obtaining larger and cheaper premises at Lotteries House, to replace our present office at Canning Bridge. However, it turned out that the new premises were far from ready and that other applicants may in any case have a prior claim. So our application waits on ice.

Bruce Buchanan, the editor, continues to produce W.A. Bird Notes with its usual stimulating and attractive material. We're very grateful to have someone like Bruce prepared to take so much time and trouble over it. During the year, Anne Buchanan who had hitherto been responsible for handling the procedure for getting WA Bird Notes printed handed over the job to Rod Smith. He is incidentally looking into the possibility of getting WA Bird Notes printed on recycled paper in future.

Regular outings and campouts for birdwatching continued during the year organised by Ron Van Delft and usually well patronised by members. One innovation was a monthly meeting held in Albany over the long weekend in June. Monthly meetings normally take place in the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre. The object of the change was to indicate that the W.A. Group isn't solely for the benefit of Perth members, but is equally for members elsewhere in the State. Following this principle, arrangements are in hand for another monthly meeting and excursion to Geraldton in June.

Monthly meetings have generally been well attended, with a variety of speakers on topics of interest. Jeremy Talbot, who arranges these speakers is lining them up for the rest of the year. The Committee has approved purchase of a public address system with amplifier, for use by speakers whose bird calls are low in volume.

Financially we've kept our head above water and managed fairly well, thanks to the Trading Table which has provided the major part of our income. The Trading Table took part in a dozen or so fairs and festivals in and around Perth, mostly in the run-up to Christmas. In past years, most income came from participation in the King's Park Wildflower Festival, but in 1990 the King's Park Board felt unable to invite us and this is likely to be the case in future. However, a possible substitute may be Garden Week in Perry Lakes. Our bird cards have proved as popular as ever, but we shall not be producing new ones this year since we have enough left over from past years to tide us over till next year when we can reconsider.

A Sub-committee under Rod Smith has worked throughout the year on arrangements for the RAOU Congress which will take place in Perth in September.

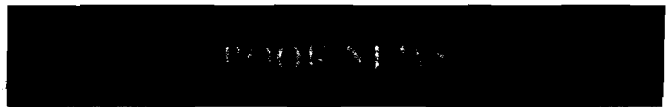
We continue to provide bird books for sale as a service to members, at a modest profit and so offer books at less than therecommended retail price in shops. Allan Jones has taken over responsibility for books.

The W.A. Minister for the Environment has recently exercised ministerial powers to ban duck shooting in 1991. Because these powers allow him to ban for only a year at a time, he attempted to put the matter beyond doubt by introducing legislation to ban duck shooting permanently. Unfortunately, the Liberal and National Parties in opposition saw matters otherwise, defeated the legislation and are likely to reintroduce duck shooting if they get into power.

Finally, I must pay tribute to the members of your Committee for their support and cooperation during the year, and in particular to Chris Wilder, the Secretary, for her remarkable efficiency and energy, not only in the direct execution of her job but also in other matters like arranging the Christmas breakfast. She has served us faithfully and well and we look forward to more of the same. For refreshments at meetings we must thank Claire Mercer who does a marvellous job.

For the coming year, we shall strive for interesting outings and monthly meetings; success in conservation issues, in particular the declaration of the whole of Mt Lesueur as a National Park and a happy membership increasing in numbers, especially in the younger generation.

Brian Wilson



The bibliophile birdo has been well served recently.

First came *Threatened Birds of Australia: an annotated list RAOU Report Number 68*. This covers 59 species, with notes on a further four. For each species there is a summary, distribution, population, habitat and threats, conservation measures taken and proposed and list of references and each are categorised as extinct, endangered, vulnerable, rare, indeterminate or insufficiently known.

Extinct means "species not definitely located in the wild during the past fifty years" which is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) definition. This is a little unfortunate as the editors also use "extinct" and "extinction" in their common meaning. The IUCN and ICBP with the example of the coelacanth before them may be correct to adopt a cautious definition, it is a pity they did not adopt another word for it.

The book is full of fact and interest. As at least ten of the listed birds may be observed relatively easily in Western

