

Western Australian Bird Notes



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



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SOOTY OYSTERCATCHER SITES IN SOUTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA

For more than ten years now, members from Birds Australia WA have been involved in Hooded Plover surveys. During this time, much information has been gained on Hooded Plovers, but other data have also been gathered.

Observers were asked to complete a survey sheet and record sightings of other wader species. Consequently, in addition to Hooded Plover sightings we were able to collect data on Sooty Oystercatchers, *Haematopus fuliginosus*, and their distribution along the south west coast.

This article presents an overview of the observations and information we have accumulated on Sooty Oystercatchers. These are not conclusive and there are bound to be sites that have been overlooked. Many observations coincided with the major February surveys.

The Sooty Oystercatcher is a species of interest as it is an ecological specialist and is dependent on a particular diet and habitat. Their distribution is along the coast, particularly where rocky shore lines are found. Observers from all regions mentioned that Pied Oystercatchers, *H. longirostris*, and Sooty Oystercatchers were often found together. Although they share each other's company the Pied Oystercatcher's preferred habitat is sandy beaches whilst the Sooty Oystercatcher prefers the

rocky coastline. Sites where Sooty Oystercatcher sightings have been recorded are shown in Table 1.

Coastal distribution of Sooty Oystercatchers from Perth to Eyre

Perth

Sightings of Sooty Oystercatchers around Perth are rare. Records of Sooty Oystercatchers are spread throughout the year and number one to two birds. Garden Island had a resident pair during 1995–2000. They could be found at the rocky southern end of the island (Boyd Wykes, personal communication). Observations from adjacent areas such as Rottnest Island, Woodman Point and Point Peron (Rockingham) seem likely to be forays from the Garden Island pair. There has been a lack of sightings from Garden Island over recent years.

Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin

The next location of Sooty Oystercatchers is south, past Dunsborough. Sightings were mostly concentrated along the coastal stretches on either side of Cape Leeuwin and Gracetown. The rocky coastal beaches between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin had a number of regular locations for this species, with small groups of up to ten birds seen.



Sooty Oystercatcher
Photo courtesy Les George

Augusta to Walpole

White Point, Black Point and Windy Harbour were the only sites where Sooty Oystercatchers were reported between Augusta and Broke Inlet. The stretch of beach between Windy Harbour and the mouth of the Gardner River, a distance of about 9 km, had 17 birds on 3 March 2002 and 15 on 6 March 2005. Once past Broke Inlet the sites with this species increased. There was no mention of any coastal breeding records.

Walpole to Albany

An observer who regularly walks along the beach from Peaceful Bay to Groper Bay, which is 3 km to the west, commented that they always see two to three Sooty Oystercatchers. Another observer mentioned that they regularly visit the coast from West Cape Howe westwards to Peaceful Bay and see these birds, in groups of two to eight, often in mixed groups with Pied Oystercatchers. No seasonal variation was noticed. Thomas and Jessie Healey who regularly visit Greens Pool Beach and Mazzeletti Beach, advised that they saw five individual birds one morning about March 2005. Recently they have only seen two pairs. Some high counts came from Wilson's Inlet, Ocean Beach (15) on 29 July 2003 and Peaceful Bay Beach (18) on 8 November 2000.

There are numerous sites around Albany where this species can be found. Two sites where you can almost guarantee seeing Sooty Oystercatchers are at Isthmus Bay, and along the foreshore of Princess Royal Harbour in the vicinity of the replica of the *Amity*. Torndirrup National Park had regular sightings with a maximum number of eight birds reported from both Isthmus Bay and Cable Beach. Sightings of feeding birds came from the grassed area in front of the brig *Amity*, a tourist attraction in Albany. There were no recent sightings from Rushy Point. Up to ten were seen on one of the islands in King George Sound.

Nesting was reported on Gull Rock, October 1996, but there have been no breeding records received from around Albany through the ongoing Atlas data collection.

Large congregations of Pied Oystercatchers were reported at the Lower King Esplanade, Albany, particularly during the autumn and winter months when numbers increased up to 100. This phenomenon has been observed as far back as 1982. Recent records were of 68 Pied Oystercatchers at Lower King in both May and June 2005 (Ray Garstone, personal communication).

Albany to Hopetoun

The coastline between Albany and Hopetoun has a good spread of Sooty Oystercatcher sites. A high count of 20 came from Beaufort Inlet on 16 April 2001.

Comments from Garry Carr, Senior Ranger at Fitzgerald River National Park:

I have not been keeping a record of Sooty Oystercatcher sightings, so the information I am providing is only from memory.

There are a number of sites through the area where I have observed Sooty's on a regular basis; the rocks close to the Gordon Inlet mouth on Trigelow Beach often have a pair.

The rocky areas around Pt Anne have low numbers of the birds, a pair and maybe one individual on odd occasions, as was the case on the 5 July 2005 there was one bird on Pt Anne beach. There is also a pair that frequents Fitzgerald Beach.

While the birds are seen on a regular basis, the numbers are quite low and I have never seen them in large numbers.

As for breeding records I have never recorded any nest sites or juveniles in this area.

I have recorded Pied Oystercatcher nest sites along the coast.



Pied Oystercatcher nest at Trigelow Beach.
Photo courtesy Garry Carr

They lay straight on the sand in a shallow depression. One site was on top of the first fore dune on Trigelow Beach. This is a good illustration of the vulnerability of the nest sites and is an example of the importance, for people to avoid the fore dunes in their vehicles.

Esperance and surrounds

When Sooty Oystercatchers were recorded on the beaches around Esperance, there were usually only a pair, unless there was a large stretch of beach. They were often seen with Pied

Oystercatchers. The largest concentration of Sooty Oystercatchers was found in the Archipelago of the Recherche off the Esperance coast.

Some estimates of the populations were as follows.

During a survey of 54 islands in 1991, it was estimated that 229 birds were present (B. Haberley unpublished).

In April 1993, 359 were counted on the islands of the Recherche and 71 on the beaches between Pt Culver and Stokes Inlet (Halse *et al.* 1995).

These estimates of the Sooty Oystercatcher population suggest that the islands of the Archipelago of the Recherche are a site of national significance, although this is not mentioned in the literature.

Comments from Allan Rose, Senior Ranger with the Department of Conservation and Land Management, based at Cape Arid National Park:

There have never been large numbers of Sooty Oystercatchers at Cape Arid National Park during my nine years here. The maximum number seen at Yokinup Bay beach

was ten during the February wader count. I do not take counts at other times of the year.

I cannot recall any Sooty Oystercatcher breeding records for the park, though Pied Oystercatchers have nested near the mouth of the Thomas River.

A survey conducted along the beach from Wattle Camp to Israelite Bay on 14 December 1986, a distance of 42.5 km, found 30 Sooty Oystercatchers (Newbey 1988).

Eyre

Data supplied by the Eyre Bird Observatory are shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

The graphs show the maximum monthly count and the number of surveys conducted in each month. The years covered are 1996, 1997 and 1999. Surveys along Kanidal beach were often conducted on a weekly basis.

On the information available it seems that numbers of Sooty Oystercatchers are lowest over winter and early spring and highest over the summer months. The highest number of Sooty Oystercatchers recorded at this site was 35 in December 1996.

Some earlier information from the Eyre Bird Observatory Report No. 6 (Goodreid and Goodreid 1996; see also Fig 4), lists the Sooty Oystercatcher as a resident but not breeding within the recording area in the period 1988 to 1992.

1988 - Present throughout the year, rarely to the east, but usually at the Nine Mile Beach or the Wader Beach/Twilight Cove area.

1989 – Present as usual.

1990/91/92 – Sooty Oystercatchers were largely confined to the rocky bay and adjacent reefs at 14 km west and along the rocky reef between Nine Mile Beach and Twilight Cove.

The higher numbers shown on some Kanidal Beach counts were usually on days when they were foraging, presumably on mussels, on the exposed reefs at low tide.

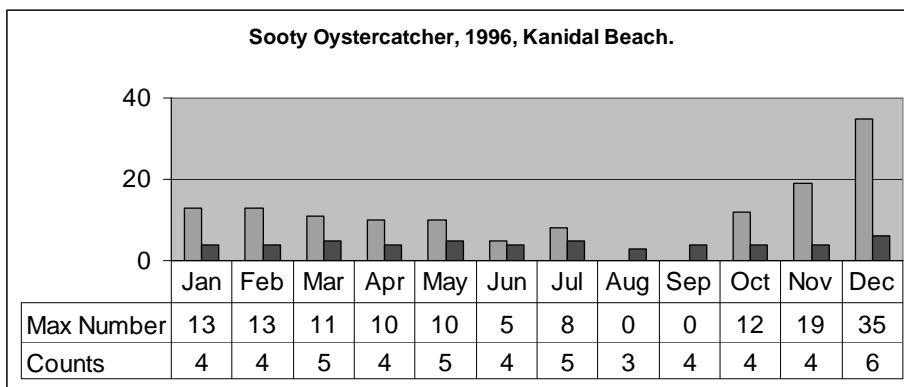


Fig. 1: Sooty Oystercatcher counts for each month of 1996 at Kanidal Beach.

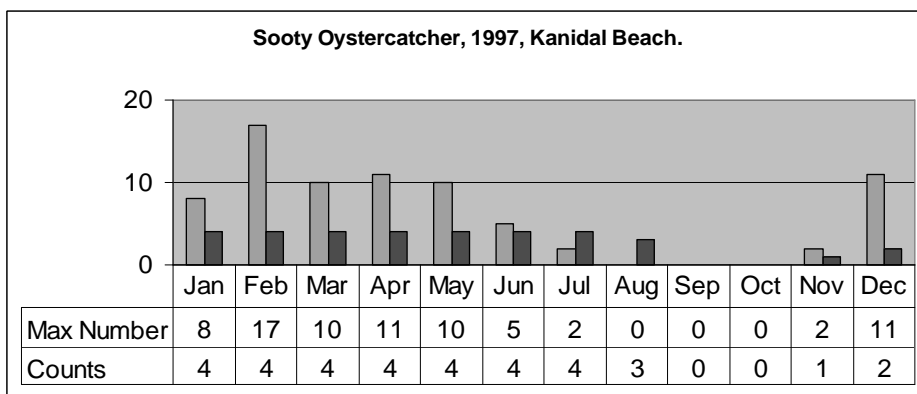


Fig. 2: Sooty Oystercatcher counts for each month of 1997 at Kanidal Beach.

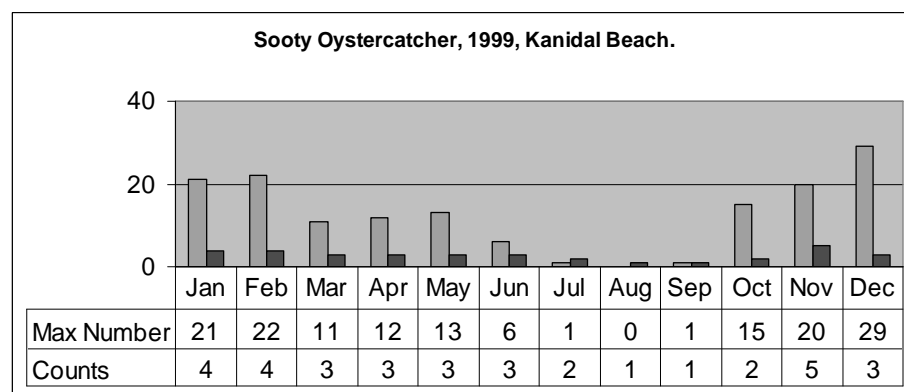


Fig. 3: Sooty Oystercatcher counts for each month of 1999 at Kanidal Beach.

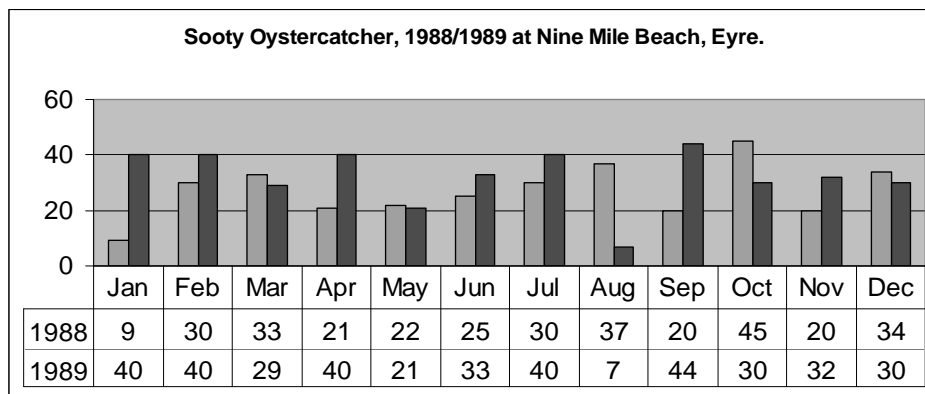


Fig 4: Monthly maxima of Sooty Oystercatcher at the Nine Mile Beach, Eyre, in 1988 and 1989.

They are known to shelter out of sight behind the 14 km headland on days of high tide and strong winds.

The low numbers in winter 1991 were unusual compared with other years (Goodreid and Goodreid 1996).

Breeding records

Breeding records for Sooty Oystercatchers are very scarce, probably due to their preference for offshore islands as breeding sites. Surprisingly, there are no breeding records from Garden Island.

The Sooty Oystercatcher was reported breeding on Woody Island in November 1997 (Beckingham 1998).

There are breeding records for Two Peoples Bay as well as offshore islands in the region, such as Gull Rock near Albany.

Thomas and Jessie Healey were the only people with a breeding report in 2004:

A pair of Sooty Oystercatchers with a chick were seen on the Green's Pool beach about two thirds of the way towards West Rocks. The juvenile was feathered and the parents were teaching it how to find worms. One of the birds pulled a worm out of the sand and then ran up to the juvenile with it.

Movements

No seasonal variation in numbers or movement was noticed on our south-western WA beaches, apart from the variation at Eyre, noted above.

This is in contrast to Tasmania and Victoria where some flocking behaviour has been recorded after the breeding season (Watkins 1993). Studies on the central Victorian coast, where Sooty Oystercatchers breed on islands between October and January, show that numbers increase on mainland rocky shores through summer and on sandy ocean beaches in winter. These regular movements correspond to seasonal variations in the exposure of rocky intertidal feeding habitat, which is not exposed for as long during the winter months (Lane *et al.* 1987). At some sites, fewer birds were recorded prior to and during the breeding season, which extends from October to January. This is presumably because of movement from counted sites to breeding territories on offshore islands (Alcorn *et al.* 1994).

Wader counts were held at Kanidal Beach during 1986 to 1990 as part of the Australasian Wader Studies Group regular counts project. The following comments relate to the annual variation in Sooty Oystercatcher numbers:

The small numbers of Sooty Oystercatcher observed at Kanidal Beach varied widely and the periods of departure varied from short intervals to the nine-month interval from May 1986 to February 1987. These periods of departure showed little seasonal pattern and may not be related to the breeding cycle. Generally fewer Sooty Oystercatcher were counted in 1986

than in remaining years (Alcorn *et al.* 1994).

The small fairly constant numbers of Sooty Oystercatchers observed year-round at Kanidal Beach suggested there were no large scale movements (Alcorn *et al.* 1994) although there does appear to be lower numbers in winter and early spring in some years (Figures 1-3), indicating that there may be at least some local movements in the vicinity of Eyre.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the contributions made by our Hooded Plover surveyors. Particular thanks go to Gary Carr, George Endacott, Ray Garstone, Beryl Meulenbroek, June Morrison, Ken Read, Allan Rose, the Albany Birdwatching Group and the Esperance Bird Observers for their input.

Furthermore I would like to acknowledge the data kindly supplied by the Eyre Bird Observatory and the assistance from Alma and Perry de Rebeira.

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Location	Shire	Location	Shire
Rottneest	Perth	Lower King, Esplanade	Albany
Garden Island	Perth	Oyster Harbour, Emu Point	Albany
Woodman Point	Perth	Ledge Beach	Albany
Point Peron	Rockingham	Nanarup Beach	Albany
Sugarloaf Rock	Busselton	Two People's Bay	Albany
Cape Clairault	Busselton	Betty's Beach	Albany
Cowaramup Beach	Augusta/Margaret River	Normans Beach	Albany
Ellenbrook	Augusta/Margaret River	Cape Riche	Albany
Bob's Hollow	Augusta/Margaret River	Cheyne Bay, Eyre River	Albany
Cape Freycinet	Augusta/Margaret River	Schooner Beach	Albany
Deepdene Beach	Augusta/Margaret River	Beaufort Inlet	Jerramungup
Skippy Rock	Augusta/Margaret River	Pallinup Estuary	Jerramungup
Quarry Bay	Augusta/Margaret River	Yandi Beach	Jerramungup
Cape Leewin	Augusta/Margaret River	Reef Beach	Jerramungup
Sarge Bay	Augusta/Margaret River	Bremer Bay Bar	Jerramungup
Augusta Cliffs	Augusta/Margaret River	Gordon Inlet	Jerramungup
Flinders Bay	Augusta/Margaret River	Trigelow Beach	Ravensthorpe
White Point	Nannup	Point Anne	Ravensthorpe
Black Point	Nannup	Point Charles	Ravensthorpe
Salmon Beach	Manjimup	Fitzgerald Inlet	Ravensthorpe
Windy Harbour	Manjimup	Salmon Holes	Ravensthorpe
Broke Inlet	Manjimup	Hopetoun Beach	Ravensthorpe
Banksia Camp	Manjimup	Twelve Mile Beach	Ravensthorpe
Mandalay Beach	Manjimup	Mason Bay	Ravensthorpe
Nornalup Inlet	Manjimup	Starvation Bay	Ravensthorpe
Bellanger Beach	Denmark	Munglinup Beach	Ravensthorpe
Conspicuous Beach	Denmark	Stokes Inlet	Esperance
Rame Head	Denmark	Barkers Inlet	Esperance
Peaceful Bay	Denmark	Fourth Beach	Esperance
Boat Harbour	Denmark	Dempster Head	Esperance
Parry Beach	Denmark	Wylie Head	Esperance
Mazzoletti Beach	Denmark	Lucky Bay	Esperance
Greens Pool	Denmark	Rossiter Bay	Esperance
Lights Beach	Denmark	Mount Le Grande Beach	Esperance
Wilson Inlet	Denmark	Wharton Beach	Esperance
Perkins Beach	Albany	Alexander Bay	Esperance
Torbay Inlet	Albany	Yokinup Bay	Esperance
Cable Beach	Albany	Cape Arid Nat Park, CANP	Esperance
Isthmus Bay	Albany	Thomas River mouth, CANP	Esperance
Amity Boat	Albany	Seal Creek, CANP	Esperance
Royal Harbour	Albany	Jorndee Creek, CANP	Esperance
Sandpatch, windfarm	Albany	Blue Haven Beach	Esperance
Rushy Point, PRH	Albany	Barrier Anchorage	Esperance
Bramble Beach, PRH	Albany	Woody Is.	Esperance
Whalers Cove, KGS	Albany	Boxer Is.	Esperance
Michaelmas Island, KGS	Albany	Mondrane Is.	Esperance
Breaksea Island, KGS	Albany	Figure of Eight Is.	Esperance
Cordinup Beach	Albany	Capps Is.	Esperance
Gull Rock	Albany	Israelite Bay	Esperance
		Eyre, Kanidal Beach	Dundas

Table 1: List of sites where Sooty Oystercatchers have been recorded.

Note:

CANP = Cape Arid National Park

KGS - King George Sound

PRH - Princess Royal Harbour



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.

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. There are some outstanding sightings from the last few months. The **RINGED PLOVER** seen at Rottnest Island is the first report for WA and one of only a few claimed for Australia. In the south west an **Inland Dotterel** was seen near Katanning and a **Rockhopper Penguin** at Albany. A **Little Stint** was seen in Dampier. There have been a host of sightings on Cocos and Christmas Islands including a **RED COLLARED-DOVE** (the first reported for Australia) and a **Rose-coloured Starling** (the third for Australia).

In the metropolitan area, there have been excellent numbers of waders on the Peel Inlet. The wet winter and spring have left most wetlands at high levels with little habitat suitable for waders and crakes. There has also been alternative habitat available inland as a result of cyclonic rains. There have been very few waders at Lake McLarty, Thomsons Lake and Forrestdale Lake so far this summer. Perhaps these are the birds feeding at South Yunderup, which has not been surveyed as extensively in previous years.

In the south-west, the **Wandering Whistling-Duck** seen at Northam is well south of its normal range. There are very few migratory waders on Oyster Harbour at Albany and Wilson Inlet at Denmark. One suggestion is that this is because these areas are less suitable after heavy rains in late spring and early summer wash nutrients down

the rivers. Hopefully the waders will return soon. A report of a probable **Sabine's Gull** off the south coast is a very unusual sighting.

Don Hadden has lived on the Cocos Islands for nearly six months and his sustained observations have contributed much to the knowledge of Cocos birdlife, including the first records for the islands of **Rose-coloured Starling**, **Red-necked Phalarope**, **Black Bittern** and **Pacific Black Duck**. He has been photographing several herons that differ from the normal grey morph **Eastern Reef Egret**. One bird has a white head, neck and underparts and is probably an aberrant coloured bird, possibly the same bird reported a few years earlier. Another has occipital plumes, yellow feet and some white near the gape raising debate over whether it might be a **Western Reef Egret** or a hybrid with a **Little Egret**. One grey bird and one white bird have whitish upper legs.

David James has worked on Christmas Island for nearly two years, and some of his recent sightings are included. **Barn Swallow**, **Fork-tailed Swift**, **Red-rumped Swallow** and **Asian House Martin** appear to be uncommon annual passage migrants in November / December. David has also reported **Large Hawk-Cuckoo**, **Kentish Plover** and **Tree Martin** during 2005 but we don't have the full details to include in this report. A **Black-tailed Native-hen** is the first record for the island.

METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

Brown Quail – 2, 29/11/05, Munday Brook, Canning Road (Canning Mills) – RP (probable aviary escapee)

Radjah Shelduck – 1, 29/01/06, Forrestdale Lake (Forrestdale) – DFJ (probable aviary escapee)

Royal Spoonbill – 1 in breeding plumage, 10/12/05, Maurice Hamer Reserve (Herdsman) – EG * 1 in breeding plumage, 25/12/05 to 22/01/06, Perry Lakes (Floreat) – SH *et al.* (uncommon in the south west)

Black-tailed Native-hen – 1, 18/10/05, Bartram Road Swamp (Forrestdale) – DFJ * 1, 16/12/05, Thomsons Lake (Beeliar) – RPi (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

Wood Sandpiper – 9, 17/12/05, Bartram Road Swamp (Forrestdale) – DFJ (high count for this site)

Pectoral Sandpiper – 1, 29/01/06, Peel Inlet (South Yunderup) – AC (uncommon in the south west)

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper – 2400, 19/01/06, Peel Inlet (South Yunderup) – AC (high count in the south west)

Broad-billed Sandpiper – 1, 16-19/01/06, Peel Inlet (South Yunderup) – AC (uncommon in the south west)

Ruff – 1, 09/01/06, Creery Wetlands (Coodanup) – AC (uncommon in the south west)

RINGED PLOVER – 1, 11-13/11/05, Government House Lake (Rottnest Island) – BR (adult in winter plumage, possibly ssp *tundrae*, distinctive call heard; 1st report for WA; BARC submission required)

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater – 1, 13-14/01/06, Soldier's Cove (Dudley Park) – DR, BS (rare in Mandurah area)

Grey Currawong – 1, 11/01/06, Sunset Homes (Dalkeith) – HB (rare in the western suburbs)

SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

ROCKHOPPER PENGUIN – 1, 06/01/06, Two People's Bay (Albany) – MBa (very uncommon in WA; relocated to Breaksea Island by CALM)

White-headed Petrel – 1 beach washed, 27/12/05, Boranup Beach (Augusta – Margaret River) – JPO (uncommon in summer; photograph)

Wandering Whistling-Duck – 1, 16/01/06, Northam Weir (Northam) – KG (rare in the south west; photograph)

Freckled Duck – 22, 26/11/05, lake on Bibiking Road (Katanning) – DS * 85, 05/01/06, lake on Bibiking Road (Katanning) – DS (high counts)

Chestnut Teal – 2 adults and 4 young, 04/01/06, lake on Hotker Road (Katanning) – DS (breeding unusual this far north)

White-necked Heron – 2 nests, 26/11/05, lake on Packard Road (Katanning) – DS (rarely reported nesting in the south west)

Black-tailed Native-hen – 68, 26/11/05, lake on Bibiking Road (Katanning) – DS (high count in the south west)

Red Knot – 1, 04/12/05, 10km S of Badgebup (Katanning) – DS (rarely reported inland)

Red-necked Stint – 5500, 15/01/06, Lake Preston north (Waroona) – BRu (high count)

Pectoral Sandpiper – 1, 04/12/05, 10km S of Badgebup (Katanning) – DS * 1, 29/01/06, Gundaring Lake (Wagin) – BAWA, DS (uncommon in the south west)

INLAND DOTTEREL – 1, 04/12/05, 10km S of Badgebup (Katanning) – DS (rare in the south west)

Hooded Plover – 42, including an immature, 04/01/06, salt lake E of Leeman (Carnamah) – MB (high count for northern part of range)

Probable **Sabine's Gull** – 1, 12/09/05, off West Cape Howe National Park (Albany) – MH (see article elsewhere in this issue)

Mulga Parrot – 1, 05/01/06, Willies Road (Beverly) – IR * 2, 07/01/06, Parkeyerring Lake (Wagin) – DS * 2, 28/01/06, Wagin Lake (Wagin) – BAWA, DS * 9, 29/01/06, Parkeyerring Lake (Wagin) – BAWA, DS (western edge of range)

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater – 1, 07/01/06, Parkeyerring Lake (Wagin) – DS * 2, 29/01/06, Parkeyerring Lake (Wagin) – BAWA, DS (western edge of range)

ARID ZONE

Brown Quail – 1, 01/12/05, McNeil's

Claypan (Carnarvon) – FO (2nd record for Carnarvon Basin)

Common Redshank – 1, 17/12/05, Small Boat Harbour (Carnarvon) – LG (very uncommon in the Gascoyne)

LITTLE STINT – 1 breeding plumage, 04/11/05, Dampier Salt Works (Roebourne) – CH (rare in WA)

Oriental Pratincole – 7, 01/12/05, McNeil Claypan (Carnarvon) – FO * 7, 16/12/05, McNeil Claypan (Carnarvon) – LG (uncommon in the Gascoyne)

Barking Owl – 2+, 28/12/05, Running Waters, Skull Spring Road (East Pilbara) – BD (near eastern limit in the Pilbara)

White-fronted Chat – 1, 02/12/05, Carbla Station (Shark Bay) – FO (near northern limit)

Star Finch – 30+, 08/11/05, South Hedland Sewage Works (Port Hedland) – FO (uncommon)



These White-breasted Waterhens appear to be resident on Cocos Islands.

Photo courtesy Don Hadden

KIMBERLEY

Freckled Duck – 12, 01/12/05, Lake Argyle (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CH (uncommon in the East Kimberley)

Chestnut Teal – 2, 01/12/05, Lake Argyle (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CH (rare in the Kimberley)

Great Crested Grebe – 14, 01/12/05, Lake Argyle (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CH (uncommon in the East Kimberley)

Flock Bronzewing – 120, 02/10/05, Parry Lagoon (Wyndham – East

Kimberley) – RC * 3000, 01/12/05, edge of Lake Argyle (Wyndham – East Kimberley) – CH (high counts)

Banded Honeyeater – 25, 12/11/05, Broome Town (Broome) – CH (very uncommon in the west Kimberley)

CHRISTMAS & COCOS ISLANDS

Pacific Black Duck – 6, 27/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (1st record for Cocos; photographs)

Hardhead – 1, 27/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (2nd record for Cocos; photographs)

Little Black Cormorant – 1, 06/01/06, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (2nd record for Cocos; photographs)

Black Bittern – 1, 29/10/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH (1st record for Cocos; photographs)

White-breasted Waterhen – 1, 13/10/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH * 1, 18/10/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH * adult & 3 chicks, 30/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (now resident on Cocos; photographs)

Black-tailed Native-hen – 1, 03-05/01/06, Irvine Hill Road / Phosphate Hill Road (Christmas Island) – FO, ASK (1st record for Christmas Is; photographs)

Pin-tailed Snipe – 1, 27/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH * 3, 06/01/06, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (uncommon; photographs)

Common Greenshank – 2, 27/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (uncommon)

Common Redshank – 1 immature, 13/10/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH * 1, 24/10/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (rare; photographs)

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper – 1, 06/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (3rd record for Cocos; photographs)

Curlew Sandpiper – 6, 06/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (2nd record for Cocos; photographs)

Red-necked Phalarope – 1, 30/11/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH (1st record for Cocos; photographs)



This Red-necked Phalarope was the first recorded for Cocos Islands.
Photo courtesy Don Hadden

Oriental Pratincole – 1, 29/10/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH * 1, 27/11/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH (uncommon)

RED COLLARED-DOVE – 1, 30-31/12/05, The Plantation (Christmas Island) – ASK, FO (1st report for Australia; BARC submission sent; article submitted for publication in *Amytornis*)

Edible-nest or Black-nest Swiftlet – 3-4, 07/11/05, near North West Point (Christmas Island) – DJ (rare;

exact identity could not be determined)

Dollarbird – 1, 07/12/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH (3rd record for Cocos)

Barn Swallow – 1, 19/10/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH * 13, 06/11/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH (uncommon; photographs)

Red-rumped Swallow – 3-4, 07/11/05, near North West Point (Christmas Island) – DJ (uncommon)

Asian House Martin – 4, 07/11/05, near North West Point (Christmas Island) – DJ (rare)

Yellow Wagtail – 1, 13/10/05, West Island (Cocos Island) – DH * 1, 29/10/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH (uncommon; photographs)

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING – 1 immature, 30/11/05, Home Island (Cocos Island) – DH (1st record for Cocos; photographs)

OBSERVER

AC = Alan Collins
ASK = Arthur & Sheryl Keates (NT)
BARC = BA Rarities Committee
BAWA = BAWA Excursion
BD = Ben Drew
BR = Bill Rutherford
BRu = Bill Russell
BS = Bill Smart
CH = Chris Hassell
DFJ = David F. James
DH = Don Hadden
DJ = David James (CI)
DR = Dick Rule
DS = David Secomb
EG = Euro Gerbaz
FO = Frank O'Connor
HB = Hillary Brooke
IR = Ian Rudd
JPO = Jean-Paul Orsini
KG = Kate Gole
LG = Les George
MB = Mike Bamford
MBa = Mike Barth
MH = Marilyn Hewish
RC = Ricki Coughlan
RP = Ryan Phillips
RPi = Robyn Pickering
SH = Stewart Houghton



Birds Australia WA Inc Reports



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

I can scarcely believe that another year has now passed. As I write this, the BAWA AGM is pending, which means I have been fortunate enough to hold the position of chair for a whole year! Time does fly. Although I shall try to refrain from the traditional bout of speculation on what has unfolded during the past year, I shall say that it has been a year of change. As mentioned in my column in the last issue, the biggest change that I see, has been the strengthening of our conservation work on Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. This included two new project officers and a whole new component of urgently needed Swan Coastal Plain work. I feel that the tide is turning for BAWA as we finally have the opportunity to focus on practical conservation projects in a major way. I hope to see a consolidation of this in the next year.

A very interesting exercise for BAWA recently has been the collation of data on volunteer hours. In an attempt to quantify just how much of our time we all donate to BAWA, we have commenced monthly accounting of all volunteer hours from now on. For an initial estimate on last year's data, I was able to estimate (very conservatively!) that we put in nearly

4000 hours per month of our time! This includes very substantial contributions from the excursions committee and those members who attend walks, as well as from all our other amazing committees such as Eyre Bird Observatory, Public Relations, Grants, Conservation and Research and Executive committee amongst many others. At the rate of \$25.00 hour, this equates to around \$100 000 of volunteer work per month or \$1.2 million per year!! I think we have a lot to be proud of.

This year we also have the national Congress and Campout to look forward to and planning on this is now well advanced thanks to the dedicated work of Bruce Haynes and his committee. This event offers a unique opportunity for us to showcase the many important activities and research of BAWA as well as the unique birds of WA's south coast region. It promises to be an interesting and fun time for all members and we hope to see you there.

Well until next time, happy birding and thank you to all our members for your amazing personal contributions that make BAWA the very active organisation it is today.

Rob Davis

LETTER FROM COUNCIL

This is the first of what I hope will be regular reports on my experiences on Birds Australia's Council. I would like to start by thanking members for their support and encouragement. This may sound a bit corny, but it really is humbling to be put in a position where other people think I can do something useful.

I have now attended three Council meetings. The first, in July, was preceded by an introductory session for new Councillors. At this session we were made aware that we were effectively now directors on the board of a company whose business is bird conservation. Unpaid directors, to be sure, but with all the responsibilities of directors none-the-less. So what happens at Council meetings?

They happen four times a year and each lasts a day, but of course that is the tip of the iceberg. There are formal and informal meetings with BA staff and other councillors both before and after the main meeting, as well as a steady stream of email correspondence between meetings. I have also been asked to chair a committee on communications issues, with this committee providing advice and recommendations to Council and the National Office. A recent initiative of Council has been to set up several such committees and to bring in non-council members for advice on particular issues. This is essential as it draws in expertise when we need it.

Like the bumper sticker says: "More than just birdwatching". Following are some examples of the issues dealt with at Council recently.

Management of Newhaven. When BA acquired Newhaven, the aim was that it would be managed for the conservation of birds and would be a place that members could visit, and where they could participate in research. This is to be achieved through a partnership with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, an organisation that is experienced in reserve management. Entering into this partnership has required a long period of negotiation, but the outcome is consistent with BA's original aim with respect to Newhaven. Importantly, BA gets to do what it does well, which is provide expertise on birds, while AWC gets to do what it does well, which is manage private reserves for conservation.

Policy on the recreational shooting of ducks. It might seem obvious that BA would oppose duck shooting, but nothing is ever that simple. BA's position has long been that in a conservation sense, duck shooting should only be opposed if it can be demonstrated that duck shooting is causing irreparable harm to duck populations. In some parts of the world, particularly North America, recreational shooters are a very positive force for conservation because they ensure

protection of habitat. However, this is not the case in Australia. Council has therefore proposed a change in BA's position on duck shooting, but still has to resolve the question of shooting that is not recreational.

Return of a proportion of members' subscriptions to Regional Groups. This has been a topic of debate for many years and I have now been on both sides of the fence. It is certainly not a simple issue but Council is seeking to ensure that Regional Groups do get more financial support.

Other matters dealt with have included the question of National Office accommodation, negotiating with a major corporate donor for a 3 year, Australia-wide project on Important Bird Areas, preparing an objective statement on bird flu, developing closer ties with other bird groups, investigating questions of insurance cover for members and regional groups, and so on.

Much of what we deal with seems far removed from birds, but it is encouraging how often conversations turn to bird-watching and observations on bird behaviour, and a recent meeting was disrupted when the whisper "Little Lorikeet" went around the room. That would have been a new species for at least one Councillor!

Mike Bamford

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- > Grasslands and Claypans

Chris is an excellent field ornithologist. He has over ten 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.

WESTERN GROUND PARROT RECOVERY: THE LEGACY CONTINUES



South Coast Regional
Initiative Planning Team



The Western Ground Parrot Recovery Project (WGPRP) has been in operation for over two years now and thanks to an ongoing partnership between the Department of Conservation & Land Management (CALM) and the South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team (SCRIPT) it looks like it will continue into 2008. The recovery of this critically endangered parrot is part of SCRIPT's Regional Natural Resource Management Strategy which includes the implementation of recovery actions for a long list of threatened flora and fauna found on Western Australia's south coast. Funding has been provided by the Australian and Western Australian Governments through the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

The WGPRP consists of CALM staff, a vast network of volunteers (often BAWA members) and the 'Friends of the Western Ground Parrot', a community group dedicated to the recovery of this species. Over the past two years, the project has conducted over 20 survey trips in an effort to locate all remaining populations of Western Ground Parrots. Detailed maps of critical habitat and population boundaries are now available. A wealth of information was collected revealing important clues to the bird's habitat requirements in its ever-changing fire prone ecosystem along with a better understanding of the timing of the breeding season. This was all made possible through the hard work of many volunteers contributing countless hours to the project. Over the next few years the project will continue to monitor the remaining populations of birds, refine survey techniques and work with land managers to reduce threats such as feral predators and uncontrolled wildfires. There is still much to learn and we are always looking to discover any unknown remnant Ground Parrot populations.

If you would like to help save this elusive, cryptic ground dwelling parrot please consider joining the WGPRP team in 2006. All survey trips are fully supported with food and group equipment and some assistance towards transport. Survey trips (usually 10 days in length) will commence in March and run through May. For trip dates and details please contact Mike Barth on ph. (08) 9842 4519 or e-mail: <michaelba@calm.wa.gov.au> . To join the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, or simply to obtain further information, contact Brenda Newbey (Perth) on ph. (08) 9337 5673 or e-mail: <wgparrot@inet.net.au>

or Anne Bondin (Albany) on ph. (08) 9844 1793 or e-mail: <albanybirds@hotmail.com>.

Mike Barth

CARNABY'S BLACK-COCKATOOS ON THE SWAN COASTAL PLAIN: WE NEED YOUR HELP!



*"What great birds they
[Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos]
are! They're real larrikins, and
often remind me of adolescents -
they're big, very noisy, very, very
messy... but we love them
anyway!"*

*Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo
observer*

Birds Australia WA's new research project on the Swan Coastal Plain aims to determine how many Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos there are, where they are, and to identify critical habitat for the birds. Information from this project will assist with conservation planning in the rapidly developing Swan Region.

Once numerous in WA, the enigmatic and highly mobile Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) is now listed as endangered under both State and Commonwealth legislation. Populations are declining dramatically due to land clearing for urban development in Perth and for agriculture in regional areas. The last 45 years has seen a 50% decrease in the species' range and abundance.

Any suitable habitat that remains for the Carnaby's is fragmented, and often degraded by soil salinity and weed invasion. Feeding habitat is often so far away from nesting sites that the growth rate and survival of nestlings is significantly reduced.

The life history of this distinctive cockatoo makes it extremely vulnerable to threats resulting from human activities. Clearing of habitat such as on the Swan Coastal Plain continues to be a threat. The birds feed on a large variety of plants including proteaceous species (Banksia, Dryandra and Grevillea), Marri nuts, and a range of introduced species like pine cones.

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos are believed to breed mostly in the



Two Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo
males.

Photo courtesy John Lauri



Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo
Photo courtesy Eleanor Adams

Wheatbelt, returning to coastal and near coastal areas from late December to July. Pairs bond for life and use large hollows in eucalypt trees to produce just one chick per year. Breeding habitat has also been destroyed by the loss of old, hollow-bearing trees. Hollows may not form in those trees for 120 – 150 years and competition for hollows is increasing from feral bees, corellas and Galahs.

'Great Cocky Count'

For good estimates of the population in this region, we urgently require as many volunteers over as extensive an area of the Swan Coastal Plain as possible. If there is a patch of bush near you, you

too could be a part of the 'Great Cocky Count'. Anyone can participate, surveying from good vantage points anywhere from Gingin to Bunbury within local parks, reserves and home gardens. Survey forms, volunteer coordinator details and further information can be obtained from the website listed below.

Vegetation survey volunteers needed—variable timing

Vegetation surveys aiming to identify critical habitat for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos are currently being planned. Surveys will be conducted in bush across the Swan Coastal Plain. Please check the website for the latest information. The feeding habits and preferences of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo on the coastal plain are currently unknown. Food plant record forms are therefore available on the website for you to fill out anytime you see one feeding.

For Carnaby's, non-breeding areas are as critical to long-term survival as breeding areas. The survival and recovery of the cockatoo is inextricably linked to the survival of its habitat—both in breeding areas in the wheatbelt and non-breeding areas such as the Swan Coastal Plain. However, with increasing public awareness and support, and future conservation planning based on good information, there is still hope that Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos will again blacken the sky as they fly overhead.

The next bird surveys are on **Sunday 26 March 2006** (3:30 to 6:00 pm) and **Sunday 14 May 2006** (3:00 – 6:00 pm) and will involve observing for cockatoos, counting birds, their flight direction and activity at particular locations. Information about the surveys, registration with volunteer coordinators (Jacqui, <volunteers@carnabyscockatoos.org>, 0428 946 001) and forms are available on the website at <www.carnabyscockatoo.org>. To find out other ways to become involved, contact Bansi Shah, Swan Coastal Coordinator, Birds Australia WA on <b.shah@birdsaustralia.com.au>.

Bansi Shah

USE OF PREDATOR EXCLUSION CAGES (PEC) AT HOODED PLOVERS' NESTS AT YALGORUP LAKES 2005/2006

Since the Myalup Bird Observers (MBO) was formed in late 2000, the members have noticed Hooded Plover egg losses at the south west end of Lake Preston each breeding season due to either flooding or undiscovered predators, probably silver gulls and foxes.

Some egg losses have also occurred, or were suspected by some members, to have been predated also at other hypersaline lakes found within the Yalgorup National Park (about 13 088 ha).

The MBO has assisted at several Yalgorup Hooded Plover capture and colour-banding operations since September 2002. So, together with the Hooded Plover sub-committee (HPSC) of Birds Australia WA Inc. (BAWA), the consensus early in 2005 was to find some way of preserving this rare species' gene pool at Yalgorup by trying to improve the hatching rate. The fate thereafter of any chicks and fledglings would be incalculable.

On request, Dr Bob Baird, senior researcher in Victoria, supplied the MBO with Predator Exclusion Cage (PEC) diagrams and instructions for use. The HPSC then successfully applied for a grant to purchase materials for five PEC kits, minor ancillaries and tools. As far as is known, this is the first time that PECs have been used to protect the eggs of nesting Hooded Plovers in Western Australia. However the above average rains in the 2005 winter, brim-filled all the Yalgorup National Park lakes, leaving only very few, narrow shoreline margins. This was not remembered to have occurred over the last ten years.

Some known breeding pairs that were expected to nest from late November 2005 failed to appear near their usual nesting sites. When a few did appear, they left quite shortly after. It became impossible to predict if the Hooded Plover 2005–2006 breeding season would peak almost on cue as it has done in the past. The question that arose was that if, on arrival, the birds found their usual food sources at Yalgorup inhibited by submerged lake shores, or access to available food was prevented, where were they feeding meanwhile? At near breeding time nutritional needs would be high. So it is noteworthy also that Hooded Plovers were observed during this period, wading and foraging freely on swarms of brine flies.

The race was on between all MBO and some Mandurah Bird Observers Club



Hooded Plover three-egg nest at Duck Pond, North Yalgorup, 9 December 2005.
Photo courtesy Tony France



Bill Russell and Dick Rule installing Predator Exclusion Cage (PEC) over a Hooded Plover's three-egg nest; three chicks hatched out just under three weeks later.

Photo courtesy Tony France

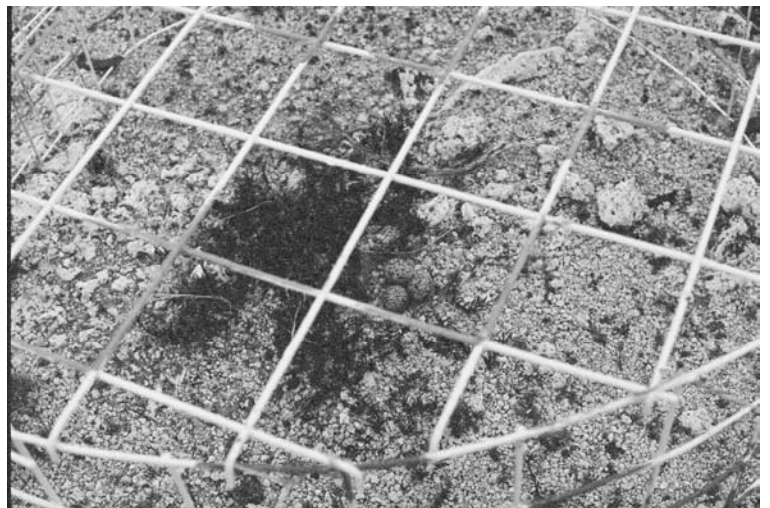
(MBOC) members to find the first Hooded Plover nest with eggs this season. Dick Rule found a three-egg nest with two adult birds nearby at Duck Pond. The author, rashly anticipating almost certain victory for his MBO team, had already assembled one PEC for immediate use, but Dick's earliest three egg find offered the best and fairest opportunity to trial the PEC technology.

The breeding Hooded Plover pair was quickly spotted some way from the nest site, so giving our party a fair opportunity to set the PEC over the nest with the least disturbance possible to the parent birds. The three eggs were found intact, bedded on loose limestone gravel with some low and sparse vegetation.

There was no mistaking the pale olive cast to the eggs' base colour, although the MBO experience at the south west Lake Preston site usually is of an ashy-beige base colour.

By 9:10 am the cage was firmly pegged down on very firm limestone substrate, while the parents stayed in sight at a larger promontory some way off.

We had been advised from Victoria to install a PEC at the two egg stage, and that it might take up to a half an hour for either of the parent birds to return to the nest after the cage had been installed. Although Dick was anxious to use the interval for other work, I was curious about how the parent birds with a three egg nest would react, so we observed the nest from a distance and under cover.



This site is at Lake Preston west, Bay of Islands (north), about 15 km north of Myalup. The photograph shows the well-concealed 3-egg nest through the top of the Predator Exclusion Cage wire on 15 December 2005. The parent pair was found at the site only about 10 days before the eggs were discovered. Nests of the inferred same unbanded pair were discovered in previous years just south of this site and much closer to the waterline. However, the pair is not known to have successfully brooded eggs in recent seasons. However, the high lake level may well have influenced the slightly altered site this season, because the current nest is about 80 m inland from the waterline.

Although one parent bird returned alongside and around the cage only five minutes after installation of the PEC, the bird was not seen at the eggs until three days later.

Photo courtesy Tony France

By 9:25 am, Dick saw through his spotter 'scope one of the parents bob its head against the first horizontal rung of the circular wire cage before it ducked under, to sit back on the nest. Afterwards we discussed Dick's experience of both pairs of Hooded Plovers he has found nesting regularly each season at Duck Pond. The author found that reproduction success rate unusually high when compared with the entire population of the Yalgorup Lakes, possibly arising from the relatively remote, isolated and seemingly undisturbed habitat not known to be frequented by either foxes or gulls. We agreed we would need to factor this into our final research data and analysis of PEC operations this 2005–2006 season.

We had been advised also to check any PEC protected nest at three-day intervals, reducing to once a week until the eggs hatched. Of course, we had no idea when the third egg was laid at Duck Pond, so checking the nest might need to take place up to 30 days hence. At a later check on the site it was reported that the sitting bird was cautious, but still brooding the eggs under a cage. Once the eggs had hatched at Duck Pond the same cage could be used at another nest site.

We remain grateful to the Western Australian government Department of the Environment's Community Conservation Grant, and the valuable advice from Dr Bob Baird. We would also like to thank the Department of Conservation and Land Management's senior ranger at Yalgorup, Steve Dutton, for granting a license to operate the PEC conservation technology in the Yalgorup National Park.

Tony France

STARLING 'STAKEOUT', MUNGLINUP, 25 November–4 December 2005

Sixteen BAWA members joined Dr Andrew Woolnough and the Department of Agriculture staff for an adventure week at Munglinup. Over thirty swamps/lakes were surveyed for Common Starlings, generally on three separate occasions, on either the morning or afternoon sessions. Most sites were on private property and this offered us access to a variety of new locations under variable conditions in order to record biodiversity and numbers of birds, including starlings. Highlights included large numbers of Hoary-headed Grebes, Red-necked Avocets and Hooded and Red-capped Plovers.

Our observations will be used to define the current range of Starlings in the district and facilitate the development of their eradication programme. Four interesting and informative talks were given by experts on starlings including a geneticist, a Ground Parrot survey update from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and a general talk by CALM on national parks versus nature reserves.

Typical starling search site near Munglinup—a lake with dead trees, and live *Melaleucas* round the edges.

Drawing by Pam Agar

Two great barbecue nights were provided by the Department of Agriculture staff, highlighted by the spectacular appearance of a comet lighting up the sky just as Clive Napier rose to his feet! The BAWA group rallied together to provide 70 fresh scones (with jam and cream) for everyone on the last afternoon.

The facilities at Munglinup Beach Holiday Park were both comfortable and spotless and the setting afforded many opportunities to view some of the 119 species recorded over the week.

Overall, a thoroughly enjoyable and informative week was had by all, facilitated by the expert organisation of Garry Gray from the Department of Agriculture, Forrestfield.

Lorraine Marshall
BAWA executive committee

DARLINGTON ARTS FESTIVAL

The Darlington Art Festival was on November 5th and 6th, and was held on the Darlington Recreation Ground. BAWA had a static display and also showed DVDs and played bird calls. Despite a suggestion of rain on the Saturday morning, we had lovely spring weather for this event.

The venue was good, interested browsers good, bird calls from DVD good, information output good, sales good (best ever), volunteers excellent as always. Thank you all very much.

Stella Stewart-Wynne

NOT NOW, STARLING

Extract from *The Esperance Express*, December 15, 2005

When a group of trained birdwatchers volunteered to look for European starlings in Munglinup, most had never seen one before.

The Western Australian Department of Agriculture would like it to stay that way: as declared pests, starlings are a threat to our native birds, to community assets and to industry.

Their aggressive behaviour threatens native bird numbers and they damage buildings when they nest.

Industry examples include viticulture, the soft fruit industry, grain growers and sheep farmers whose water supplies can be fouled by starlings.

In an effort to help eradicate starlings from WA, 16 ornithologists from the WA branch of Birds Australia were invited to take part in a surveillance and detection campout for the Department of Agriculture last month.

"We've had starlings in the Munglinup area for a few years, but we weren't exactly sure of the extremity of the incursion," said Department officer and Starling Management Project manager Ron Payne.

He said that over 800 starlings have been taken out of Munglinup, 100 km west of Esperance, since their discovery in 2001.

Previous incursions at Bremer Bay, Manypeaks and Condingup have been eradicated or contained.

The recent survey provided the Department with vital information about the Munglinup incursion of starlings: their precise location, their preferred nesting trees, the numbers of young and the time of day they were most prominent.

The surveillance area covered 24 lakes and swamp areas on farming properties between Hopetoun in the west and Stokes Inlet in the east.

"We went outside the areas where we thought they might be," Mr Payne said.

"There's so many swamps, lakes and nature reserves in the area, it can be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Furnished with knowledge about what starlings look like in and out of breeding season, the visiting ornithologists found several breeding sites in swamp areas, another in the Munglinup nature reserve and an incidence of starlings seven kilometres west of where they were believed to exist.

"We also got them to search a lot of areas where we hoped they wouldn't be, and they didn't find any, so we're happy about that," Mr Payne said.

The involvement of Birds Australia WA was part of a desire to involve the community in the Starling Management Project.

This is a joint initiative between the Department, the Agricultural Protection Board and South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team with NHT funding from the 2005-08 NRM Investment plan for the South Coast region.

As well as tracking the starlings, the ornithologists gathered an inventory of native bird species in the Munglinup area, including Hoary-headed Grebes, Red-necked Avocets, Hooded Plovers and Chestnut Teal. They also contributed to the local community by producing a list of birds of the Oldfield Estuary.

Research into nesting sites and radio tracking of starlings will continue with ongoing SCRIPT funding, with a view to averting damage to agriculture and the environment elsewhere in the state.

"Starlings haven't got into the south west region, for example, where they're receiving world wide recognition for their wine," Mr Payne said.

"The Margaret River wine industry and other fruit growing regions can't afford a problem like starlings. It would be enough to tip them over the edge."

Starlings are a common pest on the Eyre Peninsula and in eastern parts of Australia.

Research into the birds' activity is vital to keeping them out of Western Australia.



Ornithologists survey the lakes area of Munglinup in their search for starlings, birds which are on the Western Australian declared pests list.

Photo courtesy Garry Gray

"We need all available means to help us get rid of them," Mr Payne said.

For further information or an up to date list of the state's declared animals, contact the Esperance office on 9083 1100, or go to the 'pests, weeds and diseases' section of the Department's website (www.agric.wa.gov.au).

Megan Anderson



Members' Contributions



BROWN SONGLARKS ON ROEBUCK PLAINS

At about 13:00 on Saturday 24 November 2005, I was driving north along the Great Northern Highway across the open stretch of Roebuck Plain near Broome. It was a very hot day of about 45°C in the sun. I saw what looked like a Brown Songlark perched in a tree, so I turned around and stopped to look. As I got out of the car, about 50 birds exploded out of the small acacia. It became apparent that they were nearly all Brown Songlarks with a few Richard's Pipits. We continued along the road, stopping at the few isolated trees (acacias and melaleucas) near the road, and almost every time there were Brown Songlarks. We estimated that there were over 200 Brown Songlarks in the roughly 7 km stretch. Surprisingly they didn't call when they flew. There were a number of males in quite good breeding plumage, although the majority of males were in eclipse plumage. The number of males and females was roughly equal. I couldn't tell if they were migrating, or perhaps all the birds from the nearby surrounding areas had moved to the trees for shelter from the heat.

On Sunday 4 December at 10:00 am I drove south along the stretch, and I looked out for the Brown Songlarks again. We

found about 50 along the stretch. Some were in the small trees, but quite a few came out of the grass, or were perched on the fence wires in the shade of posts. This suggested that they were not migrating, and none of the males was in breeding plumage. The outside temperature in the sun was about 35°C, so the assumption was that they were using these isolated trees to shelter from the sun on particularly hot days.

Frank O'Connor

INEBRIATED BIRDS BEWARE

On 3 January 2006 at approximately 10:00 am just west of Ravensthorpe there were large flocks of 12 to 20 Galahs busily eating on the asphalt road. Weather conditions were overcast with some very light drizzly rain. These Galahs, which normally take flight when a vehicle approaches from about 30 m away, remained on the road until about ten metres, appearing to have delayed reflexes. They then took flight straight into the red coloured Forrester, one smashing

the right rear-vision mirror against the body of the car and another getting caught under the front of the car shredding the fibre plastic shield beneath.

Each flock of Galahs, about six in all, displayed the same delayed flight reflexes, another bird hitting the car and many near misses. There were many road kills on that stretch of road.

Had these birds been gorging on fermented wheat? The wheat harvest in that area had been exceptionally good. There were small piles of wheat lying on the roads and ground. The temperatures were warm and there had been intermittent rain over the last two weeks.

Both eyesight and hearing are well developed in birds. On country roads, birds eating carrion, such as Australian Ravens, raise their heads when the vehicle is approximately 30 m away and quickly hop off the road. The Wedge-tailed Eagle, which may be devouring carrion together with fox, cat and crow, stays until the last minute after firstly the fox then the cat and lastly the crow have departed, but it rises straight upwards. Galahs, how much do they rely on hearing and how much on eyesight and when inebriated which sense is affected first?

Mary Bremner

WELCOME TO GLENDALOUGH

I was recently thrilled to welcome new neighbours to our suburb. A pair of Yellow-billed Spoonbill was seen inspecting a neglected property at Glendalough Open Space on 1 November 2005. They were obviously pleased with the property and after some renovations and extensions have moved in. The exterior of the stick home has been liberally "lime washed". The breadwinner obviously works nearby and is able to take flying visits home to his roosting partner.

14 November 2005: She keeps her head down and the eggs warm and doesn't leave home.

21 November 2005: There is another neglected residence higher up in the eucalypt which I'm hoping does not belong to the Australian Raven family—the suburban bullies.

Purple Swampheens, Dusky Moorheens and Eurasian Coots have been breeding prolifically over the past three months. There are still some brooding families, whilst other are taking their youngsters out and familiarising them with the neighbourhood. The Black Swan cygnets are now teenagers and gradually taking to wearing black. Makes you realise how quickly the youngsters grow up.

Welcome Swallows are continually extending, renovating and repairing their sprawling home on the original property. They do not welcome visitors and leave as soon as you arrive in their area. Willie Wagtails have the best security systems. I am bombarded and heckled when approaching their properties and rarely get to see their residences. Red Wattlebirds have youngsters out and about in the area. They are very persistent in their demands for food.

At the Tennis Court Lake, Magpie-larks have recently renovated an old property. Their building materials are

different from the Yellow-billed Spoonbills in that they have a bowl-shaped mud residence. The couple appear to take turns in brooding on the nest. A Hardhead was taking his triplets swimming today. I had been unaware of their moving into the neighbourhood.

I am a little concerned at the lack of health food warnings in the area, for example, *Do not feed the birds*. Bakery products are often left unsolicited at the waters' edge. The only signage is for *Dogs to be on leads* and *No golf to be played*. If a golf ball was driven a fair way I'm sure that there would be a bird brooding it by the time the owner arrived to claim it!

Claire Gerrish

GREY-CROWNED BABBLER BEHAVIOUR

In September 2005 I was fortunate in being able to spend some time at the Broome Bird Observatory. Amongst the birds we watched from the small bird bath hide were a couple of Grey-crowned Babbler foraging near the bird baths. They were extremely wary about coming in to drink at the bird baths. However, we did see one of these birds find a fruit or nut which it clasped in its foot. It extended that leg and brought its beak to the fruit.

I have witnessed this behaviour in parrot species, moorheens and swampheens. Unfortunately, they are not a species that stays still for long and so were soon gone from sight. I was unable to find this behaviour documented in Pizzey or Simpson and Day.

Claire Gerrish

AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE 2005—BLENHEIM, NEW ZEALAND

The AOC2005 was a joint initiative between Birds Australia and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. This was the third of these biennial conferences and the fourth one is to be held in Perth from December 3rd to 5th 2007. The Blenheim conference hosted 240 delegates from several different countries. The program of excellent papers covered a range of ornithological and conservation issues. Many of the New Zealand papers mentioned the threat of predation by introduced animals and the strategies being used to protect endemic species. This was in contrast with our concern for preserving habitat and landscape.

The plenary sessions were diverse with Hugh Robertson summarising the work on the recovery program for declining kiwi species. Richard Holdaway's topic was New Zealand Quaternary avian palaeobiology. He described past research then suggested that progress in this question-based research should lead to a melding of palaeobiology with modern ecology. This theoretically, could provide important insights for the conservation and management of surviving species and systems. Michael Clarke's address on the Black-eared Miner reviewed the different facets of the recovery program for this species.

The symposia covered diverse topics such as birds in developed landscapes, avian influenza, ethno-ornithology and landbird population monitoring. There were also a number of contributed papers, both oral and poster, on a range of topics.

Field trips, both before and after the conference, gave delegates the opportunity to both meet and talk with fellow delegates and see New Zealand birds.

It was an interesting and enjoyable conference, well organised. So the challenge for BAWA in 2007 is to, at the very least, replicate the quality of AOC2005.

Sue Mather

NEW BIRD HIDE AT WONNERUP

How many members have visited the new bird hide north of Busselton, in Wonnerup Road, opposite Wonnerup House?

Friends told us that it was well worth a visit so we stopped there on the way back to Perth early in January and found it an excellent addition to birding facilities in the area. The water in the lakes was high and the waterbirds were there in large numbers. We even saw some Pink-eared Ducks, several Great Egrets and Australasian Shovelers and managed a reasonable photo of one of the Yellow-billed Spoonbills.

Molly and Barry Angus

CATTLE EGRETS AT RAVENSWOOD

On 5 October 2005 it was reported to me that strange egrets with yellow / gold heads had been seen on the Pinjarra Road on the western approaches to Ravenswood. I was tied up that day but Bill Smart investigated and found six Cattle Egrets in breeding plumage. He has reported these birds earlier. A few days later birds were seen on the South Yunderup Road.

On 3 November Bill and I decided to search the area again and see if we could locate the egrets and, if possible, locate a breeding site. We searched the Fiegerts and Rodgers Roads and the South Yunderup Road without success but found 16 birds on the Old Mandurah Road and Paterson Road adjacent. The birds were in twos and threes with the cattle but there was one flock of ten on the Old Mandurah Road. Some of the birds were in full breeding plumage, some in fading breeding plumage and two without breeding plumage. We continued our search down the roads leading to Lake McLarty and then along mills Road and the Old Bunbury Road to the south end of the Harvey Estuary. No further birds or nesting sites were located. All birds found were within a five kilometre radius of Ravenswood.

Four White-necked Herons were seen during the search.

Dick Rule

MALLEEFOWL STUDY

In 2004, through the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management, Albany, University of Western Australia, I began my PhD study examining the life history of young Malleefowl in small isolated habitat remnants in the southern agricultural region of Western Australia. This study involved intensive radio-tracking of chicks and young Malleefowl, enabling the gathering of information on their dispersal, behaviour, survival and habitat requirements.

During the 2004/05 breeding season, eggs collected from mounds in a small habitat remnant in the shire of Gnowangerup, were artificially incubated. Ten day-old chicks and ten young birds, one to two months of age, were released into the source site. Predators identified in the course of the study included raptors, Grey Currawongs *Strepera versicolor*, goanna *Varanus* sp, and the introduced predators, cat and fox.

Two of the young birds, a male and a female, survived for 12½ months in the field following their release. Continual radio-tracking made it possible to observe aspects of behaviour not previously recorded for young Malleefowl, including vocalisations, displays and social behaviour. Two of the most interesting observations were social interaction among young Malleefowl, and the recruitment of the young male into the breeding population in its first year.

The young birds were released separately into the habitat and, after a week of moving around, appeared to settle. One month after release, the young female moved 1.5 km within a day to where the young male had settled. The birds alternated between sharing areas and living alone. While sharing areas they

foraged and rested within metres of each other. The female, two weeks older, was dominant over the younger male. Initially the birds used frequent visual fear-aggression displays, similar to the adults. As the birds developed, the male became dominant. On at least two occasions, the birds were observed with a wild bird that, though not adult size, was larger than the two radio-tracked birds.

The recruitment of the young male into the breeding population in the remnant was extremely interesting. The remains of an adult bird, later identified as male through DNA sexing, were found 30 metres from a mound in early September 2005. The mound had been active and producing eggs for at least the previous three years, and had been prepared for the 2005/06 breeding season.

In November, the young radio-tracked male was observed working the mound, which contained at least one egg. Due to an extremely wet winter and an ongoing cool and wet season, the commencement of egg laying in 2005 was delayed in this area. The mound of a nearby established pair contained at least two eggs. At this time, the radio-tracked male was



Yellow-billed Spoonbill from the bird hide, Wonnerup.

Photo courtesy Molly Angus

eleven months of age. It has been thought that breeding maturity is reached between two to four years (Marchant & Higgins 1993). The warm winter may have provided ideal conditions for the young bird to mature quickly and, together with the availability of the mound, commence breeding at a young age.

The bird has since been observed working and tending the mound in the same way as established breeding birds (van der Waag 2003, 2005). The mate, a wild female has been seen at the mound. However it is not known if she is the same female as observed there in previous seasons, or if mating has occurred. DNA testing will be used to determine the paternity of the chicks from the mound. The young radio-tracked female does not appear to have commenced breeding.

This research has received support from Birds Australia through a Stuart Leslie Bird Research Award. Funding has also been received through a WA Community Conservation grant, from the Malleefowl Preservation Group Inc Community Conservation Trust, the Threatened Species Network through the Yongergnow Malleefowl Interpretative and Research Centre Inc and the Australian Academy of Science. Saturn Biotech of Murdoch University provided the DNA sexing of the birds for this project at no cost.

References

- Marchant, S. and Higgins, P. J. (1993). *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Volume 2*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- van der Waag, J. A. E. (2003). *Aspects of Behaviour in Mound tending Malleefowl *Leipoa ocellata*, at Ongerup, Western Australia*. Honours thesis, Curtin University of Technology.
- van der Waag, J. A. E. (2005). Behavioural observations of two young Malleefowl. BirdLife/WPA/SSC Megapode Specialist Group, *Megapode Newsletter* 19, 1, 2-5.

Jesica van der Waag
UWA Albany Campus



The 11-month old, radio-tracked male working the mound.
Photo courtesy J van der Waag



The young male (left) displays a mild level of fear-aggression toward the dominant female (right).

Photo courtesy R van der Waag

AN UNCONFIRMED RECORD OF A SABINE'S GULL NEAR ALBANY

On 12 September 2005 between 09:00 and 10:00, I saw an unfamiliar seabird while I was sea-watching from a pull-off part way down Shelley Beach Road, which overlooks Torbay Bay, West Cape Howe National Park (27 km west of Albany, lat. 35°06', long. 117°37'). Although I had only a brief view, I believe that the bird was a Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* in breeding plumage, or close to breeding plumage.

The bird was flying 200-300 metres offshore with Crested Terns in the relatively sheltered waters east of Torbay Head. Further offshore, the sea was rough and the wind was westerly and very strong to gale-force, as it had been almost continuously for the past week. The weather was predominantly overcast with small patches of blue sky and occasional rain squalls passing through. Visibility was quite good except when it was actually raining. I used a Kowa spotting telescope with a 77 mm diameter objective, 25x magnification.

A single bird flew into the wind, fairly high above the surface, and at the same height as nearby Crested Terns. It looked tern-shaped at first glance. It flew like a tern, with deep sweeping wingbeats, and was graceful and agile in flight, twisting and turning into the wind. There were Crested Terns scattered around it, but it wasn't with them. It was considerably smaller than the nearby Crested Terns, maybe 2/3 the size. The wings were pointed beyond the 'wrist', shaped like a tern's, shorter and broader in relation to the body than for the Crested Terns (which had long and narrow wings), and swept back at the 'wrist', but not as strongly as for the Crested Terns. The head was rounded and about the same size relative to the body as a Silver Gull's i.e. not large and slim like a Crested Tern's head.

The overall impression of the colour of the bird was white with dark areas. A clear view on the downstroke of the wing showed a long thin black triangle on the wingtip. It was not dark or dusky but jet-black. The border between the black triangle and the white reached from the 'wrist' to about halfway along the primaries on the trailing edge, and was very sharply-defined, black against white, and straight. I saw this black triangle several times. I was certain of its shape and position.

The bird at first had its head turned slightly away. When it turned towards me, I saw that the black on the head was not a cap like a tern's, but a complete black hood over the head and chin and down onto the upper neck. The hood was bordered by white lower on the neck, and the border was sharply-defined. I saw this only once, but for several seconds and clearly. A quick impression was that the hood didn't reach very far down onto the neck.

What I saw of the underbody was white. The tail was white and reasonably short, but I didn't get a look at the shape of the tail tip. There were no tail streamers. I couldn't see the bill, although I tried. The large pale bills of the Crested Terns nearby were clearly visible in the telescope. I took this to mean that the bill must be small and/or dark. I knew that the pattern on the back and inner upperwing was crucial in identification. As I started to concentrate on getting a view of this area, the bird started to dim out. It was enveloped in a rain squall and became invisible. I waited in a fury of frustration, but when the rain passed the bird had disappeared. The view had been brief. The bird was centred in the field of the telescope, in focus, and I was concentrating on looking at field marks for about 20 seconds, maybe half a minute at the most.

I didn't see the bird again, though I searched for about 30 minutes. I carefully described the bird to my husband Dean about 10 minutes after the sighting, and drew a sketch and wrote a description in my notebook. The sighting is unlikely to be acceptable to a Rarities Committee, as the view was brief, the back-pattern was not observed, and I was the only person who saw the bird. However, the black hood and the long black straight-edged triangle on the wingtip seemed to me to eliminate everything but a Sabine's Gull, and the other features seen were consistent with this identification.

Higgins and Davies (1996) summarise the information on the global distribution, Australian records, and plumages of Sabine's Gulls. The birds breed in north circumpolar regions. They spend the non-breeding season at sea, usually far from shore, in the Pacific off the Americas and in the Atlantic off Europe and western Africa. Their usual range extends as far south as Chile and South Africa. They are accidental visitors to Australia, with confirmed records in Darwin, NT in April 1982, off Port MacDonnell, SA in June 1984, and off Wollongong, NSW in March 1985. The head pattern distinguishes breeding and non-breeding plumages. The post-breeding moult probably occurs between August and October, and the hood is generally complete in August, partial in September, and lost by October.

A bird with a full hood would be unusual in October, but a partial hood may have appeared complete at a distance and in a brief view. The birds are normally seen from land only

during gales, which is consistent with the prevailing conditions in early October 2005 in southern WA.

Perhaps WA sea-watchers should keep the possibility of this species in mind when observing after prolonged stormy weather.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Mike Carter for helpful discussion on this sighting, and for information on Sabine's Gull plumages and the Australian records.

Reference

Higgins, P.J. and Davies, S.J.J.F. (Eds) (1996). *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 3: Snipe to Pigeons*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Marilyn Hewish



Great Crested Grebe
Photo courtesy Molly Angus

A BOXING DAY SURPRISE

On the afternoon of Boxing Day we went for a walk near the lakes in South Perth on the river at Coode Street. A clear blue sky, families happily picnicking and playing cricket and a surfeit of birds—we saw 23 species without even trying!

The trees and lawn area were alive with Little Corellas (estimated at 450) making their usual squawking noise, and five species of duck were enjoying the lakes as were Eurasian Coots, Dusky Moorhen and Purple Swamphen. One Pacific Black Duck had ten ducklings, we saw 'Mother Coot'

leading her offspring into the water and young Australian Wood Ducks were still in mother's care.

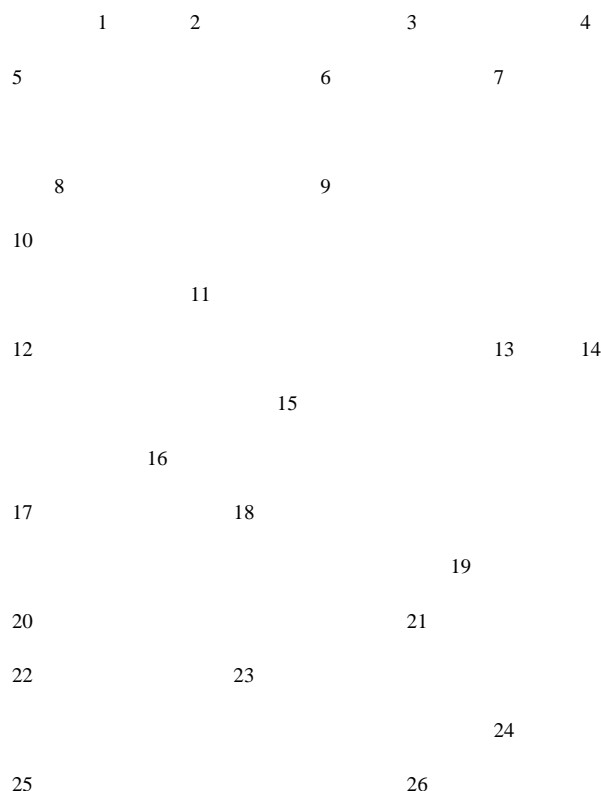
The delight of the afternoon was a female Great Crested Grebe with a chick on board and another swimming near her. 'Father Grebe' appeared and either greeted or fed the larger of the chicks, sent a coot scattering and then nonchalantly swam off. The chick nestling in mother's feathers poked its head up and occasionally rubbed mother's cheek before cuddling down again.

We watched them for some time, took several photos and then left this happy family to keep up their good work. Obviously these lakes are very satisfactory breeding areas for waterbirds. Well done to the South Perth Council for planting reeds and other plants in and around the water line.

Molly and Barry Angus



By Pam Agar

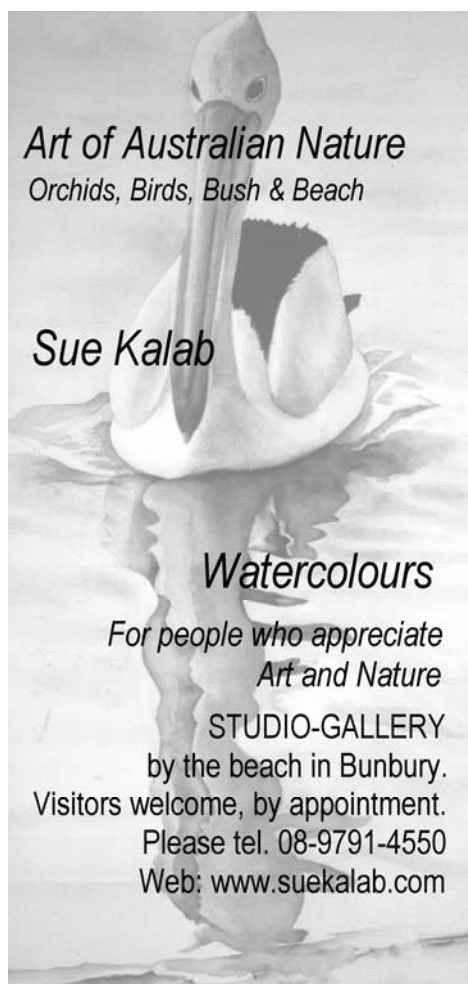


Clues across

5. Pardalote nest site.
6. Common quail of wheatbelt.
8. Feeding method of Ibis.
9. One may be more suited to nest sites than others.
11. For recording sightings.
12. Western Rosella's is yellow.
15. Site of a 2005 campout.
17. Shy feeder of mudflats.
18. Offence.
19. Haunt of Little Woodswallows.
22. Adjustment to environment.
24. Song of fairy-wrens.
25. Distinctive pattern of southern pardalote.
26. Small long-tailed bird.

Clues down

1. May dictate species present.
2. Plains east of Broome.
3. At risk.
4. To gain knowledge.
6. Family name of Boobies.
7. Colour of local rail's band.
10. Food of miners.
13. Fruit-eater.
14. To mate.
15. More likely to be protective.
16. Station purchased by BA.
20. Dense aggregation.
21. Noongar name of Malleefowl.
23. Colouring may be a clue to this.



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FIELD GUIDES FOR SALE THROUGH THE BAWA OFFICE

Pizzey & Knight, <i>Field Guide to the Birds of Australia</i>	\$38.00
Simpson & Day, <i>Field Guide to the Birds of Australia</i> , 6th edit.	\$32.00
Morecombe, <i>Field Guide to Australian Birds</i>	\$32.00
Morecombe, <i>Field Guide to Australian Birds</i>	\$30.00
Slater, <i>Slater's Field Guide to Australian Birds</i>	\$30.00
Flegg, <i>Photographic Field Guide to the Birds of Australia</i>	\$28.00

The Office also has a selection of **Audio Cassettes** for sale for those interested in identifying birds by sound. Other books available include:

Nevill, <i>Guide to the Wildlife of the Perth Region</i>	\$29.00
Van Delft, <i>Birding Sites around Perth</i> , 2nd edit	\$15.00

Details of all the books are now available on the BA website at www.birdswa.com.au.

OFFICE HOURS are: Mon - Fri 9:30 am - 12:30 pm.

Stewart Houghton



ATTENTION NEW MEMBERS



BIRD IDENTIFICATION SEMINAR - WORKSHOP

Once again we are running our Bird Identification Seminar for new members and beginners. This year it will be held during Conservation Week Mar 20th – 26th 2006.

The workshop will be held on four days March 21-24th 2006 and will cover the basics for bird identification, followed by three days of specified bird groups, as follows.

**Mar 21st – Venue: WA Ecology Centre,
167 Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat 6014**

Presentation: **INTRODUCTION** — Identification, Use of field guides, notes, habitat, binoculars, migration, where to find birds and jizz.

Time: 9.00 am – 12.30 pm

Mar 22nd – Venue: WA Ecology Centre

Presentation: **BUSH BIRDS** — Slide show and lecture followed by a field walk in Bold Park.

Time: 9.00 am – 12.30 pm

Mar 23rd – Venue: WA Ecology Centre

Presentation: **WATER BIRDS** — Slide show and lecture followed by a field walk at Lake Herdsman.

Time 9.00 am – 12.30 pm

**Mar 24th – Venue: Atwell Art Gallery,
586 Canning Hwy, Alfred Cove**

Presentation: **WADERS** — Slide show and lecture followed by a field walk at Alfred Cove.

Time: 9.00 am – 12.30 pm

There will be a morning tea break each day with tea, coffee, and biscuits catered for.

For the field walks, the group will be split into small groups of 5/6 people each with a leader.

COST: \$10 per session. Book for one or all four days.

BOOKINGS can be made by phoning the Birds Australia Office on 9383 7749, Mon – Fri from 9.30 am – 12.30 pm or by Email. Email: <birdswa@inet.au> by entering, **Bird Seminar, attention Elsa Dabbs**, in the Subject line.

Please give your **name** and **phone number**, state the **days** you wish to attend and the **number** attending. A confirmation Email will be sent.

NEW BAWA WEB SITE AND EMAIL ADDRESSES

Web sites and email have become necessary methods of disseminating information, and many BAWA members now have email accounts.

We established the BAWA web site in 2001, and created a sub domain in 2004. We always recognised that these were interim measures. We have delayed making a long term decision while we investigated the option of combining with the national web site. We have also been looking for the best way to increase the space for our web site from 30MB to 100MB or more for the future. The time has come to act. Combining with the national web site is not a viable option. The costs to create a full domain name have fallen, and we have registered <birdswa.com.au> as our new domain name. This will double the size of our web site for the medium term, and we have affordable options for the long term. The old web site <birdswa.iinet.net.au> will continue to work for the remainder of 2006.

It also provides BAWA with up to 10 email addresses. Our email addresses will change, although the old addresses will continue until at least the end of June. The new email address for BAWA is <mail@birdswa.com.au>. The address for the unusual sightings will be <sightings@birdswa.com.au>.

We also have a new Webmaster. Frank O'Connor has done a good job to set up the site with the bird guide brochures, unusual sightings, coming events, etc. Frank will continue to maintain the unusual sightings, but last year he handed the remainder over to Roger Watson to bring a fresh approach. Roger has helped BAWA greatly in the past by typesetting the bird guide brochures. You will notice some changes to the layout of the web site. Roger can be contacted with the new address <webmaster@birdswa.com.au>.

Many of you will have received an email in January from Roger Watson advising you that BAWA will now send out a monthly news bulletin by email. The aim is to provide you with up to date information between the issues of WABN. If you did not receive this news, then email <news@birdswa.com.au> and ask to be added to the email list. If you no longer wish to receive these monthly emails, then reply to the next message and ask to be unsubscribed. If you have a short notice or event to be included in the news, then email it to <news@birdswa.com.au>. The plan is to send out the news near the end of each month, but the frequency will depend on the volume of news or lack thereof. Elsa Dabbs has volunteered to manage this service, supported by Merrian Kuerschner, Darryl James and Jennifer Muir. As with any such scheme, there are operational guidelines; if you want a copy of the guidelines, send a request email to <news@birdswa.com.au>.

SHARK BAY

A working holiday for bird lovers

Walk leaders wanted for a trip to Shark Bay, leading bird walks organised for CALM and Birds Australia and sponsored by Healthways. The walks are during the school holidays July 8th – 15th and 16th – 23rd. You may do both weeks if you wish; a grant from Healthways/CALM will provide money for transportation; accommodation is available at the Homestead. An excerpt from one of last year's leaders, Richard King, will give an insight into the walks.

A total of 82 people attended the walks with an average of just over five people per walk. Only one day out of 11 days of bird walks had no participants. Bird walks were conducted every day at Monkey Mia except, with an extra bird walk in the afternoon on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Peron Homestead. All bird walks at Monkey Mia were conducted from 10am along the CALM Nature Trail, taking about two hours to complete. Peron Homestead walks started at 5pm and took about one hour to complete along tracks to the east of the homestead.

Any BAWA members wishing to spread their wings and travel to Shark Bay, please contact Brice Wells, Tel: 9255 3710 for further details.

**Elsa Dabbs, Publicity Officer
Public Relations Sub-Committee**

Calling all bird watchers

Volunteers needed

Contrasting land use by Crakes and Rails



Observers are needed for an Honours Thesis conducted at the Capel Wetlands Centre. (CWC)

Opportunistic data would also be much appreciated.

The aim is to determine habitat preferences over space and time and obtain any other behavioural or dietary information.

Observations are conducted for approximately 5 consecutive days usually every third week per month at CWC.

For further information and to obtain survey form please contact

Karl Edwards on H 9497 1506 or M 0427 971 506

Email <karlbird@bigpond.net.au>

12TH NATIONAL AVICULTURAL CONVENTION

AVICULTURAL FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

**Friday 5th to Sunday 7th May 2006
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or <birdswa@iprimus.com.au>
Web: <www.birdswa.org>**

BAWA Volunteer Hours

This is a short reminder that we are collecting the actual number of hours volunteered in 2006 on BAWA tasks.

Please collate your hours per month and email them to me on <foconnor@iinet.net.au> or send a note to the office. Contact me for a list of the categories.

Tasks include leading excursions, official surveys, displays, etc. You should include travel time.

The hours will help the BAWA Committee, and will also help us to explain to National Office and funding authorities the value BAWA is adding to the community.

Sunday 2 April 2006, 10.30am – 4.00pm

***Auria – Australia of the future –
without salt.* TM**

'Auria', Old Koorda Road, Dowerin, WA

Entrance 400 m north of intersection with
Underwood Flat Road.

What are other people saying about The Auria Research
Project?

Dr David Deeley (BSc, Grad Dip NRM, MSc, PhD)
(Landscape Ecologist 30 years' experience in WA): *Plant
establishment, survival and growth rates achieved by David
at Auria are outstanding. It is indeed satisfying to see a
practical application of mixed species and companion
plantings across such a wide range of potentially
commercially viable trees and shrubs. Any established
research organisation would be proud of the successes
observed in trials at Auria. The fact that they have been
implemented by an individual farmer is truly remarkable. I
would have no hesitation in recommending potential
sponsors to David Kennett and The Auria Project.*

Charles Peaty BScForestry—with 50 years' experience:
*David defies all good forestry precepts by planting through
to early summer and, refusing to use chemical weed
control, fertilisers or pest control. His trees have
nevertheless developed astonishingly well in their first few
years, even on the worst parts of the site!*

Come along and make your own judgement!

Be kind to the environment and use the bus.
Departing 08:00 am sharp

"Centrepont" car park (opposite Midland railway
station).

Hire of bus and fuel will be shared:
\$20 – \$25 per person.

Entrance fee: \$25. This covers lunch and every dollar
over and above cost will purchase 3 more trees
for the project.

**BOOKING BY WEDNESDAY MARCH 29TH
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NOTE. A 'comfort-stop' in Dowerin is strongly
recommended. Bring your own water bottle, hat, suitable
footwear, etc. Under no circumstances is the presence of
any individual to be interpreted as either them or their
employer endorsing the research being undertaken at
'Auria'.

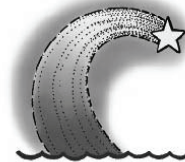
NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between
1 November 2005 to 31 January 2006. We look forward
to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

B Allen, G Archer, H Beahan, M Bush, W Gager, L
Gilchrist, M Graff, C Harding, P Johnston, O Leitch & C
Foley, J Macknay, K Macknay, I Mayer, E & P Metcalfe,
M Overheu, P Riordan, B Stirling, B Stoneman



Owlet-Nightjar, Woodanilling campout.
Photo courtesy Wendy Napier



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Country Groups



ALBANY BIRD GROUP

November 2005 Outing

A small group of us went to the Torbay area on 8 November, first of all to Perkins Beach, where we saw very little in the way of birds. Equally few were seen at the floodgates.

We then went on to Torbay Hall, which proved very rewarding. A nice walk through the woods produced quite a few bushbirds. Firetails were seen carrying nesting material, and we had good views of Shining Bronze-Cuckoos and Golden Whistlers. The final tally was 43.

Liz Davies

December 2005 Outing

There were 22 of us in the Albany Bird Group for our Christmas outing. We went first to Prideau Road Reserve. There were an amazing amount of wildflowers still about, and most of the usual birds. Next we went to the lower Kalgan Bridge, where we had morning tea. The group split up, some going to the Grammar School bird hide, where they saw quite a few waders. We paid a quick visit to Mead Road, where we were lucky enough to spot a Grey Fantail sitting on a beautiful little nest. We then went on to Two Peoples Bay for our shared Christmas lunch.

We saw 63 species altogether.

Liz Davies



Excursion Reports



KINGS PARK, 29 October 2005

On a cloudy October morning, under the leadership of Frank O'Connor, approximately 30 participants, including visitors, met for a bird walk covering three areas within Kings Park.

We first walked a circuit from the Pioneer Women's Fountain where Australian Wood Ducks and Pacific Black Ducks still had young, and a Red Wattlebird young was heard begging. An interesting sighting in the nearby gardens was a male Variegated Fairy-wren and family. A Common Bronzewing was also seen, and Striated Pardalotes and probable Spotted Pardalotes were heard calling.

North and south circuits of the pines area were then walked, during which an Australian Magpie young was heard begging. Good views were had of a Striated Pardalote, and a probable male Brown Goshawk was seen.

At the southwest corner of Kings Park, three Ospreys (including at least one adult male) were observed soaring overhead.

A total of 31 species was recorded during this walk, of which the highlight was sighting of the three Osprey and the Variegated Fairy-wren.

Many thanks to Frank for leading an interesting birdwalk.

Jennifer Muir

JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK, 6 November, 2005

With a strong breeze on the coast and an overcast sky, a small group assembled for an interesting morning of birds and wild flowers. Although the list was relatively short, 36 species, some good sightings were had by all. An Elegant Parrot obliged by staying at the water's edge under a bridge thus allowing prolonged views for a group of English visitors who had joined us. It then disappeared into a nearby eucalypt to demonstrate the effectiveness of its camouflaging plumage.

At morning tea the Australian Magpies were aggressive in their quest for human food, attempting to take it from the hands of the unwary. The Australian Ringnecks were a little more reserved but well positioned for anything that may come their way. A Laughing Kookaburra maintained a reserved distance sitting on a nearby fence and happily posed for a photo shoot despite remaining unfed.

The variety of walks, both in length and difficulty allowed participants to choose what most suited their needs and capability. Some who ventured further afield saw a Regent Parrot whilst others who were less adventurous saw a Little Pied Cormorant dive from a high perch into the rapidly flowing creek. Those who arrived early watched two Little Eagles soaring above the car park and later two Wedge-tailed Eagles put in a brief appearance.

Although some of our 'expected sightings' did not occur it was still a very enjoyable morning. Thanks to Charles Merriam.

Merrian Kuerschner

LAKE MONGER WALK, 16 November 2005

After a small hiccup at the beginning of the walk, ten of us had a pleasant walk around Lake Monger. We saw 42 species of bush and waterbirds. Thank you so much to the telescope carriers as it enabled all of us to get excellent views of several waterbirds. Great Crested Grebes entertained us for quite a while with their mating behaviour. Several birds were building nests or brooding or had young. We were treated to glimpses of a very new Black Swan cygnet.

The water level was still quite high so the only wading birds we saw were Black-fronted Dotterel and a Common Sandpiper. The main duck species was Australian Shelduck, but Australasian Shoveler numbers were building up. We did see the benefit of the settling ponds filtering run off water before it reaches the lake.

Claire Gerrish

Clive Nealon saved the day by bringing his telescope and relaying sightings to us weaker mortals.

A group of 15, including Heather Walters (a member residing in New York) and new member Ian Mayer, still managed to see 55 species in the first part of the walk. After tea break, six of us went to the south end of the lake. This proved to be the highlight of the morning as we saw eight extra species, including Little Egret, Glossy Ibis and two White-necked Herons.

To avoid the heat, it was suggested that an earlier start would be better—7:00 am or 7:30 am was suggested.

A bizarre sight was the corpse of a large male Grey Kangaroo lying on the car park lawn. How it died was a mystery. Some members were depressed and unsettled by the sight of the dead animal.

Nevertheless we had a good morning with a total of 63 species.

Tom Delaney

GARVEY PARK, REDCLIFFE, 7 December 2005

Ten people turned up for this pleasant walk. The weather was beautiful with little wind. Highlights were a Common Sandpiper (a first for this site) on the shore of Ron Courtney Island, two Sacred Kingfishers, one of which disappeared in a hole in a tree branch hollow, a very good frontal view of a Peregrine Falcon and the sighting of three Buff-banded Rails. Dusky Moorhens and Australasian Grebes still looking after young ones, were seen on the lake. We heard Mistletoebirds but unfortunately could not find them.

Generally, the birds were not in high numbers but we managed to identify 43 species, a pretty good effort.

Hank van Wees



Munglinup survey for starlings (see BAWA Reports).
Photo courtesy Garry Carr

WATERFORD, 12 January

Cyclone Clare ensured a very wet January walk!

Thirteen hardy souls braved the elements—three visitors from England (Enfield and Manchester) and one from New York must have wondered what had happened to sunny Western Australia.

A total of 39 species was recorded, five being new to our personal list of the area. The birds must have been busy during spring as we saw seven species with young—Eurasian Coots, Australian Wood Ducks, Australian White Ibis, Singing Honeyeaters, Purple Swamphens, Willy Wagtails and Western Thornbills. The Purple Swamphens were even planning their next family if their behaviour is to be believed!

A clear sighting of a Buff-banded Rail on the mud flats along the Canning River was a plus and a Nankeen Night Heron flying over was a surprise. A brief glimpse of several Rainbow Bee-eaters was a delight as also was the sight of a Western Thornbill feeding its young.

Well done to the group who splashed along with us—we predict rain for 15 June when we lead our next walk (at Market Garden Swamp)!

Molly and Barry Angus

LAKE JOONDALUP, 7 January 2006

A very hot sun made birding difficult. The main sites at the lakeside and viewing platform were in direct sun and most of us had to retreat into the shade rather than look for waterbirds.

BOLD PARK, 15 January

The second of these surveys recorded 45 species, all previously listed in the Bold Park data base. There were some differences in species seen though when compared with the October survey. For example Australian Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Red-capped Parrot were not seen in this survey. This is a significant area of bushland with diverse habitats so it is well worth our efforts in ensuring that there is an accurate and adequate record of the birds that use it and at what time of the year.

Thirty people participated, beginning at 7:00 am, and in seven groups walked different transects. The BGPA provided morning tea at the Eco centre after the surveys. A big thank you to the seven group leaders. The third of these four surveys is on 9 April at 8:00 am. If you haven't participated in these surveys and would like to have a close look at particular areas of Bold Park, some of which are not accessible to the public, then this is your opportunity.

Sue Mather

THOMSONS LAKE, BEELAIR, 22 Jan

On a perfect birding day about 30 people set off on an early morning walk around Thomsons Lake. In all 60 birds were seen during the morning and this was without many of the common birds. We were fortunate that there was still quite a lot of water left in the lake. This enabled us to view one of the highlights of the day which was large rafts of Banded Stilts and Eurasian Coots with lots of Silver Gulls, Yellow-billed Spoonbills and the three ibis species amongst them.

Wedge-tailed Eagles, a Swamp Harrier, Brown Goshawk, Nankeen Kestrel and Whistling Kites circled overhead. Pallid, Horsfield's and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos were seen. An Italian visitor, whose hobby is taking bird photographs, shared with us some of his wonderful, large, colour photographs making a delightful end to a most successful morning.

Owlet-Nightjar at Flagstaff Lake,
Woodanilling campout.
Drawing by Pam Agar

Lyn Sellars

WOODANILLING CAMPOUT, 26–29 January

David Secomb, helped by Mary, led a campout of 37 people at Woodanilling over Australia Day and the following weekend. Ray Garstone and Wayne Zadow also provided excellent leadership, so it was not surprising that the total bird count was 118. The main purpose of the campout, apart from providing enjoyment for Birds Australia members, was to see how many wading birds had gathered on the margins of the many lakes in the area. As we found at lake after lake

the extra rain which had fallen in the area over the summer made conditions unsuitable for the small waders. Wagin Lake proved to be the most rewarding with hundreds of Red-necked Stilts, Red-capped Plovers, one Long-toed Stint and a large flock of Black-winged Stilts. A small group of Banded Stilts were also there. A few Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers were spotted among the busily feeding flocks. At another lake there were sightings of Pectoral as well as Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Many of the lakes visited had hundreds of Black Swans, Eurasian Coots and Australian

Shelducks. Good numbers of Pink-eared Ducks, Grey Teal and Australian Shovelers were seen and one Freckled Duck. David will provide more detailed counts on the various lakes in another article.

In spite of the windy and sometimes quite cold conditions, many bushbirds were seen. There were very good sightings of Mulga, Elegant and Regent Parrots and Western Rosellas as well as the more common Australian Ringnecks and Galahs. The robin family was well represented with Scarlet, Red-capped, Western Yellow Robins and Jacky Winters all being seen by most people. A Hooded Robin was seen by some people. One group of keen observers found it necessary to do a detailed study of some Silvereyes feeding in a fruiting mulberry tree near an abandoned homestead. One of the highlights was excellent views of an Owlet-Nightjar sitting on a bare

branch among casuarina trees until everyone in the party had seen it clearly.

Ray guided us to some interesting historical places such as the old Kenmare Hall and school, a stone building which would be worth preserving. Our accommodation at the Woodanilling Caravan Park was good and there was a pleasant little camp kitchen for our evening bird count. On Friday evening we had a communal barbecue and on Saturday our friendly hostess Eileen put on a very good dinner of roast pork and vegetables followed by apple pie at the small restaurant attached to the caravan park. The prize for the nearest estimate of bird species seen went to George Agar who we are sure will treasure it for years to come. Our thanks go to David and Mary for the time put in to organising a very enjoyable campout.

Wendy Napier

ALFRED COVE, 28 January

A small group of members met at Alfred Cove on Sunday morning for one of our regular visits to the area. Unfortunately, the tide was far out and the sand banks were vast and almost out of telescope range. We also had a strong southerly breeze blowing which kept us cool but didn't improve the birdwatching.

However, we still managed to spot 46 species of birds. Out on the sand banks there were small flocks of Red-necked Stints, Great Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits with scattered Grey Plovers and numerous Common Greenshanks.

Overhead the Ospreys were busy flying around. One, with a Swamp Harrier on its tail, flew over with a large fish. The chase lasted several minutes with the Osprey desperately trying to shake the Swamp Harrier. Later, we saw three Ospreys perched together on the top of the radio mast. We also saw the resident Black-shouldered Kite.

Other bushbirds of interest were two male White-fronted Chats in the samphire area near the mast and an Inland Thornbill doing a passable Silveryeye call. A Striated Pardalote was seen flying in and out of a hollow and nestlings were heard from within.

Thanks to Toni Webster with assistance from Tom Delaney who stood in at the last minute to lead the excursion.

Helen Frederiksen

Swans, swans and more swans! At Woodanilling campout, January 2006.

Drawing by Pam Agar



Observatory Reports



EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Volunteer Caretakers' Report, November 2005 to February 2006



We arrived at Eyre 22 October 2005 to begin what was to be a very sharp learning curve, before we would officially begin duties on 1 November.

In those initial days we read loads of material, tried out the walk trails, attempted to absorb all the directions and instructions about this goes with that and that goes with something else or was it all the other way around? There was weather recording, including identification of the type of clouds, you know those white fluffy things in the sky that sometimes look like a dog or other animal. But no, we have to give them names like cumulus, stratus, altocumulus, altostratus, cirrus and so on; not as easy as you might think. The airline pilots need to know. Then there's where to go to do the bird surveys; now just which track do we take to get to XYZ site? And much, much more, including how to capture bothersome snakes for removal away from the house area.

Eight days later we were on our own. Would we do it? Could we do it? Well three months on and we have done it, although not without incidents and drama, we do admit.

Our biggest test came on day 3 of our stewardship. Snake! No not one, but two in half an hour: a Dugite and a Southern Death Adder, duly canned ready for dispatch to their new homes. We even managed not to have heart attacks!

Beach birding has not been very exciting since our days on L plates when a dead Southern Giant Petrel and a dead Southern Fulmar were found. The Red-capped Plover runners are now all doing their own thing, although an adult was observed a few days ago giving the broken wing display, so maybe we'll find some more runners. For each of the months, December and January, only 11 species were seen.

Around the observatory area birding has been more rewarding with 60-70 species each month.

Welcome Swallows and Silvereyes were breeding well into December, but most late chicks were unfledged and succumbed on our extremely hot day. The Silvereyes that we were monitoring were taken by a predator at 11 days of age, but we did get a good photographic record of their development up to then.

One Common Starling was spotted and indeed went into the trap, but did the Houdini bit before we could capture it. It was seen again a few days later at the birdbath but not since.

One Malleefowl was observed crossing the track about 6 km north of the house, 12 Fork-tailed Swifts, one Crested Pigeon, one Stubble Quail, one Peregrine Falcon near the Eyre Highway and one Australian Hobby at Kanidal Beach. There are a number of brown Australian Ravens, for which the only explanation offered is that they are sporting last season's feathers, having not moulted.

The weather has been what we expect of Melbourne—four seasons in one day. On 19 December we recorded the hottest

December day ever at 47.5°, and hottest in the state, followed a couple of days later by the state's lowest overnight minimum at 5.6°. The lowest for December was -0.9°, another record, then 30 January gave us our lowest recorded January maximum.

We finished 2005 with 290 mm rain, 18 mm below the mean average, only even getting that far with 20 mm on 31 December, but started 2006 with 100 mm (and at 4 pm 30 Dec it's still raining), about 80 mm above the mean monthly average.

At the end of November the course *Field Techniques in Bird Studies*, lead by Stephen Davies, was conducted successfully. A total of 38 birds of nine species were caught and banded. Point counts and mapping techniques were used to calculate the densities of 11 and eight species respectively, confirming some increases and some decreases in populations. A single line of pit traps was opened, but nothing was caught. Gina participated where possible in Stephen's activities but guests have to take first priority.

The first of this year's Dune Restoration Courses was held mid January. Although there was little weed on the beach and seed of *Spinifex hirsutus* was in short supply, it was a successful week with some weed spread and much other seed collected, sorted and planted. We hope the 13 mm rain two days after the troops departed will bed the seed in and not wash it away.

There are still vacancies for the Dune Restoration Courses to be held 2-8 April, 21-27 May and 18-24 June.

We've had a steady stream of overnight and day visitors, keeping us on our toes constantly, and often looking forward to a visitor-free day.



Young Silvereyes in nest at Eyre, 2005.
Photo courtesy Norm & Gina Gregory

It has been a pleasure to meet some very interesting and interested people. They arrive at all times of the day and usually quickly settle into the homely atmosphere of Eyre.

Our Christmas was shared with our granddaughter, who arrived thanks to a truckie friend of the family (there are no buses plying the Eyre Highway now), a German couple and a Western Australian man. Delightful! Then the New Year was welcomed with our granddaughter, a Victorian lady with her two young sons and a Victorian couple. The weather was cold and wet, but it didn't dampen anyone's spirits.

After three months we are still eagerly looking forward to the next four months of the great unknown.

Norm and Gina Gregory



Coming Events



Important Note re Campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BA Office (9383 7749) of the number in their party and when they will arrive. 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-Monday 4-6 March: Campout at Busselton

It is six years since a Busselton campout and a look at the diverse habitats of the area: the Vasse-Wonnerup estuary system – a RAMSAR site; the only remaining remnant bushland on the coastal plain near Busselton; pretty Meelup Creek; and Cowaramup Bay which has the most northerly stand of Karri to explore.

We will be staying at the Anglican Camp site, 185 Caves Road, Busselton. Travel through Busselton towards Dunsborough and the camp site is approximately a kilometre past the turn off to Margaret River. It is on the beach front and has powered camp sites. Cost is \$7.00 per person per night.

Accommodation is difficult to obtain at this time of the year and

ten sites have been reserved. Phone 9755 4588 and say you are with Birds Australia.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 5 March: Ascot Waters, Ascot Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at

the end of Tidewater Way. To reach the area from Great Eastern Highway, turn into Stoneham Street, then into Resolution Drive, and left into Tidewater Way. Continue through two roundabouts, over the bridge, and up to the car park at the top of the rise. Lots of Buff-banded Rails were seen here last year, and several raptors are often seen.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Saturday 11 March: Penguin Island, Rockingham
Full day excursion

A chartered ferry will depart from the Mersey Point Jetty, off Arcadia Drive, Shoalwater, at 9:00 am for an hour's sail around birding spots in Warnbro Sound. We will land on Penguin Island around 10:00 am.

The group will walk to the various places of interest on the island and, if they wish, people can attend the penguin feeding in the CALM facility housing injured or orphaned penguins.

The cost below covers the return trip to the mainland, which can be taken whenever individuals wish. Ferries return hourly. There is no shop on the island so please bring all food and drink requirements. We will stay for lunch, probably before visiting the penguin facility.

The cruise return and penguin viewing cost is \$31.50 for adults, \$28 for concession holders, and \$22.50 for children. For those not wishing to view the Penguin Experience the cost will be adults \$26 and concession holders \$23.50. The above costs depend on at least 25 people attending. In all past visits we have had at least this number but a small extra charge is possible. It is essential to ring the BAWA office on 9383 7749 before 3 February and have your name added to the list.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Clive Napier

Thursday 16 March: Woodman Point, Cockburn
Mid-week excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at Woodman Point on Jervoise Bay. Turn right off Cockburn Road, into O'Kane Court, then left into Jervoise Bay Cove, and almost immediately right into Woodman Point Road. Drive to the end of the road into Woodman Point car park. We will walk along the beach to Woodman Spit, and back along the other side to Cockburn Cement Jetty to look for waders and sea birds. Bring your telescopes.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 19 March: Herdsman Lake, Stirling
Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am in the Maurice Hamer car park. Turn off Pearson Street into Falcon Avenue, then right into Lakeside Road. 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 the Wood Sandpiper. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Saturday 25 March: Yangebup Lake, Cockburn
Half-day excursion

There have been some changes to the roads around the Lake so read this carefully.

Turn into Osprey Drive from North Lake Road and immediately turn into Parkes Road. Parkes Road now only runs for about 200 m before being shut off. Park in this area and walk to the barrier across the road where we will meet at 8:00 am. It is a long walk to reach this point from the Hammond Road entrance to Parkes Road.

There may be muddy areas so wear rubber boots if possible and bring

scopes if available. There should be a good variety of waterbirds and waders and three species of crane have been sighted here. If time permits, we will visit Kogolup Lake.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Clive Napier

Monday 27 March: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat
Meeting 7:30 pm

Michael Morcombe, a member and professional bird photographer, will give an illustrated talk entitled "Mapping for Field Guides".

Saturday 1 April: Helena Valley, Boya
Half-day excursion

This walk will be on the southern side of the Helena River. Meet at 8:00 am at the parking space 600 m beyond the sealed section of Helena Valley Road.

This road has been inspected and is safe for 2WD vehicles, but care must be taken. Follow Helena Valley Road east past the Helena Valley Primary School, from the roundabout junction of Helena Valley Road and Ridge Hill Road, Helena Valley. The walk is about 5 km.

Wear sturdy shoes and bring a water bottle.

Members and guests only.

Leader: Wendy Napier

Thursday 6 April: Piney Lakes, Melville
Morning excursion

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park off Murdoch Drive. Turn off Leach Highway or South Street into Murdoch Drive at the lights. From Leach Highway take the second turn right, across the dual carriageway, into the grassed park area to the car park. It is approximately 700 m from Leach Highway. This park used to be a pine plantation, and has two artificial lakes and one natural

permanent lake. The Spotless Crake and numerous other waterbirds frequent the area. There is a considerable area of natural bushland around the lake and this is home to the usual local species.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Clive Napier

Sunday 9 April: Bold Park Bird Watch, Cambridge
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the Peregrine House car park off Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat. This is the third of four planned comprehensive surveys of Bold Park. It would be appreciated if participants in the first two surveys were able to assist, particularly the site leaders.

A minimum of 28 people is needed for this important task. Each group will survey one site, recording both the species seen and the habitat used.

The survey will be followed by morning tea provided by the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Sue Mather

Friday 14 to Monday 17 April
Easter Campout at Wogarno Station, Murchison

Wogarno is a working sheep station on the Great Northern Highway in the Murchison, south of Mount

Magnet. On their website <www.wogarno.com.au> is a list of over 85 bird species that have been recorded on the station. We will not see them all but, in addition to observing birds, participants can enjoy the outback.

The sign-posted turnoff is 540 km north of Perth, and it is 15 km into the homestead. The hosts, Lesley-Jane and David Campbell, assure us that the station tracks are suitable for conventional vehicles.

Those wishing to attend please notify the BAWA office (9383 7749) and leave contact details. You will also need to book your accommodation (tent site, caravan site, shearer's quarters or homestead accommodation) by writing to Wogarno Station, PO Box 525, Mount Magnet, WA 6638, or by telephone 9963 5846, or fax 9963 5870, or by e-mail using the booking form on their website, <www.wogarno.com.au>. It is suggested that you book early to avoid disappointment, and it is important to mention that you are booking as a participant in the BAWA campout.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: John and Ruth Luyser

Saturday 22 April: Ray Marshall Park, Viveash
Half-day excursion

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

take a morning's walk along the John George Trail that runs beside the Swan River. On the return walk, we will divert to a swampy area 250 m off the track and this will usually add up to six extra species to the list.

This walk includes big river redgums, waterbirds along the river, and the walk to the swamp mentioned above.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Tom Delaney

Monday 24 April: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat
Meeting 7:30 pm

Mrs Rita Watkins, an ecologist and longtime resident of Leschenault, will give an illustrated talk entitled "Study of Bird Usage of Planted Tree Belts".

Saturday 29 April: Ellis Brook, Gosnells
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 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 of them not often seen near Perth, such as Red-eared Firetail and Red-browed Finch, and Red-capped and Scarlet Robin.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris/Sue Abbotts



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Sunday 7 May: The Spectacles, Kwinana

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am in the main car park in McLaughlan Road. Proceed along the Kwinana Freeway to the Anketell Road crossroad, some 30 km south of Perth. Turn right and travel about 2 km, then turn left into McLaughlan Road.

Over 100 species of birds have been sighted here.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Paul Marty

Saturday 13 May: Avon Valley National Park

Full day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the turnoff to the park from Toodyay Road; there is a sign for Avon Valley National Park. Turn left into Morangup Road, this is 42 km from Midland Junction.

For anyone arriving late, we will be travelling along Morangup Road to the national park entry, which is again signposted, then along Forty-One Mile Road. This will lead to the valley campsite overlooking the Avon River.

There will be some waterbirds on the river, and many other species in good Jarrah, Marri, and Whitegum woodland. Bring your lunch, as there are no supplies within the park. Roads in the park are gravel but safe for 2WD cars, and there are the usual facilities.

Those wanting to hear the dawn chorus can camp overnight at the Group Area Camp Ground if they wish. It has been booked, and is in the middle of the national park. There are showers and toilets, but there is a limit of 10 tents or caravans, so please ring the BAWA office on 9383 7749 if you wish to camp.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Robina Haynes and Paul Marty

Wednesday 17 May: King's Park, Perth

Morning excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the northern end of Forrest Drive opposite the Botanic Gardens near the junction with Lovekin Drive. There should be plenty of bushbirds in the area.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Frank O'Connor

Sunday 21 May: Bibra Lake, Cockburn

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the first car park at the northern end of the lake, off Progress Drive. Bibra Lake is a part of the Beeliar wetlands chain, and a large number of waterbirds and bushbirds can be seen here. The complete walk around the lake could take up to 3½ hours, so bring water, hats, etc.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Wynton Maddeford

Monday 22 May: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat
Meeting 7:30 pm

Dr Stephen Davies, a member and former CEO of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (previous name for Birds Australia), will give an illustrated talk entitled "Nests of Birds".

Saturday 27 May: Canning River Regional Park, Wilson
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the Kent Street Weir car park. The walk follows a 5 km circuit along the Canning River, viewing a large selection of bush and waterbirds, hopefully with sightings of the elusive Spotless Crake.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Richard & Lorraine Chyne

Saturday 3 to Monday 5 June: Foundation Day Weekend Campout at Ninghan Station

Travel 110 km north of Wubin on the Great Northern Highway. Turn off to the right at the station entrance, about 6 km to the homestead.

This station has been visited previously and an interesting bird list can be achieved. There are several types of accommodation to suit most tastes. Camping and caravans can be used but power cannot be provided. Dongas to sleep 24 people are available, with fully self-contained kitchen, and two cottages to sleep eight and four people. Please ring the station on 9963 6517 and make your own bookings. It will be a popular weekend, so early bookings are essential. Rates are quite reasonable. Participants must ring the BAWA Office on 9383 7749 and leave contact details.

Mulga and Bourke's Parrot, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Malleefowl and Gilbert's Whistler are possible sightings. The leaders will be on site from Thursday 1 June.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Clive Napier

Thursday 8 June: Market Garden Swamps, Spearwood
Morning excursion

Meet at 8:30 am on the corner of Pennlake Drive and Brenzi Court (under the power lines), on the edge of Market Garden Swamps. Travelling south on Rockingham Road from Spearwood Avenue, turn right into Rigby Avenue, then left at the T-junction and left at the roundabout. Over 30 species of birds have been seen here. Bring morning tea.

For members and the general public.

Leaders: Barry and Molly Angus

Sunday 11 June: Bickley Brook, Gosnells
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am just past the

children's camp at the reservoir. There are good prospects of seeing both Red-browed Finch and Red-eared Firetail, Southern Emu-wren, and a fair selection of other bushbirds.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Les Harris/Sue Abbotts

Saturday 17 June: Stinton Cascades Nature Reserve, Karragullen
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at a small parking area just off Brookton Highway, in Irymple Road, Karragullen. This is a CALM reserve of Jarrah, and a good area for birds.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Hank van Wees

Saturday 24 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 and swampland where Tawny-crowned and other honeyeaters, Splendid Fairy-wren, several raptors, and many other species have been seen-- around 46 so far. Wear old shoes or gumboots.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Debbie Walker

Monday 26 June: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat
Meeting 7:30 pm

John Brooke, a member, will give an illustrated talk entitled "Views of New Zealand, including its birds onshore and offshore", describing his recent trip there.

Crossword Answers No 44

ACROSS

5 hollow, 6 stubble, 8 probe, 9 landform, 11 card, 12 cheek, 15 Pemberton, 17 rail, 18 crime, 19 hills, 22 adaptation, 24 reel, 25 spotted, 26 wren.

DOWN

1 flora, 2 Roebuck, 3 vulnerable, 4 learn, 6 Sulidae, 7 buff, 10 nectar, 13 frugivore, 14 copulate, 15 parent, 16 Gluepot, 20 mass, 21 Gnow, 23 age.

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Interstate Members	\$15.00
Overseas Members	\$20.00

Note: WABN subscription is only available with a Birds Australia membership. For membership rates contact Birds Australia.

Payment Details

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

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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.

- ◆ **Atlas** – surveys for this are continuing – contact Cheryl Gole
Phone 9293 4958, e-mail <cgole@westnet.com.au>
- ◆ **CALM** is conducting surveys and monitoring for the Critically Endangered **Western Ground Parrot**. Volunteers are needed for 10 day trips from March through May to assist with survey work at remote field sites. Training will be provided along with food and group camp equipment. Good hearing and bush camping experience essential. For more information and dates please contact Mike Barth (CALM), ph. 9842 4519, <email: michaelba@calm.wa.gov.au>
- ◆ **Monthly Meeting Speakers** – contact Brian Wilson 9293 1094
- ◆ **Excursion Leaders** – contact Sue Abbotts 9444 1607, e-mail <sabbotts1@bigpond.com>
- ◆ **Public Relations Sub-committee** – 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 Project**— Swan Coastal Plain surveys are on Sunday March 26th and May 14th. if you can help contact Bansi on <b.shah@birdsaustralia.com.au> or 0427 707 047 to be placed on the register.

Birds Australia Western Australia Inc

Office: **Peregrine House**

167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat WA 6014

NOTE NEW INTERNET DETAILS!

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Birds Australia WA Home Page:
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Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

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

Printing Deadlines (at the BAWA Office)

June 2006 issue: 1 May
September 2006 issue: 1 August
December 2006 issue: 1 November
March 2007 issue: 1 February

Advertising Rates

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

Calendar of Events

Sat-Mon 4 – 6 Mar: Campout at Busselton
Sun 5 Mar: Ascot Waters, Ascot, Half-day excursion
Sat 11 Mar: Penguin Island, Rockingham, Full day excursion
Thu 16 Mar: Woodman Point, Cockburn, Mid-week excursion
Sun 19 Mar: Herdsman Lake, Stirling, Half-day excursion
Sat 25 Mar: Yangebup Lake, Cockburn, Half-day excursion
Mon 27 Mar: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting 7:30 pm
Sat 1 Apr: Helena Valley, Boya, Half-day excursion
Thu 6 Apr: Piney Lakes, Melville, Morning excursion
Sun 9 Apr: Bold Park Bird Watch, Cambridge, Half-day excursion
Fri 14 – Mon 17 Apr: Easter Campout at Wogarno Station, Murchison
Sat 22 Apr: Ray Marshall Park, Viveash, Half-day excursion
Mon 24 Apr: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting 7:30 pm
Sat 29 Apr: Ellis Brook, Gosnells, Half-day excursion
Sun 7 May: The Spectacles, Kwinana, Half-day excursion
Sat 13 May: Avon Valley National Park, Full day excursion
Wed 17 May: King's Park, Perth, Morning excursion
Sun 21 May: Bibra Lake, Cockburn, Half-day excursion
Mon 22 May: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting 7:30 pm
Sat 27 May: Canning River Regional Park, Wilson, Half-day excursion
Sat 3 – Mon 5 Jun: Foundation Day Weekend Campout at Ninghan Station
Thu 8 Jun: Market Garden Swamps, Spearwood, Morning excursion
Sun 11 Jun: Bickley Brook, Gosnells, Half-day excursion
Sat 17 Jun: Stinton Cascades Nature Reserve, Karragullen, Half-day excursion
Sat 24 Jun: Jandakot Regional Park, Forrestdale, Half-day excursion
Mon 26 Jun: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting 7:30 pm

Printed by Executive Press: Tel (08) 9275 8044