



# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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## The Tyranny of Taxonomy

Taxonomy impairs the serenity of bird observers. All endure irritation, frustration and annoyance by being subject to an arbitrary, unhelpful and unappreciated schema expressed in a language few can follow. Taxonomy essentially started with Carl Linne (1707 - 1778), later known as Carl von Linné and even later known as Carolus Linnaeus. A successful botanist and physician, (he was a professor of medicine before becoming professor of botany by his own request), it is to Linne, that we owe the binomial nomenclature system, which became the foundation for modern taxonomy.

In the mid-18th Century when Linne suggested the binomial system using Latin, it was the then 'universal' language and could be read by most educated persons. Two hundred years before, the educated could speak Latin easily (Queen Elizabeth I of England delivered speeches in Latin — besides being fluent in Greek, French and Italian), but 200 years after Linne, that is the present time, very few can read Latin let alone speak it and a knowledge of Latin is no longer regarded as a sign of education but rather of dilettantism or of time wasted. Taxonomy, however, continues to use Latin.

Taxonomy is the classification of living entities by kinship and evolutionary descent. Fisher/Flegg (1974) state "Taxonomic zoologists.....have one of the most difficult tasks in the whole of zoology, for in their arrangement.....in a natural classification they have to bear in mind many very different principles.....the taxonomist has to be an historian, an evolutionist, a geographer, an anatomist, a bibliographer, and often a mathematician...." (p35). All this sounds impressively scientific and possessed of precision and certainty.

Consequently it is something of a surprise to find that "all systems of zoological classification are artificial in that they contain a large *subjective* element" and that the "category that has objective reality is species ..... all other categories, lower or higher, are *subjective*" (Thomson 1964, p128/129), or "The species category has a biological definition.....but all higher

categories in the Linnaean hierarchical system, including genus, family, order, class, and so on, are *arbitrary* designations of genealogical relationship." (McKittrick 1991 p76) — (my emphases.) It is not of course that taxonomists do not wish to be scientific, it is simply that lacking data, "arbitrary" and "subjective" judgements are inevitable.

Wiens (1991) in discussing biogeography says "the details.....depend on the taxonomic classifications of birds and their relationships that are *in vogue*" (p159) — (my emphasis.) One of the newest techniques for distinguishing the orders of birds is based on DNA-DNA hybridization, an approach which involves the differential melting points of related and lesser related genetic materials. The technique results in a rather different taxonomic order to that with which we are currently forced to struggle — see comparative table on page 2.

It is obvious from the lists overleaf that if (or more likely when) the DNA method becomes fully in vogue, our present taxonomic order will undergo significant if not profound change. Some minor changes were wrought in the first volume of HANZAB: the second has introduced significant alterations to the taxonomic order for raptors, rails, stilts, plovers and dotterels, so that already (that is with only a few of the total of Australian birds covered by HANZAB) all previous bird publications, books and bird lists are superseded. Thousands of pages of printed material have become outdated overnight.

Brooke (1991) refers to the fact that where the DNA/DNA approach differs from that derived from anatomical features (the main basis for the current taxonomic order) "it is not possible (in the absence of a more detailed fossil record) to say which answer is right" (p78), but he appears to declare his allegiance by stating that "in our account of the orders of birds, traditional taxonomy has been followed since this will make it easier for the reader to tie together information.....with accounts in other bird books." (p78)

Traditional or current vogue taxonomy profoundly and

### Current taxonomic order

Ratites  
Grebes  
Penguins, Albatrosses, Petrels  
Gannets, Cormorants  
Frigatebirds  
Tropicbirds  
Herons & Ibis  
Waterfowl  
Raptors  
Button-quails  
Rails  
Shorebirds, Gulls & Terns  
Pigeons  
Parrots  
Cuckoos  
Owls & Nightjars  
Swifts  
Kingfishers, Bee-eaters, Rollers  
Passerines

### DNA taxonomy (McKittrick 1991)

Ratites  
Waterfowl  
Button-quails  
Rollers, Bee-eaters  
Cuckoos  
Parrots  
Swifts  
Owls & Nightjars  
Pigeons  
Passerines  
Rails  
Shorebirds, Gulls & Terns  
Raptors  
Grebes  
Tropicbirds  
Gannets & Cormorants  
Herons, Ibis & Pelicans  
Frigatebirds, Penguins  
Petrels & Albatrosses

adversely effects all bird observers. It is followed by all the literature. As you to hunt for information in your bird book, frustrated by trying to recall whether babblers are before treecreepers and where both are in relation to warblers you may well exclaim at the absurdity of the current situation in which your book is ordered according to an "arbitrary", "subjective" and artificial system which is understood by few and of interest to less. Hands up those who are aware that the White-cheeked Honeyeater is currently regarded as being evolutionary younger than the New Holland Honeyeater. Hands up those who care.

The current taxonomic ordering of bird literature, ie. listing by evolutionary date order, has the less sense when it is realised that the time spans involved cannot be realistically appreciated by the human mind. The evolutionary time between parrots and raptors may have been some 30 million years, or a mere 10 million between rails and shorebirds. Among the most recent of the bird groups is Passerines, evolved over 100 million years ago. These lengths of time are beyond any adequate comprehension.

Imagine your response when you next visit your book-seller to purchase an English dictionary. You are informed that all the dictionaries have been given a new approach. You find they are arranged according to the etymological family of each word, with each family expressed in a language you are unable to understand, but meaning Old French, Latin, Greek, New Latin, Old English, Old High German, Old Norse, Middle Dutch, Urdu, Portugese, Somali, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, Scots, Middle Low German, Middle High German, Mediaeval Latin, Old Spanish, Hebrew — and many more. (there are some 95 analogous families in your Australian bird book.) You are also informed the words in the dictionary within each family grouping are set out in their evolutionary order.

You might well believe the change to your reference book to be not advantageous. You might well believe there must be a better way to set out your dictionary. You might even suggest alphabetically. You might feel the more strongly when you discover your new dictionary arrangement is agreed to be subjective, arbitrary and lacking in certainty, even by those with expertise, is the subject of intense debate among scholars and is liable to dramatic alteration and re-organisation. It seems

improbable you will greet the arrangement of your new dictionary with enthusiasm.

Yet bird books continue to be arranged similarly to the supposed new dictionary. Supporters of the present taxonomic ordering of bird literature, if there be any, can of course say that if we wish to locate information on a specific bird, all we have to do is look up the index. Overlooking for a moment the vexatious habit of printing indexes in so small a print as to induce eye strain, you would not accept the mere presence of an index as a rational defence of the "new dictionary". The presence of an index is not a rational defence of the current arrangement of bird books — merely an excuse for not making a long overdue alteration. An equally feeble excuse is that 'it has always been done this way'; the most sterile response to needs for change.

Why are not bird books in alphabetical order by English names — English now being the 'universal' language? The taxonomic order can then be placed in the pages previously occupied by the index, to satisfy the tiny minority of those interested in the current vogue among scholars as to the sequence of bird evolution. English alphabetical order would make bird books and bird lists easy for the vast majority to use, rather than the current very difficult "arbitrary" approach and would overcome the trauma of finding all existing books and all bird lists out of sequence when the taxonomic order alters, as it has done recently in HANZAB and will again.

A strict alphabetical order (of the English names) might not always be the most convenient. Groupings, themselves in alphabetical order, such as ducks, honeyeaters, parrots, raptors, seabirds, waders etc might make for greater ease of use, with the birds within each grouping in alphabetical order. Books with such 'family' groupings are already produced, but they remain tyrannised by taxonomy when it comes to the order of the species within each group, which follow the current "artificial", "subjective" and wholly infuriating practice.

When it is fully realised that current taxonomy is not scientific but the consensus among best guesses, that the overwhelming majority of bird observers are almost wholly disinterested in evolutionary sequences and that the use of bird books could easily be made simple, in place of the current

enigmatic intricacy, then the slavish adherence to "taxonomic order" for both books and bird lists will be seen for what it is, a pernicious blight.

We may be unable to avoid the binomial Latin for a while yet, particularly as translation is not the solution (for example, even *Emblema oculata* seems better than "Inlaid Work with eyes" — the Red-eared Firetail) but Latin binomials can be listed for early future change to English. This can wait until tomorrow. Today we can have a rational arrangement for our bird lists and bird books and throw off the crassness we currently endure. It is time to rise against the tyranny of taxonomy.

B. Buchanan

#### References:

Brooke M, McKittrick MC & Wiens J (1991) all contributors to *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Ornithology*, Eds Brooke M & Birkhead T (1991) Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, Australia.

Fisher J, revised Flegg J (1974) *Watching Birds*, T & AD Poyser, Penguin Books, Victoria, Australia

Thomson, Sir AL ed (1964) *A New Dictionary of Birds* British Ornithologists Union, Nelson, England.

## Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

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

**Cattle Egret** - 1, 10/1/94-11/2/94, Lake Kogolup (Cockburn) - JH

**Great Egret** - 60+, January-February, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JH, IS, KN, RD and others

**Sacred (Australian White) Ibis** - 5, 20/5/93, in the settlement paddock, unusual in the wheatbelt, Dryandra State Forest (Williams) - LS

**Royal Spoonbill** - 1, January-February, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JH, IS, KN, RD and others

**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** - 200, January-February, Lake McLarty (Murray) (highest number recorded for this site) - JH, IS, KN, RD and others

**Australian Shelduck** - about 1000, 7/1/94, Noring Lake, sw of Wagin (Wagin) - LS

**Chestnut Teal** - 1, 20/1/94, Bayswater Bird Sanctuary (Bayswater) - HvW

**Collared Sparrowhawk** - 1, 19/10/93, Buntine Nature Reserve (Dalwallinu) (not previously recorded in this Nature Reserve or this Atlas block) - BB

**Wedge-tailed Eagle** - 1, 25/1/94, Lake Kogolup (Cockburn) - JH \* 1, January 94, Ocean Reef (Wanneroo) - IL, GL (uncommon on Swan Coastal Plain)

**Peregrine Falcon** - 1, 8/8/93, Mosman Park (Mosman Park) - MCr \* 1, 17/11/93, McGillivray Oval, Mt Claremont (Claremont) - MCr

**Malleefowl** - 1, 17/11/93, roadside between Hyden and East Hyden (Kondinin) - TS

**Sooty Oystercatcher** - 1, 25/10/93 and on several occasions since, Alfred Cove (Melville) (apparently not previously recorded here) - JH

**Lesser Golden Plover** - 1, 7/11/93, Alfred Cove (Melville) - JH, TK, CD \* 1, 12/12/93, Lake Kogolup (Cockburn) - JH \* 14, 6/1/94, Creery Island, Peel Inlet (Mandurah) - JH

**Hooded Plover** - 1 immature, November- December 1993, Alfred Cove (Melville) - JH, TK and others

**Mongolian Plover** - 2, 7/11/93, Alfred Cove (Melville) - TK  
**Large Sand Plover** - 12, 18/12/93, Oyster Harbour (Albany) - JH

**Red-necked Avocet** - 2500, 3/1/94, increasing to about 5000 in early February, Lake McLarty (Murray) (high number for the south-west) - BBa, MC, JH

**Wood Sandpiper** - 6, 10/9/93, Baldvis Water Ski Park (Rockingham) (early record for this species) - JH

**Grey-tailed Tattler** - 18, 17/12/93, Kalgan River Inlet (Albany) - JH \* 14, 6/1/94, Styx Channel, near Mandurah (Mandurah) JH

**Marsh Sandpiper** - 20, January-February 1994, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JH, IS, KN, RD and others

**Terek Sandpiper** - 2, 18/12/93, Oyster Harbour (Albany) - JH

**Black-tailed Godwit** - 1, 18/4/93, Wellstead Estuary, adjacent to Bremer Bay town (Jerramungup) (unusual on the south coast) - AS \* 19, January-February, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JH, IS, KN, RD and others

**Red Knot** - 1, January-February, Lake McLarty (Murray) (unusual away from the coast) - JH, IS, KN, RD and others

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** - 3000, January-February, Lake McLarty (Murray) (high number for the south-west) - JH, IS, KN, RD and others

**Pectoral Sandpiper** - 3, 17/11/93, Baldvis Water Ski Park (Rockingham) (usually only seen in ones or twos) - JH

**Little Stint** - 1 in breeding plumage, 8/2/94, Lake Cooloongup (Rockingham) - TK, BN

**Curlew Sandpiper** - 500, 3/1/94, Lake McLarty (Murray) - BBa, MC

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** - 1, 26/10/93, Alfred Cove (Melville) - MCr \* 2, 7-8/11/93, Alfred Cove (Melville) - GM, JH and others \* 1, 3/1/94, Lake McLarty (Murray) - GM, BBa, MC

**Ruff** - 1 (probably Reeve), 16/1/94, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, FO

**Great Skua** - 1, 26/11/93, RGC wetlands, 5 km S of Capel (Capel) - MJB

**Pacific Gull** - 1, 19/12/93, Sorrento (Wanneroo) (rare in metropolitan area) - JR, AB

**Gull-billed Tern** - 1, 25/10/93, in breeding plumage, Alfred Cove (Melville) - JH \* 10, 8/1/94, Lake Preston, near Myalup (Harvey) - TJ

**Common Tern** - 17, 16/1/94, Mandurah Boat Harbour (Mandurah) - JH

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** - 6, 31/1/94, Lake McLarty (Murray) - BBa, MC

**Rainbow Lorikeet** - 2+, April-May 1993, Cannington (Canning) (unusual in this area) - TS

**Yellow Wagtail** - (subspecies *simillima*), 29/12/93, Lake McLarty (Murray) (third record for the south-west) - IS, JH

**Red-capped Robin** - 1 male, 30/10/93, 14/11/93 and 21/11/93, McGillivray Oval, Mt Claremont (Claremont) - MCr

**Western Yellow Robin** - 1, 27/11/93, Buntine Nature Reserve (Dalwallinu) - AB, JR

**Golden Whistler** - 3, 6/12/93, Wellesley, just west of Benger Swamp (Harvey) - MJB

**Splendid Fairy-wren** - 1 male, 11/11/93, Alfred Cove (Melville) - MCr \* 2, 23/12/93, Attadale (Melville) - ND (uncommon in urban areas)

## Members Contributions

**Redthroat** - 1 male, 25/5/93, Phillips River 14 km NW of Ravensthorpe (Ravensthorpe) (an extension of known range about 40 km S from near Lake King) - AS

**Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** - 2+, 28/11/93, Buntine Nature Reserve (Dalwallinu) (unusual this far north-east) - AB, JB and others

**ARID ZONE** (including the Pilbara, Gascoyne, interior and Nullabor)

**Bourke's Parrot** - 2, 27/7/93, apparently nesting in a mulga stump, Meekatharra (Meekatharra) - JS, HS

**Cinnamon (Chestnut-breasted) Quail-thrush** - 1, 10/7/93, Kidson Track, 100 km W of Canning Stock Route (East Pilbara) - KC \* 4, and a nest with 2 eggs, 18/7/93, Kennedy Range (Carnarvon) - JS, HS \* 1, 24/8/93, Yuimmery Station, near Sandstone (Sandstone) - KC

### **KIMBERLEY**

**Least Frigatebird** - 32, 7/2/94, Barred Creek (Broome) - BBO  
**Garganey** - 1, 5/12/93, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - TK

**Grey Goshawk** - 1, (white phase), 11/1/94, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Grey Falcon** - 1, 5/10, 10/10, 19/10, 29/10/93, Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) - BBO

**Greenshank** - 2 flocks (60, 15), 24/1/94, Broome (Broome) - BBO

**Common Redshank** - 2, 18/10/93, Crab Creek, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO \* 3, 16/1/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO

**Asian Dowitcher** - 45, 21/8/93, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO \* 2, 13/10/93 and 2, 28/10/93, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** - 1, 2/10/93, and 3, 26/10/93, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO

**Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** - 1, 18/1/94, Broome (Broome) - GS

**Common Koel** - 1 male, 1/1/94, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) (at or near southern edge of range) - FO

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** - 1, 15/12/93, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - TK

### **CORRIGENDA**

**Hooded Plover** - 1 immature, 10/9/93, Pelican Point (Nedlands) - MBy (Shown as Double-banded Plover in WABN 68)

**Double-banded Plover** - The record of two immatures at Woodman Point in October (WABN 68) is presumed incorrect. This species breeds August to February in New Zealand and after breeding, many birds (adults and immatures) migrate to Australia. At this time, immatures can easily be distinguished from adults, but while in Australia, immatures begin to develop breeding plumage. Immatures can still be distinguished by their worn primaries and retained juvenile inner median coverts up until about the time of departure. A few birds spend summer in Australia, but by about August, immatures are indistinguishable from adults. One would therefore not expect to see a juvenile or immature Double-banded Plover in Australia in October. Immature birds can easily be confused with the Large Sand Plover.

**Greenshank** - 275, 5/10/93, Creery Island (Murray) (apparently the highest count from south-western Australia) - JH, TK, CD (Shown as 175 birds in WABN 68).

### **LITTLE GRASSBIRD WADING**

On Sunday 6th February after the Wellard wetland outing, Brenda Newbey and I visited Lake Cooloongup in Rockingham. We parked at the picnic area at the northern end and walked along the edge of the lake to the north east corner where the reeds are close to the water.

There were several thousand ducks (Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal and Australian Shelduck), about 200 Banded Stilt, some Red-necked Avocet and other expected saltwater habitat waterbirds.

There were several hundred waders (mainly Red-necked Stint and Red-capped Plover, plus Curlew Sandpiper and Greenshank). Brenda noticed a bird about 20 m away amongst other waders in a small (about 4m by 2m), very shallow (50mm at most) wet area, about 2m from the reeds. We had difficulty convincing ourselves because of the behaviour, but it was unmistakably a Little Grassbird. We saw another very close by and a third some distance away near three Spotless and one Baillon's Crake.

I have never seen a Little Grassbird in the open on the ground before. Not only that, but it was foraging almost exactly like the waders it was with, except that once it was on top of a small stromatalite in a pool. When alarmed, the waders flew out towards the lake, while the Little Grassbird flew the two metres to the edge of the reeds. It re-appeared quite soon each time.

We also noticed that sometimes the Little Grassbird used its feet to splash the water or to 'stamp on' the mud as though to disturb prey.

F. O'Connor

### **LETTER FROM UK**

I was lucky enough to spend three weeks with RAOU W A members recently. My host in Perth saw notice of a walk in Bold Park for Bird week in October 1993. I had visited Bold Park and was eager to join the walk and knowing I was a stranger, people took trouble to explain the various habitats and calls. I saw several species - from a dramatic view of a Little Eagle soaring high to a little Silvereye flitting in the bushes. At the end of the walk I was told of two other walks, one at Booragoon Lake on the following day. A member offered to take me and in a very different habitat I was told of the problems of keeping a balance between man and nature.

The new boardwalk into the wetland area gave a marvelous opportunity to see a Darter with a family of two young and various ducks and cormorants. It seemed somewhat bizarre to join with some 30 others in turns to view the back of a sleeping Rufous Night Heron but this was not nearly so bizarre as the sight and sound of the male Musk duck displaying - amazing!

Then came the "Big One" - an all day trip to Austin Bay Reserve. I had an interesting ride down to meet 22 other enthusiasts. We saw a variety of damp and dry habitats. I have seen the infrequent spoonbill at home in Suffolk, but never so many and so clearly. I was very glad to have the opportunity to look at them through a telescope. Also, at the Australian Shelduck, so different from ours.

I had never seen a heat haze like that across the very wide estuary or walked on sand which felt crisp underfoot, with

encrusted salt. I was amazed to see natural vegetation with which I am familiar as wild or cultivated escapees at home. The Aussie avocets let me down - I did want to see them! I was delighted to be shown some smart coloured spiders with webs. Then the hunt for a Splendid Fairy-wren was on - a fine specimen was found which sat still long enough for me to marvel at it through a telescope.

I found the deep sand of the track on return rather trying, though I did find a single clump of emerald green kangaroo paw in flower, but I was so glad to get back to a shady tree by the cars. I had been afraid of letting the side down only to find others equally tired and glad of lunch.

We had a good trip home, seeing some Richards Pipits, like our Meadow Pipit and at Serpentine Falls watched a White-faced Heron catching fish right by the pool. The sun had set - a blaze of glory - before we returned to Perth.

Thank you all for your kindness and making my stay in WA memorable, it was just the sort of thing I wanted to do but feared I would not be able to do.

M. Leeson

## Banding Networks

This is the first of a regular feature that will publicise bird banding events; local, national and international. Banders who wish to report on a project, or feature unusual and interesting recoveries are invited to submit copy to the Editor.

The systematic marking of free-flying birds for ornithological study was first used in Denmark almost a century ago. The Australian Bird Banding Scheme was created in 1953, although banding activity had been conducted in this country about 30 years before that. Bird banding has come a long way since then.

Bird and bat banding in Australia and its Territories is controlled by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, formerly called the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. ANCA issues banding permits in conjunction with each state wildlife authority. Researchers in W.A. need a license from CALM to take fauna for study purposes. A further permit is required to operate in a National Park or Nature Reserve.

There are currently 110 bird banders registered in W.A., with another 15 out-of-State banders licensed to conduct banding projects in the West. Three are from the U.S.A., one from Germany and the rest are from interstate.

There are 83 separate banding projects in W.A., supervised by 45 individual supervising banders who are assisted by 55 collaborating banders. In addition to this there is a strong supporting group of volunteer assistants who take part in field trips and expeditions to band birds.

Of the 83 bird banding projects, 58 are being conducted by amateur researchers, the balance by staff of private field stations, universities, research institutions and government departments. At present there are 91 A Class banders resident in W.A., 17 C Class (Trainee status) and 2 R Class (Restricted duration permits).

One of the national projects underway is aimed at collecting information on birds for the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Some regional operators concen-

trate on gathering data on species endemic to their area and contribute whenever possible to the study of variations within species that are common across the continent. Other banders take part in co-operative national and international projects aimed at understanding migration routes and feeding requirements of long distance travellers that spend part of the year in Australia. This work enables researchers to identify major feeding and refuge areas along flightpaths used by migrants, an important step in the process of multinational habitat conservation. Other projects are oriented towards seasonal fluctuations in populations, longevity, site fidelity of individuals and dispersal of young.

Long term banding studies have unravelled some of the mysteries about birds; how long they live, where they come from, where they go, but not all the questions have been answered.

Do you have any questions?

P. de Rebeira

Regional Organiser for W.A.  
Australian Bird Banding Scheme.

I am looking for banding sites for a new project that will concentrate on large seasonal gatherings of honeyeaters in patches of native vegetation that have massive annual flowering events. If any member knows of such sites within 300 - 400 km of Perth, please contact me at 12 Glenwood Avenue, Glen Forrest, Telephone: (09) 29 88 999.

P. de Rebeira

RAOU Office WA	Perry House, 71 Oceanic Drive Wembley 6014 or PO Box 199 Jolimont 6014.
Telephone	(09) 383 7749.
Birding Hotline	(09) 387 8412.
Chairman	B. Wilson, 46 Farrant Street, Gooseberry Hill, 6076 tel 293 1094.
Editor	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 June  
Issue  
21 May 1994

# Notices

## COMMITTEE

The WA Group Committee for 1994-1995 is

Chairman: Brian Wilson (09) 293 1094  
Vice Chairman: John Blyth (09) 381 6293  
Secretary: Margaret Philippson (09) 375 2068  
Treasurer: Peter Anson (09) 330 2915

Committee Members: —

Allan Burbidge (09) 306 1642  
Allan Jones (09) 364 3975  
Bill McRoberts (09) 459 1971  
Brenda Newbey (09) 337 5673  
Rod Smith (09) 397 5319  
Trevor Stoneman (09) 387 2467

All telephone numbers are home numbers

## BOOKSHOP NEWS

We now have a good range of books, tapes and videos in stock. We also have catalogues of books available in Australia. Contact the office volunteer staff for help in locating your particular book. In most cases we are able to order books through our regular suppliers.

Prices are set as low as possible as we aim to provide a service for our members..

A new edition of *Birdlife of Rottnest* is now available at \$12.50.

## COUNTRY BROCHURES

Thanks to members who have responded to our request for help in the preparation of birding brochures for country centres.

Twenty three members have already forwarded information or are in the process of so doing.

The brochures contain information on good birding habitats, with names of birds typical to each area. A map is provided showing routes and locations.

The birdlist brochure is prepared from various records. The W.A. Museum staff has been helpful in providing information and checking lists.

The project has been made possible with a grant from the Gordon Reid Foundation for Conservation. Argyle Diamonds has funded three areas.

We are now seeking further funds to produce the remainder of the brochures being prepared.

1000 copies of each brochure are forwarded to country areas for distribution through various outlets. The brochures are also available at Perry House.

Many thanks to all who are taking part in this project.

AK. Jones

## INDEX to WABN 1993

Numbers 66 to 68 inclusive, May to December 1993.

The INDEX for that part of 1993 not covered by the 50th Anniversary issue of the INDEX 1943 — 1993, is now available from RAOU office, Perry House, 71, Oceanic Drive, Wembley 6014

or Box 199, Jolimont. Telephone (09) 383 4479.

The cost is \$1.00 only.

# BBCBQ

Raptor questions:

- 1) Are older Wedge-tailed Eagles lighter or darker in plumage ?
- 2) Older Marsh Harriers plumage is lighter or darker ?
- 3) Which 3 species of the following do not line their nests with leaves ? Black-shouldered Kite, Whistling Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Marsh Harrier, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle, Brown Falcon, Australian Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon.
- 4) Black-shouldered Kites prefer open grasslands. Do they prefer the grass tall or low ?
- 5) Little Eagles prefer dense forest or open woodland ?
- 6) Brown Goshawks sedentary or partially migratory ?
- 7) Whistling Kite usually nest near — open country, water, or woodland ?
- 8) Do Wedge-tailed Eagles hunt co-operatively ?
- 9) Whistling Kites sometimes associate with which other raptor ?
- 10) What is the success rate of attack of the Australian Kestrel during the breeding season ?

## Malleefowl Project

Searches for Malleefowl mounds were conducted at Dryandra on the last weekend in October and at Buntine a month later. At Dryandra all of the mounds located in the earlier searches were re-visited. Others of particular interest were also examined in nearby areas. The reputation the Malleefowl established as an obvious and busy bird in Dryandra was not justified in 1993. Only one mound was clearly active (vegetation litter had been scraped into a prepared crater, although it was at an early stage of construction for so late in the year) and another mound appeared to have had some work done on it.

The Buntine weekend was well-attended by RAOU members from Perth and received interest and support from residents in the Buntine and nearby districts.

A section of Buntine Nature Reserve (measuring 3.5 km by .5 km) was searched on the last weekend in November. The hot weather sapped energy but it was felt that a quite satisfactory task had been accomplished. Not only was the weather unkind, but search conditions were not conducive to a comfortable stroll in the bush! However those who joined in stuck at the task. By Sunday afternoon three quite old mounds had been found. Buntine is an interesting and attractive search area. Malleefowl are frequently seen there and indeed recent tracks of the birds were seen at three locations during the search.

The work will continue in 1994. Support for the Malleefowl search was provided by the Principal and staff of the Buntine Primary School. Thanks to them and to all those who have worked hard to contribute to the Malleefowl Project.

R. Smith



