

Western Australian Bird Notes

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

No 88 December 1998

BIRDS AUSTRALIA 1998 CAMPOUT — GREENOUGH WA

To paraphrase Banjo Paterson's epic poem "They came from near and far and gathered at the campsite for a week". This was not the Snowy River but Birds Australia's annual Campout, this year held at Greenough near Geraldton, WA. Despite the lack of an associated conference, one hundred and five members came from as far afield as New Zealand with over half being from the eastern States of Australia.

It was apparent that there were two major attractions that had brought so many people so far. The promise of seabirds in remarkable numbers on the Abrolhos Islands, including some rarely seen species, was irresistible to hardened twitchers, both from WA and elsewhere. As an added bonus it was the very middle of spring and the botanical show in the Midlands was at its best. The Midlands District is exceptionally rich in plant diversity and as well as the massed displays there was an incredible variety of individual species blooming, many of which can be seen nowhere else in the world.

Four boatloads of about 18 people each spent two days investigating the nesting seabirds on the Abrolhos and were rewarded with excellent views of Lesser and Common Noddies as well as flocks of Sooty, Crested, Fairy, Caspian and Roseate Terns. One Common Tern was identified by our sharp eyed President and his party and on the mainland a pair of Whiskered Terns were found on an ephemeral lake not far from the Camp. The total of nine species of terns on one camp is unusual to say the least.

Pelsaert Island, the one on which most time was spent, was stunning for the sheer abundance of birds, especially Sooty Terns and Common Noddies, wheeling and circling above their nesting ground, with probably tens of

thousands of birds in the air at the same time. Common and Lesser Noddies were very obliging, sitting side by side



Ospreys breed on many offshore islands, including Pelsaert Island where they were common during the campout.

Drawing by Pam Agar

on the same branch and conducting joint fly-pasts for us so that the similarities and differences could be seen clearly. Those apparently slight differences shown in the field guides can certainly be seen in the field, and the two species act and fly very differently.

Pelsaert Island also supported a remarkable number of Ospreys, with many pairs nesting. One nest, no doubt many years old, was about one and a half metres high,

Please see page 3 for

**NOTICE OF
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING**

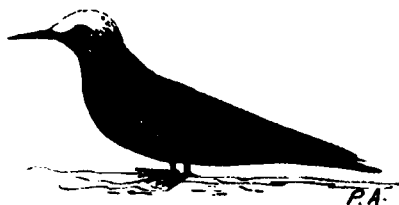
built of flotsam and jetsam, including pieces of rope of various colour and thickness, pieces of coloured plastic and cloth and a straw broom!

The tyranny of distance in the Western Australian countryside meant that long daily treks were needed to get to differing habitats but by using two buses and private cars no one complained of the long drives. The leaders allowed for frequent stops so that wildflowers could be inspected as well as birds.

Each day groups visited different areas and these included inland river pools and cliff formations, where nesting Peregrine Falcons put on a show and Splendid Fairy-wrens in full breeding colour were everywhere. Many people also had excellent looks at Variegated Fairy-wrens, sufficient to be certain that they were not the very similar Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, found in the south-west and overlapping with the Variegated Fairy-wren inland of Geraldton.

Another trip was to the spectacular Talling Peak and Gorge some 150 km inland, where dry Mulga country supported a variety of raptors, Black-eared Cuckoo, Red-capped Robins, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush and Little Woodswallows to name a few. Redthroats were very common and vocal, the males calling and posturing all around us. Most groups also had good views of White-winged Fairy-wrens and one site produced a flock of about 50 Black-tailed Native-hens.

The full daytime program did not leave very much time for other activities, but we did have two interesting slide presentations by local Geraldton people. One of these was on rare and other flora of the Geraldton district presented by Robyn Westlake, a local member of the Geraldton District Threatened Flora Recovery Team. The second was about Project Eden, the CALM project to control feral animals and re-establish the original vertebrate fauna, including Malleefowl, of Peron Peninsula. This was presented by CALM's Regional Manager, Kelly Gillen. The rest of the time was given to socialising, including, for many, the Campout dinner.



The Common Noddy was abundant
on Pelsaert Island.
Drawing by Pam Agar

All up 170 species of birds were recorded during the week's birding. As is routine at WA Campouts we had a prize for the member who came closest to guessing the total numbers of species recorded during the week. The two bottles of excellent WA wine were won by no less a luminary than Margaret Cameron — a fitting end to a most enjoyable national campout.

Clive Napier and John Blyth

Editors' note: The Geraldton Campout was from all accounts a great success. Many people contributed to that success, but two carried the burden from beginning to end. These hard-working people were Clive Napier and Mary Vaughan, and to them should go much of the credit for the enjoyment we all received from the Campout.

Observations

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION: A REMINDER

Observations will be considered for inclusion if they relate to birds

- (1) declared under the WA Wildlife Conservation Act as endangered or in need of special protection, or listed in S. Garnett (ed) (1992) *Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia* (RAOU Report No. 82),
- (2) outside their normal range or normal time of occurrence as known from reliable publications,
- (3) recorded in areas where they are known to be rare or to have declined,
- (4) rarely seen in WA or that part of WA where the observation was made,
- (5) in unusual numbers compared with RAOU/Birds Australia data (eg, Scopewest survey data) or published information,
- (6) breeding in an area where breeding of that species was previously unknown, or at an unusual time of year, or
- (7) in high or unusual numbers of breeding pairs in colonies (particularly seabirds, herons, egrets, spoonbills and ibis).

Note that fitting a criterion does not guarantee inclusion. For example, a record of a single Noisy Scrub-bird at Two Peoples Bay (albeit a notable sighting for any observer!) does not warrant inclusion, even though it fits Criterion 1, as it is well known that this species is resident at that site. The basis for decisions will be published and unpublished material available to the Observations Committee including information in HANZAB, the WA Museum regional lists, RAOU/Birds Australia atlas data and results from other Birds Australia surveys.

For reports of vagrants, or 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 anyone what you actually saw. Providing extra details also assists the editors to provide extra information to readers. Additional information may be requested by the Observations Officer.

Inclusion of material will be at the discretion of the Observations Committee convened by the Observations Officer. Membership of the committee will be by

recommendation of the WA Group Research Committee and appointment by the WA Group Committee. The current Convener is Allan Burbidge and members are Ron Johnstone, Mike Bamford and Mike Craig. In particular cases, advice is sought from other knowledgeable individuals such as John Darnell.

Please send Observations to the Observations Officer at Perry House to be considered for inclusion, or e-mail to Allan Burbidge at austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au. As the numbers of records submitted is sometimes voluminous, we do not normally notify observers of non-inclusion.

RECENT 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.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Kerguelen Petrel - 2, 29/8/98, Pt Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Soft-plumaged Petrel - 20+ in 2 hrs, 16/9/98, Pt Dalling, Dunsborough (Busselton) - RP

Australian Pelican - c. 20 birds, some with eggs, late Aug 98, Penguin Is (Rockingham) - per BD

Australian Bustard, 2, 16-18/9/98, Kojaneerup Springs Rd, S of Bluff Knoll, Stirling Range National Park (Albany) - CD

Banded Stilt - 4-5000, 18/10/98, Lake Koombekine (Dowerin) - PB, VD

(eastern) **Long-billed Corella** - 17, 24/10/98, Zig Zag Road, Baldivis (W of Alcoa wetlands) (Rockingham) - FO (this is about 30 km S of the locations of corella populations mentioned in WABN 87: 12-14) * 6, 15/11/98, Fletcher Road, c10 km further S again - JB, JAB

Bourke's Parrot - 3, 21/10/98, W boundary of Kadji Kadji Station, c. 25 km NE of Morawa (Morawa) - AB (at or near usual SW margin of range)

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin - c. 40, 8/9/98, near Herdsman Lake (Herdsman Pde/John Sanders Dve) (Stirling) - RN

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

Malleefowl - 1, 6/3/98, 62.5 km S of Denham, on southern part of Peron Peninsula (Shark Bay) - RP

Freckled Duck - 2, 20/9/98, on a claypan on Mt Gibson station, between the homestead and Lake Moore (Yalgoo) - GA, PA

Bush Stone-curlew - 3 birds under mulga, 28/8/98, near Sandstone (Sandstone) - MB

KIMBERLEY

Australian Wood Duck - 8, 9/8/98, Taylor's Lagoon (Broome) - BBO

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 4/8 & 8/8/98, James Price Point area (Broome) - BBO

Black Falcon - 1, 15/8/98, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO

Red-backed Button-quail - 1+, 27/9/98, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Little Curlew - 2500, 10/98, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO

NOTICE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

to be held on
Monday 18 January 1999
at the State Tennis Centre,
Bolton Ave, Burswood
commencing at conclusion
of General Meeting

Business

- 1 To consider the proposal to incorporate BAWAG.
- 2 Subject to item (1) being accepted, to consider and adopt the draft constitution.

Note: If you would like to receive a copy of the draft constitution prior to the meeting, please register your name at the office for a copy when available.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO MEMBERS

For some years your committee has been attempting to gain agreement from the Federal Council of Birds Australia for the WA Group to Incorporate. At the most recent meeting of Council permission was given. The WA Committee has rewritten the Articles of Association and subject to their acceptance by the Small Business Registration Section of the Ministry of Fair Trading, and following a process of advertising and the holding of an Extraordinary General Meeting, we can become incorporated in WA.

We wish to stress that this is not a precursor to any split from the Federal body. We are very aware of the need for solidarity and the credibility given to our Research Projects by the broader association and it is the committee's intention to maintain this bond.

There are several reasons why incorporation is desirable. Firstly it will remove a possible obstacle to gaining larger scale grants that some institutions prefer to give to locally registered bodies. Secondly it will reduce the risks that members of your committee currently carry. At present, as office bearers of a non incorporated body, individual committee members can be held financially and legally responsible for actions of the Group and under very rare conditions this can be a serious risk.

We stress that incorporation will make no difference to the normal operation of our Group or to the way we pay our subs or to any other Birds Australia function. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me or Sue Abbotts and we will try to answer them. The EGM will be held in conjunction with our normal January, 1999 meeting.

Chairman BAWAG, Clive Napier

Long-toed Stint - 3, 17/9/98, Broome sewage works (Broome) - BBO (1st return for season)

Ruff - 1, 29/9/98, Broome sewage works (Broome) - BBO

Red-necked Phalarope - 1, 31/10/98, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO

Little Ringed Plover - 1, 26-27/8/98, Broome sewage works (Broome) - BBO

Oriental Plover - 1, 30/8/98, Roebuck Bay (Broome) - BBO (1st return for season)

Banded Lapwing - 2, 9-11/9/98, El Questro (Wyndham East Kimberley) - KU (long way north for this species)

Fork-tailed Swift - 1000+, 20/10/98, Port Hedland (Port Hedland) - BBO

Black-tailed Treecreeper - 1, 15/8/98, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO

Green-backed Gerygone - 2, 15/9/98, Point Springs Nature Reserve (Wyndham East Kimberley) - JS (very few records for East Kimberley)

Yellow Chat - 300, 14/8/98, Nimilaica, N of Broome (Broome) - BBO

Gouldian Finch - 4 adult and 2 juvenile, 9/10/98, at a drying out waterhole on Parry Creek, Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - GG, JG

Eurasian Tree Sparrow - 2, 21/10/98, Broome (Broome) - CH (see article elsewhere in this issue)

Little Grassbird - 2+, 17/9/98, Nimilaica, N of Broome (Broome) - BBO (new record for Broome - see article elsewhere in this issue)

OBSERVERS

AB = Allan Burbidge	JG = Jesse Graham
BBO = Broome Bird Obs	JS = Jonny Schoenjahn
BD = Brad Daw	KU = Klaus Uhlenhut
CD = Colin Davis	MB = Mary Bremner
CH = Chris Hassell	PA = Pam Agar
FO = Frank O'Connor	PB = Phyllis Bentley
GA = George Agar	RITP = Bob Prince
GG = Gordon Graham	RP = Ross Payton
JAB = Judy Blyth	RN = Roger Nichols
JB = John Blyth	VD = Viv Dare

Christmas Closure

Please note that our Perry House office will be closed from
25 December 1998 to 3 January 1999
inclusive

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

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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 MSWord format; a style sheet is available from Perry House to guide writers regarding format
- WABN uses Birds Australia recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.
- the full Editorial Policy is stated in WABN 74:10-12

Deadline for the March 1999 Issue
1 February 1999
at Perry House

WA Group Reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA-WA GROUP COMMITTEE

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

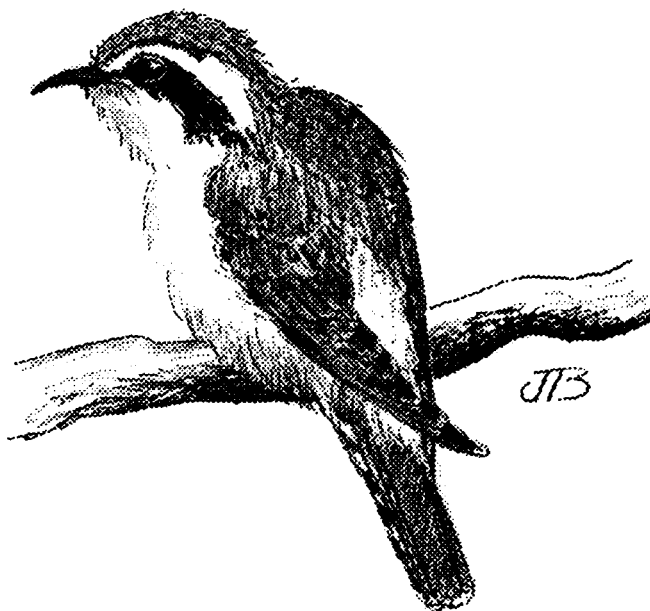
It is through the committee that the business of Birds Australia-WA Group is managed. Matters for

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:

Atlas of Australian Birds #2 Project — see separate supplement for report from the WA coordinator, Cheryl Gole.

Research projects — several projects are being prepared for appraisal by the Research Committee; however more members will be needed to support the projects.



Black-eared Cuckoos were feature birds on both the Greenough and Wanjarri campouts reported in this issue

Drawing by Judy Blyth.

Remote area excursions — the recent trip to Wanjarri in the Kathleen Valley near Leonora was very successful; keen interest is being shown in the survey planned for 1999 along the Canning Stock Route with priority to be given to finding some real information about the distribution of Princess Parrots, as well as being an atlasing survey; enquiries are being made with the National Office seeking clarification of the matter of insurance.

Birds Australia Annual Campout, Greenough, 21-28 September — see lead story for report from Clive Napier and John Blyth.

New Members' Night, Monday 9 November at the State Tennis Centre, Burswood — approximately 40 new members turned up for this evening which was an excellent response; sadly, due to a misunderstanding on the part of Tennis West, we were locked out of the venue; the Committee was delighted that all new members stayed and made the best of the situation, hearing about 10-12 people tell of their activities with Birds Australia-WA Group.

Conservation:

Ecotourism conference, Margaret River — a contribution of \$100 has been provided towards costs of participation by Shapelle McNee,

Birds being fed and creating a nuisance — suggestions have been put to the Town of Bassendean on ways to reduce this nuisance and enquiries will be made with the National Office as to the existence of a policy on handfeeding of birds.

Jet skis and waders on Swan River — Mike Bamford has been awarded a contract with the Dept of Transport to monitor wader numbers and the effects of jet skis, particularly in the Milyu NR area and volunteer wader counters are being sought.

Proposed southern extension of Tonkin Hwy — advice has been sought from BAWAG on identification of important wetland areas which could be affected by certain alignment options:

- south from Albany Hwy, Gosnells, through Wright Lake, to the east of Forrestdale Lake, and
- north of Bishop Rd and south to Mundijong Rd/ South-West Hwy/ Jarrahdale Road

Birds on Farms Project — this is being wound up, with an interim report to be produced; participants are being encouraged to now take part in the #2 Atlas surveys.

Suburban Bird Survey — see separate report from Clive Nealon elsewhere in this issue.

Hooded Plover Project — an article in a recent *Earth 2000* on the Hooded Plover project has attracted responses from the general public, including reported sightings in the Shark Bay area; surveys have been carried out in the Esperance and Ravensthorpe areas with the location of many Hooded Plovers; Marcus Singor is writing the project report, with Allan Burbidge and John Blyth as editors.

OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS FROM TENNIS WEST

11 November 1998

On behalf of the State Tennis Centre we wish to apologise for overlooking your booking of the Hopman Cup Room on 9 November 1998.

We obviously caused significant inconvenience to members which was exacerbated by the fact that it was a New Members' Night for Birds Australia. We have reviewed our internal procedures as a result of the oversight and members can be assured that we have taken steps to ensure that this situation does not recur.

Birds Australia were one of our first customers to utilise the State Tennis Centre and we value the association. We will ensure that our service and customer focus will in future reflect the value we place on our oldest client. Once again please accept our apologies.

Yours sincerely

David Copeland
General Manager

Education/Public Relations — see report from Judy Blyth elsewhere in this issue.

Student grants to attend observatory courses — grants have been awarded to Matthew Pudovskis and Brenden Metcalf to attend the December course at Eyre Bird Observatory.

Perry House lease with Kings Park Board — the board will be constructing interim office accommodation for its new ranger in the grounds of Perry House and will be using some of the facilities at Perry House, eg, toilet.

Grants — Allan Jones and his sub-committee (including new member Tony Bennett) continue to submit applications for funding of projects including:

- Lotteries Commission — grant of \$1650 received for a new computer.
- Federation Centenary Grant — joint project: "Federation Walk", Bold Park — an application has been sent in from the participants: the Friends of Bold Park, WA Wildflower Society, Kings Park Board and BAWAG.
- Brochures — report sent to Gordon Reid Foundation on recently completed brochures from its grant; the following were involved in preparation of recent brochures:
 - Kings Park: J Dell, Judy Blyth, S Tingay;
 - Gingin, Lancelin and Woody Island: D Beckingham;
 - Donnybrook: P Amundsen;
 - *Dalwallinu: M Brooker, C Napier;
 - *Murchison Settlement: S Keogh
 - * these two under way
- Hooded Plover survey — report being written by Marcus Singor
- Ground Parrot survey — report being written by Shapelle McNee; there was a good response from Albany people for the final survey (5 nights).

Trading Table — new bird cards now available @ \$1.00 each retail; good sales have been made at the recent Kings Park Wildflower Festival and the *Spring Fling*; substantial quantity delivered to the Combined Charities Christmas Card Shop for onselling.

... we're 'online' ...

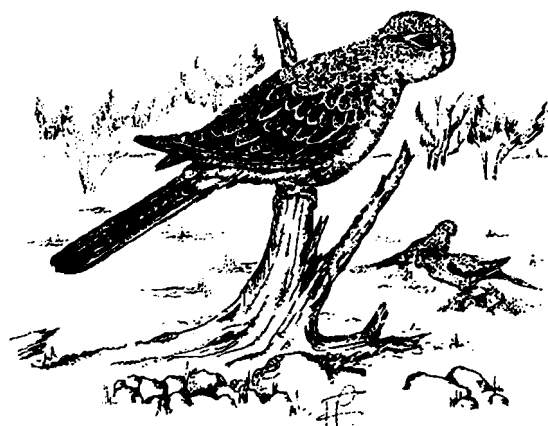
Connection to the Internet — it is expected that by the time you receive this newsletter we will be 'online' with our own email address. Please be patient and give us some time to initiate our office volunteers into the mysteries of the Internet. Our email address will be:

birdswa@starwon.com.au

General meeting 14 September 1998 at Burswood — apologies to members who arrived for this meeting and found us locked out; Tennis West has apologised and hopefully this won't happen again.

Christmas Function — a barbecue will be held on Sunday 20 December commencing at 6 pm at Perry House, BYO meat and drinks — all members welcome.

Clive Napier
WA GROUP CHAIRMAN



The lovely Bourke's Parrot was a feature of the Wanjarri campout report in this issue.

Drawing by Pam Free

PERRY HOUSE AND VOLUNTEERS

Yet another year has almost gone by, and it is important to bring to your attention the time, effort and commitment given by many volunteers at the Birds Australia WA Group office at Perry House.

Built in 1915 by Joseph Perry and listed as a National Heritage building, it is now the headquarters for both Birds Australia WA Group and the WA Wildflower Society.

Our volunteers provide an invaluable service by being there each morning, Monday to Friday, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, to provide a service to members, as well as the community in general, on all matters relating to the birding activities of the WA Group.

A large array of bird items are for sale: books, cards (new ones have been printed this year) with and without Christmas greetings, CDs and tapes of Australian bird song, and calendars — the list goes on!

All of these items are suitable as Christmas gifts, so why not just drop in to Perry House at 71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat and have a look for yourself, without any commercial pressure! The volunteer on duty will be pleased to see you, and make you welcome.

All volunteers deserve a pat on the back, as they do a magnificent job for the WA group.

Please raise your glass to them this Christmas.

Max Bailey
Office Manager

BIRDS ON FARMS PROJECT

Twenty-five farm surveyors have completed the eight seasonal surveys. Nearly all have expressed pleasure in having taken part. For example, some have learned to identify more bird species than they knew before; others have enjoyed the opportunity to visit a farm, its owners and its birds on a regular basis.

Summary of Progress

No. of surveys completed	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Totals
Farms	25	14	23	22	3	7	2	2	98
Road verges	-	-	36	85	27	12	0	1	161

Looking at the data — Parrot Family

SPECIES	No. of farms (max. 91)	No. of individuals
Pink Cockatoo (Major Mitchell)	5	76
Cockatiel	5	109
Mulga Parrot	10	201
Corella (2 species)	11	2945
Regent Parrot	16	240
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	25	809
White-tailed Black-Cockatoo (2 species)	26	772
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	27	1214
Elegant Parrot	30	498
Western Rosella	34	869
Red-capped Parrot	41	741
Galah	50	4 893
Australian Ringneck	88	7 664

Cockatoos and parrots are a major component of WA farm bird population. The survey farms cover a wide area bounded by farms near Ajana, Mukinbudin, Bodallin and Esperance. Ninety-one farms have a 50 hectare site being surveyed, and all the parrot data from these 50 hectare sites were used to give the results below. They are raw data which offer a sketch of the comparative abundance of the parrot species. The species are listed in ascending order according to the number of farms (of 91) on which they have been recorded. The third column shows the number of individual birds of each species that have been recorded over all surveys entered to date within the 50 hectare sites.

Among other things these figures indicate that if you have corellas, you are likely to have them in profusion, and that Australian Ringnecks are indeed widespread and common on WA farms.

Brenda Newbey
WA Co-ordinator, Birds on Farms Project

SUBURBAN BIRD SURVEY

The number of observations received by the survey, and entered into the data base is now approaching the 200,000 mark. This number has been reached through the efforts of 122 observers who have submitted records from a total of 113 gardens and 280 other sites. Of course, while the numbers are impressive, we have far more than 122 members of Birds Australia living in Perth (and remember that some records are submitted by non-members), and many of the sites only represent Incidental records, or have been visited only a few times.

Congratulations and thanks to all who have contributed.

The survey has now been in operation for nearly three years. I want to stress that the survey is still active and will remain so despite the beginning of the national Atlas project. I believe that the accumulation of records over an extended period is important in order to be able to detect trends in population changes among the birds around the city.

I must apologise for not communicating more of the findings from the survey but time flies by and any small absence (like three weeks overseas on business during August) makes it very difficult to catch up with data base updates. That, however, is no reason — just an excuse.

I have been thinking of how a start can be made on presenting some findings from the data collected so far, and I hope to have something ready for the next issue of Bird Notes.

Once again, thank you to all those contributing records regularly. And to all those who aren't, but think that they may be able to help, please do it. It is not too late to start — as I said above, we do not have an end date. Please just ask for some data collection forms. Call the office and leave a message, and I will send out forms to your home address.

The process of recording for the Suburban Survey is extremely simple. If you record the birds in your garden, it hardly takes any time at all — you just record what you see around your garden each week. If you wish to provide records of a favourite area that you visit regularly as well, so much the better. All of the records will be gratefully received.

Clive Nealon

LIBRARY NEWS

The following publications have been accessioned since the last report:

- *The Bird Observer*, No 788, August 1998
- *The Tattler*, Wader Study Group newsletter, No 16, July 1998
- *Riverview*, Swan River Trust newsletter, No 15, July 1998
- Information Sheet/Activity List, Swan/Avon Catchment Area, No 8, September 1998
- *Narpulungup News*, Friends of Fitzgerald National Park newsletter, July and August 1998
- *Mainstream*, WA Water Corporation newsletter, Nos 6 and 7, July and October 1998
- Cumberland Bird Observers Club newsletter, No 1 vol 20, August 1998 and Index to CBOC newsletters, vols 13-18
- *Contact Call*, North Queensland Group newsletter, September 1998
- *Greener Times*, Conservation Council newsletter, September and October 1998
- Western Power Annual Report, 1998

To those looking for Christmas presents, copies of Simon Nevill's beautiful book on West Australian Wildflowers is available for \$20.00 at Perry House, and at our monthly meetings. A selection of other publications is also available — come and have a look.

Liz Walker, LIBRARIAN

PUBLICITY/EDUCATION REPORT

Since BAWAG's 1998 AGM in February ten bird talks have been given to public groups, 23 bird walks taken (with school children or general public) and 21 BAWAG displays have been mounted at eight different venues. Several new displays have been prepared, eg, "Frequent Fliers of Alfred Cove", "Researching the Ground Parrot", and "Go Atlassing!" Our four old green display boards have been re-covered to make them "Velcro-friendly", costs being covered by the Healthway grant.

A resources kit, "Birdwatching Around Bibra Lake" has been prepared and presented to Cockburn Sound Education Centre (funding for this from Healthway). Assistance has been given to students and schools for various projects involving birds. Birds of Kings Park brochure was completed with illustrations. National Bird Week was celebrated with free public bird walks daily, culminating in Open House at our headquarters on 25 October. Thanks to all leaders of these walks, and to other volunteers at our trading table/displays at Spring Fling and other occasions. Thanks, too, to Clive Napier for taking on most of the talks to adult groups.

Judy Blyth

Members' Contributions

WHISTLING KITE AT NEST, BARRAGUP, SERPENTINE RIVER

A pair of Whistling Kites have been nesting for several years at the same site on a private property in Barragup, within 200 metres of the Serpentine River. The nest is high up in an old Tuart tree. Several Yellow-billed Spoonbills have also been nesting nearby in tall Tuart trees and have successfully raised young for the last two seasons.

Diane Beckingham

THE BIRDS OF THE ERIC SINGLETON BIRD SANCTUARY, BAYSWATER, PERTH, WA

Introduction

The bird sanctuary came into being in 1976, when Eric Singleton approached the City of Bayswater and pointed out that their rubbish tip would encroach on an area that was a good swamp in winter, even though it dried out in summer. The area had previously been grazed by livestock but was only being used by trail-bike riders at that time. The City decided to preserve what was left, about 4 ha, and invited Eric to submit a plan which would ensure preservation of the site. Since then the City has continued to act upon and finance Eric's requests and advice in relation to this wetland.

The sanctuary is located between the disused rubbish tip and the Bayswater drain, which flows into the Swan River, and levees were built to protect the sanctuary from any leachate that might seep or flow from the tip or the

drain. The sanctuary fills naturally in winter but has to be topped up from a bore in summer, as previously it was simply a winter swamp on the Swan River floodplain.

The dominant, remnant flora is Flooded Gum, Swamp Paperbark, Common Wattle and Lake Club-rush. *Cassytha racemosa* grows on some of the paperbarks while the bulrush is the introduced *Typha orientalis*. Grasses grow to the water's edge in places and the waterfowl can graze upon them without having to leave the water. Water Couch is the preferred grass of most of the ducks and is a natural part of the diet of the Pacific Black Duck and the Grey Teal (Frith, 1977), while the Musk Duck, which is largely carnivorous, will eat the Water-Weed *Triglochin procera* (O'Brien 1990).

An island was built in the sanctuary in 1991 in the hope that it would be used by birds wanting to rest or nest there, and some grasses and bushes were planted to provide cover for the birds and to make the island more aesthetically pleasing. It is intended that all exotic plants, except the Swamp Cypress and the *Typha* will be removed, and that only native plants, except for the ornamental and deciduous Liquidamber, will be planted.

The sanctuary is largely open water and the paperbarks in it have died because they are now permanently flooded, and have lost their leaves, again resulting in more open water, and they are used as resting



Whistling Kite at nest in Tuart tree, at Barragup,
on Serpentine River
Drawing by Diane Beckingham

places. The sanctuary water is shallow around the edges but up to 2 m deep in the centre.

The swamp was declared a C-class reserve in 1977 and between then and now 98 species of birds have been identified in and around the sanctuary. It has attracted many species of waterfowl, many of which now reside

there permanently, and 22 species of birds breed there, including several species of ducks. Nesting drums erected in the sanctuary (see WABN 87: 19) are extensively used, especially by four species of ducks, ie, the Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck and Blue-billed Duck.

Muscovy Ducks, Mallard derivatives and any Mallard hybrids with the Black Duck are removed from the sanctuary as soon as possible. However, though living freely in Perth the Mallard was never truly a wild bird (Serventy and Whittell, 1976) and the pure Mallard no longer occurs here, though derivatives such as the Khaki Campbell occasionally hybridise with the Black Duck. Our observations on such hybrids however lead us to conclude that they are not suited for life in the wild, and can only live on suburban lakes and rivers, as is the case for the Mallard derivatives too.

The sanctuary is only 6 km from Perth and the birdlife should be recorded now, before the planners effect all their changes, because the sanctuary is now valuable wetland, even if it is not, in the eyes of planners, highly attractive.

The Birds

Stubble Quail. Very rare. Once only
 Blue-billed Duck. Common breeding resident
 Musk Duck. Uncommon
 Freckled Duck. Very rare. Twice only. (But also seen at Ascot racecourse)
 Black Swan. Uncommon, breeding once.
 Australian Shelduck. Common, breeding, always present
 Australian Wood Duck. Uncommon, breeding
 Pacific Black Duck. Common, breeding, always present
 Australasian Shoveler. Common in winter, rarely breeding
 Grey Teal. Common, breeding, always present
 Chestnut Teal. Very rare visitor
 Pink-eared Duck. Very common breeding resident
 Hardhead. Common winter visitor, occasionally breeding.
 Australasian Grebe. Common breeding resident
 Hoary-headed Grebe. Uncommon, breeding
 Great Crested Grebe. Rare visitor
 Darter. Uncommon, occasionally breeding
 Little Pied Cormorant. Common visitor
 Little Black Cormorant. Common, roosting of an evening
 Great Cormorant. Common, roosting of an evening
 Australian Pelican. Rare visitor
 White-faced Heron. Common visitor
 Little Egret. Uncommon visitor
 White-necked Heron. Uncommon visitor
 Great Egret. Common visitor
 Nankeen Night Heron. Very rare
 Australasian Bittern. Very rare
 Australian White Ibis. Common summer visitor
 Straw-necked Ibis. Common summer visitor
 Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Common summer visitor
 Osprey. Rare visitor
 Black-shouldered Kite. Very common
 Whistling Kite. Uncommon
 Swamp Harrier. Uncommon
 Brown Goshawk. Common
 Collared Sparrowhawk. Very rare
 Little Eagle. Rare visitor

Australian Hobby. Uncommon visitor
 Peregrine Falcon. Very rare visitor
 Nankeen Kestrel. Common
 Buff-banded Rail. Uncommon
 Australian Spotted Crake. Uncommon
 Spotless Crake. Uncommon
 Purple Swampphen. Very common breeding resident
 Dusky Moorhen. Common breeding resident
 Eurasian Coot. Very common, breeding, partly resident
 Whimbrel. Very rare visitor
 Red-necked Stint. Uncommon summer visitor
 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Uncommon summer visitor
 Black-winged Stilt. Common in summer
 Red-necked Avocet. Uncommon
 Red-capped Plover. Uncommon summer visitor
 Black-fronted Dotterel. Common summer visitor
 Red-kneed Dotterel. Common summer visitor
 Rock Dove. Uncommon
 Laughing Turtle-Dove. Common
 Spotted Turtle-Dove. Common
 Short-billed Black-Cockatoo. Visitor, large flocks sometimes
 Galah. Uncommon visitor, small groups
 Little Corella (?) Visitor, flocks of up to 200
 Australian Ringneck. Uncommon visitor
 Pallid Cuckoo. Uncommon seasonal visitor
 Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Very rare winter visitor
 Shining Bronze Cuckoo. Uncommon seasonal visitor
 Barn Owl. Rare
 Laughing Kookaburra. Uncommon, breeding
 Sacred Kingfisher. Uncommon summer visitor
 Rainbow Bee-eater. Common summer visitor
 Rufous Treecreeper. Very rare, once only
 Spotted Pardalote. Very rare, once only
 Striated Pardalote. Uncommon
 Western Gerygone. Uncommon visitor
 Yellow-rumped Thornbill. Uncommon visitor
 Red Wattlebird. Rare visitor
 Little Wattlebird. Uncommon visitor
 Singing Honeyeater. Common breeding resident
 Brown Honeyeater. Common, breeding, mostly resident
 White-fronted Chat. Uncommon visitor
 Rufous Whistler. Uncommon winter visitor
 Magpie-lark. Common resident
 Grey Fantail. Uncommon winter visitor
 Willie Wagtail. Common resident. Breeds freely
 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. Uncommon, breeding
 White-winged Triller. Uncommon visitor
 Grey Butcherbird. Uncommon
 Australian Magpie. Common
 Australian Raven. Common, breeding
 Richard's Pipit. Common around the sanctuary
 Mistletoebird. Uncommon visitor
 White-backed Swallow. Uncommon irregular visitor
 Welcome Swallow. Common, resident
 Tree Martin. Common, partly resident
 Clamorous Reed-Warbler. Uncommon, breeding, resident
 Little Grassbird. Uncommon, resident
 Rufous Songlark. Very rare, twice only
 Silveryeye. Uncommon

Discussion

Birds of the sanctuary not seen on Maylands Peninsula and its adjoining section of the Swan River are Freckled Duck, Chestnut Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Nankeen Night Heron, Australasian Bittern, Collared Sparrowhawk, Australian Spotted Crake, Whimbrel, Barn Owl, Rufous Treecreeper, Spotted Pardalote and Rufous Songlark. This brings to 124 the species of birds which are shared by these two areas.

Acknowledgments

The City of Bayswater is acknowledged as having a great interest in the sanctuary and being the provider of finance and labour needed to both make it, and then upgrade it to being an integral part of their Riverside Gardens project.

We are grateful to Allan Burbidge and John Blyth for reading this article and making helpful suggestions.

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PREPARATION OF FOOD BY AUSTRALIAN RAVEN

As I went about my business of sitting in the car outside a house in North Perth on 15 September, waiting for a tradesman to appear, an Australian Raven went about his (or her) business of foraging and strutting on the grass verge. From time to time he waded in a shallow earthenware dish under a bush only a few metres from my car window. My circumstances meant I had ample opportunity to observe his. I noticed he spent quite a bit of time in the shallow water, with little apparent purpose. On one occasion he was chasing and trying to pick up a small piece of indeterminate white soggy food — a feat he eventually accomplished. Shortly afterwards he appeared with a much larger piece of dry cracker type biscuit, which

he dropped in the water. After it had softened sufficiently he proceeded to pull it apart and eat it. Full marks for intelligence, if not for manners!

John Brooke

MORE ON THE AUSTRALIAN RAVEN

I watched an Australian Raven in my garden at Joondanna in May 1998 picking up dry pebbles of sheep dung which had been spread around the plants. The raven dug a hole in the lawn using a pressing motion with the beak and placed the pebble into it. The hole was then camouflaged by drawing grass and dry leaves over the opening. This behaviour was repeated many times that morning.

This same raven has been observed on numerous occasions burying excess food in the same manner. It is assumed that the dung was considered as food, albeit low grade, unless there is a more complex explanation?

Such caches are revisited and the food eaten by the raven. Finding the holes in the lawn again seems to be achieved by sight and memory. The raven appears to observe and memorise each cache before leaving it.

During one observation of this behaviour, an egg was placed in the guttering of a house roof and carefully covered with leaves for later retrieval.

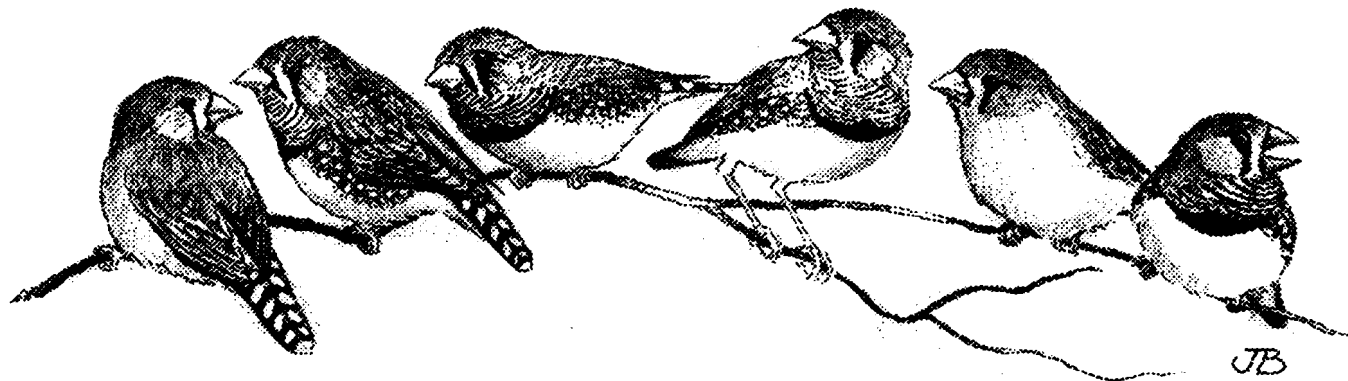
Barbara Reif

PILBARA BIRDWATCHING AFTER RAIN

Just a few notes on the joys of birdwatching in the Pilbara out from Karratha, after rain.

This district has mangroves, sandy beaches, rocky headlands, mountains, spinifex plains and lush valleys (eg, Millstream). Scenery was magnificent with reds, ochres, blues, purples and black against the rich greens of spinifex and snappy gum trees with their pristine white trunks.

The conditions of plenty after the rains resulted in some frantic and bizarre nesting behaviour. Zebra Finches at Harding Dam were trying to nest in the hollow metal crossbar of a power pole — the young would be cooked! Also Zebra Finches set up a nest in the base of a Brown Falcon's nest, when the Brown Falcon was sitting! This was on a branch overhanging the road. I have previously seen Zebra Finches nesting in the basement of a huge Osprey nest at Exmouth, but wonder at the tolerance of the Brown Falcon. I was unable to follow this through, but it



Zebra Finch
Drawing by Judy Blyth

does raise the possibility that maybe the finches were not successful!!

With the lure of Rufous-crowned Emu-wrens, we spent a day going to Mt Florance Station. Alas, the emu-wrens were shy, but not the Spinifexbird and the Striated Grasswrens next to the station homestead. The commonest honeyeater is the Grey-headed. The station has a very nice camping area with all conveniences and historical shearers' quarters (brochures at our office). Picnic table birds at the camp site are Spinifex Pigeons with Striated Grasswrens and Spinifexbirds nearby. Also, Black-tailed Treecreepers are regular residents not far away. We saw them gathering beaksful of insects from the Station tip before flying off to feed young.

A total of 80 species were seen in four days with possibilities of many more. It was a great trip.

Mary Vaughan

GLIDING HIGH

Even before I became a declared birdwatcher I admired the ability of some birds to soar high into the sky. Flying in an aeroplane is not quite the same, although one day in the Kimberley we were at eye-level with an Australian Pelican. I imagined that gliding would possibly give the illusion of soaring like birds.

Recently I had the opportunity to put this theory to the test. A few of us travelled by car to a nearby country town. The airfield was located very close to the shooting range and BMX gravel track. As these were both in use on this day, the Soaring Club was using a paddock very recently vacated by sheep. This ensured that we were airborne by the time we reached the shooting range!

The recent removal of sheep from the paddock necessitated a very thorough scrutiny of shoe soles before entering the cockpit of the glider. Being dual cockpit meant that the pilot was behind me whilst flying the glider. Whilst waiting for the tow-plane, or 'Tug' as it was affectionately known, we did several safety checks. I did have a thought for the many birds of prey that will feed on the ground. How they could also use a 'tow' after they have gorged themselves so thoroughly that it is very difficult for them to become airborne.

Indeed, the bumpy paddock takeoff could have been similar. We were towed to 3500' and a thermal before disconnecting from the towrope. The altimeter was the most important feature as it indicated a climb or descent. There was little time to admire the panoramic view of the town and countryside below, with neat paddocks and meandering river. We also had to observe for other 'fixed-wing birds', rather like looking for prey.

It was very quiet except for when I opened the 'window' for the cold, fresh air. Somehow the smell of sheep had even permeated the cockpit. Combined with the constant circling to maintain a position in the thermals, I detected a distinctly queasy feeling in my tummy. Certainly not something experienced by the soaring birds of the feathered variety, I'm sure.

I must confess to feeling highly exhilarated when we reached 5000' and descended to 3500' at 200 km/hr. No wonder birds of prey are travelling so fast when they catch

their prey on the ground. Somehow our descent after a 30 minute flight was distinctly more orderly and less rushed than a bird of prey's food gathering. There was a bit of a rush, but it was to get our glider off the runway as three other gliders were following us down in quick succession.

After experiencing gliding, I decided that it was more like surfing the sky rather than flying like eagles or soaring like pelicans and ibis on a particular thermal. We search the sky for certain clouds that usually indicate a thermal. Catching these thermals enables one to travel great distances in height and kilometre. It was great to meet a crowd of people who are as enthusiastic about their hobby as we are about birding. Oh, yes, we did see some raptors — three Wedge-tailed Eagles in a thermal just below us.

Claire Gerrish

FOUR OSPREYS IN DENMARK

In early September we were driving along Ocean Beach Road, Denmark, looking for a suitable site for a picnic lunch when we noticed an Osprey perched in a paperbark beside the road. It was only about three metres up, so we stopped to photograph it. We watched for about five minutes while it sat completely unperturbed by our presence.

We drove on for about 50 metres and found a track leading down to the inlet and another group of paperbarks, where we stopped again. Another Osprey was perched on one of these trees, and while watching it another, a smaller bird, came and mated with it. The original Osprey then flew over, and a fourth appeared, two of them remaining for some time.

Liz & Charlie Davies

ANOTHER NEW BIRD (CALL) FOR THE BROOME LIST

While birding with the participants of the *Welcome the Waders Back* course, at a freshwater wetland site to the north of Broome on the 17th of November, we heard an unusual call. The clear three-note call was a pe-pee-pee, the middle note being distinctly longer. The call was heard repeatedly from dense stands of sedge (*Schoenoplectus littoralis*) growing abundantly in 75 cm to 1 metre of deep fresh water.

I was unfamiliar with the call but had with me five 'birdos' who immediately recognised the call as a Little Grassbird. When I pointed out that it would be a new bird for the Broome list, they all looked suitably serious but stuck to their original call of Little Grassbird with no hesitation.

On returning to the Broome Bird Observatory we played the BOCA *Field Guide to Australian Birds* tape just to satisfy any of those niggling doubts. The call, of course, was spot on. Thanks to the keen ears and knowledge of:

Tom Delaney, Gordon Graham, Malea Kneen,
Michael McLeish and Brian Walker

Chris Hassell
Broome Bird Observatory

SINGING HONEYEATER PAIR-BONDING AND TERRITORIAL BEHAVIOUR

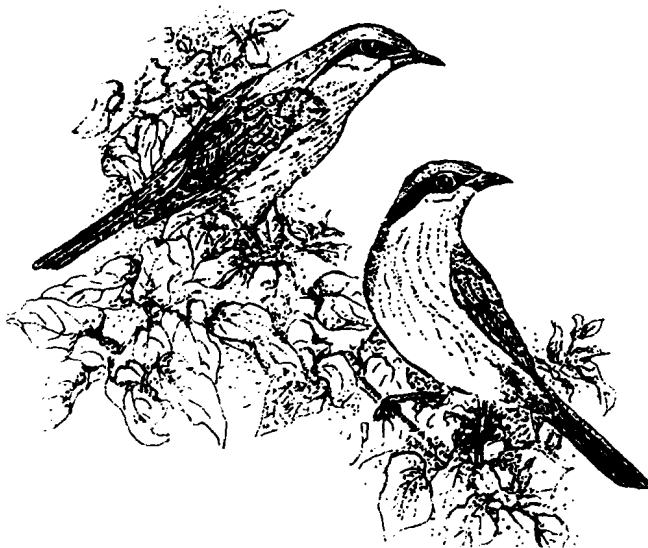
The pair of Singing Honeyeaters which had held as territory the garden around my house in Joondanna for about five years, met with tragedy in January 1998. While the female was sitting on a nest of eggs, the male was killed, possibly by a raptor which hunts in the area, or by a prowling cat. Only a few wing feathers remained to tell the tale.

The lone female continued to sit on the nest and a week later began feeding two young. Surprisingly, she was able to hold the territory against neighbouring pairs, singing a monosyllabic note frequently. The territory borders were usually patrolled by the male which had a rich melody and often used this in duet with the female's lesser notes to proclaim the territory.

Unfortunately, the nest was raided and torn apart during the female's foraging absence and the young were nowhere to be found. I suspect a raptor or raven was responsible.

The female continued to sing and patrol the borders for a month. She was joined at last by a vigorous male and there were many duets proclaiming their bonding. A new nest was begun, but no young appeared. Maybe it was too late in the season, as the female had already raised three broods and lost the fourth.

Barbara Reif



Singing Honeyeater
Drawing by Pam Free

VICTORIA'S RIFLEBIRD

On a recent trip to Cape Tribulation, North Queensland, one of my favourite walks was along a little used road which served a few houses on the lower slopes of a small mountain. Apart from these small properties, the road was surrounded by thick rainforest. At the edge, one of the tall trees had been damaged, perhaps by lightning, and all the branches which had been growing almost perpendicularly had been broken off about ten metres up. Some of them had started to grow new foliage, but the central trunk was

bare and as I passed one day, calling from this spot was a male Victoria's Riflebird. He must have chosen this for one of his display perches, as an alternative to the usual trunk of a tall palm which has lost its top.

"... spectacular courting display ..."

As I watched he called loudly and regularly and after a while a female bird flew into the tree. Up went his wings and so began his spectacular courting display which went on for a couple of minutes. He rocked and postured at every possible angle in order to best display the beautiful iridescent blue-green colour of his breast feathers reflecting the sunlight. At times he leant so far back that I thought he would fall off his perch, but alas, his endeavours were in vain, as he failed to impress the potential mate and after a while she flew off.

I had previously seen film of a Victoria's Riflebird courting display, taken by wildlife photographer Jim Frazier, but never expected to see it in real life myself. After all, Jim had to go deep into the rainforest, climb a flimsy rope ladder to get to a hide high up in the canopy in order to get close to the action, while I saw it without leaving the road. I still can't quite believe my luck.

Mavis Norgard

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE SHUFFLES ITS WINGS

I have always been puzzled by the wing shuffling done by Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, usually after perching. Today I may have learned why the birds do this. Four Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes were observed on electric light wires near my home in Joondanna in early August. At a distance one bird appeared to be deformed or struggling to free itself from something. I reached for my binoculars and found that the strange movement was the cuckoo-shrike making extreme wing shuffles, with the wings at almost 45 degrees to the body. This behaviour appeared to be a display by a pair in defence of their territory against another pair.

Barbara Reif

LARGE GULLS AT CAPE PERON

For at least 20 years I have hoped to see Kelp Gulls on the south coast but have had no success. So it was a complete surprise when I noticed two apparent immature Kelp Gulls at Cape Peron on 4 August 1998. I was quite confident that they were Kelp Gulls although I had never seen that species before. The two birds were seen angled from above flying along the shoreline, at a distance of 25 m at the closest. They were also seen standing on the shore also angled from above and at a greater distance (about 45 m

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and the next day at about 70 m). Binoculars were used. A few Pacific Gulls were around at the same time. The Pacific Gulls were also all immature birds, mostly quite dark brown in general appearance though some had a pale rump. The other two birds were smaller than the Pacific Gulls but nevertheless large birds, much bigger than the Crested Terns that were around at the same time. An estimate would be 6/7 the size of Pacific Gulls (in bulk), and in length about 5 cm shorter. I made a note of the build of these two birds, the tail and head colour, the type of mottling, and these features are described below.

Firstly, they were quite similar to the Pacific Gulls with the same style of bill. However, it was more in proportion to the size of the head than the bill of the Pacific Gull, a finer but still substantial bill. Overall the birds appeared to be less stocky than Pacific Gulls; rather than just a scaled down Pacific Gull, they were a lighter build.

Secondly, they had paler heads and tails than any of the Pacific Gulls. In fact, the central tail feathers were

completely white. The outer tail feathers were blotched darker — a grey/buff colour and there appeared on one bird at least to be some unevenness, ie, a smaller blotch on one side of the tail than the other.

It was the smaller size, proportionally smaller bill and white tail feathers that made me so sure that I had seen Kelp Gulls.

The only other note that I made at the time was about the mottling across the back and wings. It looked considerably paler than that of the young Pacific Gulls, with more contrast. There was a lot more pale buff, and smaller area of dark brown. However, as with the Pacific Gulls, the mottles were quite large. The mottling looked different to that of any Pacific Gulls I had seen before and confirmed in my mind that I was looking at a different species.

The Observations Committee was surprised at the record and were unable to accept it without further information as this was a long way north for Kelp Gulls. Perhaps the birds were another rare visitor species of which there are several possibilities. I went to the WA Museum to be shown the relevant skins by Ron Johnstone. There were only four Kelp Gulls. Two of these were immature birds. Both appeared younger than the birds I had seen, but the older of the two had a mottle a bit darker than I recollected seeing, but clearly paler than any of the immature Pacific Gulls in the collection. Their beaks looked right in size and shape. The only element of confusion introduced by Ron was the sole Denham Pacific Gull specimen, an adult quite a bit smaller than the southern Pacific Gulls and with a bill intermediate between the southern Pacific Gulls and the Kelp Gulls. However, I had been observing northern Pacific Gulls and had found them distinct from the two unusual birds. Ron regretted the sparseness of the museum collection of Kelp Gulls and the complete lack of specimens of immature northern race Pacific Gulls.

John Darnell offered to do a drawing of the birds I had seen and my memory was stretched to recall details about which I had made no notes, so there is a greater chance of error. Bill colour — one colour only and dull yellowish brown. Leg colour — neither black nor yellow but something rather dull. Breast colour — darker than head — brownish.

I feel confident that the birds I saw were not Pacific Gulls. Discussion of the details with Ron Johnstone and John Darnell did not convince them that these birds were Kelp Gulls, but neither were they prepared to say that they must have been some other species. I still feel that the birds I saw were more likely to be Kelp Gulls than any other species.

The available field guides do not have illustrations of all immature seabird plumage permutations. The distribution maps in field guides are sometimes questionable, too. (The Atlas project should help to redress this.) If you see an unusual seabird — especially one that you have waited 20 years for — take as many notes as possible plus sketches and photos, and then a definite identification may result.

Brenda Newbey

UNUSUAL GULL AT SEABIRD

On 8 March 1998 we called in to Seabird, a small coastal town north of Yanchep, on our way back from Lancelin. We scanned the shore, the fishing boats and a small wooden structure with our binoculars and, as well as some Silver Gulls, noticed a different gull sitting on the stern of a fishing boat about 200 to 250 metres off shore. At first sight it appeared to be a Pacific Gull but on closer inspection we noticed its wings were more grey than black and the bill did not seem so chunky. We then viewed it through a spotting 'scope and noted the following details.

Size: it appeared to be bigger than the Silver Gulls around it but probably smaller than a Pacific Gull.

Head: white with possibly some slight marking on top.

Beak: yellow with a black section and red tip — thicker than a Silver Gull but not as chunky as a Pacific Gull.

Wings: grey with what appeared to be a small white scallop on the back and white edging at the back.

Tail: black with a white edge in flight.

Legs: greenish yellow.

Our conclusion on the day was that the bird was a Black-tailed Gull, a species that has been reported only rarely in Australia, with only one possible previous Western Australian report. However, after obtaining further information on our return to Perth, we cannot be sure that the bird we saw wasn't an immature Pacific Gull. Birds in northern populations of this species in Western Australia are smaller and slightly paler than south coast populations (Ron Johnstone, personal communication) and a bird moulting from immature to adult plumage might have the combination of characters we observed. Nevertheless, the bird we saw did appear unusual, and we would encourage other observers to look out for unusual gulls in this area and take detailed field notes, preferably with sketches of the bill and wing and tail patterns.

Chris and Dianne Reidy

ANOTHER NEW BIRD (UNWANTED) FOR THE BROOME LIST

On 21 October, while strolling on the Broome jetty, I was horrified to see two sparrows (neither of them Janet Sparrow!) hopping around whilst feeding on spilled cattle feed. On closer viewing, I identified them as Eurasian Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*). The brown forehead, crown and nape and black ear coverts distinguish this species from the House Sparrow (*P. domesticus*) with its grey crown and forehead and pale ear coverts (Simpson and Day 1996; Clement *et al.* 1993). I am familiar with both of these species from Europe. Another possibility is the Cinnamon (or Russet) Sparrow (*P. rutilans*) of north-eastern Asia, but this species lacks the black ear coverts and pale collar of the Tree Sparrow, and is a rich warm cinnamon on the upper parts.

The House and Tree Sparrows occur very widely throughout Eurasia with introduced populations well established in many parts of the world, including eastern Australia. In eastern Asia the Tree Sparrow replaces the

House Sparrow as the common bird in urban environments.

I believe the two birds at Broome had been ship assisted on a cattle vessel returning from Indonesia. The Agriculture WA people in Broome have been advised of these charming though undesirable arrivals and the birds despatched.

Tree Sparrows have arrived in Western Australia on several previous occasions, apparently as ship-assisted migrants to such places as Fremantle and Bunbury, and in November 1986 were recorded breeding at Port Hedland (Long 1981; Ron Johnstone personal communication) but the Broome birds appear to be the first from the Kimberley.

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Chris Hassell

THE LARDER

While walking around the boundary of the Kalgoorlie Arboretum in mid September I noticed about 20 to 30 medium-sized birds moving very actively in some bushes and a tree just outside the fenceline. I slowly approached to about 10 metres and saw that they were a flock of the locally common Yellow-throated Miners feeding on the ground between the bushes. Over a period of several minutes I came to within 5 metres to see one particular bush with an undue amount of activity in the dense area at its base. I examined this part more closely using binoculars. A bird seemed to be struggling with something about 30 cm from the ground, but in the heart of the bush. As it gained height and came into a more open part of the bush the bird was clearly not a miner. Similar in overall size it was very sturdily built and had a massive beak with a dark tip. Its general colouring was lightish brown, with the head and face heavily speckled. It was certainly a juvenile butcherbird, probably one of the local Pied Butcherbirds but with more speckling than I would have expected.

It continued to struggle to lift a heavy object about half its own size. As I watched, the object came clear of the undergrowth and was revealed as a dead duckling, reasonably large but still at the downy stage. The butcherbird had it gripped by the back of the head and continued to drag it up through the bush until it reached a metre in height. At this level was a substantial fork in a branch, making a vertical Y with sides 1 cm in width. The butcherbird lifted the body up to this fork then dropped the head into the Y and released its grip. The head was effectively jammed into the fork with the body hanging below.

The butcherbird then climbed down below the body and started to tug at the lower abdomen. With the head so

effectively fixed it took only a few vigorous pulls to open the body and enable the bird to feast on the contents. After about five minutes feeding the butcherbird flew up into a nearby tree. I took this opportunity to leave the scene and to return about 30 minutes later with a camera. There was no trace anywhere of the duckling or any sign of the butcherbird.

The nearest pond to this sighting was about 300 metres away, but there were no ducks in sight. Another pond with numerous breeding Grey Teal is at Hammond Park over 500 metres distant.

Bob Fergie

BARKING OWL IN FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

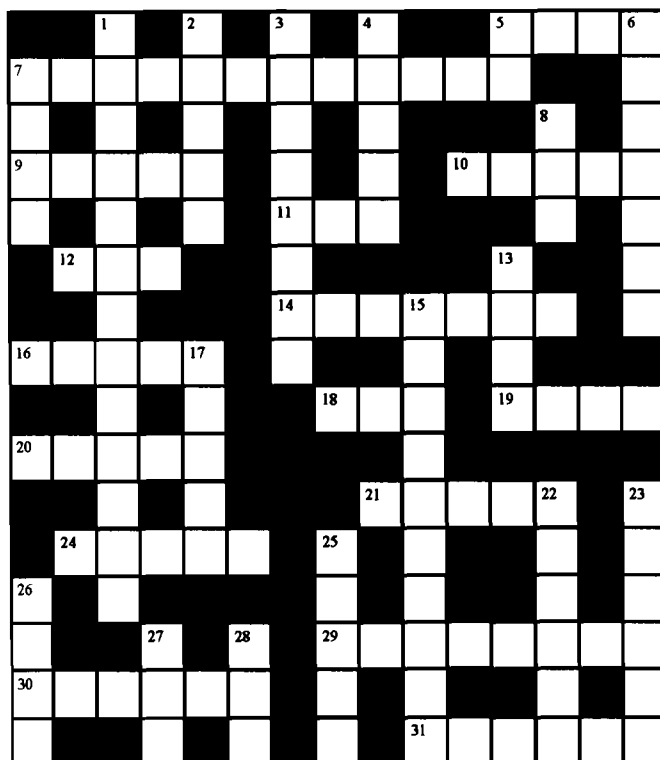
I heard the Barking Owl screaming woman call at 1:30 am on 21 October 1998 in Fitzgerald River National Park.

One was heard (by Andrew and Pam Chapman) in this area in 1985. We had a pair of Barking Owls on the farm at Ongerup for a few weeks in 1979 but I had not heard the screaming call before. I have checked it with my BOC tape.

Brenda Newbey

Crossword No 15

By Pam Agar



EMAIL ADDRESSES OF MEMBERS

Now that we expect to be connected to the internet shortly, it would be helpful if all members who have email addresses would advise the secretary at:
Margaret Philippon <birdswa@starwon.com.au>

Clues Across

5. Marsh feeders which also use farms and lawns.
7. Preferred food of Banded Stilt.
9. Theoretically, 'little owl'.
10. Portion of road easement under survey for bird usage.
11. Conclusion.
12. Temporary storage unit used when canon netting.
14. Feeding movements of Little Egret.
16. The smallest amount.
18. Silver Gulls often rest on one.
19. Mouth.
20. Approximate wingspan of an ibis.
21. Narrow shelf, maybe a seabird nest site.
24. On these days it's difficult to hear many calls.
29. Zoological zone which includes India and Indonesia.
30. Flight path of waders.
31. Describes stripe on Grey Teal's upper wing.

Clues Down

1. Small Perth bird, enjoying a resurgence.
2. 1998 anniversary of Broome Bird Observatory.
3. Specialised filter feeder.
4. Nature of Shy Heathwren.
5. Abbreviation for 'island'.
6. Destination of many of WA's waders.
7. Possible resting place of a cormorant.
8. A Darter's wings need to do this before the next fishing session.
13. A lapwing may feign a broken one.
15. Lowered body and spread wings may indicate this behaviour.
17. Do this warily among a nesting colony.
22. Holiday campout period.
23. Useful attribute of birds' bones.
25. May provide weakened avian visitors.
26. Swans may gain more of this by taking off into the wind.
27. Possess.
28. Male Hardhead has a white one.

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

August Outing

Just a small group of seven people visited the Boxwood Hills, Mara Bridge area on 11 August. The day looked threatening and the weather forecast had been for rain. Although we had a few light showers the day was enjoyable.

Many flowers were seen in the Mara Bridge region including various orchids. Spring is well on its way.

The Group did not see a great number of birds, even though we covered quite a large area. However, we all went home contented with a list of 34 species seen.

September Outing

The outing held 8 September was attended by 12 people with a total of 40 bird species recorded.

The day was warm and sunny with no wind, making it easy to see the birds.

We visited the Manypeaks region with Stephenson's farm our target area.

The bulk of the farm had been planted with Blue Gums with a few pockets of bushland remaining. This bush had been closed off for seven years and consists of *Eucalyptus staeri*, just coming into bloom, plus some surviving remnant vegetation.

Hollows could be seen in the older trees. The parrots were showing interest.



The Restless Flycatcher is common in the Albany area, and is reported in this issue as nesting at Julimar north-east of Perth.

Drawing by Diane Beckingham

We saw Australian Magpie, Magpie-lark and Yellow-rumped Thornbill nesting. With all the activity, nesting is on the agenda.

The Group enjoyed the day.

October Outing

The Albany Bird Group had an outing to Lake Matilda on 13 October.

Twelve people and 43 species for that area, with everybody seeing the birds recorded made it a very successful day. For some it was the best day's bird outing they had had. Lake Matilda is just off the main Albany Highway between Mt Barker and Cranbrook. It was used by the railways years ago when the trains needed water. I gather it was fresh then but since has turned brackish and is no longer used.

We also saw great patches of orchids of many different types.

The weather was grey with the sun shining at times plus an odd shower. The birds were active and although no nest was seen we were sure some were breeding.

Michael Nield had his GPS. The readings were 34°25'53"S 117°34'11"E. A practise run for atlassing!

Vivian McCormick

Notices

REMOTE EXPEDITION

Sunday 15 August – Saturday 11 September 1999

An expedition to document distribution and breeding of the rare Princess Parrot in the Gibson Desert Region

This will be an unusual opportunity to venture into the most remote regions of WA. Come and join the search for the rare Princess Parrot and experience arid-zone birding at its best!

At this time, we need a firm indication of numbers wishing to participate. We are over-subscribed for the tag-along places, but we still have a few vacancies for passengers in the three hire vehicles.

The trip planning and costing have now been finalised. The cost includes the services of drivers and the hire/insurance of late-model air-conditioned Toyota Land Cruisers (transportation from Perth to Perth, a distance of approximately 5,000 km), all meals catered (camp cook), camping equipment (except sleeping bag), maps, a global positioning navigation system (GPS), Royal Flying Doctor (RFDS) radio, extensive first-aid kit, and the services of two experienced qualified first-aiders.

The cost for the 28-day trip for a paying passenger will be \$2,960; this works out to \$105.70 per day. Comparing this to similar ventures such as Landscape and those offered by professional tour operators, you will find this very good value indeed. Because this is an expedition and not a "twitch-a-tour", costs have been kept to a minimum, but comfort and catering will be of good standard.

Road conditions will be such that we will only be able to cover about 130 km per day. *En route* and during breaks, we'll be looking in earnest for the Princess Parrot. Because such large distances are involved, many stops will

be overnight; however, three major base camps have been planned — the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve, Tobin Lake, and Rudall River National Park, each for several days. While here, we'll set off in parties to look for the Princess Parrot, and conduct general bird surveys for the new Atlas of Australian Birds.

For insurance purposes, all members of the expedition need to be financial members of Birds Australia. There is no age limit, but we request that participants be in good health; please check with your doctor if in any doubt, as this will be an arduous journey in an isolated environment.

Please ring 9459 1971 to reserve a place, whereupon a booking form will be sent to you.

Bill and Karen McRoberts
Trip Organisers

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia-WA Group between 1 August and 31 October 1998. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

E Adams, B Carstens, I Carstens, T Davies, G Elict, P Fleming, M Gill, J Hardman, A Hollick, D Lehmann, V Locke, L McRoberts, B Metcalf, D Mitchell, S O'Malley, R Phillimore, M Robertson, C Stott, P Taylor, Y Uematsu, S Uematsu and P West

Snippets

DECLINE IN WADERS ON THE SWAN RIVER

Twenty years ago, 1000 Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers were frequently present at Pelican Point at one time, but now 100 birds are rarely seen together. The decline commenced in the sandpipers in the late 1970s and in the stints about 1980.

These and other changes are described in the latest issue of the *Stilt* in an article by local BAWAG members Kate Creed and Max Bailey. With a little help from their friends, they have counted numbers of waders at Pelican Point on the Swan River from 1971 to 1998. The numbers of five migratory wader species — Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Grey Plover — declined over the 26-year period. There were slight reductions in the numbers of Great and Red Knots and the non-migratory Red-necked Avocets. Numbers of Red-capped Plovers and Black-winged Stilts remained constant, while Greenshanks are the only species seen more frequently now than previously. Other species occur too infrequently or irregularly to detect significant changes.

Kate and Max concluded that the major cause of the decline in numbers is due to a decrease in the number of birds reaching the Swan River rather than changes at Pelican Point.

Similar changes have probably occurred at other sites on the Swan and generally in south-western Australia, but many more counts are needed to confirm this, so don't forget to volunteer for the next Wader Study Group Summer Survey! (For details of the next count, see *WA Bird Notes* No. 87 or contact Perry House.)

This is summarised from:

Creed, K.E. and Bailey, M. 1998. Decline in migratory waders at Pelican Point, Swan River, Western Australia. *Stilt* 33, 10-14.

Observatory Reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

The North West Wader and Tern Expedition is over and an eerie quiet has descended on the Broome Bird Observatory. The wet season build up has started and the waders are back in huge numbers. As usual we have had a period of exciting activities and exciting birds (see unusual sightings).

The 1998 North West Wader and Tern Expedition was the biggest ever undertaken; 125 participants representing 17 nationalities, all volunteers, made it a huge success. In the 13-week period, 15 016 shorebirds (35 species) and 786 terns (7 species) were banded. Banding was centred around the shores of Roebuck Bay, Eighty Mile Beach and Port Hedland Saltworks. Catching began in the winter period, when the bay was predominantly populated by immature birds. During the expedition the adults and then the juvenile birds arrived, with numbers building to their summer highs. For the first time ever there has been a complete ground count of the Eighty Mile Beach, which incidentally is 265 km in length. The count turned up a staggering 465 890 shorebirds. We recorded both numbers of birds and species distribution along the beach. An aerial count of Roebuck Bay yielded 94 800 shorebirds. The flight covered the southern part of the bay to the Dampier Creek mangroves, at the back of China Town, and included the northern shores of the bay in front of the Observatory. Roebuck Bay's numbers and diversity are astounding.

One of the most exciting and fascinating aspects of this expedition has been radio tracking to try and understand more about night time roosts. For the first time ever the use of radio transmitters on birds has allowed us to piece together the puzzle of shorebird movements around the bay. Six birds, two Bar-tailed Godwits and four Great Knots, are carrying transmitters. At night, birds have been tracked on the northern shores, up to 14 km away from the bay on salt pans, on Cable Beach and at Bush Point at the southernmost part of the bay. The mobility of birds on the night time roosts has been a revelation. Why the birds should choose to move these distances is a bigger and more complex question. Work planned for the year 2000 will follow up on the discoveries

from this year. One of the most spectacular moments was when we walked out onto Cable Beach on a full moon and a high tide in search of waders. Once our eyes had adjusted, the beach seemed to be alive with small shorebirds, running in and out with the surf. As we scanned down the beach a flock of up to 20 000 long-legged shorebirds roosted against the dunes. There is still a lot more to find out but we are beginning to get a clearer picture of some of our birds' movements.

A great deal of work will be undertaken to interpret and understand the data (look out for reports in the Australasian Wader Studies Group's bulletin). Initial data on the numbers of juvenile birds (ie, those hatched in July/August 1998) seem to indicate that birds breeding at more southerly latitudes have fared better than some of the high Arctic breeders. Many thanks to Clive Minton and the crew, too many to mention, for an enlightening and exciting time at the BBO.

Research based at the BBO continues to grow and next year will see further work on benthic invertebrates, sedimentology and hydrology of the bay. There will be a continuation and development of constant effort data collected by BBO staff, volunteers and enthusiastic guests. All of this only goes to enhance Broome's international reputation.

A further step in enhancing our reputation was taken with our participation at the British Birdwatching Fair in August this year. **Royal Brunei Airlines** sponsored two tickets for wardens to attend the fair. Very generously they allowed Janet to fly out of Perth and Raoul Boughton, of Barren Grounds Bird Observatory, out of Brisbane. Their flexibility in responding to our needs and various commitments was fantastic. Special thanks also goes to the **WA Group** for their sponsorship toward the participation costs of Broome and Eyre Bird Observatories. Many thanks to those other individuals who contributed and made the whole thing happen. The British Birdwatching Fair allowed us to raise the profile of Observatories at an international conservation level. The fair raised its target amount of \$250 000 towards Birdlife International's Globally Threatened Bird Species Program. Currently there are 1111 bird species under threat of extinction. This three-day event attracted just under 16 000 people and was a great success for both the Observatories and for the birds.

This is our last report to you as Wardens. 1999 will see a new staffing structure at the Broome Bird Observatory. From January, BBO will have three members of staff. Two managers will oversee the smooth running of the facility, take bookings and answer your queries. Chris and I will be staying in Broome and Chris will be employed as Ornithological Manager. In conjunction with the new Facility Managers, he will be developing our course, tour, research and education programs to tempt your birdwatching palates. By the time we get into winter and have added our Assistant Wardens to the picture there will be a top team to look after you at the BBO. Five bird brains to pick should mean that all your birdwatching needs will be catered for, plus a lot more besides. The

1999 course brochure is now available and we are already taking bookings!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved at the BBO for their support over our two years as Wardens and hope that we have played our part in an Observatory with a growing and deserved international reputation. Broome has always lived up to our favourite phrase of "one of *the* places to watch birds in Australia". It has been a privilege to share it with so many people who wholeheartedly agree!

Chris Hassell and Janet Sparrow

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

The busy season is upon us and activity is high at Eyre. It's spring and days are warmer and taken up with nest building, feeding young, flying lessons, and the Red-capped Plover runners are trying their luck at body surfing one inch waves along Kanidal Beach. Whilst many of the first Welcome Swallows, Grey Currawongs, and New Holland and White-fronted Honeyeaters have taken to the wing, we are still finding Pied Oystercatchers, White-browed Babblers and Silvereyes sitting upon their eggs.

Both amateur and professional birdwatchers have visited Eyre over the past few months with a number of unusual sightings. A group of 14 wildlife biologists from Oregon, USA roaming the countryside with Emu Tours were privileged to have two Peregrine Falcons perform artistic aerial manoeuvres over the observatory. The Pied Honeyeater has also been spotted on occasions within one week and Little Wattlebirds have made a number of appearances. Sacred Kingfishers and Rainbow Bee-eaters are also dropping in periodically.

The bird banding week was unfortunately cancelled this year (keep it in mind for next year, though) so banding activity was limited to one day with David Paton and family allowing us to gain some extra experience. The nets proved popular with New Holland Honeyeaters who appear to have had a monopoly on the birdbaths around the house of late.

The beach is providing some interesting and varied birdwatching at present, as is the Hampton Tableland north of Eyre. This year's migration has seen a wide variety of waders visit Kanidal Beach including Banded Stilts, Grey-tailed Tattlers, Greater Sand Plovers and Sharp-tailed, Wood, and Curlew Sandpipers also stopping for a little R&R. The tableland has also been a host for many bird species with large numbers of Masked Woodswallows, Emus, Australian Bustards and even Blue Bonnets giving the 'binos' a well-deserved workout.

Anyone looking for some serious birding over the summer break should consider visiting Eyre during the 10th to the 16th of January. Peter Sandilands will be here hosting *Focus on Birds* summer edition. All you need is a love of the natural environment, a pair of 'binos', a good sense of humour and a desire to participate in something a little different over your break. Oh, don't forget your bathers! So don't be a stranger, give us a call to secure a place. Hope you enjoy the holiday season and we hope to see some of you in the New Year.

Tracy Stolman and Alistair (Al) Dermer

Excursion Reports

CAMPOUT AT WANJARRI NATURE RESERVE, 24-29 August

The Wanjarri campout, held during the last week of August, was a huge success and certainly the most enjoyable of the year. Bill McRoberts led the camp and having arrived a day or so before the main party of 34 members was able to show us the best routes to travel over. During the five or six days of the campout 85 species of birds were found of which 38 were breeding. We were lucky to have three very experienced 'nesters' with us, namely, Ray Garstone, Wayne Zadow and John Dart, who were responsible for finding many of the nests.

The weather was fine and not too hot; even so we all enjoyed the campfire lit each evening in the old shearing shed around which we all sat for the bird call and to discuss the following day's plans.

Apart from species often seen in our own localities, most members were able to see such comparatively uncommon birds as Bourke's Parrots, Black-eared Cuckoos, Red-backed Kingfishers, Striated Grasswrens, Red-browed Pardalotes, Black and Pied Honeyeaters (both in large numbers), Chestnut-breasted and Chestnut Quail-thrush and many more. One highlight was a pair of Ground Cuckoo-shrikes nesting near the Blue Bore. A week to remember!

Apart from the birds, mention should be made of the great effort on the part of the Albany Group who fielded no less than ten members and who had driven over 1300 km to reach the Reserve. We hope that this will be the pattern for future campouts.

Bryan Barrett

HILLARYS PELAGIC TRIP, 20 September

A fine warm day. This was a good pelagic trip with Great-winged Petrels everywhere in the deeper water. It was a very slow start, but by the end of the day we saw seven pelagic species plus Great Skua, Australasian Gannet and two Bridled Terns. We went more than 70 km offshore, just west of the 115 degree longitude at 800+ metres deep. The highlights were two Soft-plumaged Petrels and about 20 White-faced Storm-Petrels. The biggest surprise was only seeing one Flesh-footed Shearwater. There were brief views by some of a Hutton's Shearwater. Further (probably three) trips will be organised in 1999 between May and August. For details contact Frank O'Connor on foconnor@iinet.net.au or (08) 9386 5694.

Frank O'Connor

ELLENBROOK RESERVE, 20 September

Road maps can be wrong. However, our diligent double-checking mentor guided all ten of us to the right place on time.

The weather was fine as we set out, and the banksia woodland interspersed with swampy growth looked promising. But the eventual bird count of only 28 species was disappointing. There were compensations, however,

including the aerial displays of courting Brown Goshawks. White-winged Fairy-wrens were a first for this area. Then there were those very active juvenile Red-capped Robins; or were they Scarlets? Everybody had an opinion. (There will be an appeal to higher authority.) And there was the delight of newcomers seeing birds for the first time.

The lack of birds could be due to the lowered water table and dieback. Adjacent areas were being pumped and earmarked for housing development. A 9 am start may have contributed as well, because activity quietened down fairly quickly.

Red-backed Kingfisher

Drawn by Judy Blyth



We had lunch by a delightful lagoon on the property of our very obliging host and escort,

Lyn Dunstan. Thanks to her and Brenda for a very pleasant outing.

John Stewart

JULIMAR CONSERVATION PARK, 31 October–1 November

A dozen or so campers settled in on a warm Friday afternoon to a base camp 5 km along Munyerring Springs Road, near Julimar Brook.

There were still some pools of water in the brook and some blue Leschenaultia and pink Rhodanthe everlastings were still in flower. The white gums were covered in blossom, attracting Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Brown-headed, White-naped and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters. In the woolly bush, New Holland and Brown Honeyeaters, Little Wattlebirds and Western Spinebills were busily feeding.

The weekend was especially memorable for the presence of many breeding birds. The following species were seen feeding young at the nest: Grey Shrike-thrush (nest in a hollow); Restless Flycatcher (cup-shaped fibrous nest, 10 m up in the fork of a white gum); Dusky Woodswallow (stick nest 6 m high in a young white gum).

The pair of flycatchers were giving two of their three characteristic calls and were sharing the constant feeding of the two young, while buzzing any ringneck parrots which happened to approach the tree canopy near the nest.

The following species were seen feeding newly fledged young: Rufous Treecreeper, Splendid Fairy-wren (two young), Little Wattlebird, White-naped Honeyeater, Western Spinebill (two young), Scarlet Robin and Crested Shrike-tit.

Nests of a Willie Wagtail and Brown Goshawk were also located.

As we sat having smoko, Sue Keogh walked over and said so casually, "I don't know if you can be bothered coming over to see some Crested Shrike-tits behind our tent ..." We couldn't move fast enough for our first sighting of these colourful birds!

We also enjoyed good sightings of Elegant Parrot, Brown-headed Honeyeater and Varied Sittella. Spotlighting forays produced little, but Bill McRoberts and company saw two separate Echidnas crossing tracks at night. A Southern Boobook was seen over the camp and their calls were heard many times on both nights.

Last year our excursion here was in mid-September, much earlier. This year we added White-cheeked Honeyeater to the existing list and we recorded a total of 64 species. We recommend a return visit perhaps one week earlier, next October.

Julimar certainly is a top birding spot, and only 115 km from Perth, via Bindoon or Toodyay. On the way out, on Munyerring Springs Road, I was privileged to have a leisurely look at two Painted Button-quails which were foraging near the road and were crossing the track in front of me.

On Sunday morning, Clive Napier demonstrated a Twenty-minute Survey, the preferred method for the new Atlas records. From 8:40 am to 9:00 am in an area of two hectares, 20 species of birds were identified. This was a useful exercise for several of us who will be keen to participate.

Once again, an excellent campout, thanks to the expertise of Clive Napier and Allan Burbidge.

Diane Beckingham

LAKE McLARTY, 1 November

The outing did not have an auspicious start. Continuous light rain fell on the drive from the city to Pinjarra and at the rendezvous point the leader's vehicle had broken down. Luckily Margery Clegg and Bryan Barrett, who know the area well, were present. They took over the leadership role, and the rain cleared to pleasant conditions for the eight members of the group.

At Lake McLarty we were disappointed to find a high water level that was unsuitable for migratory waders. The only wader species present was Black-winged Stilt. However, up to 1000 Australian Shelducks and 100+ Black Swans including several broods of well grown young were present as well as Great Egret, White-faced Heron, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, and Australian White Ibis.

Raptors were plentiful and four species were identified: Swamp Harrier, Whistling Kite, Nankeen Kestrel and White-breasted Sea-Eagle. The latter was perched high in a eucalypt overlooking the lake. We were able to approach to about 50 metres before it took to flight and then circled low above us several times before flying off.

Bush birds were not plentiful but good views of a pair of Western Spinebills and a Sacred Kingfisher were highlights. A large flock of Straw-necked Ibis was seen circling high in the thermals. A total of 41 species was recorded.

After lunch we went on to Austin Bay. On our arrival there a lively party of Splendid Fairy-wrens consisting of 3 males in full breeding plumage and 2 females were pursuing one another noisily in and around several melaleuca bushes. They eventually flew high into a eucalypt.

A flock of about 500 Red-necked Stints was seen feeding close to the water's edge and another flock of similar size was further out, along with several Greenshanks. Red-capped Plovers were dispersed along the foreshore. Once again, a large number of Australian Shelduck was present as well as Pied and Little Pied Cormorants, Australian Pelicans and a White-faced Heron.

Thanks to Margery and Bryan for a most enjoyable day.

Phyllis Bentley



Southern Boobook — heard frequently during the Julimar campout.

Drawing by Diane Beckingham

Coming Events

Sunday 6 December — Half-day Excursion, Thomsons Lake, Beeliar

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park off Russell Road, between Pearse and Hammond Roads. A good area for bush birds, waders and waterbirds.

Leader: Dee Smith

Thursday 10 December — Mid-week Walk, Bold Park

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

Leader: Max Bailey

Saturday–Sunday 12–13 December — Campout, Wilgarup Lake, Manjimup

This lake and surrounding bushland is on a property owned by Mr and Mrs Eric Phillips, some 15 km north of Manjimup, and has been developed into a wildlife sanctuary. It is approximately 265 km from Perth.

This lake was the last-known whereabouts of the Lewin's Rail, which is now thought to be extinct in WA.

Travel via Bridgetown south towards Manjimup. Watch for the "15 km to Manjurah" signpost, proceed 200 m beyond, and turn right. Follow the road to the homestead. RAOU signs will direct you to the campsite.

Campers will need to be self-sufficient.

If you would like to arrive Friday afternoon, I will be there.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

NO DECEMBER MEETING

Sunday 20 December — Christmas Function

A barbecue will be held on Sunday 20 December commencing at 6 pm at Perry House, BYO meat and drinks — all members welcome.

**Friday–Sunday 1–3 January 1999 — Campout, Shannon River National Park
HAS BEEN CANCELLED.**

Sunday 10 January — Half-day Excursion, Yangebup Lake

Meet at 8:30 am on Yangebup Road, off Hammond Road, Yangebup. We'll be looking at waterbirds.

Leaders: Jan and Dave Crossley

Thursday 14 January — Mid-week Excursion, Booragoon and Blue Gum Lakes

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Aldridge Road and Lang Street, Booragoon to look at waterbirds.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 17 January — Half-day Excursion, Woodman Point Reserve, Cockburn

Meet at 8:30 am at the entrance to Woodman Point Recreation Camp, off Cockburn Road, south of the caravan park.

We will start by looking for bush birds in the reserve of Tuart woodland and Native Cypress, and then head over to the point to look for seabirds (don't forget your telescopes for this part).

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Monday 18 January 1999 General Meeting and EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING — WA Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Note: 3rd Monday

Brian Wilson is a long-standing member and past president of BAWAG. He has birded in many parts of the

world and recently embarked upon a trip to Ethiopia which is little-known ornithologically. Brian will show us some of the birds he saw on his trip, many of which are endemic to the country.

The General Meeting will be followed by the Extraordinary General Meeting (see page 3 for details).

Saturday–Tuesday 23–26 January — Campout, Walpole

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

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

A camping area with shelter has been booked. However, if you need powered caravan sites or on-site accommodation, you are requested to book your own by phoning the caravan park on 9840 1026. If you're coming, please inform the Birds Australia office, advising numbers in your party, by phoning 9383 7749. Further information can be obtained from Maggie Cashman-Bailes on 9378 2457.

Leader: Maggie Cashman-Bailes.

Sunday 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 about 100. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

Leader: Gordon Elliot

Saturday 6 February — Half-day Excursion, Alfred Cove

Meet at 8:30 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: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 7 February — WADER COUNT

Sunday 14 February — Full-day Excursion, Amarillo Pool, Baldi

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

**Wednesday 17 February — Mid-week Excursion,
Bickley Brook Reservoir**

Meet at 8:00 am at the turning circle, next to the children's camp, at the Reservoir on the Maddington/Hardinge Road.

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

Leader: Neil Porteous

**Sunday 21 February — Full-day
Excursion, Lake McLarty, Pinjarra**
Meet at 8:00 am at the intersection of South Western Highway and the Old Bunbury Road, approximately 5 km south of Pinjarra.

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

Wellington boots/old shoes are recommended, plus hat, insect repellent and water.

Leader: Colin Davis

**Monday 22 February ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING and General Meeting — State 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 1999/2000. 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.

Gary Luck is currently completing his PhD at Edith Cowan University. His research has focused on the ecology, behaviour and social structure of the Rufous Treecreeper and most of the work has been conducted at Dryandra Nature Reserve. Gary will be presenting the findings of his research.

**Saturday–Monday 27 February –1 March —
Campout, Forest Rise Chalets, near Carburnup**

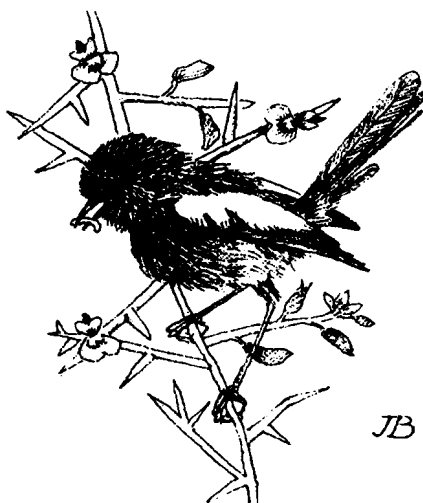
Travel south along the Bussell Highway, past Busselton. Travel through Vasse and Carburnup. About 5 km south of Carburnup, turn right onto Yelverton Road. The Forest Rise Chalets are another 2.3 km, on the left-hand side of the road. Go through a double gate (leave gate as found) and there will be signs to direct you.

Come self-contained; there will be water and toilets. We'll be camping in an open paddock. The site is still under construction; we've been requested by the owner to conduct a bird survey.

There are about 100 ha of forested and cleared land, with a swamp. A quick preliminary survey revealed 40 species of birds, including Elegant Parrots, three species of robins and thornbills.

Please note that at this time of year, open fires are prohibited. Please phone the Birds Australia Office and register the numbers in your party.

Leader: Bill McRoberts



White-winged Fairy-wren
(specimen thanks to Fred van Gessel,
Greenough Campout)
Drawing by Judy Blyth

**Saturday 6 March — Half-day
Excursion, Lake Gwelup**

Meet at 8:30 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 bush birds.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 14 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

Birding Sites around Perth

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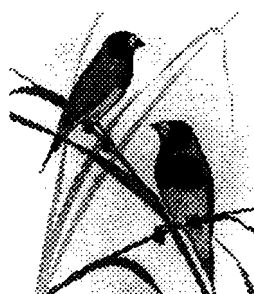
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Scarlet Robin*



Western Spinebill*



White-winged Fairy-wren



Splendid Fairy-wren*



Willie Wagtail*

**Wednesday 17 March — Mid-week Excursion,
Yangebup Lake**
Meet at 8:30 am on Yangebup Road, off Hammond Road,
Yangebup. We'll be looking at waterbirds.
Leader: Tom Delaney

Saturday 20 March — To Be Announced

**Monday 22 March Meeting — State Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Dr Allan Burbidge, a member of the BAWAG Research
Committee, is based at the Wildlife Research Centre at the
Department of Conservation and Land Management and is
one of Western Australia's foremost ornithologists. Allan
will describe recent mapping of birds in the Carnarvon
Basin and discuss how lessons learnt there can be applied
to the BAWAG databases and the national atlas.

**Saturday 27 March — Half-Day Excursion, Big
Carine Lake**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park off Beach Road, Carine.
Eighty-plus species have been recorded here,
including the three ibis, Buff-banded Rail, Freckled Duck,
and several raptors. Don't forget your telescope.
Leader: Clive Nealon

**Friday–Monday 2–5 April — Easter Weekend
Campout, North-east of Merredin**
Leader: Maggie Cashman-Bailes

**Monday 26 April Meeting — State Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Speaker to be advised.

**Monday 24 May Meeting — State Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Speaker to be advised.

**Monday 28 June Meeting — State Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Speaker to be advised.

**Monday 26 July Meeting — State Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Speaker to be advised.

**Monday 23 August Meeting — State Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Speaker to be advised.

**Monday 20 September Meeting — State Tennis
Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Note: 3rd Monday
Speaker to be advised.

**Monday 25 October Meeting — State Tennis Centre,
Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Speaker to be advised.

**Monday 22 November Meeting — State Tennis
Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Speaker to be advised.

Crossword Answers No 15

ACROSS

5 ibis, 7 brineshrimps, 9 owlet, 10 verge, 11 end, 12 pen,
14 erratic, 16 least, 18 leg, 19 gape, 20 metre, 21 ledge, 24
windy, 29 oriental, 30 flyway, 31 narrow.

DOWN:

1 Willie Wagtail, 2 tenth, 3 shoveler, 4 timid, 5 is, 6
Siberia, 7 buoy, 8 dry, 13 wing, 15 aggression, 17 tread,
22 Easter, 23 hollow, 25 storm, 26 lift, 27 own, 28 eye.



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