Western Australian Bird Notes

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(a division of Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

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PAINTED SNIPE NEAR BROOME

On 25 March I went out to a cattle bore on Roebuck Plains to 'reccy' for the possibility of cannon netting Oriental Pratincoles. When I got there the pratincoles were widely spread and even with a big net a maximum of five or so birds would have been lucky.

I decided to wait until dusk to see if the 'prats' grouped together. While I waited I took some photos of the Whiskered Terns, with the occasional White-winged Black amongst them.

A much photographed female Painted Snipe cannon-netted on Roebuck Plains.
Photo courtesy Chris Hassell

After this I casually scanned the small waterhole and you can imagine my surprise and delight when I saw 7 (SEVEN) Painted Snipe on the edge of the water feeding in belly deep grey muddy water. I got extended views through my 40X eyepiece and scope and then crept closer in the car to photograph them. There was one adult female and seven others either immature females/males or adult males. Even in the hand the birds are difficult to distinguish.

As I looked at them and marvelled at their beauty a thought came into my head—they looked very catchable.

This species is currently the centre of a lot of attention, being the subject of a Birds Australia project. We know very little about this cryptic and elusive species. There is speculation that it is a separate species from the Painted Snipe in Africa and Asia (Rogers and Lane 2000).

Knowing this and having just completed an article for *The Stilt* with Danny Rogers on Painted Snipe in the Kimberley, with notes on a nest I found in 1999, I had a strong interest in the species. Seeing seven sitting in belly-deep water looking very 'cannon nettable' was too much to bear!

The main reason for catching the birds was to take blood samples for DNA analysis to test the predictions of Rogers and Lane.

After many hectic phone calls that night I had five other people prepared for two nights hence. 2AM meet, 3AM at site! The following day George Swann was at the site mid morning and saw eight birds without an adult female being seen. This boded well for success as the birds were obviously at the water all day.

We got to the site to be greeted by 300 cattle. They left in a very orderly fashion and were thoughtful enough to leave behind 17 million mossies!

The net was set very efficiently, seeing as it was dark, and we retired to 150 m away for a 'cuppa' and to wait for first light. The mossies meanwhile feasted well.

At first light we left Jan Lewis at the firing box with radio and the two vehicles moved to where we could see the waterhole and the catching area.

There was now enough light to see eight snipe: seven unknowns and one female. The birds were feeding successfully in the muddy water as I had first seen them.

Twice a single bird got in front of the net on one of its feeding sorties but eventually I got a vehicle to move a little closer to the birds; this worked a charm and six birds promptly walked in front of the net.

The resulting dash to the net was its usual adrenaline-filled affair. We presumed the grey, cow dung filled water wasn't too deep and plunged in. We grabbed the five birds on view and extracted them where we stood without moving the net; meanwhile a cage was going up with alacrity but something was bothering me. I had fired over six and was certain we would catch them all so where was number six? I started to check the net where it was, still in the murky water, and number six popped up in front of me. I don't know if the bird was deliberately submerged to protect itself or if the net was holding it down but it was in fine spirits and all birds, despite the foul looking water they had been in for a moment, didn't have a drop on them. They were all aggressive and hissed continually until put in the cage and then continued to do so and perform threat displays every time we looked in. The sight of the birds with wings and tail spread is a sight to behold at close quarters.

Modern communications were then utilised and a satellite phone call to senior AQIS vet John Curran saw him joining us 40 minutes later to take the blood samples.

All birds were banded, flagged, measured and weighed, then photographed and photographed and photographed, etc, etc, etc, etc.

We released all six birds at the same time and they flew strongly for 200 m or so before dropping into tall grass.

We packed up the muddy gear and our muddy selves and smiled all the way home.

This exciting and very valuable catch would not have been possible without

Dan Blunt BBO Warden,
Wendy Blunt BBO Warden,
John Curran, AQIS, BBO Committee,
Jan Lewis BBO committee,
Liz Rosenberg, BBO Volunteer, and
George Swann.

My sincere thanks to those above.

Rostratula australis here we come!

Chris Hassell

Observations

This list has been compiled by the Observations Committee. Metropolitan suburbs or shires are in brackets. Please report interesting observations to Frank O'Connor (9386 5694 or preferably sightings@iinet.net.au) or the BAWA office. Sightings are included on the BAWA website (http://birdswa.iinet.net.au) as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in WABN.

The 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).

Highlights

The late summer and early autumn have been very quiet for the reporting of unusual sightings. The main exception has been a number of unusual sightings for Rottnest Island. The Little Bittern at Regent Waters and the Freckled Duck at Herdsman Lake have remained since the previous list. There were more sightings of crakes and large flocks of Banded Stilts.

Two Rockhopper Penguins, a Short-tailed Shearwater and a Long-tailed Jaeger were the most unusual sightings in the south-west. It is also very heartening that Malleefowl are still being reported from Dryandra.

The Kimberley has been quiet during this period. The best sightings were of a possible Kelp Gull that has been present at the port since late December, and a small flock of Painted Snipe on Roebuck Plains Station.

Every trip to Christmas Island seems to find new birds for this island 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, plus some other species not previously reported on the island. The summer produced a rash of 'herons' with seven unusual species recorded since November.

Finally, I have heard third or fourth hand of many sightings that would have been included in this list if the full details had been reported. So please send more sightings to the office or me. The information below is usually sufficient

and we will ask for more information and adequate documentation when it is needed for inclusion in WABN.

METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

Black Swan – 2000+, 25/04/02, Peel Inlet (Coodanup) – MB
Red-tailed Tropicbird – 1, 09/03/02, Cape Vlamingh (Rottnest) – WB, RD
Australian Pelican – 9, 06/03/02, Rocky Bay (Rottnest) – WB
Australian White Ibis – 2200, 26/03/02, North Lake (North Lake) – WM
Painted Button-quail – 1, 15/04/02, near Pines car park Lovekin Drive (Kings Park) – BAWA
Hooded Plover – 1, 08/03/02, Salmon Bay (Rottnest) – RD
Pacific Gull – 1, 14/02/02, Ricey Beach (Rottnest) – WB (scarce in Perth region)
Roseate Tern – 3, 12/03/02, Cape Vlamingh (Rottnest) – WB
Purple-crowned Lorikeet – 2, 28/04/02, Hardy Road (Nedlands) – FO
Fan-tailed Cuckoo – 1, 06/03/02, Wadjemup Hill (Rottnest) – WB
Fork-tailed Swift – 8-10, 09/03/02, Cape Vlamingh (Rottnest) – WB, RD * 190+, 29/03/02, Lake Joondalup near Ariti Avenue (Wanneroo) – ID
White-winged Fairy-wren – 1, 17/01/02, Star Swamp (North Beach) – MH, HvW
Southern Emu-wren – 1, 18/04/02, Gum Blossom Park (Quinns Rock) – PJ
Hooded Robin – 2, 15/03/02, Jandakot Airport (Jandakot) – MB
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike – 1, 07/03/02, Bulldozer Swamp (Rottnest) – WB
Grey Butcherbird – 1 eating Willie Wagtail, 31/01/02, Lake Joondalup (Wanneroo) – RP, WM
Fairy Martin – 1, 02/03/02, Big Carine Swamp (Carine) – FO, BS

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba ocularis*), Christmas Island, March 2002
Photo courtesy Mike Carter

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Malleefowl – 1, 14/12/01, Koomal Road Dryandra (Cuballing) – JP
Rockhopper Penguin – 1, late 12/01, Fitzgerald River NP (Ravensthorpe) – LD * 1, mid 02/02, Salmon Bay Beach (Albany) – per AB
Short-tailed Shearwater – 1 beach washed, 06/01/02, Cable Beach (Albany) – MN
Australasian Bittern – 1, 13/03/02, Mettler Lake, Wellstead (Albany) – MAN
Black-tailed Godwit – 6, 12/02/02, Hay River mouth, Wilson Inlet (Albany) – AB, ABG
Long-toed Stint – 1, 09/02/02, Corackin Swamp (Katanning) – DS
Banded Stilt – 1200, 15/02/02, Lake Ewlyamertup (Katanning) – DS
Hooded Plover – 4, 15/02/02, Lake Ewlyamertup (Katanning) – DS
Long-tailed Jaeger – 1, 16/03/02, Kondinin Lake (Kondinin) – AH (4th inland record for WA)
Gull-billed Tern – 1, 12/02/02, Sleeman River mouth, Wilson Inlet (Albany) – AB, ABG
Fairy Tern – nesting, 17/02/02, Lake Thetis (Dandaragan) – CG (see article in this issue)
Whiskered Tern – 8, 12/02/02, Sleeman River mouth, Wilson Inlet (Albany) – AB, ABG
Fork-tailed Swift – 7-8, 29/03/02, track off Coolgardie North Road (Coolgardie) – CG, MG * 3, 01/04/02, track near No 8 Pumping Station (Coolgardie) – CG, MG. (See article in this issue).
Gilbert's Whistler – 1, 01/04/02, Ularring Rock approximately 130km NNW of Coolgardie (Coolgardie) – CG, MG

KIMBERLEY

Brolga – breeding, 26/04/02, Roebuck Plains (Broome) – AdB
Little Curlew – 300, 28/01/02, Crab Creek mud flats (Broome) – FO, RB (unusual on mudflats)
Asian Dowitcher – 50+, 13/03/02, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – JS
Painted Snipe – 7, 25/03/02, Roebuck Plains (Broome) – CH * 8, 26/03/02, Roebuck Plains (Broome) – GS (see article in this issue)
Oriental Pratincole – 1000, 28/01/02, over Crab Creek mangroves (Broome) – FO, RB * 20000, 30/01/02, Derby airport (Derby) – FO, RB
Kelp Gull? – 1, 28/12/01 to 05/02, Entrance Point (Broome) – GS and many others (identification still to be confirmed; possibly Madagascar race which is smaller with a finer bill)
Oriental Cuckoo – 1, 08/03/02, Willare Bridge (Derby) – CH * 1 hepatic, 16/03/02, Cable Beach dunes (Broome) – CH
Little Bronze-Cuckoo – 2 adults and 1 juvenile, 30/01/02, port mangroves (Derby) – FO, RB (in same tree)
Yellow Wagtail – 45, 12/04/02, sewage ponds (Broome) – AdB

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Little Black Cormorant – 1, 14/03/02 – MC, SD
Cattle Egret – 2, 12/03/02 – MC, SD
Striated Heron – 1, 14/03/02 – MC, SD
Malayan Night Heron – 1 sub adult, 04-11/03/02 – GH, DJ (BARC submission, 1st for Australia if accepted)
Cinnamon Bittern – 1, 22/02/02 – PG, AY (BARC submission by MC, 1st for Australia if accepted, found exhausted and later died)
Black Bittern – 1, 12/03/02 – MC, SD
Watercock – 1 male, 04-11/03/02 – GH, DJ
Pin-tailed Snipe – 1, 04-11/03/02 – GH, DJ * 4, 15/03/02, Christmas Island – MC, SD
White Wagtail (*leucopsis*) – 1, 11/03/02 – GH, DJ, MC, SD
White Wagtail (*ocularis*) – 1, 11/03/02 – MC, SD (BARC submission – photographs)
Java Sparrow – 140, 14/03/02 – MC, SD
Barn Swallow – 3, 11/03/02 – MC, SD

Corrections – The **Short-toed Eagle** reported in WABN 101 was not accepted. A photo of the bird in flight indicated that it was more likely to have been an **Oriental Honey-Buzzard**. The **Shrike sp.** reported in WABN 101 is reported to have been a **Brown Shrike**.

OBSERVERS

AB = Anne Bondin
ABG=Albany Bird Grp
AdB = Adrian Boyle
AH = Alex Hollick
AY = Azmi Yon (CI)
BARC = BA Rarities Committee
BAWA = BAWA Excursion
BS = Barry Stanley
CG = Cheryl Gole
CH = Chris Hassell
DS = David Secomb
DJ = David James (Qld)
FO = Frank O'Connor
GH = Glenn Holmes (Qld)
GS = George Swann
HvW = Hank van Wees
ID = Ian Davis
JP = Jon Pridham
JS = Jonny Schoenjahn
LD = Luke Decicco (US)
MAN=Michael & Ada Nield
MB = Mike Bamford
MC = Mike Carter (Vic)
MG = Martin Gole
MH = Mike Hancock
MN = Margaret Nash
PG = Peter Green (Vic)
PJ = Peter Jacoby
PM = Pam Masters
PS = Peter Sandilands
RB = Robbie Browne (Vic)
RD = Rob Davis
RP = Ryan Phillips
SD = Sean Dooley (Vic)
WB = Wes Bancroft
WM = Wynton Maddeford

Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors

We feel the current issues of WABN are just right in every way.

The notes don't need to be any bigger. As it is it takes us quite some time to read a whole issue. A bigger issue would also necessitate more work for more people and cost more to produce and mail out. About 30 pages is sufficient we think.

We find the notes very easy to read because of the yellow paper with the matt finish and the black printing. Glossy paper is harder to read because of reflections and is more expensive and heavier. With our rather poor financial position why make it worse? We already have a very well produced and expensive magazine, *Wingspan*, so we don't really need another.

The sketches are appropriate and attractive and we can easily refer to other books if we want to see the birds in colour.

The fact that the pages are not stapled together doesn't worry us in the least.

We are quite happy with what we have.

Dorothy and Hank van Wees

PS: Why not be proud of our magazine?

Dear Sirs

Western Rosellas and Peppermints

I refer to the article in the last issue of WA Bird Notes by G F Mees on the matter of Western Rosellas' use of peppermint seeds as a food source.

I can confirm when I lived in Dunsborough that over many years of observation I have seen Western Rosellas feeding on peppermint seeds in my neighbour's back yard.

Western Rosellas and 'Twenty Eights' (Australian Ringnecks) were common in the area.

Ross Payton

Learning About Birds

Reproduced from Interpretive Birding Bulletin Vol. 4 No 6, May/June 2001.

STRATEGIC DECEPTION

There is strong selection on hosts to prevent parasites from finding and laying eggs in their nest.

Three potential defence strategies are available to hosts: mobbing parasites, ejecting foreign eggs from their nest, and refusing to feed odd-looking or odd-acting nestlings. Perhaps to overcome such defences, many brood parasites have evolved various forms of deception via mimicry.

Raptor mimicry

Adults of several species of Old World Cuckoos exhibit a remarkable resemblance to birds of prey.[6] The mimicry extends to the shape of the pointed wings, the long tail, plumage colouration, and the 'flap and glide' flight-style performed by both cuckoos and falcons. Do cuckoos mimic the appearance and behaviour of raptors because there is a benefit associated with looking like a predator? Or are these resemblances coincidental? Since small birds readily mob raptors, cuckoos could provoke mobbing without being suspected of being a brood parasite. Typically, predators are mobbed when birds are nesting and/or when the predator approaches a bird's nest. This being the case, a cuckoo could use the intensity of mobbing as an indication that a host's nest is nearby. A raptor disguise may also decrease a cuckoo's vulnerability to real birds of prey. Unfortunately, there is little evidence bearing on this possibility.

Egg mimicry

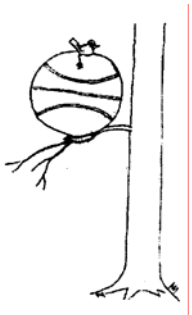
Egg mimicry has evolved in a number of Old World Cuckoos in Europe, Africa, India, and Australia (eg, the Black-eared Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx osculans*). In the Common Cuckoo of Europe (*Cuculus canorus*) evolution of egg mimicry is particularly advanced in that females breeding in different geographical regions lay mimetic eggs to match different host species.[3] Egg mimicry is genetic and presumably transmitted from mother to daughter. Although the exact mechanism for inheritance hasn't been worked out, the genes for egg colour, etc, are believed to be located on the female's W chromosome since in birds the female is the heterogametic sex.

Other brood parasites such as the honeyguides, viduine finches, and Black-headed Ducks (*Heteronetta atricapilla*), do not lay mimetic eggs. Neither do cowbirds, with the possible exception of the Giant Cowbird (*Scaphidura oryzivora*) which possibly lays mimetic eggs to match those laid by oropendolas and caciques.[8] This report, however, has been challenged.[4]

Biologists interpret egg mimicry as an adaptation which reduces the chance that a host will recognise a parasite's egg and remove it from the nest. Other explanations have been proposed. Egg mimicry may have evolved to reduce the conspicuousness of the cuckoo's egg to another cuckoo. [3, 5] Although brood parasites typically lay only one egg per host nest, different individuals occasionally lay eggs in the same nest. Most brood parasites also destroy one of the host's eggs before laying. There are two ways to reduce the chance that a cuckoo's egg will be removed by another cuckoo: (1) mimic the appearance of the host's eggs to confuse the second cuckoo, and (2) lay eggs that mimic the background of the host's nest, making an egg difficult to detect. The first strategy assumes that cuckoos can tell the difference between a host and a cuckoo's egg, a fact that has not been tested, while the second strategy may work especially if the host's nest is covered, ie, dark inside. Both strategies have been proposed to explain egg mimicry in cuckoos.[3] Since most birds can see ultraviolet light, it is also possible that some cuckoos lay eggs that mimic the UV colouration of their host's eggs.[1]

Visual mimicry

Visual mimicry is also exhibited by nestlings of some brood parasites. The best documented examples involve African finches (genus *Vidua*) that parasitise other *Estrildid* finches. The majority of *Vidua* finches parasitise nests of only one host species. Unlike cuckoos, *Vidua* chicks do not eject the host's eggs or its young; hence offspring of both the parasite and host are raised in the same nest. Presumably to avoid detection by their foster-parents, the viduine chicks closely mimic the appearance and behaviour of their host's offspring. This feat is remarkable for two reasons. The open gape of the nestlings, visible when they beg for food, is conspicuously marked with distinctive patterns that are brightly coloured. Each species of *Estrildid* finch exhibits its own unique gape pattern.[7] Still, the gape of each parasitic finch precisely mimics the gape-pattern of its specific host.[7]



Cuckoo practical joke!

Vocal mimicry

Getting fed enough food by foster parents is potentially a problem for a single cuckoo chick that has ejected its host's eggs and young from the nest. Why? Because parents adjust their feed rate to the intensity of the begging

response of their offspring. In an unparasitised nest, the combined visual and auditory stimuli created by multiple chicks is usually sufficient to keep parents motivated to look for food. How does a single cuckoo chick evoke a sufficiently strong response from its foster parents? Nestlings of the Long-tailed Cuckoo (*Eudynamys taitensis*) and the Shining Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*) of New Zealand overcome this problem by mimicking the calls of their host's nestlings and by calling for a longer period of time than their host's nestlings would typically call.[9] The Common Cuckoo in Europe takes vocal mimicry a step further: its chicks mimic the sound of an entire brood of its host's chicks begging simultaneously[2]— WJD.

References

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WA Group reports

BIRDS AUSTRALIA WA INC. COMMITTEE

The Committee continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month at Perry House. Following the AGM it contains re-elected and new members, while there have been several changes in office bearers. The composition is:

Chair: Mike Bamford
Vice-Chair: Brice Wells
Secretary: Liz Walker
Treasurer: Mary Vaughan
Committee members:
Wes Bancroft
Rob Davis
Carol Elliott
Sue Mather
Clive Nealon
Frank O'Connor
Jenny Wilcox

The role of the Committee is to oversee the activities of the group on behalf of members. During a typical Committee meeting, discussions include research proposals, grant applications, progress reports on current projects, the excursions program, public relations, fundraising, student sponsorship, conservation issues and so on. The treasurer tables monthly accounts and there is correspondence to deal with. Reports on many of these activities appear elsewhere in this issue of Bird Notes. We are also endeavouring to respond to issues identified as of importance by members during the recent planning sessions (see elsewhere in this issue), but the bottom line is that what we do depends upon what members feel we ought to do. If any members have concerns or ideas, or would like to join the growing band of volunteers who keep the office going, get in touch with us. Birds Australia may be a hundred years old, but it is nothing without active members now.

In addition to handling local affairs, the BAWA Committee is our Group's link with the National Office of Birds Australia. In March I attended a meeting of Birds Australia Regional Groups in Sydney. In a small, second storey office in the appropriately named Crows Nest were representatives of only three Regional Groups, but we covered a lot of ground and it was a great opportunity to discuss directions being taken by the whole organisation with Henry Nix (President) and Jim Downey (Chief Executive Officer). Despite modern forms of communication, the tyranny of distance is a constant problem and it is easy to forget that we are part of a national body. It was also interesting to find that while BAWA is much more active than other Regional Groups in organising excursions and camp-outs for members, we are much less active on the conservation front. Co-incidentally, this was one of the issues identified in our planning sessions.

A lot is planned for the next few months. I look forward to catching up with members at meetings and I might even find time to do some birdwatching.

Mike Bamford, Chair

OUTCOMES OF FEBRUARY BAWA PLANNING WORKSHOP

Birds Australia WA has now completed the first stage of a strategic planning process to clarify its future role.

The process to examine BAWA and identify any needs and opportunities for new directions was initiated by the BAWA Committee in 2001. To date, the process has included two workshops and an opportunity to comment through an article in the December 2001 edition of WABN.

At the first BAWA planning workshop in October 2001, participants identified key BAWA roles: Conservation, Member Services, Research, Communication and Financial viability. For each of these roles, a number of essential tasks were identified and opportunities for change were suggested. Details of the workshop outcomes were reported in the December WABN article.

At the second planning workshop in February 2002, participants were asked to examine the opportunities for change in more detail and consider:

- What specific actions are required to achieve change?
- Who should be responsible for implementing the actions?
- What are the priorities for implementation?

The workshop participants were asked to work in specific groups before coming together to identify overall themes and priorities. These groups were:

- Servicing members/communication
- Conservation/research
- Financial viability/organisational issues

Some of the suggestions to come out of the February workshop are listed below.

Membership services/communication

- Improve services to country members
  Ideas include establishing a country coordinator, having a 'Country' page in WABN, inviting country members to join in excursions, having a country membership category (and fee category), developing a guest speaker program for country centres and developing a country member email list for ease of communication
- Encourage young people to join and remain in BAWA

  Ideas include offering specific activities for younger members (eg, under 40), identifying younger persons already in BAWA and establishing a younger persons group, having a coordinator, promoting BAWA at schools, a reduced subscription, and asking young people what they want
- Upgrade information on membership (through a survey) and especially identify skills of the membership
- Develop job description forms for existing and new roles. Need to clarify roles and responsibilities of office volunteers, sub-committees, and office holders

  New roles include coordinators for the following: country members, new members, demographics, wader studies, suburban bird survey, new ideas and younger member group
- Develop a range of educational activities
  Ideas include an annual BAWA Open Day for the public, improving links to schools and tertiary institutions, developing interactive software on WA birds for use in schools, hosting an annual seminar for university students to present their research and hosting one of the biannual Australian ornithology conferences
- Improve linkages with other organisations such as CALM and the Naturalists' Club
- Increase use of computer technology (Email group lists, merging of databases)
- Undertake more publicity (perhaps a sub-committee is needed)

Conservation/research

- Establish a Research and Conservation Committee (by calling for expressions of interest)
- Undertake publicity for conservation projects
- Improve coordination with other research groups/ committees
- Prioritise research with regard to funding
- Publish research results in general and technical publications
- Upgrade the database to improve accessibility for information and research

Finance/organisational issues

- Increase BAWA Income

  Ideas to do this include: send out BAWA brochure to universities and libraries to promote and increase membership; requesting donations for the service of tour guiding overseas and eastern states visitors in WA; charging for survey requests; charging for guided bird tours to individuals and groups, bird watching for beginners and public bird walks; lobbying the National Office to have the funding allocation returned to the previous figure, promoting greater use of the observatories and greater participation in Eco-tourism
- Develop a Financial Policy and Plan for the organisation
- Establish a Finance Sub Committee
- Identify new office accommodation in two years or less

- Strengthen the relationship with the National Office through Council membership and support to Regional Groups
- Provide more support to volunteers and acknowledge the work of volunteers (eg, through certificates, badges, honour board and letter from Chairman)
- Consider payment of some staff

Priorities for action within the next year were as follows:

- Improved services to country members
- Collect information on membership
- Financial plan
- Accommodation issue
- Consider database use (and merging of data)
- Volunteer acknowledgement
- Conservation committee

The BAWA committee now has the responsibility for pursuing the outcomes of the review process. Any enquiries can be directed to the chairman, Mike Bamford.

Alison Day
Workshop Facilitator

Post Script

One of the concerns with this sort of exercise is that everyone does a lot of talking and has good ideas, but little changes. The Committee is ensuring that we do respond to the recommendations that have come from the planning sessions. Apart from taking advantage of some very good ideas, it is important that participants feel their time was well spent. Recent developments that have come from the planning sessions include:

- The formation of a conservation and research committee to advise the BAWA Committee on conservation issues and research proposals. An invitation for expressions of interest to join this committee in enclosed in this issue of Bird Notes.
- Establishment of a finance sub-committee.
- Circulation of a membership questionnaire to collect information on the expectations and skills of our members (enclosed in this issue of Bird Notes).
- Discussions with the Naturalists' Club and Kings Park and Botanic Gardens have been held concerning our future accommodation.
- Discussions have been held with CALM regarding access to and use of databases to which BAWA members contributed.
- Planning for a BAWA open day, to coincide with Bird Week in October, is under way.

Mike Bamford
Chair

WHERE HAVE ALL THE HOODED PLOVERS GONE?

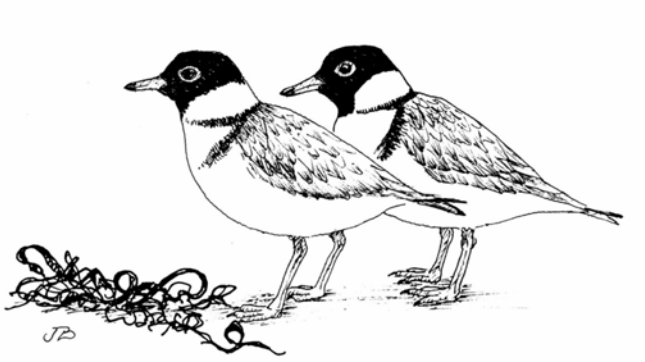
There was great expectation that our state-wide dry season Hooded Plover survey in March this year might produce a total of about 2000 Hooded Plovers for the state. However, despite large numbers of 'Hoodie Helpers' scouring beaches and wetlands in the south-west of the state, where our efforts were concentrated, we only found 730 plovers.

We had reasoned that, with such an extremely dry year, most Hooded Plovers would have been forced to move to the coastal beaches and wetlands where we focussed most of our survey effort. Enquiries about the state of the wetlands in the inland confirmed that it was "as dry as a chip" with only a few wetlands holding any water. Most of these were searched or at least partially searched and yielded little or nothing. The exceptions were Lake Kwornicup, where we found 28 plovers and a lake on private land at Pingrup where we found 63.

Thanks to many volunteers this survey covered most coastline and wetlands with water in them in the target area from Mandurah to Esperance. We also included some coastal areas north to Rockingham and as far west as Kanidal Beach at Eyre. The results are presented below.

In a nut shell

We found a total of 730 Hooded Plovers during the survey period. This included 39 juveniles (5.3%). Only two breeding efforts were found. They were in the Yalgorup National Park and the Fitzgerald River National Park. Data are now being entered on computer and will be analysed in a few weeks time. We do not know why we found so few Hooded Plovers. It could mean the species is in decline. However, it is more likely that the birds were simply moving around in big flocks comprising hundreds of birds and, by co-incidence, we did not happen to have volunteers in the right place at the right time! Previously collected data indicate the high degree to which Hooded Plovers may flock, particularly during the dry season. For example, in the January 1995 State Hooded Plover survey, 2093 plovers were counted but 1868 (89%) were in big flocks of 90 or more birds on just three wetlands in the Esperance area.



Hooded Plovers
Drawing by Judy Blyth

Table: Results of Hooded Plover survey, March 2002

Areas	Numbers: Dry season survey March 2002
Wetlands between Rockingham and Mandurah	0
Beaches from Mandurah to Leschenault Inlet	0 (not well sampled in north due to high tide)
Yalgorup National Park (Yalgorup HPMR*)	170 (including 12 juveniles and 1 breeding effort)
Geographe Bay	0
Beaches from Cape Naturaliste to Augusta (Naturaliste-Augusta HPMR)	39 (including 9 juveniles)
Beaches from east of Augusta to Broke Inlet	2
Beaches from east of Broke Inlet to Denmark (Walpole-Denmark HPMR)	25 (including 3 juveniles)
Beaches east of Denmark to west of Beaufort Inlet (Albany area)	12
Beaches from Beaufort Inlet to Hopetoun (Bremer Bay-Hopetoun HPMR)	40 (including 1 juvenile and 1 breeding effort)
Beaches from east of Hopetoun to Stokes Inlet	4 (plus 23 at Lake Shaster including 2 juveniles)
Beaches Stokes Inlet to Cape Le Grande	213 (including 4 juveniles)
Esperance Lakes (L Gore system to Mullet Lake) (Esperance HPMR)	92 (including 6 juveniles)
Beaches east of Cape Le Grande	10 (including 1 juvenile)
Inland lakes in south west of the State	100 (including 1 juvenile at one site and 63 on a privately owned lake)
Total	**730 (including 39 juveniles)**

Note: * HPMR = Hooded Plover Management Region

Thank yous

Many, many thanks to all our volunteers who provided information about the state of wetlands in the inland areas or conducted surveys there or on the coast. Special thanks to Chris Siemer who flew his plane around the Esperance area to help us identify wet areas that volunteers subsequently searched. Special thanks also to those people who helped co-ordinate sections of the survey including Phyllis Bentley (Hooded Plover Sub-Committee), Bob Goodale (Rockingham), Dick Rule and Tony France (Yalgorup National Park), Lida Feist (Cape Naturaliste to Augusta), Chris Wilder and Sue Abbotts (East Augusta to Broke Inlet), Isaac Hatch and Chris Goodsell (Walpole to Denmark), Anne Bondin (Denmark to Beaufort Inlet), Anne Gadsby (Beaufort Inlet to Hopetoun) and Greg Bannon, Mike Gibbs and Ken Read (Esperance area).

Adopt a Beach or Wetland Program

Consider adopting your own beach or wetland to survey regularly for Hooded Plovers anywhere in the State. It is one of the most helpful things you could do to assist this rare species. Please contact Julie Raines Tel/Fax 9306 5819 or email <austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au>. Please keep sending your data in, including negative records where you search a beach or wetland thoroughly but do not find any Hooded Plovers. These records are just as important as those where you record Hooded Plovers.

Julie Raines
Project Co-ordinator

This project is sponsored by
The NHT *Coast and Clean Seas* Program

FIFTH CORELLA COUNT

Twenty BAWA members spent two or so hours late in the afternoon on Sunday, 7 April 2002 searching a large number of sites from which corellas have been reported in the last few months. The results are summarised in Table 1 below. As far as possible the results are grouped in neighbouring areas, eg along the Swan River from Guildford downstream. Most observers used a combination of driving, to cover as many separate sites as possible, and walking at specific sites to cover as much area as possible. After some discussion, I believe that all identifications as to which species was seen are reliable, and any duplication between recorders has been identified and allowed for as far as possible.

Table 1 Results of the Perth metropolitan corella count, 7 April 2002

Observers	Sites	Results
1. Swan River, from Guildford to Fremantle		
Cheryl and Martin Gole	Parks and open areas on both sides of Swan River from Guildford to Middle Swan Bridge. Ending at Stirling Square, Guildford	About 500 Little Corellas. At least 32 Eastern Long-billed Corellas (ELBs)
Robert Schmidt	Swan River, from Point Reserve Guildford down to Sandy Beach Reserve	up to about 90 ?Little Corella, 1 ELB, probably part of flock counted by Cheryl and Martin Gole
Tom Delaney	Swan River; Coode St to Burswood Golf Course:	72 Little Corellas
Tom Delaney, Marcus Singor	South Perth foreshore; Narrows to Causeway	At least 500 Little Corellas
Brenda Newbey	Point Walter to Leeuwin Barracks	7 Little Corellas; 62 ELBs
John and Judy Blyth	Point Resolution/Point Walter,	About 110 ?Little Corellas?,
Charlie Nicholson	North Fremantle area	About 20 Little Corellas
2. South of the Swan River, approximately from north to south		
Bryan Barrett and Marjorie Clegg	Canning River; Kent Street Weir	360 ELBs
Sue Clegg	Canning River; Kent Street Weir to Riverton Bridge	Seven ELBs and five Western Corellas
Tom Spalding	Attadale Reserve Melville Water	No corellas
3. North of the Swan River, approximately from north to south		
Neil Hamilton, Allan and Michael Burbidge	Lake Joondalup, eastern side	No corellas
Neil Hamilton	Neil Hawkins Park, Lake Joondalup	No corellas
Neil Hamilton	Mawson Park, Hillarys	140 Little Corellas
Gary Grey	Carine Open Space Lake Gwelup	at least 200 Little Corellas, about 100 ELBs
John and Judy Blyth	Perry Lakes	140 Little Corellas
John and Judy Blyth	Lake Monger	1 Little Corella
John and Judy Blyth	Subiaco Primary School	No corellas
Stuart Houghton	Chidley Point Golf Course	No corellas
Stuart Houghton	Seaview Golf Course, Cottesloe and nearby railway reserve.	220 to 230 ELBs
Andrew Burbidge, Bill Rutherford	Jackadder Lake, Woodlands	120-380 Little Corellas
Andrew Burbidge	Herdsman Lake, Floreat	192 Little Corellas (80 of these probably part of flock from Perry Lakes.)
Nora Brockman, Peter Sandilands	Lake Claremont and golf course	43 Little Corellas

Observers	Sites	Results
Table 1, ctd		
4. Busselton//Wonnerup		
Dick Shore	Busselton, incl foreshore, to Wonnerup	No Corellas

In total, a possible maximum of 3297 corellas were counted, and the minimum number possible is 2521. These maxima and minima are appreciably higher than for any previous year's count. Adding the 'most likely' totals for each species gives a combined total of 2700, compared with 1782 for last year.

Table 2. Total numbers recorded for each species in counts in 1998,1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002

Species	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
ELB	About 140	577-627	250-374	430-785: 'most likely' 632	781-902 'most likely' about 800
Little	About 820	1385 to 1580	939-1451	1072-1304: 'most likely' about 1150	1740-2395 'most likely' about 1900
Western	Nil	7	Nil	Nil	5

The range in total numbers in Table 2 is necessary because of possible duplication of counting between two or more observers at different sites, and because in some cases the species of corella was not determined. Observers recorded the time and direction of any movement of corellas, so that it was possible to draw reasonable conclusions about possible double counting. In relation to undetermined species of corellas, the number was counted in the maximum estimate for both Little and Long-billed Corellas, but included in the minimum and likely total only for the species considered most likely.

Although Dick Shore reported no corellas in Busselton on the day of the count, he has recorded significant numbers on several occasions over the last year, including over 60 in January this year. Dick believes these to be Western Corellas, and if this is correct it is possible that they are birds from the Lake Muir to Boyup Brook sub-species or Muir's Corella. This would be quite exciting, because it might mean that the officially endangered Muir's Corella is beginning to expand its range.

In summary, this year's count suggests a large increase in the numbers of Little Corellas around Perth, the first big jump since 1999. This could be simply a result of more complete counting this year and of year to year variations. However, given there were fewer counters this year than last year, and that numbers of Little Corellas have been comparatively consistent over the last three years, this year's numbers are a cause for concern.

Maximum, minimum and 'most likely' estimates this year were also appreciably higher for Long-billed Corellas than in the previous highest count in 1999. However, the number this year is close to what it would have been last year prior to the poisoning of significant numbers (now thought to be about 200) of this species just before the 2001 count. Given that the number of those poisoned last year appears to have been replaced in one breeding season, this species may also be increasing quite rapidly.

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

John Blyth

Atlassers!

Please keep those survey sheets coming in.

LIBRARY NEWS

A new addition may interest travellers to South-East Asia.

Ken Scriven has kindly donated to the Library a copy of *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia.* It is to be found on the shelves at 598.0957. This is for you, the members, to borrow if, for instance you are going to some wonderful exotic place in Asia to escape the winter.

The CALM publication *Landscope* is also available for loan and often has interesting bird- related articles in it.

It is always worth having a look at *The Bird Observer* found at 598.0723 in a box for interesting bird snippets. It also may be borrowed.

The Bookshop

All four Australian field guides are now back in stock at very competitive prices.

A great gift for a birdo

The Flight of the Emu is available for purchase at a never to be beaten price. This fascinating book has been well reviewed. It covers the history of ornithology in Australia, offers some insights into our organization and is interspersed with interesting chapters about specific projects such as the Noisy Scrub-bird recovery program. It is great to read and a good reference.

Sue Mather
Librarian

Members' contributions

AVOCETS AT BIBRA LAKE

During recent past summers Red-necked Avocets have been observed at Bibra Lake in only small numbers (up to six). They chose shallows close to shore on the western side directly opposite the entrance to Adventure World. Trees along the lake edge, a low fence at the edge of parkland and long grass in between provide some screening from the public.

In the late afternoon on 21 March, when cycling around the lake, a friend saw 75 avocets at this spot. None had been observed five days previously during an early morning count by Friends of Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre. On 4, 13 and 14 April, 125, 150 and 230 avocets respectively were seen. These were all observed in the late afternoon.

On Tuesday 16 April and early into the 17th Perth received 69 mm of welcome rain. At 1:00 pm on the 17th when the rain had ceased and the sun was shining I counted 30 avocets resting 50 m off shore and, at least 50 m beyond them, another group of about 50. By mid morning 20 April the numbers were down 14 and on the mornings of the 23rd and 24th all appeared to have gone. However, on mid morning of Anzac Day I saw six avocets resting in a more secluded spot slightly south of the previous site. Black-winged Stilts in numbers ranging from 4 to 20 were seen with or close to the avocets during these sightings.

Nearby North Lake sometimes hosts small numbers of avocets in summer. Over the period of the avocet increase at Bibra Lake very large numbers of Australian White Ibis (over 1000 at dusk) occupied the shallows along the south-west corner of North Lake. They were not seen there after the April rain.

I have been told that up to 1000 avocets may gather at Forrestdale Lake and move on as that lake and Thomsons dry up, usually in January.

The increase in avocet numbers at Bibra Lake is an unusual but very welcome event.

Marion Shaw

WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE AT LAKE McLARTY

Since 1996 members of the Wader Study Group have been conducting surveys of waterbirds and waders at Lake McLarty (see "*The Stilt*" 38: 18-32 (2001)). During these visits we have often been treated to the sight of a pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles patrolling the edges of the wetland or perched in one of the tall Tuarts *(Eucalyptus gomphocephala)* that grow on the fringes of the lake.

White-bellied Sea-Eagles are known to build their nests in tall trees overlooking open areas of water. The presence of a pair in the vicinity of the lake posed interesting questions. Could the birds be breeding and if so was a nest located nearby? An adult bird accompanied by an immature bird had been seen at Creery Island in 1995 so there was every chance. On this basis three separate efforts to track down the birds and locate a nest were made into the woodlands fringing the lake. As the bulk of our waterbird surveys are spent on the eastern side of the lake, the eastern woodland received the most attention. A search into the bushland to the northeast was also conducted, but both of these areas were explored without success. The western side of the lake is predominantly an area of sub divided land known as 'Birchmont'—it consists of privately owned open pastured blocks intersected by sealed service roads. Remnant Tuarts are scattered throughout the sub division. This area was given a periodic scanning with binoculars whenever we visited the western side but a thorough investigation was not conducted. A trip was also made to Austin Bay where Brian Barrett had reported a nest in the late 1980s. The results were a host of regular sightings of the birds but not one of a nest. The problem was temporarily shelved in the "things to do later basket"—our main interest was, after all, waterbirds and waders.

The question resurfaced on 4 March 2000 when a juvenile bird was seen at the lake. This suggested that the birds were breeding somewhere in the Peel Inlet / Harvey Estuary region. Then on 29 April 2001 during a visit to the

lake, Marcus Singor watched an adult bird break a branch from one of the Tuarts and carry it off—was this nest building a or a mating display to its partner? No nest was found so the question remained. A short time later a nest was discovered at Amarillo during an excursion led by Les Harris. Great news but it was some distance from Lake McLarty and the rumours of a nest in the bushland areas adjoining the lake persisted whenever local landowners were encountered, so the vexing question was never really put to rest.

On Sunday 2 December 2001 Cecilia Grant and I were at McLarty and had some great bird watching on the eastern side of the lake. After discovering a Little Stint in breeding plumage, a Chestnut Teal and three Black-tailed Godwits, we moved over to the western side. Finding it slightly oppressive due to the rising temperature, we decided to have lunch on the hill between the lake and the Harvey Inlet and were enjoying the sea breeze that had sprung up, when our attention was drawn to a large raptor flying from the direction of the lake into the lower branches of a tree on the edge of the open grassland. Checking the bird with binoculars was enough to confirm it as a juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle. To get a better view of the bird we walked in a round about way towards the tree, working our way along the top of the ridge. A passing shadow caused us to look upwards and there overhead were two adult birds just above tree top height, keeping a parental eye on proceedings. One of the birds peeled off to the north, dipping slightly. We followed its flight and there high in a Tuart just below the top of the hill was the elusive nest.

Sea-Eagle's nest at Lake McLarty, December 2001
Photo courtesy Cecilia Grant

Lunch was forgotten while Cecilia got to work with her camera, and thanks to her intrepid photographic work we have some great shots of the nest and a juvenile, at the very least, partly raised at Lake McLarty.

Although the presence of this nest does not confirm the species to be breeding at the lake it does establish the lake as an important part of the birds' territory. It will possibly be two years before the birds mate again which means we might have to wait until 2003 for definite proof that McLarty is a breeding site for these magnificent birds. This discovery is another reason for Birds Australia to lobby for more protection of this marvellous wetland.

Colin Davis

PROGRESS

If you think that you are having a bad hair day, spare a thought for the Welcome Swallows and Tree Martins that used to roost on the electrical wires around Lake Monger. The wires have recently been laid underground and now only the Australian Magpies and Ravens can manage to stand on the new street lights. The Magpie-larks are learning to stand on them, too.

Thank goodness for the wires at the Lake Monger Recreation Centre. However, the sun doesn't reach them quite so early in the morning. Will this mean that the 'prospective breakfast' insects have an hour longer in this world?

Claire Gerrish

UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR OF SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOOS

During a recent cruise on the Murray River from Murray Bridge to Blanchetown in South Australia we were amazed at the number of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos we saw on the sandstone cliffs. The cliff face is riddled with holes and there were Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in many of them. In some cases the birds appeared from deep inside the cliff and others seemed to be excavating. A local confirmed they nested in the cliffs. He blamed the scarcity of trees with suitable nest holes for this phenomenon. Morcombe (Field guide to Australian birds, p.375) indicates they sometimes nest in cliffs.

Corellas were also seen in quite large numbers on the cliffs so perhaps they also nest there. Occasional smooth round holes clearly belonged to something else, the size suggesting kingfishers or bee-eaters.

The scarcity of water in the area had attracted many birds to the river which was at its lowest level for 50 years. We counted 50 species of birds in five days, amongst them large numbers of pelicans, many Darters and Whistling Kites that appeared to have territories at regular intervals along the banks. The Darters were seen with young in the trees on the river bank and the prominent nests of the kites appeared at quite regular intervals during the whole trip from Murray Bridge to Blanchetown.

Phil & Loreley Morling

ROTTNEST BIRD SURVEYS

(1) East West Flyway In WA?

Each year in early February, a small number of individuals of a migratory species leave the security of their nesting sites to journey over the waters of the Indian Ocean. Arriving at a small Island off the West Australian coast they quickly establish themselves in their new habitat. It is here they can be viewed as they gather in small groups on the edges of salt lakes. Some can even be found after dark at the western extremity of the island mingling with the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, their muffled calls of excitement drifting on the night air.

What is the reason for this annual avian gathering? What prompts the scuttling activities for areas of prime roosting in the depths of their colony at the top of Wadjemup Hill?

Well in an eggshell … the island is Rottnest and the rare migrants are Birds Australia members. This year 24 members were involved in the bird surveys on the island.

Once again we had the use of the Wadjemup Hill research station during the survey—many thanks to Doctor Jane Prince of UWA Dept of Zoology and her staff for the use of these facilities. Acknowledgements also to Claire Wright, Rottnest Environmental Manager, for her assistance. BA and the Wader Study Group are most appreciative of these sources of support.

Two surveys are conducted during the February program: bush birds and waders. Observations start in the days preceding the wader survey when the bush habitats are monitored with the cooperation of the Rottnest Environment Management. Other opportunistic observations are made and bird counts are held each day at 'sundowners'. The total count on the final day was 62 species.

(2) Rottnest Bush Bird Surveys—Feb 2001–2002

The survey of selected bush sites is done to monitor the re-establishment of birds into changing habitat. The results of this program have been encouraging over the last two years. Little Eagle and Buff-banded Rail have been seen. A quail or button-quail species was also reported for the first time during this year's visit (see table below). The seven bush bird habitats were selected by the Rottnest Environment Department.

Tree Martins and Welcome Swallows were not included in the counts, although both species were seen at all sites.

Table 1: Summer survey of Rottnest Island bushbirds

Species	Site 1		Site 2		Site 3		Site 4		Site 5		Site 6		Site 7	
	01	**02**	01	**02**	01	**02**	01	**02**	01	**02**	01	**02**	01	**02**
Common Pheasant	0	**11**	0	**8**	0	**0**	2	**0**	0	**1**	2	**4**	0	**0**
Black-shouldered Kite *	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**
Little Eagle	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	1	**1**	0	**0**
Nankeen Kestrel	0	**0**	1	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	2	**1**	0	**0**	0	**0**
Spotted Turtle-dove	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	1	**0**	0	**0**
Laughing Turtle-dove	10	**6**	4	**1**	2	**2**	0	**1**	17	**4**	2	**2**	2	**0**
Galah	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**
Australian Ringneck	1	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**
Rock Parrot	2	**2**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**
Sacred Kingfisher *	0	**1**	2	**1**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**1**	0	**1**
Rainbow Bee-eater *	9	**3**	1	**10**	22	**12**	9	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	2	**2**
White-browed Scrubwren	15	**5**	23	**5**	8	**4**	4	**3**	4	**0**	0	**0**	5	**7**
Western Gerygone	6	**3**	6	**1**	0	**1**	0	**1**	2	**2**	0	**0**	2	**3**
Singing Honeyeater	7	**10**	19	**18**	5	**11**	7	**2**	2	**13**	6	**10**	2	**4**
White-fronted Chat	2	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**7**	3	**#4**
Red-capped Robin	12	**4**	5	**11**	4	**2**	7	**1**	2	**0**	1	**0**	0	**0**
Golden Whistler	2	**1**	1	**0**	4	**1**	4	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**3**
Australian Raven	19	**2**	10	**1**	4	**3**	15	**3**	6	**2**	7	**0**	4	**6**
Silvereye	34	**18**	40	**15**	60	**3**	38	**11**	50	**55**	8	**10**	16	**25**
'Quail' sp									0	**5**				

Sites selected were as follows:

- Site 1 Anniversary Park
- Site 2 Bickley towards Henrietta Rocks; open remnant
- Site 3 East Barker Swamp; remnant area north of centreline fence
- Site 4 East Barker Swamp; partly remnant partly plantation south of centreline fence
- Site 5 West Barker Swamp; new plantation (Fire Site)
- Site 6 (Bee keepers); partly remnant partly pines
- Site 7 West of Oliver Hill; old dense plantation

Observations at bushland locations resulted in daily sightings of resident species such as Black-shouldered Kite, Golden Whistler, Red-capped Robin, White-fronted Chat and Rock Parrot. Four rarely seen visitors to the island, Fork-tailed Swift, Buff-banded Rail, Brown Goshawk and Little Eagle, were also reported.

Notes

White-fronted Chats seen outside the fence towards Salmon Swamp 2002

* These birds were seen on the fringes of, or at Barker Swamp but not in the adjacent sites 3 .4 .5. 2001 *

Two Galahs were seen east of Anniversary Park the day before the survey 2001

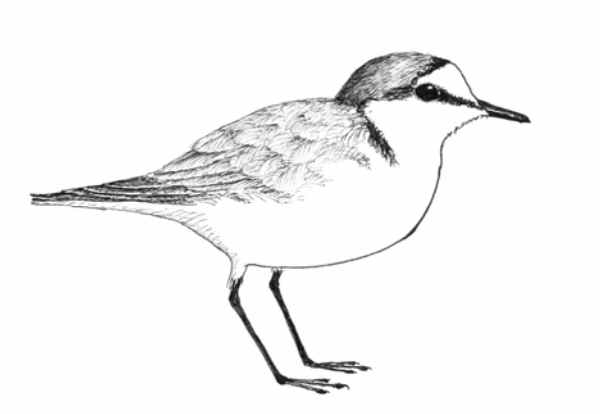
Marked decrease in the number of Ravens at all sites other than site 7

'Quail' species (possibly Stubble Quail) at site 5

Little Eagle seen two years running in same area of site 6

Brown Goshawk seen in area adjacent site 5

Two Black-shouldered Kites seen in area adjacent site 6



Red-capped Plover
Drawing by Judy Blyth

(3) Waders

The main objective of the Rottnest surveys is to monitor the island's wader population. This starts with a survey of the salt lakes in the days preceding the count to establish where the birds are congregating. The morning of the count commences with observers starting at the eastern end of each location and moving westward to a predetermined point, counting waders as they progress. Care is taken not to disturb the birds during the process. Among the 18 wader species seen during the count were large numbers of Banded Stilts at Lake Herschel. Although there was cyclonic activity in the north of the state just before the count, no flock movement from the island was noted. This year there have been reports of up to 20 000 Banded Stilts at Rottnest. This species was monitored each day and care was taken to get the count as accurate as possible, particularly at Lake Herschell where the bulk of the birds were congregated.

Rottnest is becoming known as a regular habitat for the Red-necked Phalarope. We have witnessed at least one bird on the salt lakes each year since January 2000. This year a bird in non-breeding plumage was seen over a three-day period at Lake Bagdad.

Red-necked Stints with leg flags were seen at Serpentine and Herschel Lakes and at Porpoise Bay, and one bird with an orange flag has caused some head scratching by our wader study group colleagues in the east by apparently changing from the east to the west flyway.

We continue to turn up Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones in numbers that indicate Rottnest is an important habitat for both species.

Evidence of breeding was observed among the following birds at various locations around the island: Red-necked Avocet (Pink Lake), Osprey, Fairy Tern, Bridled Tern, Red-capped Plover and Wedge-tailed Shearwater. Juvenile Caspian and Crested Terns were also seen.

Since the completion of the mid-summer count the Australian Wader Study Group has asked us to include Rottnest with the Swan Estuary Marine Park count. This is an important addition as Swan Estuary Marine Park and Albany are the only two southern WA sites included in the national Wader Count. This will necessitate a mid-winter count and therefore the program is about to be extended.

A mid-winter survey will take place between Friday 14 and Sunday 16 June 2002. Members who have not previously been involved in the program and wish to become acquainted with waders will be given the opportunity to participate on a first come first served basis.

Those interested should contact Colin Davis on 9330 1482 A/H for details.

Colin Davis

Table 2: February 2002 Mid-Summer Wader Count, Rottnest Island

FEBRUARY 2002 MID-SUMMER WADER COUNT, ROTTNEST ISLAND														
	Gov House Lake	Serpentine Lake	Causeway Pearse L	Herschel Lake	Lake Bagdad East	Lake Bagdad West	Lake Vincent	Lake Negri	Pink Lake	Swamps	Reef areas	Porpoise Bay G.I	Salmon Bay	Totals of each species
SPECIES AT EACH SITE	**9**	**6**	**6**	**10**	**6**	**10**	**2**	**DRY**	**1**	**1**	**9**	**9**	**8**	
Pied Oystercatcher	0	0	0	1	0	0	0		0	0	4	2	0	7
Banded Lapwing	2	0	0	2	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	4
Grey Plover	1	1	2	1	1	1	0		0	0	4	2	2	15
Lesser Sand Plover	*3*	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	3
Large Sand Plover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	1	1
Red-capped Plover	27	4	40	47	9	28	0		0	0	0	6	0	161
Black-winged Stilt	0	0	0	2	0	4	0		0	0	0	0	0	6
Banded Stilt	390	89	72	4228	0	307	0		0	4	0	0	0	5090
Red-necked Avocet	0	0	0	2	0	7	0		4	0	0	0	0	13
Ruddy Turnstone	79	13	46	68	34	15	5		0	0	10	116	16	402
Whimbrel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	1	0	0	1
Grey-tailed Tattler	0	0	6	1	0	0	0		0	0	4	0	0	11
Common Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	1	1	2
Greenshank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Bar-tailed Godwit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	3	2	9	14
Red Knot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Great Knot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Pectoral Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Red-necked Stint	370	28	163	287	158	301	1		0	0	32	34	6	1380
Curlew Sandpiper	28	2	12	0	4	15	0		0	0	1	2	0	64
Sanderling	1	0	0	0	1	4	0		0	0	21	37	57	121
Red-necked Phalarope	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	*0*	0	0	0	0	0	1
Birds at each site	**901**	**137**	**341**	**4639**	**207**	**683**	**6**	**0**	**4**	**4**	**80**	**202**	**92**	**7296**

ILLNESSES IN WILD LAUGHING TURTLE-DOVES IN PERTH

The articles on Megabacteria in WABN 101:7-8 prompt me to record some notes on observations made by Lexie Nicholls at her former bird hospital and sanctuary in Nedlands, approximately during 1960-1985.

The wild Laughing Turtle-Doves locally don't exhibit much illness or disease, presumably because any affected birds don't survive very long. However, the following notes were made by Lexie:

> "A minor proportion of the doves presented for care showed symptoms commonly termed *going light* (Note: Is this the same as for Megabacteria?), a progressive emaciation despite voluntary food intake. Such symptoms may be due to *Trichomoniasis*, but treatment with varying doses of the recognised medication Entramin has so far not yielded satisfactory results.
>
> "No adult dove has shown the fairly typical cheesy lesions of the mouth, throat, etc, that occur in the Domestic Pigeon afflicted with canker, but a few fledglings have been presented with large lumps in the crop. No treatment has yet been successful with these cases, either.
>
> "Deworming preparations tried on emaciated adults have likewise not shown good response, but in one case a lengthy course of Aureomycin prolonged life to four months after admission before the bird was destroyed owing to persistent poor condition.
>
> "Some fledglings are brought in during the summer months with gross oedema of the ventral tissue (abdomen, breast, thighs). This is thought to be a manifestation of either pox infection, vitamin K deficiency or mite damage. A few cases where oedema was minor recovered spontaneously but others in the same class became worse and died within a week of admission. Intramuscular injections of Menaphthone Sodium Bisulphite were tried at various times on six individuals, four of which lived and recovered, while two worsened and died.
>
> "Small pox lesions (warty lumps) have been observed on a few juveniles, usually on an eyelid or at the side of the bill. No dove seen at the sanctuary has ever developed the very severe pox lesions that may be observed in Domestic Pigeons".

The above must be put into perspective, however. Lexie hand-reared and released hundreds of Laughing Doves each year and attended to many more that had been mauled by cats, hit by cars or otherwise injured, and the incidence of the above illnesses was extremely small and insignificant. Lexie didn't differentiate between introduced turtle-doves and rare native species and cared for everything. She spent a small fortune on seed and fish, any medicines needed and sometimes veterinary care.

She was a brilliant nurse and released and returned to the wild many thousands of native birds brought to her injured and distressed. Her favoured patients were the seabirds, the *Procellariiformes*, and she dutifully recorded and passed on much interesting information to Dr Serventy, who also had a special interest in them. They were at odds, though, Dr Serventy believing that all such birds should be left to a natural fate, while Lexie believed in nursing them to recovery and giving them another chance. At first Lexie banded the birds she released and some of the recoveries proved that many indeed made the most of their second chance and were not inferior birds.

Perhaps her finest hour was in hand-raising four Noisy Scrub-bird chicks for study by her colleagues at CSIRO Wildlife.

Robert Stranger

LITTLE CROW AT YANCHEP AND WEMBLEY

Ian Rowley (2002) summarises the occurrence of the Little Crow on the Swan Coastal Plain near Perth, and the numbers cited range up to 300. Thus it is worthwhile recording an observation of mine and two reports that I received.

In the late afternoon of a Sunday in October 1973 I observed a straggle of corvids flying just above the tree-tops near Yanchep. They were not Ravens. A short while later and some 10-15 km south of Yanchep, I again saw a number of corvids flying just above the tree-tops, and they were very conveniently diagonally crossing Wanneroo Road, from the NW and heading SE. Thus I could clearly see the birds and the mere straggle became a huge number as the procession passed by me. The birds were loosely formed in groups of 5-10 and were in effect a loose line or file. I watched them crossing the road for 30 minutes and am not sure that I saw the last of them, my patience by then exhausted.

I didn't try to count them because I wasn't expecting so many, but there must have been many, many hundreds, perhaps 500 or even twice as many. Though not positively identified they could only have been Little Crows.

The observation is also of interest because Ian saw c.100 at Helena Valley on 8 January1974, one of his larger numbers, and in 1973 trapped and banded there 142 birds, which is more than three times the numbers for 1972 and 1974.

Also of interest is that an injured Little Crow was given to Lexie Nicholls, then with CSIRO Wildlife, in the late 1970s. It had been captured, injured, at a local rubbish tip.

In the latter half of 1997, perhaps September, I received a report of "1000 Ravens" on a grassed playing-field in Wembley. Well, there might not be that many Ravens in the entire Perth metro area, much less would they have gathered at the one place at the one time. My informant, Peter Stewart, said that the birds were scattered over the oval, as does the Little Crow when a flock is on a recently

ploughed or seeded field. And I think we could safely assume that the birds seen at Wembley were Little Crows, and not ravens.

Robert Stranger

Reference
Rowley, I. 2002. Little Crows *Corvus bennetti* on the Coastal Plain of South-Western Australia. Western Australian Naturalist, 23: 211-213.

BREEDING FAIRY TERNS AT LAKE THETIS

On 17 March, while undertaking coastal and wetland surveys for the WA Wader Study Group annual wader watch, three of us saw Fairy Terns breeding at Lake Thetis.

We recorded seven adults, one of which appeared to be brooding or incubating. Two downy runners in different age plumages were seen, the first crouched on stromatalites near the edge of the water, and the second apparently flushed from samphire some metres from the lake. Unfortunately, as we were not aware that the birds were breeding, all chicks and adults were inadvertently disturbed by us while we were walking around the lake.

Lake Thetis is a small saline wetland approximately 2 km south-east of Cervantes on the western coast of WA. It is well-known for its stromatalites, and is signposted off the Cervantes Road as a place of interest for tourists. Although bollards restrict vehicular access to the lake margins, vehicles are able to park close by and a well-worn track around the wetland perimeter attests to the heavy foot traffic this area is subject to. Although small, the lake is host to numbers of water birds and waders. To our knowledge, this is the first time the Fairy Tern has been recorded breeding there.

Throughout their range, Fairy Tern breeding grounds are subject to disturbance by people, and the species is known to abandon nests after disturbance. It is our understanding that this site currently is vested in the local council, but that it may in the future be vested in the Conservation Commission. It may warrant more protection than it currently receives - perhaps sites such as Lake Thetis need to be protected from human interference—including that from birdwatchers!

Cheryl Gole, Martin Gole and Sue Mather

PROBABLE FIRST RECORDS FOR FORK-TAILED SWIFT IN WA GOLDFIELDS

Over Easter this year, we observed two groups of Fork-tailed Swifts in the western Goldfields.

The first group of 7-8 birds was sighted at sunset on 29 March flying over Salmon Gum woodland on a track off the Coolgardie North Road, approximately 90 km north-west of Coolgardie. The second group of three individuals was sighted three days later on 1 April at 10:30 am on a track off the Great Eastern Highway west of the Number 8 Pumping Station, approximately 70 km west of Coolgardie. This group was hawking insects over eucalypt woodland. Although Dusky Woodswallows were also hawking nearby, the two species did not appear to be foraging together. While the first group of birds appeared to be tracking the leading edge of the frontal weather system dominant over the Goldfields over much of the Easter period, the second group appeared to be tracking the trailing edge of the system.

Fork-tailed Swift breed in Asia and are widespread non-breeding migrants to Australia. In Western Australia, the Fork-tailed Swift is largely recorded along the south and south-west coasts, and along the south-west Pilbara and Kimberley coasts. There are scattered inland records. The only published southern interior record to our knowledge is a March 1975 record of 50-100 birds near Neale Junction in the Great Victoria Desert, approximately 540 km north-east of Coolgardie.

It would appear that these are the first published records of Fork-tailed Swift in the Goldfields.

References
Higgins, P. J. 1999. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 4. Parrots to Dollarbird*. Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.
Storr, G. M. 1986. Birds of the south-eastern interior of Western Australia. *Records of the Western Australian Museum*, Suppl. No. 26.

Cheryl and Martin Gole

AUSTRALIAN CURLEW SANDPIPER IN SOUTH AFRICA

The banding studies in Broome conducted by the Broome Bird Observatory and the North West Wader Studies Group (BBO/NWWSG) have had an intriguing flag sighting reported to them. It is of a Curlew Sandpiper in South Africa.

The bird was first seen by Brian Vanderwalt, a member of the Western Cape Wader Studies Group. The yellow flag was on the right tarsus indicating the bird was banded in Roebuck Bay some time since 1992.

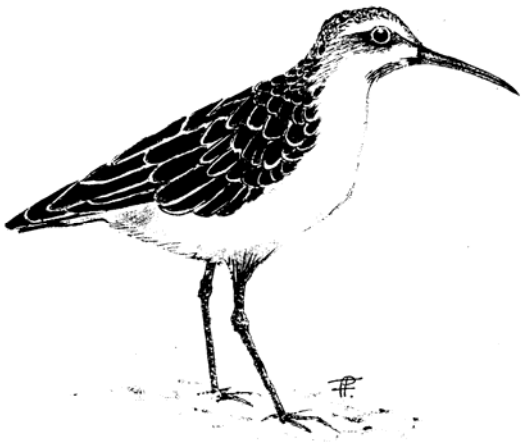
The Curlew Sandpiper is no longer spending the non-breeding season in Broome but at Langebaan Lagoon approximately 100 km north of Cape Town in SW South Africa. The bird was first seen on 24 March when it had 10% breeding plumage. It was seen again on 29 March.

This is only the second sighting of an Australian flagged wader outside of the East-Asian-Australasian Flyway. There was a Curlew Sandpiper reported from SE India some 20 years ago.

Curlew Sandpipers from Australia and South Africa have over-lapping breeding grounds on the Taymyr Peninsular in central Arctic Russia so it seems this bird took off on the wrong coordinates.

The interesting question now is—will the bird adopt Langebaan Lagoon as its permanent non-breeding area or switch back to NW Australia after this next breeding season?

Chris Hassell
Coordinator of Wader Studies NW Australia



Curlew Sandpiper
Drawing by Pam Free

BANDED LAPWINGS BREEDING IN SOUTH METROPOLITAN PERTH

On returning to Perth from my stint as site manager at Broome Bird Observatory I commenced work with an engineering firm in the Jandakot area. One of my many roles was driving the ute for pickups of materials from the industrial areas around southern Perth, particularly the Canning Vale and Coogee areas.

Much of the land annexed for industrial use in these areas has been cleared of vegetation and is now slowly being colonised by exotic weed species. This destructive activity has, it seems, had one positive spin-off in that it has created ideal breeding conditions for Banded Lapwings. In the Baile Road area of Canning Vale at least two pairs of lapwings bred successfully on cleared ground with an additional third pair possibly breeding on the pitch and put course on the same road.

Additional areas where I have recorded lapwings breeding include a single pair in the Coogee Industrial area and on the cleared land around the shopping centre at the eastern end of Beeliar Drive. This particular site regularly holds up to 25 birds on a daily basis.

The birds at this last site are incredibly tame and can be approached to within a few metres, feeding on short grass and actually in the car park itself.

Bill Rutherford

BIRDS ON PIMBEE STATION

Pimbee Station, on the Wooramel River, was purchased by CALM several years ago as an addition to the conservation reserve system, but very little is known of the birds of the area.

My observations were from 16–23 March and were mainly done whilst trapping cats, etc. My companions and I saw 41 species during our visit.

I saw the following birds every day at most places: Galah, Mulga Parrot, Willie Wagtail, Little Crow, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Zebra Finch, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Magpie-lark, Emu, White-browed Babbler, Black-faced Woodswallow, Tree Martin, Southern Whiteface and Australian Magpie.

The following birds were much less common, each being seen on one or two days: Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Singing Honeyeater, Splendid Fairy-wren, White-winged Fairy-wren, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-throated Miner, Red-capped Robin, Striated Pardalote, Variegated Fairy-wren (plus some that looked rather like Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens), Weebill, Crested Bellbird, Little Corella, Red-capped Robin, Bourke's Parrot, Chiming Wedgebill, Black-faced Woodswallow feeding fledged young, Rainbow Bee-eater, Yellow throated Miners, Brown Falcon.

In addition, John Angus saw three other species (Nankeen Kestrel, Australian Ringneck and Pied Honeyeater) and Mike Onus saw a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike.

Neil Hamilton

DRYANDRA MALLEEFOWLS

The attached sightings are getting rather historical but it wasn't until I was recently speaking to some other birders that I thought they might be of some significance.

Although I have been going to Dryandra Forest regularly for a number of years I had never seen a Malleefowl *Leipoa ocellata* there until 16 October 1998, when I had a good view of one in 'Peters' Block. It unconcernedly crossed in front of my vehicle, before wandering off into the forest on the east side of the track, whilst I was driving slowly along Gura Road approximately 1.5 km from the intersection with Wardong Road. A year later I again visited Dryandra and saw three Malleefowl over a two-day period, the 4th and 5th of October within the same vicinity of 'Frank' block. The first bird I saw on the 4th when it crossed in front of my vehicle. It was within 100 m of a mound, which although not appearing currently active, showed relatively recent signs of being worked.

The following day I drove to the same location to try and ascertain the status of the mound but this time approached from the north. As I drove along the track I again saw a Malleefowl in front of me crossing the road from south to north. It was approximately 600 m from the mound and walking away from that general direction. After watching it disappear into the bush, I parked my vehicle and approached the mound on foot. As I was within ten metres of the mound I was startled by another Malleefowl, which ran quickly away from it (me?). Due to the distance from the first Malleefowl it was definitely a different bird, however I assumed that one of the two birds I saw was the same one from the previous day's sighting. Again, the mound did not look as if it was being worked; there were numerous ant-lion pits and other unidentified animal diggings around its edges.

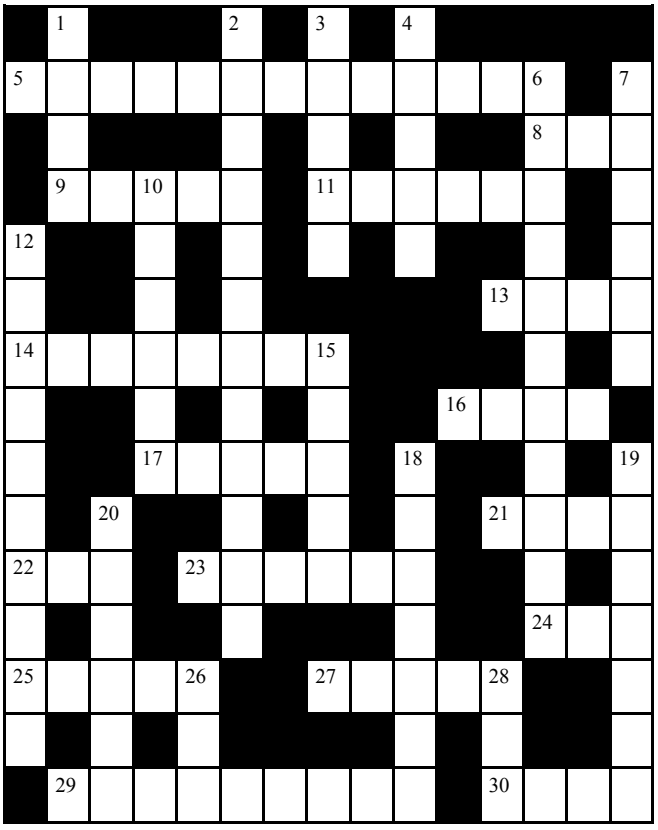
On 28 October 2001 I was driving along Koomal Road approximately 700 m west of Newell Road when I saw another Malleefowl on the north side of the road. As with the other sightings it didn't seem particularly wary and I was able to watch it from my vehicle for a good five minutes. It initially remained stationary in the shade of a *Gastrolobium* bush before nonchalantly walking off in an easterly direction.

I have spoken with a number of people familiar with the area who believe that the Malleefowl have become less common in Dryandra and there are indeed, concerns for its survival locally. I would have thought that given the intensive management practices within Dryandra Forest, including 1080 baiting aimed at the preservation of endangered marsupial species, the Malleefowl would also have benefited. Anecdotally this does not appear to be the case, but I would be delighted to have someone correct me and prove there is still a viable population of Malleefowl at Dryandra! It would be a great pity if the species became locally extinct, especially as historically it appears to have been one of the nearest and most *relatively* plentiful populations to the metro area.

Jon Pridham

Crossword no 29

By Pam Agar



Clues across

5. A possible Australian first, from Ashmore Reef on 4.11.01
8. Major problem for waterbirds
9. Confusing if changed
11. Iridescent feathers on chin or throat
13. Distance between
14. BA property
16. Necessary to control numbers?
17. Material of leg bands
21. Sloping entrance to waterbird's nest
22. Decay
23. One parrot supposedly wears a blue one
24. We all do it occasionally!
25. Dorsal surface
27. Useful source of funding
29. Celebration of one hundred years
30. Malleefowl

Clues down

1. Enthusiastic
2. Part of the Birds Australia motto
3. Possible source of introduced species
4. Metropolitan lake excursion site
6. All four toes webbed
7. Likely place for Brolgas
10. May be caused by a hunting raptor
12. Diet of a raven
15. Strong synthetic material
18. Possible haunt of swans or pelicans
19. So far, not in WA
20. Major part of diet
26. Possible enemy of nestlings
28. Information provider

Notices

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR METROPOLITAN BIRDWATCHERS

When the Maylands clay-pits were being developed their bird-life fled elsewhere. However, filtered water has been pumped into them, the vegetation is growing and it seems that some of the bird-life is returning. Thus it would be of great interest to monitor the bird-life, assess its post-development abundance and compare it to previous records.

Further, Maylands is now within the City of Bayswater and it was the Bayswater Council that developed, established and is now maintaining the Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary. Perhaps the Council could also be induced to view the clay-pits as a significant asset to Maylands and another sanctuary for birds and birdwatchers.

I can no longer indulge in fieldwork but would be most interested in collating and filing any information collected, or in extracting information from my diary for anyone interested in such monitoring.

Observations could be made casually and in any capacity, or become a regular and detailed project. Whatever an observer wishes to do!

Please contact me if you are interested.

Robert Stranger

RESURRECTION OF 'FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN GROUND PARROT GROUP'

The endangered Western Ground Parrot *Pezoporous wallicus flaviventris* is a cryptic ground feeding bird that normally only calls at two short periods each day, before sunrise and after sunset. This makes the bird very difficult to study and survey. The only effective way to survey the Ground Parrot is with the support of a number of observers at the same time. **This bird needs your help!!**

The Western Ground Parrot is currently known from three separated populations—the Fitzgerald River National Park, Waychinicup area and Cape Arid National Park. However, surveys conducted between June 1999 and June 2000 failed to locate any birds in the Cape Arid area. In 1992 it was estimated that there were less than 400 individuals of this species in the wild. Recent estimates predict there are unlikely to be more that 300 individuals, with most birds found in the Fitzgerald River National Park. Numbers of Ground Parrots in the Waychinicup area appear to have declined between 1998 and 2001 and further surveys are needed to determine if the bird is using other areas within the region. Ground Parrots have also been reported from other areas and surveys to establish the existence of further populations need to be urgently undertaken.

It is obvious that the current and future status of the Ground Parrot is cause for a great deal of concern.

'Friends of …' groups have proved successful in the past whereby like-minded members of the public can assist with various research projects on a voluntary basis. This included the original 'Friends of the Western Ground Parrot' formed in Albany several years ago but which for a number of reasons, primarily the loss of key individuals, entered a hiatus. A meeting was held on Monday 25 March in Albany to discuss recent survey efforts and possible actions that can be taken by community members to assist with Recovery Actions for this species. The meeting was addressed by Brenda Newbey and Shapelle McNee who are currently undertaking research on the Ground Parrot. They both reiterated the need for ongoing and comprehensive surveys, which are only likely to be achieved with the help of volunteers.

Although only attended by a small group of people it was enthusiastically decided to resurrect the '**Friends of the Western Ground Parrot'.** The main role of the group is to undertake surveys to provide accurate censuses in areas known to contain Ground Parrots as well as potential 'new' localities. All that a volunteer needs is the enthusiasm and patience to spend time at dusk and / or dawn listening and recording the distinctive calls of the Ground Parrots.

If any one is interested in participating in any future census they can contact either the Co-ordinator of the **'Friends of the Western Ground Parrot',** Jon Pridham at Albany on 9841 7763, (email <pridham@albanyis.com.au>) or Sarah Comer, CALM Ecologist, Albany 9842 4500 (email <sarahc@calm.wa.gov.au>).

Jon Pridham

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia WA between 1 February and 30 April 2002. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

G W Arnold, C Barnesby, A Bates, J Bates, N Beurteaux, J Bradshaw, S Broom, J Bullock, J Burgett, I Cannon, J C H Cheng, M Clinch, D Coulter, P Coulter, R Cripps, B P Davey, D Dowsett, S Dowesett, J C Flint, J Goldberg, F Gorddard, G Grant, C Hickman, N Hickman, M J Higgs, P Higgs, G James, D Kelso, M Kelso, D Koch, R Lethbridge, C Lilley, L McMahon, C Munday, D Rowe, L Shannon, E Shedley, S Stewart-Wynne, S Vercoe.

What is Birds Australia's Outback Twitchathon?

It's a unique, Birds Australia fun activity! It is a bird race for everyone! No experience necessary! All you need is a keen eye to identify birds of the outback using an Australian field guide which you can purchase from The Birding Shop, 415 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn East, Vic. 3123

<www.thebirdingshop.com>

The idea behind the race is for people to form into teams (minimum number per team— 2 people), and go out into **outback Australia** and find as many species of birds as possible in the 36-hour period described below. Each member of the team is encouraged to find sponsorship from friends, family, colleagues or corporations for each species of bird seen or heard by the team, or to find straight out donations for the team. There are great prizes to be won, including a prize for the most funds raised by an individual member of the team!

Twitchathons are really enormous fun! This Outback Twitchathon is also that magic, **outback** experience you've been waiting for! It's your opportunity to enjoy inland Australia, learn something, or something more, about our native birds and our **unique, glorious outback**. It's also that wonderful opportunity to do some bird atlassing and to win a great prize, whether you're a novice or experienced birdwatcher, or have the ability to encourage people to sponsor your team! But more importantly, it is an opportunity to draw attention to our birds and their habitat both to country and city folk.

Race Details

Dates and time

Any 36-hour period commencing at 6:00 am on the first day and ending at 6:00 pm on the second day between Saturday 27 July and Sunday 18 August 2002. (We would encourage teams to participate on the week-end of 27/28 July if at all possible—however see "What do you need to do" below.)

Where?

You can start in any part of arid Australia and finish in any part of arid Australia! We'll send you an arid Australia map.

What do you need to do?

Contact our Sydney office for your registration form— see below. An Outback Twitchathon Kit will be sent to you immediately. (Registration must be received by **21 July. Results must be received by the Sydney office no later than 23 August 2002.**)

Please remember that care must be taken in Outback Australia—be sure to plan your trip well. Take plenty of water and food, sun block-out cream, insect repellent, hat, sensible clothing and shoes. Take maps, and a compass or GPS unit (if you have one). If you are going into really remote areas, be sure to register and de-register at the local Police Station or a suitable outback post. In many areas roads, particularly those on black soil, may be impassable after rain. Ensure that you check predicted weather conditions. If conditions are unsuitable, we would encourage you to either change your route, or participate on other days within the allowable period.

Fundraising for our Outback Twitchathon

Birds Australia recently purchased "Newhaven Station", 335 km north-west of Alice Springs. It is home to at least 15 nationally threatened species of animals and plants. There are five species of birds nationally threatened and 19 species which are threatened in one or more mainland states. Regionally threatened birds include Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Black-breasted Buzzard, Australian Bustard, Bush Stone-curlew and Grey-crowned Babbler. It boasts ten vegetation communities and a wide array of landforms, none of which is well represented in existing reserves. Your Twitchathon Kit will contain a supplement to Birds Australia's national magazine Wingspan, which describes the property and all its wonderful attributes. Since that publication, we were able to raise the funds to buy the property from both our very generous members and the public at large.

The Outback Twitchathon is your great opportunity to help us maintain this vast outback property to ensure that it remains a safe haven for our native birds, other animals and plants.

For further information contact:

Birds Australia
PO Box 1322, Crows Nest NSW 1585
Tel/Fax 02 9436 0388
Email: <rosella63@bigpond.com>

Do you live in or near the Perth metropolitan area?

Would you like to take part in some bird surveys?

The Perth Biodiversity Project, an initiative of the Local Government Association, aims to protect biodiversity in Perth in areas not currently protected by CALM or the Bush Forever program. From late June 2002, community groups and the Local Government Association will be working to protect 10–15 sites across the Perth region. They need to know which birds are in those sites. If you live in the Perth area and enjoy birdwatching, you can help us establish bird lists for those places. Information will also be shared with the WA group database and the Bird Atlas. You can help Birds Australia WA, this important project AND some of Perth's hardworking community groups.

What do observers need to do?

- Nominate to undertake surveys in one of the biodiversity project sites in a zone that interests you
- Do a bird survey once each month or once each season
- You may do the surveys alone or with a group of your friends.

What types of sites are in the project

- Most sites are bushland, however there may be a small number of river foreshore or wetland sites
- Sites vary in size from 0.5 hectares to 20 hectares.

Where are the Perth project sites?

There are 10–15 sites throughout the Perth area and they are scattered throughout five zones. These zones are:

- Central west: 'inner city' to coastal local council areas such as Cottesloe, Cambridge, Subiaco, South Perth;
- South west: shires of Fremantle, Kwinana, Rockingham and Cockburn;
- South east: shires of Victoria Park, Canning, Gosnells, Armadale, Serpentine-Jarrahdale;
- North east: shires of Belmont, Bassendean, Bayswater, Kalamunda, Mundaring, Swan;
- North west: shires of Stirling, Joondalup, Wanneroo.

When will the surveys start?

- Surveys will start this winter, probably in June or July 2002.

How do you take part?

Contact: Cheryl Gole
Tel/Fax: 9293 4958
Email: <gole@starwon.com.au>

Expressions of Interest — Membership of Proposed BAWA Inc. Conservation and Research Committee

Expressions of interest are invited from dedicated members of Birds Australia WA for nominations as members of the newly proposed Conservation and Research Committee. Interested applicants should possess a strong desire to assist with the conservation and research- based tasks of this committee, These tasks may include, but are not limited to:

* Detailed consideration of the role of the conservation and research committee;

* Consideration of proposals for new conservation and research projects by the WA group:

* Consideration of technical and scientific proposals;

* Where time and relevance permit, assessment of, and comment on, proposed development, where such development threaten natural habitats deemed by the committee or BAWA to be important;

* Funding proposals for new conservation and research initiatives;

* Initiation and seeking of funds for new research;

* Public education and awareness-raising and representation on matters relevant to the committee;

* Media liaison — releases when required;

* Co-ordinating and being involved in relevant projects and tasks;

* Annual report to Birds Australia WA committee.

Applicants should be prepared to attend regular meetings and undertake delegated tasks to ensure the smooth running of the committee. A strong commitment is essential and relevant experience beneficial. Note that membership is not restricted to formal qualifications in the biological sciences.

Expressions of interest (EOIs) should be no more than two printed A4 pages and should include the following:

- A brief indication of why you want to be considered for membership of the committee;
- Brief details of the skills and knowledge you would bring to such a position;
- Brief details of specific interests;
- A brief outline of the kinds of tasks you would be prepared to undertake.

Submit three printed copies of EOIs together with a cover letter and contact details by (**1st July**).

Send to:
Interim Conservation and Research Committee
Birds Australia WA
71 Oceanic Drive
Floreat WA 6014

Enquiries: Mike Bamford
(Tel: 9309 3671 or e-mail mabce@ca.com.au)

Spring birdwatching in the wheatbelt — we need some help from you!

In Spring 2002, between September and late November, Birds Australia WA will be doing bird surveys in the Avon region of the wheatbelt. We'll be helping the Living Landscapes project, Greening WA and landowners in five rural subcatchments find out more about the birds in some of the remnants in this area. Most of the remnants are on farms. Information from the project will also contribute to the Bird Atlas and the Birds Australia WA group database.

We will need bird lists from 80 remnants scattered across the region reaching from Kellerberrin, South Tammin, Wongan Hills and Dowerin through to the Beverley area. This is a good opportunity to explore this area for a very important reason.

What do we need from you?

- Birdwatching skills
- Willingness to help us look at a variety of remnants from very small to large
- Willingness to go birdwatching in small groups
- An interest in accessing bush on private land
- An interest in WA's wonderful wheatbelt birds.
-

What do we provide?

- Some accommodation (probably in shearer's quarters)
- Organisation of a probable car pool
- Probable BBQ get togethers
- Existing bird lists for most sites; maps and directions on how to get there
- And, hopefully, good sightings of Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Shy Heathwren, and much, much more.
-

We're still making plans, but are you interested?

As surveys will start in September, please express some interest now, and we'll keep in touch with you.

Contact: Cheryl Gole
Tel/Fax 9293 4958
Email: <gole@starwon.com.au>
Or, write to: Birds Australia WA
71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat WA 6014

Country Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

Wilson Inlet, 12 February

On our February outing, 14 of us met at 8:00 am to help with the wader count on part of Wilson Inlet. The wader numbers were down on last year, when we saw in excess of 5000. This year it was just over 3100 birds of 12 species. There were also 2000 Black Swans. On Morley Beach we saw a Gull-billed Tern and eight Whiskered Terns. The total bird count for the day was 62 species. A very enjoyable day.

Charlie Davies

Cape Riche, March

Albany Bird Group had a short campout at Cape Riche in March. Three people went early on Sunday morning and were taken by Peter Moir to Cheyne Island, where they saw Rock Parrot, Silvereye, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Australasian Gannet and Sooty Oystercatcher. They had a sighting of a Little Penguin, which nests on the island.

Sunday was very windy, but on Monday the weather was much kinder, and by then there were 11 of us. The earlier arrivals did quite a few Atlas surveys, and more were done on Tuesday, 25 being completed in all.

We heard the Southern Scrub-robin calling clearly, and saw some Pacific Gulls without the black tail band, which could easily have been mistaken for Kelp Gulls, except that we were lucky enough to get a good view of their bills with their distinctive red tips.

Eighty-two bird species were seen altogether.

Liz Davies

Narrikup area, April

On the second Tuesday of April, 14 of us met at Narrikup Store and proceeded to Lake Eyrie. Unfortunately the property has changed hands and the new owner, in spite of Ray Garstone's approach, would not allow the group in because he was worried about insurance. This is a great loss, as we have been visiting this lake and its surrounds at least once or twice a year and found it a most interesting place with a large variety of birds.

We then went to Healy Road, where we had quite good sightings. We saw three robins, Scarlet, White-breasted and Western Yellow. The Western Yellow Robin was suffering from a large growth on its face, which prevented it from closing its beak. It looked a very sick bird.

We visited two more places in the Narrikup area, and had some beautiful views of Australasian Shovelers paddling in a shallow dam and in full sun, which allowed us to see the males' orange legs. Altogether we saw 43 species.

We then moved on to Morley Beach on Wilson Inlet to see if there were many waders left. Nearly all the migrating birds had left, but there were still plenty of Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers, one of which gave us a very good broken-wing display protecting some young. We also saw two White-breasted Sea-eagles and a Whistling Kite. Twenty-one species were recorded in this area.

Charlie Davies

Excursion reports

WELLARD WETLANDS, 3 February

Twenty members met on this fine Sunday morning to look for the water and bush birds which inhabit these wetlands. Birds Australia has been actively interested in the area for the last 20 or more years. In the early 80s we agreed to take part in the revegetation of the then exposed slippery clay banks that surrounded the ponds. It was a dirty job, and somewhat dangerous—people were warned not to fall in as there is no bottom!

Since those early days, and after two or three initial surveys by the group, Birds Australia has conducted 17 excursions and recorded a total of 95 species of birds. Boyd Wykes also did some early surveys and is the only person to have recorded Freckled Duck in the area.

On this, our 17th visit, we added two more species to the list—Golden Whistler and White-backed Swallow. Incidentally, we have often managed to add new species on our visits here. It is an important wetland, being somewhat secluded and a haven for ducks and waterbirds, some of which breed regularly, eg, Black Swan, Great Crested Grebe, Pacific Black Duck and Eurasian Coot. During this visit 58 species were recorded—eight of the ducks, all three grebes, and four raptors, together with a single Spotless Crake—a total of 27 species of wetland birds.

Alcoa are to be complimented for reclaiming and maintaining these former clay pits and encouraging wildlife back to the area.

Bryan Barrett

MANDURAH ESTUARY BRIDGE AND ENVIRONS, 10 February

The excursion concentrated on a recently developed observation area with viewing 'hides' and connecting boardwalks through remnant woodland and samphire flats immediately north of the Mandurah Estuary Bridge, fronting the western shores of the channel. As well as adding species (notably the Mistletoebird) to the expanding birdlist of the vicinity, our wader observations were amalgamated with those being made simultaneously by Mandurah birdwatchers on other shores of the Peel Estuary.

A walk around the lakes of the adjacent Erskine locality gave further sightings of waders and of a Chestnut Teal, a species last recorded here in 1994. Altogether a total of 47 species was recorded—a goodly number considering that many routine species did not expose themselves to the prevailing hot weather.

Thanks are due to the very knowledgeable birders who joined us at Mandurah and enriched our local observations.

Frank Pridham

LAKE JOONDALUP, 16 February

The most dedicated of the 32 birdwatchers on this outing had to be Judy McKinnon—two hours one way by car, train and foot. She was adamant that it was worth it.

Sixty-nine species on a pleasantly warm morning, a good mix of bush and water birds. Quite a few highlights. A flock of over 50 Great Egrets, avocets in numbers, a Little Eagle repeatedly dive-bombing a wedgetail, lots of activity on the lake and a solitary Royal Spoonbill.

Tom had never seen so many species here on many such outings. Someone even found him a Singing Honeyeater. A most rewarding day. Thank you, Tom Delaney.

John Stewart

ERIC SINGLETON BIRD SANCTUARY, 20 February

Fifteen people turned up for this walk under ideal weather conditions. Bird numbers were down, particularly ducks, but the variety of species was excellent. Even the bushbirds were well represented. I was very happy to hear the Rufous Whistler again after nearly a year's absence. The bushbirds are bound to increase further when the 6000 native plants and trees planted over two winters by 'The Friends' mature.

Unfortunately the waders were poorly represented, probably because of the high water level. However, the

Black-winged Stilts and the Black-fronted Dotterels were enjoyed by all. The Nankeen Night Heron, Great Egret and Spotless Crake were a lovely surprise in the swamp opposite the sanctuary. In all, 40 species of birds were recorded which is very good indeed.

I was pleased to have Eric Singleton OAM with us on the walk. He was the person who persuaded the then Bayswater Shire Council to stop filling the swamp as a rubbish tip back in 1976. Thus, the Bayswater Bird Sanctuary came into existence. It was later renamed after Eric. Needless to say, Eric very much appreciates the interest shown in 'HIS' sanctuary.

Hank van Wees

Birdwatching keeps you young: Bryan Barrett and Eric Singleton, on the rare, palindromic date, 20/02/2002, Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary
Photo courtesy Molly Angus

PEMBERTON CAMPOUT, 2–4 March

As all members attending had already arrived on Friday night, 20 people in all, a morning walk adjacent to the caravan park was organised. The park is beautifully located in the Karri forest, and many birds were seen before the formal program began, with both Red-tailed Black and Long-billed (White tailed) Black-Cockatoos calling overhead.

The morning was cool and cloudy, and birds were active, with White-breasted Robins, New Holland Honeyeaters, Grey Fantails and a female Golden Whistler feeding its young. A Crested Shrike-tit was seen by some people, and a highlight was seeing three cuckoos, the Pallid, Fan-tailed and Shining Bronze. Altogether, 41 species were seen during the morning. Blackberry bushes were a bit of an impediment, making access difficult.

In the afternoon, the group walked an easy three and a half kilometres around Big Brook Dam, seeing Eurasian Coots, Musk Ducks and Pacific Black Duck on the water, a Spotless Crake, and a good sighting of an Osprey. Many bushbirds, Splendid Fairy-wrens, Silvereyes, White-breasted and Western Yellow Robins, and a beautiful Red-winged Fairy-wren. In all 26 species were seen here, and several 'firsts' for newer members, with four first time campers.

On Sunday the group travelled to Windy Harbour, to join Chris Wilder in searching for Hooded Plovers. We split into four groups, each taking a beach area, with Sue Abbotts and Sue Clegg bravely tackling the very long 8 km stretch from the mouth of the Gardner River to the town site. This proved worthwhile though, as they saw several species not otherwise seen, including White-faced Heron and spoonbill, at the cost of sunburned feet. Others saw Pacific Gulls, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, Pied Cormorants, two Sooty Oystercatchers, and one dead Flesh-footed Shearwater, but only four Hooded Plovers were found.

After this, we went on to Mount Chudalup, a granite outcrop which offered splendid views of the coast but few birds. On to the Twin Karri Walk, where we looked briefly around the car park amid beautiful forest trees. The last visit was to the Cascades, which had little water and a few Grey Fantails. After a satisfying and enjoyable day, we arrived back with a bird count of 33.

As some people were leaving next day, a full bird call was held that evening, and 84 species were listed, a good number for the area. Wayne Zadow won the prize, and had also probably spotted more birds than anyone else, and his good samaritan act in towing the Perrys to Northcliffe when their radiator blew up was much appreciated too.

Monday morning a visit to Beedalup Falls was made, but there were not many birds, and light drizzle was falling, so after a short but pleasant walk, we made our way home.

Many thanks to Sue Abbotts for organising a great weekend.

Liz Walker

HERDSMANS LAKE, 16 March

An early morning start gave 24 birdos a good total number of sightings. Sixty-five different species were seen and we had very good views of a number of different birds. Nankeen Night Herons were seen in adult and juvenile plumage. Excellent views were had of the Pink-eared Duck's pink ear. All three species of grebes were seen and all three ibis. Unfortunately, the Freckled Duck, seen only ten days previously, proved elusive. Several different

raptors were hunting in the area. Clamorous Reed-Warblers are difficult for some folks at the moment because they are only doing their 'chuck-chuck' call at present instead of their clamorous aria.

The level of the lake is dropping and Black-winged Stilts and Black-fronted Dotterels were seen. A noisy little flock of birds moving through the Melaleucas at the end of the lake proved to be Splendid Fairy-wrens, White-browed Scrubwrens, Inland Thornbills, Grey Fantails and Yellow-rumped Thornbills.

Some people turned back here and found a female White-winged Triller on the grass. Others decided to check out the dredger where several Great Cormorants are nesting. This is in spite of all the earthworks going on around this lake. A Little Egret was also seen in the area, as was a Sacred Kingfisher. The 'early birds' got a substantial worm on this lovely sunny bird walk!

Claire Gerrish

ASCOT WATERS, 20 March

Rails galore!

At least seven Buff-banded Rails were seen during the walk!

Two White-fronted Chats were an unusual sighting as these birds are now seldom seen so close to the city.

Apart from these two species birding was rather quiet. Quite disappointing in fact because the large swampy areas in this area were rather bare. Not a single wader was seen. Is this because the waters are polluted from poisons leaching from the old tip?

Fifteen birdos attended this walk sponsored by Healthway and we saw 45 species.

Tom Delaney

White-fronted Chat
Drawing by Charlie Davies

EASTER CAMPOUT, NANGA STATION

Clive and Wendy Napier led a group of 31 people for the Easter Bird Survey Campout at Nanga Station.

Most participants arrived on the Thursday to find Clive and Wendy out checking the access to areas in which to carry out surveys. This resulted in a staked tyre for Clive.

On Friday morning, most of the group led by Sue Abbotts went to look for waders and other birds on a trip to Monkey Mia. Others stayed behind with Clive and Wendy to help our industrious leader repair his tyre. Afterwards they headed off to check out Artesian Bore and Point Petit Bore on Nanga Station, returning to camp for lunch and to relax during the heat of the day. Late in the afternoon, after cooling off at the beach, the whole group went to Artesian Bore to look for birds. Despite the presence of water and bulrushes, bird-life seemed to be rather scarce.

Saturday morning, Wendy was greeted with balloons, etc, for her birthday. We then broke into two groups and surveyed two different areas of the station for the morning, both groups finding in excess of 20 different species, one group finding a Golden Whistler. In the afternoon when the groups changed over and returned to the sites the number of species found decreased considerably at both sites. This appeared to be due to the change in weather conditions from a pleasant sunny morning to windy and overcast. We returned to a bird call supplemented with champagne and a birthday cake (with candles) for the continuation of birthday celebrations.

On Sunday morning we again split into two groups, one group surveying Artesian Bore and the second group heading out to Point Petit Bore for a morning of birding, with both surveys giving a greater number of species. Swimming at the beach and/or in the pool occupied most people during the heat of the day and then later in the afternoon we set out looking for waders, visiting Goulet Bluff, Whalebone and Fowlers Camp.

Monday was time for a trip to Francois Peron National Park, visiting Eagle Bluff, Denham and Little Lagoon on the way. The Thick-billed Grasswren was seen at the Peron Visitors Centre, along with several other species. We continued on to Big Lagoon for lunch, returning to camp for the final bird call ending with a total of 94 species for the Shark Bay Shire and a total of 60 species for Nanga Station. The Chiming Wedgebill, White-browed Babbler, Variegated, Splendid and White-winged Fairy-wrens were seen and heard at almost every site visited. Parrots, on the other hand were rarely seen.

Tuesday saw the break of camp with members starting to head home again.

Our thanks once again to Clive and Wendy for another very successful campout.

Ruth Luyer

HOFFMAN'S MILL CAMPOUT, 13–14 April

Hoffman's Mill is on the Upper Harvey River east of Yarloop, near one of several sites in the Darling Range where Noisy Scrub-birds have been reintroduced over the last several years. Part of the purpose of the excursion was to listen and look for scrub-birds at several of the reintroduction sites.

Hoffman's Mill campout, 2002 — participants gathered at site of 1999 sighting of Noisy Scrub-bird.
Photo courtesy Judy Blyth

Eight members camped at the almost empty Hoffman's Mill camping area on Friday night, while the tardy leaders arrived on Saturday morning. We were, however, in time to lead an early morning walk northwards from the camp-site, beside dense riverside vegetation in which Noisy Scrub-birds might feel at home. In the same area three years ago BAWA members were fortunate enough to find not one, but two Noisy Scrub-birds, calling vigorously from both sides of a track crossing a creek. We were not so fortunate this time, but despite rather cold and windy conditions everyone had good views of a number of typical Jarrah forest birds. These included White-naped Honeyeaters and Western Spinebills (both abundant and feeding on the flowers of Bullich (*Eucalyptus megacarpa*) and Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*)), Red-winged Fairy-wrens, Western Thornbills, White-breasted Robins and Golden Whistlers. Purple-crowned Lorikeets were heard frequently but rarely seen, and then only zipping around through or above the forest canopy.

The rest of the Saturday was spent looking at other parts of the extensive Upper Harvey stream-line vegetation. This is very picturesque, with tall clean-trunked Bullich contrasting with the dark, rough- barked Blackbutt *(Eucalyptus patens*). The under-storey comprised dense thickets of Melaleuca species, other shrubs and abundant sedges, but if scrub-birds were present they were not being noisy.

On the second day we drove to other scrub-bird release sites at Sixty-one Form and King Jarrah West, again with many good views of Jarrah-forest birds but without success in finding Noisy Scrub-birds.

Eight species of birds endemic to the south-west of WA were seen during the campout. These were Long-billed (Baudin's) Black Cockatoos, Western Rosella, Red-capped Parrot, Red-winged Fairy-wren, Western Thornbill, Western (previously Little) Wattlebird, Western Spinebill and White-breasted Robin. The total count for the weekend was 36.

John Blyth

Observatory reports

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Eyre Bird Observatory may be one of the most remote bird observatories in the world, but it is anything but dull.

The weather during the first months of this year has been very mild and wet, which has created a unique environment for the birds and the flora.

To date, most species of flora are in bloom, which is about 2-3 months premature. The honeyeaters find this early nectar bonanza absolutely delightful. We have increased numbers of New Holland, Brown, Singing, Spiny-cheeked, and Purple-gaped Honeyeaters, as well as Silvereyes.

The initial parrot itinerant population is now coming through. The Regent Parrot, Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Australian Ringnecks and Mulga Parrots are all in good numbers and adding a beautiful splash of colour to Eyre.

Of course, our Major Mitchells are in good numbers, with 24 to 30 being seen at the observatory water baths most days. They are spectacular.

At Kanidal Beach, an easy 1 km walk from the observatory, we have had some very interesting observations. On several occasions recently, good numbers of Banded Stilts, Hoary-headed Grebes, White-faced Herons, Chestnut Teal and Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers were all busy feeding in the seaweed outcrops. Of course,

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Led by Mike Carter

Limited places available

Plus more exciting trips for 2002/3

our perennial Red-capped Plovers and Pacific Gulls are in abundance, as usual.

We believe that one of the most interesting and important happenings at the Eyre Bird Observatory is the sighting of four Malleefowl during the past few weeks. These unique birds have been spotted along the main track, only 1.5 km from the observatory itself. This is a very promising indication that at least one pair may be preparing a nesting mound, almost in our backyard!

As you can see, Eyre Bird Observatory is a great place to come birdwatching because it offers something for everyone. We cater for day visitors and we have great accommodation for those who wish to stay longer. The invitation is there, so come and join us.

For bookings for accommodation, or any inquiries,

Phone: 08 9039 3450
Fax: 08 9039 3440
E-mail: <eyrebirdobs@bigpond.com>

Leighton and Margot Martin
Wardens

Wardens wanted for Eyre Bird Observatory

Wardens are urgently needed at Eyre Bird Observatory (on the coast of the Great Australian Bight, just south of the Nullarbor Plain, south-eastern WA).

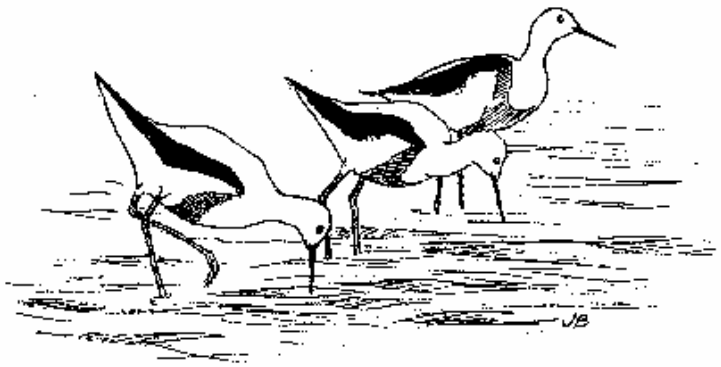
Eyre needs Wardens from the first week of June 2002 to at least the first week of September 2002. Margo and Leighton Martin (the current Wardens at Eyre) need to leave Eyre on midday of 7 June 2002. An overlap period of three days, if possible, between leaving and starting Wardens is preferred.

Margo and Leighton have said they are able to come back and work at Eyre from September to November (inclusive) in 2002. This could work out well. We have had several couples who have indicated that they may be interested in taking up the positions of Wardens at Eyre after September 2002.

If any couple is interested and able to work at Eyre during this period please contact

Shapelle McNee: Ph: 08 9433 1372
or 08 9494 1286

or email: mshapelle@hotmail.com



Banded Stilts
Drawing by Judy Blyth

FOCUS ON BIRDS (Autumn) 21-27 April at Eyre

Good rainfall in the Eucla in the weeks prior to the commencement of this course had changed the appearance of the region with much new plant growth evident. Considerable areas of mallee were already flowering, attracting flocks of nomadic birds such as Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird and White-fronted Honeyeater while other areas were in bud and likely to flower in the near future.

Against this backdrop, the course started in excellent weather for birdwatching—moderate cloud, light north-westerly breeze and temperature in the mid-twenties. After the initial briefing, a short bird walk to familiarise participants with the local resident species was conducted around the observatory. Good views were obtained of a number of species including White-browed Scrubwren, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Golden Whistler.

The following day brought strong winds and much higher temperatures during which sites near the Eyre Highway were visited. Large numbers of White-fronted Honeyeaters were noted moving into the mallee from the north-east. Other observations of interest included Jacky Winter, Mulga Parrot and Emu.

Participants visited a Malleefowl mound early the next morning and while there were able to observe a male Chestnut Quail-thrush at close range. Although cooler than the day before, the humidity increased as a thunderstorm moved along the coast. This caused a reduction in bird activity and an early return to the observatory for lunch. Banks of clouds continued to move along the scarp during the afternoon with thunderstorms observed to the east of the observatory at dinner time.

After a warm night, the next day was spent on the coast conducting a beach count. Some Red-necked Stints were still present and a small group of Hoary-headed Grebes were feeding near the seaweed bank at Nine Mile while Sooty Oystercatchers and White-faced Herons foraged amongst it. There was also a brief view of a pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles. The course continued on to Twilight Cove where we saw Crested Pigeons on the limestone flats and Rock Parrots feeding upon Acacia bushes. At Twilight Cove a Southern Boobook was observed roosting in a cave.

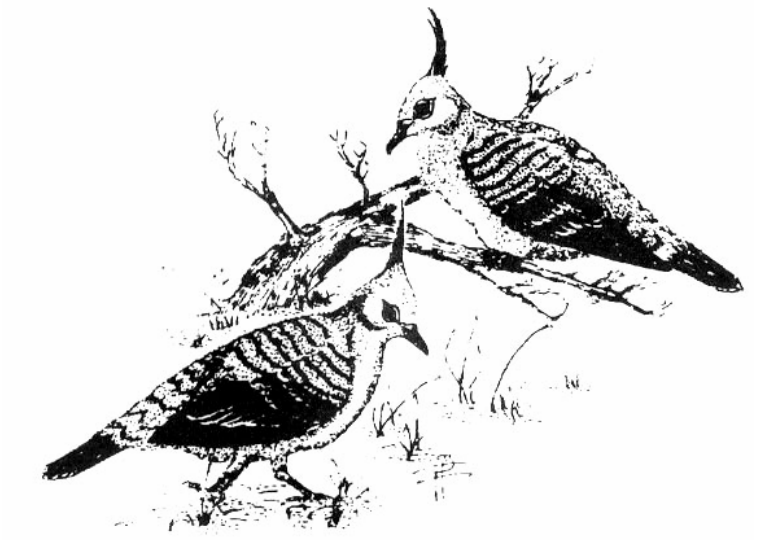
Rain and a moderate breeze overnight reduced the temperature—minimum 4° C—and the next day was one of those glorious Autumn days that Eyre is renowned for. A formation of three Wedge-tailed Eagles flying low overhead was a good start to the first site visited where seven species of honeyeater including Yellow-plumed and Brown-headed were added to the list. Other highlights were Red-capped Robin and Golden Whistler. Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Western Yellow Robin and Chestnut Quail-thrush were seen at another site in the afternoon .

More rain overnight and another trip to the Hampton Tableland. Here large numbers of Yellow-throated Miners let everyone know exactly where participants were. They and the large numbers of White-fronted Honeyeaters made it difficult to hear other species. Banded Lapwings were the highlight here as well as a couple of Emus that raced along the track in front of the vehicle.

On the last day a Collared Sparrowhawk came to the birdbath at the observatory where all its identification features were able to be seen. It remained for approximately 15 minutes washing and preening.

Species regularly recorded (seven or more sites) were Spotted Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Weebill, White-eared Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, White-fronted Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Raven, Welcome Swallow and Silvereye. Less common species recorded included Emu, Banded Lapwing, Mulga Parrot, Jacky Winter, Chestnut Quail-thrush and Purple-gaped Honeyeater. The species seen at the most sites was the Grey Butcherbird while the most numerous was the White-fronted Honeyeater. Forty nine species of birds, two of mammals and seven of reptiles were recorded at the sites visited.

Peter Sandilands
Course Leader



Crested Pigeons
Drawing by Pam Free

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 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-browed Finches and Red-eared Firetails, 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".

Saturday 29 June—Half-day excursion, Lake Coogee

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Coogee Road and Gardiner Avenue—NB, new meeting place! (StreetSmart Map 491, B4). Nearly 100 species of birds have been seen on and around this lake, including nine raptors. It is quite a large lake and now has a path right round it so some people may wish to do the full circuit.

Leaders: Jan and Dave Crossley

Sunday 30 June—Full Day Excursion, Hillarys Pelagic Trip

The trip leaves at 7:00 am from near Underwater World at Hillarys Boat Harbour and returns at about 3:30 pm. There is a limit of 23 people. Booking is essential.

The cost is expected to be $70 and is required one week before the event. Book by contacting Frank O'Connor.

Observers wanted

Birds Australia WA needs observers for survey projects in the Perth metropolitan area and the central wheatbelt.

See the advertisements for the Perth Biodiversity Project and Living Landscapes Project elsewhere in this issue.

Contact: ***Cheryl Gole***
Tel: 9293 4959
E-mail: <gole@starwon.com.au>

Late June/early July is an excellent time for a good range of seabirds. Bring your camera.

Leader: Frank O'Connor
(9386 5694 or foconnor@iinet.net.au)

Sunday 7 July—Half-day excursion, North Mole, Fremantle, and Woodman Point

Meet at 8:30 am at the end of North Mole, near the lighthouse. We will look for seabirds here, and may go on to look at the birds at Woodman Point. Bring telescopes if you have them.

Leader: Ian Standring

Saturday 13 July—Half-day excursion, Ellis Brook Reserve, Gosnells

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin. A popular area where a variety of bush birds may be seen — some of them not often seen near Perth. A recent bushfire in this reserve may result in some unusual species being seen.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 21 July—Half-day excursion, Lake Gwelup

Meet at **8:00 am** in the car park at the corner of Stoneham Street and Huntriss Road (north of Karrinyup Road). We should see plenty of waterbirds and bushbirds, and there are often several raptors to be seen here.

Leader: Clive Nealon

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.

Saturday 27 July—Half-day excursion, Piesse Brook, Kalamunda

Meet at 8:30 am at the junction of Hummerston Road and Schipp Road at the southern end of Kalamunda National Park. Take Mundaring Weir Road from Kalamunda and turn left into Hummerston Road.

We should see Golden Whistlers, perhaps the introduced Red-browed Firetails, and other bushbirds.

Leader: Brian Wilson

Sunday 4 August—Half-day excursion, Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale

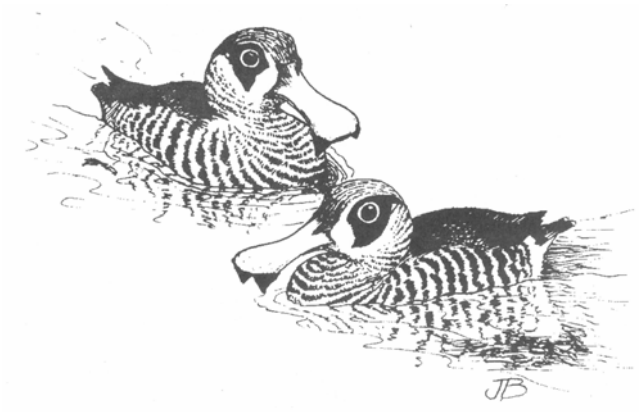
Meet at 8:30 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam, at the end of Admiral Road (off Albany Highway), Bedfordale. Over 90 different species of birds have been recorded here including Red-eared Firetails, White-breasted Robins and Red-winged Fairy-wrens. It is also a good area for several raptors.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Saturday 10 August—Half-day excursion, Market Garden Swamps, Spearwood

Meet at 8:30 am on the corner of Pennlake Drive and Brenzi Court (under the power lines), on the edge of Market Garden Swamps. This is a new reserve for our group to visit and already over 30 species have been seen here.

Leader: Bryan Barrett



Pink-eared Duck
Drawing by Judy Blyth

Sunday 11 August—Full Day Excursion, Hillarys Pelagic Trip

The trip leaves at 7:00 am from near Underwater World at Hillarys Boat Harbour and returns at about 3:30 pm. There is a limit of 23 people. Booking is essential.

The cost is expected to be $70 and is required one week before the event. Book by contacting Frank O'Connor.

August is an excellent time for a range of seabirds including Hutton's Shearwater on migration. Bring your camera.

Leader : Frank O'Connor
(9386 5694 or foconnor@iinet.net.au)

Thursday 15 August—Mid-week excursion, Little Rush Lake, Yangebup

Meet at 8:30 am near the playground on the western side of this small wooded lake. Little Rush Lake is part of the Beeliar Regional Park. To reach the area turn right, going south, into Osprey Drive off North Lake Road, then right into Dotterel Way and right into Grassbird Loop (StreetSmart Map 462, B7).

There is a path around the lake and we should see plenty of both water and bush birds. Fifty species of birds have been seen in four visits here.

Leaders: Molly and Barry Angus

Sunday 18 August—Full day excursion, Bootine Road Nature Reserve, Gingin

Meet at 8:00 am at the new reserve on the northern side of Bootine Road 8.4 km west of the Brand Highway (at A, 0.5, Map 69, in the Western Australian Traveller's Atlas). A hand-painted 'CALM' sign is visible on a large tree near the gate and nature reserve sign, about 100 metres past the creek crossing. The Bootine Road turnoff from the Brand Highway is well signposted, about 100 km north of Perth city and is virtually opposite the Boonanarring Road turnoff. Bring lunch, lots of water and long pants or gaiters to protect against snakes and grass seeds.

This reserve supports four species of fairy-wrens. The outing should provide a reasonably good selection of bush birds as well as some experience in separating fairy-wrens of the chestnut-shouldered group—a must for atlassers in the south west!

Leaders John and Judy Blyth

Saturday 24 August—Full day excursion, Pipidinny Road, Eglinton

Meet at 8:30 am on the corner of Yanchep and Pipidinny Roads (StreetSmart Map 128 E1) — an hour's drive from Perth. Be prepared to pay a small fee to enter the picnic area for lunch.

Bird Atlas News

The New Atlas of Australian Birds is to continue as a survey project and we actively encourage new and existing observers to participate. The report of the first stage of the project is in press and will be presented to Environment Australia in May 2002. The Atlas book will be printed by the end of 2002.

A copy of the report will be available on short term loan to WA members and will then be lodged in the BAWA library.

The Atlas is an important national survey resource without parallel, and we encourage you to contribute surveys from any location, even those which you feel are 'over' surveyed.

Contact: ***Cheryl Gole***
Tel: 9293 4959
E-mail: <gole@starwon.com.au>

We will look at four habitats during the day: the coastal dunes for Variegated Fairy-wrens, White-browed Scrubwrens, etc; the heath for White-winged Fairy-wrens, Tawny-crowned and White-cheeked Honeyeaters; the swamp for waterfowl, and a part of Yanchep National Park which few people visit.

Leader: Brice Wells

Monday 26 August meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm

Rolf Jensen, zoologist, will speak on "Birds, beasts and wildflowers in south-western Africa".

Sunday 1 September—Full day excursion, Flynn Road, The Lakes

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

We will look at several areas of Wandoo woodland where three species of robin are usually seen, and with luck Crested Shrike-tits could also be seen.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Saturday-Sunday 7-8 September—Short Weekend Campout, Boyagin Rock Nature Reserve

This Reserve (Western Australian Traveller's Atlas Map 55, ref. C4) contains impressive stands of Powderbark Wandoo and has a species list of about 73 birds. There are moderate to easy walks, with some more strenuous ones around the rock. We should also find orchids at this time of the year, and several Numbats were seen on our last visit.

To reach the camp site at the base of Boyagin Rock, travel along the Brookton Highway to the intersection of the York-Williams Road, turn south and proceed to Boyagin Road and turn left. The road to the rock will be sign-posted. There is a bush toilet but please be self-sufficient as regards water, food, tents, etc. If you wish you may come for a day trip on either day — a round trip of about 250 km.

I will be on site late on Friday afternoon.

Please advise the Birds Australia office (9383 7749) if you wish to attend.

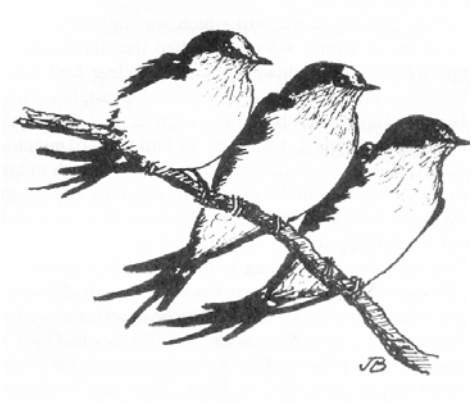
Leader: Clive Napier

Saturday 14 September—Half-day excursion, Ray Marshall Park (Blackadder Creek), Viveash

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park of the Ray Marshall Park. Go to the end of First Avenue, off Great Eastern Highway, just east of the Governor Stirling Senior High School.

A morning's walk along the John George Trail that runs beside the Swan River, crossing Blackadder Creek.

Leader: Jan Rogers



Welcome Swallows
(see page 13 for article)
Drawing by Judy Blyth

Thursday 19 September—Mid-week excursion, The Spectacles, Kwinana

Meet in the main car park on McLaughlan Road at 8:30 am. Proceed along the Kwinana Freeway to the Anketell Road crossroad, some 30 km south of Perth. Travel about 2 km, then turn left into McLaughlan Road. Over 100 species of birds have been seen here.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Sunday 22 September—Full day walk from Nanga Bridge along the Murray River

Meet at 8:30 am at the Dwellingup Hotel. From Perth, drive down the South-West Highway to North Dandalup. Turn left to Dwellingup. Allow one hour of driving time from Armadale (about 70 km one way).

This will be an 8 km undulating walk down a creek and along the Murray River. We will follow a good track through Jarrah, Marri and Banksia, with beautiful views of the river.

Bushbirds seen in this area include Striated and Spotted Pardalote, Red-eared Firetail, Red-winged Fairy-wren, White-breasted Robin and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Bring lunch and a minimum of 1 litre of water. I will boil a billy at lunch time for everyone.

Leader: Sue Abbotts (9444 1607)

Saturday-Monday 28-30 September—Campout at Chiddarcooping Reserve, Shire of Westonia

Chiddarcooping is an 8000 ha CALM reserve about 65 km north of Westonia in the eastern wheatbelt. It contains a variety of vegetation types, including large areas of breakaway and granite rock as well as heathland.

Accommodation has been arranged at a nearby farm where the owner has two comfortable houses not in use which can accommodate up to 14 people. Those who wish to 'bush' camp can do so in a large native bush area surrounding the sheds and houses. Those using the houses are asked to pay $12 per night which includes electricity, gas and hot water. Those camping can use the toilets and water at $6 per night. The farm also caters for 'farm stays' in luxurious conditions with breakfast and a lunch provided for $50 per day. Dinner can be provided as an extra.

CALM do not wish large groups to camp on the reserve.

Please ring the Birds Australia office (9383 7749) if you wish to attend this campout giving your name, address, the number in your party, what type of accommodation you require, and when you will arrive. Further details and a printed sheet of directions will then be sent to you.

Following the weekend you may wish to join the leaders who plan to continue east for about a week to inspect other Goldfields woodland areas. This will not be an official campout but you are welcome to join in if you wish. It will be bush camping and there will be some gravel roads. Also, please advise the office if you are interested in this additional travel and a sheet giving a general guide to the extra campout will be sent to you.

For further details you can ring Clive and Wendy on 9332 7265.

Leaders: Wendy and Clive Napier

Attention!

Birdwatchers and Photographers

You are invited to a photographic exhibition

" A VOYAGE TO ANTARCTICA"

by

Wildlife Photographer

STUART MILLER

Fremantle Arts Centre
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Fremantle

Continuing until 16 June

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

Stuart Miller, wildlife photographer, will speak on "Voyage to Antarctica, including Sub-Antarctic Islands".

Two views of the juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle seen at Lake McLarty, December 2001 (see Colin Davis' article on page 12)
Photos courtesy Cecilia Grant

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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 or emailed would assist, especially if in MSWord as a document **without** styles.
- WABN uses Birds Australia recommended English names
- except for Observations, contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.
- Full Editorial Policy is stated in WABN 74:10-12

Deadline for the September 2002 Issue

1 August 2002 at Perry House

Advertising Rates

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1/2 page	$50.00
Full page	$90.00

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Crossword Answers No 29

ACROSS

5 Petchora Pipit, 8 oil, 9 names, 11 gorget, 13 span, 14 Newhaven, 16 cull, 17 metal, 21 ramp, 22 rot, 23 bonnet, 24 err, 25 upper, 27 grant, 29 centenary, 30 Gnow.

DOWN

1 keen, 2 conservation, 3 cargo, 4 Bibra, 6 totipalmate, 7 plains, 10 mayhem, 12 omnivorous, 15 nylon, 18 estuary, 19 sparrow, 20 staple, 26 rat, 28 tag.

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