

Western Australian Bird Notes



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WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATERS AT ROTTNEST ISLAND

For those of you who know Sue and Rob Mather, it is no secret that they don't mind spending a little bit of time sailing the seas on their yacht 'Seaweed'. And when the warmth of summer comes around and the crayfish season is in full swing it is not surprising that 'Seaweed' spends as much time as possible moored in one of the bays on Rottnest Island. But Sue and Rob (and the hundred thousand other holiday makers) are not the only migrants to Rottnest at that time of year. On a warm February evening two years ago Sue and Rob joined Brenden Metcalf and myself on a trip to the west end of the island so that I could show them just what I had been talking about.

In the daytime Cape Vlamingh at the west end of Rottnest is a pretty impressive place. At the right times of year one can sit there and watch the horizon for whales breaching, a family of sea-lions playing in the kelp, or a pod of dolphins surfing the waves at Cathedral Rocks. It goes without saying that there are some pretty spectacular ocean views, too. In fact, it is such a tourist draw that a series of boardwalks have been constructed to keep people off the ground. Many folks believe that the boardwalk is an

effort to control erosion at Cape Vlamingh and in some respects that is true. But the real reason only becomes evident after the sun has gone down.

Peeling one's attention away from the setting sun, the silhouettes of hundreds of birds can be seen as they rapidly rise and fall from view over the evening waves. Within an hour of nightfall, the birds have come closer to land and flocks silently wheel around above the boardwalks of Cape Vlamingh. The birds gradually descend until, one by one, they come to an abrupt and ungainly halt on the ground. A few moments of clumsy scrambling follow, and then they disappear—below ground!

Every night, from mid-August until late April, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, often known as muttonbirds, return from a

day of fishing at sea (diving and pursuing their prey to depths of 60 m!) to their nesting colonies on Rottnest. But unlike many birds that are familiar to us, the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters don't build cup nests in trees, or even scrapes on the ground. These birds are burrowers, and they're really good at what they do.

I have spent the past three years investigating the impact that their



Wedge-tailed Shearwater at Rottnest Island.
Photo courtesy Wes Bancroft

burrowing has on the Rottnest Island environment. My work has many components, but in this article I will concentrate on the physical impact made by these birds on this island—which will hopefully give you some appreciation as to how (and how much) they modify their patch of the island.

One of the first tasks on my agenda was to quantify the size of the colonies on Rottnest Island. This involved a deal of walking, a GPS, and the ability to count holes in the ground (so it's not exactly rocket science). There are six discrete colonies on Rottnest: at Cathedral Rocks, Cape Vlamingh, Fish Hook Bay, Radar Reef, Wilson Bay and Strickland Bay. These colonies only occupy an area of 4.5 ha (0.2% of the total island area), but house some 11 700 burrows. Previous work by Colleen Sims suggested that burrow occupancy on Rottnest is around 70%, although other workers tell me that this can vary greatly. If this is the case then Rottnest supports a population of at least 16 000 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. I'm inclined to think that this may be a generous figure, but having only watched the colonies for a few years I'm reluctant to offer an alternative.

Having established the number of burrows, I turned my attention to the size (volume) of individual burrows. There are several methods that one can use to calculate the volume of a hole in the ground, but two of the most common are casting (eg, creating a mould with wax, plaster of Paris, polyurethane, etc) or determining the internal dimensions by excavation. The sheer size of Wedge-tailed Shearwater burrows excluded the former, so I got the shovel and ruler out, and began digging. Needless to say, I conducted this part of my study during winter, when these birds are absent from the island.

The size of the burrows averages 20 cm high by 27 cm wide, approximately the dimensions of an A4 sheet of paper, and 2 m in length. The longest burrow that I worked with was over 4 m and the deepest reached to 1.5 m below ground level. When I looked at the shape of the burrows, I found they were parabolic in cross section. That is, while the floors of the burrows were relatively horizontal, the rooves formed arches that followed quadratic mathematical equations, much like some bridges, church arches and the path a ball takes when you throw it. This interested me greatly, for two reasons. First it meant that conventional methods for calculating burrow volume, which assume the cross-section to be rectangular or elliptical, are likely to overestimate volume. Second, I wanted to know why they were that shape. I had a chat with a structural engineer and, after a page of equations,

it seems that, given the forces that act on the roof of the burrow, the laws of physics predict that the most stable, and naturally forming, shape will be a parabolic arch. It is my opinion that it is a natural tendency (given the soil properties) for burrows to assume this curve, rather than being actively shaped by the birds.

With the help of a university mathematician, I designed a new way to calculate burrow volume that accounted for their parabolic shape, and also for some the variation in height and width along the burrow length. The average burrow occupies 60 l (ie, 30 milk cartons), and displaces 82 kg of soil. At the colony level, this equates to 210 tonnes of soil per hectare, which is enough to fill four medium-sized mining dump trucks! Burrows can be dug from scratch, by only two birds, in six days. A Wedge-tailed Shearwater weighs less than a can of Coke. The equivalent would be two 70 kg humans shifting almost 15 tonnes of soil between them, with their feet.

The magnitude of the soil shaping (geomorphic) impact of the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters holds its own when compared to burrowing mammals, such as rabbits, gophers, rats and wombats. Not too bad when you consider this bird has a two-leg handicap.

So next time you're out on the west end of Rottnest Island and scanning the horizon for Humpback Whales see if you can peel your eyes away, for just a moment, to look down at the colony of feathery excavators just below your feet.

Wes Bancroft



A burrow of a Wedge-tailed Shearwater,
Cape Vlamingh

Photo courtesy Wes Bancroft



Cape Vlamingh, Rottnest Island
Photo courtesy Wes Bancroft

IN MEMORY OF COLIN ROBERT DAVIS

It was with great sadness that we learnt that our dear friend Colin had passed away, age 65, on 29 December 2004 after a prolonged illness.

Colin was an electrician by trade and affectionately known as “Col”.

Many members will recall Colin as one of our excursion leaders always happy to share his favourite birding spots. One of these was Bashford Nature Reserve near Lancelin, which had a known Barn Owl roost.

Colin had an “exclusive” as the leader of the obligatory summer excursion to Lake McLarty where he freely imparted his extensive local knowledge of waders.

Lake McLarty was a wetland close to Colin’s heart, and he was passionate about its preservation.

As soon as the summer excursion to Lake McLarty had been completed, Colin would be busy arranging his next

undertaking, the Rottnest Island campout, which formed part of the annual National Wader Survey. From all accounts, fond memories of these February campouts will remain with the participants for years to come. Is it true that some cabins had tiger snakes in the cupboards, or was that an embellishment that has grown in stature over time?

Some people have a love of life and Colin was a great example. He had it in ample proportions: his enthusiasm was infectious, he got on with people from all walks of life, he celebrated life and he would rise to any challenge with zest although he had a bit of a mischievous streak in him.

Nevertheless Colin had a much deeper, near philosophical, side to his personality. This manifested itself in his “What’s in a name” articles in WA Bird Notes. It can now be revealed that Colin was ‘Geronticus’, the author of these articles.

We will never forget the campouts at Lake MacLeod where, after a hard day’s tramping through the mud and mangroves, we would return to camp exhausted but excited about the day’s work. At night after the embers of the campfire had died down we would turn in and Col would climb onto the

roof top of his trusty old green Land Cruiser (that’s where he slept). Then we would all gaze up at the Milky Way, marvel at the clear outback skies and discuss the next day’s plans.

The Irish outback coffees he made were memorable—as Tony recalls—where was the coffee?!

Colin was the person who got the surveys of Lake MacLeod off the ground and helped establish the importance of this wetland complex for birds. In the process he built up a professional working relationship for Birds Australia with Dampier Salt.

Lake MacLeod has proved to be an important Curlew Sandpiper stopover and, on occasion, supports tens of thousands of waders and waterbirds. Members will recall Colin’s interesting article in the last issue of *Western Australian Bird Notes* (No 112, December 2004): “Wader Study Group Surveys at Lake MacLeod, March 2004”.

Colin was a frequent contributor to *Western Australian Bird Notes* and his articles were

informative and a joy to read. His contributions to Birds Australia were many fold. He led excursions, was the co-ordinator for the National Wader Survey in WA each summer and winter, was an advocate for the protection of Lake McLarty and Lake MacLeod and had a strong interest in the waders at Alfred Cove.

Betty recounted an uplifting event: Colin spent his last days at the Murdoch Community Hospice and a day shortly before his passing the local honeyeaters all gathered outside his bedroom window as if to say their last farewell to this great birder. They must have known.

On a personal note, we recall spending many birding trips with Colin, be it searching for Long-toed Stints at Kogolup or watching White-bellied Sea-eagles at Lake McLarty. Colin was always a generous and kind person willing to share his wealth of experience and we will treasure the memories of our many birding trips. Visits to Lake McLarty will never be the same without you, “Col”.

Our heartfelt sympathy goes to Colin’s partner Betty and family.

Tony Kirkby and Marcus Singor



Colin Davis (right) with fellow birdos Tony Kirkby (left) and Dave Bauer (centre)
Photo courtesy Tony Kirkby

VALE PETER CONGREVE

22 December 1915 - 5 January 2005

Peter served with the British army with the rank of Major before moving to Kenya where he managed a tea plantation. After moving to Western Australia he joined the National Parks Board, now CALM, and ended his career as Superintendent of Yanchep National Park.

Always interested in birds, Peter joined the RAOU in January 1970. He took part in many field outings and campouts, demonstrating a remarkable ability to find nests. He was enrolled with the Australian Bird Banding Scheme in 1980 with Authority No. A965, and became a very productive and knowledgeable bander.

After retiring from state government service Peter and Di served as wardens of Eyre Bird Observatory from 6

October 1980 to 19 June 1984. Peter's contribution to Eyre was considerable and significant. He was one of the initial work party in 1977, helping to make the scarp passable for vehicles and making the building habitable and useable as a bird observatory.

Peter's banding activity also expanded on previous research at Eyre and established a solid foundation for the banding database. He developed ageing and sexing criteria for a number of honeyeater species.

To this day Peter and Di remain as having been the longest serving wardens at Eyre and their hospitality was well known.

Birds Australia extends condolences to Di and family on behalf of members who knew him.

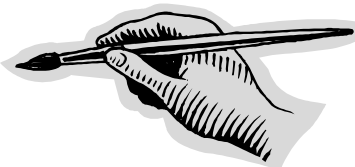
Perry de Rebeira

WHERE ARE OUR ARTISTS?

Your drawings are invited for publication in *WA Bird Notes*.

So when you go away for that weekend campout, take your sketch pad and draw that bird or special scene.

Black pen and ink drawings are preferred as they scan better.



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 (9383 7749). Sightings are included on the BAWA web site (<birdswa.iinet.net.au>) as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in the next WABN. Please note that, while all care is taken in compiling this list, these reports are not authenticated records: researchers are advised to check with the compilers and observers before citing.

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. This was a phenomenal quarter for major rarities. A **Black-capped Kingfisher** (1st for Australia) was found near Merredin, a **Northern Pintail** near Wyndham, a **Sabine's Gull** on Eighty Mile Beach, a **Grey Wagtail** and

an **Oriental Reed-Warbler** at Adele Island, and a host of rarities at Ashmore Reef. A **Rockhopper Penguin** at Albany, a **Yellow Wagtail** at Lake McLarty and a **Franklin's Gull** at Carnarvon seem common in comparison.

In the metropolitan area **Freckled Ducks** have returned to Herdsman Lake in good numbers (up to 20 so far), **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos** are being recorded more often on the coastal plain, Fairy Terns recorded breeding on the Swan River for the first time in many years and 2500 **Black-winged Stilts** at Thomsons Lake was the highest number at that site for many years. **Royal Spoonbill** was seen twice, the first since last summer.

In the Pilbara, the most significant sighting was a large flock of **Pictorella Mannikins** at Yarrarie Station.

In the Kimberley, sightings of **Freckled Duck**, **Chestnut Teal**, **Red-necked Phalaropes** and **Painted Snipe** were other highlights.

A pelagic trip to Ashmore Reef confirmed the presence of **Jouanin's Petrel**, **Leach's Storm-Petrel** and **Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel** in addition to good numbers of the other species normally recorded in late October. At Ashmore Reef, they found major rarities of **Island Monarch** (1st for Australia), **Grey Wagtail**, **Oriental Reed-Warbler** and **Arctic Warbler**.

Two trips to Christmas Island found **Asian Koel**, another first for Australia if it is accepted as a separate species from Common Koel.

METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

Emu – 1, 21/12/04, Paganoni Swamp (Golden Bay) – MN (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

Stubble Quail – 1 male, 06/01/05, Floreat Waters (Herdsmen) – LF (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

Royal Spoonbill – 1, 05/12/04, North Lake (North Lake) – BS * 1, 09/01/05, Lake Joondalup (Joondalup) – RP, SP (uncommon in the south west)

Spotless Crane – 1, 05/11/04, Bickley Swamp (Rottnest Island) – PF (1st record for Rottnest)

Black-tailed Godwit – 2, 18/12/04, Thomsons Lake (Beeliar) – RoP (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

Wood Sandpiper – 11, 11/01/05, Maurice Hamer Reserve (Herdsmen) – RP (high count near Perth)

Terek Sandpiper – 1, 05/12/04, Alfred Cove (Attadale) – DH (uncommon on the Swan River)

Black-winged Stilt – 2500, 16/11/04, Thomsons Lake (Beeliar) – MS (very high count in the metropolitan area)

Banded Lapwing – 28, 05/11/04, Cricket Oval (Rottnest Island) – PF (high count)

Fairy Tern – breeding, 12/04, Point Walter (Bicton) – MB per MBa (apparently the first breeding on the Swan River for decades)



BAWA volunteers and some local residents from Badgeup on a monitoring trip in 2004 joined CALM staff to help conduct searches for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo nests.

Photo courtesy Leonie McMahon

Whiskered Tern – 50, 10/01/05, Lake Joondalup (Joondalup) – PF (high count near Perth)

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo – 5, 06/12/04, Manning Road / Leach Highway (Bentley) – CS * ca 10, 7/12/04, between Thompson Lake and Beeliar Drive – MW * 10, 11/12/04, Kogolup Lake (Beeliar) – JS * 12, 31/12/04, Aderyn Reserve (Willetton) – BD * 5, 12/01/05, Dyson Street (Kensington) – BO (increasing on the coastal plain)

SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Freckled Duck – 10, 29-31/12/04, Bokarup Swamp Nature Reserve (Cranbrook) – CMG, PT, IW (uncommon this far southwest)

Rockhopper Penguin – 1, 25/01/05, Goode Beach (Albany) – per CD (very uncommon in WA; died in care; specimen in WA Museum)

Great-winged Petrel – 1, 21/11/04, Lake Unicap (Cranbrook) – WZ *et al.* (very unusual inland)

Cattle Egret – 18, 16/01/05, Corio Road (Murray) – LG (high count for the south west)

Little Bittern – heard, 20/11/04, Kulunilup Nature Reserve (Cranbrook) – PT, IW, ABo (seldom reported)

Glossy Ibis – 110, 25/12/04, Lake McLarty (Murray) – BR (record count for the south west)

Black-tailed Native-hen – 1, 18/12/04, King River (Albany) – MaN (uncommon this far southwest)

Black-tailed Godwit – 5, 23/01/05, Lake McLarty (Murray) – JD * 1, 05/01/05, Hay River mouth (Albany) – ABo (uncommon in the south west)

Wood Sandpiper – 22, 24/12/04, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MCr (high count for the south west)

Pectoral Sandpiper – 1, 16/10/04, Lake Corycup (Katanning) – DS * 1, 03/01/05, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MN (uncommon in the south west)

Ruff – 2, 24/12/04 to 16/01/2005, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MCr *et al.* * 2, 16/01/05, Corackin Swamp (Katanning) – DS, WZ (uncommon in the south west)

Banded Stilt – 2500, 02/01/05, Lake Clifton (Waroona) – BR (high count for the south west)

Oriental Plover – 1 first year bird, 6/02/05, Lake McLarty (Murray) – JD

Banded Lapwing – 80, 6/02/05, Greenlands Road, near Lake McLarty (Murray) – JD

Whiskered Tern – 250, 25/12/04, Lake McLarty (Murray) – BR * 250, 02/01/05, Lake McLarty (Murray) – JD (high count for the south west)

White-winged Black Tern – 2, 24/12/04, Lake McLarty (Murray) – MCr * 8, 16/01/05, Lake McLarty (Murray) – JD (uncommon in the south west)

BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER – 1 immature female, 03/01/05, farm North Burracoppin (Merredin) – HJM (1st record for Australia; taken into care but died; specimen lodged in WA Museum)

Yellow Wagtail – 1, 02/01/05, Lake McLarty (Murray) – JD (vagrant in the south west)

ARID ZONE

Blue-billed Duck – male and female, 10/01/05, sewage ponds (Carnarvon) – DP (uncommon this far north)

Black-tailed Native-hen – 100+, 26/11/04, McNeil Claypan (Carnarvon) – LG (high count at this site)

Little Curlew – 3, 01/01/05, McNeil Claypan (Carnarvon) – LG (uncommon in this shire)

Ruff – 2, 02/12/04, McNeil Claypan (Carnarvon) – LG (uncommon in this shire)

Red-necked Phalarope – 38, 02/11/04, salt works (Port Hedland) – AB, CH (high count for WA)

Red-necked Avocet – 100+, 26/11/04, McNeil Claypan (Carnarvon) – LG (high count for this shire)

Oriental Pratincole – 3, 01/01/05, McNeil Claypan (Carnarvon) – LG (uncommon in this shire)

FRANKLIN'S GULL – 1 adult winter plumage, 26/12/04, sewage ponds (Carnarvon) – EP (rare in Australia; description provided)

Yellow Wagtail – 2, 22/01/05, Festival Grounds (Carnarvon) – LG (rare in this shire)

Pictorella Mannikin – 145, 15/12/04, Eel Creek on Yarrie Station (East Pilbara) – GS (rare this far south)

KIMBERLEY

Plumed Whistling-Duck – 100, 19/01/05, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – RC (uncommon on coastal waters)

Freckled Duck – 1, 19/01/05, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – RC
* 4, 28/01/05, Lake Eda (Broome) – AB, CH (uncommon in the Kimberley)

Chestnut Teal – 1 male, 28/01/05, Lake Eda (Broome) – AB, CH (rare in the Kimberley)

NORTHERN PINTAIL – 1 male, 23/11/04, Marglu Billabong (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CM, PC (2nd record for WA; photographs; BARC submission being prepared; see article elsewhere in this issue)

Pink-eared Duck – 1, 18/01/05, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – RC (uncommon on coastal waters)

Hardhead – 100, 18/01/05, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – RC (uncommon on coastal waters)

Streaked Shearwater – 1, 19/11/04, off Adele Island – AB, GS (uncommon in WA)

Red-footed Booby – 14 including 2 chicks, 23/11/04, Adele Island – AB, GS (uncommon in WA)

Black-tailed Native-hen – 1, 28/12/04, golf course (Broome) – AB (uncommon in the shire)

Red-necked Phalarope – 1, 10/12/04, Taylor's Lagoon (Broome) – AB *et al.* (uncommon in the Kimberley)

Painted Snipe – 1, 29/10/04, Theda Station (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – RM (uncommon in WA)

Banded Stilt – 1, 28/01/05, Lake Eda (Broome) – AB, CH (uncommon in the Kimberley)

SABINE'S GULL – 1 in 2nd winter plumage, 22/11/04, Eighty Mile Beach (Broome) – DR *et al.* (4th record for WA; BARC submission required)

Northern Fantail – 1, 02/12/04, Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) – RC (uncommon at this site)

Yellow Wagtail – 1, 20/11/04, Adele Island – AB *et al.* (1st record for Adele Island)

GREY WAGTAIL – 1, 20/11/04, Adele Island – AB *et al.* (3rd record for WA; BARC submission required)

ORIENTAL REED-WARBLER – 1 caught, 23/11/04, Adele Island – AB, GS (rarely reported in WA)

ASHMORE REEF

Tahiti Petrel – 21, 25-30/10/04, Ashmore Reef pelagic – GS, MC *et al.* (uncommon in WA)

Bulwer's Petrel – 38, 25-30/10/04, Ashmore Reef pelagic – GS, MC *et al.* (uncommon in WA)

Jouanin's Petrel – 2, 30/10/04, south of Scott Reef – GS, MC *et al.* (very uncommon in WA)

Streaked Shearwater – 330, 30-31/10/04, Ashmore Reef pelagic – GS, MC *et al.* (high count)

Wedge-tailed Shearwater – 13, 25-31/10/04, Ashmore Reef pelagic – GS, MC *et al.* (uncommon in this area)

Leach's Storm-Petrel – 1, 26/10/04, Ashmore Reef pelagic – GS, MC *et al.* (rare in Australia; BARC submission required)

Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel – 26, 25-30/10/04, Ashmore Reef pelagic – GS, MC *et al.* (uncommon in WA)

Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel – 7, 25-30/10/04, Ashmore Reef pelagic – GS, MC *et al.* (uncommon in WA)

Asian Dowitcher – 1, 28/10/04, sand bar between Middle and East Islands – GS, MC *et al.* (uncommon at Ashmore)

Oriental Cuckoo – 12, 27-29/10/04, West Island – GS, MC *et al.* (high count)

Common Koel – 1 sub adult male, 27/10/04, West Island – GS, MC *et al.* (1st record for Ashmore)

ISLAND MONARCH – 1 juvenile, 28/10/04, West Island – GS, MC *et al.* (1st record for Australia; photographs; BARC submission prepared)

GREY WAGTAIL – 1, 27/10/04, on Indonesian boat near West Island – GS, MC *et al.* (1st record for Ashmore; photograph; BARC submission prepared)

ORIENTAL REED-WARBLER – 2, 29/10/04, West Island – GS, MC *et al.* (1st record for Ashmore; BARC submission required)

ARCTIC WARBLER – 2, 28-29/10/04, West Island – GS,
MC *et al.* (photographs; BARC submission prepared)

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Intermediate Egret – 1, 22/11/04 to 06/12/04, golf course –
MC *et al.*, CT (uncommon on Christmas Island)

Striated Heron – 1, 22/11/04 to 06/12/04, Waterfall Beach
– MC *et al.*, CT (uncommon on Christmas Island)

Nankeen Night Heron – 1, 22/11/04 to 29/11/04, Hugh's
Dale – MC *et al.* (uncommon on Christmas Island)

Oriental Cuckoo – 3, 22/11/04 to 29/11/04, various sites –
MC *et al.* (uncommon on Christmas Island)

ASIAN KOEL – 1 female, 22/11/04 to 29/11/04, Silver City
– MC *et al.* * male and female, 29/11/04 to 06/12/04,
Parks Australia office – CT (description provided; 1st
records for Australia; probable split from Common
Koel)

Sacred Kingfisher – 1, 22/11/04 to 06/12/04, Chinese
Cemetery – MC *et al.*, CT (uncommon on Christmas
Island)

Grey Wagtail – 8, 22/11/04 to 06/12/04, Murray Road –
MC *et al.*, CT (high number on Christmas Island)

COCOS ISLAND

White-breasted Waterhen – 4+, 07/12/04, airstrip West
Island – GL (1st record for Cocos Island)

White-winged Black Tern – 1+, 07/12/04, North Lagoon
West Island – GL (uncommon on Cocos Island)

Oriental Cuckoo – 1 found dead, 07/12/04, North Lagoon
West Island – per GL (1st record for Cocos Island)

OBSERVERS

AB = Adrian Boyle	IW = Ian Wheeler
ABO = Anne Bondin	JD = John Darnell
AC = Alan Collins	JS = Jeff Spencer
BARC = Birds Australia Rarities Committee	LF = Liz Fox
BD = Brian Davis	LG = Les George
BO = Beverley O'Brien	MaN = Margaret Nash
BR = Bill Russell	MB = Marlene Barling
BS = Bill Smith	MBa = Mike Bamford
CD = Charlie Davies	MC = Mike Carter (Vic)
CH = Chris Hassell	MCr = Michael Craig
CM = Catherine McFadden (NT)	MN = Mark Newman
CMG = Cheryl and Martin Gole	MS = Marcus Singor
CS = Claire Stevenson	MW = Matt Williams
CT = Coate's Tours	PC = Paul Clarke (NT)
DH = David Henderson	PF = Paul Freeman
DP = David Parker (NSW)	PT = Peter Taylor
DR = Danny Rogers (Vic)	RC = Ricki Coughlan
DS = David Secomb	RM = Robin Maher
EP = Easy Patterson	RoP = Robyn Pickering
GL = Gil Langfield (Vic)	RP = Ryan Phillips
GS = George Swann	SP = Steve Phillips
HJM = Harold and Josephine Millington	WZ = Wayne Zadow



Letters to the Editors



Dear Editors

As in the enclosed note* a reference is made to a list of
Birds of the Busselton Area, compiled in your office; I am
sure that you will want to comment and check on what
information your evaluation of the status of the Singing
Honeyeater in Busselton is based. I realise that the BAWA
list covers a much larger area than the town. There may well
be other pockets of occurrence in the large Busselton 'area'
but, if so, it is even more peculiar that the town has not been
colonised.

As far as my experience goes, four species of Meliphagidae
are common in Busselton: Red Wattlebird, Western
Spinebill and Brown and New Holland Honeyeaters. I have
the impression that the last-mentioned species has increased
in recent years, while the others seem stable.

G F Mees

* (Ed. Note: See Members' Contributions.)

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

This is my final report as Chairperson of BAWA, and I think it is both appropriate and deserved that I be somewhat reflective; that I consider what we have done over the last three years or more, and where we are going.

From where I've been sitting, it has been a busy and sometimes almost tumultuous three years. There have been regular events such as excursions and our monthly meetings, and we have had project officers working on urban birds, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, Hooded Plover and Ground Parrot. The excursions programme alone is astounding, with over 50 half-day or whole day excursions annually, as well as campouts on an almost monthly basis. We have continued with station surveys, wader surveys and activities at Stirling Retreat. There have also been special events such as Perth Birdwatch, a school art competition, introductory courses to bird-watching, a school environmental competition and displays at a variety of fairs and festivals, including the major wildflower festival at King's Park. WA Bird Notes continues to be published, including our 100th edition, and remains much-admired both within WA and elsewhere in Australia.

There have also been major changes; some obvious, some more in the background. The management of Eyre Bird Observatory is now closely tied to BAWA and, of course, we have a new office in Peregrine House. With growing numbers of members and activities, we have formalised our management structure not to create unnecessary bureaucracy, but to ensure that our organisation gets on with its business efficiently. I hope we do that! A draft document entitled "Operational Guidelines for the Executive Committee and Sub-Committees of BAWA (Inc.*)" seems far removed from an organisation that some people think consists of a bunch of bird-watchers. But it is a document we need because not only is there a lot involved in organising a bunch of bird-watchers, we are a lot more than that.

Rather conveniently, that brings me to the point that I really want to consider, because as Chair I have often found myself wondering what BAWA is all about. The President of the United States of America allegedly has a sign on his desk that says "The Buck Stops Here!" There are times when I have felt like that. It really makes you think when one week you are accused of pandering to bird-watchers and to be steering BAWA away from conservation, only to have someone the following week demanding that resources of "the bird club" not be wasted on conservation issues, for which it is suggested a separate organisation is needed! With such disparate views, what is BAWA all about?

Overall, Birds Australia started out as a union of talented amateur ornithologists at a time when there were virtually no professional ornithologists anyway. They got together to share information, to carry out activities upon which we now frown, like collecting eggs, and to publish a journal in which they could report their observations on Australia's birds. They also, quickly, became involved in conservation issues.

The WA branch of Birds Australia was established on similar lines, and the report on the first meeting of 22nd May 1943 clearly states that one of the aims of the organisation is to inform and educate members so they better understand Australia's birds. This sounds a little condescending, but Dom Serventy wrote that "We shall find our hobby much more interesting the more we know about it". The emphasis was clearly upon learning about birds, and it was hoped that meetings would provide opportunities for guided discussions or tutorials on various aspects of ornithology. We still do that; but much more.

Dom Serventy's words do give us an idea of part of what BA is about and, as the bumper sticker says, it is "more than just birdwatching". The byline on the BA letterhead is "Conservation through Knowledge", while Wingspan claims to be "for birds and birdwatchers". That all seems clear and the member who called BAWA a bird club was only half right. But how could that member also have been half wrong? Should we worry when our own members aren't always sure what we are for?

Less than a third of BAWA members are actively involved in BAWA activities, and I am told that is about the right proportion for a club of any sort. Fifty members or so come to meetings at any one time, perhaps 100 across the year. Some 200 members go on excursions and another 100 or so get involved in projects. This is supposed to be good, but the figures were only slightly less 20 years ago. Our membership has barely doubled in those 20 years and is still below 1000 in WA. This makes me ask questions: Why do we need members? Why do people join BAWA? Why do they stay? Why do they leave?

I don't have real answers, but I want to make some comments that will at least keep people thinking. Or keep them awake. I would like to see BA membership grow massively not because that means more membership fees, but because a large membership sends a powerful message to society, including politicians, about the importance of birds. I want serious bird-watchers in 100 years time to have the same bird-watching opportunities that we have; and we won't achieve that by just being a bunch of birdos. However, I don't think that growth of BA rests with increasing numbers of bird-watchers, but with raising awareness of birds within the broader community and

getting members of that broader community to join us. Having 20 000 members who can tell a Singing Honeyeater from a Red Wattlebird but who never go bird-watching is more important than having 100 members who will rush up to Broome to see a rare wader. However, those 100 may well depend upon the existence of those 20 000.

Many non-members who encounter BA now think that it is a bird-watching club. To be brutally honest, I think that puts some people off. I know it is the reason why some people leave: 'We don't have the time/interest to go bird-watching, so there was no point in remaining members'. We need to present ourselves to society as a group that achieves a balance between bird-watching, research and conservation. Perhaps I should throw education in there as well. We need to attract members to an organisation that is seen to be doing something for birds, not just looking at them. We are doing that already, but I don't think many of us realise how important it is to be aware of what we do, and to make other people aware of our activities.

What I am talking about isn't new. When the British RSPB and the equivalent group in The Netherlands grew during the 1980s and 1990s respectively, they did so because they re-invented themselves. The Audubon Society in the United States did the same thing. They became household names synonymous with caring about birds, caring about the environment, informing people about birds; and, yes, bird-watching. When we look at what BA does in Australia and BAWA achieves in WA, we are clearly already the sort of organisation I am talking about, but we haven't worked out how to tell people that yet.

So how do we go about that? I wish I knew, but just think about the number of times you have been asked

about what you get for your membership fee.

Wingspan looks like a pretty slim volume, doesn't it? HANZAB is much more impressive but so, so specialised. I suspect that growth in our membership lies with people who have some interest in birds, and who are presented with an organisation that might be of some direct benefit to them but which, most of all, they will see as achieving things on their behalf. When we run activities, whether it is a bird walk, a bird talk, a research project or a school competition, we are running that on behalf of our membership. When you join BA, you aren't paying for 4 copies of *Wingspan* a year; you are paying to support an organisation that is out there doing things that you, as an individual, cannot do. You are supporting the running of introductory bird-watching courses; you are supporting the people who run the stall at the Wildflower Festival; you are supporting the people who plan excursions and write letters on conservation issues; and you are supporting the National Office in its regular meetings with staff from the office of the Federal Minister for the Environment. Bird-watching and learning about birds, which may have been the primary activities of BA half a century ago, are still important, but to me they are a means to an end, and that end is achieving the conservation of Australia's birds.

It remains for me to thank all those who have helped BAWA in any way over the past three years. That includes members who do nothing more than pay their fees, but I'd like to thank everyone who does more than that, and to acknowledge my committee and the various sub-committees for all their tremendous efforts. An organisation like BA gives people an opportunity to make a difference; but the organisation would be nothing without those people.

Dr Mike Bamford



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REACHING OUT

175th WA Anniversary Project

Three thousand schoolchildren and 22 BAWA members were involved in the 175th Anniversary School Conservation project last year. This conservation project was for the study of and participation in restoration and maintenance of a reserve, bushland or wetland, including a bird survey, in or near the school grounds.

It seemed a daunting task to complete this project by the end of the year once we received the grant from the Western Australian government in the second round. But such an opportunity and a challenge were not to be missed. Children are the world's future and some of those children will eventually be involved in looking after the environment of which birds are an important part.

With cooperation from the Western Australian Department of Education we were able to send details of the competition to all the primary and secondary schools in metropolitan Perth. It is sometimes difficult to reach the teacher who is interested in your project and willing to implement it, so with a time span of just over two months for replies, we waited anxiously. Only one secondary school replied but 15 primary schools accepted. The grant had then to be re-approved to use only in primary schools. Confirmation was granted and two BAWA members visited each school to provide whatever help they required. They gave advice, slide shows, walks and talks, and were received, in most cases, with enthusiasm by the children and teachers. Two schools did not require any help and one school could not complete their project on time. Presentations had to be sent to the BAWA office by 31 October 2004.

Chairman Mike Bamford and his wife Mandy were the judges. Their assessment of the school projects was as follows:

	Primary School	Award
1 st Prize:	Wembley Downs	\$825.00
2 nd "	Glen Forrest	495.00
3 rd "	Bicton	330.00
Highly Commended:	Kardinya	265.00
Highly Commended:	Bull Creek	265.00

The remaining schools each received \$165.00 for their participation in the project.

Prizes were for the purpose of facilitating the project only. Mike Bamford presented the first prize winners their award and a certificate of participation, BAWA members presented the remaining. The project was completed before the end of the school year.



Chairman Mike Bamford at Wembley Downs Primary School with teacher Mrs Ann Evans and pupils India Lynn and Julia Jardine.

Photo courtesy Rebecca Holland

It was a worthwhile effort and we have been invited back to many of the schools to help with the continuation of their projects into the next year. Our special thanks to the Western Australian Department of Education and Birds Australia members Barry Angus, Mike and Mandy Bamford, Robert Davis, Ron Dibbons, Tom Delaney, Ray Flannagan, Valerie Hemsley, Alan and Rose Jones, Wynton Maddeford, Jenny Muir, Clive and Wendy Napier, Brenda Newbey, Frank O'Connor, Ian Rudd, Stella Stewart-Wynne, Catherine Van Delft, Brice Wells and

Jennifer Wilcox. The Public Relations Sub-committee is grateful for your time and contribution to the project. WELL DONE.

Elsa Dabbs
Public Relations Sub-Committee

CARNABY'S BLACK-COCKATOO RECOVERY PROJECT

The last six months have been busy ones for the project. During this time we have monitored key sites throughout another breeding season, completed a hollow repair program and changed funding bodies.

Monitoring in 2004 Breeding Season

Once again I was joined by a group of dedicated volunteers to monitor at key breeding sites in the northern wheatbelt and Great Southern between September and December 2004. Our main objective was to consolidate data obtained in

previous years. We found additional active hollows at each of the sites monitored, an indication of our increased familiarity with the sites and knowledge of individual hollows. It was interesting to note that at a number of sites we observed fewer Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos around during our visits. Many thanks to the volunteers for their efforts and support throughout the season.

Hollow Repair Program

In 2004 Birds Australia received a small grant to repair hollows at key breeding sites of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. The funds came from the Western Australian Minister for the Environment's Community Conservation grant program. A team of volunteers, John Lauri, Bob Veletta and Tom Kemp, repaired or carried out maintenance on 900 hollows in 2004 at five different properties in the northern wheatbelt.

Monitoring in the 2004 breeding season indicated that almost 50% of the repaired hollows at one property, 20% at another and 36% at a third were used by Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos. At a fourth property 7% of repaired hollows were used and at the final property no breeding pairs of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo returned to the site at all in 2004 so the effectiveness of repairs can not yet be judged. These results, although preliminary, are very encouraging.

Call for Volunteers to Do Hollow Repairs in 2005

We have successfully obtained further funding from the same Community Conservation program to continue the hollow repair program in 2005.

John, Bob and Tom will again carry out hollow repairs over two trips in March and April 2005. However, we are looking for additional volunteers who are prepared to go on a couple of extra trips between April and July to conduct further repairs. Most of the work will be carried out in the northern wheatbelt.

It will be possible to join John Lauri on the April trip (4th to 8th April) to see what the work involves. For further details please call Leonie McMahon on the numbers provided below to discuss this. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Once again we thank the Western Australian Minister for the Environment for her on-going support of this program.

New Structure of Project

We are now funded for the next three years by the Department of Environment and Heritage through a 'Cross Regional' funding program. This means Birds Australia will be working in liaison with several Natural Resource Management councils, in particular the Northern Agricultural Catchment Council (NACC), the South West Catchment Council (SWCC) and the South Coast Regional Initiative Project Team (SCRIPT). The Northern Agricultural Catchment Council is the lead or sponsoring region for the project. We also hope to work with the Swan Catchment Council and the Avon Catchment Council in the future.

To date Birds Australia has worked at breeding sites located in the Moore Catchment in the Northern Wheatbelt and the

Blackwood Catchment in the Great Southern. As a result of the new funding structure the project will now take on a more cross regional approach.

From September 2003 to September 2004 the project was funded by LotteriesWest and for this support we were extremely grateful.

For further information about the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project, contact Leonie McMahon on 0438 678492 or by email (<ljmcmahon@bigpond.com>).

You can also visit the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo webpage on the Birds Australia WA website in the Projects section.

Leonie McMahon



A female Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo occupying a hollow that was repaired earlier in 2004 as part of the hollow repair program.

Photo courtesy Leonie McMahon

STATUS OF THE SINGING HONEYEATER IN BUSSELTON

The Singing Honeyeater *Lichenostomus virescens* has adapted remarkably well to life in urban and suburban Perth and Fremantle. This is not a recent development but dates from the beginning of European settlement and the foundation of these towns (Stranger, 2003, *W.A Bird Notes* 107: 24-25).

It also ranges down the coast and occurs in the centre of Bunbury. In a list of *Birds of the Busselton Area* (Birds Australia WA, 2001), the Singing Honeyeater is marked as "Common". One might deduce from this that its status here is similar to that in Perth: that it is a common bird in the town of Busselton.

This conflicts with my experience. My nearest observation to Busselton was on 5 May 1968, of a single individual near the Busselton rubbish tip, just over the drain, at that time well outside the town although now reached by development. At the time of my observation, the *Banksia littoralis* was in flower and had attracted honeyeaters of several species. It was a beautiful place. Councils are of course known for choosing places of high aesthetic and biological value to locate their tips.

Farther south, ca. 10 km from the coast, there is a piece of remnant native vegetation that has since become the Ambergate Regional Park. At the time of my first visit, 30 years ago, I found a small breeding population of Singing Honeyeaters there, probably no more than a few pairs, and it continues to exist. Apart from the one observation at the rubbish tip, this is the nearest location to the town of Busselton from where I know the species. The fact that it occurs so near Busselton poses the question as to why it has failed to colonise the town. Sooner or later the Singing Honeyeater will become established in Busselton, but it seems worth recording that as yet it has not.

G F Mees

LAKE KING

There is a straight road from Lake Grace eastward with only one (though long) curve in 176 km. Lake King, situated 44 km before the eastern end of the road, is a typical small crossroads township with all the usual appurtenances of such a town. These, in the order seen on driving from the west, are: cemetery, sports oval, school, store with petrol, tavern and church (unusually fine). These features are surrounded by a mallee woodland.

However, the passing motorist is unlikely to be aware of the existence of 10 km of walk trails through the mallee. Not

only are these trails clearly marked, but they also have many signs for the botanically minded, which reveal grevilleas, hakea, melaleucas, callitris, daviesia and eucalypts. These last include, among others, *E. eremophila*, *transcontinentalis*, *salmonophloia*, *salubris* (or *diptera*), *flocktoniae* and *melanoxydon*. A well produced and informative pamphlet has a map of the four marked trails, lists the botanical specimens to be seen on the trails and gives a list of the bird species seen.

Anne and I spent three days (9-11 September 2004) walking the Lake King trails. One trail is over part of the golf course, the others are among the trees. There is also a small wetland. The weather was adverse throughout, being cold (the worst being 9°C at mid-day) and partially overcast, which was not positive for observation.

The Lake King pamphlet lists 32 bushbirds as having been seen along the walk trails. Of these we saw 25, but we observed ten species additional to those listed in the pamphlet.

Eight kilometres east of the town is the airfield, the runways for which are cut in the bush, which extends unbroken to the Frank Hann National Park and beyond. Easy of access, the bush at the sides of the runways contained many birds, especially White-cheeked and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters. The latter species very helpfully likes to perch on the top of bushes and was in greater numbers than we have ever seen elsewhere, one bush supporting 14 Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters with an adjacent bush showing another ten. Birds seen at the airfield and not along the marked trails were Singing Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, White-fronted Chat, Crested Bellbird, Richard's Pipit and Grey Butcherbird, as well as a Spotted Harrier between town and airfield.

Birds listed as having been seen on the walk trails and seen by us were Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Regent Parrot, Australian Ringneck, Elegant Parrot, Weebill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Red Wattlebird, Yellow-throated Miner, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Southern Scrub-robin, White-browed Babbler, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Magpie-Lark, Willie Wagtail, Australian Magpie, Grey Currawong and Australian Raven.

The species we saw in addition to the pamphlet list were Nankeen Kestrel, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Spotted Nightjar (on the golf course, only my second sighting), Striated Pardalote, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Black-faced Woodswallow, Dusky Woodswallow (clinging to tree trunks low down and flying to the ground), Welcome Swallow and Tree Martin.

Lake King is a pleasant birding area and not as remote for coastal dwellers as may seem the case. Our thanks to Nancye and Dick Perkins for their hospitality and directions.

Bruce Buchanan

THE MAGPIES

The neighbourhood magpies have been a study for me from January 1998. This became a journal. I have identified each of the birds in their turn, utilising what I had learned from years spent researching dolphin identifications as a volunteer at Bunbury's Dolphin Discovery Centre.

I have recorded the group as it has changed over the years, witnessed initiations of new birds to the group, nesting and nest building activities including recycling of a windfall nest, and learned from their numerous alarm calls. Nature has a lot to teach us if we take time to listen!

This painting is of Magpie Girl F6, who is now the dominant female. She is now in her fifth nesting season. She is feeding her nestlings, and has yet to bring them down.

She had come in to the garden on a wet Sunday morning, and because we are such good friends, preened herself in my company. She was quite relaxed and I appreciated the blue-black tones in her lustrous feathers.

Sue Kalab



A painting of the magpies.
Courtesy Sue Kalab

HELP NEEDED TO GUARD AGAINST STARLINGS

WA Bird Notes readers are being urged to look out for and report European Starlings, which pose a threat to the State's agricultural industries and the environment. The Department of Agriculture currently spends over \$350 000 per year to prevent starlings from establishing in WA. However, birds have been present for some time at both Condingup and Munglinup, in the Esperance area. The Department of Agriculture recently set up a State Starling Management Advisory Committee to review current control activities and to raise awareness of this species with various stakeholder groups.

Starlings are a declared pest in Western Australia. They damage cultivated grain and horticulture crops, foul wool and can damage buildings through nesting. Starlings also compete with native birds for food and nesting sites, and have the potential to cause major negative impacts on the unique biodiversity of Western Australia. Where breeding populations become established they can also threaten tourism because they foul buildings and public spaces with their droppings.

Starlings are stocky birds with longish, fine, pointed beaks and short tails. They are about 21 cm in length and have glossy black feathers with a multi-coloured sheen, sometimes with spots. Young birds are a dull mouse brown colour but they may appear a patchy brown and black as they moult to adult plumage. On the ground starlings run about jerkily with quick jabs of their open bills into the soil in a sewing machine action; they do not hop. They fly by rapid wing movements interspersed by short glides. Flocks are often seen wheeling and turning quickly in tight flying groups. This is the main way in which starlings can be recognised at a distance.

The starling appears on an IUCN (World Conservation Union) list of 100 of the world's worst invasive alien species, along with the Common Myna, Cane Toad, Red Imported Fire Ant, Yellow Crazy Ant, Water Hyacinth and Lantana.

Anyone who suspects they may have seen starlings is asked to contact the office of the Department of Agriculture on tel. 9368 3666. All attempts possible should also be made to raise awareness with members of the public that this species is a severe pest and the time to prevent it establishing feral populations in Perth is now, not when it appears on the outskirts of the city.

More information about starlings can be found by visiting the Department of Agriculture's website at <www.agric.wa.gov.au>.

One hundred of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species can be viewed at <www.issg.org>.

HISTORICAL NOTE RE KARARA STATION

Many of the participants at last year's BAWA campout at Karara Station would have noticed the roofless ruins of three quite solid houses set in a straight line back from the old Rothsay Road (about 7 km SSW of the current homestead). These are all that remain of the one-time Dampawah State Farm, established in 1926.



Ruins of the State Farm at Karara.
Photo courtesy Trevor Stoneman.

The State Farm (later referred to as Experiment Farm and then as Research Station) was established to test the suitability for wheat growing of the low rainfall area outside the existing established wheatbelt. The combination of low rainfall, depression years and the onset of World War II resulted in the farm being closed down in 1940.

The first manager was Frank Gishubl who arrived at Dampawah in 1927 and lived in a tent for three years until the first two cement brick houses were built. Much of the time he was on his own, apart from occasional contract clearers (who used axes), fencers and well diggers. Gishubl Well was one he divined. He left Dampawah in 1933.

Trevor Stoneman

RAINBOW LORIKEETS—JUST HANGING ABOUT?

While birdwatching around Lake Monger, Leederville, about four km from the centre of Perth, we noticed a flock of about 30 Rainbow Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) in two nearby palm trees. The time was about 4.30 pm on a fine, late winter's day.

At first look at the flock there was one bird hanging, more or less motionless, upside down from the end of a single pendant leaf of a palm frond. As we watched, for at least 15 minutes, more birds began to hang upside down in an identical fashion, and from very similar palm leaves in both trees. While some were quite close together, hanging birds were often one or several metres away from any other hanging birds. At one stage there were at least nine birds hanging with their heads pointing to the ground, giving the impression at any distance of a small bat colony.

Several of the lorikeets remained hanging for all or most of the time we watched, and apart from switching from two feet holding on, to one foot, and from foot to foot, remained largely inactive. On a few occasions, and for short periods, two birds hanging near to each other might interact, perhaps touching bills for a while and wrestling gently, but overall

there was little interaction between hanging birds.

Volume four of HANZAB provides several pages of information on the behaviour and displays of Rainbow Lorikeets, which have been studied intensively in both captive and wild birds. There is reference in that information to birds hanging upside down during four forms of behaviour: (1) play, mainly stylised wrestling of couples or related birds; (2) courtship displays between breeding pairs; (3) agonistic encounters, usually between male neighbours; and (4) feeding, sometimes hanging upside

down from foliage to reach food items. There is no reference in HANZAB to hanging upside down as a more or less independent activity.

As noted above, the hanging birds we observed appeared to remain mainly independent of each other. We think that they were all in adult plumage, and although they may have been hanging in breeding pairs or family groups, we saw no signs or activities to indicate that this was the case. There was little indication that adopting the hanging position was part of a more complex set of activities relating to play, courtship or hierarchical status, and the birds were certainly not feeding.

We considered the possibility that hanging almost motionless may have been a way of obtaining the most efficient warming from the late afternoon sun. While this is a possibility, there did not seem to be a consistent direction in which hanging birds faced and some of them did not appear to be in full sunlight (although most were). We would be interested to know whether this 'static hanging' behaviour has been observed before in Rainbow Lorikeets, or other birds, and whether anyone is aware of its function.

John and Judy Blyth

NORTHERN PINTAIL—SECOND WA RECORD

The Northern Pintail is a common wintering species in southern California, USA, where I have lived and actively birded for over 10 years. I have seen thousands of individuals of both sexes, all ages and all plumages, but it was a big surprise to see one in the Kimberley.

This bird was seen by Paul Clarke and myself at Marlgu Billabong, Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve, 11 km S of Wyndham, on 23 November 2004. We observed it from a distance of about 80 m between 0900-1030 and 1230-1400. It was a bright overcast day with flat light and excellent visibility. We used Bausch & Lomb Elite 10x42 binoculars and a Swarovski ATS65 HD spotting 'scope. The accompanying photograph was taken through the spotting 'scope using a hand-held Nikon CoolPix 3200 digital camera.

The bird we saw was an adult male Northern Pintail in breeding plumage. The photograph shows the plumage pattern and the size of the bird in relation to nearby Pacific Black Ducks. The unusual shape of the bird was obvious, and we could clearly see the brown head with a white breast and white stripe running up the side of the neck.

When first seen at about 0900, the bird was swimming and actively feeding in the shallows at the far end of the lagoon, approximately 80 m from the viewing platform. While feeding, the bird swam slowly in a small area, repeatedly dipping its head below the surface for several seconds at a time. It did not actively interact with any of the numerous other waterfowl in the immediate vicinity. The bird fed for about 30 minutes and then retired to the muddy shore to sit quietly among other waterfowl. When we returned to the site at approx 1230 we were initially unable to relocate the pintail, but eventually found it asleep on the shore among and obscured by a large group of cormorants and Magpie Geese. During the 1-1/2 hrs while we were there the bird did not move, and we were only able to see it occasionally when other birds that obstructed our view moved aside.

I am not aware of any other species that may be confused with a male Northern Pintail in breeding plumage. The pintail shape is unique, and no other pintail species has a brown head with a white breast and white stripe running up the side of the neck.

I knew immediately upon seeing the bird that it was a rarity for Australia, although I was aware that there were some previous records. The first record for Australia, and the only previous record for WA, was a single bird seen at Lake Chandala in 1986 (Agar *et al.* 1988). Since then, the Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) has accepted two other records for Australia – one bird near Grafton, NSW, in August 2000, and one near Darwin in October-December 2003. The present record is also being submitted to BARC.



Northern Pintail at Marlgu Billabong, November 2004
Photo courtesy Catherine McFadden

Reference

Agar, G., Jaensch, R.P. and Vervest, R. (1988) A Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* in Australia. *Australian Bird Watcher* 12: 204-205.

Catherine McFadden

BOOBOOKS BREEDING IN PERTH

Early in December 2004 we received a phone call from Mrs Helen Seear enquiring about the number of young a Southern Boobook pair were likely to hatch.

As I answered the 'phone, I volunteered the information that two or three was the usual number, but that they occasionally laid as many as five eggs. Helen then informed me that a pair had laid in one of her nest boxes in Victoria Park, for the second year and had hatched and reared five chicks (two the year before).

Being rather amazed, I went to her house and saw seven boobooks together in one tree. I found it difficult to believe one pair could successfully rear five chicks in the metropolitan area, and discovered Helen had given them a little help, by leaving out occasional 'pinkies' (unfurred baby mice) for the parents to discover. She is a carer for injured and fledgling birds. Even so, five young reared in a heavily inhabited inner suburb was an amazing feat.

Brice Wells

KUNDIP NATURE RESERVE

Anne and I revisited Kundip each day from 16 to 19 December 2004 inclusive. It was noticeably drier than in 2003, which may account for the lower numbers of birds present and a species count of 41 compared to 48 previously.

Among our 41 were four 'new' species for the area—Spotted Nightjar, White-eared Honeyeater, Western Spinebill and Nankeen Kestrel. The kestrels had vocal young in a nest within 70 m of the reserve boundary, and were hunting over a wide area of the reserve.

Shapelle McNee and Brenda Newbey had visited the reserve six weeks earlier and noted 21 species while adding Rufous Fieldwren and a nesting Western Whipbird to the list.

Sadly, no more Western Bristlebirds were seen. The species list for the reserve now totals 54.

Bruce Buchanan

NOISY SCRUB-BIRDS, WESTERN WHIPBIRDS AND WILDFIRE AT MT MANYPEAKS

In late December 2004 a lightning strike ignited an area on the southern slopes of Mt Manypeaks, near Albany. This was to develop into a major challenge for fire fighters, and result in significant losses of Noisy Scrub-birds.

The first report of smoke was made to the CALM Albany office by a local fisherman around mid-day on the 31st of December. Resources were immediately mobilised to try and minimise the area burnt, but due to the inaccessibility and extreme flammability of the vegetation on the southern slopes this was never going to be a simple task.

Because of the known high conservation values, suppression of the wildfire was given a very high priority. Over 160 personnel, including CALM staff from as far away as Geraldton, were involved with the suppression activities. Four water bombers, accompanied by two spotter planes and one helicopter were used to try and minimise the area burnt. Unfortunately the high fuel loads made this very difficult, and after the efforts of the first few days it became a priority to ensure that the area burnt was contained within secure boundaries. The fire was under control by 10 January, but even as this is being written (beginning of February) pockets of vegetation associated with peat are still smouldering.

In 2001 55% of the total population of the Vulnerable Noisy Scrub-bird was located in the 4500 ha comprising Mt Manypeaks and the gullies and flats directly to the north. Other special values of this area include the presence of populations of the Western Whipbird (Western Heath subspecies), Western Ringtail Possum, Quokka, rare flora and relictual invertebrates. A small number of Western Bristlebirds were known from the periphery of the area.

Because of the rugged terrain, neither vehicles or machinery can access this area, which was last burnt in 1979. It had been recognised for some time that this presented quite a challenge for fire management. Recently, a strategy was developed to create a mosaic of fuel ages over a period of time. A range of people contributed to this strategy, including the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team and various fire management specialists. In 2004 the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team endorsed a prescription burn that was to be carried out as part of a fire management strategy for the Manypeaks ridge in winter 2005, but unfortunately the recent fire pre-empted this burn and we are now left with a blank slate on which to develop a new strategy for fire protection in this area.

The impact of the recent wildfire on the Noisy Scrub-bird was substantial. The loss of 4500 ha of

approximately 13 000 ha of optimal habitat, in addition to approximately 4000 ha of habitat that has been burnt by wildfires since 2001 means that there are only around 3500 ha of optimal scrub-bird habitat in the Albany area with a post-fire age that is suitable for scrub-birds. This highlights the difficulties of management – despite the best efforts and intentions it can be extremely difficult to control wildfire in the highly flammable heaths of the south coast.

The recent wildfire also highlights the importance, and historical successes, of the scrub-bird translocation program. Mt Manypeaks was the site chosen for the first translocation of Noisy Scrub-birds in 1983 with input and technical support from people like Don Merton, from New Zealand's Department of Conservation, assisting with the development of techniques specific to scrub-birds. The founder population of scrub-birds on Manypeaks was 31 birds (18 males and 13 females), released in 1983 and 1985. The growth in this area to a population index of 427 singing males in 2001 (Figure 1) was quite remarkable. Indications from 2004 surveys of an area of approximately 800 ha on the eastern end of Mt Manypeaks were that the scrub-bird population was continuing to increase. However, the recent wildfire has reduced scrub-bird numbers to roughly what they were ten years ago.

The Western Whipbird (Western Heath subspecies) population was also impacted by the wildfire. The Albany Management Zone (AMZ) was surveyed for this species in 2001 by Sarah Comer and Shapelle McNee. The area burnt in the wildfire contained habitat of approximately one quarter of the total AMZ population of whipbirds. In conjunction with wildfires in 2003 the habitat of approximately one third of the western heath subspecies of whipbird has been affected.



Wildfire at Mt Manypeaks, January 2005.

Photo courtesy CALM Albany

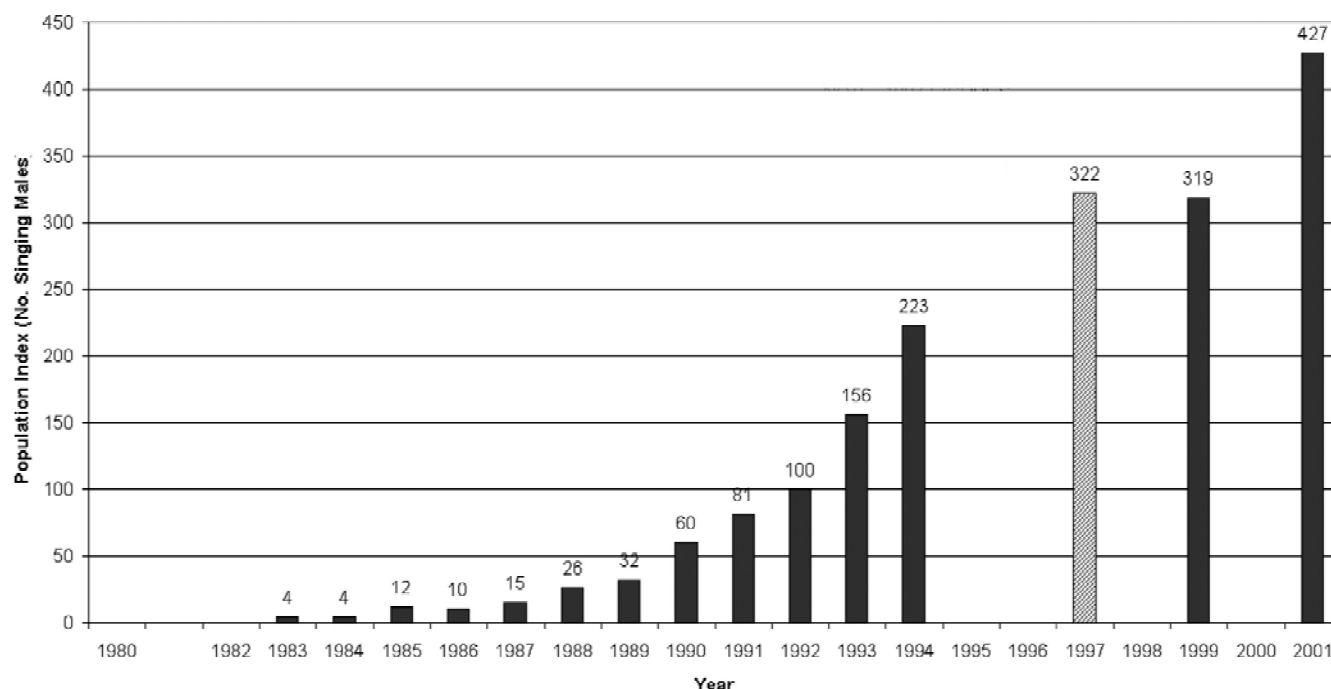


Figure 1: Noisy Scrub-bird population index, Mount Manypeaks. The 1997 figure is an estimate based on a partial survey.

Monitoring populations of scrub-birds, whipbirds and bristlebirds in 2005 will give us a good picture of the current population status of all of these species in the Albany Management Zone. In the future, it will allow us to study response to wildfire in these species in a way that hasn't previously been possible. We are also hoping to establish

base-line post-fire monitoring of both vegetation and invertebrate food supplies in this area. Results of these studies will be used to underpin future management, hopefully allowing us to avoid similar drastic population declines in the future.

Sarah Comer, Alan Danks and Allan Burbidge



Book Review



Handbook of Western Australian Birds Volume II Passerines (Blue-winged Pitta to Goldfinch)

By R.E. Johnstone and G.M. Storr, 2004. Published by the Western Australian Museum, Perth. 529 pages, 38 colour plates of birds, 28 photographic colour plates of eggs. \$130.00. ISBN 1 920843 11 6 (v.II).

This handbook completes the two-part series on the birds of Western Australia, but also includes as appendices the birds of Christmas Island, Cocos-Keeling Islands and several new species recorded in the state since the publication of Volume I. Drawing on the Western Australian Museum's and other public and private collections this is a comprehensive summary of current knowledge of Western Australian birds. It provides information on physical features, climate and

vegetation of the Western Australian biogeographic regions, well defined through maps. Detailed line drawings of the topography of a bird, feather, nest and egg details clearly define the terms used throughout the text. This is all useful reference information.

The stated aim of this volume is to provide comprehensive information on the morphology, distribution, status, habitat preferences, migrations, nest, eggs, food and behaviour of all avian species in or visiting Western Australia. This information is clearly set out for each species and is enhanced by distribution maps, drawings of birds at their nests, details of nests and behavioural characteristics of some species. The detailed drawings of Martin Thompson and Trisha Wright add an invaluable level of information on each species. For example there is a delightful drawing of

the communal roost of Dusky Woodswallows. Figure 158 illustrating the variation in male Australian Magpie dorsal plumage across its hybrid zone is an example of the level of detail the authors have employed to convey this information.

The detailed distribution records of each species in Western Australia is useful information, the detail of which cannot be covered in distribution maps. This volume does not include the level of information that is in volumes of the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* but that is not its intention. It does however give detail relevant to this state, for example the slight and clinal variation of the almost continuously distributed Rufous Whistler is described. The examples given are the darkest plumage at Harvey and the palest from the south Kimberley.

This edition unfortunately has one small error, an incorrect distribution map for the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater. The

publisher assures me that already purchased copies can be returned to them or the Museum bookshop where the correction will be made and the copy returned to you.

The volume concludes with a useful glossary, gazetteer, bibliography and index. One small criticism is that it could also have included a more detailed map of Western Australia showing the location of places referred to under the distribution heading for each species. People from outside the state may struggle to find a map with this degree of detail.

This handbook achieves its aims in providing the reader or researcher with comprehensive information on Western Australian birds. The information is clearly presented. It is a valuable addition to any naturalist's library.

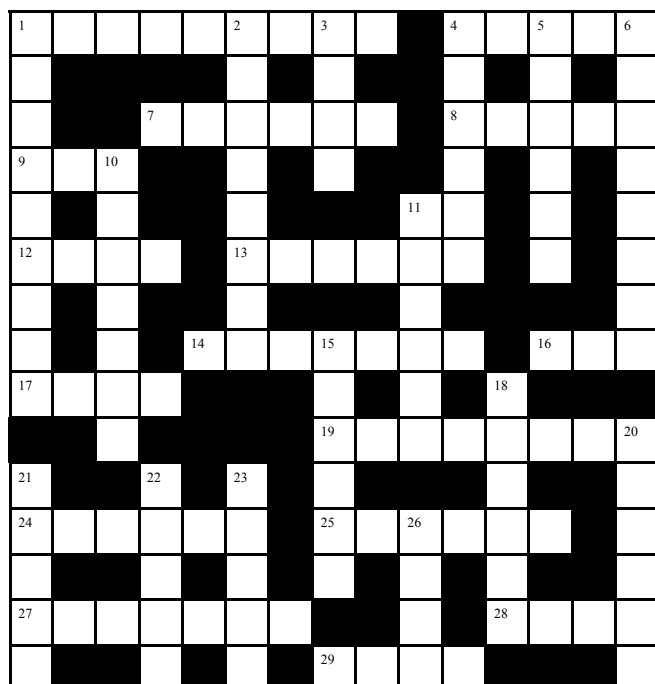
Suzanne Mather



Crossword No 40



By Pam Agar



Clues across

1. Helps raise awareness of situation.
4. Large groups of cormorants.
7. Nature of curlew's bill.
8. To feign call or action.
9. To consume.
12. Relative speed.
13. To feed by tipping body up.
14. May determine vegetation.
16. Digit of foot.
17. Well-developed in raptors.
19. Branch and trunk forager.
24. Slender, thrush-like bird.
25. Less difficult.
27. Body covering of birds.
28. May cause deaths of birds in Northern Australia.
29. Makes it difficult to hear calls.

Clues down

1. Prized by falconers.
2. Raven and Crow family.
3. Important element of many birds' habitats.
4. Distant.
5. Social group.
6. Gregarious.
10. Wader of Australian coast.
11. To land.
15. To make an effort to hear.
18. Parrot of WA wheatbelt.
20. Genus of Australia's river kingfishers.
21. Distinctive plumage colouring.
22. Food source of corella species.
23. Possible sea-bird nest site.
26. Museum specimen.

EIGHTH ANNUAL CORELLA COUNT

We need your help. But not at Easter!

Please note changed date

Sunday 10th April 2005

Starting 3:30 pm

The 2002 and 2004 counts suggest significant recent increases in both feral species of corellas around Perth. But the number of counters has been declining! Please help with this year's count if you can – these surveys have real value in keeping track of corella numbers and influencing management. And it is easy — with a good view, Little Corellas and (Eastern) Long-billed Corellas are readily identified. If views are distant, or of flying birds, total numbers are still useful.

Control of feral corellas has been proceeding for the last two years, with 322 Little Corellas and 109 Long-billed Corellas being removed from the wild population so far. It is important for as large a number of counters as possible to continue to track distribution and numbers that will help to monitor the effectiveness of this program in reducing populations.

It would also be good to have some counters in Mandurah, Bunbury, Busselton and Albany where feral flocks have been reported and may be increasing in size.

See WABN 86, June 1998 for background information and identification hints and WABN 87 (September 1998), 90 (June 1999), 94 (June 2000), 98 (June 2001), 102 (June 2002), and 111 (September 2004) for reports on earlier corella surveys.

If you know of a place that you regularly or often see corellas, or would be happy to be assigned to an area we already know about, please take part in an organised count at as many places as possible on 10th April! Counting begins at 3:30 pm and ends when it gets too dark to identify corellas.

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

Please put this new entry on 10th April into your diary now, if necessary **replacing** that on 27th March (Easter Sunday!)

Contact John Blyth

Phone (work 9405 5161; home 9381 6293)

facs 9306 1641

Email johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au

BAWA PLANS TO HELP THE WESTERN GROUND PARROT



BAWA has applied to LotteriesWest for funding for some much-needed Ground Parrot survey work in Nuytsland Nature Reserve. The project is designed to run parallel with survey work being undertaken by CALM in the neighbouring Cape Arid National Park between March and June 2005.

The outcome of the application will not be known until mid-March. If successful (and BAWA has over the years received several grants from LotteriesWest), volunteers will be needed. There will be two trips, each around ten days, plus travelling to and from Esperance. The goal will be to follow up on the easternmost confirmed record of the Western Ground Parrot from May 2003 and to attempt to find out more about the distribution and numbers of these extremely rare and elusive birds in this remote area.

The field trips would be scheduled between mid-April and mid-June. Does the thought of spending time as part of the team undertaking this unusual project in a little-frequented location appeal? Camping will be essential. There will be some help with travel and food costs. Training will be provided if you are new to the task. Not all participants will need their own vehicle. Reasonably good hearing is a pre-requisite as this survey will mostly be done by sound.

For more information or to express interest please contact

Brenda Newbey

(phone 9337 5673 or e-mail wgparrot@iinet.net.au).

Co-ordinator needed for Western Australian Wader Study Group

We are looking for someone who would like to take on the role as State co-ordinator of the Western Australian Wader Study Group (WAWSG).

The principal tasks are organising the summer and winter wader counts in conjunction with the National wader count and writing up the results for *Western Australian Bird Notes*.

If you prefer to contribute in a supporting role please let us know.

We want to ensure that the valuable work Colin Davis started in relation to WA wader studies continues.

For further information please contact:

John Lauri, telephone 9245 4916

or *Marcus Singor*, telephone 9362 2742

for details or e-mail birdswa@iinet.net.au.

ROTTNEST WINTER WADER COUNT CAMPOUT

FOUNDATION DAY WEEKEND

June 4th, 5th, 6th

This is a great opportunity to survey the Island's winter population of both shorebirds and bushbirds. Early June is usually a pleasant time on the Island before the onset of cold and wet weather.

The accommodation at the University of Western Australia's Research Station is comfortable and reasonably central.

Numbers are limited to 16 people. If you would like to attend please leave your name and contact details at the BAWA office by May 13th.

Sue Mather

Phone 9389 6416

NOISY SCRUB-BIRD SURVEYS

As a result of recent wildfires in the Albany area there will be opportunities for volunteers to participate in post-fire surveys of Noisy Scrub-birds, Western Whipbirds and Western Bristlebirds on the south coast.

In addition there will be work on the Noisy Scrub-bird translocation program during this time. All work will be conducted between April and November.

Volunteers will need to have a reasonable level of personal fitness.

Accommodation will be provided at Two Peoples Bay Research Quarters, and volunteers are asked to participate for at least a week.

For further information contact **Sarah Comer**:
sarahc@calm.wa.gov.au or (08) 9842 4500.

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY MALLEEFOWL PRESERVATION GROUP



Eyre Bird Observatory and the Malleefowl Preservation Group have combined efforts to conduct a search for Malleefowl mounds at Eyre. Volunteers who are fit and enjoy plenty of walking are invited to join this endeavour. Funding for the project ensures that meals and accommodation at Eyre are available for a minimal daily charge.

Those participating will be at Eyre during the period Sunday 12 June to Saturday 25th June 2005, a total of 13 nights.

Applicants will be selected by MPG. To register your interest in this work, please contact:

Malleefowl Preservation Group Inc
PO Box 29, Ongerup, Western Australia 6336
Ph: (08) 9828 2007 Mobile: 0427282002
Fax: (08) 9828 2018
web: <www.malleefowl.com.au>

Rod Smith
Chairman
Eyre Bird Observatory Management
Committee

Sustainable Fisheries Liaison Office Conservation Council of WA

City West Lotteries House
2 Delhi St, West Perth WA 6005
Tel: (08) 9226 5856; Fax: (08) 9420 7273

PELICANS AND FISHING TACKLE SURVEY

The Sustainable Fisheries Liaison Office is organising a Pelican survey on Sunday 3 April from 8-10 am. The numbers of adult and juvenile pelicans and those with fishing gear entanglements will be recorded during the two- hour time frame. The project aims to cover the major pelican habitats between Busselton and Perth including:

- Vasse Estuary
- Leschenault Estuary
- Peel Harvey Inlet
- Lake Richmond
- Safety Bay
- Shoalwater Bay
- Cockburn Sound
- Penguin Island
- Cockburn Lakes
- Swan and Canning Estuary

Volunteer support will be needed to carry out this project. Team leaders from local environment and recreational fishing groups will be assigned to the major areas and volunteers will report to these designated people. Each volunteer will require binoculars and will be provided with datasheets and a wildcare helpline brochure. The aim of the survey is to gain a general idea of the numbers of adult and juvenile pelicans in the above areas and the proportion of pelicans with fishing gear entanglements or injuries. The volunteers will only record observations and seabird rescue personnel will be available to handle injured birds. The success of this project relies on the support of volunteers and community groups.

If anyone is interested in participating in this project please contact:

Fiona Maxwell on 9226 5856
or <sfl.assistant@conservationwa.asn.au>

Australian Parrots on Stamps

Australia Post will be releasing a new stamp range showcasing five Australian Parrots in their native habitat on 8 February 2005.

The five parrots represented are:

- * Princess Parrot (*Polytelis alexandrae*)
- * Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*)
- * Green Rosella (*Platycercus caledonicus*)
- * Red-capped Parrot (*Purpureicephalus spurius*)
- * Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Gossopsitta porphyrocephala*)

These colourful stamps illustrated by South Australian wildlife artist, Kevin Stead, are rich in detail. In the background the stamp displays one of the above parrots in its natural environment, while in the foreground shows a more detailed close up of the parrot. As your members/readers are avid bird breeders/watchers, I am sure they will appreciate the beauty of these stamps and stamp products.

On 8 February we will be sending your organisation an Australian Parrots stamp kit which will include an Australian Parrots stamp pack, media release and some Australian Parrots posters.

For more information on stamps or stamp products, please check out our website <auspost.com.au/stamps>.

Australia Post

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between 1 November 2004 to 31 January 2005. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

I Benson, B R Brown, C Colson, R G Donaldson, J Ford, S Guy, J & N Kalnejais, N Kalnejais, J Kibblewhite, I Law, S Lowe, S Mason, M McKay, I Morgan, I Platell, J Rees, A Skirving, H C Smith, J Spencer, K Thomas, J P Thomson, J R Turney, N Walker, C Watson, D Wilson, J Winterbottom



Country Groups



ALBANY BIRD GROUP

October 2004 Campout, Stirling Range Retreat

In Mid-October some members of the group went on an overnight trip to the Stirling Ranges, enjoying the hospitality and great birdlife of the Retreat. As expected we found many birds building nests or feeding young. On our walk to a completely dry Ongerup Creek, we saw numerous Tree Martins and Striated Pardalotes flying in and out of tree hollows. A Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike was busy constructing a nest and two recent arrivals, the Sacred Kingfisher and the Rainbow Bee-eater, were looking for nest sites. Closer to the Retreat we were lucky to spot a Varied Sittella nest. Other nesting species included the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Dusky Woodswallow and Splendid Fairy-wren. Sadly, the Tawny Frogmouth and the Owlet Nightjar, two regulars at the Retreat, couldn't be found this year. No doubt this is a valid excuse to visit again next year.

Ann Bondin

were fairly low. Numerous dead melaleucas near the shoreline made it difficult to see the birds, but with persistence, Grey and Chestnut Teals, Pacific Black Ducks, Australian Shelducks, Hoary-headed Grebes, Black Swans and a small flock of Banded Stilts were identified.

In nearby bushland, we saw White-winged Trillers, Red-capped Robins, Regent Parrots and Restless Flycatchers, all species rarely seen closer to Albany. The sighting of a Rufous Songlark had everyone excited. The Rainbow Bee-eaters we had hoped to find, however, remained elusive. Little did we know that they were to turn up within a short distance of Albany's Oyster Harbour the following morning! By lunchtime wet weather started to set in, preventing us from searching for Spotted Pardalote nests, but with more than 50 species identified in the course of the morning, we were not complaining.

Ann Bondin

November 2004 Outing, Lake Kiamerndyip area

This month we decided to revisit an area north of the Porongurups, to learn more about the waterbird species using this increasingly saline lake. After a very dry winter and an even drier spring, Lake Kiamerndyip's water levels

December 2004 outing, Lake Powell/Torbay Hall area

We started the morning with a visit to the hide on Lake Powell, and had views of quite a number of waterbirds including Red-necked Avocets, Blue-billed Ducks, Hardheads, and many shelducks.

We then visited Margaret White's place, which is just the other side of the drain leading into the lake. She has a large garden with lots of birds, including a Buff-banded Rail, of which we had a good sighting.

We then went to Torbay Hall, which is always rewarding, and after a good walk, where we saw quite a few bush birds, including a good view of a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, 19 of us sat down to an enjoyable shared lunch near the hall. Even the flies kept away from us!

Charlie Davies

January 2005 Outing, Albany

Unfortunately the day of our outing was extremely windy and blustery. We went as planned to Rushy Point on Princess Royal Harbour. As it was low tide we were able to walk out quite a long way on the mud in search of waders.

There were plenty of Red-necked Stints, but only small numbers of other waders were there. Some were difficult to identify on account the wind. We did see two Grey-tailed Tattlers, and four Bar-tailed Godwits.

We then went to the Rotary camp, which was a little more sheltered, but there were very few bushbirds about.

Liz Davies



Excursion Reports



PICKERING BROOK, 6 November 2004

On 6 November 2004, 15 members and three members of the public went to the garden of Alison and Will Hepburn in Pickering Brook for a half-day walk. The garden is huge and wonderful, bordered on two sides by state forest so we were looking forward to the morning.

We split into two groups because 18 people, even in a big garden, is a bit much. One group scarcely moved for an hour, because they had a group of about a dozen Red-winged Fairy-wrens frolicking in the thick bushes.

This included four males in the binoculars at the same time. In all, we saw 29 species in the most delightful of settings including well over 50 Red-browed Finches around the house.

Afterwards we were all invited into the house for morning tea by our charming hosts. It wasn't the usual birdwatch, but totally charming because of its setting and the dedication of the owners.

Since the bushfires, I have tried to ring the Hepburn's to see how they fared, but have had no response so I assume they are away on holidays. The fact that their answering machine

is operating gives me hope that their garden was not destroyed.

Brice Wells

LAKE MUIR-UNICUP CAMPOUT, 19–21 November 2004

A BAWA campout held at Mordalup a couple of years back had surveyed a number of reserves and wetlands in this incredibly diverse area. The Department of Conservation and Land Management was keen for further information so a campout was arranged and, with the help of around 25 BA members, surveys were conducted at ten of the 30 or so reserves in the area.

Local farmer, Jeff De Campo had allowed us the use of his property on the Muir Highway, some 60 km east of Manjimup, as a base. Forty-nine species were recorded just around the campsite including a party of Western Corellas that ensured birdwatchers were ready for an early start each morning.

The group divided into small parties and spent the cooler parts of the morning and late afternoons surveying the various reserves. Reports came back of Spotless Crakes,



At the home of Will & Allison Hepburn, Pickering Brook
Photo courtesy Elsa Dabbs

Buff-banded Rail, Brown Quail and the possible sound of an Australasian Bittern at Kulunilup. Despite intensive further searching, the elusive bird could not be enticed or cajoled into revealing itself and has to remain as “the one that got away”.

We were particularly interested in night birds and bitterns as there had been historical records of a number of these less commonly reported species. Masked Owl had been recorded at Lake Muir during the recent Atlas surveys and CALM had records of Australasian Bitterns from Yarnup and Kulunilup Nature Reserves going back to the early 1980s. So armed with waterbird and owl tapes we targeted key wetlands and, in between wind gusts, three lucky souls were rewarded with the sound of a Little Bittern calling in the distance just after dusk at Kulunilup NR.

Other highlights were the high numbers of duck species on Red Lake (eight recorded including male Chestnut Teal and a couple of Pink-eared Ducks), flocks of waders such as Common Greenshank, Grey-tailed Tattler and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on the vast expanse of exposed mud at Lake Muir and Tawny-crowned Honeyeater at Kodjinup and Unicup reserves.

But the final morning provided the most unusual record for the trip. Those who were fortunate enough to visit Unicup Lake were treated to the magnificent spectacle of a Great-winged Petrel, soaring endlessly over the shallow water. The bird was presumably recently fledged off the Albany coast and had been blown inland after severe weather earlier in the week. Interestingly, Johnstone & Storr cite inland records of this species but only from October 20 to December 1 (this was Sunday November 21st).

Total species count for the weekend was a creditable 98 and that was without a kestrel!

Thanks go to Ian Wheeler and the rest of the crew from CALM for organising transport, maps, amplifiers and especially the evening barbecues. Plans are already under way to hold another camp in this area next year.

Peter Taylor

PARUNA SANCTUARY, 27 November 2004

The Paruna Sanctuary, established by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC), creates a vital wildlife corridor between Walyunga and Avon Valley National Parks. Trish Gardner, who is employed by this organisation, talked about this to the 32 members who attended the walk through the eastern end of the sanctuary. Our specific task for this walk was to try and confirm previous reports of Red-eared Firetails along the stream. So in preparation we listened to a tape of the call then, because of the number of members attending, split into two groups to walk close to the water's edge. No Red-eared Firetail but Crested Shrike-tit and four cuckoo species were recorded in the day's total of 33 species.

Many thanks to Trish for organising access to the sanctuary and leading one of the groups.

Sue Mather

WUNGONG GORGE, 12 December 2004

Bill McRoberts has been visiting this area for 20 years and still has enthusiasm for the regular bird walks he leads.

A small group met at 0730 on a lovely cool morning and spotted 41 species. Highlight was the great sighting of a Square-tailed Kite. No sign of the firetail on this walk.

Two visitors from the UK joined us for a very nice morning.

Thanks, Bill and congratulations on your 20th year!

Helen Clark

GARDEN ISLAND, 8 January 2005

Fifty members arrived to share a marvellous day and experience an interesting and illuminating time with Boyd Wykes and briefly the ranger, Trevor Smith, who has been seconded from CALM to work on the island.

The environment on Garden Island is little changed since European settlement so gives some idea of how other west coast habitats must once have been.

We stopped at several sites, hearing about the history of the island since European settlement, the environmental problems faced and managed there as we looked for birds. Perhaps the highlight was seeing four raptor species at one stop: Osprey, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Brown Goshawk and Nankeen Kestrel. There were a few waders on the seaward side beaches. There are no eucalypts there and the Singing Honeyeater is the only honeyeater species that has been found on the island.

Whilst there has been public criticism of the restrictions placed on access and the Department of Defence presence there, I think we all appreciated the level of protection this policy affords this beautiful place.

A big thank you to Boyd both for organising this day, coping with such a big group and for his enthusiasm and knowledge about Garden Island.

Sue Mather

ASCOT WATERS, 16 January

A warm, clear, moderately windy day made conditions comfortable for birding. As so it proved. Birds were there in reasonable numbers and variety. And birders, too—23 of us—beginners, visitors and veterans, relaxed and enjoying ourselves.

Cormorants, coots, ducks and Darters were staple diet, but a variety of other single sightings kept us going. The tide was exceptionally low, which probably explains the low count of Little Grassbirds and, unusually, only one raptor was seen — an Osprey with fish. A total of 50 species was seen.

Thanks again to Les and Hank especially, for their capable support.

John Stewart

ALBANY CAMPOUT, 28-31 January

Close to 40 people enjoyed three very full days visiting a variety of local areas with members of the Albany Group.

Our first day included the King River Bridge area, with the highlight perhaps being a pair of very vocal Australian Hobbies.

Prideaux Road provided the opportunity to see bush birds, including Rainbow Bee-eater, and for one group at least, a fantastic view of a Square-tailed Kite overhead. The other group were treated to views of Glossy Ibis, and Owlet Nightjars, which have nested on Ray Garstone's property for several years.

The circuit walk of Lake Seppings provided a lot more waterbirds, including five cryptic Masked Lapwings among the waterlilies. These birds are recent arrivals to the area. Most people also had good views of a Spotless Crake feeding along the edge of the reeds on the west side of the lake.

A late afternoon visit to Rushy Point left us all floundering over wader identification, but we were able to have a close look at a small group of Pacific Golden Plovers.

For some, Saturday was a long day, with a 4:30am start in order to be out at Waychinicup in time to see the 'big three'. Thanks to David Secombe's knowledge of both the birds and the area we had a fleeting glimpse of a Noisy Scrub-bird and excellent views of a Western Bristlebird feeding on a firebreak close to the camping area. We also heard lots of calls by the Noisy Scrub-bird and the Western Whipbird. The later group were at least able to hear all three species calling.

Back at the Waychinicup River crossing a flock of White-tailed Black-Cockatoos had us guessing as to whether they were Baudins or Carnabys. Both species were seen during the weekend and we were told it is possible to see them in mixed flocks in the Albany area.

After a relaxing early afternoon we visited The Esplanade at Lower King and found Grey-tailed Tattler,

numerous stilts, both Banded and Black-winged, Pied Oyster-catcher and a few Whimbrels. Access to Oyster Harbour from near the mussel processing works meant more waders and we were able to spend some time comparing Red and Great Knots, and getting to know the Greater Sand Plover.

Early morning drizzle on the third day did not deter anyone on the visit to Lake Powell on the Lower Denmark Road. We appreciated the new boardwalk and the hide but were disappointed to find fewer birds than usual on this shore due to the prevailing winds. However we were treated to views of two magnificent White-bellied Sea-Eagles, perched at first and later soaring over the lake in the distance.

We also appreciated the opportunity to visit the North's property on Torbay Inlet. Not a lot of bush birds were seen among the karri but waterbirds were abundant and included Chestnut Teal, Glossy Ibis and both Spotted and Spotless Crakes.

Viewing waders at Morley Beach on Wilson Inlet was made difficult by the strong winds but by now most people were able to identify the numerous Red-capped Plovers and Red-necked

Stints, large numbers of which were feeding in the shallow water or huddled down among clumps of samphire. Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers were probably the most challenging here.

During the campout a total of 136 species were seen. 57 of those were available just by wandering around the campsite and along the Kalgan River. One unusual sighting within the camping area was hybrids between the Long-billed Corella and Galah. Two birds, paler and less pink than Galahs, with peach-coloured cheek patches and huge bills like the corellas, were seen digging among the grass as they fed with two corellas and a flock of Galahs.

Many thanks to Clive Napier as overall leader, and to Anne Bondin from Albany who organised the walks and also suggested the Kalgan River Caravan Park as a camping venue. Special thanks are also due to Ray Garstone and Wayne Zadow for their help with leading groups and identification of many birds, in particular those 'oh-so-frustrating' waders. Thanks too to those people who obligingly carted telescopes around all weekend and willingly shared them with others.

Pam Agar



Where are those crakes? At North's Lake farm, Albany campout, January 2005.
Photo courtesy Molly Angus

BLACKWALL REACH/POINT WALTER SAND SPIT, 29 January

Previously, this picturesque walk has been mid-week. Changing to Saturday explains why attendance (21) nearly doubled. Being the weekend there were more people around, probably disturbing the birdlife. We were pleased to have 34 sightings, only one short of last year. A list of recent sightings, to which was added a list of sightings over the years, was distributed.

In the introductory address, at the risk of repetition from previous years, a few highlights were explained:

In the tree above our heads was a nesting hollow (it really was, a few years ago) now full of bees; not native either.

Along the way we will see repeats; with one site, the honeycomb is hanging down like curtains.

The Rainbow Lorikeets are prolific in the area. There is a hollow where one's head has been seen protruding.

A challenge is to sight the five diving fish eaters (the four cormorants and the Darter). They're here! It's a matter of sighting them.

They won't let us down! The family of White-cheeked Honeyeaters will surely be here as they have been in living memory.

They're been together for at least 20 years—a Galah and an Eastern Corella—and have produced progeny. They must have a love for the area because they have never moved. Their one-time nesting hollow will be pointed out on the way.

The Point Walter Sand Spit has been barricaded with appropriate signage pointing out that the Fairy Terns are breeding at the far end of the Spit. Hope to get a sight of them.

There's a dead tree overhanging the river where there is a chance to see an Osprey. They nest on the other side of the river. The family is growing so perhaps a chance the progeny may migrate to this side of the river and build their nest and make themselves at home like they used to. They are regularly seen on the wireless mast at Alfred Cove.

Magpie-larks are dotted all around the area but can't remember seeing one on this walk. Let's go find one!

There is a big number of Australian Ravens that feed off whatever is on the rocks on the shoreline, particularly at low tide.

Both turtle-doves are in the area. Spotted can be elusive at times.

Some were amazed at the curtain of honeycomb but the Rainbow Lorikeet hollow could not be found. The Great Cormorant let us down—none in sight. The Osprey was not in the dead tree but a pair flew overhead. The White-cheeked Honeyeaters put on a display but not up to their usual expectation. Missed out on the Galah and Eastern Corella. Bet they are still around.

Disappointed when at the barricade on the Spit—two fishermen were walking along the vulnerable area. When they saw us they took to the shallows—they knew! Not a Fairy Tern in sight.

Ironically, there was a single Red-capped Plover to give us joy. Last year there was only a single one seen. What's the chances, the same one! No Magpie-lark! The ravens were there in all their glory. One Spotted Turtle-dove saved the day. A raptor soared overhead but no one would commit themselves. A week before, a Brown Goshawk was seen roosting in a tree, causing great consternation among the local birdlife.

This is one of the best walks along the river as long as you turn a blind eye to the vandalism. It must be very expensive for the local government bodies to keep up

with it all. The end result is that they don't. Perhaps too many people! A real travesty! Let's keep plugging away! The next generation may find the answers. Can or will they bear the responsibility? What sort of legacy are we leaving them? We must not give up hope! Here's hoping!

At the bird count, when finished, no one wanted to go home; just sitting and chatting in a wonderful environment, despite the vandals.

A great time had by all.

Eric Pyatt



A hollow in the northern wheatbelt being repaired using an old sheet of corrugated iron as part of the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project.

Photo courtesy Leonie McMahon

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Up here in Broome we are currently experiencing the wet season.

It has meant that we have had very active bird baths at the observatory. The high visitation rate—never less than a dozen birds at each bath—is largely dependent upon how often our resident Brown Goshawks make an ‘ambit swoop’ through the hot and thirsty bathers. Earlier, these beautiful raptors had their three young which were preparing to fledge and small birds were definitely a favourite a-la-carte item on their menu. At times here, when the heat soars into the mid 40s, the smaller birds ignore even the goshawks and continue to drink in desperation.

With the higher temperatures, I have been encouraging visitors to seek the cooler, sheltered mangrove forests as a birding venue. One quickly becomes used to the mud, which seldom goes beyond ankle depth, and is often quite firm and sandy. In exchange for this slight inconvenience, one can enjoy fantastic birding amid a truly amazing jungle ambience. Beautiful Broad-billed Flycatchers, White-breasted Whistlers, Yellow White-eyes, Dusky Gerygones, Mangrove Gerygones and Mangrove Fantails are quite common and one always remains alert for the possibility of spotting a Mangrove Golden Whistler.

A great many encounters with waders are another reward for the mangrove visitor, with Grey-tailed Tattlers, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Mangrove Herons being quite common in the forest itself. Once out the back of the mangroves the tens of thousands of waders may be viewed in their full magnificence, including the sought after ‘Common’ Redshank. If you have timed your visit properly you can observe the rapidly moving tide gradually push the multitudes of birds towards you. Here, a telescope is unnecessary, as the waders are in greater proximity than usual and those which are further back bring delight as they form immense boiling flocks which move in patterns resembling schools of fish or a gigantic avian ‘Mexican Wave’. As these flocks move over birds foraging on the bay below, many join in and the numbers continue to swell before the flock disperses at a feeding point each time closer to the birders waiting in the mangroves.

I doubt that there is any other habitat where so many life forms are in evidence. From crabs to sea-stars and gastropods to mudskippers, as well as all manner of fancy flat worms and shell-less molluscs in gorgeous colours or cryptic camouflage, there is something here to suit every naturalist’s interest.

A visit to Broome Bird Observatory surely must be on the list for everyone who wishes to enjoy an amazing



array of birds in incredible numbers. A mangrove tour is one way to ensure that you’ll witness what is surely on par with any of the great sights of nature in the world and I look forward to sharing experiences like this with you up here soon.

Ricki Coughlan
Warden

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Eyre has been staffed by volunteers since our last paid wardens left in August last year. This is an effort to ensure that Eyre not only stays open, but is able to gradually improve its facilities and provide maintenance and repairs to the century-old building.



Gwen and Graham Goodreid have been a major force during this time. They staffed Eyre until early January, providing a wonderful energy to the observatory. A number of short-term volunteers followed until early February when Vicky and Brian took over. They will be there until the end of April. Other volunteers are under consideration to see Eyre through into 2006.

It is worth mentioning Toni Nossiter’s involvement. From Albury she responded to an urgent email request for staffing assistance. The next evening she was on an Indian Pacific sit-up seat to Kalgoorlie, immediately hitched a ride to Norseman where she slept under a table at a garage, then hitched a morning ride to Cocklebidy where I collected her. She still had enough energy at that stage to throw a 44-gallon drum on to the back of the ute before we drove to Eyre. Toni then spent three weeks at Eyre, unassisted, and is keen to return.

The gas freezer ‘gave up the ghost’ but has been replaced by a donated electric one. The beautiful large jarrah dining table in the lounge, constructed and donated by Neil McCallum, is an attractive and practical asset.

Work is planned for the huge below-ground water storage tank. If all goes to plan, the tank will be repaired, re-rendered and re-roofed to the extent that quality water can be stored safely. With guttering, and other stonework on the main building and old toilet, the total work will require a large grant. We are optimistic. Please note that we have access to funds for a partnership project with MPG—see the notice in this issue.

Late last year New Holland Honeyeaters were at the bird baths in huge numbers during hot weather. One photograph shows a cluster of 60 waiting above, and in, the water. A recent beach trip resulted in a beached

2.3 metre bronze whaler, and on another trip the carcass of a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was collected and photographed. Bustards and Mulga Parrots have been seen above the escarpment. There are also visitor reports of what are probably Purple-crowned Lorikeets, which from time to time pass through Eyre in large numbers as they take advantage of the flowering mallees.

An important link with Eyre's colourful past was lost recently, with the death of Peter Congreve. Peter and Di were wardens for well over three years during Eyre's early stages when facilities were quite basic. He was a keen bander who provided data based on his close encounters with thousands of birds.

At any time of the year Eyre is a delight. You are encouraged to stay there.

Rod Smith
Chairman
Eyre Bird Observatory Management Committee



A 'platoon of Pelicans', Oyster Bay, Albany campout at Kalgan River, January 2005.

Photo courtesy Molly Angus



Coming Events



Important Note re Campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BAWA Office (9383 7749) of the number in their party and when they will arrive. When members arrive without notice it makes it difficult for leaders who have made arrangements only for the people on the list, so if you are unsure, put your name down. You can always cancel, and then we can advise the next person on the waiting list. With this information we will be able to ensure the group will be together and will know when to expect people.

New Members

Please let the leaders know that you are a new member and don't hesitate to ask for assistance with bird sightings.

Saturday 5 to Monday 7 March: Pemberton Campout

It is three years since we had a campout at Pemberton in the cooler south-west. The caravan park is situated in lovely Karri forest, with Red-eared Firetails and White-breasted Robins along the creek. Besides the Karri forest, we will also visit coastal heath and some more accessible parts of the D'Entrecasteaux National Park. A trip is planned to Windy Harbour covering some of the south coast for the Hooded Plover count.

Bookings for powered and unpowered sites are not necessary, but cabins need to be booked. Ring Pemberton Caravan Park on 9776 1300.

Please also phone 9383 7749 to notify the office of your intention to attend.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 6 March: Lake Monger; Town of Cambridge Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the most westerly car park off Lake Monger Drive, just

before reaching Gregory St. This is a good opportunity to view many species of ducks and other waterbirds. For members and the general public.

Leader: Robert Davis

Saturday 12 March: Mindarie Keys, Wanneroo

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park on the southern side of Mindarie Keys. Travel north along Marmion Avenue, turning left into Anchorage Drive, left

into Long Beach Promenade and the car park is on the only track on the right at the Tuart Grove picnic area. This will be a two to three hour walk along the coast looking for seabirds and bushbirds. Variegated and Splendid Fairy-wrens and White-browed Scrubwrens should be seen.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Neil Hamilton

Wednesday 16 March: Garvey Park, Belmont

Mid-week Morning Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park next to the Rowing Club, at the western end of Fauntleroy Avenue, off Great Eastern Highway. This area has a good variety of waterbirds and bushbirds. Sixty-seven species have been recorded here since 1977, including the Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake and Mistletoebird.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Hank van Wees

Saturday 19 March: Peel Inlet Full Day Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the western end of the Mandurah Estuary Bridge (the new bridge on the Mandurah Bypass). Drive over the bridge and turn right into Old Coast Rd, then right again into Leisure Way and park under the bridge. We will first look around the bird-hides and the boardwalk. The shore at Coodanup, Nairns and Creery Wetlands will also be visited. Don't forget insect repellent, your telescope if you have one, and come and learn about waders!

For members and guests only.

Leader: Dick Rule

Monday 21 March: State Tennis Centre, Burswood

Meeting, 7:30 pm

Frank O'Connor, a member, will give an illustrated talk entitled Migratory Waders Visiting WA.

Note revised date.

Friday 25 to Monday 28 March: Margaret River

Easter Weekend Campout

The Capes region in the south west has a wide variety of great bird habitats. During the weekend we shall visit several Conservation Park/National Parks around the Margaret River area, including a section of the Margaret River itself, discovering birds in the Karri, Marri, and Jarrah forests.

We will also walk a small section of the spectacular and rugged Cape to Cape Track to look at the coastal heath and peppermint thickets. As it will be summer most creeks will not be running. Red-eared Firetails, Red-winged Fairywrens, Crested Shrike-tits, and Western Yellow and White-breasted Robins are often seen in the area.

The campout will be held on a rural property near Margaret River township. Basic facilities will be available. If you don't intend to camp then accommodation should be booked early as Margaret River is a popular destination at Easter.

Those wishing to attend must put their names on the list as usual (phone 9383 7749) and further instructions will be mailed.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Chris Wilder (Phone 9757 3804)

<cwilderone@yahoo.com.au>

Friday 25 to Monday 28 March: Mt Barker

Easter Weekend Campout

This is a new venue for a BAWA camp and will suit those who prefer good accommodation and a more relaxed type of campout. The Mt Barker Caravan Park has the usual powered sites, as well as campsites, chalets and cabins. Opposite the Caravan Park is an excellent motel with views of the Porongurups. The town has two hotels with motel-type accommodation.

The excursion will radiate from Mt Barker to several lakes and a variety of habitats, including a day trip to the Porongurups. Various woodland areas

Australasian Ornithological Conference 2005



Birds Australia is committed to holding biennial conferences that provide a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian-based researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region.

Blenheim, New Zealand 6–10 December 2005

This conference is a joint Ornithological Society of New Zealand and Birds Australia initiative to promote ornithology. The Australasian Wader Studies Group will hold their two-day conference immediately following the AOC 2005 at Nelson, from 11th to 13th December. The ASC is the conference of the Australasian Wader Study Group and is focused on shorebird research and conservation.

Both conferences will have post-conference field excursions. Following the AOC these include boat trips off Kaikoura to see seabirds, Marlborough Sounds launch trips to see inshore seabirds and rare forest species surviving on predator-free islands, and the opportunity to visit a Department of Conservation Mainland Island project. After the ASC a two-day trip to Farewell Spit will be run. People attending both conferences will be in a position to join AOC field trips before the ASC conference.

You are invited to express your interest in attending these conferences, and presenting a paper by visiting the OSZN web site, or by writing to the conference co-ordinator:

Sue Bell
35 Selmes Rd, RD 3, Blenheim, New Zealand
<wmilblenheim@clear.net.nz>

will be visited ranging from White Gum to Karri, and sandplain areas should provide further variation.

As usual it is advisable to book early as Easter is a busy tourist time, although as Mt Barker is not on the coast, it should be less crowded (telephone: 98511691). The leaders lived near Mt Barker for seven years, so should be able to navigate to the best spots. Please also phone 9383 7749 to notify the office of your intention to attend.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier will be on site late Thursday.

Sunday 27 March: Herdsman Lake, Stirling

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 7:30 am in the Maurice Hamer car park. Turn off Pearson St into Falcon Avenue, then right into Lakeside Rd. The car park is on the left, opposite Heron Place.

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 the Wood Sandpiper. In the summer of 2002-3, a large number of Freckled Ducks were here for many weeks. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

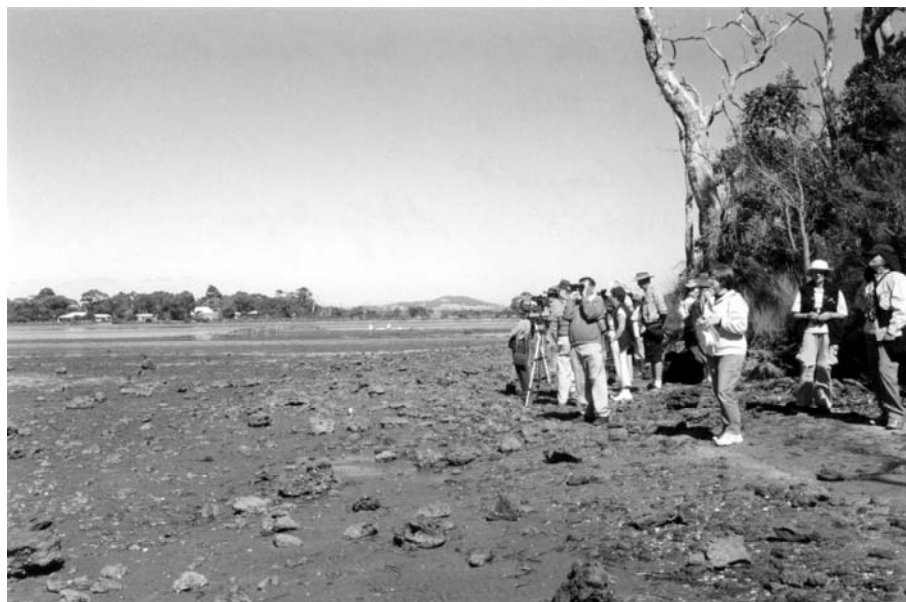
Saturday 2 April: Beermullah Lake, Gingin

Full day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the Beermullah Road West turnoff, approximately 13 km north of the Dewar Road turnoff into Gingin. (This is the northern entry to Gingin from the Brand Highway.) The turnoff is just past Bootine Road, which will be known to those who have been on the Bootine Road excursion. Bring lunch and drinks, as there are no facilities at the Lake. If time permits, other lakes in the area may be visited. Tracks on the property are sound, and should be suitable for all vehicles.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Clive Napier and Ian Rudd



Scanning Oyster Bay near King River during the Albany campout, January 2005.

Photo courtesy Molly Angus

Sunday 10 April: Ellis Brook, Gosnells

Half-day Walk

Meet at 08:00 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin. There are three walks in this area, and we will look at one of these on this visit. It is a popular area where a variety of bushbirds can be seen, some not often near Perth, such as the Red-eared and Red-browed Firetails, Red-capped and Scarlet Robins and Southern Emu-Wren. On this excursion there is an opportunity to go through the farm area which is not usually accessible.

Leader: Les Harris

Wednesday 13 April: Bold Park, Cambridge

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at Peregrine House, 167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, for a walk in Bold Park. This is a pleasant and interesting walk close to Birds Australia's back door, and a variety of bush birds can be seen.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Max Bailey

Sunday 10 April: Eighth Corella Count

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

Contact John Blyth (tel work 9405 5100 e-mail <johnbl@calm.wa.gov.au>) to be allocated a site or suggest one of which you know.

Leader: John Blyth

Sunday 17 April: Denis de Young Reserve, Banjup

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the end of Oxley Road that goes east off Liddelow Road, at the south-eastern corner of the reserve. To reach the reserve from the north, come down Liddelow Road that goes south off Armadale Road. The walk takes us through banksia and paperbark woodland, an excellent birding area for at least six species of honeyeater and lots of other bush birds.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Keogh

Monday 18 April: State Tennis Centre, Burswood

Meeting, 7:30 pm

Michael Brown, Manager of Parks Operations, City of Rockingham Council, will give a talk entitled *Designs for bird-friendly parks and reserves*.

(Note: This meeting is a week earlier than usual, as 25 April is ANZAC Day.)

Saturday 23rd to Monday 25th April: Dryandra Woodland State Forest ANZAC Day Long Weekend Campout

Dryandra is one of the most important remnant reserves in the wheatbelt, and has mostly birds typical of the wheatbelt woodlands. Members have the option of either camping at the Congelin Dam camp ground, or using one of the cabins or cottages, 1 km away in the Dryandra Settlement. The main entrance is on the Wandering/Narrogin Road. A 12-bed cabin has been booked by Birds Australia. The cost is \$20 per head. Please book early with the Birds Australia WA office on 9383 7749.

The Congelin Dam campground is off the York/Williams road, past the most southerly entrance to Dryandra. Here

there are camping bays, toilets and barbeque facilities. A small CALM camping fee will be charged.

Dryandra is 164 km south east of Perth, and 22 km north west of Narrogin. There are signposts on the Albany Highway at North Bannister, and on the Great Southern Highway at Cuballing and at Narrogin.

The camp leader will be at the campground by the evening of Friday 22 April.

For members and guests only.

Leader: David Secombe

Sunday 24 April: University of WA, Nedlands

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am in P1 car park, which is the one closest to Mounts Bay Road, and is accessed from Mounts Bay Road at the traffic lights at the junction with Winthrop Avenue. Do not expect rarities, but it can be a pleasant walk on a Sunday morning. An extension to the river could be an optional extra.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Max Bailey

Sunday 1 May: Gleneagles Rest Area

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the Gleneagles Rest Area about 55 km from Perth on the Albany Highway. Allow just over an hour from central Perth. Head south on the Kwinana Freeway, turn east on Armadale Road and straight ahead on Albany Highway. Gleneagles Rest Area is sign-posted on a downhill stretch with a passing lane for the other direction.

The pine forest has recently been logged, but it is still a good area to look for Red-winged Fairy-wrens, White-breasted Robins, Western Yellow Robins and there is a good chance of other south-west endemics, such as cockatoos, Western Wattlebird, Western Spinebill, Western Rosella and Red-capped Parrot. We will then walk across the road to a different habitat to look for Western Thornbills, Rufous Treecreepers, etc. You are welcome to stay for lunch before heading back to Perth.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Frank O'Connor

Saturday 7 May: Paruna Sanctuary Full or Half-day Excursion

This sanctuary is privately owned by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC). Meet at 8:15 am in the car park at the end of Avon Road. Travelling on the Toodyay Road, turn north into O'Brien Road, which becomes Clenton Road after 15.3 km, and after a further 2 km turn north onto Avon Road. This road is gravel, but quite suitable for any vehicle, and less than 1 km in length. Allow 20 minutes from the Toodyay/O'Brien turn off.

There are two walks that we can do, one short and easy one, and one 6.5 km, described as moderate. This is a haven for Quenda, Woylie, Tamar and Black-footed Wallaby, none of which we are likely to see, but the bird list includes 90 species, most of which we will see, and who knows, add to!

AWC normally charges \$5.00 per person. This is kindly being waived for our excursion, but donations will



Scanning the Kalgan River from the mudflats during the Albany campout, January 2005

Photo courtesy Molly Angus

be gratefully received. Bring water, and lunch if you wish.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Ted and Stella Stewart-Wynne

Wednesday 11 May: Hyde Park, Perth

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Throssell Street and Glendower Street, Perth. This is a small but very pleasant park with lakes. As it is autumn, some of the waterbirds will have dispersed, but it is still worth a visit.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Max Bailey

Saturday 14 May: Lightning Swamp, Noranda

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 7:30 am at the gate in the south-east corner of the bushland, on Della Road. Parking is available at the northern end of Della Road. Lightning Swamp, part of Noranda Open Space, is an area of seasonal wetlands and banksia woodland (come back for the wildflowers in spring). The area does not support many waterbirds, although Hardheads, Nankeen Night Herons and a range of others are sometimes seen. The bushland supports a range of species including some that are uncommon in smaller reserves, such as the Western Thornbill, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and Red-capped Robin. Most of the tracks are very sandy—how sandy depends on the weather—so wear appropriate shoes. Bring a drink, as the walk will take about three hours.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Jennifer Wilcox

Sunday 22 May: Avon Valley National Park

Full-day Excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the turnoff to the Park from the Toodyay Road. The road is signposted as Morangup Road. It is 42 km from Midland Junction.

For anyone arriving late, we will travel along Morangup and Forty One Mile Road. This will lead to Valley Campsite overlooking the Avon River. There will be some waterbirds in the river, and many other species in good Jarrah, Marri and White Gum woodland. Bring your lunch, etc, as there are no supplies within the Park. There are the usual facilities. Roads in the Park are all gravel, but safe for normal cars.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Clive Napier and Paul Marty

Monday 23 May: State Tennis Centre, Burswood

Meeting, 7:30 pm

Leonie McMahon, who is engaged by Birds Australia on a survey of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, will give an update on results so far.

Saturday 28 May: The Spectacles, Kwinana

Half-day Excursion

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

For members and the general public.

Leader: Michael Bamford

Saturday 4th to Monday 6th June: Warriedar Station

Foundation Day Campout

This is a station recently acquired by CALM, and they have asked that we do a bird survey, as for the many other stations they have bought in recent years. This will be a 'campers only' excursion as there are NO facilities available for us to use. The property is approximately 218 km NE of Wubin on the Great Northern Highway. Turn off to the left 5 km past the Ninghan Station turn off. Station tracks are all dirt and 4WD is desirable to reach all areas to be surveyed. Those taking part need to be fully self-contained regarding fuel, food and spares. On completion of the Warriedar survey

those with the time can carry on to Kadji Kadji Station to the west, to carry out a bird survey on this property.

No more than 30 members can be accommodated so it is essential to book early. Please indicate if you intend moving on to Kadji Kadji. BAWA signs will be in place.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Alyson and Ed Paull, Pam and George Agar, Clive and Wendy Napier

Foundation Day Weekend: Saturday 4th June to Monday 6th June

Rottneet Winter Wader Count

This survey has previously been carried out by a small group, but at Colin Davis' suggestion the opportunity is being offered to all members to attend this campout. Accommodation at approximately \$16.50 per night will be at the UWA Research Station at the eastern end of the airstrip. This offers cooking facilities, utensils, refrigerators, and bathrooms. Numbers are limited to 16 people.

If you are interested in attending please leave your name, phone number and e-mail address at the BA office. You will be contacted to confirm your attendance and be sent more information.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Mather

Sunday 11 June: Jandakot Regional Park, Forrestdale

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Ranford Road and Skeet Road (formerly Hale Road), opposite the poultry farm. We will walk around bushland/swampland where Tawny-crowned and other honeyeaters, Splendid Fairy-wrens, several raptors and many other species have been seen—46 so far. Wear old shoes or gumboots.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Debbie Walker

Wednesday 15 June: Bickley Brook, Gosnells

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park just past the children's camp at the reservoir. Follow Maddington Road and Hardinge Road to the reservoir. There are good prospects of seeing both Red-browed Finches and Red-eared Firetails, Southern Emu-wrens and a fair selection of other bushbirds.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 19 June: Burley Park, Bullsbrook

Half-day Excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park/barbecue area to the right off Smith Road. Burley Park is a 19 ha bushland remnant part of which is listed under Bush Forever. From Bullsbrook on the Great Northern Highway take the Chittering road and turn right into

Smith Road. Burley Park will be immediately on your right. 47 species have been recorded here with the Perth Biodiversity Project surveys, including Mistletoebird, Dusky and Black-faced Woodswallow, Varied Sittella and Splendid Fairy-wren.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Sue Mather

Sunday 26 June: Yarra Road (Christmas Tree Well), Brookton
Full-day Excursion

Meet at 9:00 am at the Christmas Tree Well car park on the left hand side of the Brookton Highway, heading east. The turn-off is sign-posted and about 0.5 km short of the Yarra Road turn-off. The area is about 45 km from the junction of the Brookton and Albany Highways in Kelmscott.

Good bush birding in Wandoo woodland.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Pam and George Agar

Monday 27 June: State Tennis Centre, Burswood
Meeting, 7:30 pm

Marion Massam, Technical Officer, Agriculture Western Australia, will speak on *Control of exotic birds and animals, including Rainbow Lorikeets*.

Monday 25 July: State Tennis Centre, Burswood
Meeting, 7:30 pm

Stuart Miller, a member, will give a talk entitled *Photographic glimpses of the nature of the Fitzgerald River region*.



BAWA volunteers for the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project
(from left): Tom Delaney, Niel Adams, Leonie McMahon (project officer), Phyllis Bentley, Stella Stewart-Wynne and Eleanor Adams preparing for an evening monitoring session at Waddy Forest.

Photo courtesy Leonie McMahon

ATLAS PROJECT

INFORMATION FOR OFFICE VOLUNTEERS AND OTHER BAWA SUPPORT PEOPLE

YES! THE ATLAS IS CONTINUING

Please note that the Atlas Project is ongoing and we are actively encouraging people to continue with Atlas surveys.

Why is the Atlas continuing?

- Ongoing bird survey information is very important for Birds Australia. It is used by individual birdwatchers, scientists, conservationists, and all levels of government
- Birds Australia is now committed to annual State of the Birds reports and the Atlas information provides critical information for these.

You can help by:

- Encouraging new members and callers to participate in the project
- Participating in the Atlas yourself
-

How:

- If kits are available in the back office, either give one to the prospective atlasser, or send one out by post.
- Contact Cheryl Gole, and ask her to contact the prospective observer.

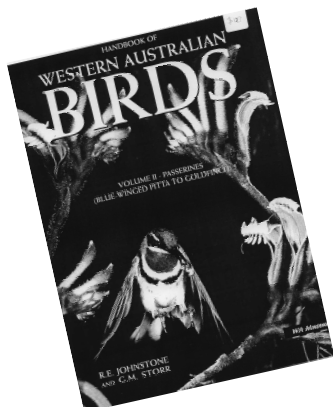
Note that the Atlas information is also used for important WA projects such as the local Bird Guides, etc. WA still has a group of voluntary Regional Organisers who, between them, cover the whole state.

Your assistance will help keep our Atlas project alive and functioning well.

THANK YOU!

QUERIES: Cheryl Gole (Tel/Fax: 9293 4958; Mobile 0428 934 958; E-mail <cgole@westnet.com.au>)

Call in and visit our Bookshop!



Handbook of Western Australian Birds volume II Passerines (Blue-winged Pitta to Goldfinch) by R E Johnstone and G M Storr — \$123.00

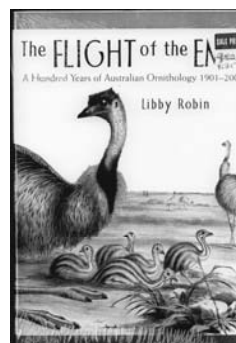
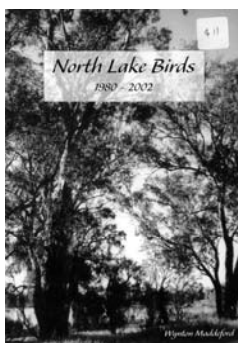
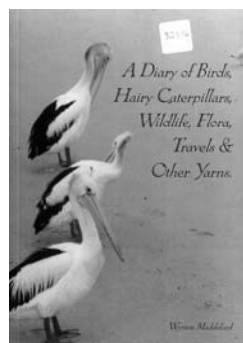
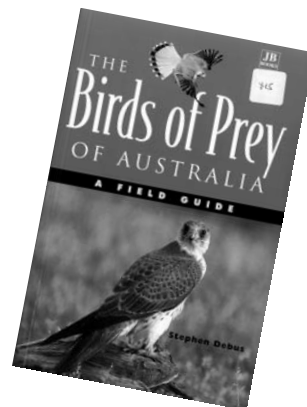
The Birds of Prey of Australia : a field guide by Stephen Debus — new edition — \$15.00

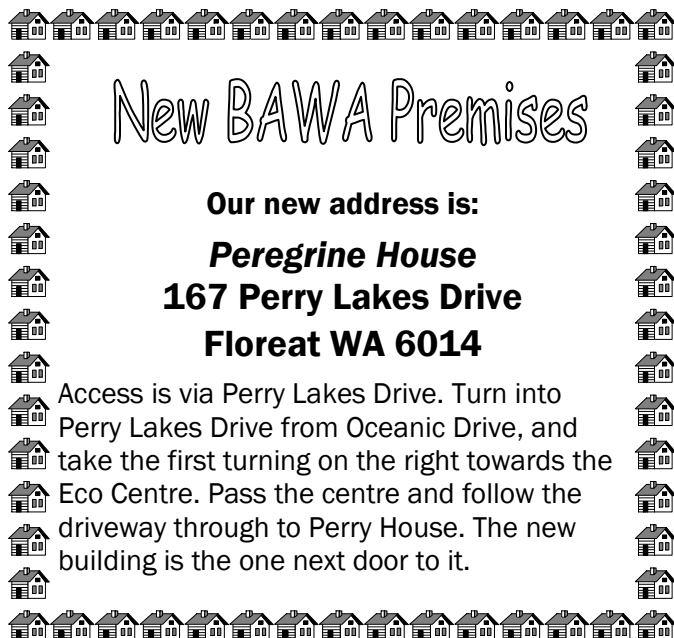
A Diary of Birds, Hairy Caterpillars, Wildlife, Flora, Travels & Other Yarns by Wynton Maddeford — \$27.50

The Flight of the Emu : A Hundred Years of Australian Ornithology 1901-2001 by Libby Robin — sale price \$25.00

North Lake Birds 1980-2002 by Wynton Maddeford — \$11.00

This is just a very small selection of our range of books.





New BAWA Premises

Our new address is:
Peregrine House
167 Perry Lakes Drive
Floreat WA 6014

Access is via Perry Lakes Drive. Turn into Perry Lakes Drive from Oceanic Drive, and take the first turning on the right towards the Eco Centre. Pass the centre and follow the driveway through to Perry House. The new building is the one next door to it.

Bird Cards

FOR SALE!




All cards cost \$1 each including an envelope. All cards are blank inside.

You can order them from our office near Perry Lakes in Perth at *Peregrine House*, 167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat WA 6014.

Our website <<http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>> has photographs in colour of all our cards.




Contact details:

E-mail: birdswa@iinet.net.au

Tel: (08) 9383 7749




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 E-mail: turnstone@wn.com.au
 PO Box 3089, Broome, WA, 6725

Chris continues to offer exciting birdwatching experiences around Broome including:

- ♦ Shorebirds of Roebuck Bay
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- ♦ Wetland and Woodlands
- ♦ Grasslands and Claypans

Chris is an excellent field ornithologist. He has over nine years experience guiding and researching in the Broome area. This experience and his infectious enthusiasm makes him an outstanding interpreter.

Chris looks forward to hearing from you.



Kingfisher Gallery

Michael Morcombe

One of Australia's leading nature photographers, is exhibiting a selection of photographs at

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From April 3rd until April 29th, 2005

Gallery Hours: Wed-Friday 1pm-5pm, Sunday 1pm-4pm

Phone: 08 9486 9822

Web: www.kingfishergallery.com.au

Amytornis

Western Australian Journal of Ornithology

Call for articles for the Inaugural edition of Birds Australia Western Australia's new journal.

Articles should be on Western Australian ornithological research and come in the form of scientific papers, short communications or comprehensive annotated lists.

Submissions from professional scientists as well as recreational birdwatchers are encouraged.

All submissions will be fully peer reviewed.

For further enquiries please contact either:

Managing Editor: *Myles Menz* on 0407 425 379

or

Assistant Editor: *Robert Davis* on 0429 702 973

Crossword Answers No 40

Across

1 publicity, 4 rafts, 7 curved, 8 mimic, 9 eat, 12 rate, 13 dabble, 14 geology, 16 toe, 17 eyes, 19 Sittella, 24 Oriole, 25 easier, 27 plumage, 28 toad, 29 wind

Down

1 Peregrine, 2 Corvidae, 3 tree, 4 remote, 5 family, 6 sociable, 10 tattler, 11 alight, 15 listen, 18 regent, 20 Alcedo, 21 morph, 22 corms, 23 ledge, 26 skin.

Birds Australia Western Australia (Inc) (A DIVISION OF ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION)

Western Australian Bird Notes Subscription Form

Are you joining Birds Australia for the first time, or renewing your membership?

Do you wish to receive *Western Australian Bird Notes*?

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Title: First name:

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WABN subscription rates per annum

(please cross out whichever is inapplicable)

WA Members	\$12.00
Interstate Members	\$13.00
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Payment Details

I enclose a cheque/money order payable to 'Birds Australia'
OR

Debit my ☐ Bankcard ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐

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...../.....

Expiry date

Signature

*Concession card number(s)
(Full-time student, Health Care or Pension card)

Post to: Birds Australia Membership
415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East, Vic 3123

8/2003



Opportunities for Volunteers



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

- ♦ **Eyre Bird Observatory volunteer caretakers** – contact
 - * Caroline Comstock Phone 9450 5086,
e-mail <caro@iinet.net.au>
 - * or Rod Smith Phone 9447 3804,
e-mail <rodjoyce@optusnet.com.au>
- ♦ **Atlas** – surveys for this are continuing – contact Cheryl Gole
Phone 9293 4958, e-mail <cgoale@westnet.com.au>
- ♦ **Excursion Leaders** – contact Sue Abbotts 9444 1607,
e-mail <sabbotts1@bigpond.com>
- ♦ **Monthly Meeting Speakers** – contact Brian Wilson 9293 1094
- ♦ **Noisy Scrub-bird** – contact Sarah Comer (see details under Notices)
- ♦ **Western Ground Parrot Project** – 10-day surveys in the Cape Arid area from March to June 2005; starting dates are March 2 and 26, April 13, May 4 and 20; ongoing surveys of the Waychinicup area from Albany on Thursdays. Contact:
 - * Brent Barrett 9842 4519 e-mail <brentb@calm.wa.gov.au>
 - * Brenda Newbey 9337 5673 e-mail <wgparrot@iinet.net.au>
 - * Anne Bondin 9844 1793 e-mail <albanybirds@hotmail.com>
- ♦ **Public Relations Sub-committee** – graphic artist, members willing to visit schools, set up displays, attend shows and help with administration – contact Elsa Dabbs e-mail <dabchic5@bigpond.net.au>
- ♦ **Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project** – a range of assistance is required including attendance at agricultural shows, databasing, surveys – contact Leonie McMahon 9287 2448, e-mail <ljmcmahon@bigpond.com>

Birds Australia Western Australia Inc

Office: *Peregrine House*

167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat WA 6014

NOTE NEW ADDRESS!

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Facsimile: (08) 9387 8412
Email: birdsau@iinet.net.au

Birds Australia WA Home Page:
<http://birdswa.iinet.net.au>

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Distribution: Rod Smith

Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**—a copy on disk or emailed would assist, especially if in MSWord as a document **without** styles.
- WABN uses Birds Australia recommended English names
- except for Observations, contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary.
- Full Editorial Policy is stated in WABN 74:10-12

Printing Deadlines (at the BAWA Office)

June 2005 issue: 1 May
September 2005 issue: 1 August
December 2005 issue: 1 November
March 2006 issue: 1 February

Advertising Rates

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

Calendar of Events

- Sat 5 – Mon 7 Mar:** Pemberton Campout
Sun 6 Mar: Lake Monger; Town of Cambridge, Half-day Excursion
Sat 12 Mar: Mindarie Keys, Wanneroo, Half-day Excursion
Wed 16 Mar: Garvey Park, Belmont, Mid-week Morning Excursion
Sat 19 Mar: Peel Inlet, Full Day Excursion
Mon 21 Mar: State Tennis Centre, Burswood, Meeting, 7:30 pm
Fri 25 – Mon 28 Mar: Margaret River, Easter Weekend Campout
Fri 25 – Mon 28 Mar: Mt Barker, Easter Weekend Campout
Sun 27 Mar: Herdsman Lake, Stirling, Half-day Excursion
Sat 2 Apr: Beermullah Lake, Gingin, Full day Excursion
Sun 10 Apr: Ellis Brook, Gosnells, Half-day Walk
Sun 10 Apr: Eighth Corella Count, Time: 3.30 pm to dark
Wed 13 Apr: Bold Park, Cambridge, Half-day Excursion
Sun 17 Apr: Denis de Young Reserve, Banjup, Half-day Excursion
Mon 18 Apr: State Tennis Centre, Burswood, Meeting, 7:30 pm
Sat 23 – Mon 25 Apr: Dryandra Woodland State Forest, ANZAC Day Long Weekend Campout
Sun 24 Apr: University of WA, Nedlands, Half-day Excursion
Sun 1 May: Gleneagles Rest Area, Half-day Excursion
Sat 7 May: Paruna Sanctuary, Full or Half-day Excursion
Wed 11 May: Hyde Park, Perth, Half-day Excursion
Sat 14 May: Lightning Swamp, Noranda, Half-day Excursion
Sun 22 May: Avon Valley National Park, Full-day Excursion
Mon 23 May: State Tennis Centre, Burswood, Meeting, 7:30 pm
Sat 28 May: The Spectacles, Kwinana, Half-day Excursion
Sat 4 – Mon 6 Jun: Warriedar Station, Foundation Day Campout
Sat 4 – Mon 6 Jun: Foundation Day Weekend: Rottneet Winter Wader Count
Sun 11 Jun: Jandakot Regional Park, Forrestdale, Half-day Excursion
Wed 15 Jun: Bickley Brook, Gosnells, Half-day Excursion
Sun 19 Jun: Burley Park, Bullsbrook, Half-day Excursion
Sun 26 Jun: Yarra Road (Christmas Tree Well), Brookton, Full-day Excursion
Mon 27 Jun: State Tennis Centre, Burswood, Meeting, 7:30 pm

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