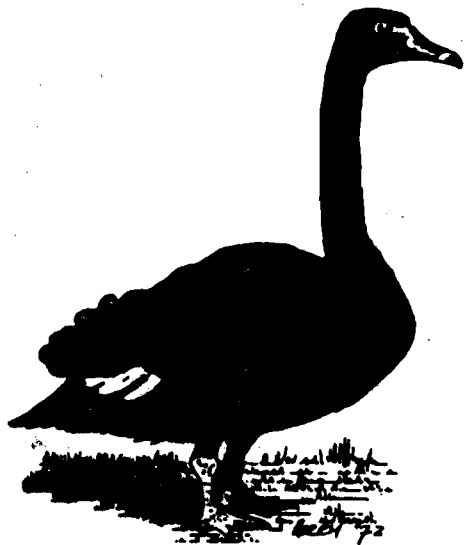


W. Phillipson



## Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

No 73 March 1995

### An Invasion of Black Honeyeaters

It is occasionally remarked that if you watch birds at one spot for long enough, you will get to see just about everything there is to see. While exaggerated for effect, there are times when this statement might seem to be not so far from the truth. Such a time occurred recently for me at Cooljarloo, 15 km north of Cataby on the Brand Highway, a place where I have recorded birds regularly since 1986 for Tiwest Joint Venture, who mine mineral sands in the area. From 29 November to 4 December 1994, in the typical Banksia low woodland of the northern sandplains, amongst the Brown, Tawny-crowned, White-cheeked and Singing Honeyeaters, I came across not one but dozens of Black Honeyeaters.



The Black Honeyeater is an arid-zone species which I had previously only seen in spinifex grasslands of the Great Sandy Desert. They are sometimes recorded in the south-west region in small numbers, but this was something else entirely. From never seen at the site (and not expected) they jumped to the second most abundant species in my Australian Bird Count Surveys, with an average density of 0.8/ha across a total search area of 36 ha. Only the ubiquitous Brown Honeyeater, at 2.5/ha, was more abundant.

The Black Honeyeaters were in loose flocks of 2-6 birds and there appeared to be slightly more males than females, although this was probably because the males are so distinctive. They were seen at all spots visited over an area of several square kilometres, which suggests that there were hundreds,

if not thousands, in the area. So, if you thought you saw Black Honeyeaters in the South-West recently, look again; you probably did! It would be nice to know the extent of this invasion.

As a footnote, another new species for the site, the Masked Woodswallow, was also present in large numbers that week. Not as unexpected as the Black Honeyeater, its presence suggests that a general south-western movement of arid-zone birds may be taking place in response to low rainfall in many inland areas of Australia.

Mike Bamford

#### Editors' Note

As Mike Bamford suggests in his article above, his sightings at Cooljarloo are apparently part of a much wider invasion of south-west Western Australia by Black Honeyeaters. The Observations column of the last issue of Bird Notes included a record of three birds seen at Dryandra Forest on 1 October 1994 by Chris Wilder, and others were seen at Dryandra later the same month. John and Judy Blyth observed Black Honeyeaters at Wongan Hills Nature Reserve on 10 and 11 September 1994, and around Mingenew on 24 and 25 of the same month.

On 7 November, Simon Nevill, Tony Kirkby and others found three pairs of Black Honeyeaters and two nests at Dryandra. One nest contained three eggs while the other was not examined, to reduce possible disturbance to the birds. Breeding of Black Honeyeaters this far south-west is extremely unusual.

The two observations at Wongan Hills were of single males in two places in mallee/heath vegetation about one km apart. Around Mingenew, Black Honeyeaters were seen in three widely separated stands of remnant shrub/heath along road reserves. In each of these cases there was at least one male and one female bird present, and the largest group was of four birds. Several groups of Crimson Chats were also present in roadside vegetation around Mingenew on the same weekend, supporting Mike's suggestion of a general movement of inland birds away from drought-affected areas.

## Thank You to Our Former Editor

This being the first edition of WABN in 1995 and the first produced under its new editors, it is fitting to pay tribute to Bruce Buchanan, the former editor. For the past ten years, Bruce edited Bird Notes, raising it to professional standards of scientific accuracy but avoiding its becoming a heavy academic journal. There was enough human interest, including the regular birding quiz, to catch the eye of even the less experienced. It was a pleasure to see good grammar and spelling, accurate typing, and a logical layout of material. These were high standards indeed, and something to be treasured. To produce work of this splendid nature required hours of voluntary labour once a quarter, regardless of other commitments in life. Too often, there was not enough material from members to fill up the pages, and it was left to Bruce to plug the gap with an absorbing article of his own. Who can forget the forthright views in his recent front-page article *The Tyranny of Taxonomy?* It must have raised quite a few blood-pressure. His prolonged labour in producing an Index of former articles in WABN was a prodigious effort, for which he must take the utmost credit.

As is sometimes the case, it is not until a competent person leaves his job that one realises just how competent he was and what a hard act it will be to take his place. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Bruce and his wife, Ann, for their efforts over the years in editing WABN. We look forward to their contribution in the form of more stimulating articles from Bruce, if he can spare the time from his numerous and long-standing surveys of birds in WA's wetlands.

To the new editors of WABN, we wish every success in their exciting venture.

Brian Wilson (Chairman)

## Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

Names and order follow Christidis, L. and Boles, W. (1995) *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. RAOU Monograph 2. (See *Names for Australian Birds* on page 4 herein).

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

**Malleefowl** - 1, 27/11/94, 10-15 km N of Wubin (Dalwallinu) - SN and party

**Cape Barren Goose** - 14, 30/12/94, Cull Is, S of Esperance (Esperance) - MC

**Freckled Duck** - 5, 19/11/94, corner Forrest and Liddelow Roads, Banjup (Cockburn) - TK \* 26, 29/1/95, Football Lake (Gingin) - BB

**Chestnut Teal** - 900, 25/12/94, Lake Warden (Esperance) (high count, especially for the Esperance area) - MC \* 1 male, 12/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - DJ, TK

**Pink-eared Duck** - 2380, 4/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, GMo, JC

**White-headed Petrel** - 1, 11/94, Cheyne Beach (Albany) - GMo

**White-faced Storm-Petrel** - 1, 11/12/94, 5 km north-east of Rottneest Island - GL

**Yellow-nosed Albatross** - 1, 15/1/95, 1 km S of Strickland Bay, Rottneest Island - GMo

**White-necked Heron** - 17, 10/11/94, Higgins Swamp, Nannup (Nannup) - BKM \* ca. 60, 3/12/94, Forrestdale Lake (Armada-Kelmscott) - KL

**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** - 80, 26/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS

**Letter-winged Kite** - 2, 28/11/94, Heirisson Prong (Shark Bay) - PB

**Peregrine Falcon** - nesting with 3 young, 12/11/94, Ellendale Pool (Greenough) - JD, JH

**Buff-banded Rail** - 1, 6/12/94, Eatha Spring, SE of Green Head (Dandaragan) - AB

**Australian Spotted Crake** - 4, 6/12/94, Eatha Spring, SE of Green Head (Dandaragan) - AB

**Eurasian Coot** - 10000, 7/1/95, - MC, GMo, JP \* 4500, 15/1/95 - AB \* 3000+, 26/1/95, - IS \* 190, 4/2/95, - MC, JC, GMo - all at Lake McLarty (Murray)

**Bar-tailed Godwit** - 90, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Whimbrel** - 15, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Marsh Sandpiper** - 34, 26/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS

**Wood Sandpiper** - 40+, 28/12/94, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS

**Long-toed Stint** - 20 (including one in apparently full breeding plumage), 15/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, GM, AB

**Pectoral Sandpiper** - 1, 29/12/94, on small lake 4 km N of Quagi Beach, 70 km W of Esperance (Esperance) - MC

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** - 1, 7/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, GMo, JP

**Ruff** - 2, 28/12/94, 7/1/95 and 15/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - IS, MC, TK, and others \* 3, 4/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, JC, GMo

**Black-winged Stilt** - 3670+, 3/1/95, Forrestdale Lake (Armada-Kelmscott) - DJ, TK (very high count for the south-west)

**Pacific Golden Plover** - 13, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS \* 4, 15/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, GM, AB

**Grey Plover** - 82, 26/12/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Little Ringed Plover** - 1, 4/2/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC, JC, GMo (second record for McLarty; there are less than 10 records from the south-west)

**Greater Sand Plover** - 3, 27/11/94, Creery wetlands, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

**Hooded Plover** - 1, 6/12/94, on beach just south of Leeman (Carnamah) - AB \* 1, 17/12/94, mouth of the Greenough River - KC

**Arctic Jaeger** - 1, 30/12/94, 1 km N of Cull Island, S of Esperance (Esperance) - MC \* 3, 13/1/95, 8 km NE of Rottneest - GL \* 5, 13/1/95, Woodman Point (Cockburn) - BB, MC

**Common Tern** - 12, 8/1/95, Mandurah boat harbour (Murray) - MC, GMo, JP

**Common Noddy** - 20, 18/1/95, Lancelin Island (Gingin) - DB

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** - 8, 12/1/95, Lake McLarty (Murray) - TK, DJ

**Rainbow Lorikeet** - 2, 3/1/95, Carousel shopping centre, Cannington (Canning) - MS  
**Budgerigar** - 15, 23/11/94, 20 km N of Lake King (Lake Grace) - SN and party  
**Orange Chat** - 1, 27/11/94, 2 km due E of Morawa (Morawa) - SN and party  
**White-breasted Robin** - 1, 15/1/95, Yanchep National Park (Wanneroo) - PdR  
**Brown Songlark** - 1 female, 24/12/94, on oval at Dianella (Stirling) - HvW

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

**Letter-winged Kite** - 5-9/10/94, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - John Dell (also see above and WABN 71 and 72 for other recent reports in WA).  
**Square-tailed Kite** - 1, 17/10/94, Nerren Nerren Station (Shark Bay) - PF  
**Black-breasted Buzzard** - nest with two young, 26/9/94, Wongawol Station (Wiluna) - SN  
**Australian Bustard** - 19 in flight, 3/10/94, 50 km N of Cocklebiddy (Dundas) - SN  
**Oriental Plover** - 12, 3/10/94, 18 km N of Cocklebiddy (Dundas) - SN  
**Striated Grasswren** - 3, 22/8/94, 38 km due east of Mungili Claypan, Gunbarrel Hwy (Wiluna) - SN \* 2, 28/9/94, 25 km due E of Cosmo Newbery (Laverton) - SN  
**Slaty-backed Thornbill** - 12, 24/9/94, Nallan Station (Cue) - SN  
**Grey-crowned Babbler** - 6, 24/9/94, Nallan Station (Cue) - SN  
**Banded Whiteface** - 4, 21/8/94, 52 km N of Alexander Spring, Hunt Exploration Track (Wiluna) - SN  
**Rufous Treecreeper** - 4, 19/8/94, 18 km N of Neale Junction (Laverton) - SN  
**Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush** - 1, 21/8/94, 2 km N of Alexander Spring, Hunt Exploration Track (Wiluna) - SN

## KIMBERLEY

**King Quail** - 2+, 7/1/95, heard, then flushed, from damp grass in an irrigated Lukina crop, Kingston rest station, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (few if any previous records for the East Kimberley)  
**Magpie Goose** - 10000+, 4/1/95, Kununurra sewage ponds (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 5000+, 4/1/95, Kimberley Research Station, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Australian Shelduck** - 3, 25/11/94, 4 on 10/12/94 and 9 on 11/12/94, Broome sewage ponds (Broome) - PCo, GS, MR  
**Garganey** - 4, 13/1/95, Derby sewage ponds (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 1, 17/1/95, sewage ponds at Argyle village (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO  
**Streaked Shearwater** - 1, 24/12/94, found sick and dying on Cable Beach (Broome) - GS (specimen now in WA Museum)  
**Great-billed Heron** - 1, 9/94, Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - MCo  
**Nankeen Night Heron** - 20, 15-16/12/94, Broome crocodile farm (Broome) - BBO  
**Little Bittern** - 1, 6/1/95, Kona Caravan Park, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Black Bittern** - 1, 5/1/95, Cheese Tin Creek, ca. 40 km S of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**White-bellied Sea-Eagle** - 10 (including 7 immature), 8/1/95, Lake Argyle and Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO  
**Eurasian Coot** - 2000+ in one flock, 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Gallinago sp(p)** - 100+ birds flushed (minimum 35 individuals), 5/1/95, 5 km along road to Palm Springs, SE of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB - 30+ of these appeared to be **Swinhoe's Snipe**, but 4+ were apparently smaller, with shorter bill, different call and usually higher and more twisting flight, and were possibly **Pin-tailed Snipe**  
**Bar-tailed Godwit** - 15,000, 19/12/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO  
**Eastern Curlew** - 260 in one flock, 19/11/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO  
**Great Knot** - 10,000, 19/12/94, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO  
**Long-toed Stint** - 4+, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 30+, 13/1/95, marsh near Derby sewage ponds (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Red-necked Phalarope** - 2, 19-20/12/94, Broome sewage ponds (Broome) - GS, BBO  
**Painted Snipe** - 2 females, 5/1/95, Parry Lagoons, SE of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Comb-crested Jacana** - 8 (including 3 immature), 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Pacific Golden Plover** - 7, 4/1/95, Kununurra sewage ponds (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 10, 4/1/95, Kimberley Research Station, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 3, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (previously only few records from East Kimberley)  
**Little Ringed Plover** - 1, 13/1/95, marsh near Derby sewage ponds (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Oriental Plover** - 20, 8/1/95, Ord River at south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 3, 13/1/95, near Willare Bridge, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Oriental Pratincole** - 400+, 8/1/95, Ord River at south end of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Whiskered Tern** - 1000+, 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**White-winged Black Tern** - 10+, 8/1/95, south end of Lake Argyle near Ord River (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Common Noddy** - 48, 18/12/94, at Broome port (Broome) - GS  
**Oriental Cuckoo** - 2 or 3, 13/1/95, Derby sewage ponds, (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Brush Cuckoo** - 4, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (unusual this far south in the East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB  
**Channel-billed Cuckoo** - 1, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (unusual this far south in the East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Grass Owl** - 1, 8/1/95, salt marsh near Broome (Broome) - PCo

**Azure Kingfisher** - 1, 7/1/95, Kingston rest station, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Collared Kingfisher** - 1, 5/1/95, Wyndham port (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 1, 13/1/95, Derby port (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Purple-crowned Fairy-wren** - 8+, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (in a thicket of the introduced Jerusalem Thorn (?*Parkinsonia* sp.) covered by introduced passionfruit vines(*Passiflora foetida*))

**White-throated Gerygone** - 1, 16/10/94, Flying Fox Creek, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (at southern limit of range in this area)

**Silver-crowned Friarbird** - 50+, 16/10/94, Flying Fox Creek, near Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (at southern limit of range in this area)

**Bar-breasted Honeyeater** - 1, 17/1/95, near Argyle Diamond Mine village (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (unusual this far south)

**Black Honeyeater** - 10, 17/11 to 3/12/94, woodland near Broome (Broome) - BBO

**Pied Honeyeater** - 65, 24/11 to 3/12/94, woodland near Broome (Broome) - BBO

**Yellow Chat** - 1+, 9/94, Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - MCa \* 15+, 8/1/95, along Ord River S of Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Lemon-bellied (Kimberley) Flycatcher** - 1, 7/1/95, Barred Creek, north of Broome (Broome) - PCo \* adult feeding immature, 13/1/95, Derby port (Derby-West Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Varied Sittella** - 20, 28/11/94, Broome (Broome) - BK per BBO

**Sandstone Shrike-thrush** - 1, 23/1/95, in mine pit at Argyle Diamond Mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

**Northern Fantail** - 1, 7/1/95, Barred Creek, north of Broome (Broome) - PCo (SW limit of range)

**Yellow Wagtail** - 1, 5/1/95, Parry Lagoons, SE of Wyndham (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 12, 6/1/95, Kununurra golf course (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Yellow-rumped Mannikin** - 50+ (biggest flock 30+), 4/1/95, Weaber Plains irrigation area near Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB \* 1, 7/1/95, Kingston rest station, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

**Barn Swallow** - 50+, 11/1/95, Roebuck Plains, near Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) - FO, FS, JBe, KB

possible **Oriental (Great) Reed-Warbler** - 3+, 4/1/95, Lily Creek Lagoon, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO, FS, JBe, KB (apparently different call from Clamorous, and fine streaks on breast, pink mouth (but note: Clamorous can also have pink mouth))

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Editor's note: Christmas Island and Cocos-Keeling Islands are Australian territories in the Indian Ocean and species recorded on these islands are included in the latest RAOU checklist. We therefore welcome interesting sightings from these two territories.

**Pied Heron** - 1, 1/12/94, at the Casino Resort - KC (apparently the first record for Christmas Island)

**White-breasted Waterhen** - 2, 2/12/94, near Drumsite - KC

**Eastern Curlew** - 1, 7/12/94, alongside the airstrip - KC (apparently the first record for Christmas Island)

## ERRATA

**Letter-winged Kite** - 1, 10/94, 50 km N of Kalbarri (Northampton) - AB (observer omitted in WABN 72)

## OBSERVERS

AB = Allan Burbidge	JF = Jon Fallaw
BB = Bruce Buchanan	JH = James Hall
BBO = Broome Bird Observatory	JP = Jane Prince
BK = Brian Kane	KB = Ken Baker
BKM = Bernie Masters	KC = Kevin Coate
DB = Di Beckingham	KL = Kim-Chye Lim
DJ = David James	MBa = Mike Bamford
FO = Frank O'Connor	MC = Michael Craig
FS = Fred Smith	MCa = Mike Carter
GL = Graeme Little	MR = Mavis Russell
GM = George Miller	MS = Marcus Singor
GMo = Glenn Moore	PB = Philip Boglio
GS = George Swann	PCo = Peter Collins
HvW = Hank van Wees	PdR = Perry de Rebeira
IS = Ian Standring	PF = Phil Fuller
JBe = Jim Beruldsen	RM = Robert Mitchell
JC = Jean Craig	SN = Simon Nevill
JD = Jill Denning	TK = Tony Kirkby

## ALBINO BIRDS SEEN RECENTLY:

**Silver Gull** - 1, 10/12/94, Penguin Island (Rockingham) - Geoff Burrow (This bird had a dark eye, pink bill and feet, with uniform white plumage).

**Crested Pigeon** - 1, 20/10/94, 70 km SW of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - Kevin Coate

**Welcome Swallow** - 4 or 5, 20/12/94, shed at BHP, Kwinana (Cockburn) - Colin St Jack

## NAMES FOR AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

The RAOU has recently published a revised list of Australian birds (Christidis, L. and Boles, W. E. 1995 *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. Monograph 2, RAOU, Melbourne). This is now the "official" list to be used in RAOU publications.

There are two significant kinds of changes in this list. The first is to scientific names and the order of species, and the second is to English names. No doubt some people will be dismayed to hear that there are any changes, but there are good reasons for both kinds of changes, and there are some changes that almost everyone will welcome.

### English Names

It is 16 years since the publication of the RAOU's *Recommended English names for Australian birds* (Emu 77 Supplement, 245-313). These names were also used in the RAOU Atlas of Australian Birds. Despite that length of time and the great amount of work done on Australian birds during

that period, relatively few changes in English names are proposed in the current list. They fall into three categories, which are listed below with examples using Western Australian species. In each case the 'new' name is listed first, with the 'old' name in brackets.

1) *Changes to names of introduced or wide ranging species to conform with current international usage:*

Common Greenshank (Greenshank), Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian Plover), Greater Sand Plover (Large Sand Plover), White-winged Black Tern (White-winged Tern), Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon).

2) *Changes as a result of increased understanding of taxonomic status:*

Black-faced Cormorant (Black-faced Shag), Australian White Ibis (Sacred Ibis), Swamp Harrier (Marsh Harrier), Pacific Golden Plover and American Golden Plover (Lesser Golden Plover), Pied Imperial Pigeon (Torresian Imperial Pigeon), Western Corella (in addition to Long-billed Corella of south-eastern Australia), Short-billed Black-Cockatoo and Long-billed Black-Cockatoo (White-tailed Black-Cockatoo), Australian Ringneck (includes Mallee Ringneck, Port Lincoln Ringneck and Twenty-eight Parrot), Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush (separate from Cinnamon Quail-thrush), Cinnamon Quail-thrush (includes Nullarbor Quail-thrush), Mangrove Grey Fantail (in addition to Grey Fantail), Western Bowerbird (in addition to Spotted Bowerbird), Red-browed Finch (Red-browed Firetail), Painted Finch (Painted Firetail).

3) *Changes to names that were thought to be unpopular and have been changed after survey of birdwatchers:*

Australian Wood Duck (Maned Duck), White-necked Heron (Pacific Heron), Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous Night Heron), Nankeen Kestrel (Australian Kestrel), Australian Spotted Crake (Australian Crake), Bush Stone-curlew (Bush Thick-knee), Beach Stone-curlew (Beach Thick-knee), Black-fronted Dotterel (Black-fronted Plover), Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (Pink Cockatoo), Princess Parrot (Alexandra's Parrot), Shy Heathwren (Shy Hylacola), Rufous Fieldwren (Rufous Calamanthus), Magpie-lark (Australian Magpie-lark).

Experienced birdwatchers will have noticed that a number of these are changes back to 'traditional' usage. This is despite leading to one or two inconsistencies, such as Australian Wood Duck which is not related to Wood Ducks elsewhere in the world, and is a more cumbersome name than Maned Duck. However, overall, the changes are likely to result in a list which is stable for many years to come.

**Taxonomy**

From the point of view of the ordinary birdwatcher, there are few changes in scientific names and these will be of little practical consequence to most people. What is more significant and interesting is the order in which the families and species have been placed. The current checklists were published in 1975, and there has been an enormous increase in our understanding of the relationships of Australian birds in the intervening 20 years. In 1975, the prevailing view was that most Australian songbirds were simply curious relatives of northern hemisphere groups of birds such as robins and warblers. Today, it is believed that many major groups of

Australian birds (such as honeyeaters) actually evolved on the southern super-continent Gondwanaland, and are not closely related to any northern hemisphere groups. Indeed, it is now widely accepted that the original ancestor of the worldwide crows and ravens, and the northern hemisphere magpies and jays and their relatives, originally evolved on the southern continents, not, as had previously been assumed, in the northern hemisphere. Studies on these southern-evolved groups has helped to clarify a number of major general questions about the origins of the world's bird fauna.

This new knowledge is incorporated into the new list, with the longer-established Australian groups close to each other at the beginning of the list, more recent arrivals such as the crows which belong to originally southern-evolved groups placed next, and the northern-evolved groups (such as swallows and martins, songlarks and finches) being placed at the end of the list. This highlights, for scientist and 'ordinary birdwatcher' alike, the unique and important nature of Australian birds. Groups such as pardalotes, thornbills, fairywrens and honeyeaters, which are common birds to us, are found only in Australia, New Guinea and New Zealand. They are of international importance and interest and not simply the quaint relatives of the major northern hemisphere groups.

**Allan Burbidge**

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**Notes for Contributors**

The Editors request contributors to note:

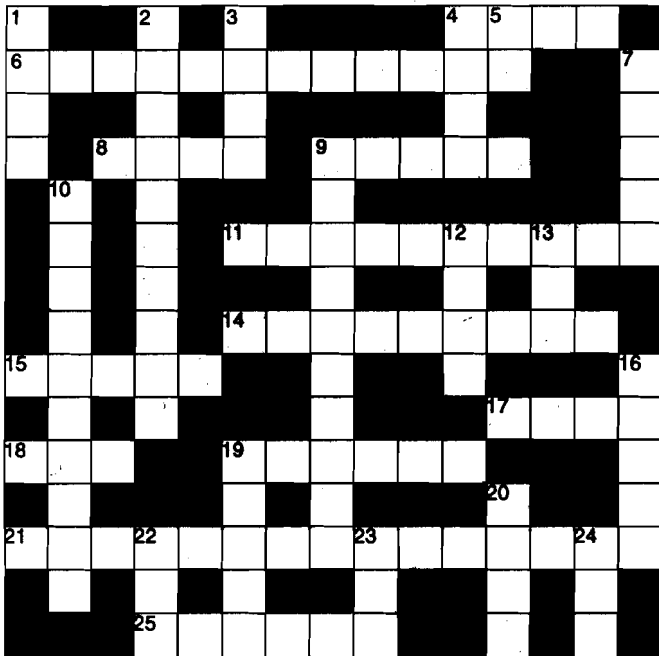
- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**
- WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

**Deadline for the June Issue**  
**1 May 1995**  
**at Perry House**

## New Challenge

Since Big Bird has retired, I thought it might be an appropriate time to challenge readers with a crossword instead of a quiz. Hopefully the longtime stalwarts will still need to think a little, but beginners to the birding scene may also learn something in the process of tackling the crossword. The answer is given on the last page. Have fun!

**Pam Agar**



### ACROSS

- 4 Possibly an alternative nest-site for a kestrel on the Nullabor.
- 6 The biological order which includes owls.
- 8 One duck is named from its bill which is this colour.
- 9 Not a gold-digger, but likely to be found in the same area.
- 11 Optical aids for birdwatchers.
- 14 Young bird, ready to fly.
- 15 Food eaten by finches and doves.
- 17 Aboriginal name for Malleefowl in southwestern W.A.
- 18 Most birds will do this for long periods during the breeding season.
- 19 Site of WA's second bird observatory.
- 21 Eastern States parrot, becoming very common in the Perth metropolitan area (2 words).
- 25 If you were a Rainbow Bee-eater you might appreciate help with the construction of one.

### DOWN

- 1 You may need a boat to visit one if you are looking for Little Penguin nests.
- 2 Together with binoculars, essential for the beginner (2 words).
- 3 Flies well in the wind, even without human control.
- 4 Ridge above the bill of a bird, containing nostrils.
- 5 As wise ... an owl.

6

- 7 A Calamanthus often does this from an exposed perch.
- 9 A species under survey at Eyre Bird Observatory.
- 10 Small parrot seen in large flocks in the north of WA.
- 12 This sort of weather may cause a bird to fluff up its feathers for warmth.
- 13 Feather yet to grow through the surface of the skin.
- 16 Doesn't necessarily live up to its speedy name.
- 19 A small honeyeater, common in the Perth metropolitan area.
- 20 Predatory sea-bird.
- 22 This might be a tasty snack for a parrot.
- 23 Nocturnal bird of prey.
- 24 The bird representative on the Australian coat of arms.

## Members' Contributions

### REPORT ON FARMING PROPERTIES VISITED IN THE SOUTH-WEST

Whilst Margery Clegg and I were responsible for arranging the walks and campouts for the RAOU we were approached by the Land Management Society and asked if the RAOU would be prepared to conduct surveys on some of their members' farms to ascertain bird species and densities and to advise on improvements.

We were then invited to their Annual General Meeting at Dryandra on 17/18 October 1992. Upon our arrival we met, amongst others, our friend Leon Silvester (Wildlife Officer for the Narrogin district) who had driven over to give an evening lecture and take bird walks on the Sunday. Leon persuaded us to take the walks for him as he had been away for a week and wished to return home. This we did, having surveyed the surrounding area to see what species were present and if possible to find some nests.

We took two walks on the Sunday, one in the morning and the second after lunch. On both occasions we found our audience to consist of country people and landowners, most of whom had spent most of their lives on the land but had paid little attention to bird life.

The results we feel have been well worth the effort as we have been asked to visit six properties, met some delightful people, and have been able to hold two very successful campouts for the RAOU. In addition, these activities were reported in the Land Management Society's magazine, with an invitation to other landowners to seek assistance from the RAOU to compile a bird list for their properties.

Set out below is a list of the farms visited, together with some information about each of them.

#### 25-28 September 1992: Wigboro Farms, Ongerup (Sandy and Kingsley Vaux)

This holding was introduced to us by Rodney Vervest, but is included in the report as it is similar to the rest of the properties visited.

We found that Kingsley is very interested in the preservation of his district and has set aside, with his brother, an area of thick bush known to contain more than one active Malleefowl mound. This area has been fenced against fox intrusion and has been baited.

There is also an area of swamp-cum-lake on the edge of his property which the owner hopes will be made into a

recognised CALM reserve. We were asked to check this site in particular as he hoped we would find evidence of rare or unusual bird life. Regrettably, we failed to locate the area until the last morning of our visit and only two people were able to walk right round the freshwater lake.

We think that the property should be visited on a 3-4 year basis and is an excellent area for an RAOU campout.

**8-10 January 1993: Tamaru Poll Stud Farm (John and Leslie Doncon, RMB 8002, Kalgan River, via Albany 6330)**

This property, of 1075 hectares, is not suitable for either an RAOU campout or as a place that the local Albany Group could take a walk. Each paddock and area of bush is surrounded by a 4-strand electric fence carrying 250 volts. This gave us considerable trouble getting into the areas we wished to survey.

**Birralee Farm near Dumbleyung (Terri and Dale Lloyd, 125 Gate Road, Dumbleyung)**

This was a leased property which we first visited for two days on 9-11 February 1993. Whilst there we realised that it would be very suitable for an RAOU campout. It consisted of approximately 1900 hectares with four large areas of bush, some of which had been cleared 20 years or so previously. These areas were regrowing and provided good cover for a variety of birds.

An RAOU campout was held for the long Easter weekend 8-13 April 1993. Seventy species of birds were found, including Spotted Nightjar, Owllet Nightjar, Shy Heathwren, Redthroat, Fieldwren and Black Honeyeater.

Unfortunately, the lease has lapsed and we understand that the owners have sold the land.

**Jindalee Farm, Dumbleyung (Terri and Dale Lloyd)**

The Lloyds purchased this property in 1993 to replace their leased land. It is an area of 1700 acres. We were asked to look at two relatively small areas of bush, both of which had in the past been grazed by sheep. They hoped to gain a grant to help fence one of the areas. When we walked there in March 1994 we were not very impressed with either area, but of the two the area nearest the shearing shed seemed to provide the best cover.

We looked at the area again on 6-7 October 1994, and confirmed our original findings. The area consists of breakaway country, some very large boulders, areas of dense scrub which are very difficult to penetrate, small patches of mallee and an area of heath in which we found evidence of Rainbow Bee-eaters' nesting holes. Whilst there we found a nest of Western Yellow Robins and saw a second pair with immature young.

**16-17 November 1993: Hartley Reserve, Corrigin (Laurie Pitman)**

The northern boundary consisted largely of sparse mallee with areas of scattered open timber and virtually no understorey, and consequently there was very little bird life. We did find a few Brown and White-eared Honeyeaters and some Red Wattlebirds. Bronzewing Pigeons and Australian Ringnecks (Port Lincoln Parrots) were also there but we felt that they were using the bush as a roosting area and feeding in the adjacent paddocks. This density of bird species could alter when the eucalypts are flowering, but we feel that only nectar and manna feeders would be found.

On the morning of the second day, we walked through the thick low scrub growing adjacent to the road and found a number of species. We continued along the southern track, passing through belts of different habitats caused by changes of soil and small breakaways. Both of these areas provide excellent cover and a source of food for bird life. We noted also that the occasional patch of low eucalypts which were in flower had attracted honeyeaters such as the Brown-headed. The latter species is nomadic and follows the flowering of eucalypts. In this instance we thought some nesting had taken place in the reserve as the feeding group consisted of both adult, young and immature birds.

Throughout these two areas of denser scrub we found that the commonest birds were Southern Scrub-robins and White-browed Babblers. Both of these species tend to feed on or near ground level on beetles and other small invertebrates and on small seeds which they find in the litter. We thought that the relatively small area of 300 hectares supported an unusually large population of Southern Scrub-robins, estimated at 10, possibly 12 pairs. White-browed Babblers were also numerous and we thought that four or five groups of up to 12 individuals were present. We saw a total of 12 species, and the presence of Shy Heathwren and Southern Scrub-robin is of special interest for a remnant in the Wheatbelt.

The area could be visited during spring by a small group of about 6-8 individuals and a thorough search made of the whole area. We do not think that the area is suitable for a larger group owing to the difficulty of access for 2WD vehicles.

**4-5 October 1993: Red Hill Farm, Nyabing (Michael and Win Patterson)**

We had intended to visit this farm the previous March, but the extreme heat prevented our inspection, to the relief of the owners who wanted to visit Albany!

We spent two days after the Woodanilling campout looking at two areas of woodland, one of 75 acres and the second 150 acres.

The first consisted of an area of standing old wandoo with many hollows suitable for nesting parrots, etc., also areas of casuarina and open pavements of granite. The areas have been grazed and there is little or no understorey. We noted an old Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest. The area is small and would not offer much cover for permanent bushbirds.

Next morning we spent four hours looking at the 150-acre block which was much more interesting both for the resident birds and the plant life. Several different habitats presented themselves: breakaways clad in various types of eucalypts, mallee, old wandoos and an open park-like area, stands of tea-trees and other bush. We found evidence of several species nesting in the area such as Red-capped Robins and honeyeaters. There are two, or possibly three, nests of Wedge-tailed Eagles, one of which appears to have been or is being used. However, we saw no sign of the eagles.

The Pattersons own another block of some 1500 acres which we expect to visit in the near future after which a full report will be sent to the owners.

**Bryan Barrett**

**NOTEBOOK JOTTINGS**

Following our appeal to members for articles for WABN, Bryan Barrett has offered to write a series of snippets from his notebooks. The first of these appears below with some

background biography, and concludes by posing an interesting question about robins and fire.

#### Editors

As an introduction, allow me to explain that I commenced serious birding in Australia in 1983, having visited WA in 1977 and 1980. Since 1983 I have kept extensive notes for every excursion. I make a practice of noting the time of arrival on site, the weather, my companions, what was done during the visit, any unusual behaviour on the part of the species seen, and indeed their state of development. Nests are recorded, their position, the material from which they are constructed, number of eggs/young, etc. Up to 1986/87 presence only was recorded. However, it then occurred to me that this practice was of little significance to the area being investigated so quantity was added to the records. Each loose-leaf notebook is indexed both for the places visited and the species seen on each day.

(I am old-fashioned; doubtless the younger generation does all that on one of those new-fangled machines. However, I hope we all arrive at the same conclusions.)

In 1983 I had neither seen nor heard much more than a kookaburra and Australian Magpies, except for one glorious day in 1977 when Ann and Bob Goodale showed me Scarlet Robins, a Sacred Kingfisher and an Australian Kestrel on a nest in a blackboy. Perhaps there were others, but regrettably no record was kept. Then, on a campout, I met Brice Wells (later to become a warden at both the Eyre and Broome Bird Observatories) and have never looked back. So, my recommendation is that inexperienced members should attach themselves to people with more extensive knowledge than themselves who usually take great pleasure in introducing our bird life to others.

As a result of my note-taking and observations over the years I find there are many questions for which I would like to find answers. Here is my first quandary which has come from observing an area affected by bushfires.

It was in December 1983 that Brice introduced me to Pipididdy, an area adjacent to Yanchep Park, which he had been visiting for three years. The heath had been burnt in 1982/83 and regrowth was apparent. As we walked we found two new species - a pair of Hooded and a pair of Red-capped Robins. When Brice left to go up north Margery, Norma and I continued to visit the area and did so on an average of nine times a year until the next time the area was burnt in January 1991. During this time we found no evidence of either species. Walking the badly burnt heath during May 1991 we again noted both robins close to the location in which they had been in December 1983. However, they had disappeared again by June of the same year and have not been seen there since.

The question is: where had they come from and where did they go? If any other members have also noted this behaviour of robins coming into areas after fires, I would be grateful if they could contact me.

Bryan Barrett

#### PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR OF BLACK-COCKATOOS

While on a wildlife survey in the Ravensthorpe area during November-December 1994, I observed what I believe to be unknown behaviour of the Carnaby's Black Cockatoo (now officially Short-billed Black-Cockatoo).

Each night between 6 and 7.30 pm the arrival of the family

(male, female and one young) would be announced by the young bird squawking as they approached the same tree every night.

After 10-20 minutes the female would feed the young bird which would then work its way to a hollow. On some occasions the female would then approach the hollow and spend up to five minutes with the young bird.

Just before dark the female would fly off, presumably to the canopy for the night, as seen on one occasion.

While all this happened the male was perched within five metres of the hollow. The male would stay long after the female had departed and well after dark.

The young one could be heard squawking (not a begging sound) until half an hour to one hour after dark.

The next morning at 4.15 am the dawn would be accompanied by a cacophony as they all greeted each other. They would all then fly off and not return until that evening.

This behaviour was seen every night that I camped in that area between 18 November to 13 December (some 11 nights).

Geoff Burrow

#### FOOD OF HOBBY

Within 60 metres of the cockatoo tree referred to in the previous item, a pair of Hobbys was raising two nestlings. Food brought to this nest included a Yellow-rumped Thornbill, a New Holland Honeyeater and a mammal of mouse or honey possum size.

Of interest in the same area, a rare and endangered carpet python was observed.

Geoff Burrow

#### FRANKLIN'S GULL AT ESPERANCE

While walking on the old tanker jetty at Esperance, at about 5.20 pm on 30/12/94, we saw a beautifully marked black headed gull with a small flock of Silver Gulls near local fishermen. There was a warm easterly wind blowing. We had good views of the gull, flying and sitting on the water, through 8x40 and 7x35 binoculars. At times it was less than 10 m away, in excellent light. The gull was slightly smaller than the nearby Silver Gulls, and had a distinct, clearly demarcated black hood, a red bill and white eye ring. The upper wing and back/mantle were grey (slightly darker than the Silver Gulls), with a clearly defined white trailing wing stripe, and black wing tips separated from the remainder of the upperwing by a white patch. The remainder of the upperparts (between hood and back, rump and tail) were white. The tail was short and square. The underparts, with the exception of the dark wing tips, were white. The legs were red. We watched the bird for 10-15 minutes. A search the next morning failed to locate it. A check of several reference books including *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World* by G. Tuck and H. Heinzel showed it to be a Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) in full breeding plumage.

John and Hillary Brooke

Editors' note: This bird was seen also by Pam Burgess on the same day, and may have been the same bird seen by other members in late January. There are very few records of this species from Western Australia, and this is probably the first confirmed record from the south coast. Gulls with black heads can be difficult to identify, and not all the possible vagrants





