

Western Australian Bird Notes

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

No 84 December 1997

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*ANAS CLYPEATA*) AT LAKE MCLARTY

On 16 Feb 1997 we observed an unusual shoveler at Lake McLarty. Observers present were T Kirkby, C Davis, M Darnell and J Darnell. The following notes contain details of our observations and subsequent conclusions.

Weather conditions: Light breeze, sunny (only about 1/5 cloud), with good visibility. At the time of observations there was no heat haze or refraction.

Observations: The bird was picked out from a mixed flock of ducks and coots feeding in open, fairly shallow water. Although the initial impression was that of a female Australasian Shoveler (*Anas rhynchos*) — some 40-50 of which were in the vicinity — it differed from them in that it appeared slightly larger, was of a markedly lighter, warm buff, shade of brown (this particularly evident on the head and neck), showed obvious white sides to the closed tail and had a larger and heavier bill which showed an extensive area of orange (especially basally).

This combination of features allowed this bird to be readily and repeatedly picked out and distinguished from the darker and duller brown, dark-billed female Australasian Shovelers.

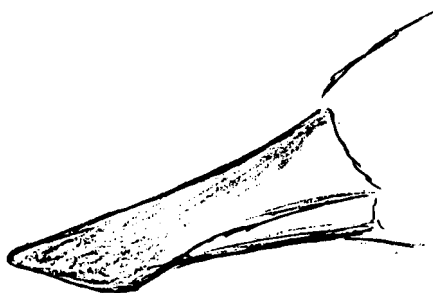
Description: Because of the range of the observations (80-100 m), the description of plumage is less one of fine detail as of overall impressions. Details of the bird as seen on the water were as follows:

Head and neck: Light (slightly greyish) buffy brown, somewhat darker on the crown, lacking any definite or bold pattern although appearing slightly

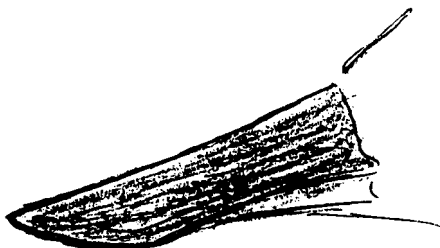
paler on the cheeks and lores (adjacent to bill) down to the chin area. A darker line was seen extending a little before and behind eye (though it did not appear to reach the bill). Breast similar to neck, etc, but noticeably paler. Flanks somewhat darker and with a slightly rufous cinnamon wash (not obviously patterned). When up-ending the central belly area appeared an even more deep and rich brownish rufous. Area at rear of flanks (base of tail) less warm brown-cinnamon and cloacal area much paler, lateral under-tail coverts dullish warm brown. Central under-tail coverts (visible when up-ending) were a darkish sepia brown.

Upperparts: Mantle and centre back dull blackish brown with obvious contrast between this area and scapulars (most obvious as bird seen up-ending and head-on but not quite so evident when bird seen in profile). Rump, upper tail coverts as back, etc. Scapulars dull greyish buff (of a darker shade than neck, etc, but still with a warmer and paler shade than an Australasian Shoveler). Closed primaries: dark sepia/blackish. At some angles a thin white line was noted (edge to tertials?). Sides of the tail were white and very obvious, extending back to rear of flanks.

NB: Overall the plumage impression was rather uniform. The lack of a mottled pattern could be due in part to the range, although in some adjacent (equidistant) female ducks the



Northern Shoveler bill



Australasian Shoveler bill

mottled (dark feather centres/pale edged type pattern) could be seen.

Iris: tawny/amber-brown.

Bill: Decidedly larger and heavier than that of any of the Australasian Shovelers. The bill shape differed from that of the typical Australasian birds in looking more bevelled at the tip and angular at the point where its broadest part of upper mandible overhangs the lower one. (This area is much more rounded and less obvious in Australasian.)

The ridge of the upper mandible and almost all the spatulate tip were dark brownish black. Sides of the upper mandible, for approximately 2/3 length and broadening to cover all but its narrow central ridge at base and all of the lower mandible dullish, but very obvious orange; underside of the bill appeared entirely orange (except very tip). (The bill was very broad towards the tip when seen head-on.)

Feet and legs: Bright orange almost scarlet (a more fiery shade than in any of the Australasian Shovelers (male or female)).

In flight (not seen well — only short flight and that in tight flock, mixed group): Forewing dull bluish grey, separated from dark and dull trailing edge (no colour to speculum noted) by narrow whitish line (this broadest towards outer wing). Primary coverts and primaries were blackish. The tail looked predominantly whitish (in contrast to the darkish rump and upper tail coverts). The underwing was not seen well — its appearance was whitish.

Structure: Appeared slightly larger than the accompanying Australasian Shovelers. Bill appeared more massive, heavy and angular (see notes above). Primaries/wing-tip extended up to (or at some angles slightly beyond) the tip of the tail. The wings were noted to be almost always held well clear of, above, the tail. This contrasted with the normal attitude of the Australasian Shovelers. In those birds the wing appeared slightly shorter than the tail tip and the primaries usually lay on the upper tail coverts and tail or only slightly raised above them.

Behaviour: During the whole 15-20 minutes of observation, this bird fed in only a very restricted area (probably no more than a 20 m radius). Even when disturbed by a Swamp Harrier, it only flew (in a mixed flock of other ducks and coots) a short distance and almost immediately swam back to the original area.

Whereas the adjacent Australasian Shovelers were seen to surface filter feed as well as up-end, this individual was only seen to feed by up-ending. When doing this, it was noted that (when viewed from behind) the primary tips extended and crossed well beyond the line of the tail. In this respect it differed from (similarly viewed) Australasian Shovelers; in those the primaries appeared to project far less, and frequently did not cross over at all.

Although this bird did not carry the neck extended or stretched, the head was usually held well above its "shoulders". In contrast the Australasian Shovelers very frequently had the head and neck tucked onto the back.

Whilst attempting to round the lake for better views, the whole of the duck and coot population was disturbed (by a White-bellied Sea-Eagle), many not returning including, apparently, this individual.

Comments: The combination of buffy-brown plumage, heavy and extensive orange markings on the side and base of the bill, combined with the predominantly white tail, etc,

indicate that this bird was a Northern Shoveler.

The plumage suggested that it was a first year male, and was partially acquiring adult first year plumage type usually referred to as "Adult male supplementary" (eg, the darker zone down mid back area, the paler shade to the breast, the rufous cinnamon wash to the flanks, etc).

This species is well known to three of us, with one (JD) having had regular opportunities to see this species (in the UK) over a period of several months only some 18 months earlier.

John Darnell

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.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Australian Shelduck - 9432, 22/10/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC (moulting?)

Black-browed Albatross - 30+, 21/8/97, Eclipse Island, near Albany (Albany) - AM

Yellow-nosed Albatross - 70+, 21/8/97, Eclipse Island, near Albany (Albany) - AM * at various times, maximum 20+ in 4 hrs, 12/7/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Sooty Albatross - 1, 21/8/97, Eclipse Island, near Albany (Albany) - AM

Red-tailed Tropicbird - 14, 2/11/97, in air over Sugarloaf Rock (Busselton) - PC, BC

Australasian Gannet - seen over several months; max. no. 50+ in 2 hrs, 1/7/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Little Egret - 1, 2/10/97, Wellstead Estuary, Bremer Bay (Jerramungup) - BN (rare on the south coast)

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 17/8/97, Mt Cook (Wandering) - LK

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - 1, 7/10/97, hunting a Mallard at Forrestdale Lake (Armadale) - FO

Painted Button-quail - 1, 9/6/97, Point Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Black-tailed Godwit - 8, 29/8/97 to 7/9/97, Thomson's Lake (Cockburn) - MS

Ruddy Turnstone - 6, 28/7/97, at unnamed salt lake 12 km N of Jurien Bay (Dandaragan) - BKM (unusual on salt

lakes except at Rottnest) * 10, 16/9/97, Point Malcolm, Nuytsland Nature Reserve (Esperance) - AR (few records from this area)

Hooded Plover - 12 adults and 2 juveniles, 20/9/97, Yarra Yarra Lakes, on the west side of the southern lake (Carnamah Shire) - BN * 44 (including 6 immatures), Sandy Bight Beach, Cape Arid National Park (Esperance) - AR

Laughing Turtle-Dove - 1, 2-3/9/97, Little Grove, Albany (Albany) - AM (possibly the first record for Albany)

Crested Pigeon - 1, 31/8/97 and 2, 1/10/97, southern end of Hammond Road, near Thomsons Lake (Cockburn) - MS

(Eastern) **Long-billed Corella** - 1, 23/10/97, North Lake (Cockburn) - RD * 5, 8/11/97, Carine open space (Stirling) - MC

Little Corella - 1, 22/10/97, Lake McLarty (Murray) - MC (escapee?)

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo - 1, 10/10/97, c. 5 km S of Carnamah on Midlands Road (Galahs and Western Corellas common in this area) (Carnamah) - MaB, MBa, JaB, JoB

Black-eared Cuckoo - 1, 28/7/97, Dryandra State Forest (eastern block) (Cuballing) - SN

Fork-tailed Swift - 2, Cape Pasley (Cape Arid National Park) (Esperance) - AR

Splendid Fairy-wren - 3+ albino birds, 29/8/97, near Wilga (Boyp Brook) BF, BB

Gilbert's Whistler - 2 males, 27/7/97, Chiddarcooping Nature Reserve, E of Mukinbudin (Mukinbudin) - SN

Crested Shrike-tit - 2 males, 14/9/97, near Julimar Brook, Julimar Conservation Park (Toodyay) - AB *et al.*

Ground Cuckoo-shrike - 2, 27/7/97, 'Forty six gate Road', NE of Mukinbudin (Mukinbudin) - SN

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

Malleefowl - 2, 16/8/97, 5-10 km N of Billabong Roadhouse, NW Coastal Hwy (Shark Bay) - TS * tracks, near Nerren Nerren HS on NW Coastal Hwy, N of Kalbarri (Shark Bay) - JB, JBe * 1, 11/10/97, near turnoff to Nerren Nerren HS on NW Coastal Hwy, N of Kalbarri (Shark Bay) - JH

Musk Duck - 5, 17/9/97, Nallan Lake (Cue) - FO

Black-necked Stork - 1, 18/8/93, Shaw River, Hillside Station (East Pilbara) - MB * 1, 24/8/97, NW of Milgun Station (Meekatharra) - MB

Square-tailed Kite - 2 at a nest, 24/8/97, Coolyia Creek on Hillside Station (East Pilbara) - MB (uncommon in the Pilbara - this is apparently only the second breeding record for the Pilbara area)

Black-breasted Buzzard - 2, with nest, 15/8/93, Three Rivers Station at Gascoyne River (Middle Branch) crossing (Meekatharra) - MB * 2, 24/8/97, Milgun Station (Meekatharra) - MB

Grey Falcon - 1, 22/8/96, Rudall River NP (East Pilbara) - MB

Peregrine Falcon - 2 plus nest with C/3, 24/8/96, Rudall River NP (East Pilbara) - MB

Australian Spotted Crane - 1, 10/97, soak near Twilight Cove, E of Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - DBr, JBr

Little Curlew - 2, 28/9/97, Kanidal Beach, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) - EBO

Laughing Turtle-Dove - 1, 19/8/97, Babbage Island,

Carnarvon (Carnarvon) - TS (very few records from north of Shark Bay)

Regent Parrot - 5, 4/9/97, Warne River crossing on Paynes Find - Sandstone Road (Sandstone) - MC

Bourke's Parrot - c. 40, 16-18/9/97, Nallan Station (Cue) - FO

White-browed Treecreeper - 3 individuals, 17-18/9/97, in mulga on Nallan Station (Cue) - FO

Shy Heathwren - 2, 4/9/97, 51 km N of Wubin on road to Paynes Find (Dalwallinu) - MC (long way N for this species)

Rufous Fieldwren - 2, 18/9/97, Lake Austin (22 km S of Cue) (Cue) - FO (scarce in this area)

Slender-billed Thornbill - 3, 17/9/97, Lake Annean (Meekatharra) - FO (now scarce in this area)

Banded Whiteface - 6, 16/8/97, Bibbingoona (Milgun Station) (Meekatharra) - MB

Grey Honeyeater - 2, 21/8/97, NW of sewage works at Tom Price (Ashburton) - TS * 2, 15/9/97, 32 km S of Paynes Find on road to Beacon (Yalgoo) - FO * 1, 22/9/97, Nallan Station (near Cue) (Cue) - per RJ

Orange Chat - pair nesting, 17/9/97, Lake Annean (Meekatharra) - FO * 20+, 18/9/97, Lake Austin (22 km S of Cue) (Cue) - FO

Grey-crowned Babbler - 11 (6 and 5), 17/9/97, Nallan Station (Cue) - FO (near southern limit in WA)

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush - 2, 17/9/97, c. 9 km E of Cue (Cue) - FO * 1, 25/8/97, Mulgool Station (Meekatharra) - MB

Barn Swallow - 5, 12-17/11/97, Onslow (Ashburton) - MC (few records from this area)

Clamorous Reed-Warbler - 1, 5-10/10/97, calling from Typha, Charfcutter's Spring, Kennedy Range (Carnarvon) - JH

KIMBERLEY

Orange-footed Scrubfowl - mound, 18/8/97, edge of vine thicket at top of beach, Steep Head Island, Port Warrender area (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO

Green Pygmy-goose - 300, 11/9/97, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO (high numbers for this area)

Cape Petrel - 1 beachwashed (alive, but died next day), 10/9/97, Willy Creek (Broome) - BBO (N most record for WA)

Great-billed Heron - 1, 19/8/97, Point MacGregor (Port Warrender area) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO * 1, 21/8/97, Rail Creek (Port Warrender area) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO

Pied Heron - 1, 22/9/97, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO (unusual near Broome)

Cattle Egret - 12, 26/9/97, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO (unusual near Broome)

Grey Falcon - 1, 1-2/9/97 and 2, 4/9/97, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO (unusual near Broome)

Chestnut Rail - 2, 15/8/97, Kimberley Coastal Camp, Port Warrender (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO * 4, 21/8/97, Rail Creek, Port Warrender area (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO

Common Redshank - 2, 3-4/9/97 and 3, 15-16/9/97, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO

Broad-billed Sandpiper - 4 in cannon net, 21/9/97,

Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO

Comb-crested Jacana - 1, 13-14/9/97, Lake Campion (Broome) - BBO (see WABN 83: 11 for the first record for Broome) (this is the most south-westerly record in WA)

Oriental Plover - 1, 24/9/97, Argyle Diamond mine airport (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (this bird, a first record for the Argyle lease, was hit by a plane)

Caspian Tern - nest, 8/97, Myres Island (Port Warrender area) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO

Little Bronze-Cuckoo - 1 juvenile, 15/8/97, being fed by a pair of Mangrove Gerygones, Kimberley Coastal Camp, near Port Warrender (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO

Barn Owl - 1, 8/8/97, dead on highway; 1, 1/9/97 and 5/9/97, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO (not often recorded near Broome)

Red-browed Pardalote - 1, 21/8/97 and 2, 1/9/97, Kilito Station (Broome) BBO (at or near its northern limit of range)

Western Gerygone - 1 immature, south-western subspecies, 6/6/97, Quarry Beach near Broome (Broome) - CH (caught in mist net, photographed, measured and description taken - see details elsewhere in this issue)

Yellow Chat - 2 males, 10/9/97, Lake Argyle (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - RJ

Rufous Fantail - 2, 19/8/97, vine thicket near Walsh Point (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GS, FO

Black Butcherbird - 1, 10/10/97, Cambridge Gulf (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - REJ, GLo * 1, 24/10/97, Tanmurra Creek (False Mouths of the Ord), Ord River Nature Reserve (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GG (rarely recorded in Western Australia)

ADDENDUM

In WABN 83, the date for observation of the Lesser Crested Tern seen by Tony Kirkby at Woodman Point should have been given as 26/5/97.

OBSERVERS

AB = Allan Burbidge
AM = Alex Morrison
AR = Allan Rose
BB = Brad Bourke
BBO = Broome Bird Ob'y
BC = Brian Clay
BF = Brett Fitzgerald
BKM = Bernie Masters
BN = Brenda Newbey
CH = Chris Hassell
DBr = Debbie Brownlie
EBO = Eyre Bird Ob'y
FO = Frank O'Connor
GLo = Geoff Lodge
GS = George Swann
JaB = Jake Bamford
JoB = Josh Bamford

JB = John Blyth
JBe = Joe Benshemesh
JBr = James Brownlie
JH = Judith Harvey
LK = Laurie Knight
MaB = Mandy Bamford
MB = M. Bougher
MBa = Mike Bamford
MC = Michael Craig
MS = Marcus Singor
PC = Pauline Clay
RD = Robert Davis
RJ = Richard Jordan
REJ = Ron Johnstone
RP = Ross Payton
SN = Simon Nevill
TS = Teet Sirotkin

Letters to the Editors

Dear Sirs,

On 27 July, I saw a Collared Sparrowhawk make a kill of a Laughing Turtle-Dove on the roof of a suburban home in Leeming.

The sparrowhawk made the strike on the roof, struggled along an enclosed pergola (below which I was working), tumbled into the back garden and sat for about 30 seconds. I had an excellent view from 7-8 m away before the sparrowhawk struggled to fly over the back fence and flew off downwind.

Also, an article by Stewart Houghton in *WA Bird Notes* (82 June 1997) concerning Little Eagles in Fremantle: I have noted Little Eagles 3-4 times throughout the year over the last 5-6 years over the Causeway Bridge/Heirisson Island area (I work nearby) so they presumably are frequent visitors to the metropolitan area.

Tim Blake

Obituary

JEREMY TALBOT

With the sudden and unexpected death of Jeremy Talbot on 15 August 1997, the Birds Australia WA Group lost one of its most active and hard-working members. Jeremy had broad interests in natural history, but was particularly interested in birds. He joined the RAOU in 1978, when he first came to Australia. The inaugural meeting of the WA Wader Study Group was held in the home of Jeremy and Val and, specially in his early years in Western Australia, Jeremy organised and participated in many wader banding activities. He was a strong supporter of the Western Australian Naturalists Club, and a foundation member of the Western Banders Association. He was also a foundation member of the Kimberley Society, and assisted greatly in drawing up their constitution. Birds Australia members, however, will remember Jeremy more for his erudite and friendly companionship in the field and the array of speakers he organised for monthly meetings of the WA Group of the RAOU/Birds Australia over a number of years. Jeremy gently and politely persuaded a varied and interesting array of speakers to talk to us, covering the full breadth of members' interests, and always with an interesting story to tell. Because of his own broad interests and impressive memory, Jeremy was often the one, in question time, to ask the more interesting or searching questions of the speaker.

Jeremy was born in Dorking, Surrey on 12 January 1940, the eldest child of Isabella and Denis Talbot. Jeremy was educated in Nyasaland and at boarding school in England, and subsequently, with the assistance of a scholarship, studied law at Kings College, Cambridge. Jeremy practised as a Prosecutor in Rhodesia, and later drafted Parliamentary Bills, first in Africa and subsequently in Western Australia, where he became Deputy Parliamentary Counsel. In this latter post he was instrumental in the design of some very important Bills concerned with land management, conservation, public sector

management and Native Title. While in Rhodesia, Jeremy was also for some time Editor of *The Honeyguide*, magazine of the Rhodesian Ornithological Society, later the Zimbabwean Ornithological Society.

From an early age, and encouraged by his mother, Jeremy developed broad interests in natural history. Growing up in Nyasaland, where his father was a District Commissioner, provided a rich array of experiences and opportunities to develop these interests. It was through their mutual interests in birds that Jeremy and Val met in Rhodesia in 1966, leading to their marriage in 1970.

When discussing the finer points of communication between Europeans and indigenous Africans, Jeremy was noted to say "My mother always told me '...when first meeting anybody, always have a smile on your face'...". No doubt we would all agree that Jeremy upheld that principle throughout his life.

Jeremy was a man of gentleness, politeness, dedication, of great integrity and with an active mind and a considerable skill with words, being competent in several languages. He was a genial, good-natured fellow, often with an interesting story to tell, but just as often with a whole series of questions, reflecting not only his interests in natural history but also his interests in his fellow man.

The Birds Australia WA Group extends its sympathy to Val, their children Clare and Richard, and Jeremy's brother Giles. Jeremy will be sorely missed by his many friends in the several natural history organisations of which he was an active member.

(Thanks to Val Talbot, John Blyth, Perry de Rebeira, Kevin Coate, Simon Nevill and John and Helen Start for their contributions to this obituary).

Allan Burbidge

WA Group Reports

The WA Group Committee and the
WABN staff extend the compliments
of the season to all members

BIRDS AUSTRALIA-WA GROUP COMMITTEE

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:

Death of Jeremy Talbot — a tribute was paid to Jeremy who died suddenly on 15 August 1997; Michael Craig has now taken on the role of guest speaker organiser which was so ably carried out by Jeremy.

Ramsar Sites in WA — John Blyth has provided a copy of the list of the 1990 WA nominations for nine sites for inclusion

on the list of Wetlands of International Importance, ie, Ord River Floodplain, Lakes Argyle and Kununurra, Roebuck Bay, Eighty-mile Beach, Forrestdale and Thomsons Lakes, Peel-Yalgorup System, Lake Toolibin, Vasse-Wonnerup System and the Lake Warden System; and advised that CALM was now investigating further nominations of sites, eg, Lake Gore, Millstream, for inclusion on the Ramsar list.

Byenup Lagoon/Lake Muir/Unicup Wetlands Recovery Plan Coordinating Team — funding has been received by CALM for a recovery plan of the area and at the invitation of CALM, BAWAG has nominated Ms Lee Fontanini as a member of the team, with meetings to be held at Manjimup.

Birds on Farms Project — being progressed by Brenda Newbey.

Hooded Plover Survey — being carried out during January 1998, and coordinated by Allan Rose, Grant Pearson, David Free, Phyllis Bentley, Max Bailey and Allan Jones.

Suburban Birds Survey Project — records now exceed 106,000; Clive Nealon has sent a copy of the quarterly scientific project survey report to Stephen Ambrose of the National Office — see also separate report.

Birding Sites Around Perth Revised Edition — to be launched by the Governor on 26 November at Perry House.

Provision of scholarships for university students to cover course fees at WA observatories — due to revised study commitments, the 1997 scholarships have now been awarded to two students who will be attending the December course at Eyre Bird Observatory; Mike Bamford has been given authority to approve two applications annually without prior referral to the WA Group Committee, until this authority is revoked.

Junior ornithologists — the first junior groups formed south of the river are having their second bird walk on 16 November and a further five classes have had talks and a slide show at Trinity College; there is a group from these classes keen to go on an excursion at Alfred Cove which will take place on 22 November.

Finances — see separate report from the Treasurer.

Conservation — areas under consideration are Amarillo, Lake McLarty, Serpentine River National Park.

CALM Wetlands Coordinating Committee — at the invitation of CALM, BAWAG has nominated Dr Mike Bamford as its representative on this committee.

Booklet on Wader Identification — Bryan Barrett has arranged for the production of 1000 copies of this new brochure.

Proposed No 2 Atlas of Australian Birds — this new national project would be a good opportunity to raise the profile of Birds Australia within universities and the broader community; the WA committee will be giving consideration to a paper prepared by Bill McRoberts on surveys in remote areas, with the possible subsidising of some of the costs of members involved.

Trading Table — volunteers are still being sought to run this vital source of fundraising; new artwork will be required for a different range of bird cards to be printed in the new year.

Database of WA Birds (DABWA) — the value of this database is now being appreciated, with the records regularly being used by commercial and scientific organisations, the latest being CALM.

Excursions — the excursions sub-committee is continuing

to provide a wide range of events for members.

Index of *WA Bird Notes* and Index of Unusual Sightings — these two booklets are being prepared.

Perry House Maintenance — this is being progressed by Max Bailey, with the repainting of the building and garage doors and guttering repair being finalised; items being progressed are a new front entry sign plus main office carpeting and an ergonomic chair for the computer operator.

Clive Napier, CHAIRMAN

TREASURER'S REPORT

PROFIT AND LOSS, YEAR TO 30 SEPTEMBER 1997

Item	\$	\$
INCOME		
Subscriptions — Members	3800	
Subscriptions — Members	40	
Grant — Birds on Farms	5000	
Grants — Birding Sites Around Perth	180	
Grants — Donations	110	
Grant — Hooded Plover Survey	3680	
Grant - Road Verges	7660	
Specific Donations	262	
Non-specific Donations	114	
Interest Received	28	
Members' Activities	628	20 978
 Sales	12 693	
Cost of Sales	5559	7134
		28 112
 EXPENDITURE		
Accounting and Audit	500	
Advertising and Promotion	300	
Amenities	464	
Bank Charges	79	
Computer Support	346	
Equipment (consumable)	103	
Licences and Subscriptions	75	
Light and Power	173	
Petty Cash	334	
Photocopying	83	
Postage/Courier/Freight	95	
Rent	872	
Repairs & Maintenance - Equipment	114	
Stationery and Printing	842	
Telephone and Fax	1180	
Sundry Expenditure	115	
Birds on Farms Project Expenses	17 142	
BSAP Project Expenses	1080	
Displays & Walks Project Expenses	498	
Brochures Project Expenses	769	
Road Verges Project Expenses	1190	26 355
 NET SURPLUS		1757
 Plus Cash at Bank 1 Jan 97 b/f		6683
Less Purchase of Fixed Asset (Photocopier)		2290
		6150
Plus Cheque cancelled		100
Cash Book Balance		6250

During the month of September, the WA Group received the sum of \$1560 from the sale of information on the database.

Jane Venter, Hon Treasurer

PERRY HOUSE LIBRARY NEWS

The following reports/journals/books have been received since the last report (May-October 1997):

Narpulungup News, Newsletter, Fitzgerald River National Park Association, April & June 1997

1997 Urban Bushland and Community Group Directory, Urban Bushland Council (WA)

On the Brink, Newsletter, Endangered Species Program, No 9, May 1997

The Greener Times, Conservation Council of WA (Inc), May and August 1997

Rangeflash, Newsletter, Rangeways Project, No 2, May 1997

The Flow, Newsletter, Water Corporation, No 10, May 1997

Understanding the Community Perspective, Rangeways Project, Division of Water Resources and CSIRO, Report No 96/57

Draft Management Plan, Swan Estuary Marine Park and Adjacent Nature Reserves, CALM, 1996

Draft Management Plan, Canning River Regional Park, 1995-2005, CALM

Draft Management Plan, Stirling Range and Porongurup National Parks, 1997, CALM

Summary Report, Southern Metropolitan Coastal Waters Study, 1991-1994, Dept of Environmental Protection, November 1996

Inside Planning, Newsletter, Ministry for Planning, No 7, March 1997

River View, Newsletter, Swan River Trust, No 12, March/April 1997

Public Environmental Review, Perth-Bunbury Highway, Peel Deviation, Main Roads, January 1997

The Tattler, Newsletter, East Asian-Australasian Flyway, AWSG, Nos 11 & 12, April & July 1997

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* all donated by Helen Clark

Helen Clark, Librarian



Julimar Conservation Park
drawn by Diane Beckingham

SUBURBAN BIRDS SURVEY

Thanks to all those observers who are still sending in their records regularly. We have now collected well over 100 000 bird observations spread over 221 species. There is a small number of birds that are almost certainly aviary escapees, but the survey certainly confirms that there is a rich variety of species right on our doorsteps.

While the response has been excellent, there are still large gaps in our coverage of the metropolitan area.

We have records from the following suburbs:

Alfred Cove	Dianella	Leeming	Rossmoyne
Applecross	Doubleview	Lesmurdie	Rottneet Island
Ardross	Duncraig	Maddington	Salter Point
Armadale	East Cannington	Maida Vale	Samson
Attadale	East Fremantle	Marangaroo	Sawyers Valley
Balcatta	East Perth	Martin	Scarborough
Baldivis	Edgewater	Maylands	Shelley
Balga	Eglinton	Morley	Shenton Park
Ballajura	Ellenbrook	Mosman Park	Shoalwater
Banjup	Ferndale	Mt Claremont	Sorrento
Bassendean	Floreat	Mt Hawthorn	South Guildford
Bateman	Forrestdale	Mt Helena	South Lake
Bayswater	Forrestfield	Mt Lawley	South Perth
Beaconsfield	Fremantle	Mt Pleasant	Spearwood
Bedfordale	Furnissdale	Mundijong	State Forest 65
Beechboro	Garden Island	Munster	Stirling
Beeliar	Girrawheen	Myaree	Swan View
Beldon	Glen Forrest	Nedlands	Swanbourne
Bellevue	Glendalough	Neerabup	The Spectacles
Bentley	Gooseberry Hill	Noranda	Thornlie
Bibra Lake	Guildford	North Beach	Trigg
Bicton	Gwelup	North Fremantle	Victoria Park
Booragoon	Hamilton Hill	North Lake	Wandi
Bullsbrook	Herdsmen	Northridge	Wangara
Burswood	High Wycombe	Oakford	Wanneroo
Byford	Hillarys	Orange Grove	Warnbro
Cannington	Hillman	Osborne Park	Wembley
Carine	Innaloo	Padbury	Wembley Dwns
Caversham	Jandakot	Palmyra	West Perth
City Beach	Jolimont	Parkerville	Westfield
Claremont	Joondalup	Pauls Valley	Whiteman
Cloverdale	Kalamunda	Peron	Willetton
Coogee	Kallaroo	Perth	Winthrop
Coolbellup	Karrinyup	Perth Airport	Wungong
Cooloongup	Kenwick	Piesse Brook	Yanchep
Cottesloe	Kings Park	Ravenswood	Yangebup
Daglish	Kingsley	Riverton	Yokine
Dalkeith	Lathlain	Roleystone	

While the list of suburbs may look impressive, some of them only have a very small number of observation reports against them, and so the data from particular suburbs may be quite unrepresentative of the actual bird populations.

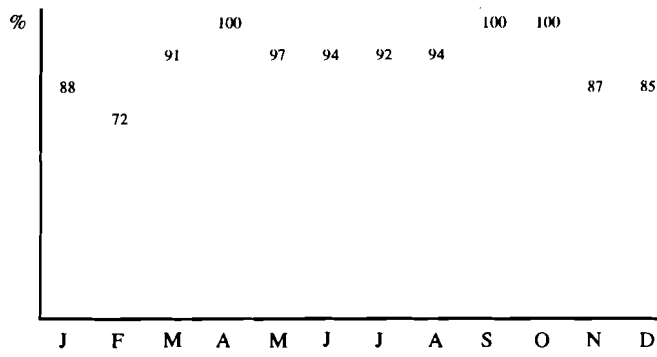
If you, or anyone you know, can help the survey by recording your observations and submitting them for inclusion in the survey, you would be helping expand our knowledge of bird activity around Perth. I am interested in obtaining new observers and new sites even in the suburbs listed above, but especially in any suburb that does not appear on the list.

I am often asked how long the survey will continue. As far as I am concerned, it has only just started. No end date has been considered. I want to know when the Rainbow Lorikeet extends its range past the 30 km radius line from the city centre, and I'm prepared to be patient. So far, there is only a single record of a Rainbow Lorikeet between 30 and 40 km from the city, and no records from further afield.

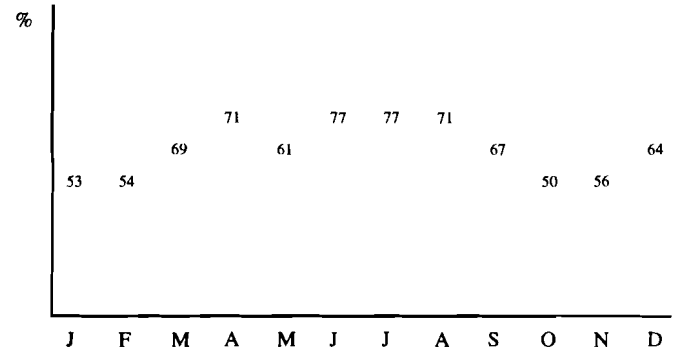
You may find it interesting to see the Rainbow Lorikeet distribution, and compare it with the distribution of the Australian Ringneck. The following graphs show a comparison of the reporting rates of each species. The graphs show the number of record sheets received each month for locations within the radius that record the bird, expressed as a percentage.

Rainbow Lorikeet

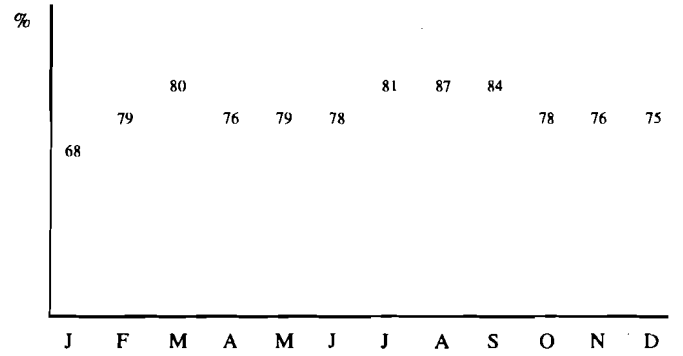
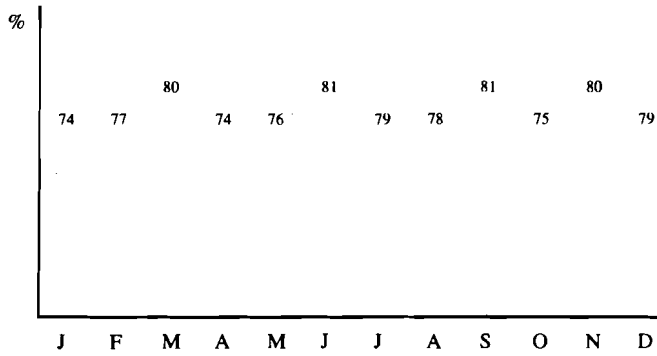
at 5 km



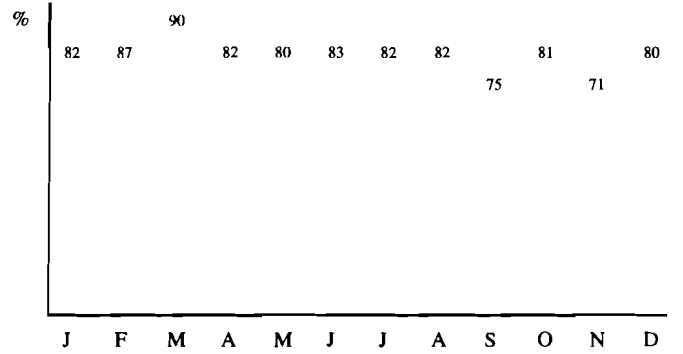
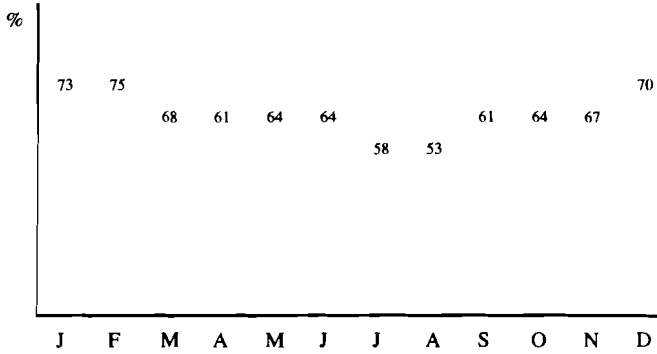
Australian Ringneck



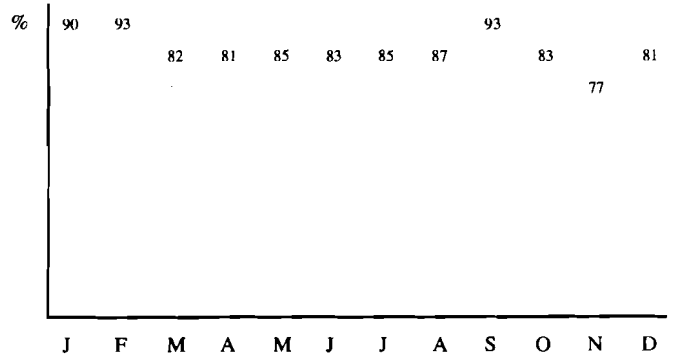
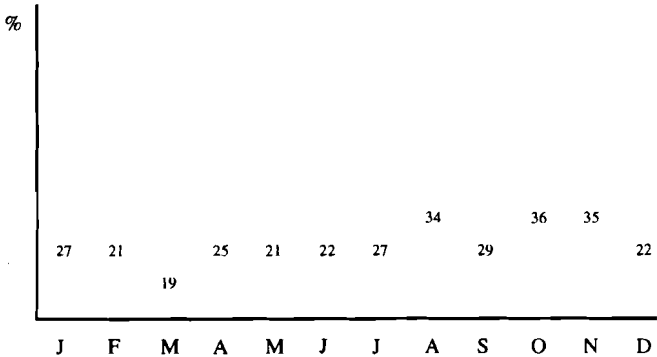
at 10 km



at 15 km

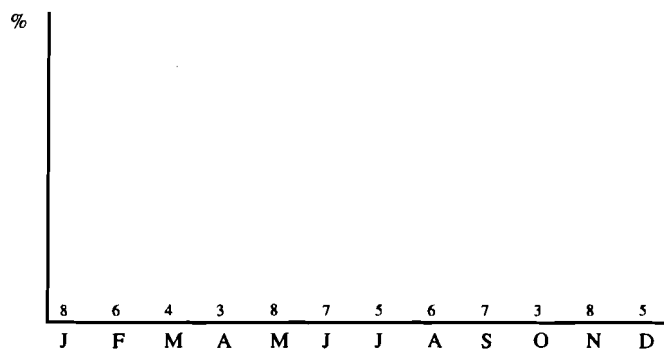


at 20 km

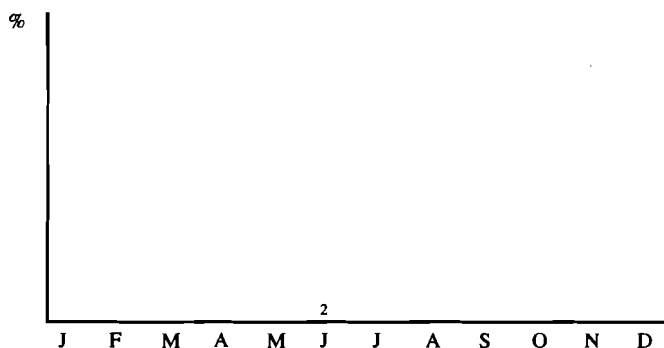


Rainbow Lorikeet

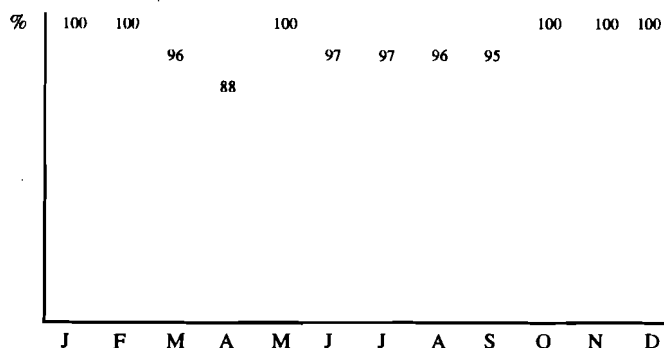
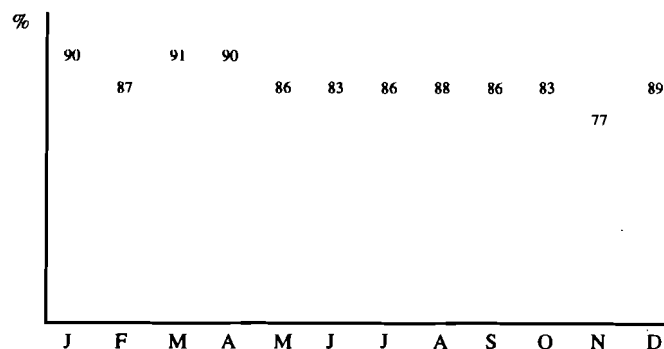
at 30 km



at 40 km



Australian Ringneck



Clive Nealon

Members' Contributions

FOOD OF THE RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO

In publications on the south-western subspecies of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*, listed as a threatened subspecies, the importance to its survival of the Marri *Eucalyptus calophylla*, as a food tree has been stressed (Saunders *et al.* 1985 (Table 1); Garnett 1993: 100-101; Rice 1995).

As my observations do not agree, and as Rice especially asked for further information, I wrote to the editors of Wingspan, stating that on the lower Warren River, Marri 'nuts' do not appear to be an important food. The reply I received was kind enough. It mentioned that several similar letters had been received from readers in Western Australia and mildly suggested that I had confused *C. b. naso* with another subspecies, *C. b. samueli*. (Perhaps one cannot blame eastern States ornithologists for having at most a hazy idea of where the mouth of the Warren River is to be found). The letter further referred me to Saunders *et al.* (1985) and Saunders and Ingram (1995: 116) to support the claim that Marri 'nuts' constitute the main food, and enclosed was a pre-print of a note by Baker-Gabb (1995).

This suggests there is a clear need for well-documented observations by Western Australian ornithologists, to clarify what food sources the birds use at various localities at different times of year, and therefore I return to the subject. My observations were made, over the past four years, on the

property "The Colonel's" at Callcup, near the mouth of the Warren River, and in the adjacent D'Entrecasteaux National Park. The white-tailed Long-billed (Baudin's) Black-Cockatoos *Calyptorhynchus baudinii* (to be discussed below in relation to red-tails) are common throughout the year, although less so in winter; the largest flock seen to date came to over 150 individuals. Red-tails are less common, and the largest number seen together was only about 25. I have not found nests yet, although families of three, with dependent young, of both species appear regularly.

Five species of gum-trees occur here: Marri *E. calophylla*, Karri *E. diversicolor*, Jarrah *E. marginata*, Bullich *E. megacarpa* and Flooded Gum *E. rudis*. During a large part of the year, Marri 'nuts' form the staple food of the Long-billed Black-Cockatoo; the seeds are dug out in the manner described by Robinson (1960). I have never seen Long-bills eat nuts of Jarrah or Karri. Red-tails, on the other hand, I have only seen eating Jarrah nuts and Karri nuts, especially the former. As our Karri flowers and fruits only irregularly, the seeming preference for Jarrah over Karri may be a matter of availability rather than of preference. Anyway, the staple food is Jarrah. The nuts are picked, cracked, the seeds extracted and the shells discarded. I have never seen red-tails eat Marri nuts.

The above statement does not mean to contradict the authorities who say that red-tails do eat Marri nuts. The first of these, as far as I am aware, is Robinson, in his classic paper

already referred to. He claims that white-tails and red-tails treat the nuts in the same manner, excavating the seeds, and gives an illustration of two nuts purportedly eaten by red-tails. It seems, however, that he has confused his species, for according to Saunders *et al.*, red-tails tackle the nuts in an entirely different manner, biting them open diagonally with their powerful bills. The important point is that this makes it easy to distinguish the work of white-tails and red-tails by the discarded shells. Although, as mentioned above, I have never seen red-tails eat Marri nuts, once in "The Colonels" and once at Pemberton, c. 25 km away, I did find halved empty nuts, treated in the way described by Saunders *et al.* (1985).

In conclusion: contrary to the literature, at Callcup on the lower course of the Warren River, in the lower South-West, Marri nuts form no more than an insignificant part of the menu of the red-tail; the mainstay of its diet here is Jarrah, and Karri when available.

With the preceding notes I do not mean to claim that Marri nuts are unimportant as food in all parts of the range of the red-tail; there may well be local differences in food preference. Note in this connection that Karri would be available only in the southern part of the range. Note also that at Callcup there is an almost complete segregation in food between red-tails and white-tails.

This communication is offered in the hope of stimulating further discussion. Most emphatically this is not an attempt to deny or minimise the importance of the Marri in the ecosystem of the South-West. The white-tail, as an endemic species with a limited range, is in more or less natural circumstances heavily dependent on the Marri and is at least as vulnerable as the red-tail. Nothing would be more short-sighted than to destroy Marri trees for the pulp-mill, and thus force the birds off their natural food and into orchards. Actually, this version of events is too simplistic, for parrots, enterprising and versatile feeders, would probably go avidly for any kind of exotic fast food. Whatever the circumstances, there will always be some damage to orchards.

To complete the picture at Callcup: large numbers of immature Marri nuts are eaten by Australian Ringnecks, *Barnardius zonarius*; this species also feeds on the ripe seeds of Flooded Gum. I have not seen Western Rosellas, *Platycercus icterotis*, eat gumnuts, but they monopolise the very small nuts of the Peppermint, *Agonis flexuosa*. Strangely enough, I have yet to see any parrot show an interest in the nuts of Bullich.

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Management. Surrey Beatty and Sons, Chipping Norton, NSW.

G.F. Mees

Editors' note: Food preferences of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos apparently vary with locality and perhaps time of year. We are interested in receiving further information on feeding observations of forest cockatoos, to help resolve this question. Any contributions are welcome.

WOOLEEN REVISITED, 19-23 August 1997

In the usual course of events Wooleen Station has two areas of water: at Yewlands Pool south-east of the homestead and at Meeberrie Pool on the Murchison River near the northern boundary. On visiting Yewlands Pool in 1997 I was surprised to find the water area much smaller than in 1996. There were 12 Australasian and one Hoary-headed Grebe, seven Wood Sandpipers, a Red-kneed and two Black-fronted Dotterels.

On the way to the pool, water was seen shining in the near distance. This was the southern part of Wooleen Lake. This lake, dry in 1996, proved to be some six kilometres long and two kilometres wide at the broadest point. Depth did not exceed 500 mm. The catchment for the Yewlands Pool and the lake are different (both off Wooleen) so that although relatively close together on the station they can and do exhibit very different water levels.

The Roderick River supplies the southern lake. When the river flows strongly, the southern part of the lake is flooded and flood waters can reach the northern part of Wooleen Lake, although this is more usually (not often) inundated by an overflow of the Murchison River from the north. If both these rivers have good rainfall in their catchments the entire lake is flooded to some depth.

I was informed that Black Swans had arrived at the lake a day after its initial flooding. Some 150+ adults, most pairs having cygnets, were seen at the time of my visit. The main bird life was Eurasian Coot, in one large 'raft' with over 8000 birds, the greatest concentration of this species I have encountered. Virtually everywhere about the lake were Black-winged Stilts, a dispersion which made an estimate of their numbers difficult, particularly as it was not possible to see all the lake from one place. I finally estimated 2000+. Also present were Grey Teal 2000+, Australasian Grebes 2000+, Pacific Black Ducks 200+, White-faced Heron 250+ and Straw-necked Ibis, whose numbers varied from day to day — usually there were some 75. Other species present were Australian Shelduck, Hardhead, Australian Pelican, Great Egret and Yellow-billed Spoonbill, each below 20 in number.

Constantly wheeling and diving over the shallow waters were Whiskered Terns (some in breeding plumage) of which there were some 250, together with 150 Gull-billed Terns. These two species roosted on the same spit at the northern end of the southern lake and as far as could be seen 'fished' in concert over the same waters, though presumably for different prey.

The presence of Wood Sandpipers at Yewlands Pool (they were also present in 1996), in a smallish area of flooded grass and mud not only showed migratory waders visit the area but held promise of greater numbers around the lake, for it had many kilometres of shoreline and very large areas of slightly

inundated grass and mud. I concluded the lake must not be in the migration directional memory of waders — probably because water is only present erratically. After much searching I found two adult Red-capped Plovers (and one immature bird) in an environment which appeared to be highly favourable for shoreline and wading birds.

Visiting somewhat earlier in the year than in 1996 and it being a 'good' year (following the equally good though unflooded 1996), I found 20 species breeding. These were Emu, Black Swan, Australasian Grebe, Whistling Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Galah, Budgerigar, Bourke's Parrot, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, Red-capped Robin, Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Black-faced Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Little Crow, Torresian Crow, Richard's Pipit and Weebill. All these were seen with young or at/on a nest, with the exception of the Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos which were engaged in activity requiring a nest site in the near future.

Nineteen species were recorded as breeding in 1996, ten of which were not observed in 1997.

Ninety-two species were recorded in 1997 (cf 96 in 1996; see WABN 80, December 1996). Species seen in 1997 but not seen in 1996 were Australian Hobby (one flying near the homestead), Gull-billed Tern, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo (two parties of two), Variegated Fairy-wren (a 'family' near the homestead), Brown Honeyeater (plentiful along watercourses), Little Button-quail (three in total), White-browed Babbler (three parties), Mistletoebird, Weebill (feeding young) and White-fronted Honeyeater (several near the north-eastern boundary of the station). The presence of some if not all of these may be attributed to the flooding of the lake and the good season. These ten bring my sightings over 1996/1997 to 106 species.

Another signal of the season was an abundance of Nankeen Kestrels and Brown Falcons. The many Brown Falcons were in dark, light and between phases. Wooleen has large granite outcrops, some nearly 200 m high. Above one of these five Brown Falcons hung motionless in the face of a stiff breeze, to descend in a rapid glide with a final twisting lunge whenever prey was sighted on the ground — presumably insects. Only one Brown Falcon was seen in 1996.

Two species seen in 1996 and not recorded in the *Atlas* block, Common Bronzewing and Grey Butcherbird, were again seen. Two Common Bronzewings were seen in 1996 (near Yewlands Pool), but eight in 1997 (4 x 2) again at the pool but also in other parts of the station. A Grey Butcherbird was constructing a nest and this species too was seen and heard more widely than in 1996. A pair of White-browed Treecreepers was recorded at a considerable distance north of the 1996 sighting, but the other four 'non-*Atlas*' species of 1996 (Peregrine Falcon, Blue-billed Duck, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo and Varied Sittella) were not found.

I was pleased to have a Spotted Bowerbird perch and remain for some time less than 20 m from my 'hide' (the car in which I was eating breakfast) and greatly impressed with a Spotted Harrier which flew slowly towards me at head height while swinging from side to side to reveal its magnificent marking. It passed lazily by less than five metres from where I stood, in the process revealing a Willie Wagtail nest under construction, for the Willie Wagtail fled on sighting the harrier.

It was of interest to find Common Bronzewing, Spotted

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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 March 1998 Issue
1 February 1998
at Perry House

Bowerbird, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Masked Woodswallow and Western Gerygone in the same places that I found them in 1996, although all were seen elsewhere in 1997. The Masked Woodswallows which were abundant in an area in 1996 were again abundant in that same area only. One was observed to carry a twig.

The northern part of Wooleen lies in the 26/116 *Atlas* block. Species seen within that block and not recorded in the *Atlas* were Australasian Shoveler (2), Australasian Grebe (16) and Straw-necked Ibis (300+). All these were at Meeberrie Pool. Bush species seen but not recorded in the *Atlas* 26/116 block were Mistletoebird, Brown Honeyeater and White-fronted Honeyeater, all of which were observed along the

lower-middle reaches of the Roderick River. The Spotted Bowerbird mentioned above was also within the 26/116 *Atlas* block (both 1996 and 1997) in which it was not recorded previously.

I thank Helen and Brett Pollock for their help and hospitality.

Bruce Buchanan

Reference: Blakers, M., Davies, S.J.J.F. and Reilly, P.N. (1984) *The Atlas of Australian Birds*. RAOU and Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

GAME VALLEY NATURE RESERVE: PART 2 OF AN AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

(See WABN 82:10-11 for Part 1)

On 26 January I was again able to join Professor Maclean's birdwalk at Game Valley. There was a group of 10 people, including two members of Professor Maclean's family. On this walk Gordon had a different driver/assistant, who was also helpful. We followed the same route as on the previous birdwalk. However, the weather was very hot and sunny and we only managed to identify 70+ species in 3½ hours. The walk finished a little earlier than previously and the drink stops were more welcome than ever.

The Karkloof River was running very swiftly due to recent heavy rains in the catchment areas. Water was flowing over the bridge. The grass was higher and the tree canopies denser.

The Long-crested Eagle was again perched in a tree near the river. A young *Gymnogene* was in trees nearby. A Yellow-billed Kite and Little Sparrowhawk were the only other raptors we saw until we returned to the main lodge at the end of the walk. Then a Martial Eagle soared over us.

A Common Sandpiper was on the bridge and a White-rumped Swift overhead. We also saw European and White-throated Swallows. Other new sightings for me were Groundscraper Thrush (very good view), Yellow and African Sedge-Warblers, Lazy Cisticola and several Spotted Flycatchers. We were fortunate seeing the Long-tailed Wagtail as they are not common in the area. There was a Brubru as well as a Yellow-throated Sparrow and a Forest Canary. Once again we saw several types of weavers, including the Thick-billed Weaver. We also had good views of the Forest Weavers. The Black-headed Oriole followed alongside us for some time. It has a lovely liquid callnote and a bright yellow belly, making it easy to spot and identify. A male *Nerina Trogon* was the highlight. It flew into a tall tree and perched motionless facing us. Its head, back and breast are bright green and it has a red belly. Despite this it is very difficult to spot.

Giraffes were browsing or resting very close to the road on this walk. They did not appear to be afraid of vehicles. There were several groups of young adult Giraffes as well as family groups with very young offspring. The White Rhinoceros had recently been fed so we were able to walk past quietly without disturbing them. Burchell's Zebra, Impala and Wildebeest were also observed at different locations in the Park.

Once again I had a very interesting walk in beautiful surroundings despite the very warm day.

Claire Gerrish

LAUGHING TURTLE-DOVE AT DENHAM

Robert Davis (*WA Bird Notes*, No. 83) records the Laughing Turtle-Dove at Monkey Mia. While holidaying at Denham in December 1991 I made the following observations of that species there:

15th: December: Two birds inside the town.

16th: One bird inside the town.

17th: Three birds were flushed from the ground amongst the scrub about one kilometre east of the town.

18th: Three birds inside the town.

19th: One bird flushed from the ground just out of the town. References for RD and others interested in the species' colonisation of the North-West are:

Blakers *et al.* 1984. (*RAOU Atlas*). Refer to the map on p223. It is now well established at Carnarvon and has been observed at North-West Cape.

Morris *et al.* 1994. *The Western Australian Naturalist*, 19:351.

Storr, G.M. 1985. *Records of the Western Australian Museum Supplement* 21.

Other Columbids that I saw were the Rock Dove (Domestic Pigeon) in Denham, the birds flying in circles in a compact flock, as they do while exercising, and a male Common Bronzewing a few kilometres from Denham along the road to Monkey Mia.

Further observations of the Laughing Turtle-Dove in the North-West would be of great interest.

R H Stranger

WHO AND WHAT KILLED THE GOLDFINCH IN PERTH?

The article by Ian Standring (*WA Bird Notes*, 82:12) about recent sightings of the Goldfinch locally reminded me of its former occurrences in and around Perth, and its mysterious demise. Several theories were advanced to explain why it had declined so abruptly, over a span of seven or eight years (Storr and Johnstone, 1988), after successfully colonising Perth for some 30 years. Lack of food, disease(s), predation, trapping for the cage-bird trade, harassment by native species — all these reasons were put forward in an attempt to solve the mystery. Was any one factor responsible? Did some of them compound on others? Even now, some 25 years later, the puzzle still isn't solved.

The Goldfinch was fairly well known to me in the 1950s and the early 1960s, and I knew it both as a cage-bird and a wild bird, even if feral. In fact I knew it better than many native species. It liked the introduced pines, wastelands, old pastures and open fields, the latter being the source of its food. Mostly it was fairly tame and thus easily observed and groups and small flocks could be seen drinking at and bathing in standing waters, such as the bird-bath in Rutter Park, Wembley.

A lack of food seemed a possibility for its demise because the wastelands and fields that sustained it were progressively consumed by development, and built over for housing estates. Many stands of pine, which it was very fond of for shelter and nesting, were felled in the name of progress. An example of the former was the area south-west of Herdsman's Lake, Woodlands. A fringe of eucalypts provided some shelter and resting places and the birds roamed and foraged over the wasteland between the eucalypts and the reed-beds of the lake proper. Now, the only indication of their former presence there

is the appropriately named Goldfinch Way. Aviculturists used to trap birds for their own collections and some were sold into the cage-bird trade. How many Goldfinches were removed from the wild is unknown but at least one trapper noticed that some of the birds being handled had a brownish "fungal" growth on their feet and legs. This led to the belief that maybe the birds were stressed and that they had become subject to disease(s) and progressively perished. One can only wonder that maybe an escaped bird or two introduced such a disease to the feral birds.

It was also thought that predation by hawks and cats may have been a contributing factor in its extinction locally, but this was not a new hazard, the birds having been subject to it from the day they became feral. There were no observations of the larger natives, such as the Magpie, interfering with or harassing them. Except for one, the Singing Honeyeater, but my comments fell on deaf ears.

The Goldfinch was relentlessly harassed by the Singing Honeyeater, which is a very aggressive native species well known to attack and harass any small native birds in the metropolitan area. It will also attack and harass the smaller cage-birds such as Canaries and finches, even if they are in aviaries. Further, in the wild the Singing Honeyeater is known to destroy and plunder the nests and eggs of Zebra and Double-barred Finches (Serventy and Whittell 1976) and also to eat the eggs of smaller birds and interfere with their attempts to breed (Goodwin 1978).

I knew of a Goldfinch nest built at the top of a pine in Rutter Park and it was not covered in any way. It seemed to me that the Goldfinches were sitting, or at least trying to occupy the nest. The Singing Honeyeaters were really giving the sitting finch a hard time and when I returned to the park a week later the nest had been abandoned. Another completely uncovered nest was built in an Almond tree in Nedlands and was soon subject to the attacks of the local Singing Honeyeaters. This attempt at breeding was also aborted by the Goldfinches but in this case may have been influenced by a local birdwatcher trying to photograph the nest and eggs. The nest was eventually picked to pieces by the honeyeaters.

Such interference with the Goldfinch's attempts to breed may have not been decisive in its demise, but coupled with its harassment generally, I consider that it was at least a considerable factor. It was also obvious to me when I saw the two species "coexisting" on southern Eyre Peninsula, South Australia in 1977 that they were really occupying two different habitats. The Singing Honeyeater confined itself to the vegetation bordering the fields with only a few sorties out of it, and the Goldfinch largely avoided contact with it by flying high over that vegetation, and although roaming and foraging extensively over the fields it avoided close contact with the honeyeater at the borders of the fields.

From these observations I concluded that wherever the Singing Honeyeater has access to the whole of the area, the Goldfinch cannot coexist with it because of the honeyeater's constant attacks on and harassment of it. But, given a suitable locality where the honeyeater is absent, such as Adelaide, South Australia, the Goldfinch can sustain itself on suitable food and can maintain itself by local breeding.

In hindsight we can still only guess the reasons for the Goldfinch's demise in Perth.

But a study of the Goldfinch and Singing Honeyeater at Albany, Western Australia, where it is claimed that the two

species do coexist, and the conditions there would no doubt be of some interest.

References:

- Goodwin, D. 1978. *Birds of Man's World*. Trustees of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Butler & Tanner, London.
Serventy, D.L. & Whittell, H.M. 1976. *Birds of Western Australia*. University of WA Press, Nedlands, WA.
Storr, G.M. & Johnstone, R.E. 1988. *Birds of the Swan Coastal Plain and adjacent seas and islands*. Records of the Western Australian Museum, Suppl. No. 28.

R H Stranger

SWAMP HARRIER AT LAKE JOONDALUP

On the morning of 29 September I saw a Swamp Harrier attempting to hover over open water at the southern end of Lake Joondalup. When I looked through binoculars I saw splashes in the water below the harrier. The splashes were being made by one of the small grebes, either an Australasian Grebe or a Hoary-headed Grebe. The distance, the light, and the speed with which it dived after breaking the surface all conspired against a positive identification.

After some five or six minutes of this activity, the harrier, which had been maintaining a height of two or three metres above the surface, dropped to the surface with its talons held out below it. It settled on the surface with its wings spread out and remained there for about three minutes.

The harrier then started to flap its wings and lifted itself clear of the water, emerging with a limp and apparently lifeless grebe suspended from one foot. Once airborne, it headed towards a stand of Paperbarks on the eastern side of the lake.

Clive Nealon

BIRDING BY CAMEL

I have only recently become a 'birdo', but have always been in places where I have been aware of birds. They have not been the sole reason for my being in various places. Different forms of transport have been needed to get to these places. Transport to date has been by car, 4-wheel drive, back of utility or Landrover, small boat, shanks pony and cycling.

At present I am employed in the Kimberley and have used yet another form of transport for bird observation: a camel safari along the Fitzroy River.

Camels are extremely useful creatures, but I would not put birdwatching high on their list of uses. They have minds of their own so it is necessary to keep a firm hold of the saddle handle at all times. This makes following a bird, one-handedly, with binoculars rather difficult. Camels can be rather noisy as they browse whilst travelling. They appear interested in where the food is, rather than where to place their large, soft feet. They do not have the sweetest breath, either.

The camels made me feel as if I was sailing through the grasslands or gliding through the riverine forest. They need quite a distance for braking and then are very difficult to reverse. What you wanted to see has usually gone by then.

When you do stop, parking is difficult; they may be inclined to think of a rest. Suddenly the front goes down halfway, then the back goes down all the way and then the front goes down the rest of the way.

Our camel train made wonderful beasts of burden under the warm sun. Camping under the stars in this weather is

magical. A luxury to lie in your swag and watch the dawn birds through the mosquito nets!

However, after two days I did feel rather saddle weary. I wonder what my next form of bird viewing transport will be?

Claire Gerrish

ABERRATIONS AGAIN

1. More Mimicry

WABN 81 of March 1997 published an account of a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater which cooperated with a Little Wattlebird in defence of their food sources at Wannamal.

1997 has been a different year climatically and the *Eremophila laanii* which so attracted birds to this site in 1996 has been relatively sparsely flowered.

Nevertheless in early August a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater appeared in the bush and commenced calling in 'Little Wattlebird'. Its defence of the bush was rather half-hearted and a good deal of time was spent elsewhere, during which periods other birds gained access to the flowers.

Two days after arrival, the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters began to call from the *Eremophila*, still in 'Little Wattlebird', but much more loudly than usual. Not long after, two Little Wattlebirds flew to perch in the bush close to the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater.

The Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater alternately cocked its head at the new arrivals and talked to them quietly in "their language". After some two minutes of this, during which time the Little Wattlebirds simply looked back, the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater flew at the new arrivals. They departed rapidly to a nearby tree with the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater in pursuit.

Having disposed of these two, the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater returned to the *Eremophila*. There it continued its previous lackadaisical defence. After two further days during which it called seldom (though always in 'Little Wattlebird'), it abandoned the *Eremophila* altogether.

Was this the same bird as in 1996?

2. Nocturnal Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo

This year around Wannamal there has been a dearth of the usually predominant Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo is the one of the two most commonly heard. One of these decided to roost overnight in my garden, not far from the bedroom window.

A result of this has been to disturb me by its calls at night. The first time this occurred was about 11 pm. Other calls have usually been around 3:00–3:30 am, although one was at 1:30 am. Some calls have been the earliest of the garden dawn chorus.

Pallid Cuckoos are well reported as calling at night. I have not found a reference to Horsfield's doing the same and it is the first time I have heard one calling in the dark of the night in over ten years here.

3. Partial Xanthochroism

Red-capped Parrots have been particularly plentiful in the garden at Wannamal this year. They have developed a taste for *Grevillea olivaceae* first thing in the morning (much less so at other times of the day) and as many as 30 have been making early visits to these plants.

During the past four months the Red-capped Parrots have been accompanied at times by one whose wings and other

colouring is suffused with a dull yellow, giving the impression of a yellow-green bird in flight. Inspection through binoculars reveals an unmistakable Red-capped Parrot but equipped with the unusual colouring.

Such flavism or partial xanthochroism appears to be well recorded, but it is the first such bird I have ever seen.

Bruce Buchanan

GERYGONE FUSCA FUSCA CONFIRMED AT BROOME

During a mist-netting session taking place as part of the Broome Bird Observatory banding fieldcraft course at Quarry Beach mangroves (species *Avicennia*, *Aegiceras*, *Camptostemon* and *Rhizophora*), a Gerygone found its way into one of the nets. At first glance I believed it to be a juvenile Mangrove Gerygone (*Gerygone levigaster*); this species is seen in the vicinity on a regular basis (Johnstone 1990; Collins 1995). Once I began to process the bird it appeared slightly different and did not resemble the expected features of the Mangrove Gerygone. When I saw the tail pattern I "nearly fell off me" stool!" The striking tail pattern identified it as a Western Gerygone (*Gerygone fusca*), but I knew of only four sightings in the Broome area and none had ever been banded (Collins 1995; BBO records). I showed the bird to Perry de Rebeira, who was leading our course. Perry agreed that it looked like a Western Gerygone tail pattern. A full plumage description was carried out and numerous photographs were taken.

The photographs were sent to Rod Smith (Western Banders Association), Dr R Jessop and P Collins (banders who have studied the birds of the North-West) and Ron Johnstone (WA Museum). All agreed that the bird was a Western Gerygone and Ron, with the aid of magnifying glass and skins, pinned it down to *Gerygone fusca fusca*, as opposed to *Gerygone fusca mungi*. *Mungi* (the desert race) is found in the Edgar Ranges 180 km south-east of Broome (Storr 1980). The nearest population of *G. fusca fusca* is Geraldton, so that's a pretty impressive juvenile dispersal. Thanks to Pete, Perry, Rod, Ron and Roz for their input. A new bird for the band register!

References:

- Collins, P. 1995. The Birds of Broome. An Annotated List. Broome Bird Observatory, Broome.
Johnstone, R.E. 1990. Mangroves and Mangrove Birds of Western Australia. Records of the Western Australian Museum, Suppl. No. 32.
Storr, G.M. 1980. Birds of the Kimberley Division, Western Australia. WA Museum Special Publication No. 11.

Chris Hassell

HERON FORAGING BEHAVIOUR

About two weeks ago (in September) I observed a White-faced Heron hunting in my garden near Mandurah. As the heron stalked its prey and got closer it began vibrating or oscillating its neck. As it got even closer the oscillations got more pronounced and its rump was also waving from side to side. I was able to observe this behaviour five times. I only saw it catch one feed that I could identify although four may have been small. The fifth victim was a very fat skink.

I wonder whether this oscillating of the neck is an unusual or a usual behaviour? I have not observed it before in herons feeding on the mudflats. The only theory I can suggest is that

it was a poor hunter and very hungry and getting very excited at the prospect of a meal.

Dick Rule

Editors' note: HANZAB records neck swaying (moving head and neck from side to side after prey sighted) but the behaviour of the Mandurah bird seems not to have been recorded before.

GREAT CORMORANTS BREEDING

Mitadu Tea-tree Pool is part of the Sanford River system on Murgoo Station. The approximate location of the pool is 27°32'S, 116°30'E.

On 9 October we saw a colony of Great Cormorants in Tea-trees (*Melaleuca* sp.) growing in 0.5 m water about 50 m from shore. Nine nests were found, one containing three large chicks. Several of the nests were "layered" suggesting they had been added to in successive years. Mitadu Tea-tree Pool dries out in some years but there is always some surface water in the area and the Sanford River supports at least two native fish: Spangled Grunters *Leiopotherapon unicolor* and Deep Hardyheads *Craterocephalus cuneiceps*. Other waterbirds included a group of six Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Grey Teal (about ten) and a single White-necked Heron.

This would appear to be an unusual breeding record for Great Cormorants and the colony was only located because the station owner spotted it while mustering from a light aircraft.

The only other breeding record from the Gascoyne is from the Gascoyne River (Storr 1985, Records of the WA Museum, Suppl. No. 21).

Mandy, Mike, Josh and Jake Bamford

MAGPIE-LARKS

About mid-August a pair of Magpie-larks started to build a nest in a large eucalypt overhanging our garden. We have known this pair for several years; they have both been banded, and last year they built a nest and brought up two youngsters in a pine tree nearly a kilometre away.

At the top of the tree they chose this year a pair of Australian Ravens had built a nest and proceeded to raise three young. We were fearful of the fate awaiting the Magpie-lark eggs, or offspring when the time came for the eggs to hatch, but there must be an unwritten law that birds do not attack other occupants of the same tree.

We were away for a few days while the Magpie-larks were building their nest, but when we returned on 30 August we were amazed to find no sign of it. We later found its soggy remains beneath a nearby bush. There had been a heavy downpour just before our return, and no doubt the nest had filled with rainwater and collapsed.

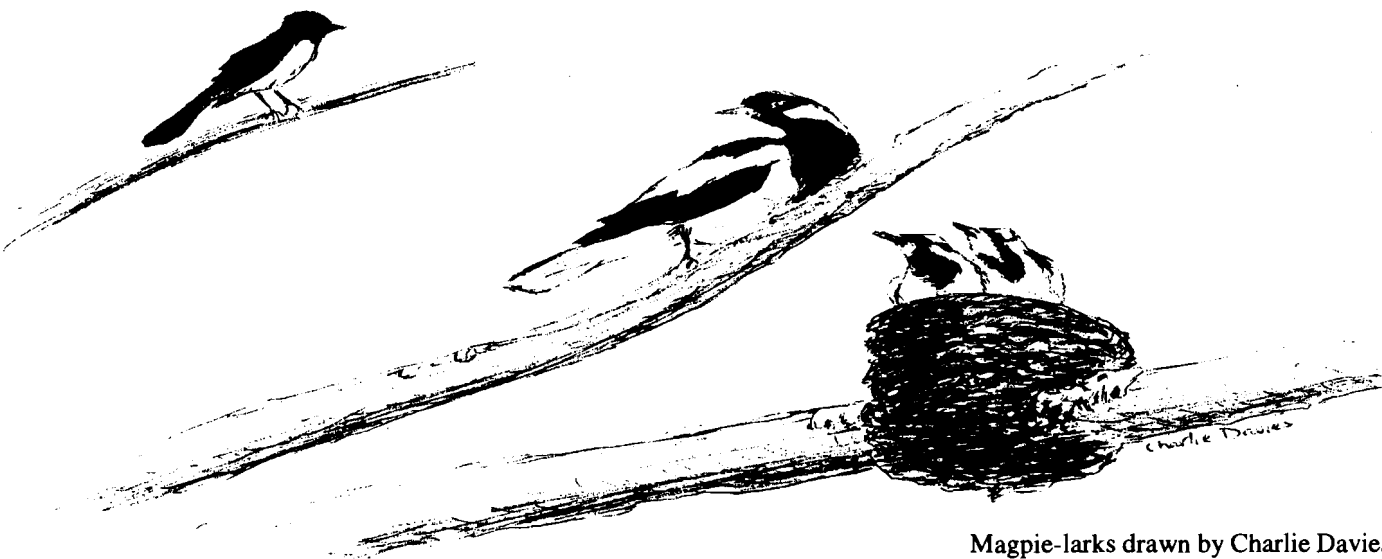
However, the Magpie-larks immediately recommenced building, this time successfully. From 9 September the birds would spend short periods on the nest, leaving it empty for much of the day, but after 17 September one or other parent was always on the nest. By 5 October there were naked chicks being fed, and by the 18th there were signs of black and white feathers.

On 19 October, after a few days of strong winds, we found the partly feathered body of a chick on the ground near the nest. However, next day we could make out two much bigger chicks still in the nest. The third chick may have been too much for the parents to cope with.

On 22 October, both chicks were standing on the edge of the nest stretching and exercising their wings. Two days later we noticed that they were no longer there. At least one of the parents seemed unaware of their flight, for the father arrived at the nest with a morsel of food, and seemed surprised to find it empty. It was their cries and his flight to satisfy their hunger which led us to their new perch.

One remarkable aspect of this whole episode is that the one and only Willie Wagtail in this area appears to have cast himself in the role of nursemaid and guardian. Although he never fed them, at times he would sing to them in the nest, and any ravens or magpies which dare to set foot in the garden are seen off fearlessly and in no uncertain manner.

Charlie and Liz Davies



Magpie-larks drawn by Charlie Davies

NEST SITE FIDELITY OF THE MAGPIE-LARK

The prolific white wash on the cycle way had caught my attention and a brief look overhead identified the cause among the overhanging branches of a large river gum. On one of the lower branches was the nest of a Magpie-lark. An adult bird was sitting high on the nest and likely with young. Once aware of the nest site, I made regular checks while passing underneath. On 29 December 1995 the young were close to fledging.

Surprisingly the nest largely survived the winter rains. The cup walls had a greenish tinge which was possibly due to moss growing on the mud.

Nearly a year later on 30 October 1996, a Magpie-lark was again sitting on the same nest as the previous year.

A few weeks later a closer look was taken through binoculars and some quite large young had their heads hanging over the rim of the nest with the adult bird still perched on top. What was interesting was the difference in the colour of the nest cup's wall.

The top half of the nest cup was a lighter grey, the mud looked fresher as opposed to the bottom half which was darker grey. There was a distinct border between the two colours. Did the nest from the previous year sustain some damage after all during the winter/spring season and had this been repaired at the start of the new breeding season?

The summer passed and the nest remained intact. In early March 1997 the nest started to break up. First a corner, then the sides and finally by the first week in May 1997 there was no trace on the branch that a nest had ever been there.

You would have expected the story to end here but amazingly on 2 August 1997 a freshly built Magpie-lark nest adorned the branch. It was located in exactly the same place as the nest had been during the previous two years. The spot was easily identified on the branch as it had a small stump protruding sideways which probably helped anchor the nest.

After weathering heavy August showers the nest was completed and the Magpie-lark was found settled on the nest on 23 August 1997. Four weeks later the site was deserted.

A Magpie-lark used exactly the same nest site three years in a row which shows a remarkable site fidelity. The location was near the Thornlie Campus.

Marcus Singor

PREDATION OF TAWNY FROGMOUTH NEST BY RAVEN

The following incident occurred on 16 October at Paxwold, Lesmurdie and was observed from my vehicle from 10:30 am at a distance of about 35 m. I noticed two Tawny Frogmouths in the first fork of a Jarrah 10 m up. Although its branches extended a further 8-9 m, the canopy was almost non-existent due to ravages of dieback disease, and a fire last January. The frogmouths were being harassed by an Australian Raven. Soon one of them flew at the raven which also flew, then both perched in a nearby tree, the raven further from the nest. The raven promptly returned to the nest area (and I was able to ascertain later that there was a nest), perching above, then moving down the tree limb towards the other agitated frogmouth. The first frogmouth returned to the nest. The raven moved in closer then away followed again by one of the frogmouths. Again it quickly returned to the nest area.

Over the next few minutes there were at least four

repetitions of this behaviour then suddenly a change. The Tawny Frogmouths were apart, the raven moved in directly to the nest then left flying low with a fluffy chick in its beak, held by the head or neck so that I could clearly see its stumpy wings outstretched and its legs dangling. The parent bird that had already left the nest did not return and the other left soon after.

It is likely that other chicks of the same clutch had gone the same way. I would estimate that the chick was the maximum size it would grow before the emergence of feathers. I don't know how long the siege had been going on before my arrival.

Brenda Newbey

SEA-GOING DUCKLINGS

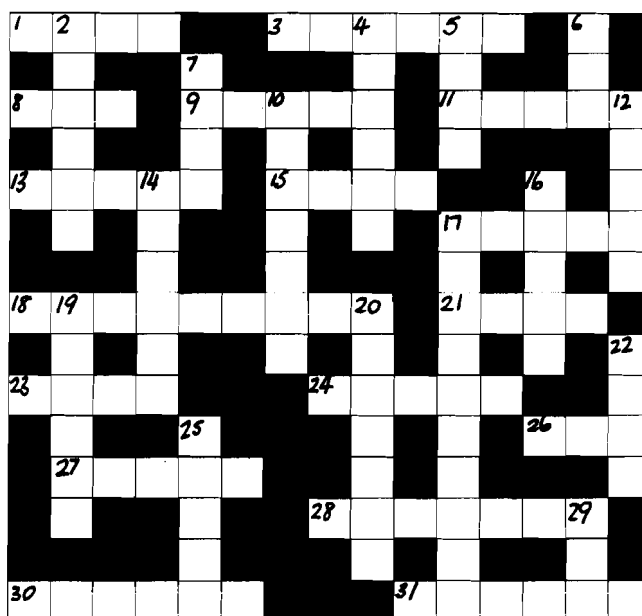
On the morning of 18 October at Mangles Bay, Rockingham, I observed an adult Pacific Black Duck accompanied by five downy ducklings paddling steadfastly out to sea, almost into the very strong wind. (I was in a dinghy heading the opposite way with almost no rowing required.) They were about 100 m from shore. It was a morning of unusually low tide. Perhaps they had been feeding among exposed seagrass near the water's edge when startled; perhaps there was an intent to feed on algae, etc, along mooring lines and on buoys as the family was in a zone of scattered moorings which extend to 350 m from shore.

I have occasionally seen black ducks on the sea, although not at Rockingham, and never ducklings.

Brenda Newbey

Crossword No 11

Pam Agar



Clues Across

1. It's difficult, but cockatoos can be ... in captivity.
3. Gape colour of one of Eyre's honeyeaters.
8. Number of eggs laid by a cuckoo in a single host's nest.
9. Crown colour of northern wren species.

11. Boobooks choose thick foliage for this.
13. Likely nest-site of some seabirds.
15. Creation of one may aid in preservation of some species.
17. Cayley's *What Bird Is That?* was ... published in 1931.
18. Degree of occurrence.
21. Excursion site in Joondalup.
23. A honeyeater is a possible one for a Pallid Cuckoo.
24. You may need more to convince an expert.
26. Surname of past President of RAOU — June '83 - June '86
27. Finch with barred tail.
28. He/she may initiate a project to satisfy requirements of a degree.
30. That of the WA Group is featured on name cards.
31. The great-winged species breeds along the south coast of WA.

Clues Down

2. Young wader.
4. Noted observation.
5. Musical instrument, giving name to a large songbird.
6. Is Australia a signatory of the Ramsar Treaty?
7. Wing difference between the two forms of Kookaburra.
10. Officially a wader but often seen in farm paddocks.
12. Birds have but one, briefly.
14. Diving bird.
16. Secretive water bird.
17. Official family name of Australian Kestrel and Grey Falcon.
19. Wing colour, giving name to pigeon species.
20. Part of previous scientific name for Large Egret.
22. Soft covering developed for warmth.
25. It may be illegal, but it still occurs with rare species.
29. Digit of foot.

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

May Outing

Fifteen of the Albany Bird Group travelled to Kamballup on 8 May. The day was calm and sunny. It became quite warm for this time of the year.

The birds were very active with several breeding pairs seen.

We walked through the Wandoo country down to the Kalgan River, and saw a brood of 18 shelduck ducklings about one week old. Here we saw also the Sacred Kingfisher, Restless Flycatcher and Splendid Fairy-wrens. In the Wandoo the Purple-crowned Lorikeets were going in and out of hollows, as were the Red-capped Parrots. Also seen as a pair were Regent Parrots, Australian Ringnecks and Western Rosellas.

After lunch the group moved across the road to the old golf course. We didn't see as many birds but the area was rich in wildflowers.

This was a splendid day, with 47 species seen altogether and we were home by 3 pm.

Vivian McCormick

September Outing

In spite of all sorts of threatening weather conditions forecast, 14 regular attendees plus one visitor from England met at Denmark.

After gathering at the rotunda on the banks of the Denmark River we travelled to Tina Smith's home which is situated on the edge of a forest on the southern edge of the golf course. Here, from her kitchen window, we had very good views of many bush birds such as Splendid Fairy-wrens, a White-breasted Robin, Red-eared Firetails, Common Bronzews, etc. Tina does put food out and had delayed feeding until we came. Our visitor was very pleased with his video results and we were all thrilled to see so many birds gathered in one place.

Although it was cold and the clouds still threatened, the birds were active. We saw some birds carrying food and other indications that they were breeding.

Tina took us on a walk to the golf course and to visit a Tawny Frogmouth sitting on a nest, looking more like a stick than a stick! We always find golf courses very good value for birdwatching, but never go to one without permission.

At the golf course we also saw Brown and White-naped Honeyeaters, Western Rosellas, Galahs, Scarlet Robin, Inland Thornbill and of special interest, a family of White-browed Babblers on the bushland opposite, plus a Pacific Black Duck sitting in a hollow. Tina is in an ideal situation to view these birds. We thank her for sharing.

After morning tea we visited the beach and the mouth of the Wilson Inlet. Here we saw Caspian Terns fishing, Crested Terns, Red-capped Plovers and heard a Little Grassbird, as well as a flock of about 20 Long-billed Black-Cockatoos. The clouds still threatened but the sun came out from time to time, and it got warmer as the day progressed.

All agreed it was a most enjoyable bird outing; and for some of us bird observing continued on the way back to Albany — Swamp Harriers, a group of about 50 Australian Shelducks, Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Australian White Ibis, Hoary-headed Grebe, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorant. The rain started as we got closer to Albany. We had been very fortunate.

Vivian McCormick

October Outing

For the Albany Bird Group the October outing was the best we have had all year, with a total of 61 species. I'm convinced we are very lucky in Albany. I know a lot of our bird group feel the same way.

We are pleased to welcome Viv Dare who has come to join us. Altogether there were 21 regulars plus one visitor for the outing. We met at the Cranbrook-Frankland River turnoff at 8:00 am.

The day was sunny with no wind. Even while waiting the birds were active with a Grey Butcherbird calling. The first stop was at the Slab Hut Creek (known to the locals as "Wash Pool"). We broke up into small groups. Some went one side of the creek and both sides of the road. The flowers were beautiful and there were birds everywhere. We had other stops, too, but our main destination was "Kenny's Tank". The Wandoo country is always good value for us. We called in at a lake close by and were able to add water birds to our list.

Vivian McCormick

Notices

WAHOOPS — FURTHER HOODED PLOVER SURVEYS

Thanks to a grant from World Wide Fund for Nature Australia, we are now able to continue our studies to solve some of the mysteries surrounding this interesting species.



WWF World Wide Fund
For Nature Australia
ACN 001 594 074

We will again rely on the skills, patience and generosity of our members for success as in our 1994-96 surveys.

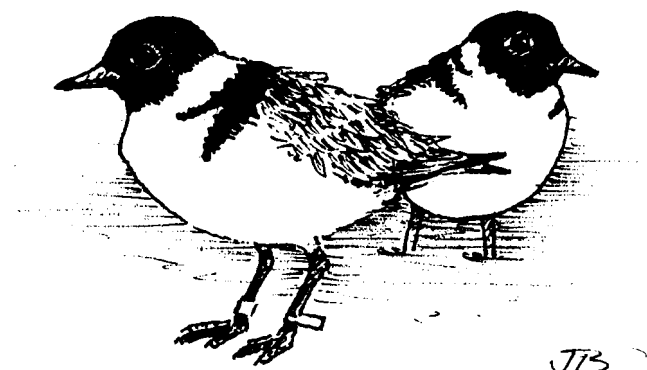
Michael Bamford, Brenda Newbey, Grant Pearson and Allan Rose will provide the professional guidance and support for the project.

What Are Our Objectives?

- To discover why Hooded Plovers (HP) gather at such few sites in summer, especially Lake Gore, for breeding and foraging.
- To assess whether there is any change in the numbers in the Esperance region.
- To again attempt to find the winter location of HP in remote areas.
- To locate some of the flagged HP from the Esperance programme.
- To obtain an up-to-date summer/winter assessment of the distribution of HP throughout coastal and inland areas in WA.
- To prepare a report on the project.

What is the Programme?

Flagging — in January 1998, Allan Rose will supervise the flagging and banding of Hooded Plovers in the Esperance area. A few experienced banders will be needed to help Allan. The yellow flags shown on the illustration will help observers detect the birds in February and August surveys. Note that the flag is on the left tarsus, just above the foot, and is yellow. There will be a silver band on the right leg.



Mud and Water Sampling — core samples will be taken from selected lakes in the Esperance area and sent to Perth for analysis. Volunteers will be needed for the flagging and sampling and may need to camp at Lake Gore for several days. If interested please complete and return information on the back of enclosed report form to Hooded Plover Project.

Summer Survey — we hope to survey most of the areas on the back of enclosed Hooded Plover report form which will be carried out in conjunction with the 7 February 1998 Wader Study Survey. If 7 February is not suitable, please select a time as close as possible to this date.

We have included in this edition a form for reporting HP sightings. Please contact the office for additional copies or make photocopies.

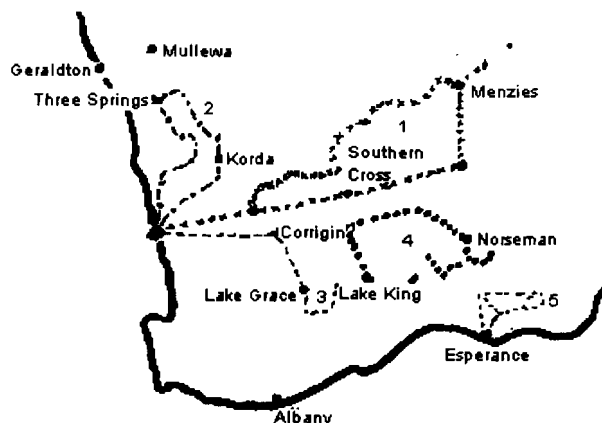
SEND ALL RETURNS FOR WADER STUDY SURVEY + HOODED PLOVER SURVEY TO PHYLLIS BENTLEY AT OUR OFFICE.

Winter Survey — this will cover the area of the Summer Survey and procedures will be the same.

Remote Area Surveys — volunteers are needed for remote area surveys as shown on the map.

Dates will be selected as we get nearer to the period (possibly July, August).

REMOTE WINTER SURVEYS



Area maps and information will be provided for each leader-driver detailing sites to be visited. On each map there will be additional sites to be explored at the leader's discretion.

Leader-drivers will set the timetable of the trip within a specified period.

Because of long distances to be covered, grant money is available to defray some expenses for remote surveys.

Contact David Free, who is organising remote surveys, on (08) 9384 5160 for further information on remote surveys, or forward information on back of enclosed report form to Phyllis Bentley at our office.

Final Report

As in 1994-96, a report describing the whole programme will be made available to members.

The committee members look forward to a strong voluntary input as a follow-up to our successful 1994-96 survey.

Allan K Jones
for Hooded Plover Sub-committee

WADER STUDY GROUP

Hello, Wader Watchers!

Polish up your 'binos', sharpen your pencils, and get out the notebooks! Shorebirds are about to visit a location near you!

They have already arrived at Broome and the Eighty-Mile Beach where they are getting their second wind before setting off on the trip south. Reports from these areas tell of numerous numbers of knots, tons of tattlers, tereks, and turnstones. Stacks of stints. A plentiful preponderance of plovers, quite a few Curlew Sandpiper, along with a sprinkling of rarities like the Common Redshank and Asian Dowitcher. All preparing for the next stage of their migration.

So, hasten off to your favourite wetland to welcome them back by logging them on your WADER STUDY FORMS (keep an eye open for tagged birds). If you need extra survey forms please contact me on (08) 9330 1482.

Don't forget the 1998 mid-summer survey will be held on 7-8 February.

Mid-summer and mid-winter surveys are held each year to monitor shorebird numbers at their highest (mid-summer) and lowest (mid-winter).

Forty members took part in the 1997 mid-summer count, 17 locations were monitored, 33 species identified, and a total of 21 282 birds were counted.

We hope to increase the number of sites in the program for the 1998 survey.

If you are interested in waders it is a great opportunity to start your personal observations at a favourite wetland. Contact Colin Davis on (08) 9330 1482 (after hours) or write to Perry House to obtain the survey forms. Country members are still needed as very few inland sites are monitored.

Colin Davis

EYRE NEEDS HELP!

Eyre Bird Observatory needs to increase its creature comforts. Some items are due for replacement and others are required to improve the existing conditions. Please can you help? Life for the wardens has already been improved this year with donations such as a new answering machine, kitchen items and bed linen.

It is vital that anything taken to Eyre is practical and sturdy. Too many household articles at the observatory are below standard because they have been donated at a time beyond their useful lives.

If you are able to assist in the provision of any of these items please contact Rod Smith, either through the Birds Australia office at Perry House or by ringing him after hours on (08) 9447 3804.

Kitchen small whiteboard (memo board), mugs, wok, teaspoons, pattypan, tray, steel for sharpening knives, block of knives, gravy boat, baking tray, 8" dutch oven, coffee plunger.

Linen blankets — single & double (cotton) sheets — single & double towels.

Other new dunny seat & lid, slide projector stand, A3 document holder (for computer), folding chairs

Large Items new timber beds, shelving — office & kitchen.

Thank you.

Rod Smith

THE BIRDS AUSTRALIA OFFICE

Our office is located at Perry House, on the edge of the area known as Perry Lakes. The house was built in 1919 and is now on the National Heritage list. We share the building with the Wildflower Society of WA, each having individual office and library space. Other areas are shared and used for committee meetings and the like, as and when needed.

Monthly rent is paid to the Town of Cambridge.

Members and the general public are free to come and browse on any morning Monday to Friday 9:30 am – 12:30 pm which is the time the office is attended by one of our willing team of volunteers.

The office serves a number of purposes and receives a remarkable number of phone calls on an equally remarkable variety of bird-related subjects. Just in the last week we have had a call from a person at Walpole telling us a local Red-eared Firetail was orange (the new edition of Pizzey says these are females); a gentleman visiting from Sydney for a few days wanted to know where he could see Yellow Robins, and a lady called to say there was an injured Magpie in her garden with a band on its leg, what should she do!

Many calls are related to membership and general activities of the WA Group, outings, binoculars and field guides.

It seems quite obvious that it is essential for members and the general community to have this facility available to them.

We have many items for sale such as a variety of bird books, CDs and the ever popular bird cards, some with Christmas greetings, at give-away prices. These have been a good source of income for us over many years. Then there are the country brochures which are free, and give useful information on birding sites and species to be seen in about 30 different locations from Esperance to Broome, and everywhere in between. These have been the brainchild of the indefatigable (not yielding to fatigue) Allan Jones.

The office is also the home of the Database of WA Birds. Birdlists, made on the checklist cards available from Perry House, have been coming in from members since the scheme was started in the mid 1980s. These are recorded in the computer for almost 500 locations and are available to organisations such as CALM, councils, schools, consultants and mining companies, in fact anyone who has a need for them.

The office fulfils a multiplicity of needs to many people, and it is all done and provided by **Volunteers** — we would be lost without them. Currently there are about 15 men and ladies who give time to the WA Group in this particular way. They deserve our praise and thanks.

Max Bailey

ROEBUCK BAY INTERTIDAL BENTHIC MAPPING PROGRAMME (ROEBIM-97)

ROEBIM-97 is a cooperative research effort involving Broome Bird Observatory, CALM, the Netherlands Institute for Sea Research and Curtin University. The objectives of the programme are to provide the groundwork for future foodweb studies, environmental impact assessments in the Roebuck Bay area, sedimentological and geological investigations and mapping studies of foraging waders, by producing maps of sediment characteristics and invertebrate abundance.

Fieldwork was completed in June of this year. Over 500 samples of animals (mostly tubeworms) were taken from the

mud, and preliminary sorting has shown that there are at least 200 different species of invertebrates in these samples.

These data suggest that the Roebuck Bay mudflats are amongst the most biodiverse in the world, so it is not surprising that it is a great area for waders.

Danny Rogers will be building on this dataset for his PhD on wader foraging at Roebuck Bay.

THREATENED SPECIES LISTINGS

The Threatened Species Scientific Committee (appointed by the Hon Minister for the Environment) reviews the status of Western Australian plants and animals each year, and makes recommendations to the Minister as to which species should be declared threatened under the Wildlife Conservation Act, administered by CALM. The Threatened Species Scientific Committee (appointed by the Hon Minister for the Environment) reviews the status of Western Australian plants and animals each year, and makes recommendations to the Minister as to which species should be declared threatened under the Wildlife Conservation Act, administered by CALM.

Persons wishing to nominate species for inclusion on, or removal from, the list, can obtain the relevant forms and guidelines from CALM Wildlife Branch, Locked Bag 104, BENTLEY DC WA 6983. Once received, nominations are assessed on scientific grounds by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee and, if appropriate, a recommendation is made to the Minister for inclusion on the list.

Birds Australia members who would like further information on the present list or the listing process can contact Allan Burbidge (Tel. (08) 9405 5109, fax (08) 9306 1641, e-mail allanb@calm.wa.gov.au)

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia-WA Group between 8 August and 29 October. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

M J Braine, C and R Carey, M De La Harpe, A Ferguson, R Finlay, C Grant, G Gregory, S Hastings, T Havord, L Jackson, L McKenzie Martinkus, E Meek, F Ramsey, M Reynolds, C A Surman, M N Vegter, M Warden and J Wilcox.

RAOU CALENDARS

1998 calendars are now available for purchase at Perry House at \$16.95. As usual, these are of a very high standard, with excellent photographs of birds and their habitats. Your purchase helps the WA Group and the national body.

NOTICE — VIRUS WARNING

Extract from *Galah* 19:5, 7 Nov 97

The National Office computer network has had some trouble recently with the computer virus "WordMacro/Npad.CD". This virus only affects Word documents and templates. We are being extremely careful to check any disk or email file we send out, but to be safe, please ensure that you check for macro viruses on any Word document you receive from this office, before opening it.

Mandy Johnson

Observatory Reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Well, they're back! The northern beaches of Roebuck Bay are heaving with birds. The usual mass of godwits and knots and other species are supplemented by a generous sprinkling of redshank, dowitcher, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Oriental Plovers. The ovals are playing host to a few Little Curlew but the biggest count for this bird was a report of 500 birds from the oval at the Beagle Bay community. The sewage ponds have given us improved watching, with Wood Sandpipers and 'Sharpies' using the pond edges for feeding and Long-toed Stints making their reappearance. The other migrant that gets everybody twitching is the Yellow Wagtail. Up to eight have been seen in the sewage ponds; both adult and juvenile birds have been spotted.

In the last week numbers of Barn Swallows have been building up and the sightings of Dollarbirds have suddenly increased. A beautiful bird with a striking orange-red bill, the Dollarbird's distinctive call and habit of perching out in the open, make it an easy bird to spot. Another visitor to the Broome area and a call that is unmistakably raucous is that of the Channel-billed Cuckoo. A report from the dune area behind Cable Beach from David Duro gives a perfect description of this bird. Heard around the observatory in January of this year, it seems that Channel-billed Cuckoos may begin to appear more often on the bird log.

I signed off our last report saying that we were finding it hard to get new birds for the Broome list. Since our excitement over the Comb-crested Jacana we have had two further birds to add. A Red-browed Pardalote was seen on Kildo Station by five observers. Further excitement was caused by a description given over the phone of a seabird found swimming around in a rock pool at Willie Creek. We could narrow it down to a petrel on the description but needed to see the bird to identify it as a Cape Petrel. This bird was approximately 1000 km north of its known range. A young bird on plumage, it was very weak and light and unfortunately died the following day.

Broome Bird Observatory fielded a large team for the national Twitchathon, including guests, locals and staff. We did not travel far from the observatory, but managed to tick off 145 species in the 24 hours. A great day was had by all. Highlights can be a very personal thing but everyone was captivated by the dawn chorus at Tagarana bore. Every member of the team, excepting ourselves (who have the pleasure of birding this area all the time) added a new bird to their life list; an added bonus to a fun day out.

Quality birdwatching and learning about shorebirds were the order of the day for the *Welcome the Waders Back* course. Course members caught up with all the expected shorebirds and plenty of other species, too. Nic Day's course was a fascinating chance to watch an artist at work and to try our hand and exercise our artistic inclinations.

Nesting birds have been found at several locations around the observatory. A successful Spotted Harrier fledged two chicks. The flimsy nest managed to conceal one chick completely and it was not until the young birds fledged and the nest collapsed that both chicks were seen. We could see the remains of a meal as the tail of what would have been a

substantial monitor lizard hung from the edge of the nest. The White-bellied Sea-Eagle has a much more impressive structure as the nest has been used for some years. Again, only one chick was ever seen as the distance for viewing was substantial, but two juvenile birds have recently been seen on the Bay.

Danny Rogers has been at Broome Bird Observatory undertaking what will be the basis for his PhD into wader feeding ecology. Mapping the birds and where they feed, he will begin to build information about the Bay. The information will not only confirm the general importance of the Bay but also the significance of specific areas in providing food for certain species. Danny will be returning early in 1998 to continue with this fascinating work.

Pete Collins and Ros Jessop visited the observatory and supplemented our regular mist netting sessions with numerous sessions at the observatory. Always happy to share their knowledge and enthusiasm, guests got more opportunities to see birds in the hand as well as the field.

Next year promises to be a big year for Broome Bird Observatory. The biennial Australian Wader Study Group's North West Wader and Tern expedition promises to be the biggest yet and will collect data on over-wintering immature birds, returning adults and returning juveniles. Clive Minton, addicted to Broome, stayed at the observatory earlier this year. A mix of family holiday and a bit of cannon-netting thrown in for good measure. The benthic fauna monitoring will continue apace and the BBO will be celebrating its 10th birthday. Established in 1988 for education and research, the observatory is still growing and our birdwatching visitors continue to increase every year. Our 1998 program is now available and places on our courses are, as usual, highly sought after. If you would like more information on the AWSG expedition or our 1998 course brochure, contact us direct at the observatory.

As usual we are indebted to people who support the BBO and lend their time and skills. Our latest venture, a web site on the Internet, could not have been achieved without the local work of Phil Joy and the support of Allan Burbidge. Both possess the invaluable combination of bird and computer knowledge. Anyone wishing to locate us on the net can find us at:

<http://cygnus.uwa.edu.au/austecol/birds.html>

Janet Sparrow and Chris Hassell

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Time has passed so quickly since we arrived at Eyre Bird Observatory. At Eyre, all that can be heard are the birds and ocean; there is no noise from traffic or suburban hustle and bustle. It sure beats life in the suburbs!

As we are moving closer to summer, the first light colours the sky in the early hours and the birds begin to call loudly.

The spring has brought with it great successes from the nest, as many of our resident birds introduce their fledglings to the world, and the list continually grows longer. At present it includes Red-capped Plover, Pied Oystercatcher, White-fronted Chat, White-eared Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, Australian Bustard, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote and Brown Falcon, to name just a few! Many other birds are still building nests or sitting on eggs. The amazing mounds of the Malleefowl are also being monitored.

Life is never dull and the steady stream of vagrant waders

ensures that we are all kept on our toes, particularly when the bird in question appears to be suspiciously like a Little Curlew! At Eyre! — a new bird! That makes 246 birds and didn't it cause some excitement, as well as being well photographed.

The number of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers has also risen in recent days and our weekly beach count has produced 159 feeding voraciously in the seaweed. Amongst them also are large numbers of Red-necked Stints, including one with an orange flag! It was banded on the coast of Victoria by Clive Minton.

The trip out to Twilight Cove with some guests also proved fruitful, with the sighting of an Australian Crake feeding at a small soak. It allowed us to approach closely and gave us all a fantastic view, the second only recorded sighting for Eyre.

Soon the holiday season will be upon us and I couldn't think of a better place to spend it other than Eyre and encourage you to share its magic and birdwatching with us.

We would also like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Good Birdwatching.

James and Debbie Brownlie

Excursion Reports

NINGHAN STATION CAMPOUT, 29 May–2 June

The campout at Ningham Station proved even more popular than a similar event at White Wells last year, as a total of 44 people attended. Some stayed at the station homestead, others in the cabins with camp kitchen but most came with tents, campers and caravans and spread out around the home paddock. Several friendly Emus and kangaroos investigated all new arrivals.

With such a large group it was necessary to split into several parties and while one group went to Wardagga Rock, a large granite rock to the north of the homestead, others went up Mount Singleton or to areas of good mallee bushland. One of the highlights of the bird sightings were the good views of Ground Cuckoo-shrikes which were regularly seen near the shearing shed. In the bushland we saw Major Mitchell's Cockatoos, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and Regent Parrots as well as Southern Whitefaces, Grey-fronted Honeyeaters and many of the more common species. A pair of Spotted Nightjars was flushed from the top of a rocky outcrop.

There were two separate excursions to the Warne River and several people saw Gilbert's Whistlers, Crested Bellbirds and Chiming Wedgebills for the first time as well as Red-capped Robins, Splendid Fairy-wrens and many other species. A total of 68 species was seen during the long weekend. The lakes on the station were mostly dry so almost no waterbirds were seen which made the total of species sighted very impressive.

We gathered in the camp kitchen each evening as it was rather chilly to be outside for long. Fortunately the threatened rain fell mostly at night, and one morning we awoke to find mist shrouding the whole valley, but this soon cleared and we were able to continue our birding. We were happy to be joined by birders from Geraldton. Our thanks to Bill McRoberts and Clive Napier for organising this popular campout. It has given members another interesting place to visit in their own time.

Wendy Napier

SERPENTINE NATIONAL PARK, 16 August

As it turned out we were lucky with the weather, for despite the forecast of showers it remained dry but with a cold wind.

Our morning walk started from the gate in Scrivener Road and proceeded along the ridge to Baldwin's Bluff, a distance of almost two kilometres. This is a walk followed by Peter Anson in previous years but we avoided the track down to the Falls because of its steepness and loose surface.

The bush was already in flower with donkey orchids, myrtle, cassia, hovea, native wisteria and much more. Bird song was all around and we immediately spotted a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, followed by Golden Whistlers and Striated Pardalotes which were much in evidence.

We watched White-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Rufous Whistlers, thornbills, Red-capped Parrots and a Wedge-tailed Eagle being chased by a Raven.

The outward end of the walk culminated at Baldwin's Bluff, a high point where we were able to look down upon the Falls in full flood.

On the return we were fortunate to observe a family of White-browed Scrubwrens. Lunch was taken at Serpentine Brook (again a Peter Anson site), some 12 km from Scrivener Road along Kingsbury Drive.

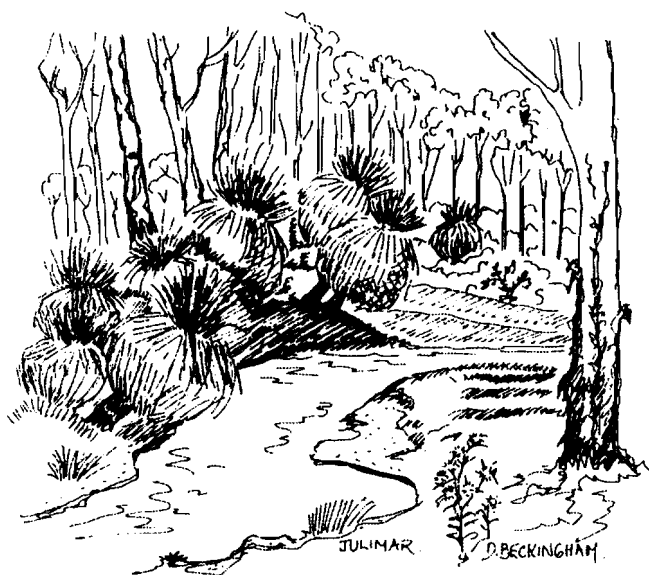
This was a disappointing visit and we were only able to see White-breasted Robins at the Brook and a number of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

The final count was 30 species and the excursion was much enjoyed by all 12 members.

Gordon and Marjorie Wilson

JULIMAR CONSERVATION PARK, 13-14 September

A relatively small group of 12 members and friends had an interesting weekend's birding, with a total of 58 bird species seen in the Conservation Park and the enclosed farmland.



Julimar Conservation Park
drawn by Diane Beckingham

Highlight of the weekend was close views of two male

Crested Shrike-tits chasing each other in regrowth Wandoo near Julimar Brook. Les Harris and Eric Pyapp saw two Western Corellas in Wandoo near Julimar Brook - a species new for the Birds Australia list for Julimar. Other interesting sightings included a number of Rufous Treecreepers, Painted Button-quail, Golden Whistlers on a nest, Brown-headed Honeyeaters feeding juveniles and an Emu with five chicks on Hewett Road.

Allan Burbidge

HILLARYS PELAGIC TRIP, 14 September

A fine calm day. A day with very large numbers of Yellow-nosed Albatross, Flesh-footed Shearwaters, Australasian Gannets and Bridled Dolphins (a rarely recorded species in WA). We also had good views of Great Skuas, Great-winged Petrels and a Shy Albatross. A couple of White-faced Storm-Petrels were also seen.

Further (probably 3) trips will be organised in 1998 between May (17th?) and August. For details contact Frank O'Connor on (08) 9386 5694 or (08) 9482 1445.

Frank O'Connor

WELLARD WETLANDS, 3 September

On the morning of 3 September, nine intrepid birdos gathered outside the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on one of the season's most unpleasant mornings. The day commenced with strong rain storms which luckily eased while we were there so that members could visit the three main hides without getting soaked. Very few ducks were to be seen on the waters and it proved impossible to see whether any birds had used the artificial nest boxes. While there, 39 species were observed of which two were new to the growing list for the area, namely, a White-necked Heron and Crested Pigeons. The list now stands at 75 species.

Bryan Barrett

PIESSE BROOK, KALAMUNDA, 25 September

A small group of members met for this mid-week walk on a fine, mild spring morning. As if inspired by the lovely weather, the birds were not only heard in fine voice, but seemed determined to be seen. A number of them, usually males in their more colourful plumage, perched themselves on branches where we had good views of them and stayed there for some time.

The first of these was a Red-winged Fairy-wren and we saw several more families of this species, as well as Splendid Fairy-wrens, as the walk progressed. A Western Gerygone, collecting nesting material from a shrub by the edge of the track, only a couple of metres from where we stood, was unconcerned by our presence. Also in this area, but well up a sapling, was a nesting Grey Fantail. A male Mistletoebird, presumably collecting insects from the blossoms of a eucalypt whose branches overhung our path, spent quite a few minutes there and ensured that everyone saw him. Among other species seen were Sacred Kingfisher, Rufous and Golden Whistlers, Scarlet Robin, White-naped Honeyeater, Western Spinebill, parrots, Galah, White-tailed Black-Cockatoo and many Inland Thornbills and Striated Pardalotes.

We did not have a sighting of a Red-browed Firetail, but it was not a time when they are most likely to be seen as the

seeding grasses they feed on do not ripen till mid-summer. Our total count was 28 species — all bush birds except for a pair of Pacific Black Ducks.

Mavis Norgard

STIRLING RANGE NATIONAL PARK CAMPOUT, 27-29 September

Twenty-four people attended this campout which saw fine and partly cloudy conditions all weekend. On Saturday afternoon the new arrivals went on the 4 km Ongerup Creek Walk, a delightful walk through mallee, Yate, Jarrah, heath and low scrub lands. The sightings along this track included Brown-headed and White-naped Honeyeaters, Western Yellow Robin, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo and Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Brown and Collared Sparrowhawk, Regent Parrot and Restless Flycatcher.

On this same afternoon six intrepid adventurers set off to reconnoitre the lakes situated to the south-east of the range, including Two Mile Lake which adjoins "Beulah Downs". This property is owned by Harvey and Pat Arnold who very kindly gave of their time and allowed the group access to two lakes via their property. The quantity and ferocity of the mosquitoes in these areas were reminiscent of the Siberian Tundra! For our stoicism we did see Southern Emu-wrens, Purple-gaped Honeyeaters, Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters and a Gull-billed Tern feeding at the lake.

Sunday morning six of us went back to the lakes area with mosquito repellent, to meet with Harvey who then took us in his vehicle to Quurberwardup Lake and Kajaneerup Swamp. Harvey had obtained permission from CALM to take a small group into the lakes via an access track that is closed to the public and rarely used. Travelling through a particularly large and deep pool of water along this track the vehicle bogged to the axle in pure clay. After a wait Pat came to the rescue with kangaroo jack, boards and camera as she indicated that she was going to dine out on this story for some time!

On Kajaneerup Swamp we saw a Whiskered Tern in breeding plumage, Musk and Pink-eared Ducks, Grey Teal and Australasian Shovelers. On the larger Quurberwardup Lake, which is a major breeding ground in the summer, we found large numbers of Banded Stilts, Red-necked Avocets, Curlew Sandpipers and Red-capped Dotterels.

On Monday morning the majority of the camp went on the 4.5 km Kanga Walk, which follows a track from the caravan park through White Gum, Yate and mallee heath. The highlight of this walk was an excellent view of a Square-tailed Kite flying low and slowly along a ridge.

It was a most enjoyable weekend, and we were especially privileged and grateful to the Arnolds who gave generously of their time to show us the lakes surrounding their farm. Thank you to Bill McRoberts for leading an excellent campout.

Dee Smith

WALPOLE-NORNALUP CAMPOUT, 30 September—4 October

A good group of up to 28 stayed in a peaceful caravan park right on Nornalup Inlet. Close by we were able to watch Golden Whistlers, Red-winged Fairy-wrens, Australian Pelicans, Common Sandpipers, Ospreys and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

On the short walk to The Knoll, White-browed Babbler,



Yellow Robin seen at Julimar
drawn by Diane beckingham

Crested Shrike-tits and Golden Whistlers were seen at every turn.

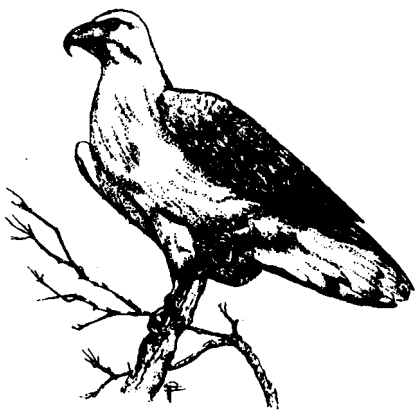
Long-billed Black-Cockatoos and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes appeared along local heritage trails to Walpole. In the Karri forest we enjoyed White-naped Honeyeaters, Western Rosellas, Tree Martins and Purple-crowned Lorikeets, while we almost missed the hundreds of Australian White and Straw-necked Ibis feeding in open farmland. Here, too, were Great Egrets and White-faced Herons and an Elegant Parrot.

The 6:30 am (to beat the tourists) Tree Top Walk was impressive. There were Varied Sittellas, but three of their chicks had been taken by Laughing Kookaburras. Last November I had been high up in a Karri tree watching at eye level from a distance of about two metres a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike sitting on eggs, and Striated Pardalotes so close that every marking was clearly visible. Lower down, Australian Ringnecks were preparing for nesting. Nicole Bellanger and David Edmunds were our guides for two hours. They were both very interested in the environment and in the history of pioneer families in the Walpole area.

Birding was quiet as we took in Conspicuous Cliffs, Nut Road Lookout and Peaceful Bay. However, stunning scenery made up for this. At Irwin Inlet, we saw a Musk Duck. The migratory waders arrive in numbers around November.

The Giant Tingle Forest was alive with many birds — including nesting White-naped Honeyeaters, a Red-eared Firetail finding long strands of soft grass to build its nest lower down, and a New Holland Honeyeater building in a casuarina tree. Red-winged and Splendid Fairy-wrens were plentiful. It is no wonder that people work hard to save these very old forests, a truly wonderful place of Red, Yellow and Rate's Tingle and home to a myriad of creatures.

We took in Frankland River National Park, Nuyts Wilderness and Walpole/Nornalup National Park, seeing Little Eagle, Collared Sparrowhawk, Swamp Harriers, Peregrine Falcon, Australian Kestrel and two Spotted Pardalotes.



White-bellied Sea-Eagle
drawn by Pam Free

Without a doubt the highlight of the four days was a three-hour boat cruise from Walpole Inlet to the larger Nornalup Inlet during which we saw a number of waders. Garry Weir (of pioneer stock) and his helper, Liz Pickett, were full of knowledge beyond the normal tourist boat cruises. Ospreys and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle looked large as they perched close on the side of a hill edging the big inlet. We saw a Pied Oystercatcher sitting on eggs in the sand dunes, and Sooty Oystercatchers were also around, as well as two Pacific Black Ducks. I could go on and on — it was a rewarding time with 83 species spotted. Perhaps we will have another time at the same place.

It was also lovely to see our birding friends from Albany including Liz and Charlie, as well as some new faces among the regulars.

Maggie Cashman-Bailes

NORTH LAKE, 5 October

The stiff easterly wind blowing across the lake did not augur well for the morning's walk. However, the fine, sunny conditions made birdwatching more pleasant on the sheltered eastern side. Few sightings were made from the western shore, and even the honeyeaters were hard to find. The southern area was more rewarding, particularly on the small swamp near the southern boundary where all varieties of cormorants were seen as well as White-faced Heron, Australian White Ibis and Blue-billed Duck. A pair of Rainbow Lorikeets provided one of the morning's highlights as they played around their nesting hole in a large river gum.

As anticipated, the more sheltered eastern shore provided frequent sightings of bush and water birds. The Splendid Fairy-wrens seen during the earlier reconnaissance did not disappoint and once again put on a fine display at close range. A Little Eagle obligingly banked steeply overhead and displayed its upper and lower wing patterns which were quite distinctive. Several families of Pacific Black Duck and Australian Shelduck accompanied by their fluffy ducklings were seen close inshore among the reeds.

The walk resulted in a total of 47 species and, considering

the windy conditions, all ten members in the group were quite satisfied with this tally. Thanks must go to Clive Nealon and Les Harris for helping with their local knowledge of the venue.

Neil Porteous

ALFRED COVE, 9 and 18 October

The two outings at Alfred Cove, held to identify waders soon after their arrival here, were vastly different. At the mid-week walk on the 9th, it was a very cold and wet day with a strong south-westerly wind and the water level was very high. Consequently, only a few waders were seen — a small group of Common Greenshanks and, as the only sandbank exposed gradually became larger, a group of Red-necked Avocets flew in.

On the 18th the tide was extremely low and, in spite of a very strong easterly wind, the group of 19 people was able to walk out on the exposed sandbanks. However, it was only after walking for some time that any waders were seen. Even then, the numbers were very small and only two Red-necked Stints were sighted. The leader, Les Harris, persisted and eventually a group of Grey Plovers, three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, a Grey-tailed Tattler (unusual for this part of the river) and several Black-tailed Godwits were sighted. Just as these birds were seen a Whistling Kite flew right up the river and scattered everything far and wide. When they finally settled again several different terns were found, among them a Common Tern (also unusual for the river) and a Whiskered Tern.

A total of 61 birds was seen on this outing and thanks must go to Les for locating and identifying the waders.

Margery Clegg

LANCELIN CAMPOUT, 11-12 October

Lancelin Island is approximately eight hectares in area and lies 600 m offshore. It is an important seabird breeding island with hundreds of Wedge-tailed Shearwater burrows, several sensitive tern nesting sites and a nesting colony of Common Noddies.



Common Noddy nests on Lancelin Island
drawn by Diane Beckingham

On an afternoon visit in fine weather, a dozen observers

noted 19 bird species. Several Caspian Terns and a Pacific Gull had established nests on headlands. Some 70 Common Noddies were roosting on rocks on the western side of the island, where some had already made fresh nest platforms of seaweed on the top of Nitraria bushes. Dr Nic Dunlop has been monitoring the noddy colony since their arrival in 1991-92, and it has grown to 350 pairs.

On the sandspit, three Roseate Terns were seen among numerous Crested Terns. The Bridled Terns had not yet arrived in their thousands, but soon the island will be a hive of activity and very vulnerable to human intrusion. Some cautionary signs will be erected by CALM and a 'Friends of Lancelin Island' group has been formed.

We had many good views of Rock Parrots here (and also around the town where they were feeding on Capeweed).

In the low tide reef pools on the eastern side of the island, we saw a Buff-banded Rail, a Common Sandpiper, a Grey-tailed Tattler, Pied Oystercatchers and an Eastern Reef Egret.

On Edward Island, to the south, two Osprey chicks were being attended to at the nest by two adult birds.

We are most grateful to Dave Mitchell for his willing assistance on the day.

On Sunday morning early, Colin Davis led us to Bashford Nature Reserve (Bootoo Swamp), a small, attractive reserve which is 36 km north-east of Lancelin. It is 5 km from the corner of Nilgen and Dingo Roads and the last 2 km is softer sand, though 2WD cars negotiated it in this season.

The reserve combines banksia woodland, coastal heath and a swampy area with old-growth eucalypts, the latter providing nesting sites for Galahs, Western Corellas and Australian Ringnecks. Some Short-billed Black-Cockatoos were closely observed and a Barn Owl was seen peeping out briefly from a deep hollow in a Flooded Gum near the swamp. Its pellets were examined and rodent teeth and beetles were found in them. Scarlet Robin, White-breasted Robin, Splendid Fairy-wren, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren and White-browed Scrub-wren were seen. Several species of honeyeaters were seen on the flowering heath, where ticks were a bit of a hazard. However, a return visit is recommended. We saw a total of 37 species and had a pleasant morning in a very attractive area.

Diane Beckingham

WONGAN HILLS CAMPOUT, 24-25 October

Seventeen members assembled at the excellent Wongan Hills Caravan Park on Friday and Saturday 24-25 October. Light rain fell during the first evening but did not dampen spirits. An early morning walk on Saturday through the reserve adjoining the town was pleasant and produced the predictable wheatbelt birds as well as some attractive Kunzia on the Christmas Rock. Later in the morning we drove west to the southern end of the Wongan Hills and had excellent views of the surrounding country from the area around the television mast. A search for possible Malleefowl ensued but to no avail. However, instead of the Malleefowl, excellent views were had of Southern Scrub-Robins at close quarters. Brown-headed Honeyeaters and a family of White-browed Babblers added to the tally.

After lunch and while the birds were at siesta we went north for about 20 km to the Reynoldson Reserve. While we did not expect to see many birds, this area is well known for the display of several species of Verticordia. While it was still

a couple of weeks from its best it was quite outstanding for those seeing it for the first time. There were five species of this colourful plant in flower. Despite predictions of "no" birds we saw well-coloured Mulga Parrots on the reserve as well as Singing Honeyeaters and Rufous Whistlers. A salt flat near to the reserve gave excellent and extended views of several families of White-winged Fairy-wrens.

On Sunday morning we set off for Dingo Rock about 25 km to the east and although conditions were excellent and a varied habitat should have produced better results, only a few additional species were seen.

In all it was a disappointing weekend in terms of sightings as only 47 species were recorded. Part of the blame can be attributed to the poor winter rains which had left all the local lakes with little water in them. However, good views of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and then Southern Scrub-Robins made up to some extent.

Clive Napier

Coming Events

Sunday 7 December — Full-day Excursion to Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

Meet at 8:30 am at the intersection of South Western Highway and the Old Bunbury Road, approximately 5 km south of Pinjarra, then turn right into the parking area.

We hope to see a variety of waders and other water and bushbirds. There are occasional rarities to be seen on this large shallow lake.

Wellington boots/old shoes are recommended, plus hats, insect repellent and water. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Colin Davis

Thursday 11 December — Mid-week Excursion to Star Swamp and Trigg Bushland

Meet at 8:30 am at the Hope Street entrance.

Star Swamp has tuart woodland, mixed-Banksia woodland, and heath.

Leader: Neil Porteous

Saturday/Sunday 13/14 December — Twitchathon and End-of-Year BBQ

Begin at 4:00 pm Saturday and end at 4:00 pm Sunday. Join us afterwards in a WA Group end-of-year party at Perry House at 6:00 pm Sunday. See full details in Notices.

Organisers: Sue Abbotts, Clive and Wendy Napier

Sunday 21 December — Half-Day Excursion to Bibra Lake

Meet at 8:00 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake, off Progress Drive.

Bibra Lake is part of the Beeliar Wetlands Chain, and a large number of water and bushbirds can be observed.

Leader: Clive Napier

NO DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

**Wednesday 14 January 1998 — Mid-week Walk,
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 car park near Heron Place.

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

Leader: Tom Delaney

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

NOTE: 3rd Monday as 26th Australia Day holiday

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.

**Saturday 31 January — Half-day Excursion,
Bayswater Bird Sanctuary**

Meet at 8:30 am at the Swan River end of King William Street, Bayswater. Parking is available in Slade Road, off King William Street.

The reserve was created in 1977 by Eric Singleton in conjunction with the Bayswater Council. It consists of waterways, paved paths (suitable for wheelchairs), a bird hide, and an artificial island. Many waterbirds breed in the reserve; the total species list is in excess of 100.

Leader: Gordon Elliot

**Saturday 7 February and Sunday 8 February —
WADER COUNT**

**Wednesday 11 February — Mid-week Walk, Canning
River Regional Park, Wilson**

Meet at 8:30 am at the Kent Street Weir car park, near the Canning River, to explore the varied birdlife of the Canning Wetlands.

Leader: Neil Porteous

**Sunday 15 February — Full-day Excursion, Amarillo
Pool, Baldivis**

Meet at 8:30 am at the entrance to Amarillo Farm, on the Serpentine River. Travel south on the Mandurah road turning left into Paganoni Road, travel several kilometres and turn right into Vine Road.

We will search for waders along the mudflats of the river. Long trousers and boots/wellingtons are recommended — snakes seen in area! Hats, insect repellent and water should be carried. Bring your lunch; another area will be looked at in the afternoon.

Leader: Les Harris

**Saturday 21 February — Half-day Excursion, Alfred
Cove**

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast), off Burke Drive, Attadale.

This is one of a series of outings to identify some of the waders that spend their summer in the southern hemisphere. Bring your telescope if you have one.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

**Monday 23 February ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
& General Meeting — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood,
8:00 pm**

The Annual General Meeting will be held in conjunction with the General Meeting. All committee positions will be declared vacant and office bearers will be elected for 1998/99. Nomination forms may be obtained from the office and must be signed by the proposer, seconder and the person nominated, all of whom should be paid-up members. The completed form should be sent to the Secretary or handed in prior to the commencement of the AGM.

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.

**Saturday 28 February to Monday 2 March — Campout,
Lake Muir**

Be self-sufficient in food and water, also camping gear. Lake Muir is about 60 km south-east of Manjimup. The farmer has limited accommodation — please book your own. The farmer's name is Basil Hanekamp, and his telephone is (08) 9777 1105. Little Bitterns and Australasian Bitterns have been seen in the area with thousands of waterfowl. Please phone the office nearer the time to ask for directions.

Leader: to be announced

Sunday 8 March — Half-day Excursion, Lake Gwelup

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park at the corner of Stoneham Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road).

An opportunity to see both waterbirds and bushbirds, and maybe the bittern?

Leader: Clive Nealon

Thursday 12 March — Mid-week Walk, Stoney Brook

Meet at 8:30 am on Mills Road at Cohuna Wildlife Park car park.

Mavis Norgard will lead us from here to Stoney Brook.

Leader: Mavis Norgard

Sunday 15 March — Half-day Excursion, Lake Coogee

Meet at 8:30 am on the southern side of Mayor Road, Munster (50 m west of Hamilton Road).

This is quite a diverse area, with over 100 species having been seen on the lake and in surrounding bushland. Nine species of raptors have been sighted.

Leaders: Jan and Dave Crossley

**Sunday 21 March — Full-day Excursion, Pipidinny
Road, Eglinton**

Turn left off Yanchep Road into Pipidinny Road, Eglinton (an hour's drive from Perth). We will meet at 8:30 am at the end of Pipidinny Road (approximately 5 km from the turnoff). Be prepared to pay a small fee to enter the picnic area for lunch.

We'll look at four habitats during the day: the coastal dunes for Variegated Fairy-wrens, White-browed Scrubwrens, etc.; the heath for White-winged Fairy-wrens, Tawny-crowned and White-cheeked Honeyeaters; the swamp for waterfowl,

and a part of Yanchep National Park which few people visit.
Leader: Bryan Barrett

**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.

**Sunday 29 March 29 — Full-day Excursion, Peel Inlet
Boat Trip**

Early booking is required; the deadline is 1st March, so phone the Birds Australia office, (08) 9383 7749, and leave your name, phone number, and number of people who will be attending. Cost and meeting directions will be given to you.

Leader: Clive Napier

**?Easter Campout ? (Good Friday 10 April - Easter
Monday 13 April)**

To be advised.

**Monday 20 April Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**

NOTE: 3rd Monday as 27th is Anzac Day holiday

Grant Pearson, the Manager of CALM's Woodvale Research Centre, will talk about the setting up of a research programme to study the mudflats of Roebuck Bay near Broome and the huge numbers of migrant waders which feed on them, a project in which Grant has been heavily involved. The researchers have used Broome Bird Observatory and its new laboratory as a base for field work and have been using a hovercraft to travel about their study area.

**Saturday 25 April 25 to Monday 27 April — Anzac Day
Long-weekend Campout, Leschenault Inlet, Australind**

To be advised.

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

Dr Ken McNamara, the head of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at the Western Australian Museum, will discuss recent advances in our knowledge of the early evolution of birds.

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

Speaker to be arranged.

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

Speaker to be arranged.

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

Speaker to be arranged.

**Monday 21 September Meeting — WA Tennis Centre,
8:00 pm**

NOTE: 3rd Monday as 28th Queens Birthday holiday

Julie Raines, who has been assessing wetlands for their importance to birds in southern Australia, including this State, for the RAOU/Birds Australia, will be telling us about her findings.

TREASURER NEEDED

At the committee meeting on the 19 November members learnt that the current treasurer intends to resign from the position, due to work and personal commitments. Applications are invited from a person to undertake the position. Note that much of the day-to-day financial work is done by Max Bailey and the new treasurer would not have to attend committee meetings on a regular basis. The major requirement is a knowledge of financial and book-keeping systems. The group's accounts are computerised and this system is used to print the monthly statement of accounts.

Please contact Clive Napier (08 9332-7265) urgently if you think you could assist or if you would like to discuss the appointment.

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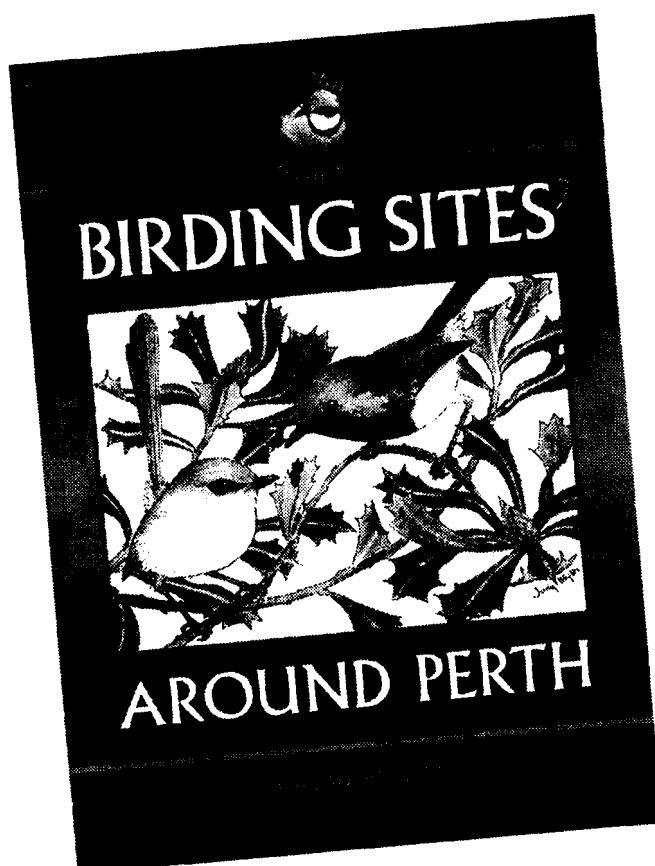
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