

Western Australian Bird Notes

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

No 83 September 1997

EASTERN CURLEWS NEAR MANDURAH

The West Australian Wader Study Group has nominated the Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*) as a species of special interest.

This outline has been written to provide some background information for members who are interested in participating in monitoring Eastern Curlew populations and movements in Western Australia.

Although the emphasis in this article is on the lower south west, this is by no means meant to discourage members residing in the northern parts of our State from participating in the survey. If anything, the opposite holds true, as little information is available from the areas between Karratha and Perth.

The Eastern Curlew is the largest wader to visit our shores and has been listed internationally as a species of special concern. A general decline in numbers has been noticed in both their Russian breeding grounds (Gerasimov *et al.*, 1997) and their Australian overwintering grounds. The fact that it is a large and slow bird make it a favourite game species for waterfowl hunters in Russia, where as recently as 1989 the Eastern Curlew was still listed as a gamebird. Statutory protection from legal hunters is now provided. Hunting also formerly took place in Tasmania (Lane, 1987, page 89).

The preferred habitats for Eastern Curlews in Australia are estuarine mudflats and samphire marshes. They are very sensitive to disturbance of any kind and quick to take flight.

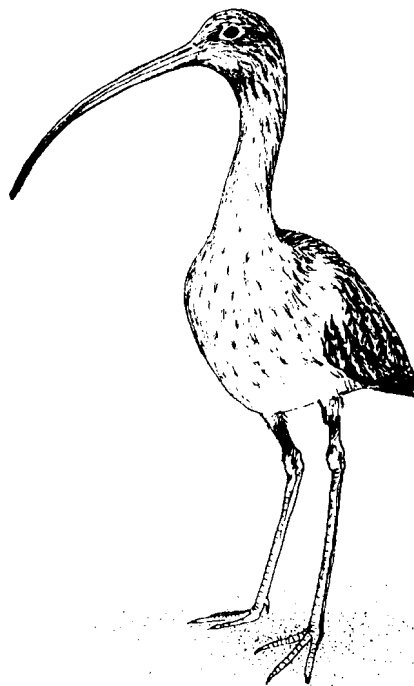
Unfortunately most known sites coincide with popular recreational areas.

In Western Australia Eastern Curlews are most common at Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach (Watkins 1993). Around Carnarvon and Shark Bay they still number in the hundreds out on the mangrove mudflats, but become much less common the further south you go.

Nevertheless, Eastern Curlews have been observed at a number of locations in the south west corner of Western Australia. The best known sites are the northern Peel Inlet (in particular Austin Bay, Coodanup Beach and Sticks Channel), Alfred Cove Nature Reserve, the southern Leschenault Inlet (especially the mouth of the Preston River) and Oyster Harbour (mouth of the King River). It probably frequents other sites that need to be identified; for example I have a sighting of one Eastern Curlew on the beach at Woodman Point (29 March 1997) during its northward migration.

The highest count recorded for the lower south west was 23 birds at the mouth of the King River, Albany (Jaensch *et al.*, 1993). This observation was made back in 1988. Generally only one or two Eastern Curlews are found in the Albany area according to the national wader counts. Another high count was 16 Eastern Curlews at Coodanup, Mandurah (Kirkby, 1992).

The mouth of the Preston River and Leschenault Inlet used to produce regular observations of Eastern Curlews,



The Eastern Curlew is the most spectacular of the transequatorial migrants
Drawn by Judy Blyth

Black-browed Albatross — 4 immatures, 27/6/97, 20 km W of Hillarys — FO

Yellow-nosed Albatross — 1 adult of nominate subspecies, 20/7/97, 20 km W of Rottneest I. — PPT (first confirmed record of this subspecies for Western Australia: more details will be published in next issue of WABN.)

Wilson's Storm-Petrel — 1, 23/5/97, North Mole (Fremantle) — FO * 6, 31/5/97, Point Peron (Rockingham) — FO * 1, 31/5/97 and 2/6/97, North Mole (Fremantle) — IS * 1, 5/6/97, Busselton Jetty (Busselton) — MC, GM * 6, 27/6/97, 20 km W of Hillarys — FO * 1, 20/7/97, N of Rottneest I. — PPT

Red-tailed Tropicbird — 2, 25/5/97, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) — FO

Australian Bustard — 1, 19/5/97, Victoria Road, Wattle Grove (Kalamunda) — JC

Black-tailed Godwit — 5, 24/5/97, Kogolup Swamp (Cockburn) — FO * 6, 15/6/97, Alfred Cove (Melville) — BB * 6, 6/97, Kogolup Swamp (Cockburn) — LH

Pectoral Sandpiper — 16, 19/3/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC, GM * 20, 11/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC, GM

Pomarine Jaeger — 2, 16/3/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP

Arctic Jaeger — 2, 15/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 1, 17/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 1, 18/2/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP * 6, 16/3/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) — RP

Lesser Crested Tern — 1 adult, non-breeding, Woodman Point (Cockburn) — TK

Common Noddy — 1, 20/5/97, North Fremantle Primary School (Fremantle) — DP

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo — 1000+, 20/5/97, Beacon-Bencubbin Road, c. 15 km N of Beacon (Mt Marshall) — RD

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo — 31, 11/4/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) — MC, GM

Regent Parrot — 50 (feeding on *Solanum* fruits), 13/6/97, North Dandalup (Murray) — VW

Varied Sittella — 1, 22/6/97, Jarrad Street, Cottesloe (Cottesloe) — IS

Red-eared Firetail — 2, 20/7/97, Victoria Dam, Canning Mills (Kalamunda) — MB, KC

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

Grey Falcon — 2, 25/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

Inland Dotterel — 6, 4/6/97, Cooralya Station, N of Carnarvon (Carnarvon) — TK (unusual this far west)

Splendid Fairy-wren — 23, 13-26/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

Redthroat — 3, 13-24/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

Slender-billed Thornbill — 4, 1/5/97, Lake Annean (Meekatharra) — MC

Orange Chat — 40, 1/5/97, Lake Annean (Meekatharra) — MC

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush — 2, 21/6/97, West Angelas, 100 km NW of Newman (Ashburton) — GM

KIMBERLEY

King Quail — 1, 11/2/97, 1.5 km N of Ivanhoe Crossing (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Oriental Cuckoo — 10, 9/2/97, banks of the Ord River 31 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Channel-billed Cuckoo — 4, 9/2/97, banks of the Ord River 31 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Green-backed Gerygone — 2, 17/10/96, N end of Weaber Plain 48 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 2, 8/2/97, N end of Weaber Plain 48 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Lemon-bellied Flycatcher (nominate race) — 3, 9/2/97, vine thicket 50 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Lemon-bellied Flycatcher (Kimberley race) — 6, 13/2/97, Wyndham wharf (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Grey Butcherbird (silver-backed subspecies) — 3, 17/10/96, N end of Weaber Plain 48 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Star Finch — 800, 16/10/96, irrigation channel 32 km NNE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Yellow-rumped Mannikin — 44, 16/10/96, irrigation channel 32 km NNE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Pictorella Mannikin — 33, 18/10/96, Keep River Plain 33 km NE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Barn Swallow — 50, 9/2/97, Kununurra Airport (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Tawny Grassbird — 8, 16/10/96, irrigation channel 32 km NNE of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 7, 12/2/97, 2 km N of Ivanhoe Crossing (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

Zitting Cisticola — 3+, 8-10/2/97, Kununurra Airport (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 4 (including female carrying nest material), 9/2/97, Carlton Plain 39 km NW of Kununurra (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC * 22, 13/2/97, Parry Lagoon Nature Reserve (Wyndham/East Kimberley) — MC

OBSERVERS

AP = Ann Payton

LHn = Leslie Harrison

BB = Bryan Barrett

MB = Max Bailey

DP = Deborah Perry

MC = Michael Craig

FO = Frank O'Connor

PPT = Perth Pelagic Trip

GM = Glenn Moore

RD = Robert Davis

IS = Ian Standring

RP = Ross Payton

JD = John Darnell

SN = Simon Nevill

KC = Kate Creed

TK = Tony Kirkby

LH = Les Harris

VW = Vivian Wells

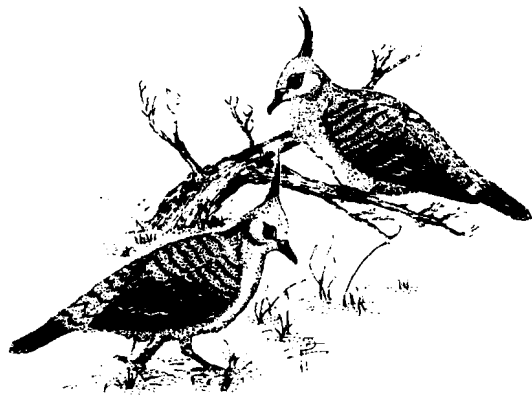
Letters to the Editors

I thought you might be interested in this story. On Friday 30 May, my friend Toni, her 5-year-old son Gordon and I drove to Wilga to hunt for white (albino) fairy-wrens. We parked the car and walked down the track between the farm fence and the bush, watching and listening. No wrens were seen, although there were Grey Fantails, cockatoos, Australian Ravens and Australian Ringnecks. We returned through the bush and over the fence, searching the old homestead garden and the orchard, seeing Red Wattle-birds, Magpies and Mudlarks, Golden Whistler, Scarlet Robin, Western Yellow Robin, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Fantail, and one party of normally coloured Splendid Fairy-wrens.

Walking back we thought we would sit in the sun to have our picnic. But Gordon insisted he had to decide and his choice was the car. To keep the peace we all sat in the car. Lo and behold, down the track we had walked, came three white wrens and two normally coloured Splendid Fairy-wrens. They worked their way along the fenceline until they were under the old pine tree near the car, no more than 4 m away, and we had an excellent view. They appeared all white with a light brown bill and a dark eye and the feathers on the back appeared slightly ruffled and grey white. The two normal wrens interacted with them as one party. My camera is not equipped with telephoto lens, so all I got were some pictures of the general scene.

It was exciting to watch them and to find them exactly where we had been told to look.

Are albino fairy-wrens common? Do you or your readers have any information on them?



The Crested Pigeon continues to expand throughout agricultural areas in the south-west, as reported by several members in this issue

Drawn by Pam Free

Crested Pigeons have increased in numbers and range in the Burekup/Waterloo/Dardanup area in the past 15 years. I have seen 15 to 20 birds feeding on one farm in Waterloo. They appear to enjoy areas where concentrates are being used to feed young stock.

On 17 June I saw a Sacred Kingfisher feeding from the powerline on beetles. They usually depart April/May and don't return till August/September on this property.

Olga Green

As one of your usually non-contributing members I felt I did have to report an interesting sighting which I stumbled upon in urban Gwelup on 25 April this year.

I was visiting a colleague when I observed a raptor-like silhouette hovering over the neighbouring house before depositing an object on the lateral arm of a rooftop television aerial and leaving again. I borrowed some binoculars and awaited the return. Within five minutes a Nankeen (Australian) Kestrel perched on the television aerial and proceeded to consume the "object" which I identified as a mouse. The kestrel continued to eat its meal and I watched with great fascination for another 5-10 minutes.

I have not seen a Nankeen Kestrel in your "Observations" column for some time, so I wondered whether this sighting might be of interest to you and your readers.

Roy Junckerstorff

Obituary

CLEE FRANCIS HOWARD JENKINS

With the passing of Clee Jenkins on 13 July 1997, Australia lost one of its most widely known ornithologists. For over 60 years his newspaper articles have interested and educated their readers. His first, on cormorants and the fishing industry, was published in the *West Australian* in June 1936 and his last, earlier this year, was also in the *West Australian*. He gave many radio and television interviews, over 1200 by 1997, and worked tirelessly to promote the principles of conservation to the general public and the public service alike.

Clee was born in Adelaide in 1908, moved to Western Australia with his parents in 1926, and in 1929 became a cadet at the Western Australian Museum. He married 'Billy' Eileen Alice Bowley in 1939 and their daughter, Gillian, is still working as a botanist in Perth. Clee moved from the Museum to the Department of Agriculture in 1933 and became Government Entomologist in 1939, remaining in that post until he became Chief of the Biological Services Division of the Department in 1964. He retired in 1973. As well as publishing numerous articles on birds in the *Emu* and other journals, he made two significant contributions to ornithology in Western Australia. With Ludwig Glauert he published the original description of the eggs of the Banded Stilt in 1931, a bird whose breeding remained a mystery until a colony was discovered by Ivan Carnaby on Lake Grace. On 22 May 1943, Clee was one of the ten who met to found the Western Australian Group of the RAOU (Birds Australia), a group that has certainly heeded the warning given by Dr Dom Serventy to that meeting, that "the group should avoid the profitless type of meeting so often found in natural history organisations".

Clee was a man of great integrity, good humour and clear vision in whatever he did. Whether as President respectively of the WA National Parks Authority, the Zoological Gardens Board of WA or the WA Gould League, or as Government Entomologist, he brooked no questionable policies or passive resistance that would frustrate goals that he saw as progressive and desirable. He will be remembered as a great gentleman with a genuine interest in the good of his fellows and of his fellow creatures.

Stephen Davies

WA Group Reports

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 Birds 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 — being progressed by Brenda Newbey, with 95 farms involved in the project, as well as the Main Roads Department contract for surveys of road verges.

Survey of Suburban Birds Project — Clive Nealon had processed 90,000-odd records so far on the database although some of the greater metropolitan area is not well covered; about 215 species have been recorded including 10-12 escapees.

Birding Sites Around Perth Revised Edition — now at the printers and to be launched on 28 October at Perry House by the Governor.

Provision of scholarships for university students to cover course fees at WA observatories — Mike Bamford received several applications for grants and Brad Cox (Broome) and Chris Powell (Eyre) have been the recipients for 1997.

Junior ornithologists — Clive Napier is encouraging interest by groups of students from two schools south of the river in setting up an informal junior ornithologists group.

Finances — the Treasurer's report follows this section; the capital expenditure item of \$2290 relates to the purchase of a new photocopier (long overdue!); Jane Venter is now using the accounting package *Pastel* purchased through HQ; since the 6-monthly report was received, HQ has reimbursed the WA Group with its share of membership dues and WABN subscriptions.

Conservation — areas considered during the quarter included Byenup Lagoon, Lake Muir, Amarillo Pool, Lake McLarty, Peel deviation, Whiteman Park, Swan Marine Park, remnant bushland in Coolbellup area off Roe Hwy; the City of Melville has advised that it has erected signs at Alfred Cove prohibiting dogs in the area, following a request from the WA Group; the State Government's 1997 budget provided for funds to maintain six metropolitan regional parks, viz, Herdsman Lake, Yellagonga, Canning River, Beeliar, Rockingham Lakes and Jandakot Botanic Park and a letter has been sent to the Environment Minister congratulating the Government on this decision and offering our assistance in planning the management of these parks to protect the birds of these areas.

Purchase of 'Gluepot' by Birds Australia — members' donations have been very generous with sufficient received to cover cost of purchase by HQ.

Search for new volunteers — nine members have come forward to assist with duties/projects, and also two new birdwalk leaders.

Trading Table — requires the attention of a dedicated volunteer who is not working fulltime; new bird cards are needed to stimulate renewed interest in purchase.

Database of WA Birds (DABWA) — Richard Chyne has taken over the management of this database and is working on upgrading so as to provide access to mapping systems.

Excursions — have been well received by members and the Excursions Sub-committee is now trying out short weekend campouts.

Twitchathon 1996 — the WA Group Committee has distributed its share of proceeds from monies raised during this event, to the Eyre and Broome Bird Observatories, with each receiving \$150.

Clive Napier

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following income and expenditure statement for the period 1 January to 30 June 1997 is presented for the information of members:

	1997 ytd \$	1996 \$
CASH AT BANK at 1/1/97 b/f	6,683.31	
PLUS RECEIPTS Functions	47.60	661.35
Book Sales	512.00	5,116.80
WABN	120.00	6,227.00
Trading Table	4,735.52	10,418.68
Membership	40.00	4,488.60
Interest	7.62	1,650.57
Donations	50.00	1,651.11
Grants	8,680.00	10,729.96
Other	281.45	69.50
TOTAL RECEIPTS	14,474.19	41,013.57
LESS EXPENDITURE		
WABN Printing	2,314.86	4,264.18
Postage, Phone, Stamps	836.36	513.45
Capital Expenditure	2,290.00	0
Functions	246.74	1,209.72
Bank Charges	34.60	108.15
Donations, Subs	0	125.00
Book Purchases	791.75	2,370.37
Rent	581.22	626.18
Utilities	1,106.90	937.03
Projects	5,633.04	14,560.81
Accounting	500.00	300.00
Trading Table Expenses	88.00	4,671.80
Insurance	0	307.41
Petty Cash	54.00	635.90
Depreciation	0	1,108.00
Copier Service	0	495.61
Computer Requisites	0	204.75
Sundries	244.60	104.30
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	14,722.07	32,542.66
BALANCE ON HAND	6,435.43	8,470.91

Jane Venter, Treasurer

BIRDS ON FARMS

Since the last report there have been many changes. The deadline for new participants has passed. The final total of farms involved through the WA coordinator is 95, just in excess of the goal of 90. There are a few other WA farms that joined the program earlier so the real WA total is over 100. The spread of farms has increased to the north. Ajana and Northampton are now included. Some people who began last spring have already completed four surveys, i.e., the half-way mark. By the time you are reading this, every site should have been

surveyed once.

The 161 Main Roads verge Twenty-Minute sites have been selected. Many volunteers are now involved in surveying them. More are needed. I would like to hear from anyone who could help with sites on the Great Eastern Highway between Northam and Tammin, on Albany Highway near Arthur River and Tenterden; and also between Dalwallinu and Wubin. Just one site (to be surveyed seasonally) would be helpful.

Timing of surveys on the day.

For the purposes of the survey it is best not to be too regular in your habits. If you do a series of sites on the one day, it is suggested that you vary the sequence. The example below could be coincidence being a sample of one but is interesting nevertheless. I surveyed five comparable Main Roads revegetation sites near York on the morning of 8 May:

Time	No of Species	No of Individuals
7.50	7	29
8.35	8	21
9.40	4	19
10.20	5	12
11.25	3	5

Acknowledgements

The money situation has improved dramatically. The Gordon Reid Foundation provided funding both to help with the last minute flurry to get the required number of farms registered before the cut-off date, and to continue with the project.

The basic function of the Gordon Reid Foundation for Conservation is to encourage and sustain action by community organisations, to conserve and restore indigenous plants, animals and micro organisms and their natural environments in Western Australia.

Brenda Newbey
WA Coordinator, Birds on Farms Project

PUBLICATIONS REPORT

Birding Sites Around Perth

The launch of this publication has now been changed to Tuesday 28 October 1997 at 10:00 am.

Guests will include representatives of State and Local Government departments and company organisations, which have supported the Bird 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 WELCOME

To assist the organisers with catering, would you please advise the office on (08) 9383 7749 by 4 October if you are attending.

Allan K Jones
for Organising Sub-committee

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN WADER STUDY GROUP (WAWSG)

The WAWSG aims to raise the profile of wader research in Western Australia and to gain a better understanding of wader movements within our State.

The Group has therefore initiated a number of projects, which will continue over the next few years. These will complement the existing projects already run by our local Birds Australia group and extend the range of choice of birding activities available to members.

You are encouraged to participate in one of the local, national or international wader projects as listed below.

1. The National Wader Counts

The national wader counts are held during February and June of each year. These counts monitor the wader populations at different sites around Australia and assist in predicting population trends and fluctuations. For example, during the summer of 1996 a total of 172 sites were counted over 28 designated areas. The national count results are published once a year in *The Stilt*. You may have seen the local results of our last summer count in the previous issue of *Western Australian Bird Notes*. More sites and participants are keenly sought to make this program even more successful. The representation of our State in the national wader counts is presently relatively small. The next national wader count is planned for the weekend 7/8 February 1998.

2. Banded Stilts

Back in April 1995 tens of thousands of Banded Stilts nested at Lake Ballard, near Menzies. Many were banded and leg-flagged in order to trace their dispersal after the breeding season had finished. The leg-flags are small, made of stiff, yellow plastic and located on the left tibia. The WAWSG continues to monitor Banded Stilts for yellow leg-flags and for that matter any other waders with leg-flags. Please keep a lookout for flagged Banded Stilts. All information will be passed on to CALM who are currently doing the research and hopefully we will be able to gain a better understanding of the movements of Banded Stilts.

Information we are grateful to receive is location, date, and total number of Banded Stilts seen, the number with leg-flags, and any other information of possible interest.

3. Special Interest Species

Australia works closely with other countries situated along the East Asian-Australian Flyway in order to protect critical bird habitat and conduct joint migration research. A flyway can best be described as the migratory routes waders follow from their Siberian breeding grounds to their overwintering grounds in Australia. Australia has signed migratory bird agreements with both Japan (JAMBA) and China (CAMBA). At a joint meeting held earlier this year between these countries it was decided to nominate the Eastern Curlew and Grey-tailed Tattler as special interest species. The West Australian Wader Study Group intends to collect as much data as possible in support of these programs and RAOU members are encouraged to participate. In addition the Pacific Golden Plover has been added as a species of special local interest as this plover is showing both a local and national decline in numbers. Information that would greatly assist and extend our knowledge on any of these species is location, date, number, and any other

comments of interest, e.g., plumage, feeding habits, disturbances etc.

4. Hooded Plover Project

The formal Hooded Plover project was largely brought to a conclusion with the publication of the "Report on Hooded Plover Project" June 1994 to March 1996 (RAOU, WA Group) by B.J. Newbey.

This species continues to be monitored in an attempt to increase our knowledge and to protect the bird's major habitats. The Esperance Bird Observers group has been asked to continue regular monitoring of nearby lakes at which Hooded Plovers are known to congregate in summer.

As part of the continuing research into this nationally vulnerable species another banding project is planned for January 1998 near Esperance. Leg-flagging will be included.

5. Regular Count Projects

The purpose of this project is to build up a local wader database, which will ultimately lead to a better understanding of wader movements within the State.

For instance, the movement and fluctuation in numbers of the Red-necked Stint intrigues many wader watchers.

Members are encouraged to nominate a wader site and conduct regular wader counts (fortnightly if possible).

The lakes north of the Swan River offer a particular challenge to anyone wishing to start up their own regular counts project. Wader data from these lakes are very scant and surveys could provide some new and interesting findings.

For example, wader sites monitored during June 1997 showed a group of Black-tailed Godwits moving from Lake McLarty to Lake Kogolup and then on to Alfred Cove all in a matter of weeks. Where did they go to from there? Closer surveillance of other lakes might have provided the answers especially if water levels had remained low. Regular wader counts have shown that most wader species can still be located near Perth even during the winter months, admittedly with a bit of perseverance.

By the time you read this article the first flocks of waders will be arriving in Perth and at other locations in the south western corner of our State. There is no time like the present to nominate yourself for your favourite wader project(s).

Count sheets and instructions will be issued to interested parties and participants will be kept informed of results and findings through regular publications in WABN.

Further information on any of the projects can be obtained from Colin Davis, c/- WAWSG, 199 Kitchener Road, Booragoon 6154.

Don't forget the national survey on 7/8 February 1998!

West Australian Wader Study Group, Perth.

VALE JEREMY TALBOT

We are very sad to have to report the sudden death of Jeremy Talbot on Friday 15 August 1997. Jeremy was one of our most active and hard-working members and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Our deepest sympathy to Val, Richard and Clare. We will have a full obituary in the next issue of WABN.

RAOU Office Perry House
(WA) 71 Oceanic Drive
Floreat 6014

Telephone (08) 9383 7749
Facsimile (08) 9387 8412

Chairman Clive Napier
69 Dean Road
Bateman 6150
Tel. (08) 9332 7265

Joint Editors John Blyth
Tel. (08) 9405 5100 (w)
Tel. (08) 9381 6293 (h)
Fax. (08) 9306 1641 (w)
Email. johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au

Allan Burbidge
Tel. (08) 9405 5109 (w)
Tel/Fax. (08) 9306 1642 (h)
Fax. (08) 9306 1641 (w)
Email. austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au

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 December 1997 Issue

**1 November 1997
at Perry House**

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

BOOK REVIEW:

PIZZEY AND KNIGHT FIELD GUIDE

The long-awaited revision of Graham Pizzey's field guide is at last available — and it was worth waiting for. It really is a major revision, with largely re-written (and shortened) text and a completely new set of plates, this time by Frank Knight.

Unlike its predecessor, in which you had to look in three different places to find the illustration, the text and the map for a given bird, the new edition has all three on a double

page. This is a significant improvement on the first edition, making it much more useful as a field guide. Typically, there are three or four species per page, compared with the six or seven typical of the other major Australian bird field guides. This provides a pleasant, uncluttered impression. However, the sizes of the illustrations are not much bigger, if at all, than in other field guides, for two reasons. In some plates, there is a lot of space between illustrations, but in others, there are simply a lot of birds. For example, on the plate with Superb, Princess and Regent Parrots and Cockatiel, there are eight birds perched and eight in flight (i.e., four birds per species).

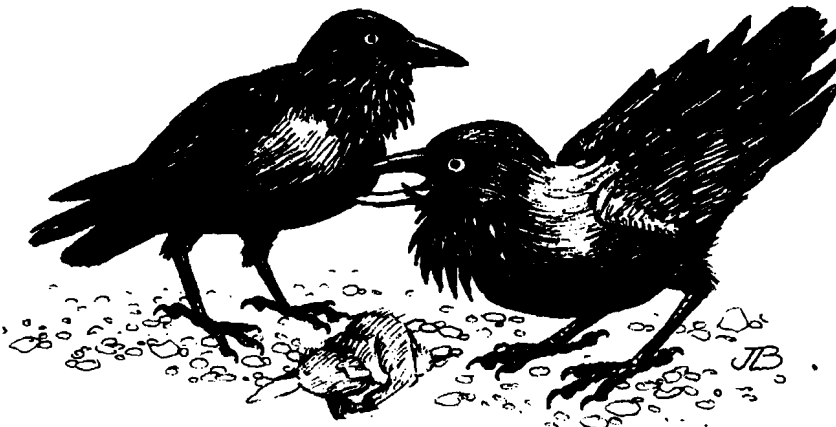
Without having examined the plates in detail, they appear quite good for a field guide, but in some (e.g., the fantails on p.448 and finches on p.491) the colours appear somewhat 'murky' as if covered by a not quite transparent film. Many birds are shown perched, while many others are shown without a perch, and this sometimes looks a bit odd (e.g., Bowers Shrike-thrush on p.439), although this is arguably of little relevance in a field guide. What is of relevance is that the 'jizz' of the birds is not always shown well. An example of this is on the fantail plate (p.448) where the appearance of all four species seems a little stilted, and the differences not captured well. Good features include the many flight illustrations, raptor flight silhouettes as well as underwing patterns, and many immature birds (e.g., the crakes and rails on pp.149-155).

The birds are arranged in (almost) the same order as in the Christidis and Boles checklist, and with almost the same names. A few species are 'out of order' because they are placed with other species with which they might be confused (e.g., Magpie-lark with Australian Magpie; Spangled Drongo with Trumpet Manucode). Departures from the names used in the official checklist are few and apparently idiosyncratic; e.g., the Australian Ringneck is divided in the field guide into the "Eastern Ringneck" and "Western Ringneck" without comment, other than the statement that hybrids occur between the two.

One of the strengths of the first edition was the description of calls, which was excellent, with vivid descriptions based primarily on Graham Pizzey's extensive field experience. This is still in the present edition, but unfortunately a little diluted, mainly through being shortened. Many observers would argue that it would have been better to completely retain and augment this section (for example with sonagrams for problematic species such as Oriental Reed-Warblers or for Short-billed and Long-billed Black-Cockatoos) and leave out the 20-odd pages on 'Family Introductions' which are not really necessary in a field guide. Although some text has been shortened, much of the behavioural, distributional and other information about each species, for which the first edition was outstanding, has

been retained. This is still the best of the Australian bird field guides in this regard.

Unfortunately, the maps are not of the same standard as the text or plates. Errors are many, and extend from quite minor to serious. An example of the former is that the WA distributions of Brown Quail (on the mainland) and Bushhen are shown as somewhat more extensive than reality. An example of where distributions are not complete is where some island populations are indicated by arrows, while others, such as Brown Quail and Bar-shouldered Dove on Pilbara islands, are not. One of the worst examples of incorrect maps is on p.252, where the Squatter



Australian Ravens are highly intelligent birds, but can still be taken in by images of themselves

Drawn by Judy Blyth

Pigeon, Partridge Pigeon and Flock Bronzewing are all shown (erroneously) as occurring in Tasmania! Another bad example is that of Latham's Snipe, shown as occurring throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara, extending south to Perth. A bit enthusiastic, for a species having only one or two confirmed records in this State! In some instances, the text is correct, but the map wrong (e.g., Ground Parrot). More attention to detail in the maps would be appropriate, as might different levels of shading to show differences in breeding versus non-breeding ranges or areas where the species may sometimes be seen during irruptions, or to show historical versus current range. Different levels of shading in distribution maps are used only two or three times in the whole book.

The book concludes with a glossary, bibliography (with many useful references, although it is not clear why some equally useful ones were excluded), addresses of birdwatching organisations, a useful gazetteer and indexes to common and scientific names.

The book measures about 15.5 x 24 x 3 cm and weighs almost 1.1 kg — perhaps a bit big and heavy for a field guide, but it does have an attractive shower-proof cover.

Overall, we like the book, and recommend it as a general field guide which serious birders will find hard to resist (but take care with the distribution maps!).

Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight: *The Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Angus and Robertson. Available for \$25 - \$35; the WA office of Birds Australia has it at \$30.

Allan Burbidge and John Blyth

AGGRESSIVE DISPLAY IN AUSTRALIAN RAVENS

While parking a car at the Carine Glades Shopping Centre we were attracted to the behaviour of two Australian Ravens. These birds were under the covered way outside the tavern, one remaining still and quiet, the other bobbing and ducking with its beak open. We watched from the car for several minutes before deciding to look closer. It had become clear that what

