



Western Australian Bird Notes

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Quarterly Newsletter of the W.A. Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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COMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held at Cynnet Hall on the waterfront at the corner of Mackett Drive and Stirling Highway, Crawley, beginning at 8.00 p.m.

This year we have arranged a series of lectures dealing with the major forest habitats in W.A.

Monday March 29 — Dr. Ron Wooller of Murdoch University will speak on "Birds in the Karri Forest".

Monday May 3 — **NOTE THIS IS AN EXTRA MEETING.** Visiting lecturer Val Garget will speak on "The Black Eagle of Africa".

Monday June 28 — Graeme Chapman — "Birds of the Salmon Gum Woodlands".

Monday September 27 — John Dell of the W.A. Museum will speak on "Birds of the Jarrah Forest".

ANNUAL DINNER & MEETING

The 1982 dinner was held at Roger Jaensch's house in Boya Crescent, Boya on the evening of Friday, January 29. Over 100 members and their guests were present and enjoyed the pleasant evening and the grounds. The catering by Miss Maud was lavish and Roger lived for weeks on the left-overs. Stephen Davies Jnr. spoke afterwards about the migration and distribution of Palearctic Warblers, showing some excellent slides to illustrate his points.

The Annual General Meeting accepted the Treasurer's report and elected the following officers and committee for 1982:

Chairman	Dr. S. J. J. F. Davies (regional contact)
Vice Chairman	Dr. D. L. Serventy
Secretary	Mrs. J. Seabrook
Treasurer	Mr. D. Drakes
Editor	Mr. G. S. Chapman
Committee	Mr. J. N. Talbot Mr. D. Watkins

Minutes Secretary Miss Stephanie McNeel

Editor of W.A.

Bird Notes

LOCAL EXCURSIONS

Saturday April 17th — Garden Island - Leader Bob Goodale, Telephone (095) 274 289. Meet at the Causeway Carpark at the mainland end of the causeway where we shall re-organise into fewer cars at 9.00 a.m. We shall be joining with the Rockingham Field Naturalists. The island offers a range of shore and bush birds and is not readily accessible to the public.

Saturday June 12th — Bindoon area - Lake Chittering and wandoo forest. Leader Graeme Chapman. Meet at 8.00 a.m. at the Chittering Store, Great Northern Highway. Water birds in the morning and on to lunch at Julimar State Forest.

DISTRIBUTION OF W.A. BIRD NOTES

As indicated in the December issue, W.A. Bird Notes is now being mailed only to RAOU members and Waterbird Project participants. This move followed a review of printing costs for the first new format issue by the W.A. Group committee and will avoid the cost of mailing W.A. Bird Notes to people who are not contributing in some way to the work of the RAOU. The new format was produced primarily to give feedback to Waterbird Project participants and is largely financed by the Project.

NORTH-WEST WADER STUDIES EXPEDITION: Spring 1982

Following the immensely successful expedition to the Broom and 80-Mile Beach areas in 1981, a similar venture has been planned for the period 17th August to 10th September 1982. The 1982 Australasian Wader Studies Group expedition will involve both wader counting and banding activities. Timing will coincide with the arrival of birds in Australia from the northern hemisphere breeding grounds and with peak spring tides. Some birds will hopefully be coloured-dyed to assist in the tracing of wader movements within Australia.

Information gained from our studies will improve our knowledge of wader biology and migration and will assist in the preservation of vital roost and feeding sites. If you are interested in going, a firm indication is required by the end of April - contact Graeme Chapman, 21 Mackett Drive, Glen Forrest, 6071, or Roger Jaensch, 15 Boya Crescent, Boya, 6056.

NATIONAL WADER COUNT

- Preliminary Report -

The Australasian Wader Studies Group of the RAOU held its summer national wader count on the weekend of 6th and 7th February, 1982. Coverage of wader habits in W.A. was excellent in the South-West division but patchy in the north of the State.

Returns are still being collated but at least 40,000 birds were counted of 40 species, with the Broome, Dampier and Peel Inlet areas being especially productive. Former Atlassers were approached to assist in this exercise and response was quite good. A number of species were included in counts in W.A. for the first time, these being the Bush Thick-knee (Stone Curlew), Red-kneed Dotterel, Hooded Plover, Oriental Plover, Little Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper and Ruff. Encouraging numbers of Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel and Sanderling were reported.

All participants will receive detailed summaries of the count results and a more comprehensive report including comparisons with other States may be published in the June issue of W.A. Bird Notes or in The Spill (A.W.S.G. bulletin).

Ken Mills.

THOMSON'S LAKE EXCURSION REPORT

The advertised starting time for this excursion was 6.30 a.m. but cloud remained from three days of steady rain just ended, so conditions were rather cool. More than 25 people arrived at Thomson's Lake Nature Reserve and were treated to a frenzy of bird activity in the tuart - jarrah - banksia woodland adjacent to the lake.

Rainbow Bee-eaters, Grey Fantails, Western Gerygones (Warblers) and a large party of Varied Sittellas were most conspicuous, while Grey Shrike - thrushes, Rufous Whistlers and Striated Pardalotes were seen feeding dependent flying young. A lone Shining (Golden) Bronze-Cuckoo called briefly.

The lake itself had risen to its outer margins from the heavy rain and runoff and was therefore unsuitable for smaller waders, although many stilts remained. RAOU Waterbird Project Field Officer Roger Jaensch demonstrated methods of counting large mixed flocks of waterbirds and pointed out Pink-eared Ducks and Shovelers with the aid of a mounted spotting scope. About 1400 ducks were present, Shoveler being the largest component. Ten Sacred (White) Ibis were recorded but few other large wading birds were noted. A total of 56 species was listed for the reserve.

Moving on to Lake Forrestdale Nature Reserve we found equally high waterlevels but fewer waterfowl. Highlights were Red-necked Avocets and a Marsh Harrier attempting to catch juvenile Pink-eared Ducks.

A small group of enthusiasts called at Yangebup Lake on the way back to Perth and enjoyed excellent views of about 15 Long-toed Stints and a brief glimpse of two Wood Sandpipers. Continuing on to Point Waylen on the Swan, we studied Great Knots (80) and Bar-tailed Godwits (30) amidst some 3000 smaller waders feeding on exposed mudflats.

PEEL INLET EXCURSION REPORT

Saturday, 13 February 1982

The RAOU's February excursion was considered a tremendous success, from the point of view of both organisers and participants. A group of 25 local and Perth observers visited various bird habitats including Broome, Dampier

and Mandurah. The extensive mudflats at Yunderup were partly covered with water blown in by south-westerly winds; this contrasted with the situation several days before when this area was dry as a result of persistent easterlies. RAOU Waterbird Project co-ordinator Roger Jaensch described methods of counting huge masses of waterbirds and assisted with identification of confusing wader species by using a telescope.

Highlights of the Yunderup area were long, close looks at three Pectoral Sandpipers and a Ruff feeding with Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and a Long-tailed Stint foraging beside Red-necked Stints. A nest containing eggs of the Red-capped Plover was located in gravel near the cars and a Peregrine Falcon soared high above with a group of Darters.

Few waders were seen at Coorow but a lone Glossy Ibis and a pair of Little Egrets were observed on the muddy shores. In the sheltered boat anchorage behind the Mandurah breakwater we enjoyed roosting Roseate Terns, Fairy Terns with dependent flying young, Red and Great Knots and Large Sand Plovers, one of which was in advanced breeding plumage. Those staying until late in the afternoon saw about thirty Regent Parrots flying through woodland just south of the Mandurah bridge. A total of 43 species was seen on the day.

TORBAY CAMPOUT

The RAOU campout at Torbay took place on the long weekend of 27th February to 1st March, with 38 people from Perth and southern districts attending. A report will appear in the June issue of W.A. Bird Notes.

W.A. WADER STUDY GROUP NOTES

Wader banding has been carried out in several different parts of the State during the last year or so. Ken Mills has been operating from his base at Narrogin and has been paying special attention to Albany; Peter Congreve, the warden at Eyre Bird Observatory, has been banding numbers of waders as well as dry land birds such as honey-eaters at his outpost on the Great Australian Bight; Grant Pearson and other Western Australians have twice joined folk from Victoria and other points east in mounting expeditions to the northwestern coastline of the State where large concentrations of waders, including many thousands of Great Knots, occur at certain times of the year; and the Perth wader banding fraternity have been keeping up their weekend mistnetting and cannon netting activities.

This brief account deals only with the banding activities of the Perth sub-group, members of which have also taken part in periodical wader counts. The results of these counts will be reported elsewhere in due course.

As at 28 February 1982, the season's catching tally stands at 490 birds of 16 different species, including 33 retraps. Unfortunately, details of when and where the re-trapped birds were originally banded are not yet available. These figures compare with 482 birds of 20 different species caught during the whole of the 1980/81 season and 277 birds of 9 different species caught during the whole 1979/80 season. Two new species have been caught this season - Red-kneed Dotterels netted by Grant Pearson and Roger Jaensch at Capamaura Lake or Swamp near Coorow and Sanderlings taken at Brown Bay on Garden Island. As usual, Red-necked Stints have formed the bulk of the catch with a total of 243 birds.

Pelican Point on the Swan estuary has yielded large numbers, including 140 birds (a record for the subgroup's mistnetting activities) on 21 November and 93 birds on 20 February. With the kind permission of the naval authorities at Garden Island, we have cannon netted there twice this season and hope to do so a third time soon in the company of Bob Goodale and others from the Safety Bay and adjacent areas. Our biggest catch there this season has been 52 birds. Owing to high water levels on the coastal lakes, which have no doubt helped to produce the big catches at Pelican Point, we have thus far visited only one of those lakes (Lake Forrestdale or Jandakot). We have also been to the mouth of the Preston River at Bunbury, Karakin Lake near Lancelin and Lake Cooloongup south of Rockingham.

Finally, Ken Mills and Peter Curry prepared a submission on our behalf to the Environmental Protection Authority concerning wetlands of importance to waders in the System 6 area and we are most grateful for their efforts. If our activities have done something to show up the importance to waders of some of those wetlands, we shall be well rewarded.

JNT

W.A. BIRD REPORT 1982

This is your Report and I am awaiting the first batch of reports.

The questions we would like to answer are:

1. How many of what, live where and when?
Even though we do not have many true migrants, we don't have regular records of when they arrive and when they leave.
2. Do they leave completely or just head North?
3. What is the pattern of movement in Silvereyes?
Do you see flocks of them moving in any particular direction, at different times of the year?
4. Do birds like Reed Warblers, Swallows, Martins leave your area in Summer or Winter?
5. Are there more White Fronted Chats in Perth this year?
6. Have the floods in the South West changed distribution patterns at all?

Answers to these sorts of questions can only be formulated by a collection of information from a lot of people, over a long period of time. So, let's get started!

Records in any form will be welcomed, but it would be helpful if you could use the forms provided. Additional forms can be obtained from Geoff Shannon or at RAOU meetings. A vetting system has not yet been formalised but details will be announced later. This is not because we do not believe you. Rather these records will form an important body of biological information and therefore have to be seen to be accurate.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Geoff Shannon,
31 Climbroke Way,
Duncraig, W.A. 6023

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Eyre is holding a full programme of courses this year. Those coming up in the near future are:

- 9 - 15th May: EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY. Its history and work. DI and Peter Congreve. Participants will be involved in the work of the Observatory, Bird Banding, Surveys, and renovation. Excursions will be made to Twilight Cove and either Burnabbie or the Hampton tableland.

- 16 - 22nd May: HONEYEATERS. Dr. Brian G. Collins. The course will involve the use of mist nets and the handling of honeyeaters, and will concern various aspects of nutrition, energetics and pollination biology of these birds.

Contact Peter Congreve, Eyre Bird Observatory, Cocklebidy, via Norseman, W.A. 6443, as soon as possible with your bookings.

WATERBIRDS OFFICE TO SHIFT

Increased travel costs and greater time being spent at the Wildlife Research Centre (Wanneroo) and University (Crawley), has caused me to decide to shift my home and office to the inner city area. This move will have the added advantages of my location being closer to wetlands in which I can test waterbird survey techniques and also closer to most project participants.

I would suggest that you continue to write to me at my Boya address until I notify you in writing of a new address. I must apologise for any inconvenience this will cause but I expect that the move will ultimately result in better liaison with waterbird enthusiasts and RAOU members in general.

Roger Jaensch.

WAGIN DISTRICT FIELD DAY

In order to obtain participants for the Waterbird Project in the Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning districts, I will be conducting a field day in that region on Saturday, 24th April, 1982. I hope to meet both local observers and Perth enthusiasts at the intersection of the Narrogin - Wagin and Harrismith roads (in Narrogin) at 9.00 a.m. From there we will take a tour of some of the lakes in the Upper Arthur River system, arriving at the Wagin Post Office at 12 noon. We will then proceed through the Wagin Lakes chain to the Albany Highway, 22 km south of Arthur River settlement.

This is the only part of the South-West Nature Reserve system that has minimal coverage in the Waterbird Project. I hope to have this situation rectified before May 1982.

R.J.

JANUARY FLOODS AND SUBSEQUENT WATERBIRD BREEDING

The heavy rainfall and flooding experienced in the South-West in January 1982 predictably caused a major dispersal of waterbirds from summer refuges to revitalised wetlands. Most of the region between Mandurah and Gnowangerup received around 200 mm of rain followed by heavy runoff, causing most wetlands to fill or overflow.

Reports from various observers indicated that herons and many waders had dispersed to temporarily flooded pastures and marshes, while ducks had re-appeared at numerous dams, swamps and flooded river flats such as the Cobline near Dumbleyung. Clutches of Grey Teal and Pink-eared Duck eggs were reported from the wheatbelt and a survey at Kwobrup Swamp near Katanning revealed that all Grey Teal present were paired off. Furthermore, 80% of birds in a small sample of Grey Teal and Pink-eared Duck (from the Cobline and Kwobrup) examined by Wildlife Officers in early February, had enlarged gonads indicative of birds in breeding condition. The full extent of breeding may never be known due to the thin spread of observers in the large area affected by flooding.

The combination of floods and a rather mild summer will ensure that many lakes will remain inundated until winter. If average or near average amounts of rain fall in winter, these wetlands will fill again in the 1982-1983 breeding season. Therefore, the floods will probably cause a long-term improvement in the depth and quality of many otherwise deteriorating wheatbelt wetlands.

SOUTH-WEST WATERBIRD PROJECT

Recruitment

At last count, some 71 people had been sent introductory material for the Waterbird Project, 22 of these being based in country districts. Twenty-three observers have chosen reserves for which they wish to monitor waterbird populations and 29 reserves have been allocated altogether.

There are 40 priority reserves which I would like to have allocated to observers by May or June 1982. As could be expected, reserves north and south of Perth are reasonably well covered and thanks to Austin Daw, three of the four priority reserves near Esperance are being monitored. The main inadequacies of coverage are in the south coast and southern wheatbelt regions and appropriate recruiting drives have been planned. Table 1 lists priority reserves as yet not allocated.

Training

Training of observers in techniques of finding, identifying and counting waterbirds has taken place at five excursions and campouts since October. Forthcoming field days are described elsewhere here and participants should check each issue for future events. Any person(s) experiencing particular difficulties with finding, identifying and/or counting waterbirds should contact me and I will arrange in-field training at the earliest convenient date.

Techniques

1. Finding waterbirds. This is not a problem on open, exposed wetlands but densely vegetated areas pose special problems. In order to use appropriate search methods one needs to know which species to expect in each waterbird habitat. Some examples are given in Table 2.

Search methods also depend on the ease of access to the habitat by the observer and each method requires some disturbance to both vegetation and birds. Observers should be aware that many waterbirds are often remarkably tolerant of man and in regularly disturbed areas may become particularly confiding (e.g. Floreat Waters, Herdsman).

However, some species are rather shy and may cease to inhabit such areas, being excluded by the more tolerant species. I may publish a list of more sensitive species when more information comes to hand.

Nesting birds are much less tolerant and observers should exercise utmost care when in the vicinity of nests, possible nesting sites or nesting habitats. Reedbeds are particularly difficult in this regard as nests are often only seen when "trod upon". To minimise impact here, observers should move very carefully in spring and early summer and use a strictly limited number of paths.

Greatest damage may be done at breeding colonies of larger waterbirds (e.g. cormorants, egrets, ibis), especially if nests are in tree canopies. Observers must view nests from a distance before entering the breeding colonies, to determine if the nests contain young capable of hopping out to their death. If such is the case, observers should move close to the colony and observe from a distance.

2. Identification. Difficult species and groups will be dealt with in coming issues of this newsletter and in brochures to be posted to participants in the near future.

3. Counting. Counting large masses of waterbirds can be an awesome task to anyone who has had no experience at it. Observers should always strive to count each bird but a different approach must be adopted where individuals cannot be easily counted. Large groups of birds are prone to sudden moves and so relatively quick counting methods are most useful.

Species that occur in large numbers are usually common species at a regional or State level (e.g. Grey Teal, Red-necked Stint), so we are principally concerned with the order of magnitude of size of flocks of these species. Provided identification is not difficult, rarer species within a mixed flock can usually be counted individually.

One of the best approaches to dealing with large mixed-species flocks is to obtain an estimate for the total flock size and then an assessment of the proportions of that flock made up by each species present. Table 3 gives an example of this "Segment and Percentage" method.

To obtain the total flock size, you might count exactly 10, 20, 50 or 100 birds (depending on the order of size of the flock), and then scan slowly through the flock, partitioning it into segments of 10, 20, 50 or 100. It is useful to repeat this tally at least once and ideally you should also check your segment size.

The next step is to identify all species present within the flock. Each species should then be listed in your Field Record Booklet or notebook, together with your impression of its percentage of the flock. Again, these percentages should be revised or corrected at least once. The total for each species is then calculated by combining the species' percentages and the total flock size. Another quick scan might necessitate adjustment of calculated figures for each species.

Of course, counting will be more difficult if birds are moving about quickly whilst feeding, in flight, roosting in tight packs or in uneven densities within the flock. These situations are overcome with experience and slight modifications to the approach described above. Results may be less accurate but this is unavoidable. You might indicate difficulties in the "Comments" section on the computer forms.

Observers tend to grossly under-estimate large group size: this should be borne in mind but allowances should not be made for this in calculations. Dense roosting flocks (particularly stilts) are notoriously difficult and are best checked in flight. This may require careful disturbance but observers should always use utmost discretion in this type of activity, especially in the presence of the public. Remember; a genuine estimate is better than none at all.

Returns

On 3 March, 41 computer forms had been returned to the Project Office. Contributions have been received from R. C. Barking (10), S. & D. Keeling (6), A. Daw (5), B. Buchanan (10), D. James (4), B. J. Newby (5) and P. Wilmot (1). These cover ten reserves in the northern and central coastal plain, south-east wheatbelt and Esperance regions.

Participants have almost without exception filled in these forms exactly as required. Hopefully this means that the designs and survey requirements are easily handled. I will still welcome any suggestions or comments regarding data collecting and recording. Are the booklets satisfactory?

If you have run out of computer forms or booklets please drop me a line. Also, please remember to send in returns for wetlands found dry, or devoid of birds even though still containing water. This is important for the project.

ments"), as this information is important.

Survey Dates

Although some observers have already begun, surveys should begin in earnest after the first winter rains in May or June 1982. In order to obtain best correlation between waterbird data and water depth quality information, we would prefer waterbird surveys to be conducted during the weeks in which depth and quality are monitored by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Therefore, suggested survey weeks for the first twelve months of survey are as follows:

1982 : May 8-16, July 10-18, Sept. 11-19, Nov. 6-14.
1983 : January 1-7, March 12-20.

The January period has been set ahead of the scheduled opening of the duck shooting season which may commence on the 8th or 9th of January.

Any extra surveys will be a bonus and observers are requested to consider making additional counts as wetlands begin to fill, at the peaks of breeding and before drying-out is imminent. If a particular survey date cannot be made we cannot object, but you might try asking another observer to fill in or contact the RAOU office for help.

Office Assistance

Much of the time-consuming work associated with the Project can be easily handled by voluntary helpers. If you are in a position to assist in any way, please let me know immediately. I will send W.A. Bird Notes to all assistants, even if they are not RAOU members or water-birders.

Rubber Waders and Telescopes

Enquiries I have made with Perth suppliers suggest that full length rubberised waders may be obtained for a group of six people at from \$43 to \$45 a pair. This represents a reduction from around \$50 although this itself is a reduced price (from around \$60) being offered at this time of year. I have also been told that one make is available for under \$40 in at least one RAOU store but size range and stock may well be limited. If people are still interested in a \$5 - \$7 reduction could they please tell me their nearest shoe sizes immediately.

Quality spotting scopes are not widely stocked but Riley's Sports and Tackle (Market St., Fremantle) stock the Bushnell range which is one of the best and most popular makes available worldwide. A basic Bushnell 40 or 50 mm telescope unit without eyepiece or small tripod (buy your own camera tripod), will cost from \$100 to \$200 depending on model. Eyepieces similarly vary from \$30 to over \$50 but I would suggest that a simple 25 or 30 x lens would be adequate for waterbirds. Zoom eyepieces are usually more expensive and often have inferior focusing qualities.

The unit that I use is manufactured by GSA and has both 20 x and 40 x (at 45°) lenses on a vertically rotating mounting. It has been regarded highly by all who have used it and is available in Adelaide at \$150 complete with lenses. If anyone is interested, I will look into the cost of freight-ing these to Perth.

Again, please contact me if definitely interested in purchasing a scope as the above prices are for group discounts.

TABLE 1

Priority reserves not covered at 3rd March 1982

P.W. No.	Name of lake or swamp	location (km)
245	Yurine	16 NW Gin Gin
248	Hinds	16 NW Wongan Hills
58	Beverley	20 NE Brookton
43	Mears	25 S Quairading
40	White Water	5 N Yealering
37	Toolibin	39 E Narrogin
222	Taarblin	34 E Narrogin
38	Bokan	33 ESE Narrogin
87	Little White	25 ESE Narrogin
61	Coomelberrup	10 SSE Dumbleyung
72	Gundaring	12 E Wagin
71	Parkeyerring	5 S Wagin
63	Flagstaff	22 SSW Wagin
68	Wardering	24 SSW Wagin
79	Coyrecup	26 E Katanning
127	Towerinning	26 SSE Darkan
172	Unicup	38 E Nyamup
174	Yarnup	21 NW Rocky Gully
101	Kwornicup	23 WNW Mt. Barker
110	Pleasant View	Manypeaks
90	North Sister	6 NNE Manypeaks
208	Gore	34 WNW Esperance

TABLE 2

Waterbirds in concealing habits

- A. Thick patches or areas of vegetation over 0.5 m tall, capable of concealing birds and their nests at ground or water level (e.g. bulrush Typha, round rush Baumea, low teatree Melaleuca, tussocks Gahnia, sedge Scirpus): grebes, ducks, bitterns, Marsh Harrier, crakes, rails, waterhens, Reed Warblers, Little Grass-birds.

Search method — watch patiently at muddy edges or attempt to identify birds flushed when traversing the habitat in set paths. Knowledge of calls invaluable.

- B. Vegetation capable of concealing large birds and their nests at canopy level (e.g. paperbark thickets, Flooded Gums, Swamp Yates, Casuarina groves) : Darter and cormorants, herons, egrets, Night Herons, ibis, spoonbills.

Search method — inspect canopy from a distance (see notes regarding disturbance) and from underneath.

- C. Dense or patchy vegetation less than 0.5 m tall, capable of partly or wholly concealing birds and their nests at ground or water level (e.g. samphire, thin sedge, short grass) : grebes, ducks, crakes, rails, waders.

Search method — walk through habitat in set paths, identifying birds when spotted or flushed.

TABLE 3

An example of the Segment and Percentage method for counting mixed flocks of waterbirds

1. Approx. flock size (rough impression) — a few thousand.
2. Appropriate size of segment — 100.

3. Number of segments counted; first run — 26
second run — 28
third run — 27
average of these — 27
 4. Total flock size = $27 \times 100 = 2700$
 5. Species present: Grey Teal, Shoveler, Hardhead, Great Egret.
 6. Percentages of these within flock:
- | | 1st. run % | correction % | total (% x 2700) |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Grey Teal | 50 | 55 | 1485 |
| Shoveler | 25 | 20 | 540 |
| Hardhead | 25 | 25 | 675 |
| Great Egret | individuals counted = 6 | | |
7. Adjust totals after considering whether realistic:
- | | |
|-----------|------|
| Grey Teal | 1550 |
| Shoveler | 550 |
| Hardhead | 600 |

INTERESTING WATERBIRD SIGHTINGS: Series 3 : 1981 - 82

Note: * indicates wetland is within a WAWA Wetland Nature Reserve being studied in the Waterbird Project. Unless otherwise indicated, the place names are lakes or swamps and shires are given in brackets.

- Darter — active colonies in small swamps near the Harvey and Leschenault Estuaries, Feb. 1982.
- Little Bittern — 1, mid Nov. 1981, Thompson's * (Cockburn).
Nest & eggs, 7/12/81, Pleasant View * (Albany).
1, 7 - 8/12/81, Bengier * (Harvey).
- Australasian (Brown) Bittern — 3 calling, 7 - 8/12/81, Bengier *.
1 calling, mid Nov. & early Dec. 1981, Thompson's *.
- Glossy Ibis — 13, 1-10/12/81, Karakin (Gin Gin).
6, 1/1/82, Mungala * (Gin Gin).
3, 7/1/82, Herdsman (Metro).
5, 31/1/82, Forrestdale * (Armadale - Kelm-scott).
- Sacred Ibis — 1, 19/12/81, Wannamal * (Gin Gin).
- Royal Spoonbill — 2, 6/2/82, Nerimba Cay Res. (Murray).
- Freckled Duck — 18, 20/9/81, Wannamal *.
30, 5/12/81, Toolbin * (Wickepin).
13, 8/12/81, Bengier *.
11, 15/1/82, Harvey R. Res. * (Murray).
- Chestnut Teal — 2, 3/2/82, Yaalup * (Kent).
- Pink-eared Duck — 1000, 1/1/82, Mungala *.
- Hardhead (White-eyed Duck) — 568, 19/12/81, Wannamal *.
- Blue-billed Duck — 1, 3/2/82, Towerrinning * (West Arthur).
- Buff-banded (Land) Rail — 2, 22/11/81, Point Waylen * (Metro).
1, 15/1/82, near Mealup (Murray).
2, mid Feb. 1982, Maylands (Metro).
- Baillon's (Marsh) Crake — 1, 9/1/82, Forrestdale *.
- Spotless Crake — 6 trapped and banded, 9 - 16/1/82, Forrestdale *.
3, 14/1/82, Typha swamp near Brookton.
- Hooded Plover (Dotterel) — 25, 23/1/82, Mullet *.
- Black-winged Stilt — 2160, 3/2/82, Cairlocup * (Kent).
- Wood Sandpiper — 16, 12/2/82, Jandabup * (Wanneroo).
- Grey-tailed Tattler — 1, 3/12/81, Point Waylen *.
- Black-tailed Godwit — 1, 27/12/81, Point Waylen *.
- Pectoral Sandpiper — 6, 1/12/81, Karakin.
1, 1/1/82, Bengier *.
1, 7/1/82, Herdsman.

- Long-toed Stint — 8, 1-10/12/81, Karakin.
3, 5/1/82, Bengier *.
2, 15/1/82, McLarty (Murray).
8, 6/2/82, Austin Bay Res. * (Murray).
3, 15/2/82, Jandabup *.
- Ruff — 5, late Feb., Yunderup Island (Murray).
- Oriental Pratincole — 2, Garden Is., Jan. 1982.
- Australian Pratincole — 2, 1/12/81, Karakin.
- Whiskered Tern — 100, 14/9/81, Warden * (Esperance).
- White-winged (Black) Tern — 1, 1-10/12/81, Karakin.
- Gull-billed Tern — 2, 14/9/81, Warden *.
- Clamorous Reed Warbler — nest with eggs, 31/1/82, Forrestdale.

GREY v/s PIED BUTCHERBIRDS IN THE SOUTH-WEST

In the past couple of years, several observations of the Pied (Black-throated) Butcherbird have been made in the far south-west for the Atlas. Care should be taken when sighting butcherbirds on the coastal plain south of Gin Gin and the areas cleared of forest south of Busselton. The Grey Butcherbirds which inhabit the forests of the south-west are frequently very dark, appearing almost "pied" at first glance, but of course they lack the distinctive black bib of the Pied Butcherbird. This note is directed in particular at those who may be used to seeing their Grey Butcherbirds in other parts of the State where they appear a much greyer looking bird.

Genuine observations of the Pied Butcherbird in the south-west are of interest and would be welcome for the newsletter. It may be that it is gradually spreading into cleared areas of the south-west, in particular the area between Busselton and Augusta where another relative newcomer, the Black-faced Woodswallow is already well established.

MORE ON WHITE-BACKED SWALLOWS NEAR PERTH

It seems that this species is quite well established in the Perth metropolitan area and can be expected wherever there are sand pits or other suitable banks.

John Malone writes:- ... I first found them breeding in the sand pit in the Neerup National Park about three or four years ago. I made a second sighting at the western side of the Forrestfield Marshalling Yards on 25th May and found tunnels in sand banks just off Wittenoom Road. On June 9th 1979 I saw White-backed Swallows in the old pits on the Maylands Peninsula and found many short tunnels but no positive evidence that they belonged to these birds. While at the Peninsula, I also saw a group of White-winged Wrens in the Pampas Grass behind the Police Academy.

Terry Barnes writes:- ... Approximately seven years ago, I discovered nest/roosting tunnels with birds in attendance in a old small sand quarry in bushland at the back of Morley.

John Nilson writes:- ... I saw a pair near burrows in a sand pit on the corner of Amherst and Warton Roads, Southern River (Gosnells) in October 1980, and another pair near Jandakot airport on 16th August 1980; also a pair entering and leaving a nest hole 10 km east of Lake Grace on 9th November 1980.

It is worth noting here that White-backed Swallows that construct their tunnels in low banks, less than 4-5 feet high, frequently fall prey to foxes which dig out the tunnels. To lesser extent, goannas prey on them in like fashion. In the sand pits near Perth possibly humans would be the most disturbing factor.

LATE BREEDING AFTER UNSEASONAL RAIN

From Boscabel (Kojonup Shire) on 20-21 February last, John Nilson made the following observations. 260 mm of rain fell in the area around 21-22 January.

Little Grebe — one nest with 7 eggs, two others sitting, not disturbed.

Hoary-headed Grebe — two nests, 2 eggs and 3 eggs.

White-fronted Chat — 3 nests, 3, 3, and 2 eggs.

Banded Plover — 3 eggs.

BIRDS OF ROTTNEST ISLAND — A CHECK LIST —

Compiled by D.A. Saunders, G. T. Smith and C. P. de Rebeira, this recently published booklet provides an instant reference in tabular form of the past and present status of all birds known to occur on and around the island. Seasonal occurrence, breeding period, preferred habitat and status are shown and to date, 97 species are included. Even the back cover is utilised with a neat area map.

Copies are available at \$1.00 from the Rottnest Island Board, stores on Rottnest and better bookshops.

DIAMOND DOVES NEAR NORTHAM

Lindsay Milhinch has made several sightings of Diamond Doves in his district this season. They first appeared during October at his property near Northam and on 4th November he found a bird sitting on a nest containing 2 eggs. This record has coincided with the appearance of several other northern species in areas further south than their usual range. Previous records of the the Diamond Dove in the Avon River Valley and other southern localities are discussed by Dom Serventy in "Birds of Western Australia". It will be interesting to see how long these birds remain in the light of that discussion.

STOP PRESS

Roger Jaensch will be on holiday from 24th March to 4th April, 1982.

AUSTRALASIAN RAPTOR ASSOCIATION

The Australasian Raptor Association is a semi-autonomous body sponsored by the Field Investigation Committee of the R.A.O.U. It is an association for all those with an interest in the diurnal and nocturnal raptors of the Australasian region. Amongst other activities such as a Nest Record Scheme, a Prey Record Scheme and a Raptor Survey Scheme the Association publishes a regular Newsletter. Current subscription is \$3.00. For further information write to the Secretary, Tom Aumann, Lot 1 Hansen's Creek Road, Hoddle's Creek, Vic. 3139.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

As part of my effort for this year's Wildlife Show (of the Rockingham Branch of the W.A. Naturalists' Club), I am trying to establish bird lists for the wetland areas and certain bush areas between Fremantle and Mandurah, going as far inland as Lake Forrestdale and concentrating on the two Cockburn wetland chains. The "bush" areas I am interested in are the islands off this stretch of coast, Pt. Peron, Mt. Brown, Long Point and Woodman's Point. Any such information, particularly on which birds breed there and the current condition of these areas would be greatly appreciated.

David Doust,
C/- 26 Safety Bay Road,
Rockingham, W.A. 6168

RAOU BIRD REPORT FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

YEAR: 1982 OBSERVER: FRED BEAK

SHEET: 4 ADDRESS: 222 BILLINGGATE RD, DOOLEYBUP, 6773 Postcode

REC. For records of species considered unusual, please include with this
 VET. form full descriptions and other supporting field notes in Atlas URKF[†]
 ENT. format or equivalent detail. These details may be requested if not
 REF. supplied. Spare forms will be forwarded on receipt of a stamped,
 Record addressed envelope from Geoff Shannon, 31 Cimbrook Way, Duncraig,

NR	RAOU Atlas No.	Number recorded	Locality & preferably distance
↓	↓	↓	↓
1	237	2	12 k SSW YALGOO.
2	051	4	Tucker's Swamp, 7 k NE Big Hill near Yalgoo.
3	157	1	Hertsman Lake, Perth.
4	176	3	40 k E Murrumbidgee.
5	416	2	5 k SE Gnowangerup.
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

Remarks: description, behaviour, evidence of breeding, habitat. Continue on back also →

- Thicket falcon with barred chest. Diving and chasing display near large tree.
- Loud and persistent calling from thick bed of *Typha* bulrush.
- On edge of lawn close to water.
- With two large runners in sandhill country signs of recent rain.
- Swamp Yates along creek: feeding quietly in canopy.