# Western Australian Bird Notes

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

CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

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## TRIPPING OVER PAINTED SNIPES IN THE CENTRAL WHEATBELT!

If someone had said that I would be literally tripping over snipe on a trip to Konnongorring (south of Wongan Hills) in the central wheatbelt I certainly would have suggested that they have a rethink (and some medication). But that's what happened. Almost…

We (a bunch of keen volunteers) had joined Cheryl Gole on a farm in the Gabby Quoi Quoi sub-catchment to help her survey bushland remnants as part of the *Living Landscapes* project, an initiative of Greening WA.

We had completed the first survey and, as we wandered back to the car, we were quite happily chatting about the wheatbelt bushbirds that we had seen. Several of the observers had just picked up new species for their lists, and some of us were simply enjoying non-Perth birds for a change, so the conversation was already full of energy. And how that was going to increase…!

Looking for a Painted Snipe nest, central wheatbelt.
*Photo courtesy Sue Mather*

Not far from the car we had to cross a small area of marsh, near a freshwater soak. I had walked ahead of the main group (there were ten of us in total) with the landholder—mostly for selfish reasons. I figured that if we were going to cross the marshland then my best option for keeping my feet dry was to follow the guy who knew his way around. And sometimes, when you least expect it, you just get really lucky…

As the rear group came up toward the soak one of the members (details were lost in the ensuing excitement) almost stepped on (ie, tripped over) a pair of largish waders—flushing them into the air. I was totally unaware of this behind me. I just had 'that feeling' that you sometimes get (ESP?) and looked up to see a female Painted Snipe fly right past. My binoculars were to my eyes in an instant. And I got a great look, too (much to the chagrin of my fellow observers).

The group regathered in a state of disbelief. Not everyone was convinced that what we had seen was a snipe. The landholder and I had seen where the bird had landed, so a couple of the group set off in pursuit. Sure enough, when they were almost on top of the bird, it flushed again. This time, after a brief look at the bird in the air, it disappeared over trees and out of sight.

So we returned to the cars, chatted excitedly and erratically (some more so than others if you believe what people say about me), and decided to return to the marsh that evening.

We approached on dusk, but before any of us had had a chance to survey the scene the farm dog had caught a glimpse of the native hens wandering through the marsh. The dog was into the rushes in a flash, scattering the hens and putting both the snipe up into the air. In the following hour we wandered through the marsh and the snipe were flushed several more times, allowing confirmation of the identification.

Back in Perth, it took only a little bit of reading to realise what a once-in-a-lifetime sighting of Painted Snipe this was. For starters the Australian Painted Snipe has all but reached full species status (*Rostratula australis*), rather than being a sub-species of the Greater Painted Snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*) of Asia and Africa, and its numbers have been declining steadily since the 1950s (APSP, 2002). They are listed as 'vulnerable' in the *Action Plan for Australian Birds* (Garnett and Crowley, 2000). In WA their occurrence is rare (Marchant and Higgins, 1993), and almost all sightings have been in December to February (APSP, 2002). Our record is only the 6th record in the south-west region of WA in the last century (including the recent sighting at Herdsman Lake, see Observations, *WABN* No. 103) and the only record off the Swan Coastal Plain since a breeding record in Moora in October 1923 (Johnstone and Storr, 1998).

I have been in touch with Danny Rogers of the Australian Painted Snipe Project and, once Cheryl has chased some further details for us, I will complete a report to add to their database.

I was once heard to utter that 'snipes suck'. Now I've seen a female Painted one, in WA, in the south-west, off the coastal plain, in a marsh surrounded by wheat fields, and in October, they rock!

Sighting details

Saturday 19 October 2002.

The nearest town to the farm is Konnongorring (31º 03' S, 116º 46' E).

The birds were first sighted at 1130. Return sightings were at 1730.

The marsh is approximately 150 x 60 m and is dominated by the introduced Spiny Rush *Juncus acutus*. *Casuarina* sp. trees border the southern and eastern edges. Nearby vegetation complexes include remnant sandplain Banksia woodland and tammar scrub. The wetland/dampland area includes small, mostly shallow pools (0 to 50 cm depth) throughout the marsh and the soil in the remaining areas is mostly damp.

Postscript

Three weeks later, on Saturday 9 November, the snipes were seen again. A group of seven observers, led by Cheryl Gole, formed a 'beating' line across the marsh, and flushed both birds. The birds were initially flushed from the area where they had first been seen on 19 October. A brief nest search was undertaken, but there was no evidence of breeding. However, given the density of the rushes in this location, this nest search was not considered to be complete.

References

APSP. 2002. *Painted Snippets: Newsletter of the Australian Painted Snipe Project.* Volume One.

Garnett, S. T. and Crowley, G. M. 2000. *The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000.* Environment Australia, Canberra, ACT.

Johnstone, R. E. and Storr, G. M. 1998. *Handbook of Western Australian Birds: Volume 1: Non-passerines (Emu to Dollarbird).* Western Australian Museum, Perth WA.

Marchant, S. and Higgins P. J. (Eds). 1993. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic birds.* Volume 2. *Raptors to Lapwings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

**Wes Bancroft**

## PAINTED SNIPE AT HERDSMAN LAKE

On Saturday 18 May at about 10:30 am, I visited the Glendalough Parklands on the south-eastern side of Herdsman Lake to look for crakes.

I parked in the car park next to the tennis courts and walked around to the left along the edge of the Typha reeds to a small cleared area. The ground was soft and wet from recent rain with water lying in a few places. I walked down a wide clearing towards the main reeds when I saw a bird standing in a frozen position about four metres in front of me.

I had about two seconds to observe the bird before it took off. It had a dark brown head and back, a large white eye ring and patch behind the eye. The belly was white and there was a white blaze going from the belly to the edge of the primaries on the lesser underwing coverts. The leading edge of the underwing looked dark as did the secondaries and primaries. The bird was like a Gallinago snipe, but the bill was short for a snipe, and the wings were broad and rounded like an American Woodcock. The flight was fairly slow like a woodcock, rather than the rapid zig-zag flight of a Gallinago snipe. The bird landed about 200 metres away in the dense Typha reeds.

I identified the bird as a Painted Snipe.

I found it again early on the Sunday morning with Frank O'Connor and John and Judy Blyth. I flushed it from an open patch of Typha within five metres of the original site. We saw it fly off into the Typha. It was a female.

Over the next couple of days, I looked for it again several times, along with a number of other people, but it was never relocated.

**Easy Patterson**

# Observations

This list has been compiled by the Observations Committee. Metropolitan suburbs or shires are in parentheses. Please report interesting observations to Frank O'Connor (9386 5694 or preferably <sightings@iinet.net.au>) or to the BAWA office. Sightings are included on the BAWA web site (http://birdswa.iinet.net.au) as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in the next *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 most unusual sighting in this edition is the second wheatbelt record for Painted Snipe. A Sooty Shearwater and a white morph Southern Giant-Petrel created much excitement during the August pelagic trip off Hillarys. An unusual gull was briefly seen off Cottesloe in late August and tentatively identified as a Franklin's Gull.

White-necked Herons continue to be seen widely and in large numbers in the south west. This spring has seen an irruption of White-winged Trillers on the Swan Coastal Plain. Freckled Ducks, Black-tailed Native-hens and Cattle Egrets continue to be reported in increasing numbers nearer the coast. Perhaps this is due to the dry conditions inland. A Red-necked Phalarope has been reported from Rottnest Island for at least the seventh consecutive year. Conversely, several people have commented on the small numbers of Dusky Woodswallows in the south west this spring.

A lowlight has been the sighting of two declared pests in Perth. A Common Blackbird was seen in the southern end of Murdoch University and along North Lake Road, and two sparrows were reported near the North Mole at Fremantle. Two Common Blackbirds were seen last year nearby in Kardinya. These sightings have been reported to Agriculture WA but the birds have not been relocated. Please report any further sightings to Marion Massam on 9366 2301. Rainbow Lorikeets were reported from Chidlow and Mandurah during the Perth Birdwatch indicating that this species is continuing to expand its distribution. Long-billed Corellas are also expanding with some seen near Serpentine.

A Pacific Baza that stayed in Derby for about a month was an interesting sighting in the Kimberley. A large dark immature gull was seen at Crab Creek in Broome in early November but not for long enough to be identified.

## METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

**Freckled Duck** – 4, 08/09/02, Swan River at Pelican Point (Crawley) – CE, RD, JW (1st sighting at Pelican Point) * 14, 10/10/02, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – RP, ST (high number)

**Southern Giant-Petrel** – 1white morph, 11/08/02, Hillarys pelagic – BAWA (1st sighting on these trips)

**Salvin's Prion** – 4, 11/08/02, Hillarys pelagic – BAWA (2nd sighting on these trips)

**Sooty Shearwater** – 1, 11/08/02, Hillarys pelagic – BAWA (rarely seen in WA)

**Terek Sandpiper** – 1, 23/10/02, Pelican Point – MB, CM

**White-necked Heron** – 35, 18/08/02, Armadale Road (Forrestdale) – WM * 31, 10/09/02, near Tiwest Chandala (Muchea) – MB, RD (high number)

**Cattle Egret** – 1, 04/08/02, WA Water Ski Park (Baldivis) – DBH (increasing in the south west)

**Royal Spoonbill** – 1, 20/10/02, Butlers Reserve west side (Scarborough) – EG

**Black-tailed Native-hen** – 1, 21/10/02, Rossmoyne foreshore near Fifth Avenue (Rossmoyne) – PA

**Eastern Curlew** – 1, 06/11/02, Alfred Cove (Attadale) – WB (rare on the Swan River)

**Red-necked Phalarope** – 1, 24/09/02, Pearse/Government House Lakes (Rottnest) – WB, CH

**Black-eared Cuckoo** – 1, 11/08/02, Yanchep National Park (Yanchep) – JR, AB (unusual this far south-west)

**Restless Flycatcher** – 1, 12/09/02, Whiteman Park (Whiteman) – RD, JW

**White-winged Triller** – 50, 12/09/02, Whiteman Park (Whiteman) – RD, JW (high number)

**Rufous Songlark** – 1, 29/10/02, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – WM, JB

**Black-faced Woodswallow** – 1, 12/11/02, Pelican Point – MB, MC, CM

**Common Blackbird** – 1, 06/10/02, Murdoch University (Murdoch) – JE (reported to Agriculture WA)

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

**Malleefowl** – 1, 05/10/02, Koolyanobbing-Southern Cross Road (Southern Cross) – CC, PW

**Freckled Duck** – 2, 10/09/02, Broadwater (Busselton) – BAB * 1, 16/09/02, near Wilson Inlet (Albany) – RG * 5, 04/10/02, Lake Matilda (Albany) – ABG

**White-necked Heron** – 36, 08/09/02, Mills Road (Murray) – MS (high number)

**Cattle Egret** – 3, 18/08/02, near Bootine Road Nature Reserve (Gingin) – BAWA (increasing in the south west)

**Black-tailed Native-hen** – 7, 16/09/02, Wandering-Narrogin Road (Wandering) – JC, AW

**Painted Snipe** – 2, 19/10/02, small wetland SE of Konnongorring (Goomalling) – WB *et al*. (rare in the south west); seen again 9/11/02 (CG *et al*.)

**Long-billed Corella** – 5, 19/08/02, Hopeland / Henderson Roads (Serpentine - Jarrahdale) – WM

**Little Corella** – 2, 10/09/02, near Mortlock River (Wongan-Ballidu) – CG (south of expected range)

**Masked Owl** – 1, 16/09/02, Dryandra State Forest (Cuballing) – JC, AW

**Red-backed Kingfisher** – 1, 20/10/02, remnant woodland near Konnongorring (Goomalling) – CG *et al*.

**Black Honeyeater** – 2 males, 30/09/02, Badjaling North Road (Quairading) – CG

**Pied Honeyeater** – 1 female, 13/09/02, Gabby Quoi Quoi Road (Goomalling) – CG * 1 female, 30/09/02, Badjaling North Road (Quairading) – CG

**Crimson Chat** – 1 male, 16/10/02, Whitfield Road, Konnongorring (Goomalling) – CG * 5, 21/10/02, Mortlock River (Goomalling) – RD *et al*.

**Western Whipbird** – 1, 09/10/02, Salt River Road (Cranbrook) – FO

### ARID ZONE

**Ruff** – 1, 01/11/02, Carnarvon sewage ponds (Carnarvon) – ChC

**Oriental Plover** – 1, 28/09/02, 70 km west of Mundrabilla Roadhouse (Dundas) – BM *et al*.

**Grey Honeyeater** – 1, 24/08/02, Cotton Creek Track, Rudall River NP (East Pilbara) – BR

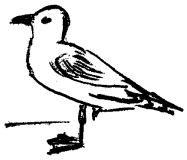
### KIMBERLEY

**Pacific Baza** – 1,24/08/02 to 19/09/02, Hamlet Grove (Derby – West Kimberley) – per PM (1st in Derby town)

**Grey Falcon** – 1 hunting Oriental Plovers, 05/11/02, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – AdB

### OBSERVERS

AB = Allan Burbidge
ABG = Albany Bird Group
AdB = Adrian Boyle
AW = Alex Watson
BAB = Bruce & Anne Buchanan
BAWA = BAWA Excursion
BM = Bill McRoberts
BR = Bill Rutherford
CC = Christine Cooper
CE = Carole Elliott
CG = Cheryl Gole
CH = Chas Hansen
ChC = Chris Coleborne (Vic)
CM = Charles Merriam
DBH = David & Barbara Henderson
EG = Eric Gard
FO = Frank O'Connor
JB = John Brooke
JC = Jarrad Cousin
JE = Julie Ellery
JR = Julie Raines
JW = Jenny Wilcox
KC = Kate Creed
MB = Mike Bamford
MaB = Max Bailey
MS = Marcus Singor
PA = Pam Agar
PM = Pam Masters
PW = Phil Withers
RD = Rob Davis
RG = Ray Garstone
RP = Ryan Phillips
ST = Sean Tomlinson
WB =Wes Bancroft
WM = Wynton Maddeford



BIRD TALK from Penny Towells
*Gull: It gets them every time!*

## Editorial

The inclusion of a table of contents and calendar of events in this issue is to assist the reader with finding information in *WABN*.

The Birds Australia logo has been added to the masthead in accord with the organisation's policy of including this whenever possible, aiming to help raise our public profile.

We have also included a section listing opportunities for volunteers. Members seeking volunteers for projects can contact the editors with the appropriate details for future editions.

We look forward to your feedback on these changes.

### INDONESIA BIRDING NOW???

Peacocks, jungle-fowl, dragons, and more!!!
After the recent tragic event in Bali, some might wonder if this is a good idea.

Here are a few good reasons to consider a birding trip there over the next few months:

(1) The Balinese/Indonesian economy is on the brink due to catastrophic tourism declines, and it would feel good to help out

(2) it's cheaper than ever because of discounts/rupiah decline vs A$

(3) birding trips visit low-risk spots.

With this in mind, I propose to set up a tour of about 10 days based in Bali, including visits to 3 national parks in East Java, and optional 5-day extension to Flores/Komodo to see the 'dragons' and lots of additional birds including rare endemics.

Total all-in costs including air-fare depend on numbers, etc (max 10 per tour), but should cost substantially less than any equivalent holiday in Australia.

Proposed dates in Feb-Apr'03.

At least 200 bird species possible.

*Interested? Call or e-mail me for more info:*

Rolf Jensen, junglej1@bigpond.com,
or 9336-6782

# Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors

**A second Grey Heron?**
The article on the Grey Heron in September's *WA Bird Notes* prompts me to mention the sighting of such a bird on 25 June 2001.

After having consulted, without success, the 1990 *Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*, I telephoned the Perry House office, mentioning the characteristic dark stripe along the bird's head, but my interlocutor was as mystified as I was. I also spoke of the European heron, with which I was familiar. And now, in my English book of birds, I see that they are one and the same, the *Ardea cinerea*. The sighting was on the creek in Glen Forrest's Springside Park.

**Elisabeth Ager**

Dear Editors

**It's a jungle out there**
On 8 September, sitting at the top of a cliff overlooking Roebuck Bay at Broome, I saw a very dispiriting sight.

A high, 9.13 m tide had just peaked at 11:30 am when below me I saw two birds fighting. Quickly focussing the telescope, two Common Sandpipers were identified as having quite a scrap. Suddenly one turned onto its back and the other scampered off. The one left, in the high tide debris, just lay there.

It was watched for approximately one hour and the only movement was a slight twitch of one wing and the head moved to one side. Such a sad final end, little white tummy shining with little beak pointing to the sky.

Question: why did one Common Sandpiper attack and leave for dead another? The world can be a cruel place.

**Mary Vaughan**

Dear Editors

**Banded Lapwing in Mandurah**
My neighbour, Mr Ian Melrose, took me to see a pair of Banded Lapwings and they had two newly hatched chicks. I thought I have never seen these birds before in central Mandurah, and I have been here 50 years.

They are on the bank of a new canal, just over the old Mandurah Bridge.

**Pat Tuffin**

Dear Editors

**Malleefowl at Dryandra**
Jon Pridham's article on the Malleefowl at Dryandra (*Western Australian Bird Notes* 102: 19-20, June 2002) poses several interesting questions on why Malleefowl have not increased in numbers after a decade of 1080 baiting to control foxes.

The population at Dryandra is probably still viable. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Malleefowl occurs in lower numbers at Dryandra compared to eastern sites such as Lake Magenta Nature Reserve and Tarin Rock Nature Reserve. The reason for this is unknown.

Control of foxes at Dryandra aims to limit their numbers so that species directly affected by fox predation remain viable. Although not formally monitored, the Malleefowl population at Dryandra should remain at or near its carrying capacity because of on-going fox control. This management activity will shelter susceptible species from other threats such as drought or unplanned fires. The current drought, now into its third year, is likely to have a major short-term effect on the reproductive potential of the Dryandra Malleefowl population, however, the population should recover again when conditions improve.

**Bruce Bone**
**District Manager**
**Dept of Conservation & Land Management**
**Narrogin District**

Spotted Pardalote at Eyre
*Photo courtesy Bea Myers & Ian Tarbin*

# Birds Australia WA Inc Reports

BAWA and its committee have been very busy over the past few months. Many of the issues and events that have occupied our time are described in detail elsewhere in this issue of *WA Bird Notes*, but following are some of the highlights.

The inaugural Perth Birdwatch was a great success, resulting in valuable information on the distribution and abundance of Willie Wagtails, Rainbow Lorikeets and Australian Ringnecks around Perth. Birdwatch also raised awareness of BAWA in the community, with most of the 1500 people who contributed records being non-members who had never heard of us before. Many of them expressed appreciation for what we were trying to do and it was exciting to find such interest in birds in the general community.

A lot of people have asked when we will be doing the Birdwatch again, and if we will focus on the same or different species. That is very encouraging but before we commit ourselves to another Birdwatch, I will have to talk very nicely to the many volunteers who put in so much time into making the first Birdwatch such a success. Liz Walker and the office volunteers did a fantastic job on the telephone, while Wes Bancroft, Rob Davis and Frank O'Connor were involved in publicity and data entry, resulting in a series of high profile articles in *The West Australian* and several local newspapers. Dr Stephen Connell produced the maps for us.

Birdwatch occupied most of us during Bird Week, but the week culminated in the BAWA Open Day at Perry House. Again, many people contributed to the success of this day, but Jenny Wilcox deserves special mention for organising so much of it. An important aspect of both Birdwatch and the Open Day was raising the profile of our organisation within the community, as that is an important step towards making us more effective in protecting birds, and the two events served us well in this regard.

While Perth Birdwatch and the Open Day were very public events, a lot more has been happening in the background. Rob Davis attended the second Regional Groups meeting for 2002 on behalf of BAWA, while Wes Bancroft reported to the committee of an excellent response to the questionnaire sent out to members in the last issue of Bird Notes. We hope to be able to act upon some of the suggestions in the coming months. Meanwhile, there hardly seems to be a weekend without an excursion going somewhere, our existing projects continue and funding has been received for further projects on both Ground Parrots and Hooded Plovers. The new Conservation and Research Committee met for the first time and it is hoped that this group will give BAWA an effective voice on conservation issues, as well as providing guidance for our expanding research programme.

I look forward to catching up with as many members as possible at the Christmas barbecue.

**Mike Bamford, Chair**

# BAWA Projects

## WHO ARE WE?
## The 2002 BAWA Membership Survey

**Report by Wes Bancroft**

In the last edition of *WA Bird Notes* the BAWA Committee included a membership information survey. Here I report on what we have gleaned from the information provided.

Firstly a huge thank you goes out to all those people who took the time to respond. We had a fantastic return rate; of the 600 surveys printed and mailed out we received 128 (21%) back. Listening to the radio the other week, they suggested that any rate over about 10% is pretty exceptional. The great thing about having a strong return rate is that we are likely to have a more accurate representation of the membership. So thanks again to everyone who participated.

What did we find? I have divided the results into several sections, with some comment where appropriate.

### i) Membership age

99% of people were happy to divulge their age range. The frequency distribution of membership age (Figure 1) was not unexpected. More than 82% of members admitted to being over 40 years of age. There is a very, very small proportion of young (under 25) members.

I suspect that there are at least four factors working against recruitment of younger members: (i) the lack of public awareness, although Brice Wells and his team are working hard to rectify that by visiting schools, (ii) a lack of public understanding that BAWA members don't just 'watch birds', but that we are an active research and conservation group, (iii) the cost of membership (junior memberships are unavailable through Bird Australia but work well elsewhere, eg, the Gould League, to secure younger members), and (iv) the image of bird clubs has never been one of 'cool'ness. We can change these.

**ii) Member participation**
98%, 98% and 95% of returned forms provided information as to whether members attended general meetings, excursions or made visits to the BAWA office, respectively. 44%, 55% and 56% of members had attended at least one general meeting, excursion or had made a visit to the BAWA office in the last year, respectively. The 'average' BAWA member will attend 1.9 ± 0.3SE meetings, 2.2 ± 0.3SE excursions and visit the office 2.6 ± 0.5SE times in a year. The ranges of participation were from 0 to 11 meetings per year, from 0 to 20 excursions per year and from 0 to 36 visits to the office per year. (NB. 'SE' refers to the standard error: a measure of the variation around the average).

Several comments from country members suggested their limited participation rate was due to their location, relative to the bulk of activities.

**iii) Use of the BAWA Office**
100%, 99% and 99% of returned forms provided information as to how members made use (or not) of the library, slides and sale items provided by the BAWA office in Perry House, respectively. Throughout their membership 31% of members had used the library, 10% had borrowed slides and 60% had made a purchase from the BAWA office.

**iv) E-mail notification**
79%, 81% and 80% of returned forms provided information as to whether members would like to be advised, by e-mail, of changes to excursions, unusual sightings and 'other' BAWA notices, respectively. The proportions of members in favour of these e-mail services were 45% for excursion changes, 53% for unusual sightings and 50% for 'other' BAWA notices.

While e-mailing lists would be welcomed by a solid proportion of the membership, some comments made alongside this section of the form suggested that a number of members were concerned about committing to an e-mail list because of the potential 'flood' of e-mails.

**v) Bird-related interests of members**
The popularity of bird-related interests of BAWA members is shown in Figure 2. It is great to see the spread of interests that our group has. The three most popular interests were conservation, bird friendly gardens and excursions. Surveys and atlassing also ranked highly. Does this mean that when BAWA members are not at home tending their gardens to help conserve birds they'd prefer to be on an excursion completing a survey as part of the Atlas?

BAWA certainly has a range of conservation projects, excursions and surveys on the go, but might we be able to increase the activities and information on gardens and the birds within?

**vi) Skills offered by members**
It was wonderful to see such a range of skills on offer from our members (Figure 3). It is encouraging to know that there are at least one or two members that may be able to help out in almost any capacity required. By far the most popular skills identified were volunteer time, computer skills, and writing or editing. This is no surprise when we take a look at the projects, services and publications that BAWA produces. Several members were concerned that they couldn't give BAWA as much of their time as they'd like to.

**vii) Why join Birds Australia?**
96% of returned forms provided us with information as to why members first joined Birds Australia. I loosely grouped this information into ten categories and the results are shown in Figure 4. Most members joined Birds Australia because of their interest in birds or to increase their skills or knowledge of birds. On the whole I think Birds Australia provides some very impressive services for these members. It was suggested, however, that maybe we could improve our services to those people who are just beginning to dabble with their interest in birds (eg, via various workshops, educational presentations or excursions).

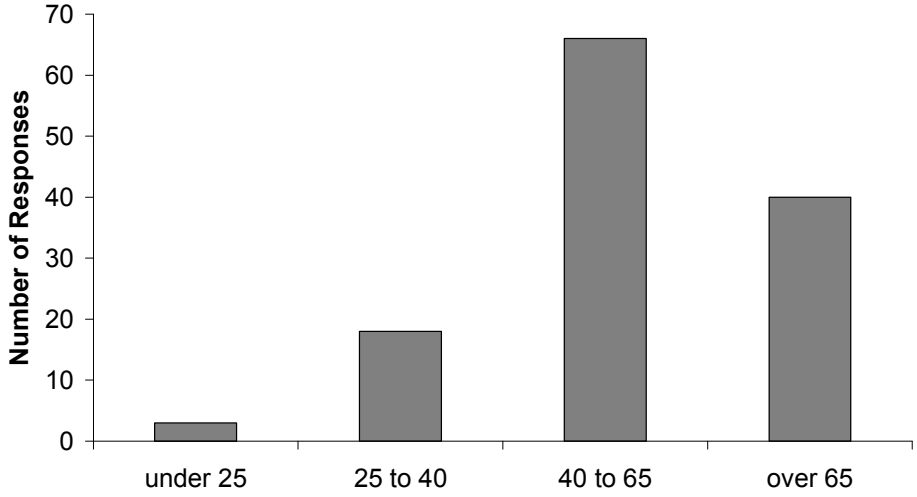



***Figure 1:*** **Age structure of BAWA membership.**

**viii) Suggestions or comments on Birds Australia and BAWA**

We received a large number of suggestions, comments and criticisms that will help the Committee manage BAWA. I have grouped these comments into related areas below. Forgive me if I have paraphrased your comments. Some of the more specific comments are not published here and I will pass them, anonymously to the relevant parties.

Atlas

Why don't Atlassers from an area meet up with each other?

The Atlas is a great project for motivating members.

Conservation

Birds Australia should enter the conservation debate more forcefully (eg, feral birds, bird feeding).

Conservation and research should be a priority.

It is important to increase membership to help Birds Australia speak with more 'clout'.

Birds Australia should work more on public education.

Efforts of BAWA Members

I am impressed by the degree of involvement and commitment of members, particularly the committee and leaders.

Keep up the good work. (4 responses)

Groups

A separate group for young people (12-18) should be set up with its own reduced subscription, organiser and leaders.

A local group in Busselton or Bunbury should be set up.

BAWA should secede from the Birds Australia.

Meetings and Excursions

General meetings start too late.

An e-mail reminder (including speaker, topic and date) sent 1-2 weeks ahead of the general meetings would be valued.

BAWA should hold a meeting at Naragebup Environmental Centre (Rockingham) at least once a year (and maybe combine that with an excursion?).

Those living in country areas are often unable to attend meetings and excursions. (2 responses)

Excursions could be varied to include activities other than listing birds (e.g. bird identification contests).

An introductory bird identification course would be valued.

How can people without a home computer keep in touch with excursion changes and unusual sightings?

We need more bird forums.

Office and Observatories

Location of facilities is important; hopefully a new location for the office will be convenient and appealing.

BAWA should work toward opening the office in the afternoons.

I am concerned about the financing and management of Broome and Eyre Bird Observatories.

*WABN* and *Wingspan*

Black and white photos in *WABN* are acceptable, but the quality (resolution) should be improved.

*WABN* articles should specify localities and regions.

Could a summary of the meeting talks be put into *WABN*?

*WABN* should not include matters of national ornithological importance (eg, Grey Heron).

*WABN* could be a medium for serious ornithology too; a lift out, library-quality journal included in *WABN* could benefit Western Australians.

Reports from local groups of bird watchers would be very informative and should be included in *WABN*.

I enjoy/love *WABN*. (6 responses)

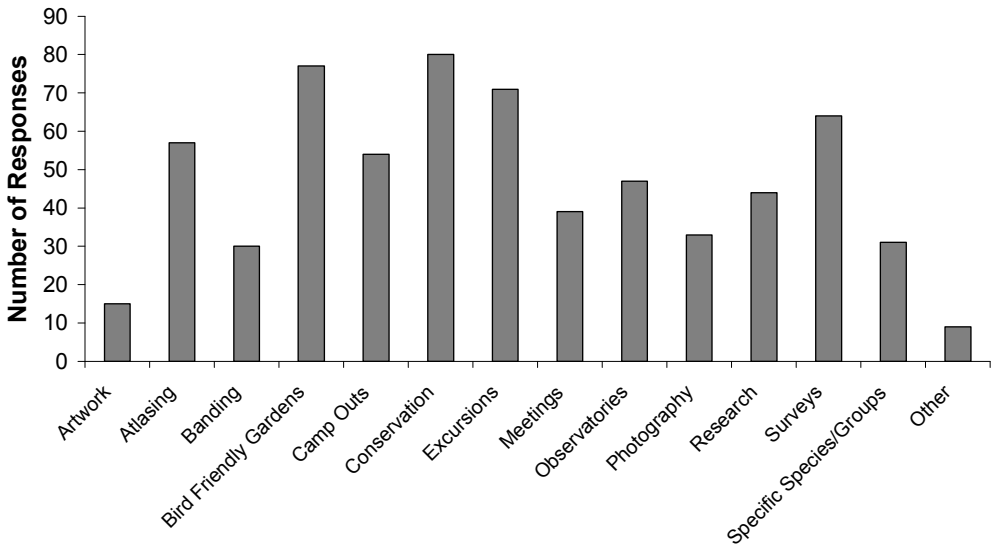



***Figure 2:*** **Bird-related interests of the BAWA membership.**

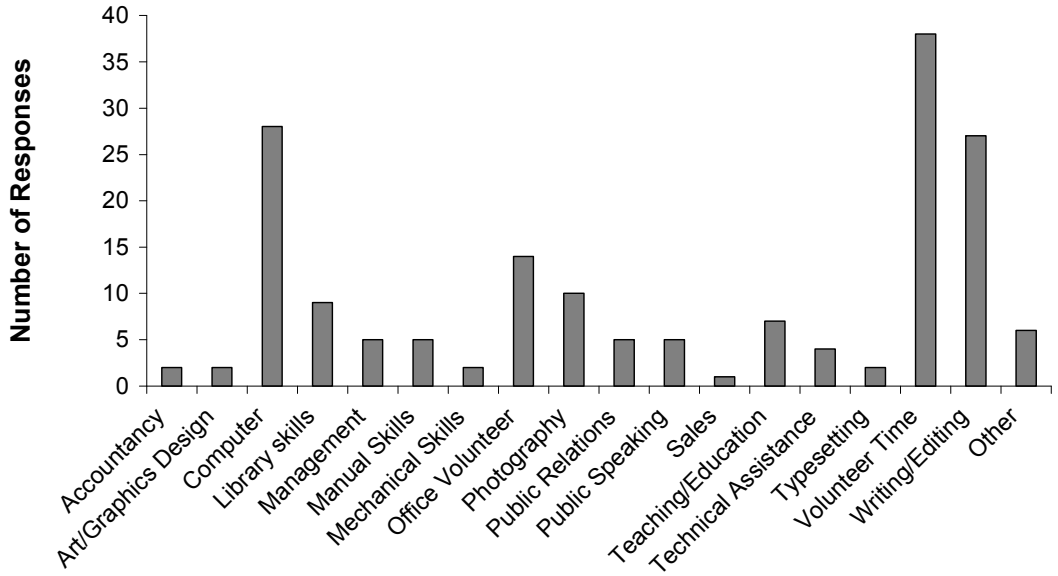



***Figure 3:*** **Skills offered by the BAWA membership.**

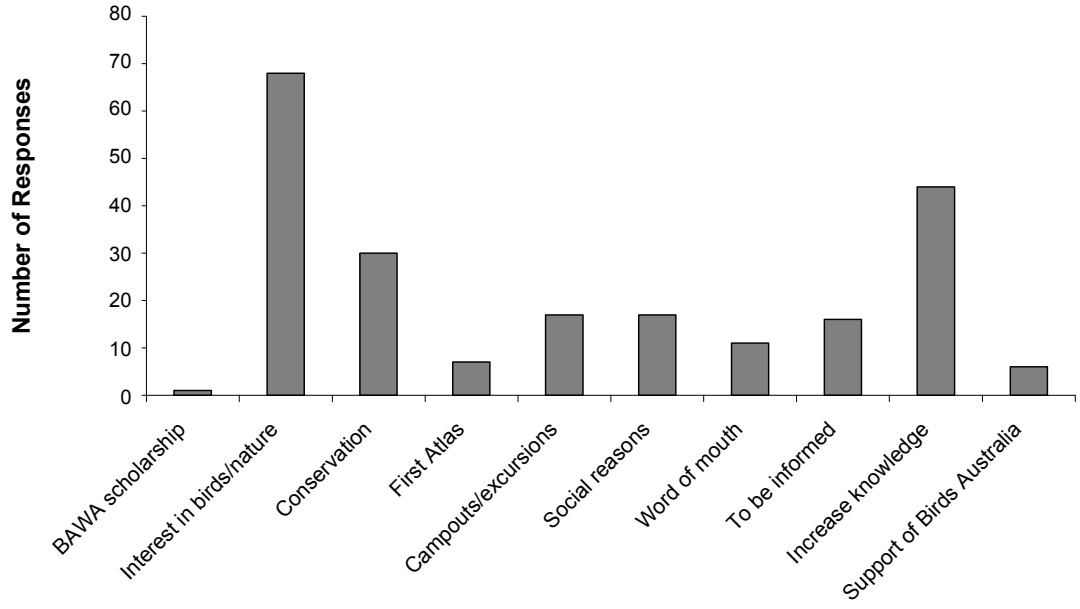



***Figure 4:*** **Reasons for joining Birds Australia.**

**Key**

| | |
|---|---|
| BAWA scholarship : | Because of a BAWA scholarship |
| Interest in birds/nature : | Because of an interest in birds or nature |
| Conservation : | Because of conservation or environmental concerns |
| First Atlas : | As a result of the first Atlas |
| Campouts/excursions : | For the campouts or excursions |
| Social reasons : | For social reasons or to join like-minded people |
| Word of mouth : | Through word of mouth or a referral from other organisations |
| To be informed : | To keep in touch, to be informed or to receive publications (*WABN*, *Wingspan*) |
| Increase knowledge : | To learn, or to increase knowledge or skills |
| Support of Birds Australia : | To support the actions of Birds Australia |

I like the readers' observations about birds in *WABN*.

*WABN* is a mine of information.

*Wingspan* should include a quiz-photo as a segment of interest and to sharpen readers' skills.

**Where to now?**
As of writing this for *WABN* I have yet to present the data to the BAWA Committee. We will discuss the results and potential follow-up actions at a committee meeting soon. The response was far in excess of what I had hoped for; a credit to you, the members. The Committee greatly appreciates the information provided by members as it will assist in decision making, directing efforts and will help us plan for, and shape, BAWA's future.

**Feedback**
If you have read something in this article that stimulates your interest or provokes your comments, then please follow it through. I would love to hear further ideas or suggestions. I can be contacted via e-mail, wes@cyllene.uwa.edu.au, telephone, 9380 1494 (work hours), or you can write to me: Membership Survey, c/o Wes Bancroft, BAWA, 71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat WA 6014.

## *PERTH BIRDWATCH*—A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!

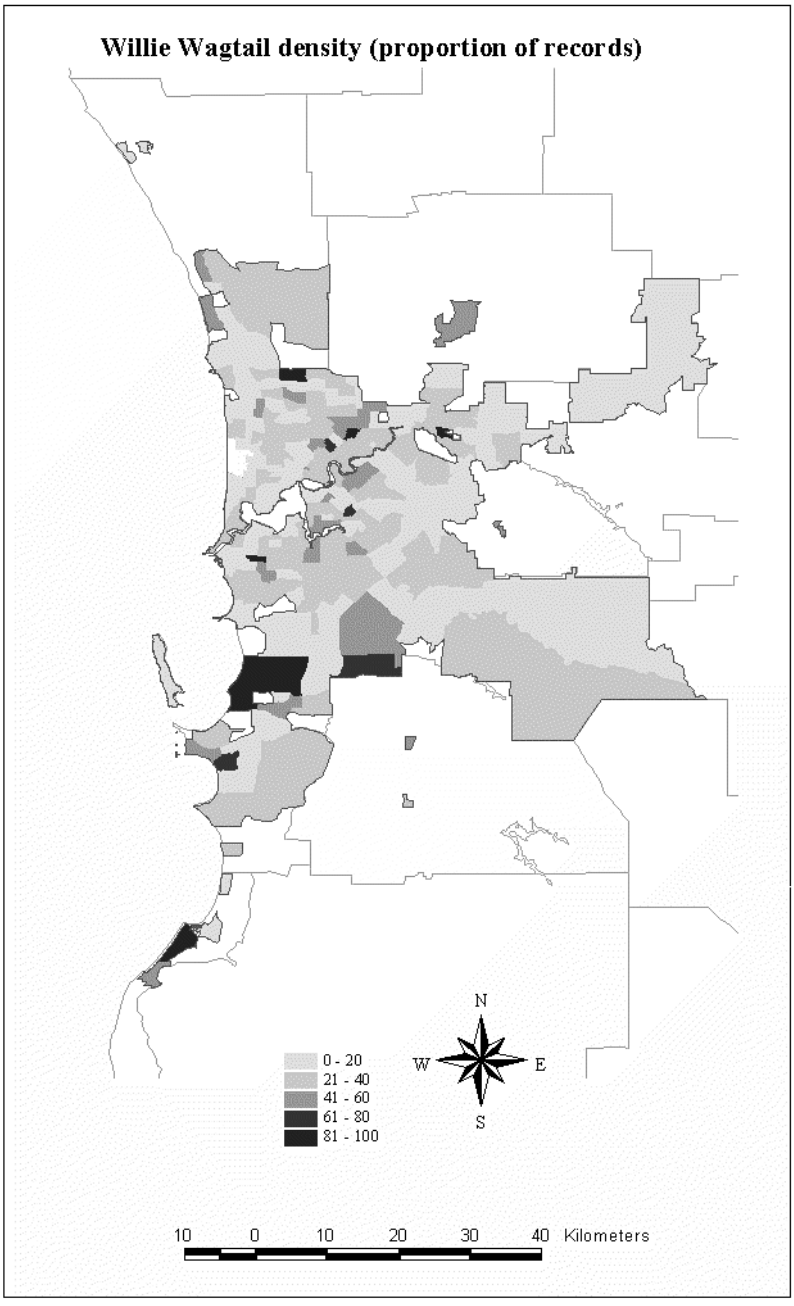
The inaugural Perth Birdwatch that was run during National Bird Week (20–27 October 2002) was an overwhelming success. The project, a BAWA initiative, asked for Perth residents to report sightings of three common species of suburban birds during bird week: Willie Wagtail, Australian Ringneck and Rainbow Lorikeet. The aim of the exercise was to produce distribution and abundance maps of these species.

The three species were chosen because they are familiar to many people who are not necessarily bird fanatics, and because each has a story to tell about Perth. Many long-term residents consider that the Willie Wagtail disappeared during the 1960s and has been increasing in abundance over the last few years. There has been some suggestion that the Australian Ringneck is becoming less common in Perth's inner suburbs, possibly due to tree felling or competition with other species. In contrast, the Rainbow Lorikeet is introduced, aggressive, competes with native species for nest hollows, and has been rapidly spreading across Perth over the last 20 years.

We didn't really know what response to expect from the Perth public, so our preparations were conservative. We should have had a little more faith. An article by Keith McDonald in the *Eureka* section of *The West Australian* on the Monday of bird week, and notices through several other Perth media, prompted some 3200 reports from in excess of 1500 people from 262 suburbs around Perth!

The BAWA telephone line rang hot (for the first three days the maximum time between calls was 7 seconds!), the 'hit counter' on the website broke, e-mails flooded in and we were totally overwhelmed. We had such a huge response that Keith McDonald kindly ran a second article on the following Monday, explaining to Perth birdwatchers that we had extended the reporting period into the following week to cope with the response.

The survey results were collated and the final maps are now available to view on the BAWA website (http://www.birdswa.iinet.net.au/birdwatch/index.htm). They were also published in The West on Monday 18



November and will be made available to other Perth media. We mapped the distribution and abundance of each species on a suburb by suburb basis in two ways: average number of birds seen per record, and the proportion of records from that suburb in which the species was counted. We also mapped the response rate (total number of records) of each suburb. There's even an interactive map, where you can single out the results from your own suburb.

Just as a bit of tease, I have included the distribution and abundance map of the Willie Wagtail (proportion of records) with this article. Of the 1500 or so participants in Perth Birdwatch, almost none were members of Birds Australia, most were not aware of Birds Australia's existence or its function, and almost 500 people requested further information on our organisation. We well and truly exceeded the survey aims of Perth Birdwatch and we also promoted our organisation and its work to the community on a pretty impressive scale (for the first attempt).

Perth Birdwatch was completely co-ordinated and run by volunteers and it simply would not have happened without a lot of time and effort of many people. In particular I'd like to thank the BAWA Office Volunteers for tending the constantly ringing telephone, Mike Bamford (BAWA Chairman) for his help in co-ordinating the project, Jim Downey (BA CEO) for his support, Frank O'Connor (BAWA) for entering all the data, Steve Connell (OzGIS) for producing the maps, and Keith McDonald (*The West Australian*) for writing about the project.

So where to from here? An event that received as much support as this should strongly be considered as an annual project. It will be VERY interesting to repeat the exercise on these same three species in the future, and compare those results to the 2002 Perth Birdwatch data. There's already talk of Perth Birdwatch 2003—the dates, the species, the plan… Working with birds, the sky's the limit!

If anyone would like further information, please don't hesitate to contact me at wes@cyllene.uwa.edu.au, or on 9380 1493 (wk).

**Wes Bancroft**

### THANK YOU TO HEALTHWAY

This is the fourth year that Healthway has assisted us with our community program. This assistance has enabled the provision of support and advice to country centres, schools, conservation groups and organisations and participation in field and open days. Monthly mid-week Community Walks, sponsored by Healthway have continued this year at a variety of habitats and have been well attended.

Another project, assisted by this funding, has been the cataloguing, in taxonomic order, of hundreds of bird prints used for the preparation of displays and school projects.

Our Community Liaison Officer, Brice Wells has co-ordinated this, carrying on the good work of his predecessors. Brice is already planning for next year. If you would like to join the merry band of his volunteers then let Brice know.

Birds Australia WA Inc would like to thank Healthway and acknowledge their continued support.

**Allan Jones**

## Members' Contributions

### RAINBOW LORIKEET CENSUS RESULTS

The Rainbow Lorikeet has increasingly become an important species in the avifauna of the Perth metropolitan region. With every passing year their numbers and extent of habitat use has grown, as has the level of awareness of the need to act on the threat they pose to our local species and the potential threat to agriculture.

As yet the Rainbow Lorikeet has not been shown to reach any of the agricultural regions in the lower South West or take advantage of suburban stone fruits for that matter. I have, however, received some reports of their presence in the Karragullen region in previous years but this could not be confirmed. A Boyup Brook Agriculture Western Australia (AGWA) officer reported a small feral population in the town of Boyup Brook in 2000 but this was a result of local aviary escapees and all birds, except one shot, have subsequently been returned to captivity. (Dean Wainwright, AGWA Boyup Brook, per M. Massam, AGWA).

It is not something that has gone unnoticed by the Agricultural Protection Board (APB), which has recognised them as a potential threat to agriculture and consequently on 9 May 2001 the species was declared a pest under the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976. It was assigned to category A2 in areas south of $20^0$ latitude and outside the Perth metropolitan area, meaning they must be eradicated or reduced in number.

Several studies have been conducted on this contentious species in Perth, the most notable being that of David Lamont who studied the changing status of the lorikeet in South Western Australia for his Masters Thesis. Subsequently, in a *Landscope* article Lamont and Burbidge (1996) reported on detailed observations and a public

survey to obtain further information on the behaviour, distribution and diet of the lorikeet in Perth. Using this and other information I conducted a study analysing whether their range had expanded and I also examined the abundance of the lorikeet's favoured food resources. Since this time I considered it worthwhile to conduct a census to compare the numbers of lorikeets now with the estimates provided in Lamont and Burbidge (1996).

Whilst the timing and prior notice for this census was not ideal a good response was received to the call for observers and counts were conducted at several known roosting sites around the metropolitan area. The results returned were greater than expected for some sites but much lower for other sites; ironically, the site I surveyed provided very poor results despite repeated surveys. The greatest numbers of birds were observed at the Cottesloe site (1375), and the least at Armadale (6) (Table 1). At the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Wanneroo shopping centre sites it appears the birds left upon sunset. It is possible that the former group may have moved to the Cottesloe site but one can't say with any degree of certainty. As the Domestic Airport and Carine shopping centre sites were only observed until ca. 5:40 pm it is possible that these birds may have also moved on at sunset. This would be worthy of further investigation.

The total number of lorikeets observed was around half that of the year 2000 estimate provided by Lamont and Burbidge (1996).

| Site | Nos observed |
|---|---|
| Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital + | 98 |
| Wanneroo shopping centre + | 60 |
| Carine shopping centre * | 80 |
| Cottesloe (Marine Parade) | 1375 |
| Perth Domestic Airport | 350-400 |
| West Armadale shopping centre | 6 |
| Total | 1969-2019 |

**Table 1. Numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets observed at various sites around Perth.**
+ these birds flew off at sunset
* birds may have also left at sunset.

It is also worth mentioning that at the time of the census some lorikeets were seen investigating hollows, and this may have influenced the number of birds roosting communally. In addition at least two other sites have come to my attention as being worthy of further study—these are the Perth Zoo and the Murdoch University campus. It is for these reasons that I propose another census be conducted in early to mid autumn when more observers could be organised at a greater number of sites and at a time of year when breeding is unlikely. With improved data the numbers may approach the aforementioned estimates.

Please let me know if you would like to participate—any interested parties can reach me on edwards_karl@hotmail.com or by phone on 9358 1071.

Finally I would be amiss not to acknowledge the time and effort so selflessly donated to this census. I thank you all for your generosity and please know that without you this work would not have been possible. Participants included Claire Stevenson, Allan Burbidge, Jon Elliott, Paul Baker and Carla Hudson, Rod Smith and Joyce Hegney.

Reference

Lamont, D and Burbidge, A. H. (1996) Rainbow Lorikeets. *Landscope* 12 (1): 17-21.

**Karl Edwards**

## LITTLE CORELLA IN CENTRAL WHEATBELT

On 10 September, while doing bird surveys in the Konongorring district, I saw a pair of Little Corellas in a degraded Salmon and York Gum woodland remnant near the Mortlock River. There appeared to be only a single pair among numbers of Western Corellas. Although I have been undertaking surveys in many similar remnants, I have only recorded Little Corellas in this single location.

The Little Corellas were distinguished from Western Corellas by their smaller size, shorter top mandible length, smaller reddish patch over the lores, not extending behind the eye, shorter crests, and the lack of red underfeathers. Few occasions in birdwatching are so fortuitous but, while watching them, a Western Corella and a group of Galahs perched nearby in the same dead tree, allowing for an easy comparison of identification features and size. Interestingly, the Little Corellas perched quietly in the tree while all nearby Western Corellas screeched constantly. Might this suggest that the Westerns were breeding, while the Little Corellas were not?

The Little Corella is known from northern WA, the Murchison and the northern wheatbelt, occurring about as far south as the Shires of Three Springs and Carnamah, and from an increasing Perth metropolitan population established from aviary escapees or releases. This central wheatbelt record suggests either that the birds were local aviary escapees or releases, or that they represent a southern or northern shift in the confirmed limits of the species. The Western Corella is common throughout the central wheatbelt but there have been few confirmed records of Little Corellas from this area. In the Great Southern, Ron Johnstone from the WA Museum has reported a flock of Little Corellas in the Wickepin district, presumably established from aviary escapees.

Records of Little Corellas from other areas of the central wheatbelt would be of interest, and may be submitted to the Observations Committee for *Western Australian Bird Notes*.

**Cheryl Gole**

## WARRAKATTA IN DROUGHT

The area about Dalwallinu and northwards has been badly affected by poor rainfall this year. Warrakatta has had less than half its normal rain, receiving only about 145 mm and farm crop was not only less than half the size of that in more favoured areas to the south, but clearly dying. Further east where rainfall has been even less it was astonishing to see large farm paddocks without even a weed, let alone a blade of grass.

The 1000 hectares of bush at Warrakatta had few flowers and understory was scant, while the acacia/mulga appeared less dense owing to growth being principally on the tops of the bushes, with side growth being sparse.

Anne and I spent six days, 16-21 September at Warrakatta. In 2000 we also spent six days there, although in early August and early September (*WABN* No 96). In 2000 we observed 63 species but in 2002 we only found 48. Three 'new' species were seen: Emu (not seen in the area for some years), Cockatiel and Hooded Robin. The presence of the first two of these (and possibly the third) can be attributed to the dry conditions.

Emus at beach, Eyre
*Photo courtesy Bea Myers & Ian Tarbin*

Other differences to the year 2000 were the presence of Galahs in much greater numbers (flocks of over 200), many more White-winged Trillers, usually in groups 9-10 strong, large numbers of Red-capped Robins, which seemed to have enjoyed a better than usual breeding season and a greatly reduced presence of honeyeaters and cuckoos. Additionally those species usually seen in groups, Chestnut and Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Weebill, Splendid Fairy-wren and Southern Whiteface, were all in much reduced numbers (two or three only), a feature particularly striking with the Splendid Fairy-wrens. Nine raptor species were seen in 2000, but only four in 2002. (Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon—both several times and Australian Hobby and Nankeen Kestrel, both once only.)

A behaviour we had not previously observed may have derived from the shortage of aerial insects. Yellow-throated Miners repeatedly pursued Black-faced Woodswallows that perched on electricity cables near a tree favoured by the Yellow-throated Miners. When a disturbed woodswallow flew to settle again on the electricity cable further away, a miner flew from its group to attack again until the woodswallows were driven some 50 m from their original perch.

**Bruce Buchanan**

## ARID ZONE HONEYEATERS IN CENTRAL WHEATBELT

In spring 2002, while undertaking bird surveys in the central wheatbelt, two species of arid zone honeyeaters were seen at a number of locations.

On 13 September, a single Pied Honeyeater female was flushed from flowering Granite Kunzea *Kunzea pulchella* on a small granite outcrop remnant off Gabby Quoi Quoi Road approximately 20 km SSE of Wongan Hills. On 30 September, a second single female Pied Honeyeater was seen feeding on flowering Wax Grevillea *Grevillea insignis* on a grazed ridgeline remnant on Baljaling North Road, approximately 20 km north of Quairading. At least two males were observed feeding from Flame Grevillea *Grevillea eriostachya* in sandplain habitat in an unnamed nature reserve on Thornett Road, approximately 16 km SW of Dowerin.

At a similar ridgeline remnant between Clulows and Jacobs Wells Roads, approximately 18 km WSW of Quairading, two male Black Honeyeaters were observed feeding on the flowers of *G. insignis*. At the Baljaling North Road site north of Quairading, two male Black Honeyeaters were also seen feeding on flowering *G. insignis*, in company with the Pied, Brown-headed, Brown, White-eared and Singing Honeyeaters and Yellow-throated Miners. Some of these honeyeaters—namely Singing and Brown-headed Honeyeaters and Yellow-throated Miners—are largely insectivorous and are only occasionally observed feeding at flowers.

At some of these locations, the Pied Honeyeater appears to be at its south-west range limit, or slightly south of it. The Black Honeyeater is known to occasionally occur further south. Both species may be moving further south in response to the relatively dry conditions in inland WA in 2002. In 1999, records submitted to the *New Atlas of Australian Birds* showed that both Black and Pied Honeyeaters moved further south, perhaps in response to particularly wet conditions, so it would appear that their movements may correspond with varying climatic conditions. However it is also possible that seasonal movements of small numbers of these arid zone honeyeaters may occur more regularly, as bushland remnants in the central wheatbelt are seldom or irregularly surveyed for birds.

**Cheryl Gole**

## LEAF-GLEANING BEHAVIOUR IN RAINBOW LORIKEETS

On 22 September 2002, in Cadogan Reserve in the Perth metropolitan suburb of Kingsley, I observed two Rainbow Lorikeets leaf gleaning from eucalypt leaves.

The birds spent some time working their bills on the surface of leaves, and I assumed they were feeding off the surface. I had not noticed this behaviour before but, according to the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds,* Volume 4, there is a published record from 1955 of the species feeding on psyllids. Psyllids and lerps often infest the surfaces of leaves and are often the target of leaf-gleaning species of birds, including pardalotes.

**Cheryl Gole**

## WHITE-WINGED TRILLERS

We regularly survey a site along Yarra Road in the Shire of Beverley. On Sunday 22 September we observed the first White-winged Trillers for the season. They were a flock of four males.

The following Sunday (29 September) we saw a flock of 12 males. Not all had attained full breeding plumage. The following Sunday (6 October) we saw a flock of six females, and on Thursday 10 October we saw a flock of eight females. There were very few males remaining in the area during these last two surveys, and we recorded no White-winged Trillers during the next three weeks.

**John Darnell**

## NEW SPECIES FOR PELICAN POINT

When one has been visiting the same fairly small reserve for well over 30 years it becomes increasingly difficult to see a new species, but it can still occur.

On 12 November after three of us had just completed our weekly early evening circumnavigation of Pelican Point, in extremely strong windy conditions, a Black-faced Woodswallow was seen on the telegraph wires just above our heads. It changed position several times so we had good views over several minutes. It finally flew and disappeared into the reserve. This brings the number of bird species recorded at the reserve to 92.

The reserve has changed considerably since my first visits, from just an open space of sand and shells to an area fenced in 1976, with bushes and grass to the high water mark. Sadly the waders that were the reason for it being made a reserve have virtually disappeared, and bushbirds are increasingly being recorded.

The latest changes being made by CALM are a purge of non-native plant species, which means the removal of large straggly and dense tea-trees which are the habitat of the Variegated Fairy-wrens and plantings of something considered more appropriate. This raises the very interesting question of whether later generations of professionals at CALM, dominated seemingly by botanists, can ignore the principles and reasons for creating the reserve out of an open sandy promontory known for its large numbers and variety of wading birds, and converted into an area of bush.

**Max Bailey**

## AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE—BLACK-BACKED AT MARMION, 3 NOVEMBER

From my office window I saw, across the road in a pine tree, an unusual bird. This black bird, with a white beak, white nape and white rump, had a magpie appearance. Returning with binoculars to the front lawn, I observed it as it faced into a strong south-west breeze at 1800 hours, with the sun from a north-west direction.

Back in the office, still observing, I checked out *The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* (G. Pizzey and F. Knight, page 462) to confirm the bird was a Black-backed Magpie. In *Birds of Western Australia* (D.L. Serventy and H.M. Whittell, page 364) it is stated that the bird occurs 'as far south as Onslow. The exact range is not certainly known …'

**Michael J Hancock**

## WILD DUCKS BREED IN AN ARTIFICIAL SWAMP

### Introduction

The Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary is an artificial but now permanent swamp that was created over a temporary winter swamp on the flood-plain of the Swan River at Bayswater in 1976.

The history and features of the sanctuary were described by Singleton *et al*. (1998) but it is worthwhile repeating that the remnant flora is Flooded Gum *Eucalyptus rudis*, Swamp Paperbark *Melaleuca raphiophylla*, Common Wattle *Acacia saligna* and Lake Club-rush *Schoenoplectus validus*. The bulrush is the introduced *Typha orientalis* (M. Robson in O'Brien 1991) and the Swamp Couch *Paspalum distichum* grows there in abundance.

### Common Breeding Species

Wild ducks regularly bred there from 1977 and continue to do so, especially the Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck and to a lesser extent the Blue-billed Duck. These four species utilise the nesting drums erected in the sanctuary and use them 63% of the time, favouring them instead of natural nesting places (Stranger 1998 and Table 1). This could mean that there are insufficient places for natural nests, and this in turn means that the swamp can support more ducks than can breed there in natural nests.

| | Type of Nest | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Natural | | Drum | |
| Species | No | % | No | % |
| Pacific Black Duck | 22 | 38 | 36 | 62 |
| Grey Teal | 29 | 57 | 22 | 43 |
| Pink-eared Duck | 6 | 13 | 41 | 87 |
| Blue-billed Duck | 6 | 50 | 6 | 50 |
| Total | 63 | 37 | 105 | 63 |

**Table 1. Nesting of four species of duck at the Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary, 1977-1988 (from Stranger 1998).**

The breeding times of these ducks within the sanctuary fall within the breeding times reported by Halse and Jaensch (1989) and Johnstone and Storr (1998). Despite the ability of these four ducks to breed independently of seasons (Serventy and Whittell 1976; Frith 1977; Cayley 1990 and Storr 1991), they prefer to breed during late winter and spring, as do many other species of native birds in the winter rainfall belt of southern WA (Serventy and Whittell 1976). Serventy and Whittell also list the Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal and Blue-billed Duck as species that can exhibit a breeding response to adequate rainfall. The breeding times of the four also compare favourably with Frith (1977, 1982) and Cayley (1990) for southern Australia generally. However, the Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal have very short breeding seasons locally (Figures 1 and 2) and favour August for completing their clutches. The Pink-eared Duck also favours August but has a more protracted season (Figure 3). Our data for the Blue-billed Duck are scanty but suggest October as its peak of breeding (Figure 4), though Beckle (1983) cited a brood in March of 1982, and we have records in April and May of 1987. Captive birds may breed opportunistically and continuously (Marchant and Higgins 1990).

The water level in the swamp peaks by mid-winter, a rise of 0.5 metres from the summer level, and is then constant until the next summer. Thus the birds may be induced to breed by the rising water level (Frith 1982) but it is probable that other regular factors are involved too. One is that the water level determines the availability of food, which in turn induces breeding (Marchant and Higgins 1990). Both Serventy and Whittell (1976) and Halse and Jaensch (1989) consider that rainfall is the main factor that determines the time of breeding locally, and the latter state that temperature and photo-period cycles are not involved.

The clutch sizes of the four ducks have been compared to those cited in the references above. Clutch sizes at the sanctuary are similar to those reported from elsewhere, falling within the extremes of Frith (1982) and Storr (1991) (Tables 2 and 3). The vast majority of the eggs laid are successfully hatched, the hatchability ranging up to 100% in both the natural nests and the nesting drums, but there was some usurpation in the drums.

**Nesting of Other Species**

Other species of ducks that have nested in the sanctuary, but only in natural nests, are as follows:

Australasian Shoveler – October 1979, its only nesting.
Hardhead – September and October 1979, September 1980 and September 1989.
Australian Shelduck – October and November 1983, June 1984 and July 1989.
Australian Wood Duck – October 1987, its only breeding.
Black Swan – bred twice only.

**Mortality of the Ducklings**

The successful nesting in the sanctuary however is tempered by the mortality of the ducklings. Some broods were reared to the 'flapper' stage, at about six weeks of age, but the mortality rate seemed to be quite high, many of the ducklings simply disappearing. Perhaps there is not enough food for them but Swamp Couch can be grazed at all times and forms part of the diet of both the Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal (Frith 1982). Furthermore, M. Robson (in O'Brien 1991) collected and identified 28 species of invertebrates, comprising Gastropoda, Annelida, Ostracoda, Copepods, Arachnida, Isopoda, Cladocera, Odonata, Hemiptera, Diptera, Trichoptera, Coleoptera, Dysticidae and Hydrophilidae.

Or, perhaps, the mortality is due to predation by the Western Long-necked Turtle *Chelodina oblonga*, which can drown a Eurasian Coot (Ford 1955) and will attack and kill Rock Doves while they are drinking (Serventy 1960). The Purple Swamphen, of which there are some 25-30 birds in the sanctuary, is also known to kill ducklings (Blakers *et al*. 1984; Johnstone and Storr 1998). A male Musk Duck was seen to kill and discard two Grey Teal

| Species | | Breeding Season | | No. Nests at Particular Clutch Sizes | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| Pacific Black Duck | Eggs | June | Oct | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| | Brood | | | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Grey Teal | Eggs | July | Nov | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Brood | | | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Pink-eared Duck | Eggs | July | Jan | 0 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Blue-billed Duck | Eggs | Aug | Mar | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

**Table 2. Variation in clutch and brood size in four duck species at the Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary.**

| | | Eric Singleton | | Published Clutches | | Ranges Other Sources # |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Species** | **Eggs/Brood** | **Range** | **Mean + SD** | **Range *** | **Mean + SD** | |
| Pacific Black Duck | Eggs | 6-11 | 9.0±1.3 | 1) 3-14 | 8.4±2.0 | 5-15 |
| | | | | 2) 5-15 | 9.0±2.0 | |
| | Broods | 5-9 | 7.3±1.3 | | | |
| Grey Teal | Eggs | 6-13 | 8.0±1.7 | 1) 4-17 | 8.9±2.6 | 4-15 |
| | | | | 2) 5-15 | 8.4±2.2 | |
| | Broods | 3-13 | 7.2±2.5 | | | |
| Pink-eared Duck | Eggs | 4-10 | 7.0±1.4 | 1) 3-11 | 6.9±1.4 | 3-9 |
| | | | | 2) 3-9 | 6.5±1.6 | |
| Blue-billed Duck | Eggs | 4-12 | 7.5±3.2 | 1) 3-12 | - | 3-10 |
| | | | | 2) 3-10 | 7.0±1.8 | |

**Table 3. Comparison of clutch and brood size in four duck species at the Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary with data from elsewhere.**

* 1) = Frith(1982). Mean + SD calculated by us.
2) = Storr (1991). Mean + SD calculated by us

\# Other Sources: Serventy and Whittell (1976), Frith (1977), Pizzey (1984), Slater *et al*. (1989), Caley (1990).

ducklings in the sanctuary, another was seen to kill and eat a Pacific Black Duck duckling (Turpin and Dell 1991), and the Musk Duck is also known to have killed and eaten a Pink-eared Duck duckling, broken the neck of a cygnet and drowned an adult Australasian Grebe. Another possible predator is the Water Rat *Hydromys chrysogaster* and Marchant and Higgins (1990) cite it as doing much damage. Diurnal birds of prey (Falconiformes) have also been seen to take ducklings from the sanctuary. On the other hand, Marchant and Higgins (1990) cite disease rather than predation as causing mortality in captive birds.

**Conclusion**

The Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary is an artificial swamp that attracts many species of wild duck to breed there. Nesting drums suitable for wild ducks have been erected in the sanctuary and the Black Duck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck and Blue-billed Duck breed in them 63% of the time. These four species are each capable of opportunistic breeding, and can do so independent of season, but by and large do not do so. Their breeding times in the sanctuary conform with those recorded elsewhere in south-western and south-eastern Australia.

The clutch sizes of the four species are comparable to those for the same species from elsewhere in Australia.

The conditions in this artificial swamp and bird sanctuary apparently are not limiting or restricting the nesting, egg-laying or brooding of the four species, and they extensively use the nesting drums. However, the progeny seem to suffer high mortality, which may be due to insufficient food and or a high degree of predation.

**Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to the City of Bayswater for creating the sanctuary and maintaining it, and for making this study possible. We are also grateful to Dr Stephen Davies for valuable comment and advice and Dr Allan Burbidge for editing a difficult script.

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**Eric Singleton, Peter Singleton, Robert Stranger**

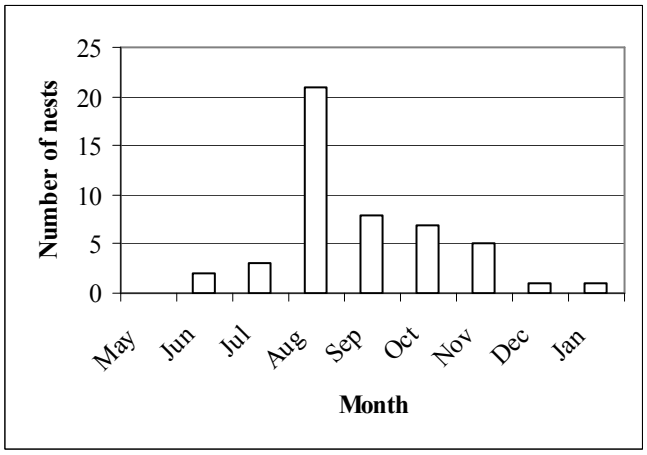



**Figure 3: Breeding season of the Pink-eared Duck at Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary, 1977-1988. Natural and artificial nest sites combined.**

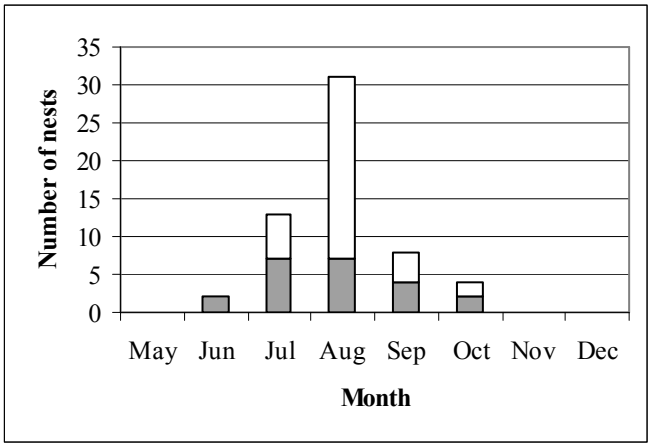



**Figure 1: Breeding season of the Pacific Black Duck at Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary, 1977-1988. Solid parts of bas represent natural nest sites and open parts represent nests in drums.**

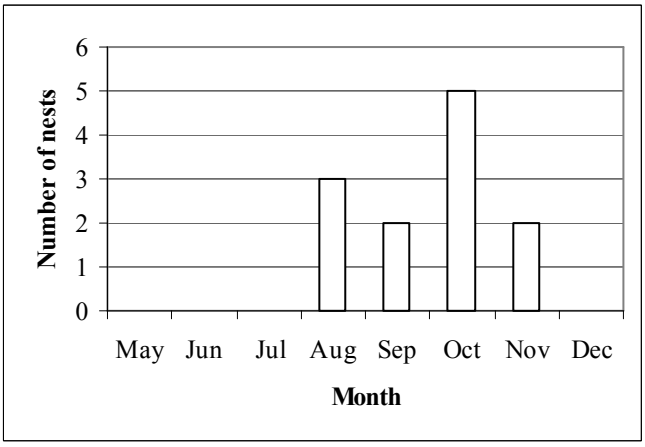



**Figure 4: Breeding season of the Blue-billed Duck at Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary, 1977-1988. Natural and artificial nest sites combined.**

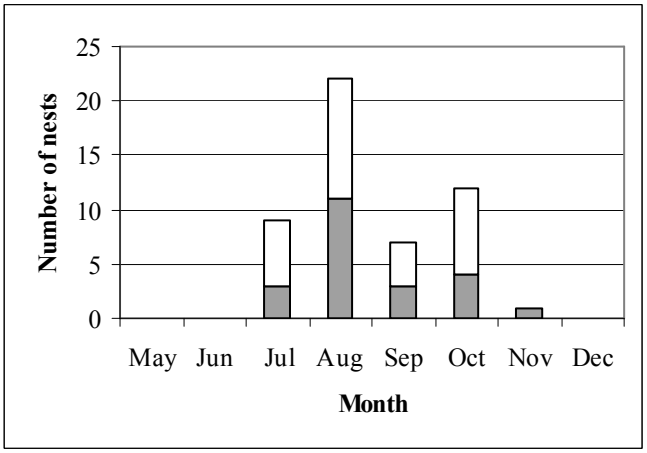



**Figure 2: Breeding season of the Grey Teal at Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary, 1977-1988. Solid parts of bas represent natural nest sites and open parts represent nests in drums.**

BIRD TALK from Penny Towells
*Duck, it's birdwatchers!*

## PALLID CUCKOOS ARRIVE LATE

It has been hard to sleep in our house at Joondanna for the last few weeks. The reason is that a pair of Pallid Cuckoos arrived on their southerly migration in mid-September and took up residence close by.

The male arrived first and gave his shrill, trilling call day and night for a whole week, until a female turned up. Her hoarse, emphatic 'meer' call now punctuates the not quite so persistent calling of the male. 'Scale-bird' is a very appropriate name.

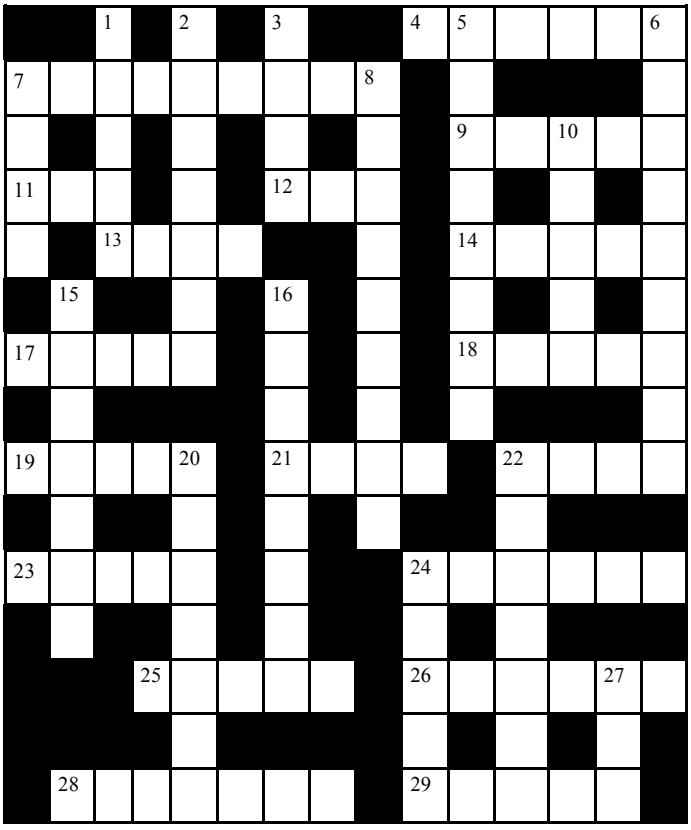
We were lucky enough to see both birds through binoculars as they perched on the electricity wires. The female appears to be slightly larger than the male and is a darker buff colour. Both have magnificent long barred tails. At a distance they are surprisingly difficult to distinguish from turtle-doves; useful camouflage, perhaps, for parasitising nests. We are now so enchanted by the cuckoos, in spite of the noise they make in the wee hours of the morning, that it will be sad when they leave.

**Barbara Reif**

BIRD TALK from Penny Towells
*Well, I've always had a sweet tooth!*

# Crossword No 31

by Pam Agar



### CLUES ACROSS

4. Leg parts
7. Sum of what is known
9. Often seen moving from branch to ground and back
11. Nocturnal bird of prey
12. To consume
13. Wader sightings may be better if it's low
14. Common to all birds
17. Common haunt of little cormorants
18. Generic name of a group of herons and egrets
19. Tactic for hiding eggs, used by grebes
21. Work to be done
22. Soil preference of a Magpie-lark rather than a Rainbow Bee-eater
23. Underdeveloped sense in birds
24. To spend a whole day in a hide may be to … it
25. Attribute of Emu eggs
26. Not applicable to bush-camping birdos
28. Agitate
29. Part of scientific name of hawk-owls

### CLUES DOWN

1. Shedding of feathers
2. Bill form of godwits and snipe
3. Boundary
5. Dark-coloured duck
6. May be critical for survival of a species
7. Migratory wader
8. Set up on a permanent basis
10. Skill with binoculars may be more important than this
15. Active during the day
16. Singing together
20. Parrot of woodlands
22. V-shaped mark
24. Records are more valuable if collected ….
27. Modern method of communication

# Notices

## Call for Nominations for Committee, AGM 2003

**Would you like to help BAWA by nominating for a role on the Committee?**

**If so, please send in your nomination to the Secretary, Liz Walker, prior to 17 February if possible, or else nominate at the AGM. All positions will be declared vacant.**

**CHANGE OF MEETING TIME**

**Please note that as from March 2003, our general meetings will commence at 7:30 pm and not 8:00 pm.**

### PURCHASE OF LAND FOR A CONSERVATION RESERVE

The Friends of the Porongurup Range have been given the opportunity to purchase over 500 ha of land, of which 75% is still remnant bush, for the purpose of establishing a community-run conservation reserve. This reserve will become part of the protected area estate in WA and the national reserve system.

Although we are applying for funding from the National Heritage Trust for the majority, we will still need to raise around $100 000.

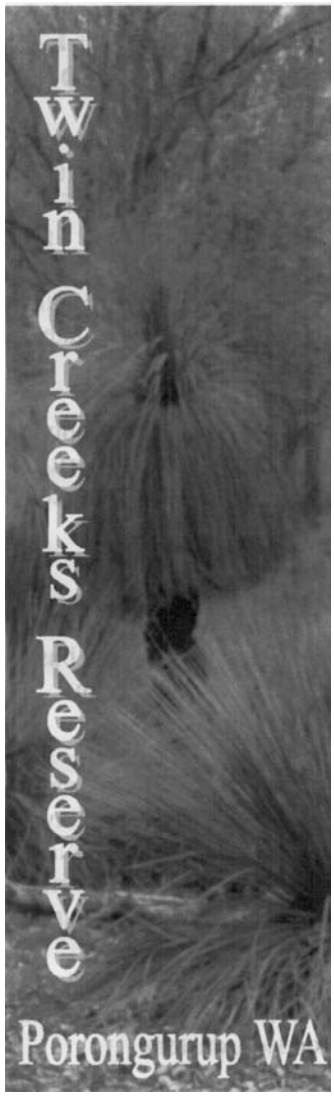
This parcel of land is extremely valuable in the conservation stakes, as it is an important link in the bush corridor chain being planned around the Porongurup National Park.

Not only is it important for this bush corridor, it also has many vegetation types not represented in the national park or the surrounding region, some of which are at the extreme edge of their range.

The soils on the property vary from granite to laterite, white sand, sandstone, clay and flooded ironstone.

Preliminary surveys of the property indicate the presence of over 500 species of flora, 60+ birds and many other species of fauna including the western brush wallaby. Two rare and six priority flora species have so far been discovered, with a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) registered on the flooded ironstone plain.

There are also some fantastic views to the Porongurup Range in the south and the Stirling Range to the north, as the property lies along the boundary between these two vastly different mountain ranges.




It is extremely rare to find such a large area of uncleared bush still in private hands in this busy farming area. The Friends are therefore asking for your help to protect it so that wildlife and flora enthusiasts and other visitors will be able to enjoy its diversity in all the years to come.

As we are still in the process of registering a public fund for the purpose as a tax deductible gift recipient, we are at this stage only asking for a pledge, to be honoured in the 2002-03 financial year. If you can help or wish for more information, please contact us:

Mail: Treasurer
Friends of the Porongurup Range Inc
c/- RMB 1292, Porongurup WA 6324

Email: <burchell@wn.com.au>

### NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between 1 August and 31 October 2002. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

Note: Information not available at time of printing —to be included in the March 2003 *WABN*.

# Country Groups

## ALBANY GROUP

**August outing, Porongurups**
On 13 August, a lovely, sunny day, 13 of us met Ann Burchell at the Porongorups Tearooms.

Ann is the President of the Friends of the Porongurup Range and she took us to the proposed Twin Creeks Conservation Reserve, a very diverse area no longer farmed and which her group hopes to purchase.

We had a long and very rewarding walk in the morning, and saw 48 different species of birds, including three different cuckoos—Horsfield's, Fan-tailed and Pallid. We also saw a Yellow-rumped Thornbill feeding young at its nest, and a Spotted Pardalote with young. In fact we were lucky enough to identify its nesting tunnel in the bank of a washaway. A Scarlet Robin's nest was also found.

Ann's group is raising money for the Conservation Fund. She can be contacted by phone on 9853 1153, or e-mail at <burchell@wn.com.au>.

**Liz Davies**

**September outing, Cheyne Beach**
Nineteen of us met at Bakers Junction at 8:00 am and proceeded towards Cheyne Beach, stopping at Hassell Beach Track. We were looking for Hooded Robins, which had been seen there recently, but they evaded us. We did see quite a large colony of White-cheeked Honeyeaters, and some Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters.

We then went on to morning tea at Waychinicup, where we had views of Varied Sittellas and Red-eared Firetails, and heard the Noisy Scrub-bird. The Western Whipbird was also very vocal, and some of us had fleeting glimpses of it. A few people were lucky enough to have a really good view of a Western Bristlebird.

Then it was on to Cheyne Beach, where we had our lunch serenaded by a Noisy Scrub-bird in thick bush beside the picnic area. Nobody managed to see it, although it had been seen there the previous week. A beautiful sunny day, and altogether we saw 52 species.

**Charlie Davies**

**October outing, Mt Barker**
On 8 October 15 of us met at Mount Barker on a dull, cold and overcast morning, and proceeded to Lake Matilda, where we were lucky enough to see a group of five Freckled Ducks—a first for most of us. There was also a large group of Pink-eared Ducks.

We then went on to Pingalup Creek, on the Frankland-Cranbrook Road, where we spent a good half hour. Here we saw a good variety of bushbirds.

Then it was on to Frank Smith's farm, Yarralena. Frank is 92 years old, and very active still. He showed us round his conservation area of 1000 acres which has been fenced off from stock for the last 20 years. The place was thick with spider orchids, and he showed us many other orchids. Here we had some interesting bird sightings, including a Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest with a chick looking down at us, and a Restless Flycatcher on its nest not far from where we had been enjoying our lunch. Frank was very knowledgeable about all the plants and birds. A very interesting visit.

On the way back to Albany we stopped at Nunijup Lake, where there were lots of Hoaryheaded Grebes and several hundred Blue-billed Ducks.

Altogether we saw 70 different species; a most successful day.

**Liz Davies**

Albany Group at Frank Smith's property, Oct 2002
*Photo courtesy Liz Davies*

### ESPERANCE BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP

With many lakes along the coast near Esperance still full or near full from the exceptional summer rains of 1999, 2000 and to a lesser extent 2001, ten members of the Esperance Bird Observers Group surveyed Mullet Lake, Station Lake and a small lake on private property in September 2002.

While walking out to Mullet Lake a group of ten Little Black Cormorants were seen feeding by continually diving in search of food. Birds seen on Mullet Lake included Australasian Shoveler, Chestnut Teal, Great Crested Grebe, Musk Duck, Eurasian Coot and on the lake edge, seven Straw-necked Ibis, six Australian White Ibis, one Great Egret and one Little Egret plus other water birds. Circling above the lake's edges were Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Whistling Kite and Swamp Harrier. Further around the lake the group was surprised to see four Cattle Egrets feeding amongst the wet saltbush area. The Little Egret and Cattle Egret are birds not often seen in the Esperance area.

To survey Station Lake, which is close to Mullet Lake, we had to come in through private property. Six Cattle Egrets were seen amongst cattle on the private property.

After wading through water to reach the edge of Station Lake, we found the lake full with the marsh area around the lake flooded and very few birds.

A nearby small lake on private property was also surveyed. One hundred and fifty Hardheads were the most numerous duck on the lake, with four Chestnut Teal, Eurasian Coots, Little Black Cormorants and a single Common Greenshank also on the lake. A single tern was seen on the other side of the lake that may have been a Whiskered Tern.

The October outing saw 11 members visit Swan Lagoon and The Cups, a low granite outcrop formation 100 km NW of Esperance.

In perfect conditions for bushwalking, 40 varieties of birds were recorded, some of the more notable being the colourful Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Red-capped Robin, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater and Pink-eared Duck. Two nests of Dusky Woodswallows were seen with two young in one nest visible as the adults fed them at Swan Lagoon.

Recent rain had seen water stored in The Cups providing drinking water for White-eared, Brown and New Holland Honeyeaters, a Crested Pigeon and a Common Bronzewing. Emu droppings were numerous in the area. A male Red-capped Robin was seen feeding a young bird out of the nest.

**Allan Rose**

## Excursion Reports

### NANGA BRIDGE/MURRAY RIVER, 22 March

With intermittent showers and moderate winds forecast it was a surprise to see 27 people turn up at the Dwellingup Hotel for the walk. Everyone wanted to get out into the bush to see the birds and wildflowers and so we headed for the river while the weather looked reasonable.

A gate had been put across the access road because of mining further away which added an extra two kilometres to the walk. This gave us more time up on the laterite for wildflowers particularly greenhood (bird) orchids and good views of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Scarlet Robin and Golden Whistler. After morning tea at the junction of two creeks we headed down an old logging track, which is becoming increasingly overgrown, to the Murray River. Although it was beautiful there were very few birds and for the first time no Red-eared Firetails were seen. Good views were had of a lone Elegant Parrot and of White-breasted Robin. We were entertained by Red-winged Fairy-wrens as we boiled the billy and had lunch on a tongue of rock that juts out into the Murray River.

Just as we left lunch to walk back (about 5 km), the heavens opened with a down pour of rain for about 30 minutes. The rain stopped and a large flock of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos made their noisy presence known. We soon warmed up, walking up the only hill of the day.

A rather wet group repaired to the Dwellingup Hotel and their large fire after seeing a total of 31 species.

**Sue Abbotts**

### Hooded Plover Project

**Feb/March 2003**

**Co-ordinators and surveyors needed**
**— contact Julie Raines 9306 5819**
**Email <auistecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au>**

### WUNGONG GORGE, 3 August

Wet weather watching: the leader, Bill McRoberts, expressed surprise at the turnout of ten hardy souls who braved what looked like being a hopeless day for birding. He thought he would just turn up, see nobody, and go back to bed.

But, although we had a few light to moderate showers, the walk was thoroughly enjoyed by all. The highlight was the finding, by Michael Morcombe, of a Red-eared Firetail's nest, albeit last season's. We saw a single firetail during the walk.

We saw 31 species—good for such a dark and showery day.

Thanks, Bill McRoberts, for a very interesting walk.

**Tom Delaney**

### MARKET GARDEN SWAMPS, SPEARWOOD, 10 August

On 10 August eight staunch members met Les Harris to walk round the swamps that were full of water. Whilst there, we were lucky as only one short shower occurred. Later, after leaving the area, heavier showers came up from the south-east.

We had an interesting walk finding seven species of duck, some of which were breeding, together with a pair of Black Swans with eight cygnets. The swamps present excellent areas for breeding waterbirds, but one wonders how long the present abundance of birds will continue to inhabit the area as it is now in the centre of suburbia, with its accompanying pets. Dogs should be on leads, but cats present a different problem.

During the morning we saw 40 species, mostly waterbirds, but the surrounding bush provided habitat for plenty of honeyeaters and other small birds. It was an enjoyable walk in spite of the occasional shower.

It is important to record that the Cockburn Council's Environmental Officer, Chris Beaton, allows us to park our cars off the rather narrow road, through a gate, into a paddock.

**Bryan Barrett**

### LITTLE RUSH LAKE, YANGEBUP, 15 August

On the morning of Thursday 15 August, heavy rain and a strong, cold southerly wind greeted the four walkers who arrived for the walk. One of the arrivals decided to return home. Tom, being at the site for the first time, said he was going to walk around the lake and set off holding on tightly to his unfurled umbrella. Sian arrived and with the rain easing she wanted to do the walk being her first time there. The three of us set off to catch up to Tom.

The rain stopped and it was not long before we saw Tom with umbrella down and using his binoculars to survey the lake. A quick check on birds seen to this point included many of the common birds one would expect to see but also a Great Cormorant and Little Wattlebirds. Continuing the walk, Galahs were heard, later seen, kookaburras heard, Hoary-headed Grebes confirmed and a Grey Fantail successfully tracked down.

About half way around the lake another walker approached us. She identified herself as Jane, a visitor from Canada, who had found out about the walk after a visit to the BA office.

Now five in number we proceeded and came upon a patch of bush which revealed a Splendid Fairy-wren, Brown Honeyeater, Silvereyes AND the sighting of the morning, a BRUSH BRONZEWING which was walking, calmly, through the bushes about four metres from us.

Reaching our starting point, another survey of the lake revealed two Grey Teal, an Australasian Grebe and a male Musk Duck making a great display which resulted, we

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**May** **Desert Tracks Tour**
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observed, in there then being two Musk Ducks and the male being even more excited!

The walk was enjoyed by all; we did not get wet and saw 41 species of birds.

**Barry and Molly Angus**

## PIPIDINNY ROAD, EGLINTON, 24 August

Brice Wells, with Gail's support, led a group of 15 members through the area that has been surveyed for the last 25 years or more, firstly by Peter Congreve, then Brice and Gail, and for the last 15 years by Margery Clegg and myself. So we know a lot about its avian history.

On this visit we drove to the far end of Pipidinny Road to walk through the sand dunes in the hope of finding Variegated Fairy-wren. A pair was seen by a few members but most birds kept low in the scrub due to the strong easterly wind.

Driving back along the road a number of Black-faced Woodswallows were seen over the heath, some perching on blackboy spikes. Also seen in the area were White-winged Trillers and a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, together with an immature Pallid Cuckoo. Further up the road we looked at the nesting hollows of White-backed Swallows, another species that has returned after the last bad fire on the heath, and a number were seen in the area. However, in spite of diligent searching, we could not locate any White-winged Fairy-wren, but several Splendid Fairy-wrens were seen, including a brilliant male. A few White-cheeked and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters were seen, but several fires over the years seem to have killed the thickets of dryandra in which both species would be feeding.

After lunch the group walked through the swamp which has been dry for quite a few years, apart from two small dams. Single White-faced and White-necked Herons were the only waterbirds seen, Not a duck of any type could be found. We then walked through the Tuart forest expecting to see some birds there, but the only sounds to be heard were from kookaburras and ringnecks.

We were pleased to see three new members at this walk and hope that they were not too disappointed with the low numbers of birds seen—the total count being 47 species.

**Bryan Barrett**

## RAY MARSHALL PARK, VIVEASH, 14 September

Birdwatching is always more successful on days when the weather is just right. This was just such a day. Storms and strong winds had been forecast, but as the sky was bright blue 18 keen members, including two from Brisbane, turned out at Ray Marshall Park to see what we could find on such a good day. Needless to say we were not disappointed with 52 species being observed. Among the highlights was a juvenile Tawny Frogmouth sitting sedately in the fork of a tree looking for all the world like a burl. So well camouflaged was this little bird that none of the other birds in the area had discovered it.

Western and Little Corellas were plentiful and two Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were nesting in a tall tree. A flock of ten White-necked Herons were circling in the sky like vultures seeking out prey. A Nankeen Kestrel and a Sacred Kingfisher were basking on dead branches of trees in the sunlight. Cormorants, ducks, Darters, coots and grebes were busy feeding and floating on the river.

A feeling of contentment was evident at the end of this great birding excursion in spite of the very blustery wind that came up during the bird call. Our thanks to Jan Rogers for taking this walk.

**Lyn Sellers**

## CHIDDARCOOPING CAMPOUT, 28-30 September

This spring visit to an area approximately 80 km north-east of Merredin provided quite a challenge as the district was very dry, having experienced well below average rainfall during the preceding winter months. Despite that, the 31 participants managed a total of 74 species.

A variety of accommodation was available at Coorancooping Hill Farm and the immediate surroundings were checked daily, with most people seeing Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Black-tailed Native-hens and the Banded Lapwings which had well-grown young. An evening session of spotlighting yielded three Tawny Frogmouths.

An afternoon visit was made to Chiddarcooping Nature Reserve, south of the farm, where an interesting breakaway area provided sightings of, among other things, Elegant and Mulga Parrots, Little Woodswallow and Crested Bellbird. A subsequent visit gave people the opportunity to explore a long valley and an extensive area of granite outcrops. Wedge-tailed and Little Eagles were seen soaring and Redthroats were found among lower shrubs. A pair of Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens was breeding in a small, densely-vegetated gully. A Southern Boobook was flushed in woodland on the eastern margin of the reserve. An added bonus was the variety of wildflowers on sand-plain country nearby.

On Sunday the group visited two more rock outcrops to the north, Yanneymooning Rock and the larger, scenic and more accessible Elachbutting Rock. White-fronted Honeyeaters were tracked down at Yanneymooning and at Elachbutting we saw Western Yellow Robin, Southern Whiteface, Redthroats, Brown Falcon and Brown Goshawk as well as a number of honeyeaters and a flock of Regent Parrots.

A visit to a water reserve south-east of the camping area was rather unproductive though we did find a Malleefowl

and nesting Willie Wagtails. A group of 14 Banded Lapwings on farmland opposite the reserve was another bonus.

The final day was unseasonally hot and uncomfortable but drinks that evening were enjoyed at the farm-house, situated on top of a rocky hill and surrounded by fascinating natural rock 'gardens', with magnificent views of the surrounding countryside. Early starters were rewarded with White-winged Fairy-wrens close to the house.

Overall Weebill, Red-capped Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill were probably the most commonly seen species but the group was very satisfied with the recording of three species of fairy-wren (Splendid, Blue-breasted and White-winged) and ten species of honey-eater, including Purple-gaped Honeyeater, which is uncommon this far north.

All in all, this was a very interesting area which would be well worth another visit in a better season.

Thanks are again due to Clive for his very capable leadership.

**Pam Agar**

### WAMBYN NATURE RESERVE, 13 October

One of the more engaging aspects of birdwatching would have to be the way in which one's various senses are called into play; for most of us it is an audio-visual experience, and this is the time of year when the sounds as well as the sights are particularly evident. However, there also is a valid research component to be derived from visits to these reserves, which has the potential to enrich the experience.

For the Wambyn Reserve visit on 13 October, a team of 19 assembled at The Lakes and then drove to the reserve, situated 15 km west of York on the Great Southern Highway. Wambyn is at the interface of the Darling Scarp Jarrah forest and the Avon wheatbelt Wandoo habitat. As a result, the bird species encountered are an interesting blend drawn from those two environments.

The group drove first to the eastern end of the reserve, an area characterised by young Wandoo and heath understory. The trill of wren species, mixed with Western Gerygone and Weebill calls, permeated the air. As the group wandered towards the interior, first sightings included Galah, Australian Ringneck, Australian Raven, Red-capped and Scarlet Robin, Rufous Whistler, Inland and Western Thornbill, as well as an enduring long view of a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles hovering over breakaway belts.

To the reserve front, Australian Magpies carolled, and way overhead the first Rainbow Bee-eaters emitted their hesitant undulating croak. Striated Pardalotes sounded their 'witta-witta' in the Wandoo and Powderbark canopy, whilst Rufous Treecreepers 'chip-chipped' at ground level.

As the group circled through younger woodland towards dense dryandra and sheoak country on the front boundary, good sightings were obtained of New Holland Honeyeater, Western Yellow Robin (with young gathered together on a limb), Weebill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Red Wattlebird.

In the afternoon, the group ranged across mature Wandoo parkland with an open Honey Bush and dwarf scrub understory. With changes in habitat came changes in sightings. Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters made their presence felt, flitting through the Wandoo tops. This species had been reported as scarce in the mid-eighties, but recent sightings suggest a recovery in numbers. Dusky Woodswallows and Tree Martins maintained a gliding presence, the latter showing signs of nesting in strategic hollows exactly as described by Morcombe in his field guide. An Elegant Parrot posed in profile long enough to allow good viewing for most of the group. A Grey Shrike-thrush was lured in by Les by dint of clever mimicking of its own lyrical, liquid calls, and thereafter attached itself to the group, becoming the twentieth member and an audio-visual coup!

As a climax to the outing, sustained close sightings of a pair of Crested Shrike-tits were gained on the central rise—a first for Wambyn.

**John Ashford**

### FORRESTDALE, 19 October

Thank you to all the familiar faces who turned out for my initiation as leader on a bird walk! It was a lovely morning and the species count surpassed my expectations at 46! All those experienced eyes made the difference.

Splendid Fairy-wrens showed themselves many times, sometimes with two or three males in full colour close together. Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters were a highlight, especially when a nest with young was found close to the ground.

White-winged Trillers were seen and heard. Four species of raptor were seen: Australian Kestrel, Black-shouldered Kite, Little Eagle and Swamp Harrier.

In the damper area a White-necked Heron was seen.

## Wader Study Group Summer Survey

**Sunday 9 February 2003**

**If you wish to participate in this survey, please fill in the enclosed form and send to our Office as soon as possible.**

Other species seen nesting were Australian Magpie-Lark, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Black-shouldered Kite, Australian Magpie and Australian Raven.

I have been told by the environment officer for Armadale Shire that part of this area will be kept as a reserve as the 'southern corridor' is slowly developed.

**Debbie Walker**

### UDUMUNG, 3 November

On a perfect spring day 17 people gathered at Udumung Nature Reserve on Hay Flat Road in the Chittering Shire. Bush birds were quite active and we soon saw Rufous Whistlers, Scarlet Robins and Splendid Fairy-wrens in the thick vegetation along the creek bed. Western Gerygones were calling everywhere as were Striated Pardalotes and White-winged Trillers were also heard and seen. Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos flew overhead and a pair of Australian White Ibis sat in a tall dead tree. This was a first sighting of this species in the reserve. Also a first was a Clamorous Reed-Warbler in a patch of reeds near the boundary of the reserve. The parrots were represented by Australian Ringnecks, Red-capped and Elegant Parrots. The flowering dryandra bushes had attracted several species of honeyeaters including Western Spinebills, Brown-headed, White-cheeked, and Brown Honeyeaters as well as the inevitable Red Wattlebirds.

BIRD TALK from Penny Towells
*Now it's your turn!*

After having lunch in the pleasant shade of the Wandoo trees we drove west to Lake Wannamal which had plenty of water in spite of the relatively dry winter. Here we saw Black Swans in abundance and many Grey Teal. There were also Australian Shelduck and a few Australasian Shovelers and Musk Ducks as well as Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes, but not quite the variety of water birds we had hoped for. Variegated Fairy-wrens were seen in the undergrowth near the lake.

On the return trip via West Wannamal Road several people saw at close quarters a Black-breasted Buzzard. The bird was first observed at a considerable height and some distance away, gradually came closer and eventually flew directly overhead much lower. We observed quite clearly the white patches in the outer wings that extended from the leading to the trailing edge and the lack of any white bar along the length of the wing. The entire underside was very dark and the wing tips strongly fingered. The bird gave us ample time to consult a variety of books and it was unanimously decided that it was a Black-breasted Buzzard.

**Wendy Napier**

## National Bird Week 21-27 October

### CARINE REGIONAL OPEN SPACE, 21 October

Fifty species were seen in the two wetlands and the surrounding bush, in the 2½ hours. Clear views of a Red-capped Parrot, Brown Goshawk and Black-fronted Dotterel were seen. While looking for the elusive Variegated Fairy-wren near the Little Swamp, a sleeping Nankeen Night-heron was flushed in front of everyone.

The writer was surprised at the interest and support from members on the day, some not having been to this venue before. Twenty-four people attended the walk, including many local people, who had seen the report and photo from Birds Australia publicity in the *Stirling Times*. Seven parties requested information and were supplied membership forms and the latest *WA Bird Notes*. People from both the USA and Bendigo were present.

**Michael Hancock**

### LAKE JOONDALUP, 22 October

About 16 birdos, half members and half visitors, including three from the USA, joined the walk. As always there was plenty of activity at Neil Hawkins Park, with the usual flock of Long-billed Corellas, head-perching Australian Ringnecks, raucous Rainbow Lorikeets, Galahs and Red Wattlebirds. For the birdos from outside the state this was the place to come.

We walked around the park area entertained by breeding Grey Butcherbirds singing splendidly. In the background the 'pinging' of the Musk Ducks had the Americans intrigued. Overlooking the large expanse of the lake from the landing, there were not a lot of ducks but there was a large raft of Hoary-headed Grebes. Along the path to the lookout and back visitors were thrilled by male Splendid Fairy-wrens hopping merrily along the track. Shining Bronze-Cuckoos took a while to find but added colour to a variety of bushbirds seen among the tall timber and dense understory.

We saw a total of 54 species, a lot less than the 69 in February. For local members possibly the most interesting sightings were of the three corellas, plus a Galah x corella hybrid confirmed by Eric Pyatt who has seen adults of the two species breeding near his home.

I hope the walk inspired more people to join BA.

**Tom Delaney**

### PELICAN POINT, 23 October

Twenty-one walkers gathered at the Pelican Point gazebo on the Wednesday morning of Bird Week. In the group were two visitors from Tennessee in USA and one from South Africa.

Quite early in the walk we saw Black-winged Stilts and then a group of Red-capped Plovers with one Red-necked Stint all quite close to a Crested Tern and several Fairy Terns. A splendid Great Cormorant flew by us as we scanned the river. Further round the point a Red-capped Plover was behaving strangely, indicating that she had a nest nearby. Several of us watched quietly from the dunes as she returned to her well camouflaged but vulnerable nest. Further along two eggs could be seen in a second nest on the sand so we all walked on to leave the plovers in peace.

The next excitement was a good sighting of a Terek Sandpiper with its orange legs and its long beak with the upward curve. A Sacred Kingfisher caused some excitement and at the last moment an Australian Hobby flew overhead.

Thank you to Max and Charles for sharing their expertise and knowledge of this area. They also issued an open invitation to birding enthusiasts to join them on any Tuesday afternoon at 5:30 pm when they do their weekly count of this area.

**Molly Angus and Max Bailey**

### ALFRED COVE, 25 October

A Buff-banded Rail greeted the early arrivals at Troy Park on Friday 25 October. Later, all 22 walkers were able to see this elusive bird quite clearly on the grass behind the new fence built to keep dogs out of the nature reserve.

Before we left the car park we had recorded 15 species including a spectacular Sacred Kingfisher perched high in a tree. An agitated Willy Wagtail drew our attention to its nest nearby and our list continued to grow as we puddled through the samphire along Alfred Cove. Here we were rewarded with an exciting view of two adult Black-winged Stilts guarding three chicks in the rushes.

As we rounded the point the sandbanks were covered in birds. Scanning the sandbanks with telescopes showed the pelicans looking like aircraft carriers compared to the Common Greenshanks, Grey Plovers, Red-necked Avocets, Pied Oystercatchers, Red-necked Stints, Red-capped Plovers, Curlew Sandpipers and other waders and waterbirds.

A pair of Splendid Fairy-wrens was flitting in some trees right on the water's edge and in the bush nearer the road some Rainbow Bee-eaters and a Pallid Cuckoo were seen, as well as a nesting Australian Magpie.

Just as we completed the bird count Tom spied a New Holland Honeyeater and so the total for the morning reached 58 species. Thank you to Les for his cheerful and energetic leadership.

**Molly Angus**

## Observatory Reports

### BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

There might be a drought in many parts of Australia but the same can't be said for the birding around Broome.

It's been an action packed end-of-year with a new live sighting for Australia at the observatory. A Blue-and-white Flycatcher was seen by a number of people and the sighting will be written up shortly. This bird was seen about the same time of year as the one that was beach-washed in 1995. Grant and Clare Moreton who found the original bird were present for this momentous event.

On top of this there has been a sighting of a Grey Wagtail moving along the foreshore, a couple of strange gulls with dark heads that could not be identified due to their proximity to the viewers, and they were in flight. A Ruff was also seen in the bay a few weeks earlier by Jan Van de Kam, the well known Dutch wader photographer.

Oriental Plovers and Little Curlews are everywhere, and the first Oriental Pratincoles have arrived at the sewage works. Everyone birding in Broome is excited about the prospect of more vagrants turning up, so keep an eye out for anything while up this way.

It has also come time for Wendy, Carlia and me to migrate back to Queensland. We felt that the environment over summer would not be the best for our newborn and so we sadly leave the observatory to head home closer to family. We have had a great time here and hope that our input has been of great benefit to the observatory. Hopefully the standard of work will continue and the observatory will prosper over the next few years. We will certainly be back to participate and birdwatch at some time in the future. Thanks everyone and WA for some great birding.

**Dan, Wendy and Carlia**

Note: Broome Bird Observatory has a new email address:
<bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au>

## Situation/s vacant

Birds Australia is seeking an experienced and motivated person or couple to manage the Broome Bird Observatory.

This challenging position requires excellent skills in guest management and a strong interest in the natural world. The person/couple need strong skills in financial management, staff supervision, facility maintenance and the ability to conduct tours and educational activities. A creative and enthusiastic approach to the management of this facility will ensure its continued success. A willingness to live in a remote and often harsh environment is essential. Rewards of the position include living adjacent to and working on the spectacular Roebuck Bay, a site of international importance for migratory shorebirds.

If you are interested in this position, please phone or e-mail the observatory for an application package prior to submitting an application.

Applications close on Friday December 20th. Commencement date: mid January or as soon as possible afterwards.

Ph: 08 9193 5600 e-mail <bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au>

## AUGUST AT EYRE

I was at Eyre for the first few weeks of August (acting as one of the relief wardens until the 'real' wardens turned up) and although cold at night with some record low temperatures it was immensely interesting as always.

It soon warms up during the day and even in winter there are many visitors to the birdbaths, including a seemingly ever increasing population of New Holland Honeyeaters, several Brush Bronzewings, Major Mitchell's Cockatoos on most days, and the occasional White-eared Honeyeater, White-browed Scrubwren and Grey Currawong.

Along Kanidal Beach there is generally fairly low species variability in winter and during my visit there were no migratory shorebirds (well, one Common Sandpiper). However, the resident Red-capped Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers were there, and good numbers of White-faced Herons were observed at the weedy western end along with a small group of Musk Ducks. Twilight Cove was exceptional (despite being bogged in decomposing seaweed), with a couple of Southern Right Whales, and a Leopard Seal seemingly a long way from its home in Antarctica. A pair of Southern Boobooks was in the cave along the Baxter Cliffs, and lots of Sooty Oystercatchers (40+) were observed foraging on the beach washed weed, along with Australian Pelican, Pied and Little Pied Cormorant, a roosting flock of Crested Terns (150+), and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle for good measure.

Grey Teal in flight at Eyre.
*Photo courtesy Bea Myers & Ian Tarbin*

Just to give a brief idea of some of the information collected about birds at Eyre over the years, I have presented some of the beach count data from 2001 for two species: the resident Red-capped Plover and the migratory Red-necked Stint (these are only 2 of the 22 shorebird species recorded from that year). The Red-capped Plover was present during every survey, with from 4 (26 April) to 111 (13 February) birds observed, and an average of 42, with generally at least 20 birds recorded (Figure 1). There is some variation in numbers during the course of the year, but this is likely to be partially attributable to weather conditions on the day of survey as well as seasonal changes in density due to movements locally along the beach and regionally to other roost sites. (Incidentally, Red-capped Plover runners were observed from April to August.)

The Red-necked Stint on the other hand, was recorded on less than 60% of occasions, and demonstrates a highly seasonal abundance distribution, with good numbers between mid-April and mid-June and again between early October and mid-November (Figure 2). These periods of peak abundance possibly coincide with major intervals of migratory movement, although the peak earlier in the year seems to be a little late than expected if birds are attempting to make their way north and across the equator. In addition, there are no data (from 2001) on the number of adult versus juvenile birds so it is difficult to determine if some birds are only moving north to overwinter in Australia or are migratory adults.

Some sightings of interest during the visit were a White-necked Heron near the microwave tower, a Black Kite along the highway, Chestnut Quail-thrush, Peregrine Falcon, and the lone Black-tailed Native-hen that continues to hang around the vicinity of the house. We had reports of Malleefowl from several of our visitors (what's that bird about the size of a chicken running across the road?) and a mound above the scarp and right next to the access track was active, the bird dragging piles of leaf litter across the track to the mound.

Winter is a good time to visit Eyre because there are fewer Welcome Swallows and hence less chance of being, well, hit. (Saying that, a pair of swallows did move into my room and left their calling card; possibly they were adversely affected by my attempts to capture them with a net.) It is also

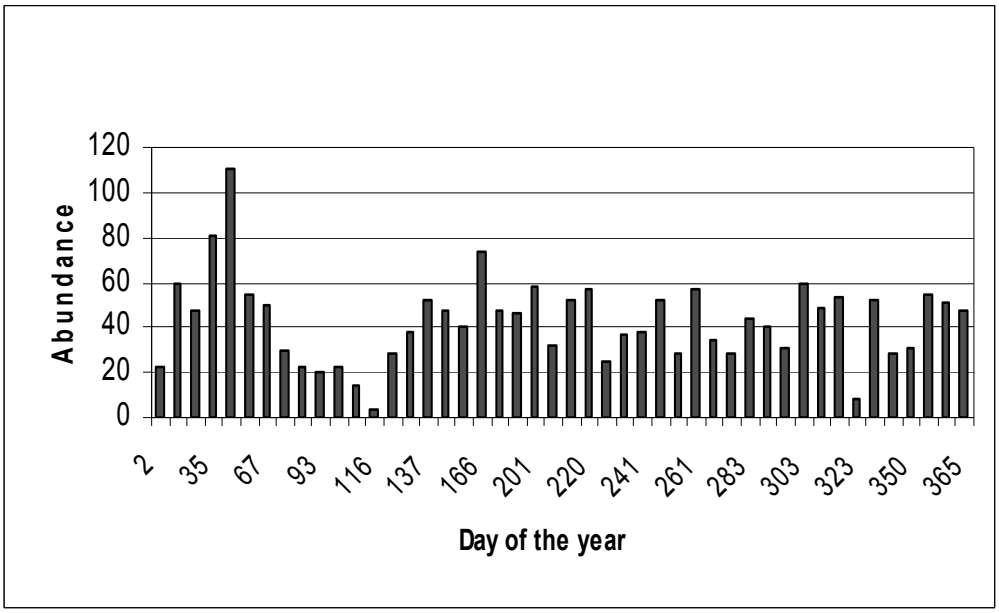


**Figure 1: Abundance of Red-capped Plovers on Kanidal Beach, 2001**.

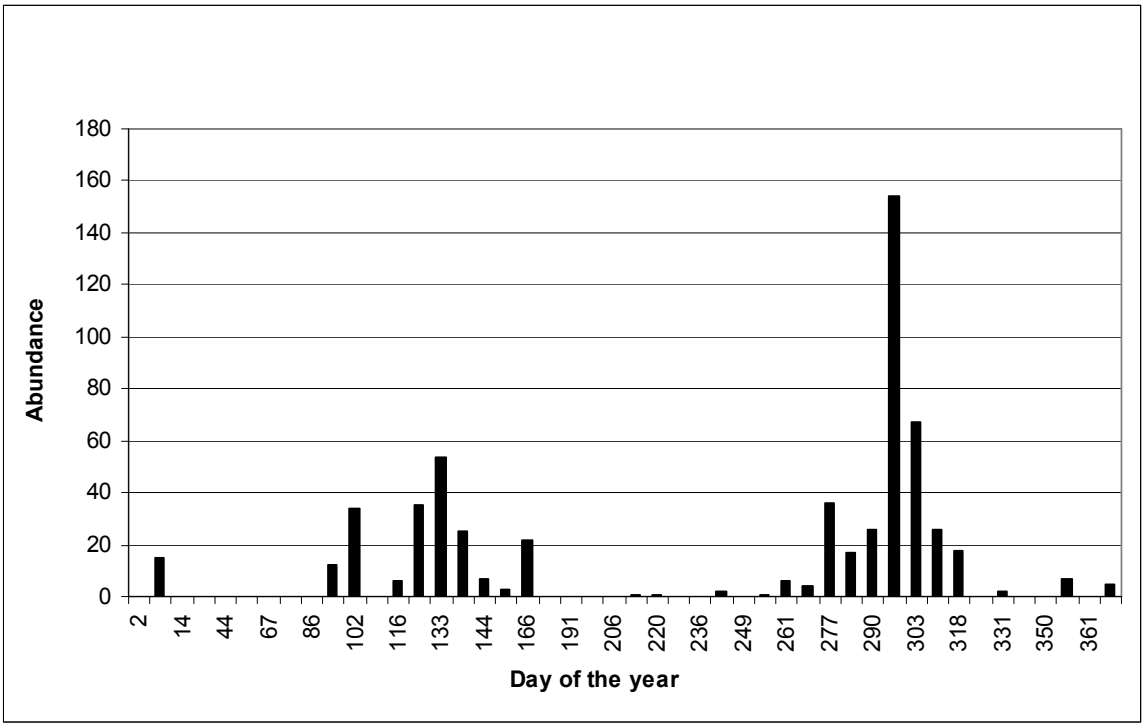


**Figure 2: Abundance of Red-necked Stints on Kanidal Beach, 2001**.

cool during the day, hence conducive to walking and birding. We were able to investigate several of the tracks in the area, particularly the lengthy east track which is now partly covered in dunes and hence inaccessible to vehicles.

Just as I was leaving it seemed that some of the birds were arriving. On the last day I came across Jacky Winter, Grey Fantail and Western Yellow Robin, none of which I had observed in the previous three weeks. The new wardens Bea and Ian had also arrived and begun transforming the place so it was time to move on. Bea and Ian have been partially nomadic for the past few years, travelling around Australia particularly in the north, but are now resident at Eyre. Helen appears to be an irregular visitor to semi-resident at Arubiddy station (across the Highway), whereas I have migrated back to Perth via the Goldfields (more on that later).

**Steve Reynolds**

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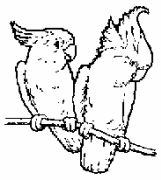
## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY



A warm balmy night, good company and a bottle of wine — what more could we have asked for on our arrival at Eyre? The maximum temperature for the day had been 34.8 degrees, a record high for the month of August. The strange thing is, two mornings before, Eyre recorded a record low of -5.1 degrees.

Why is it so? We have noticed a pattern in the weather during our time at Eyre. When we have a cold morning, the next day is hot. We probably wouldn't even notice these weather extremes if we weren't a weather station, as being inside the house the temperatures are much more constant.

Brisk mornings turn into lovely days, as we seem to have mostly clear skies. Warm to hot days can change in an instant, when the northerly wind swings around to a cooler southerly.

Warm days do bring the birds into the bird baths. Our regulars the Major Mitchell's Cockatoos quite often visit just after day break and sometimes at intervals throughout the morning, coming back for another drink in the afternoon. Brush Bronzewings do the same in a much quieter manner.

Hundreds of honeyeaters form a constant stream to the water, among them the Purple-gaped, White-eared, Brown-headed and Spiny-cheeked. The last few days we have had regular visits from two male and two female White-winged Trillers. When all is quiet the Collared Sparrowhawk enjoys a dip.

The first recorded sighting of a Common Blackbird in late October was reported to the Agricultural Protection Board. It was seen sneaking in to the bird bath for a quick drink.

Sitting on the back veranda with binoculars in one had a cup of tea in the other is a great way to view the birds. They can be examined at close quarters and intricate details seen while the viewer relaxes in comfort.

Whenever possible we enjoy taking guests on the weekly beach count, driving 13 km west of the observatory and counting the birds in each kilometre. Many say it is the highlight of their stay.

Red-capped Plovers always feature on the count. Of late we have also seen some Red-capped runners, aptly named. We usually see several pairs of Pied Oystercatchers along the beach and have seen up to 30 Sooty Oystercatchers at Nine Mile or Wader Beach.

Banded Stilt at Eyre
*Photo courtesy Bea Myers & Ian Tarbin*

At first trying to identify the various waders was a daunting task. With the help of some guests more experienced than us, we now feel much more confident. When all else fails there is always the digital camera. We then huddle around the computer back in the

office, with many books from Eyre's extensive library aiming to make a positive identification.

We were delighted to see a Hooded Plover and two Banded Stilts recently. Red-necked Stints or "*sewing machine birds"* as one guest described them, seem to be on the increase. Bar-tailed Godwits, Great Knots, Curlew Sandpipers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers have all been added to recent counts.

I'm still amazed by the sight of ducks riding the ocean waves. On one beach count we saw a flock of Grey Teal and Hardheads, five Musk Ducks and Hoary-headed Grebes bobbing about in the water. Even more amazing was seeing Emus cooling down in the ocean.

Apart from the birds we have often seen New Zealand Fur Seals, Australian Sea-lions and even a Leopard Seal soaking up the sun. The sight of Southern Right Whales so close to the shore is worth the bumpy ride to Twilight Cove.

In the first week of September a dune restoration working bee was held at Eyre. The eight participants spread loads of seaweed on the dunes, aiming to stabilise the shifting sand. The job was finished by sprinkling seed over the area.

During October, the Bird Banding Course group banded 189 birds with another 36 re-traps. Seeing the intricate detail of birds in the hand and being able to capture these images was a highlight.

We have found that even though many of our visitors would not call themselves 'birdwatchers' by the time they leave Eyre they are keen to look for birds elsewhere or maybe set up a bird bath at home.

Our *Birding for Beginners* Course, to be held 16-22 March 2003, is an ideal opportunity for people to develop their interest in birds. Why not encourage someone you know to attend?

We are looking forward to our year at Eyre. Already we have experienced some amazing things and met some wonderful people. We invite you to visit us.

**Bea Myers & Ian Tarbin**
**New Wardens**

Perth Biodiversity Project

Perth Metropolitan Area Bird Surveys

## Observers needed

Birds Australia WA is assisting the WA Local Government Association by doing bird surveys in selected areas of remnant bushland in the Perth metropolitan area.

From time to time, new survey sites become available to the project. You may register your interest in case a site near you needs surveying. Surveys are generally done once every two months, with two sets of observers alternating for each site.

*Are you interested in putting your name on the list? If so, contact*

Cheryl Gole, Bird Surveys Coordinator
Tel/Fax: 9293 4958
Email: gole@starwon.com.au

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**Available from the Office**

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**Stuart Miller $52.00**

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**Libby Robin $39.95**

# 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.

**Sunday 15 December—Half-day/Full day excursion, Woodman Point, Kogolup Swamp**
Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at Woodman Point on Jervoise Bay. This is now a bitumen road. Turn off Cockburn Road, south of the caravan park, along O'Kane Court, turning left towards the entrance to the Jervoise Bay Sailing Club, then left to the car park. We will walk along the beach to Wapet Groyne to look for waders and sea birds.

Bring your telescopes.

Later, we will travel to Kogolup Swamp on Beeliar Drive to look for the many crakes and rails that have been seen there in the Typha. There should also be plenty of waterbirds and perhaps some waders.

Those wishing to bring their lunch could go to nearby Yangebup Lake where there is a car park and nearby grassed area, which would be a pleasant lunch stop. There should also be lots of waterbirds on this large lake.

*Leader: Les Harris*

**Saturday 28 December—Half-day excursion, Alfred Cove, Attadale**
Meet at 8:00 am at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast), off Burke Drive, Attadale. We will look for waders round the river, and for bushbirds. Buff-banded Rails are also often seen in the area.

*Leader: Les Harris*

**Saturday 4 January 2003—Half-day excursion, Ascot Waters, Belmont**
Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the end of Tidewater Way. To reach the area from Great Eastern Highway, turn into Stoneham Street, then into Resolution Drive, and left into Tidewater Way. Continue through two roundabouts, over the bridge and up to the car park at the top of the rise. Lots of Buff-banded Rails were seen here last year, and several raptors are often seen.

*Leader: John Stewart*

**Sunday 12 January—Half-day excursion, Canning River Regional Park, Wilson**
Meet at 7:30 am at the Kent Street Weir car park, near the Canning River, to explore the varied bird life of the Canning Wetlands.

*Leader: Clive Napier*

**Wednesday 15 January—Mid-week excursion, Manning Lake, Spearwood**
Meet at 8:00 am in the car park, Azelia Road, opposite the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum, on the western side of the lake. A semi-permanent wetland, with a fringe of paperbark trees, noted for its waterbirds. Bushbirds are also plentiful in the reserve and in bush to the west.

*Leader: Bryan Barrett*

**Saturday 18 January—Half-day excursion, Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis**
Meet at 7:30 am at the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on the northern side of Zigzag Road, 1 km from St Alban's Road, Baldivis. There should be plenty of waterbirds, bushbirds, and perhaps some waders. Several species of raptors are also often seen here.

*Leader: Bryan Barrett*

**Monday 20 January 2003 meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**
Daniel Rajah, Environmental/Natural Areas Conservation Officer, City of Stirling Council, will speak on the effects of public feeding of feral and wild waterbirds.

*NB: Note the earlier date for this meeting. The following Monday, which would normally be the date for the monthly meeting, is a public holiday following Australia Day.*

**PLEASE NOTE: Change of venue for this long weekend campout!**

**Saturday-Monday 25-27 January—Australia Day campout at Albany**

We will join the Albany group of Birds Australia for this campout, which will be held at the Rotary Youth Camp at Little Grove.

The camp is situated on the picturesque Frenchman Bay Road, approximately 15 km from Albany, and is set in a mainly native bush area that has prolific bird life such as Red-winged Fairy-wrens, Red-eared Firetails and lots of Red-capped Parrots and Western Rosellas.

There is a variety of accommodation, all of which includes showers, toilets, a fully equipped kitchen with cooking utensils, a dining room and two undercover BBQs. There is ample space for tents and caravans, a large dormitory ('unisex'!) containing 36 beds, and a cottage with four rooms each containing five beds. The charge is $5 per person per night for any booking. Minimal power is available for caravans from three power points next to the cottage.

The charge for day visitors is $2.

Those intending to join this campout should let the office know (9383 7749), and also make their own bookings as early as possible by ringing the Youth Camp on 9844 4162.

*Leader: Viv McCormick*

**Saturday 1 February—Half-day excursion, Herdsman Lake**

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

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

*Leader: Claire Gerrish*

**Sunday 2 February—Full day excursion, Boat trip to Carnac Island**

The charter ferry *Supercat* will leave 'B' Shed, Victoria Quay, Fremantle Harbour, at 10:30 am and return at 3:00 pm for a trip to Carnac Island to view seabirds breeding on the island.

Numbers are limited and bookings will be strictly on a 'first come first served' basis. The cost will be $65 per person and will include a buffet lunch, free tea and coffee, a guided beach nature walk with a marine biologist, and use of snorkelling gear.

Birds that could be sighted include Little Penguin, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Pied Cormorant, Pied Oystercatcher, Fairy, Caspian, Crested and Bridled Tern and Silver Gull. It is also an important habitat for the Australian Sea-lion.

Casual clothing and footwear is recommended. The beach walk involves a transfer by small watercraft directly onto the beach and your feet will get wet. Bathers, towel and sunscreen lotion are recommended for those wishing to swim/snorkel.

Please notify the office (9383 7749) no later than Friday 10 January if you wish to participate. Booking is essential! Payment must be made to the office (71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat 6014), either by cash or cheque (no credit cards) at least two weeks prior to the date, ie, by Friday 17 January. There will be no refunds!

*Leader: Brice Wells*

**Sunday 9 February—Wader Count** (see enclosed registration form)

Bird banding course, Eyre
*Photo courtesy Bea Myers & Ian Tarbin*

**Wednesday 12 February—Mid-week excursion, Star Swamp, North Beach**
Meet at 8:00 am at the Hope Street entrance. Star Swamp has Tuart woodland, mixed Banksia woodland and heath. A variety of bushbirds and raptors have been seen here.

*Leader: Vera Patterson*

**Saturday 15 February—Half-day excursion, Bayswater Bird Sanctuary**
Meet at 8:00 am at the Swan River end of King William Street, Bayswater. Parking is available in Slade Road, off King William Street.

This reserve was created in 1977 by Eric Singleton in conjunction with the Bayswater Council. It consists of waterways, paved paths (suitable for wheelchairs), a bird hide and an artificial island. Many waterbirds breed in the reserve, and we could see crakes and rails, as well as some raptors. The total species list is about 100.

*Leader: Hank van Wees*

**Sunday 23 February—Half-day excursion, Ashfield Flats, Ashfield**
Meet at 8:00 am at the southern end of West Road, Bassendean. This area is called the Sandy Beach Reserve. Our leader will be Ron van Delft, the author of *Birding Sites Around Perth* and this is one of his favourite spots.

*Leader: Ron van Delft*

**Monday 24 February meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm**
**Annual General Meeting**. Following the meeting, five members will speak on topics concerning birds and the Group.

**Saturday-Monday 1-3 March—Labour Day Campout, Flinders Bay, Augusta**
We will look at areas in the Leeuwin region where there is a variety of habitats such as forests, beaches, estuary, headlands, rivers and heathland. On a previous campout 110 species of birds were recorded, including such specials as Southern Emu-wren, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Red-eared Firetail and various seabirds.

Please book your own camp site at the Flinders Bay Caravan Park, Albany Terrace, Augusta, on 9758 1380—making it known that you are with the Birds Australia group. Only two on-site vans and two powered sites for caravans are available, so early bookings are essential. There are plenty of tent sites, but these must also be booked.

If you wish to participate in this campout, please notify the office (9383 7749) of the number in your party and when you will arrive.

*Leaders: Chris Wilder and Sue Abbotts*

**Sunday 9 March—Half-day excursion, Lake Joondalup**
Meet at 8:00 am at Neil Hawkins Park, in the car park at the end of Boas Avenue. At the same time last year 69 species of birds were seen. There are always lots of water and bushbirds to be seen around this large lake, and there could be waders as well. Bring your telescope if you have one.

*Leader: Tom Delaney*

**Saturday 15 March—Evening walk, Reg Bond Reserve, Viveash**
Meet at 5:30 pm in the car park at the end of Bernley Drive.

Going north on Great Eastern Highway, turn left into Morrison Road, Midland; left into Frederic Street and follow it to the end. Turn left again into Muriel Street and go past La Salle College, left at Bernley Drive and follow this right to the end (Map 232, UBD Street Directory). It terminates in the Reg Bond Reserve car park. Be careful of the last speed hump!

This park is at the northern end of the John George walk trail which starts at Ray Marshall Park.

There is a double-sided BBQ at the reserve for those wishing to use it; or bring a light meal. We will eat early before walking along the John George walk trail beside the Swan River. The evening walk last year from Ray Marshall Park was very successful as the Tawny Frogmouth and Southern Boobook were seen, and Australian Owlet-nightjar heard.

*Leader: Jan Rogers*

**Wednesday 19 March—Mid-week excursion, Burswood Open Spaces**
Meet at 8:00 am in the car park near the Tourist Centre on Resort Drive. We will look at the bird life which has returned to the public parks and gardens that occupy the site of the former Rivervale Dump.

*Leader: Bryan Barrett*

**Sunday 23 March—Alfred Cove**
Meet at 4:30 pm at the car park in Troy Park (by the radio mast), off Burke Drive, Attadale. A last chance to look for waders in the late afternoon to avoid having to look across the water into the sun. Hopefully some of the birds will be in their breeding plumage. Bring your telescope if you have one.

*Leader: Les Harris*

**Monday 24 March meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 7:30 pm**
Professor Jonathan Majer, Head of the Department of Environmental Biology, Curtin University of Technology, will speak on the extent to which local trees and plants, as opposed to exotic ones, attract birds.

*NB:* ***Note the earlier starting time of the meeting. This will also apply to all subsequent monthly meetings.***

**Saturday 29 March—Wungong Gorge, Bedfordale**
Meet at 8:00 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 Firetail, White-breasted Robin and Red-winged Fairy-wren. Several raptors have also been seen.

*Leader: Bill McRoberts*


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

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

## Crossword Answers No 31

**ACROSS**

4 shanks, 7 knowledge, 9 robin, 11 owl, 12 eat, 13 tide, 14 heart, 17 river, 18 Ardea, 19 drape, 21 task, 22 clay, 23 taste, 24 overdo, 25 large, 26 tariff, 28 disturb, 29 Ninox

**DOWN**

1 moult, 2 slender, 3 edge, 5 Hardhead, 6 sanctuary, 7 knot, 8 establish, 10 brand, 15 diurnal, 16 duetting, 20 elegant, 22 chevron, 24 often, 27 fax

Willie Wagtail feeding a young Pallid Cuckoo, Stratton
*Drawing by Penny Towells*


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6/2002

# Opportunities for Volunteers

**This new section gives members an avenue to advertise for voluntary assistance with projects, surveys, initiatives,**

*** Office — manning the desk** — contact Wendy Napier 9332 7265

*** Perth Biodiversity Project** — contact Cheryl Gole 9293 4958, Email gole@starwon.com.au

*** Hooded Plover Project — Feb/Mar 2003**, co-ordinators and surveyors needed — contact Julie Raines 9306 5819 Email <austecol@cygnus.uwa.edu.au

*** Atlas — surveys for this are continuing** —contact Cheryl Gole, 9293 4958, Email<gole@starwon.com.au

*** Rainbow Lorikeet —survey, autumn 2003** — contact Karl Edwards 9358 1071

* **Wader Study — survey, 9 February 2003** — contact Office


## Birds Australia Western Australia Inc

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### Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**—a copy on disk 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 March 2003 Issue**

**10 February 2003 at Perry House**


## Advertising Rates

| | |
|---|---|
| 1/4 page | $30.00 |
| 1/2 page | $50.00 |
| Full page | $90.00 |


# Calendar of Events

**Sunday 15 December**—Half-day/Full day excursion, Woodman Point, Kogolup Swamp
**Saturday 28 December**—Half-day excursion, Alfred Cove, Attadale
**Saturday 4 January 2003**—Half-day excursion, Ascot Waters, Belmont
**Sunday 12 January**—Half-day excursion, Canning River Regional Park, Wilson
**Wednesday 15 January**—Mid-week excursion, Manning Lake, Spearwood
**Saturday 18 January**—Half-day excursion, Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis
**Monday 20 January** meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm
**Saturday-Monday 25-27 January**—Australia Day Campout at **Albany** (please note change of venue)
**Saturday 1 February**—Half-day excursion, Herdsman Lake
**Sunday 2 February**—Full day excursion, Boat Trip to Carnac Island
**Sunday 9 February**—Wader Count
**Wednesday 12 February**—Mid-week excursion, Star Swamp, North Beach
**Saturday 15 February**—Half-day excursion, Bayswater Bird Sanctuary
**Sunday 23 February**—Half-day excursion, Ashfield Flats, Ashfield
**Monday 24 February ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** followed by general meeting—State Tennis Centre, Burswood, 8:00 pm
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