

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of Birds Australia - WA Group
(a division of Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

No 82 June 1997

REDSHANK REVELRY

On Friday 25 April 1997, members of "Waterbird Identification for Absolute Beginners" (a four-week course I gave for residents of Busselton) were treated to a very special bird — a Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* — feeding on top of partially submerged islets (built by tube worms of the family Serpulidae) in the Vasse Estuary opposite Estuary View Drive, Wonnerup.

While I was guiding participants through the finer points of darters, cormorants and ducks, one of the group, Mrs Edna Moore, who lives opposite, was asking me, "What is that little grey bird over there?" I reassured Edna that we would "get to that later" assuming she was referring to one of several Greenshanks in the vicinity. When I finally turned to the 'little grey bird' (appreciably smaller than the nearby Greenshanks) and saw brightly coloured legs, my immediate thought was "Terek" and this would have been rewarding enough. But they weren't yellow-orange legs they were orange-red! And so was the base of the bill, which was straight not upturned; also, the bird was larger than a Terek Sandpiper and the dimensions were all wrong! A Redshank!

This was the first Common Redshank I had seen since the Shetlands in 1978 and was enormously exciting to find in this part of the world. Redshanks breed in northern Eurasia, mainly between 40° and 60° latitude. In the East Asian-Australasian

'hemisphere' they normally migrate as far south as Indonesia, with a few vagrants to the north-west coast of Australia. There is only one previous record of a Common Redshank south of Carnarvon (in Western Australia) and that was a single bird seen at Creery Island (Peel Inlet) by John Blyth, Roger Jaensch and others on 10 July 1985 (Jaensch & Blyth 1988).

Coincidentally John Blyth was coming down to Busselton the following day to join an RAOU Anzac weekend outing in the Busselton area. On the Sunday morning at 8:30 am, 15 of us descended with binoculars, telescopes and tripods on Estuary View Drive and searched again. Yes, it was still there and all had reasonable, though not close, views of it searching energetically for food on the 1-3 m diameter islands and making short flights from one to the next.

At the time of writing (30 April), I have made two further visits (on 28th and 29th) and saw the bird again on the second occasion. On every occasion the bird has been at least 90 m (measured off aerial photograph) from us and it has not been possible to confidently describe its plumage other than to say it is grey/brown above with dark streaking on the otherwise pale neck, breast and flanks. The diagnostic broad white trailing edge to the wing and the white back and rump are very conspicuous in flight (Spotted Redshanks lack the white trailing edge to the wing, and have a longer, slightly



Common Redshank at Vasse Estuary
Drawn by Jo Taylor

downturned bill). A local artist, Jo Taylor, has kindly provided the accompanying sketch. We will also keep trying to get a close look at its plumage, with the aim of confidently ageing it.

With luck, our Redshank could remain in the area until winter rains begin, rivers run and the "estuary" water level rises, submerging the islands (the Vasse estuary now functions as a lake due to floodgates preventing seawater incursion). Once the islands are covered the bird will need to move elsewhere to find suitable feeding habitat.

If anyone is thinking of coming down to see our special visitor, ring (08) 9752 1677 or fax (08) 9752 1432 me and I will be happy to let you know when and where it was last sighted.

Reference:

Jaensch, R. & Blyth, J. 1988. A Redshank at Peel Inlet and a review of its status in Western Australia. *Western Australian Naturalist*, 17: 106-9.

Jim Lane

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

Names and order follow Christidis, L. and Boles, W. (1994) *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. RAOU Monograph 2.

Observers are reminded that, for rarely seen or difficult to identify species, adequate documentation is required for inclusion in WABN. For example, new records, or records of species rarely recorded in the south-west should be accompanied by a description of what was *actually seen* and reasons for the identification. Note that a statement to the effect that what was seen fitted a description in a field guide is a statement about what is in a field guide, and does not tell the editors what you actually saw. Providing extra details also assists the editors to provide extra information to readers.

Few sightings have been submitted this time, but the list includes two very exciting reports - a **Common Redshank** on the Vasse Estuary (details elsewhere in this issue) and a **Yellow Wagtail** at McLarty - both second records for the south-west.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Northern Shoveler - 1, apparently a first year male, 16/2/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JD, TK, CD (details in next issue)

Grey Teal - 14 adults, and 2 adults with 11 ducklings, 19/11/96, Lake Negri, Rottneest Island - IS (few breeding records from Rottneest)

Pink-eared Duck - 2 adults plus several young, 10/96, Manning Lake, Spearwood (Cockburn) - JA

Flesh-footed Shearwater - 3000, 4/5/97, off North Mole (Fremantle) - JD (increasing late April - early May, with maximum numbers on 4/5/97)

The following seabirds were reported from Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton), between 1/11/96 and 31/1/97: **White-headed Petrel** (late records), **Yellow-nosed Albatross**, **Soft-plumaged Petrel** (late records), **Great-winged Petrel**, **White-chinned Petrel**, **Grey Petrel**, **Kerguelen Petrel**,

Flesh-footed Shearwater, **Australasian Gannet**, **Arctic Jaeger**, **Great Skua** - RP

Nankeen Night Heron - 6, 21/2/97, Esplanade, Fremantle (Fremantle) - IS

Glossy Ibis - 5, 20/4/97, Carine Swamp (Stirling) - CNe* 8, 25/4/97, Herdsman Lake (Stirling) - JD

Royal Spoonbill - 1, 1/2/97, Carine Swamp (Stirling) - CNe * 1, 6/4/97, Creery wetlands (Mandurah) - MS

Osprey - 1, 8/3/97, Cottesloe (Cottesloe) - IS * 1, 9/3/97, Fremantle Harbour (Fremantle) - IS

Black-shouldered Kite - 2 juvs/imms, 31/3/97, Lake Monger (Vincent) - IS

Collared Sparrowhawk - 1, 8/2/97, Hampden Road, Nedlands (Nedlands) - FO

Little Eagle - 1, 31/3/97, Cottesloe (Cottesloe) - IS

Buff-banded Rail - 1, 4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JD (unusual at McLarty - possibly first record here)

Baillon's Crake - 1, 9/2/97, Kogolup Lake (Cockburn) - MS

Spotless Crake - 4, 9/2/97, Kogolup Lake (Cockburn) - MS * 9, 8/3/97, Kogolup Lake (Cockburn) - FO, LH * ca. 30, 20/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JD (odd birds at McLarty from mid-Feb, with marked peak (ca 30 birds) on 20/4/97; numbers dropped to ca. 8 on 27/4/97)

Wood Sandpiper - 2, 27/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) JD (late date)

Great Knot - 2, 27/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - JD (unusual at McLarty - possibly first record here)

Sanderling - 42+, 22/11/96, Pearse Lakes, Rottneest Island - IS

Long-toed Stint - 2 in breeding plumage, 27/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) JD (late date)

Pectoral Sandpiper - 8, 20/4/97 and 2+, 27/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) JD (late date)

Black-winged Stilt - 1 immature, 4-5/4/97, Lake Herschel and Garden Lake, Rottneest Island - CC, KK (unusual on Rottneest)

Greater Sand Plover - 6, 28/2/97, Halls Head, Mandurah (Mandurah) - IS

Hooded Plover - 2, 5/4/97, Cooloongup (Rockingham) - CNe * 2, 18/4/97, 14 km NE of Fitzgerald on Fitzgerald Road (Ravensthorpe) - BN, SM, AB * 1, 18/4/97, 8 km NW of Newdegate on Lake Biddy Road (Lake Grace) - BN, SM, AB

Banded Lapwing - 6 adults and 6 juveniles, 1/12/96; 10, 16/3/97; 11, 25/4/97, all at Rous Head, Fremantle (Fremantle) - IS

Pomarine Jaeger - 8-12 (including 2 with almost fully developed tails), 3/5/97, off North Mole (Fremantle) - JD

Arctic Jaeger - 8-10+, 25/4/97, North Mole, Fremantle (Fremantle) - IS; * 1 on 29/4/97 and 2 on 4/5/97, North Mole, Fremantle (Fremantle) - JD

Crested Tern - 500-600 adults and 250+ chicks, 18/11/96 - 22/11/96, islets in Lake Baghdad, Rottneest Island - IS

Common Tern - 1 (or 2), 28/2/97, Halls Head, Mandurah (Mandurah) - IS (detailed description available)

Fairy Tern - 43, 20/11/96, Pearse Lakes, Rottneest Island - IS

Crested Pigeon - 2, 19/2/97, Busselton (Busselton) - GM

Budgerigar - "several flights", 3/97, Australind (Harvey) - GE

Elegant Parrot - ca. 50, 15/2/97, Old Bunbury Road, S of Pinjarra, between S-W Hwy and Paulls Road (Murray) - IS

Yellow Wagtail - 1, 11/3/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - LH (description supplied)

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

Princess Parrot - 1, 5/97, Shay Gap (East Pilbara) - TF

KIMBERLEY

Grey Falcon - 1, 5/4/97, near Broome (Broome) - BBO

Black Falcon - 1 probable, 19/6/96, Airfield Swamp, Mitchell Plateau (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - CN, WN (NB: Observers should note that Brown Falcons in this area can be very dark and easily confused with Black Falcons)

Red-chested Button-quail - 1, 22/3/97, Argyle diamond mine (Wyndham - East Kimberley) - FO

possible **Spotted Redshank** - 1, 26/12/95, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - PC (detailed description supplied; also submitted to RAC)

Asian Dowitcher - 27, many in breeding plumage, 13/4/97, Broome area (Broome) - BBO

Franklin's Gull - 1, 29/12/96-1/1/97, Broome rubbish dump (Broome) - GS, BBO (description supplied)

Oriental Cuckoo - 1, 5/3/97, Broome area (Broome) - BBO

Barking Owl - 1, 15/4/97, Broome area (Broome) - BBO

Crested Bellbird - 1, 17/3/97, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO (very few records from the Broome area)

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Reports have been received (without details) of two **White Wagtails** on 17/3/97, a possible **Brown Shrike** on 17/3/97, and 15 **Asian House Martins** at the airport, 12-22/3/97.

OBSERVERS

AB = Allan Burbidge

BBO = Broome Bird Observatory

BN = Brenda Newbey

CC = Caroline Comstock

CD = Colin Davis

CN = Clive Napier

CNe = Clive Nealon

FO = Frank O'Connor

GE = Graeme Edwards

GM = G.F. Mees

IS = Ian Standing

JA = Jude Allan

JD = John Darnell

KK = Ken Kennedy

LH = Les Harris

MS = Marcus Singor

PC = Peter Collins

RP = Ross Payton

SM = Shapelle McNee

TF = Tony Friend

TK = Tony Kirkby

WN = Wendy Napier

Letters to the Editors

The last issue of *WA Bird Notes* (No 81, page 13) contained observations by Burbidge *et al* on a Barn Swallow and Tree Martins which were flying through the spray of water coming from a leaking pipe.

This aerial bathing, which may also include drinking, has also been observed in the White-backed Swallow, at Geraldton in 1969 (Stranger. 1970. Aerial bathing by White-backed Swallows. *Western Australian Naturalist Club*. 11: 145.

Interested readers should also refer to Dow, D.D. 1970. Avian Bathing Behaviour. *Western Australian Naturalist*. 11:

184), who discusses such and similar bathing by birds more extensively and also lists many references.

Burbidge *et al* also referred to observations by others of Barn Swallows apparently drinking from a dam, but didn't elaborate. This raises questions such as: were they drinking while in flight? Hovering? Or on the ground?

The Tree Martin is a species which can scoop up water from the surface of a dam while in flight, for instance, and I witnessed this behaviour several times in 1968 at the dam which used to supply water to Banksiadale, that site now being under the waters of the South Dandalup Dam. The Banksiadale Dam has since been breached.

R H Stranger

WA Group Reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA-WA GROUP COMMITTEE

The 1997 Committee has been elected/appointed and its members are:

	Tel
Chairman: Clive Napier	9332 7265
Vice Chair: Clive Nealon	9448 5921
Treasurer: Ms Jane Venter	9330 2862
Secretary: Mrs Margaret Philippon	9375 2068
Members:	
Ms Sue Abbotts (<i>Excursions</i>)	9444 1607
Max Bailey (<i>Office Manager</i>)	9444 7920
Mike Bamford (<i>Conservation</i>)	9309 3671
John Blyth (<i>Joint Editor, WA Bird Notes</i>)	9381 6293
Bryan Barrett (<i>Excursions</i>)	9457 2335
Bill McRoberts (<i>Excursions</i>)	9459 1971
Rod Smith (<i>WABN Distribution</i>)	9447 3804

Meetings of the WA Group Committee are held on the third Wednesday of each month at Perry House.

It is through the committee that the business of Birding Australia-WA Group is managed. Matters for consideration by the committee should be communicated to the office with adequate time for distribution to committee members.

Recent committee meetings have dealt with the following:

Birds on Farms Project — just when it was thought that funds for this project were exhausted, the Main Roads Department has contracted the group for surveys of road verges, with Brenda Newbey continuing as the liaison officer. It is also possible that the Gordon Reid Foundation for Conservation will provide a two-year grant for wider surveys.

Survey of Suburban Birds Project — being progressed by Clive Nealon, with follow-up letters planned to participants who have not continued to send in reports.

Birding Sites Around Perth Revised Edition — now at the printers and expected to be launched on 1 September at Perry House by the Governor (see Publications Report below for more details).

Swan/Canning Basin survey — this is a possible new project for participation by members and an application for funding has been made to the National Heritage Trust.

Proposed calendar of events in the bird world — deferred pending contributions by members.

Remote area field trip — deferred.

Provision of scholarships for university students — Mike Bamford has put together a proposal for two scholarships of \$300 each for two students to attend a course at Eyre and Broome Bird Observatories, as a way of encouraging professional interest in ornithology.

Junior ornithologists — contact is being made with several schools, seeking participants for courses, as a way of promoting ornithology among young people.

New name 'The Birds Australia Group' — this has now come into operation, with our group being known as 'Birds Australia-WA Group'.

Finances— the Committee welcomes Jane Venter as the new Treasurer, with Max Bailey to be responsible for the day-to-day finances;

— at the extraordinary general meeting held 19 March, the audited financial accounts for 1996 were presented and adopted, with the assistance of many people in their preparation following the sudden death of our previous Treasurer, Peter Anson;

— the Committee has agreed that a three-monthly income and expenditure statement be included in *WA Bird Notes* for the general information of members (see report below).

— the Committee recorded its gratitude for the efforts of Sue Clegg (Margery's daughter) and the Treasurer for installing the accounting software package that is compatible with Head Office in Melbourne, which will simplify the 'marrying' of the accounts at year-end.

Conservation — areas being monitored include Amarillo Pool at Mandurah.

Rural bird brochures — this project is continuing, with the latest one planned for the Bunbury area and another for Bridgetown.

The Chairman reported on news from *Galah* (the in-house HQ newsletter for volunteers) that the pastoral lease "Gluepot" in South Australia had been purchased by Birds Australia and that it was a sanctuary for several endangered species.

It has been planned to further improve the database program to allow more flexibility in data retrieval and to make mapping of species distribution feasible.

Darryl James, the WA Group representative at the Conservation Council, reported on Council activities and her personal role in promoting Birds Australia-WA Group views.

Clive Napier, Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following income and expenditure statement for the period 1 January to 31 March 1997 is presented for the information of members:

Cash at bank at 1/1/97 b/fwd	6,683.31
Plus Receipts	<u>4,178.55</u>
	10,861.86
Less Expenditure	
<i>WA Bird Notes</i>	1,175.43
Postages, Telephone	196.76
Functions	216.74
Bank Charges	9.62
Books	519.40
Rent	243.74
Utilities	107.05
Projects	2,847.14
Trading Expenses	88.00
Sundries	669.00
Total Expenditure	<u>6,072.88</u>
Balance of Cash at Bank	<u>\$4,788.98</u>

Jane Venter, Treasurer

PUBLICATIONS REPORT

BIRDING SITES AROUND PERTH

The revised edition of *Birding Sites Around Perth* will be launched at Perry House by the Governor of Western Australia, His Excellency Major-General Michael Jeffery AC, MC, at 10:00 am on Monday 1 September 1997.

Guests will include representatives of State and Local Government departments and company organisations which have supported the Birds Australia-WA Group in this and other projects.

It will be an opportunity to acknowledge the support of our sponsors in this and other projects and to have displays of our current activities and research projects and to publicise our Birds Australia-WA Group.

ALL MEMBERS ARE VERY WELCOME.

To assist the organisers with catering, would you please advise the office on (08) 9383 7749 if you are attending by Monday 18 August.

**Allan Jones
for Organising Sub-committee**

HERON AND EGRET SURVEY, MARCH 1997

In March the Committee received a request from Robyn Phillimore, a Masters student in environmental science, asking for help in taking a census of the population of egrets in the metropolitan area. To achieve this we mounted an operation to take place over one weekend, thereby hopefully not counting the same birds more than once. Ten members agreed to check their local wetlands on either 22nd or 23rd March. Their observations were then posted direct to the student.

To make the count more interesting, we included the three species of herons with the two species of egrets.

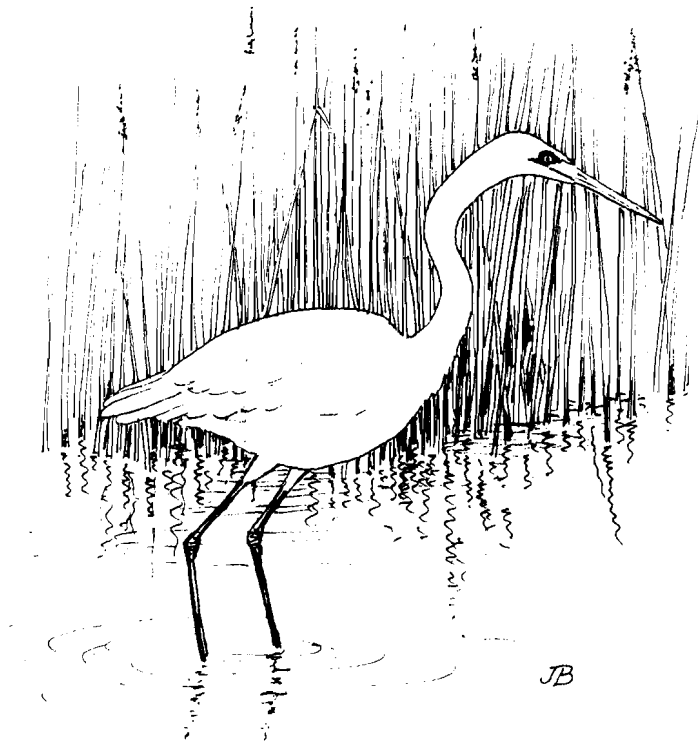
Predictably, White-faced Herons at 42, and Great Egrets at 31, were dominant whereas only seven Little Egrets were counted. The three Nankeen Night Herons reported fails to reflect their presence, since they tend to roost in inaccessible places. No White-necked Herons were reported, although 20 had been seen during January on Forrestdale Lake which is now dry.

The table on the following page shows the areas observed and birds found there.

Bryan Barrett

RESULTS, HERON AND EGRET SURVEY, MARCH 1997

Location	Weather	Date	Time	Great Egret	Little Egret	White-faced Heron	White-necked Heron	Nankeen Night Heron
Alfred Cove (Attadale)	Sunny	22 Mar 97	8:00 - 9:00 am	0	0	2	0	0
Bibra Lake	Sunny	23 Mar 97	9:30 - 11:30 am	4	0	8	0	0
Big Carine Swamp	Sunny	23 Mar 97	6:45 - 8:15 am	9	2	5	0	1
Blue Gum Lake (Mt Pleasant)	Sunny	23 Mar 97	10:20 - 10:45 am	1	0	0	0	0
Booragoon Lake	Sunny	23 Mar 97	9:45 - 10:15 am	1	0	0	0	2
Coogee Lake	Sunny, SW breeze	23 Mar 97	12:00 pm	1	2	5	0	0
Forrestdale Lake	Sunny	22 Mar 97	10:00 - 10:15 am	0	0	0	0	0
Gnangara Lake	Sunny	22 Mar 97	9:30 - 11:30 am	0	0	0	0	0
Herdsman Lake	Sunny, windy	23 Mar 97	8:15 - 11:15 am	2	0	7	0	0
Lake Gwelup	Sunny	23 Mar 97	9:00 - 10:00 am	1	0	0	0	0
Lake Joondalup	Sunny, E wind	21 Mar 97	7:00 am - 8:00 am	8	3	5	0	0
Lake Kogolup	Sunny	22 Mar 97	10:50 am	0	0	5	0	0
Lake Monger	Sunny	23 Mar 97	7:00 am	2	0	0	0	0
Lake Yangebup	Sunny, E wind	22 Mar 97	9:30 am	1	0	3	0	0
North Lake	Sunny	23 Mar 97	11:30 am - 12:30 pm	1	0	1	0	0
Perry Lakes	Sunny	22 Mar 97	3:30 - 4:30 pm	0	0	0	0	0
Piney Lakes (Winthrop)	Sunny	22 Mar 97	11:00 am	0	0	0	0	0
Star Swamp, North Beach	Sunny	22 Mar 97	7:45 - 9:00 am	0	0	1	0	0
Thomsons Lake	Sunny	22 Mar 97	8:30 - 9:30 am	0	0	0	0	0



The Great Egret was the second most common species recorded during the Heron and Egret Survey
 Drawn by Judy Blyth

PROJECT REPORT: BIRDS ON FARMS

Despite participants finding the registration form 'intimidating', 'daunting' and 'far from easy', there are now 68 farms registered through the Birds Australia-WA Group. The goal is 90. Nationwide the goal is 250 farms. In WA, farms are widespread extending to Albany (south), Nabawa (north), Yallingup (west) and Esperance (east). Many farmers are surveying on their own properties. There has been a high level of success in finding birdwatchers for interested farmers. Several farmers only need help to start with and are giving themselves a crash course in bird identification.

Help is still needed at Ajana and Mingenew.

Although I was hoping to make the deadline for new participants the end of autumn (31 May), it has for various reasons been extended to 30 June which is the deadline selected by Geoff Barrett, national coordinator of the project, so there is still time to leap on board.

If you are registered but missed the autumn survey, try to get the winter one done.

In April, Main Roads WA agreed to participate in the project as they are interested in finding out more about bird use of their revegetated road verges. The Main Roads sites will all be half hectare sites which should be surveyed in 20 minutes. (They are called 20 Minute Sites.) I will be selecting the sites and seeking volunteers for the surveys in May and June. As for the farms involved, participation will be for a minimum of two years with each site visited once a season.

Main Roads WA is funding their participation. So far, except for one small grant (State Government, community conservation), the rest of the project in WA has been supported by the WA Group. The Group (through the efforts of Allan Jones and Clare Mercer in particular) is trying very hard to

secure outside funding.

To save duplication of effort, the survey results and site registration details are being entered into a database at the national office in Melbourne. Soon the current version of the WA data will be sent to me. Thereafter it will be updated every three or four months and some preliminary examination of the WA data can begin. We are hoping to exchange information with other Western Australian programs.

We have been in touch with Penny Hussey of CALM's Land for Wildlife program and officers from Agriculture WA from Narrogin and Albany who are responsible for large scale monitoring and will make data available to them when required.

Brenda Newbey
 WA Coordinator

WADER STUDY GROUP SUMMER SURVEY

On 15 February, 31 RAOU Members, plus volunteers at Rottnest and Walpole, took part in a coordinated wader count at 17 locations between Cervantes and Albany. This survey was organised following a request from Ken Harris on behalf of the Australian Wader Study Group, to monitor waders at the Swan Estuary Marine Park for their summer survey. It was then decided to increase the number of Western Australian sites. This was achieved thanks to the response of those RAOU members contacted, the Department of Conservation and Land Management at Walpole, Frank Pridham and the Mandurah birders, and the Rottnest Volunteer Guides. These stalwarts were on station at their allotted sites and counting started simultaneously at each of the 17 locations at the predicted time for low tide.

A total of 21 281 waders was counted and 33 different species identified (see table on next page). As would be expected, Red-necked Stints were the most reported species being seen at 11 of the 17 sites. However, the total of 2876 shows a drop in numbers compared to previous surveys (eg. 10 000 Red-necked Stints at Alfred Cove — Watkins 1993 Report). Wader numbers were also down at the Swan Estuary Marine Park where the three reserves making up the Park — Milyu, Pelican Point and Alfred Cove — reported a combined wader count of 797 birds. Observers at Alfred Cove counted 579 waders. The highest numbers were recorded at Lake McLarty with 16 species, including 35 Marsh Sandpipers (only one other site reported this species), 1024 Curlew Sandpipers, 5 Pectoral Sandpipers, 2 Long-toed Stints, and a Ruff. Also a bonus was the sighting of a Northern Shoveler by the four observers covering the lake.

Two inland sites were included in the survey resulting in 6000 Banded Stilts being observed at Flagstaff Lake (many thanks to Wayne Zadow), plus ten species at Towerinning Lake. Tagged, flagged or banded birds were not seen at any of the sites during the survey.

The Wader Study Group will be conducting another summer count in February 1998. In addition to the sites covered in the 1997 exercise, we intend to monitor all the Rottnest lakes, coastal habitats north of Cervantes, estuaries between Australind and Esperance, plus as many inland sites as possible. For this program to be a success we need more observers, particularly country members. Those contemplating surveillance of a site with slight apprehension should check the Table and note it does not have to be teeming with waders to be accepted. A habitat with two species, eg, Rous Head, is

WA WADER STUDY SURVEY, 15 February 1997

Species	Rottnest	Swan Estuary Marine Pk	Kogolup Lake	Forrest-dale Lake	Woodman Point	Cookoongup Lake	4 West Sites Mandurah	McLarty Lake	Harvey Estuary	Albany A Little Grove	Albany B Wilson Inlet	Walpole	Towerinning Lake	Flagstaff Lake	Cervantes L Thetis	Yalgorup N Pk	Rous Head Fremantle
Pied Oystercatcher		20					18					5					
Sooty Oystercatcher											*2	1					
Banded Lapwing																	9
Grey Plover		68			8		39		4	3							
Pacific Golden										18							
Red-kneed Dotterel			2					6					14				
Hooded Plover						1										10	
Large Sand Plover											2						
Red-capped Plover		84		700		97		229		3	178		115	450	18	153	3
Black-fronted Dotterel			22	1				7					74				
Black-winged Stilt		29	45	2400			98	1200			3		135			8	
Banded Stilt	850			33	1	2		21	150				2	6000		47	
Red-necked Avocet			246	210				1403			291		3		1	2	
Ruddy Turnstone	38				14					4							
Eastern Curlew							5										
Whimbrel							4										
Wood Sandpiper			2	9				4					4				
Grey-tailed Tattler					2												
Common Sandpiper							2					5					
Greenshank		12		10			21	26	5	22	34			11	3	1	
Marsh Sandpiper								35					1				
Black-tailed Godwit								24									
Bar-tailed Godwit		5					67			4							
Red Knot							50			351							
Great Knot		28															
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper		3		32			117	506			1		22				
Pectoral Sandpiper								5									
Red-necked Stint	34	526		640	2	2	451	634		16	550		9			12	
Long-toed Stint			1	1				2									
Curlew Sandpiper	4	22		50				1024			238						
Sanderling	6				8							3					
Ruff								1									
Terek Sandpiper															2		
TOTAL	932	797	318	4086	35	102	882	5127	159	421	1299	14	379	6461	24	233	12

* seen at Parry Beach

of equal value in the count to any other. So, plan an outing for next February and join Wader Watchers by filling in the form included in this newsletter and sending it to the Wader Study Survey, Perry House. You will then be contacted and informed of how you can help.

Colin Davis

PERRY HOUSE LIBRARY NEWS

The following reports/journals/books have been received since the last report:

Bulletin, Threatened Species Network No 1, November 1996

Contact Call, Newsletter, RAOU North Queensland, December 1996

Newsletter, Broome Bird Observatory, December 1996

Tree Society Review, No 4, December 1996

The Bird Observer, Bird Observers Club of Australia, Nos 768, 771, 772 and 773, October 1996, January-April 1997

River View, Swan River Trust, No 8, July/August 1996

Inner Peel Region Structure Plan, Lake Mealup Preservation Society (Inc), September 1996

G N Lord. *Birds of the West Wimmera Shire*. West Wimmera Shire Council

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*donated by Norah Brockman

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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**—a copy on disk of word processed documents would assist, especially if in MS Word format. A style sheet is available from Perry House to guide writers regarding format
- WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.

Deadline for the September 1997 Issue

1 August 1997

at Perry House

Members' Contributions

TERNS AT EYRE

October 24th, 1996 was an overcast, windy day and members of the Focus on Birds (Spring) course at Eyre Bird Observatory were travelling west along Kanidal Beach when a tern was sighted between the seaweed banks. It flew as we approached and our first impression was of a small, slim, grey tern using full but slow wing strokes, flying almost side-on into the strong south-westerly wind and keeping quite low —

just above the seaweed banks. We followed up more slowly this time and all present noticed the very pointy dark bill which quickly eliminated Caspian and Crested Terns from our list of possible species, while its size was well above that of a Fairy Tern.

As the tern became used to our presence, the pauses between moves along the beach were longer and more detailed notes were taken and confirmed by all present. Its bill was actually a very dark red as were its legs. The length of the bill was noticeably shorter than the length of the head. The black cap was receding with a noticeable white forehead and a thick black line from the cap to the front of the eye. When on the beach it appeared to have very short legs, that is, its knees were not showing, and it had no noticeable neck giving it a hunched appearance. Each time it flew a narrow, dark blackish edge, of even width and with clear cut edges, was evident along the trailing edge of its wing — both upper and lower surfaces.

There was no carpal (shoulder) bar and its wings were very long and tapered. This last observation led us to exclude the less common Antarctic Tern, which is also bulkier, with noticeable grey on the underparts of the body. We were now left with a choice between the Arctic Tern and Common Tern, neither of which are common species at Eyre. Adult birds of both of these species exhibit the uniform pale grey upper parts, with white rump and underbody, as seen on our bird. Its hunched appearance, clear-cut, dark even trailing edge to long tapering wings and its manner of flight convinced us that it was an Arctic Tern that we were looking at.

Later the same day at Twilight Cove to the west of Eyre, a large flock of 350 or more Crested Terns was observed on the beach. Birds were continuously moving in and out of the resting group. On a number of occasions an incoming bird would be just about to land when a stronger gust of wind would cause it to crash amongst the others — definitely not a dignified way for such a graceful bird to arrive.

“To see two migratory species of terns
in three days was indeed something
special.”

Two days later, as course members were preparing to depart, another tern was sighted by Doris Graham at the beach entrance of the track leading to the Observatory. After a scramble for binoculars and telescope, five people headed for the beach to follow it up. The bird was located behind the primary dune and looked very ill; that is, not really taking much notice of people, feathers in disarray and moving very unsteadily on its feet. This enabled most present to obtain good views of it. Its almost complete black cap led to the opinion that it was not the same bird that had been seen two days before. Like the Arctic Tern seen earlier, this bird was slender, had red/black bill and legs, pale grey upper parts, and white rump and underbody. However, the longer bill in relation to the length of the head, a large dark triangular area (dusky wedge) on the upper and lower wing tips, a noticeable carpal (shoulder) bar and longer legs (we could see its knees) convinced us that this was a Common Tern between breeding and non-breeding plumage. As Mavis Norgard attempted to get closer to take a photograph it took fright and flew inland until lost from view.

To see two migratory species of terns in three days was indeed something special. However, the records of Eyre Bird Observatory show that a similar event occurred in September 1984 when two Arctic Terns were sighted three days before an immature Common Tern. At least one of these species was new for most course members.

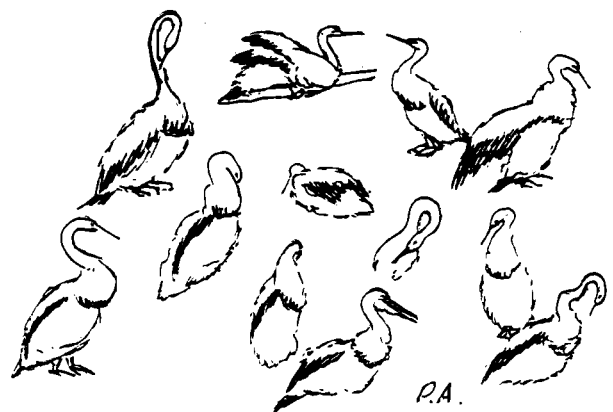
In reaching our conclusions we consulted the following references:

- Dymond, N. 1988. ‘Birds’ in *Eyre Bird Observatory Report No. 4* 1984/19185. RAOU Report No. 38.
- Harrison, P. 1985. *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*. 2nd edition, Croom Helm Ltd, London.
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- Simpson, K. And Day, N. 1996. *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. 5th edition, Viking Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria.
- Storr, G. M. 1987. *Birds of the Eucla Division of Western Australia. Records of the Western Australian Museum — Supplement No 27*. Western Australian Museum, Perth.
- Since returning to Perth the following additional references have also been consulted:
- Higgins, P. J. And Davies, S. J. J. F. (Eds) 1996. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds Vol. 3 Snipe to Pigeons*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Carter, M. And Eades, D. 1994. Bird identification: The ‘commic’ terns — identification of four medium sized terns. *Wingspan*. No. 16, 16-19.

NESTING DARTERS

During the campout at Lake Wilgarup, about 15 km N of Manjimup, on the weekend of March 1-3, a nesting Darters’ site was discovered and visited by members of the group on several occasions.

We first saw the nests with a group of about eight people, and later returned on two occasions, when we were the only two there.



Some of the poses adopted by young Darters
in a nest at Wilgarup Swamp
Drawn by Pam Agar.

Two bulky stick nests had been built in a relatively low paperbark at the water's edge. The branches of this tree tended to spread horizontally, whereas other nearby trees grew more vertically. The nest-site was well screened on the landward side by a thick stand of mature paperbarks, flooded-gums and a red-flowering shrub (*Melaleuca* sp.). The opposite side was open to a stretch of water, with a broad band of tall reeds separating that from an even wider stretch of water beyond.

(The nests were also somewhat protected from intruders by tiger snakes!)

The lower of the two nests had been built about two metres above the water; the other, nearby, was slightly higher.

Four well-developed young, almost the size of adults, seemed to be associated with the lower nest, while the higher nest contained at least two chicks. These two were much younger than those in the lower nest, being only about half their size.

All the young were covered with thick white down and some had developed an orange-tan colouring on their necks and heads. Their legs and feet were very pale and all had developed dark wing primaries and tail feathers.

The birds were more active early in the morning and the chicks, obviously hungry, were observed with necks craned. When the female arrived, often all chicks reached up but only one chick was fed on each visit, although a second chick signaled its need by tapping at the bill of the adult. The chick receiving the food thrust its bill deep within the throat of the adult bird, and the two performed an awkward jiggling movement as the adult regurgitated a meal. When the chick was satisfied, the adult moved to a nearby perch to rest briefly, before leaving again, often by dropping directly into the water below the perch.

The male bird visited the nest on more than one occasion but was not seen to feed the young.

Later in the morning, with appetites apparently satisfied, the young were more relaxed and spent their time preening, hunching drowsily in the nest, stretching half-developed wings or clumsily exploring the nearby branches. The nest site was completely exposed from above and as the day grew hotter, the young were seen with bills open, panting, and fluttering the skin below the lower bill, in an attempt to cool themselves.

Despite the fact that the only view available was from about ten metres away (making it necessary to use binoculars), and largely obscured by paperbark trunks, I spent a pleasant hour attempting to capture the poses of the young birds. Some of the results are included.

Pam Agar

MIMICRY IN HONEYEATERS

In the last issue of WABN, Bruce Buchanan described very interesting observations concerning vocal mimicry by a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater at Wannamal (WABN 81: 1-2). As noted in the article, such behaviour is unusual. In fact, mimicry in honeyeaters is very rare. The two species in which it is best developed are the Regent Honeyeater and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (Veerman 1992 and references therein). Most instances of mimicry in these species involve the calls of larger species (particularly wattlebirds) and Veerman (1994) discusses possible explanations of this behaviour. He suggests that the benefit to the mimic is in reducing competition for food by reducing possible aggression by larger honeyeaters or enhancing territorial defence against smaller competitors.

The Wannamal example appears to fit this explanation, except that it appears also to involve a certain degree of co-operation between a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and Little Wattlebird.

Thanks to Stephen Debus for bringing the Regent Honeyeater studies to our attention.

References:

- Buchanan, B. 1997. Cooperation between honeyeater species. *Western Australian Bird Notes* 81, 1-2.
- Veerman, P.A. 1992. Vocal mimicry of larger honeyeaters by the Regent Honeyeater. *Australian Bird Watcher* 14, 180-189.
- Veerman, P.A. 1994. Batesian acoustic mimicry by the Regent Honeyeater. *Australian Bird Watcher* 15, 250-259.

Allan Burbidge

TAWNY FROGMOUTHS: CORRECTION

In an article on Frogmouths in the last issue (WABN 81,8) it was stated that the smaller of the pair (assumed to be a male) incubated at night and the larger bird (assumed to be a female) incubated during the day. This is consistent with Hollands (1991). However, this is incorrect. In frogmouths it is in fact the male which is larger, and the female smaller, as described by Schodde and Mason (1980), based on dissection of museum specimens.

References:

- Hollands, D. 1991. *Birds of the Night: Owls, Frogmouths and Nightjars of Australia*. Reed Books Pty Lrd, Balgowlah, NSW.
- Schodde, R. and Mason, I. J. 1980. *Nocturnal Birds of Australia*. Lansdowne Editions, Melbourne.

Editors

A BIRD WALK IN GAME VALLEY NATURE RESERVE: AN AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

Game Valley Nature Reserve, about 25 km from Pietermaritzburg, capital of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, lies in the Karkloof Valley, a tributary of the Mngeni (Umgeni) River which reaches the sea at Durban, about 150 km away. The reserve's habitats vary from dense evergreen forest to deciduous savanna (mainly the Paperbark *Acacia sieberana*) and some open grassland. There is also some riverine and marshland vegetation. The woodland trees include the Cabbage Tree *Cussonia spicata*. There is unfortunately some invasion by alien weeds, but the indigenous plants include some pretty native blooms, such as the Christmas Bells *Sandersonia aurantiaca*.

On a breezy Sunday at the end of November 1996 I joined a birdwalk at Game Valley, led by Professor Gordon Maclean, author of the Fifth and Sixth Editions of *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*, the region's definitive handbook. He had given us a very interesting talk during his visit to Perth in October 1996. There were ten other people on the birdwalk which began at 6:30 am after coffee and muffins, and finished at about 11:30 am after tea and delicious snacks which were included in the ZAR45.00 (Aus\$12.85). While waiting to depart from the main lodge, Lesser Striped Swallows, a Rameron Pigeon, Tambourine Dove and a nesting Dusky Flycatcher were seen.

The vegetation was very green as the normal summer rains had been falling for over two months after an unusually wet winter. We set off in an open-sided transport which could seat about 20 people. Zeff, Gordon's assistant (an African game

warden who was also very knowledgeable) was the driver. We were driven back to the park's entrance gate, stopping along the way for interesting birds, of which there were many.

It was hard to know where to look first, as birdsongs just filled the early-morning air. A Rufous-naped Lark was on the right and a White-browed Robin (not to be confused with the Australian species *Poecilodryas superciliosa* of the same common name; eds) to the left. Ahead on an overhead powerline several birds appeared to be warming themselves in the sun — a Golden-breasted Bunting, a Black Flycatcher and a Brown-hooded Kingfisher. A pair of African Hoopoes and a Yellow-throated Longclaw allowed us a good look at them, while Greater Striped Swallows flew overhead. Many Fork-tailed Drongos were seen throughout the walk. A Long-crested Eagle was perched in a tree near the river, and on the dam were Yellow-billed and White-faced Ducks, along with a Grey Heron and some Egyptian Geese. A Hamerkop flew off nearby when it was disturbed.

When we were dropped off at the gate at about 7:30 am, we saw House Sparrows and Grey-headed Sparrows around the buildings. We started the walk and covered about three kilometres over the next three hours. Once we had to stop when the road was blocked by a Burchell's Zebra; we also saw some Impalas grazing and some piles of White Rhino droppings, evidence of their recent proximity. At one point, while scanning the sky for raptors (Osprey, Steppe Buzzard and Yellow-billed Kites), we dipped the binoculars a few centimetres to watch a mother and baby Giraffe feeding.

There were two types of weavers' nests in the vegetation along the river, namely Spotted-backed and Lesser Masked Weavers. The woven entrances in the various weaver nests differ in that some have a short tunnel, others a long tunnel, and some have none. A family of African Pied Wagtails and a pair of Cape Wagtails were accompanied on the river bank by a Reed Cormorant. In the marshy vegetation alongside the road were Burchell's Coucal, Black-collared Barbets and Speckled and Red-faced Mousebirds. We managed to see several Diederik Cuckoos, but only heard four of the other cuckoo species (Black, Red-chested, Klaas's and Emerald).

In the trees overhanging the road a pair of Forest Weavers had their nest. A Golden-tailed Woodpecker was seen in a thicket near a large Cabbage Tree in which a Red-billed Woodhoopoe was foraging by probing into the loose bark. In the vicinity were also some Blue-billed Fire-finches, Cape White-eyes, two species of thrush (Olive and Kurrichane) and a Fiscal Shrike.

Along the walk there were two organised refreshment stops, at each of which an Esky filled with ice and soft drinks had been left at the roadside. During the first welcome break there were Black and Olive Sunbirds, Red-winged and Glossy Starlings, while overhead some Black Saw-wing Swallows fluttered. There were so many fast-moving LBJs, such as Familiar Chat, African Marsh Warbler, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Neddicky (a species of cisticola), Levillant's and Croaking Cisticolas, that I constantly needed lots of help. Among other things, I learned that all honeyguides have white outer tail feathers (rectrices), though the only species we saw was the Lesser Honeyguide.

Our last refreshment stop was next to the Karkloof River again, on the bank above the nesting tunnel of a Malachite Kingfisher. We did our checklist of a remarkable 90 species in just four hours. A pair of Pied Kingfishers appeared, as if

on cue, as we tried to make the list up to 100 species. By the time we got back to the lodge, the count was 93. The Plum-coloured Starling stole the colour show, especially when the male's brilliant purple iridescence was seen in sunlight. The Red Bishops were also attractively coloured birds in their black-and-scarlet breeding plumage. The Pin-tailed Whydah, a small seed eater, the male of which has a very long tail, is unusual in that, like the cuckoos, it is a brood parasite. It uses the Common Waxbill as its host species. Unfortunately I saw only a female Paradise Flycatcher which lacks the long orange rectrices of the male. However, it was a very interesting bird walk in lovely surroundings, and I learned a great deal.

Claire Gerrish

LITTLE EAGLE IN FREMANTLE

Driving north from Fremantle station towards the traffic bridge at about 4:30 pm on Tuesday 29 April, my attention was caught by a flock of feral pigeons wheeling and darting in an agitated manner a short distance ahead. Above them a large raptor was hanging in the stiff westerly breeze. I managed to park the car but, by the time I had focused my binoculars, the raptor had drifted back the way I had come. However, after a few minutes, the hawk came back and flew low almost directly overhead. My first impression had been that the bird was possibly a kite but now there could be no mistaking the distinctive under-wing markings of a pale-phase Little Eagle.

As it approached, the pigeons, which had been perching nervously on a parapet, took off again but, apart from one half-hearted stoop, the eagle virtually ignored them. Instead, it seemed intent on scanning the roofs of the old wool-store buildings opposite the railway line in Elder Place. Gradually, the bird moved back towards Pioneer Reserve only to return swiftly to where I had parked the car near James Street. This performance was repeated 4-5 times while I watched, each time sending the pigeons into the air. At one point, a kestrel got into the act, swooping repeatedly at the larger bird of prey which finally disappeared from view behind buildings in the centre of Fremantle.

On a couple of occasions over the years, I have seen a Little Eagle flying low over King's Park and once saw one swoop on a small dog in a car park at Coogee Beach, but I've never seen one hunting in such an urbanised environment before.

Stewart Houghton



The Little Eagle is featured in several reports in this issue of WABN
 Drawn by Judy Blyth

CRESTED PIGEONS *OCYPHAPS LOPHOTES* IN BUSSELTON

Following an observation of a Crested Pigeon near Pinjarra on 4 June 1996, Gordon Baker (1996, WABN No 79) enquires about other records in the South-West. In Busselton, two individuals were first noted by one of us (VJM) in September 1995, near the silo of Busselton Rural in the Light Industrial Area, a spot for obvious reasons attractive to pigeons. A few months later, two birds were seen at Yoongarillup about 10 km SE of Busselton (VJM). We have not recently seen any birds at the above-mentioned localities, but there is another place, no more than 2 km from the centre of Busselton, where we can now almost count on seeing up to six individuals. Evidently, the Crested Pigeon is a resident near Busselton, although in small numbers. For how long it has been present we cannot say, but it may well have been for several years before our first observation.

Whether Busselton is at the limit of its expansion is another unanswered question, but the species is not listed from Dunsborough-Cape Naturaliste by P and B Clay (1996, *Birds of Cape Naturaliste*). Storr (1991, *Rec W A Museum Suppl* No 35: 75) includes Collie, Boyup Brook and Bridgetown in the range; this can now be extended to Busselton.

G F Mees, V J Mees-Balchin

HOODED PLOVERS NORTH EAST OF ISRAELITE BAY

On 3 December 1996 I set out from my residence at Cape Arid National Park for Wylie Cliffs (120 km north east of Israelite Bay) to erect '1080' poison bait signs as part of the Western Shield program.

The trip out was slow going as I missed the beach turn-off and then had to travel inland along the old Telegraph track. The track passes across and nearby many lakes that were dry. Few birds were seen or heard along the way.

The majority of the return trip was along the beach before being forced off by too much seaweed closer to Israelite Bay. Along the 77 km of beach travelled, 36 Hooded Plovers were seen in groups of two to six birds. Hidden amongst the seaweed banks and seen only as small groups flew out to sea as the vehicle disturbed them, were what looked like Pacific Golden Plovers. Many Richard's Pipits were disturbed from the drier seaweed further up the beach.

Allan Rose



Hooded Plover, seen in good numbers east of Israelite Bay
Drawn by Judy Blyth

**Make a photocopy of
the list of the
telephone numbers for
Committee members
on page 3 and keep it
by your telephone.
They would like to
hear from you!**

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH IN FREMANTLE

At about midday on 14th October 1996, I was leaving the Fremantle Arts Centre in Finnerty Street Fremantle when my attention was drawn to a call that I did not immediately recognise. The call was a subdued, conversational but musical song. My first thoughts were of a Silvereye which I have heard calling very quietly, as though to itself, a call which has sometimes included mimicking fragments of the calls of such species as the Welcome Swallow and Inland Thornbill: this call is probably the "quiet or autumn sub-song that includes mimicry" referred to by Pizzey (1980). The call however was too strong and too sustained. It also fleetingly recalled Yellow-rumped Thornbill as it had a twinkling quality but the rest of the song was unlike this species. It sounded most like a European Goldfinch, a species which I had been familiar with in the past in Victoria and NSW.

I approached the plane tree from which the call was coming but the light cloud made for difficult viewing conditions as I was looking up into the glare. After several minutes, circling the tree, I fortuitously saw the bird in favourable conditions against a background of leaves. The bird was sitting quietly, almost motionless, on a branch near the trunk, calling quietly. Although I had no binoculars, it was close enough (about 6-8 m) to enable me to see the bold pattern and colour of the bird (red face, some black about the head, broad yellow band in the black wings, fawn sides of the breast), features which readily identified the species as a European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*.

It is likely that this bird was either an escapee from an aviary or possibly a recent arrival on board one of the many ships that dock in Fremantle. Other recent sightings of this species include one at Lake Coogee, some 9 km S of the Fremantle location on 6 July 1996 (Crossley and Crossley 1996) and one at Herdsman Lake in December 1996 (Knight 1996).

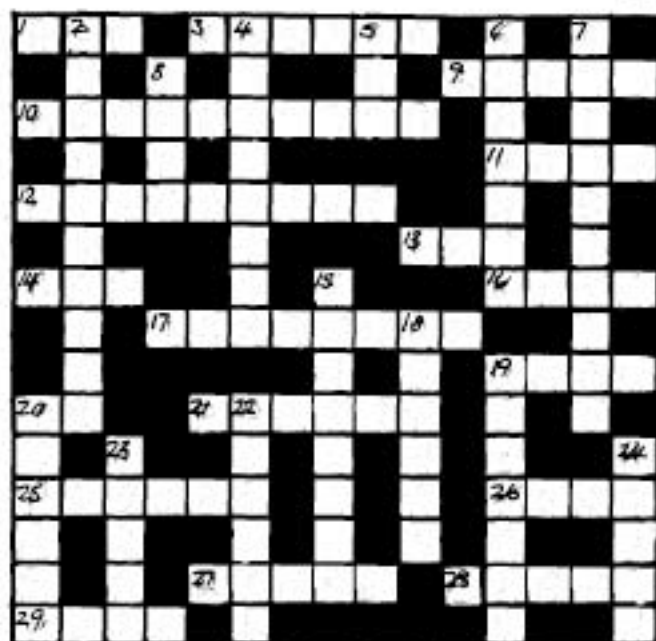
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- Crossley, J. and Crossley, J. 1996. 'Observations' and 'Excursion Reports: Lake Coogee', WABN 79, 3 and 22.
Knight, L. 1997. 'Observations', WABN 81, 3.
Pizzey, G. 1980. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Collins, Sydney.

Ian Standring

Crossword No 9

Pam Agar



Clues Across

1. A 1996 report in WABN described birds eating this.
3. The earlier common name for an Ibis which has greatly extended its range in recent years.
9. Describes the feet of coot.
10. Australia's largest kingfisher.
11. A Hooded Robin appears to wear a black one.
12. Commonly used metal for leg bands.
13. A Crimson Chat's nest is always in this location.
14. If it has a black one it may be a Varied Sittella in southern Australia.
16. Diurnal bird of prey.
17. Not yet adult.
19. A Black Cockatoo may shred this to get at grubs.
20. Binoculars ... telescope may be useful at the beach.
21. These species lay spherical eggs.
25. A Little Ringed one was a rare sighting near Broome in September '96.
26. Baits for these often tempt albatross.
27. Area covered by a particular species.
28. Baillon's is a difficult one to find.
29. Central part of egg.

Clues Down

2. Marine Park south of Perth.
4. State of lacking usual dark colouring.
5. The colour of these coverts may aid identification.
6. Raptor with long rounded tail.
7. A key part of the NSB recovery program.
8. Swallows often do this over water.
15. Species introduced to Australia but not found in WA.
18. A bander may glean useful information from one.
19. This robin has less yellow on its underparts than its eastern cousin.
20. Coastal raptor.
22. Type of display by some raptors.
23. Sooty Terns nest on ... atolls.
24. Black scavenger.

Country Groups

EBOG (Esperance Bird Observers' Group)

The February outing of the Esperance Bird Observers Group was at Wheatfield Lake, one of many lakes only five minutes from Esperance. This lake is brackish unlike the salt lakes of Warden, Mullet and Station Lakes not far away.

Clear skies and little wind greeted members at the car park where a Red-eared Firetail was seen. Amongst the large numbers of Eurasian Coots and Grey Teal, 12 Great Crested Grebes stood out, 10 Pink-eared Ducks, Chestnut Teal and perched on trees around the lakes margin were eight Yellow-billed Spoonbills, six Little Pied Cormorants and three Little Black Cormorants. Black Swans and Musk Ducks were easily identified. Three Common Greenshanks were disturbed as we walked around part of the lake's edge. A single Australian Pelican was joined by another later in the morning.

A total of 26 species of birds was seen.

Allan Rose

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

Narrikup Area, 11 February

The Albany Group had a splendid outing on 11 February, our first for 1997.

Twenty-six people and about ten cars all gathered at the King's property on Millbrook Road.

The property is a massive garden with a permanent creek along one boundary. There are lots of resident birds. In the short time we were there, we saw 22 species including White-breasted Robin, Golden Whistler and Red-winged Fairy-wren.

Our next stop was Rob Booth's farm about 15 km west of Narrikup along Spencer Road.

Lake Eyrie is a large lake set behind the house, and can be seen from the road. It is brackish water but a large number of birds gather. In the time we were there we saw 41 species. There may have been others but we didn't have a scope!

An interesting wader that was identified was a Pectoral Sandpiper. It was viewed from 10 m in good light. It was with a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Both were observed by our best bird identifiers, ie, Ray Garstone and Michael Nield.

Morley Beach, 11 March

For the outing on 11 March, 27 people in 12 cars went to Morley Beach to see the waterbirds. We were led by Tim Hunt and Michael Nield. The morning was overcast with very little wind. Water levels were still quite high and the birds were there in abundance.

Tim is doing his waterbird count there and says he has counted 4400 Red-necked Stints. There were also a great number of Black Swans and Black-winged Stilts. We saw an unsuccessful attempt by a Peregrine Falcon to take a duck at the Sleeman River.

From Morley Road we went to the inlet off Eden Road, where we saw 6-7 Great Crested Grebes, 9-10 Yellow-billed Spoonbills, plus Little Pied Cormorants and a number of other waterbirds.

It was a good outing, enjoyed by all.

Torbay Area, 6 April

Tuesday 6 April was an ideal birdwatching day for the Albany group of bird enthusiasts.

The day was spent at North's property and surrounds. We crossed over the canal which joins Lake Powell to the Torbay Inlet onto the levy bank. This gave us the perfect view of the canal and woodlands on one side and Torbay Lake on the other.

There wasn't any wind, and very little cloud. The Karris were flowering and the birds were very busy. There were lots of water birds on the lake and in the canal.

Thirty people attended this outing. It is one of our favourite places. The bird call resulted in 59 species. Everybody agreed it was a great day.

Vivian McCormick

Notices

RUFIOUS TREECREEPER STUDY

The Rufous Treecreeper (*Climacteris rufa*) is a bird common to woodland and mallee habitats in southern Western Australia and western South Australia. However, clearance of woodland habitat, especially in areas such as the Western Australian wheatbelt, appears to have had an adverse effect on this species. I am beginning a three year study through Edith Cowan University that will focus on the habitat use of this species. I will also compare breeding success and habitat use by treecreepers in a large continuous habitat patch with smaller, more fragmented patches.

The study will be conducted in Dryandra (and possibly Highbury) State Forest and surrounding areas. I will be banding individual birds with a unique combination of one metal and one colour band on the left leg and two colour bands on the right. It would assist my research greatly if RAOU members bird-watching in or around Dryandra, Highbury, or woodland patches near Narrogin or Cuballing, could keep a look-out for Rufous Treecreepers.

Please note the location of the bird(s) and record the presence or absence of colour bands. If colour bands are present please record the colour of each band and its position on the leg (on the left leg the colour band will always be above the metal band). For example:

left leg — red above metal

right leg — blue above white (the position of the bands on the leg is just as important as the colour).

Colour banding will begin in July of this year and the project will continue until March 2000. It would also assist my study if you could record the location of birds with no bands. I would be interested to talk to any RAOU members who have location records for Rufous Treecreepers in or near Dryandra, Highbury, Narrogin or Cuballing (or even further afield). I will report on the progress of the study in future issues of WA Bird Notes.

Contact details:

PO Box 626, Joondalup 6919

Tel. (work) (08) 9400 5056

(home) (08) 9405 4567

E-mail: ddfxnq@scorpion.cowan.edu.au

Gary Luck

ECOLOGY OF THE AUSTRALIAN RAVEN

The Australian Raven (*Corvus coronoides*) is an aggressive, opportunistic bird that has adapted well to human alteration of the environment. A wider selection of food sources has allowed this bird to increase its abundance and distribution in the urban reaches of Australia. In Perth there is concern that raven abundance has increased to such an extent, that it may be having an impact on other urban dwelling fauna. However, little has been documented on the lifestyle and behaviour of the bird in a metropolitan setting.

An 'Honours' student in Environmental Management at Edith Cowan University, under the tutelage of Prof. Harry Recher, is attempting to quantify some aspects in the ecology of the raven in suburban Perth. Among other things, he is looking at the nests and nesting behaviour of the bird. Towards this he is requesting assistance from RAOU members to inform him of any nesting sites to study in the Perth metropolitan area. He is also interested in hearing from anyone who has witnessed at first hand a raven predation event, that is, any sightings of the raven robbing a nest or killing another bird/animal. Instances where the bird has disturbed people (been a nuisance) would also be useful to know about. Conversely he would be interested in any 'positive' comments about the raven.

If you have any important information about the raven, please contact:

Peter Stewart

Edith Cowan University

Department of Environmental Management

Joondalup Drive,

Joondalup 6027

Tel: (08) 9400 5058, Fax: (08) 9400 5717

E-mail: vydwbs@echidna.stu.cowan.edu.au

Thank you for your assistance.

WORLD POPULATION DAY

FRIDAY 11 JULY 1997

**Inaugural Public Meeting
Australians for an Ecologically
Sustainable Population (WA Branch)
Alexander Library Lecture Theatre**

Speakers:

Dr Graham Chittleborough, Environmental Scientist
Dr Tim Flannery, Senior Scientist, The Australian
Museum

Edwina Barton, National Convenor, AESP

Professor Harry Recher, Professor of Environmental
Management, Edith Cowan University

Chairperson:

Mr Richard Utting

All welcome

Editors' note: This is somewhat different to material we would normally publish in WABN. However, we believe that some of our members will be interested, and there can be no doubt about the relevance of human population growth to bird conservation, eg, at Lake McLarty!

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia-WA Group between 27 October 1996 and 14 January 1997. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

P Baker, A Bennett, P Bennett, C Bonham, B Brooker, T Candelias, C Cornwell, D Greenwood, G Jackson, K Kennedy, J Lewis, G Luck, F Marchant, D Mitchell, S Monterrubio, S Murray, S Norris, W Radcliffe, J Robinson, M Rossetto, R Sadleir, M Shaw, P Tuffin, O Vachez, J Venter, B Wedderburn, G F Wilson and M Wilson.

Observatory Reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

One of the best times at the Broome Bird Observatory is the migration period of March and April. Thousands of shorebirds put on breeding plumage and fatten up for the long migration north. Migration is systematically watched by staff who are joined by keen guests and day visitors. This 'visible' migration watch (as opposed to radar-tracking) began on 6 March, with 56 Eastern Curlews. Our biggest night of migration was on 4 April with 3020 birds migrating. Our biggest night of watchers was 20 as a group of locals joined us for the spectacle.

Migration data had an added dimension this year as Broome was linked to the Shorebird Reserve Information Network via Wetlands International in Canberra. As Broome faxed the details of birds migrating from Roebuck Bay we received information from Japan on the birds arriving there. As the birds left Roebuck Bay in species groups, shorebird arrival was monitored in Japan and China. Additional information received through the network included that of Eastern Curlews, fitted with satellite radio trackers, from Moreton Bay in Queensland. We could follow these birds as they travelled through the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Mai, the name given to one of the birds, is currently in the Russian Federation and within the known breeding range for this species. Our Eastern Curlews will now also be at a similar latitude.

Among the thousands of migrating shorebirds we also see small groups of Gull-billed Terns. There are two races of this impressive tern: *Sterna nilotica affinis*, (slightly smaller than *macrotarsa* which is resident in Australia) is the one we see migrating and it travels to southern China and south to the Malay Archipelago. As with the shorebirds their premigration behaviour is distinctive. The birds line up for the marathon, stop feeding and flick their wings and call, each appearing to urge the others on. They begin to organise themselves into characteristic chevrons as they fly over the beaches of Roebuck Bay and on over the Observatory.

Shorebird viewing is always good in the North West and occasionally throws up gems to get you excited or keep you guessing. Early in the migration, while watching with Raoul Boughton, Christine Mcnamara and Sue Proust of Barren Grounds Observatory, we became fascinated by a small shorebird. Although in every aspect of plumage the bird appeared to be a Curlew Sandpiper, its bill not only seemed straight but if anything, slightly upturned. We took copious notes as the bird fed on the mud. Finally in flight the distinctive

rump pattern confirmed it to be a Curlew Sandpiper with an aberrant bill. On talking to Mike Bamford we discovered that a straight billed Curlew Sandpiper was caught on the Swan Estuary in the early 1980s. One of the "gems" was on one of BBO's regular "Shorebird Tours": 27 Asian Dowitchers — 26 in full breeding plumage. When working with Mike Bamford at Cargill Salt, Chris and Mike spotted a Red-necked Stint that carried both a yellow and blue leg flag. Chris was sure that there could only be one bird with such a colour combination: the bird was banded originally in Hokkaido and recovered at the salt works last year on the North West Wader Expedition. We have since received confirmation from the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme that it was indeed the bird we suspected.

Our National Shorebird census for the Bay turned up smaller than normal counts for this time of year. This could be due to the poor breeding season for some of our species. Also, the salt pans behind the mangroves have remained wet after the huge monsoon low we had earlier in the year. The count for the Bay however was still 15 859, more than enough shorebirds to keep the most avid birdwatcher busy.

Until very recently, Roebuck Plains were extensively flooded, right up to the edge of the Great Northern Highway. This afforded some great tern viewing with thousands of Whiskered Terns and good numbers of White-winged Black Terns, in stunning breeding plumage, feeding out over the Plains. The area has been great for waterbirds with Great Crested Grebes, unusual for this area, turning up. Pink-eared Ducks, Hardheads, Grey Teal and Pacific Black Ducks were making the most of the water. On flooded land adjoining the Observatory there were breeding Plumed Whistling Ducks and at Taylor's Lagoon Wandering Whistling Ducks with a brood of nine ducklings. Our amazing duck story has to be the Plumed Whistling Duck who confidently set off across the Bay with her brood of nine ducklings. They must have walked a clear three kilometres over the low tide mud flats until they disappeared into the Crab Creek mangroves on the other side of the Bay. Luckily for them the White-bellied Sea-Eagles and Brahminy Kites were too full or otherwise engaged to bother with this very exposed family of determined mud walkers.

The bushbirds also provide us with plenty to look at and listen to. A Grey Falcon has been seen near the Observatory towards One Tree. We will be keeping a close eye out for this bird. On a visit to Taylor's Lagoon we heard the distinctive call of the Crested Bellbird. The *Birds of Broome* annotated list gives a single bird recorded in the Coconut Well area in 1910. However, George Swann has seen Crested Bellbirds north of Roebuck Plains on more recent occasions than this! Brief but distinct views of an Oriental Cuckoo were had at the Quarry Beach area by Janet Sparrow, Raoul Boughton and Peter West (Southern New South Wales and ACT Group). Other Cuckoos have also been prominent, with good views of Horsfield's Bronze, several excellent sightings of Black-eared Cuckoos (usually around mangrove habitat), Channel-billed Cuckoo calling in the Observatory and young Pallid Cuckoos being fed by a Brown Honeyeater and Grey Shrike-Thrush.

As new wardens we have had a busy March and April with the RAOU Observatory Conference, plenty of keen birdwatchers booked in and a full *Wave the Waders Goodbye* course. We are gearing up for what looks to be another action packed season with many visiting birdwatching groups and

some exciting research planned. We are happy to welcome two new Assistant Wardens for the 1997 season. Olivier Vachez joined us in April, after working in the rainforest habitats of northern Queensland. Ian Snadden returns from Tasmania, as Assistant Warden, at the end of May. He started his life as BBO course member in the 1996 *Birding in the Warm Winter Sun*. After staying on to help build the mud lab, he seems to find it impossible to stay away from the place. The amazing Mavis Russell is volunteering as Assistant Warden during April and May and will be joining the research project in June. It's great to see WA Group members represented among our courses participants and visiting the Observatory. We were particularly pleased to show WA Group Secretary, Margaret Philippon, around the place earlier this year. I know that Margaret had "dreamt of coming to Broome". We look forward to seeing many more of you as the year progresses.

Janet Sparrow and Chris Hassell

Excursion Reports

JUBILATION AT JOONDALUP, 13 February

A splendid morning's birding was held at Joondalup by the 15 lucky people who joined this walk ably led by Di Beckingham who we hope is a Born Again leader for the WA Group.

At 8:30 am the day started beautifully with the delightful and unusual sight of nine Great Egrets perched together on the rails of the small jetty in Neil Hawkins Park. Following the well kept path through the Marri and Tuart forest, the next excitement was the sighting, by one of our learner members, of two Tawny Frogmouths roosting together in a fairly open spot about three metres up in a small Marri tree.

Another great sight was that of a wonderfully marked Little Eagle soaring high up in a cloudless sky. For the writer and other experienced members it was the most perfectly marked Little Eagle they had ever seen.

So much for the highlights, but to add to the quality of this outing we saw at least ten Great Crested Grebes, thousands of ducks and other waterbirds, a Nankeen Night Heron, Little Egret and one Glossy Ibis.

We saw only one honeyeater — the Red Wattlebird.

In total 57 species were seen in the vicinity of Neil Hawkins Park. When some members drove to the south end of the lake we saw another 11 species. Altogether 68 species in about four hours — a remarkable effort. Other lakes on other excursions have yielded: Lake Carine 61, Coogee 55 and Herdsman about 66. So Joondalup could be said to be our top birding lake.

Many thanks to Di for organising this great day's birding.

Tom Delaney

WELLARD WETLANDS, BALDIVIS, 15 February

Unfortunately the date for this walk clashed with the Australian Wader Count. However, it was a mild, sunny day as eight members walked round the Wetlands. Alcoa has done a lot of work to encourage birds to the area and they have been very successful. Large numbers of ducks, three species of grebes, and Black Swans were using the lakes and several

raptors were hunting in the distance. In spite of the dry undergrowth, a number of bushbirds were sighted and a group of wrens was watched with interest as it included a young White-browed Scrubwren which was clearly seen high up in a eucalypt.

A total of 50 species was counted and it was a pleasant morning's walk.

Three members continued on to Woodman Point but were disappointed that few waders were seen — not a Red-capped Plover in sight! However, a single Grey-tailed Tattler and a group of Sanderlings were appreciated.

Margery Clegg

GINGIN LAKES, 23 February

After weeks of hot, dry days we drove through heavy rain to reach the meeting place in Gingin. Fourteen members braved the conditions and drove a further 25 km north of Gingin to reach Blue Lake, the property of R W Gill and Son on the Brand Highway.

The lake came into prominence during the South-West Waterbird Survey when, amongst other species, Freckled Ducks were sometimes recorded. During this visit, however, none was sighted, nor were there any swans. All the other ducks were present, together with a few waders like Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterel, Black-winged Stilt and Red-necked Avocet. Other waterbirds seen were White-faced Heron, Great Egret and Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Raptors seen included a Swamp Harrier, a Little Eagle and two Wedge-tailed Eagles close to a nest. In all, we found 24 species of wetland birds, and 34 other species in the surrounding bush, giving a total of 58 for the morning out of 69 so far recorded for the area.

After lunch some of the group went into Beermullah Lake a few kilometres south to add several new species to our list for the day. A notable sighting was of a Little Egret perched in a dead tree next to a Great Egret thereby giving a fine comparison of the two species.

It should be noted that both lakes are on private property and permission to visit either must be obtained from the owners.

Bryan Barrett

CAMPOUT AT WILGARUP LAKE, MANJIMUP, 1-3 March

Twenty people attended this campout at the lake and surrounding bushland on a property approximately 265 km from Perth. The area consists of 200 acres of bush, and another 200 acres of wetland.

Wilgarup Lake was one of the last-known whereabouts of the Lewin's Rail, which is now thought to be extinct in WA. Unfortunately, we didn't rediscover the species on this occasion, but where there's life there's hope — Mr and Mrs Phillips are trying to develop Wilgarup as a wildlife sanctuary.

We did get excellent sightings of Baillon's Crakes and Spotless Crakes. We saw the three grebes, the Little Pied, the Great, and the Little Black Cormorant, plenty of Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Black Swans galore, and eight species of duck. Ten raptor species were sighted. The Peregrine Falcon, the Australian Hobby, and the Swamp Harrier were above us all at once. Six species of parrot, and both bronzewings were seen. We also encountered Scarlet, White-breasted, and Western Yellow Robins, Restless Flycatchers, Red-winged and

Splendid Fairy-wrens, seven species of honeyeater, and Red-eared Firetails. In total, 87 species were counted.



A view of Wilgarup Swamp
Drawn by Pam Agar.

Participants were invited to the Phillips' house on Saturday night for an open fire, complete with coffee, tea, and home-baked scones with jam and real cream!

Back at the lake, breeding darters were a special highlight. Pam Agar and I tried to sketch several young. We couldn't get very close, and there were a few friendly tiger snakes about, but it was great fun watching these birds' antics (see article and sketch in Members' Contributions: Eds).

Everyone enjoyed this campout immensely. Our hosts were very happy to have us visit and enjoy their wetland, and hope that we will do so on a regular basis. They are to be commended for their conservation efforts; we look forward to returning to Wilgarup.

Karen McRoberts

LAKE COOGEE, 8 March

Once more a fine sunny day greeted the occasion of our morning walk around Lake Coogee. An optimistic group of 17 eager bird spotters set off on a walk that has yielded good raptor sightings on previous walks. Again we were not disappointed as excellent views of Little Eagle, Brown Goshawk, Black-shouldered Kite and Whistling Kite were enjoyed.

The birds were not particularly active on this morning and our group had to work hard for sightings. Endeavour had its reward, however, and most of us had very good sightings

of both a Spotless Crake and a juvenile Pallid Cuckoo, with White-backed Swallows and Great Crested Grebes also being a bit special.

A total of 56 species was collated at the end of a pleasant morning's walk.

Dave and Jan Crossley

FLYNN ROAD, 16 March

Trying to locate birds in the Darling Range during the heat of the summer can prove to be a difficult and exasperating exercise. We have been looking at birds in the Flynn Road area since 1983 and know most of their territories and where certain species can often be found. It was therefore frustrating to direct members to a known locality only to find later that they had walked for quite a time without seeing many birds.

We made a good start finding a pair of Crested Shrike-tits, a Restless Flycatcher, several Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters and some Dusky Woodswallows within minutes of leaving the cars. Rufous Treecreepers were there, too, but the remainder of the day proved more than difficult. The birds were present in small numbers, but few called and were seldom seen.

Only two members found a pair of Hooded Robins and none appeared at lunchtime which they had done on the previous visit. One Western Yellow Robin was sighted and only one pair of Scarlet Robins showed themselves. At other times when we have been alone or with a group the two species have usually been seen. However, this time was the exception and we lunched alone.

After lunch we continued on to a small area of heathland where several species of honeyeaters are usually found. This time only one or two White-cheeked Honeyeaters were seen, but two quail were flushed several times and it was thought that they were Stubble Quail, which have been reported in the area only once before.

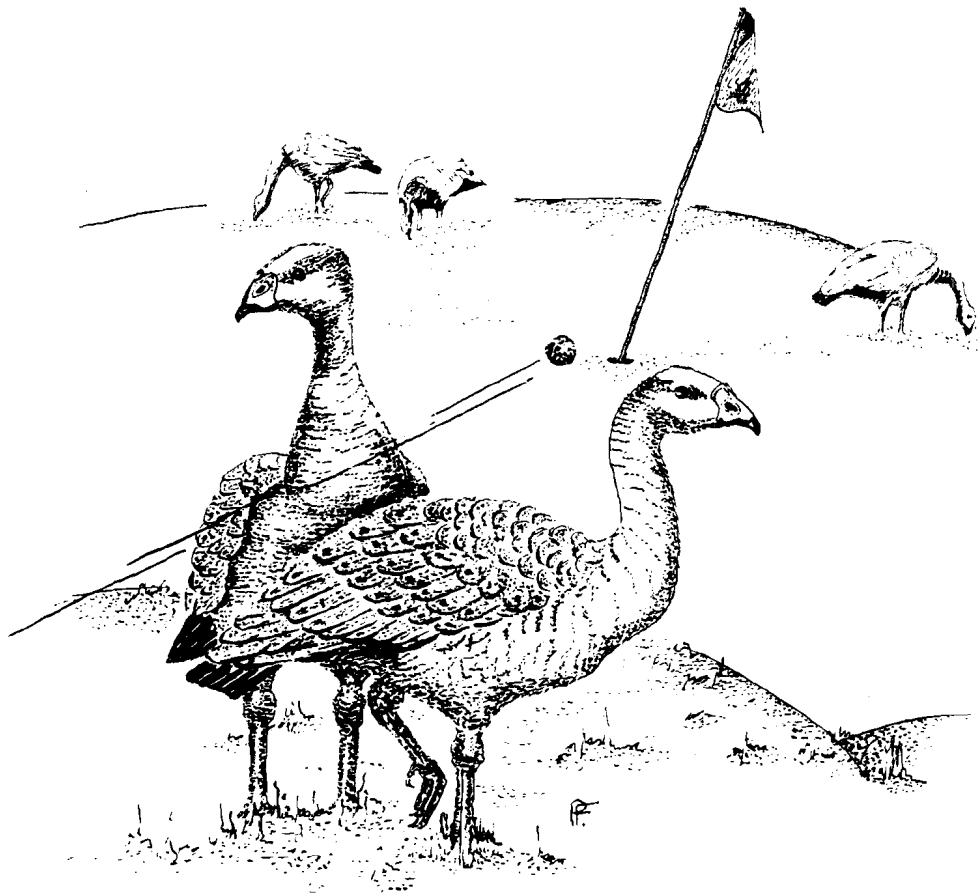
A total of 35 species was seen during the day by the group of 13 members who enjoyed the visit to this attractive area of the hills in spite of the lack of birdlife.

Bryan Barrett

THOMSONS, KOGOLUP AND YANGEBUP LAKES, 22 March

Nineteen people attended the walk, intended to be to Thomsons Lake. When we got down to the lake, we found it more-or-less dry. In the far distance, we could see a few hundred waders feeding in shallow mud. We decided to move on to Kogolup Lake, which was about one third full. Here we saw Red-necked Avocets, two Spotless Crakes, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and several species of ducks. We then went on to Yangebup Lake, where the water was quite deep. Birds seen here included Hoary-headed and Australasian Grebes, plenty of Black Swans, and Pink-eared and Musk Ducks. Also encountered were Great Egrets, Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels, and a few Wood Sandpipers. White-fronted Chats were plentiful in the samphire areas. Bushbirds seen included Rufous Whistlers, Grey Fantails, Willie Wagtails, and Red Wattlebirds. A total of 50 species was counted for the day.

Bill McRoberts



Cape Barren Geese, an added hazard for
golfers on Esperance Golf Course
Drawn by Pam Free

EASTER CAMPOUT AT ESPERANCE, WITH EXTENSIONS TO CAPE ARID, PEAK CHARLES AND FRANK HANN NATIONAL PARKS

Fourteen of us gathered at the Esperance Shire Caravan Park on the evening of 28 March, all hoping for a good long weekend of birding in pleasant weather. Well, the birding was good but the weather, at least for the first couple of days, was not the best. Clive and Wendy Napier, who had arrived a day early and scouted around, promised some exciting sights, including masses of Hooded Plovers at the "world capital" of this species, Lake Gore. So we set off in that direction on a dull and windy Saturday morning. Unfortunately the plovers had other ideas, and despite diligently searching around the lake not one was to be seen, and not much else either! After such a disappointing start things could only get better, and they did. Other locations visited on day one were much more productive and Pam and I saw several new species, including Cape Barren Geese obstructing the players at the Esperance Golf Club.

On Sunday some went to Cape le Grand and four of us took the island cruise. Sightings included shearwaters, a White-bellied Sea-eagle, Sooty Oystercatchers and, on Woody Island, an abundance of Golden Whistlers.

Twelve of the 14 people moved to Cape Arid on Monday. We spent a couple of days here, with good results including some new species for the Park. Four-wheel-drive vehicles

proved essential to access some of the more remote areas. Cape Arid is well worth a visit but, as advised in the *WA Bird Notes*, one has to be totally self sufficient here. Australasian Gannets, Hooded Plovers, Red-necked Stints, Sanderlings and Rock Parrots were among the birds seen on the miles-long beach. Three new species (Little Black Cormorant, Brown Goshawk and Sanderling) were added to the CALM Cape Arid bird list.

On Wednesday we moved to Peak Charles National Park. Driving in, Pam and I saw our first Australian Bustards, a great introduction. Peak Charles is most impressive: some of us could not resist the climb to the summit (650 m) on Thursday morning, despite, or perhaps because of, the wine consumed around the camp fire the previous evening. It was blowing a gale up there but we were compensated by excellent views of the surrounding country as well as a curious Wedge-tailed Eagle and a pair of Peregrine Falcons.

We had to leave at midday, but the rest of the group observed some more birds to bring the total to 31 species. In a short stop at Frank Hann National Park on the return journey, they managed a count of 21 species.

Many thanks to our leader, Clive Napier. The very long drive from Perth was certainly worthwhile. In all 123 species were recorded in Esperance Shire.

David Free

HILLARYS PELAGIC TRIP, 6 April

The day threatened thunderstorms, but the weather held off and the seas were mostly calm. A disappointing day but there were close views of Great-winged Petrels and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, some of which were in wing moult. Other birds seen by some or all of the people were Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Great Skua, Pomarine Jaeger, Arctic Jaeger, Bridled and Roseate Tern. Perhaps the most unusual sightings were a small number of Fairy Terns well out to sea, as well as some distant martins/swallows.

The next pelagic trip in May will have passed by the time this is published, but another trip is expected to be organised in August or, more likely, September. For details contact Frank O'Connor on (08) 9386 5694 or (08) 9482 1445.

Frank O'Connor

GINGIN, 13 April

Close to 20 people took part in the full day trip to Lakes Bambun, Nambung and Mungala in peaceful Gingin. It was a beautiful day, sun at every step and waterbirds galore. Highlights were several sightings of the bow-winged Whistling Kite. What a beauty, swooping high above the Lake earlier in the day.

Some people were lucky to see their first Black-fronted Dotterel. These delicately skirted the lake, whilst a pot-pourri of waterbirds (ibis, spoonbill, eight species of duck and two grebes) swam and fed farther out.

Our party walked around the larger of the lakes which took us nearly two hours. Along the way we spotted Splendid Fairy-wrens, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Yellow-throated Miners.

Fifty-three species were seen — a lovely Sunday birdwatching trip.

Thanks to Clive and Wendy.

Jeff and Penny Towells

CANNING RIVER REGIONAL PARK, 16 April

This mid-week walk was held on a perfect autumn morning with clear skies and little or no wind. The river was placid and presented tranquil stretches which were occasionally ruffled by various species of ducks and other waterbirds. The bushbirds were also reasonably abundant and easy to see, such as the Sacred Kingfisher which was perched on a branch overhanging the river. Even before the walk commenced most members of the group had a grandstand view of a sparrowhawk frightening a small flock of Rainbow Lorikeets which chose to settle in the same tree as the hawk. During the two and a half hour walk we saw 56 species.

Bryan Barrett

BUSSELTON CAMPOUT, 25-27 April

Sixteen people defied the weather forecaster's predictions and journeyed to the South-west for the Anzac weekend. Except for a short but violent thunderstorm on Saturday morning the weather was excellent. Friday afternoon saw the group enjoy a delightful walk up the creek at Meelup where three species of robins as well as Varied Sittellas and many of the usual bushbirds were seen. This was followed by a drive to Sugarloaf Rock near Cape Naturaliste where the most

southern colony of Red-tailed Tropicbirds spend the summer. Unfortunately for us they had left only a week before for warmer climes.

Friday night was a highlight as Sue Abbotts had organised a walk through the Ludlow Tuart forest led by Dick Shaw from the RGC Wetlands Centre. We did not see any night birds but 16 Ringtailed Possums appeared in our torch beams. This was a most interesting and appreciated innovation.

Saturday started with the abovementioned violent thunderstorm but soon became fine and allowed an enjoyable walk through the Ambergate Reserve. Whistlers, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, an unnamed quail and numerous fully coloured Red-capped Parrots added to the list. We drove to Gracetown for lunch and afterwards followed the trail up the hill through the stunted Karri. Birds were not numerous as it was the middle of the day but several honeyeaters were seen and the piercing call of the Rufous Treecreeper was distinctly heard. On returning to the cars we were met by young Mr Jones who advised us that we had missed the best show as a family of Southern Emu-wrens had been playing around the car park. Fortunately they were still nearby and most had good views.

On Sunday morning we visited the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands for the ornithological highlight of the visit. Jim Lane led us to an area where we had excellent views of a Common Redshank. This is only the second sighting of this species in the south-west of WA. Fine weather and sun all assisted in giving everyone top views.

A short drive took us to the RGC Wetlands where Dick Shaw again took over and led us around this attractive area.

In all, 88 species were sighted during the weekend and an enjoyable time had by all.

Sue rightly won the prize for the nearest guesstimate of the total with 89 and our sincere thanks to her for the excellent planning and attention to detail which she had put into the excursion. It was an extremely smooth operation, despite her co-leader's efforts to get everyone lost. Our thanks also to Dick Shaw and Jim Lane for their part in making the weekend so successful.

Clive Napier

Coming Events

Saturday, May 31st - Monday, June 2nd —Campout at Ninghan Station, Payne's Find

110 km north of Wubin on the Great Northern Highway, you will see a sign on the left-hand side of the road, marking the turn off to Ninghan Station. The Station is about 6 km from the highway. We've booked a number of unpowered sites at \$6 per person per night. Powered sites are available for slightly more. Some double rooms are also available, but need to be booked directly with the station owners (phone 099-636517). If interested, you'll need to book as soon as possible as these rooms go quickly at this time of year. When booking, please say that you are with the birdwatching group from Perth. Everyone attending this campout should call the RAOU office on 383-7749 to let us know the numbers in your party.

This should be a great area to see Burke's Parrots, Malleefowl, Major Mitchell Cockatoos, Gilbert's Whistlers, and much more!

Leaders: Clive Napier and Bill McRoberts

Sunday, June 8th — Half-day Excursion to Bickley Brook Reserve

Meet at 8:30 am at the turning circle, next to the children's camp. From Perth travelling on the Tonkin Highway, turn left into Gosnells Road East (Reservoir is signposted), then left into Reservoir Road and right into Maddington/Hardinge Road.

We have a good chance of seeing Emu-wrens, Red-Browed Firetails, plus all our favourite bush birds.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Saturday, June 14th — Full-day Excursion to The Spectacles Mandogalup

Meet in the main Car-park on McLaughlan Road at 8:30 am. Proceed along the Kwinana Freeway to the Anketell crossroad, some 30 km south of Perth. Turn right into Anketell Road, travel about 2 km, then turn left into McLaughlan Road. It's a nice place for lunch so bring some!

Leaders: Viv Dare and Sue Abbotts

Wednesday, June 18th — Mid-week Excursion to Herdsman Lake

Meet at 8:30 am in Maurice Hamer Park. Turn off Pearson Street into Goldfinch Avenue. Turn right onto Lakeside Road and follow it along to the carpark near Heron Place.

This is a great spot for viewing waterbirds. Bring your telescope if you have one.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Sunday, June 22nd — Half-day Excursion to Burswood Open Spaces

Meet at 8:30 am outside the Park Board Administration Building. Parking is available about 100 metres to the left and right of the building. We'll be looking at the bird life which has returned to the public parks and gardens which occupy the site of the former Rivervale Dump.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Monday 23 June Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Frank O'Connor, a member of our Group who works at the Argyle diamond mine in the Kimberley and has made good birding use of his time in the north, will talk about how local birds have adapted themselves to the presence of the mine.

Sunday 6 July — Half-day Excursion, North Mole, Fremantle

Meet at 8:30 am. We aim to spend a couple of hours looking for seabirds. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Ian Standing

Saturday 12 July — Full-day Excursion, West Talbot Road, Shire of York

Meet at 9:00 am at The Lakes turnoff, corner of Great Eastern Highway and the York road. We will investigate an area of wandoo forest on either side of the West Talbot Road which is approximately 50 km east of Midland.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Monday 21 July Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Note: THIRD Monday

Susanne Dennings is the secretary of the Malleefowl Preservation Group Inc at Ongerup and will give a presentation on the work of that Group. Malleefowl are threatened by loss of habitat, foxes and other factors and there is an urgent need to find out as much as possible about remaining populations and work out ways to safeguard them. Some farmers, such as those down at Ongerup, are making a major effort to further Malleefowl conservation.

Saturday 26 July — Half-day Excursion, Yellagonga Regional Park, Joondalup

Meet at 8:30 am at Neil Hawkins Park, in the car park at the end of Boas Avenue. A chance to see the birdlife of Lake Joondalup. This is a good spot for a picnic. Another area can be visited after lunch for those who would like to.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Sunday 3 August — Half-day Excursion, Helena Valley, Boya

Meet at 8:30 am at parking lot 600 m beyond the sealed section of Helena Valley Road. This unsealed section is negotiable for normal vehicles provided care is taken. If you wish, park just off the end of the bitumen and walk to the parking area.

To reach Helena Valley Road at K9 Map 15 1993 UBD or Map 253 F14 UBD 1997, take Ridge Hill Road or Helena Valley Road or Scott Road. Follow Helena Valley Road east up the River valley.

Walk distance is 5 km but those of you who wish for a shorter walk can return earlier. This is a new walk for the Group.

Leader: Wendy Napier

Sunday 10 August — Half-day Excursion, Bold Park/Perry Lakes

Meet at 8:00 am at Perry House, 71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat. Birdwatching in Bold Park and at Perry Lakes for 3-4 hours.

Leader: Helen Clark

Saturday 16 August — Full-day Excursion, Serpentine National Park

Meet at 8:30 am at the junction of the South West Highway and Falls Road (the turnoff to Serpentine Falls). A visit to several sections of the Park not normally accessible to the general public. Eighty species of birds have been seen here. Bring your lunch.

Leaders: Marjorie and Gordon Wilson

Saturday 23 August — Full-day Excursion, Wambyn Nature Reserve, Shire of York

Meet at 8:30 am at the junction of York Road and the Great Eastern Highway ("The Lakes" service station). The reserve is approximately 35 km beyond the junction. Good stands of Wandoo and breakaways, etc, where the birding can be interesting.

Leader: John Ashford

Monday 25 August Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

John Darnell, a member of our Group with considerable knowledge of our seabirds and of the birds of South-east Asia,

will discuss the identification of seabirds. With interest in watching seabirds (whether from boats or from *terra firma*) increasing among local birdos, many will be acutely aware of the need to be able to distinguish quickly and accurately between the numerous species that are known to occur, or may occur, off our coasts.

Wednesday 3 September — Mid-week Walk, Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis

Meet at 8:30 am at the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on the northern side of Zigzag Road, 1 km from St Alban's Road, Baldivis.

There should be plenty of waterbirds and bushbirds breeding.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 7 September — Half-day Excursion, Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale

Meet at 8:30 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam, at the end of Admiral Road (off Albany Highway), Bedfordale.

This is an excellent site for Red-eared Firetails and White-breasted Robins. Ninety-two different species have been seen at this site. Wedge-tailed Eagles are again being sighted — since at least one bird was shot and fire destroyed their nest.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Saturday/Sunday 13/14 September — Julimar State Forest Campout

Enjoy a spring weekend in the forest. Easy access is from Bindoon/Dewars Pool Road, turn off on Munyerring Spring Road (B2 Map 70, *Travellers' Atlas*). This is a reasonable, gravel road. Follow RAOU signs to camp site. No water or facilities are available. Permission for tents, campers, caravans has been obtained from CALM.

Arrive Friday evening 12 September or Saturday morning and stay as long as you like.

Night spotting for owls and nightjars.

Ring the office to be on the list for this campout.

Leader: Allan Burbidge

Sunday 21 September — Full-day Walk from Nanga Bridge along the Murray River

Meet at 8:30 am at the Dwellingup Hotel. From Perth, drive down the South West Highway to North Dandalup. Turn left to Dwellingup. Allow one hour of driving time from Armadale (about 70 km one-way).

This will be a 12-km undulating walk down a creek and along the Murray River. We'll follow a good track through Jarrah, Marri and *Banksia*, with beautiful views of the river.

Bushbirds seen in this area include Striated and Spotted Pardalote, Red-eared Firetail, Red-winged Fairy-wren, White-breasted Robin and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Bring lunch and a minimum of one litre of water. I'll boil a billy at lunch time for everyone.

Leader: Sue Abbotts (08) 9444 1607

Monday 22 September Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Dr Douglas Hey, a retired Director of Nature Conservation for the Cape Province of South Africa, will speak about the fauna and flora of that beautiful province and in doing so will pay special attention to its birdlife.

Thursday 25 September — Mid-week Excursion, Piesse Brook, Kalamunda

Meet at 8:30 am at the junction of Hummerston Road and Schipp Road at the southern end of Kalamunda National Park. Take Mundaring Weir Road from Kalamunda and turn left into Hummerston Road. Possible sightings of Golden Whistlers, the introduced Red-browed Firetails, and other bushbirds.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 27-Monday 29 September — Campout at Stirling Range National Park, with continuation at Walpole on Tuesday 30 September-Saturday 4 October

This is a brilliant time of year to visit the Stirlings, home to a great many species of birds and plants. We will be staying at the Stirling Range Caravan Park, itself a haven for birdlife. A range of accommodation is available. We have booked camping sites, but if you require powered sites for caravans or on-site accommodation, please book your own by phoning the caravan park on (08) 9827 9229. You should do this as soon as possible as Spring in the Stirlings books out FAST! Please let the Birds Australia office know if you are coming and the numbers in your party by phoning (08) 9383 7749.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Continuation to Walpole — Tuesday 30 September-Saturday 4 October

Walpole is situated 423 km south east of Perth in the heart of the Nornalup National Park. This is a picturesque area with tranquil waterways and magnificent Karri and Tingle forest, home to many birds.

The venue at Walpole will be the Coalmine Beach Caravan Park, which has cabins, on-site vans, powered and unpowered sites, bbqs, and a camp kitchen. The Park is set amongst peppermint trees and is close to the beach.

A camping area with shelter has been booked. However, if you need powered caravan sites or on-site accommodation, you are requested to book your own by phoning the caravan park on (08) 9840 1026. If you are coming, please let the Birds Australia office know, with numbers in your party, by phoning (08) 9383 7749. Further information can be obtained from Maggie Cashman-Bailes on (08) 9272 4723.

Leader: Maggie Cashman-Bailes

Monday 27 October Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Dr Andrew Burbidge, the Director of the WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit at CALM's Wildlife Research Centre, will discuss the birds of the Monte Bello Islands and CALM's Seabird Breeding Islands Database.

Monday 24 November Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Dr Stephen Ambrose, who studied White-browed Scrubwrens in three different locations in WA for his PhD thesis and later became known for his co-ordination of the Australian Bird Count, will be talking either about the Australian Bird Count or about RAOU research programmes (including those in WA) or both.

NO DECEMBER EVENING MEETING

Monday 19 January 1998 Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Belinda Brooker has been carrying out research on Thick-billed Grasswrens on Peron Peninsula in Shark Bay and will be discussing aspects of their breeding cycle, how their diet compares with that of other bird species in the area and why the species has disappeared from much of its former range.

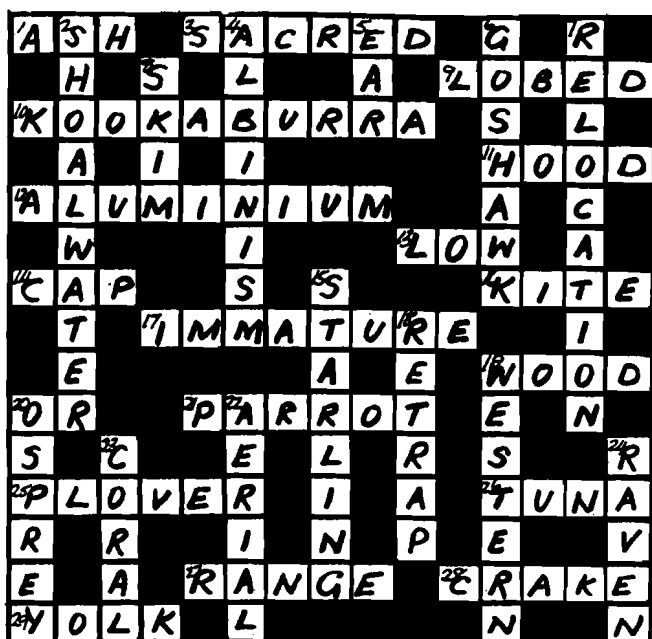
Monday 23 February Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

John Blyth, a prominent member of the Group for many years and a member of CALM's Threatened Species and Communities Unit, has been searching for, and collecting information on, the Night Parrot. His talk will, among other things, explain how we can assist in the search for this parrot, which is probably Australia's rarest and least known bird species.

Monday 23 March Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

David Lamont is the executive officer of CALM's Roadside Conservation Committee and has been studying Rainbow Lorikeets, which he describes as an evolving pest species in this State. What David has to say about this native of eastern Australia will be of particular interest because of its rapid spread through the metropolitan area.

Crossword answers



GIFTS

Think of purchasing your gifts from the Perry House office.

Books, field guides, calendars, cards, tapes, videos, CDs and more.

Call at the office any weekday morning, see our range of stock or check catalogues for items that can be ordered.

Ask us to post out a list of items available. The stock is constantly being updated.

BIRDS ON FARMS AT COOROW

Having now completed three visits to the Coorow property Koobabbie, owned by Alison and John Doley, we are starting to gain an overview of the main birds likely to be seen. Koobabbie is a large and varied property with comparatively large areas of uncleared vegetation, all of which are fenced off from stock. As a result the property supports a diverse bird fauna, including some species which are not common in more highly developed parts of the Wheatbelt. Southern Scrub Robins and Western Yellow Robin appear to be resident on one relatively small patch (about 8ha) of thirty year old regrowth 'kwongan' on a gravelly slope. A healthy population of White-browed Babblers also occurs on this remnant and elsewhere on the property.

Koobabbie also boasts a good range of cockatoos, with Galahs and Western Corellas abundant, both short-billed Black and Red-tailed Black Cockatoos breeding on the property, and Major Mitchells seen regularly and possibly breeding there as well.

As would be expected with a property towards the northern edge of the Wheatbelt, Koobabbie has a mixture of typically southwestern species, such as the two robins referred to above, and species from the arid inland, including the inland form of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Mulga Parrot, Little Button-quail, White-fronted Honeyeater and White-backed Swallow. There are also of course many of the widespread species such as Black-faced Woodswallow, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Australian Owlet Nightjar.

One of the joys of projects like Birds on Farms is the opportunity to get to know people like the Doleys, who are not only practical and successful farmers but have a genuine love of the plants and animals that their farm supports and take many practical steps to conserve them.

John and Judy Blyth

* BAWAG NEEDS YOU



* Birds Australia - WA Group

(a division of Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

Due to a considerable increase in projects, excursions and general activity, we are in desperate need of more assistance from our members. You do not need to be a scientist, computer expert or bus driver — just willing.

We need people to assist and understudy various members who have become expert in their fields but need backup.

There are many interesting and rewarding jobs which can take as little or as much of your time as you determine.

We need people to act as Office Volunteers during weekday mornings, more assistance with data input

for the major Database, Excursion Leaders, volunteers to assist with project coordination and one or two to assist with the Trading Table.

Don't hang back because you think you are not sufficiently expert. We will either find something suitable or teach you the simple skills required for any of the above. Apart from helping your Organisation, you will have fun and assist in research and conservation of BIRDS. PLEASE OFFER your help; I hate having to break arms!

Please fill in one or both of the forms on the enclosed sheet and post or deliver to the Office.

Clive Napier



KIRRAMA WILDLIFE TOURS

Cape York Birding Adventures 2 Jan-16 Jan 1998

January is the best time for birds on Cape York

Location: **Pajinka Wilderness Lodge**

Organised and operated by the best team
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Special rates for a 4-day, 5-day
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FALCON TOURS

1998 PROGRAM **KIMBERLEY - NTH. TERRITORY** **21 DAYS (CAMPING)**

1 - 21 June '98 13 days \$1980

Ext. to Darwin 8 days \$1218

Broome, private Kimberley cattle stations, Kununurra, Gregory National Park (rarely visited), Katherine, South Kakadu Park, Litchfield and Darwin. Some would say it was the sightings of Red Goshawk, Black Grasswren, Black Bittern, Asian Dowicher, Gouldian Finch, Yellow Chat, Grey Falcon, Letterwing Kite, Princess Parrot, Spinifexbird, Inland Dotterel and Banded Whiteface that made our '96 Kimberley tour a success; for me it was simply the group. This time travelling to Darwin may give us Hooded Parrot, White-throated Grasswren, White-lined Honeyeater and Banded Pigeon etc.

KENYA - 17 days **(Optional extension 3 nights coast)** **Zimbabwe - Vic Falls Ext. 3 days**

13th Jan to 1st Feb 1999

Yes, we are going back to Kenya, the best tour in Africa so far, with a top Kenyan guide, simply the best game viewing and an amazing quantity of bird species. We had over 550 species for the total trip and it could have been more but the game viewing was so good. The lodges and meals are of a very high standard. Apologies for changing the date but January in Kenya is the best time for birding and '99 is the only time available.

SOUTH WEST IN THE WILDFLOWER SEASON

Incl. a boat trip to the Abrolhos Islands

11 days (6 days accom. 5 days camping and return flight Geraldton Perth)

November 14 to 28 1998 \$1970 (great value)

We know the South West so well that getting the endemics is not a problem. We will see many wildflowers as well and the trip out to the Abrolhos coincides with one of Australia's birding wonders; thousands of breeding Common and Lesser Noddies as well as other sea birds.

Send for the itinerary you require.

All '97 tours are full.

Please note that our overseas tours are not for 'Twitchers' being 70-80% birding, 10-20% game viewing and 10% cultural interest.

All tours led by Simon Nevill.

Unit 7 - 432 South Terrace
South Fremantle WA 6162

Ph/Fax: (08) 9336 3882

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