SUPPLEMENT TO RAOU NEWSLETTER No. 42, DECEMBER, 1979

Western Australian Bird Notes

Editor: Graeme Chapman Number 12, December, 1979

More land clearing for agriculture

A committee of the Rural and Industries Council is to review agricultural land release policy in Western Australia. The current policy is one of consolidation of existing areas with land allocated where only minimal servicing costs are involved. Most of this land has now been allocated and there is considerable farmer enquiry for release of new land in various parts of the State. Any change of policy must take account of this farmer interest, the cost of providing roads and other facilities and conservation issues.

The committee invited public comment and submissions closed on October 9th. The W.A. Group of the RAOU has forwarded a submission on this most important matter.

It should be pointed out here that submissions of this nature are usually phrased in general terms which aim to cover the whole State. Members living in country areas may be able to provide valuable assistance by keeping informed of suggested new development in their area, by passing on the information to the RAOU Committee and also by promoting our viewpoint at the local level via shire councillors, M.P.'s etc. In this instance, we have recommended that one tenth of all land to be released should be retained as large reserves. The land under the most imminent threat will be the Salmon Gum woodlands on the eastern fringe of the wheatbelt, a habitat rich in bird life, but also one which grows good wheat, in some years anyway.

Eyre Bird Observatory

The ornithological courses held last month were successful. During the time spent in field recording, about 30 species were captured on tape including Blue-breasted Wren, Shy Hylacola, Yellow-rumped Pardalote, Purple-gaped Honeyeater and four cuckoos, Pallid, Fan-tailed, Shining Bronze and Horsfield's Bronze. Provided sufficient suitable material was obtained it may now be possible to prepare a cassette representative of species in the reserve, both for use at the observatory and for sale.

John Martindale will be resigning as warden in December to return to his studies at La Trobe University, Melbourne. Arrangements are in hand for acting wardens to man the observatory when he leaves and all correspondence should be addressed as before to the Warden, Eyre Bird Observatory, Cocklebiddy, via Norseman, W.A. 6443.

There will be a work party at the observatory from January 12 to 28, 1980. The aim will be to continue the restoration and lay out netting on the drifting sand dunes to help the stabilisation process. Preliminary results with brush and netting laid out in 1978 and 1979 are encouraging, and as many people as possible,

including children, are encouraged to go and help. The daily cost will be reduced to $6 per head (children half price) for the duration of the work party. Please let the warden know well in advance so that food can be ordered for the number of people involved.

Field Trips, 1980

There are still two areas of the State where Atlas coverage is poor, the eastern Pilbara and the Great Sandy Desert. Preliminary plans are to enter the Great Sandy Desert in July from Christmas Creek and spend about three weeks travelling south east towards Lake MacKay and then back through Tallawanna. This will be an excursion for four-wheel drive vehicles only. In the August-September school holidays a camp will be established in the Eastern Pilbara in an attempt to improve coverage in the area. People interested in either excursion should contact Stephen Davies so that he can have an idea of the likely response and prepare details for the next newsletter.

Annual Meeting

Tom Spence has expressed his keenness to maintain the tradition of previous years. The meeting date will be the evening of Friday, January 4th. Please phone Tom on 367.7988 at least seven days in advance to obtain full details.

Wader Studies

The W.A. Wader group has made a good start under the co-ordination of Jeremy Talbot (ph. 322.1899 working hours) and has banding evenings once a month.

In Victoria a wader group, the Victorian Wader Study Group was inaugurated in Melbourne in June, 1979 by various people interested in the study of waders in Victoria. The setting up of a formal group developed from the need for more co-ordination among wader enthusiasts to carry out large-scale projects on Waders. The main areas of interest of the VWSG are:-

1. Censusing.
2. Movements.
3. Population structure.
4. Ecological studies.

The VWSG is a Victorian Ornithological Research Group project and as such will report on progress made at the VORG meetings and in VORG notes. In addition, the VWSG will publish an Annual Report and a Bulletin. The Annual Report will be a record of the Group's activities from 1st July to 30th June. The Bulletin will be published as often as sufficient material is available and will contain articles on any aspects of wader study, including banding recoveries, census results, observations on behaviour and other relevant material.

Participation is open to everyone and does not require any knowledge of waders or ornithological techniques. The VWSG's activities centre around banding at Werribee once a month and provides an excellent opportunity to observe waders in the hand as well as in the field. Contact Julie Strudwick, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds, Vic. 3039.