

Western Australian Bird Notes

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WADER STUDY GROUP SURVEYS AT LAKE MACLEOD, 1999–2000

Introduction

Lake MacLeod is a unique wetland. It became an official site on the Register of the National Estate in 1978 (NER 10748). It has since gained recognition in Environment Australia's 'Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia'. It has yet to receive Ramsar accreditation and has had limited detailed survey.

Most of us these days are aware of the business world's obsession with the 'bottom line' and the maximising of shareholders returns. It is therefore encouraging to find a company that is concerned with the natural environment in and around its operations as well as the investors' portfolios. One company to be commended for a policy that embodies these principles is Dampier Salt Limited (DSL).

DSL conducts salt and gypsum mining operations at Lake MacLeod, 40 km north of Carnarvon in Western Australia. It is also implementing an ecological monitoring program at the lake to gain knowledge on the flora and fauna and other natural features of this important wetland. This program, co-ordinated by Stuart Simmonds, DSL's environmental superintendent, includes a survey of the salt water vents, plus studies of the Grey Mangroves *Avicennia marina* that grow on the western side of the lake.

In 1999 Birds Australia WA Wader Study Group was invited to join the DSL program to monitor the birds of the

lake and its surrounding bushland fringes. Arrangements were made for a preliminary survey to be conducted between the 8th and 12th November 1999. A subsequent survey to coincide with the arrival of migratory wading species took place between the 17th and 22nd of September 2000.



Very large numbers of Curlew Sandpipers were recorded at Lake MacLeod in the survey by Wader Study Group members last year
Drawing by Pam Free

Company facilities were kindly made available to the WSG observers during both surveys. This included accommodation, two-way radio communication in the field, 4WD transportation to the study areas and an inflatable craft for access to aquatic sites.

Lake MacLeod

Lake MacLeod is situated in the Gascoyne region of WA at Latitude 24° 09'S, Longitude 113° 51'E and covers an area of over 2000 sq km. The lake lies below sea level and is a predominantly dry salt flat receiving only periodic fresh water run off after heavy rainfall. This occasional inflow from rivers and streams causes a large shallow flood sheet

to spread over the dry surface of the lake. However, the unique feature of the lake is a series of permanent marine based ponds found in the north-west section. These ponds are fed by sea water entering through vents via underground seepages. The permanent waters are confined to the vents, and two distinct areas known as the central basin and the southern basin.

The main body of water forming the central basin is typically less than 1.5 metres deep except in the immediate vicinity of the vents where depths can range to six metres. Vegetation fringing the permanent waters is dominated by narrow stands of Grey Mangrove with undergrowth of species of *Halosarcia* (a samphire) in places.

In the central basin there are large areas of algae and sea grasses, which in turn support epiphytic growth. Two species of fish are found in the lake, and are most numerous in the northern part of the central basin in the areas around the vents.

In the summer as the water levels fall, ledges form along the mud banks and narrow gutters run into channels leading to areas of open water. An extensive mud flat running south-west forms a barrier to the southern basin with shallow channels at the north and south where the water spills into the southern basin.

The southern basin is characterised by shallow water less than one metre deep. There is much less fringing mangrove than in the central basin and what does occur is predominantly on the western side. The basin gradually shallows into low-lying mud flats.

Bushland fringing the lake is dominated by areas of *Halosarcia* stands and other salt tolerant species. Areas of dense scrub up to three metres in height exist in elevated country away from the lake where soil types are more favourable. A dune system, dominated by Acacias, runs parallel to the western edge of the lake, though some distance from it.

Lake MacLeod is unlike most other WA wetlands, in that care must be observed as unstable, dangerous ground can be encountered. Our group found some areas impossible to access owing to these conditions.

Due to these factors, plus difficulties of access to the permanent water and the lake's remote location, there has been very limited human impact on the lake. This has been to the benefit of bird life in the area.

Previous Survey

The most comprehensive survey of the central basin of the lake to date has been the RAOU 1987 Expedition (Jaensch and Vervest, 1990). Their report states that few ornithological studies had been made at the lake's permanent wetland.

Preliminary study 8–12 November 1999

WSG participants: Colin Davis, Tony Kirkby.

The preliminary survey got under way with a reconnaissance flight over the lake to familiarise observers with the study area and to aid the ground survey by locating concentrations of birds.

We were then guided by Stuart Simmonds and his team to the mine site where a base was set up with the other members of the expedition in a company dwelling.

Early each morning our group would drive approximately 60 km via bush track to the central basin, launch the dinghy and proceed out to the study area. Site positions were established by GPS readings and given a land mark number. Birds at the site were identified and their numbers recorded. We would then move on to the next location and repeat procedures.

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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
- except for Observations, 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 September 2001 Issue
1 August 2001 at Perry House

Advertising Rates

1/4 page	\$30.00
1/2 page	\$50.00
Full page	\$90.00

Water levels were low during the course of the preliminary study with extensive mud banks visible throughout the survey areas.

Conditions were warm with a daily temperature of over 30° C. Light cloud cover occurred during the week with a moderate to strong north-easterly wind in the mornings changing to south-westerly in the afternoons. Temperatures steadily increased and by mid day a heat shimmer had developed. These conditions sometimes made identification of individual birds difficult.

Observations commenced from a launching site on the channels at the central basin.

Australian Pelican, Pied Cormorant, and Great and Little Egret were the species most obvious in this area. Travelling down these channels we disturbed a small group of Black Swans including some flightless birds. Darters, Little Black Cormorants, Striated Herons and Grey Teal would occasionally break cover from the fringing mangroves as we passed. In one of the taller stands of mangrove, nests could be seen where a colony of Pied Cormorants was established. Progressing into the widening channel the numbers of pelicans increased, with some of these great birds flying above our craft as an escort to the open water. Off to the side, a pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles took to the wing from their roost in the mangroves, while before us



Osprey. This species was recorded nesting on an artificial platform at Lake MacLeod mine site.

Drawing by Penny Towells

Pied Cormorants were feeding on fish, accompanied overhead by terns and Silver Gulls. In the open water of the central basin, scattered stunted mangroves fringed the mud flats and sandbars. These habitats supported large mixed flocks of waders, as well as the always present pelicans and egrets. Towards the south of the central basin we encountered an extensive mud bank running to the SW hindering our progress into the southern basin. Further exploration over the following days revealed numerous groups of waders feeding throughout these areas, particularly along this large mudbank and the gutters leading from it.

Conditions in the central basin were ideal for waders with extensive open areas of shallow water and exposed mudflats providing an

abundant food supply, plus sheltered roosting areas at the edge of the lake. Disturbance levels were low although evidence of foxes was noted at most locations. Raptor harassment was seen on only two occasions. A Wedge-tailed Eagle was observed taking an interest in a colony of pelicans and an unidentified falcon was seen harrying a flock of waders.

A total of 31 496 waders/waterbirds of 45 species were counted during the 1999 November study.

Waders

24 shorebird species were found at the lake (see Table). The most prevalent was the Curlew Sandpiper, making up from 80% to 90% of the bird numbers.

Two rarely seen species, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Little Stint (description provided to the WA Museum), were observed at one location in the south of the central basin. This is the first record of Little Stint from the Carnarvon region.

A Red Knot with a yellow leg flag was observed among one flock of waders at location 27° 27.12'S, 113° 38.85'E.

The sighting of 32 Oriental Plovers on 9th November is thought to be the first time this species has been reported at Lake MacLeod and one of a very few sightings in the Carnarvon area.

Other Waterbirds

The most common waterbird species were Australian Pelican, Great Egret, Little Egret and Pied Cormorant, plus encouraging numbers of Caspian, Whiskered and Fairy Terns. Although these pelican groups contained numbers of immature birds, no evidence of breeding was found.

Bush Birds

Observations of the bush birds were made in the areas between the lake's edge and the dune system during trips to the central basin. Sightings during both surveys were opportunistic and therefore actual numbers of birds were not recorded.

CALL FOR PAPERS AND EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR ATTENDANCE



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Table : Birds recorded at Lake MacLeod, November 1999 and September 2000.

Water Birds Nov 99	Nov 1999	Sep 2000	Bush Birds	Nov 1999	Sep 2000
Black Swan	15	1	Emu	+	+
Australian Shelduck	0	5	quail sp.	+	+
Pacific Black Duck	1	0	Black-shouldered Kite	+	+
Grey Teal	6	31	Whistling Kite	+	+
Hoary-headed Grebe	0	3	Spotted Harrier	+	+
Darter	5	8	Wedge-tailed Eagle	+	+
Little Pied Cormorant	0	3	Brown Falcon	+	+
Pied Cormorant	502	650	Australian Hobby		+
Little Black Cormorant	85	200	Peregrine Falcon		+
Australian Pelican	338	1600	Nankeen Kestrel	+	+
White-faced Heron	18	2	Australian Bustard	+	+
Little Egret	22	170	Common Bronzewing	+	+
White-necked Heron	0	2	Crested Pigeon	+	+
Great Egret	13	150	Galah	+	+
Striated Heron	21	25	Little Corella	+	
Nankeen Night Heron	0	110	Budgerigar	+	
Osprey	2	2	Pallid Cuckoo	+	
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	4	3	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	+	
Buff-banded Rail	0	1	Red-backed Kingfisher		+
Eurasian Coot	5	2	Sacred Kingfisher		+
Black-tailed Godwit	14	0	Variegated Fairy-wren	+	+
Bar-tailed Godwit	286	18	White-winged Fairy-wren	+	+
Eastern Curlew	0	1	Striated Pardalote	+	
Marsh Sandpiper	3	0	Dusky Gerygone	+	+
Common Greenshank	235	300	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	+	
Wood Sandpiper	3	0	Singing Honeyeater	+	+
Common Sandpiper	6	2	Orange Chat	+	+
Grey-tailed Tattler	2	0	White-fronted Chat	+	+
Ruddy Turnstone	37	10	White-browed Babbler	+	+
Great Knot	211	39	Chiming Wedgebill	+	+
Red Knot	137	8	Crested Bellbird	+	+
Sanderling	1	0	Grey Shrike-thrush	+	
Little Stint	2	0	Mangrove Grey Fantail	+	+
Red-necked Stint	2350	6000	Willie Wagtail	+	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	214	10	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	+	
Curlew Sandpiper	18 392	40 000	White-winged Triller	+	
Broad-billed Sandpiper	1	0	White-breasted Woodswallow	+	+
Pied Oystercatcher	2	2	Pied Butcherbird	+	+
Black-winged Stilt	5	500	corvid sp(p).	+	+
Banded Stilt	2042	8500	Richard's Pipit	+	+
Red-necked Avocet	0	70	Zebra Finch	+	+
Pacific Golden Plover	3	0	Welcome Swallow	+	+
Grey Plover	31	2	Tree Martin	+	+
Red-capped Plover	114	500	Little Grassbird		+
Lesser Sand Plover	3	0	Brown Songlark	+	+
Greater Sand Plover	12	0	Yellow White-eye	+	+
Oriental Plover	33	0	Silvereye	+	
Banded Lapwing	0	4			
Silver Gull	292	300			
Gull-billed Tern	14	30			
Caspian Tern	346	40			
Crested Tern	1	9			
Common Tern	0	5			
Fairy Tern	92	5			
Whiskered Tern	75	50			
unidentified waders	5500	2500			
No of species	45	43		42	36
Total individuals	31 496	61 873			

Spring Survey 17–22 September 2000

WSG Participants: Colin Davis, Tony Kirkby and Marcus Singor.

For the 2000 spring survey a campsite base was set up near the boat launching area at the central basin just south of a feature that protrudes into the lake, aptly named the Panhandle. This resulted in the saving of approximately 120 km a day travelling from the mine site, giving our party up to three extra hours a day survey time in the field. This allowed earlier on-site starts and late afternoon observations at wader roost areas.

The 1999 Preliminary Survey sites were revisited (most were found to be under water). Return trips were made to sites with a high bird presence to verify the numbers originally logged. Some areas of the lake and its shorelines were explored on foot where 4WD or dinghy access proved to be impractical due to boggy conditions. Bush bird observations were mostly restricted to the area around the campsite, with some sightings made during forays by the land-based teams.

Weather conditions were generally fine with temperatures around 25°C. Winds were mainly southerly with velocity ranging from light to brisk.

Water levels were unusually high during the September 2000 survey due to the arrival of Cyclone Steve earlier in the year bringing heavy rainfall throughout the Gascoyne region. This resulted in local flooding and runoff from the rivers and creeks feeding into the lake. Waters rose to heights not experienced in recent years as the flood sheet spread across the lake combining with the permanent water. Low-lying areas previously considered as accessible were flooded, and some mudflats proved to be increasingly unstable.

One unusual effect was the almost tidal conditions caused by steadily increasing winds moving the flood sheet around the lake. A half metre difference in water depth was experienced over night at our launch site on 19th September due to the strong southerly wind. The prolonged inundation of normally exposed mudflat areas has resulted in the drowning or stressing of a high proportion of the smaller mangroves. This increase in the water body has led to a corresponding increase in fish numbers to the benefit of some bird life, particularly the fish eating species such as Australian Pelican, Great Egret, Little Egret, Pied Cormorant and various tern species (see Table).

Waders were observed at various locations in the central and southern basins, with the majority of birds being found in the central basin. Large flocks of Curlew Sandpipers and Banded Stilts were observed in three locations where exposed mud and shallow water provided ideal feeding conditions.

At LM7 (23° 55.39'S 113° 38.10'E) an evening roost area was located at the edge of the lake where large flocks of up to 20 000 waders arrived in the late afternoon. The behaviour of these birds was amusing. As the flocks arrived the birds broke up into groups and each group would race through the birds already present making their way up into the dry samphire cover at the edge of the lake, presumably to get out of the southerly winds. This

leapfrogging activity went on until the birds were some distance from the water.

This site is of interest as it is located in the same area reported as a wader roost by the 1987 Jaensch & Vervest expedition to the lake.

Site LM11 (23° 56.80'S 113° 39.49'E) is an area of large shallow mud flats that proved to be the main area of wader concentration. To compare with impressions made during a visit on 18/09/00 when 15 000 Curlew Sandpipers and 5000 Red-necked Stints were counted, a second trip was made by all members of the party on 20/09/00. During this second trip a large flock estimated to contain 30 000+ Curlew Sandpipers was discovered at the site. An additional flock containing large numbers of unidentified waders could be seen to the north of this position, but due to soft mud we were unable to progress more than a short distance in the direction of these birds to identify species. The general consensus among the observers was that it was made up of mostly small waders.

Although the southern basin proved to be the favoured habitat for Banded Stilts during the 1999 preliminary survey, our progress into this area was limited during the September 2000 survey and only 44 birds of this species were seen at southern basin sites. However, several flocks of 2000+ birds were regularly seen in the central basin areas adjacent to the channels south of the Panhandle. The largest numbers were recorded at LM8 (23° 56.32'S 113° 37.80'E) where 6000+ birds were seen on 20/09/00.

Breeding

Location LM10 (23° 58.47'S 113° 37.98'E) can be described as an exposed mud bank in the centre of the central basin with a stand of mature mangroves on the northern fringe. When visited on 20th September 2000, 150 nests were counted with birds in attendance. The area was one of intense nest building activity with at least three species busy here. Pied Cormorants were fairly well established in taller trees situated in front of the main stand of mangroves. Little Egrets and Great Egrets were competing for nesting sites or foraging for nesting material, while some birds were already sitting on established nests. A count revealed 60 Great Egrets and 100 Little Egrets. Sixty Little Black Cormorants were also counted flying into an area behind the nesting egrets. We did not attempt to get closer to these birds for fear of disrupting the entire colony, and therefore can't be certain if the Little Black Cormorants were actually breeding at this location.

At a junction of channels in the launch point area at 23° 55.17'S 113° 38.86'E a colony of 90 Nankeen Night Herons were residing amongst a large number of abandoned nests. Although no nesting behaviour was observed, some recent activity was evident, as there were unbroken light blue eggs below some of the nests. This gathering comprised mostly birds in immature plumage accompanied by a few birds in adult plumage. A smaller group of night herons was found in channels further to the north with a similar ratio of adult to immature birds.

Definite breeding evidence, in the form of nests with eggs or hatchlings present, was observed for seven species: Darter, Little Black Cormorant, Banded Lapwing, Red-

capped Plover, Osprey, Nankeen Kestrel and White-winged Fairy-wren. The ospreys were nesting on an artificial platform at the mine site.

Land Based Surveys

Some locations were too difficult to reach with the dinghy and it was decided to make land based surveys to various locations along the western side of the southern basin. Small groups of up to 300 waders, plus Little Egrets, Great Egrets and pelicans, were seen at most of these locations. The migrant waders consisted mainly of Curlew Sandpipers and Red-necked Stints.

Red-capped Plovers (some with runners), in groups varying between 10 and 40 were also found at intervals along the shorelines between the lake's edge and scattered patches of samphire fringing the drying mud.

A total of 61 873 waders/waterbirds of 43 species were counted during the September 2000 survey.

Summary

The two surveys build on the previous report of the abundant and varied bird life in the central basin of Lake MacLeod by the Jaensch and Vervest 1987 RAOU Expedition. Lake MacLeod has been reported several times as supporting high numbers of species and individuals of waterbirds, with the highest count being 114 956 individuals of 53 species in September 1987 (Jaensch and Vervest, 1990).

The sightings of large flocks of Curlew Sandpipers during surveys to date indicate the lake to be of particular importance for this species. The preliminary survey revealed large numbers of Curlew Sandpipers at the lake in late spring. This could indicate that the lake is a destination for these birds rather than a fly-way stop over. A factor to support this is that unlike other inland wetlands that dry out, the continuous water flow from the vents to the central basin could ensure permanent feeding areas are available even during the hot summer months.

Further ongoing studies should test these theories and help to establish the importance of the lake as a refuge for resident and migratory bird populations. Our survey results add weight to the lake's claim for Ramsar status, for which regular use by 20 000 or more water birds is a primary criterion.

Acknowledgements

Birds Australia WA Wader Study Group would like to acknowledge DSL management for initiating this study, and especially the efforts of Stuart Simmonds, DSL's environmental superintendent. We would also like to thank Linda Wutherspoon for the help given in counting waders during the preliminary survey and Andrew Wales for help with the September 2000 survey.

Also, special thanks to Dave Bauer of Arid Landscapes Carnarvon for overcoming some of the unforeseen problems that arose in the field; his local knowledge and sense of humour were much appreciated.

Reference:

Jaensch, R.P. and Vervest, R.M. 1990. Waterbirds at remote wetlands in Western Australia, 1986-8. Part Two: Lake MacLeod, Shark Bay, Camballin Floodplain and Parry Floodplain. Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union Report No. 69.

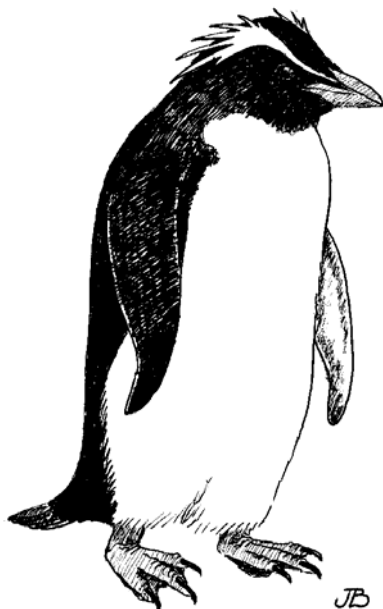
Colin Davis, Tony Kirkby and Marcus Singor

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

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

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



This Rockhopper Penguin was beachwashed at Windy Harbour. It will soon be released after rehabilitation by Leslie Harrison.
Drawing by Judy Blyth

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Rockhopper Penguin – 1, 27/01/01, beachwashed (injured) at Windy Harbour (Manjimup) – LH (being rehabilitated)

White-faced Heron – 214, 11/02/2001 Thomsons Lake (Cockburn) – MS (very high number for this wetland)

Little Egret – 1, 9/02/01 and 15/02/01, Thomas River mouth, Cape Arid NP (Esperance) – AR (first record for Cape Arid NP; unusual on south coast)

Nankeen Night Heron – 9, 11/02/01, small lake adjacent to Woody Lake (Esperance) – EBOG

Glossy Ibis – 13, 11/02/2001, Kogolup Lake (Cockburn) – MS (high number for this wetland)

Black Kite – 1, 3/03/01, Hillarys Marina (Joondalup) – BN (brief description provided)

Little Eagle – 1, 11/02/01, Rottnest Island – CD, CN *et al.* (not recorded in 'The Birdlife of Rottnest Island' by Saunders and de Rebeira)

Buff-banded Rail – 2, 11/02/01, Lake Baghdad, Rottnest Island – CD, CN *et al.*

Terek Sandpiper – 1, from 8/03/2001 to 10/4/2001 Serpentine River Reserve (Mandurah) – MS

Red-necked Phalarope – 1, 11/02/01, Lake Baghdad, Rottnest Island – CD, CN *et al.*

Hooded Plover – 45 (in one flock), 24/03/01, Boundary Lake (Mandurah) – DR

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo – 60 +, 8/03/2001, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MS

Masked Owl – 1, found dead, early April 2001, Lake Mealup (Murray) – MT, ST (see article elsewhere in this issue)

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater – 2, 24/12/2000, Warwick Open Space (Wanneroo) – BH, PH * 6, 10/01/01, Wireless Hill, Ardross (Melville) – DM * 1, 15/03/01, Bull Creek (Melville) – DH * 1, 3/01, Ashfield (Bassendean) – GA * 2, 10/04/01, Dianella (Stirling) – HVW * 1, 13/04/01, Alfred Cove (Melville) – RJ (unusual visitor to metropolitan area)

Red-capped Robin – 1, 10/03/01, Lake Joondalup south (Joondalup) – DHa

Hooded Robin – 4, 16/04/01, Poison Creek Road, Cape Arid National Park (Esperance) – AR, SR (seen at this site each summer and autumn)

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

Australian Shelduck – 1000+, 12/03/01, Lake Yindargooda, 30 km SE of Kalgoorlie (30° 42', 121° 53') (Kalgoorlie - Boulder) – SD

Striated Heron – 3 (2 grey, 1 rufous), 23/03/2001, creek into Little Lagoon, Denham (Shark Bay) – EV

Black-breasted Buzzard – 1, 25/03/2001, North West Coastal Highway, 40 km south of Billabong Roadhouse near Nerren Nerren (Shark Bay) – EV * 1, 14/04/01, Muggon Station (Murchison) – JB, JuB * 2, 21/04/01, Gascoyne River at Mullewa-Murchison Road (Murchison) – JB, JuB

Hooded Plover – 2, 12/03/01, just after cyclonic rain, displaying in a scrape on a small quartzite island in Lake Yindargooda, 30 km SE of Kalgoorlie (30° 42', 121° 53') (Kalgoorlie - Boulder) – SD

Grey Honeyeater – 1, 26/03/2001, ~30 km east of Yalgoo (Yalgoo) – EV * 1, 27/03/2001, Sandstone Road ~5 km east of Cue (Cue) – EV

Ground Cuckoo-shrike – 4, 29/03/2001, Ninghan Station along road to shearers' quarters (Yalgoo) – EV * 6, 12/02/01, Weebo Station, S of Leinster, at 28° 12' 32", 120° 51' 27" (Leonora) – MB

Masked Woodswallow – ~2,000, 27/03/2001, Sandstone Road, ~5 km east of Cue (Cue) – EV

KIMBERLEY

Stubble Quail – 1 (male), 25/09/00, Derby Sewerage Works (Derby – West Kimberley) – GS

Australian Wood Duck – 1, 29/11/00, Goondi Goondi Waterhole, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Little Bittern – 1, 14/02/01 and 2/03/01, swamp north of Broome (Broome) – GS (1st sighting for Broome)

Black-shouldered Kite – 1 eating a snake, 12/04/01, Kalumburu (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – SW (unusual in this area – first in 26 months of observations)

Black Falcon – 1, 29/11/00, Lera Yard, Mulan Lake (Halls Creek) – GS

Peregrine Falcon – 1, 28/02/2001, Argyle Diamond Mine Light Industrial Area (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO (unusual at Argyle)

Baillon's Crake – 1, 29/11/00, Goondi Goondi Waterhole, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Wood Sandpiper 11, 29/11/00, Goondi Goondi Waterhole, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Pectoral Sandpiper – 1, 1/12/00, Bulbi Plain, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Painted Snipe – 4 (one male, one female, two immature), 2/12/00, Delivery Camp Plain, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Oriental Plover – 58, 30/11/00, Mulan Lake (Halls Creek) – GS

Oriental Pratincole – 41, 1/12/00, Delivery Camp Plain, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Australian Pratincole – 9, 11/04/01, Kalumburu (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – SW (first of the year)

Flock Bronzewing – 465, 28/11/00, Sesbania Creek, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Swiftlet sp. – 2, 14/02/01 during Cyclone Vincent, Entrance Point, Broome (Broome) – GS.

Fork-tailed Swift – 5, 1/03/2001, and 4, 2/03/2001, Argyle Diamond Mine Village (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO (seen during the passing of ex-cyclone Abigail; not often recorded in this area) * 20+, 6/04/01, Kalumburu (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – SW (first of the year; heading NW to coast)

Rainbow Bee-eater – 20+, 8/04/01, Kalumburu (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – SW (First of the year)

Orange Chat – 4, 29/11/00, Lera Yard, Mulan Lake (Halls Creek) – GS * 6, 1/12/00, Bulbi Plain, Lake Gregory (Halls Creek) – GS

Yellow Chat – 100's, 29/11/00, Lera Yard, Mulan Lake (Halls Creek) – GS

Masked Woodswallow – 27, 30/11/00, Mulan Community (20° 6', 127° 36') (Halls Creek) – GS

Star Finch – 6+ adults, 3/3/2001, between Argyle Diamond Mine and Alluvials Dam (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO (This is the 5th record (and highest count) since they were first seen at Argyle in January 2000. Crimson Finches have also increased since about 6 years or so ago)

Gouldian Finch – 3+ (2 male black-faced), 4/3/2001, Argyle Diamond Mine Village car park (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO * 4 (2 male, 2 female), 10/3/2001, Argyle Diamond Mine Village (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – FO (These are the 4th and 5th records at Argyle. The first was in 1983, and the others have been since January 2000)

OBSERVERS

AR = Allan Rose	HVW = Hank van Wees
BH = Bob Horwood	JB = John Blyths
BN = Brenda Newbey	JuB = Judy Blyth
CD = Colin Davis	LH = Leslie Harrison
CN = Clive Nealon	MB = Mike Bamford
DH = David Henderson	MS = Marcus Singor
Dha = David Hancock	MT = Margaret Telford
DM = Delphine McFarlane	PH = Pat Horwood
DR = Dick Rule	RJ = Rose Jones
EBOG = Esperance Bird Observers Group	SD = Stephen Davies
EV = Edwin Vella	SR = Sandy Rose
FO = Frank O'Connor	ST = Stan Telford
GA = Geoff Addison	SW = Simon Wilson
GS = George Swann	

WA Group reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA WA INC COMMITTEE

The committee continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month at Perry House. The new committee, elected at the February AGM, has met twice since then and is continuing to try to handle all of the tasks necessary to keep the group running smoothly. The committee is charged with conducting the activities of the group on behalf of its members and we welcome any items that you feel the committee should consider.

The composition of the committee for this year is as follows

Chairman: Clive Nealon
Vice-chairman: Mike Bamford
Treasurer: Greg Wyllie
Secretary: Jennifer Wilcox
Bookkeeper: Mary Vaughan
Committee members:
Wes Bancroft
Michael Brooker
Sandra Mackenzie
Rod Smith
Liz Walker
Brice Wells

All members of the committee are keen to hear of ideas and suggestions from any member. We would be grateful for any assistance that members may be able to offer to improve and strengthen our organisation.

During March I attended a meeting in Sydney of Birds Australia regional groups. Six regional groups were represented. The meeting had been proposed so that representatives of each group could discuss matters that

were likely to be common, and to see if increased co-operation between the groups might lead to improved service to our members and a more rational use of resources.

The meeting was useful as a means of gaining a clearer understanding of the ways the various groups operated. The clear message was that improved communications between the groups, and between the groups and the National Office, were required. The meeting agreed to list a number of suggestions for improvement and to present the list to the new CEO of Birds Australia when that person is appointed. The meeting also agreed that regional group meetings should be held twice per year, and that the costs for each delegate be shared equally between the groups.

Birds Australia AGM 2001

The Annual General Meeting of the national body of Birds Australia is now almost upon us. This will be the first time that the AGM of the national body has been held in WA, and we should all be keen to demonstrate that the group is a significant and important part of Birds Australia.

The AGM will be held on Saturday 26 May, Members Day. While the AGM itself will last for perhaps, an hour, we intend to stage a day of presentations that will showcase the work being carried out by the group in WA. I hope that as many people as possible will show their support and register to attend the meeting, and take part in the election of councillors. A new president of the organisation will be elected, and there are four nominees for the three council positions that will become vacant. Your attendance and support will also encourage the project officers and students who will present papers that will demonstrate the extent of bird related research and study being carried out in Western Australia.

I look forward to meeting as many members as possible on Member's Day.

Project status

Our two major projects, the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo project and the Hooded Plover project are proceeding to conclusion under the current funding and further funding applications have been made so that the work can continue.

Volunteers required.

I am in danger of repeating myself but we really do need volunteers in order to continue providing the activities that we do. It is clear to everyone that these things don't just happen, but all too often they are left to a small number of people. Many of our members take advantage of

- the birding excursions that are arranged
- the monthly meetings that are organised
- the staffing of our office

but we really do need some help to maintain the program. None of the tasks are onerous, but they do require some time commitment. I am sure that we will be able to tailor tasks to suit any amount of time that you can make available, so please don't assume that you won't be able to offer enough time.

There are people who can help you get started, and provide you with the sort of advice and encouragement that you need to take on some of these tasks. BAWA needs you take on one of these, and other, tasks. More importantly, the birds need us to make our presence known.

The continuing vitality of BAWA is dependent on volunteers, and on the sales of books, cards, and other items that provide funding to cover our operating costs. We will again be able, this year, to sell our cards through the Kings Park Board Wildflower Festival, and Christmas cards through the Combined Charities Card Shop.

Please take some time to consider what I've said, and see if you could spare some of your time to helping with some of the tasks outlined. There is no minimum requirement specified. Any assistance you can offer will be valuable to the group, and I'm sure that you will find it personally rewarding. If you have any questions, please contact me, or leave a message at the office.

Finally – A CHALLENGE

The strength and health of Birds Australia is important to all of us as members. It is also vitally important to the nation's birds. BA is doing a great deal of important work in the scientific study and conservation of our birds. The simplest way to try to improve the strength of BA is to increase our membership. We in the west would be making a major contribution if we could double the number of members in WA this year. While that sounds like a formidable task, it only needs each current member to enlist one new member to achieve the goal.

So, that's my challenge to you all. Go out and enlist one new member this year. If you can't stop at one, please don't — enlist as many as you can. Good hunting.

Clive Nealon



Brown Honeyeaters are common in many of Perth's suburbs and show marked seasonal movements.

Drawing by Judy Blyth

LIBRARY REPORT

Additions to the library and pamphlets stand since February 2001

Pamphlet stand

- *Getting in step with the environment*
- *Planning News*, Ministry of Planning
- *Narpulungup News*, Jan 2001
- *Naragebup News*, Feb 2001
- *Greening Times*, Feb 2001
- *Swan Avon Info Sheet* no 2/2001, 3/2001
- *River View*, Swan River Trust, Mar 2001
- *Bush Heritage News*, Autumn 2001
- *Cocky Notes*, no 2, Feb 2001
- *The Swan Newsletter*, Feb 2001
- *Contact Call*, Mar 2001
- *CALM News*, Jan-Feb 2001
- *Greener Times*, Mar 2001
- *Bird Notes*, March 2001, Southern NSW & ACT Group
- *Malleefowl Matters*, Feb 2001

Library

- 598.0723 *The Web*, Feb 2001
- 598.099423 *The South Australian Ornithological Assoc Inc Newsletter*, Dec 2000
- 598.0994 *The Bird Observer*, Feb 2001
- 363.7 *Bush forever: Keeping the Bush in the City* 4 vols
- 333.09941 *Wedge and Grey*
- 333.782 *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*
- 598 *The Life of Birds*, David Attenborough, 3 videos
- 598.78 *Kingfishers of Australia*, video
- 598.994 Balmford, R. *The Beginners Guide to Australian Birds*
- 598.0994 Trounson, D. & M. *Australia Land of Birds*
- 598.9941 *Western Australian Bird Notes*, no 97, Mar 2001
- 598.09944 *Cumberland Bird Observers Club*, vol 22, no 4
- 994.09941 *Bushwalks in the South-West*, 1997, CALM
- 333.7 *Wetlands of the Swan Coastal Plain*, vol 7, Storey, *et al*
- 994.9941 *Wild Places Quiet Places*, 1999, CALM
- 598.994 *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds*, vol 5, Higgins, *et al*. OUP 2001
- 994.9941 *Travellers Guide to the Parks & Reserves of WA*, Nevill, S. Simon Nevill Publications, 2000
- 598.64 *National Recovery Plan for Malleefowl*, National Parks SA, 2000
- 333.09941 *Landscape*, Autumn 2001

Sue Mather

**BIRDS AUSTRALIA WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.
TREASURER'S REPORT, YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2000**

Note: These accounts have been audited by David John Hayman CPA, Perth and a satisfactory report received.
This is an abridged version — a copy of the complete accounts is available at Perry House.

BALANCE SHEET	\$	\$	\$
Assets			
Current Assets			
Total Cash on Hand	96,409.74		
Total Stock on Hand	<u>10,857.00</u>		
Total Current Assets		107,266.74	
Non-Current Assets			
Investments	74,288.03		
Equipment on Hand	<u>3,612.00</u>		
Total Non-Current Assets		<u>77,900.03</u>	
Total Assets			185,166.77
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Sundry Creditors	1,089.00		
GST Liabilities	<u>-1,095.89</u>	-6.89	
Grants			
Centenary Grant	27,396.20		
Healthways—Promotions	904.20		
Hooded Plover	18,697.25		
Carnaby Cockatoo	341.24		
Wheatbelt — Salt -\$22.71	<u>-22.71</u>		
Total Grants		<u>47,316.18</u>	
Total Liabilities			<u>47,309.29</u>
Net Assets			<u>137,857.48</u>
Accumulated Funds			
Prior Year's Surplus/(Deficit)		116,574.40	
Retained Earnings		6,385.45	
Current Year's Surplus/(Deficit)		<u>14,897.63</u>	
Total Accumulated Funds			<u>137,857.48</u>

INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2000	\$	\$
Income		
Total Trading Table	5,127.16	
Total Books	-1,411.62	
WA Bird Notes	425.88	
Other Income (Members' Fees, Sundry, Donations, Bank Interest)	10,333.22	
Sales Tax Recovered	6,250.00	
Total Other Items	<u>4,523.78</u>	
Total Income		25,248.42
Expenses		
Audit Fees	360.00	
Bank Charges	270.90	
Donations	2,013.44	
Rent	1,002.00	
Telephone	1,807.67	
Write off Equipment	800.00	
Other Expenses	<u>4,096.78</u>	
Total Expenses		<u>10,350.79</u>
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		<u>14,897.63</u>

HOW MANY HOODED PLOVERS DOES IT TAKE TO FILL UP YALGORUP NATIONAL PARK?

Our dry season survey of Yalgorup National Park between 17-25 February 2001, surprisingly revealed 181 Hooded Plovers including one breeding record. This is more than a three-fold increase in numbers compared to our wet season survey last September, when only 49 Hooded Plovers were detected.

Where did they come from? Nobody knows. Did they venture over the scarp or did they make their way north along the coast? We know that they are likely to have moved, at least in part, as a response to other wetland habitat drying up. Our data are consistent with the idea that the Yalgorup Lake Wetland System would be an integral part of a larger wetland circuit Hooded Plovers move through in Western Australia, rather than being a wetland used only by resident Hooded Plovers.

How did we do it? To cover this large area a light plane was first used to find out which areas were still flooded and some ground-truthing was done to help determine which areas had to be accessed for the survey. Notably Lake Clifton and associated wetland areas in the north of the Park were flooded or saturated in September. Volunteers from Mandurah Bird Watchers surveyed the southern and central lakes in both surveys, while another group, mainly from Perth, explored the northern part of the system during the February survey. This procedure covered most of the system. Thank you John Osborne for providing your plane in September and CALM for helping us in February. Special thanks to Steve Dutton who took us into areas otherwise inaccessible and to all those who participated. It was great fun!

Do you think you missed out? The Mandurah Bird Watchers are thinking of running another wet season survey this September. We will also run our large-scale, dry season coastal survey in February-March 2002. If you would like to help with the next Yalgorup survey, please telephone Dick Rule on 9581 1894 or if you would like to be involved in any part of our Hooded Plover Project please telephone me on 9306 5819.

Julie Raines (Project Officer)

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia WA between 1 February and 30 April 2001. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

S A Armitage, L D Branch, R Broomhall, R Cook, P C Cove, D Dallas, D Dallas, I Davis, B Dawson, K Edwards, P Elton, B Fitzpatrick, M Gallop, J M Howard, B Jenkins, S Jones, D King, P I Kuipers, S Landy, R Lane, J Masarei, E Mattock, J O Mayer, E M McLean, J Monahan, J P Morhall, Mullewa District High School, D L Newton, C O'Callaghan, I Perry, C J L Pullin, E Pyper, J Richardson, K Robins, C Round, M Seymour, A J Shepherd, B A Smith, E Smith, K Spurge, S Weldon, P West, S Wolff

Members' contributions

MORE ON CURRAWONGS

In 1930 Dom Serventy (Emu 30: 33-38) described the Grey Currawong as "very numerous" when he walked from Mandurah to Bunbury. In contrast, by 1988, Glenn Storr and Ron Johnstone (Records of the WA Museum Suppl. No 28) described it as "scarce and patchily distributed". Robert Stranger, who has made a study of the birds of the Mandurah area, found currawongs west of the Peel Inlet in the late 1960s and in the 1970s, but notes that much of their habitat has been lost to urban development, resulting in a decline in numbers.

In the last two issues of WABN (96: 10 and 97: 15), several Swan Coastal Plain records of Grey Currawongs were reported. This is interesting in the light of earlier suggestions that they have declined on the coastal plain.

Recently, Hank Van Wees reported some further sightings of currawongs on the Swan Coastal Plain. He recorded one bird at Halls Head (just south of Mandurah) in March 1998, March 1999 and February 2001. John Brooke saw one of these birds with Hank at Halls Head on 18/02/01 and recorded another (or the same bird) in the vicinity on 3/03/01.

One bird was recorded by Hank at the Erskine walk trail (just south of Halls Head) in February 2001 and Marcus Singor recorded one at the same place on 10 April 2001.

Dick Rule reports that, since moving to Mandurah in March 1988, he has regularly seen Grey Currawongs while working between the estuary and the coast. He has mostly

"... often among the gardens and the golf club ..."

seen them on the timbered ridge between the coast and the estuary and often among the gardens and the golf club.

These records, together with those reported in recent issues of WABN, suggest that currawongs are thinly spread from Mandurah south at least to Dawesville. This is encouraging in the light of the amount of urban development in this area in recent times.

Hank also reported currawongs from Riverside Gardens / Greenfields, near the Serpentine River between Mandurah and Pinjarra, in February 2001. These are presumably separate birds from those south of Mandurah, but it is unknown whether these connect up with the ones previously reported from the Spectacles – Banjup area.

Dick Rule has also seen Grey Currawongs at Australind on several occasions in recent years. Interestingly, Evelyn Meek has reported that a pair of currawongs has been at the Bunbury Golf Club since 1996, but was not present for the previous few years. Perhaps they have been increasing in numbers in the Bunbury area.

Allan Burbidge

Appointment of new CEO to Birds Australia

Birds Australia now has a new CEO, Jim Downey, who is a chartered accountant and was previously CEO of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

More recently, he has been working as a political advisor in Canberra.

Jim will be starting work in the BA National Office on Monday 21 May 2001.

FOURTH CORELLA COUNT, 7 APRIL 2001

Introduction

BAWA has now conducted four annual corella counts in the Perth metropolitan area, with the aim of documenting population size and trends for the three corella species introduced in the area.

There were some interesting circumstances surrounding this year's count. First, it has been a long dry summer, and the count occurred before any sign of autumn rain. Thus, it is likely that the various species of corellas would have coalesced into larger flocks than usual and that breeding pairs would not yet have separated from the flocks.

Second, there was a lot of publicity a few weeks before the count regarding the illegal poisoning of corellas around Guildford. Up to about 80 birds were killed, of

which an unknown but significant number (perhaps 30 or so) were eastern Long-billed Corellas. Although much of the publicity treated the corellas as if they were birds native to the Perth area, it did raise the issue of corellas as a pest, one serious enough for someone to take extreme action over.

Third, on the Monday before the count an excellent story, discussing Perth's corellas, their significance as a public and environmental threat and possible control actions, appeared in the centre pages of the *West Australian*. Thus, the results of this year's count assume considerable significance and could help lead to control efforts in the near future.

Results

Twenty-eight BAWA members spent two or so hours late in the afternoon on Saturday 7 April, searching a large number of sites from which corellas have been reported in the last few months. The results are summarised in Table 1 below. As far as possible the results are grouped in neighbouring areas, eg, along the Swan River from Guildford downstream. Most observers used a combination of driving, to cover as many separate sites as possible, and walking at specific sites to cover as much area as possible. After some discussion, I believe that all identifications as to which species was seen are reliable, and any duplication between recorders has been identified and allowed for. This is discussed in more detail below.

Table 1 Results of the Perth metropolitan corella count, 15/4/2001

Observers	Sites	Results
1. Swan River, from Guildford to Fremantle		
Ian and Eleanor Rowley	Parks and open areas on both sides of Swan River from Guildford to Middle Swan Bridge. Ending at Stirling Square, Guildford	About 640 Little Corellas. At least seven eastern Long-billed Corellas (ELBs)
Robert Schmidt	Swan River, from Point Reserve Guildford down to Sandy Beach Reserve	About 150 corellas (?Littles), mainly moving upstream. Several inspecting hollows
Hank Van Wees	Ollie Worrel Reserve, High Wycombe	No corellas
Eunice Pyper	Along Swan River, Sandy Beach to railway bridge	Two ELBs
Tom Delaney	Swan River; Burswood to railway bridge	No corellas
Allison and Edward Paul	South Perth foreshore; Narrows to Causeway	No corellas
Marion Shaw, Joy Horne, Pat and Al Smith	Point Walter to Tomkins Park, Applecross	60 Little Corellas; four ELBs
John and Judy Blyth	Point Resolution, and other riverside reserves around to Mosman Park	60 Little Corellas, 3 ELBs
Charlie Nicholson	North Fremantle area	14 Little Corellas

2. South of the Swan River, approximately from north to south

Bryan Barrett	Canning River; Kent Street Weir to Riverton Bridge	About 350 Long-billed Corellas
Kathy Flanagan	Both sides of Canning River, Kent Street Weir to Nicholson Rd	Thirty-two corellas in flight (east to west). ?ELBs?
Clive and Wendy Napier	Canning River, Nicholson Road east to Gosnells	No corellas
Peter Mawson	Canning Highway at Point Walter Road	No corellas
Peter Mawson	Royal Fremantle and Fremantle Golf Courses	No corellas
Peter Mawson	Suburban East Fremantle	No corellas
Audrey Turner	Manning Park	Eight ELBs

3. North of the Swan River, approximately from north to south

Neil Hamilton	Lake Joondalup, eastern side	No corellas
Neil Hamilton	Neil Hawkins Park, Lake Joondalup	No corellas
Neil Hamilton	Mawson Park, Hillarys	42 Little Corellas
Michael Hancock	Carine Open Space Lake Gwelup	10 LittleCorellas, 26 ELBs
John and Judy Blyth	Nedlands Golf Course	No corellas
John and Judy Blyth	Subiaco Primary School	No corellas
Stuart Houghton and friend	Blackwall Reach, Chidley Point, Minim Cove	About 50 eastern Long-billed Corellas around golf course
Stuart Houghton	Seaview Golf Course, Cottesloe and nearby railway reserve.	About 50 ELBs (same ones as above?) In morning 200 ELBs in same area
Andrew Burbidge	Jackadder Lake, Woodlands	16 Little Corellas
Andrew Burbidge	Herdsmen Lake, Floreat	140 Little Corellas
Brendan Kinsella	Perry Lakes	150 to 200 Little Corellas
Brendan Kinsella	Lake Monger	No corellas
Nora Brockman	Lake Claremont and golf course	No corellas

In total, a possible maximum of 1904 corellas were counted, and the minimum number possible is 1704. These maxima and minima are appreciably higher than for last year's count but rather lower than those in 1999.

Table 2. Total numbers recorded for each species of corella in counts in 1998,1999, 2000 and 2001

Species	1998	1999	2000	2001
Long-billed Corella	About 140	577-627	250-374	430-785: 'most likely' 632
Little Corella	About 820	1385 to 1580	939-1451	1072-1304: 'most likely' about 1150
Western Corella	Nil	7	Nil	Nil

The range in total numbers in Table 2 is necessary because of possible duplication of counting between two or more observers at different sites, and because in some cases the species of corella was not determined. In the latter case, the number of unspecified corellas was counted in the maximum estimate for both Little and Long-billed Corellas, but included in the minimum and likely total only for the species considered most likely.

Observers recorded the time and direction of any movement of corellas, so that it was possible to draw reasonable conclusions about possible double counting. There are three cases where duplication is either definite or likely, and one where it seems unlikely but could have had a significant effect.

- The flock of about 60 Little Corellas counted at Point Walter was almost certainly the same as that seen at Point Resolution to which the birds flew, so 60 is the figure included in both maximum and minimum totals.
- The 50 eastern Long-billed Corellas seen at Chidley Point Golf Course are probably the same as the about 50 counted around Cottesloe, during the actual count on Saturday afternoon. However, about 200 ELBs were counted in the Cottesloe to Fremantle area around 9 am on the morning of the count! Therefore 50 is the minimum figure for the whole 'Fremantle' area but I have taken 200 as the figure for that area for the maximum total.
- The about 150 corellas counted along the Swan between Bassendean and Guildford were probably part of the flock of about 650 Little Corellas that flew in to roost at Stirling Square, Guildford at the end of the day. However, there is some doubt and they are excluded from the minimum and 'most likely' totals but included in the maximum for both Little and Long-billed Corellas.
- The small number of ELBs counted around the lower Swan ('Fremantle') during the count is inconsistent with numbers that have been observed there for the last few weeks. On the other hand, the number of up to 382 ELBs on the Canning River flats is very high. Thus, it is possible that most of the 'Fremantle' birds, including most of the 200 seen on Saturday morning, had flown the twelve or so kilometres over to the Canning during the day of the count. We have no way of knowing whether this is so or not. As noted above, I have included the 200 birds seen on Saturday morning in the maximum total. I have also included them in the 'most likely' total, because I had some recent reports of "very large numbers" on the Canning flats at the same time as large numbers were being reported from around Fremantle. In addition, we have had no previous evidence for interaction between the 'Fremantle' and Canning flocks.

The absence of Western Corellas from all counts both this year and last year may be partly because of the difficulty of identifying them, as they have some of the features of each of the other species. However, I am reasonably confident that the results reflect correctly the fact that flocks of corellas around Perth are dominated by Little and eastern

Long-billed Corellas and that Western Corellas are, at this time, in negligible numbers.

In considering the population trends, I think we should ignore the first count, in 1998, because it was conducted two months later than the last three counts. A pattern reported by several observers is that many Little and Long-billed Corellas tend to disappear in early winter, or following good autumn rain, from most of the sites in the metropolitan area at which they congregate over summer.

However, the counts in 1999, 2000 and 2001 were all in April, and the differences between these three years could result from real differences in numbers of corellas around Perth or from the fact that counts vary in efficiency, depending on whether birds remained in the known sites. Certainly, there were reports during this year's count, of no corellas from several sites that only a few weeks previously had supported one to several hundred of one of the two main species.

In summary, this year's count certainly gives no evidence for continuing increase in the numbers of Little Corellas around Perth; numbers counted have been similar for the last three years, but with a continuing decline in the estimated maximum over that time.

On the other hand, maximum and 'most likely' estimates this year were similar to but higher for Long-billed Corellas than in the previous highest count in 1999. Remembering the recent death of about thirty of this species there is a suggestion of a small but possibly significant increase in the numbers of eastern Long-billed Corellas.

Once again, many thanks to all of our counters on the day and to those people who have kept me informed of sightings of large numbers of corellas and of possible areas to include in future counts.

John Blyth

BAR-BREASTED HONEYEATERS NESTING

Shortly after dawn in mid December 2000 I heard an unusual harsh bird call outside my village room at the Argyle Diamond Mine in the north-east Kimberley. I looked outside and saw an adult Bar-breasted Honeyeater hovering outside the window attacking its reflection in the sliding door. This was only my second sighting of this species in the Argyle village and I have only seen about ten near Argyle in over ten years.

This continued every morning for about a week for the rest of my period on site. Near the end of the period I noticed that a nest was being built at about eye height hanging from a Callistemon on the edge of my porch and I saw a second adult. I have previously only seen this species nesting in Melaleuca trees overhanging water.

When I returned to site in early January 2001 after my two weeks off, the nest was fully developed and the adults were visiting the nest frequently, presumably feeding young. Because of the construction of the nest I couldn't determine how many young there were. I was on leave for six weeks from mid January. When I returned to site at the end of February there was a second nest about 50 cm from the first nest in the same Callistemon. The first nest was

still intact. The adults were again visiting frequently, presumably feeding young again. I only saw two adults so I don't know the outcome from the first nest. One evening I had a closer look at the nest and I could see about 1 cm of the tail of an adult sticking outside the side entrance of the nest. There was a lot of rain and near the end of my period on site I returned to my village room one evening and I noticed that the second nest had broken off and was on the ground and the first nest was washed out and only about half remained. I noticed that both nests were largely made of bark, probably from the *Callistemon*. I checked the nest on the ground and it was empty so I don't know the outcome.

A couple of days later I again awoke to an adult attacking its reflection in the window. And on the last evening when I left site I noticed that they had started to build another nest where the second nest had been. I returned to site two weeks later and the nest had only slightly progressed and I assumed that it had been abandoned. However, during the next two weeks the construction of the nest was still progressing and it was nearly complete when I left site in early April. Unfortunately I won't know the final outcome as this was my final time on site at Argyle. I was very surprised that they had nested three times in a season within half a metre.

Grey-fronted Honeyeaters nest most of the year near my office, but they move around the building a lot. They have never nested so close to a previous site.

Frank O'Connor

QUAIL AND BUTTON-QUAIL IN SOUTHERN WA

Often, the best view we get of a quail or button-quail is very brief as it bursts into the air with a whirl of wings and disappears into the distance. Not the best conditions for getting a detailed plumage description! Hence it is not surprising that many observers have trouble identifying these birds, and even the most skilled observers cannot identify all the birds they see.

Because it is important that we get reliable identifications for the Atlas project (and other Birds Australia projects), the following notes may be of use. These notes are meant as an introduction — if anyone has further ideas about identifying these species, please write in to WABN.

In southern Western Australia four species occur — Stubble Quail, Brown Quail, Little Button-quail and Painted Button-quail. Detailed descriptions of appearance and distribution can be found in Johnstone and Storr (1998) and the 'Field Identification' section for each species in HANZAB is particularly useful. Only the most important points are listed below.

The Stubble Quail can be found almost anywhere in southern Western Australia where suitable habitat exists, ie in open or lightly wooded grasslands, cereal crops, open heathlands or samphire. Brown Quail are normally found only on the south coast, north to about Cape Naturaliste and east to about Albany, usually in swampy sedgeland or coastal heath. Any report from outside this area would need to be supported by an acceptable URRF (Unusual

Record Report Form) to be included in the Atlas database. They sometimes do occur away from the south coast — for a well documented example (with photograph) see the note by David James concerning Brown Quails at Forrestdale, reported in a recent issue of WABN (James 1999). (Note that this species also occurs in the Pilbara, on north-west islands, and in the Kimberley).

Painted Button-quails occur south and west of a line from Kalbarri to Esperance, with occasional records outside this region. They are usually in thickets, scrubs or woodlands, especially on stony or gravelly soils, but can occasionally wander into more open areas. Little Button-quails occur over much of southern Western Australia, avoiding the wetter forested areas and south coast east to Esperance. They normally occur in very open or lightly wooded areas, usually where there is some fresh herbage.

As the name suggests, the Little Button-quail is relatively small, whereas the other three species are all largish quails or button-quails of a similar size (see Figure 1). It can be seen from this figure that, unless the bird in question is quite small, size alone is not a very useful indicator of species.

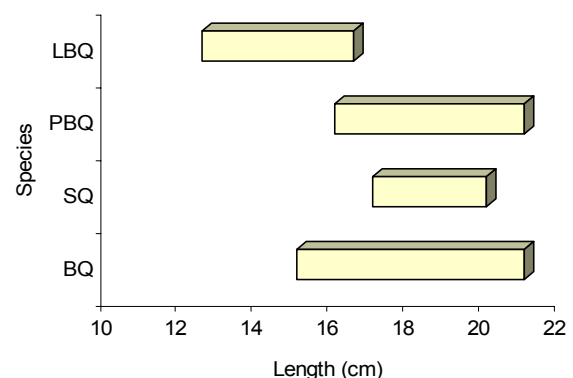


Figure 1: Sizes (lengths) of quail and button-quail species in southern Western Australia. (LBQ = Little Button-quail, PBQ = Painted Button-quail, SQ = Stubble Quail, BQ = Brown Quail; data from Johnstone and Storr 1998).

Calls are not often heard, but if they are heard, can be useful indicators of identity. The Stubble Quail has a distinctive 'pippy-wit' or 'chu-chi-wit' call, and the Brown Quail a loud 'ch-weep' or 'tu-wee'. The button-quails have generally low-pitched calls, often repeated. The Painted Button-quail gives a booming 'oom' (rather like a Common Bronzewing) and the Little Button-quail a low, moaning 'oo-ah' or 'oom, oom', often given at night.

The Stubble Quail is a large, plump quail similar in size and shape to the Brown Quail but with slightly narrower and more pointed wings. It has a whitish stripe on the centre of the crown and over each eye and the back and wings are conspicuously pale-streaked. Males have a rufous throat and conspicuous black streaks on the breast, while females have a pale throat without the conspicuous black streaks on the breast.

The pale streaks on the Brown Quail are inconspicuous on head, back and wings, giving it a darker and more uniform appearance than the other quails and button-quails in the south-west, either standing or in flight.

For a button-quail, the Painted is large, and dark with a small bill and a dark eye in a pale face. The reddish shoulder patch makes this species distinctive. Interestingly, this species is often misidentified as Brown Quail, apparently in the mistaken belief that all button-quails are small. However, as can be seen from Figure 1, this species can be as large as any quail in south-western Australia. In flight, it has a pattern of brownish upperparts contrasting with greyish wing tips, rather like a Little Button-quail, but gives an overall darker appearance than that species. When feeding, this species makes characteristic circular depressions in the leaf litter, where it scratches leaves away in search of seeds.

The Little is smaller and compact, with short, rounded wings. It has a rufous-brown or pinkish-toned upperbody and inner wing coverts, with inconspicuous pale streaking. There is a prominent pale panel on the central inner wing coverts. In flight there is a marked contrast between the brownish upperparts and the grey of the ends and trailing edges of the wings. This species has a pale eye, whereas the other three species in the south-west have a dark (reddish) eye.

In summary, it is possible to reliably identify quails and button-quails in the south-west, and if you get a reasonable look at the bird, it is not difficult. If you only get a glimpse of the bird in flight (and who hasn't had that experience??) it may still be possible, using the above guidelines as a basis. However, in this situation, it is best to first of all write down your overall impression of size, shape and colour, together with any details you may have noticed, before opening your field guide.

References:

- HANZAB: Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Vol. 2. Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, Melbourne.
- James, D. 1999. Brown Quail at Forrestdale. WABN 91: 15-16.
- Johnstone, R.E. and Storr, G.M. 1998. Handbook of Western Australian Birds. Vol. 1. Non-passerines. Western Australian Museum, Perth.

Allan Burbidge

WHAT POOH PONDS AM I?

I am in the flight path for many migratory species passing through Australia, on their way both north and south. Over the last year I have recorded over 110 species. Each summer I am home for up to 21 Yellow Wagtails — it is amazing watching them change from drab brown, not long after they arrive in late September, into brilliant yellow, before they migrate north in late April. In November and December during the heat of the day I have **Little Curlews** drop in to drink and rest, after feeding in the morning on the adjacent golf course.

November to January is often good for **Long-toed Stints** — my bare rocky edges where they feed, provide an excellent area to photograph them and obtain the views that make you realise how they got their name.

Snipe are regular here in the wet season, particularly after a dry spell. The snipe are not generally wary and you can approach on foot, often to within seven metres, allowing great views. Species identification is not always easy. **Swinhoe's Snipe** seems to be more common but a **Pintail Snipe** was caught here in 1997, so a lot of detailed notes are needed.

Because of my closeness to a bay, shorebird viewing is best at high tide when many travel to the ponds to roost. On large tides several hundred can gather and up to 25 species of shorebird have been recorded and for one week in October a **Ruff** was present.

I am also subject to annual cyclones that can bring in rare vagrants. In the past, rare species such as **Common Redshank**, **White** and **Black-backed Wagtails**, **Garganey**, **Little-ringed Plover**, **Asiatic Dowitcher**, **Black-headed Gull** and **Red-rumped Swallows** have all been seen.

Positioned next to a golf course and separated from the famous Roebuck Bay by a single dune, you would know that I am

The Broome Sewerage Works.

I am a 'must' for birdwatchers when travelling in the north-west of Australia. Look forward to seeing you here.

Adrian Boyle and Chris Hassell

FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF SOOTY OYSTERCATCHERS

Sooty Oystercatchers *Haematopus fuliginosus ophthalmicus* are reasonably common on the shorelines of Roebuck Bay and Broome.

At Entrance Point, close to the Broome Jetty on 17 January 2001 I watched a pair feeding. It was about four thirty in the afternoon on a neap tide. I noticed one of the pair (a female by her longer and thinner bill) moving systematically between one side of the sloping face of a large rock to the middle. I decided to watch the bird from a distance of approximately 50 metres, with the aid of a telescope using a 20x eyepiece.

The oystercatcher would move towards the edge of the large rock and remove a small dark gastropod from an area of splash zone. The bird would then carry the mollusc to the middle of the rock and place it in a particular crevice; sometimes the crevice chosen was unsuitable, presumably because of the shell size, in which case the bird moved to another. The oystercatcher would then hammer the prey repeatedly rather like a pneumatic road drill for a couple of seconds until the shell was broken. The animal inside was then quickly consumed. The bird would then move back to the splash zone and pick up another mollusc and repeat the performance.

I watched the oystercatcher collect and consume eight shells over a ten-minute period before it was joined by the second oystercatcher that also performed the same feeding method, but in a less adroit fashion. The second bird left after feeding on two molluscs and moved to a lower rock surface out of sight from my viewing position. The first bird fed on two more molluscs before the pair flew off having been disturbed by a dog and its owner.

I went to investigate the site, finding the broken fragments of the gastropods in the almost custom made holes in the sandstone rock surface. I collected some of these shells and they have been identified (by B Smith of the Shell House, Broome) as a member of the family *Neritidae* and called nerites. The species is *Nerita undata*, which occurs abundantly from Geraldton around northern Australia to Queensland (Wells and Bryce, 1988). The nerites group are herbivores that scrape off algae from rocks and mangroves. This species is common on rocky shorelines around Broome.

On researching this subject it was pleasing to find reference to this feeding behaviour (from eastern Australia) in HANZAB Vol 2, Raptors to Lapwings, page 742 under the heading 'Food'. For those who have not splashed out and bought these great books, all I can do is recommend that you do.

References:

- Wells, F.E. and Bryce, C.W. 1988. *Seashells of Western Australia*. Western Australian Museum, Perth.
 Marchant, S.M. and Higgins, P.J. 1993. *Handbook of Australian New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Vol 2. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

George Swann

LAKE JOONDALUP SOUTH, 1983 TO 2001

Lake Joondalup South is at 31°46' 115°47' in the Perth suburb of Woodvale. There have been many changes around this area since 1983 when we first surveyed the waterbirds, with the development of the housing estate to the south and the loss of giant tuart trees to the west so we decided to survey the waterbirds again this year.

For waterbirds the varying summer weather conditions dictate their distribution. During the dry years when Perth misses out on cyclonic rain-bearing depressions the dwindling wetlands become overcrowded. However, after good post-cyclonic rains waterbirds distribute themselves far and wide. Thus an accurate comparison of bird numbers on Lake Joondalup South is not possible: the lake may become completely dry, as in May 1985, and often dwindles down to a pool 100 m by 200 m. The part of the lake south of Ocean Reef Road was surveyed by us 46 times between 1983 and 1992. Table 1 shows bird numbers and the commonest species seen in February of each year.

There were numerous breeding records over this period for Blue-billed Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Shoveler and Great Crested Grebe but of special interest was the breeding of the Freckled Duck in November 1986 and the recording of Black Bittern in both 1986 and 1987. It was in July 1991 with the first felling of the giant tuart trees on the west side that we were alerted to

Table 1: Lake Joondalup, south of Ocean Reef Road

Year	No.	Commonest species
1984	375	Pacific Black Duck 80, Grey Teal 70
1985	360	Grey Teal 150, Black-winged Stilt 80
1986	585	Grey Teal 200, Pacific Black Duck 120, Pink-eared Duck 55
1987	500	Grey Teal 365
1988	500	Grey Teal 136, Red-necked Avocet 120, Australian Shelduck 80
1989	240	Australian Wood Duck 60, Australian Shelduck 55
1990	225	Pacific Black Duck 65, Grey Teal 55
1991	300	Pacific Black Duck 80, Grey Teal 65, Yellow-billed Spoonbill 45
1992	200	Pacific Black Duck 50, Eurasian Coot 50

the distress calls of a pair of Australian Wood Ducks peering into their nesting hollow in the felled eucalypt tree.

The survey in February 2001 in this area south of Ocean Reef Road revealed a small lake 200 m by 100 m with 52 birds and no Black-fronted Plovers. There were 20 Pacific Black Ducks and 15 Black-winged Stilts and 10 shelducks. The other birds were ibis and herons.

Lake Joondalup South, north of Ocean Reef Road over this period has been the preferred habitat of the shelduck and coot. Table 2 shows bird numbers and the commonest species seen in February of each year.

Table 2: South Joondalup Lake north of Ocean Reef Rd

Year	No.	Commonest species
1984	199	Australian Shelduck 80, Eurasian Coot 35
1985	182	Australian Shelduck 65, Eurasian Coot 25, Black-winged Stilt 25
1986	65	Pacific Black Duck 30, Black-winged Stilt 30
1987	100	Grey Teal 30, Australian Pelican 20
1988	293	Red-necked Avocet 200
1989	375	Australian Shelduck 200, Eurasian Coot 80
1990	115	Eurasian Coot 40, Pacific Black Duck 20
1991	115	Black-winged Stilt 50, Black-fronted Plover 20
1992	310	Eurasian Coot and Pacific Black Duck 70, Australian Wood Duck and Grey Teal 50

The survey in February 2001 in this area gave a tally of 97 birds including Black-winged Stilt 24, Pacific Black Duck 20 and Yellow-billed Spoonbill 12. There were nine swamphens.

Northern end, Lake Joondalup 31°43' 115°45'

In contrast to the southern end the habitat has changed very little since 1983. In the February 2001 survey there were over 1900 birds with large numbers of coots, black ducks and Grey Teal. There was a group of 25 pelicans in a feeding frenzy and a large flotilla of Banded Stilts. The other years in February with numbers between one and two thousand were 1986-87-88 and 1991.

Have we lost a great summer waterbird refuge south of Ocean Reef Road? Waterbird species preferences have been shown to be quite different north and south of Ocean Reef Road. Can the northern end of Lake Joondalup accommodate more birds before the onset of winter rains?

Mary Bremner

SEABIRDING OFF WOLLONGONG NSW, 24 FEBRUARY

Eight hours in a rocking, noisy, fairly old converted fishing boat can be a bit trying but the day turned out to be very rewarding. We boarded the "Sandra Kay" at 7:30 am and went out about 30 km, not seeing much until about one hour out from the harbour. This was mainly because the sea was relatively calm and the weather quite warm. Then we started seeing mainly Wedge-tailed Shearwaters especially when we started burleying.

Over the day we saw approximately the following numbers: Shearwaters: Wedge-tailed 200-300, Flesh-footed 50, Short-tailed 6, Sooty 4. Also seen were Great-winged Petrels 6.

The outstanding highlight was the sighting of the three Jaegers found in Australian waters, viz, Pomarine, Arctic and Long-tailed. The latter was a beautiful, graceful bird that was new to me.

Close to shore on the return trip we saw Kelp Gull 1, Australian Gannet 1, Fairy Penguin 2, plus numerous Silver Gulls.

A sour point was the trawling for fish from the back of the boat by the skipper. When burleying this inevitably led to birds being tangled in the lines. We caught about ten, all 'Wedgies', all of which were untangled without apparent damage. It did give us the chance to examine the 'Wedgies' in the hand. One obligingly spewed up its lunch. This was eagerly collected by local seabird guru Lindsay Smith for further examination. He said the small animals in the spew looked like tiny squid.

Two unidentified species were also seen, possibly Herald Petrel and Fluttering Shearwater, but they were too far away to identify, even for some very knowledgeable seabirders among the group.

Another highlight was the sighting of a group of Risso Dolphins hunting for fish.

Seabird trips leave Wollongong on the fourth Saturday of each month at 7:30 am, returning at 4:00 pm, cost about \$60.00.

Tom Delaney

CRIMSON FINCHES NEOCHMIA PHAETON FEEDING ON PSYLLIDS

On the morning of 5 October 1999 at 10:30 am while visiting Bell Gorge with a tour group we decided to walk up the small valley that follows directly west from the Silent Grove campground. A spring fed creek flows year-round here and supports a rich mix of common riverine plants including River Pandanus *Pandanus aquaticus*, Swamp Corkwood *Sesbania formosa* and Leichhardt Pine *Nauclea orientalis*. The River Pandanus is favoured by Crimson Finches and they're rarely seen far away from it.

Only 700 m upstream from the campground we spotted a small flock of five Crimson Finches. They were feeding low down amongst some emergent leaves in the surrounding dry grass which included Black Spear Grass, *Heteropogon contortus* and a (*Sorghum sp.*) speargrass.

While we were taking a closer look with a 20x telescope the birds appeared to be feeding on 'lerps' that were attached to the large immature leaves of a sapling Swamp Bloodwood *Eucalyptus (Corymbia) ptychocarpa*. Were the finches actually feeding on the lerps (the sugary coating the insect produces as a protective cover for itself), or were they feeding on the insect itself, or both? After a concentrated observation and moving a little closer to our subjects, we could actually see the Crimson Finches discarding the lerp or sugary coating, flicking them off with ease, and then consuming the nymph stage of the insect that lives underneath. These insects are called Psyllids and belong to the family Psyllidae. As adults many of the 330 species in Australia have wings, are free moving and sometimes referred to as "jumping plant lice".

Finches do supplement their diet with protein particularly when they are breeding and feeding young. It was interesting to see these beautiful finches behaving selectively on a widespread and common source of food.

George Swann



Flesh-footed Shearwater
Drawing by Pam Free

THE BIRDS OF AN URBAN HOUSING AREA, MAYLANDS, WA

Introduction

An area of typical urban housing is assessed for its ability to support its birdlife, which varies considerably, and ranges from species that are seen daily to those which may only be seen once or twice a year. Twenty-nine species of birds occur in this Maylands area, five of which are introduced, four are seasonal migrants, seven are resident, or nearly so, and thirteen are transient.

The study area is defined as being within one kilometre of where I live at the intersection of East and Falkirk Streets, Maylands, which is one of Perth's older suburbs. It is a typical housing suburb with well established gardens, of both native and exotic flora, lawns, many introduced trees and some native ones. The roadside verges are mostly lawns and grasses, there is one parkland reserve some few hectares in size, and a shopping centre.

My observations were made during the period 1995 to 2000, and all the bird species occur elsewhere on the Maylands Peninsula. Because Perth has no sparrows, starlings or Common (Indian) Mynas it is worthwhile recording my observations in their absence.

The Birds

Rock Dove. Introduced, well established, moderately common resident. It avoids the houses but frequents the streets, parks and gardens and the larger and usually older buildings.

Laughing Turtle-Dove. Introduced, well established, very common resident. Forages over the lawns and in the gardens of the houses, the parkland, streets, verges and parking bays. Seen or heard daily.

Spotted Turtle-Dove. Introduced, well established, common resident but in lesser numbers than the preceding species. Forages similarly to the preceding species. Seen or heard daily.

Short-billed (Carnaby's) Black-Cockatoo. Uncommon visitor, mostly between late May and late August; sporadic at other times. Flocks of up to 60-70 birds. Mostly feeds on the pine trees but also forages over some of the other introduced trees.

Galah. Uncommon and irregular visitor. Singles and pairs and always in flight.

Little Corella. Irregular visitor, flocks of up to 200. There is the possibility that these flocks also include both Western and eastern Long-billed Corellas.

Rainbow Lorikeet. Introduced, well established, usually pairs and small groups.

Australian Ringneck. A rare and irregular visitor but sometimes present for a few weeks at a time.

Pallid Cuckoo. A rare seasonal visitor; single birds only.

Laughing Kookaburra. Introduced, very rare visitor from elsewhere on the peninsula.

Sacred Kingfisher. A rare and seasonal visitor, mostly single birds.

Rainbow Bee-eater. Uncommon and seasonal visitor when migrating.

Striated Pardalote. Uncommon visitor but sometimes present for 4-5 weeks at a time.

Red Wattlebird. Uncommon, largely resident, but may be absent for several weeks or so at a time.

Little Wattlebird. A very rare irregular visitor.

Singing Honeyeater. Very common resident, seen or heard daily.

Brown Honeyeater. Common, largely resident, but may be absent for 5-6 weeks during mid August to early November. Perhaps it breeds then.

Rufous Whistler. Very rare autumn/winter visitor.

Magpie-lark. Moderately common during winter, sporadic during summer.

Grey Fantail. Rare autumn/winter visitor.

Willie Wagtail. Common during winter, sporadic during summer.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. Small numbers, mostly resident, but may be absent for periods of two months or so.

Grey Butcher-bird. Very rare visitor.

Australian Magpie. Mostly resident, but may be absent for a month or so.

Australian Raven. Mostly resident, moderately common, seen or heard almost daily.

Mistletoebird. A fairly rare visitor, mid April to early August.

Welcome Swallow. A rare and irregular visitor, small numbers.

Tree Martin. A rare and irregular visitor, small numbers.

Silvereye. Small numbers only, May to August.

Discussion

The introduced resident species that can be seen or heard daily are the Rock Dove, Laughing and Spotted Turtle-Doves and Rainbow Lorikeet. The fifth introduction is the Laughing Kookaburra but it is very rare in the area. The two turtle-doves feed on the seeds of a variety of plants, even those that are spread over the lawns, and commercial grains, and seem to be completely supported by the study area. The Rock Dove is largely supported here, perhaps even completely, and the Rainbow Lorikeet seems to find enough nectar, pollen and other food to sustain itself locally.

The native species that are common and can be said to be resident are Red Wattlebird, Singing Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, Australian Magpie and Australian Raven. The raven is a scavenger and seems to be completely supported by the area and the Singing Honeyeater finds enough nectar, pollen and insects to maintain itself too, as do the Brown Honeyeater and Red Wattlebird. The Willie Wagtail frequents the lawns and road verges mainly and seems to subsist on flies and similar insects, and the Magpie-lark and magpie forage over the same habitat, the magpie seeming to largely obtain beetles and similar insects both on and in the lawns and road verges.

The seasonal migrants are the Short-billed (Carnaby's) Black-Cockatoo, Pallid Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher and Rainbow Bee-eater. They find some food and shelter here, but usually do not remain for more than a day or two, except for the cockatoo, which may remain in the area for a week or so as it prepares the pine cones and later comes

back to feed on the seeds. The Rufous Whistler and Grey Fantail are autumn/winter visitors but do not stay here for more than a day or so.

The Striated Pardalote and Mistletoebird are seldom recorded but may stay here for a week or so at a time. The Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike is unusual in that it may remain here for a month or two, and is then absent for a month or two. The remaining species of birds are transient and may only occur here for a day or two during the year.

Conclusion

The study area, which is typical urban housing, supports 11 species of birds completely, or largely so, four seasonal migrants for a few days of the year, two autumn/winter visitors for a day or two in the year and 12 transient species. The commonest residents may be observed daily.

Robert H Stranger

SPLENDID FAIRY-WRENS AT TENNIS COURT LAKE, HERDSMAN PARADE

I had heard that Splendid Fairy-wrens had been absent from Herdsman's Lake area for perhaps several decades. It was very surprising, therefore, to encounter a female Splendid Fairy-wren during the week of 10 January 2000. I had been doing my weekly suburban bird survey of the area as I have been doing since February 1998. During this time I had never seen, or even heard, wrens in the area.

Despite assistance from friends, no more Splendid Fairy-wrens were seen until 31 July 2000. This time I saw two coloured males with several females. Water levels were high with local flooding up to the Melaleucas and bordering the Bullrushes of Herdsman's Lake. The birds moved easily through the area along with the Silvereyes, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Western Gerygones.

I did not see them again from the end of August 2000 until December and January 2001, when there were still two coloured males with several females. My last sighting of a rather tatty-looking male Splendid Fairy-wren was 27 February 2001.

Claire Gerrish

OBSERVATIONS ON THE LAUGHING TURTLE-DOVE AT DENHAM

The Laughing Turtle-Dove was seen 8 km SSE of Denham, Shark Bay, by Ron Johnstone in 1984 (Storr 1985) and Morris *et al.* (1994) cite that observation as "near Denham". I have recorded the species within Denham itself.

While holidaying at Denham in December 1991 I made the following observations. On 15 December two birds were seen inside the town; on the 16th one was seen in the town; on the 17th three birds were flushed from the ground in the scrub about one km east of Denham; on the 18th three birds were seen in the town and on the 19th a single bird was feeding on the ground in the scrub just outside the town.

I never saw any birds on the ground in Denham and suggest that the birds were there to drink only, though I never saw any surface water in the town either.

Another Columbidae in the town was a small compact flock of Rock Doves, circling around a small area as they do when released from their cages for exercise.

The only other Columbidae seen was a solitary male Common Bronzewing a few kilometres from Denham, at the side of the road leading to Monkey Mia on 18 December 1991.

References:

- Morris, K., Speldewinde, P. and Orell, P. 1994. A new bird record for Bernier Island, Shark Bay. *Western Australian Naturalist* 19:351.
- Storr, GM. 1985. Records of the Western Australian Museum Supplement No. 21

Robert H. Stranger

SPINY-CHEEKED HONEYEATER AT ROYAL WEMBLEY

I was sitting in the bar at the Wembley Golf Course at 11:00 am on 11 April (I'd only had one beer, honestly) when my attention was drawn to what appeared to be a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater in an *Agonis flexuosa* outside the window. I had no binoculars with me, so to ensure it was not a young wattlebird (I could see no wattles) I went outside for a closer look. The bird of course had disappeared, but some squeaking quickly brought the curious honeyeater back. In fact, it came to within 2 m of me, threw its head back, and sang a beautiful soft song, continuing until I tired of squeaking and once again needed to wet my whistle!

There was absolutely no doubt of the bird's identification — I could clearly see the bi-coloured bill and characteristic buffy throat colour. I have extensive experience with this species, having lived for several years in central New South Wales.

The day was overcast and humid, with some remnant cyclonic weather. Perhaps this, or the unusually dry season, had brought this beautiful, and possibly lonely bird from its inland habitat.

John Brooke

ROTTNEST ISLAND, 4–6 APRIL 2001

Introduction

With the great majority of the trans-equatorial waders already having left these southern climes at this time of year, I thought it would be a good time to visit Rottne, where I had heard of waders all year round. Not having visited the island for some time, I was pleasantly surprised to find the number and variety of waders quite high, and also a range of bushbirds that are a subset of those on the nearby mainland.

Getting around principally by bike, I concentrated survey effort on the salt lakes, but also investigated woodland and coastal habitats. I restricted myself to areas east of Wadjemup (Lighthouse) Hill, so Narro neck and West End remain elusive targets, but would provide plenty of coastline, reef flat and rocky islets for the interested viewer. The survey was also strictly terrestrial, in the sense that I never left the shore (other than to go for a quick swim). Lake water levels were quite low at the time of the visit since Perth was still waiting for its first decent rainfall of the year. There was consequently a greater than usual area of exposed shoreline around the lakes.

A complete list of bird species observed during the three days is supplied at the end of this article. For a more comprehensive treatment and further details about the island's avian inhabitants, refer to *Birds of Rottnest Island* (and references therein), by Saunders and de Rebeira (1993).

Settlement and Bushland

The Settlement. Commonest species are the incessantly calling Australian Ravens, the Silver Gulls hanging around the shops, and Welcome Swallows. The Quokka *Setonix brachyurus* should also be mentioned here. These animals are ubiquitous throughout the island, and their tameness is remarked upon by almost any visitor. For those of us who have had little experience with the middle-weight-range mammals of the Australian continent, they are a great first-hand experience similar to what the first settlers, and indeed the indigenous population, would have been more or less accustomed to.

**“... enough to send a
careering cyclist toppling ...”**

But onto the birds. The settlement presents relatively few birding opportunities, but Golden Whistler and Sacred Kingfisher are around. The most suitable times are the early mornings — that is for the birds, but these are not always the most suitable times for the human inhabitants of Rottnest. In any case, the settlement provides only a limited number of species that appreciate the woodland aspect (low diversity of tree species) of the environment. Pacific Black Ducks were observed in a group of 8 or 9 under the Moreton Bay Figs. By the cycle track at the ‘back’ of the huts and tent-land of the settlement, the track runs to the ‘Rottnest Royal Exclusive Golf Course’.

Golf Course. Pheasants are common here. Introduced onto the island, they run amok and turn up in surprising places (they also squawk, which can be enough to send a careering cyclist toppling from his/her bicycle). Probably a bird of grassland and heath in their natural range, they widely inhabit Rottnest, and actually add an interesting (although comparatively new) variety to the birdlife. Galah, Australian Raven, Silvereye and Singing Honeyeater are also here, but the course provides few opportunities for other birds.

Note: Eight or nine Banded Lapwings were on the oval as I approached the Basin. The Basin itself is similar to

other coastal areas - Silver Gull, Welcome Swallow and Pied Cormorant. Peafowl wandering around at the Pub.

Bickley Swamp. Maintaining the bushland emphasis, the swamp itself supports few birds this time of year — only two shelduck on one occasion. Golden Whistlers occur in the Melaleuca, as well as Silvereyes, and a pair of Red-capped Robins. Other bushbirds occur here, including White-browed Scrubwrens and Singing Honeyeaters. Sacred Kingfishers can be seen nearby.

Coastal (bays, headlands, sandy beaches, secluded coves, limestone rocks)

Thompson Bay. On the bay itself Pied Oystercatcher, Silver Gull and Ruddy Turnstone occur. These can be seen almost as you hop off the ferry. Welcome Swallows flit amongst the walls, trees and houses.

Phillip Point. White-fronted Chat, Welcome Swallow, Pied Oystercatcher and Turnstone were observed along the shoreline. At the sand spit leading to the point, a roosting flock of Crested Terns (30+) with a smattering of active Fairy Terns. Cormorants and terns occur on the rock crags out to sea, but a telescope is needed to identify them.

Porpoise Bay. An interesting spot. Other than the constant caterwauling from the seagulls (don't be too put off), I came across Little Pied Cormorant for the first time, and also a single Grey-tailed Tattler and two Pied Oystercatchers on a rock. Formations of fallen, corrugated limestone boulders make this coastal scene particularly unique. A place of washing waves and (temporary) solitude.

Salmon Bay. Long bay with a good variety of species, even at this time of year. Fairly large group of Crested Terns, but also Pied Cormorant, Grey-tailed Tattler, Welcome Swallow foraging along the beach and White-fronted Chats coming down nearly to the beachline, almost looking like small waders. This at the southern end. Nearer the north (-western) end of Salmon Bay, I came across a group of approximately 29 Sanderlings on the beach. Pied Oystercatcher (2), Fairy Tern (3) and Grey-tailed Tattler (1) were also here. Large waders were scarce (nonexistent?) in the areas on the island that I investigated, but here I found Bar-tailed Godwit (2) and Whimbrel (1). These three seemed to be in company. Also an Osprey over the dunes at the back of Salmon Bay.

Salt Lakes

The formation of these salt lakes is suggested by their extreme salinity — as a result of marine transgression and regression, or with strong influence from wind-borne marine salt loads (or a combination of both). The estimated age of the salt lakes is about 5000 years, when during a marine transgression the area of the present salt lakes formed arms of the sea (Playford, 1983). After sea levels receded the lakes formed: the island is thought to have attained its current configuration approximately 2500 years ago.

Water depth in the salt lakes varies seasonally. Being at the end of the long dry season that Perth has experienced this year, the lakes are very much depleted, and several of the smaller ones are dry. This has allowed for much of the ‘coastline’ of these lakes to be exposed, perhaps enhancing

opportunities for waders, be they temporarily resident or truly transitory, or migratory. The lakes are also likely to be under some degree of tidal influence. Wind is an important factor, driving shorebirds to feed in areas dependent directly or indirectly on the prevailing winds.

Garden Lake. Nearest lake to the settlement, adjacent to the golf course. Good views of this lake and areas to the west can be obtained from the Vlamingh Lookout (from which you can plot your journey). This is also the only place I heard Western Gerygone. Few species were present at the lake on this occasion. Welcome Swallows were however abundant (50+) with good numbers resting on a broad area of exposed shoreline of the lake.

Herschel Lake. The area signposted 'Research Area' is a good spot for waders, and it's pretty close to town too, even by bike. Just take the first right out of town (before you reach the Causeway). Near to and in the research area, which includes a piece of shoreline connected to an island (completely connected at this time of year with the water so low), the first good views of waders can be obtained. Good numbers of Red-necked Stints and Ruddy Turnstones occur here, but there are also Red-capped Plovers along the shore, and the odd Australian Shelduck and Grey Plover. At this site I observed two Curlew Sandpipers; these were in partial and near-complete breeding plumage, the red initially making me consider Red Knot, but the size was too small. A number of the stints were also developing breeding plumage, noticeable on the throat and breast (red colouration) but also on the head (streaking). Upon repeat visits to this site I saw stint, turnstone, shelduck, Grey Plover and Red-capped Plover regularly, and also recorded Curlew Sandpiper and Grey-tailed Tattler. Certainly the views to be had from this spot are remarkable, since it is easier to get close to waders, and have a really good look, here than practically anywhere else I can think of.

Government House Lake. A good spot for waders, but only in the right areas. Near to the Causeway and other frequently traversed areas, there are relatively few waders but they are there. I parked my bike at the beginning (as you go out of the settlement) of the Causeway, and walked progressively around the edge of Government House Lake. Here you can see several species, including turnstone, stint, tattler, and Pied Oystercatcher. Crested Terns were also seen in this vicinity. This lake has the most pleasant spot on the island for watching birds (and most easily accessible), but I am not willing to divulge details. Just look for a nice grassy spot.

Lake Vincent. In the south-west corner where the cycle path passes through a series of lakes, there is a small cove in the limestone, some bush birds, and the usual Quokkas. In this area I saw small numbers of Red-capped Plover, Red-necked Stint and Ruddy Turnstone, and a single Grey Plover.

Lake Baghdad. This is a pretty exciting area for birds. Starting in the western part of Lake Baghdad, there is a muddy flat fringed by reed beds that supports a flock of Australian Shelduck, and two Grey Teal were also observed here. The best part of Lake Baghdad though is near the turnoff to Little Parakeet Bay (nowadays just down the hill from Geordie), where there is an extensive

piece of shoreline supporting hundreds of waders. Shorebirds seen here (with rough estimates in brackets) include Ruddy Turnstone (15), Red-capped Plover (2), Grey-tailed Tattler (3), Curlew Sandpiper (2) and Red-necked Stint (100+). There is a spit further out into the lake and a flock of 100+ Fairy Terns were observed on the first day. On the next day there were again Fairy Terns but in reduced numbers, and also a group of Banded Stilts (70) and Crested Terns (20+). The last place I investigated is a track that follows the northern shore of the eastern part of Lake Baghdad. This is mostly fringed by rushes, but the stony shoreline is similar to elsewhere on the island's lakes. There were stints, turnstones and shelducks scattered throughout this area of shoreline.

Discussion

In comparison to parts of the nearby Swan Coastal Plain, the bushbirds of Rottneest are somewhat depauperate. It did surprise me that I didn't see Willie Wagtail or Magpie-lark, and what about Red Wattlebird or Brown Honeyeater? A combination of recent isolation and restricted available habitats (there are few, and much of the vegetation on the island was cleared by the early settlers) has served to markedly reduce species richness in comparison with the mainland, approximately 17 km away. The marine transgression several thousand years ago not only had a role in the formation of the salt lakes, but also served to markedly reduce the land area of the island. This resulted in loss of much of the vegetation (which incidentally included Tuart *Eucalyptus gomphocephala* woodland), and presumably consequent extinction of much of the fauna.

I observed a total of 39 species at Rottneest, including 29 non-passerine and 10 passerine species. The large number of waterbirds and waders in comparison to few bushbirds greatly skews the ratio of passerine to non-passerine species. This is further evidenced by the most speciose families: these are the Scolopacidae ('waders') with seven species, the Laridae (gulls & terns) with four, and the Charadriidae (plovers) with three species. The most that any passerine family could muster was two species (Pardalotidae, Meliphagidae, Hirundinidae). Of the common species listed by Saunders and de Rebeira (1993), I missed out on seeing Rock Parrot, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Richard's Pipit. Rainbow Bee-eater and Fan-tailed Cuckoo were, I suppose, out of season.

Overall the island is a great spot for birds, particularly waders. It is unique in that it is the only island off the Western Australian coast to possess permanent salt lakes. As pointed out by Saunders & de Rebeira (1986), the loss of many of our wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain may have made these lakes of even greater significance to waterbirds and waders. I think the area is also unique in that it is an important site for birds that overwinter in the southern hemisphere (usually juvenile or first year birds), particularly for species such as Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Sanderling *C. alba*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* and Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*.

Table 1. Counts/estimates of wader and tern numbers and location of observational records for Rottnest, 4-6 April 2001 (these relate to the areas investigated, all of which are east of Wadjemup Hill, and with particular emphasis on the salt lakes).

Species	Nos	Location
Bar-tailed Godwit	2	coastal
Whimbrel	1	coastal
Grey-tailed Tattler	6	coastal & salt lake edges
Ruddy Turnstone	50+	coastal & salt lake edges
Curlew Sandpiper	4	salt lake edges
Red-necked Stint	350+	salt lake edges
Sanderling	35	coastal
Pied Oystercatcher	3	coastal & salt lakes
Banded Stilt	70+	salt lakes
Red-necked Avocet	1	salt lakes
Grey Plover	5	salt lake fringes
Red-capped Plover	15+	salt lake fringes
Banded Lapwing	9	oval
Silver Gull	100's	coastal, salt lakes, settlement
Crested Tern	50+	coastal, salt lakes
Caspian Tern	17	salt lakes & coastal
Fairy Tern	100+	salt lakes & coastal

Table 2. Species List
Non-passerines (30 species)

*Common Pheasant	Sanderling
*Peafowl	Pied Oystercatcher
Pacific Black Duck	Banded Stilt
Grey Teal	Red-necked Avocet
Australian Shelduck	Grey Plover
Little Pied Cormorant	Red-capped Plover
Pied Cormorant	Banded Lapwing
Osprey	Silver Gull
Nankeen Kestrel	Crested Tern
Bar-tailed Godwit	Caspian Tern
Whimbrel	Fairy Tern
Grey-tailed Tattler	*Laughing Turtle-dove
Ruddy Turnstone	*Spotted Turtle-dove
Curlew Sandpiper	Galah
Red-necked Stint	Sacred Kingfisher

Passerines (9 species)

Western Gerygone	Golden Whistler
White-browed Scrubwren	Australian Raven
Singing Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
White-fronted Chat	Tree Martin
Red-capped Robin	

(* = introduced species)

References:

- Playford, P.E. 1983. Geological research on Rottnest Island. *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* 66: 10-15.
- Saunders, D.A. and de Rebeira, C.P. 1986. Seasonal occurrence of members of the suborder Charadrii (waders or shorebirds) on Rottnest Island, Western Australia. *Australian Wildlife Research* 13: 225-244.
- Saunders, D.A. and de Rebeira, C.P. 1993. *The Birdlife of Rottnest Island*. DAS and CPdeR, Perth.

Steve Reynolds

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET IN KING'S PARK

My wife and I were walking up the long ramp on the south-eastern edge of King's Park at about 7:00 am on 22 April when her attention was drawn to a long-tailed yellow-green parrot flying westwards along the scarp with a small flock of Rainbow Lorikeets. It reminded her of a Regent or Princess Parrot, but she was unable to see any detail. About 10 minutes later we were descending the rough stairs (now the Kokoda Track Memorial) above the old Swan Brewery when we heard a strange call from a large date palm. We were lucky enough to spot and observe (we were not carrying binoculars) an unusual exotic parrot for a few minutes. It was indeed about the size of a Superb or Princess Parrot, although stockier in the body, and much larger than a Rainbow Lorikeet. It had very long central tail feathers extending beyond fanned outer feathers and yellow-green underparts. The face and head appeared to have a bluish tinge; the bill was large and bright coral pink; and a well-defined black moustache underlined with bright yellow extended from under the bill to below the cheeks. The nape appeared to have a brownish band. Although obviously an escapee of some sort, it was not behaving like a tame bird.

After consulting admittedly limited reference books, we concluded that the bird was a Rose-ringed Parakeet, *Psittacula krameri*. We have no experience of this species, but understand that it, a native of the Indian subcontinent, has established feral populations in Durban and Johannesburg. John Blyth informs me that it colonises readily, and is now resident on Christmas Island.

John Brooke

PROBABLE BARN SWALLOW AT NEDLANDS

On 1 April (really, and it was after midday) my wife and I were in the back garden at 19 Louise Street, Nedlands when our attention was drawn to a swallow flying fairly directly in an easterly direction just above the treetops. It was immediately conspicuous by its bright white underparts and deeply forked tail. It was also noticeably larger than a Welcome Swallow, such that my initial thought, from a distance, was of a swift. It beat me to the front of the house so we only had the one brief sighting. Unfortunately, we did not see the head and throat pattern, but it was clearly not a Welcome Swallow.

We checked various reference books and field guides and concluded that the bird was almost certainly a Barn Swallow. Pizzey and Knight in particular highlight the pure white underparts, longer tail streamers and larger size than the Welcome Swallow. Coincidentally, when we went outside again, at about 6:00 pm, on the off-chance that it was still about, we saw four Fork-tailed Swifts, hawking very much higher. There was some light, high cloud and a slight weather change approaching.

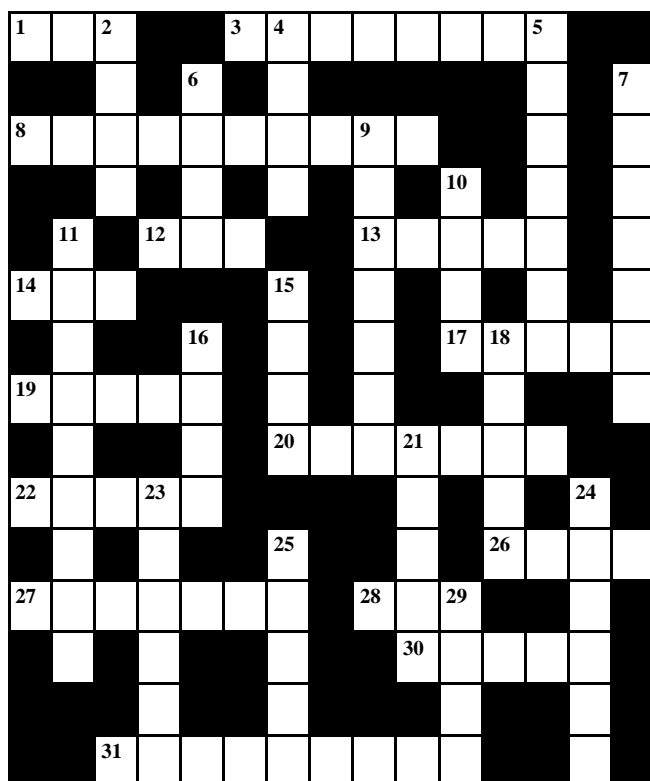
I have experience of Barn Swallows overseas, but my only Australian sighting was of a single bird at Camp Nifty in the Great Sandy Desert in the late 1980s.

A Barn Swallow was previously recorded at Thomsons Lake in 1986 (see *WA Bird Notes* No 37). As they now appear to be common visitors in the Broome area, it may be that more are finding their way to Perth!

John Brooke

Crossword No 25

By Pam Agar



Clues across

1. Makes it difficult to export Australian birds.
3. Bird group noted for 'falling leaf' melodies.
8. Opportunity for experts to share ideas.
12. To request.

13. To perch for the night.
14. Device which indicates location.
17. Large elegant wader.
19. Tall, heavy bird with straight bill.
20. Hidden, adapted for concealment.
22. Call to warn others of danger.
26. A coot's are red.
27. Common habitat of small farmland bird.
28. May hold a meal for a small bird.
30. Useful for recall of detail.
31. Small bird of reeds and swamps.

Clues down

2. Limb enabling flight.
4. District.
5. Revegetation may provide this in time.
6. Opposite to more.
7. A male Emu does this for chicks for several months.
9. Ornithologist whose name denotes a species of cockatoo.
10. Number of Australian representatives of Woodpecker family.
11. Shape of spoonbill's bill.
15. Facial marking of owl.
16. To fly low over water.
18. Flight style of albatross.
21. Needs to be done daily to keep feathers in order.
23. Egg thief.
24. Breeding period.
25. Sub-group of family.
29. Behaviour of Willy Wagtail.

Classified ads

This new section is for members wishing to buy or sell items relating to birds or birdwatching. Please keep items to less than about four lines. Non-commercial activities only. *Editors.*

Wanted To Buy

Second-hand copies of any volumes of HANZAB (the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds). Contact Cheryl Gole (Tel: 9293 4958; or email gole@starwon.com.au).

Wanted to Buy

I wish to purchase a copy of Volume 1 of The Australian Museum's National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife *The Wrens and Warblers of Australia*, if anybody would like to liquidate his or her copy, or who knows somebody else who would. I am prepared to negotiate a good price. Contact John Brooke (08) 9386 2718.

Snippets

MASKED OWL — A NEW BIRD FOR LAKE MEALUP

Reprinted with permission from Lake Mealup Preservation Society Newsletter, Vol 14, No 1, April 2001

In early April Margaret and Stan Telford found a dead owl near the shed. This unusually large bird was identified by David James and Bryony Fremlin as a Masked Owl. This was subsequently confirmed by Ron Johnstone of the WA Museum, with whom the specimen was lodged.

The Masked Owl is in the same genus as the Barn Owl which it resembles, but is larger and has darker upper parts and facial mask. It is a widespread but sparsely occurring species, and its distribution in Western Australia is apparently not well defined. It can take larger prey than the Barn Owl, including young rabbits.

During the past year several members noted the remains of what appeared to be owl pellets below a large tuart bordering the campsite. The dead bird was found only tens of metres from this spot. Perhaps it had been roosting above our camp area for some time. Let's hope this wasn't the only Masked Owl at Mealup.

The Masked Owl sighting brings the number of bird species recorded at Lake Mealup to 123.

Notices

RAOU FELLOWS CENTENARY DINNER, 2001

The Fellows of the RAOU (Birds Australia) in celebration of the 100th Birthday of the organisation, have planned a dinner to mark the event. The first meeting of the RAOU was held in Adelaide on 31 October 1901, so the dinner will be held in Adelaide on 31 October 2001.

The dinner will be held at the Adelaide Club, 165 North Terrace, Adelaide, at 7:00 pm for 7:45 pm, on the evening of Wednesday 31 October 2001. Many of the early RAOU members will have been members of the Club and it provides a central location, as well as an assurance of high quality in venue, catering and service. Dress will be Lounge suit and tie. The guest of honour and speaker for the evening will be Robyn Williams, of the ABC Science Unit. Robyn is best known as presenter of the weekly Science Show. More formally he is Dr Robyn Williams, Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, but has always been a good friend of Birds Australia. He launched the first Atlas in Melbourne and promoted it, and many other Birds Australia projects, through the media. I am sure he will be entertaining as well as interesting.

All profits from the dinner will go to the Birds Australia Council, perhaps to assist in the production of some extra pages in a forthcoming *Emu*. It is not an exclusive event, members and non-members are invited to apply for invitations (\$150 + \$15 GST = \$165 each) for themselves and their guests. Bookings will be confirmed in order of receipt. Because we shall receive some benefit from the event — the dinner — it is not possible to make the cost a tax deductible research donation.

The Birds Australia Headquarters at Riversdale Road is grossly overworked and understaffed as a consequence of the organisation's shortage of money, so the dinner will be organised from outside Melbourne. Please do not contact the National Office for information.

Applications for invitations should be made as soon as possible to help us confirm arrangements with the Adelaide Club. Because there are complications with the GST, as well as to save the Birds Australia accounts from complications, cheques or money orders should be made payable to Stephen Davies, and sent to:

Dr Stephen Davies

PO Box 9, Mount Helena, Western Australia 6082

I regret that I cannot accept credit cards. A receipt will be attached to your invitation and the invitations may need to be shown to gain entry to the Adelaide Club on the night of the dinner. I shall be happy to provide further details for you.

We hope that the dinner will give members and well-wishers a pleasant opportunity of expressing their support for the work of Birds Australia and for its continued success in helping Australian birds. It will also provide an opportunity for discussion of other ways in which the Fellows as a group can help Birds Australia.

J A Keast

S Marchant

S J J F Davies

P N Reilly

I C R Rowley

B D Bell

M A Cameron

C D T Minton

SHOREBIRDERS

Please keep your eyes on *Pluvialis* plover legs during the upcoming migration and breeding season! Pacific Golden Plovers banded at various sites (Oahu, HI; Johnston Atoll; Nome, AK) might be coming your way, also American Golden Plovers, and Black-bellied Plovers captured near Nome. Each bird wears a metal band plus some combination of colour-bands or flags. It is important to record the exact sequence on each leg, and whether there is a colour-band above or below the metal band.

Send observations with as much information as possible to: Wally Johnson, Dept of Ecology, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717 USA (e-mail owjohnson2105@aol.com; tel 406-587-7305; fax 406-994-3190).

A PLEA TO WABN CONTRIBUTORS

WA *Bird Notes* is very much a members' newsletter and the support it receives from BAWA members is fantastic. One of the features of this is that there is a wide range of writing styles and emphases in reports and members' contributions. We value this individuality and variation in styles, as it adds to the interest and appeal of the newsletter.

WABN is edited, typeset and distributed by volunteer efforts of busy people. Well-presented articles make the job easier for everyone. Where articles are not well-presented, the editing and typesetting processes can be time consuming, and it may be irritating to contributors to have substantial changes made to their articles. To reduce the likelihood of these occurrences we would appreciate it if members would take just a little extra time to review their contribution. In particular, please check spelling, punctuation, readability and clarity, and accuracy of any tables or figures.

WABN is not a scientific journal, and its major role must remain as that of a members' newsletter. Nevertheless, it is widely read and used by birders of all kinds (including professional ornithologists). High standards of accuracy and clarity add to its value and to the pleasure of most readers. Please help us to maintain these standards and to enhance the usefulness and enjoyment provided by our newsletter.

John Blyth and Allan Burbidge
Editors

WEEDERS WANTED!

Yes, weeders are wanted. We have wonderful birding areas in the metropolitan area and beyond, but slowly and surely they are being engulfed in weeds. Consequently we lose our native plants and flowers and with them our birds.

If there is a bush area near you or there is one you particularly fancy, why not find out if there is a 'Friends' group for that area and join it. If not, perhaps you could start a group. The local city or shire usually has information about 'Friends' groups. Also, through the groups, you could put influence on the cities or shires to replant and conserve native vegetation.

So, birders, do yourself and the birds a favour. You'll find it very satisfying as by restoring the bush you'll keep the birds.

Hank van Wees

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

February 2001

On Tuesday 13 February, 17 members of the Albany Bird Group and two visitors met at Eden Road (off the lower Denmark Road) at 8:00 am to take part in a combined bird outing and wader count. The count was led by our local Atlas organiser, Tim Hunt.

The first stop took us in groups along Eden Road and into Lake Narrinup and the estuary. From there we visited Wilson's Inlet via Morley Road. The waders were active and plentiful and extended the full length of the shoreline. This meant a long walk for some of the group. The wader count was ON.

With the help of so many people, Tim had the count completed before lunchtime.

The bird call for the day was 62 species.

Three weeks prior we had taken the Birds Australia campout people there and found Red-capped Plover nests with eggs. Three or four very young birds were observed during the count.

Another successful day for the Albany Bird Group.

March 2001

A campout was held 12-13 March in the Nornalup district with the express purpose of contributing to the Atlas.

Thirteen members of the Albany Bird Group met at Che Sera Sera which is situated on the banks of the Frankland River.

We all arrived Monday afternoon, some of the group doing surveys as they came.

At Che Sera Sera we shared two of their comfortable cottages for the night.

Tim Hunt led the group. In the evening Tim presented slides and tapes of work that had been done with the Albert's Lyrebird 1968 to 1972 and the recorded movements of this remarkable bird. It was an added bonus and one we all appreciated. Our thanks go to Tim.

Next morning we awoke to thick fog that lifted as we were leaving at 7:30 am. The day could not have been better for birdwatching.

Each group had three or four areas to survey, finishing at Peaceful Bay where we had lunch and lots more red dots to add to the map!

The bird call after lunch resulted in a total of 69 species for the two days.

The April outing is planned for 10-11 April and we are heading for a night in the Wellstead district to add yet more dots to the Atlas.

Vivian McCormick

New bird card designs are coming!

**Ring our Perry House office on 9383 7749
from July and place your order.**

Observatory reports

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Hi, we're Helen and Paul, the new permanent wardens for Eyre, and we come to you from Melbourne by way of South America, South East Asia and Port Douglas. "Permanent?!!", we hear you scoff. Yes, that's right, we have signed up for the full year and although it's only been a month, if we keep having such great experiences we may decide to hang around! The pity is that there are so few of you around to share these moments. In fact, the Vics are well on top in the visitor stakes (is this an indication of how the footy season is going to run?).

Already today, and it's only 11 o'clock, birding activity is high. There are the usual suspects in at the bird baths – Brush Bronzings, 'New Hollands', 'Singers' and Silvereyes. However, the fun started much earlier. We were roused from our bed by a group of 22 Major Mitchell's Cockatoos. These birds are great characters, love to have an audience and seem to get the huff if there's nobody around to watch them perform. So, we had a quick breakfast while making appropriate noises whenever a suitably daring acrobatic manoeuvre was completed. We then became aware of an even larger group of 'Major Mitchells' approaching, so went to take a look. They were heading our way but not to visit! A beautiful White-bellied Sea-Eagle in sub-adult plumage was being mobbed by a group of 60-ish 'Major Mitchells' plus a raven for good measure. Our lot then flew off to join the fray, returning a little while later with extra friends for a welcome drink at the bird baths. The sea-eagle had obviously made the mistake of venturing into their territory and, though fleeing, it was a glorious sight. In fact, this is the second week in a row that we have seen sea-eagles on consecutive days. Yesterday, while completing the weekly beach count, we spotted an adult sea-eagle that put to flight a group of 30 White-faced Herons at the end of Kanidal Beach. Possibly it was the same adult that had put us to 'fright' (or was that the other way around?), the week before in about the same area. Strolling along the beach for the last kilometre of the count, we had just rounded a little point when we were brought to a halt by the sight of this magnificent bird of prey launching itself from a dead tree and struggling for lift on the light sea breeze. (Lumbering like a fully laden 747 is more like it!!). Speaking of the beach count, it's an adventure we look forward to every week and is a highly recommended excursion from Eyre if you have your own vehicle. Apart from the sea-



White-fronted Chat
panting in the heat at the
Australind campout.
Drawing by Charlie Davies

eagles, we have also seen pods of dolphins cruising the beach, a sea lion frolicking in the surf and stingrays basking in the shallows, as well as a wide variety of migratory waders.

So, as you can see, Eyre is not just about birds. In fact, on our first visit to Twilight Cove, we sat beneath the Baxter Cliffs on pure white sand, brilliantly framed by blue sky and turquoise sea, having a picnic lunch, while a sea lion, obviously doing some work on her tan, looked on with interest. A visit to Twilight Cove is another day trip that's very worthwhile.

Having mentioned possible day visits, it's not actually necessary to venture too far at all to have an enjoyable birding experience. Just by sitting on the verandahs watching the bird baths you can discover little gems to take away with you, as happened to us one afternoon.

Having just returned from completing a bird count out on the West Track, we were resting up with a refreshment, when a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater popped in to join us. Seemingly quite at ease with our attentions, and despite continual harassment from the 'New Hollands', it remained for a number of minutes flitting in and out of the water. This is the first instance that we know of where one has actually visited the bird baths although they are regularly seen around the area.

Speaking of verandahs, we can report that the southern ceiling has now been completely enclosed, much to the protestations of the resident Welcome Swallows, who while we toiled late into the afternoon continually swooped delivering a number of messages with some palpable hits!!! It was an interesting exercise. The day was brilliant, a light north-easterly blowing but not too hot, just perfect for working on the southern side. However, yes you guessed it, halfway through the wind changed and a gusty sea breeze started blowing. Picture this — newly appointed warden perched precariously atop an extension ladder, hammer in one hand, timber studs between clenched lips, while the other hand is gripping the shade cloth which is doing its best to imitate the runaway spinnaker of an America's Cup yacht.

Mission successfully accomplished, eventually, but the ructions from the swallows went on well into the night. Some of the poor unfortunates have found themselves trapped up in the roof unable, now, to find their way to freedom. Most we have liberated while others seem reluctant to abandon their homes. Unfortunately for them, the rudest shock still awaits. Once the western side is enclosed that completes all the verandah ceilings. No more cushy billets for the swallows. All is not lost for them, though. There is still the garage to converge upon and we plan to put up a series of running boards at the end of each rafter for them to perch upon.

Another addition to the southern verandah and bird bath is a bird hide. Basically a wooden wall between two

posts with a series of holes strategically placed, they should allow those interested in photography to take some nice close-ups. Tripod and rock-like stillness essential.

We guess that covers it for this issue. Oh, did we mention the peace and tranquility? It's all part of the Eyre essential experience. See you soon.

Paul and Helen Evans

Excursion reports

PERTH ZOO, 3 February

Our second visit to the Zoo took place on 3 February. Neil Hamilton suggested that we should visit in the evening and have a BBQ, having first looked at many of the bird cages. On this occasion we had the Zoo to ourselves as the gardens had closed for the evening. We had just over 50 members attending and were able to donate \$169.00 to the Zoo.

Our thanks go to Neil for giving us his time.

Bryan Barrett

WOODMAN POINT, 14 February

This mid-week walk at Woodman Point was enjoyed by 12 members. We were somewhat buffeted by a strong easterly wind which even the waders found disturbing as most were sheltering behind the rocks at the end of Wapet Groyne.

Our best sighting was the small flock of golden plovers that had been there throughout the summer months. These and other species such as a single greenshank, one or two Grey-tailed Tattlers and some Ruddy Turnstones, were all very easy to see.

After the walk Les Harris took some members to Kogolup Swamp in the hope of seeing crakes. We had seen both Baillon's and Spotless Crakes the previous week and also Buff-banded Rail, but unfortunately the area had dried out and none was seen during this walk.

Bryan Barrett

HERDSMAN LAKE, FLOREAT WATERS, 24 February

On what was advertised as a late afternoon search for crakes and rails, fleeting glimpses of one Spotless Crake were obtained by only a few of the thirty two people who attended this walk.

However, there were compensations. The most exciting of these was a male Freckled Duck with beautiful, red ski-jump bill sitting in the base of a small paperbark only ten or fifteen metres from the shore. Everyone had excellent views of it, tucked up and pretending to be asleep, preening and squabbling with neighbouring Grey Teal and finally swimming away into the sunset.

With water levels still relatively high for this time of year the only waders seen were Common Greenshanks and Black-winged Stilts. Larger wading birds were reasonably common, with Great and Little Egrets, Australian White and Straw-necked Ibises and Yellow-billed Spoonbills being conspicuous.

After gathering a list of 56 species those who survived the rather long walk sat down to a picnic tea in the dark. Many thanks to those few organised people who brought torches and lanterns with them! Once the loss of blood to mosquitoes threatened to outweigh the meal the last stragglers left for home.

John Blyth

AUSTRALIND, 3-5 March

About 23 people gathered at Australind for a weekend's exploration of the Leschenault Inlet and surrounding area. With temperatures in the very high 30s, birding was restricted to the early morning and late afternoon.

On Saturday morning we drove around the northern part of the inlet, checking likely areas for waterbirds and waders. The water level was high, so there were few waders to be found, but we were well compensated by seeing good numbers of Great and Little Egrets, White and Straw-necked Ibis, and all the cormorants. A stop beside an open field revealed 14 Banded Lapwings and nine Pacific Golden Plovers, plus a few White-fronted Chats.

Finding a cool spot at lunchtime was the order of the day; even the two Ospreys perched in a dead tree were holding out their wings, trying to catch a breeze. We decided to reassemble late afternoon, when we drove to the Bunbury end of the inlet. Twelve Red-necked Avocets, a Common Sandpiper and a Buff-banded Rail were seen, but the tide prevented us from venturing too far.

An early start on Sunday morning to the Collie River Diversion Dam was



Participants at the Australind Campout.
Photo taken at the diversion dam.
Photo by Molly Angus

a good idea, to look for bushbirds in the Jarrah forest before the extreme heat of the day set in. We found it held a good variety, including Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, a very active flock of Varied Sittellas inspecting every tree trunk, Golden Whistlers, Dusky Woodswallows, many Western Gerygones and Grey Fantails and a single White-breasted Robin.

A pod of some 10 to 20 dolphins were at the 'cut' late in the afternoon, but not a lot of birds were evident, apart from Crested Terns and Little Pied Cormorants on the breakwater and two flocks of Grey Plovers further down the beach. A walk along the mangrove boardwalk at Koombana Bay produced several New Holland and one White-cheeked Honeyeater and a lone Whimbrel was observed feeding in the samphire.

The official list was closed on Sunday night at 89, but after an early morning trip back to the inlet on a lower tide, this total was increased to 95. A magnificent White-bellied Sea-Eagle and several waders (four Eastern Curlews, many Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers and a single Pied Oystercatcher and Ruddy Turnstone) were seen. For a moment, a Great and a Little Egret were feeding side-by-side, allowing a direct size comparison, a huge difference when seen in such close proximity to each other.

Once again, our thanks go to Clive and Wendy Napier for their excellent leadership.

Pam Agnew

BAYSWATER BIRD SANCTUARY, 15 March

It was a cold, wintry autumn morning but about 20 diehard birdwatchers turned up for the walk. Gordon Elliot gave a brief history of the site and then we headed for the covered bird hide just in time to avoid a shower of rain. Fortunately this was the only real shower for the morning.

The spot was well worth a visit. The hide was a good place for telescopes and a concrete path that circumnavigates the lake made for easy walking and viewing. Crakes and rails have been seen in abundance someone said, but on this occasion only one Spotless Crake was in evidence and then only for a short time. A few late leavers saw a Buff-banded Rail brazenly walk across the lawn right beside the car park.

In all, 43 species of birds were seen. Most of the usual waterbirds and two species of waders (Black-fronted Dotterels and Black-winged Stilts) were there. Pink-eared Ducks were notably absent. A Black-shouldered Kite hovered low down and almost overhead for ages affording everyone a good look. Another highlight was seeing a Purple Swampphen chick following mum around. It can't have been long hatched judging by the sparseness of feathers.

Many thanks to Gordon Elliot for sharing his expertise and local knowledge and to Bryan Barrett for the disappearing bulldozer story.

Ed and Alyson Paull

LAKE JOONDALUP, 25 March

Most of the lake had dried up but there were some stretches of water on the west side where we did our birding. This enabled us to see many waterbirds and, combined with bushbirds, finish with a good total of 58 species for the morning.

Highlight of the walk was provided by the Whistling Kites (probably nesting) soaring low over our heads — a good chance for new birders to see the underwing pattern. One kite settled on a bush 20 m away so we were then able to get close-ups of the perched bird.

Other highlights were a large flock of White-fronted Chats and close-ups of heavily marked Eastern Long-billed Corellas being fed from a visitor's hand. A flash of unusual colour was an almost totally yellow aviary escaped Cockatiel which flew around the trees and also settled among ground feeding Galahs and Australian Ringnecks.

Special thanks are due to David Secomb who very skilfully called up quite a few small bushbirds that otherwise would have been missed. Also thanks to Chairman Clive for bringing his telescope. A short visit to the south end of the lake was fruitless as it was completely dry.

A very enjoyable morning's birding. Total 58 species.

Tom Delaney

CARINE LAKES, 1 April

Being April Fools' Day did not seem to concern the group of about 15 walkers who did the circuit of Carine Lakes on 1 April. As the big lake was devoid of water we were able to take a shorter route across the weeds growing on the dry mud flats — correspondingly there were very few waterbirds in this area apart from some very healthy looking swamphens enjoying the green weeds. Having visited this area almost exactly two years ago I was pleased to note that the new Reid Highway seemed to have used very little of the bush area at the southern end of the lake.

The small lake was more rewarding with splendid sightings of a Swamp Harrier hovering above, a Black-shouldered Kite perched quietly on the branch of a dead tree and a Sacred Kingfisher sitting quietly on a branch watching us watching him/her. One Musk Duck with a duckling was seen and some very colourful hybrid ducks were enjoying the water with their native cousins.

As we headed back to the cars for morning tea we saw a flock of approximately 50 Long-billed Corellas feeding on the lawns; with them were also a few Little Corellas.

One member had clearly heard the call of a Little Grassbird, not common at this location.

A total of 50 birds were seen, a good count for a morning when the east wind was very strong.

Thank you to Clive Nealon for an enjoyable morning.

Molly Angus

BLACKWALL REACH, 21 April

About ten members turned out on a fine autumn morning for what is normally one of the best walks on the Swan River. Unfortunately, the reserve is very stressed — too many dead and dying trees and shrubs, apparently the result of the long, dry spell we are having. Graffiti and vandalism are also apparent.

However, we were a happy crowd, following the recognised bush tracks (not the concrete) and the foreshore beyond the cliffs, onto the 'sand spit'. We actually saw a Rainbow Lorikeet enter a hollow and disappear not to come out. The flock of corellas brought forward the usual debate on recognition, some agreeing to differ. We were disappointed not to see the family of White-cheeked Honeyeaters that frequent the reserve. It's a 99% chance of their being there. May be the conditions have had an effect.

The highlight of the morning was the white-tailed black-cockatoos at such close quarters, feeding on the Dryandra (parrot bush). Didn't need the binoculars — they were at arm's length.

There were 28 sightings, bushbirds and waterbirds. Home early after an enjoyable walk with pleasant company.

Eric Pyatt



Varied Sittella seen on the Australind outing — report on page 28.

Drawing by Penny Towells

Monday 28 May meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm
Perry de Rebeira, formerly of the CSIRO, will speak on "Changes in Bander Training — A World View".

Saturday-Monday 2-4 June — Campout at Mount Gibson Station
The turnoff to Mt Gibson Station is 74 km north-east of Wubin along the Great Northern Highway heading for Paynes Find. The homestead is 27 km from the main road. Please ensure that you leave gates as you find them. Fill your fuel tank at Wubin. Bring warm clothes and sleeping gear as it gets cold inland at this time of the year.

Some accommodation is available in excellent units at the Emu Farm that is not far from the main camp area. Closer to the time we will know if there will be space available in the

shearers' quarters and some beds can be arranged at the homestead.

Birding can be excellent with many of the dryland species such as quail-thrush, Ground Cuckoo-shrike and Major Mitchell's Cockatoo being recorded. 65 species were recorded at the last campout two years ago.

Contact the Emu Farm on 9963 6519 for details and costs of accommodation.

Ring Clive Napier on 9332 7265 for information on alternate camping and accommodation.

Leader: Clive Napier

Sunday 10 June — Full-day excursion, Walyunga National Park

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at the end of Walyunga Road (off Great Northern Hwy, Upper Swan, near Bungarah Pool). Please be advised that there is a park entrance fee.

The national park lies along the Darling Scarp. The Avon River bounds one part of the planned walk, and there are some good stretches of Wandoo. We should see a good variety of birds.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Thursday 14 June — Mid-week walk, North Lake

Meet at the car park on Progress Drive at 8.30 am. Nearly 80 species of birds have been seen here.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday 16 June — Half-day excursion, Bickley Brook

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park just past the children's camp at the reservoir. Follow Maddington Rd and Hardinge Rd to reservoir.

Good prospects of seeing both Red-browed Finches and Red-eared Firetails, emu-wrens and a fair selection of other bushbirds.

Leader: John Stewart

Coming events

Important note re campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts **must** notify the BA Office of the number in their party and when they will arrive. With this information we will be able to make sure the group will be together and when to expect people.

Saturday 26 May — Members Day and AGM — CSIRO Auditorium, Floreat, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Details and registration forms were included in the last edition of *Wingspan* and can also be obtained from Perry House.

Sunday 27 May — Half-day excursion, Lake Gwelup

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at the corner of Stoneham Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road). Plenty of both waterbirds and bushbirds.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 17 June — Pelagic trip

Pelagic seabird trips have been booked for Sunday 17 June and Sunday 5 August. This first trip has been fully booked but places are available for the second trip (see details below).

Leader: Frank O'Connor

Sunday 24 June — Half-day excursion, North Herdsman Lake

Meet at 8:30 am at the northern end of Herdsman Lake, off Jon Sanders Drive, in the car park of the Perth Pony Club. There should be lots of waterbirds to be seen here.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Monday 25 June meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Speaker to be announced. Please contact the Perry House office (9383 7749) prior to the meeting for details.

Saturday 30 June — Half-day excursion, North Mole, Fremantle, and Woodman Point

Meet at 8.30 am at the end of North Mole, near the lighthouse. We will look for seabirds here, and may go on to look at the birds at Woodman Point. Don't forget your telescope.

Leader: Ian Standring

Sunday 8 July — Half-day excursion, Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury

Meet at 8.30 am at the first car park off Whitford Avenue (on the right-hand side through the entrance). An interesting park where gardens and lawns are flanked by natural woodland of Tuarts and Banksias. Some 65 species of birds have been sighted in the area, including Yellow-throated Miner.

Leader: Rod Smith

July 11-18 — Combined Kimberley Campout, Kingston Rest, Kununurra

Birds Australia, the Wildflower Society, the Naturalists Club and the Kimberley Society are combining for a campout at Kingston Rest, 70 km south of Kununurra. Kevin Coate is the leader.

For details, contact Sue Abbotts, the Birds Australia coordinator, on 9444 1607.

Sunday 15 July—Half-day excursion, Bold Park

Meet at 9:00 am in the car park on Reabold Hill Scenic Drive for a walk in Bold Park and do a bird survey for the Atlas.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Saturday 21 July — Half-day excursion, Ashfield Flats

Meet at 9:00 am at the southern end of West Road, Bassendean. This area is called the Sandy Beach Reserve. Bring suitable footwear for muddy areas. Leader is Ron van Delft, the original author of Birding Sites Around Perth. This is one of his favourite spots and it is some years since he has led an excursion to the Flats.

Leader: Ron van Delft

Monday 23 July meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Speaker to be announced. Please contact the Perry House office (9383 7749) prior to the meeting for details.

Sunday 29 July — Half-day excursion, Webb's Lease, Jarrahdale

Meet at 9:00 am in the car park. Travel from Armadale on the South-west Highway. Turn left into Jarrahdale Road. Go through Jarrahdale. After approximately 5.5 km, turn right into Acacia Road (the next right turn past Blue Rock Road). Keep to the left to get to the car park.

Red-eared Firetails, White-breasted Robins, and Red-winged Fairy-wrens are regularly seen here.

Leader: Dave Crossley

Saturday 4 August — Full day excursion, Yarra Road (Christmas Tree Well), Shire of Beverley

Meet at 9:00 am at the Christmas Tree Well car park on the left-hand side of the Brookton Highway, heading east. The reserve is about 45 km from the junction of the Brookton and Albany Highways in Kelmscott. Good bushbirding in the wandoo forest.

Leader: Brice Wells

Sunday 5 August — Hillarys Pelagic Trip

Pelagic seabird trips have been booked for Sunday 17 June and Sunday 5 August. The first trip has been fully booked but places are available for this second trip.

The trip leaves at 7:00 am from near Underwater World at Hillarys Boat Harbour and returns at about 4:00 am. There is a limit of 23 people. Booking is essential. The cost is expected to be \$70 and is required one week before the event.

Book by email (foconnor@iinet.net.au) or by phoning Frank O'Connor on 08 9386 5694.

Leader: Frank O'Connor

Saturday 11 August—Half-day excursion, Bibra Lake

Meet at 8:30 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake, off Progress Drive.

Bibra Lake is part of the Beeliiar Wetlands Chain and a large number of water and bushbirds can be seen here.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Thursday 16 August — Mid-week walk, Canning River Regional Park, Wilson

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

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 19 August — Full day excursion, Wambyn Nature Reserve, Shire of York

Meet at 9:00 am at the junction of York Road and the Great Eastern Highway ('The Lakes' service station). The reserve is approximately 35 km beyond the junction. Good stands of Wandoo and breakaways, etc, where the birding can be interesting.

Leader: John Ashford

Saturday 25 August — Half-day excursion, Kings Park
Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the northern end of Forrest Drive at the junction of Forrest and Lovekin Drives. We will conduct Atlas surveys in several areas of the park.

Leader: Frank O'Connor

Monday 27 August meeting — State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Simon Nevill of Falcon Tours will speak on "Dryandra Woodland Reserve" and "The Wheatbelt from a layman's perspective".

Saturday–Sunday 1-2 September—Short-weekend Campout, Jurien Bay

You must book your own accommodation at the Jurien Bay Caravan Park, phone: 9652 1595. There are on-site vans available and plenty of space for caravans and camping.

Travel north on the Brand Hwy to Bibby Rd – Munbinea Rd – Jurien Rd. All sealed and more interesting and shorter than the main highway.

A 2-3 hour boat trip around the off-shore islands may be arranged if sufficient people wish to participate. Cost \$20 per person.

Please advise the Birds Australia Office if you are attending, and the number in your party who are interested in the boat trip.

We will be at the caravan park on Friday afternoon.

Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier

Sunday 9 September — Half-day excursion, Helena Valley, Boya

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

The distance we'll walk will be about 5 km, but those who would like a shorter walk can return earlier.

Leader: Wendy Napier

Saturday 15 September — Full day excursion, Flynn Road

Meet at 9:00 am on the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about one kilometre on the Perth side of 'The Lakes' turnoff, ie, the York Road turnoff.

We will look at several areas of Wandoo woodland where three species of robin are usually seen.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Thursday 20 September — Mid-week walk, Alfred Cove

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast), off Burke Drive, Attadale. We hope to look for any waders which have arrived early, and also see the many bushbirds in the area.

We may go on later to Kogolup Lake to look for the crakes that inhabit the reeds around this lake.

Leader: Les Harris

Crossword answers No 25

Across

1. law, 3 warblers, 8 conference. 12 ask, 13 roost, 14 GPS, 17 egret, 19 stork, 20 cryptic, 22 alarm, 26 eyes, 27 stubble, 28 web, 30 notes, 31 grassbird

Down

2 wing, 4 area, 5 shelter, 6 less, 7 escorts, 9 Carnaby, 10 none, 11 spatulate, 15 disc, 16 skim, 18 glide, 21 preen, 23 robber, 24 season, 25 genus, 29 bold

Sunday 23 September — Half-day excursion, Three Wren Search, South Bold Park

Meet at 8:30 am at the end of Fortview Road at the side of the Christ Church playing fields for a two-hour walk

In this small area, at the southern end of Bold Park, three species of fairy-wrens have been seen. White-winged Fairy-wren, Splendid Fairy-wren and the Variegated Fairy-wren will be looked for in the low coastal scrub.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Friday–Monday, 28 September to 1 October — Campout at Dryandra State Forest

A cottage has been booked which can accommodate 12 people in two separate rooms. Cost will be \$16.50 per night per person. Please book early with the Birds Australia Office.

No camping is permitted in the forest, but sites for tents, caravans, etc, will be available at the camping ground which is located off the York-Williams Road, past the most southerly entrance to Dryandra. A small fee will be charged here.

Spotlight, scopes, etc, could be useful. Remember, it will still be cold at night!

Leader: Clive Napier

Wanted: Back Copies

Our Librarian, Sue Mather, is building up reference material in our Perry House library and would appreciate donations of back copies of these journals:

.. *The Corella* (NSW Australian Bird Study Association)

.. *The Western Australian Naturalist* (WA Naturalists' Club)

You can drop off your donation at Perry House.
Thank you.

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