

# Western Australian Bird Notes



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



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## AWARD FOR LIFE LONG AMATEUR ORNITHOLOGIST

On 23 April 2007, at the graduation ceremony in the Perth Concert Hall, Murdoch University awarded a local amateur ornithologist the degree of Honorary Master of Science (Environmental Science). The citation reads:

### **Mr Robert Harold Stranger**

*Mr Robert Stranger is a respected ornithologist who has dedicated most of his life to observing birds and their habits.*

*He is a self-taught enthusiast, having never undertaken any formal training in the field. His interest began as a child when he was exposed to pet birds and soon expanded to wild varieties.*

*Through joining the WA Naturalists Club, Mr Stranger met Dr Dom Serventy who was then Officer in Charge of the Division of Wildlife Research at the CSIRO. Dr Serventy encouraged him to make use of his laboratory for conducting experiments. It was here that he recorded the homing behaviour of doves, finding some could travel up to 160 km back to a home base.*

*While a volunteer Mr Stranger began to record his observations and participate in field work. He*

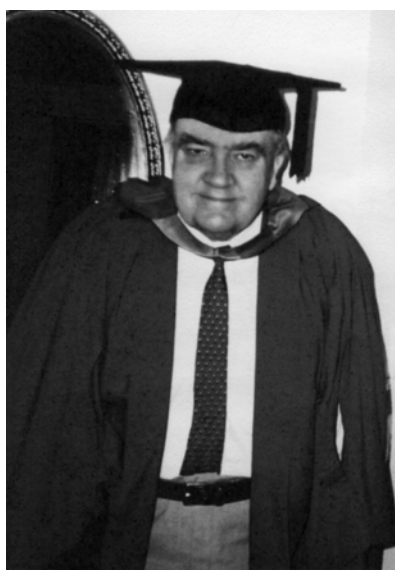
*was the first person to trap a Noisy Scrub-bird shortly after its rediscovery near Albany.*

*His first published work was on the Black-throated Butcherbird and appeared in the Western Australian Naturalist in 1958. Since then he has contributed over 80 published works. His major publications have been the Birds of the Mandurah District and The Birds of the Perth District.*

*He is well known for his work on bird lice and has established himself as one of two Australian experts.*

*Despite his many achievements in ornithology he has not made a living out of this field of endeavour. He has held many jobs working on farms, in factories, for the Australian Army and, at one stage, worked on decimal conversion programs, switching adding machines from sterling to decimal currency.*

Robert Stranger gave the Occasional Address at the ceremony, which was very well received by the hundreds of graduates, parents, friends and academic staff present. Birds Australia adds its congratulations to their's on his well-deserved recognition.



Robert Stranger  
Photo courtesy Robert Stranger

**Stephen Davies**

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*Editors' note:* Perhaps not many current BAWA members have met Robert Stranger, but readers of WABN will certainly be familiar with the name, as he has contributed more than 40 different items to WABN on a diverse array of topics, from various aspects of bird behaviour to questions of bird distribution, and historical notes on the occurrence of birds.

Robert Stranger holding the first Noisy Scrub-bird caught at Two Peoples Bay, while Dom Serventy took notes, January 1964.

*Photo by Sydney Erickson*



## Letters to the Editors



Dear Editors

### **Discipline and the Great Crested Grebe**

Discipline, it is stated, is a copied behaviour and with humans, apart from setting a good example, it is important to concentrate on positive behaviour with appropriate rewards' verbal or otherwise.

On 10 January 2007 at the north end of Herdsman Lake there were two Great Crested Grebes swimming together with four small fluffy heads poking out from the feathers on the back of one of the birds that I will call "father". The front bird, that I will call "mother", swam off about two metres and dived for food. Immediately "mother" resurfaced, one fluffy chick left "father's" back, swam to "mother", was fed and quickly returned to the safety of "father's" back, snuggling into his feathers. "Mother" again dived for food and when she resurfaced a second chick left "father's" back, swam to "mother", was fed and swam back to "father's" back. This routine was repeated twice more for the other two chicks.

Was this good discipline? On each of the four occasions only ONE chick left "father's" back. Was there a pre-arrangement of the order in which each chick was to receive its gastronomic reward?

As the male and female birds look alike and exchange maternal and paternal duties, I am unsure which bird was "mother" or "father".

**M H Bremner**

Dear Editors

On Sunday 18th February 2007 a new phone tower was erected outside the Herdsman Wildlife Centre and World Wildlife Fund Centre (WWF) on the south east side of Herdsman Lake.

There has been much discussion as to the effect of radiation on human health, particularly child health, from these towers. It is estimated that maximum radiation occurs between 150 and 350 metres from the towers and peaking at approximately 0.58 microwatts per square centimetre at 170 metres.

Although there has been no consensus as to the effect of this radiation from the towers, there have been reported clusters of ill health in children living around such towers. Radiation is cumulative and humans are exposed to many sources. However, for frogs at Herdsman Lake the tower is probably a source of radiation from which they would be unable to escape. With nesting water birds in the vicinity the young are immediately mobile but can remain in the area for a few weeks so would also be exposed to this radiation.

This is a living laboratory set up for us. Perhaps this could be a great opportunity to monitor the effect of this radiation on the abundant bird and frog life at Herdsman Lake. Frogs are sedentary and water birds are both sedentary and locally nomadic. There are patches of thick reeds that may be able to absorb radiation and shelter the birds. A comparison of the reeded and non-reeded areas would be interesting. A three-year study over the next three breeding seasons may help elucidate the medical worries.

**Mary H Bremner**

The Observations Committee has compiled this list. Metropolitan suburbs or shires are in parentheses. Please report interesting observations to Frank O'Connor (9386 5694 or preferably sightings@birdswa.com.au) or to the BAWA office (9383 7749). Sightings are included on the BAWA web site (birdswa.com.au) as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in the next WABN.

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

**Highlights.** The highlight in the metropolitan area was a **Spotted Nightjar** photographed at Piney Lakes Reserve. There was a spate of metro sightings of **Stubble Quail** (refer to the web site). The annual passage of jaegers at Woodman Point occurred in late April. A **Long-tailed Jaeger** is very unusual for the south west, and a **Great Skua** is an early record. The 'screaming woman call' of a **Barking Owl** was heard in Carmel but it was not seen to confirm the record. There have been a number of reports of **Western Spinebills** and a few **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters** in domestic gardens. They do occur in a number of parks around the metropolitan area, but it is unusual for them to be sighted in gardens. The annual movement of **Spotted Pardalotes** through Perth has also been noticeable.

A **Common Diving-Petrel** was found alive on a beach at Denmark, but it died in care. A **Common Blackbird** was shot near Manjimup in April, and some sparrows (species uncertain) were reported from Point Samson.

A sizable number of **White-throated Needleetails** were seen near Karratha.

The Kimberley had another outstanding period with several cyclones in the north west bringing in some interesting birds. There were a number of sightings of swiftlets at Broome in March. Their identity has not been confirmed, but they could be an *Aerodramus* species, either **Edible-nest** or **Black-nest**

**Swiftlets**, which would be a first for mainland Australia. Another swiftlet seen on West Montalivet Island, on 27<sup>th</sup> April, may have been a *Collocalia* swiftlet.



Unidentified swiftlets (possibly from the edible-nest group) were seen in Broome in early March  
Photo by Adrian Boyle

Two groups visited Cocos Islands and Christmas Island in late February and early March resulting in a host of unusual sightings for the islands. This resulted in three new species for Australia. Photographs of the possible **Saunders's Terns** reported in WABN 121 in adult plumage suggest that the identification is correct. It has long been suspected that **Western Reef Egrets** are present on the Cocos Islands, and a photograph of a dark morph bird suggests that this is the case. Five other white and intermediate birds are also believed to be this species. A hobby seen on Christmas Island was first thought to be a Eurasian Hobby or an Oriental Hobby, but the photographs and field notes suggest that it was a **Eurasian Hobby**. A **Savanna Nightjar** has returned to the Christmas Island airport, and a **White Wagtail** was also seen on Christmas Island.

## METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

**Great Skua** – 1, 15/04/07, Woodman Point (Munster) – JD (early record)

**Long-tailed Jaeger** – 1, 24/04/07, Woodman Point (Munster) – JD (rare south of Exmouth)

**Spotted Nightjar** – 1, 14/04/07, Piney Lakes Reserve (Winthrop) – per WM (rare in the metropolitan area; photograph)

**Fork-tailed Swift** – 5, 11/03/07, Lake Joondalup South (Edgewater) – DT (not often reported in the metropolitan area)

## SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

**COMMON DIVING-PETREL** – 1, 11/03/07, beach near Denmark (Denmark) – per HdK (rare in WA; died in care; photographs)

**Short-tailed Shearwater** – 1, 04/03/07, pelagic trip from Albany – PM, FO (western edge of range)

**Cattle Egret** – 35, 17/02/07, Vittoria / Glen Iris (Bunbury) – GH (increasing in the south west)

**Australian Bustard** – 1, 05/02/07, Albany Highway south of Mt Barker (Plantagenet) – DC \* 1, 06/03/07, Albany Highway south of Mt Barker (Plantagenet) – DC (uncommon in the south west)

**White-winged Black Tern** – 1 breeding plumage, 20/04/07, Roberts Bay (Murray) – BR (late record)

**Fork-tailed Swift** – 100+, 17/03/07, Gregory (Northampton) – CHE (high count for the south west) \* 3, 08/04/07, Hyden Norseman Road (Kondinin) – CG \* 6, 08/04/07, south of Hyden Norseman Road (Kondinin) – CG (rarely reported this far inland)

**Rufous Treecreeper** – 1, 04/02/07, Boggy Bay (Murray) – BR (rarely recorded on coastal plain since about 1920)

**Crested Shrike-tit** – 1, 08/04/07, south of Hyden Norseman Road (Kondinin) – CG (rarely reported this far east)

**Little Crow** – 1, 07/04/07, Hyden Norseman Road (Kondinin) – CG \* 2, 08/04/07, Disappointment Rock (Kondinin) – CG (uncommon in this area)

**Common Blackbird** – 1, 12/04/07, 32 km E of Manjimup (Manjimup) – PMe (shot; please report any other sightings)

## ARID ZONE

**Australian Spotted Crake** – 1, 16/02/07, Patjarr, Gibson Desert (Ngaanyatjarraku) – MB (unusual in the interior)

**Asian Dowitcher** – 1, 03/03/07, Carnarvon boat harbour (Carnarvon) – LG (rare south of the Pilbara)

**Purple-crowned Lorikeet** – 20, early 03/07, 50 km NW of Plumridge Lakes NR (Menzies) – SF *et al.* (outside normal range)

**Scarlet-chested Parrot** – 20-30, early 03/07, 50 km NW of Plumridge Lakes NR (Menzies) – SF *et al.* (seldom reported)

## WHITE-THROATED

**NEEDLETAIL** – 50, 21/03/07, North West Coastal Highway 30 km SW of Karratha (Roebourne) – BM, PS (rarely reported in WA)

**Zebra Finch** – 4000, 06/03/07, Overlander Roadhouse (Shark Bay) – JS (high count)

## KIMBERLEY

**Stubble Quail** – 1, 24/02/07, Kidney Bean Lagoon (Broome) – AB (very uncommon in Broome)

**Australian Shelduck** – 2 females, 13/02/07, Lake Eda (Broome) – AB, CH (unusual in the Kimberley)

**Red-footed Booby** – 1, 11/03/07, Broome port (Broome) – AB (very uncommon in Broome)

**Great Frigatebird** – 1, 28/03/07, Crab Creek (Broome) – PM, MS \* 1, 29/03/07, Roebuck Bay (Broome) – AB (uncommon in Broome)

**Pied Heron** – 5, 01/04/07, Roebuck Plains (Broome) – AB \* 9, 24/04/07, Roebuck Plains (Broome) – AB (uncommon in Broome area)

**Painted Snipe** – 1 female, 24/04/07, Roebuck Plains (Broome) – AB (uncommon in Broome area)

**Franklin's Gull** – 1, 06/03/07, Broome sewage ponds (Broome) – AB (rare in WA)

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND

**Glossy Ibis** – 1, 07/03/07, near South Point – MC *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Christmas Island)

**EURASIAN HOBBY** – 1, 03/03/07, plantation – MC *et al.* \* 1, early 03/07, rubbish tip – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Australia if confirmed by BARC; submission in preparation; photographs)

**Oriental Pratincole** – 500+, 09/03/07, airport – MC *et al.* (highest count for Christmas Island)

**SAVANNA NIGHTJAR** – 1, 05/03/07, airport – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record since 1997)

**Dollarbird** – 1, early 03/07, Christmas Island – RB *et al.* (3<sup>rd</sup> record for Christmas Island)

**Asian House Martin** – 2, 04/03/07, airport – MC *et al.* (uncommon on Christmas Island; BARC submission in preparation; photographs)

**White Wagtail** – 1, 10/03/07, rubbish tip – RB *et al.* (4<sup>th</sup> record for Christmas Island)

## COCOS ISLANDS

**Pacific Black Duck** – 8, 24/02/07, West Island – MC *et al.* (2<sup>nd</sup> record for Cocos)

**Little Black Cormorant** – 1, 24/02/07, West Island – MC *et al.* (3<sup>rd</sup> record for Cocos)

**Great Cormorant** – 1, early 03/07, West island – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Cocos)

**WESTERN REEF EGRET** – 1 dark phase, 24/02/07 to 02/03/07, West Island – MC *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> confirmed record for Australia if confirmed by BARC; submission in preparation; photographs)

**Striated Heron** – 1, 26/02/07, Horsburgh Island – CJ (1<sup>st</sup> record for Cocos)

**Bar-tailed Godwit** – 2, 28/02/07, South Island – MC *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Cocos)

**Grey-tailed Tattler** – 22, 28/02/07, South Island – MC *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Cocos)

**Great Knot** – 1, 28/02/07, South Island – MC *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Cocos)

**Red-necked Stint** – 3, 28/02/07, South Island – MC *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Cocos)

**Black-winged Stilt** – 1, 26/02/07, Horsburgh Island – CJ (3<sup>rd</sup> record for Cocos)

**Grey Plover** – 3, 28/02/07, South Island – MC *et al.* (2<sup>nd</sup> record for Cocos)

**SAUNDERS' TERN** – 9, 28/02/07, South Island – MC *et al.* \* 7, 07/03/07, South Island – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> confirmed records for Australia if confirmed by BARC; present since December; BARC submission in preparation; photographs)

**Asian House Martin** – 1, early 03/07, Home Island – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Cocos)

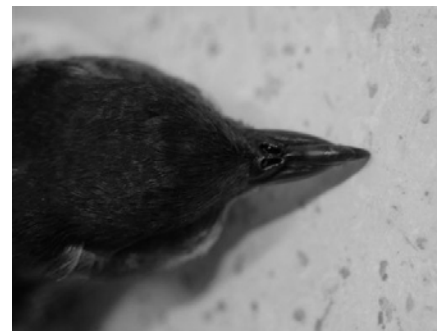


Saunders' Terns on Cocos Islands  
Photo by Mike Carter

**OBSERVERS**

AB = Adrian Boyle  
 BM = Brenden Metcalf  
 BR = Bill Rutherford  
 CG = Cheryl Gole  
 CH = Chris Hassell  
 CHe = Colin Heap  
 CJ = Colin Judkins (Vic)  
 DC = Dan Carter  
 DT = David Taggart  
 FO = Frank O'Connor  
 GH = Greg Harewood  
 HdK = Heyn de Koek

JD = John Darnell  
 JS = Jeff Spencer  
 LG = Les George  
 MB = Marion Bryant  
 MC = Mike Carter (Vic)  
 MS = Mailee Stanbury  
 PM = Phil Maher (NSW)  
 Pme = Paul Merks  
 PMo = Paul Mollatt  
 PS = Peter Smith  
 RB = Richard Baxter (NSW)  
 SF = Stewart Ford  
 WM = Wynton Maddeford



Common Diving Petrel found at Denmark; note diagnostic bill shape  
*Photo courtesy Heyn de Koek*



## Birds Australia WA Inc reports

**BAWA ANNUAL REPORT, 2007****Introduction**

The last year has been one of consolidation and expansion for Birds Australia WA. We have continued to grow both in members and in our approach and operations as a group. For me, the last year has been a pivotal one. We not only crossed the long-awaited 1000 members threshold, but we have managed to address many issues vital to the future of the organisation. These included most notably, a planning forum to identify strengths and weaknesses and set future targets for where we want to be as a group. This process is ongoing but the forum proved an ideal opportunity to build on the previous planning day and reassess the direction of the current organisation. I thank everyone that was involved in this process for your candid and constructive comments. Several clear themes emerged from the process and there were a number of commonalities that arose from discussions. Core amongst it was the need to recognise the importance of volunteers to BAWA and conserving our birds. Further details and opportunities for comment on the outcomes of the planning forum will be available this year.

For now, I would like to provide a brief summary of the major activities and achievements of BAWA during the past year. Thank you to all of you that form this amazing organisation and work together to achieve so much for birds and bird conservation. I am looking forward to an even bigger year this year!

**Office**

Liz Walker, Wendy Napier and the office volunteers form the backbone of day to day services to BAWA members. They meet and greet visitors, deal with post, e-mail, sale of books and cards, and provide informed responses to a range of enquiries.

**Grants**

Thanks to Allan Jones and others, BAWA has received several grants this year. The Eyre Bird Observatory has received a grant from Lotterywest for major conservation work, and one from the Federal Government for a composting toilet to save water. The Hooded Plover

project received a grant from Lotterywest for further surveys in the Israelite Bay area. The Community Education team has received some small grants for various training activities. BAWA has also benefited from the generous donation from an anonymous donor, which funded the Carnaby's Coastal Plain survey, and a new Western Ground Parrot search.

**Communications**

Email News allows a timely communication to members. However, only about half the members are registered. It should also be used much more for communication of changed excursions, BAWA issues, etc. Thanks to Merrian Kuerschner for the circulation of the ENews and the maintenance of the ENews database.

The Digital Library has been expanded and now contains over 3,000 images. There are still many gaps, but BAWA presentations are now being done using PowerPoint and the new data projector, rather than using the 35 mm slide library.

5 minute talks. We now have a short talk at the beginning of each monthly meeting to add extra interest. Members are invited to present these talks on any subject of interest.

**Excursions**

In 2006, 68 excursions were arranged. There were eight campouts, to Woodanilling, Busselton, Wogano Station, Perenjori, Wongan Hills, Boyagin Rock, Rottnest Island and Dryandra State Forest. The 60 walks around Perth and environs included a mid-week walk each month and a walk open to the public each month.

The BAWA members attending excursions continue to support various scientific endeavours such as Hooded Plover surveys, Wader Surveys, Atlassing and the database. We also provide education on bird identification and behaviour in a friendly social environment.

Volunteer hours for 2006 are similar to 2005 and are very approximate.

Committee and associated activity	200 hours
Volunteer leaders	2,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>3,000</u></b>

Thanks go to the 37 volunteer leaders for taking excursions and campouts. Particular acknowledgement is made of Liz Walker's contribution as secretary to the group and to Les Harris who we have relied on so heavily for many years but is currently not well enough to lead walks. Executive committee extends its thanks to Sue Abbotts for her work as convenor of this sub-committee.

### Community Education

There was a name change from PR committee in 2006 to better reflect their role. Once again, this sub-committee has amazed us and the national office, with the sheer volume of work they have undertaken. A summary of activities for the past year follows. BAWA would like to thank Brice Wells and Elsa Dabbs and their committee for their critically important role in integrating birds and bird conservation into the minds and hearts of the general public.

### Cards Sub-committee

Cards continue to be a popular and integral part of BAWA's operations and also make a significant financial contribution to our yearly income. Valerie Hemsley and Barbara Anderson have had another busy year that included several new card designs being made available. Our thanks go to Valerie and Barbara for their hard work on this key sub-committee.

### Finances

We have been very fortunate to have had the assistance of Mary Vaughan as treasurer for the past year. In what was at times a very difficult year for her, Mary has kept BAWA's finances on-track and up to date, and we are grateful to both her and Greg Wylie for their assistance with our organisation's finances.

### WA Bird Notes

Bird Notes continues to become bigger and better than ever with subtle changes implemented over the past year making our favourite publication even easier to use. There continues to be strong support amongst our members for WABN, and the WABN team of editors Sue Mather and Allan Burbidge, production manager Rod Smith and typesetter Margaret Philippon continue to produce a top-notch publication for which we are very grateful.

### AOC 2007

BAWA looks forward to hosting the AOC in December 2007 and acknowledge the leadership of Sue Mather, Allan Burbidge and others from BAWA in organising this event.

### Bird Guides

Thanks to Allan and Rose Jones, BAWA continues to add to its impressive and popular array of bird guides for all around our state.

### Library

The BAWA library continues to provide a valuable resource to all our members with a large range of publications received and catalogued under the watchful eye of Stewart Houghton.

### Kings Park Wildflower Festival

We are indebted to Eggy Boggs who kindly agreed to co-ordinate BAWA's involvement at the Kings Park Wildflower Festival in 2006. This is the single largest event BAWA is ever involved in with potentially over 40 000 visitors to the BAWA stand. Such an event is obviously of key importance to our organisation and we are very grateful to Eggy and all the volunteers who assisted in getting the message out there about birds and bird conservation.

### Conservation and Research Sub-Committee

In a busy year, the Conservation and Research Sub-Committee (CRC) has considered a large number of issues; has made a number of submissions to various bodies, has reviewed or provided comments on a number of BAWA projects, and responded to requests from BAWA members and members of the public.

Over the previous 12 months the CRC had input to a range of conservation issues regarding birds, including:

- the Lake McLarty Management Plan to CALM (now DEC – Department of Environment and Conservation)
- a proposed development on Long Island, Houtman Abrolhos (which opposed the development on this relatively pristine island).
- a boardwalk, Hill River (submission to Irwin Shire suggested boardwalk should protect island against predator access)

#### COMMUNITY EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE PRECIS OF ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2006

<b>Schools</b>	6 schools	375 students (plus teachers & parents)	17 BAWA members involved
<b>Bird ID classes</b>	10 classes	281 participants	36 BAWA members
<b>Bird walks</b>	140 participants		14 BAWA members
<b>Displays</b>	15 metropolitan and country areas		15 BAWA members
<b>At the above:</b>	<b>\$3127.60 raised in sales and donations.</b>		
<b>Library displays</b>	9 libraries		4 BAWA members
<b>Laminated pictures</b>	continues to grow		
<b>Bird images</b>	over 3000		
<b>Email News</b>	up and running, could be used by more members.		
<b>Catching up with the modern world</b> – beginning to create posters for displays and use Power Point presentations.			
<b>Schools Liaison Officer</b> – Rod Smith has accepted position and begun visiting primary schools.			
<b>Registering members for working with children</b> CHECK (Police Clearance).			
<b>More members involved</b> – hopefully more committee members coming on board.			

- the Mandurah Foreshore 2020 project (The CRC supported a submission by R Rule, Mandurah Bird Observers Group, which suggested limited development and no development in areas important for shorebirds)
- liaison with national office on a submission about Barrow Island (submission suggested proposed Gorgon gas development on island would be more appropriate on mainland than on island)
- a submission to Birds Australia Common Names committee related to accepted common names of Carnaby's and Baudin's Black-Cockatoos (suggesting that BA accept Carnaby's and Baudin's and make Short-billed and Long-billed terminology obsolete)

The CRC provided comments on the following BAWA project proposals:

- Carnaby's Swan project
- Carnaby's SCRIPT region project
- Carnaby's plantings database project
- Hooded Plover project
- Western Ground Parrot northern sandplains project
- Malleefowl project proposal
- and reviewed a number of project proposals, for funding provided by an anonymous donor.

The CRC has also provided technical help to both the Hooded Plover project (re appropriate consultants) and the Station Surveys Project (ToR and appropriate methodology) and provided comments on project management issues for the Carnaby's project. We have also responded to a number of miscellaneous issues including inquiries from the public, particularly related to bird survey techniques (eg, The Chittering Landcare Centre), logging in the Helm's Forest Block (an area important for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos) and had discussions on many issues such as indexing WA Bird Notes, data management for BAWA, and survey and bird counting techniques.

Members of the CRC attended the BAWA Forum in October and a number of issues with regard to the CRC were discussed. The first step in addressing these issues has been taken with the development of a Terms of Reference, which will be presented for discussion and acceptance by the new Executive Committee immediately after the AGM. This will help considerably in defining the role and responsibilities of the CRC.

There are a number of open issues the CRC are considering at present. One outcome of the BAWA Forum was the identification of the need for an easier system for dealing with enquiries, whether from members or the general public. As part of this system, the CRC is developing a response chart/proforma and flow chart for office volunteers, which will provide written guidance on responding to issues. In many cases these enquiries could be handled efficiently by referring the person to prepared documents on a range of standard issues. Among these issues are land clearing and the use of offset conditions by developers to offset damage they do to the environment. The CRC is developing position statements for adoption by BAWA on the subjects of land clearing and offsets.

The CRC is continuing its work and at the moment is considering several issues including a submission on The State Biodiversity Strategy which was released recently.

In addition the position of chair changed at the end of 2006 when Andrew Hobbs took over the position of Chair of the sub-committee when Cheryl Gole and John Blyth retired as Co-Chairs. Many thanks to John and Cheryl for their efforts in that position.

The Hooded Plover project run by Marcus Singor and the Western Ground Parrot Project run by Brenda Newbey are both important and ongoing projects focusing on these threatened and iconic birds. Both projects have been successful in securing funding for ongoing work.

## Eyre

This year has been extremely busy at Eyre Bird Observatory. The resignation of Rod Smith at the beginning of the year, as president, after serving as both president and committee member, did not curtail his work behind the scenes as an advisory member. The committee would like to acknowledge Rod's great contribution to the Eyre Bird Observatory and on-going involvement in the Malleefowl Study in the environs at EBO. The current committee continues to work to keep the needs of the Volunteer Caretakers met in maintaining the high standard of scientific observation and care for the many visitors.

The Committee Members are Caroline Comstock, Alma de Rebeira, George Agar, Wendy MacGibbon and Liz Walker with Mary Molloy and Shapelle McNee as co-opted members.

Nearly 30 years of work to stabilise the encroaching dunes has changed the landscape directly south of the telegraph station from the glare of white sand hills to vegetation, which is clearly apparent when comparing satellite photographs taken 30 years apart.

Following the initial successful application to Coastwest Coastcare (2002), and subsequent grants, Coastcare funding for the past two years has supported four, one week courses of subsidised volunteer work, which in 2006, included a group from Nannup (WA southern town), led by Graham and Gwen Goodreid, former caretakers of Eyre Bird Observatory. Shapelle supported by George, has coordinated the Dune Restoration Program, having acquired the funding and acquitted the grant and maintained the resources and equipment.

Volunteer Caretakers: a Change in Managing. Through the investigation and recommendations by Gwen and Graham Goodreid, the system of wardens has been replaced by relatively short term (three months) Volunteer Caretakers.

Every three months, a two week handover period ensures the new Volunteer Caretakers confidently complete the daily, weekly and monthly bird logs that have been continuously kept for close to 30 years.

During 2006, a total of 704 daily visitors in 232 vehicles found the bird observatory and 474 visitors stayed as guests over 861 nights.

The following projects were carried out during 2006. Coralie Hortin and Julie Morris, who currently volunteer at the WA Herbarium (Albany), offered their time to reorganise the observatory's herbarium. Painting and sanding the floors and vacuuming the half ton of sand from the ceiling space was carried out by the Hanrahan Group. Catherine van Delft has coordinated the successful application to the Lotteries Commission (November 2006) for a composting toilet which will be installed in 2007.

The 270 Friends of Eyre addressees on the mailing list has steadily grown over 2006. Eyre Bird Observatory Committee gratefully acknowledges their support.

A course brochure for the Eyre Bird Observatory 2006 (Alma de Rebeira), advertised a Malleefowl Course (Rod Smith and Joyce Hegney) with the successful sighting of a Malleefowl, four Busy Bee Courses (Caretakers Coordinators), four Dune Restoration Courses (Shapelle McNee, George Agar and Gwen and Graham Goodreid), Techniques in Bird Studies (Stephen Davies) and Christmas at Eyre (Norm and Gina Gregory, Caretakers).

### **Carnaby's 2006 Cross Regional Project**

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo is now core business for BAWA and our work on this iconic species is a large part of what we do in terms of publicity and membership activities.

The Birds Australia Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project, ably managed by Helen Pitman, was successful in obtaining \$200 000 from the SCRIPT NRM Regional Group to extend the recovery project to the South Coast. The South Coast is a very important region for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo and with 45% remnant vegetation retained it is crucial that critical habitat is identified and protected for the future. The South Coast Carnaby's Recovery Project has commenced with the employment of a Project Officer, Raana Scott, in November 2006. The project officer will be hosted by Greening Australia in Albany and operates until June 2008.

Highlights of the Cross-Regional Project were:

- eight landholders participated in the Proteaceous Species planting trial during 2006 in the Northern Agricultural Region; a total of 7657 seedlings were planted and 25 hectares revegetated
- 20 articles, seven presentations, three workshop/field days and one radio and one TV interview during 2006
- five landholders were successful in obtaining Envirofund grants for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo habitat restoration in the form of fencing and revegetation for 2007; this amounts to a total of nearly \$120 000
- hollow monitoring for 2006 is complete with 14 properties visited and over 400 hollows monitored for nesting activity
- over 1000 information brochures were distributed during 2006
- one landholder has agreed to fence over 160 hectares of critical feeding habitat adjacent to active nesting trees; this site will be covered by a Voluntary Management Agreement brokered by WWF-Australia.

The Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Swan Coastal Plain Project was successfully concluded in 2006. Ms Banshi Shah was the project officer and BAWA gratefully acknowledges the generosity of an anonymous donor, without which this project would not have been possible. This project pioneered the Great Cocky Count, resulting in the first estimate of the number of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos on the Swan Coastal Plain. It also identified and confirmed the importance of roost sites and presented some data collected on important food plants and dispersal. About 3900 volunteer hours were involved in this study, making it a great success. The report is available from [www.carnabyscockatoo.org](http://www.carnabyscockatoo.org).

### **Congress and Campout 2006**

The annual Birds Australia Congress was held at the Albany Town Hall from 18 to 20 October 2006 with a program of 32 papers and five posters of high quality. 136 persons registered for the Congress and this included a stimulating mix of BAWA members, persons from government and private conservation organisations, interested local people and visitors from interstate and overseas. The Congress began with a public session, the President of Birds Australia provided the welcome and the Congress was opened by the Deputy Director of the Department of Environment and Conservation. The Congress dinner was addressed by the Chief Executive Officer of Birds Australia.

Clive Napier ran a successful Campout based at Albany from 21 to 24 October with great support from a number of BAWA members as excursion leaders for the 82 birders. The Campout included a pelagic trip and recorded a total of 155 species.

The Congress and Campout Committee was pleased to receive many positive comments about the quality of the Congress and the success of the Campout. They were also pleased to have achieved a positive financial outcome for this event.

The BAWA committee extends its thanks to congress convener Mr Bruce Haynes, excursion convenor Clive Napier, congress organising committee members Robina Haynes, Sue Mather, Lorraine Marshall and Graham Woller as well as key local members including Ann Bondin, Wayne Zadow and Ray Garstone for all their help with organising this event.

**Rob Davis, Chair, BAWA**

### **2007 Committee**

The following members were elected to the Committee at the February 2007 annual general meeting:

Chair: Robert Davis  
 Vice Chair: Darryl James  
 Minutes Secretary: Marion Massam  
 Treasurer: Mary Vaughan  
 Committee members:  
 Frank O'Connor  
 Michael Bamford  
 Liz Walker  
 Bill Rutherford  
 Graham Wooller  
 Maureen Francesconi



# BIRDS AUSTRALIA WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.

## TREASURER'S REPORT, YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

Note: These accounts have been audited by Greg Wyllie, Chartered Accountant and a satisfactory report received. This is an abridged version — a copy of the complete accounts is available at Peregrine House.

### BALANCE SHEET

#### Assets

##### Current Assets

Total Cash on hand	186,964	
Total Stock on Hand	<u>16,560</u>	203,524
Non-current Assets		
Investments	190,839	
Equipment on Hand	<u>22,182</u>	<u>213,021</u>

Total Assets		416,545
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#### Liabilities

##### Current Liabilities

GST Liabilities	4,513	
Grants – Various	<u>176,207</u>	
Total Liabilities		<u>180,720</u>

#### Net Assets

**235,825**

#### Accumulated funds

Prior Years' Surplus(Deficit)	116,574	
Retained Earnings	100,508	
Current Year Surplus(Deficit)	<u>18,743</u>	

Total accumulated funds		235,825
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### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2006

#### Income

Total Trading Table	2,009	
Total Books	2,176	
Total <i>WA Bird Notes</i>	2,446	
Donations	3,568	
Interest and Investment Rollovers	8,647	
Other income – Fees % \$3,967 +% Grants \$19,445	<u>23,413</u>	<u>42,259</u>

#### Expense

Audit and Bank Charges	449	
Donations	1,652	
Functions	2,821	
Rent	4,419	
Office expenses (Phone, Stationery, Postage, etc)	11,488	
Regional Group Travel	577	
Library Expenses	758	
Community liaison	<u>1,352</u>	
Total Expenses		<u>23,516</u>

#### Net Surplus(deficit)

**18,743**

## RESULTS OF HOODED PLOVER SURVEY, 17–18 FEBRUARY 2007

The Hooded Plover summer survey was held on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 February 2007. A total of 572 Hooded Plovers were observed, despite significant difficulties in some areas.

Adverse weather along the south coast made surveying difficult; observers had to contend with rain, mist and windy conditions. Huge swells and high tides had eroded many beaches up to the base of the dunes, for example at Circus Beach, Normans Beach, Torbay and the small beaches around Cheyne Bay. The tide was up to the dunes at Coodamurup Beach and Williams Bay. Water levels at Benje Benjenup Lake were high for the time of the year. Lake Quaderwardup held plenty of water but no Hooded Plovers were reported, and Culham Inlet was too full for waders at the time of the survey. At Meerup River, a combination of a big swell and the river overflowing after rain, inundated a colony of 100 Fairy Terns that were breeding there.

### Survey results, 17 and 18 February 2007

Results of all counts are summarised in Table 1.

Some Hooded Plovers seem to be weathering the increased level of disturbance better than others. A pair of Hooded



Hooded Plover at Bremer Bay  
*Photo by Michael Bouette*

Plover that has been in residence at the eastern side of Bunker Bay, well before the Bunker Bay resort development became operational, is still regularly seen. This is the last pair of Hooded Plover on Geographe Bay. Similarly, the Hooded Plovers at Gracetown are usually present on one of the beaches despite the high volume of beachgoers and dogs. Monitoring these birds over the coming years will be interesting.

### Summer Survey 17 and 18 February 2007

Areas:	Numbers	
Shark Bay to Perth	0	
Wetlands between Rockingham and Mandurah	0	
Beaches from Mandurah to Leschenault Inlet	0	
Yalgorup National Park (Yalgorup HPMR*)	97	(including 12 juveniles)
Geographe Bay	2	
Beaches from Cape Naturaliste to Augusta (Naturaliste-Augusta HPMR*)	33	(including 4 juveniles)
Beaches from Augusta to Broke Inlet	10	(including 2 juveniles)
Beaches from Broke Inlet (Walpole) to Beaufort Inlet (east of Albany) Walpole-Denmark HPMR*)	29	(including 8 juveniles)
Beaches from Beaufort Inlet to Hopetoun (Bremer Bay-Hopetoun HPMR*)	36	(including 1 juvenile)
Beaches, coastal — and inland lakes east of Hopetoun to Stokes Inlet	132	(including 8 juveniles)
Beaches Stokes Inlet to Cape Le Grande	58	(including 5 juveniles)
Esperance Lakes (Lake Gore system to Mullet Lake) (Esperance HPMR*)	99	
Beaches east of Cape Le Grande	19	(including 1 juvenile)
Inland lakes in south west of the State	57	(including 4 juveniles)
<b>Total</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>(includes 45 juveniles)</b>

Table 1: Locations and results of surveys of Hooded Plovers, 17 and 18 February 2007.

\* HPMR = Hooded Plover Management Region

On the other hand one observer mentioned that Hooded Plovers haven't been seen at Yallingup and Smith's Beaches for eight years. Our records confirm regular sightings of Hooded Plovers at Smith's Beach up to the late 1990s and a breeding record in 2000, but little since. These sites have been subject to development.

The estuary of the Donnelly River was surveyed for the first time, but unfortunately no Hooded Plovers were found.

Breeding records this year came from Yalgorup National Park, Denmark, Hopetoun and Cape Arid National Park.

Lake Kwooncup was dry when visited on 19 February 2007 but there were still 14 Hooded Plovers present.

Some reports included observations of birds feeding, for example birds were seen feeding on exposed limestone reef at Fourth Beach–Twilight Cove, Esperance and at Lake Benje Benjenup two Hooded Plovers were seen near samphire at the lake's edge and appeared to be catching flying midges.

The correlation between Hooded Plover sightings and the presence of fresh water streams at beaches was again evident. Such situations were found at Redgate Beach (Redgate Brook), Boodjidup Beach (Boodjup Brook), Windy Harbour Beach (small creek to east), Perkin's Beach, Lights Beach and Alexander Bay (Alexander River).

The coastal lake region between Hopetoun and Barker Inlet produced some of the best counts of the survey and is an important breeding and summering area.

### Conservation threats

Motor bikes and vehicles were reported to be having a negative impact in several areas this year.

Heavy four wheel drive traffic was reported at Torbay and the beaches south of the Minninup. The ban on vehicular access to beaches along the Albany coast has resulted in quad bikes moving into new locations such as the Bremer Bay beaches where they are now having a negative impact. The mining boom and the development of the BHP nickel mine near Jerdacuttup has resulted in an increase of four wheel drive vehicles on the Hopetoun beaches. It was also noted that Hopetoun is considering implementing a ban on beach vehicles between the boat ramp and Barrens Beach.

Survey period	Adults and (Juveniles)	% Juveniles	Total
February 2004	412 (79)	16 %	491
February 2005	548 (75)	12 %	623
February 2006	631 (44)	6.5%	675
February 2007	527 (45)	7.8%	572

Table 2: A summary of the Hooded Plover counts collected over summer surveys 2004–2007.

### Summary

This year, we recorded 527 adults and 45 juveniles. The total number of birds was down slightly compared with the last two years, but was more than reported in 2004 (Table 2).

### Acknowledgements

I thank everyone who generously contributed to the survey from Geraldton to the Eyre Bird Observatory. Our own Birds Australia members made a tremendous contribution.

A special word of thanks for the Hooded Plover regional coordinators who organised the volunteers in their districts: Dick Rule (Yalgorup), Tony France (Myalup), Logan Anderson, Lida Feist (Margaret River), David Edmonds (Walpole), Tina Smith (Denmark), Anne Bondin (Albany), Anne Gadsby (Bremer Bay) and Ken Read (Esperance). Christine Wilder completed her annual trek along the south coast from Augusta to Broke Inlet, a hard feat to surpass.

We also received assistance from Graeme and Toni Dearle of the Pemberton Discovery Tours. Kellie Wilson, the Environmental Officer at the Tiwest Cooljarloo mine participated and promoted the survey locally. Thanks go to Jeff Kimpton of the Department of Environment and Conservation, Donnelly District for his assistance.

Last but by no means least the members of the Hooded Plover Sub-committee: Kate Creed, Stewart Houghton, John Lauri and Trevor Stoneman.

**Marcus Singor**  
**Chairperson, Hooded Plover Sub-Committee**

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

This is the final report on the Predator Exclusion Cage (PEC) experiment that was also reported in *Western Australian Bird Notes* No. 117 (France 2006).

Following this experiment, it was learned through communication with Dr Mike Weston (BA National Office) that research in Victoria had shown that although caged eggs resulted in a greatly improved number of Hooded Plover (HP) hatchings, the ratio of young birds lost thereafter had proved just as high as previously. Consequently, Weston's team abandoned the basic PEC conservation technology some time in 1998. However, by the time that information was received, southwest regional operators were already in the process of deploying PECs at the Yalgorup system.

Local observers have long observed consistently high losses of HP eggs at Lake Preston, and there was a strong argument that more HP eggs needed to hatch to maintain the ongoing viability of the estimated Yalgorup National Park (YNP) population (<154 birds). Predation is seen as one of the inhibiting factors in the hatching rate. At Yalgorup, Silver Gulls and foxes are suspected as the main egg-raiding predators. However despite a lack of observed incidents, loss of HP juveniles may also occur from any one of the raptors found at the system – Swamp Harrier, Spotted Harrier, Brown Goshawk, Whistling Kite, Little Eagle, Australian

Hobby and Nankeen Kestrel — or perhaps from the Grey Butcherbird or Australian Raven.

Victoria, a more populous state than Western Australia, has ocean beach HP nesting sites with considerable public access and therefore potential pressure on HP population recruitment. This was considered not to be the case at Yalgorup NP where, although human interference still remained, it was far less than in Victoria. Therefore HP population recruitment should have some chance of improving.

The Victorian experience of Dr Bob Baird also suggested preferably caging HP nests found at the 2-egg stage onwards. The theory was that once any caged-protected eggs hatched, that cage could be re-located to another HP nest. Nevertheless, if all known nesting HP pairs at YNP bred within the summer peak season, the PEC supply of five kits might well be insufficient. In the event, a number of HP pairs bred well on either side of the peak summer season. Two licensed Mandurah Bird Observers (MABO) members caged one 3-egg HP nest at Duck Pond, and one Myalup Bird Observers (MBO) member caged one 2-egg nest and one 3-egg nest at west Lake Preston.

Dr Baird suggested checking caged HP eggs about once a week. Despite a reluctance to return the day immediately after caging each nest, the author felt almost obliged by the parent birds' unsure behaviour from the outset to make extra visits at shorter intervals, confirming whether or not one of the parent birds was sitting on the protected nest. Therefore including December 19 2005, the Bay of Islands HP nest site (about 15 km north of Myalup) was visited eight times, and then by a MBO four member team, twice. The author visited the southwest pocket site seven times alone. It was possible from daily diaries on the PEC project at west Lake Preston to form a reliable estimate of some 100 voluntary man-hours and over 500 km of travel over rough tracks.

### Bay of Islands site

On 19 December, a 3-egg nest was located at 3:45 pm and a pre-assembled PEC was securely installed over the nest. The nest was on a sparsely vegetated, hard and level plain, about 80 metres from Lake Preston's waterline. However, although one HP parent shortly returned, walking closely all around the cage, it failed to return to the eggs by the time the author, in heavy and distant cover, left about 40 minutes later.

On 24 January, visibility was poor overall as a result of smoke from big bush-fires, rain and frothy white shorelines at the caged-nest area. By 11:45 am, it was established from afar that parents were absent from the nest; nevertheless, an area for up to 1 km radius of the nest was searched, before checking the nest. HPs were absent throughout. The PEC was recovered.

### Southwest Pocket site, north

On 19 January the author discovered a 1-egg nest. One parent was believed to be the banded bird Left leg: r/m, Right leg: r/w and, unlike its former partner, its new partner was unbanded. Mating of the new partners was not observed.

HP nests in this claylike, almost flat beach location, closest to Myalup township are at a high risk of both sudden flooding,

and human interference from children playing in soft mud and/or riding bicycles, and unleashed dogs. Oddly, at the Southwest Pocket *southern zone* the rematched pair (not observed to copulate) eventually chose to nest at what usually is close to the *north zone* nesting-site of an unbanded pair. This transfer of nest site could have resulted from the fact that the beach was still soggy at the pair's usual southern site. Also, the regular north-zone pair had not put in an appearance. Had the PEC proved successful at either nesting site, it would have been a severe test of its efficacy.

The Southwest Pocket is a vulnerable nest site because its topography exposes it to severe east or northeast winds and the proximity to Myalup results in human intrusion along the beach, which occurs despite a prominently displayed 'Temporary Breeding Beach' sign which MBO posts each season.

January 23: The author discovered a second egg and so caged the nest by 9:10 am. The ground was relatively firm and dry, allowing the driving home to the full of four cage-securing metal pegs. The nest was in a slight hollow scraped into soft but gritty silt, within a ring of low samphire clumps. It was only about 40 metres east of the densely reeded bank, backed by dense trees. The nest frontage to Lake Preston was about 80 metres west of the waterline.

The parents at first were not seen, because they had concealed themselves beyond the white foam at the waterline, but the birds' repeated alarm calls were heard distinctly.

One parent returned in about 3 minutes, to within about 10 m of the cage, then propped short of the cage, sitting among some low samphire cover. The other parent foraged at the mud beach away from the waterline. From a well-concealed approach, the cage over the nest was clearly visible at the inner arc centre of that small dry bay. The PEC was recovered 21 days later.

The results of this experiment showed that at west Lake Preston the respective parents eventually abandoned both caged nests. The PECs were not removed from the nests until it was evident that the respective parents had permanently abandoned their nests.

In any case, by the time the author had begun to suspect the parent birds were totally alienated by the cages, the operation was too far advanced to expect any value from removing the cages in an attempt to encourage the parent birds to resume brooding the eggs.

The weather and temperature throughout had been very variable. The eggs were cold and damp when the PECs were removed. Perhaps some unknown disturbance had so interrupted the Bay of Islands' parents' brooding that the embryos had failed in the interim.

After each HP pair abandoned its caged eggs at Lake Preston locations, the mutual decision was to postpone further caging of any eggs discovered at Lake Preston.

The final visit to the 3-egg nest showed that the parents definitely had abandoned the nest, with the strong evidence that the three eggs, when originally found, were already in an advanced state of incubation.

Even *in situ*, one egg clearly showed a missing fragment at the small end, an aperture that revealed a dense mass of pale yellow solid with some dark shadow snugly filling the egg. This suggested an advanced state of incubation with the eggs being fertile.

Another egg had suffered a breakdown, perhaps due to considerable exposure, showing hairline cracks, but with a tiny impacted hole that looked as if it had been caused by a slim sharp object. The likeliest explanation is that the parents, after the nest was found, continued for a while to brood the eggs, but for some reason eventually gave up. It is possible that one of the parents pecked the hole in that egg. However, this observer is unaware that HP parents in any way try to assist the hatching of their chicks, or sometimes destroy their own eggs.

The third egg looked sound, but all three had small limestone grains attached, resulting from sticky mucous that had leaked from the other two eggs. The eggs when first found had a pale olive base, this had since changed to a beige colour.

Only once thereafter did the author find a parent bird sitting at what remained a 2-egg nest, which was left caged for a full fortnight after. The eggs gradually gathered dust and took on an air of neglect. Bare footprints were once discovered leaving a trail towards and then passing close to the caged nest.

### Duck Pond

Three chicks subsequently hatched successfully at Duck Pond, where two MABO members caged a nest at the 3-egg stage. Also, a high probability exists that the same pair produced another successful (uncaged) clutch of three, several months later (R. Rule, pers. comm.).

Duck Pond is one of the smaller YNP lakes and, compared to western Lake Preston, is off any main walking track or route the general public is likely to take. Given that the same HP pair has repeatedly nested at the same location, with known success, strongly suggests the site consistently provides virtual isolation and the least human interference. This is not often the case at west Lake Preston sites.

### Discussion and conclusions

This was the first occasion that PEC conservation technology has been used at Yalgorup to protect HP eggs. We have all learned something from the subsequent experiment.

The PEC experiment at Duck Pond was a qualified success, with the positive result comparing most favourably with the Victorian specialists' experience.

However, the percentage loss of caged eggs at west Lake Preston proved too high on this occasion to experiment further. No safe conclusions can be drawn because of the variable weather pattern at Yalgorup experienced during the trial period. But the total failure twice at west Lake Preston nonetheless yielded PEC operation information that may yet prove more valuable than the limited success it achieved at

the time. This proved a disappointing start to the PEC experiment at southwest Lake Preston. However the author found one HP runner and several advanced juveniles during the 2006-2007 season, but no HP eggs were found at west Lake Preston sites where HP pairs have bred relatively regularly hitherto.

At all three caged-nest sites, HP parent birds proved ultra cautious and alert. This compares differently from the HP parents brooding similarly protected eggs in Victoria. Either Bob Baird or Mike Weston remarked to Marcus Singor that they had

regularly observed pedestrians approaching up to 5 m from caged nests with the sitting HP parents remaining unbothered and unmoved.

Victorian HP populations seem mostly, if not entirely, faithful to their known nesting locations, despite considerable human traffic with access to those public beaches. Evidently, those birds have become almost habituated to close and relatively regular human presence (Weston and Elgar 2005). Thus, it becomes a reasonable proposition that breeding pairs there were less concerned when their eggs were caged.

Very recently, observers at Lake Gnorrning achieved a first, when they found one of the HPs banded at YNP in 2002. This serendipitous find suggests that at least some HP pairs may not be site faithful within the Yalgorup system, let alone any breeding site within that system, but move to, live and possibly breed at inland lakes. Such pairs especially demonstrate different behaviour from the Victoria ocean-beach faithful population.

Despite the successful Duck Pond experience of unhabituated HP parents accepting PEC, the Victorian experience of successfully caged nests of habituated HPs parents would be impossible to replicate throughout Yalgorup. However, consideration might at some future time need to be given to caging HP eggs at known and vulnerable nesting sites at public ocean beaches on WA's south coast. If so, five PEC cages and ancillary tools remain available, along with acquired local advice on how best to use them.

PEC weld-mesh sections received were not galvanised so an off-white paint had been applied. The painting process may be one not adopted in Victoria. Nevertheless, it remains



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 by Tony France*

(Photo originally published in WABN, 117, 12)

unknown whether this modification to the PEC particularly alarmed Yalgorup's breeding HP pairs.

As for the abandoned eggs at Lake Preston, it is difficult to see what more could have been done. However, it became evident that the time-strapped observer, attempting to cover a large area, and finding a 1- or 2-egg HP nest in which another egg was subsequently found, has the distinct advantage of being able to predict with some accuracy when the chicks should hatch. Armed with that helpful information, once the licensed observer has confirmed at the time of caging the eggs that the parent bird had definitely returned to sit on the nest, the occasions needed to check up on the nest may be greatly reduced. Importantly, the same observer would stand a good chance of finding and counting how many HP chicks have hatched. But, as matters stand, an alternative and more subtle method needs to be found to protect HP eggs at west Lake Preston before any further protective action is again attempted.

Meanwhile, much improved Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) compliance measures are needed in YNP to control increasing human interference.

The Yalgorup PEC operators again thank Dr Baird and his Victorian colleagues for their valuable information and advice, and DEC officers for licensing the operation and its three operators.

#### References

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- Weston, M. A., and Elgar, M. A. (2005). Disturbance to brood-rearing Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis*: responses and consequences. *Bird Conservation International* **15**, 193-209.

A F (Tony) France



Israelite Bay habitat  
Photo by Mike Bouette

## COUNTING HOODED PLOVERS

The number of Hooded Plovers (HP) in Western Australia has always been open to conjecture. The Action Plan for Australian Birds (Garnett and Crowley 2000) put the population at 3000 adults but, in the absence of hard evidence of a decline in numbers, classified it as Near Threatened (rather than Vulnerable). However, its nesting habits, on open beaches and round the margins of salt lakes, render it susceptible to both human interference and predation and it is generally accepted that numbers have been declining in the Eastern States.

In Western Australia, a Hooded Plover Project began in 1994 with the object of *documenting the distribution and numbers of the Hooded Plover in Western Australia* (Raines and Singor 2002). The first detailed survey of the coastal area between Perth and Esperance, which was carried out in January 1995, produced a total of 2093 HPs. However, by far the largest number (1550) was reported from a single site, Lake Gore, some 60 km west of Esperance. The second highest concentration was reported from the nearby Stokes Inlet (208), with relatively high numbers also at Lake Warden (90) and the Mullet Lake complex (76), both near Esperance (Bentley *et al.* 1995).

The second survey in 1996 yielded 1686 HPs but subsequent surveys have produced much smaller totals (Table 1). However, it is unclear whether the population has suffered a serious decline, or whether other factors are responsible for the marked discrepancy. Interestingly, a significant proportion of the total population in recent years has been recorded from lakes on private farmland, which had previously not been included in the surveys. In 2006, for example, 306 out of a total of 623 HPs counted throughout WA were located on farms in the Munglinup area, half way between Ravensthorpe and Esperance.

Date of Survey	Adults	Juveniles	Total
Jan 1995	2093	n.a.	2093
Jan/Feb 1996	1555	131	1686
Feb 1998	514	39	553
March 2002	691	39	730
Feb/March 2003	344	23	367
Feb 2004	412	79	491
Feb 2005	584	75	623
Feb 2006	631	44	675
Feb 2007	527	45	572

Table 1: Results of annual summer Hooded Plover surveys in WA, 1995-2006 (Singor 2003, 2006, 2007).

One factor that makes it difficult to determine changes in the total population over time is the annual variability of rainfall in southern coastal districts. In winter, HPs disperse and breed on inland salt lakes as far north as Lake Cowan in the Goldfields and Lake Moore on the edge of the northern wheatbelt. As lakes dry out in summer, the HPs tend to congregate on the remaining salt lakes near the coast, estuaries and ocean beaches, particularly on the south coast. Just how concentrated the population becomes, appears to depend on how many lakes still hold moisture at the end of summer.

Data from the Bureau of Meteorology shows that, since 1970 rainfall in the town of Esperance has averaged 620 mm per annum. However, the range is considerable, varying between 404 mm in 1994 (!) to more than twice that figure, 837 mm, in 1999. Hence, it seems likely that the record number of birds reported in 1995 was probably the product of exceptionally low rainfall over the previous 12 months, forcing the HP population to congregate at the few remaining wetlands. The relatively large number of birds recorded the following year may partly reflect the high point of enthusiasm among observers, while higher rainfall in subsequent years has rendered the task of conducting an accurate census much more difficult.

In 2007, annual rainfall in Esperance totalled only 472 mm but any hope that this might allow a more accurate picture of HP numbers in the area to emerge was dashed when a storm associated with a severe tropical depression deposited 155 mm of rain on Esperance in 24 hours in the second week of January. Some adjacent areas were reported to have received over 200 mm. Surprisingly however, water levels in many lakes around Munglinup were similar to those in 2006. Notable exceptions were two lakes that have extensive river catchments, Lake Jerdacuttup (west) near Hopetoun and Lake Gore.

In the past, Hooded Plovers have also been reported from the Nuytsland lakes and other areas east of Esperance. In December 1986, Brenda Newbey (Newbey 1987) counted 113 on beaches near Israelite Bay and, ten years later, Allan Rose reported seeing 36 on beaches in the same area (Rose 1997). However, the area's remoteness has always prevented its inclusion in BAWA's annual HP surveys.

In January 2007, BAWA received a grant from the Lotteries Commission to mount an expedition to the Nuytsland Nature Reserve with the object of surveying salt lakes in the vicinity of Israelite Bay. Four BAWA members subsequently carried out a survey from 1–5 March. Regrettably, no HPs were located but the expedition did provide an opportunity to carry out Atlas Surveys in an area that is rarely visited.

Both Lake Daringdella west of the old telegraph station and Lake Geglup to the north contained areas of water. However, on closer inspection the former proved hyper-saline and devoid of any bird life. Lake Geglup looked more attractive in the early morning light but supported only a handful of Red-necked Stints and two pairs of Australian Shelduck. A much smaller lake behind the coast near the Israelite Bay camp site also held water and supported a flock of about 20 Chestnut Teal. A pair of teal with young were also located on a nearby outlet to the sea.

North-east of Israelite Bay, an extensive lake system runs parallel with the coast on a low-lying coast plain for more than 70 km. On the last day, the expedition followed the old telegraph track, reaching the coast again near Wattle Camp. However, the lake was completely dry and no waterbirds

were seen. Unfortunately, we were not able to carry out a systematic survey of ocean beaches in the area because of time constraints and the large amount of seaweed present.

Despite anecdotal evidence that the number of HPs in WA is declining, recent surveys have proved largely inconclusive.

This is mainly because of the difficulties involved in covering large numbers of potential sites where birds could congregate. Annual fluctuations in water levels in many inland lakes accentuate this problem. In future, it may be wise to concentrate resources in areas where HPs can be accurately counted, such as the lake system south of Mandurah and the coastline between Bunbury and Augusta.

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**Stewart Houghton**



Ruins of the Israelite Bay Telegraph Station  
(1876-1927)

Photo by Mike Bouette



Fig 1: BAWA members at the welcome barbecue (see Starling Search next page).

Photo by Garry Gray

## BREMER BAY STARLING SEARCH CAMPOUT, 18-24 FEBRUARY

### Introduction

On the evening of Sunday 18 February, 18 members assembled at the Bremer Bay Beaches Tourist Resort Caravan Park for a welcome barbecue provided by officers of the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA) Vertebrate Pest Research Section (Figure 1 page 15). The objective was to search for Common Starlings in the area.

The first activity was a briefing on the coming week's activities by Andrew Woolnough and Garry Gray that included a DVD movie showing typical habits and flight patterns of the target species as well as the damage they can cause. Andrew, and Ron Sinclair from the Animal and Plant Control Group of South Australia, appear in the movie, outlining the case against the Common Starling and why it should be controlled. Members were then allocated into groups that were assigned to properties and vehicles for the next morning's search.



Fig 2: Plenty of logs to trip over. One of the swamps searched during the surveys.

*Photo by Ron Dibbens*



Fig 3: Lots of mud here! One of the lakes searched during the surveys.

*Photo by Ron Dibbens*

surrounding farmland. Fencelines, powerlines, stockyards and paddocks that had stock in them were scanned while lakes and swamps were searched in an effort to determine whether starlings were in the area or not (Figures 2 and 3).

Groups arrived back at the caravan park between 9:30 and 10:00 am, often passing officers from DAFWA's locust control group who were dealing with that pest species in the Bremer Bay area. Members then made morning tea and

assembled in the briefing tent to be assigned to properties and vehicles for the afternoon session. The daily bird call was also held at this time to allow people to relax and prepare meals after their return in the evenings. Between the morning and evening searches, members were free to do whatever they wished.

Evening searches departed at either 3:30 or 4:00 pm depending on the distance to be travelled. The reverse logic applied to these sessions, with groups watching, searching and scanning for starlings feeding and returning to their roost sites. Groups arrived back at the caravan park between 7:30 and 8:00 pm.

After each search, a starling observation record sheet was filled in (even if no starlings were seen) to provide a written record for the Vertebrate Pest Research Section personnel.

### Results of the searches

The Department of Agriculture and Food was very appreciative of the financial contribution by BAWA in assisting members getting there and of the effort and commitment of members attending. Volunteers spent approximately 500 hours bird watching and searching for starlings. DAFWA was pleased that starlings were not confirmed in the areas and properties searched. While there were a couple of sightings of birds that could not be identified but with perhaps similar features and habits to starlings, we were not able to further clarify or confirm these despite modification of the search plans and 115 person hours (all teams) spent in the vicinity of these sightings. Further follow-up surveillance will be undertaken by the local Biosecurity Officer to ensure that no starlings are present.

This project is one of a number of projects funded by South Coast Regional Initiative Project Team (SCRIPT) targeting starlings. Ryan Monroe, Invasive Species Coordinator for SCRIPT attended the campout for a couple of days and was also impressed by the skills, enthusiasm and participation of BAWA members.

The Department hopes to arrange another campout in the same area in November this year. This will provide an opportunity to revisit some locations at a different time of year and to check other areas that we were not able to get to this time.

### The camp site

Members were accommodated in a mix of caravans, cabins and chalets that were set amongst large, shady Peppermint (*Agonis*) trees (Figure 4).

The pleasant grounds were home to a number of bird species including the Red-capped Parrot,



Fig 4: Part of part of the caravan park used as a base for the starling searches.

*Photo by Peter Sandilands*





Fig 5: Every Galah should have a hobby. Time out for preening on one of the properties searched for starlings.

Photo by Pam Agar

Grey Fantail, Tawny Frogmouth and Australian Magpie. The favourite of most appeared to be the Scarlet Robins that were attracted to their reflections in the mirrors of the vehicles and even left their calling card on a few.

Small groups of Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Carnaby's (Short-billed) Black-Cockatoos, Australian Ringnecks, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Silvereyes also moved through the area quite regularly.

Even though the caravan park was close to full capacity for the duration of the campout and some building work was being carried out, noise was not a problem. This allowed several members to have a siesta between the morning and afternoon searches. Others used the time to visit different parts of the local area for leisure activities such as sightseeing, swimming and more birdwatching. Weather conditions were ideal with temperate days in the low to mid-twenties and cooler nights. There was no rain to speak of until the last morning (Saturday) of the campout.

### The birds

Although the priority was searching for starlings, participants were still able to compile a bird list of 133 species over the duration of the campout. To be eligible to win a bottle of wine (label temporarily removed) kindly donated by the Vertebrate Pest Research Section officers, each person wrote



Fig 6: Juvenile Dusky Woodswallow on one of the properties searched for starlings

Photo by Pam Agar

down the total number of species that they thought would be seen. By Friday morning only three were left in the running, the prize finally being won by Max Howard who had estimated 137 species.

Apart from the nearby Fitzgerald River National Park, the area had not been well covered before and the intensive nature of the campout resulted in many new records for the area, which have been captured on Atlas forms. The sighting of Red-winged Fairy-wrens at some of the properties visited may, if the records are accepted, lead to an eastward range extension for this species of some 80-100 km (*see elsewhere in this issue — Eds*).

As was the case with previous starling searches, some large concentrations of waterbirds were seen with the most notable being the big rafts of Hoary-headed Grebe. In addition, flocks of approximately 250 Straw-necked Ibis were noted feeding on locusts. Thirteen species of raptor were seen, some on more than one occasion. The most unusual was a Black Kite seen by Mike Bouette, while others saw an Osprey fishing on the Bremer Bay estuary and a Wedge-tailed Eagle being harassed by a Nankeen Kestrel. There were some very clear sightings of the Australian Hobby, which seemed to be almost as common as the kestrels (Figure 5).

Breeding records were few and the most interesting of these was June and Alex Morrison's sighting of a Baillon's Crake with young and Max Howard's discovery of a Common Bronzewing's nest containing three eggs. Figure 7 shows one of the species that can sometimes be confused with starlings. Although only slightly smaller, swift in flight and spotted; the juvenile Dusky Woodswallow's broader bill, white streak on the edge of the wings and the fact they often call in flight separates them quite clearly from the Common Starling.

Some migratory waders were seen at the estuary and at Lake Torrup while a group of Australian Ravens spent a lot of time on the road at the edge of town feeding on the locusts squashed by passing vehicles.

One of the farmers, whose property was part of the starling searches, requested a list of the species seen there and this was provided through the DAFWA staff. Alex and June Morrison also put together a bird list for the owners of the caravan park.

### Conclusion

After the last search on Friday evening, all personnel gathered at the caravan park restaurant for a wine, cheese and pizza farewell dinner. Dennis Rafferty thanked all the BAWA members for their efforts over the week and indicated they may need assistance again sometime in the future. The Vertebrate Pest Research Section team were thanked in turn for their good humour in dealing with the BAWA members and for making the campout an interesting and enjoyable one.

The next day some members departed early, travelling to Esperance for the Hooded Plover survey, while the remainder had left by mid-morning.

**Peter Sandilands (Leader)  
and Garry Gray (Technical Officer DAFWA)**

## BAWA VOLUNTEERS — A SHORT HISTORY

I have been an office volunteer since 1984 and have organised the roster for volunteers for a good part of that time, so it may be interesting to people who have joined in more recent years to know something of the history of the Birds Australia volunteers.

Many of us took part in the first Atlas of Australian Birds that was overseen in WA by Stephen Davies and a few people assisted with data entry at the CSIRO headquarters in Helena Valley. However it was not until Roger Jaensch was appointed Field Officer in the early eighties and began mustering volunteers for the South West Waterbird Survey and later the Great Duck Count that the WA Group began operating in the way we know today. At first Roger, who came from South Australia, worked from his temporary home wherever it happened to be and for some of that time the entire project papers were reportedly kept in a box under his bed!

However when money for the project came through from Head Office in Melbourne it allowed for the renting of an office and the chosen location was in Rowley's Centre near Canning Bridge. This was a single room with a partition so that there was some division between the front office and the working area.

As the number of people contributing to the Waterbird Project mounted, Roger and his assistant Rodney Vervest were spending more and more time entering data and answering phone calls when they needed to be out in the field. Roger asked for people to help at the office as volunteers whenever they could. The idea was also to make a meeting place where people could discuss their problems with surveys and perhaps share the excitement of seeing a rare bird. I started going to help in 1984 and gradually got into the habit of going on a regular day and soon took over the task of trying to make sure someone was there while Roger and Rodney were away.

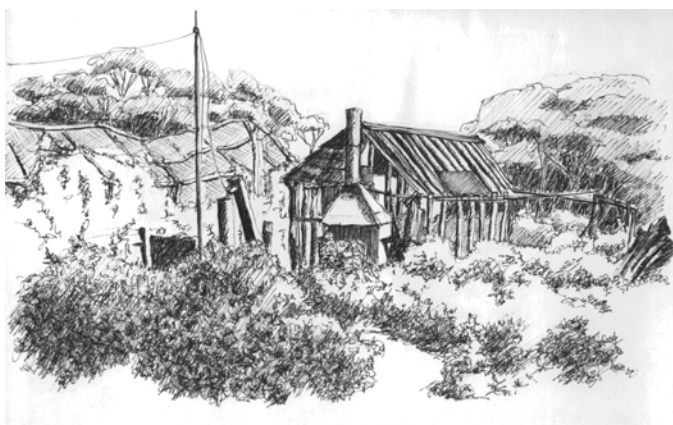
At about this time it was realised that the activities of the WA Group would be very limited unless there was some back up funding, as all we received from Head Office was 15% of our membership fees. Margaret Wilson had the idea of having

cards printed with paintings by local artists of West Australian birds. With much help from her husband Brian, Clive Napier and others, the cards were printed and launched at an art exhibition in the foyer of the Perth Concert Hall. This was very successful and was continued for three successive years. Artists such as Joan Jordan, Martin Thompson, Bryony Fremlin, Mike Bamford and Pam Free have generously donated their paintings to be re-produced. Thus an amount of capital was built up and invested to earn money for the WA Group. Volunteers have continued to organise the printing of the cards and to supervise the sales of them.

When the South West Waterbird Project and the Great Duck Count were completed there was no longer funding for an office and the WA Group was not yet strong enough to afford the rent. Roger went on to projects in other states and we would soon be out on the street and homeless again! The City of Perth was approached and through the good offices of the Lord Mayor, Reg Withers, we were offered Perry House at a nominal rent. With much hard work from the office bearers of the time, Brian Wilson, Chris Wilder, John Blyth and others the move was made in June 1992 and in conjunction with the Wildflower Society we had a grand opening with John Blyth representing the RAOU, John Colwill presiding for the Wildflower Society, the Lord Mayor and an amusing guest speaker in Bill Oddie who is a well known birder as well as a famous comedian.

Perry House served us well for 12 years and during this time we became Birds Australia, WA Group. With continued card sales, judicious investment and grants for particular projects, for many years organised by Allan Jones, we have continued to flourish. When the opportunity came to take over the lease of Peregrine House it seemed too good to pass up and the volunteers now enjoy the spacious and bright offices we have today. During this time volunteers have staffed the office every weekday morning and we have the efficient guidance of Liz Walker, our Office Manager. With the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Officer also operating from Peregrine House the office is fully utilised and is a busy centre for the operations of the WA Group. Long may it continue.

**Wendy Napier**



Burnabbie ruins, Eyre (see Observatory reports)  
*Sketch by Pam Agar*



## SKUAS AT WOODMAN POINT

This April (2007) the usual concentration of skuas and jaegers again occurred at Cockburn Sound/Woodman Point.

Observations on 15 April coincided with the passage of a front. This produced moderate, increasing to fresh, north-westerly winds and subsequently after the watch period, heavy rain. Such meteorological conditions were thought ideal for skua movement and so it proved.

In the 50 minute period commencing 0920 hrs it was estimated (by JD) that some 60 birds were involved in a northwards movement. This number was over and above an estimated 30 – 40 birds that were present throughout. The passage birds comprised mainly Arctic Skuas (Jaegers), but at least five Pomarine Skuas (Jaegers) were involved. A further Pomarine and one Great (Brown) Skua were present in the 'resident' group. As with the passage birds however, some of the more distant individuals were not specifically identified.

About 45% of the Arctic Skuas were dark phase birds (light phase being taken to include also intermediate birds). Of 40 seen closely, only six had central tail feathers approximately 50% developed and only one had them fully developed. Overall I would estimate 5% of the Arctic Skuas were 1st/2nd year plumaged birds.

No Pomarine Skuas were noted with fully developed central tail feathers. Of those seen, two were dark phase and two were 1st/2nd year plumage birds.

The Brown Skua record is a fairly early date although early arrivals frequently overlap the departure of the smaller, northern breeding jaegers.

Further observations from the same area, by JD on 24th April, were again taken just ahead of a front; this again producing freshening northwest winds and subsequent, although this time only light, rains. As on the 15th, 30 plus birds were present throughout most of observation period. Others were, however noted heading northwards; this passage involved approximately 30 birds over the 45 minute watch period. Again these were predominantly Arctic Skuas but included at least two Pominines (with one intermediate plumage adult having a fully developed tail) and one Long-tailed Skua (this an intermediate plumage type, 1st/2nd year bird). The proportion of dark plumage Arctic Skuas was approximately 55%. Immature birds included one in exceptionally pale plumage. This had the head pale golden buff, contrasting strongly with the darkish brown back/wing coverts and blackish primaries, these still showing a typical white flash to the primary base, however. Its underparts were very pale and the central underwing area was almost plain whitish. None of these latter three birds were observed on 15 April.

On 29 April, AC observed from 0915 to 1015 in strong NW winds and, for the first five minutes, driving rain, after which it was sunny. On this day, there were approximately 80

Arctic Skuas, with 50 of these going north further out, and about 20-30 hanging around. It was estimated that 65-70% were pale (plus intermediate phase). There were far more adults (or near adults) than noted the previous week. There were two adults with completely grown tail feathers and another two with central tail feathers about 50% grown. Very few were 1st year plumaged birds.

There were seven or eight Pomarine Skuas present including two pale/intermediate adults with elongated central tail feathers, and two dark phase adult/near adults plus two 1st year birds.

Only one probable Long-tailed Skua was seen, and that briefly, but it had the right jizz and did the stalling action associated by AC with Long-tailed Skuas seen in Norfolk (UK). A brief view was had of nice dark barring across the pale uppertail coverts.

No Great Skuas were seen on this occasion.

On 8 May, there were light easterly winds and, over a 90 minute period of observations by JD starting at 0815, only four skuas were seen - three Arctic and one Pomarine. None of these appeared 'resident'.

It would be interesting to know how many people watch the skua passage each year. Given the difficulty in picking out pale/intermediate phase immature Long-tailed Skuas (let alone dark-phase birds) it may be that the Long-tailed Skua is a very scarce migrant which just isn't picked out, rather than being a "true" rarity. Only more systematic and careful observations will clarify this.

**John Darnell and Alan Collins**

## ATLAS FORM PROCRASTINATORS UNITE!

I have been a terrible procrastinator over the past two years when it comes to submitting my atlas survey results. I enjoy doing my bird surveys immensely but the administration part of the job is left languishing while I am off on another bird walk!

For a long time I have eyed the notes in the various newsletters to enter atlas records on the birddata website with suspicion. However, I have finally had a go at entering a survey form and was very pleasantly surprised. It is easy to use, formatted very similarly to the paper forms and while on the site other bird locations can be easily perused! I am now a convert!

While entering my species lists for a survey I was even able to enter some waterbird counts. This I feel is a wonderful tool as it means that the conservation and research community are able to access this data to see if a wetland or bird location is improving, deteriorating or staying the same.

I am now busily putting in my data for the past few years and hoping that other atlas form procrastinators will do the same (Please do not tell me I am the only one!!!).

**Robyn Pickering**

## FAST FOOD FOR NATIVE BIRDS

Given all the publicity obesity problems receive these days, I feel compelled to let the cat out of the bag about some dubious dietary habits of some native birds in our front garden that immediately abuts shire-owned woodland at Myalup.

Let's start at the beginning. We have a dog and one cat we once voluntarily adopted as a stray and another, which latterly adopted us, despite ourselves.

My dear spouse, Elaine, has gained a reputation locally for nursing sick and injured birds, so it was not entirely unusual that a couple of local youngsters once brought to her a young and injured Galah they had just found at the roadside. The now-healed and mature Galah (Charlie) is housed in a large cage that reposes during most days on our veranda. And although about a year ago Elaine recovered and nursed a very young, broken-winged Common Bronzewing, he (or she?) remains mostly flightless and, sadly, alone in our large bird-recovery aviary.

Our large ginger tom-cat, Eddie, was once owned by nearby neighbours who also had a dog. The cat and dog were great pals, but the ageing dog died. Even before then, Eddie would make frequent visits to us. The visits became more frequent and longer as his dog friend became older and increasingly irascible. Eventually, Eddie crashed permanently in on us, proving as fond of our young Norwegian Elk Hound bitch, Elka, as Elka became of Eddie, who commonly mooches along behind us when we take Elka for walks.

From the start, we had Eddie neutered, collared and belled him; he soon gave up occasionally hunting and catching native birds, predominantly New Holland Honeyeaters.

Well-fed Eddie is a somewhat jealous soul, very ambivalent about our once stray 19-year-old white female cat, Cassie. An increasingly gaunt Cassie these days is a fastidious and nervous feeder, so we have taken to placing a small dish of crisp Whiskettes cat-pellets on the veranda, keeping Eddie occupied outside while Cassie has her undisturbed meal indoors.

We have regularly observed since, Australian Ringnecks helping themselves from the dish, picking up a Whiskette pellet and holding it in one claw as they munch on the morsel. It was not long before some Galahs caught on,

then some local Australian Magpies. Eventually, a regular pair of Grey Butcherbirds started to help themselves, then fly off with a pellet for the young they were brooding at the time. Then, the whole family turned up at the cat dish. Even blue wrens come in to peck at small Whiskette crumbs left by the other birds.

Throughout all these invasions, a disinterested Eddie often lounges sleepily only a few feet away.

I took to tossing up a cat-pellet into the air, and it seldom reached the ground before a keen-eyed Grey Butcherbird would swoop down and snatch it up in mid-air, with flight as adept and agile as any one of the Grey Fantails that haunt flying insect swarms hovering above our garden compost pit.

I have to imagine that something in the cat pellet's composition provides those birds an added measure of protein that, say particularly breeding New Holland Honeyeaters and Red Wattlebirds obtain from the spiders and insects they seasonally scavenge for along the length of our veranda's eaves.

While Charlie's behaviour is not always exemplary, he shows a particular appetite for a piece of toasted bread, also crispy fried bacon-rind, and a cooked chicken bone, also a piece of mature cheddar cheese. Thus, he and our native-bird visitors at Myalup exemplify that general classifications of native birds as, say, carnivorous or insectivorous, seed-eaters, or honey-eaters, are very loose guides, indeed.

No good deed deserves to go unpunished. Long-rescued Charlie's rather cavalier feeding habits inadvertently scatters his seed on our veranda and thereby also attracts some other native birds. Charlie almost became 'packaged take-away fast food' himself recently, first to a Tawny Frogmouth, and a few days later to a very determined Brown Goshawk — all in broad daylight.

Talk about a fast-food chain!

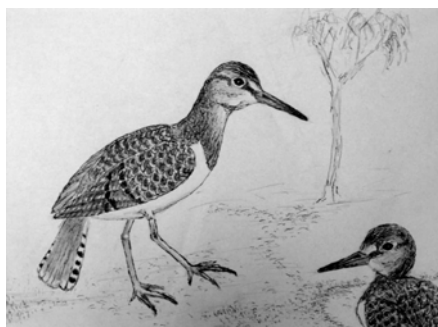
**Tony France**

## COMMON SANDPIPER BEHAVIOUR

I was wandering the perimeter of a local wetland when I noticed two Common Sandpipers (*Actitis hypoleucos*) just a few metres from me. I had not seen them till they moved. They were some distance from the waters edge, something that I have witnessed before but not often, usually at rest, sheltered from sun or wind.

On seeing them I stopped, rather than frighten them off. Their running seemed to indicate that they intended distancing themselves from me but then one of them settled into a hollow made by a horse's hoof in the sand. I thought it might have been trying to hide. The other sandpiper stopped briefly, aware of the first; it then ran a short distance further and itself settled into a hollow. At this, the first bird exited its hollow and approached the second bird; as the first neared, the second vacated its hollow and moved further away.

One bird was larger than the other, which is not uncommon in waders. The larger bird was in advanced breeding plumage, with the brown streaking on the upper breast



Common Sandpipers  
Sketch by Les George

clearly visible. The behaviour I was seeing now made me think that I was watching a male and female bird, with the larger assumed to be male. This larger bird was the first one to settle in a hollow and was now behind the other bird, body slightly raised, tail spread and down pointing, the barring in the tail appearing as spots on the outer edges. This seemed reminiscent of a breeding display. The "hen" kept her distance but was still close, perhaps impressed by his attentions. The birds were intermittently obscured by vegetation as I watched as them moving this way, then that. Then they flew off, out over the water, very low to the water and in a wide arc, almost wing tip to wing tip, one slightly behind the other and returning to the same area they took off from. The smaller bird landed first, the larger a few metres further on. The smaller one then ran to the other and beyond. Then both took off and the same low flight over water in a wide arc was performed, returning to the place of take off, faltering but not landing. Another smaller arc over the water and one landed on the far side, the other did a loop to join the first landed but not doing so, it flew back in the other direction and landed some distance away. Both then seemed to begin feeding independently.

I have seen many interactions in Common Sandpipers, most are seen when feeding and one of the birds gives a short chase to defend its feeding territory, the other flying off. Often there are standoffs, where neither bird gives ground and some fervent skirmishes ensue; on one occasion I saw feathers sent flying. Of all the interactions I have seen, all have been acts of aggression except this most recent observation.

Looking back, I envisaged the male posing the question, "How would this suit?" when settling in the first hollow, as he might a nest site on their breeding grounds. The time frame in which this behaviour was observed was brief and I was both bemused by it and disappointed that it ended when it did.

HANZAB contains no behavioural information for migratory species and I have no other ready access to such information so I'm left wondering if that which I saw was indeed indicative of pair bonding/breeding behaviour.

Can anyone enlighten me?

**Les George**

## RED-WINGED FAIRY-WRENS AT BREMER BAY

While participating in the recent starling search held in the Bremer Bay area (see BAWA Projects this edition), a number of members had sightings of 'red-winged' fairy-wrens. The views were often quite fleeting with not enough information being collected for positive identification to be made. This was due to the dense, tangled vegetation around the perimeter of many of the lakes and swamps where the searches were conducted. However, a few groups had good views and were confident that what they saw were Red-winged Fairy-wrens. Three of the four sightings were made at one location on different days while the fourth was some distance west. Details of the sightings are outlined below.

**Location: 34° 23' 13" S 119° 12' 00" E**

Observers: Mike Bouette and Darryl James. Date: 19 Feb 2007

Description: 'Fully plumaged males having very light (almost translucent) crowns, backs and ear coverts, females brownish backs and wings, light breasts and black bills. There were some male juveniles in the process of colouring'.

Observers: Alex and June Morrison. Date: 20 Feb 2007

Description: 'A group of fairy-wrens, all with black bills, none with blue or red on the wings (presumed female Red-winged)'.

Observers: Peter Sandilands and Max Howard. Date: 19 Feb 2007

Description: 'Mid-grey crown, slightly lighter grey back contrasting with creamy-white breast, reddish wings (not bright), black bill, black (not blue) around the eye, tail not seen'.

**Location: 34° 18' 47" S 119° 01' 19" E**

Observers: Mike Bouette and Darryl James. Date: 22 Feb 2007

Description: 'In both cases where we reported sightings I got a good look at a male in full sunlight and I particularly noted the colour of the head and lack of obvious ear coverlets'.

Such sightings would not normally be cause for comment except that in the case of this species the closest recordings, according to Birds Australia's Bird Data website (Birds Australia 2007), are approximately 80-100 km west of where these were made. This is a considerable range extension for a small, fairly sedentary species so it is likely that it has actually been in the area all the time and observers have missed recording it over the years. Ford (1966) observed males of this species and males of the Blue-breasted Fairy-wren together at Warriup on the south coast while Serenty and Whittell (1976) mention that location as the eastern boundary of its distribution along with a possible outlier in the Stirling Ranges — since confirmed. Data in the first atlas (Blakers *et al.* 1984) reflect that. Storr (1991) does not mention the species east of Warriup and the Stirling Ranges and this is repeated in a more recent work by Johnstone and Storr (2004).

Rowley *et al.* (1988) mention a sighting made by Ford at Copper Mine Creek in 1963, but discount it because it was not mentioned in later papers by the same author. This location is now part of the Fitzgerald River National Park and is approximately 50 to 55 km NE of the Bremer Bay sightings. Ford's sighting was also disregarded in HANZAB (Higgins *et al.* 2001) although the locality of Gairdner appears in the same work. This is only some 20 to 30 km NNW of the current sightings.

Although species distributions do change over time it is more likely that this species has avoided observation in the area and been present all the time. In his Western Australian Branch Report to the RAOU Congress, Ford (1963, p. 91) said that the range extensions of this and a number of other species were "far more likely to be due to the lack of comprehensive surveys of many parts of the state". Although others have talked of seeing this species in the vicinity of Bremer Bay, Ford is the only one to have put it in the

ornithological literature for others to reference. Perhaps we should look more closely at "red-winged" fairy-wrens in the coastal parts of Fitzgerald River National Park to see if that discounted sighting is indeed correct. The recent observations serve to underline the fact that there is still a lot more to be learnt about the birds of Western Australia, including their distribution.

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**Peter Sandilands**

### TORRESIAN CROWS AT CARNARVON

On 5 April 2007 I was surveying a wetland in the lower Gascoyne River known locally as Tucker's Pump, because a variety of birds have been congregating there and at Chinaman's Pool to the west as wetlands further afield dry up or become less habitable. I often meander around these areas, as they are relatively close to my residence and on occasions host birds rarely seen in these parts.

On a number of occasions when visiting recently I have heard a pair of Torresian Crows calling, at least that was what they sounded like. This being the first time I have recorded this species so close to the coast I was in doubt for some time that I had indeed identified the birds correctly as I know that all corvids I have encountered can have many

variations in voice and I have only heard this species further inland. Could I have been mistaken? Little Crows are very common in this general locality at this time of year and for the most part are easily approachable, but not so these birds. The first time I heard them I tried for a closer look, even thinking I would not be confident in identifying them by sight even if I did manage good views. This was not to be. But there was another occasion when one landed reasonably close by, calling loudly, but I could not see the bird. When I did manoeuvre close enough to see it, the bird also saw me and vacated. I have wanted to get a good photograph of this species for my collection but I also know that the BAWA image library would welcome a good picture.

This time, as is usual, the birds were calling from the opposite bank, but often visible as they tend to call from the tops of gum trees sparse in leaves, but as I watched the birds flew westward. Some time later when I was on this northern bank I noticed one of these crows calling again. Lifting my binoculars I noticed it was also surrounded by a number of Little Corellas. This is not unusual either as I have seen large numbers of Little Crows and Little Corellas quite happily sharing the same roost sites. It was then that I noted one of the corellas upside down, its foot or feet caught in the fork of a twig. The crow was seen pecking at the stricken bird and the other corellas had gathered at its 'mayday' call. It wasn't long before the crow departed but I could see the corella's legs had been stripped of skin. A short time later a young Whistling Kite landed near, and this put the stricken corella in immediate panic though the kite was not seen to make any attempt on the bird. Panic again ensued when the kite took off.

When I had all but circumnavigated this pool I noted both crows were back with the corella and thought that no better chance existed for a photograph. I was able to get close before both crows moved a short distance away but as the sun was in the wrong quarter a photograph was not immediately possible. The crows departed for the opposite bank again while I tried to position myself for a shot. I decided to remain where I was, as I knew the crows would return. The fate of the corella was sealed, the most humane thing to do would be euthanasia, but I had no way of doing that. The long and the short of it was that the crows did return and I had the image in my lens but alas my camera batteries had gone flat during my wait. I resorted to another camera with less zoom and took a photo of the corella. One photo of a crow was managed but it shows no distinguishing features, as it was too distant.

I returned later that afternoon to find that there was only a bit of down stuck to the twigs, probably by blood. Two Whistling Kites flew from the tree at my approach so it was assumed they had removed the body; scanning for remains I saw only a pair of fully intact wings, still joined by bone. No other remains except feathers were found though I looked for the head remnants or bill. Perhaps body parts were removed and transported elsewhere to be consumed, as there was more than one feeding on the remains. The Torresian Crows had the last say; they were heard calling from the opposite bank before I departed.

**Les George**

## RINGED PLOVER ON MARTIN'S TANK

Martin's Tank is one of a chain of small, saline lakes in Yalgorup National Park, west of Waroona. Stretching along a line between Lakes Clifton and Preston, the lakes are important, among other things, as breeding areas for Hooded Plovers. Martin's Tank generally supports two or three pairs of Hooded Plovers and it is a lake I visit regularly.

When I did my regular search on Friday, February 3, 2007, a pair of colour-ringed Hooded Plovers, that I expected to be there, were not to be found and I resolved to make a quick visit on Saturday morning to look for them. I had intended to attend a community meeting in Preston Beach that morning, so it was going to be a quick visit.

On Saturday morning, the ringed birds were where they should have been and I decided to have a look at the south end of the lake to check for recently fledged 'Hoodies'. I was looking at one of these and a few Red-necked Stints when a small brown, black and white plover walked into my field of view. I thought "s..t – that's a Ringed Plover".

Having seen many Common Ringed Plovers in my native Scotland — but always in summer recently — I was anxious to make it a Little Ringed Plover but I couldn't. There was no obvious white line above the black across the forehead and, when it flew, the broad, white wing bar (see photo) and the call (a two syllable 'too-eet' or 'tlui-eet') all indicated that it was a Common Ringed Plover. Little Ringed Plovers have a very inconspicuous wing bar, and adults have a fine white line above the black on the head.

I took some photographs before it flew off further up the lake with the stints but I located it again on a recently emerged island off the eastern shore. It was not particularly confiding but I did manage to take a few more photographs before deciding to leave it alone in the hope that someone else might be able to see it.

I e-mailed the news to a few people and Alan Collins turned up on Sunday morning, deviating from his planned wader count on Peel Inlet. We located the bird without too much trouble and Alan confirmed that it looked like a Common Ringed Plover but a bit more checking was needed to exclude the American Semipalmated Plover. The very conspicuous

white line above and behind the eye suggests Ringed Plover, as the Semipalmated Plover has a much less obvious white line in this position (see photo).

The bird had a conspicuous, well marked facial pattern, but a black bill, suggesting that it was a non-breeding adult.



Ringed Plover at Martin's Tank, showing distinctive head pattern  
*Photo by Alan Collins*



Ringed Plover in flight at Martin's Tank, showing conspicuous wing bar  
*Photo by Alan Collins*

By the time other observers arrived on Monday, the bird had disappeared and could not be found on any of the adjoining lakes.

The bird turned up on Martin's Tank at the same time as a flock of around 900 Red-necked Stints and most of these had gone by the time I visited the lake again the following weekend. Some of the stints may have moved to Lake Preston but there was no sign of the Common Ringed Plover.

If accepted, this will be the second confirmed record for WA and about the 5<sup>th</sup> for Australia.

**Bill Russell**

## A DIVING LESSON WITH A "KISS"

On the north side of Herdsman Lake on 24 March, a juvenile Great Crested Grebe was having a diving lesson. The

juvenile was probably three and a half months old: brownish plumage, whitish chest and dark patch on head.

The adult would stay submerged on average 21 seconds and the juvenile 13 seconds. Occasionally they would dive simultaneously but usually the juvenile would dive a few seconds after the adult. The juvenile usually surfaced first chirping and looking around for the adult, but occasionally the adult surfaced first and would look frantically around for the youngster.

Immediately on spying each other they momentarily touched beaks (a kiss). This of course was probably an exchange of a minute amount of food, but no obvious exchange of food was observed.

**Mary Bremner**

## WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE BLACK SWANS ON LAKE POLLARD?

I have been surveying the waterbirds and waders on the central Yalgorup lakes for several years, recording numbers present rather than just presence or absence.

Lake Pollard has long been renowned for the number of Black Swans that turn up for a few months in summer to feed on an aquatic plant *Lamprothamnium papulosum*, the Foxtail Stonewort. This summer, there appeared to be fewer swans than usual and they didn't appear to hang around as long.

The following graph (Figure 1) shows a steady decline over the years in peak numbers and more months when no swans were present. The second graph (Figure 2) shows the numbers of Australian Shelducks on the lake over the same period which don't appear to have declined to the same extent.

The number of swans on the other central lakes hasn't increased so where have they gone and what has changed in Lake Pollard to make it less attractive to them?

Water levels have been well below average in all the Yalgorup lakes this summer and there was a wide band of crystalline salt around Lakes Yalgorup, Hayward and Newnham before the Easter rain, although not around Lake Pollard. The lakes filled to the usual levels last September but low spring rain meant that levels started dropping almost

immediately. This could explain low numbers this summer but numbers have been trending down for many years.

What's happening?

**Bill Russell**

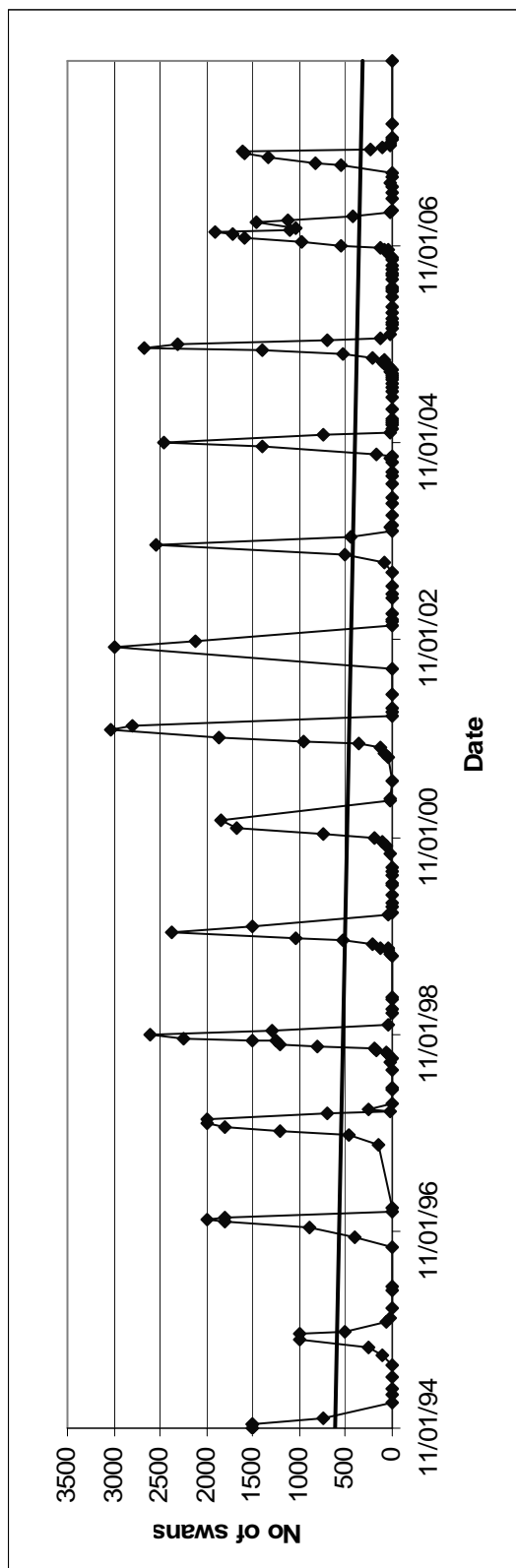


Figure 1. Numbers of Black Swans on Lake Pollard, 1994 to 2007. The straight line shows the long-term trend in numbers.

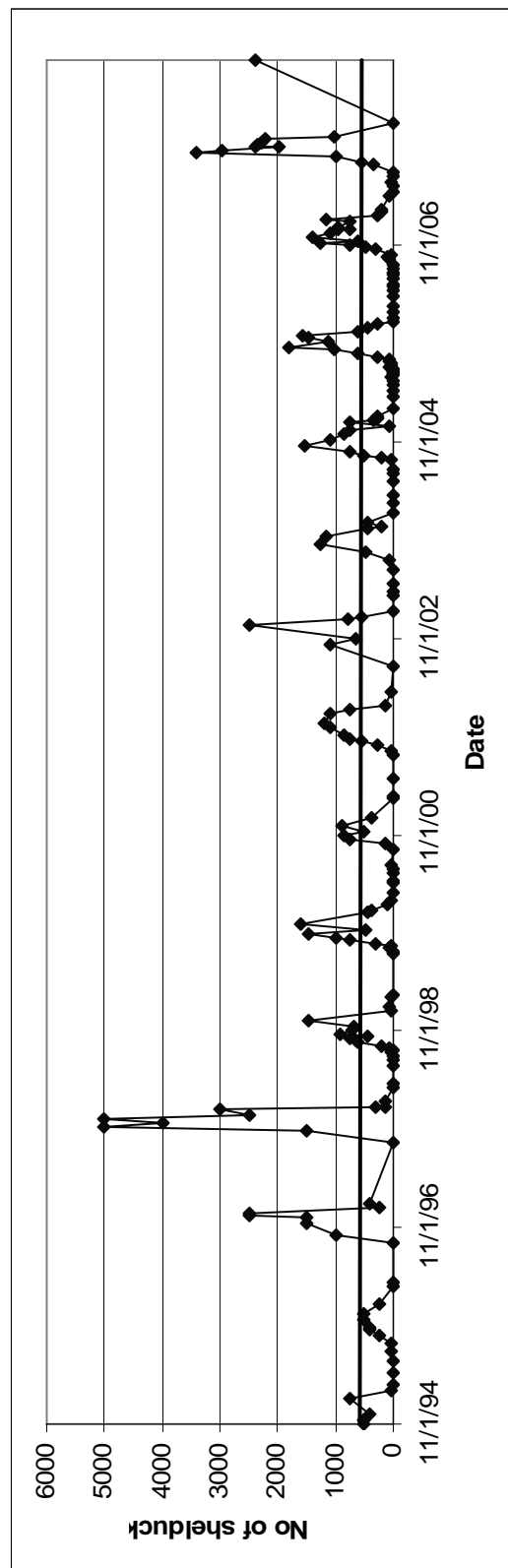
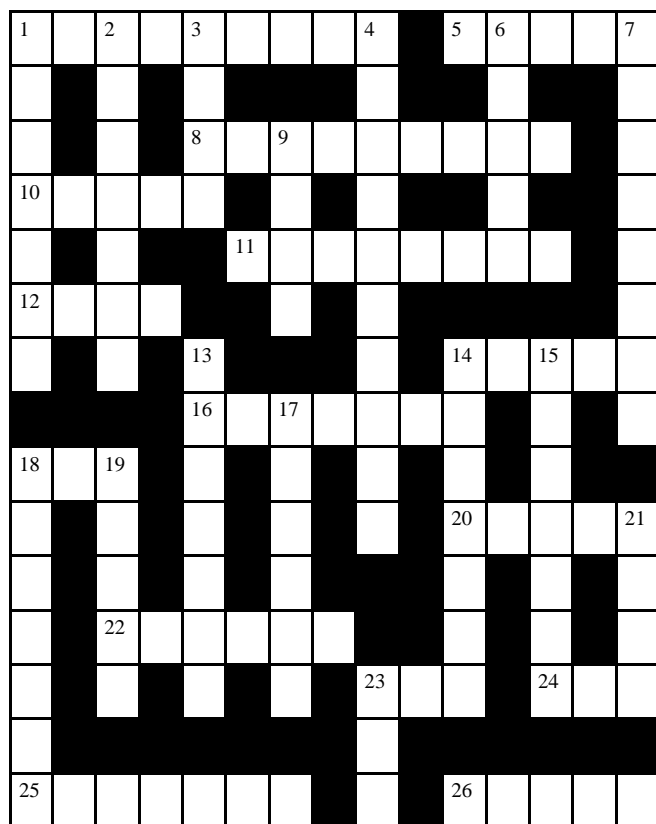


Figure 2. Numbers of Australian Shelduck on Lake Pollard, 1994 to 2007. The straight line shows the long-term trend in numbers.





By Pam Agar



## Clues across

1. Area of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo work.
5. Reserved for emergency.
8. Dense trees of coastal areas.
10. Common aspect of a display.
11. Quality of swamphen call.
12. Off-putting weather.
14. To emulate.
16. Often instantly recognisable.
18. Nesting material.
20. Concerned with sun.
22. Species of penguin.
23. Organ of sight.
24. System for identifying specimens.
25. Period of drab plumage.
26. Plant associated with bitterns.

## Clues down

1. Prefix of Perth wattlebird.
2. Of local occurrence only.
3. Data required on atlas form.
4. Innermost flight feathers.
6. To tidy feathers.
7. Opening of nest hollow.
9. Brief record of facts.
13. Small feathers.
14. To determine length.
15. Properly, Magpie-lark.
17. Meeting hall of BAWA.
18. Source of information.
19. Abdomen.
21. To depend on.
23. To consume.



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*Ashmore Reef, Scott Reef, Lacepede Islands.*

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## GRANT APPLICATIONS

Members are asked to note that the following procedures must be followed by all who wish to apply for a grant.

1. Put your request in writing to the Office Manager, who will be responsible for having your request attended to as quickly as possible.

Name of grant applicant  
Title of grant application  
Possible grant donor  
Objectives of the project  
Brief outline of method and procedures  
Estimated cost of project  
Amount of Grant money applying for  
Qualifications and experience of applicant/s to carry out project

2. Do not proceed with grant application or project until you have received a reply from the Executive Committee which may need further information.

3. There is a file in the office with all grants available throughout the year and information to help with the preparation of grants.

The above procedures are necessary to ensure that all projects, research and surveys are carried out to Birds Australia's high standards and to avoid conflict arising from other applications.

**Allan K Jones and Liz Walker**

## Rottneest Winter Wader/Bushbird Count

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> to Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June**

This survey is part of the twice-annual continuing survey of shorebird sites and bushbird presence in the revegetated sites.

Accommodation is approximately \$16.50 per night at the UWA Research Station at the eastern end of the airstrip. This offers cooking facilities, utensils, refrigerators and bathrooms. You need to bring your own food or buy it on arrival. Transport around the Island and to the accommodation will be provided. We will apply for some concession on the ferry fares.

Numbers are limited to 16 people.

If you are interested in attending

please contact me on 9389 6416  
or email <sma12577@bigpond.net.au>.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Mather



## Fourth Biennial AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE



Ornithological Society of New Zealand

### Call for Papers and Expressions of Interest

The Fourth Biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held in Perth, Western Australia on 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2007. This conference provides a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region. The venue will be the University of Western Australia, and the Western Australian group of Birds Australia (RAOU) will host the conference.

Post-conference field excursions will be available.

### An Invitation

You are invited to express your interest in attending this conference, and presenting a paper by visiting

<http://birdswa.com.au/aoc2007> or by writing to the conference co-ordinator:

**S. Mather**

Birds Australia Western Australia, 167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, WA 6014, Australia  
Email: [aoc2007@birdswa.com.au](mailto:aoc2007@birdswa.com.au) Telephone: +61 (0)8 9389 6416

### Other conferences in Perth at this time:

- The Australian & New Zealand Society for Comparative Physiology & Biochemistry 1st and 2nd December 2007. <http://www.zoo.latrobe.edu.au/anzscpb/>
- The Ecological Society of Australia 2007 26th to 30th November 2007. <http://www.ecolsoc.org.au/>



## Hoodies need help!



The Hooded Plover Sub-committee obtained a grant from the Lotteries Commission to conduct an expedition to the Nuytsland Nature Reserve to search for Hooded Plovers, and the results are reported in this issue of WABN.

After the event some funding was left over and the Lotteries Commission has kindly agreed that this can be used to conduct further inland Hooded Plover surveys.

A subsidy is available to Birds Australia WA members (country and metro) who conduct a Hooded Plover survey at inland salt lakes between June and November 2007.

Your trip/campout does not have to be solely orientated on Hooded Plovers as long as you comprehensively survey some salt lakes for Hooded Plovers and supply observation sheets.

### Aim

To survey inland salt lakes.

### Locations

Coastal lakes around Hopetoun, and between Hopetoun and Esperance  
Lake Ronnerup, Bennetts Lake  
Salt lakes around Cranbrook  
Salt lakes north of the Stirling Ranges  
Yarra Yarra Lakes  
Salt lakes near Leeman  
Salt lakes east of Perenjori  
Lake Grace and many more.

### Subsidy

The amount of funding will depend on the length of the trip and areas covered, and is mainly to help defray the cost of fuel. You will need to supply receipts of your expenditure and discuss your plans with the Hooded Plover Sub-committee beforehand.

### Contact

Hooded Plover Sub-committee  
E-mail: msingor@iprimus.com.au  
Tel: 9362 2742

## REQUEST TO ALL BIRDERS

For the past few years, I have been co-ordinating a colour banding project in the western suburbs of Perth. This has now extended to cover seven sites. The primary objective of this study is to learn about the movement of bushland-dependent bird species through urban landscapes. This will inform us about how urban development affects birds and how we can design urban landscapes to conserve native birds. Some of this work is being undertaken through the University of Western Australia and the rest by qualified banders in their own time.

Could any birdwatchers that see any birds with coloured bands on their legs, please contact me either c/- the Birds Australia WA office or email rob@graduate.uwa.edu.au or phone 6488 1361.

If you find any birds dead or injured with standard metal leg bands please either remove the band or record its number carefully and contact the Department of Environment and Water Resources:

The Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS)

GPO Box 8, Canberra ACT 2601  
Telephone: (02) 6274 2407  
Facsimile: (02) 6274 2455  
mail: abbsE@deh.gov.au

Details of reporting recoveries and an online form can be found here:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/abbbs/recovery.html>

I have been colour-banding a number of species, mostly White-cheeked Honeyeaters, Variegated Fairy-wrens, Rufous Whistlers and Western Spinebills, and have used the following colours: red, yellow, white, orange, purple, light green, dark blue. So if you are bird-watching in the western suburbs or anywhere around Perth and come across a colour-banded bird, you could make a very important contribution to science and conservation. Please record the band colour, species, location, date and time and pass the details on to me. Happy Birding!

**Rob Davis**

## *Become a* FRIEND OF EYRE



*Eyre Bird Observatory is a not for profit facility and is self-funded.*

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

## *Donations to Friends of Eyre help to raise money for research, maintenance and the upgrade of equipment.*

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Simply send your name, address and donation to:

**Eyre Management Committee**  
c/o PO Box 113  
GLEN FORREST WA 6071



## Malleefowl Forum and First Western Australian Megapode Symposium

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and Yongergnow Australian Malleefowl Research  
Centre

**September 7-10, 2007**

*For information and registration contact:*

Stephen Davies  
PO Box 9  
Mount Helena 6082 Western Australia  
Phone (08) 9572 1074  
e-mail <S.Davies @exchange.curtin.edu.au>



## NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between 1 February to 30 April 2007. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

J Adcroft, M Baldock, M Barter, S Bell,  
M Brown, C Carden, W Elliott, P & L Francis,  
L Wang Fung, D Grobicki, A Halliday,  
E Harris, E Ligtermoet, J Longley, C Muller,  
R Powell, Z Pufcas, P Randell, P Runham,  
J Shepherdson, T Thompson and A Warburton



## Country groups



### ALBANY BIRD GROUP

#### March 2007 outing

Our March outing proved rather unsuccessful with regard to the number of birds we found. We started at Millbrook Reserve and went later to Mawson Road, Napier. Everything was very dry, and the 20 people on the outing saw only 20 different common bushbirds. It was the lowest number of birds ever seen on an outing. We hope for better sightings next month.

**Charlie Davies**

#### April outing

Rather a drizzly day, and only seven people turned up. We decided not to go too far, so spent a couple of hours at the River View Golf Course, which was very rewarding. In half an hour we saw more birds there, including a Collared Sparrowhawk, than we had seen in a whole morning the previous month.

We then went to Prideaux Road, where we found an Australian Owlet-nightjar sheltering in his hollow. We decided to have an early lunch at the Lower King Bridge, as it looked as though it was going to rain seriously, and had time to see the resident Australian Hobby before the heavens opened. Forty three species was the count for the day.

**Charlie Davies**

#### May 2007 outing

Sixteen of us parked behind the Porongurups Tea-room on the morning of 8 May to explore a piece of bush we hadn't visited before. The first thing we saw was a pair of Australian Ravens chasing a Wedge-tailed Eagle. The group split in two and returned for morning tea with a list of birds which included Scarlet, Western Yellow and White-breasted Robins. We then drove to Twin Creeks Reserve where we saw a few more bushbirds. The bird call at lunch time revealed a total of 39 species for the day.

**Liz Davies**

**ALFRED COVE, 11 February**

Approximately 35 well-equipped members and visitors turned out for this excursion. The early morning was cool and the tide just right to see the waterbirds. Waders included Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Pied Oystercatcher and Black-winged Stilt. Adjacent Pacific Golden Plover and Grey Plover provided an excellent comparison between these two species.

All four cormorant species were seen and the usual Osprey and Black-shouldered Kite but the highlight of the morning was the Chestnut Teal on the shoreline and everyone had close views. Fairy, Caspian and Crested Terns were also out on the sand bars.

On the return walk back to the cars via the shady trees, a good variety of bushbirds were present including Red-capped Parrot, Sacred Kingfisher and Rainbow Bee-eater. A total of 57 species were seen, reaffirming Alfred Cove as an excellent birding location despite the fall in wader numbers in recent years.

**Sue Abbotts**

**BLACKWALL REACH, 25 February**

We missed out on reporting last year's excursion when we had 21 attending for 32 sightings.

This year we had 18 people attending with 31 sightings. The usual preamble was presented: keeping an eye out for the hollows being invaded by the bees, with their honeycomb exposed, and/or aggressive, invading Rainbow Lorikeets; the challenges of finding all five diving fish eaters (the four cormorants and the Darter); our mismatched pair, the Galah and the Long-billed Corella; along with finding the family of Red-capped Plovers on the sand spit; the Magpie-Lark, yet to be seen on this walk; and not forgetting the Swan River Ospreys. An unexpected challenge was to find the White-cheeked Honeyeaters! Your fearless leader with two walks over the last fortnight had not sighted one. The first time in over 30 years!

Within 300 m from the start of the walk, the four cormorants and the Darter were on our list. The bees were gone from our first hollow, which was being inspected by a pair of Galahs, but, on the second, the bees, were still there. It was pointed out that there was a gentleman locally, who would shift the bees. He is also responsible for the nesting boxes we saw dotted around the area. We hadn't even reached the usual home ground of the White-cheeked Honeyeaters when sure enough, there they were, which was quite heartwarming. From the viewing platform, looking back across the escarpment, there were three well spread Ospreys roosting among the trees on the high points. When on the sand spit, through the binoculars, if you knew where to look, was the

Osprey's active nest just north of the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club.

Leaving the path, when the limestone cliffs ran out, we followed the shoreline picking our way through the rocks and following the ruminants of a track, scattering the resident Australian Ravens until we came to the upright long-dead tree trunk with the ideal nesting hollow. This is where, some years back, the aforementioned Galah and corella were found nesting and their progeny was seen up among the branches of a dead tree opposite. Much to our surprise, there they were, the mismatched pair canoodling in this same tree. Last year they were seen on the ground, over the road from the green open space at Point Walter, feeding on the roots of the sparse lawn. We had a very good close view, where it was debated what species of corella it was, a unanimous conclusion not being accorded. This year all agreed that it was a Long-billed.

On reaching the sand spit, it was pleasing to see so many Black Swans. Despite many people being around, there were also fair numbers of Crested Terns, Pied Oystercatchers, Pacific Black Duck, Australian Pelicans and of course, the highlight, the dozen or so Red-capped Plovers. Walking back from the tip of the sand spit we were disappointed to see two young ladies walking towards us with their two rather large dogs. The moment they saw us, with our binoculars swinging around our necks, they turned and headed back — but of course the damage had been done. One of the dogs was frantically running about and of course disturbed the plovers, which took off in their little flock and landed further up the sand spit. If we hadn't been there they would have been further disturbed and maybe not return.

We headed for home by way of the old tram track on the top side of the reserve where, disappointingly, it was very barren of birdlife but, overall it turned out to be quite an interesting morning's excursion — a lovely part of the river if you turn a blind eye to the vandalism. Again there wasn't any Magpie-Lark to be seen.

It was an early finish, allowing all to participate in the bird count on the lawn under the shade of the big gum tree near to the water's edge, enjoying the river outlook and our respective refreshments. No one seemed to want to hurry away.

**Eric Pyatt**

**GARVEY PARK, ASCOT, 14 February**

A beautiful sunny day enticed 16 people to come to Garvey Park for a spot of birdwatching and their effort was well rewarded. Forty-four species of birds were recorded including a pair of Collared Sparrowhawks, harassed by Australian Magpies, and a fantastic close-up of a Great Cormorant.

The usual species of waterfowl and bushbirds were there including the beautiful Mistletoebirds. We were lucky to have such good views of two Buff-banded Rails as they are very shy birds. It was certainly a birdwatching morning to be remembered.

**Hank van Wees**

### WELLARD WETLANDS, 17 February

On a cool, windy morning, 25 members joined Charles for a walk around this lovely reserve. Raptors were out in numbers and we enjoyed good views of Whistling Kite, Swamp Harrier, Brown Falcon and Nankeen Kestrel. At the first hide a large flock or mainly White and a few Straw-necked Ibis were roosting on the mud and in the trees. A good selection of ducks and grebes, along with Black Swans and Eurasian Coots, busied themselves on the water.

There were a few stilts and Red-capped Plovers on the other lakes. However, the star performers were undoubtedly a pair of Tawny Frogmouths. Despite the heavy shower at the time, we spent several minutes watching and photographing these strange birds until a cracking twig disturbed them.

Sixty species were seen all up and a very happy group left for home after morning tea.

Many thanks to Charles for a good outing.



Tawny Frogmouth  
Photo by Ted Cawley

**Maureen Cawley**

### LAKE YANGEBUP, 11 March

A chilly, blustery Sunday morning was no deterrent for 19 keen birders to join Dave and me at Lake Yangebup. The weather was quite refreshing after the heat of the previous week but the wind kept many of the passerines out of view. The lake however had a decent level of water and held a large number of waterbirds as well as a wide variety of species. Thirteen species of waterfowl and grebes, five of waders and five of heron/ibis were seen. We were pleased to identify a couple of Red-necked Stints amongst the Red-capped Plovers and a dozen Black-fronted Dotterels. The highlight for many was the disturbance of several quail as we made our way down to the lake's edge. John Litherland's photos later allowed identification of them as Stubble Quail.

Our morning's viewing resulted in a total of 58 species of birds. Thank you to all who attended.

**Jan Crossley**

### CANNING RIVER REGIONAL PARK, 17 March

Despite the earlier than usual start, birding was low-key for the first half of the walk, though a lucky couple did spot the Buff-banded Rail near the weir, and all had good views of Darters, including a male on a nest.

Lingering in Eucalypt woodland on the return leg provided perhaps the best 15-20 minutes of the morning: a male Mistletoebird in full sunlight, Striated Pardalotes displaying near a nest hole, both male and female Rufous Whistlers and a Sacred Kingfisher.

After morning tea and a progressive tally, chairs and coffees were suddenly abandoned while we tracked down a Collared Sparrowhawk, one of only two raptors seen on the walk.

Later some of the group walked round to Wilson Park Lake where we added another seven species to the list, including Black-winged Stilt and Hoary-headed Grebe. Seven duck species were seen here and another Buff-banded Rail and some saw the elusive Spotless Crake. Seeing at least eight Black-fronted Dotterels was particularly pleasing as one pair was known to be breeding nearby a few months ago.

The relatively small group of 19, including a visitor from the UK, meant it was easier for everyone to see things of interest and the morning's total was a very respectable 65 species.

**Pam Agar**

### HEIRISSON ISLAND, 22 March

On a cooler morning 16 birders and one very tired leader came to Heirisson Island for an interesting morning. Most participants were curious to see the area and what birdlife existed in this city central area. Thirty five species were recorded, a lovely sighting of a Buff-banded Rail was enjoyed plus Little Corellas cuddled up to Silver Gulls. We also had beautiful sightings of Darters of various ages. All in all it was a very pleasant morning.

**Robina Haynes**

### BIBRA LAKE, 24 March

Luckily all the 22 people who arrived for the 7:30 am start had remembered to wind their alarm clocks back one hour and had enjoyed the extra hour's sleep as daylight saving ended.

The lake was almost totally dry apart from a narrow channel that ran along the western side and a couple of other isolated spots. Most observers agreed this was the driest the lake had

been in recent times and it was a sad sight, especially as most of the other coastal lakes are in a similar state and it will be probably at least two more months before some significant amount of water will commence to enter the lakes.

Luckily the channel was still deep enough to support a Blue-billed Duck and three Musk Ducks and as it became shallower, a feeding raft of Red-necked Avocets was seen along with Black-winged Stilts.

The southern end of the lake provided some good raptor sightings and these included Whistling Kite, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Australian Hobby, Peregrine Falcon and a Black-shouldered Kite.

Along the eastern side we were attracted to a patch of paperbarks by agitated Singing Honeyeaters and Red Wattlebirds and eventually found the cause of their concern, a Southern Boobook roosting high up in one of the paperbarks. Further along we ticked off Varied Sittella and a Spotted Pardalote, the latter being unusual as normally it is May before this species first appears along the coastal plain.

We arrived back at our start point at 11:15 am and we were impressed when the bird count came to 61 species. Apart from the dry state of the lake, it was a very enjoyable walk and confirmed Bibra Lake to be an important area for both water and bush birds along the coastal plain.

**Wynton Maddeford**

## LAKE MONGER DRIVE, 1 April

At least 15 people were waiting for me on arrival at 0730. I noticed a very impressive array of telescopes, but after a second glance found some were equally impressive cameras. We could not help noticing how low the water level was in the lake, with very large sandbanks between deeper channels.

The April Fool's joke they played on me wasn't a joke! There really was an Indian Ringneck in the tree next to the parking area. It had flown in with Rainbow Lorikeets. We have photographs to prove it. The Department of Agriculture was to be notified next day.

We found 43 species in our walk round the lake. We had good views of the waterbirds, thanks to the telescopes and cameras. Due to the water levels, the main ducks were Australian Shovelers and Pink-eared Duck. There were many Black-winged Stilts and over 200 Red-necked Avocets. The Black-fronted Dotterel juvenile confused us briefly, whilst the adults entertained us. A Brown Goshawk set the waterbirds and waders up several times. A Clamorous Reed-Warbler was seen.



Brown Goshawk  
Photo by Maris Lauva

Bushbirds were also seen including four different honeyeater species, Grey Fantail and Willie Wagtails. Tree Martins and Welcome Swallows were in constant motion above us.

It was a very pleasant walk.

**Claire Gerrish**

## LAKE GRACE, Easter campout

We had a score of ten out of ten for the campout. All species listed as "might-see" were spotted.

Twenty-nine people enjoyed birding and added a few more! The weather was good until Monday when it became chilly and the wind was brisk.

Some lakes were not full. However, dams gave a variety of waterbirds and surrounding gums provided blossom and vantage points for "bushies".

A very large Malleefowl mound was seen and there was one under construction. Two birds were captured on camera very early in the day by one avid birder.

We saw and walked down the John Holland track, supposedly the longest wheelbarrow run ever. Pioneers cut through here on the way to Kalgoorlie and gold. They made six miles per day.

We'd birded from 7:00 am on Saturday and in the afternoon went to the lovely garden of the Kelly's, carers of the track. The garden was an oasis after a busy birding day and we were happy to indulge in tea, scones, jam and cream.

Lake Grace seemed expansive, pastel coloured and full of birds. A challenge to find, but then that's the lure which makes birding great, isn't it?

An especially good sighting was that of a Pectoral Sandpiper. Not all the lakes were dry.

We thank David and Mary Secomb for their information and good guidance over the Easter weekend at Lake Grace — 104 varieties noted.

**Penny Towells**



White-backed Swallows, one of 104 species seen at Lake Grace  
Sketch by Penny Towells

**RAY MARSHALL PARK, VIVEASH, 7 April**

On this beautiful morning, 13 people turned up for the bird walk. The birds did not disappoint us and we scored 47 species, no doubt influenced by the presence of water in the river and swamps.

Apart from the usual birds we identified three species of raptor: Black-shouldered Kite, Whistling Kite and Australian Hobby.

The Sulphur-crested Cockatoo is still here and presented us with some beautiful views. It is good to see that the Australian Ringneck is in good numbers in this area despite the intrusion of the Rainbow Lorikeets.

For anybody who wants to familiarise him or her self with the Darter, this is the area to come to.

I am sure all birdos enjoyed this lovely walk.

**Hank van Wees**

**ELLIS BROOK, 15 April**

On a fine, warm but overcast morning 22 cheerful members and visitors enjoyed the morning walk at Ellis Brook. Ian Rudd lead us up and down the hill to see a total of 47 species, mainly bushbirds.

The two Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring overhead were the only raptors. However, this was more than compensated by great observations of other species including Rufous Whistler,

Golden Whistler, Scarlet Robin, Red-eared Firetail, Varied Sittella and White-naped Honeyeater. Several members of the group were also lucky to see White-breasted Robins and a spectacular male Red-winged Fairy-wren in full breeding plumage. A large group of Dusky Woodswallows entertained us with their graceful glides.

As we drove off, the rain came in, which would have been a welcome relief to the many very dry trees and shrubs on the Darling Scarp.

All agreed it was a wonderful and worthwhile walk.

**Robyn Pickering**

**BOLD PARK, 22 April**

Twenty-one people, including a visitor from the United Kingdom, enjoyed a sunny 4.5 km ramble along various paths, covering woodland, pines and heath. The total of 34 species was satisfying enough considering the current lack of water in this area.

Rainbow Lorikeets were by far the most abundant species, frequently seen exploring potential nest hollows, and four raptors provided a challenge. Rufous Whistlers and Spotted Pardalotes were also conspicuous. Despite flowering banksias along Camel Lake Walk, not many honeyeaters were seen along this section, though we did record six honeyeater species overall.

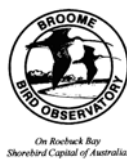
**Pam Agar**

**Observatory reports****BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY**

The late wet season is often the most exciting time of the year in the Broome region. Not only is there the likely prospect of extreme rarities, but the sight of thousands of waders in full breeding plumage wheeling against the dark sky of an approaching thunderstorm is truly spectacular.

February was a bit of a fizzer as it was hot and no weather systems came to anything of real note. As it was so dry, visits could be made to Kidney Bean where a Ruff and a Stubble Quail were seen. A Black Falcon was observed on Roebuck Plains apparently chasing large dragonflies. The highlight of the month was the Australian Shelduck at Lake Eda, which seemed to be responding to the remarkably dry conditions.

March compensated for the dryness of February in a big way. Three cyclones and several associated thunderstorms brought heaps of rain and lots of exciting birds. A Franklin's Gull was found at the sewage works, a Red-rumped Swallow was seen in the company of martins and Barn Swallows in the bay, and photographs were taken of several swiftlets over one of the local hostellers. These



have as yet defied identification but they turned up on a regular basis at various places until the end of the month. A definite new bird to the Broome list, a Red-footed Booby, was found and photographed at the port, and by sheer chance a Great Frigatebird was found in the same location. Subsequently the frigatebird — or one very much like it — was seen in the bay later in the month. On the subject of seabirds, which are quite rare in this area, a single Wedge-tailed Shearwater was seen in the bay, and on the following day at Cable Beach.

April calmed down a lot, with two Oriental Cuckoos and a flock of 12 Painted Finches stirring the blood of the local birders. Thousands of White-winged Black Terns, most in full breeding plumage, were seen hunting tadpoles and other invertebrates on the flooded areas of Roebuck Plains. These were accompanied by thousands of Whiskered Terns, and in the hope of finding their nests, the irrepressible Adrian Boyle waded out and flushed nine Pied Herons and a single Painted Snipe.

The effect of three cyclones in quick succession had a remarkable effect on the migration of the shorebirds; thousands of birds were lined up like holidaymakers waiting for their delayed planes to depart. You could feel



the edginess in the flocks of Bar-tailed Godwit and Great Knot as time kept ticking away. All of a sudden the weather changed and more favorable conditions kicked in. The thousands of relieved birds started on their way to their first stop in the Yellow Sea. As we write this, Red Knots are still leaving, even though it's the beginning of May. If they get any fatter it seems they might pop.

As the dry season creeps in, the wader flocks get smaller and the human flocks get bigger. If you are thinking of visiting us this season, please book as early as possible, and don't hesitate to contact us on 9193 5600 if you are interested in participating in our upcoming courses (Birding for Beginners: 27 August – 1 September; Birds of the Broome Region: 24 – 29 September and 13 – 18 October).

**Pete Collins and Holly Sitters**

## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

### Volunteer Caretakers' Report

After our journey from Camden, NSW, we arrived at Eyre on Valentine's Day ready to learn all about running the bird observatory. We had a lot to learn but it all soon fell into place.



From March 1 we were on our own. A steady stream of wonderful visitors and glorious weather in an idyllic location had us hooked! Do we really have to leave here at the end of April? Unfortunately we could only get enough leave to stay nine weeks but every day was as exciting as the next. At Eyre, you never know what each day will bring!

March brought with it 56.8 mm of rain in nine days. We did have a shortage of birds on those days. The surroundings simply glowed from the rain; it also filled our water tanks! Some days with heavy dew, again caused the birdbaths to be vacant! John and I are new at birding but soon became very addicted, logging 65 species in the month. The Major Mitchell's Cockatoos made their presence known and thrilled our guests with their performances. They seemed to know when there were visitors to entertain! Of course our 'regulars' visited often — including Welcome Swallows, Grey Currawongs, Grey Butcherbirds, New Holland Honeyeaters, Dusky Woodswallows, Tree Martins, Willie Wagtail, Silvereyes (can't they afford gold ones?), Singing Honeyeaters, Australian Ravens, Brush Sparingwings, Red Wattlebirds, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, White-eared Honeyeaters, Grey Fantail, White-browed Babblers, Rainbow Bee-eaters, White-fronted Honeyeaters and even a Collared Sparrowhawk came in for a few visits.

John was fortunate to see a Malleefowl not far from the observatory, which was exciting. After a late afternoon pickup from the car park two Tawny Frogmouths and one Southern Boobook were also sighted. We had an ibis strutting around the observatory, which caused us concern about its health, but it was seen flying strongly towards the beach! The Golden Whistler was also a thrill to see and hear its beautiful song! The Grey Shrike-thrushes were heard calling daily.

We thoroughly enjoyed doing the beach count. As well as the usual birds we also picked up a beach-washed Straw-necked Ibis, and on another day a sea lion virtually



Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Eyre

*Photo by Mike Bouette*

waddled in front of the vehicle. We also had many Fork-tailed Swifts fly above us — another first for us! Stingrays and dolphins were also a delight to see. A real transformation of the beach had taken place by the time we left Eyre, from white glorious sand with not a piece of seaweed, to seaweed all along the beach. It is amazing that the seaweed can build up so much in such a short time.

Burnabbie gave us a treat when we saw the Varied Sittellas — there were also Dusky Woodswallows, Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens, Jacky Winters, and Singing Honeyeaters to name a few species we observed.

Crystal Ponds (the sewerage settling ponds) at Cocklebiddy had Grey Teal on one occasion.

It was also a great experience to do the weather observations three times per day — 7 am, 10 am and 4 pm. The results are sent via the internet to the Bureau of Meteorology in Perth so we did have to worry about the time! Time is of importance at Eyre! Especially meal times — it's amazing how quickly they come around!! On March 4 we had a low of 6°C and received a call from BOM to confirm that; it was 6°C colder than anywhere else in WA! Eyre hit the news again!

Bill and Els, the new caretakers, arrived on Good Friday — it was great to have extra hands on deck over Easter and school holidays. There seemed to be 13 for each meal! We thoroughly enjoyed our time with them, and they certainly contributed to our birding skills. Bill banded some Welcome Swallows and it was great to actually hold one, as they are a big part of life at Eyre, being residents in the shed.

Farewell to Eyre for a while. We will head north for winter and come back to resume our caretaking in October until February 2008. Can't wait to get back again! Thank you to all the wonderful people who are so passionate about Eyre and have helped make it the place it is today. Good luck to Bill and Els as they too contribute to Eyre for three months. Eyre would not be the place it is without the support of so many people. So thank you to everyone for allowing us to care for such a special place. We felt very privileged to be there. Thank you also to the Committee for your help during our stay!

Bye for now.

**John and Beverley O'Brien**  
**Voluntary Caretakers**

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### Code-of-conduct for campouts

This code-of-conduct is designed to make BAWA campouts pleasant, safe and enjoyable for everyone.

1. Members shall notify the BAWA office if they plan to attend a campout, leaving name, address, phone number, and an emergency contact.
2. The leader is responsible for gaining consent from the owners or public authorities to visit proposed birding areas prior to the visit.
3. Family pets should not be taken on campouts. If children are taken on the campout, then parents shall take full responsibility for them and will be held accountable for their behaviour.
4. While the Leader generally seeks consensus on the arrangements for the day's events, if a final decision is required then this rests with the leader. Their directions should be followed, especially in public land or parks.
5. A compass and whistle can be invaluable if lost, or, to raise an alarm.
6. Participants should treat each other and the facilities provided with respect.
7. Participants wishing to leave any activities early should ensure the leader is advised.
8. Campfires can only be used if permitted at the time and must be fully extinguished prior to leaving the camp area.
9. Rubbish shall be disposed of properly, and if no suitable bin is provided then the rubbish shall be taken home.
10. Members should ensure that their vehicle is in roadworthy condition and they have adequate food, water and fuel, and suitable clothing including footwear. Daily checks can be undertaken using the 'POWER' check guide, ie, P = petrol/diesel fuel, O = oil, W = water, E = electrical/battery, R = rubber/tyre pressures.
11. When travelling in convoy having your vehicle 'lights turned on' and always keeping the vehicle behind you in sight, especially at turns is good practice. If they stop, check if help is required and advise the Leader.
12. The environment should be left in its pristine condition, and care should be taken not to disturb the wildlife or stock animals. Always leave gates as you have found them, ie, if they are open then leave them open, if closed then close them.

**Note:** Communication can be enhanced when travelling in convoy and when walking through bushland to call-in interesting sightings by carrying handheld two-way CB/UHF radios.

### 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.  
An emergency contact number should also be provided in case of accident.

### 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 2 June: The Spectacles, Kwinana Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am in the main car park in McLaughlan Road. Drive down 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. We will not return to the car park during the walk, so carry your drinks and snacks with you. The walk can take up to three hours.

Over 100 species of birds have been sighted here.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Paul Marty*

#### Saturday – Monday 2- 4 June: Foundation Day Long Weekend Campout, Dongara

Dongara is 358 km north of Perth. We will stay at the Seaspray Caravan Park, Church Street, which is on the ocean

beach front near the mouth of the Irwin River. To reach the caravan park, turn off Brand Highway into Moreton Terrace, Dongara, which runs into Church Street.

Eighty-six species of birds have been seen in the area, which includes riverine woodland, low heath and banksias. Some places to be visited will be Ellendale Pool and Burma Road Nature Reserve.

Villas for \$130 for 2 people per night, budget cabins (without en suite) \$60 for 2 people per night, powered sites \$25 per night. Please make your own bookings — phone 9927 1165.

**Please register with the office on 9383 7749 as numbers will be limited to 25.**

For members only.

*Leader: Sue Abbotts*

#### Sunday 10 June: Jandakot Regional Park (Harrisdale Swamp), Forrestdale Half-day excursion

Meet at 8.30 am opposite Carey Baptist

College on Wright Road, Forrestdale. This is an area that the leader has walked in many times. It has many good tracks and fairly diverse vegetation, and is fenced on three sides. It includes a large area of wetland, which should be interesting if there has been reasonable winter rain beforehand. Many of the regional bushbirds should be seen including Splendid Fairy-wren, several honeyeaters, Grey Shrike-thrush, Rufous Whistler, raptors and cuckoos, and possibly wetland species. Wear old shoes or gumboots.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Debbie Walker*

#### Sunday 10 June – 26 June: DEC Station Survey

It is planned to undertake surveys of Earacheedy and Lorna Glen stations, 150km north-east of Wiluna.

See Notices in this edition.

For members only. The closing date is 27 April 2007.

**Thursday 14 June: Little Rush Lake, Yangebup**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am near the playground on the western side of this small wooded lake. Little Rush Lake is part of the Beeliar Regional Park. To reach the area, turn right off North Lake Road, travelling south, into Osprey Drive, right into Dotterel Way, then right into Grassbird Loop. There is a path around the lake, and we should see plenty of waterbirds and bushbirds. Fifty species of birds have been seen here. Bring morning tea.

For members and the general public.

*Leaders: Barry and Molly Angus*

**Saturday – Monday 16-17 June: Rottneest winter wader/bushbird count**

This survey is part of the twice-annual continuing survey of shorebird sites and bushbird presence in the re-vegetated sites.

Accommodation is approximately \$16.50 per night at the UWA Research Station at the eastern end of the airstrip. This offers cooking facilities, utensils, refrigerators and bathrooms. You need to bring your own food or buy it on arrival. Transport around the island and to the accommodation will be provided. Numbers are limited to 16 people.

If you are interested in attending please contact Sue Mather on 9389 6416 or e-mail: sma12577@bigpond.net.au.

For members only.

*Leader: Sue Mather*

**Saturday 16 June: Flynn Road, Mundaring**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 9:00 am at the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about 1 km on the Perth side of The Lakes turnoff (off the York Road turnoff). We will look at several areas of Wandoo woodland, where three species of robin are often seen, and sometimes a Crested Shrike-tit.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Charles Merriam*

**Saturday 23 June: Victoria Reservoir, Canning Mills**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park beside the information board at the entrance to the dam. From Perth, travel east along Welshpool Road to the T-junction at Canning Road, turn right and travel for about 200 m to Masonmill Road. Continue along this road for several km, following the signs to the dam past the rose nursery, to the entrance to the car park. We will follow several walking tracks in this area, which is not normally open to the public at the weekend.

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: David and Joyce Ballard*

**Monday 25 June: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat**  
**Meeting, 7:30 pm**

Stuart Miller, a member, will give an illustrated talk, with his own slides, entitled "Photographic windows north and south of WA".

**Sunday 1 July: Kings Park, Perth**  
**Half-day excursion**

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

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Sue Mather*

**Sunday 8 July: Lightning Swamp, Noranda**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am at the gate in the SE corner of the bushland, on Della Road. Lightning Swamp, part of Noranda Open Space, is an area of seasonal wetlands and banksia woodland (come back for the wildflowers in spring). The area supports some waterbirds, and cormorants have bred here. The bushland supports a range of species, including some that are uncommon in smaller reserves, such as the Western Thornbill, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and Red-capped Robin. Most of the walk will be restricted to the limestone paths due to the presence of dieback.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Paul Marty*

**Wednesday 11 July: Burswood Open Spaces, Burswood**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am at the Information Centre on Resort Drive. From Great Eastern Highway turn into the Resort, then left at the first roundabout. The Information Centre is about 150 m on the right. Park in the free parking on your left.

Lots of waterbirds to be seen here in the lakes and along the Swan River. Unusual birds sometimes seen are Little Egret, crakes, and the three grebes. It is easy walking and not too far.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Tom Delaney*

**Sunday 15 July: North Mole, Fremantle**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at the end of North Mole, near the lighthouse. We will look for seabirds here, and may go on to Woodman Point. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Michael Craig*

**Saturday 21 July: Piesse Brook, Kalamunda**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at the junction of Hummerston Road and Schipp Road at the southern end of Kalamunda National Park. Take Mundaring Weir Road from Kalamunda, and turn left into Hummerston Road. We should see Golden Whistler, perhaps the introduced Red-browed Finch, and other bushbirds.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Stella Stewart-Wynne*

**Monday 23 July: Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat**  
**Meeting, 7:30 pm**

Joe Tonga will give a talk entitled "Nest boxes for wild animals", showing the nest boxes that he makes for different species of birds and other animals, eg. bats.

**Sunday 29 July: Waterford Foreshore, Salter Point, Manning**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at the Curtin University Boatshed at 8:30 am. To reach the parking area travel along Manning Road and turn into Elderfield Street, which is on the western side of the Trinity College Playing Fields. Proceed to the end of this street, and the parking area is on the right side. The walk will proceed along the river front for about 1 km and return via a nearby park. Several species of waterbirds and bushbirds have been seen. Bring morning tea. If time permits we will move on to Salter Point, where other species can be seen.

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: Richard and Lorraine Chyne*

**Sunday 5 August: Yarra Rd, (Christmas Tree Well), Brookton**  
**Full day excursion**

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

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: Pam and George Agar*

**Sunday 12 August: Herdsman Lake, Stirling**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park of the Perth Pony Club. To reach the car park, drive along Jon Sanders Drive from the Perth direction, and turn left just before you reach Selby Street. This is one of the waterbird refuges that never dries up. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Claire Gerrish*

**Thursday 16 August: Heirisson Island**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 9:30 am at the Heirisson Island car park that can only be entered when travelling from the city on the left hand side of the Causeway. We will walk

around the island then visit the two newly developed lakes on the Swan River where the Woodside building used to be. Expect a variety of both water and bushbirds. Bring morning tea.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Robina Haynes*

**Saturday 18 August: Pipidinny Road, Eglinton**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am on the corner of Wanneroo Road and Pipidinny Road, about an hour's drive from Perth. Be prepared to pay a small fee to enter the picnic area for lunch. We will look at four habitats during the day: the coastal dunes for Variegated Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrub-wren etc; the heath for White-winged Fairy-wren, Tawny-crowned and White-cheeked Honeyeater; the swamp for waterfowl; and lastly, a part of the Yanchep National Park which few people visit.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Brice Wells*

**Sunday 26 August: Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury**  
**Morning excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park in the Memorial Park. Pinnaroo is an extensive bushland area very close to the Mitchell Freeway in Padbury. Turn south off Whitford's Avenue at the "cemetery" sign, go ahead through the roundabout then turn right immediately into the car park. This is an interesting park where gardens and lawns are flanked by natural woodland of Tuarts and banksias. About 80 bird species have been identified in the area, including Splendid Fairy-wren, Scarlet Robin and Varied Sittella.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Rod Smith*

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

Tim Simmons, a post-graduate student of Curtin University, will speak on "Using birds as a management tool in Jarrah forests".

**Saturday 1 September: Lake Gwelup, Stirling**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the corner of Stoneman Street and Huntriss Road, north of Karrinyup Road. We should see waterbirds and bushbirds, and often raptors can be seen here. The lake did dry out in the summer, but should be reasonable after some winter rain.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Sue Abbotts*

**Sunday 9 September: Karnup and Baldvis Reserves**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking area just around the corner in Karnup Road off Baldvis Road. Follow Kwinana Freeway until it becomes Safety Bay Road. Turn left at Baldvis Road roundabout, and travel approx 6 km to Karnup Road on the left. Western Yellow Robins have been seen here. Returning back along Baldvis Road towards Perth, it is 8 km to Baldvis Reserve, where there are shady picnic tables and toilets. We can do more birding in that reserve. Both reserves are being monitored for the Biodiversity Study.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Mary Vaughan*

**Thursday 13 September: Lake Claremont, Swanbourne**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am at the northern end of Stirling Road, Claremont. We will look for waterbirds and bushbirds around this pleasant suburban lake.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: David Free*

**Sunday 16 September: Wungong Gorge and Bungendore Nature Reserve, Bedfordale**  
**Full day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at the first car park for Wungong Dam at the end of Admiral Road, off Albany Highway. Over 90 species of birds have been recorded here, including Red-eared Firetail, White-breasted Robin and Red-winged Fairy-wren. Several raptors have also been seen.

Those who wish can continue on to Bungendore Nature Reserve. This is a good place to see a variety of parrots, including Elegant and Red-capped Parrots. It is also the best place near Perth to see the Rufous Treecreeper.

Bring your lunch.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Ian Rudd*

**Sunday 23 September: Forrestdale Lake  
Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am at Moore Street car park. From Perth, drive down the Freeway, turning left at Armadale Road. Continue on across Nicholson Road, then just over 1 km along turn right into Weld Street, then second left into Lofties Street, then right into Moore Street.

There should be plenty of waterbirds, bushbirds, and possibly some raptors. The wildflowers should be good, too.

Bring morning tea, telescopes if you have them, and rubber boots, as it may be muddy.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: David James*

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

Joe Froudust, a member, will give an illustrated talk entitled "The Antarctic scene and its birds":

**Friday 28 September to Monday 1  
October:  
Cheynes Beach, Albany  
Long weekend campout**

Cheyne's Beach is a fishing village on the edge of the Waychinicup National Park, east of Albany. It has a caravan park, with some chalets and cabins as well as the usual caravan and camping facilities. The telephone number for the caravan park is 9846 1247, and the postal address is Cheynes Beach Caravan Park, 12 Bald Island Road, Cheynes WA 6328.

The Waychinicup Park has a good selection of bird species, including the hard to find endemics, such as the Western Whipbird, Western Bristlebird and Noisy Scrub-bird. We cannot

guarantee seeing all of the above, but it will be fun trying. Wildflowers should be great at this time of the year. For those wishing to stay in cabins or chalets, please book early to avoid disappointment. Activities will be organised from Saturday morning to Monday midday.

For members only.

*Leader: to be announced*

**Friday 28 September to Monday 1  
October:  
Jaurdi State Forest, Shire of Coolgardie  
Long weekend campout**

Jaurdi Station, a former pastoral lease, was purchased by DEC in 1989 for conservation and research. It is north of the old Boorabbin townsite. It has proven to be an excellent birding location because of its size, diversity of landforms and vegetation habitats. On two previous visits, over 60 species of birds were seen, including Dusky and Little Woodswallow, Redthroat, Southern Scrub-robin, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Chestnut Quail-thrush, Gilbert's Whistler and, in 1994, large numbers of Purple-crowned Lorikeets.

We will meet at Jaurdi Station on the evening of Friday 28 September. The turnoff to the north from Great Eastern Highway is signposted: BAWA signs will be in place. The area has been reserved for BAWA for the weekend, and bookings are essential. There is some accommodation available in shearers' quarters, and plenty of camping and caravan space, with showers and toilets.

Further directions can be obtained from the Birds Australia WA office (9383 7749) or from Clive Napier (9332 7265).

After the weekend, members also have the option of continuing towards Coolgardie on the Tuesday. Up to six vehicles could join this further tour.

Tuesday: visits to Victoria Rock and Rowles Lagoon North. We will stay two nights at the Coolgardie Caravan Park and one night at the camp ground at Rowles Lagoon.

Friday: head south towards Peak Charles, staying overnight at Moir Rock (no facilities).

Saturday, and possibly Sunday: overnight at Peak Charles where there are toilets.

Monday: head west to Frank Hann National Park, where we can stay overnight if desired. At the western end of the park we will be back on sealed roads and go through Lake King.

All roads are negotiable by 2WD with care, provided rain has not been too heavy, but participants must be fully equipped for camping or caravanning, although refuelling can take place at Norseman. We will return to Perth via the wheatbelt for birds and wildflowers, taking as much time as desired, returning about Friday 12 October.

For members only.

*Leaders: Clive and Wendy Napier*

**Sunday 30 September: Dell Forest,  
Kalamunda  
Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at Dell Forest, just off Mundaring Road, 9 km from Kalamunda along Mundaring Weir Road. Park in the picnic area on the left hand side of the road, just after the Dell Forest sign. This area has been surveyed since 1987, and is predominantly jarrah forest with stands of wandoo along the gully. Over 70 species have been recorded in the area, including Emu, Painted Button-quail, and many of the south-west endemics. The excursion will finish about 1:00 pm, so bring lunch if you wish.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Sean Van Alphen*

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**Crossword answers No 49**

**Across**

1 wheatbelt, 5 spare, 8 mangroves, 10 theme, 11 strident, 12 rain, 14 mimic, 16 outline, 18 web, 20 solar, 22 Little, 23 eye, 24 key, 25 eclipse, 26 sedge.

**Down**

1 Western, 2 endemic, 3 time, 4 tertiaries, 6 preen, 7 entrance, 9 note, 13 coverts, 14 measure, 15 Mudlark, 17 Tamala, 18 website, 19 belly, 21 rely, 23 eat.

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

**Western Australian Bird Notes**  
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**Post to:** Birds Australia Membership  
 60 Leicester St, Carlton VIC 3053

02/2007



## 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 9293 4958, e-mail <cgole@westnet.com.au>
- ◆ **Monthly Meeting Speakers** – contact Brian Wilson 9293 1094
- ◆ **Community Education 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>
- ◆ **Avon Community Engagement Project.** Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo recovery initiative in the Avon River basin - anyone interested can

contact Gen Farrelly, on Ph: 9881 9213, mob: 0429 202 753 or E-mail: <gfarrelly@wwf.org.au>

- ◆ **Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project** - the South Coast Project Officer is based in Albany and working throughout the South Coast NRM Region; if you have any information particularly regarding potential nesting sites or would like to volunteer in the project, please contact Raana Scott, South Coast Project Officer, e-mail: <r.scott@birdsaustralia.com.au> or ph: 9842 0011.

## Calendar of events

### Birds Australia Western Australia Inc

#### Office: *Peregrine House*

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<http://birdswa.com.au>

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**Distribution:** Rod Smith

### Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**—a copy on disk or emailed would assist, especially if in MSWord as a document **without** styles; **do not** embed pictures or graphics in MS Word.
- 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)

September 2007 issue: 1 August  
December 2007 issue: 1 November  
March 2008 issue: 1 February  
June 2008 issue: 1 May

### Advertising Rates

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

- Sat 2 Jun:** The Spectacles, Kwinana, Half-day excursion
- Sat – Mon 2-4 Jun:** Foundation Day Long weekend campout, Dongara
- Sun 10 Jun:** Jandakot Regional Park (Harrisdale Swamp), Forrestdale, Half-day excursion
- Sun 10 Jun – 26 Jun:** DEC Station Survey, Earaheedy and Lorna Glen stations, 150 km NE of Wiluna
- Thu 14 Jun:** Little Rush Lake, Yangebup, Half-day excursion
- Sat – Mon 16-17 Jun:** Rottnest winter wader/bushbird count
- Sat 16 Jun:** Flynn Road, Mundaring, Half-day excursion
- Sat 23 Jun:** Victoria Reservoir, Canning Mills, Half-day excursion
- Mon 25 Jun:** Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Sun 1 Jul:** Kings Park, Perth, Half-day excursion
- Sun 8 Jul:** Lightning Swamp, Noranda, Half-day excursion
- Wed 11 Jul:** Burswood Open Spaces, Burswood, Half-day excursion
- Sun 15 Jul:** North Mole, Fremantle, Half-day excursion
- Sat 21 Jul:** Piesse Brook, Kalamunda, Half-day excursion
- Mon 23 Jul:** Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Sun 29 Jul:** Waterford Foreshore, Salter Point, Manning, Half-day excursion
- Sun 5 Aug:** Yarra Rd, (Christmas Tree Well), Brookton, Full day excursion
- Sun 12 Aug:** Herdsman Lake, Stirling, Half-day excursion
- Thu 16 Aug:** Heirisson Island, Half-day excursion
- Sat 18 Aug:** Pipidinny Road, Eglinton, Half-day excursion
- Sun 26 Aug:** Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury, Morning excursion
- Mon 27 Aug:** Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Sat 1 Sep:** Lake Gwelup, Stirling, Half-day excursion
- Sun 9 Sep:** Karnup and Baldivis Reserves, Half-day excursion
- Thu 13 Sep:** Lake Claremont, Swanbourne, Half-day excursion
- Sun 16 Sep:** Wungong Gorge and Bungendore Nature Reserve, Bedfordale, Full day excursion
- Sun 23 Sep:** Forrestdale Lake, Half-day excursion
- Mon 24 Sep:** Tamala Hall, Environment Centre, Floreat, Meeting, 7:30 pm
- Fri 28 Sep to Mon 1 Oct:** Cheynes Beach, Albany, Long weekend campout
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