

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**

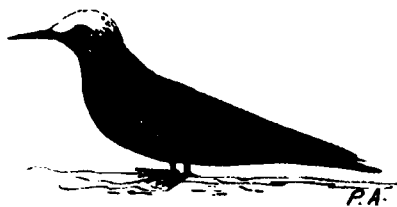
built of flotsam and jetsam, including pieces of rope of various colour and thickness, pieces of coloured plastic and cloth and a straw broom!

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.

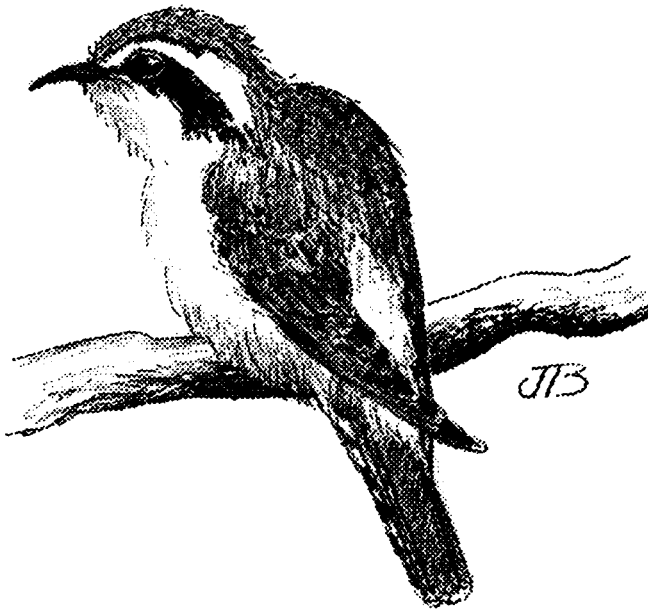
It is through the committee that the business of Birds Australia-WA Group is managed. Matters for

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 atlassing 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

