



# Western Australian Bird Notes

**Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union**

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## Latham's Snipe Confirmed In South-West

On February 6th 1993 Doug Watkins, with Tony Kirkby and Colin Davis, mist-netted a snipe (*Gallinago* sp.) at Lake Kogolup. On examination the bird was found to have 18 tail feathers and a wing measurement of 163 mm. The bird was a Latham's Snipe, the first confirmed identification in the south of WA.

Three species of *Gallinago* snipe are known to occur in Australia, Latham's Snipe, Swinhoe's Snipe and Pintail Snipe. In the field these birds appear virtually identical, but in the hand they have distinct differences, as follows:

<u>Species</u>	<u>No. Tail feathers</u>	<u>Wing Length</u>
Latham's Snipe	18	157-168 mm
Swinhoe's Snipe	20 (18-26)	137-151 mm
Pintail Snipe	26 (24-28)	125-143 mm



Tail of Latham's Snipe mist-netted in SW

This is the second *Gallinago* snipe to be positively identified in the south west - a Pintail Snipe was mist-netted near Osborne Park in 1984.

Swinhoe's Snipe may well visit the south west. I have seen six snipe in the Perth Metropolitan area since 1989 but have not been able to identify any with certainty as examination in the hand is the only reliable method of identification.

Originally seen by the author on January 21st, the Latham's Snipe was observed feeding, far from cover. The bird was probing its long bill into the mud with a "sewing machine" action. At times it was seen to preen and a good description was obtained.

Head - eyestripe narrower than supercilium close to the bill. (This feature does not vary except in Common Snipe, a possible visitor to Australia).

Mantle and Coverts - beautiful mixture of black, brown and buff. This is very similar in all 3 snipe species, not a useful characteristic.

Tertials - long, overlying primaries completely.

Tail - long, protruding past the folded wings, at times at a downward angle.

Belly - white.

Flanks - noticeably barred brown.

Breast - tan, interspersed with dark chevrons.

Underwing - white with black barring, a very distinctive pattern.

Bill - dark, long greenish near the base.

Legs - olive green.

In the hand the outer tail feathers were quite broad (see photograph), by comparison with Swinhoe's and Pintail Snipe where the outer tail feathers are reduced to "pins".

Seen regularly over the next two weeks, the flight patterns rarely varied — normally flushing out of cover to fly direct and low, usually only short distances and on landing walking into cover. Once it flew high when it joined a small group of Wood

Sandpipers for a short time, before breaking away to land close to the take-off point. No zig-zagging was noted. The bird was heard to call on two occasions, making a hard "chak" on flushing.

Initially, we thought the bird most likely to be a Swinhoe's Snipe, an identification mainly based on the flight characteristics. Neither the length of tertials nor the call seemed to fit but as a Latham's Snipe seemed unlikely we tended to favour Swinhoe's. The mist net confirmation of Latham's Snipe came as a surprise.

J. Hunt

(A Latham's Snipe was reported in WABN No. 36, p7 December 1985 and further commented upon in WABN No. 37 p7 March 1986. A good article on snipe identification in the field is in WABN No. 33 pp 6 & 7 March 1984 and there is further reference to Swinhoe's and Pin-tailed identification in WABN No. 34 p9 June 1985. Editor.)

## Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires in brackets.

### SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

**Cattle Egret** - 2, 8/1/93, Lake Kogolup (Cockburn) - MBy, KC  
**Rufous Night Heron** - 20-25, 14/2/93, Lake McLarty N.R. (Murray) - IS and RAOU excursion  
**Australasian Bittern** - 1, 2/1/93, small swamp 3 km W of Lower King Bridge (Albany) - MB  
**Glossy Ibis** - 3, 8/1/93, Kogolup Lake (Cockburn) - MBy, KC  
**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** - about 100, 14/2/93, Lake McLarty N. R. (Murray) - IS and RAOU excursion  
**Australian Shelduck** - 4500, 25/11/92, Lake McLarty N.R. (Murray) - MC  
**Chestnut Teal** - 2 males, 10/2/93, Lake Claremont (Claremont) - MC  
**Square-tailed Kite** - 1, 11/1/93, Gosnells (Gosnells) - RS \* 1, 15/1/93, Beckenham (Canning) - JH  
**Malleefowl** - 2, 27/1/93, Great Eastern Highway, 40 km E of Merredin (Merredin) - RS  
**Hooded Plover** - 1 juvenile, 14/11/92, Peel Inlet (Murray) - RAOU excursion  
**Whimbrel** - 3, 8/1/93, Baldvis (Rockingham) - MBy, KC  
**Wood Sandpiper** - 1, 10/2/93, Lake Claremont (Claremont) - MC \* 112, 17/2/93, Lake McLarty N.R. (Murray) - MC  
**Oriental Pratincole** - 3, 8/1/93 to at least late January, Baldvis water ski park (Rockingham) - TK  
*Possible Franklin's Gull* - 1, 1-3/2/93, Bibra Lake (Cockburn) - RbS, MC, BBa, KC, MBy (size, colour of bill, wing, mantle, head, eye ring and trailing edge of wing consistent with Franklin's)  
**Caspian Tern** - 2, 10/2/93, Lake Claremont (Claremont) - MC  
**Fairy Tern** - apparently breeding, Rous Head, Fremantle (Fremantle) - JD  
**Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo** - 38, 29/11/92, Stinton Cascades Reserve, (Armadale) - LH  
**Purple-crowned Lorikeet** - small flocks, Aug-Oct/92, Greenwood (Wanneroo) - PJ  
**Yellow-throated Miner** - up to 3, 20/11/92 - 13/2/93, Beldon shopping centre (Wanneroo) (unusual in urban areas) - CW

**Black Honeyeater** - 1, 7/2/93, Dryandra (Williams) (unusual this far south-west) - SN, CW, BN, RS

**Red-eared Firetail** - 4, 27/1/93, John Forrest National Park (Mundaring) - HvW

### ARID ZONE (including the Pilbara, Gascoyne, interior and Nullarbor)

**Hoary-headed Grebe** - 5, 9/92, Rawlinna (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - TH \* numerous nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) (unusual breeding record) - SH, AC, PF  
**Black Swan** - nest with 5 eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) (unusual breeding record) - SH, AC, PF  
**Freckled Duck** - 2 nests with eggs and 1 new nest on 24/10/92, 2 other nests and 1 new nest (all in lignum) on 6/11/92 and 1 brood of 6 on 12/12/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - PF, JBW \* 14 birds, 1 nest with three eggs and one nest with 1 egg in clutch of 6 eggs of Pink-eared Duck, 20-21/11/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - RJ, AC (Note: 9 probable breeding records of this species here this season is one of the largest breeding efforts known in WA)  
**Chestnut Teal** - 1 male, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - SH, AC, PF  
**Blue-billed Duck** - nest with 12 eggs, 12/12/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) (new breeding record for this area) \* PF, JBW  
**Musk Duck** - 2, 15-19/11/92, small lake 172 km from Payne's Find on Sandstone road (Yalgoo) - MC, GM  
**Grey Falcon** - 1, 9/92, Plumridge Lakes N.R. (Menzies) - TH  
**Australian Crake** - 1, 20/11/92, flushed from lignum and canegrass in 0.7 m deep water, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - RJ  
**Painted Snipe** - feathers (greater coverts, tertials, mantle) of female, 21/11/92, Melaleuca-lignum swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) (4th record south of the Tropic in WA in last 50 years) - RJ  
**Banded Lapwing** - 102, 2/2/93, on beach at Eyre (Dundas) - GW, RW  
**Red-kneed Dotterel** - 30+ and 5 nests with eggs (some at the base of lignum bushes), 21/11/92, on small islands among Melaleuca trees, Melaleuca-lignum swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yalgoo) - AC, RJ  
**Oriental Plover** - 29, 2/2/93, on beach at Eyre (Dundas) (high number for this area) - GW, RW  
**Inland Dotterel** - 45 between Eyre and Cocklebidy (Dundas) and 153 on the beach at Eyre (Dundas), 2/2/93 - GW, RW  
**Wood Sandpiper** - 3, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) - MC, GM  
**Common Sandpiper** - 1, 9/92, Rawlinna (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - TH  
**Black-winged Stilt** - several nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - SH, AC, PF  
**Whiskered Tern** - 80, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) (high number for this area) - MC, GM \* 2 nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo - SH, AC, PF  
**Gull-billed Tern** - 6, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) - MC, GM \* 9 nests with eggs, 19/1/93, salt lakes near Yalgoo (Yalgoo) - SH, AC, PF  
**Diamond Dove** - 8, 20/11/93, Warne River crossing, Payne's Find-Sandstone road (Yalgoo) - MC, GM \* 2, 10-15/2/93, Eyre Bird Obs (Dundas) (rarely observed in this area) - GW, RW

**Cockatiel** - 8, 23/1/93, Caiguna (Dundas) (unusual this area) - DW  
**Scarlet-chested Parrot** - 1, 8/92 and 2, 9/92, Plumridge Lakes N.R. (Menzies) - TH  
**Welcome Swallow** - about 500, early Feb 93, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - GW, RW  
**Fairy Martin** - 2 birds and 8-nests under a large rock, 3/12/92, 39 km E of Rawlinna (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB \* an old (used) nest in ganger's hut, 5/12/92, 23 km E of Loongana (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB \* about 60 nests (some still in use) on buildings and numerous birds, 9/12/92, Rawlinna HS (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - MM, AB \* 13 nests (2 with large chicks), 28/1/93, Pannikin Plains Cave nr. Cocklebiddy (Dundas) - DW (there are very few previous martin breeding records from the Nullarbor; presumably they only breed there in really good seasons)  
**Nullarbor Quail-thrush** - 1, 4/12/92, 20 km E of Loongana (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB \* 2, 5/12/92, 2 km north of Reid (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB \* 1, 6/12/92, 46 km S of Deakin (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - AB  
**Little Grassbird** - 4 nests with eggs, 2 recent nests and 2 new nests, 12/12/92, in a lignum and melaleuca swamp, Thundelarra Station (Yaloo) - PF, JBW  
**Rufous-crowned Emu-wren** - 3, 17/11/92, Wanjarri N.R. (Leonora) (SW limit of distribution) - MC, GM  
**Slaty-backed Thornbill** - 2, 15/11/92, 40 km from Payne's Find on Sandstone road (Yaloo) (at or near southern limit) - MC, GM  
**Black Honeyeater** - 1 male, 18/11/92, Wanjarri N.R. (Leonora) - MC  
**Pied Honeyeater** - 1 male, 2/2/93, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - GW, RW  
**Orange Chat** - 20, 19/11/92, Lake Miranda (Leonora) - MC, GM

#### **KIMBERLEY**

**Green Pygmy-Goose** - 3, 30/12/93, silt catchment pond near Argyle mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (first record for mine site) - FO  
**Dollarbird** - 2, 4/9/92, Mitchell River Falls (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (very early arrival) - LF

#### **Observer Codes**

AB -	Allan Burbidge	LF -	Lee Fontanini
AC -	Alan Clarke	LH -	Lee Hassan
BBa -	Bryan Barrett	MB -	Mary Bremner
BN -	Brenda Newbey	MBy -	Max Bailey
CW -	Chris Wilder	MC -	Michael Craig
DW -	Doug Watkins	MM -	Murray McQuie
FO -	Frank O' Connor	PF -	Phil Fuller
GM -	Glenn Moore	PJ -	Peter Jacoby
GW -	George Watkins	RJ -	Roger Jaensch
HvW -	Hank van Wees	RS -	Rod Smith
IS -	Ian Standring	RW -	Rita Watkins
JBW -	Basil Woods	SH -	Stuart Halse
JD -	Jack Donohoe	SN -	Simon Nevill
JH -	Jack Hunt	TH -	Tim Hunt & others
KC -	Kate Creed	TK -	Tony Kirkby

## **Members Contributions**

### **CARBLA STATION**

Late in January we gained permission to camp by a running bore about 170 kms south of Carnarvon on Carbla Station. The overnight stay proved to be an excellent idea as we had seen few birds the previous afternoon.

At first light Mulga Parrot flew over our camp and woke us. We set up watch westwards from the bore and were well rewarded. About fifty Mulga Parrot watered, bathed and flew around us freely for about two hours. Many Little Grassbird, Clamorous Reed Warbler and one Buff-banded Rail sneaked in and out of the reeds. The reed birds started calling around 10 am.

In the first few hours of light we also saw (approximate numbers): 100 Budgerigar, 30 Crimson Chat, 30 Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, 1 Silvereye, 6 Black-fronted Plover, 4 Common Bronzewing, 50 Crested Pigeon, 20 Richard's Pipit, 100 Zebra Finch, 6 Willie Wagtail, 30 Singing Honeyeater, 6 Galah, 12 White-browed Babbler, 4 Australian Magpie-lark, 6 Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, 1 Brown Honeyeater (seldom seen this far north), 30 Tree Martin, 4 Southern Whiteface, 2 Emu, 100 Masked Woodswallow, 20 White-plumed Honeyeater, 1 Grey Shrike-thrush, 30 Little Crow, 1 White-winged Triller (female) and heard a Chiming Wedgebill. Many Variegated and White-winged Fairy-wren with dozens of females and young were darting everywhere. Some male White-winged Fairy-wren were deepest navy while others were the usual 'Reckitts' blue.

Water birds were 3 White-faced Heron, 2 Grey Teal, 1 Pink-eared Duck, 12 Black-fronted Plover and an Oriental Plover. There was only one raptor in twenty four hours - an Australian Kestrel.

The excellent outing was capped on our return home, by sighting a pair of Orange Chat.

*Please note that permission must be obtained from the station before camping at Carbla.*

**M. Gallin and D. Kingston**

### **RED-CHESTED BUTTON-QUAIL; ARGYLE**

On Saturday 30th January a small bird was found covered in mud in the main pit of the Argyle Diamond Mine. This was just after an extended rainy period (about 125mm in the previous 48 hours) which included some gusty (but not gale force) winds and heavy cloud cover from the tropical depression that had moved across from the Northern Territory.

The bird was brought down to the medical centre where it was cleaned. It was in a weak condition but appeared to have no physical damage.

The bird was shown to me briefly that afternoon for identification and again the next day. It seemed either an immature quail or a button-quail, but not of a species that I could immediately identify.

The eyes were a distinct yellow. The feet and legs were pinkish. The bill was dark. The complete throat, chest and flanks were an even orange-buff. The overall colour was dark, but the back and wing coverts had chestnut markings. The extended wing had two distinct coloured areas with the primaries darker. The head was dark but it was more streaked on the side of the neck. I measured the bill to tail length as a rough 15cm (possibly 13 to 17) with a ruler. I extended the right wing

and all feathers were fully developed with only a little wear.

I consulted my Simpson & Day field guide. My first thought was of a Chestnut-backed Button-quail (a species not on the Argyle list yet but a probable) because of the colouring above. However, after more thought I discounted this because of the colour underneath, the general colour overall, the head and tail colour, the size and the bill and leg colour.

Little Button-quail are quite common, but I decided against this because of the lack of any white underneath and the general dark colour.

Red-backed Button-quail and King Quail occur in the Kimberley but are unlikely to occur at Argyle. Their descriptions and illustrations were not close. The bird was much too small to be a Brown Quail which are very common at Argyle.

With the bird next to Simpson & Day, it looked like the female Red-chested Button-quail illustrated. The only discrepancy was that the colour above was more distinct than the illustration of the bird in flight.

The Red-chested Button-quail was observed three times at Argyle in the wet season during the 1983 environmental survey. It received a special mention as having only been observed six times previously in the Kimberley. In *Birds of the Kimberley Division, Western Australia* by Storr G.M. (1980) WA Museum, Perth it is described as "perhaps a drought refugee from the interior of eastern Australia" (p.31) and he mentions two records from near Fitzroy Crossing. I also know that it has been seen fairly often in the grass plain at the back of the Broome Bird Observatory.

The bird was very docile and easy to pick up. It was quite happy to walk around my desk and to explore the village room of the person looking after it. It was drinking from water provided and ate bread and milk mashed together and bird seed provided. A concern however was that it sometimes flew into the wall seemingly disoriented. It will be looked after for a few more days and then either released in grassland near the mine, or CALM, Kununurra will be consulted for advice.

F. O'Connor

## INTERSPECIES PROTECTION ?

On 4 January, six kms. north of Kojonup on the Albany Highway, there is a 40m x 40m island of native bushland overgrown with grass and weeds, surrounded by hectares of agriculture. In this small area there were 12 Western Rosella feeding on the grass seeds, 2 Western Thornbill, 1 Grey Shrike-thrush, 1 Rufous Whistler and 5 Black-faced Woodswallows.

While enjoying this birdlife in the weedy, neglected-looking island of native bushland, I was suddenly swooped by a Black-faced Woodswallow at great speed. It passed within 200mm of my hat. I was swooped again and again at approximately 60 second intervals.

This encouraged me to look for a nest or young probably of the Black-faced Woodswallow family. But no - in cryptic posture on a horizontal branch less than 3m away was a small, 150mm Tawny Frogmouth with wing and tail feathers. There was no sign of the typical shallow bowl type nest of the woodswallow, nor could another Tawny Frogmouth be seen in the vicinity.

I have often been swooped and pecked by nesting seabirds, Silver Gull, Fairy Tern and Crested Tern and on land by the Australian Magpie during the September to November nesting season, but this is the first time I have been swooped by a Black-faced Woodswallow.

M.H. Bremner

## AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN AT BENGER

A team comprising J. Lane and A. Clarke (CALM), R. Jaensch (consultant) and J. Stewart (volunteer) conducted the survey. Weather conditions were favourable (still, cool) and water was up to 0.5 m deep over large areas.

### *Methods and Result*

At 20.00 to 20.30 hours on 16 November, the team listened for calling bitterns from sites in the SE and centre of the swamp, from the top of a 4WD vehicle. No bitterns were heard.

From 7.30 to 12.00 on 17 November, the team searched for bittern nests in the far NW of the swamp, between the roads name Bittern Close and Freckled Duck Drive and immediately N and S of that area. Soon after the start, an adult Australasian Bittern was seen flying purposefully for 300m from near the central N end of the swamp, to land in tall dense Typha less than 100m N of Bittern Close. Five minutes later, another was seen in the same routine: although viewed from a different site, it appeared to land in or near the same area as the first bird. Systematic searching of Typha within 100-150m of the bitterns' landing site failed to find evidence of bittern breeding, although a secondary wing feather was found. An adult bittern, either one of the first two or a third, was flushed from Typha just S of Bittern Close.

Water was 0.3-0.4m deep through a large part of the Typha searched and in many places the Typha was more than 3.0m high and closely spaced but not excessively choked with collapsed dead material, i.e. relatively easy to walk through. Less and more dense Typha also was extensive.

### *Conclusions*

Little is known about the breeding of Australasian Bittern in WA, probably nothing in regard to breeding in Typha. However, a possible explanation for behaviour of the first two bitterns is that they had been feeding elsewhere in the swamp and were bringing food to nestlings. Normally bitterns would not fly such distances unless flushed or exploiting a favoured food resource far from a nest or roost. The landing site had enough water and shelter (and was not too dense) to support a nest of the type that bitterns probably make. A nest or nestlings (which probably wander from the nest at an early age) could have been missed by the team, despite intensive effort, given the size of the area and density of vegetation.

Although no firm conclusions can be made about breeding, prospects for success in further study of bitterns at Benger during breeding season are encouraging. Future surveys could begin with watching for bittern flights from an elevated position in early morning, to pinpoint possible nest sites, probably at weekly intervals through October and November.

R. Jaensch

## Notices

### THANK YOU SLIDE CONTRIBUTORS

I would like to thank the members who have contributed the many valuable slides for our collection, particularly those who made important contributions. The RAOU Office now has two sets of slides which cover many species; one set will be kept for reference and record purposes and the second set will be available for borrowing by members, subject to conditions.

P. Howden

## COMMITTEE 1993-4

**Chairman:** John Blyth  
**Vice-Chairman:** Chris Wilder  
**Secretary:** Michael Craig  
**Treasurer:** Peter Anson  
**Members:** Allan Burbidge,  
Bill McRoberts, Brenda Newbey,  
Tom Spalding, Brian Wilson

## MALLEEFOWL CONSERVATION PROJECT

The RAOU (WA Group) is planning a project to determine the WA distribution and population of Malleefowl.

Many members (and others) may have knowledge of active or inactive mounds and have sighted the birds in various localities. A consolidation of such data will produce a clear indication of present distribution. Eventually it is hoped to evaluate changes which have occurred since Atlas information was gathered.

Specific study sites will be selected for intensive investigation which will require interested members to search for and to monitor mounds and Malleefowl.

Our membership may provide the only group of dedicated personnel large enough to carry out this co-ordinated task.

If you are interested in checking areas where Malleefowl have been reported please contact the co-ordinator. Individuals making investigations in various locations will enhance our understanding of the Malleefowl's distribution. Already there are locations where sightings have been reported and need follow-up.

Please give for Malleefowl sightings: location (indicate district, road intersections or landmarks, relevant distances and directions etc), date and time and for Malleefowl Mounds: location (detailed as above), condition of mound, date of discovery, are mounds threatened by development?

Rod Smith, Co-ordinator RAOU (WA Group) Malleefowl Conservation Project, PO Box 199, Jolimont 6014.

## SINCE BIRDS CAN'T TALK

RAOU (WA Group) needs more members willing to give talks to interested groups. We receive requests from schools, scout groups and other organisations for speakers on bird topics - but in responding to these requests, have been relying on a small number of dedicated volunteers. We are keen to hear from any members ready to add their names to our register of speakers.

Have you some expertise in any particular aspect of birdwatching? For instance, you may be familiar with a local "patch" of bushland or a lake, or have developed a special interest in a group of birds such as parrots or fairy-wrens. Perhaps you know about developing a local garden to attract native birds - or know in some detail programmes to protect endangered species ... or maybe you have a broad, general knowledge of the feathered friends.

If you can help, please contact our office any weekday between 9.30 am and 12 noon and your offer will be recorded by the volunteer on duty and passed on to either Judy Blyth or Norah Brockman.

An updated speakers' register will result, showing the topics on which volunteers are prepared to speak. It will then be easier to match requests for bird talks to suitable speakers.

J. Blyth

## WA THREATENED BIRDS: DISPLAY

Every birdwatcher, whether professional or recreational, is sadly aware of the shrunken range and reduced numbers of many Australian birds since European settlement. Two species previously found in Western Australia, Lewin's Rail and Rufous Bristlebird are now considered to be extinct in the State. The WA group has recently commenced a public education project to increase awareness of which birds are threatened, the nature of the threats and the programmes in place or planned to preserve these species.

We intend to produce a well researched and presented modular kit of display material, with photographs of as many of the State's threatened species as possible, as well as a variety of printed material including names, captions and information about threatening processes and plans for the recovery of particular species. All photographs and text will be laminated to cope with the rigors of being transported around the State and of public display.

It is hoped to have one kit produced in time to join the EPA's "Green Train", which will set off from Perth on World Environment Day, June 5th, for a year-long tour of the State. A second will be available for other displays as required. Relevant parts of the kit can be used for display in the Wheatbelt, Pilbara, Kimberley, South Coast, Perth and its environs or anywhere else in the State.

It is expected that most of the funding for this project will be covered by a grant received from the former State Government's Social Advantage Initiative.

The display should make a significant contribution to increasing community understanding of the threats to birds in our State and strengthen efforts to ensure the survival of the more threatened species.

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<b>Editor</b>	B. Buchanan, PO Box 10 Wannamal 6505

### Notes For Contributors

The Editor requests contributors to note :-

- \*WABN normally only publishes material on WA birds
- \*contributions should be written or typed with Double Spacing
- \*WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- \*copy will be edited where appropriate
- \*contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

**Deadline for the 50th Commemorative  
Issue  
7 May 1993**

## OLFACTION IN BIRDS

Big Bird writes concerning the answer to question 7 in BBCBQ of WABN No. 54 June 1990, "Do most birds have a sense of smell". The answer on page 12 was "No" and derived from Dorst J (1974 translation) *The Life of Birds*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London.

More recently Martin G (1991) in *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Ornithology* ed Brooke M & Birkhead T, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and Melbourne writes :—

"The nasal cavity in birds lies within the skull at the base of the upper bill. It contains many elaborate folds of the underlying bone; these serve to increase the surface area of the mucous membrane where the olfactory (smell) receptors are situated. The cavity is so designed that all air breathed through the nostrils is directed over these sensory surfaces. The size, position, and shape of this organ, and the part of the brain which subserves it, vary greatly between species.

Although use of smell in the daily life of a bird varies markedly between species, both laboratory and field studies have demonstrated the importance of smell in species ranging from pigeons to vultures. Some findings appear quite exceptional. For example, Black-footed Albatrosses can be attracted by odour from a distance of at least 30 kilometres to bacon fat poured on the ocean surface." (pp 50 & 51)

Other examples are given. In the circumstances Big Bird believes the answer 'No' to the original question for "most birds" should be treated with great caution. It seems possible all birds have a sense of smell but the development/use of it is markedly different between species.

Editor

## WABN: LOCATIONS INFORMATION

It would be greatly appreciated if all contributions which refer to the locations of birds, either in observations or articles, contain sufficient information to allow the location concerned to be determined with reasonable precision by reference to the *Travellers Atlas*, or in the case of Greater Perth locations by reference to either of the street guides now available.

**Observation or sightings which are not sufficiently specific will not be printed until sufficient clarity is obtained.**

Locations on pastoral properties, unless more closely detailed, are adequately delineated by the name of the pastoral property concerned.

Locations can be "x km North-east (or whatever direction) from y" (a town or geographical feature shown in the *Travellers Atlas*.)

Should any contributor believe a location should not be revealed, (an un-necessary precaution except in the cases of the nests of some rare/endangered species eg Red Goshawk) then WABN will *not print* the observation or sighting.

The purpose of making each location clear and sufficiently specific is to make WABN information of value to both current and later researchers and observers. For example, a report in WABN that say, a Black Bittern was seen at Salt lake, Plantagenet Shire is of little value unless the location of Salt Lake, Plantagenet Shire is known — which in fact it is not and help in the location would be appreciated.

Editor

## INFORMATION BROCHURE PROJECT

This month we have presented copies of our first information brochure to the President of the Shire of Carnarvon. 'Birding Around Carnarvon' contains a map and information on good birding sites in the town and Shire with the names of feature birds.

The brochure also informs readers about the RAOU, its aims and activities.

The brochure was prepared by a group of city and country members.

NOW! Country members, please contact our office and tell us you are prepared to help with a similar brochure for your area.

A copy of the Carnarvon brochure will be sent to you with the name of a Committee member appointed to provide you with information and any help you need.

Brochures will be printed by the RAOU and sent to you for presentation to your Council or Shire. Every brochure assists in making more people aware of birds and their importance.

So over to you country members! Help make this a successful activity for country and city.

A. Jones

## BBCBQ

- 1) Is the visual acuity of the Brown Falcon worse, equal or better than that of man ?
- 2) What are the two methods of head scratching by birds ?
- 3) Which of the two methods is regarded as characteristic of ground dwelling species and the most primitive ?
- 4) Why is exposure to sun, (termed sunning), useful to birds ?
- 5) How much more energy does a bird require to fly than a fish to swim ?
- 6) Why do some birds often fly close to water ?
- 7) Could the ancestors of Emu fly ?
- 8) When in deep sleep what happens to the eyes of most birds at regular intervals ?
- 9) Most birds sleep each day for how long ?
- 10) Six major biogeographic realms have been described. Which is the richest in endemic bird families ? and where does Australasia rank in the six ?

Answers on page 11

## Excursion Reports

### COODANUP 14 Nov

A number of Perth members joined the Mandurah Bird Watching Group, under the leadership of John Taylor, to look at the birdlife in the Creery Wetlands.

In the first two hours 42 species were sighted in and around the samphire flats, the marshes and the tuart forest. Along the flats the Pied Oystercatchers in their black, white and red livery were busily searching for food in the shallows, whilst overhead the Osprey and Caspian Tern hovered and circled, ever vigilant for fish in the estuary, with a Whistling Kite accompaniment.

Amongst the understorey of the tuart bushland were the



