

# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of  
Birds Australia Western Australia Inc  
(a division of Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

No 101 March 2002

ISSN 1445-3983

## LETTER-WINGED KITES (*ELANUS SCRIPTUS*) NESTING AT LAKE GREGORY

**T**he recording of Letter-winged Kites nesting at Lake Gregory poses the question, is this species extending its breeding area into Western Australia? Whilst this raptor has been recorded a number of times in this state its recognized breeding areas are the Diamantina River and Lake Eyre drainage basins.

On a five-day visit to Lake Gregory in June 2000 two pairs sitting on nests and one pair nest-building were sighted within a two-kilometre distance and another single bird about 26 km away. Camped within 100 metres of the nest-building pair we were able to closely observe their behaviour.

The Letter-winged Kite, one of the rarest and most gregarious Australian raptors, could be confused with the common and widespread Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus axillaris*), the other endemic *Elanus* species, but there are marked differences in plumage, flight patterns and habits.

The Letter-winged Kite has the owl-like characteristics of large, black-rimmed eyes, soft plumage and asymmetrical ear openings facilitating the pin pointing of sound. In the bird we saw the deep red iris was conspicuous. Like the Black-shouldered Kite, this species is startlingly white but has quite a different underwing pattern with black plumage forming a W shape.

The flight pattern is often described as tern-like with deep, loose wing beats but this was most obvious when the birds were coming in to roost, hovering and landing as do Fairy Terns (*Sterna nereis*).

Lake Gregory is at the northeast edge of the Great Sandy Desert, just south of the Tanami Track and about 200 km south of Halls Creek. The lake has a large catchment and becomes flooded with substantial rainfall in

the wet-season so is usually fresh but becomes saline when the water level recedes. The northern side of the lake, 26°10'34"S 127°25'41"E, the only place to camp when the lake is flooded, supported a substantial number of eucalypts growing on the high ground above flood level. This could be seen as a comparable habitat with the recognized breeding area of the Diamantina River and Lake Eyre basin. Whilst there is fresh water in the area in wet seasons, the surrounding country is arid and harsh. Cyclonic rain brings miraculous life to both the flora and fauna of the area. So it is possible that a population explosion of the favoured prey of

the Letter-winged Kite, the Long-haired Rat (*Rattus villosissimus*), occurred in 2000 thus creating the conditions for a breeding colony.

The habits of this species are described as nocturnal. The pair nest-building close to the camp site were active by



Letter-winged Kite at Lake Gregory  
Photograph by Sue Mather

mid afternoon but this could have resulted from the nest-building activities or from agonistic behaviour demonstrated by a Whistling Kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*). It has been shown that the Letter-winged Kite sometimes takes over the nest of other raptors so it is possible that the Whistling Kite's nest had been usurped and was being refurbished. The latter was never very far away. The other two pairs of Letter-winged Kites sitting on nests appeared to be relatively inactive when observed in the daytime. One bird was sitting on the nest while the mate was nearby on a conspicuous perch, as has been observed in breeding pairs in Queensland. As the nests were difficult to reach, we did not see eggs or young, but we concluded from the behaviour of the birds that they were breeding. The birds could be heard calling through the night, particularly in the early evening.

Unlike other raptors, this species is an opportunistic and prolific breeder. Clutch sizes can be from 3 to 6 eggs with the suggestion that breeding will continue while there is sufficient of the main prey, the Long-haired Rats, available. The stick nests are usually one per tree and high in the canopy. Our observations at Lake Gregory were consistent with this pattern, with the two sitting pairs in trees about 100 m apart and 1-2 km from the nest building pair. The only previous reports of breeding in Western Australia consist of a probable breeding attempt at Learmonth in 1943 and a nest with five young at east Yuna in 1951.

The distribution of the Letter-winged Kites was shown in the 1984 Atlas to be in two distinct habitats— 61% of the breeding records were in the Diamantina River and Lake Eyre basin, and the coastal records were the result of periodic irruptions. These irruptions appear to result from population explosions in the breeding area with young birds dispersing to the coast. Whilst the species is sometimes described as nomadic it is not nomadic in the sense that for example the arid zone honeyeaters are, annually following sources of nectar. This dispersal, seen as irruptions, is more the result of attempts to find an alternate food source as the rat population declines. The major irruptions recorded were in 1951-53, 1966-70, 1976-77 and 1980-81 with not many sightings in Western Australia. The detailed study of the 1976-77 irruption to Victoria showed that most of the birds observed were under two years old, were unfit and became progressively more so in the winter, with a resulting high mortality rate. They were also mostly seen near or on the coast with the suggestion that their search for food had brought them to their geographic limit. The assumption is that the breeding sites always retain a nucleus population that breeds prolifically once the climatic and consequently food conditions are suitable.

Observation of this relatively rare species raises a number of questions. Have its distinctive characteristics of asymmetrical ear openings, white plumage, nocturnal hunting and calling, evolved as a result of specific food needs and that food is easier to obtain at night? Why are they such prolific breeders when in an unreliable climatic zone the food source will always decline? Why do they appear to be so dependent on one food source and not able to prey-switch to another food source when necessary? The problem is to first find the Letter-winged Kites, inevitably in remote, difficult to access but wonderful locations.



Letter-winged Kite's nest at Lake Gregory.  
Photograph by Sue Mather

#### Sources Consulted

- Aumann, T. and Bellchambers, K. (1999), Letter-winged Kites *Elanus scriptus* in the south-west of the Northern Territory, 1994-95. *The Australian Bird Watcher*, 18: 68-74.
- Blakers, M., Davies, S.J.J.F. and Reilly, P.N. (1984), *The Atlas of Australian Birds*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Ey, A. (1984), Notes on Letter-winged Kite breeding in western Queensland. *Australian Bird Watcher*, 10: 243-247.
- Hollands, D.L.G. (1979), The Letter-winged Kite irruption of 1976-77. *The Australian Bird Watcher*, 8: 1-30.
- Johnstone, R.E. and Storr, G.M. (1998), Handbook of Western Australian Birds. Vol. 1. Non-passerines (Emu to Dollarbird). Western Australian Museum, Perth.
- Marchant, S. and Higgins, P.J. (eds) (1993), Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Vol. 2 Raptors to Lapwings. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Olsen, P. (1995), *Australian Birds of Prey*. University of N.S.W. Press, Sydney.
- Pizzey, G. and Knight, F. (1997), *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Serventy, D.L. and Whittell, H.M. (1967), *Birds of Western Australia*. Lamb, Perth.

**Suzanne Mather**

## Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires or metropolitan suburbs are in brackets.

Please report interesting observations to Frank O'Connor (telephone 9386 5694 or preferably by e-mail sightings@iinet.net.au). Most sightings are included on the

BAWA web site <http://birdswa.iinet.net.au> as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in WABN.

Names and order follow Christidis, L. and Boles, W. (1994) (The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories. *RAOU Monograph No. 2*).

Observers are reminded that adequate documentation is required for inclusion in WABN for rarely seen or difficult to identify species. For example, new records, or 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.

**Highlights:** This summer has shown the effects of the dry year in the south of WA. There have been numerous sightings of Glossy Ibis, Buff-banded Rail, Australian Spotted Crake and Baillon's Crake plus Freckled Ducks in much higher numbers than for some time. Lake Joondalup is having an outstanding year with over 30 000 waterbirds being seen. Banded Stilts are in high numbers near Perth with 20 000 at Rottnest and 2500 near Mandurah. Three sightings of a Royal Spoonbill, and several sightings of Black-tailed Native-hen and Pied Butcherbird further south than usual are also signs of the conditions. But where have all the migratory waders gone? There are very few at Albany and with Lake McLarty, Thomsons Lake and Forrestdale Lake dry very early there haven't been many near Perth either. A Little Stint, an Australian Pratincole, two Ruff and the usual Red-necked Phalarope have been the most interesting sightings.

The Kimberley has also had a dry start to the wet season but some excellent sightings have been made with the first record (including photos) of a Grey Wagtail in WA by George Swann, and two rare gulls found in Broome by Chris Hassell and George Swann. The identity of one of these gulls is still being debated (more details next issue). The Red-necked Phalarope is fairly common in the Pilbara, but there have only been a few records in the Kimberley and the first was found for Derby.

Every trip to Ashmore Reef and Christmas Island seems to find new birds for these sites and often they are new for Australia. Two trips to Christmas Island proved to be no exception with submissions made for two new species for Australia, and a trip to Ashmore Reef recorded the first White Tern in WA. There is much more to be learnt about these sites.

## SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

**Quail sp.** – 1, 05/11/01, Cape Vlamingh (Rottnest) – WB (probably Stubble – 1st quail recorded on Rottnest)

**Freckled Duck** – 1, 29/11/01, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – FO \* 4, 16/12/01, Big Carine Swamp (Carine) – JC \* 20, 12/01/02, Big Carine Swamp (Carine) – PS \* 1, 15/01/02, Lake Joondalup (Woodvale), EP

**Little Egret** – 1, 24/12/01, Oyster Harbour, Lower King (Albany) – RG, AB

**Little Bittern** – 1, 21/12/01, James Spiers Drive (Wanneroo) – EP

**Australasian Bittern** – 1, 01/01/02, Lake Powell, Elleker (Albany) – FO

**Glossy Ibis** – 6, 19/01/02, north Kogolup Lake (Beeliar) – BAWA

**Royal Spoonbill** – 1, 30/12/01, Perry Lakes (Floreath) – PS \* 1, 02/01/02, Perry Lakes (Floreath) – DP \* 1, 10/01/02, Lake Joondalup (Joondalup) – HvW

**Square-tailed Kite** – 1, 17/12/01, Bungendore Park (Bedfordale) – FO \* 1, 19/01/02, Masonmill Road (Carmel) – WB, CC, DP

**Brown Goshawk** – 1, 15/01/02, near central lighthouse (Rottnest) – RP

**Buff-banded Rail** – 1, 05/11/01, Herschell Lake (Rottnest) – WB \* 1 adult

and 5 chicks, 05/12/01, Troy Park Alfred Cove (Attadale) – FO \* 2 chicks, 02/01/02, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – DP \* 7, 11/01/02, Alfred Cove (Attadale) – FO, WB \* 2 adults and 2 chicks, 15/01/02, Lake Claremont (Claremont) – WM

**Black-tailed Native-hen** – 10, 27/11/01, Elleker Grasmere Road (Albany) – FO \* 1, 15/01/02, Eyre Park, Middleton Beach (Albany) – VM, AB

**Australian Bustard** – 2, 24/11/01, 12 km east of Kalbarri (Northampton) – FO

**Black-tailed Godwit** – 3, 02/12/01, Lake McLarty (Murray) – CG, CD

**Great Knot** – 41, 18/01/02, Alfred Cove (Attadale) – DP, WB

**Little Stint** – 1 in breeding plumage, 02/12/01, Lake McLarty (Murray) – CG, CD (BARC submission by FO)

**Red-necked Phalarope** – 1, 04/11/01, Pearse Lakes (Rottnest) – RN

**Red-necked Avocet** – 2000, 06/12/01, Lake McLarty (Murray) – FO

**Ruff** – 1, 03/11/01, Karakin Lakes (Gingin) – BAWA \* 1, 03/11/01, Alfred Cove (Attadale) – PA, DA

**Pacific Golden Plover** – 4, 23/12/01, Woodman Point (Coogee) – JC



Grey Wagtail photographed on Mitchell Plateau in November 2001

Photograph by George Swann

**Red-capped Plover** – 2 adults with 1 runner, 10/01/02, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – WM

**Australian Pratincole** – 1, 16/09/01, Lake Thetis (Dandaragan) – MB

**Pacific Gull** – 1 immature, 29/11/01, Woodman Point (Coogee) – FO (unusual this close to Perth)

**Common Tern** (sub species *hirundo*) – 27, 27/12/01, Halls Head (Mandurah) – FO

**Whiskered Tern** – 4, 27/12/01, Goegrup Lake (Murray) – FO \* 8, 21/01/02, Lake Joondalup (Joondalup) – FO, BS

**White-winged Black Tern** – 1, 13/11/01, Israelite Bay (Esperance) – JB

**Peaceful Dove** – 2, 23/11/01, Murchison River Bridge, NW Coastal Highway (Northampton) – FO

**Long-billed Corella** – 1, 25/11/01, Narrogin – FO (escapee? with Galahs)

**Little Corella** – 700, 10/01/02, Lake Monger (Wembley) – FO

**Masked Owl** – 1 heard, 25/11/01, Dryandra Village (Cuballing) – FO

**Tawny Frogmouth** – nest with 2 chicks, 25/01/02, Heathcote (Applecross) – WM

**Rufous Fieldwren** – 1, 31/12/01, Cheyne Beach Road (Albany) – FO

**Brown Honeyeater** – 1 flavistic, 23/12/01 to 22/01/02, Yarra and Willies Roads (Beverley) – JD, HD

**White-winged Triller** – 2 nests, 09/12/01, Greenlands Road (Murray) – JD, HD

**Masked Woodswallow** – 10, 23/11/01, 38 km east of Kalbarri (Northampton) – FO

**Pied Butcherbird** – 1, 29/11/01 and 05/01/02, near Pumphreys Bridge (Wandering) – FO

**Chestnut-breasted Mannikin** – 3, 15/07/01, Carine Swamps (Carine) – DL

**White-backed Swallow** – 1, 16/09/01, Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary (Bayswater) – HvW (unusual on Swan Coastal Plain)

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

**Black-breasted Buzzard** – 2, 23/11/01, NW Coastal Highway, ~40 km south of Billabong Roadhouse (Shark Bay) – FO

#### **KIMBERLEY**

**Garganey** – 1, 14/12/01, Waterbank Station (Broome) – CH

**Little Curlew** – 1000, 11/01, sewage ponds (Broome) – CH

**Red-necked Phalarope** – 1, 04/01/02, sewage ponds (Derby) – LL, PM (1<sup>st</sup> for Derby – video)

**Little Ringed Plover** – 1, 08-11/11/01, Anna Plains Station (Broome) – CH (BARC submission)

**Sabine's Gull** – 1, 14/12/01, Coconut Wells beach (Broome) – CH (BARC submission, 1<sup>st</sup> for Broome – see article in this issue)

**Grey Wagtail** – 1, 17/11/01, Mitchell Plateau (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – GS (BARC submission, 1<sup>st</sup> for WA – photos)

## **Birds Australia Western Australia Inc**

### **Office, Perry House**

71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat WA 6014

**Hours:** Monday-Friday 9:30 am to 12.30 pm

**Telephone:** (08) 9383 7749

**Facsimile:** (08) 9387 8412

**Email:** birdswa@inet.net.au

### **Birds Australia WA Home Page:**

<http://birdswa.inet.net.au>

### **Chairman:**

Clive Nealon

35 Hilarion Road, Duncraig WA 6023

Tel: (08) 9448 5921

E-mail: clivenealon@bigpond.com

### **Joint Editors:** John Blyth

Tel: (08) 9405 5100 (w)

Tel: (08) 9381 6293 (h)

Fax: (08) 9306 1641 (w)

E-mail: johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au

Allan Burbidge

Tel: (08) 9405 5109 (w)

Tel/Fax: (08) 9306 1642 (h)

Fax: (08) 9306 1641 (w)

E-mail: austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au

**Production:** Margaret Philippson

**Distribution:** Rod Smith

### **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 June 2002 Issue**

**1 May 2002 at Perry House**

### **Advertising Rates**

1/4 page \$30.00

1/2 page \$50.00

Full page \$90.00

**Barn Swallow** – 100, 11/01, sewage ponds (Broome) – CH

#### ASHMORE REEF

**White Tern** – 1, 02/11/01, at sea south of Scott Reef – MC, GS *et al.* (BARC submission, 1<sup>st</sup> for WA if accepted)

#### CHRISTMAS ISLAND

**Little Black Cormorant** – 1, 11-18/11/01, settlement – MC *et al.*

**Little Egret** – 1, 11-18/11/01, The Dales – RC

**Nankeen Night Heron** – 1, 11-18/11/01, Hugh's Dale – MC *et al.*

**Short-toed Eagle** – 1, 07-14/12/01, near airport – RC (BARC submission, 1<sup>st</sup> for Australia if accepted)

**White-breasted Waterhen** – nest with 5 eggs, 07-14/12/01, Christmas Island – RC

**Bar-tailed Godwit** – 1, 07-14/12/01, airport – RC

**Greater Sand Plover** – 2, 07-14/12/01, Ethel Beach – RC

**Oriental Cuckoo** – 1, 07-14/12/01, near airport – RC

**Fork-tailed Swift** – 1, 11-18/11/01, near airport – MC *et al.*

**Brown-backed Needletail** – 1, 11-18/11/01, rubbish tip and near airport – MC *et al.* (BARC submission, 1<sup>st</sup> for Australia if accepted)

**Shrike sp.** – 1, 11-18/11/01, Poon San – RC

**Grey Wagtail** – 4, 11-18/11/01, Murray Road – MC *et al.* \* 5, 07-14/12/01, Murray Road – RC

**Asian House Martin** – 1, 11-18/11/01, rubbish tip – MC *et al.* (BARC submission)

#### OBSERVERS

AB = Anne Bondin

BARC = BA Rarities Committee

BAWA = BAWA Excursion

BS = Barry Stanley

CC = Christine Cooper

CD = Colin Davis

CG = Cecilia Grant

CH = Chris Hassell

DA = Des Agnew

DL = Derek Lawson

DP = Dean Portelli

EP = Easy Patterson

FO = Frank O'Connor

GS = George Swann

HD = Hazel Darnell

HVW = Hank van Wees

JD = John Darnell

JB = John and Judy Blyth

JC = Jarrad Cousin

LL = Lou Leidweiger

MB = Mary Bremner

MC = Mike Carter (Vic)

PA = Pam Agnew

PM = Pam Masters

PS = Peter Sandilands

RC = Rohan Clarke (Vic)

RG = Ray Garstone

RN = Ray Nojek

RP = Ryan Phillips

VM = Viv McCormick

WB = Wes Bancroft

WM = Wynton Maddeford

## Editorial

### WHITHER WABN?

In the last (100<sup>th</sup>) edition we raised a number of points for readers to consider in relation to the future direction for *WA Bird Notes*.

We sought input from members, for whom and by whom Bird Notes are produced, as to what form it might take for the beginning of its next hundred issues. We have had responses from eight members, both written and verbal. All responses were useful and constructive. We summarise these responses below, in relation to the questions and issues we raised in the last *WA Bird Notes*.

- *Is the current balance of the newsletter, between standard items such as coming events and excursion reports, and actual informative articles about birds, satisfactory to most members?*

All respondents expressed satisfaction with the current balance of the newsletter (but see below for some constructive suggestions that were received).

- *If we wanted to shorten WABN, or find space for new features, what sort of current material might we exclude?*
- No-one suggested shortening WABN, and there was a general feeling that currently it is about the right length. One respondent felt that the crossword could be excluded, but some other members have expressed pleasure in

doing the crosswords.

- *Are there other specific items or sections we might include? These could include summaries of monthly meetings, especially the most interesting points from the evenings' talk. Would anyone offer to write up such a regular summary?*

We have had one negative and one positive response to the idea of summarising monthly meetings, and we have not had any volunteers to provide them. To do this would require an enthusiastic member to attend virtually all meetings and write an interesting report on them.

- *Might we seek regular or occasional guest articles written by well known bird watchers and/or professional ornithologists, or perhaps include interesting items from other newsletters or journals more frequently?*

Three members suggested that we include occasional or regular special features of interest to members, that would also enhance our enjoyment of birdwatching. This would be consistent with the quote from Dom Serventy, cited in our previous article: "We shall find our hobby much more interesting, the more we know about it". Suggestions



Buff-banded Rail—recorded recently from several sites around Perth.  
*Drawing by Pam Free*

include regular synopses of current research on birds, a series on the different regions of WA in relation to birding, and informative articles on issues such as moult in Australian birds, perhaps under the heading of 'Learning about birds'. We are wary of making this a regular feature (because of the work load involved for editors and contributors), but will be looking for opportunities to include articles of this sort.

- *Do members like the art work, and/or wish to see more photographs?*

One contributor said "The use of artwork in WABN has been one of its great assets. The sketch type styles used complement the current format and would not be as attractive in the full colour format of other magazines. It is an excellent way of promoting local talent". Another contributor felt that photographs were an attractive feature.

- *Could the format of the newsletter be modernised, perhaps by more colour, better quality paper, innovative use of different texts and styles etc.?*

Several contributors felt strongly that WABN should not aspire to be another 'Wingspan' and that the emphasis should be on interesting articles rather than glossy presentation. One respondent thought that some improvements in this direction would be worthwhile, even if it meant a small increase in cost. We are investigating some minor cosmetic changes that may make the newsletter more attractive and easier to read.

- *Would the WA Group be prepared to subsidise the newsletter to a small extent if additional size and improved quality cost more than we currently gain from subscriptions, or would members agree to pay more per copy? As an alternative, might we seek to defray costs by running more paid advertisements, or even look for sponsorships, as Wingspan does to support its full colour format?*

All respondents thought that it was not necessary or desirable to change the newsletter in a way that would increase costs, although one respondent said he would be prepared to pay a little extra for more colour or similar improvements. The same person was happy to see us pursue extra funding through advertising.

We shall attempt to address some of these matters in coming issues of WABN, and look forward to further feedback from readers. Whatever minor changes we make, we will continue to rely on members' contributions to maintain and improve the interest and value of WABN.

**John Blyth and Allan Burbidge**

### **Journals Needed for Library**

Back copies of the journal *Corella* would be useful for the Birds Australia WA group library.

Donations of any issues would be very welcome.

Contact **Sue Mather, BAWA librarian**

Tel: 9389 6416

Email: suemather@telstra.easymail.com.au

## **Letters to the Editors**

Dear Editors

Enclosed is an offering for Bird Notes (see elsewhere in this issue—Eds.). The question of what is or was the natural food of parrots and other birds, interests me, and in many cases can no longer be answered. I hope that there will be some reaction.

I was very pleased to read all the comments on my previous note, on *Cacomantis flabelliformis*, and feel proud that it even merited a sketch by Judy Blyth. I see this as an important function of the Notes, to stimulate discussion.

Number 100 was of much interest to me. Also the enclosed reprint of Note No 1. I have the nos 1-4, given to me by L Glauert, about 40 years ago. The nos 2-4 are printed, with small print, like the copy of No 1 you sent. But my No 1 is not printed, but typed, on five pages. The text is identical with that of the printed copy, so that it was presumably such a typed copy that was sent to the printers. One wonders whose initiative it was to have the Notes printed. As Glauert was a founding member of the group, it is perhaps surprising that he did not have the printed version.

Last night we returned from Callcup. *Chrysococcyx lucidus* was still whistling almost daily this month, but trilling of *Cacomantis* is already irregular. *Cuculus pallidus* is only a scarce visitor to our place and (unlike the two other species) we have no evidence that it breeds.

**G F Mees**

Dear Editors

Congratulations to all those involved in the production of the 100<sup>th</sup> edition of *Western Australian Bird Notes*. It provided a great range of articles, both historical and current, and posed important questions as to the future directions of the group.

I felt the quality of the art work was excellent, and I also enjoyed Penny Towells' humorous sketches and quips. Together I think they add an extra dimension, catering for the broad range of interests and attitudes of group members.

**Pam Agar**

Dear Editors

In WABN 100:24 Dick Rule cited some very interesting observations from Mandurah.

Because I am currently working on the Birds of Mandurah, any other observations by Dick would be of great value and of much interest to me at least.

Consequently I urge Dick to publish more of his observations in the area and suggest a full birdlist (in WABN, of course), because there are no published birdlists for the area, only adjacent areas. These are the Swan River (Alexander 1920, Serventy 1948),

Rockingham (Sedgwick 1940) and Harvey (Sedgwick 1973). Further, although the southern boundary of both Alexander and Serventy is the Murray River, those papers are now dated, as are Sedgwick's.

So, Dick, please publish more and in the interim contact me—telephone 9370 1434—because I wish to interrogate you and ascertain if you would be kind enough to throw more 'crumbs'—valuable observations, actually—my way.

**Robert Stranger**

## Learning About Birds

*Bird diseases are not something that most birders spend much time thinking about. However, the following articles by Ruth Haight, of Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre Inc, remind us that birds are susceptible to various diseases that could impact on their status in the wild.*

### MEGABACTERIA IN THE PERTH HILLS

**W**ildlife carers at Kanyana are overwhelmed, nursing sick, juvenile parrots with a contagious disease caused by the organism Megabacteria. Megabacteria was first detected at Kanyana in 1996, in a faecal sample from a Galah with diarrhoea and dramatic weight loss. Dr Ian Hainsworth identified the organism.

Last spring, while Dr Martin Gilbert was in residence at Kanyana, many juvenile Australian Ringneck parrots were admitted with a wasting disease. Dr Gilbert performed several post mortems and sent tissue samples to Murdoch University for Dr Shane Raidal (Avian Pathologist) to examine. After nine months, his report arrived with the result of his findings: Megabacteria in all cases.

Since June 2001, around 40 cases of Megabacteria have been detected in juvenile Galahs, Australian Ringnecks and Red-capped Parrots.

Dr Kayoko Ishigami performed post mortem examinations at Kanyana on Galahs that died between June and September 2001. Smears were made and stained with Gram's stain. Those with Megabacteria were confirmed by Dr Tim Oldfield (Wattle Grove Veterinary Hospital) who then gave us a positive smear to use as a reference.

Wet mount, flotation and Gram's stain preparations were examined under 100x and 400x magnification. Megabacteria are quite large and distinguishable and as we became more skilled at identifying the organism on wet mount preparations, we used this as a screening test. The reagents and equipment for faecal flotation and Gram's stain are expensive and resources at Kanyana are stretched.

Faecal samples are taken when parrots have one or more of the following signs:

1. underweight (keel bone prominent)
2. vomiting
3. calling for food but not eating when food is offered
4. tar-like faeces that stick to the vent
5. juvenile or immune-suppressed by injury, etc.

Birds that die shortly after admission are given a post mortem examination and several have been positive for Megabacteria when their faeces or proventriculus impression smears are examined microscopically. One of these positives was tested before it died and the faeces showed no Megabacteria. This 'false negative' poses huge management problems in terms of quarantine and barrier nursing regimes.

As Lizzie Aravidis (Fauna Rehabilitation Foundation) stated at the October 2001 meeting of the Wildlife Carers' Consultation Group, wildlife carers may see problems in wildlife populations long before official bodies become aware that there is a problem. Megabacteria is such a problem. This outbreak has had quite an impact on parrots in the Perth hills area and has placed a great demand on the resources and ability of carers to adequately manage this contagious disease. The Kanyana 'News Update' has run a Megabacteria article as a lift-out, to inform its members of the current situation. Also, an article on Megabacteria has been submitted to the *Wildcare* newsletter to inform other carers of the signs and management of cases in their care (see below, Eds).

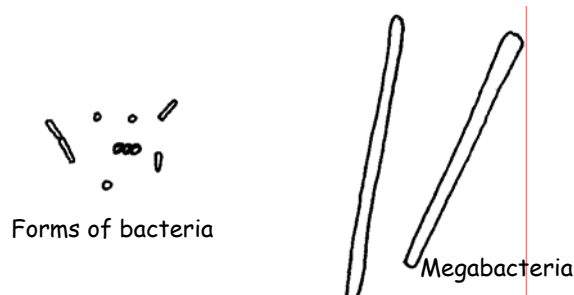
**Ruth Haight**

### MEGABACTERIA IN BABY AUSTRALIAN RINGNECKS

**S**pring means baby birds and at Kanyana there are always many little mouths to feed: honeyeaters, Tree Martins, Magpies, Silvereyes, Magpielarks, Australian Ravens, Red-capped Parrots, Galahs and Australian Ringnecks (also known as 'Twenty-eights').

But a lot of these ringneck babies are not injured or orphaned - they have a much more serious problem. A wasting disease, caused by Megabacteria, has killed many of these young parrots just as they are fledged and ready to leave their nest hollows.

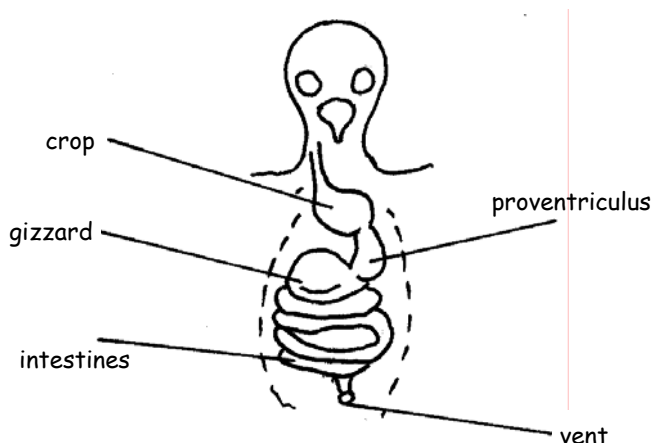
'Mega' means large and even though Megabacteria is microscopic in size, compared to many other micro-organisms it is a giant.





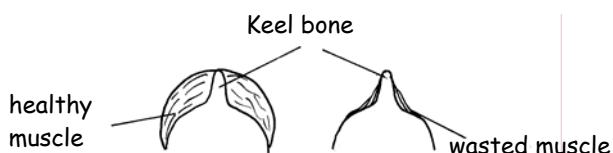
It is thought that Megabacteria entered Australia through the eastern states in the early 1990s via imported English Budgerigars (breeders call the disease 'Going Light'). Somehow it found its way into the wild bird population and gradually spread across the country. Last spring it reached the Perth hills area, affecting mostly juvenile ringnecks. Young birds are more susceptible because of their immature immune systems. Also, learning to fly and cope with the dangers of the outside world produces high stress levels which puts an added strain on the immune system.

The Megabacteria lives in the proventriculus of the bird's digestive system and causes them to vomit and stop eating.



Digestive system of a parrot

Some birds still seem to have a huge appetite, sitting at the food bowl for hours cracking and grinding seed but they do not swallow any of it. The droppings change to a black tar-like paste that sticks to the vent. Rapid weight loss leaves the bird weak and depressed. They call out to be fed but cannot eat. The large flight muscles of the chest rapidly waste away leaving the keel bone sharp and prominent.



Cross-section of a parrot's chest

Death can occur within a few days for some, while others linger on but are so weak that eventually they succumb to other illnesses.

Although Megabacteria was classed as a bacterium for many years it is now known to be a fungus, which explains

why it does not respond to ordinary antibiotics—the only one that has some success is an anti-fungal drug. This is available in a palatable, powder form, called 'Megabac-S' (Vetfarm) which can be dissolved in the crop feeding mixture. Good nursing care, reducing stress levels where possible, can save some birds if they are treated in the early stages. Advanced cases are humanely euthanased.

**“... highly contagious to birds ...”**

Although this disease does not affect people or other animals, it is highly contagious to birds and strict hygiene and quarantine principles have to be followed to prevent cross-infection. All tube-feeding equipment must be sterilised after each use, the birds are isolated and are fed and cleaned last. Carers need to wash their hands in disinfectant after handling sick birds and a clean towel is used for each bird.

There is some cause for concern when releasing recovered birds back into the wild, that they may be 'carriers' and infect more wild birds. More studies are needed so we can learn how this disease works.

Fortunately, ringneck parrots are not endangered and the diversity within the population should ensure that they recover from the huge losses. This might not be true for a species, already on the endangered list, that has lost a lot of its genetic variability.

Hopefully, in time, wild birds will develop an immunity to Megabacteria that can be passed on to their young, for there is nothing sweeter than hearing the sounds of a healthy baby ringneck, high up in the treetops, calling to its parents for another feed.

**Ruth Haight**

## MEGABACTERIA IN THE WILD

There is little information available on the occurrence of Megabacteria in wild birds in Australia, although a survey in Queensland about 10 years ago detected it in a range of species, including a number of parrots.

The disease could potentially infect any bird species. Its true extent in Australia is unknown, but Dr Shane Raidal of Murdoch University's Veterinary School believes that it may have been present in wild populations of certain species for some time.

The wasting symptoms of Megabacteria infection are similar to those of Psittacine Beak and Feather disease (caused by a virus) so detailed tests (such as those described above in Ruth's first article) may be required to detect its presence in parrots.

**Editors**



## WA Group reports

### BIRDS AUSTRALIA WA INC. COMMITTEE

**T**he committee continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month at Perry House. The committee is charged with conducting the activities of the group on behalf of its members and welcomes any items that you feel the committee should consider.

By the time you read this, a new committee under a new Chairman will have been elected at the February AGM. This, therefore, is my final report as Chairman. I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to all of the people who have contributed to the group's activities during my term in the chair, and have helped make my job so much easier than it might otherwise have been. Thank you, one and all.

After three years in the position I welcome the opportunity to step aside and I hope to be able to put my spare time into going birding again.

My colleagues on the committee this past year were

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| ▪ Vice-chairman     | Mike Bamford    |
| ▪ Treasurer         | Greg Wyllie     |
| ▪ Secretary         | Jennifer Wilcox |
| ▪ Bookkeeper        | Mary Vaughan    |
| ▪ Committee members | Wes Bancroft    |
|                     | Michael Brooker |
|                     | Sandra McKenzie |
|                     | Rod Smith       |
|                     | Liz Walker      |
|                     | Brice Wells     |

The highlight of the year 2001, the year in which Birds Australia celebrated its centenary, was, for me, the hosting of the Annual General Meeting of the national organisation. A great deal of work was put into the preparations and I believe that the results achieved on that May weekend were outstanding, and a great credit to the volunteers who dedicated their efforts to the event.

I do not intend to list the names of those who helped make the weekend the success that it was, but it would be remiss of me not to thank all of the students, researchers, and project officers who presented a wide variety of extremely interesting papers. It was most enlightening to learn how much study and research is being carried out on our birds and their habitats, and suggests that the future may be brighter than it sometimes appears.

I should also mention just one name—Michael Brooker. Michael shouldered the bulk of the planning and organisation and the success of the day owed much to his work.

The other major event of the past year was made possible by the Federation of Australia sharing its centenary with Birds Australia. With funds granted by the Federal government to celebrate their year we joined with three other community groups and participated in a project to construct the Camel Lake Heritage Trail in Bold Park,

close to the Birds Australia office. The path has been established with a number of signs indicating points of interest along the way. The Federal member for the area, the Honourable Julie Bishop, officially opened the path in October.

We were successful in obtaining additional funds to continue and develop projects under way last year. The grants allowed continuation of the Hooded Plover project and further work on the recovery plan for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. The intention of the Hooded Plover project is to identify important breeding and feeding areas and to then help the local shires in conservation efforts for those areas. Julie Raines and a host of volunteers and interested professionals in the south west of the state are running this project, undertaken with a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust's Program 'Coasts and Clean Seas'. The new Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo project has been run by Leonie McMahon, and was funded by the Natural Heritage Trust.

A new initiative has been the establishment of the WA group's own web site, and we were successful in obtaining funds that allowed the pamphlets that we have developed over the years to be reformatted for access and download from the web. This has been funded by the WA Lotteries Commission.

Finally a reminder that 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. I encourage everyone to get behind the new committee and prove to the rest of the country that the WA group is still a vibrant and important member of the BA family.

**Clive Nealon**  
Chairman

### BOLD PARK CAMEL LAKE HERITAGE TRAIL

**T**ravellers in the inland of Australia are well used to camels roaming wild, running along the track ahead of the vehicle, leaving their unmistakable footprints around water holes. One rarely thinks of them in the Perth metropolitan area.

However, a lake in Bold Park was the area for the agistment of camels in the early days and was the site where Ernest Giles rested his camels after the long exploratory trek from Port Augusta to Perth in 1875. Unfortunately the lake was dredged in the 1960s but the history and the biodiversity of the area is worthy of preservation. In April 2000 Birds Australia WA Inc applied for and was granted \$30 500 from the Federation Community Projects Program to establish an interpretive trail close to its Perry House office.

The existing Perry House was built partly with materials taken from the original cottage where Joseph Perry and his family lived and dealt in livestock. The park has been established in a series of steps since the City of Perth was granted some of the land in 1902. Land acquisition continued, with resistance to a proposal for a 19-ha housing development in 1987, until it became a fully protected "A" Class Reserve. It is a valuable asset in a fast

growing city, to be compared with the proven value of Kings Park.

The Bold Park area is also rich in Nyungar history as up to the 1950s there was an occupied campsite near Rochdale Road.

The rich and varied natural environment of the park is reflected in the small area of the heritage trail. Jarrah and Marri woodland merges into the Flooded Gum woodland that surrounds Camel Lake. Plant communities range from low heath to Banksia and Tuart woodland. Bird species that are seen there include Splendid and Variegated Fairywrens, Varied Sittellas, Rufous Whistlers, eight honeyeater species, Rainbow Bee-eaters in the summer, Red-capped Parrots and four species of cuckoo.

The Camel Lake Heritage Trail wanders through this environment with interpretive signage in appropriate areas drawing attention to both the history and the environment. A brochure that explains in more detail the features of the area is available.

This was a joint project facilitated by representatives from four organisations: Birds Australia WA Inc (Sue Mather), the Wildflower Society of WA (Marion Blackwell), the Friends of Bold Park (Stephanie Clegg) and the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (Jenny Patrick). These representatives made decisions on the structure of the trail, and the information to be used in the signage and the brochure. We applied the underlying principle that if the people who used this trail understood enough about its history and ecology then this environment was more likely to be preserved for future generations of Perth residents. In many respects it has set a pattern for the future development of other trails in the park. From the point of view of Birds Australia this was a small project looking not at the preservation of a particular species but at the preservation of particular habitats through developing an understanding in the community of the importance of biodiversity in an urban location.

**Suzanne Mather**



The opening display with school children visiting for the ceremony, and the representatives from the four organisations that facilitated the construction of the Camel Lake Heritage Trail.

*Photo by Suzanne Mather*

## COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER

This is to welcome Brice Wells to the position of Community Liaison Officer.



For many years we have been fortunate in having Judy Blyth to coordinate the many activities that come from community requests for speakers, walks, displays, attendance at special days and school visits.

Throughout these years, Judy has added that extra artistic ability to prepare displays for a wide range of BAWA activities and community requests and to have the enthusiastic support of members for these activities.

Now we are fortunate to have Brice Wells to carry on this important role of meeting the many and varied requests from the community.

This work is made possible with the support of a Healthway Grant of \$2000. This is the fourth year that we have had Healthway support. This enables us to expand our community activities far and wide and spread the Healthway message for a healthy outdoor life.

Bryce is enthusiastically planning activities for this year and will appreciate your continuing support for community programs.

## Members' contributions

### BROOME AS EXCITING AS EVER

**T**he birding around Broome is as exciting as ever this 'build up' season. The heat and humidity hasn't really kicked in and early morning birding is an absolute joy.

All the migrants are back and one or two exciting extras as well. The shorebirds are thronging the shores of Roebuck Bay at high tide. The spectacle of 15 000 birds in a single flock never ceases to amaze me. If one looks carefully among the massed ranks, sought-after species such as Asian Dowitchers and Broad-billed Sandpipers are always there. The other Broome speciality, the Redshank, is at its usual haunt, close to the mangrove fringe near Crab Creek.

Some other regular migrants are at the Crystal Ponds (sewerage works!). Yellow Wagtails, in all colours from drab olive/brown to vivid yellow, olive and grey are present. White-winged Black Terns are more abundant than I have seen before and with up to 400 Barn Swallows present it's always worth a look.

For those really keen we can spend lots of time staring at two or three snipe, take lots of notes, read lots of books and confidently say we have indeed seen snipe! What an interesting lot the *Gallinago*

species are. Even the most authoritative tomes cannot agree on them. There are more snipe at two fresh water wetlands near to Broome.

Little Curlews are commonly seen in flocks of hundreds and are yet to disperse inland as the Kimberly has had little heavy rain yet.

The grassland has quietened down in respect to button-quail sightings but the Grass Owls are still a regular sight. The best for me was while birding in the pindan at the edge of the plains when an owl flew towards me and banked around only 30 m away before returning to the grass to roost. I have no idea why it was on show so well during full daylight but it was a very welcome sight.

To add to all these usual northern regulars at this time of year we have had a few less regular ones. While participating in the AWSG expedition at Eighty-Mile Beach a friend of mine from India found a Little Ringed Plover. We obtained very good views and watched it very successfully foraging in dryish cow dung for grubs. This species is a rare but regular visitor to the Broome region with at least one record for each of the last six years.

A very exciting view of a Little Eagle carrying a juvenile Crested Tern was also seen at Anna Plains. The eagle was a couple of kilometres from the beach when it flew overhead and the tern was still struggling in its talons. The eagle dropped the tern 20 m from us, we left the tern there and the eagle duly came back to claim what was rightfully his.

All this excellent birding hardly prepared me for an early Friday morning in mid December when I went to a fresh water wetland to the north of Broome. All the usual calls were ringing out as the sun came up—Rufous Whistler, Mangrove Gerygone, Variegated and Red-backed Fairy-wrens, coucals, *et al.*

After checking in with some of the well-known favourites I came to some shallow water, remarkably still present at this time of year despite only an average wet in 2000/01. On it were a few stilts, some greenshanks and Marsh Sandpipers and three 'Grey Teal' only when I got my 'scope on them (I look at everything!) One of them turned out to be a Garganey. The bird was preening its wings and tail and showed the pale silvery-grey upperwing coverts and the well-marked facial pattern to enable distinction from the neighbouring teal.

The remainder of my time here was as enjoyable as ever with rustling reeds and calling crakes but no views.

After this spot I decided to have a quick look at Coconut Well Beach and Lagoon to see if the Little Terns were breeding. After a walk across the lagoon and a few migratory waders and some 'red-caps' to keep me entertained I crossed the dune and went on to the beach.

The first bird I saw I did not recognise with my naked eye—it was only about 25 m away and it appeared to be some sort of juvenile tern that I was not familiar with. This initial confusion rapidly turned to excitement when I got the 'bins' on the bird. It was a small, finely built gull with a yellow-tipped black bill. I changed the eyepiece on my scope to the 40X and got great views as the bird walked right along in front of me feeding on washed up cicadas!

My camera you ask? Well, in the post on its way back from repair in Perth!

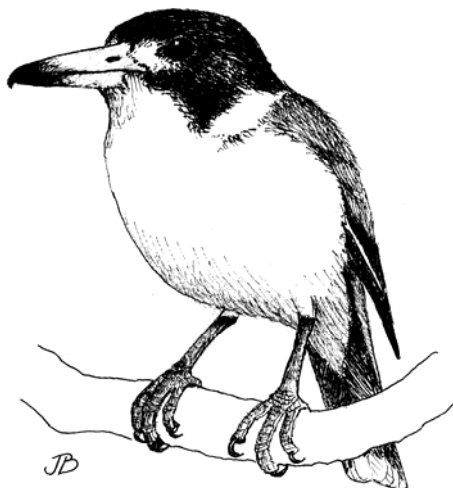
I decided to make the bird fly to assist in my tentative identification of Sabine's Gull. When the bird took to the air it showed a very bold upperwing pattern. The outer primaries were all black, the inner primaries and all the secondaries were white with some white greater primary coverts and grey secondary coverts, and scapulars and tertials. The all white shallow forked tail was another pointer to its identity. Later the bird flew of its own accord straight above me and landed 15 m away. It was relatively unconcerned by my intense interest in it.

Luckily this species of gull is easy to identify (for a gull anyway) and I am sure my report to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) will be accepted. This will constitute the fourth record to be accepted by BARC and the sixth record from Australia. It will be the third from WA; John Darnell has two previous sightings.

Just so you don't all think I am fixated on migrants the resident Red-winged Parrots are in very good numbers at the moment and flocks of 20 to 30 are commonplace and a fantastic spectacle they make too.

This place is awesome.

**Chris Hassell**



The Grey Butcherbird—a formidable predator.

*Drawing by Judy Blyth*

## GREY BUTCHERBIRD BEHAVIOUR

**D**uring the past two months I have had some visits from a family of Grey Butcherbirds, namely the adults and a single young bird.

As a former neighbour used to feed the birds with minced meat I decided to see if they would be interested in mealworms. It did not take long for the birds to appreciate the mealworms, with one particular adult taking the mealworms from my open hand. One of the adults gives an expectant chuckle when the first mealworms are given and is very gentle when taking the mealworms from my hand.

One could easily be forgiven for thinking these birds are quite gentle altogether, but the opposite is true as the Grey Butcherbird is a remarkable hunter with a big appetite and has the capacity to take comparatively large prey.

My first experience with Grey Butcherbirds was on my uncle's property in North Dandalup where my brother

and I would catch a mouse in a mouse trap, attach some cotton to the mouse's tail and then drag it under a big Marri tree where the butcherbird was in waiting. It was a great sight to see the butcherbird swoop down on its apparently live prey and carry it away. We were quite aware of the possible problem that could be caused by the cotton so we tied only a short piece of cotton to the tail of the mouse and another long piece of cotton was looped around the short piece so only the short piece was carried away.

Some more recent events have illustrated the diversity and large size of prey taken. The first was Valerie Hemsley's observation on 10 April 2000 of a bird capturing a bat at Blue Gum Lake (WABN 94: 15). This was a most unusual and large prey. The second was on 1 January 2002 when at Heathcote in Applecross I found a dead nestling, or recently fledged, Willy Wagtail hanging from a fork in a branch of a shrub. Not so long after a Grey Butcherbird arrived to tear and rip up the unfortunate Willy Wagtail that did not see out the first day of the calendar year. The wagtail was all gone by the next day, except for some tail feathers on the ground below.

The third and fourth events occurred on 10 January 2002 at Churchlands and Herdsman Lake. On both occasions I was attracted to an adult and begging young bird as the parents had prey in their beaks. At Churchlands the adult had a very large grasshopper that took considerable time to kill and eventually pass over to the young bird. At Herdsman the adult had a frog that was about 9 to 10 cm long from head to toe. Once again it took considerable effort to kill the frog and to pass it over to the young butcherbird. The young bird found it difficult to swallow and was very quiet after disposing of its large meal.

In summary, for a comparatively small bird to take such large, diverse and interesting prey such as mice, bats, nestlings, fledglings, large insects and frogs is remarkable. When you add the Grey Butcherbird's superb carolling song that is heard throughout the year and it's ability to be semi tamed and eat from the hand, *Cracticus torquatus* is one of our most interesting birds and one of my favourites.

**Wynton Maddeford**

## HERDSMAN LAKE: FASTEST BIRDING IN THE WEST?

**O**n 18 December 2001 I went to the western end of Herdsman Lake and commenced birding at 1810. At 1853 or only 43 minutes later I had ticked off 46 species. It took only another 19 minutes to notch up 50 species and the 51<sup>st</sup> was seen at 1917 or only 67 minutes after I had started.

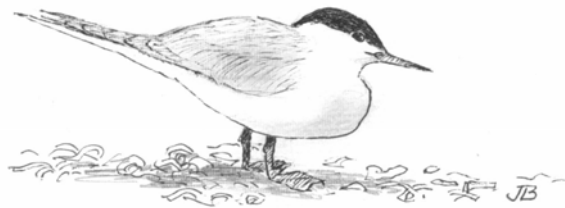
The species list included Buff-banded Rail, Great Crested Grebe, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Little Corella, a mating pair of Hardheads and Yellow-billed Spoonbill. The highlight observation however was the very confiding Freckled Duck that allowed a close view as it rested on the grass amongst Pacific Black Ducks. Thanks to Frank O'Connor who had observed the bird earlier and had posted the sighting on the Internet.

The visit confirmed the richness of birdlife that exists at Herdsman Lake and the value in birding about an hour before sunset. Who said you need to get up with the sparrows to see a lot of birds?

**Wynton Maddeford**

## BREEDING ROSEATE TERNS IN THE KIMBERLEY

**D**uring our winter work aboard the wildlife and scenic cruise ship *The Coral Princess*, we discovered a new breeding site for Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*. New that is to the ornithological world but not to the Aboriginal people of the region who were well aware of it and have been sustainably harvesting the eggs there for some years.



Roseate Tern  
Drawing by Judy Blyth

As the ship steamed south on the last leg of its journey from Darwin to Broome, Adrian noticed Roseate Terns in their splendid breeding plumage with jet black caps and bright coral-red bills and legs. Their elegant tail streamers flowed out behind them. They were carrying small fish towards some islands. When we got together we checked maps and plotted the GPS reading of our location at the time of

his sighting. We decided that the Twin Islands at the mouth of the King Sound were the likely destination of the birds.

Two days later, on the northward trip, we asked the captain of the vessel, Jason White, if we could take a short detour to take a look at the islands. We had two reasons for this—to check and see if our assumptions were correct and hopefully to give the passengers an exciting wildlife spectacle.

The Twin Islands are 10 km north of the tip of the Dampier Peninsular and 15 km from Sunday Island, an island that has past records of this species breeding, and 120 km NE of the Lacepede Islands. This is a relatively short movement to a breeding island, if indeed these birds are from the huge flock that gathers at the Lacepede Islands.

As we approached South East Twin Island on the morning of 14 July there was lots of tern activity with a constant stream of Roseates flying away from the islands empty-billed and a stream going towards with small fish grasped tightly in their bright red bills.

Also feeding in the area were Crested and Bridled Tern and Common Noddy. A few Brown Boobies skimmed the surface of the water in their characteristic fashion. The island experiences a swell from the south west through to the north.

Skipper Jason White was able to take the ship to within about 250 m of the island. The island had a jagged black rock surround, up to 10 m in height above the sea. Above this was vegetation with gaps in it. In the open areas we could see densely packed terns (colonies can be densely packed with as little as 30 cm between nests).

It was difficult to assess numbers, as I am sure that there were many more birds amongst the vegetation than we could see through binoculars and telescope from the bow of the ship.

When a White-bellied Sea-Eagle did a circle of the island a few thousand terns were in the air in consternation. I could see a few Silver Gulls wandering through the colony but no evidence of them breeding. There were 200 Crested Terns roosting on the rocks in addition to the birds of this species feeding at sea; again no evidence of this species breeding was seen from our vantage point. Despite not being very close to the colony the cries of the birds could be heard and all the activity was typical of a sea bird breeding colony. Time and landing difficulties (there was significant swell that day) precluded us from investigating further but I would estimate that the colony numbered in the thousands.

Some kilometres distant was North East Twin Island and terns could also be seen flying above this island.

On the trip we had an Aboriginal interpretive guide from One Arm Point just 15 km to the south of our position. I spoke with Rosana Angus and asked if she knew of the colony and if her people used it as a food source. Rosana told me that the eggs of 'gudiel' were collected during the 1970s and 80s certainly, and probably earlier. She recalled as a child going over to the islands and collecting eggs for food. From Rosanas' descriptions of the birds it seems that both Bridled Tern and Common Noddy also breed or have bred on the islands. She also suggested that similar numbers of birds inhabited North East Twin Island.

Roseate Terns are an interesting species. Like many of our species we do not know a lot about them including where they disperse to when not at their breeding locations. They range from Mandurah around the north of Australia to SE Queensland. Huge numbers, up to 20 000, have been seen on the Lacepede Islands, by AWSG survey teams during the months September through to May but there is only a handful of breeding records for the Lacepede

Islands. The breeding season in the Kimberley is during the winter months. Roseate Terns have been known to 'roam around' with an island favoured one year for breeding and abandoned the next. (R. Johnstone, personal communication). There are breeding records from many island localities around the coast of northern Australia but none in the Kimberley region to correlate with the 20 000 birds at the Lacepede Islands. Presumably this is not the entire Australasian population? The huge numbers at the Lacepede Islands are possibly from three origins:

1. Post-breeding birds from the NT coast and the remoter parts of northern WA. This would include the colony described above.
2. Migrants from the Northern Hemisphere winter. The Roseate Tern is almost worldwide in its distribution and there are breeding colonies in Asia.
3. Birds from the breeding colonies further south in WA.

During October 2001 a sample of the Roseate Terns from the Lacepede Islands was caught. They differed significantly from Roseate Terns caught in the southern Barrier Reef in July. The Lacepede birds were up to 20% smaller in all measurements, including weight.

They also showed a different primary moult strategy. The Lacepede birds were under going a conventional moult from the inner primary to the outer. The Queensland birds had partially completed a conventional moult and had started a 'second wave' of moult from inner to outer, that was well advanced. In effect they are replacing new feathers. Many species of terns appear to use this strategy.

More data are required before any conclusions can be drawn from these differences, however these factors suggest that the two populations are genuinely different in origin. There is evidence emerging that most birds wintering in the southern Barrier Reef are local Queensland breeders.

#### Acknowledgments

Thanks go to Jason White for his willingness to divert a little from his course and his skill to bring us close enough to the island to obtain reasonable views.

Thanks also to Rosana Angus for her sharing of knowledge on the past use of the islands by Aboriginal people, to Ron Johnstone for information about breeding of Roseate Terns and to Clive Minton for comments on the article.

**Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle**



New Members' Day at Bold Park Camel Lake Heritage Trail.

*Photograph by Rob Davis*

#### FERAL BIRDS AT JOONDALUP

I had a quick check on Eastern Long-billed Corellas at Neil Hawkins Park on 24 January this year, and counted around 119 birds feeding from the public.

The numbers of this species around Joondalup seem to be increasing every year.

Also domestic pigeons have gone from four birds three years ago to around 34 now.

One other interesting sighting was a male bantam feeding in the park.

Neil Hamilton

## NORTH DANDALUP TRIP

**T**he North Dandalup district is approximately 80 km south of Perth and is predominantly pastoral land for cattle. My uncle farmed in the district in the 1970s and this led to my knowledge of the birds in this coastal plain area and nearby districts such as Serpentine and Mundijong.

Trips in the past have recorded species such as Regent Parrot, Elegant Parrot, Glossy Ibis, White-necked Heron, Brown Falcon, Brown Songlark and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

On 23 December 2001 a friend and I travelled the back roads to North Dandalup and up into the Darling Range towards the South Dandalup Dam. An hour was spent walking in the forest. A total of 39 species of birds were recorded on the trip that commenced from the Perth CBD.

The highlights were large flocks of Australian Shelduck (200) and Straw-necked Ibis (350) feeding in dry paddocks on a dairy property; a pair of White-winged Trillers near farmland and a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring over the forest. A female Golden Whistler and a Dusky Woodswallow were also observed in the forest.

A further highlight was observing an Australian Hobby plucking a recently caught bird in a large eucalypt located in an open paddock just outside the North Dandalup townsite. Its mate and two recently fledged young soon joined it and for the next five minutes we were treated to a loud and noisy aerial display as the young and parents dashed around the paddock. A large old raven's nest high in the eucalypt may have been the nest site.

Kestrels were also observed hovering over the farmlands including the paddock where the hobbies were seen.

Birds formerly recorded but not seen on this and other recent trips included Banded Lapwing and Common Bronzewing. It is likely these species have disappeared or have significantly declined in abundance on the farming

properties on the plain due to a combination of habitat destruction, over grazing and predation by foxes and cats. A similar fate could also apply to the Stubble Quail as a visit to the old farm a few years ago revealed bare sandy soils and no quail. In the 1970s Stubble Quail were common on the property.

A road-killed Southern Brown Bandicoot and numerous mobs of Grey Kangaroos were also observed on the farmlands.

Wynton Maddeford

## SPINIFEXBIRD AT CLAUDE HILLS, ALMOST IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**W**hilst working in the Wingellina Hills in December 2001 I also visited the Claude Hills, 20 km east of Surveyor Generals Corner just south of the Northern Territory–South Australian border (26° 00' 25"S, 129° 10' 59"E).

These hills are composed of the same rocks as Wingellina Hills and have similar morphology. The vegetation is generally similar but in far better condition than at Wingellina.

A single Spinifexbird was sighted during my very brief visit of 1.5 hours and it appears that it is only the second sighting of this species for South Australia (a record is a record even if it is only a whisker within the State).

The other South Australian record is about 400 km to the east (Hopton and Copley, 1999). The nearest records to date in the current Birds Australia New Atlas are 350 km to the NW and a similar distance to the ENE. Storr (1985) places the southern limit of the bird along the WA border in the Sir Frederick Range 220 km due N, a similar position to that in the first Atlas

(Blakers et al., 1984, grid block 23°S/129°E). The sighting reported here is thus somewhat isolated. However it is possible that other scattered populations are present in Western Australia just to the W and NW of the Surveyor Generals Corner.

Full details of the present sighting have been submitted for publication in the *South Australian Ornithologist*.

### References

Blakers, M., Davis, S.J.J.F. and Reilly, P.N. 1984. *The Atlas of Australian Birds*. RAOU and Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.



Spinifexbird  
Drawing by Pam Free

- Hopton, D. and Copley, P. 1999. First sight and breeding record of the Spinifexbird *Eremiornis carteri* in South Australia. *South Australian Ornithologist*, 33, 47-50.
- Storr, G.M. 1985. Birds of the mid-eastern interior of Western Australia. *Records of the Western Australian Museum*, Supplement No. 22.

**Martin Gole**

## CANNING RIVER REGIONAL PARK, 2001

**A**s long term residents of the City of Canning, we have often visited various sites along the Canning River that now collectively form the Canning River Regional Park.

In 2001 we visited the area more frequently than usual, except for July when we were away on holidays. We maintained a record of sightings made on random visits, with at least one visit per week if we could manage it.

During the year 89 species were seen within the park, including eight that we had not recorded previously, viz, Australasian Shoveler, Domestic Goose, Little Eagle, an unidentified quail species, Black-fronted Dotterel, Princess Parrot (obviously an aviary escape), Variegated Fairy-wren and New Holland Honeyeater. Most of these were observed on only one occasion, but Australasian Shovelers were present on the lake in the Wilson Park section between April and June, with an occasional sighting in August and November. The New Holland Honeyeater had been seen feeding on native shrubs in gardens bordering the park on previous visits, but our first record of one within the park boundaries was in March 2001. They were also observed on several visits in August and October, and bred within the park this year.

Other species seen only rarely were Pink-eared Duck, Straw-necked Ibis, Swamp Harrier, Brown Goshawk, Nankeen Kestrel, Common Sandpiper, Red-capped Plover, Black-fronted Dotterel, Crested Tern, Pallid Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Southern Boobook and Little Eagle.

Species that we have recorded in the past (though sometimes only on a single occasion), but not seen this year were Hoary-headed and Great Crested Grebe, Pied Cormorant, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, White-necked Heron, Glossy Ibis, Osprey, Whistling Kite, Australian Spotted Crane, Red-necked Avocet, Red-kneed Dotterel, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Spotted Pardalote, Western Spinebill, White-fronted Chat, Varied Sittella, and Richard's Pipit. (We also have one record of a Pied Butcherbird, but no detailed field notes to back it up so we are a little doubtful about its authenticity.)

The species most commonly seen were Pacific Black Duck, Red Wattlebird, Willie Wagtail (all recorded in 43 of 44 weekly records); Australian Magpie, Australian Raven and Singing Honeyeater (recorded on 42 of the 44 weekly records); Brown Honeyeater and Silvereye (41 of the 44 weeks); Purple Swamphen, Rainbow Lorikeet and Little Pied Cormorant (40 of the 44 weeks). Willie

Wagtail, Australian White Ibis and Rainbow Lorikeet have all become more common than in previous years.

Also of interest was the presence of large numbers of Australian White Ibis roosting in the area below Surrey Road during May-June (see report in *WA Bird Notes* No. 99: 12-13) but by the end of August no birds were seen roosting at this site. On 28 August 2001 Booragoon Lake was checked immediately after a visit to the Surrey Road site at 5.45 pm and approximately 600-700 Australian White Ibis were seen at their old nesting/roosting site. Since then we have seen only very small numbers (less than 20) feeding, and possibly roosting, within the Canning River Regional Park.

The other surprise is that we have still not recorded a Little Wattlebird within the park, though they occur regularly in our garden, less than 2 km from the park.

## Breeding records

One of the challenges we set ourselves in 2001 was to locate as many nests as possible. Little did we realise we would be recording breeding activity in nine months of the year, and there were possibly waterbird species breeding during July when we were away!

The most frequently visited areas were Adenia Park, Wilson Park, Kent Street Weir and 'The Peninsula' area and Nicholson Wetland.

A total of 152 nests were observed with breeding confirmed at 93 of those. 59 records show breeding as either not confirmed or having failed.

A total of 32 different species were observed at nest sites, and of those 27 were confirmed as breeding (list follows). For five species we were unable to confirm breeding.

**Pam Agar**

## Species confirmed breeding in Canning Regional Park, 2001

Black Swan	Red Wattlebird
Australian Shelduck	Brown Honeyeater
Pacific Black Duck	New Holland Honeyeater
Grey Teal	Rufous Whistler
Hardhead	Magpie-lark
Australasian Grebe	Willie Wagtail
Buff-banded Rail	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Purple Swamphen	White-winged Triller
Dusky Moorhen	Australian Magpie
Eurasian Coot	Welcome Swallow
Laughing Turtle-Dove	Tree Martin
Rainbow Bee-eater	Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Striated Pardalote	Silvereye
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	



## BUFF-BANDED RAILS AT SOLDIERS COVE: SEQUEL

In the last Bird Notes (WABN 100: 24) I reported on Buff-banded Rails breeding at Soldiers Cove, Mandurah.

Since then, the original two downy chicks were sighted as sub adults several times during the low tides around Christmas and the new year together with the two adults. But between 31 December 2001 and 2 January 2002 another two adults were seen with another four downy young making the population four adults, two sub-adults and four downy chicks.

Considering Soldiers Cove is only about 1 km from the Post Office and the area is used by lots of picnickers, walkers and dog walkers, the birds have shown tenacity and adaptability!

Dick Rule

## RED-CAPPED PLOVER BREEDING IN SUBURBIA

On 10 January 2002 I visited Herdsman Lake in the afternoon. I was in the north-west section of the Lake (near the lakes to the north of the dredge where the Great Cormorants were observed breeding last year) when I observed a Red-capped Plover near the shoreline of one of the lakes.

I continued walking and was pleasantly surprised to notice another Red-capped Plover crossing a road with a small recently fledged chick following it. The adult and the chick crossed the road and then attempted to hide amongst a large area of sparse sandy land with low vegetation. It appears the land is ready for a housing subdivision, as it is wasteland in appearance.

This area of land was probably the site of the nest due to its location, with little passing traffic and low use by humans and the birds were attracted to this area to avoid detection.

Both parent birds were surprisingly not in breeding plumage, as they did not bear the chestnut crown colouration.

It is quite reassuring that successful breeding occurred due to all the usual problems faced by such ground nesting species in relatively built up areas as well as potential predation by foxes and cats that are assumed to be in the area. However if the land was converted to housing, then future breeding would be in doubt.

In summary, this is the first time I have recorded Red-capped Plovers breeding in the metro area (although I have heard from others that it has been recorded breeding near Herdsman) and from a species that I have seen more often scurrying along ocean beaches or along the Swan River.

Wynton Maddeford

## BIRDS OF WINGELLINA HILLS

During early December 2001 I spent two weeks undertaking geological work in the Wingellina Hills and also managed to record 31 Atlas surveys (plus three incidental records) in the 20 km<sup>2</sup> area of the hills. I was somewhat surprised by the birds that were missing from the final bird list, a reflection of the relatively small area surveyed and perhaps more importantly the restricted habitat of the hills themselves.

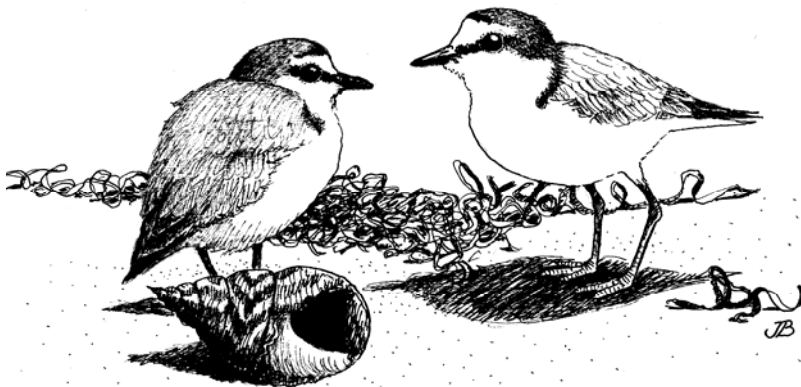
Wingellina Hills are in Aboriginal land 8 km SW of Surveyor Generals Corner (NT-SA-WA borders; 26° 03' S, 128° 57' E). They consist of a series of low, NW-SE trending ridges with a few higher and steeper hills. The habitat in the hills is very uniform, dominated by spinifex and sparse to moderately dense mallee and Acacia woodland with patches of Eremophila. In recent fire-scars low, green herbage is present whereas in some older scars tufty grass has established below dead acacia trees. Some of the mallees and Eremophilas were in flower. Only a few creek lines are present in the hills and none is thickly vegetated.

Most of the rain in the region comes from summer storms. Only two of the 13 days of the survey had full sunshine. Most days were wet with 250 mm of rain falling in a 10-day period. This not only hindered geological work it also restricted the number of bird surveys.

The hills are formed by the Wingellina

Intrusion, a layered gabbro and ultramafic igneous body. In places the gabbro forms prominent rocky outcrop with bouldery scree slopes developed on the steeper slopes. The Wingellina Hills are separated from nearby higher and more rugged ranges by 5-10 km wide flats. It is an area of spectacular scenery and grand vistas especially during wild thunderstorms.

The surveys consist of fifteen 2-hectare, 20-minute surveys, sixteen 500 m area searches and three incidental records. Area searches were mostly of 0.5-1.5 hr duration. Birds seen are listed in Table 1 along with the number of sightings of each species out of the 31 survey records. This



Red-capped Plover  
Drawing by Judy Blyth

provides a rough guide to their relative abundance. The emphasis is on 'rough' as birds that are nose-y (eg, young butcherbirds, Grey-fronted and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Willie Wagtails), noisy (eg, Crested Bellbirds, Yellow-throated Miners, songlarks) and otherwise conspicuous (woodswallows, Hooded Robins) are likely to be recorded far more often than shy, quiet species.

The total of 51 species is not a huge list after two weeks birding (well, working really) especially considering 30% (16) of them were only seen once or twice. A species accumulation curve (Figure 1), however, shows that no new species were seen in the last 3 days of the survey period. The general shape of the curve implies that additional species are likely to be added only slowly by extending the survey time. To significantly add to the list surveys are needed at different times of the year.

Notable absences from the list are Striated Pardalote, the arid zone thornbills, Weebill, Red-capped Robin, a few honeyeaters (eg, White-fronted), Wedge-tailed Eagle and one or two other birds of prey. White-fronted Honeyeater was seen east of the hills and they may move into the area in response to the December rain. Rainbow Bee-eaters were also seen nearby but these may be locally absent as the soils in the hills are clay-rich and rocky and may not be suitable for nest borrows.

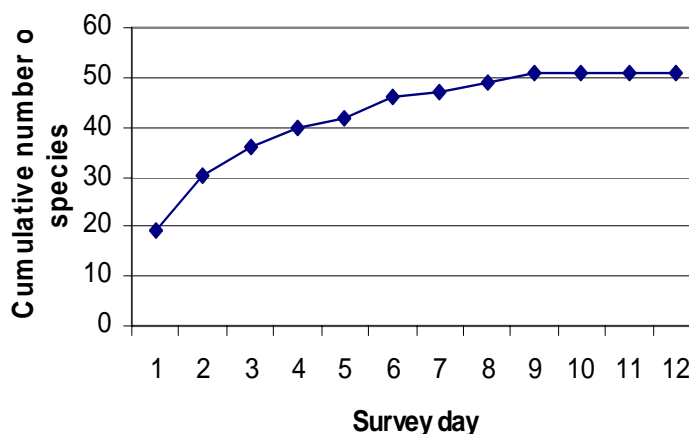
Not only were the birds great but the geological story of the Wingellina Intrusion was also fascinating. About as fabulous as seeing the Dusky Grasswrens bounce over the gabbro boulders.

**Martin Gole**

**Table 1: Wingellina Hills Bird List - December 2001**

Bird	N/31 Records	Bird	N/31 Records
Mountain Duck	1	Grey-fronted Honeyeater	22
Hoary-headed Grebe	1	Crimson Chat	3
Black-shouldered Kite	1	Jacky Winter	2
Brown Goshawk	2	Hooded Robin	8
Spotted Harrier	1	White-browed Babbler	5
Brown Falcon	5	Crested Bellbird	17
Kestrel	2	Rufous Whistler	3
Australian Hobby	4	Grey Shrike-thrush	5
Little Button-quail	6	Willie Wagtail	8
Diamond Dove	3	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	7
Common Bronzewing	4	Ground Cuckoo-shrike	2
Crested Pigeon	4	White-winged Triller	4
Cockatiel	1	Masked Woodswallow	3
Australian Ringneck	3	Black-faced Woodswallow	9
Mulga Parrot	4	Grey Butcherbird	3
Bourke's Parrot	1	Pied Butcherbird	7
Budgerigar	4	Australian Magpie	6
Pallid Cuckoo	6	Torresian Crow	1
Owlet-nightjar	1	Little Crow	4
Red-backed Kingfisher	5	Richards Pipit	2
Variegated Fairy-wren	2	Zebra Finch	5
Dusky Grasswren	4	White-backed Swallow	1
Southern Whiteface	3	Tree Martin	1
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	11	Brown Songlark	9
Yellow-throated Miner	11	Rufous Songlark	12
Singing Honeyeater	5		

**Figure 1. Cumulative species curve**



## SILVER GULL BREEDING AT HILLARYS

In the December 2001 issue of WABN there was a record from Mike and Jake Bamford of a Silver Gull chick at Hillarys Boat Harbour on 12 August 2001.

On 20 June last year, I too saw a Silver Gull chick at Hillarys Boat Harbour. It was out of the nest but was quite young with more fluff than feather. The nest could be seen on the same boat. Nests were seen on at least two other boats. Clearly the gulls deemed boats satisfactory as islands. They were 'for sale' boats indicating a certain slackness in the winter boat market.

Johnstone and Storr (1998; Handbook of Western Australian Birds) state that Silver Gulls along the west coast between Shark Bay and Shoalwater Bay lay eggs between mid-March and mid-December, so both sightings were in the same breeding season.

Brenda Newbey

## WESTERN ROSELLA *PLATYCERCUS ICTEROTIS* AND PEPPERMINT *AGONIS FLEXUOSA*

Neither in compilations of the food of Western Rosellas (eg, Halse, 1986; Higgins, 1999), nor in the numerous habitat descriptions of the species in books and articles, have I found any mention of Peppermint.

Yet, at the family property 'The Colonel's', Callcup, near the mouth of the Warren River, where both rosellas and Peppermint are common, my observations indicate that at least during the greater part of the year, the small round

“  
... the food resource is  
scarce...”

seeds of Peppermint constitute the main food of Western Rosellas. The birds pick the tiny nuts one by one, crush them in the bill (the sound of the cracking is not very loud, but clearly audible to a distance of perhaps five or six metres), and eat the seeds. I have seen them eat these seeds in all the months from the first half of February to September. The hiatus of four months in my observations may be accidental, but about September, with the onset of a new flowering season, the seeds start falling, so that in this period the food resource is scarce, or the seeds have to be pecked up from the ground. Anyway, there can be no doubt of the importance of Peppermint seeds as a food during at least eight months of the year. I previously

published a reference to this (Mees, 1997), but evidently in too casual a way for it to have been noted by compilers.

An important facet of the Peppermint is that it is a plentiful native tree: this in contrast to much of the other food mentioned in the literature, that consists of recently-introduced plant species. Furthermore, the availability of Peppermint seed during the greater part of the year, means that it serves as a reliable staple, especially as it flowers and seeds so abundantly. Higgin's (1. c.: 371) claim that Western Rosellas "feed mainly on ground" is inappropriate for this locality.

Peppermint occurs along the south-west coast from north of Perth to east of Bremer Bay. Where it occurs, it is usually plentiful, but it does not occur very far inland. Some food-studies of Western Rosellas have been made outside this range, which, of course, accounts for the omission from the record. However, I would expect Peppermint seeds to be eaten wherever Peppermint is found within the range of the rosellas. The purpose of this note is to draw attention to Peppermint and to establish whether the Western Rosella's dependence on it as its main food is purely local, or occurs widely. In this connection, there is a distinct possibility that in areas with a dense human population, there is now such a variety of introduced delicacies, that Peppermint has been reduced to minor importance.

It has been suggested (Forshaw, 1981: 210: quoting with apparent approval from Immelmann), that, in the south-west, the numbers of rosellas remain fairly low, due to biological competition with the Australian (Twenty-eight) Parrot *Barnardius zonarius*, "which is dominant throughout the south-west and utilises available food supplies and nesting sites at the expense of the smaller, more docile Western Rosella". So here follows another question: does the 'Twenty-eight Parrot' also eat Peppermint seeds? I have never seen it: my nearest observation was of an individual chewing a few Peppermint leaves in a desultory way. In the extensive (but far from complete) food list published by Higgins (1. c.: 380-381), there is no mention of *Agonis flexuosa* as a 'Twenty-eight' food either. Anyway, the considerable difference in bill-size between the two parrots suggests equally great differences in food preference.

Inland, casuarina seeds have been recorded as an important rosella food. Casuarinas (the local species is *Allocasuarina decussata*) are only moderately common at Callcup and I have never yet seen rosellas visit the trees.

### References

- Forshaw, J.M., 1981. *Australian Parrots*. Lansdowne Editions, Melbourne.
- Halse, S.A., 1986. *Parrot damage in apple orchards in south-western Australia—a review*. Dept. of CALM Technical Report 8: viii + 75 p.
- Higgins, P.J. (ed.), 1999. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds, 4: Parrots to Dollarbirds*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Mees, G.F., 1997. Food of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. *Western Australian Bird Notes* 84: 9-10.

G F Mees



Western Rosella feeding on the seeds of peppermint.  
Drawing by Judy Blyth

### THE SPIDER AND THE SILVEREYE

**O**n Friday 11 January, I found myself at Lake Leschenaultia with my son-in-law and two oldest grandsons. We were introducing the boys to the delights of camping.

After a strenuous morning I was reading and resting while the rest of the group were washing dishes. Suddenly, something fell out of a large wandoo about 15 m away. As it landed quite heavily, raising a small puff of dust, I quickly picked up my binoculars to see what it was. To my surprise I saw a Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*), vigorously attacking a large Huntsman spider (Sparassidae family) which was in a defensive position, and looked, to my eye, extremely formidable.

This didn't deter the Silvereye which kept attacking and retreating in the face of strong opposition. Eventually the bird succeeded in immobilising the spider, but kept up its sorties until it was sure its adversary was dead. Even then it was cautious, leaping in and out, but eventually as it jumped away it had a segment of leg in its bill, which it promptly swallowed. Once the legs were eliminated, it went in close and continued pecking, but did not retreat. Whether it ate the rest of the spider, I was unable to see, but finally all that was left was the abdomen. The bird picked this up and carried it away.

This was something I had never seen before, and found quite amazing. The Huntsman was one of those large flat species frequently found under bark. I would have thought it would have frightened off most small birds.

Silvereyes are known to eat small insects, but such large prey seems to be unusual. Whether the bird took the spider in the tree and carried it to the ground, or whether the spider leapt from the tree to escape, and was pursued to the ground by its free falling nemesis I am unable to say. There was no doubt about the drama that occurred on the ground.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has seen a similar occurrence.

**Brice Wells**

### ROCK DOVES PERCHING ON CABLES

**T**he Rock Dove habitually rests and preens on roofs of older and larger buildings and may nest on or in them. Away from the metropolitan area birds may frequent large old eucalypts and sometimes nest in their hollowed branches.

It is therefore of interest that at Maylands, now largely residential housing and with large, old buildings, and in response to a free meal of wheat, some 40-50 birds will gather and perch on the electricity cables near the feeding place.

As best I can remember I have never previously seen Rock Doves perching on cables, and the English ornithologist Derek Goodwin, an authority on Columbids, has only one similar record: a bird clumsily and awkwardly trying to perch on a clothes line in England, the line being too thin for the bird.

At Maylands an unknown person scatters the wheat, perhaps one or two kgs of it, on the pavement bordering the intersection of Guildford Road and Falkirk Street. On a few occasions I have seen the scattered wheat before the birds, both Rock Doves and Laughing Turtle-Doves, have begun feeding on it, and it is then a common sight to see the Rock Doves perched on the cables on the other side of Guildford Road and the turtle-doves, some 50-75 of them, perched on the cables over the wheat. But the Laughing Turtle-Dove frequently perches on cables, though usually only one or a few in number. Large numbers of birds also used to gather at Caporn Street, Nedlands, where panicum seed from the laboratory was thrown onto the back-yard lawn.

The Rock Doves, presumably, are from the populations which inhabit the nearby library and adjacent large, old buildings, and the much larger population which frequents the hospital and its surrounds, which is much further away. Small numbers may occur in other non-residential parts of Maylands. The Laughing Turtle-Doves come from everywhere, which is normal for them.

It seems that both species will sometimes gather there before the wheat is put down but I have not noticed particular days or times. The birds are most reluctant to come down if pedestrians are there, but once a bird or two begins to feed they all come down and are then reluctant to leave the wheat until the pedestrian is within a few metres of them.

**Robert Stranger**

## TAWNY FROGMOUTH BREEDING AT APPLECROSS

On 1 January 2002 I went for a run and walk to Heathcote in Applecross. Whilst walking through the lower parkland area I heard a Cockatiel calling from a eucalypt. It took me several minutes to try and locate the Cockatiel and during this searching period I was delighted to come across a roosting Tawny Frogmouth. This was the first time I had seen a Tawny Frogmouth in Applecross. Some three or four years earlier I had noticed a road killed 'Tawny' in nearby Duncraig Road.

Not contented with this single bird I started looking in the nearby trees for possible other 'Tawny's' as I considered the possibility of recently fledged young. I was delighted only a few minutes later when I spotted the second Tawny Frogmouth about 15 m up in a nearby eucalypt. As an added bonus it was sitting on a flimsy stick nest situated in a fork of a horizontal limb.

In the ensuing week I returned to the nest site on two occasions at sunset. On both occasions at about 30 minutes after sunset the non-sitting bird would fly to the nest and remain at the edge of the nest for about a minute. The sitting bird would then fly quickly off towards the entrance to the south of Perth Yacht Club. There was no physical contact made between the birds and no calls were heard.

I was unable to determine if the nest contained eggs or nestlings, although given the time of the year I guessed the nest might contain nestlings. This pair has nested late as most breeding is completed by the end of December.

My suspicion was confirmed on 21 January when I noticed two fluffy nestlings on the nest. On 26 January the two nestlings were clearly seen and peered down at me

with great interest. With their inquisitive eyes and fluffy appearance they certainly rate highly on the cuteness scale. On 27 January the two young were observed roosting with a parent about two metres from the nest. Even though it was 1440 and a warm 31°C both the parents (the other parent was only a few metres away) and the fledglings were active with preening and beak opening observed. On 28 January the two young and an adult were back on the nest with the other parent only two metres away.

It is ironic I found this nest as this is only the third nest

I have seen. However all three nests have been seen in the past two months, including two nests observed in one morning's birding at Banyule Flats in outer Melbourne in November 2001. The second nest contained two large fluffy young that were close to leaving the nest.

It was an excellent way to commence my birding for 2002. Let's hope this lower parkland does not get handed over to developers as it is so

beneficial to have such mini bush areas in the middle of suburbia, especially when they can support such an interesting bird as the Tawny Frogmouth.

Finally I should add the Cockatiel was assumed to be pet or aviary escapee. It was a male bird and it is one of several I have seen in Applecross in recent years. Later visits revealed it had been joined by another Cockatiel.

**Wynton Maddeford**



Tawny Frogmouth  
Drawing by Judy Blyth



## For Sale

6 x wooden framed pictures  
of **NATIVE BRITISH BIRDS**

By artist: **Raymond Harris Ching**

Partridge	Goshawk
Kestrel	Blackbird
Barn Owl	Blue Tits

Collection cost \$300

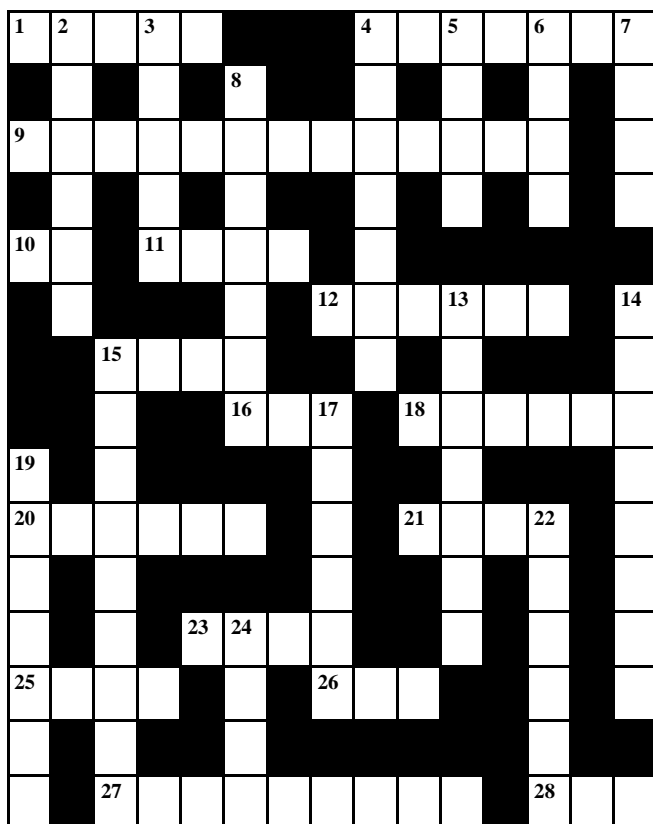
**Asking: \$150 ONO**

**Tel: Jacquie Hooper 9367 1514**



## Crossword No 28

by Pam Agar



### Clues across

1. Shanks of birds' legs.
4. Involving, threatening danger.
9. Written evidence of sightings.
10. It's vital to focus ... a subject quickly.
11. To challenge, be beyond the power of.
12. Having elongated, ornamental feathers.
15. Unlikely to be a problem for WA birders.
16. Birds happily rest on one.
18. Rail, presumed extinct in WA
20. Iridescent red-brown colour.
21. Essential if you want a photographic record.
23. You're unlikely to see the Purple-crowned Fairy version in Perth.
25. Secretive swamp-dweller.
26. Problem for beach nesters.
27. Alternative name for Jacana.
28. Identification marker.

### Clues down

2. Move this way and you may get a better view.
3. Noise.
4. Delicate.
5. Very keen.
6. Unit of inheritance.
7. A Collared Sparrowhawk has long middle ones.

8. Introduced species established on Rottnest.
13. Gathering of people to share information.
14. Bush songster of northern WA.
15. Large wading bird with strangely-shaped bill.
17. Rare parrot, subject of recent searches.
19. To watch.
22. River fish, possibly eaten by cormorants.
24. Abbreviation of formal name of Birds Australia.

## Notices

### BAWA (INC) WEB SITE UPDATE

The new BAWA web site (<http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>) is progressing well.

Nearly all the revised bird guide brochures have been revised and published on the web site. You can print the bird guides directly from the web site. They are also stored on the computer at Perry House where they can be printed at a nominal cost. Some of the large glossy metropolitan bird guides are too large to view on the internet, and so only the cover page has been published along with details of where the full brochure can be obtained. This revision has been funded by the Lotteries Commission of WA.

The sightings page is up and running and the number of sightings received is beginning to increase.

New sightings are published as soon as practical. Sightings of interest should be sent to the email address [sightings@iinet.net.au](mailto:sightings@iinet.net.au) or phoned to me on 08 9386 5694. The email address is preferred as Rob Davis can update the sightings page when I am away. Some changes to the format of the sightings page are planned to make the sightings easier to view. For example, the sightings will be split into regions similar to the observations section in WABN.

The events page is up and running and has details of the meetings, excursions, campouts, etc. So if you can't locate your copy of WABN then check the web site. Details of special events such as the WA Bird Research Forum will be included.

Work will progress on details of the BAWA activities and projects. A list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) of the office is also planned.

Please send any suggestions for additions and improvements to the committee at [birdswa@iinet.net.au](mailto:birdswa@iinet.net.au) or to me at [foconnor@iinet.net.au](mailto:foconnor@iinet.net.au).



Western Australia  
Millions Won. Thousands Helped.

Sponsored by  
Lotteries Commission

Frank O'Connor

# ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY AND PAMPHLET STAND SINCE DECEMBER 2001

## Library

- 598 *World Birdwatch*, Mar 2001, Sep 2001, Jun 2001
- 598.3 *Tatler*, Oct 2001
- 598.3 *Stilt*, Oct 2001
- 598.3 *Queensland Wader*, Spring 2001, Summer 2002
- 598.099423 *Birds SA Newsletter*, Sep 2001, Dec 2001
- 598.9943 *Contact Call*, Sep 2001
- 333.9941 *Landscape*, Spring 2001
- 598.723 *Bird Observer*, Oct 2001, Summer 2001–2
- 598.33 *Waterbird usage of the lakes at the RGC wetlands centre*, 48
- 598.33 *Waterbird usage of the lakes at the RGC wetlands centre*, 49
- 598.33 *Waterbirds of Goegrup and Black Lakes in the Peel Inlet*
- 598.71 *Report on Western Ground Parrot Survey at Waychinicup and Manypeaks*
- 598.33 *Alfred Cove—A Wildlife Habitat*
- 598.9941 *Regional Assessment of the Wheatbelt of Western Australia*
- 598.833 *Purple-crowned Fairy-wren*
- 598.33 *Hooded Plover*
- 598.994 *Flight of the Emu*
- 598 *Birds*, Summer 2001, Winter 2000, Autumn 2000, Spring 2001
- Forktail*, Aug 2001
- 363.7 *Indicators of ecological development for created wetland systems*
- 598.0723 *Wingspan*, Dec 2001
- 363.7 *Indicators of ecological development for created wetland systems, Capel Wetland Centre*
- 598.723 *Emu*, vol 101, 4, 2001

- Pamphlet stand
- Malleefowl Matter*, Nov 2001
- Naturalist News*, Nov 2001
- Harrier*, Oct 2001
- Ecoplan News*, Spring 2001, Summer 2002
- Bush Heritage News*, Summer 2001
- Swan Avon Info Sheet* #11
- Fly Way*, Dec 2001
- Bird Notes*, Southern NSW & ACT, Dec 2001
- Cumberland Bird Observers Club*, Nov-Dec 2001
- Birds Australia—Northern NSW*, Oct 2001
- Landscape Expeditions*, 2002
- Marine Conservation*, Nov 2001

## Emu

### Contents of *Emu* Volume 101 Number 4, 2001

- Molecular systematics and phylogeography of New Guinean logrunners (Orthonychidae).  
*L. Joseph, B. Slikas, D. Alpers and R. Schodde* 273
- Partial migration in Australian landbirds: a review.  
*K. Chan* 281
- The structure of raptor assemblages in riparian environments in the south-west of the Northern Territory, Australia.  
*T. Aumann* 293
- Breeding biology of raptors in the south-west of the Northern Territory, Australia.  
*T. Aumann* 305
- A new emu (*Dromaius*) from the Late Oligocene Etadunna formation.  
*W. E. Boles* 317
- Breeding activity, nest site selection and nest spacing of Wedge-tailed Eagles, *Aquila audax*, in western New South Wales.  
*A. Sharp, M. Norton and A. Marks* 323
- Provenance and sex ratio of Black-browed Albatross, *Thalassarche melanophrys*, breeding on Campbell Island, New Zealand.  
*P. J. Moore, T. M. Burg, G. A. Taylor and C. D. Millar* 329
- Multivariate statistical analysis of songs of the male Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*): an example from western Victoria, Australia.  
*B. J. Kentish, J. Harvey, L. Roberts and J. Ross* 335
- The distribution and ecology of the Rufous Bristlebird (*Dasyornis broadbenti*) at Aireys Inlet, Victoria.  
*B. A. Wilson, J. G. Aberton, P. N. Reilly and M. MacDonald* 341
- Observations on the status of the land birds, wading birds and seabirds of Samoa.  
*M. Tarburton* 349



## Publications available through Birds Australia WA Inc.

Publication	Author/Publisher	Price \$
Flight of the Emu	MUP	52.00
How to attract birds to WA gardens		1.00
Birding Sites Around Perth (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed)	Van Delft/WA Group	15.00
Birdlife of Rottnest Island	Saunders & de Rebeira	13.50
Birds of Broome—Annotated List	Collins	10.00
Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef	Nielson	24.00
Check List of Birds of WA		6 for 1.00 OR each.20
Field Guide to Birds of Australia (new ed)	Pizzey & Knight	38.00
Field Guide to Birds of Australia (6 <sup>th</sup> ed)	Simpson & Day	30.00
Field Guide to Australian Birds	Morcombe	32.00
Index to WA Bird Notes		3.50
Out of the Bush	Breeden	2.00
Western Australian Bird Notes		per issue 3.50
Which bird of prey is that? (out of print 24/07/01)	Beruldsen	12.00
Where to find birds in NE Queensland	Wieneke	15.00
Travellers' guide to the Parks & Reserves of Western Australia	Nevill, Simon	30.00
Beach Patrollers' Guide to Stormcast Seabirds		7.00
<b>Audio Cassettes</b>		
Aboriginal Birds		11.00
Bird Calls Series 1	Hutchinson	12.00
Bird Calls Series 2	Hutchinson	12.00
Bird Calls Series 5	Hutchinson	11.00
Bill's Odyssey		11.00
Camp Fire Chorus		11.00
<b>Videos</b>		
Endless Summer : Birds of Broome		40.00
Wilderness Regained		25.00
<b>Compact Disc</b>		
Aboriginal Birds	Hutchinson	16.50
Dawn Chorus	Hutchinson	16.50
<b>GPS Unit and Cable (carry bag &amp; car adapter included)</b>		<b>280.00</b>

## FIFTH CORELLA COUNT

**Sunday 7 April 2002**

**Starting 3:30 pm**

The first four counts, in June 1998, April 1999, April 2000 and April 2001, gathered useful data about the spread and numbers of feral corellas around Perth.

The number of Long-billed Corellas may have undergone another increase, with a flock of over 300 now regularly present around the Canning Regional Park at Ferndale/Riverton. We need to continue to track distribution and numbers that will, among other things, strengthen the case for control of these pest species.



Western Corella  
(sketched from WAM  
specimen)

*Drawing by Judy Blyth*

See WABN 86, June 1998 for background information and identification hints and WABN 87, (September 1998), 90 (June 1999), 94 (June 2000) and 98 (June 2001) for reports on the first four corella surveys.

If you know of a place that you regularly or often see corellas, or

would be happy to be assigned to an area we already know about, please take part in an organised count at as many places as possible on 7 April. The main focus is still around Perth, but if anyone knows other places, such as Baldivis, Mandurah, Bunbury and Albany that seem to have populations of feral corellas we would really like to have those areas covered as well. Counting begins at 3:30 pm and ends when it gets too dark to identify corellas.

We will identify the species of all corellas seen, and count the number of each species, at each site at approximately the same time on the same day. Please record details of roosting sites; location and number of birds. If birds move away from your area please note the direction of movement and the time at which they leave. Similarly, with corellas that come to your area during the count note the direction from which they come and the time of arrival.

If you would like to take part in this survey please contact **John Blyth**:

*by phone (work 9405 5161 –  
home 9381 6293);  
facs 9306 1641  
or email johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au*

## OBSERVERS WANTED

**W**e have applied for a grant for the preparation of a guide on the reserves and parks of Wanneroo City. This will be similar to the recently completed Cockburn City Guide.

If you are interested in helping survey one or more of the sites, would you please contact Wanneroo Project Birds Australia WA, by mail, phone, fax or e-mail.

We will also need a small planning committee with representatives from the Wanneroo Council, BAWA and CALM.

We will forward to you a survey form and sites to be surveyed with suggestions on what to look for in your survey.

We hope that this project will be as well supported as the Cockburn success.

**Allan K Jones**

## INAUGURAL WA BIRD RESEARCH FORUM

**Saturday 18 May 2002**

Zoology Lecture Theatre, University of Western Australia

### An Invitation...

**W**ould you like to meet other people who are conducting bird study projects? Many of us, whatever our bird related project might be, would like to know who else is working on similar projects, or would like to develop better contacts for advice, collaboration or assistance. In order to help develop better contacts between such people we are holding an informal forum on Saturday 18 May 2002 at the Zoology Department, University of Western Australia.

Anyone who is studying birds is welcome to attend—the only requirement is that you be prepared to spend a few minutes describing your project and interests. Talks should be no more than five minutes duration. We are not looking for 'flashy' presentations—simple spoken presentations with overhead transparencies (should you require them) will suffice. It is an opportunity to meet volunteers, collaborators, etc, to potentially assist with your project, as well as to learn about other, current, bird-related projects in WA. The forum will also allow us to give you a list of like-minded bird enthusiasts and bird-related projects in WA. We ask that you provide us with a title for your research and we encourage you to also submit a paragraph summarising your project. The latter is completely optional. We will compile the project summaries and distribute them at the forum.

### The Details...

**When:** 8.45 am, Saturday 18 May 2002. The day's timetable will be arranged once registration closes.

**Where:** Zoology Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, Zoology Department, UWA.

**Parking:** Car park entrance 4, Hackett Drive, Crawley (opposite Australia II Drive).

**Facilities:** The day will be free of charge and we will provide light refreshments for morning and afternoon tea.

You will need to provide or organise your own lunch (a list of nearby eateries can be provided).

### Registration

To register your attendance at this exciting event, please register by 30 April 2002. The best way to register is electronically via the BAWA website: <<http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>> but if you prefer, contact Robert Davis or Wes Bancroft:

E-mail: [radavis@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:radavis@cyllene.uwa.edu.au) or

[wes@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:wes@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

Tel: 9380 1493 Fax: 9380 1029

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions please do not hesitate to contact us.

We hope to make this a stimulating and interesting day, but its success depends on you.

We look forward to seeing you there.

**Robert Davis, Wes Bancroft, Chris Norwood  
and Allan Burbidge**

### NEW MEMBERS

**T**he following people joined Birds Australia WA between 1 November 2001 and 31 January 2002. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

H Abbott, G Batchelor, E Canella, Z Cartwright, P M Cook, M Field, J Ginbey, R Glynn, A Goodchild, J Graff, C Hooper, J Jackson, K Miller, M Mulligan, D Murray, D Orr, J Rice, M Richardson, J Snee, A Stockdale, A-M Taylor, J Webb

## Country Groups

### ALBANY BIRD GROUP

#### KALGAN RIVER, 6 DECEMBER 2001

**S**eventeen members braved rather chilly conditions and managed to get some records of waders along Oyster Harbour. Four Ospreys delighted us along the shores of the Kalgan River.

The highlight of the day, however, was provided by an Inland Thornbill tirelessly feeding a recently fledged Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo. Our excursion ended with a Christmas lunch at Two Peoples Bay.

A total of 58 species were recorded.

**Anne Bondin**

## Excursion reports

### KARAKIN LAKE AND DOOPITER SWAMP, 3 November 2001

**I**t was a cool, fine day with the promise of good birds; however, attendance was surprisingly low. The lucky three who did attend had a great day's birding led by Brian Barrett and ably assisted by Margery Clegg.

The first stop at the KW Road meeting point provided good views of two Rufous Songlarks calling and engaging in aerobic fighting/mating(?) behaviour. Thirteen other bushbirds were seen. However, the White-backed Swallows appeared to have moved on with the encroachment of the land development at this site.

Lake Karakin, the next stop, held a surprising amount of water surrounded by lush grass. Approaching the lake, and during lunch, we saw the usual bushbirds in the trees. Among the waterbirds sighted were large numbers of Straw-necked Ibis (over 500), Black-winged Stilts (approximately 150), White-necked Herons, Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Black Swans and good views of a solitary Whiskered Tern.

We searched for waders but, considering the condition of the lake—grass surrounds and no mud—we had almost decided it was a lost cause when one light brown bird was spotted 'snoozing', head under wing, among the stilts. After much waiting and observation it was decided that, in the interests of accurate identification, the bird must be disturbed. I advanced and the bird popped its head out—this bird was not a duck. The bird, obviously a wader, had an upright stance, a long neck and a small head in relation to the neck length, a medium bill, and white showing on

“  
... very upright stance...  
”

the tail in flight. The neck and breast were pale and the back and wings a honey-brown colour. We observed the bird until it flew to another spot where it pecked at the grass, again with a very upright stance. Several of us had not seen a bird like this before. After much consultation and discussion it was decided that it could only be a Ruff.

After that, we were happy for the day. However, Doopiter Swamp provided views of seven varieties of duck, spoonbills on nests, and many other waterbirds. On the shore, we sighted a Black-fronted Dotterel and Cecilia sighted one Red-kneed Dotterel nearby. A wander through the paperbark fringing the swamp rewarded us with views of a young cuckoo, possibly Horsfield's or Shining Bronze-Cuckoo. The fluffy cuckoo, barely fledged, flew to a dead branch where it was within clear view. An Inland Thornbill called loudly nearby.

The day's species count at all sites was 60. Thanks to Bryan and Margery for such an enjoyable birdwatching day.

**Lorraine Chyne**

## LAKE CHITTERING, 11 November 2001

**T**he day was pleasant enough, but brisk winds made the lake choppy for the seven participants in five canoes. The seven landlubbers who braved the grass seeds and the soggy edges found seeing birds difficult.

We saw a total of 59 species, fewer than we hoped, but nevertheless quite reasonable.

The highlights were probably Jacky Winter and Black-tailed Native-hen. A Grey Shrike-thrush in full and varied song had a most appreciative audience.

The welcome we received from the owners of the property, Jim and Freda Dean, was thoroughly appreciated. We would also like to say "thank you" to Jim and Helen Danby for their assistance in setting up the excursion.

Another trip at a different time of the year seems to be an imperative.

We saw several small groups of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos during the morning.

**Brice Wells**

## CAMPOUT, "CLARE", 16-18 November 2001

**C**onventional theories of bird breeding behaviour have ignored a special category of initiator, namely, Wayne Zadow.

Our not inexperienced group of birders had spent a cheerful morning compiling a list of carefree birds at "Clare", a conservation block SE of Darkan. Then along came Wayne. Suddenly, birds were everywhere busy attending to their young, in an assortment of cleverly concealed nests. Sittellas, pardalotes, Western Thornbills, Western Rosellas, White-naped and Singing Honeyeaters, Black-faced Woodswallows, Golden Whistlers and Jacky

Winters all turned it on, just for him. We were fortunate to be birding with a guide of his calibre.

During the weekend we also visited a series of different habitats including Dead Man's Swamp, Towerinning Lake and the large Haddleton Reserve. All interesting.

Fortune smiled on us, too, in other ways. A pleasant campsite with an obliging, hugely informative host, Bernie Masters. He initiated us into the mysteries of his delightful 100 hectare 'conservation property'. We thank him for having us and strongly urge that we accept his invitation to come again.

Ten people attended. Number of species on Clare: 44. Total species seen: 80.

**John Stewart**

## RAY MARSHALL PARK, VIVEASH, 25 November 2001

**A** late afternoon and early evening walk was held primarily to see how many nocturnal birds were in the vicinity.

The first part of the walk started around 5:30 pm when we saw the familiar species for the area—five types of duck, Darters, cormorants, heron and ibis, with some members sighting a Pallid Cuckoo. Swamp Harrier and Nankeen Kestrel were also noted. New for this list was an Australian Reed-warbler.

We then returned to our starting point and had a hurried meal while we waited for dusk to fall. When it was sufficiently dark to bring out torches, we set out again to attempt to track down the nocturnal birds. We had walked quite a way with no results, when suddenly we heard a distinctive call immediately over our heads, but at first could not see anything. Then, after much searching, a Southern Boobook flew out of the tree and landed a short distance away. It stayed there for a long time, which enabled most of the party of 30 to get a good sighting.

Pam and George Agar then walked a little further along the river and sighted a pair of Tawny Frogmouths with young. The Agars said they also found the birds by hearing their calls. Unfortunately the majority of the group had by then started back. On the way back, the call of an Australian Owlet-Nightjar was heard.

In all, 42 species were recorded.

We were lucky with the weather, too. It was a beautiful, balmy evening. Thanks to Tom Delaney for the good idea.

**Jan Rogers**



New Members' Day at Bold Park Camel Lake Heritage Trail.

*Photograph by Rob Davis*

### WUNGONG DAM, 8 December 2001

A fine, not too hot morning provided ideal conditions for an early summer walk in this area renowned for the number of Western Australian endemic species close to the metropolitan area. Nineteen people attended the walk ably led by Bill McRoberts.

Several different habitats in a relatively small area resulted in the listing of 43 species. This did not include the python luxuriating in the early morning sun on the southern side of Wungong Creek.

The overwhelming urge for a cup of coffee resulted in some members of the party missing the sighting of the Red-eared Firetail, but everyone enjoyed the plethora of Golden and Rufous Whistlers.

A fairly brisk easterly brought the raptors out: a Wedge-tailed Eagle, Square-tailed Kite and Peregrine Falcon.

There were several sightings of Fan-tailed Cuckoos, one only metres away from the walkers on the track.

A great morning.

Sue Mather

they were. Whatever had dug out the nest had not harmed the helpless chicks, and that was a puzzle.

We saw four raptor species, with good sightings of Wedge-tailed Eagle, Australian Hobby, Whistling Kite and Nankeen Kestrel.

Brice Wells

### BIRD ATLAS 2002 and beyond

The Bird Atlas is to continue into 2002 and beyond, and bird surveys of all areas are still required.

New observers welcome.

Bird lists from August 1998 can still be submitted.

Surveys submitted by late April will be included in data used to compile the Atlas book.

*Want to contribute?*

Contact: Cheryl Gole

Tel/Fax: 9293 4958 Email: [gole@starwon.com.au](mailto:gole@starwon.com.au)

### THOMSON'S LAKE, 30 December 2001

We were a little reluctant to lead this excursion after a full and busy Christmas. We expected other members to be as tired as we were, with a small attendance as a consequence. To our surprise, 19 enthusiasts were on parade, and ready to go.

The fact that the lake was dry was rather disappointing, but having a pair of Tawny Frogmouths on display, only 150 m from our starting point was a great fillip. Considering that the number of waterbirds we saw was quite minimal, 46 species for the morning walk was very acceptable.

A long tramp through sand at the end of the walk was not an ideal finish, but we did come across a peculiar and rather tragic situation during the slog. Something had dug out a Rainbow Bee-eater burrow that contained three young. Two of these were already dead, but the third one was crouched at the end of the burrow and soliciting frantically for food. We were uncertain about our next step as the survivor was extremely small, with feathers just beginning to 'pin' on the wings. Then we noticed two adult birds carrying food, close to us, so assumed they were the parent birds, and felt it best to leave things as

### WOODMAN'S POINT, 19 January 2002

On 19 January, 18 members attended the walk and 29 species were observed during the outing.

The highlight of the walk from my point of view was the sighting of a Mistletoebird in the Cockburn Cement area, which is an addition to my Woodman's Point bird list.

From there we went to Lake Kogolup where 32 species were observed. Those of most interest were Wood Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Glossy Ibis, Banded Stilt and three Crakes—Baillon's, Australian Spotted and Spotless.

Les Harris



Convoy of 4WD and telescopes 'at the ready' at lake on Peter Tozer's farm, 26 Jan 2002, Bremer Bay

Photo by Molly Angus

### AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND CAMPOUT AT BREMER BAY

Overcast and cool days made for pleasant birding at Bremer Bay on the Australia Day long weekend at the end of January. The long trip to the venue was soon forgotten when the beautiful seascapes were sighted and the many birds on the estuary greeted the first arrivals.

It soon became evident that Bremer Bay is an important part of our state's history, with settlement by the Wellstead family dating back to the 1850s. Fourth generation members of the family still live in the original homestead and have set up a superb museum with well displayed exhibits varying from a grand piano to metal curling clips and from a gleaming Cobb & Co coach to a fascinating toffee maker. So much for the historical side of Bremer—now for the campout!

A total of 38 people attended the weekend with six from Albany, three from Katanning, one each from Mandurah, Kojonup and Boyup Brook joining the members from the metropolitan area as well as Anne Gadsby who resides in Bremer and was of great assistance in guiding the group to the best spots. On Friday Anne helped Clive and Wendy and four other members to reconnoitre and so plan the next two days.

Red-capped Parrots greeted us all in the camping area on Saturday before we visited two areas on the edge of the town and just inside the Fitzgerald River National Park. As well as the bird life we were all interested in the wildflowers which were blooming profusely—among others the ouch bush (*Daviesia striata*) with its fascinating flower and prickly foliage and the orange-flowered *Grevillea (decipiens?)*, just to mention two.

A plump and colourful Brush Bronzewing sitting on the track was a good start to our bird list, as were the Splendid and Red-winged Fairy-wrens seen in this area. New Holland Honeyeaters and Little Wattlebirds abounded here. A visit to the estuary near the caravan park before lunch added to our list, including some waders which included one Terek Sandpiper and one Greater Sand Plover. Dozens of Chestnut Teal were also present and we had a very clear sighting of a Grey Shrike-thrush. Various individuals made side trips to the fishing boat harbour, the golf course and, of course, the local sewerage ponds, each adding new species to the list.

In the afternoon we travelled to a lake on the farm of Peter Tozer. The final stretch of the track was a challenge to the drivers and their vehicles but everyone managed. Having seen the lake the previous day when it was teeming with bird life the seven early campers were disappointed

that many of the birds had flown, particularly the huge flock of Banded Stilts and most of the Red-necked Avocets. However, the list continued to grow with Red-necked Stints and Australasian Shovelers and everyone continued to be enthusiastic and eager to see the elusive Western Whipbird which had been heard several times (it was not sighted during the weekend).

On Saturday evening we were invited to join the local people at a Fish Fry meal, a fund raiser for resurfacing the tennis courts at the sports centre. Twenty-six of our group attended and all enjoyed the fish, which had been caught and cooked by the local members, as well as the variety of salads provided. Altogether they fed 112 people that night which was a mighty effort. Our group held up its end as

Les won the spot prize (we think it was planted) and also by Des and Clive entering the funny fish story competition for which Clive was highly recommended for his very 'fishy' bird story.

Sunday morning saw the convoy of ten vehicles leaving at 8 am for Point Ann, having two stops on the way at the Bremer and Gairdner River crossings. The bird list grew—with so many eyes the

birds did not have a chance to hide. Once at Point Ann we were all enthralled by the scenery—vivid white sand, rugged cliffs, sparkling ocean and majestic Middle Mount Barren in the background.



Gordon Inlet, Bremer Bay, 27 Jan 2002  
Photo by Molly Angus

**“... Wagtail with a very regional accent!...”**

It was here that the sighting of the weekend was spotted by Sue and Barry—two well developed baby Western Spinebills, in a nest, being fed by busy adult birds. The sight of 20 or more pairs of binoculars staring at them did not seem to disturb the family at all, even at a distance of eight metres or less!

After our picnic lunch a small group made a short detour to the camping area north of the Point on the mouth of the Saint Mary River where they sighted some White-browed Babbler and a Willie Wagtail with a very regional accent! On the return trip we had a second clear sighting of



George Swann,  
Kimberley Birdwatching  
P O Box 220, Broome, W A 6725  
Email: [kimbird@tpg.com.au](mailto:kimbird@tpg.com.au)  
Ph/Fax: (08) 9192 1246  
[www4.tpg.com.au/users/kimbird](http://www4.tpg.com.au/users/kimbird)

*Offering the most authoritative birdwatching tours in  
North Western Australia.*

**Isdell River Bushwalk.  
Bachsten Creek.  
Black Grasswren.  
Kimberley Islands & Inlets.  
Ashmore Reef Pelagic Trip.  
North West Coast Nature Cruise.  
Plus more exciting trips for 2002/3**

a Brown Falcon, flying with very low sweeps over the heath. The magnificent *Hakea victoriae* blooms in this area; it had been named by James Drummond in 1847.

Next stop was at Quaalup House, another Wellstead building dating back to 1858, now a holiday and camping area. The best sighting here was a Splendid Fairy-wren hopping around for all to admire.

On drove the convoy to Gordon Inlet where it was telescopes to the ready! Four Hooded Plovers standing among a big flock of Sanderlings (someone counted 55) caused great excitement. In this area we also saw Red-capped Plovers.

Back at camp we completed the bird count allowing David's Flesh-footed Shearwater (but disallowing Mary's penguin!). A total of 119 species was reached. Liz and David shared the prize having predicted one above and one below this total. Fortunately Clive had two of his very fine wooden bowls in readiness for prizes.

The group thanked Anne for her local expertise and delightful company and Clive and Wendy were applauded for their patient and expert leadership of such a big group. After this we joined the Caravan Management for a complimentary Sausage Sizzle, a pleasant evening although the music was rather loud and late for some of us who needed our sleep after a long and enjoyable day's birding.

Although the campout had officially ended, on Monday a small group of nine visited a swamp on a nearby farm which is becoming a local conservation issue. The local council wants to use the gravel pit already dug above the level of the swamp as a rubbish tip. Possible future seepage is feared and it was hoped that a bird count in and around the swamp by the Birds Australia group could be used in the negotiations with the council. Thirty species were sighted which will give Anne and her friends good evidence to argue against the proposal.

When the final campers left the area on Tuesday the count had risen to 123—all in all a great weekend!

**Molly Angus**

## Observatory reports

### THE NEW BROOME...

**A**s the new Wardens of the Broome Bird Observatory we feel that we have come to a truly amazing place. There is life and activity everywhere—from the incredible sight of flocks of thousands upon thousands of wading birds on the beaches and mudflats of Roebuck Bay (just a minute's walk from the observatory), to the scuttling of various lizards through the bush, the deafening croak of Green Tree Frogs, and the melodious dawn chorus (the White-throated Gerygone is our favourite).

Highlights of our first couple of weeks included the sighting of a Dusky Gerygone in the mangroves close to the observatory, a Black-headed Python (in the shadehouse) and the spectacular colours and lighting of



**“... reflecting the colours  
of the bay ...”**

Roebuck Bay. We are on a huge and fascinating learning curve discovering the internationally significant habitat that is home to hundreds of thousands of migratory birds during their summer feeding frenzy.

Although we have arrived in the wet season (which hasn't really started yet) we are managing to get lots of jobs started. Our priorities are a revamp of the campers' kitchen/bird observation area, otherwise known as 'The Shadehouse', which is now reflecting the colours of the bay, complete with new and improved insect/frog/reptile/mammal/crab proofing. The information centre/gift shop



will also receive a facelift. We are re-establishing a resource area for slides and videos that includes a well-equipped library. This will be available for both guests and day visitors if they wish to find out a bit more about the fauna and flora of the area, or maybe would just like to relax and watch a video.

As things go, it seems it will be a busy season so we are focused on being organised to offer visitors service and facilities of the highest standard possible. We hope many people who haven't visited for a while might consider a trip to Broome this year, but we urge everyone to plan ahead as several expeditions are already booked so the observatory will be likely to fill quickly in the peak season.

Bird wise, there has been plenty of activity with thousands of Oriental Pratincoles circling overhead on several occasions being one of the highlights. A Spotted Harrier was seen in the bird bath near the shadehouse, a first for the observatory. Brown Boobies continue to dot the poles of the port. Red-headed Honeyeaters are reported among the mangroves, and Black-necked Storks always impress any birdwatcher scanning the bay. A Banded Honeyeater has also been seen this month at the observatory, another possible product of the permanent water supply and hot weather.

We have yet to confirm the sighting of a Great-billed Heron (seen three times near the mangroves). Readers may have also heard of the "Kelp Gull" that has been reported. It still graces us with its presence in the port area, however already speculations have arisen to what it 'might be' as the bird is not in adult plumage.

It's these sorts of sightings that give birding an air of excitement that many can't resist, so perhaps you will just have to see it and decide for yourself.

**Dan and Wendy Blunt, Wardens**

## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

**H**as it really been three months since the last Bird Notes? Hopefully your Christmas/New Year break was relaxing with a nice spot of birding in there somewhere.



We have been flat out, with guests coming from all over Australia (including Jabiru!) so our birding has had to take a back seat. Still, it has been wonderful to meet so many different and interesting people.

There is no better way to experience the delights that Eyre has to offer than on one of the many courses we run here. During the time since we last wrote there have been no fewer than three courses, all with very different themes.

Stephen Davies started the ball rolling in late November with *Field Techniques in Bird Studies*. Not only do you get the opportunity to participate in bird banding, you learn a variety of methods for studying birds. This was a great course with a number of students involved and it is wonderful to see the future of Australia's flora and fauna in such good hands.

**"... comes out to crack the whip ..."**

Early new year and those inclined to green fingers got together for *Greening the Dunes*. George Agar, our erstwhile Treasurer, comes out to crack the whip under the scorching sun in an attempt to arrest the relentless march of the immense mobile coastal dunes. There seemed to be much frivolity amongst these participants and that led us poor slaving Wardens (cooking up a storm over the hot stove) to ponder "Just how much work is taking place?" Rest assured, an incredible amount of area has been sewn with spinifex and acacia, with the high spirits the result of a cooling dip in the sea.

Following immediately on their heels, a group of very barmy people arrived, and mainly came out at night. Erecting some very odd-looking traps they were on the prowl for bats. Doug Watkins takes this course every year and under his expert guidance he lead this 'pallid' group of night owls up cliff and down cave in the pursuit of the bats of the Nullarbor. With excellent success too, as five of the six species were trapped and examined in detail.

Not everyone goes batty here at Eyre (wardens excepted) and normality returns with Peter Sandilands and the *Focus on Birds* course in autumn. This will be the ninth in a series of seasonal studies on the distribution of birds in the area and autumn is an excellent time of year for birding at Eyre. So if you are looking for that refreshing break from the hectic pace of life, start planning now and make the rewarding trip out to Eyre. We recommend it highly.

Now, a little bird may have whispered in your ear, and, yes, it's true. Helen and I will be leaving Eyre in mid-March so this is our last contribution to *WA Bird Notes*. We were very kindly invited to stay on by Shapelle and her management team but the lure of other adventures was just too strong.

We thank you for your support and generosity during our tenure, wishing you good birding for the future. Most especially we would like to thank Eyre. We have had a marvellous time here and the wonders of nature that we feel privileged to have witnessed will travel in our hearts forever more. This is a very special place, one that deserves your support, now, and in the future. But don't just take our word for it. Ask the birds, they'll tell you!

**Paul and Helen Evans  
Wardens**

## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY DUNE RESTORATION PROJECT



A mammoth effort is planned for 'greening the dunes' at Eyre for 2002.

Eyre sought funding from Coastcare to assist in dune restoration and was successful! Part of the funding covers the costs of volunteer workers staying at Eyre.

Eyre invites enthusiastic people to participate in collecting and spreading seaweed and seed on the mobile dunes at Eyre. For four hours' work towards stabilising the dunes, Eyre can offer free accommodation and hearty meals. All in the beautiful, peaceful natural setting that surrounds Eyre Bird Observatory. There is also available a contribution towards travel costs, up to a maximum of \$200 per return trip (eg, per vehicle or per return bus fare).

The aim of this project is to greatly boost the yearly efforts to *Green the Dunes* conducted in January each year. From the experience of almost 30 years' work on the mobile dunes closest to Eyre (and some are getting closer!), the spreading of seaweed is essential as it is the most effective means of stabilising the wind blown sands and providing a 'bed' for seed to germinate and grow.

Unfortunately, seaweed is often in short supply during the summer months at Eyre. It is hoped that with the concerted efforts of many willing hands, large amounts of seaweed will be collected and spread during working bees planned in June, July and September. Plant seed can be added to the seaweed at any time once it has been laid down.

Historically, it was the west dunes and track to the beach that were of most concern in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly at Irene's Peak. The track to the beach could change from week to week, depending on how the winds had blown the sand. The west dunes and Irene's Peak were always a challenge to dune workers, especially the late Bill Graham whose work will always be remembered with awe and respect.

Today, the west dunes are now reasonably stable with good vegetation cover. Irene's Peak (touch wood!) appears to be lying low, much lower than she used to. Maybe the winds have changed. The track to the beach is now stable with large acacia shrubs and some eucalypts on its edges and beyond (a Greening Australia grant greatly assisted this work in the early 1990s). There are some serious looking blowouts though, that need attention. The most mobile dunes appear to be to the east, including the largest dune, Joseph (the dune of many colours). Work on the dunes further to the east is planned, including the south base of Joseph.

Four working bees are planned for this project:

23 – 29 June 2002,  
14 – 20 July 2002,  
1 – 7 September 2002 and  
5 – 11 January 2003.

Remember, winter is a great time to be at Eyre. True! The low overnight minimums are misleading. Temperatures quickly rise during the morning to mild winter days. Open fires in the living room warm the winter nights.

Please book early as there are limited positions available with accommodation paid for. Please contact the Wardens at Eyre Bird Observatory (08 9039 3450) or George Agar (Co-ordinator) (08 9457 2292).

### WARDENS WANTED: EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

The management committee of Eyre Bird Observatory is seeking a couple to work as wardens at Eyre, commencing in March 2002.

Set in the mallee woodlands of Nuytsland Nature Reserve on the Nullarbor coast, south of Cocklebidy and 500 km east of Norseman in south-east WA, the observatory has a beautiful natural setting close to the coastal dunes.

Wardens must be able to cater for guests, maintain vehicles and a small solar power plant and promote the positive spirit of Eyre. The work is hard at times and the financial benefits low, but a couple that can share tasks equitably will find this a rewarding adventure.

All enquiries about the position (or offers to fill in as relief wardens) should be directed to either of the following (and please don't forget to leave your phone number): Shapelle McNee (08) 9433 1372, email <mshapelle@hotmail.com> or Rod Smith (08) 9447 3804, email <rodjoyce@optusnet.com.au>.

### WISH LISTS ....

Both Eyre and Broome need computer upgrades—each observatory has increasing needs for computer facilities for data storage, account keeping, general correspondence, etc. So, if you have a computer that you no longer need, or know of one, please contact the wardens at either observatory and enquire as to whether it would suit their needs— they will be most grateful!

The following list includes some more things that Eyre could dearly do with if you are happening to go their way or just wish to send: thermos flasks, gravy boat, fly trap, tape deck, energy saver light bulbs, small and medium size food storage containers.

Or, if you have anything else you think one of the observatories might need, please contact the wardens:

Eyre: telephone (08) 9039 3450 or email  
eyrebirdobs@bigpond.com

Broome: Dan and Wendy, telephone (08) 9193 5600  
or e-mail bbo@tpgi.com.au.

## Coming events

### **Important note re campouts**

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BA Office (9383 7749) 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 know when to expect people.

### **Saturday-Monday 2-4 March—Campout at Pemberton**

We will be based at the Pemberton Caravan Park. The park has on-site bungalows, fully contained and serviced cabins, budget cabins, as well as powered and non-powered sites for tents and caravans. Book your own accommodation by ringing 9776 1300 as early as possible as Pemberton is popular at this time of year. Tell them that you are with the Birds Australia group. A deposit is required for cabin bookings.

Please advise the Birds Australia office (9383 7749) to let us know how many will be in your party and when you will arrive.

Besides the karri forest, we will visit coastal heath and some more accessible parts of the D'Entrecasteaux National Park.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

### **Sunday 10 March—Half-day excursion, Alfred Cove**

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast), off Burke Drive, Attadale. We will look for waders before they commence their migration north, and for bushbirds. Buff-banded Rails are also often seen in the area.

Leader: Les Harris

### **Saturday 16 March—Half-day excursion, Herdsman Lake**

Meet at 7:30 am in the Maurice Hamer Park. Turn off Pearson Street into Falcon Avenue, turn right at the T-intersection into Lakeside Road. Continue to the car park at the end of the road.

This is one of the waterbird refuges that never dries up at the end of summer. If the water level is down, some interesting waders may be seen such as Wood Sandpiper. Last summer a Freckled Duck was here for many weeks. We may walk further around to the northern end looking for crakes, depending on the weather. Please bring your telescope.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

### **Wednesday 20 March—Mid-week excursion, Ascot Waters, Belmont**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the end of Tidewater Way. To reach the area from Great Eastern Highway, turn

into Stoneham Street, then into Resolution Drive, and left into Tidewater Way. Continue through two roundabouts, cross the bridge and up to the car park at the top of the rise.

We might see Buff-banded Rails, and a Black-shouldered Kite has nested in the area.

Leader: Tom Delaney

### **Sunday 24 March—Banding morning at Yanchep National Park**

Meet at the park after 7:30 am.

Travel to Yanchep National Park and go through the main entrance. By explaining that you are visiting the banding site you will be admitted free of charge. Those at the banding on the day are regarded as volunteers and will be registered as such on a list of names which will be passed on to the Park management.

The banding site is reached by driving to the northern end of the golf course, just beyond the fairways on each side of the road. Please go to the banding station on the western side.

Banding has been conducted in Yanchep National Park for many years, resulting in a growing understanding of movement and development of many of our bird species. Visitors will be shown the procedures used at the nets and at the banding table. Perry de Rebeira, Rod Smith and others will be on hand to answer your questions.

Leader: Rod Smith

### **Monday 25 March meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Colin Davis, a member, will speak on the results of the seasonal surveys in which he participated on the birds of Lake MacLeod in the north-west of WA.

### **Friday-Monday 29 March-1 April—Easter Campout at Nanga Station**

CALM has asked BAWA to assist with bird surveys of the numerous stations that are now under their management. We have chosen one of the best to start with. Nanga Station, situated at the base of Shark Bay, will be ideal for a late Easter campout. There is an excellent caravan park still operational within the station boundary, and we can use this as a base to explore the property.

Cabins, etc, are available, but early booking will be essential. As usual, please make your own bookings at Nanga Bay Resort, phone (08) 9948 3992. This will be a 'working' campout and some of us will stay on to complete the survey.

If you have not already booked, do so ASAP and advise the Office (9383 7749) of your intention to attend. Don't forget to bring bathers and fishing line.

This area is the junction of coastal, northern, southern, arid land, and SW species so a good variety of birds should be seen.

Leader: Clive Napier

**Saturday 6 April—Half-day excursion, North Lake**

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park on Progress Drive, just off Farrington Road. We will walk around this small lake where both bush and water birds can be seen.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

**Sunday 7 April—Fifth Annual Corella Count**

Time: 3.30pm to dark. We aim to locate, identify and count as many as possible of the three species of corellas present in feral populations around Perth, or in other coastal towns such as Mandurah, Bunbury and Albany.

Contact John Blyth to be allocated a site or suggest one of which you know.

Leader: John Blyth

**Saturday-Sunday 13-14 April—Campout at Hoffman's Mill**

Hoffman's Mill is in the central Jarrah forest, about 120 km south of Perth, to the east of Yarloop. It is near the three sites into which Noisy Scrub-birds were re-introduced several years ago and some were heard at a campout held here in 1999. We should also be able to have a look at two new re-introduction sites as well.

The old mill site is suitable for bush camping and there is some lovely streamside habitat nearby. Toilets are available but no other facilities, and you will need to bring

your own water for drinking and cooking. This is a popular camping spot, so it would pay to arrive on the Friday evening or as early as possible on Saturday.

Hoffman's Mill is marked on Map 46 of the current Travellers Atlas, at D5. To reach the site, travel south from Perth on the South Western Highway and turn left onto Logue Brook Dam Road, about five km south of Yarloop. Continue on until the road runs into Clarke Road which takes you directly to Hoffman's Mill. Once there look for BA signs to the BAWA camp.

Leaders: John and Judy Blyth

**Thursday 18 April—Mid-week excursion, Kings Park**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the northern end of Forrest Drive opposite the Botanic Gardens near the junction with Lovekin Drive. We will conduct Atlas surveys in several areas of the Park.

Leader: Frank O'Connor

**Sunday 21 April—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

**Monday 22 April meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Joe Tonga, a local expert on the topic, will speak on "Nest boxes for birds". In view of the continuing clearance of bush and the dwindling number of suitable trees for nests and nesting holes, this is an important issue.

**Saturday 28 April—Half-day Excursion, Yangebup Lake, Yangebup**

Meet at the car park on the south-west end of Parkes Street, between Osprey Drive and Hammond Road, (Streetsmart Map 462) at 8.30 am. Wear rubber boots or old shoes as there will be some muddy areas.

This is a good area for waterbirds and waders. Three crakes have been seen here. Bring a 'scope if possible. If time permits, Kogolup will also be visited.

Leader: Clive Napier

**Sunday 5 May—Half-day excursion, 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 bird life of the Canning Wetlands.

Leader: Richard and Lorraine Chyne

**FOR SALE**  
**BIRD SANCTUARY/RETREAT**  
**WEST GINGIN**

- \* 6.8 ha (16 acres) with small shed, two-thirds uncleared/lake. Room to build.  
Power within 200 m
- \* Permanent water fringed by paperbarks and *Eucalyptus rudis*.  
Good stand of Christmas trees.
- \* Over 90 species of birds. Breeding colony of Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Little Black Cormorant.
- \* Little Bittern seen here on 3 occasions.

Lot 2499 Wanerie Rd, West Gingin  
\$75 000

**Contact: John Hatch (08) 9655 1155**  
 Elders Real Estate  
 Lancelin WA 6044

***Help to save our precious places!***

**Saturday 11 May—Full-day excursion, Talbot Brook near York**

We will visit the property of Eggy and Rob Boggs, which has been visited twice before by BA members.

To reach the property, travel along Great Eastern Highway to The Lakes turnoff to York, continue along the Great Southern Highway, turn right into Cut-Hill Road (before reaching York). Turn right into Talbot Road, and travel for about 10 km. Then turn left into Talbot Hall Road. Continue for about two km to Talbot Hall.

We will meet here at 10:00 am.

Leader: Clive Napier

**Thursday 16 May—Mid-week excursion, Bold Park**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park on Reabold Hill Scenic Drive for a walk in Bold Park and conduct an Atlas survey.

Leader: Tom Delaney

**Sunday 19 May—Half-day excursion, Bibra Lake**

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

Bibra Lake is part of the Beeliar Wetlands Chain and a large number of water and bush birds can be seen here.

Leader: Brice Wells

**Saturday 25 May—Half-day excursion, Piney Lakes Reserve, Winthrop**

This is a new venue for the metropolitan area. It used to be part of a pine plantation, contains two artificial lakes, and one natural permanent lake. Spotless Crakes and numerous other water birds frequent the area. There is a considerable area of natural bushland around the lake and this is home to the usual local species.

Meet at 9:00 am in the car park off Murdoch Drive. Turn off Leach Hwy or South Street into Murdoch Drive at the lights. From Leach Hwy take the second turn right, across the dual carriageway, into the grassed park area to the car park. It is approximately 700 m from Leach Hwy.

Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier.

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

Dr John Long, Palaeontologist (Vertebrates) of the WA Museum, will speak on "The early evolution of birds".

**Saturday-Monday 1-3 June—Foundation Day Campout, Lochada Station and Karara Station**

These two stations adjoin each other and are quite close to Perenjori so travelling distances will not be great. They are CALM acquisitions and so they would appreciate bird lists after our visit.

The area contains a number of habitats such as Salmon and York Gum, heath, granite outcrops and swamps. There

are no facilities on either station so be prepared for a bush camp. Roads are quite good, so as long as heavy early rains do not occur conventional vehicles should be OK.

Please ring the BA Office (9383 7749) for further details and a printed sheet giving directions to the camp site.

Leaders: Tony Brandis from CALM and Clive Napier

**Sunday 9 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 Road and Hardinge Road to the reservoir.

There are good prospects of seeing both Red-eared Firetails and introduced Red-browed Finches Southern Emu-wrens, and a fair selection of other bush birds.

Leader: Les Harris

**Saturday 15 June—Full-day excursion, Serpentine National Park**

Meet at 8:30 am at the junction of the South West Highway and Falls Road (the turnoff to Serpentine Falls).

We have not visited this Park for several years, but a species list of about 80 birds has been compiled. We hope to visit areas of the park not normally accessible to the public.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

**Sunday 23 June—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. About 65 species of birds have been sighted in the area, including Yellow-throated Miners.

Leader: Rod Smith

**Monday 24 June meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Bob Goodale, zoologist, will speak on "Birds of the world in my care as Curator of Birds, Cologne Zoo, West Germany".

**Monday 22 July meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**

Michael Morcombe, wildlife photographer and member, will give an illustrated talk with slides of his photographs of birds.

# **ATTENTION**

## **BIRDWATCHERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS**

**YOU ARE INVITED TO A CHARITY OPENING OF**

**“ A VOYAGE TO ANTARCTICA ”**

**A photographic exhibition and book launch  
by**

**Wildlife Photographer**

**STUART MILLER**

**Fremantle Arts Centre  
1 Finnerty St,  
Fremantle**

**OPENING : 7 PM - 9 PM  
Wednesday 22 May 2002**

**EXHIBITION: May 18 - June 16**

***Proceeds from opening to:***

**Birds Australia (WA) and  
The Ear, Nose & Throat Foundation of Western Australia**

**Chris Hassell & Adrian Boyle  
Of Broome are NOW!!**



## **TURNSTONE NATURE DISCOVERY**

**Running a regular  
full and half-day tour  
programme throughout  
the year, you will have  
the opportunity to share  
their enthusiasm and intimate  
knowledge of the birds of  
the Broome area.**

Join Chris and Adrian for some  
exciting birdwatching experiences

- ♦ On the Bay
- ♦ In the pindan woodlands
- ♦ At the wetlands

Chris and Adrian are also  
available for private charters and  
have devised some excellent short  
itineraries out of Broome.

*Contact them for more details:*

**Tel: (08) 9192 8585**

**E-mail: turnstone@wn.com.au**

**PO Box 3089, Broome, WA, 6725**

**We look forward to hearing from you.**

## **Crossword Answers No 28**

### **ACROSS**

1.tarsi, 4 fraught, 9 documentation, 10 on, 11 defy,  
12 plumed, 15 snow, 16 leg, 18 Lewins, 20 bronze, 21  
film, 23 wren, 25 rail, 26 dog, 27 lotusbird, 28 tag

### **DOWN**

2 around, 3 sound, 4 fragile, 5 avid, 6 gene, 7 toes,  
8 peafowl, 13 meeting, 14 bushlark, 15 spoonbill,  
17 ground, 19 observe, 22 mullet, 24 RAOU

### **SILENT GROVE COTTAGE**

- ♦ Spacious, self-contained  
2 bedroom cottage — everything  
supplied
- ♦ 2 hectare bushland fringing Princess  
Royal Harbour
- ♦ Over 30 birds visit including Red-  
eared Firetail, Red-capped Parrot,  
Western Spinebill, Golden Whistler
- ♦ Adjacent to National Park, walk trails
- ♦ Adult accommodation, private and  
secluded
- ♦ Discount for members

*Contact Marilyn & Ron Dorn*

#### **Silent Grove Cottage**

PO Box 5226 (612 Frenchman's Bay Rd)  
Albany WA 6332

**Tel: (08) 9844 4950 Mobile: 0438 844 950**

**Website: [www.silentgrove.iinet.net.au](http://www.silentgrove.iinet.net.au)**

**Email: [merron@iinet.net.au](mailto:merron@iinet.net.au)**

Printed by Executive Press: Tel (08) 9275 8044