

# Western Australian Bird Notes



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



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## SWAN COASTAL PLAIN AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN SURVEYS, 2007-2008

The Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) is a threatened species listed as endangered by IUCN and BirdLife International (BirdLife International 2006), and as rare or likely to become extinct by the Western Australian Government. It is not listed under the Australian Government's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The global population of Australasian Bittern is estimated to be 3150 birds, with about 2500 in Australia and 580-725 in New Zealand (BirdLife International 2006). The species is found in south-western Australia, in eastern Australia (from Southern Queensland to south-east South Australia), Tasmania and New Zealand (Marchant and Higgins 1990; Johnstone and Storr 1998).

The South West Waterbird Survey (1981-1985) indicated that there were fewer than 100 pairs of Australasian Bitterns in Western Australia (Marchant and Higgins 1990). Anecdotal evidence and the paucity of recent confirmed records across south-western Australia suggest that the species is still in decline and numbers may be very low. Since 1990, records in south-west Australia have clustered around the Albany region wetlands and a number of Lake Muir wetlands east of Manjimup, while single records have come from Thomsons Lake, Benger

Swamp and Lake Jasper. Records are from the Birds Australia Atlas database, unpublished records from surveys conducted by the Department of Environment and Conservation and Birds Australia WA, with some additional records from WetlandBase.

There have been few confirmed records of the Australasian Bittern on the Swan Coastal Plain since 1980 and the last confirmed record for this region was at Benger Swamp in November 1992 (DEC database). In 2007, the need to determine if Thomsons Lake, a Perth metropolitan region Ramsar site, met global criteria for nomination as an Important Bird Area prompted the organisation of listening surveys for the species. These commenced at Thomsons Lake, but quickly expanded to include a number of other Swan Coastal Plain wetlands.

### Wetland review

A review of Australasian Bittern records on the Swan Coastal Plain was conducted using published literature and records published in *Western Australian Bird Notes*. This review identified 11 wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain where the Australasian Bittern had been recorded since 1981 (Table 1). Many of these records dated from the South West Waterbird Study conducted between 1981 and 1985 (Jaensch *et al.* 1988).



Volunteer observers in action at Benger.  
Photo: Robyn Pickering

All but one of these wetlands was visited to establish if suitable banks of rushes still existed to provide habitat for Australasian Bitterns. Suitable habitat was deemed to be large beds of tall rushes mixed with fine sedges or open pools (Marchant and Higgins 1990). Of the 11 wetlands five were found to still have rush beds that might provide habitat for Australasian Bitterns (Table 1). This information was used to prioritise the locations targeted by volunteer observers.

### Survey methods

Targeted surveys of Australasian Bitterns were conducted by twilight listening surveys with small groups of observers in spring and summer. This was consistent with the previous RAOU Australasian Bittern surveys conducted in south-west Australia from 1986 to 1988 (Jaensch 1986-1988). Australasian Bitterns are known to call mainly at night during spring and/or summer (Marchant and Higgins 1990; Pierce 2004). A recent report on monitoring the Australasian Bittern in New Zealand notes that most individual bitterns will be calling by sunset but that the rate of call from individuals increases dramatically after dark (Pierce 2004).

The twilight listening surveys were conducted fortnightly at Thomsons Lake from the middle of September 2007. All volunteers were familiarised with the calls of Australasian Bittern, Little Bittern, crakes, rails and other night-calling birds with 'ooming' calls, particularly the Purple Swamphen, Painted Button-quail and Tawny Frogmouth, by listening to CDs produced by the Bird Observers Club of Australia (BOCA) and David Stewart. Before each twilight survey the survey leader played some of these calls to remind volunteers of the calls of interest.

Weekly day surveys of *Baumea* and *Typha* beds at Thomsons Lake were also conducted by the coordinator of the project. Other lakes were surveyed during the day where time permitted.

### Results and discussion

The results of the survey appear in Table 2.

There were no confirmed records of Australasian Bittern during this survey, although some calls heard by volunteers on four of the 18 twilight surveys may have been those of Australasian Bittern. No call met the draft Birds Australia WA criteria established during this project for confirming records for Australasian Bittern.

The survey results, together with the lack of recent confirmed records, indicated that Australasian Bittern numbers have declined significantly since the South West Waterbird Study of the early 1980s. Other survey data from Jandabup Lake, Thomsons Lake and Bengier Swamp also showed a reduction of waterbird abundance and diversity.

Wetland (most northern to most southern)	Dates Confirmed Present Since 1981 (Reference)	Suitability of Habitat for Australasian Bittern in 2007
Pipidinny Swamp	1984 BAWA 1985 BAWA 1986 WABN, BAWA	Unsuitable
Jandabup Lake	1982 WABN 1983 Jaensch	Suitable
Star Swamp	1988 WABN	Unsuitable
Herdsmen Lake	Noted in Van Delft (1987) as present	Suitable
Bayswater Bird Sanctuary	1987 WABN	Unsuitable
Kogolup Lake	1988 WABN	Suitable
Thomsons Lake	4 years between 1981-1985 Jaensch 1986 WABN 1988 WABN 1989 WABN 1990 WABN 1991 Storey	Suitable
Lake Mealup	1984 Jaensch	Not checked
Lake McLarty	1983 WABN	Unsuitable
Bengier Swamp	1981 WABN 1983 Jaensch 1988 WABN 1989 WABN 1992 DEC	Suitable
Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary	1986 WABN 1988 WABN	Unsuitable

**Table 1:** Wetlands where the Australasian Bittern has been recorded on the Swan Coastal Plain. WABN = Western Australian Bird Notes BAWA= Birds Australia Western Australia Database, DEC= Department of Environment and Conservation Database, Jaensch = Jaensch *et al.* 1988, Storey = Storey *et al.* 1993.

Wetland	Surveys Conducted	Australasian Bittern Records
Bengier Swamp	2 day surveys and 2 twilight surveys	No confirmed records
Herdsmen Lake	1 day survey and 1 twilight survey	No confirmed records 1 possible record
Jandabup Lake	1 day survey and 4 twilight surveys	No confirmed records
Kogolup Lake	6 day surveys and 1 twilight survey	No confirmed records
Thomsons Lake	16 day surveys, 2 dawn surveys and 6 twilight surveys	No confirmed records 3 possible records

**Table 2:** Results of the 2007 Australasian Bittern Survey on the Swan Coastal Plain.

### Thomsons Lake

Even though rainfall and evaporation is comparable, some of the wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain, such as Thomsons Lake, do not have the same amount of water as they did in the early 1980s. During the South-West Waterbird Study the annual rainfall recorded in Perth varied from 620 mm in 1985 to 745 mm in 1981, with an average of 709 mm. During 2007 the annual rainfall recorded in Perth was 693 mm, a total comparable to the rainfall and evaporation rates data recorded in the South-West Waterbird Study. At Thomsons Lake, the peak water level in 1981 to 1985 ranged from

12.56 m AHD in 1981 to 12.85 m AHD in 1984, with an average of 12.7 m AHD, while the peak water level in 2007 was 12.42 m AHD. This small change in peak water level has resulted in this shallow lake drying much earlier than it did in the 25 years earlier.

Early summer drying of Thomsons Lake has been commonplace in the past ten years. Data from the Water Corporation shows that since 1997 free water begins to fill Thomsons Lake from sometime between June and August and the lake usually dries by January resulting in the lake being dry for six months of the year rather than it being dry from a few weeks to a month in late autumn as reported in the 1980s (Jaensch *et al.* 1988). This change in hydrology might adversely affect any Australasian Bitterns regularly using the lake as they favour permanent wetlands (Marchant and Higgins 1990).

Recent lower water levels at Thomsons Lake can be attributed to changes in drainage and groundwater abstraction as rainfall and evaporation is within the ranges of those experienced in the early 1980s. The Southern Lakes Drainage Scheme, which was commenced in the mid 1990s, drained water from the land east of Thomsons Lake to allow development of this land. This scheme was completed at the end of the 1990s and has reduced water flowing into the wetland as this drainage water has been diverted into Yangebup Lake. The 1993 implementation of Stage 2 of the Jandakot Groundwater Mound may have reduced the amount of groundwater available to Thomsons Lake.

At Thomsons Lake the Southwest Waterbird Study recorded Australasian Bitterns on all four years of the 1981-1985 study (Jaensch *et al.* 1988). This study included 153 surveys and covered eight months of the year in 1981/82, 11 months in 1982/83, 10 months in 1983/84 and 11 months in 1984/85.

Raines (1994) noted that the Australasian Bittern was recorded at Thomsons Lake for six out of seven years (1981-1988), which makes it the only wetland where this species has been so regularly recorded in the Perth Metropolitan area.

### Jandabup Lake

At Jandabup Lake the Southwest Waterbird Study recorded Australasian Bitterns in two years from the 43 surveys conducted at this wetland over a total of 25 months (Jaensch *et al.* 1988). Although by comparison only a small number of surveys were conducted at Jandabup Lake, it is important to note that these surveys were targeted to maximise records of the Australasian Bittern. It was noted by the 2007 bittern survey observers that the numbers of waterbird species and individuals on Jandabup Lake were very low, which suggested a low productivity at the wetland.

In 1998 Lake Jandabup became acidified due to drying of the lake and oxidization of acid sulphate soils, and this has

severely affected the invertebrate fauna of the lake (Sommer and Horwitz 2001). This possibly affected the food chain of some carnivorous fauna such as bitterns.

As with Thomsons Lake, the peak water levels at Lake Jandabup have declined since the early 1980s even though rainfall and evaporation rates for these two time periods are comparable. Department of Water data show the peak water level in 1981-1985 ranged from 44.82 m AHD to 45.14 m AHD while the peak in 2007 was 44.73 m AHD. Peak water levels in Lake Jandabup declined from 1997 resulting in the extent of water coverage within the lake being reduced. The water levels in Jandabup Lake have been artificially maintained for many years by pumping bore water into the lake. It was discontinued in 1996 but reinstated in summer 2000 (Sommer and Horwitz 2001). Even with this artificial maintenance, peak water levels are being eroded by groundwater abstraction by private and public bores.

It is worth noting however, that of the wetlands reviewed for this survey, Jandabup Lake appeared to have the best and largest vegetative habitat for the Australasian Bittern and the artificial maintenance of water levels has resulted in Jandabup Lake retaining some water throughout the year.

### Other wetlands

At Benger Swamp the Southwest Waterbird Study recorded Australasian Bitterns in at least two years during 78 surveys over 32 months (Jaensch *et al.* 1988). In November 1983 a total of eight Australasian Bitterns were recorded at Benger Swamp, the highest number of this species recorded in a wetland in Western Australia (Raines 1994).

Only two surveys were conducted in 2007, one of them in very difficult weather conditions. On both occasions the water levels were moderately high to very high. Unfortunately, water level monitoring is not conducted at Benger Swamp by either the Water Corporation or the Department of Water. In the period since Birds Australia conducted these surveys, and before the wetland dried late in the year, the Department of Environment and Conservation conducted a number of evening listening surveys at Benger Swamp. There were no confirmed records.

Kogolup Lake and Herdsman Lake were not monitored during the 1980s

Southwest Waterbird Study so data comparisons cannot be made. In this study only one twilight survey was conducted at each of these wetlands so it is difficult to assess if Australasian Bitterns are still present in these wetlands.

### Conclusions

After a total of 18 evening twilight surveys, two dawn surveys and 26 day surveys at the targeted Swan Coastal Plain wetlands between 23 September 2007 and 12 January 2008 there were no confirmed records of Australasian Bittern. Some calls heard on four of the 18 evening twilight



High water levels on one of Benger tracks.

Photo: Robyn Pickering

surveys may have been a single Australasian Bittern, but other calls have not been fully ruled out.

Data from this series of surveys indicate that half of the wetlands that provided habitat for Australasian Bitterns on the Swan Coastal Plain in the early 1980s may no longer have suitable habitat for this species. The surveys conducted in 2007 and early 2008, together with the lack of confirmed records since 1992, strongly suggest that the number of Australasian Bitterns present on the Swan Coastal Plain has declined since the South-West Waterbird study of the early 1980s and are consistent with anecdotal evidence that the species is in serious decline in south-west Australia.

This survey has raised awareness of the status of the Australasian Bittern in Western Australia and has resulted in the development of a draft document outlining the criteria for determining the status of records as confirmed, probable or possible. The Birds Australia surveys also prompted surveys by the Department of Environment and Conservation at Benger Swamp.

### Recommendations

Further targeted surveys for the Australasian Bittern on the Swan Coastal Plain and through its wider Western Australian range are required to determine the present range of this species and to gain an understanding of the number of individuals extant in Western Australia. It would be advantageous for observers to gain experience in hearing Australasian Bitterns through listening surveys at wetlands where the species is known to occur still. If the species is to survive in Western Australia, it is critical that we better understand the reasons why it continues to survive in some deep southwest and south coast wetlands, but appears to have drastically declined or become extinct elsewhere.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the many volunteers who conducted the surveys, others who provided support to the survey and those that provided advice. We thank the following people who provided assistance with surveys: Sue Abbotts, Logan Anderson, Di Ashford, Robin Ashford, Allan Burbidge, John Blyth, Judy Blyth, Gisela Cannon, Maureen Cawley, Ted Cawley, Alan Collins, Denise Crosbie, Tom Delaney, Ron Dibbens, Ruth Dibbens, Ben Drew, Rose Ferrell, Maureen Francesconi, John Francesconi, Briony Fremlin, John Graff, Cecilia Grant, Andrew Hobbs, David James, Nicole Lincoln, John Litholand, Lorraine Marshall, Rob Mather, Sue Mather, Paul Marty, Shapelle McNee, Peter Mioduszewski, Brenda Newbey, Chris Reidy, Dianne Reidy, Jeff Spencer, Wendy Spencer, Peter Taylor, Debbie Walker and Cressida Wilson.

Jon and Helen Burston kindly allowed our volunteers to stay at their property in Benger and we thank them for their warm hospitality. The Department of Environment and Conservation lent equipment and provided advice and support.

Doug Watkins and Roger Jaensch (Wetlands International) and Allan Burbidge (Department of Environment and Conservation) provided information and support. Particular thanks are due to Peter Taylor who provided unpublished

records of the Australasian Bittern for the Lake Muir wetlands, and whose experience in organising Australasian Bittern listening proved to be invaluable.

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**Robyn Pickering and Cheryl Gole**

This list has been compiled by the WA Rarities Committee. Metropolitan suburbs or shires are in parentheses. Please report interesting observations to Frank O'Connor (9386 5694 or preferably [sightings@birdswa.com.au](mailto:sightings@birdswa.com.au)) or to the BAWA office (9383 7749). Sightings are included on the BAWA web site ([birdswa.com.au](http://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. (2008) 'Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds' (CSIRO: Melbourne).

**Highlights.** There have been a number of major rarities in this period at Broome and Christmas Island and Cocos Islands. The **Chinese Pond Heron** near Broome is the first for mainland Australia. It is potentially the third confirmed record for Australia. The second was shortly before at Christmas Island. A **Cinnamon Bittern** (2<sup>nd</sup> record) was found alive on Christmas Island and released, and a **Malayan Night Heron** (5<sup>th</sup> record) was also seen. Another **Grey Wagtail** was seen near the Broome Bird Observatory, and **Franklin's Gulls** were seen in Broome (over an extended period) and Dampier. **Saunders's Terns** were seen again on South Island at the Cocos Islands, and **Bulwer's Petrels** were seen twice close to the islands (the previous Cocos record was nearly 200 km away at sea). **Lesser Noddies** were seen at both Christmas and Cocos Islands. In the south west, the highlights were a **Black Bittern** at the end of the BAWA camp out at Pemberton, two pairs of **Magpie Geese** east of Geraldton, and an **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** photographed at Lake Preston.

Stop Press: Participants in the Indian Ocean Seabird Conference held at Christmas Island in late April have reported a number of major rarities associated with the passing of Cyclone Rosie. Exact details have not been

received yet, and the identification of some species needs to be confirmed. Full details will be reported in the September WABN. The birds included a **Tiger Shrike** (1<sup>st</sup> live record for Australia), a number of **House Swifts** (1<sup>st</sup> record for Christmas Island), many **Edible-nest/Black-nest Swiftlets** (photographs believed to be of both species), a small **Acrocephalus** sp. reed-warbler (call recorded), and a **Lesser Crested** (or maybe an **Elegant**) **Tern**.

PS: The **Malayan Night-Heron** reported on Christmas Island in November 2007 in WABN 125 has now been identified as a **Japanese Night-Heron**, and is the first record for Australia.

## METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** – 1, 17/03/08, Herschell Lake (Rottneest Island) – SN \* 1, 07/04/08, Herschell Lake (Rottneest Island) – PT (uncommon on Rottneest, especially away from coast)

**Cattle Egret** – 1, 15-27/04/08, Lake Monger (Wembley) – RP *et al.* \* 1, 19/03/08, Settlers Common (Armadale) – LG \* 1, 03-20/04/08, Herdsman Lake (Herdsman) – PJ (uncommon in the metropolitan area)

**Banded Stilt** – ~12000, 03/02/08, Rottneest Island – per SM (high count; gone two weeks later)



Franklin's Gull, Dampier  
Photo: Nathan Waugh

**Roseate Tern** – ~12 (may be breeding), 08/04/08, Point Peron (Peron) – BJ (unusual at that time of year, especially if breeding)

**European Goldfinch** – 1, 04/03/08, Floreat Waters (Herdsman) – MTC (scarce in Perth; 1<sup>st</sup> at this site)

## SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

**Magpie Goose** – 4, 27/04/08, Sand Springs (Greenough) – HC (rarely reported in the south west)

**Black Bittern** – 1, immature, 03/03/08, Lefroy Brook Pemberton (Manjimup) – PGA (rarely reported in the south west; photograph)

**Eastern Yellow Wagtail** – 1, 23/02/08, Lake Preston (Harvey) – GH (rarely reported in the south west; photograph)

## ARID ZONE

**Oriental Pratincole** – 20 000+, 24/02/08, in a feeding frenzy over Karratha (Roebourne) – NW

**FRANKLIN'S GULL** – 1, 17/02/08, Dampier oval (Roebourne) – NW (rare in the Pilbara; photograph)

**Barn Swallow** – 1, 2/03/08, Eyre Bird Observatory (Dundas) – DH (photographs show white belly and underwing coverts, and dark breast band)

## KIMBERLEY

**CHINESE POND HERON** – 1, 29/03/08 to 01/04/08, Nimilaica Claypan (Broome) – RBe, GD, AB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for mainland Australia; photographs)

**Banded Lapwing** – 1, 26/02/08, Woolies Wetland (Broome) – AB *et al.* (3<sup>rd</sup> record for Broome)

**Arctic Jaeger** – 1, 23/03/08, Bush Point (Broome) – AB (rarely reported in Broome)

**FRANKLIN'S GULL** – 1, 26/02/08 to 31/03/08, various

sites (Broome) – AB *et al.* (3<sup>rd</sup> record for Broome; photographs)

**GREY WAGTAIL** – 1 male, 24/02/08, Crab Creek Road (Broome) – CH, AB (5<sup>th</sup> record for WA)

#### CHRISTMAS ISLAND

**CINNAMON BITTERN** – 1, 29/02/08, Gaze Road – RB *et al.* (2<sup>nd</sup> record for Christmas Is and Australia; photographs)

**CHINESE POND HERON** – 1 adult, 29/02/08, rubbish tip – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> potentially confirmed record for Christmas Is; report submitted to BARC; photographs)

**MALAYAN NIGHT-HERON** – 1 adult, 02/03/08, near Dolly Beach – RB *et al.* (5<sup>th</sup> record for Christmas Is and Australia; photographs)

**Lesser Noddy** – 4, 02/03/08, Flying Fish Cove – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> record for Christmas Is)

#### COCOS ISLAND

**Bulwer's Petrel** – 1, 01/08, Home Island – per IM \* 2, 12/03/08, Horsburgh Island to North Keeling Island – RB *et al.* (1<sup>st</sup> records close to Cocos)

**SAUNDER'S TERN** – 7, 26/02/08, South Island – RB *et al.* \* 11, 05/03/08, South Island – RB *et al.* (seen previous summer also; possibly regular visitors)

**Lesser Noddy** – 1, 13/03/08, West Island to Horsburgh Island – RB *et al.* (uncommon on Cocos)

#### OBSERVERS

AB = Adrian Boyle  
BJ = Brian Johnson  
CH = Chris Hassell  
DH = Dianne Hunter  
GD = Gail D'Alton (Victoria)  
GH = Greg Harewood  
HC = Helen Clarke  
IM = Ismael Macrae (Cocos)  
LG = Linda Glover



Chinese Pond Heron near Broome, 29 March 2008

Photo: Chris Hassell

MTC = Maureen and Ted Cawley  
NW = Nathan Waugh  
PGA = Pam & George Agar  
PJ = Peter Jacoby  
PT = Peter Taylor  
RB = Richard Baxter (NSW)  
RBe = Rob Berry (Victoria)  
RP = Ryan Phillips  
SM = Sue Mather  
SN = Simon Nevill



## Birds Australia WA reports



#### CHAIR'S REPORT

In the four months since I took over as Chair from Rob Davis (the youngest ever Chair of BAWA) I have been impressed at the progress that BAWA has made since the Forum in 2006. BAWA now has two past Chairs (Rob Davis and Mike Bamford) on the BA Council as befits the importance of BAWA in Birds Australia.

Excursions and Community Education committees have been working tirelessly to provide us with enjoyable outings and providing the community with valuable help in understanding the importance of our birds. Conservation and Research Committee has been busy dealing with public issues as they arise and with the various conservation projects managed by BAWA. Cards Committee has been renamed Sales Committee as that better reflects what they do so well. Eyre Bird Observatory (EBO) now has a new vehicle and a new toilet (what more could they want you ask — well, an underground water tank is the answer!). The EBO Committee recently celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of EBO and produced a book to commemorate the occasion. I strongly recommend you obtain a copy to see just what has been done to produce the remarkable achievement that is EBO.

By the time you read this I anticipate that I shall have attended my first BA Conservation Forum and AGM in

Sydney in May. The outcomes that I hope will benefit BAWA are (a) BA Rules for Regional Groups (BAWA has not had a set of rules as a regional group of BA), (b) BA Policy and Procedures Manual, (c) improvements to BA website that will enable members to sight minutes of BAWA Executive Committee and BA Council, check for changes to BAWA Calendar of Events, and be able to read BA policies, and (d) improve procedures for handling new member applications so that BAWA may provide a more welcoming service to new members. I believe the new BA website may prove a very valuable supplement to *Western Australian Bird Notes* as a source of information for BAWA members.

BAWA Executive Committee has approved a BAWA Organisational Chart that is available on the BA website. This Chart is most important as it clarifies the lines of accountability within BAWA and with other organisations. It makes clear the status of BAWA as a regional group of Birds Australia operating under BA Regional Group Rules. It also identifies BAWA Inc. as an affiliated separate entity operating under the current BAWA Inc. Rules. This separation is required as an incorporated body cannot be a part of another incorporated body. The only visible change in operation that members will see is that we will conduct a BAWA Inc. AGM at the end of the BAWA AGM. BAWA Inc. has a financial role only and will provide funds to

BAWA to run its operations as and when required. The Executive Committee and members of each group will be identical. The Chart also identifies other organisations with which BAWA is affiliated in various ways.

The Chart differentiates between EBO Committee (operating under delegated authority from BA Council to BAWA Executive Committee) and other committees created by BAWA Executive Committee. However, all committees are responsible to the BAWA Executive Committee, members are appointed by BAWA Executive Committee and bound by their respective Terms of Reference. A critical feature of this structure is that members of BAWA committees are covered as an incorporated body and thus not personally liable. This clarification of BAWA structure is a continuation of the work previously done to ensure that those on excursions, campouts and projects were operating under safe conditions and properly covered by BA insurance policies.

The Chart, however, embodies some of my more ambitious plans for BAWA to become a more effective organisation in promoting the interests of our native birds and providing members with safe, enjoyable activities. The List of Vacancies and the Call for Help (see BA website and this issue of WABN) set out the opportunities I have identified so far for members to contribute to making BAWA more effective. I have been impressed by the positive response so far of already very busy BAWA volunteers offering their services to take on new responsibilities. What I would really like to see is a group of members who are not currently heavily engaged in BAWA volunteer activity being able to help other members and gain the benefit for themselves of the satisfaction of making a positive contribution in a good cause. I invite you to look at the List of Vacancies and consider how you might help. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Bruce Haynes  
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### BIRDS AUSTRALIA WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT, YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER, 2007

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	176347		
Total Stock on Hand	<u>17087</u>		193434
Non-current Assets			
Investments	196222		
Equipment on Hand	<u>20310</u>	216532	
Total Assets			<u>409966</u>

##### Liabilities

Current Liabilities			
GST Liabilities	<u>-2855</u>	2855	
Grants			
Various		<u>158967</u>	
Total Liabilities			<u>156112</u>

##### Net Assets

**253854**

##### Accumulated funds

Prior Years Surplus(Deficit)	116574		
Retained Earnings	119251		
Current Year Surplus(Deficit)	<u>18029</u>		
Total accumulated funds			<u>253854</u>

#### INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2007

##### Income

Total Trading Table	6366		
Total Books	2374		
Total W A Bird Notes	-452		
Donations including Bequest	4376		
Interest & Investment Rollovers	12510		
Other income-Fees % \$6846 +%Grants \$12470	<u>19316</u>		44480

##### Expenses

Audit & Bank Charges	449		
Donations	3221		
Functions	1680		
Rent	4220		
Office expenses (Phone, Stationery, Postage, etc)	15044		
Regional Group Travel	1061		
Library Expenses	777		
Total Expenses			<u>26452</u>

##### Net Surplus(deficit)

**18028**



## DEPLOYMENT OF SATELLITE-TAGS ON BAR-TAILED GODWITS AT ROEBUCK BAY, NORTH WEST AUSTRALIA, FEBRUARY 2008

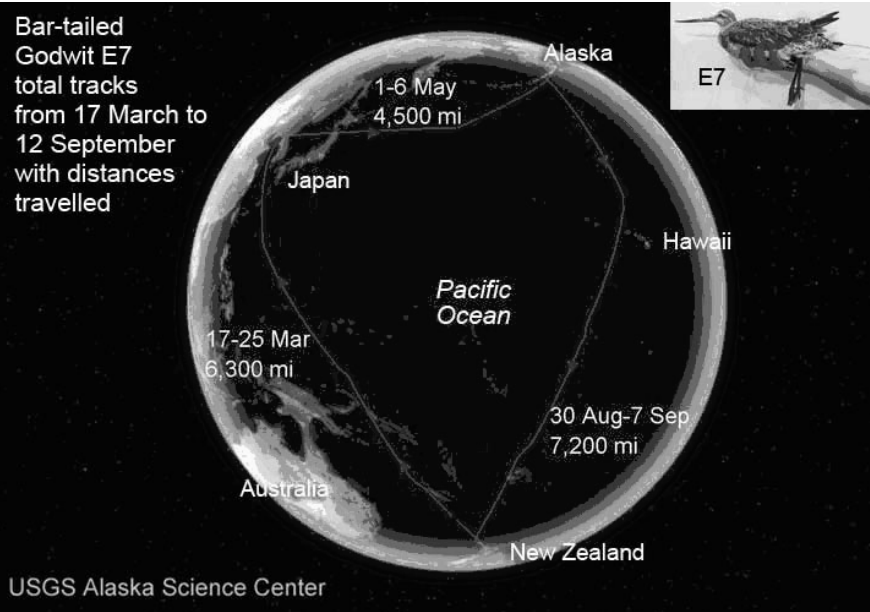
### Introduction

As one aspect of the Pacific Shorebird Migration Project during February 2007, in New Zealand, 16 Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica baueri*) were implanted with satellite transmitters (PTTs) to gather data on their northward migration. This study went better than could have been hoped for with the batteries lasting, not only until the birds reached their breeding grounds in Alaska, but all through the southward migration. This wonderful result proved once and for all that the Alaskan breeding Bar-tailed Godwit undertakes the longest single non-stop migration in the avian world. This was best illustrated by the now famous 'E7' as she covered a 29 000 km round trip from Miranda Shorebird Centre, Firth of Thames on the North Island of New Zealand to staging sites in the Yellow Sea and on to breeding areas in western Alaska before the epic journey back across the Pacific Ocean.

After the success of the 2007 work, consultations began between Nils Warnock of PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO), Bob Gill and Lee Tibbitts of the United States Geological Survey, Alaska Science Centre (USGS), Clive Minton of the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG), Theunis Piersma of the Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) and Chris Hassell of the Global Flyway Network (GFN) to extend this work to the *menzbieri* sub-species that spends the non-breeding season in north-west Australia and breeds in the Yakutia region of Eastern Siberia. With the continued generous funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation the talk became action and a team of researchers gathered at Broome Bird Observatory (BBO) to undertake the work between February 18 and 23 2008.

### Field work

The birds to be implanted with PTTs were captured by cannon net in four catches, one of which yielded no godwits. The weather during February is very hot and humid with regular rain. We were lucky in that catching was not restricted too much by heavy rain. The first catch was a regular one with the net set just above high tide, and with limited twinkling we caught 116 birds. Seven Bar-tailed Godwits had surgery, performed with great expertise by veterinarians Dan Mulcahy of USGS and Brett Gartrell of Massey University, New Zealand. All birds were successfully released 2-3 hours after surgery. For this catch we had a TV crew with us filming for the ABC's Stateline programme. They got some excellent footage and interviews; the segment went to air on the last night of our field work and was watched by us all with great interest.



The second day's catch was less successful with repeated bird of prey disturbances over the catching area. We only caught three birds and none was a Bar-tailed Godwit.

The third day's catch was a tricky affair with very heavy overnight rain persisting into the morning and delaying the setting of the net. Eventually we went out with the whole team ready to set a net and catch promptly. We set the net well below high tide and with twinkling, decoys, luck (and no little skill!) we made a catch of 12 birds. There were many more close to the net but as I waited for them to walk in to the catching area heavy rain started to fall so I took what was available. I had expected to catch about 30 birds but the net and its sand covering were very wet and the net went slowly. Ten of the total were Bar-tailed Godwits and five underwent successful implant surgery. The remaining birds were transported back to BBO and processed in the Shade House out of the inclement weather. All birds flew well on release.

We had only planned for three catching days due to tides and tight travel arrangements for the overseas researchers, but we had three PTTs left and so some hasty rearranging of flights saw us out on the northern shores of Roebuck Bay for a fourth attempt. Once again we set the net well below high tide, some 30 metres, as it was a high tide of 8.63 m and on such tides the birds do not stay on the beaches but roost at inaccessible locations in and beyond the mangroves.

We started twinkling very early on and had a possible catch soon afterwards but within seconds of firing all the birds flew. After some more skilled work from Maurice and Adrian we once again had birds close to the net and eventually they were catchable as the tide pushed them close enough. I fired and a good catch of 97 was made. With only a small team, extraction and getting birds in to cages was hectic due to the fast moving spring tide, but was accomplished successfully. The final three PTTs were implanted in birds and all went strongly on release.



There were some old birds among the re-traps with Great Knots at 15, 14 and 11+ (this bird is now individually colour-banded). We also now have Bar-tailed Godwits at 18+, 14+ and 12+ colour-banded and others at 18+ and 15+ with engraved leg flags from this latest field work.

Two of the birds carrying PTTs were retraps and are 13 and 5+ years of age as they set off with their precious cargo (see details).

As of March 12 2008 all 15 PTTs were communicating effectively with the ARGOS satellites and providing data about the birds' whereabouts in Roebuck Bay. During regular colour-band re-sighting field work seven of the birds have been seen looking strong and healthy in the field at roost sites. In addition to the thin aerial protruding from their feathers they can be identified by their large black flags engraved through to white with a single letter and a single digit.

### The future

In mid-March 2008 the PTTs will automatically switch on their regular reporting schedule of 6 hours on and 36 hours off. This should allow the batteries to last at least until the birds arrive on their Arctic breeding grounds. Any additional data received after mid-June (i.e. after approximately 400 hours of transmission time) will be a bonus. You will be able to follow the migrations of the Roebuck Bay Bar-tailed Godwits by following the links from Chris Hassell's Global Flyway Network site <http://globalflywaynetwork.com.au/>, Broome Bird Observatory <http://www.broomebirdobservatory.com/standard/index.html> or directly to the USGS Migration page [http://Alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/shorebirds/barg\\_updates.html](http://Alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/shorebirds/barg_updates.html).

### Acknowledgements

Projects such as this take an enormous amount of money and effort, not just in the field work but also during all the meticulous planning. Please bear with me while I thank the many people involved. The considerable financial contributions from David and Lucile Packard Foundation, PRBO Conservation Science, USGS Alaska Science Centre and US Department of Interior are gratefully acknowledged. Microwave Telemetry Inc is thanked for the development and manufacturing of the PTTs used in this study. To BirdLife Netherlands, thanks for funding my permanent position. The team in the field did a great job; having my Broome team with me fills me with confidence so thanks to Adrian Boyle, Maurice O'Connor,



Bar-tailed Godwit  
Photo: Adrian Boyle

Helen Macarthur, Andrea Spencer, Yindi Newman and Jan Lewis. Also thanks to Mavis Russell, Petra de Goeij, Grant Pearson and Theunis Piersma (all honorary Broome team members).

Thanks also to Bob Gill, Nils Warnock, Lee Tibbitts, Colleen Handel for field work and being instrumental in getting the project going here in Broome; to the highly skilled veterinarians Dan Mulcahy and Brett Gartrell; to John Curran for veterinary assistance and vital support with medication supplies; to Andrea Spencer, Maurice O'Connor and Helen Macarthur for wonderful food and plenty of it!; to the BBO wardens Pete Collins and Holly Sitters for hosting us and for field work; to Annie Tibbitts for field work; to Graeme Hamilton, Alison Russell-French and Rob Davis of Birds Australia for field work; to Jan Van de Kam for images of all the birds; and to the AWSG committee for support of this initiative. And last but not least, thanks to Clive Minton for continuing his unfailing support for me over the past 12 years.

Chris Hassell

February 19 2008					
Species	New	Retrap	1 <sup>st</sup> yr	Adult	Total
Bar-tailed Godwit	48	12	14	46	60
Curlew Sandpiper	2	0	2	0	2
Great Knot	39	12	6	45	51
Red Knot	3	0	1	2	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>116</b>

February 20 2008					
Species	New	Retrap	1 <sup>st</sup> yr	Adult	Total
Curlew Sandpiper	1	0	0	1	1
Great Knot	0	2	0	2	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

February 21 2008					
Species	New	Retrap	1 <sup>st</sup> yr	Adult	Total
Bar-tailed Godwit	9	1	1	9	10
Greater Sand Plover	1	0	0	1	1
Terek Sandpiper	1	0	0	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>

February 22 2008					
Species	New	Retrap	1 <sup>st</sup> yr	Adult	Total
Bar-tailed Godwit	33	17	0	50	50
Black-tailed Godwit	1	0	0	1	1
Curlew Sandpiper	1	0	0	1	1
Great Knot	29	13	2	40	42
Ruddy Turnstone	2	0	1	1	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>96</b>

## BOOK REVIEW

**Review of 'Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds'**

by Les Christidis and Walter Boles 2008.

CSIRO Publishing, 150 Oxford Street (PO Box 1139)

Collingwood, Victoria 3066

277 pages, hardback, recommended retail price \$A59.95

This eagerly anticipated replacement for "The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories", published in 1994 by the same authors, is now available. The intervening period has been an exciting one for research into the relationships of birds and the new book provides a wealth of new, highly interesting, information. It confirms that the origin of all of the world's passerines (perching birds or songbirds) was in the southern hemisphere, and in fact that all "true song-birds" (oscines, as opposed to the sub-oscine passerines of the Americas, Africa and Asia) of the northern hemisphere arose from Australasian stock.

This book is much more than a simple compendium of currently recognised birds of Australia and its territories. It is based on the premise that taxonomic decisions are essentially scientific hypotheses regarding the evolutionary status of the organisms being considered. It is divided into four parts: an Introduction (11 pages), the Species Lists (30 pages), an introduction to higher-level avian systematics (12 pages), and the main bulk of the book (157 pages) which is devoted to discussion of the systematics and taxonomy of Australian birds. The last-named section provides the scientific basis for decisions on naming and placement within the species lists. The very high level of activity in avian systematics over the last 20 or so years is indicated by the over 1,000 references cited.

**The Introduction** lists four aims for the book:

- to present a taxonomic list updated from Christidis and Boles (1994);
- to provide explanations and references for recommended taxonomic changes;
- to incorporate new records (newly described and vagrants) for Australia since 1994;
- to cover all birds recorded in all island territories, including Ashmore Reef and the Australian Antarctic Territories.

The Introduction also provides an outline of how taxonomic decisions were arrived at, stressing that this was conservative in several ways. In particular, only rigorous analysis from published studies was used in reaching decisions, and where convincing and well-supported new evidence was not available, current usage in Australian literature was maintained. Species concepts, taxonomic methods and English names are also discussed in the Introduction. Of note here is that, as in their earlier work, the authors have not espoused totally either of the two major species concepts. These are the biological species concept (species as interbreeding populations of organisms reproductively isolated from other such groups) and the phylogenetic species concept (species as the smallest cluster of individual organisms that have shared ancestry). In the spirit of

conservatism referred to above the authors have preferred the biological species concept where possible. The authors have also, as previously, excluded subspecies. They have however noted that in the Australian context many subspecies and varieties are recognizable in the field, often isolated in distribution and may merit specific recognition and/or conservation management.

**The species lists** are notable for their comprehensiveness, including all records of vagrants in Australia (including ship assisted individuals) and all Australian territories, provided these records have been accepted by the Birds Australia Records Appraisal Committee. They are also notable for many changes from the lists in Christidis and Boles (1994). These changes are of two main kinds: changes in the position within a linear list in which several major groups, at several different taxonomic levels, have been placed (eg. the order containing swifts is now placed much earlier in the list of orders of non-passerines instead of almost at the end); and removal of a species or group of species from one larger group and placement within another (eg. the owl nightjars now taken out of order Caprimulgiformes (nightjars and frogmouths) and placed with the swifts in the Apodiformes). Some of these changes and the rationale for them are discussed in the two sections referred to below.

**The section on higher level avian systematics** refers to results, able to be compared with each other, from a wide variety of often new morphological, anatomical, genetic and other molecular techniques over the last 20 or so years. These results have allowed significant advances in understanding the relationships between major groups of birds. Christidis and Boles (1994) already recognized that the ratites (ostrich, emu, cassowaries, rheas, kiwis, extinct moas and elephantbirds) plus the Neotropical tinamous form a group of taxa that are monophyletic (descended from a common ancestor or ancestral group), and basal to all other extant birds. They also recognized that all other (more advanced) extant birds can be further separated into two major groups. The first of these is the Galloanseres, made up of the orders Anseriformes (waterfowl) and Galliformes (landfowl or game birds), while the second group is all other remaining orders.

Recent work, largely accepted by Christidis and Boles (2008), has shown that these remaining orders (making up the Neoaves) again constitute two major groups, named Metaves and Coronaves. Remarkably, many orders, families and groups of species long assumed to be closely related to each other are in fact split between these two groups. Earlier taxonomy, based largely on comparative anatomy and morphology, was misled by convergent evolution for similar lifestyles on a massive scale. The new techniques are increasingly showing that such convergent evolution can be observed at all levels of avian groups, from genera to order. Untangling true, phylogenetic relationships amongst the more than 9000 extant species of birds, with some relationships going back well over 100 million years, is like solving an enormous, infinitely complex, jigsaw puzzle. Thus, despite the authors' care in accepting only those changes well supported by a range of results using different techniques, these changes still represent hypotheses, albeit based on the best currently available information.

**Systematics and taxonomy of Australian birds.** As expected, the ratites come first within the main species list followed by the waterfowl and game birds (as in Christidis and Boles 1994), but they are now followed by orders within the Metaves, in the following sequence; tropicbirds, grebes, flamingos, pigeons, frogmouths and nightjars, and in a single order, owl nightjars and swifts! All of these orders within the Metaves are seen as more closely related to each other than to any of the following orders, which are within the Coronaves.

The Coronaves begins with the Procellariiformes, or 'true' sea birds, including the albatrosses. As noted earlier the authors have adhered wherever possible to the biological species concept, and this results in a traditional and conservative identification of species of albatrosses. Many sea bird experts currently favour a taxonomy for albatrosses that is based on the phylogenetic species concept, which recognises virtually all morphologically diagnosable forms of albatrosses as full species. Christidis and Boles (2008) do however stress that there is good reason to continue to record all these recognizable forms and to ensure that efforts for their conservation continue.

There are further changes within the Coronaves, with one of the most notable being the removal of the pelicans from the order Pelecaniformes and tentative placement in the order Ciconiiformes, also containing storks, herons, ibises and spoonbills. What remains of the old Pelecaniformes is renamed Phalacrocoraciiformes and retains the frigate birds, boobies and gannets, darter and cormorants, all of which do have shared ancestry. Interestingly, the tropic birds, originally members of this group, are now placed at the beginning of the Metaves in their own order. Another significant change is the inclusion of the button-quail within the large family of shorebirds, Charadriiformes.

The last, and much the largest, order remains the Passeriformes (passerines or songbirds), with their southern hemisphere origin. There are many changes in position of families within the passerines, although most of these are relatively minor. The two major changes in order are as follows. First, the shifting of the bowerbirds from adjacent to the birds of paradise to much more basal in the order, following the treecreepers and before the fairy-wrens. While the bowerbirds are now close to the treecreepers in the classification, it is still uncertain as to whether they are closely related or simply two very old lineages whose true relationships are still unclear. Secondly, Australasian robins (family Petroicidae) instead of being seen simply as core members of an old endemic Australasian group, are now recognised as being the basal genus to the massive worldwide radiation of 'true songbirds' and have accordingly shifted position in the linear hierarchy.

This book is a timely reminder that phylogenetic taxonomy is a vibrant and exciting field of research. It is also ultimately of critical importance to nature conservation in giving us the knowledge needed to appreciate the significance of the Australian avifauna and to help to determine conservation priorities. The book is aimed at other experts in avian taxonomy and can be quite challenging for someone, like myself, without a background in that field. Nevertheless, it is very well and clearly written, with excellent editing, and will

remain the standard reference for many years for further research (and no doubt more surprises) on the detailed relationships of Australian birds.

**John Blyth**

## THE TAXONOMIC CHANGES AFFECTING WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This is a brief summary of the name changes of the birds that have been recorded in Western Australia as a result of the recent publication of 'Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds' by Les Christidis and Walter Boles (see table next page).

There have been a few new species recorded in WA since the 1994 taxonomic list. These are Glossy Swiftlet, House Swift, Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel, Jouanin's Petrel, Antarctic Petrel, Grey Heron, Oriental Honey-Buzzard, Ringed Plover, Nordmann's Greenshank, Black-naped Tern, Black-capped Kingfisher, Painted Honeyeater, Narcissus Flycatcher, Blue-and-white Flycatcher and Rosy Starling. Since the new taxonomic list went to the publishers, Chinese Pond Heron, Eurasian Curlew and Fairy Pitta have been added. Ship assisted birds have now been included in the main list. This adds birds to the WA list including Kerguelen Shag, Corncrake, Black-billed Magpie, House Crow, Tiger Shrike, Java Sparrow and Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

So what do these changes mean to you? Very little when you are birding, except that Yellow Wagtails are now harder to identify to species. WABN, including the Observations section, will use the new names and order. The Sightings web page on the BAWA web site will use the new names and order. The WA Database and the Ongoing Atlas of Australian Birds will not change immediately as this will require reprinting the forms, new species numbers and changes to the databases. This will need careful coordination.

I have MS Word documents of the new Australian and Western Australian bird lists on my web site at <http://birdingwa.iinet.net.au> (under Bird Lists). I also have an MS Excel spreadsheet of the state and territory lists that includes the new scientific names.

You can buy the new book through BAWA for \$55. Let the office know ([mail@birdswa.com.au](mailto:mail@birdswa.com.au) or 9383 7749). This is subject to a minimum number of people, and you will need to prepay.

**Frank O'Connor**

New Name	Comments	Former Name
Laughing Dove	Name change	Laughing Turtle-Dove
Spotted Dove	Name change	Spotted Turtle-Dove
Australasian Darter	Split	Darter
Australian Little Bittern	New Australian endemic	Little Bittern
Eastern Great Egret	Split	Great Egret
Eastern Osprey	Split	Osprey
Pale-vented Bush-hen	Split	Bush-hen
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	Name change	Pied Oystercatcher
Australian Painted Snipe	New Australian endemic	Painted Snipe
Brown Skua	Split	Great Skua
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo	Name change	Short-billed Black-Cockatoo
Baudin's Black-Cockatoo	Name change	Long-billed Black-Cockatoo
Eastern Koel	Split	Common Koel
Eastern Barn Owl	Split	Barn Owl
Eastern Grass Owl	Split	Grass Owl
Kimberley Honeyeater	New WA endemic	White-lined Honeyeater
Western Wattlebird	New WA endemic	Little Wattlebird
Australasian Figbird	Split	Figbird
Arafura Fantail	Split	Rufous Fantail
Buff-sided Robin	New Australian endemic	White-browed Robin
Horsfield's Bushlark	Name change	Singing Bushlark
Australian Reed-warbler	New Australian endemic	Clamorous Reed-warbler
Australasian Pipit	Split	Richard's Pipit
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	Split	Yellow Wagtail
Green-headed Yellow Wagtail	Split	Yellow Wagtail
White Wagtail	Lumped	Black-backed Wagtail

Table: Taxonomic changes affecting Western Australia



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## HOODED PLOVER INLAND SURVEY, ESPERANCE

Ken Read and Mike Gibbs from the Esperance Bird Observers Group conducted an inland survey of salt lakes to the north of Esperance. The survey was held during the last week of October 2007 and the results are shown in Table 1.

The highlights were a breeding record and the highest ever count of Hooded Plovers for Helms Lake, of 180 birds. Large

portions of the group (160) were found close to vegetation with the remaining Hooded Plovers on the water's edge.

Helms Lake held a large volume of water but still provided a good beach area around the entire lake and adequate shelter. Judging by the numbers of waders on the lake, other than Hooded Plovers, the lake was providing ample food.

**Marcus Singor**

Site	Location	Latitude	Longitude	Date	Time	No.	Ad.	Juv.	Possible Threats	Comments
Davies Fence Lake	13 km NNW of Esperance	33.44,37	121.49,21	22/10/2007	9:00 am	7	4	3	Cattle in area	Present: 3 Greenshank, 2 Red-capped Plover
Davies Middle Lake	13 km NNW of Esperance	33.44,12	121.50,02	22/10/2007	11:15 am	2	2	0		Hooded Plover breeding, nest eggs
White Lake	14 km NNW of Esperance	33.43,54	121.50,44	22/10/2007	11:50 am	4	4	0		Present: 200 Banded Stilt
Helms Lake	16 km NNW of Esperance	33.42,52	121.48,20	22/10/2007	13:55 pm	180	172	8	Dogs (tracks)	Largest number ever recorded for this site
Scaddan, North	48 km NNW of Esperance	33.25,05	121.42,37	22/10/2007	15:00 pm	0	0	0		Hooded Plover seen here in the past
Fletchers Lake	89 km NNE of Esperance	33.02,09	121.51,40	23/10/2007	9:10 am	0	0	0		Ratcliffe Road, Grass Patch East
Davies Road Lake	101 km NNE of Esperance	32.55,21	121.56,23	23/10/2007	10:30 am	0	0	0		Hooded Plover seen here in the past
Davies/Swann Road Lake	112 km NNW of Esperance	32.49,39	128.58,41	23/10/2007	12:05 pm	0	0	0		Surveyed in 1998 and 2006
N/E Swann Road Lake	120 km NNE of Esperance	32.45,49	121.54,57	23/10/2007	15:00 pm	0	0	0	Dingoes	Hooded Plover seen here in the past
Crystal Lake	80 km NNE of Esperance	33.09,45	122.09,26	24/10/2007	9:50 am	0	0	0		Hooded Plover seen here in the past
Lignite Road Lake	58 km NNE of Esperance	33.19,51	121.54,43	24/10/2007	13:30 pm	0	0	0		Hooded Plover seen here in the past
Truslove Road Lake	53 km NNE of Esperance	33.21,10	121.54,47	24/10/2007	14:00 pm	0	0	0		Hooded Plover seen here in the past
Brown Road Lake No 1.	59 km NNW of Esperance	33.19,04	121.49,26	26/10/2007	10:05 am	0	0	0		Scaddan North
Brown Road Lake No 2.	59 km NNW of Esperance	33.18,38	121.50,21	26/10/2007	12:20 pm	0	0	0		Scaddan North
Brown Road Lake No 3	60 km N of Esperance	33.17,03	121.53,15	26/10/2007		0	0	0		Hooded Plover seen here in the past
Norris Lake No 1. Gibson	28 km NNW of Esperance	33.35,56	121.50,50	26/10/2007	16:30 pm	0	0	0		Present: 24 Black-winged Stilt, 2 Greenshank
Norris Lake No 2. Gibson	28 km NNW of Esperance	33.35,35	121.50,45	26/10/2007	16:00 pm	0	0	0		Lake pink
Norris Lake No 3. Gibson	28 km NNW of Esperance	33.35,26	121.51,00	26/10/2007	14:30 pm	0	0	0		Lake full
Norris Lake No 4. Gibson	28 km NNW of Esperance	33.35,17	121.50,30	26/10/2007	15:00 pm	2	2	0		Present: 45 Banded Stilt, 5 Red-necked Avocet
Norris Lake No 5. Gibson	28 km NNW of Esperance	33.34,57	121.51,00	26/10/2007	15:45 pm	0	0	0		Lake pink
Lake Benje Benjenup	14 km N of Esperance	33.42,17	121.54,08	30/10/2007	10:30 am	0	0	0		Present: 150 Red-necked Stilt, 56 Banded Stilt
<b>Total</b>						<b>195</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>11</b>		

**Table 1: Hooded Plover Inland Survey, lakes north of Esperance Spring 2007.**

## HOODED PLOVER SURVEY, FEBRUARY 2008



The 2008 summer Hooded Plover survey was held on 23 and 24 February. A total of 368 Hooded Plovers were counted over this period. If the additional sightings of 210 Hooded Plovers made on 9 March at Lake Carbul and a further 27 at Lake Kubitch are added the overall total would increase. However it is possible that some of these birds had already been included in counts made at Benje Benjenup Lake (96) and Station Lake (31).

### Coverage comments

Steve Elson undertook an extensive inland survey between 21 and 25 February. Within the Pingrup district he surveyed a total of 25 salt lake systems. Of these, 80% were on private land and the other 20% were on Department of Environment and Conservation reserves. The salt lake systems ranged in size from several hectares to several kilometres in area. All the salt lakes were completely dry.

A further 12 salt lake systems within the North-Stirling and Cranbrook region were surveyed. The percentage of salt lakes surveyed on private land was 70% and Department of Environment and Conservation land was 30%. Many lakes were completely dry with only a few holding shallow water. A total of 34 Hooded Plover was counted across this region.

Reports of dry lakes were wide spread including Lake Ninan, Cowcowing Lakes, Lake Koomberkine and Lake Nambung. Rowles Lake had a little water. Only one lake in the Katanning, Wagin and Dumbleyung district had water. Two lakes next to Barkers Inlet were dry.

Boranup Beach wasn't covered during the survey. Salt Lakes around Munghlinup were partially surveyed. This was an area with high counts in past years. On 25 February Steve Dutton, a Senior Ranger with the Department of Environment and Conservation and Dick Rule conducted a beach run from White Hills Road to 9 km south of Preston Beach, a trip of 31 km. It was important to survey this stretch of beach as it fronts Yalgorup National Park. Unfortunately no Hooded Plovers were observed on this tyre marked beach.

### Results

Results of all counts are summarised in Table 1.

Breeding records this year came from Yalgorup National Park and north of Esperance. At Lake Bannitup (500 ha), 15 km north east of Esperance, a pair of Hooded Plover with two runners was sighted on a near dry lake. There was a small area of fresh water in the eastern corner.

The lakes around Esperance yielded the highest counts. On 10 February at Benje-Benjenup Lake, 96 Hooded Plovers were seen along the lake's edge and on a small island. Shortly after the survey was completed some additional sighting were made. At Lake Carbul 210 Hooded Plovers

were seen on 9 March and on the same day a further 27 Hooded Plover were sighted at Lake Kubitch. One lake, fringed by paperbark and low heath scrub, east of Munghlinup, was dry but had 25 Hooded Plovers in the middle of the lake. At Pink Lake three Hooded Plovers were found near the edge of the salt ponds.

### Margaret River-Augusta beach update

The survey between the Cape to Cape beaches yielded 21 adult Hooded Plovers and four juveniles indicating at least two breeding pairs. Wally Smith surveys marine debris on

some of these beaches for the Tangaroa Blue Ocean Care Society, enabling him to make Hooded Plover observations. The sites to the north of South Beach were covered by four to six visits over the last year. The sites south of South Beach were visited more frequently (often monthly) over the last three years. He has monitored the beaches quite closely for years and his commentary follows.

#### Deepdene North End

Sheltered small rocky beaches at

the base and to the west of the beach entry area. There are occasional sightings of usually one pair.

Disturbances: occasional foot traffic and fishermen.

#### Deepdene Reef

Reef south of Cresswell Road entry. There are usually two adults.

Disturbances: some four-wheel drive activity and fishing especially in the salmon season, and occasional foot traffic as this is part of the Cape to Cape walk.

#### Sarge Bay

First small rocky point at the eastern end of beach on the eastern side of lighthouse. There are now less frequent sightings of a pair of Hooded Plover.

Disturbances: frequent foot traffic and fishermen.

#### Quarry Beach

Entire shore of Quarry Bay. There are now less frequent sightings of Hooded Plovers.

Disturbances: frequent foot traffic in the holiday season as this is part of the Cape to Cape walk.

#### Cosy Corner

Southern half of the beach. There is usually one pair of Hooded Plover present near the start of limestone platform.

Disturbances: occasional foot traffic.

#### South Beach

South end of the South Beach usually when a gutter forms along mid beach area mid to late summer. One or two pairs of Hooded Plover seen.

Disturbances: infrequent foot traffic.

#### Bob's Hollow

South end of small beach below Bob's Hollow steps.

Disturbances: occasional foot traffic.



Hooded Plover at Back Beach, Denmark

Photo: John Krepp

Areas:	Summer survey 23 and 24 Feb 2008 Numbers.
Shark Bay to Perth	0
Wetlands between Rockingham and Mandurah	0
Beaches from Mandurah to Leschenault Inlet	0
Yalgorup National Park. (Yalgorup HPMR*).	88 (includes 9 juveniles)
Geographe Bay.	2
Beaches from Cape Naturaliste to Augusta. (Naturaliste-Augusta HPMR)	25 (includes 4 juveniles)
Beaches from Augusta to Broke Inlet.	4 (includes 2 juveniles)
Beaches from Broke Inlet (Walpole) to Beaufort Inlet (east of Albany). Walpole-Denmark HPMR).	26 (includes 5 juveniles)
Beaches from Beaufort Inlet to Hopetoun. (Bremer Bay-Hopetoun HPMR)	13 (includes 1 juvenile)
Beaches, coastal- and inland lakes east of Hope- toun to Stokes Inlet.	29 (includes 4 juveniles)
Beaches Stokes Inlet to Cape Le Grande.	0
Esperance Lakes. (Lake Gore system to Mullet Lake). (Esperance HPMR)	136 (includes 12 juveniles)
Beaches east of Cape Le Grande.	9
Inland lakes in south west of the State.	36
<b>Total.</b>	<b>368 (includes 37 juveniles)</b>
Note: HPMR = Hooded Plover Management Region.	

Table 1: Locations and results of the Hooded Plover surveys, 23 and 24 February 2008.

\* HPMR = Hooded Plover Management Region

### Jays Beach

Extensive beach and dune system. River mouth is now well east of the usual map entry. No Hooded Plover were found.

Disturbances: frequent walkers, surfers and fishermen.

These observations are important in light of the rapid development that is taking place in this region.

### Summary

This year, we recorded 331 adults and 37 juveniles. (Table 2). Overall, numbers were down compared with recent years.

### Acknowledgements

Lotterywest are acknowledged for their support in funding some of our inland surveys. I thank everyone who generously donated their time to the survey from Geraldton to the Eyre Bird Observatory. Our own Birds Australia members made an outstanding effort. The help of Stella and Ted Stewart-Wynne and Phyllis Bentley who covered the Yarra Yarra Lake systems is acknowledged.

A special word of thanks for the Hooded Plover regional coordinators who organised the volunteers in their districts: Dick Rule (Yalgorup), Tony France (Myalup), Jessica Worrall and Phil Beardshaw (Margaret River), David Edmonds (Walpole), Tina Smith (Denmark), Anne Bondin (Albany), Anne Gadsby (Bremer Bay) and Ken Read and Mike Gibbs (Esperance). Thanks goes to Kim Onton from the Department of Environment and Conservation (Bunbury) and Rebecca Walker from Dumbleyung Landcare. David Chadwick, the Senior Ranger at Cape Arid National Park, provided further assistance.

Thanks also to the members of the Hooded Plover sub-committee: Kate Creed, Stewart Houghton, John Lauri and Trevor Stoneman.

**Marcus Singor**  
**Chairperson**  
**Hooded Plover Sub-committee**

Survey period	Adults and (Juveniles)	% Juveniles	Total
February 2005	548 (75)	12 %	623
February 2006	631 (44)	6.5%	675
February 2007	527 (45)	7.8%	572
February 2008	331(37)	10 %	368

Table 2: A comparison of the data collected over summer surveys 2005-2008.



## GARDEN WEEK SHOW AND COCKBURN WETLANDS BIRD ID WORKSHOPS

### Cockburn Wetlands Bird ID for beginners.

This was a first time visit to the Wetlands for a workshop and it turned out to be an excellent venue with good facilities and plenty of bush, but of course due to the time of year, Bibra Lake was more like a pond. We held three workshops, one introductory for basics, the second a lecture on bushbirds followed by a field walk and the third a lecture on waders/waterbirds followed by a field walk. Fifty nine people attended during the three days of which 43 were BAWA members. A short evaluation sheet showed that most people heard of the course through the BAWA E-news, once again proving its value for information. The majority of comments, re the course and the presenters, all gave praise for the content and that it was a valuable learning experience.

Thanks to the presenters, Brice Wells, Frank O'Connor, Barry Angus and Rod Smith. Walk leaders, Valerie Hemsley, Loraine Marshall, Jeni Muir, Rick Curtis, Ian Rudd, Tom Delaney, Margaret Prickett and Julia Wates. There was a trading table and morning tea help from Margaret Prickett, Ruth Greble and Sue Keogh.



Rod Smith leading a walk for the wetlands ID session.

*Photo: Elsa Dabbs*



Cockburn Wetlands bird ID session, with Frank O'Connor

*Photo: Elsa Dabbs*

**Garden Week.** This was our first appearance at the garden week. We were invited to share a space in the City of Cambridge tent for the six-day event. Our host Amy Rayner, Sustainability Officer, provided an excellent backdrop showing birds and frogs with our site being next door to "Johnny the Frog Man". The questions on frogs were redirected next door, except when Frank O'Connor was on duty, as he had the answers. Amy also provided perspex tops for our egg/nest display boxes and graciously gave them to us. We had our own display of bird pictures and posters showing the effects of European settlements on bird populations in the south of Western Australia, a new poster showing winners and losers by Brice Wells. Our able BAWA volunteers manned the trading table with three people on most mornings and afternoon. Friday, Saturday and Sunday were the busiest days and our sales exceeded all expectations to add to BAWA funds. If Amy invites us next year, we will be there. Thanks to all the volunteers and Eggy Boggs for organising the roster.

**Elsa Dabbs, Secretary  
Community Education Sub-committee**

## AN ALBINO NIGHT HERON

After 47 mm of life saving rain on 7 February, it was time to check on the avian families at Herdsman Lake. At 8:00 am on 9 February, it was cloudy and cool with a strong easterly breeze.

Many Eurasian Coots displayed albino feathers: one bird with bilateral bright white tail feathers, while other coots displayed patterns of albino feathers quite different from those seen four months ago.

Seen also was an albino night heron with bright white wings, a hint of chestnut on the scapulars, the whole head, upper chest and bill chestnut, eye yellow and legs green. The bird was perched on a dead Melaleuca at the end of a branch together with half a dozen Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants. Its head was constantly moving as it appeared to be searching the water below. It was observed for ten minutes before it took flight northwards.

All around the birds were more active. A lone Great Crested Grebe was calling for a mate, 'row-ah', as it swam and dived. Male and female Darters paired off and perched together. A ravenous juvenile Australian White Ibis was being fed by a parent with regurgitations that lasted over three minutes. There were many egrets perched with one possible Intermediate Egret. It was perched nearby, was 30 cm smaller than other egrets, with a short neck, yellow bill and black legs.

Peter Mawson tells me that the coot albino feathers are not an indication of the psittacine viruses but are quite healthy. This leaves the cause to DNA factors (the Epigenetic interface between genes, environment and disease). Do we need to look at the surrounding environment such as exposure of the parents to chemicals before egg laying or to electromagnetic field exposure of the parents? Epigenetics, the study of the influence of the environment on genes applies in human medicine as well as in veterinary and agriculture. Previous examples of albino birds are Willy Wagtail at Lake Monger after major dredging and Richard's Pipit at Alfred Cove after extensive herbicide spraying of sedges and glasswort.

Many Bremner

## SOME LOUSE FLIES (INSECTA: HIPPOBOSCIDAE) FROM SOUTH-WESTERN AUSTRALIA

There are few records of louse flies (Insecta: Hippoboscidae) in the Australian ornithological literature. HANZAB (1990-2006) cites seven species but doesn't cite where all of them were collected; it is presumed they were all collected in eastern Australia. Locally there are no records in *The Western Australian Naturalist*, vols. 1-25, and the only two

records in *Emu*, vols. 1-107, are from south-western Australia (Ford 1966). Hence it is worth recording the flies collected by Ford and ourselves in the South-West.

In order to give an overview of previously known Australian louse flies, those listed in HANZAB (1990-2006) are shown in Table 1. Four species of these flies, *Ornithoica stipitura*, *Ornithomya variegata*, *O. nigricornis* and *O. areolata* have been recorded from Tasmania, *O. areolata* having been collected from 14 species of birds.

We can add a number of records to this, including species of louse flies previously unrecorded on Australian birds, and species of birds not previously recorded as hosting louse flies (Table 2).

Perry de Rebeira (PdeR) collected from live birds during bird-banding operations and Robert Stranger (RHS) collected from birds that had been recently killed, as did J.R. Ford. Louse flies collected by Robert Stranger were identified by staff of the British Museum (Natural History) and there are five records of four species. Those collected by Perry de Rebeira were identified by Dr. Bradley Sinclair and are lodged in and registered with the Western Australian Museum. They include 25 records of two species and five species-groups. All localities are in south-western Australia except for Wilmington, which is in South Australia.

From our records, therefore, at least 11 species of louse flies are known from 18 bird species from a variety of passerine and non-passerine families in south-western Australia. Several of these records are of interest. *Ornithomya areolata* was previously only recorded on birds from Tasmania, where it has been collected from 14 species of birds. The *O. biloba* group, species 1, 2, 3 are possibly new to science, and *Ornithophila metallica* is an Old World species.

We encourage observers to continue collecting, to aid in our understanding of the ecology and patterns of biodiversity shown by these interesting, but poorly known, animals.

Source	Louse Fly Species
Vol. 1(B), p 1373	<i>Icosta (Ardmoeca) ardea ardea</i> (Macquart 1835)
	<i>Ornithoica becariina</i> (Rondani 1878)
Vol. 2, p 960	<i>Icosta (Ornithoponus) australica</i> Paramanov 1954
Vol. 5, p 1262	<i>Ornithoica stipitura stipitura</i> (Schiner 1868)
Vol. 6, pp 1215, 1216	<i>Ornithomya variegata</i> (Bigot 1885)
	<i>Ornithomya areolata</i> Maa 1986 (Tasmania only)
Vol. 7(B), p 1966	<i>Ornithomya nigricornis</i> (Erichson 1842)

Table 1: Australian Louse Flies reported in HANZAB (1990-2006).

Louse Fly	WAM. Reg. No.	Host	Locality	Date	Collector
<i>Ornithoica exilis</i> group	23404	New Holland Honeyeater			PdeR
<i>Ornithoica stipitura</i>		Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	Bremer Bay	24-5-1962	Ford (1966)
<i>Ornithomya areolata</i>	23408	White-breasted Robin	Shannon River		PdeR
ditto	23397	Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Kellerberrin	8-8-1989	PdeR
ditto	23409	White-breasted Robin	Manjimup	1-10-1993	PdeR
ditto	23413	New Holland Honeyeater			PdeR
ditto	23414	White-breasted Robin	Shannon River	4-1-1994	PdeR
ditto	23417				PdeR
<i>Ornithomya biloba</i> group		Tree Martin	Nannup	22-11-1976	RHS
ditto, species 1	23398	White-backed Swallow	Kellerberrin	26-3-1992	PdeR
ditto, species 2	23401	White-backed Swallow	Kellerberrin	16-7-1992	PdeR
ditto, species 3	23402	Tree Martin	Helena Valley	12-2-1986	PdeR
ditto, species 3	23405	Welcome Swallow	Eyre Bird Observatory	2-10-1995	PdeR
ditto, species 3	23406	Welcome Swallow	Eyre Bird Observatory	12-10-1995	PdeR
ditto, species 3	23407	Welcome Swallow	Eyre Bird Observatory	13-10-1995	PdeR
ditto, species 3	23411	Tree Martin	Stirling Ranges	20-9-1993	PdeR
ditto, species 3	23416	Fairy Martin	Wilmington, SA	15-1-1994	PdeR
<i>Ornithomya</i> near <i>variegata</i>	23412	Red-eared Firetail	Albany	17-1-1999	PdeR
<i>Ornithomyia Clarki</i>		White-backed Swallow	Lancelin	8-10-1961	Ford (1966)
<i>Ornithomyia fringillina</i> (Curtis)		Collared Sparrowhawk	South Perth Zoo. Gardens	23-3-1968	RHS
<i>Ornithophila metallica</i> (Schiner 1864)		Galah	Latham	Easter 1967	RHS
ditto		Laughing Turtle-Dove	South Perth Zoo. Gardens	26-1-1968	RHS
ditto	23393	Rainbow Bee-eater	Kellerberrin	9-10-1989	PdeR
ditto	23394	Grey Butcherbird	Kellerberrin	19-4-1989	PdeR
ditto	23395	Australian Ringneck	Kellerberrin	20-4-1989	PdeR
ditto	23396	Brown Honeyeater	Kellerberrin	20-4-1989	PdeR
ditto	23399	Australian Ringneck	Kellerberrin	13-4-1992	PdeR
ditto	23400	Australian Ringneck	Kellerberrin	16-9-1992	PdeR
ditto	23404	New Holland Honeyeater			PdeR
ditto	23415	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Dryandra S.F.	3-1-1994	PdeR
ditto	23418				PdeR ?
<i>Pseudolynchia canariensis</i> (MacQuart 1840)		Rock Dove	South Perth Zoo. Gardens	1-11-1967	RHS

Table 2: Louse Flies collected in south-western Australia. 'WAM' = Western Australian Museum.

## References

Ford, J. R. (1966). Louse flies parasitising birds. *Emu* **65**, 221.

HANZAB (1990-2006). 'Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds.' Vols. 1-7. (Oxford University Press: Melbourne.)

**Perry de Rebiera and Robert Stranger**



Western Spinebill seen at the  
Pemberton campout.  
Sketch: Pam Agar

## LANDSCAPE TRIP TO THE HOUTMAN ABROLHOS

I participated in the recent Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Landscape expedition over the period 11–18 December 2007, 'Seabirds and Shipwrecks', exploring the Houtman Abrolhos archipelago. This choice, for me, was all about birds, and was at a place that I had not visited before but somewhere I had wanted to visit for some time. This expedition gave me both the opportunity and added reason to do so.

The Abrolhos supports the largest populations and most species rich assemblages of seabirds in the Indian Ocean; to quote Ron Johnstone "Maybe the most important seabird rookeries on the planet". While the breeding populations of most of the larger islands are relatively well known, there are many that are not. The aim of this expedition was to visit as many small islands as possible to observe and record seabird, shorebird and bushbird populations during the peak of the breeding season. Numbers of migratory waders were also recorded to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the birds using the Abrolhos as seasonal feeding grounds. Adult Sea Lions were also counted and recorded by gender; the juveniles and pups were counted but a gender could not be allocated to these. Of course these islands are also steeped in history, being the site of a number of shipwrecks including the Dutch ships *Zeewick* and *Batavia*, the latter name being adopted for the section of mid-west coast surrounding Geraldton.

Our first day was spent travelling to Geraldton where we were to meet our expedition leaders Kevin Coate and Ron Johnstone, before boarding the *Odyssey* the next morning. This 24m vessel was to be our home for the next seven days.

Keen to record all manner of birds I positioned myself up on the bow, binoculars at the ready, keeping an eye out for any movement across the water that might indicate the presence of a bird. I recorded eight species on the way across, adding four more as we neared our destination. Our research observations began in the Wallabi Group, the northern most of the three groups we would visit.

On arrival we anchored off the nor-west side of West Wallabi Island and were taken by small tenders or dinghies to Pelican Island. Here we encountered our first breeding birds, Bridled Terns, many on single eggs that proved to be somewhat difficult for a novice to locate. They tend to hide under vegetation, among rock piles and the like, but once having found a nest, it is easier to locate more. Here we also found a juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle, with both adults flying above and calling. Those that thought this a good opportunity for a photograph soon found out that the youngster also had the power of flight. On inspection of the nest site and surrounds it became evident that Wedge-tailed Shearwaters featured regularly in their diet, and skeletal remains of a young Tamar Wallaby were also found, having been brought over from the main island. Remains of a King's Skink were also found, but it was unclear as to whether this also had been brought across or was resident here on this tiny island.

*En-route* to Slaughter Point, the eastern most part of West Wallabi Island, we stopped briefly off from Turtle Bay to release a Southern Giant Petrel that had been rehabilitated by a carer in Geraldton. As is common with these birds when

freed, they don't fly off as one might imagine but remain on the water, ducking the head beneath the water, perhaps re-acquainting themselves with the wild.

Getting to Slaughter Point entailed sailing around East Wallabi Island, as there is no passage of sufficient depth to travel between these islands. After we anchored off Little Pigeon Island, one of the many islands dotted with shacks that house the cray fishermen during the fishing season, most disembarked at Slaughter Point while another small party surveyed the smaller islands for nesting birds. We found that Tamar Wallabies were in abundance, bush birds much more scarce, seeing only Brush Bronzewing, White-browed Scrubwren and Silvereye. The endemic subspecies of Painted Button-quail was seen, but only on some of those smaller islands the other party covered. We did, however, find small numbers of breeding Fairy Terns.

After reboarding *Odyssey* we sailed for Long Island, off which we would anchor for the night. Long Island has been under proposal for development for some years and many submissions against it have been lodged, largely for environmental reasons, not least of all, the birdlife. This island and the proposed development were to have been the basis of this article, to alert readers as to the ongoing plight of this island, and I was going to write up a submission also. However, on arrival back on the mainland, friends told me that approval had been given the previous day, 17 December 2007. Not a fitting end to our trip.

We landed on Long Island at 0645, 13<sup>th</sup> December, and began our survey. Bridled Terns were the first to be confirmed breeding — about 500 pairs. A juvenile Pacific Gull, too young to fly, had attempted to hide among the low vegetation, and it was the second species recorded breeding. Judging by the numbers of Roseate Terns rising on the wing at sporadic intervals, it seemed obvious from on board that they also must be breeding. This proved correct, as three colonies were found, the first two being contiguous and having about 150 pairs in each, most on eggs. The other was considerably larger, of 1300 pairs, some on eggs, while others had recently hatched young. These were the only positive proof of breeding species but the presence of Little Shearwater and White-faced Storm-Petrel burrows indicated that these species also utilised this island and indeed, may have been present at the time of our visit. A further fifteen species were recorded there — four terns, five waders, two bushbirds and the remainder seabirds.

The impact of development on these birds could be devastating, as many species return to the island from which they originated, burrowing pairs use the same nest year after year and the island is not a large one. No matter what mitigating measures are taken, the toll will be high. There is also a matter of underwater destruction, as much of the beautiful coral just off this island would be impacted upon by the construction of a jetty, and the likelihood of private boat owners utilising the area and causing further damage. All could contribute small amounts of hydrocarbons or other pollution.

The very next island visited, Dick Island, revealed something unknown or never recorded before. A White-faced Storm-Petrel chick was found in a Little Shearwater burrow. This

species usually dig their own burrows, and can be recognised by their smaller size. I wondered if this had been happening for many years. Was it a response to density pressures, so little suitable substratum for a burrow that was not already in use? Little Shearwaters nest earlier than this species and are normally gone by this time of year, though a few may persist in the area at sea.

A further five islands were visited on this day. All except one had breeding Bridled Terns, but all were recorded with breeding birds or evidence of breeding during this season. Nearing day's end we sailed for Turtle Bay, a sheltered area in the north of East Wallabi Island where we anchored overnight, with the opportunity to swim in the clear seas here.

Day four, 14 December began with the southward trip to the Easter Group. The seas were moderately rough during the earlier part of this passage but calming as we neared our destination. In the course of the morning, four islands were surveyed, the second of which was Alexander Island. This provided one small highlight, a single White-winged Triller. Most bushbirds found away from the larger Wallabi Islands are vagrants, with the exception of the Silvereye. Those seen over the course of the trip included Welcome Swallow and Richard's Pipit as well as another White-winged Triller. Leo Island was the largest of these four and the most productive. At least twenty pairs of Silver Gulls were breeding there, plus Bridled Terns and fourteen pairs of Caspian Terns. We observed a Sooty Oystercatcher distraction display but what it was protecting remained unseen. There were thousands of Sooty Terns. They nest underneath vegetation somewhat like Bridled Terns but in higher densities and are easily approachable on the nest. Some eggs were tested for freshness before being sequestered for the museum, and during this I found that a bird would vacate the nest more readily if the egg was new, but if it was under incubation the bird would hold fast in most cases, even attacking an outstretched hand. More White-faced Storm-Petrels were found here. There are so many burrows that it is very difficult to walk around in some areas as the ground can collapse underfoot. On two separate occasions an adult bird was found trying to extricate itself from the sands. On both occasions they had been incubating, but unfortunately the eggs were damaged when excavating in search of them. Some birds were found dead, and if in a reasonable state these were taken for DNA tests. I found two dead juvenile Caspian Terns, one more desiccated than the other. Of interest was the difference in the bill shape/structure. The fresher bird had a shortish stout red black bill that one might normally attribute to this species while the other was more orange, longer, more slender and with a longer nasal cavity. I personally only recorded fifteen species on this island, not a great diversity, but the sheer numbers were something else. A further two islands visited that afternoon revealed that both had breeding bird populations.

On 15 December we had a later start, because the anchorage off Leo Island is via a narrow deep winding channel, more easily negotiated with the sun overhead so that the clear waters reveal the submerged hazards. Nonetheless we landed on Suomi Island at 0745 and walked the length of this 'moonscape' looking for birds. This island is characterised by

large rolling waves of coral rubble over much of its length. Only small pockets of vegetation exist apart from the mangrove lined lagoon and marine breakaways. A very short stretch of water separates this island from the next, Keru Island. I recorded twenty-one species here.

Morley Island has a large assemblage of mangroves and I recorded nineteen species here. I only found two of these to be breeding, 225 pairs of Crested Terns and 10 000 pairs of Lesser Noddy. Having never seen a Lesser Noddy before this was an awesome sight, birds packed like sardines in a can, some building or refurbishing nests while others were on single eggs or defending territory. The Abrolhos is one of only two places in the world where this species breeds, the other is the Seychelles. These birds are like many other pelagic birds, they only come to land to breed after which they spend the rest of the year at sea. A couple of ladies inquired of me as to what bird made such large 'droppings' found beneath a cross high on a beach, and I told them they were pellets regurgitated rather than passed as they had thought, Ron confirmed they were from White-bellied Sea Eagle. While collecting some of these for Ron to inspect one of these ladies related falling in a hole after collapsing a nest burrow. A bird had been seen struggling in the aftermath. Could they show me where it was? No one wanted to return as it really is difficult trying to negotiate one's way across many sandy areas littered with burrows and no matter how careful you are, some collapses will occur. I was told that if I could follow their tracks I would find it and find it I did. It proved to be a juvenile Little Shearwater that should have left by now. I found this very interesting.

After lunch on board *Odyssey* we went to Rat Island where there are a number of fisherman's shacks. This island was one among many others that were subjected to guano mining. This was a precious commodity, so much so that all vegetation was removed, soil pushed up and all moveable rocks were stacked in rows like stone walls, and the last guano dust swept up and bagged. Rats were in plague proportions during this time and cats were introduced to kill the rats. This was devastating for the birdlife, so much so that no seabird has been recorded nesting there since. That was until this year. We found approximately 300 Fairy Terns on eggs, a heartening discovery that may see other species begin to use this island once again.

When surveying Little Sandy Island some people opted to go snorkelling to view the corals. A small number of Sea Lions were slumbering there but soon took to the water when disturbed. They were overtaken by curiosity for those snorkelling and most moved in for a closer look. Big bull Sea Lions can be very intimidating, especially as their size is magnified through goggles underwater, but one can't help but marvel at their agility in the water. One of the most obliging was another juvenile with a radio transmitter, perhaps in a playful mood as I saw it pushing a rock around on the sandy sea floor.

The last island for this day was Wooded Island, which also has a large lagoon within that is surrounded by mangroves. From a distance it could easily be seen that this island hosted many nesting birds. The most prominent or most easily seen were Pied Cormorants. The mangroves in which their nests were present were painted white with guano. Lesser Noddy

were also present in great abundance, Silver Gulls with egg and runners, Bridled Terns nesting, the list goes on. Large numbers of Sooty Terns (3500) and Roseate Terns (1000) were breeding on the eastern side of the lagoon. Roseate Terns were on the wing as people neared the colony. Nest numbers and clutch size had previously been assessed so the birds were a little more flighty than they might normally have been. Amid the many birds in the air I was confronted by a sight I had never seen before, a bird unlike any of the others, it flew directly in front of me, coming back around and hovering back and forth in front of me at head height. On later reflection, I thought it had been contemplating landing on me. The bird was a White Tern. Even though I had never seen one before I knew what it was, and of course, I was compelled to try and get a photo of it. This I managed to do but it was out of focus when taken. The next thing was to notify others so the sighting could be verified. Kevin Coate and two ladies were nearby, and Kevin first proclaimed it as an albino Roseate Tern but agreed it was a smaller bird and that the tail was not so deeply forked. Kevin was also so inspired that we were both then trying for further photos. Eventually it landed on a dead mangrove branch mid way across the lagoon. I notified Ron Johnstone and he suggested it might be a White Noddy, as one had been seen here before. Ron followed where Kevin had gone, to where the White Tern had landed. Both had excellent photo opportunities, I stayed, believing that it would be frightened off and probably fly back in my direction. When I reached the area where it was perched it then decided to take to the wing again, my photo opportunities lost. This was only the second sighting of a White Tern in Western Australia, the first being from the Ashmore Reef. A further thirteen species were also noted on this island. What a fantastic day.

Day 6, 16 December began with a survey of three remaining islands of interest in this group - Sandy, Disappearing and Dry Islands. Disappearing, as the name suggests, sometimes disappears after prolonged spates of rough weather erode the island away only to have forces of nature rebuild it when conditions change. This is only a small island perhaps 100m long and maybe 25 m at its widest point yet 11 species were seen here, most roosting.

We then sailed for the Pelsaert Group, a little confusing when the first island surveyed had the same name as one surveyed earlier in the morning, Sandy Island. On this occasion we were able to conduct the survey from onboard *Odyssey*, the water dropping to sufficient depth that this large vessel was able to get close enough for all birds to be identified and counted through binoculars. Gun Island, another island that was extensively mined for guano, was also surveyed before lunch.

In the afternoon we split into two separate groups, surveying a separate group of small islands. Many of these islands had

never been named; One Island, Two Island and so on, up to Eight Island are named by number. I went with Ron Johnstone's group doing One, Two, Davis, Sweet, Stick and Square Island. The first three of these are small but two of them provided small highlights. On One Island someone spotted a small blackish bird running, and this proved to be a Spotless Crake. They are not uncommon at the Abrolhos but as usual, not easily or readily seen. On Davis Island we saw a Richard's Pipit, a vagrant in these parts.

Sweet Island is another that was extensively mined for guano. Precious little soil remains but where it does, the vegetation is healthy and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters have utilised every available space for a burrow. There are many loose rocks piled up, most in lines, which will remain as they are for many years as they seem to have been built by stone masons, like the stone fences one might see in the English countryside.



White Tern, Wooded Island, Abrolhos  
Photo: Les George

On Square Island we found the largest colony of breeding Roseate Terns, an estimated 5500-6000 birds. Most had eggs, many of these were doubles and one clutch of three eggs was found while others had recently hatched young. There were also a few Sea Lions seen here but these birds would have been safe from them as they were largely positioned on small pieces of coral rubble with a slope of about thirty five degrees. Sea Lions prefer sand or low lying areas and appear to particularly like beds of salt tolerant vegetation like *Haloscarcia*. They have no thoughts for the nesting birds that

inhabit these islands alongside them and I expect that many become casualties to these lumbering bulldozers, as a full grown male can weigh 300 kg.

On the morning of 17 December we split into two parties again. Those that wished to, saw the large Roseate Tern colony on Square Island while the others surveyed Middle Island, off which we had anchored overnight. On Middle Island there were Ospreys nesting on the northern point with two juveniles while a pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles had reared two young toward the southern end. Pacific Gull nests were also located close to the Osprey nest but no young were seen. This island consists mainly of rock yet many sink holes and rock crevices showed signs of fresh earth, indicating that Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were present, or at least trying to excavate, but whether any of these had any depth could not be determined. Someone also found a skeleton of an albatross, and from the skull it was found to be a Yellow-nosed Albatross, the bill still retaining enough colour for it to be identified.

From here we moved on to Pelsaert Island, the largest island in this group and a very important one. Landing at a small jetty at 9.35 am on the western side about 2.5 km up from the southern end we walked south. Silver Gulls were the first breeding birds encountered with large runners, Sooty Terns and Common Noddies were in tens of thousands, 60-70 000

respectively. This is one area of very intense breeding activity. Where suitable soils occur Wedge-tailed Shearwaters have burrows underground, above this Sooty Terns nest under shrubs growing there and then there are Common Noddies nesting on the canopy of these same shrubs, in effect, three tiers of nesting birds. Common Noddies were seen to land on beaches and ingest small pieces of shell grit, presumably for calcium input for egg laying. The bird numbers here are a sight to behold. We found a further 16 Grey Teal, once again considered vagrant in this area. Of interest, Kevin Coate found a Red-tailed Tropicbird skeleton, a species that had been recorded nesting here (eight nests in 1956) but they had abandoned Pelsaert Island by 1963. There have been sporadic sightings since.

After lunch onboard we landed at the same jetty but this time walked north. Common Noddies could be seen flying south toward the nesting colony at an estimated 100 birds per minute. Small numbers of Bridled Terns were nesting, five pairs of Fairy Terns had scrapes and fifty pairs of Crested Terns were on eggs. Next we came across more Lesser Noddies, the mangrove clusters patchy and not so robust as in other locations and nesting did not occur in all clusters. Some of the birds here had young. Here we found Wedge-tailed and Little Shearwater burrows, more albatross skulls but not readily identifiable, and another colony of Crested Terns close to the end of Wader Lagoon, approximately mid way up this island. There was one bird seen here not previously recorded during this trip, a single Great Knot among a few Bar-tailed Godwits. Another very successful day drew to an end.

Our final day began when we left the island at Wader Lagoon. Waders had been regularly seen throughout our trip but they were sparsely placed, the most regularly sighted being Ruddy Turnstone. This area held the largest aggregation of waders seen by me, with seven species, mostly Bar-tailed Godwits. One godwit had flags, the combination familiar to me as I see the same at Carnarvon, white over black flags on the right tarsus, which tells me this bird was banded in Chongming Dao, Shanghai, China between April 2003 and April 2006. This bird was approximately 7300 km from its marking location. As we moved northward, still more breeding Lesser Noddies were found in mangroves plus 700 Roseate Terns on eggs. There were two separate colonies of Crested Terns. The first consisted of about 85 pairs on eggs. The second was near the northern tip and was the largest group that we saw, with approximately 1200 pairs. Most if not all had young, most of which were at runner stage, but also ranging from small to well feathered and possibly close to flying. The only two Whimbrels seen on the trip, plus Grey Plover and Grey-tailed Tattler, were seen,

A visit to Newman Island produced another colony of Roseate Terns, this one interspersed with breeding Fairy

Terns. Another three colonies of Fairy Terns were found, many with double clutches. The two largest of these had about 50 pairs while the other had only two. The territorial behaviour of a pair of Caspian Terns indicated they had something to protect too but nothing was seen. The last island that I landed on was Rotondella Island, a small island among many with fisherman's shacks in the island cluster to the north of Pelsaert Island. One other island, Hummock Island, was landed on before sailing for the mainland.

If there ever was a chance that the resort development on Long Island could be rescinded I would encourage everyone to add their voice. There are many islands that have been degraded by guano mining; a much more environmentally friendly choice could have been made.

**Les George**

## SICK RAVENS AT EYRE

In December 2007 a flock of juvenile Australian Ravens descended on Eyre and continued to enjoy the area, including the watering points at the Eyre Bird Observatory. They made themselves at home and then in mid to late February it was noticed that some seemed to be walking around with wings hanging low. It was first thought these might have a broken or dislocated wing.

The low wing tips would tend to drag on the ground and leave a distinct drag mark either side of the footprints. Evidence of similar prints was found near the well and also around the three-kilometre peg on the north track. As time passed it was more evident that they were unwell and early in

March a couple of birds were seen sitting hunched up at a watering point.

They seemed to sit most of the day hunched up and their heads tended to be fuzzy, not sleek as with the other ravens. Once the birds reached this stage their end was near and within the next day or so I would find a dead bird. Not all birds would follow these symptoms as we had one bird that hobbled in with its feet clenched. It had great difficulty standing but could still fly.

Another Australian Raven came in to water and was suffering from uncontrollable shakes and lacked

coordination. It had great difficulty in obtaining a drink as it kept falling over and the other ravens would peck it if near to them.

In all we would have lost seven Australian Ravens that I know of and who knows how many may have died further from the observatory. The flock is still far from depleted though, with estimates of between fifty and one hundred coming in to water most days

**Roger McCallum**



Sick Raven just lying at the birdbath.  
*Photo: Roger and Cheryl McCallum*



Baits have been ruled out as the nearest laid 1080 is 20 km north of the Nullarbor. Australian Ravens from that area would not travel to Eyre to feed and drink, as they would feed on road kills on the Eyre Highway. One thought is that *Nitraria billardierei*, a native plant with olive size purple berries, may be the cause. Roger reports that the ravens were eating, and regurgitating, large numbers of these berries. He will collect some for analysis. However, it is unlikely that the berries were the cause as they were a valuable food item for Aborigines. They are also a favourite of Emus.

Since then, Roger has found very small grubs or worms in the water on the tank. He doesn't know if a raven had left them but suspects they have as these are the main water points used by these birds. The worms were 3 to 4 mm long and very sluggish.

Subsequent to that communication a tapeworm has been found in the water point. Roger wonders if that may have come from the ravens. It has been collected and will be forwarded to Perth. A veterinarian passing through felt a tapeworm probably wouldn't concern Australian Ravens. It is certainly a mystery and we will await developments.

**A de Rebeira**  
**Eyre data curator**

## BLACK BITTERN SIGHTING

During the Pemberton campout in early March, I was sitting at a picnic table beside Lefroy Brook, which runs along the edge of the caravan park. It was about 2:00 pm, mild, sunny and still.

From a partly submerged log beneath a larger log, which serves as a bridge across the creek, I thought I saw something dark slip soundlessly into the water. It sent out concentric ripples but the water was clear and very shallow, so I was surprised that I couldn't see something swimming around.

Thinking it might be a water-rat, I walked round to the end of the log with my husband. As he stepped up onto the log bridge to get a better view, a dark bird, about the size of a Nankeen Night Heron, flew up from directly below him.

The bird flew to the opposite side of the creek, settling among some tall shrubs. It was still clearly visible, about 12 metres away from us. As we both had binoculars with us we were able to see that it was a typical bittern shape, with long pointed bill. The overall colouring was black, with a conspicuous yellow marking below the eye and curving down the side of the neck. It was boldly streaked black and white on the front of the neck and breast.

We watched the bird for several minutes (five – ten) and I was able to take some photos before it again flew.



Black Bittern at Pemberton.  
Photo: Peter Taylor

By then, two other observers had joined us. The bird landed by a log further downstream, keeping to the shadows of overhanging vegetation. By walking quietly back past my original position, they were able to watch the bird for five to ten minutes before it again flew, this time to a higher perch in a Peppermint tree. It was still visible, about two metres above the ground, on exposed twigs beneath the foliage and I was able to take another photo before it flew further downstream, beyond the road bridge.

After discussing individual impressions and consulting a field guide, we decided it was an adult Black Bittern.

In retrospect, what I had thought to be a water-rat was possibly the bittern's head darting out to snatch at prey.

Later in the afternoon, Peter Taylor visited the site. He was able to confirm our decision and also to take more photos of a bittern as it skulked in shadows beneath the road bridge.

Peter also reminded us that Black Bitterns were recorded nesting, a few kilometres downstream from this site, in late November 2006 (see *Western Australian Bird Notes* 121: 4). On this occasion they raised three chicks.

Peter posted photos on the Australasian Bird Image Database website, which resulted in a response from Jeff Davies, suggesting that this one was probably an immature bird due to the rufous scalloping on the feathers.

A single Black Bittern was also seen by David Secomb (Dick Shore is incorrectly credited with the sighting in *Western Australian Bird Notes* 124: 7, December 2007) on 11.8.07, at Carey Road, in the Manjimup area (not far from Beedelup Falls).

**Pam Agar**

## HIGH MORTALITY OF SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATERS

The last issue of *Western Australian Bird Notes* (No. 125, pp 31-33) carried an article on dead Short-tailed Shearwaters picked up along beaches at the Eyre Bird Observatory in November 2007. A total of 52 dead birds were counted on 10 November 2007 and another survey covering four kilometres counted 75 dead birds.

It was interesting to note that dead birds had also been found at Esperance, Cape Arid and Eucla.

I received a report from Anne Gadsby and Vivienne Hillyer from Bremer Bay of a beach survey they conducted on 20/21 November 2007. What stood out was that they mentioned finding 24 dead Short-tailed Shearwaters along the beach! This was near Point Ann and St Mary Inlet.

There seems to have been a high mortality rate of Short-tailed Shearwaters in the month of November 2007 along the southern coastline.

**Marcus Singor**

## SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATERS AT CROAJINGOLONG

In the last issue of *Western Australian Bird Notes* (No. 125, pp 31-33) in the item "Birds stranded on Kanidal Beach at Eyre Bird Observatory" it was reported that many Short-tailed Shearwaters had been found dead on the beach and this reminded me of a similar experience.

I lived in Mallacoota in Croajingolong National Park Victoria, along the Wilderness Coast of the south-east corner of Australia 1981-93. It is a wildly beautiful corner of the world.

In the early 1990s an enormous quantity of mutton birds, Short-tailed Shearwaters, greater than the EBO's report, washed up along the coastline at that time. This wash-up extended for days, with more birds coming in on the tide for perhaps a week or two. There was a dead bird every metre along the shore on all the beachfronts and bays. (This is not exaggerated.) At the time, I enquired at our local National Parks office, and also through speaking with others, I learned it was widespread and continuous, with other reports well north into NSW and far west into Victoria. The consensus then was this mass destruction was probably caused by a storm out to sea.

Over Easter, I spoke with the Head Ranger of VicParks, Phil Reichelt, who recalls that time. He commented that this occurs when low pressure systems cause severe weather and gale force winds. This mass death is a natural occurrence, and whilst not to the same magnitude, occurs from time to time. I can supply Phil's contact details if needed.

I also spoke with 'Bushy Bob', Bob Semmens, retired National Parks Ranger, BA member, Bird Atlasser and area co-ordinator. He also commented that in that year, which we decided was 1992, he counted an estimated 500 bodies of Short-tailed Shearwaters from the Mallacoota Entrance to the NSW border. He commented that head winds and rough seas also contribute to the birds' likelihood of not being able to feed because the ocean is too rough. Also, the long migratory journey would cause fatigue. They migrate south down the east side of the Pacific and cut down across to Australia's south-east and southern coast. Bob is happy to discuss this as well and has documentation if required.

I just thought I'd throw my hat into the ring! Hope this helps.

Sue Kalab



Hutt River looking west.

Photo: Colin Heap

## HUTT RIVER WADERS, SUMMER 2008

The Hutt River and Hutt Lagoon can be found half way between Geraldton and Kalbarri near the township of Port Gregory. Nestled amongst the sand dunes, the place is a paradise for beach or boat fishing, protected by a coral reef that forms a bay for all boats and swimming. Normally the bad weather just bypasses the area. I had the pleasure of staying there for six weeks this year and recorded the wader populations.

The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Additional survey results are shown from previous years.



Hutt Lagoon looking south — always water here.

Photo: Colin Heap

Hutt Lagoon can fill through leakage from large poly pipes pumping sea water to nominated farming paddocks at a mine site, or at very high tides with sea water seeping through the coastal sand dunes further to the north. During summer the lake turns pink then dries out leaving a very large salt pan.

The Hutt River has a sand bar across the entrance and a small island in the estuary and has not been tidal for at least three years. Wader numbers started to drop at the beginning of March 2008 after a week of 40°C+ and maintained that pattern until we left. On 3 March 2008 at Hillock Point (Port Gregory) I saw 20 Pied

Oystercatchers and two Sooty Oystercatchers. Quad bikes, trail bikes and dune buggies were noted as conservation threats.

Colin Heap

	14-Mar 2007	21-Mar 2007	13-Jun 2007	9-Aug 2007	12-Aug 2007	3-Feb 2008	5-Feb 2008	8-Feb 2008	12-Feb 2008	23-Feb 2008	24-Feb 2008	29-Feb 2008	4-Mar 2008
Bar-tailed Godwit						3	1	3			2		1
Eastern Curlew	1	1											
Whimbrel													
Common Greenshank	1	2			1	2	5	2	4	1	4	4	1
Common Sandpiper				3			1	2	2	3	4	2	2
Ruddy Turnstone							1	1			1		
Red-necked Stint						21	2	8	6	3	6		1
Sanderling						2							
Pied Oystercatcher	1	1				2				1			1
Black-winged Stilt	6	4	2	5	6	6	5	2	2			3	2
Banded Stilt													
Red-necked Avocet													
Grey Plover						5	6	2	2	2			2
Red-capped Plover	2	6		2	2	22	11	19	8	11	10	3	4
Black-fronted Dotterel	6	1			1								
Eastern Reef Egret	1	1					1	3	3			2	
Great Egret	1	1	1		2					2	1		
White-faced Heron	4	2			4	1		1	1	1	1		1
	10-May 2005	30-Sep 2005	13-Feb 2006	10-Mar 2006	21-Mar 2006	22-Mar 2006	27-Mar 2006	5-Apr 2006					
Bar-tailed Godwit													
Eastern Curlew													
Whimbrel													
Common Greenshank			x	x	x	x							
Common Sandpiper							x						
Ruddy Turnstone													
Red-necked Stint													
Sanderling													
Pied Oystercatcher						x							
Black-winged Stilt													
Banded Stilt													
Red-necked Avocet													
Grey Plover													
Red-capped Plover	x	x			x	x	x	x					
Black-fronted Dotterel													
Eastern Reef Egret					x		x	x					
Great Egret	x	x			x		x	x					
White-faced Heron			x		x			x					
Present not counted "x"													

Table 1: Waders recorded at Hutt River (HR) between 2005 and 2008.

	12-Feb 2006	28-Dec 2006	10-Mar 2007	12-Jun 2007	12-Aug 2007	2-Feb 2008	8-Feb 2008	10-Feb 2008	12-Feb 2008	14-Feb 2008	23-Feb 2008	24-Feb 2008	4-Mar 2008
Bar-tailed Godwit								1	4	1	1		1
Whimbrel		1								2	3	1	1
Common Greenshank			2	1			4		3				
Common Sandpiper		6	3		1		3		1		4		8
Ruddy Turnstone			1			2	4		5	8	2		3
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1												
Red-necked Stint			8			28	11		8	45	95	126	10
Curlew Sandpiper								8					
Sanderling													
Pied Oystercatcher													
Black-winged Stilt		20	15	20	26	40	48	1	28	7	6	11	3
Banded Stilt		300+	200+					14		19	20		
Red-necked Avocet		30	30	150+	24	85	4		10	6	3		
Grey Plover						3			1	4		5	2
Lesser Sand Plover	1												
Red-capped Plover		30	30	30		113	19		25	34	27	20	20
Eastern Reef Egret													
Great Egret													
White-faced Heron				1									
	15-May 2005	19-Sep 2005	11-Feb 2006	12-Feb 2006	15-Feb 2006	17-Feb 2006	2-Mar 2006	13-Mar 2006	13-Apr 2006	14-Apr 2006	21-Apr 2006		
Bar-tailed Godwit													
Whimbrel													
Little Curlew				x	x		x	x	x				
Common Greenshank											x		
Common Sandpiper					x		x	x	x				
Ruddy Turnstone				x		x	x	x	x	x			
Red-necked Stint			x		x				x	x	x		
Curlew Sandpiper	x												
Sanderling	x			x	x	x							
Pied Oystercatcher													
Black-winged Stilt	x	x		x							x		
Banded Stilt													
Red-necked Avocet													
Grey Plover													
Red-capped Plover					x		x						
Present not counted "x"													

Table 2: Waders recorded at Hutt Lagoon (HL) between 2005 and 2008.

## CURLEWS AT SOLDIERS COVE

Due to the high water levels associated with a series of high tides over the last few weeks I am regularly sighting between one and five Eastern Curlews on the peninsula at Soldiers Cove in Mandurah. Most activity is when this area is flooded or close to being flooded and the birds are either feeding or roosting on the eastern side of the peninsula. The series of high tides have meant that I am seeing the birds more often than in previous years. The area is not visited every day.

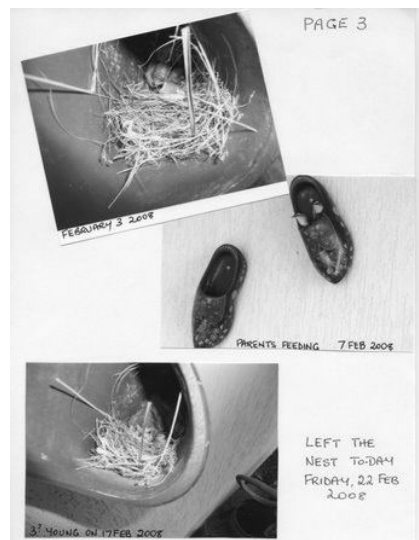
### Dick Rule

Date	Eastern Curlew	Whim-brel	Date	Eastern Curlew	Whim-brel
02.09.06	2	4	21.04.07		6
06.09.06	2		07.05.07		3
14.09.06	1		19.05.07		1
16.09.06	4	4	20.05.07		3
03.11.06		1	21.05.07		1
06.11.06		4	29.07.07		1
08.11.06		1	05.08.07		1
13.11.06		1	11.10.07		1
19.11.06		1	30.10.07		1
26.11.06		1	01.11.07		1
27.11.06		1	02.11.07		1
29.11.06		2	09.11.07		1
02.12.06	1		11.11.07		1
03.12.06	1		22.11.07		2
04.12.06	1		23.11.07		2
08.12.06		1	27.11.07		2
29.12.06	1	1	28.11.07		1
31.12.06	1		08.01.08		2
03.01.07		3	10.01.08		1
13.01.07		1	10.01.08		1
14.01.07		1	18.02.08	1	1
15.01.07	1		19.02.08	1	
17.01.07		1	20.02.08	1	2
18.01.07	1		04.03.08	1	
19.01.07		1	25.03.08	1	
21.01.07		1	05.04.08	2	
22.01.07		1	06.04.08	3	
23.01.07		1	07.04.08	1	
26.01.07		1	08.04.08	2	
27.01.07		1	09.02.08	2	
28.01.07		1	10.04.08	3	
02.02.07		2	11.04.08	2	
03.02.07		3	13.04.08	2	
06.02.07	1	2	14.04.08	2	
07.02.07		3	15.04.08	1	
09.02.07	1	2	16.04.08	5	
13.02.07		1	17.04.08	1	
14.02.07		1	19.04.08	1	
02.03.07	1		21.04.08	2	
03.03.07	1	1	22.04.08	5	
16.03.07		1	23.04.08	4	
17.03.07	1		24.04.08	1	
24.03.07		1	25.04.08	2	
28.03.07		1	26.04.08	2	
16.04.07	1		28.04.08	3	
17.04.07	1				
20.04.07	1				

## PARDALOTES AT THE FRONT DOOR

In November 2007 Lorna Verboon, of Waterside Mandurah, advised me that she had Striated Pardalotes nesting in a decorated wooden Dutch clog near her front door.

In February Lorna advised that the four eggs had hatched and the parents had almost immediately started to prepare the nest



Striated Pardalotes nesting.

*Photo: Lorna Verboon*

again. The hen laid another four eggs of which three hatched successfully.

The interesting thing is that the clog is located right alongside the front door and people coming and going obviously did not disturb the birds. It demonstrated to me that if conditions are right, birds will raise multiple clutches, and that they must have felt secure enough in this position to raise both clutches. Perhaps, it points to limited suitable nesting locations in the area.

More recently Lorna has contacted me concerned that she had not observed the birds for some weeks. I was able to assure her that Striated Pardalotes usually migrate north east in March and April and will return in spring.

**Dick Rule**

## A SQUARE-TAILED KITE IN EAST FREMANTLE

On 16 February at about 1500 hrs I was in my back yard in Palmyra when I heard ravens making their excited 'invitation to mob' calls, as they often do here when calling in recruits to drive off passing birds of prey. I looked up, hoping to catch a glimpse of perhaps an Osprey high overhead, which in recent years is the large bird of prey species I most often see from here and generally in the vicinity of the Canning Highway. My sightings of Little Eagles, always a favourite target for Australian Ravens and Australian Magpies, over Palmyra and Fremantle are definitely on the decline, while Whistling Kites and Swamp Harriers are still occasional visitors high overhead.

Instead, I was astonished to see a Square-tailed Kite in all its glory only a few metres above me, gliding around the crown of the red-flowering gum in our backyard. The kite was so low that I could immediately see that it was a dark-headed juvenile, with richly coloured body and underwing feathering and the usual closely barred primaries and slightly notched tail. It otherwise looked uninjured and in good condition. It flew in a loop back around our garden, crossed Marmion

Street, looped again and then glided on low across my neighbours' gardens, making a couple more backtracking banking turns as it slowly made its way west over Carrington Street. With a few Australian Ravens and Australian Magpies still in half-hearted pursuit, my last glimpses of it were of the 'wobbly dihedral' silhouette gliding on to the west, barely at rooftop level, over the Petra Street rise — and into East Fremantle.

In some 31 years of bird-of-prey spotting around Perth, including hundreds of encounters with these fabulous raptors along or near the Darling Scarp I have never before seen a Square-tailed in the inner coastal suburbs, anywhere between the river and Thomsons Lake, South Street and Cannington. But I do recall that the late Tom Spence reported seeing this species occasionally over South Perth Zoo in the 1970s.

Perhaps others have been lucky enough to chance on birds occasionally wandering into coastal plain suburbia in recent times?

Peter Curry

*Editors' Note:* A juvenile Square-tailed Kite was seen by Neil Hamilton, Allan Burbidge and others at Woodvale Nature Reserve on 6 February. This could possibly be the same bird seen 10 days later by Peter Curry.

## MEMORIES

I expect most readers will remember the ongoing column 'What's in a Name?' in the members' contributions of *Western Australian Bird Notes*. The last of these to be printed was in the No. 112, December 2004 issue. No. 113, March 2005 issue was printed with an obituary in which we learnt Colin Davis had been the author of 'What's in a Name?' His pen name had been Geronticus.

The explanations given to how and why birds were so named in 'Col's' own words and reflecting his thoughts may not have been to the liking of all but it did give an insight into the

man he was. I had reason to re-read all of those articles, looking for words that hinted at who the author was but I failed to find the words that stick in my mind. In reference to the bald head of the Australian White Ibis my recollection of his words were, "reminiscent of ones erstwhile self". I did find similar, and in the section relating to ibis. Col drew a likeness between Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* and Sacred Ibis *T. aethiopica*, the latter much revered by Egyptians for centuries; his words were as follows:

"Today we might understand the reverence in which the bird was held if we study its noble bald head and impressive long bill, as we can see the marks of dignity and intelligence that distinguishes the finer gentlemen among us with similar physical attributes."

As I now reflect on Col's column, I believe it was an effort to inspire readers to delve deeper than just being able to identify a bird or find it in a field guide, and there is a lot to be learnt. I now come to the reason why I was drawn to read Col's meanderings; the name Geronticus is in fact a bird genus. Represented by two species only, the Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* of the Mediterranean (endangered) and Southern Bald Ibis *G. calvus* of southern Africa (vulnerable). Once again we find reference to the bald pate.

Col was described as "having a love of life, his enthusiasm being infectious and he got on with people from all walks of life, he celebrated life and he would rise to any challenge with zest although he had a bit of a mischievous streak to him".

I found Col a friend and mentor and I considered trying to revive his 'What's in a Name?' but I couldn't do him justice. There have been times when I come upon a rare or little seen bird and I find myself attributing these finds to Col; I even voiced such words to Ron Johnstone on finding the White Tern on the Abrolhos in December 2007.

Col may not be with us any more but he *is* still weaving his magic.

Les George



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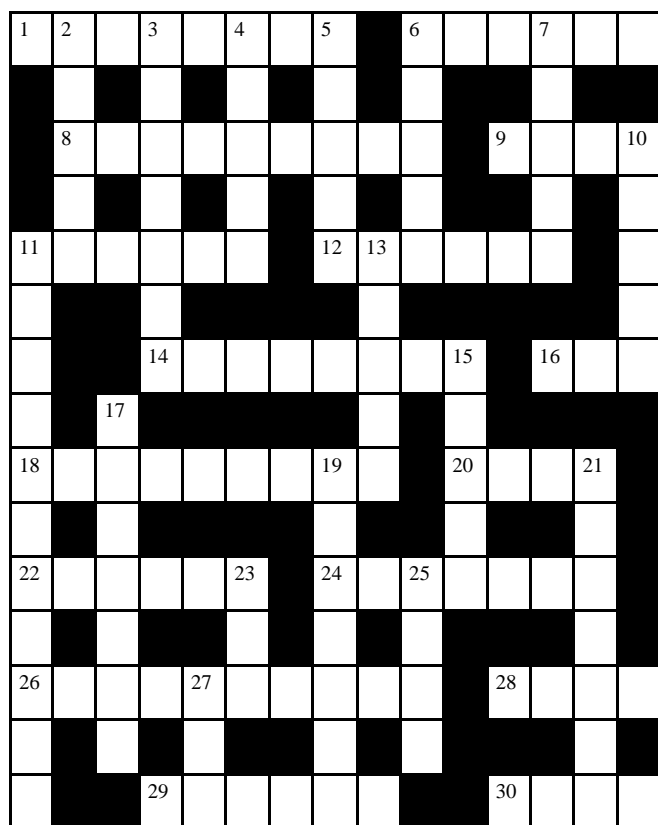
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By Pam Agar



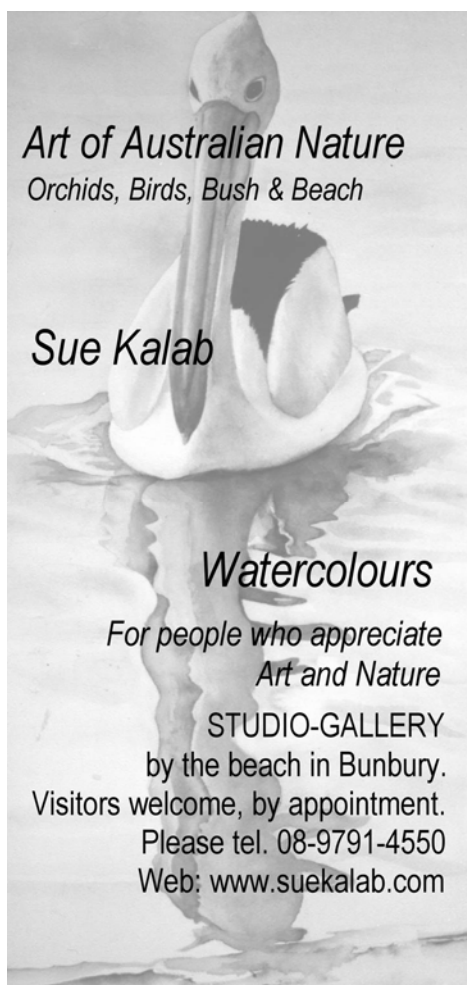
## Clues across

### Clues across

1. Circular feeding shape.
6. Display of Pied Honeyeater.
8. Tern of inland lakes.
9. Bony projection.
11. Tremulous high-pitched sounds.
12. Wet, marshy.
14. Family of secretive waterbirds.
16. Keep binoculars this way.
18. To set up.
20. Cumbersome if you're banding.
22. Product of forests.
24. Restricted to an area.
26. Explain by drawing.
28. Fairy Martin nest site.
29. Saved for later reference.
30. Family Alaudidae.

## Clues down

2. Less elevated.
3. Bird fond of caterpillars.
4. Bodies of water.
5. Graceful birds of lakes, seas.
6. Generic name of White-necked Heron.
7. To suggest.
10. Nature of Sooty Oystercatcher habitat.
11. Of the land.
13. Attribute of measurement.
15. Common name for bird of prey.
17. To lose one's footing.
19. Source of water.
21. To regain possession.
23. Nest site for a plover?
25. Water suited to diving birds.
27. Common excursion day (abbrev.).



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## Digital photos

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Most digital cameras provide an option for selecting the resolution. Low resolution images generally are used only for display on computer monitors and not for printing.



## A CALL FOR HELP

In the four months since I became Chair of BAWA, I have enjoyed several walks and campouts with members and met with various committees to find out how they work. Together with the Executive Committee, I have sought to identify ways in which BAWA may become even more effective in promoting the conservation of our native birds.

The Organisational Chart sets out existing BAWA groups and shows the lines of responsibility. It also includes affiliated groups, most notably BAWA Inc. which has a financial role only. But also included in the Chart are a number of groups and roles that currently do not exist. I believe that, if we can find people to do the things intended for these groups, BAWA will become a more effective organization. A list of vacancies has been drawn up.

The Carnaby's project has management support provided by WWF. Our other projects lack that support and, if we are to conduct further conservation and research projects in the future, it would be an advantage if BAWA office could provide management and financial support to Project Officers. With that support they could get on and do their job more effectively.

Members of the Community Education Committee now help new members when they join BAWA but they have many other things they do in schools, libraries, etc. The idea of a Membership Officer and a Country Groups Officer is to provide a dedicated point of contact that would be supplemented by that provided by the Office volunteers. We need to make new members welcome and enable them to participate fully in BAWA activity. We need to support country groups in their activity. These officers could make sure we do. A Calendar Officer would supplement the WA Bird Notes and make sure all members are able to find out what BAWA activities are taking place via a current calendar of events on the Birds Australia website. We will also need to find a replacement in 2009 for Piers Higgs who has provided BAWA with very valuable assistance in developing our website and IT capacity.

Liz Walker has managed the BAWA office (and everything) but, if she is to enjoy some time for other things and BAWA is to expand its activities, we will need someone to assist her.

If BAWA is to lift its profile in the community and provide more effective support for the conservation of native birds we need working parties to ensure we have the policies, funds and events to achieve our aims.

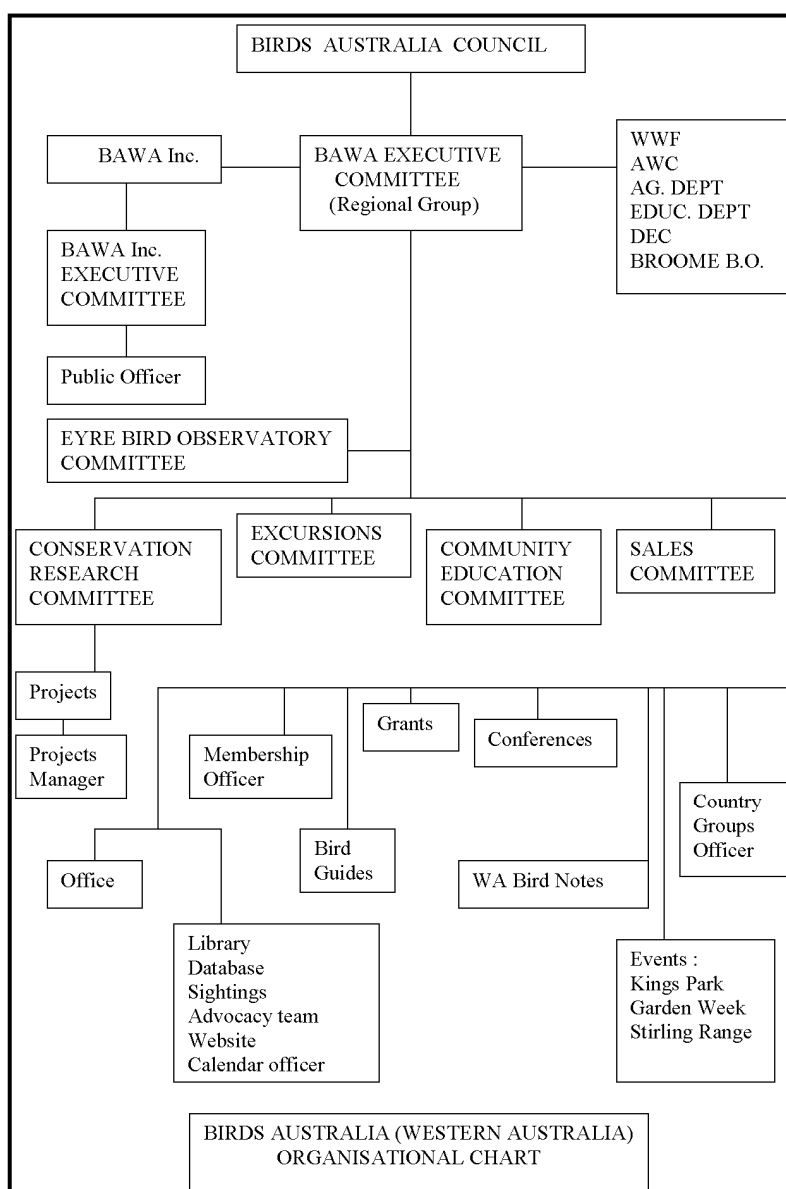
I have been impressed by the willingness of our existing volunteers to take on even more tasks to help BAWA. But for BAWA to sustain a more effective role we need more people willing to assist us in this work.

I invite you to consider what is proposed and see whether you can contribute to our effort. Please contact me if you can help. If you think of some other things that you might be able to do for BAWA I would welcome a call from you. If you are unable to offer assistance at this time but know of someone who may be able to help, please contact them and suggest they contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

In the meantime, enjoy your birding and help to make sure our grandchildren also have birds to enjoy.

Bruce Haynes  
Chair, BAWA



## LIST OF VACANCIES

(9 April 2008)

Interested persons are invited to contact Bruce Haynes, Chair, BAWA on 9 384 7426 or [b.haynes@ecu.edu.au](mailto:b.haynes@ecu.edu.au). The exact nature of these positions is open to negotiation and development in the light of experience.

### Project Management Officer

Volunteer with line management experience willing to provide project management support to Project Officers. Expenses paid. Training for conservation/research project management available.

### Project Finance Officer

Volunteer with accounting/finance background to assist Project Officers with finance management. Assist BAWA Treasurer with BAWA finances.

### Membership Officer

Volunteer to serve as first point of contact for new members and as a supplementary point of contact for members when the office is closed.

### Country Groups Officer

Volunteer to facilitate the development and activity of BAWA country groups and country members.

### Calendar Officer

Volunteer to provide monthly updates of the BAWA calendar on the BA website. This to be done either by providing the information to Melbourne or by learning how to load the information on to the website.

### Website/IT Officer (2009)

Volunteer to provide advice and assistance in maintaining the BAWA and BA websites. To provide advice and assistance in implementing the BAWA IT policy and data management.

### Office Manager (Assistant)

Volunteer to assist Office Manager in BAWA office.

### Policy development working party

Volunteers with experience and/or interest to assist the Conservation and Research Committee in developing conservation/research policies on a range of issues for BAWA

### Fundraising working party

Volunteers with experience and/or interest in corporate fundraising to assist BAWA identify and obtain support for our conservation and research activities.

### Events working party

Volunteers to organise regular events in the BAWA calendar, including Kings Park Festival, Perth Garden Week, Stirling Range walks, etc.

## BAWA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS – 2007

These awards were presented at the Annual General Meeting in February 2008.

**Rod Smith** – has been a member of the Executive Committee and the Eyre Bird Observatory Committee and is still involved in Malleefowl studies at Eyre. He is an avid bird bander and also distributes WABN. He is also the Schools Officer for the Community Education Subcommittee.

**George and Pam Agar** – George has been on the Excursions Committee, and is a passionate member of the Eyre Bird Observatory Committee. Pam and George look after the trading table at each meeting. Pam has for many years hand-made the BAWA name labels and is still involved in the production of the new labels. They have both been involved in the Common Starling and station surveys and are leaders of excursions.

## CHANGE OF NAME

The Cards Sub-committee of Birds Australia WA has a new name. It will henceforth be known as the Sales Committee, though its purpose remains the same: to raise funds for the maintenance of BAWA's office in Peregrine House. The name change reflects the fact that we are now selling hat/lapel badges as well as our successful range of greeting cards, and gives us the opportunity to expand into other merchandise in the future.

We are still a small Committee and welcome volunteers who feel they can offer expertise and/or time to help us.

**Valerie Hemsley**

## ADVANCED BIRD ID CLASSES

The Community Education Sub-committee will be presenting the following classes at the

### WA ECO CENTRE

**167 Piney Lakes Drive, Floreat, WA 6014**

DATES: June 14<sup>th</sup> : Waders, Robins, Thornbills  
June 15<sup>th</sup> : Bird Sounds, Raptors

REGISTRATION: 8.45am Class: 9.00am – 12.00pm

COST: \$10 Dollars per class, to be paid on the day.

**Bookings:** phone the Birds Australia office on 9383 7749 during office hours,

Mon-Fri 9.30am – 12.30pm or email: [mail@birdswa.com.au](mailto:mail@birdswa.com.au). State your name, a contact number, email address and the date of the sessions you wish to attend.

## ALL ABOUT GRANTS

A file in the WA office contains a comprehensive record of available grants for a wide range of activities — research, conservation, community activities, equipment, etc.

The file is kept up-to-date as new grants are advertised. When next at the office be sure to look at the file if you are contemplating a project. Some grants are available only in certain periods, others at any time during the year.

Before you apply for any grant, it is essential that you first notify the Executive Committee by completing an application form which is available at the office. The committee will consider your project and decide whether to support your application. If it is for research, they will need to contact the Conservation and Research Sub-committee for their opinions.

You will then be advised if you can proceed with your application and any conditions to be followed.

Your cooperation in this matter is necessary for the continuing success of the grants program.

Allan K Jones

## Rangeland surveys 2008

This year's Rangeland (or Station) Surveys are expected to be held at the former pastoral stations of Goongarrie and Credo from 16 to 31 August. These locations may change if some adverse event occurs at Credo or Goongarrie.

Goongarrie is located off the Goldfields Highway between Kalgoorlie and Menzies and the building we will be based at is normally accessible by two 2WD vehicles with caution; however 4WD will be needed to access our survey points. There is limited unisex sleeping accommodation, showers and toilets.

Credo is located north of Coolgardie on the Coolgardie North Road near Rowles Lagoon Conservation Park and the road is expected to be usable by 2WD drive but not the tracks to the survey sites. Accommodation there is expected to be better than that available at Goongarrie.

For further details see WABN 125, p. 24.

*The organisers are:*

Ed and Alyson Paull (9299 6283)  
Pam and George Agar (9457 2292)  
Ruth and John Luyer (9384 2098)

## Serventy Memorial Lecture

**Martin Copley: *Private Sector Conservation in Australia, its Role and Contribution***

**7.30 pm, Wednesday 23 July**

**Alexander Library Lecture Theatre, Perth**

**\$10.00**

**Supper**

The Serventy Memorial Fund was established in 1989 as a memorial to the contribution by the Serventy family to the Western Australian Naturalists' Club with the aim of assisting and encouraging young people in the study of natural history. The lecture has been held every year since 1990.

Martin Copley is the founder and chairman of Australian Wildlife Conservancy. More than 10 years ago, Martin purchased an area of land in south-western Australia for conservation. From this small beginning, Martin has successfully promoted the development of AWC as a national conservation organisation dedicated to practical, on-ground conservation and research. There are now 15 sanctuaries including five in Western Australia and AWC also manages Newhaven.

Martin's objectives for AWC are to make a practical contribution to conserving native fauna and habitats while raising awareness of Australia's diverse natural heritage.

## Wellard Wetlands mining

Alcoa World Alumina Australia are currently mining clay in an area off St Albans Road. The St Albans Road access is currently closed until mid May. The area will then be re-opened until the beginning of September at which time mining will be restarted for a period of approximately seven months, until the end of March 2009.

The Zig Zag Road entrance will be open at all times, and fencing is being repaired so visitors cannot enter the construction area unwittingly.

## NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined Birds Australia between 1 February 2007 and 30 April 2008. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings:

D Abbott, C Alexander, M Cross, R Dalton, L & T de Klerk, G Endacott, J Evans, J Gledhill, P Head, M Henryon, C Hick, CA Horton, J Krepp, G Last, S & C Ledger, L L Little & W Merritt, M Love, B Lubbe & L Gravett, L & G R Pathe, J Pearson, P Phillips, M Rogers, A Skipworth, B Smith, M Thomas, P Whiting, P Whittle, L Willett, A Worth



## Country groups



### ALBANY BIRD GROUP

#### ALBANY BIRD GROUP

##### February 2008 outing

This outing was on a very windy day. Twenty of us started at the Lower King Bridge where we saw an Eastern Curlew and a Whimbrel feeding quite close to each other so it was easy to see the difference in size. There was also a Grey-tailed Tattler on rocks near the beach.

On the mud below the Lower Kalgan Bridge we watched other waders fattening up for their migration. Next stop was Prideaux Road, where an Australian Owlet -nightjar was seen, and River View Golf Course for more bush birds. The bird call for the morning was 63 species.

**Liz and Charlie Davies**

##### March 2008 outing

A comparatively windless day, but very cloudy, made for good viewing at the Lake Powell bird hide. We saw quite a few water birds, including Pink-eared Duck, Chestnut Teal and a Little Grassbird. We then went to Morley Beach, where a wader count is usually done in February, but because the bar at Denmark had not been breached this year, and there was no beach, the water was too high for waders. This month there is a little muddy beach and we saw a few Red-necked

Stints and Black-winged Stilts with lots of Black Swans and ducks further out. Mr Morley, whose family has farmed there for years, brought photographs to show us what the area was like in the old days.

We continued to Hay River, where we saw an Osprey, and as we were packing up after lunch, a juvenile White-bellied Sea Eagle flew over. The final count was 61 species.

**Liz and Charlie Davies**

##### April 2008 outing

Twenty of us visited Charlie Hick's farm on Chorkerup Road, Naricup. Charlie had attended the Albany Summer School for Wayne Zadow's birdwatching course, and invited the group to visit his 400 hectare farm, which he purchased five years ago. It had obviously been rather neglected previously, and he had spent a great deal of time improving the property by fencing off large areas of bushland so that cattle and sheep would not graze them. Although we didn't see many birds, we had a very interesting walk around the property, and were invited to return in the spring, when there will be many more birds around. The total count for the day was 33 bird species, a fox and a tiger snake!

**Liz and Charlie Davies**



## Excursion reports



#### PEEL INLET, 3 February

A combined group from Perth and Mandurah met to carry out the annual wader count at Bridgewater Lakes and Mandurah Keys. There were large numbers of ducks on the lakes, Australasian Grebes with young and nine Yellow-billed Spoonbills, though nothing unusual. We then went on to Mandurah Keys where a Cattle Egret was seen and two Pied Oystercatchers out on a lawn, apparently adapting well to their new environment. Hundreds of Little Black Cormorants flew overhead and as we walked around the point it was obvious that Peel Inlet was cormorant heaven with over 1000 Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants counted in just a small portion of the total area of Peel Inlet.

The tide was very high and low numbers of waders were recorded but included Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Wood, Sharp-tailed and Common Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt and Grey Plover. Some of these wader species were seen at Nairns where we had gone after the wader count to have lunch.

A total of 81 species were seen thanks to the enthusiasm of the group.

**Sue Abbotts**

#### WATERFORD FORESHORE, SALTER POINT, MANNING, 14 February

Our birding guides on a very hot Thursday were Molly and Barry Angus. Waterford foreshore proved an excellent location for a walk and 17 of us saw 40 species. Penrhos School students were planting under the spaces between trees, close to the river path, as part of a re-vegetation program. Birds were everywhere, the usual ones as expected, together with many waterbirds.

But the only parrots we saw were a flock of corellas and the only raptor we saw was an Osprey. We particularly enjoyed the Rainbow Bee-eaters swirling around with Tree Martins,

their fantastic colours brilliant in the light. We were lucky seeing White-winged Trillers, beautiful, small, sleekly shaped birds. They were seen on grass beneath larger trees.

Several intrepid folk left after morning tea to have a look at Salters Point with Barry as a guide. It was a very worthwhile trip. Thanks Molly and Barry.

**Jeff and Penny Towells**

### PEMBERTON, 1–3 March

On the Friday evening, we gathered in the usual circle for a birdcall. In Sue's organised manner, the daily activities and some of the birding highlights of recent days were outlined. We explored areas including Big Brook Dam, the twin Karris, Mt Chudalup near Northcliffe, Windy Harbour and Beedelup Falls.

White-breasted Robins, Red-winged Fairy-wrens and Red-eared Firetails were regularly seen around the caravan park. After Sue's close encounter with the Crested Shrike-tit on Friday at Beedelup Falls, this bird decided to be shy but a select few saw one over the weekend. The Rock Parrots at Windy Harbour were only seen by the early birdos. Some had amazing views of a family of Southern Emu-wrens that perched for all to see. While spotlighting we eventually found one of the Southern Boobooks that were calling constantly, then were delighted when another bird came in to feed it. Other highlights were Hooded Plovers, Sanderlings, a noisy young Collared Sparrowhawk and Musk Ducks feeding their young. On Monday afternoon, when most people had departed, Pam and George Agar had excellent views of a Black Bittern in Lefroy Creek where it runs through the Caravan Park. Over the weekend 94 species were recorded.

Thanks go to Sue Abbotts for her running of a smooth camp and organising the 33 or so people who attended.

**Mary Secomb**



Successful climbers, Mt Chudalup, Pemberton campout

*Photo: Barry Angus*

### ASCOT WATERS, 13 March

A few light showers interrupted the bird count but generally it was a pleasant, cool day and ideal for birding.



White-winged Triller  
*Drawing: Penny Towells*

Ten birdos were present and we were glad to welcome a new member, Mark, who promises to be a very welcome addition to our birdwatching ranks.

Just after the walk started, we met project manager Kevin who has been supervising planting and maintaining of trees and shrubs on this former rubbish dump. He said there had been 25 000 plantings in the first year. Also, 10 000 cubic metres of wood chips have been spread over the man made island. Most of the trees are less than six years old. When they mature many more birds should be found here.

We saw 49 species. The highlight was seeing a pair of immature Ospreys perched nearby. There were lots of White-cheeked Honeyeaters. Two flocks of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos totalling 80-100 flew over, going in an easterly direction.

An interesting walk in a very promising and attractive area.

**Tom Delaney**

### QUAALUP HOMESTEAD EASTER CAMPOUT AT FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK, 21–24 March

Mild weather made for a great start to the Easter campout for 32 members at the historic Quaalup Homestead in Fitzgerald River National Park. Despite four bushfires in the area from lightning strikes during summer, the damage did not deter the excursion from making over 100 observations.

Good Friday was spent walking through the homestead land and surrounding property with sightings which included Grey Currawong, Western Yellow Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush, Southern Emu-wren and juvenile Collared Sparrowhawk.

The surroundings of the stone homestead and outlying buildings are well planted with native shrubs and trees and a few bird baths are interspersed in the area. Those lucky enough to have one outside their chalet could add Red-capped Parrots, White-naped Honeyeaters, Red-eared Firetail and the resident albino New Holland Honeyeater to the list by the end of lunchtime.

At the end of the first day, the circle for the bird list was treated to an entertaining tutorial on selected bird calls thanks to David Secomb who brought his power pack and laptop and to Alan Warburton for good speakers. The Western Bristlebird and its mate was the stand-out lesson for one group the next day at Point Ann.

After rain during the night, the muddy convoy stopped for an hour's walk down a track that ran along the old rabbit proof fence in the wide open heath with Southern Emu-wren and

Purple-gaped Honeyeater the highlights, before arriving at the magnificent expanse of the Southern Ocean at Point Ann. This beautiful spot was our base for a couple of hours, with its rocky headland and long swathe of beach to the north, where the sight of 16 Hooded Plovers rewarded a short walk over the sandhills. Earlier a group of 24 had taken flight over the headland. A lone Black Swan swam in the bay.

While exploring the very quiet St Mary's Inlet, the Western Bristlebird called, testing some of us on our new knowledge and before long the hill above the inlet was covered with members enjoying the repeats, but despite the enticements of recordings by Peter Taylor and David Secomb the bird declined to show himself.

On the return road, the convoy was momentarily halted by a family of Brush Bronzewing crossing the road.

Easter Sunday morning at Bremer River Inlet brought a rich harvest of sightings, including a solitary Rock Parrot at the spit and a tranquil pair of Common Greenshanks close to the path along the mudflats.

Bremer Bay sewage works did not escape scrutiny for the Australasian Shoveler, Hardhead, Chestnut and Grey Teal and Pink-eared Duck in amongst the usual suspects. A spell at the caravan park's café back down the road was great for the caffeine jab and for the friendly Western Spinebill along the fence.

Night excursions yielded Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Southern Boobook and a fortunate sighting of a Spotted Nightjar flying across the gate in the beam of the night-light.

The list was 110 by Sunday night and a bottle of wine went to Jean Woodings with acclamation.

Thanks to leader Sue Abbotts for her thorough research and unfailing enthusiasm to make it a very enjoyable and productive Easter.

**Ruth Greble**

### **CANNING RIVER REGIONAL PARK, WILSON, 30 March**

Twenty four participants met at Kent Street Weir on a fine sunny morning for a pleasant stroll around the river. In all 55 species of birds were seen, the waterbirds the most obvious, while the bushbirds were more secretive and scarce.

After morning tea we moved across to Wilson Lake Park where a number of extra species were added to the list including two ducks and Black-fronted Dotterel. Interestingly two other duck species, Pink-eared and Hardhead, which were there the week before, had disappeared, possibly enticed to wetter pastures elsewhere.



White-winged Triller, Bodkin Park, Waterford walk.  
*Photo: Barry Angus*

**George Agar**

### **BOLD PARK, 5 April**

On a wet miserable day six keen birders turned up in the hope that the showers would blow over. No such luck, and after allowing 30 – 45 minutes with no let up it was reluctantly agreed to give up and we all went our separate ways. I'd like to thank those keen souls for turning up... thanks.

**George Agar**

### **RAY MARSHALL PARK, GUILFORD, 13 April**

A perfect day, sunny, warm, windless and ideal for birding along the river and among the giant River Redgums and nearby Blackadder wetlands. Our group of 14 saw 49 species in a very short time. Highlights were large flocks of Little Corella (total estimated at over 400 birds), a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and a beautiful Black-shouldered Kite perched on top of a big Redgum.

This is one of the most pleasant walks, with easy walking, plenty of birds and attractive scenery. I strongly recommend another walk here in November or December.

**Tom Delaney**

### **ELLIS BROOK VALLEY, 20 April**

Birders are stalwart and enthusiastic. We have proof! Twenty three people arrived in plenty of time to start this walk at 7:30 am, despite a chilly morning.

We began by checking the water in the old quarry beside Hillside Farm, where we found five species, including Eurasian Coot and Little Pied Cormorant.

We then walked through to Honeyeater Hollow picnic area on Rushton Road. Activity was limited but we did see Common Bronzewing, Weebill and Grey Fantail.

From the picnic area we followed a new loop trail (Lower Heathland Loop) through wandoo and heathland. Again, it was very quiet and sightings of Scarlet Robin and an immature Red-capped Robin were the most significant.

After returning to the cars, we drove to the end of Rushton Road, where George and I considered the darkening sky and decided on a hurried morning tea so we could complete the walk before the rain set in. (We're obviously terrible weather-readers — no more than brief light drizzle).

Wandoo Woodland trail, along small creeks to the south side of the road, looked promising but yielded little more exciting than Western Rosella and of course more New Holland Honeyeaters.

After rejoining the bitumen we veered off to follow the old road up to Old Barrington Quarry and were able to add Western Spinebill, White-browed Scrubwren and both Red-

winged and Splendid Fairy-wren, before returning via the lookout. Some were lucky enough to see White-breasted Robin and Red-eared Firetail in vegetation along the creek-line.

A final count of 45 species, including a Little Wattlebird at the last minute, but no raptors at all, was reasonably satisfying, though hard-earned.

For anyone interested in exploring the area on their own, a brochure, detailing the walk-trails, is available from the City of Gosnells council offices.

**Pam Agar**



Pacific Gull and Pied Oystercatcher, Windy Harbour, Pemberton campout  
*Photo: Barry Angus*



## Observatory reports

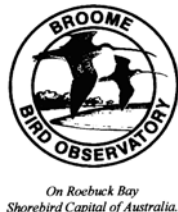


### BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

One of many things that make Broome an ornithologist's paradise is that the birding is rarely predictable. During February, Channel-billed Cuckoos hit the headlines when 16 were reported from Coconut Well just north of Broome. A few years ago this species was considered very unusual in the area but it has become a regular wet season visitor. Oriental Cuckoos were also seen on several days in February. Two national rarities were discovered several hundred metres from the observatory entrance, a magnificent Grey Wagtail, probably the best plumaged individual ever seen in the Broome area, and a rather tatty Franklin's Gull. Two Broome rarities also made an appearance: a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo was seen and heard on several days around the observatory and a Banded Lapwing was found near the Franklin's Gull. Interestingly, the lapwing is rarer in Broome than the gull.

Both the Banded Lapwing and the Franklin's Gull remained in the area long enough to be enjoyed by participants on the March course, 'Wave the Waders Goodbye'. Several swiftlets of various rump colours were seen over Cable Beach, and a single dark rumped bird went widdershins around the solar panels in the company of a Fork-tailed Swift. However, the best was yet to come and a series of coincidences led to the viewing of a Chinese Pond Heron by all participants on the March course. This was the first record for mainland Australia, and it contributed to a record breaking 'Wave the Waders Goodbye' course species count.

The pond heron stayed at the Nimalaica Claypan for a couple of days, but disappeared when the area became busy with fishermen. The Franklin's Gull was last seen at the rubbish tip, looking a lot smarter than when it first appeared six weeks earlier. By late April things became quiet on the rarity front, but two Great Crested Grebes at



*On Roebuck Bay  
Shorebird Capital of Australia.*

**“Two national rarities were discovered ...”**

Nimalaica were a pleasant find, as were the Varied Lorikeets seen whizzing over the observatory early one morning.

The March course may have had the edge with respect to species count, but April was a clear winner in terms of the number and diversity of waders leaving Roebuck Bay for the breeding grounds. Magnificent views were seen of birds in classic V formations flying right overhead. Among the many thousands of birds departing were several of the now famous 15 Bar-tailed Godwits fitted with satellite transmitters. BBO hosted a team of local and international scientists and volunteers in the deployment of these transmitters. At the time of writing, 11 birds have reached China / North Korea where they stop to refuel and three remain in Roebuck Bay (the transmitter of the fifteenth is off air). A link to daily updates can be found via our website: [www.broomebirdobservatory.com](http://www.broomebirdobservatory.com).

We are soon to depart for pastures new, but new wardens, Jon and Anne King, are here to provide more information about the upcoming course 'Birds of the Broome Region', which runs from 12 – 17 September and 11 – 16 October. Email [bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au) or phone 08 9193 5600 to make a booking. Waders begin to return from the breeding grounds in early September and numbers will build steadily over the following months. The number of species seen during courses in September and October will normally eclipse March/April totals because the freshwater lakes of Roebuck Plains are accessible.

**Pete Collins and Holly Sitters**

Ed: See "Deployment of satellite tags on Bar-tailed Godwits at Roebuck Bay, North West Australia, February 2008", p.8



## EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Roger and I have been amateur birdwatchers for many years, thanks to an ex boss Clive Napier who a lot of bird people would know, so to write this report in a place like Eyre is such a privilege.



We arrived at Eyre at the end of January; a flock of juvenile Australian Ravens had taken up residence around the observatory, only to be outdone by the beautiful Major Mitchell's Cockatoos, who noisily arrive night and morning. These birds are absolute timewasters with their antics and I'm sure they enjoy the audience. We have had some sick Australian Ravens as Roger has reported in another article, but there are still enough to go around.

At the water points we still have our regulars like the Singing and New Holland Honeyeaters and the Silvereye that have increased in number lately with the flowering of some mallees. It has been noticeable that we hadn't seen a Red Wattlebird until early March when they arrived for approximately three weeks, in flocks anywhere from 50 to uncountable. They are still present but rarely water at the observatory. The Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater had not been seen until the Red Wattlebirds arrived but we now have quite a few regulars each day, the Brown-headed and Brown Honeyeaters are also present but in smaller, though regular, numbers.

On the tablelands the mallee has started to flower and with that we have identified our first Purple-gaped Honeyeaters who are with flocks of White-fronted and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters. All these beautiful honeyeaters seem to out shine our regular White-browed Scrubwrens, pardalotes and babbler that we see close by.

The "March of the Bronzewings" still happens but they are in smaller numbers as the weather is cooler with a bit more moisture about. I call it the "March" as they march warily up the path to the water points then fly away sometimes not getting a drink as they are so nervous.

The Rainbow Bee-eaters seem to have left us for warmer weather; they were abundant around the dunes but we haven't seen or heard them for a couple of weeks. The Grey Currawong's numbers seem to be increasing. The Australian Ringneck is seen regularly near the dunes but doesn't water at the house. We have two Galahs. There was a third, but only two the last week.

On the way to Cocklebidy one hot Saturday we came across seven Wedge-tailed Eagles at a waterhole, certainly a sight to see. Since being here we have recorded the Collared Sparrowhawk as a regular and a juvenile called in

a few days ago, an Australian Hobby, a Brown Falcon, the White-bellied Sea-Eagle, who we see on occasions at the beach, and the Nankeen Kestrel.

We were excited to see Chestnut Quail-thrush and flocks of Varied Sittellas both on the North Track and the road to Burnabbie. On our way to Cocklebidy we

stopped at the start of the Haigh track to pull the side mirrors in on the new ute, only to be greeted with a whistler calling. On investigation we met and were entertained for some minutes by a juvenile Rufous Whistler, all of a metre away. They are rare at Eyre so many photos were taken. Thank heaven for digital cameras. On the beach and the dunes there is a group of six White-fronted Chats that were unfortunately camera shy, and to our surprise we also saw a pair of Orange Chats. They are brilliant in colour and the photo made identification easy although not as sharp as we would like.

We had a record run of hot weather in early March that brought some unusual sightings. A pair of Zebra Finches was the first to arrive then a Diamond Dove at the observatory and on the beach Oriental Plovers and Banded Lapwings.

At Nine Mile there was a flock of 14 Pink-eared Ducks, a Great Egret and an Eastern Reef Egret, as well as two White-faced Herons. We certainly get some surprises. Dragging the track in, is rather a slow and boring job which has to be done, but was quite exciting and not to be missed especially when you see a Malleefowl at the 3 km mark.

Roger and I have seen so many species of birds in the last two months, between the mallee, the beach and the tablelands. It's a privilege to sit on this back verandah on a rare quiet day watching the birds drinking and write the report.

Cheryl McCallum



Oriental Plovers at Eyre.  
Photo: Roger & Cheryl McCallum



Pink-eared Ducks at Nine Mile, Eyre,  
Photo: Roger & Cheryl McCallum

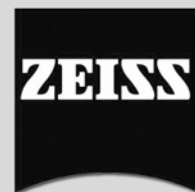
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### Code-of-conduct for campouts

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.

### Disclaimer

Birds Australia provides insurance cover between the ages of 16 and 80 for members undertaking activities officially organised and controlled by the organisation. Members of the public are also covered under the same terms when participating by invitation in an officially organised and controlled Birds Australia activity.

### 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.** If you are unsure, put your name down as you can always cancel.  
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 31 May to Monday 2 June: Foundation Day Long Weekend, Mt Gibson Wildlife Sanctuary Campout

This campout is in collaboration with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) who have owned and managed Mt Gibson Station as a wildlife sanctuary since 2001. AWC, with assistance from the Department of Environment and Conservation, have been controlling feral animals on the station and monitoring the effects on wildlife.

The turnoff to Mt Gibson Wildlife Sanctuary is 74 km north-east of Wubin along the Great Northern Highway heading for Paynes Find. The homestead is 27 km from the main road. Two-wheel-drive vehicles

are able to get into the sanctuary, but four-wheel-drives will be needed when moving around. Fill your fuel tank at Wubin. Bring warm clothes and sleeping gear as it gets cold inland at this time of year.

**Accommodation:** AWC has agreed to waive all camping fees.

There is a visitors centre which has five single dongas with two showers/toilets and cooking facilities. Nearby there is a shearing shed with an additional five beds. The camp site is currently 2 km from the shearing shed and has drinking water and two pit toilets. However, by June the camp site may have moved to a new location. It is likely to have similar, but more salubrious facilities.

We plan to carry out surveys in different vegetation types around the station. The bird watching is good for dry land species such as Southern Scrub-robin, Chestnut and Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, Mulga and Bourke Parrot, honeyeaters, Redthroat and Malleefowl, all of which have been seen recently. It is eight years since BAWA has had a campout at Mt Gibson Station.

To book the dongas or the shearing shed beds call caretakers Stan and Mary at Mt Gibson on 9963 6518. Numbers will be limited so please call the BA office to put your name on the list.

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: John and Ruth Luyer and  
George and Pam Agar*

**Sunday 1 June: Lake Coogee, Munster**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am in Fawcett Road, 100 m from Mayor Road. Nearly 100 species of birds have been seen on and around the lake, including nine raptors. It is a large lake and has a path right around it so some people may wish to do the full circuit. There has been a lot of development in the area and Lake Coogee hasn't been visited by BAWA since 2003. We may go on to another site after morning tea.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Paul Marty*

**Sunday 8 June: Avon Valley National Park**

**Full day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am at the turnoff to the park at the corner of Toodyay Road and Morangup Road, 42 km from Midland Junction. There is a sign for Avon Valley National Park at this turnoff. For anyone arriving late, we will be travelling along Morangup Road to the National Park entry, which is again signposted, then along Forty-One Mile Road. This will lead to the valley camp site overlooking the Avon River. There will be some waterbirds on the river, and many other species in good Jarrah, Marri and Wandoo (Whitegum) woodland. Bring your lunch, as there are no supplies within the park. Roads in the park are gravel but safe for two-wheel-drive cars, and there are the usual facilities. For those who wish to make a weekend of it, we will be camping on Saturday night at the group camping area. Contact the office for further details and to register.

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: Robina Haynes and Paul Marty*

**Note: Alteration to this date:**

**Thursday 12 June: Piney Lakes**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park off Murdoch Drive. Turn off Leach Highway or South Street into Murdoch Drive at the lights. From Leach Highway take the second turn right, across the dual carriage way, into the grassed park area to the car

park. It is approximately 700 m from Leach Highway. This park used to be a pine plantation, and has two artificial lakes and one natural permanent lake. Spotless Crakes and numerous other waterbirds frequent the area. There is a considerable area of natural bushland around the lake and this is home to the usual local species.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Clive Napier*

**Saturday 14 June: Flynn Road, Mundaring**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 9:00 am at the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about 10 km past Sawyers Valley or 1 km on the Perth side of The Lakes (the York 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*

**Sunday 22 June: Harrisdale Reserve, (Jandakot Regional Park), Forrestdale**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am opposite Carey Baptist College on Wright Road, Forrestdale. This reserve is fenced but has a swing gate at this location. There are good tracks throughout with varied vegetation including wetland areas that may have some water in them if we get early winter rain. Many bushbirds have been seen including Scarlet Robin, Splendid Fairy-wren, Western Spinebill, White-browed Scrub-wren, Grey Shrike-thrush, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Red-capped Parrot and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, to name just a few. Wetland species are also a possibility. Wear old shoes/gumboots just in case.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Debbie Walker*

**Monday 23 June: Bold Park EcoCentre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat Meeting, 7:30 pm**

Nick Dunlop, Chairman of the Conservation Council, will give an

illustrated talk entitled "Population dynamics of tropical seabirds breeding off South West Australia".

**Friday 27 June to Sunday 29: Rottneest winter wader/bushbird survey**

Accommodation and travel arrangements for this survey will be as in previous surveys.

Accommodation at the UWA Research Station, at \$11 per night. Bring, or buy there, your own food. The Rottneest Islander concession ferry fare is \$32. There will also be a small extra cost for the UWA vehicle. Whilst there are not many waders present in the winter, the bushbirds can be interesting with the presence of winter migrants. Contact Sue Mather, 93896416, Email: [sma12577@bigpond.net.au](mailto:sma12577@bigpond.net.au) if you are interested in participating.

For members only.

*Leader: Sue Mather*

**Sunday 29 June: Talbot Road, York Full day excursion**

Meet at 9:00 am at The Lakes turnoff to York after travelling along Great Eastern Highway. For those arriving late, we will travel along the Great Southern Highway 13 km, turn right into Yarra Road for 2 km, then left into West Talbot Road for 23 km, then left into Talbot Road for 5 km, then right into Talbot Hall Road for approximately 3 km, then right into McDougall Road. The entrance to the property is on the right; watch for the BAWA sign. We are visiting the property of Eggy and Rob Boggs, which has been visited on a number of occasions by BAWA members. Tea and coffee making facilities will be available. Bring your own lunch. Barbeque facilities are also available.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Paul Marty*

**Sunday 6 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 guests only.

*Leader: Stella Stewart-Wynne*

**Saturday 12 July: Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury**

**Half-day 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: Paul Marty and Robina Haynes*

**Thursday 17 July: Manning Lake, Spearwood**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park, Azelia Road, opposite the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum, on the western side of the lake. This is a semi-permanent wetland, with a fringe of paperbark trees, noted for its waterbirds. Bushbirds are also plentiful in the reserve and in bush to the west.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Barry and Molly Angus*

**Saturday 19 July: North Mole, Fremantle and Woodman Point**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at the end of North Mole, near the light house. We will look for seabirds here, and then go onto Woodman Point. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Michael Craig and Paul Marty*

**Sunday 27 July: 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 are seen here. The lake dries up in summer, but it should be reasonable after some winter rain.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Sue Abbotts*

**Monday 28 July: Bold Park EcoCentre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat Meeting, 7:30 pm**

John Dell, Environmental Officer with the Department of the Environment and Conservation, will give an illustrated talk entitled "Honeyeaters in the Coastal Plain — threats and conservation".

**Sunday 3 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 John 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 the general public.

*Leader: Claire Gerrish*

**Tuesday 5 August: Paganoni Swamp, Karnup**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am. Take the left hand turn off Mandurah Road onto Paganoni Road. Proceed 1.3 km until the Paganoni Swamp sign on the right (there are power lines here). Parking is along Paganoni Road. We will be looking for Western Yellow Robins and Grey Currawongs among many others in this area of diverse habitats. Participants then have the option of proceeding to the beach for lunch and to look for seabirds. This excursion is in conjunction with the Friends of Paganoni Swamp.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Mary Vaughan*

**Sunday 10 August: Yarra Road North, York**

**Full-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am on the corner of Yarra Road and Great Southern Highway. Travel along Great Eastern Highway to The Lakes turnoff to York. Travel about 13 km along the Great Southern Highway to Yarra Road. We will look at various areas of Wandoo woodland where Crested Shrike-tit and Hooded Robin have been seen.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Sue Abbotts*

**Saturday 16 August: Serpentine National Park**

**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at the junction of the South West Highway and Falls Road (the turnoff to Serpentine Falls). We will walk along a ridge overlooking Serpentine Falls, also with views across the plain to the ocean. The bush in this area has both Marri and Wandoo and usually yields a good number of bird species. For those who wish to extend the day, bring along lunch and we can explore Webb's Lease near Jarrahdale.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Paul Marty*

**Saturday 16 August to Sunday 31: Rangeland surveys**

Please see under Notices in this edition and in WABN 125.

**Thursday 21 August: 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 Belair Regional Park. If travelling south, turn right off North Lake Road, 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 bird have been seen here. Bring morning tea.

For members and the general public.

*Leaders: Barry and Molly Angus*

**Saturday 23 August: Pipidinny Road, Eglinton**

**Full-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: coastal dunes for Variegated Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrub-wren, etc; heath for Tawny-crowned and White-cheeked Honeyeater; the swamp for waterfowl; and lastly, a part of the Yanchep National Park that few people visit.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Brice Wells*

**Monday 25 August: Bold Park EcoCentre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat**  
**Meeting, 7:30 pm**

Maris Lauva, a member, will show his photos of WA birds, leaving the audience to identify them.

**Sunday 31 August: Wandoo Heights, Middle Swan and Noble Falls**  
**Half-day walk**

Meet at 8:30 am at Wandoo Heights. Follow the Toodyay Road about 3 km past the Roe Highway junction. Turn left into Campersic Road and travel approximately 6 km then turn right into Loton Road, then left into Range Rd. The gate is about 200 m on the right. Wandoo Heights is an uncleared 22 ha block, vested in the Swan Shire, and has a range of habitats. After morning tea we will travel further east on the Toodyay Road to Noble Falls, which is on the left, and signposted just past Gidgegannup. The walk will follow the creek line north and return through the woodland area to the car park for lunch.

For members and the general public.

*Leader: Sue Mather*

**Sunday 7 September: Paruna Sanctuary**  
**Full-day excursion including BBQ**

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at the end of Avon Road. Travelling on the Toodyay Road, turn north into O'Brien Road, which becomes

Clenton Road after 15.3 km, and after a further 2 km turn north onto Avon Road. This road is gravelled but quite suitable for any vehicle, and less than 1 km in length. Allow 20 minutes from the Toodyay/O'Brien turn off. Paruna Sanctuary is owned by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) and we will be carrying out surveys of three sites. AWC members will be joining us and they will provide a BBQ lunch for those attending.

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: Paul Marty, George Agar, Robina Haynes and Jo Williams*

**Thursday, 11 September: Tom Bateman Reserve, Thornlie**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am beside the playground / sporting complex at the corner of Nicholson and Wilfred Roads (car-park entry is off Wilfred Rd). We will look at a series of wetlands constructed to remove nutrients from water draining into the Canning River. We will also look at small bushland areas if they are accessible. Rubber boots may be a good idea, and insect repellent. Bring morning tea to have while we do a combined bird list.

For members and the general public.

*Leaders: George and Pam Agar*

**Saturday 13 September: Wungong Gorge and Bungendore Nature Reserve, Bedfordale**  
**Full-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 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 and several raptor species. 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.

For members and guests only.

*Leaders: Robyn Pickering and Maris Lauva*

**Saturday 13 – Sunday 14 September: Boyagin Rock**

**Short weekend campout**

This nature reserve contains impressive stands of Powderbark Wandoo as well as Marri, Casuarina and some Jarrah. Seventy three species of bird have been recorded, including Black Honeyeater and several owls. Walks are moderate to easy, but optional walks over the rock can be testing. Numbats have been seen here, and at this time of the year wildflowers should be everywhere.

To reach the campsite at the base of Boyagin Rock, travel along Brookton Highway to the intersection of the York-Williams Road, turn south (right if coming from Perth) and proceed to Boyagin Road, which enters from the left. The road from here to the rock will be sign-posted with BAWA signs.

There is a bush toilet but please be self-sufficient for all other items, such as food, water, tents, etc. It is possible to enjoy a single full day excursion, but it will be necessary to leave home early to take part in group activities. The round trip is 250 km. The leader will be on site on Friday afternoon.

Please advise the Birds Australia office if you plan to attend, and note if single day or camping.

For further details contact Clive Napier on 9332 7265.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Clive Napier*

**Sunday 21 September: Whiteman Park, Swan**  
**Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:30 am at the administration building (main car park) of Whiteman Park. Look for the BAWA signs. We will walk the Bennett Brook trail of the park. This pleasant walk should provide the opportunity to see a wide range of bird species. Western Spinebill, Western Thornbill, White-naped Honeyeater, Red-capped and Scarlet Robins and Golden Whistler have all been sighted here.

For members and guests only.

*Leader: Michael Bamford*

**Saturday 27 – Monday 29**

**September: Tutanning Nature**

**Reserve, Pingelly**

**Long weekend campout**

This reserve is approximately 20 km east of Pingelly and 154 km from Perth. Follow the Wickpin Road out of Pingelly, turn left (east) from the centre of town. Don't go into the first turn off to Tutanning Reserve (Tutanning Road) but continue further to the third turning on the left, Marshall Road. Follow this road for approximately 4 km to the Marshall property. Follow the BAWA signs to the DEC Research Station now maintained by the Friends of Tutanning.

Camping will be around the Research Station and in the adjacent paddock. The old Research Station has been recently renovated and 2 bedrooms containing 6 beds each (bunk beds) with basic kitchen and bathroom facilities are available. Electricity is supplied from a generator. Tracks are suitable for caravans and 2WD vehicles. Everyone will need to be self sufficient, though water will be available. A small fee will be charged so that this facility can be maintained. Tutanning Nature Reserve is 2089 hectares of a mixture of Wandoo, open woodland and Casuarina thickets with breakaways and granite outcrops. We will go spotlighting one night and have a BBQ on another night.

Members and guests, Friends of Tutanning Nature Reserve only.

*Leader: Sue Abbotts*

## Crossword answers No 53

### Across

1 platelet, 6 aerial, 8 whiskered, 9 spur, 11 trills, 12 swampy, 14 Rallidae, 16 dry, 18 establish, 20 gear, 22 timber, 24 endemic, 26 illustrate, 28 cave, 29 stored, 30 lark.

### Down

2 lower, 3 triller, 4 lakes, 5 terns, 6 Ardea, 7 imply, 10 rocky, 11 terrestrial, 13 width, 15 eagle, 17 stumble, 19 seepage, 21 recover, 23 rut, 25 deep, 27 Sat.

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

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Signature

\*Concession card number(s) .....  
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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** — graphic artist needed to create posters for our static displays — contact Elsa Dabbs e-mail <dabchic6@bigpond.net.au>
- ◆ **Excursion leaders** — contact Sue Abbotts 9444 1607, e-mail <suechat@bigpond.net.au>
- ◆ **Sales Committee** — BAWA's bird cards provide an important income for the organisation; assistance needed with marketing of cards, eg, possible outlets and distribution — contact Valerie Hemsley ph 9364 6573

## Calendar of events

### Birds Australia Western Australia Inc

#### Office: *Peregrine House*

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**Production:** Margaret Philippon

**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;
- contributions to be sent direct to the Editors, either at the office or by email:  
Sue Mather <sma12577@bigpond.net.au>  
Allan Burbidge <allanb99@bigpond.net.au>
- 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 2008 issue: 1 August  
December 2008 issue: 1 November  
March 2009 issue: 1 February  
June 2009 issue: 1 May

### Advertising Rates

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

**Sat 31 May to Mon 2 Jun:** Foundation Day Long Weekend, Mt Gibson Wildlife Sanctuary, Campout

**Sun 1 Jun:** Lake Coogee, Munster, Half-day excursion

**Sun 8 Jun:** Avon Valley National Park, Full day excursion

**Note: Alteration to this date: Thu 12 Jun:** Piney Lakes, Half-day excursion

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**Fri 27 Jun to Sun 29:** Rottneest winter wader/bushbird survey

**Sun 29 Jun:** Talbot Road, York, Full day excursion

**Sun 6 Jul:** Piesse Brook, Kalamunda, Half-day excursion

**Sat 12 Jul:** Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, Padbury, Half-day excursion

**Thu 17 Jul:** Manning Lake, Spearwood, Half-day excursion

**Sat 19 Jul:** North Mole, Fremantle and Woodman Point, Half-day excursion

**Sun 27 Jul:** Lake Gwelup, Stirling, Half-day excursion

**Mon 28 Jul:** Bold Park EcoCentre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat, Meeting, 7:30 pm

**Sun 3 Aug:** Herdsman Lake, Stirling, Half-day excursion

**Tue 5 Aug:** Paganoni Swamp, Karnup, Half-day excursion

**Sun 10 Aug:** Yarra Road North, York, Full-day excursion

**Sat 16 Aug:** Serpentine National Park, Half-day excursion

**Sat 16 Aug to Sun 31:** Rangeland surveys

**Thu 21 Aug:** Little Rush Lake, Yangebup, Half-day excursion

**Sat 23 Aug:** Pipidiny Road, Eglinton, Full-day excursion

**Mon 25 Aug:** Bold Park EcoCentre, Perry Lakes Dr, Floreat, Meeting, 7:30 pm

**Sun 31 Aug:** Wandoo Heights, Middle Swan and Noble Falls, Half-day walk

**Sun 7 Sep:** Paruna Sanctuary, Full-day excursion including BBQ

**Thu, 11 Sep:** Tom Bateman Reserve, Thornlie, Half-day excursion

**Sat 13 Sep:** Wungong Gorge and Bungendore Nature Reserve, Bedforddale, Full-day excursion

**Sat 13 – Sun 14 Sep:** Boyagin Rock, Short weekend campout

**Sun 21 Sep:** Whiteman Park, Swan, Half-day excursion

**Sat 27–Mon 29 Sep:** Tutanning Nature Reserve, Pingelly, Long weekend campout

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