

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

Monthly meetings are held on the waterfront at the corner of Hackett Drive and Stirling Highway, Crawley, beginning at 8.00 p.m.

Monday, September 27 -

John Dell of the W.A. Museum will speak on "Birds of the Jarrah Forest".

Annual Dinner and Meeting:

Friday, January 7 will be the date for the most popular of all our meetings and we envisage a similar sort of outdoor occasion as last January. The venue is yet to be decided. Does anybody have a big outdoor area or garden which they would like to offer for the occasion? If so, please ring Joan Seabrook on 299 6816.

COMING EXCURSIONS

Saturday, September 18 - Eagle Hawk Flats & Karakin Lakes:

Leader: Roger Jaensch. Full day excursion including waterbird training, completing a round trip of about 275km from the Perth G.P.O. Meet at 8.30 a.m. at the south side of the bridge over the Moore River on the Lancelin Road. Those wishing to rationalise vehicles or requiring a lift should meet at 69 Lanark Street, Coolbinia at 7.00 a.m. We shall start by looking at coastal-plain scrub north-east of Lancelin and later move on to the Karakin Lakes. R. J. will not be continuing on to look at wetland nature reserves in the Eneabba and Watheroo districts but will be happy to guide people to these places. Please contact him beforehand if interested.

October 1-4: Long weekend at Waroona:

Bookings are still available for some of the accommodation at Waroona Hotel. The weekend promises to be an interesting one and anyone who does not have the details from the last newsletter (No. 22) should contact Stephen Davies, Waters Upton, Mt. Helena 6555 as soon as possible.

Saturday, November 20 - Point Waylen/Alfred Cove:

Meet at the Pt. Waylen Park carpark at 8.00 a.m. for a half day outing. Steve Keeling will show observers the interesting natural features of the area, discuss management problems and assist with identification of water birds (particularly waders, if present).

Saturday, December 4 - Wannamal Lake and wetlands, Gingin Shire.

Meet at the Bindoon Hotel carpark (4km north of Bindoon on the Great Northern Highway and 86km from the Perth G.P.O.) at 8.00 a.m. We will proceed a further 33km to Wannamal Lake Nature Reserve where we will spend some time looking at water and bush birds. During the afternoon we will probably investigate a variety of small lakes and bush spots near the reserve.

CORRIGENDUM

Our apologies to the Kwinana-Rockingham-Murray Branch (RAOU) of the W.A. Naturalists' Club for incorrectly referring to their group as the Rockingham-Esperance-Murray Branch etc. in the last issue of W.A.B.N. (page 7).

FIELD OFFICER ABSENCE

I anticipate being absent from the RAOU Waterbird Project office from 6th December to after the New Year as I will be taking annual holidays at that time. Part of this leave will probably be spent at the RAOU headquarters in Melbourne.

Other periods of absence that I have planned in 1982 are:

1. 28 September - 4 October (Great Southern and Waroona).
2. 9 October - 13 October (Northern reserves).
3. 8 November - 12 November (Esperance region).

Roger Jaensch

JUNE MEETING

On 28 June over 70 people attended the RAOU meeting at Cynet Hall, where Graeme Chapman spoke on "Birds of the Salmon Gum Woodlands". Among the points made were that: Salmon Gum is often closely associated with Gimlet (*E. salubris*) and growing together they often indicate heavy soils of particular value to wheatbelt wheat/sheep farmers. Consequently, much of the salmon gum woodlands have been cleared for agriculture, a process which is still continuing. The total salmon gum woodlands are now greatly reduced in quantity and those remaining are often coveted by farmers. However, these woodlands are of particular importance to a wide range of birds as a vital food resource at certain times of the year. The importance of the woodlands is now recognised and efforts to restore regrowth have commenced. The uselessness of the single tree in the paddock for regeneration and the destructiveness of sheep both by grazing and soil compaction was emphasised. The talk was illustrated by a range of colour slides of the salmon gum habitat and the birds of the area. None of the slides was less than very good and many were magnificent. A most enjoyable evening.

Bruce Buchanan

LAKE CHITTERING - JULIMAR FOREST EXCURSION REPORT - SATURDAY 12 JUNE, 1982

Despite the forecast of stormy weather, a dozen or so stalwarts turned out on what proved to be a pleasant winter's day, firstly at Lake Chittering, then on to Lake Wannamal and finally to lunch and a wander through parts of the Julimar State Forest. The reward for perseverance came quickly, when after only a few minutes at Lake Chittering, Roger Jaensch spotted a number of Freckled Ducks and good views were obtained by everybody through his spotting scope. A careful scanning of the lake revealed a total of 145 Freckled Ducks, one of the biggest flocks seen in W.A. Twenty-two other species were seen there and perhaps the most noteworthy being 12 Yellow-billed Spoonbills, 30 Sacred Ibis and three flocks of Black Swans.

Later in the morning, a walk up the east side of Lake Wannamal revealed large numbers of ducks, mainly Pink-eared (500+) and Aust. Shovelers (500-800) with a few Grey Teal, Coots, Black Swans and a lone male Darter, and in all sixteen species. The large number of artificial nest boxes erected in trees around the lake bore testament to much hard work by the Field and Game Association of W.A. who are conducting trials with different designs of nest boxes. After a sunny stop for lunch at the northern end of the Julimar Forest, a walk through the wandoo was quite disappointing — very few birds indeed, either in number or variety. This was not surprising as one couldn't help but wonder about the lack of diversity in the understorey, both in variety and physically. The shrub layer was mostly little more than 50cm high which offered little cover for birds. Presumably this is the result of forestry management. Later in the afternoon, after driving along a forest track a few kilometres, we reached a pocket of forest which had a great variety of shrubs, some up to 5m high and in this area birds were numerous, although only a dozen species were seen during our short stay.

G.C.

GOOMALLING AND TOODYAY DISTRICTS EXCURSION REPORT

Saturday, July 10, 1982:

With a heavy fog upon us, 11 bird watchers including a visiting U.S. naval officer departed from Midland and made our way to Northam where we met 15 country members including our excursion leader for the day, Lindsay Milhinch. Moving on through the gloom, we reached Goomalling where thankfully the mist was dispersing and the countryside could be appreciated.

From a vantage point at the southern end of Lake Walyor-mouring, Lindsay explained how this basin only became a lake through the clearing of the surrounding land and how the effects of salt were killing off the vegetation. Making our lunch break meeting point Oak Park (picnic area) adjacent to the lake, members then branched out in several directions to observe the local birds. The water level was low and well out beyond the dead tree perimeter.

Amongst the 52 species of birds seen here, interesting sightings were a coloured male Chestnut Teal, two male Australasian Shovelers, two Little Button-quail, 40 Red-necked Stints, two Mulga Parrots, White-winged Fairy-wrens, and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters.

We later drove to the Wongamine Reserve near Toodyay where unfortunately only one hour could be spared. Again Lindsay briefed us on the significance of this area before we dispersed for observations amongst the varied flora communities which included wandoo, jarrah and sandplain heath. I would recommend this reserve for a more thorough survey on a future excursion. Sixteen species of birds were seen here with some notable sightings being the Western Spinebill, White-necked Honeyeater and White-winged Fairy-Wren.

We finished the excursion at Jim Masters' property, "Glen Avon", near Toodyay on the Avon River. Here we saw a very good example of how considerate farmers can encourage water birds to utilise farm dams by the planting of shrubs and trees around the edges and making small islets for nesting and roosting security.

Ten species of water birds were seen on the dams at which Jim keeps a careful watch for seasonal changes in both species and abundance. The local shire has largely banned boats from using the large pool on the river at "Glen Avon". This should afford some protection to nesting cormorants.

Seventy species of birds were seen during this excursion — our thanks to Lindsay and Jim for their guidance. We look forward to another meeting with our new birding acquaintances from the Northam-Toodyay region. The U.S. Navy Officer, Tom, much appreciated the outing and left with a greater knowledge of W.A. birds and birdos.

David James

DOBADERY NATURE RESERVE EXCURSION REPORT — SATURDAY 7th AUGUST, 1982

Sixteen "birdos" proved to have undaunted spirits on the excursion to Dobaderry Nature Reserve where they were faced with a constant drizzle. But after all, it was perfect bird watching weather — there was no wind.

Dobaderry Nature Reserve is predominantly wandoo with areas of well developed mid-storey and understorey. Flowering dryandras were a major component of the mid-storey. We were greeted at our rather wet destination with the calling of several cuckoos and four species were identified during the visit. Honey-eaters put on entertaining shows among the dryandras, with Tawny-crowned and Yellow-plumed the most striking of the six species observed. Also seen were two Varied Pittas in a colourful chasing flight.

If the rain and wet understorey did not provide a moist enough environment, Dobaderry Swamp, with its 40cm of water, certainly did. Some people, not satisfied with being only half wet, capitalised on the opportunity of getting totally wet, but unfortunately no waterbirds were seen at the swamp.

Thus we returned with a rewarding list of 18 species, some will still say that wet weather is only good for ducks. A stop for lunch further down Dale West Road towards Kelmscott brought the total bird species list to 27. Well done everybody for their show of "undampable" spirits.

Shapelle McInnes & Doug Watkins

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Courses at Eyre in the next three months are as follows:

29 August-4 September: BIRD BANDING. Perry de Rebiere and Peter Congreve. Mist netting, banding, measuring, moult and recording. The course will involve extensive field work and will emphasise the correct method of extracting birds from the net and their handling.

5-11 September: BIRDS IN THE LANDSCAPE, Eileen Brooker. An Art Course led by a Tasmanian artist who has years of experience, a Diploma of Art and Teachers Certificate. She has held exhibitions in Hobart. The course will be in the medium of painting and students will be expected to bring their own paints and impediments.

26 September-2 October: SOUND RECORDING, Ian Rocks. The equipment for this course is provided in the field, and editing. The use of recorded calls to call up birds.

30 October-6 November: SHORE BIRDS. Jim Lane and Peter Congreve. Aspects of the behaviour and identification of shore birds and the use of cannon nets. Ageing and sexing of the bird in the hand.

5-11 December: FIELD ORNITHOLOGY. Dr. Stephen Davies and Peter Congreve. The course will cover practical aspects of census techniques, watching and recording bird behaviour and the writing up of results.

Eyre badly needs a good set of spanners, metric Whitworth and A.F. Any kindly person who would like to donate complete sets or a whole kit should contact Stephen Davies who has the details. The full set costs about \$190 but ring, open-ended or socket spanners can be bought separately in each standard. The sets cost about \$30 each.

W.A. BIRD REPORT

Thank you for your records which are now arriving at a steady rate. The metropolitan area is still poorly covered. Are there no birds left in Kings Park or at Herdsman Lake? I hope that the new form for multiple visits to the same site will make it easier for you to send me your records from your favourite birding spot or garden. Please do not rely on somebody else sending records in for the more frequented spots because you may have seen something different. It does not matter if the visits are not regular. Somebody may have been there some other time and this will make your records all the more valuable.

I have already records of Pallid Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo and Fan-tailed Cuckoo from Yanchep in July. Fan-tailed Cuckoos have also been seen recently at Forrestdale and Manjimup. Sacred Kingfishers were present at Dunborough in June.

How about some breeding records to enable us to form a picture of both where and when birds start breeding? Welcome Swallows are sitting at Princess Margaret Hospital. Recently fledged New Holland Honeyeaters have been banded at Yanchep already this year. ~~Some~~ ^{Many} Honeyeaters are now more plentiful there. Any more?

Geoff Shannon,
15 Lagonda Drive,
Gwelup 6021 Phone: 445 2417

W.A. WADER STUDY GROUP

The only activity carried out by members of the Perth Sub-group since the end of the last banding season on 18 April 1982 has been its participation in the national winter wader count last July. The efforts of all those who turned out to cover several points on the Swan estuary and most of the lakes in the vicinity of Perth are much appreciated and will result in due course in the publication of useful data.

Those who took part in the north-western expedition of August/September 1981 will be interested to learn that one of their Grey-tailed Tattlers was caught alive and healthy on a beach at Tsankiang, Guang-dong, in the People's Republic of China by a Mr. Zeng Peng on 21 May 1982. The bird had travelled 5500km in a NNW direction from Roebuck Bay, Broome where it had been caught and banded on 30 August 1981. Tsankiang is situated at latitude 21°10'N and long. 110°20'E.

Owing to increasing commitments, the writer will be unable to carry on convening field meetings of the Perth Sub-group and storing and transporting the mist-netting equipment and bands used by it. He will, however, be producing a report on the activities of the last banding season, attending to his backlog of wader correspondence and organising a meeting of members of the Sub-group to discuss future operations as soon as possible. Anybody in the Sub-group who is willing and able to take over from him is very welcome to ring him to that effect at home on 291 6563.

Jeremy Talbot

SOUTH-WEST WATERBIRD PROJECT

Report by RAOU Field Officer, Roger Jaensch

1. Recruitment and Coverage of Reserves:

Our Waterbird survey team has swelled to 70 persons covering 65 wetland nature reserves. All but one of the reserves (Flagstaff L.) in our set of highest priority reserves have been allocated to observers, so we are now looking for observers to cover the next most important set of wetlands (see Table 1).

I must stress that these reserves were not ranked with the "priority" reserves simply because they were not known to be important waterbird spots. However, this has been partly due to a lack of knowledge about some reserves, which upon detailed study may prove to be of considerable importance to waterbirds! This applies particularly to those reserves which are more distant from the centres of population.

2. Survey Dates:

The next three preferred water bird survey dates are:

1. 11-19 September 1982
2. 6-14 November 1982
- 3.

Remember that many wetlands will have reached maximum depth by September, so waterbird breeding at these places will generally be at its peak during the following month or two.

A special reminder to participants covering lakes in the region from Brookton to Cranbrook, that they should make every effort where possible to visit their wetlands while there is still a fair amount of water present (mostly from January rains!). Results already submitted point to a particularly busy breeding season on these wetlands.

3. Equipment and Survey Instructions:

The final computer forms have been distributed and appear to have been well accepted by project participants. The compatible Field Record Booklet is still being modified, but supplies will be posted to active observers as soon as they become available.

Two points of instruction should be made:

- Please use blue biro or pen when filling out computer forms as black lettering is difficult to read against the black printed linework.
- Only tick breeding categories if you are absolutely sure that they apply to the species entered. Be particularly careful with identifying unattended eggs and young in nests and non-descript runners. The book Waterfowl in Australia by H. J. Faith (1967) includes a useful colour plate depicting the downy young of Australian ducks and geese.

4. Training:

Field Training Days have been held at Joondalup, Herdsman and Forrestdale Lakes (Perth area), the Narrogin Lakes and Manypeaks Lakes since the last newsletter was posted. These were basically intended to enable less experienced observers to become more familiar with waterbirds likely to be encountered in their "local" wetland reserves and to train participants in waterbird counting methods.

In all five instances we concentrated on special approaches necessary under winter-flooded conditions. We were blessed with a useful variety of waterbird species which enabled important comparisons to be made between some similar species (e.g. Swampphen and Moorhen: Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes). At Forrestdale on 21st August we concentrated on nest-searching techniques and were rewarded with active nests of Black Swan, Purple Swampphen and White-faced Heron.

Watch the December W.A. Bird Notes for details of training days in the new year and please take note of coming waterbird-centred excursions detailed in this issue.

5. Techniques:

In this issue we look at the bitterns - a group which is poorly known because of the secretive behaviour of its member species. Bitterns are widely distributed in the higher rainfall parts of the South West (from just north of Perth to the Esperance district), and at least one species is likely to be found at any fresh wetland in this region, which includes sufficient low, dense cover. Table 2 only deals with the Australasian (Brown) and Little Bitterns as I am not personally familiar with the Black Bittern - which may be dealt with in a later issue.

6. Returns:

Over 300 completed computer forms have now been received by the Project Office. Results entered on the old MK. 7A forms are being transferred to the final design forms by Mrs. Sheila Fawcett - my sincere thanks for her careful work in this task.

7. Results/Feedback:

Preparation of the computer program for our data is nearly finished but has proven more difficult than at first anticipated. I have established a system for the checking and vetting of incoming sheets and I am presently churning through the backlog of sheets received. A small, checked sample has been sent to the data punchers at the U.W.A. Regional Computing Centre to assist the programmer (Mrs. Pene Duffy) in getting the waterbird data program running smoothly. The following examples of results have been prepared manually.

a) July 1982 Surveys: preliminary results:

With increased participation in the Waterbird Project, nearly twice as many wetlands were covered in July as in May. Only a quarter of the surveys conducted in July were outside the suggested survey period, so results from the whole month were considered for the summary given in Table 3.

Despite increased coverage, the total number of birds recorded from reserves in July was similar to that in May. Factors contributing to this result could include the absence of northern hemisphere migratory waders or Australian-breeding waterbirds being located in other parts of the State or continent during our winter months.

Swan Coastal Plain wetlands figured prominently in July total, with Forrestdale, Thomson's and Peel Inlet Reserves accounting for 43% of the grand bird total. We may only be able to start to explain these types of results after at least a full year's data has been collected.

Several major differences can be seen between the figures in Table 3 below and those for May given in Table 3 in WABN No. 22 (June 1982). Banded Stilts and Coots accounted for smaller proportions of the grand total in July than in May: actual reserves covered may be crucial for total of these species. In contrast, Grey Teal and Shoveler totals jumped dramatically. Great Egrets, Grey Teal and Shoveler were each reported from a smaller proportion of the wetlands surveyed in July as in May, but Coots and Banded Stilts were proportionately less dispersed.

The Esperance Lakes and West Coast estuaries continue to be the strongholds of Great Egrets but only 40 were seen in total in July. Shoemaker and Blue-billed Duck (the latter introduced in this issue) totals could be greatly increased if other metropolitan lakes were part of the Project (e.g. 540 Shoveler reported on Bibra Lake 22/6/82). It would be interesting to know whether the Banded Stilts have dispersed to their famous breeding lakes in the Eastern Goldfields and adjacent districts.

b) Peel Inlet East and South Reserve (PW No. 13)

Nine observers are involved with the Waterbird Project counts in this reserve and their consistent survey approach has enabled me to make useful comparisons between results from surveys conducted to date. Figure 1 displays selected totals from three relatively comparable winter surveys.

Three basic trends are portrayed. Pelicans and Shovelers are typical of one group of waterbirds which has shown a consistently upward trend in numbers, while the opposite applies to Grey Teal, Black Swans and Red-necked Stilts. Reasons for the upward trend are not readily apparent but the falling totals may be due to either dispersal to flooded breeding areas or to winter migration in the case of the Stilts.

Several species, including the Black-winged Stilt have exhibited a third trend which incorporates a sag in numbers in June. June is possibly the time at which the inlet is most extensive, leaving little suitable habitat for waders. Trends in totals at this reserve are complicated by the effects of northerly and easterly winds which can push shallow water back off the mudflats well within half a day.

Other points of interest include the following high totals, all from June 1982: Great Egret (100), Yellow-billed Spoonbill (45), Greenshank (36), and Whiskered Tern (187). The Greenshank total is interesting because most individuals of this species are at northern hemisphere breeding grounds at this time, while the other three species have rarely been seen in great numbers at any time in the South-West.

Several "deepwater" species have appeared for the first time in the latest count (i.e. Hardhead, Coot, Musk Duck and Coot). Roseate Terns were also sighted in this part of the inlet: they rarely venture inland from beaches and islands wherever they occur.

c) Species Recorded Breeding (12/7/81 - 25/8/82)

Since the first survey was conducted on the 12th of July, 1981, some 31 species have been recorded breeding in the South-West and Eucla Divisions by project participants (see table 4). The Great and Little Egrets and Rufous Night Herons have not yet been recorded breeding on WAWA Wetland Native Reserves and it already seems likely that breeding grounds of these species are not at present adequately represented in the nature reserve system. However, heron-types change nest colony sites from time to time so observers should keep an eye out for these birds in the reserves they are covering. At least two former colony sites are included in the reserve system.

Surprisingly few records have been submitted for the Hoary-headed Grebe, despite its widespread occurrence. This species usually nests in small colonies, making small floating rafts of weed which contain their warty eggs (often covered with weed). White-faced Heron nests also tend to be overlooked: they place a weak platform or bowl nest in (preferably) eucalypts beside or near a wetland. The adults may be easily missed when scanning likely-looking nests due to their ability to "freeze" and blend with the background.

Australasian Grebes, Australian Shelducks and Maned Geese frequently nest on or near water. They may not be recorded breeding often in our "natural" wetlands (unless parading youngsters). Nests of bitterns and other secretive birds are surprisingly difficult to locate and some experience is useful in attempting to find them. I may discuss this in a future issue.

Waterbirds which build conspicuous nests or behave conspicuously near their nests (e.g. Black Swan, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Coot) figure prominently in Table 4. The Pink-eared Duck is the only species which has been found breeding in twelve consecutive months. It has no doubt been assisted by the January floods, but in any case it is one of our most opportunistic breeders.

The representation in Table 4 of species such as the Clamorous Reed Warbler could easily improve because their nests are relatively simple to find. Furthermore, even if duck nests are not found, small ducklings with parents are often more conspicuous and indicate breeding in the general area by the species concerned.

A fairly predictable pattern of number of species breeding each month is shown. Ignoring July and August 1981 (few sheets submitted), the peak breeding months shown are in spring and early summer and the least significant months are in late autumn and early winter. Again, the March total may have been inflated by the effects of the January floods. This is a rudimentary picture and actual counts of nests would be needed for a clearer picture but this would require a separate project to ours.

The figures in Table 4 are not intended as a guide to observers in searching for species not yet recorded breeding on any reserve as well as providing incentive to fill in gaps in the monthly distributions. A more detailed account of breeding results for each reserve will appear in the computer printouts.

A reminder that participants should consider filling out RAOU Nest Record Scheme Cards for any nests found, particularly those of less-recorded species. Details and cards are available from the Project Office.

TABLE 1
WETLAND NATURE RESERVES NOT YET ALLO-
CATED TO OBSERVERS, 1/8/82

Deserving two-monthly coverage.

P.W. No./Reserve name (e.g. Lake, swamp, river)/Shire/Location (Distance in km)

8 Gingin 31241 /Gingin/8 SW Gingin
153 Crackers/Dandaragan/26 ENE Lancelin
132 Enemings/Dandaragan/ 8 SW Cataby
186 Capamaura/Carnamah/12 WSW Coorow
149 Logue/Carnamah/12 WSW Eneabba
147 Murchison/Northampton/at Galena
46 Campion/Merredin/40 N Merredin
86 White/Narrogin/27 ESE Narrogin

62 Dumbleyung/Wagin/8 WSW Dumbleyung
65 Wagin 2088/Wagin/2 SE Wagin
63 Flagstaff/Woodanilling/22 WSW Wagin
119 West Arthur 5456/West Arthur/42 WSW Wagin
123 Wild Horse/West Arthur/38 S Darkan
128 Boyup Brook 18239/Boyup Brook/at Kulikup
129 Blackwood/Donnybrook-Balingup/13 W Greenbushes
35 Irwin Inlet/Denmark/5 SE Bow Bridge
179 East Pingerup/Cranbrook/17 WNW Rocky Gully
122 Cheyne Beach Rd/Albany/12 ENE Manypeaks
105 Cranbrook 25812/Cranbrook/24 E Cranbrook
92 Balcup/Cranbrook/22 ENE Cranbrook
82 Casuarina/Katanning/19 ENE Katanning
81 Altham/Kent/15 NNW Pingerup

TABLE 2 – FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF AUSTRALASIAN AND LITTLE BITTERNS

CHARACTERISTICS	AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN <i>Botaurus poiceoptilus</i>	LITTLE BITTERN <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
1. Preferred habitat (for both feeding and breeding)	tall, dense reed*-beds or clumps, mixed with or near short fine sedge. (* eg. <i>Typha</i> spp., <i>Baumea articulatum</i>)	reed-beds or clumps incorporating areas of dense collapsed reed stems.
2. Typical calls (usually heard in spring, presumably by males in their territories)	single deep booming "woomphhh": may be repeated several times in succession or every few minutes. Variable in volume. Usually difficult to trace to caller. Also a deep short croak when flushed.	a series of 10 or more deep, even notes, like a coarse wood-sawing sound; lasting up to 10 seconds: "cor-orr-orr-orr..." May seem frog-like. May not be strong. More easily traced to caller.
3. Size (length) comparison: in flight.	mid-way between Rufous Night Heron and Great Egret; slightly longer than White-faced Heron.	mid-way between Sacred Kingfisher and Coot.
4. Shape: in flight	like Rufous Night Heron but bulkier (particularly at hunched neck) and with proportionately longer, bowed wings.	not unlike large Sacred Kingfisher but with hunched-up neck, finer bill and slightly longer wings. Feet trail conspicuously.
5. Style of flight	differs from Rufous Night Heron in being less buoyant, more direct and usually with heavier, slower wingbeats. Rarely rises higher than just above reeds.	fairly quick, short and direct, just above reeds; may wheel and bank before crashing into cover, revealing wing pattern.
6. Distinctive plumage characters: in flight.	generally dark brown and buff (impression varies from light to almost black) on upper parts; wings similar but scalloped or laced with buff and white (not spotted).	male: black on top, buff or white below; large cream patch in each wing. female and immature: striped, brown and buff above; less distinct wing patch.
7. Typical alert Posture when in cover.	standing in water or low in reeds; "freezes", neck outstretched, bill pointing skyward.	part way up reeds, feet clasping upright reed stems; "freezes" with neck outstretched or hunched.
8. Distinctive plumage characters: in cover	two or three heavy dark brown stripes down buff or cream neck; plumage blends with background	male: black back and cap, rufous ruff around neck, female: brown instead of black; subdued version of male. immature: mostly striped brown and buff.

TABLE 3
JULY 1982 WATERBIRD SURVEY RESULTS

- from wetland nature reserves in the South-West and Eucla Divisions;
- preliminary totals from data received up to 20/8/82;
- using maxima for July if more than one survey was conducted during the month.

- Number of wetlands (reserve parts) surveyed = 73 (+).
- Number of surveys conducted in July 1982 = 97.
- Total number of birds recorded = 35,232 (*).
 - number of wetlands with no birds recorded = 6 (8% of +)

- the four highest totals were from
 - Forrestdale L. (8083 = 23% of *),
 - Peel Inlet East and South (5006 = 14% of *),
 - Walyormouring L. (2825 = 8% of *),
 - Thomson's L. (2229 = 6% of *).

4. STUDY SPECIES:

1) GREAT EGRET

- reported from 12 wetlands (16% of +),
- total = 40 (less than 1% of *),
- highest reports = 10 at Peel Inlet and 10 at Windabout L. (each 25% of total for (1)).

2) GREY TEAL

- reported from 39 wetlands (53% of +),
- total = 12,651 (36% of *),
- highest = 4,500 at Forrestdale L. (36% of total for (2)) and 2,500 at Walyormouring L. (20% of total for (2)).

3) AUSTRALASIAN SHOVELER

- reported from 15 wetlands (21% of †),
- total = 1121 (3% of *),
- highest = 410 at Thomson's L. (37% of total for (3)), and 395 at Wannamal L. (35% of total for (3)).

4) BLUE-BILLED DUCK

- reported from 6 wetlands (8% of †),
- total = 196 (1% of *),
- highest = 156 at Bambun L. (80% of total for (4)), and 27 at Byenup L. (14% of total for (4)).

5) COOT

- reported from 15 wetlands (21% of †),
- total = 1674 (5% of *),
- highest = 586 at Wannamal L. (35% of total for (5)), and 500 at Wheatfield L. (30% of total for (5)).

6) BANDED STILT

- reported from 7 wetlands (10% of †),
- total = 1481 (4% of *),
- highest = 860 at Mears L. (58% of total for (6)), 240 at White Water L. (16% of total for (6)).

TABLE 4
WATERBIRD SPECIES RECORDED BREEDING IN THE SOUTH-WEST SINCE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE RAOU WATERBIRD PROJECT (ie. May 81 - August 82)

Year Month	+ Indicates not recorded breeding on a WAWA Wetland Nature Reserve												Number of months (out of 12) which species has been recorded breeding.			
	J	A	S	1981			J	F	M	1982				J	J	A
Great Crested Grebe				*												1
Hour-headed Grebe								*								1
Great Cormorant			*									*			*	2
Little Black Cormorant			*							*						1
Little Pied Cormorant				*	*		*		*							4
Pacific Heron				*	*											2
White-faced Heron			*												*	2
+Great Egret				*		*										2
+Little Egret						*										1
+Rufous Night Heron				*		*										2
Little Bittern						*										1
Yellow-billed Spoonbill					*	*									*	3
Black Swan	*	*	*	*	*	*	*						*	*	*	8
Australian Shelduck	*			*	*	*	*							*	*	4
Pacific Black Duck				*	*	*	*							*	*	5
Grey Teal		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10
Australasian Shoveler		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	2
Pink-eared Duck		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	12
Hardhead			*	*	*	*	*									3
Maned Duck						*	*									1
Blue-billed Duck				*		*	*	*						*		3
Musk Duck				*		*	*		*			*				4
Marsh Harrier						*	*									1
Spotless Crane				*		*	*									1
Purple Swamphen				*	*	*	*									1
Coot		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	8
Red-capped Plover			*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	6
Black-fronted Plover						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1
Clamorous Reed Warbler						*	*									2
Little Grassbird				*												1
No. of species breeding each month	4	4	4	17	10	15	7	5	7	3	5	2	10	10	10	

Total number of species recorded breeding = 31.

INTERESTING WATERBIRD SIGHTINGS

Series 5 : 1982 (Winter)

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

Species names follow the RAOU Recommended List of English names in EMU Vol. 77 (supplement).

To assist the reader, shire names are given in brackets following the wetland names.

Australasian Grebe
7, 18/7, Walbyring* (Wickepin).
524, 6/6, Chittering* (Chittering).

Great Crested Grebe
25, 19/8, Monger (Metro)

Darter

4, 22/7, Forrestdale* (Armadale-Kelmscott).

Great Cormorant

13, 12/7, Wannamal* (Gingin).
16, 14/8, Toolibin* (Wickepin) 7 nests with fully fledged young, in fallen trees.

Little Black Cormorant

229, 17/7, Como Foreshore* (Metro)

Pacific Heron

2, 6/6, Wannamal* (Gingin): earliest report.
1, 24/7 & 14/8, Chandala* (Chittering).
4, 27/7, water meadows near Nanning Lake (Dandaragan).

Cattle Egret

4, 26/6, Joondalup* - In adjacent pastures with cattle! (Wanneroo).

Australasian Bittern

1, 18/7, Jandabup* (Wanneroo): unusual in winter.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill

26, 6/6, Chittering* (Chittering).

Freckled Duck

- 24, 6/6 & 12/7, Wannamal* (Gingin).
- 1, 19/6, Thomson's* (Cockburn): probable sighting.
- 2, 11/7, Forrestdale* (Armada-Kelmscott).
- 6, 14/8, Toolibin* (Wickepin).
- 3, 17/8, Gundaring* (Wagin): probable sightings.

Chestnut Teal

- 2, 2-12/7, Forrestdale* (Armada-Kelmscott).
- 100, 9/7, Woody* (Esperance).
- 30, 16/7, Townswinning* (West Arthur).
- 24, 16/8, Bremer Bay (Snowywangrup).
- 4, 17/8, Ewlyamarup (Katanning).

Australasian Shoveler

- 90, 19/6, Ibis* (Narrogin).
- 96, 2/7, Forrestdale* (Armada-Kelmscott).
- 66, 10/7, Nambung (Gingin).
- 26, 11/7, Egan* (Coorow).

Hardhead

- 107, 8/7, Benger* (Harvey).
- 414, 10/7, Chittering* (Chittering).

Blue-winged Duck

- 1, 17/8, Coyrecup* (Katanning): inconceivable prior to the floods!

Osprey

- 1, 17/7, Cooma Park* (Metro)

Buff-banded Rail

- 1, 3/7, Alfred Cove* (Metro): in sedge.
- 1, 16/7, Forrestdale* (Armada-Kelmscott).

Australian Crane

- 1, 10/7, Thomsons* (Cockburn).
- 2, 15/8, Anderson* (Tambellup): in samphire.

Spotless Crane

- 8, 10/7, Thomsons* (Cockburn).
- 1, 15/8, Mettlers (Albany).
- 1, 16/8, Bremer Bay (Snowywangrup): in twig-rush growing in creek entering lake.

Purple Swamphen

- 1, 18/7, Unicap* (Cranbrook).

Red-kneed Dotterel

- 2, 14/7, Anderson* (Tambellup).
- 2, 17/8, Lake East of Coyrecup (Katanning).

Hooded Plover

- 2, 29/6 & 3/7, Mears* (Brookton).
- 105, 10/7, Gore* (Esperance).
- 2, 12/7, White Water* (Corrigin).

Black-fronted Plover

- 23, 16/7, Townswinning* (West Arthur).

Banded Stilt

- 600, 1/6, Kworncup* (Plantagenet).
- 360, 19/6, Thomsons* (Cockburn).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

- 11, 2/7, Forrestdale* (Armada-Kelmscott): quite rare in winter, overwintering less often than other migratory waders.

Curlew Sandpiper

- 73, 10/6, Forrestdale* (Armada-Kelmscott).
- 161, 19/6, Thomsons* (Cockburn).

Red-necked Stint

- 26, 22/5, Unicap* (Cranbrook).
- 51, 10/7, Gore* (Esperance).
- 7, 12/7, White Water* (Corrigin).

Sanderling

- 12, 16/8, Gordon Inlet (Ravensthorpe).

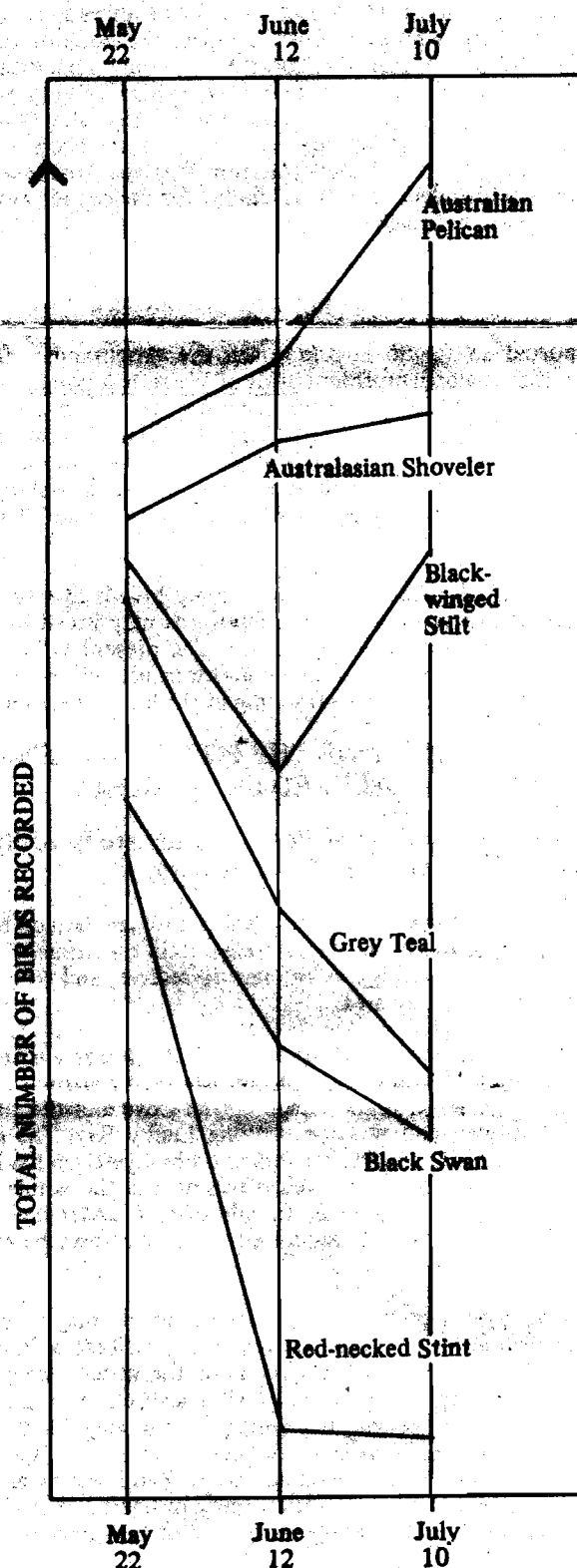
Whiskered Tern

- 3, 14/8, Ibis* (Narrogin).

FIGURE 1.

Fluctuations in waterbird numbers at Peel Inlet East & South Reserve

note: scales are not necessarily the same for each species.



Northern Shoveler Sighting

Mrs. R. Paynter and another observer, both from the Toodyay district, observed an unusual shoveler in flooded pastures near Namming Lake on Saturday 23rd July, 1982. The unusual bird differed from the male Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchos* (in breeding dress) in that it had a clean white chest and glossy green head (blackish on the crown) lacking the white crescent of *rhynchos*. These characters tally perfectly with the Male Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*. Female-phase individuals of these two species are almost impossible to distinguish between in the field and so only coloured males of *clypeata* have been previously detected in Australia.

The Northern Shoveler breeds in cold regions of the northern hemisphere and migrates considerable distances southward during the northern winter. It does not pass the equator to any great extent in South-East Asia and there are only a handful of Australian records, these being from New South Wales (twice, once in March 1975, Queensland, and South Australia (August 1979 *S.A. Ornithologist*:28, p178). There have been no previous published reports of *clypeata* from Western Australia but observers should indeed keep a watch out for the conspicuous males of this species in this State.

Black-tailed Native-Hens

The South-West is at present experiencing a minor irruption of the Black-tailed Native-hen *Callipepla australis*. Although numbers reported so far do not approach the "thousands" described in previous major irruptions (*Birds of Western Australia* by Serventy & Whittell 1976), we have received reports of 107 (Chandala Swamp, 14/8), 56 (Ibba L. 14/8) and 33 (lagoon east of Coyrecup Lake, 17/8). Other wetlands at which smaller numbers have been reported (since 10/7) include Bambun, Mungala, Wallering, Ninan, Chittering, Yeriynning, Gundasing, Kwetrup and Towerrinning Lakes and swamps.

The Black-tailed Native-hen mainly breeds in inland northern parts of the State although a few birds may breed in the South-West under favourable conditions. The present influx is possibly related to the good breeding conditions established in the North-West following extensive flooding in the last wet season.

A STUDY OF THE POINT WAYLEN - ALFRED COVE AREA

Steve Keeling gives details of his study of this important part of the Swan River estuary.

The objectives of the study are to provide data on bird species occurring in the PWA-C area, to ascertain the influence of urbanisation on the ecology of the nature reserve, and to consider the future of the study area.

The Point Waylen/Alfred Cove Nature Reserve is vested in the W.A. Wildlife Authority and consists of a narrow strip of land to the high water mark, inside Alfred Cove and the foreshore of Point Waylen and westwards along Lucky Bay. The area is currently a class C reserve. A submission by System 6 has been made to extend the reserve to well off-shore and the whole area to be made an aquatic reserve. In addition, I understand the W.A. Wildlife Authority has requested that the reserve be classified as class A.

The habitat of the area is quite varied and may be broken into four distinct areas. These are the mud/sand flats of Point Waylen; the open grassland of Troy Park to the waters edge; the mixed tree area comprising shrubs, tall eucalypts and a sub-area of paperbark and she-oak; the samphire, low sedge and reed area of Alfred Cove. Each habitat supports distinct bird species with a variety of advantages. Feeding, roosting and nesting all take place on the reserve and such is the variety of habitat that although the area is small some sixty-nine species of bird have been listed to date.

The reserve has a vital function as part of the Swan River Estuary. Together with the Pelican Point and Como foreshore areas, the Waylen mudflats form the last important wader feeding area on the River. If any one of these three areas was spoiled, the wader populations on the River would suffer considerably. The mudflats of Point Waylen and Alfred Cove provide very high counts of material for the invertebrate fauna, which may for

migratory waders. Out of thirteen transects sampled by Wallace (Macrobenthic Invertebrate Fauna Study - Dept Conservation and Environment, Public Works Dept, 1977) it was found that Alfred Cove showed the highest density recorded for a single species - 36,500 per square metre of the small polychaeta, *Capitella capitata*. The area also had the highest density for total individuals for all species - 79,000 plus or minus, 6,500 per square metre.

It is worth noting that Alfred Cove is known to be the last important Swan River refuge of the Greenshank and that studies overseas of the similar Redshank showed that this bird required some 40000 *Corophium* a day (their diet are not identical but are essentially similar). Alfred Cove produced 20,000 per square metre of this animal alone. The high density of prey available over a wide expanse of tidal flats is conducive to a variety of species able to feed at differing depths, using highly developed techniques so as to avoid or reduce competition.

The Cove provides birds with shelter from wind and disturbance by *Homo sapiens* and his trusty dog during darkness hours, and a winter roosting refuge for sedentary species. The month of July (not normally a prolific month for birders) saw forty-six bird species of all types using the reserve. By its nature the area is conducive to the study of birds, particularly waders. Nothing has proved successful and the famous re-trap of a Red-necked Stint, originally banded at Uelen just below the Arctic circle, past Waylen in a global context.

The reserve is under a great deal of pressure being so close to intense concentrations of housing. Spraying is carried out to control mosquitoes and petroleum products have been used on still water in the area. Trees have been 'doctored' and there are unconfirmed reports that trees have been poisoned (this to clear an uninterrupted view of the river). Another problem is that of dogs. This is apparently a common problem on reserves. During the summer months and particularly on weekends, dogs are walked on the reserve. They are seen to harass the flocks of waders (sometimes actively encouraged by their owners) but I believe that the great majority of people are simply unaware of the effect the dogs are having on the bird-life. Ominously, the reserve has been periodically considered as an ideal area for a boating marina. Also a cycle-way is planned along the eastern side of the Cove. Drainage of the paperbark area may be undertaken shortly.

In looking at the future of the reserve one might consider the past. The Swan Estuary had large areas of shallows, drowned sedge and wetland trees. Most of this has now been filled, dredged or re-claimed. Point Waylen itself was a swamp area and has been filled and levelled to make playing fields. The early settlers of the Swan found many species of birds which are now either gone entirely or severely diminished. The Mallee Fowl, Long-billed Corella, and possibly even the Noisy Scrub-bird and Western Bristle-bird, are all gone. Large concentrations of swans used to be seen in Lucky Bay; now they are only seen in small numbers.

However, the reserve may well offer a great opportunity to develop a unique form of Observatory Reserve. The area is frequented by at least sixty-nine species of birds, all within a relatively small area. In addition, unique beds of exposed fossilised shells and a rare saltwater snail are to be found in the Cove. Access and parking are provided and so are rudimentary pathways and observation posts. Not only is the reserve the last important area for waders on the Swan, it is also possibly the most accessible spot to the greatest number of people in Western Australia (this must not detract of course from the importance of sites such as Herdsman).

It may well be that Point Waylen/Alfred Cove would make an easily managed observatory, which could encourage awareness among the people of Perth much in the manner of similar situations in the United Kingdom (for example Dungeness) and New Zealand (for example Taiaroa). Such observatories are staffed on weekends by volunteers, conducted tours and educational lectures being delivered from time to time. Through this type of centre the birding organisations of these countries have undergone massive growth.

Many thanks to Doug Mack and Bob Howden who are now helping with observations. The following species have been recorded:

POINT WAYLEN / ALFRED COVE BIRDLIST

Hoary-headed Grebe	Curlew Sandpiper
Australian Pelican	Red-necked Stint
Great Cormorant	Broad-billed Sandpiper
Little Black Cormorant	Silver Gull
Pied Cormorant	Capelin Tern
Little Pied Cormorant	Crested Tern
White-faced Heron	Fairy Tern
Great Egret	Laughing Turtle-Dove
Sacred Ibis	Galah
Black Swan	Musk Lorikeet (escapees?)
Australian Shelduck	Red-capped Parrot
Grey Teal	Port Lincoln Kingneck (28)
Pacific Black Duck	Rainbow Bee-eater
Black-shouldered Kite	Welcome Swallow
Collared Sparrowhawk	Tree Martin
Australian Hobby	Richard's Pigeon
Australian Kestrel	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Brown Quail	Rufous Whistler
Buff-banded Rail	Willie Wagtail
Spotless Crane	Rufous Duck
Grey Plover	Western Gerygone
Red-capped Plover	(Warbler)
Black-fronted Plover	Weebill
Black-winged Stilt	Western Thornbill
Red-necked Avocet	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Greenbank	Varied Sittella
Marsh Sandpiper	Red Wattlebird
Common Sandpiper	Singing Honeyeater
Grey-tailed Tattler	Brown Honeyeater
Bar-tailed Godwit	White-fronted Chat
Black-tailed Godwit	Striated Pardalote
Great Knot	Australian Magpie
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Australian Raven
TOTAL: 65 Species	

Feral Species

Finch (white)	Domestic Pigeon
Budgerigar	Hybrid Duck (mallard type-4)

In addition, the following have been reported but in the absence of details, are not yet formally recognised for the purposes of this study:

Rainbow Lorikeet	Terek's Sandpiper
Osprey	White-tailed Black Cockatoo
Spoonbill sp.	

If anyone has records of these species, or others not listed (especially Striped Gulls), I would be most grateful for details. Also, I am keen to obtain photographs of the same as it was in the past. Bird breeding records will be especially useful.

S. Keeling
Tel. 291 7592

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Bird study and Esperanto

A combined course could be arranged at Eyre to cover some features of birdlife but conducted in Esperanto for beginners and advanced students. If interested in taking part, please advise - The Warden, Eyre Bird Observatory, Cockatoo via Norraman W.A. 6443.

In at least one state - N.S.W., a small publication - "La Suda Mevido" (= Southern Gull Chick) is produced quarterly in Esperanto by an R.A.O.U. member, W. Chandler, Hon. Life President of O.R.E. (= Ornithologia Rossica Esperantlingva). The O.R.E. is a world wide society. Esperanto is an international language devised about 100 years ago and there are Esperantists in many nations with the number still increasing.

Pronunciation

In Esperanto, every symbol or letter of the alphabet has only one sound and each particular sound can be presented by only one symbol or letter. When you learn the sounds of the 31 symbols in Esperanto you can spell any pronounced word, and pronounce any spelt word, with the absolute certainty of being correct, even when the word has never been heard or seen previously. Most of the sounds and symbols are similar to English and can be learnt in a few minutes.

Vocabulary

Once a root or base word is learnt the use of standard affixes can enable 20 or more words to be built up with confidence. These standards apply to all other root words without variations. Overall, only a fraction of the words require to be learnt compared with English.

Grammar

Unnecessary grammatical rules have been eliminated and what few remain are completely regular without exception.

A Second Language

Why not English? At present English has a world wide usage because of the relatively recent extent of the British Empire, then followed by the influence of the U.S.A. However if the fortunes of the two nations were to change, German or Japanese could have become the international language. History shows that the influence of nations rise and fall. It would be in our interest to promote a true international language for ease of communication.

Any national language is an imposed language and can be distasteful to many. In the United Nations Organisation about 90% opposed the use of English as the common language.

English is a difficult language for others to learn. Esperanto is a neutral language devised as a world wide means of communication. It is easy to learn.

In about 100 years of existence Esperanto has shown that it is a practical language. It has built up its own literature, and also works of merit from many nations have been translated into Esperanto - including the Bible.

Bill Graham

RHYNCHOKINESIS

Whilst 'employed' as an assistant on several wader banding sorties, I was intrigued to notice that several birds flexed their bill tips; in particular, the inward movement and bowing of the premaxilla. This ability to bend the bill is described in detail by P.J.K. Burton in "Feeding and the Feeding Apparatus in Waders" (London; British Museum, 1974).

Burton explains that the relationship between the upper jaw apparatus and the skull is termed KINESIS. Movement of the upper jaw is established by a complex system of links and levers. When the jaw is opened this system exerts forces which, when placed on a premaxilla where the nasal bars are separately pivoted from that part of the jaw, result in a change of shape. This is known as RHYNCHOKINESIS and is evident to varying degrees according to the species of wader. The whole system is highly complex and specialised.

Burton goes on to examine the specialisation of the feeding apparatus (such as recurvature, decurvature and spatulation) and actual feeding techniques (feeding rate, depth of probing). The relationship between bill shape and tongue and their lengths, are also covered with interesting comments on the function of the salivary glands.

S. Keeling

22-06-82

RECENT ENCOUNTERS ON THE SHARK BAY SANDPLAIN

Even in a fairly dry winter, such as that of 1982 (so far) in the Shark Bay region, the vast sandplain on the south-eastern side supports large numbers of several less well-known bush birds. The commonest honeyeater seen on a recent field trip was the Fied, able to take advantage of profusely flowering *Brachyglottis* and *E. leucophylla*. Black-eared Cuckoos and Clearing Wedgebills were heard everywhere and male-plumaged White-winged Stilts were common. Rainbow Bee-eaters hawk over the thickets on mid-winter's day and the common woodswallow of the ridges (*Acania* aff. *subterranea*) woodland is the Dusky. For water bird buffs, some of the station bore-drains feature bullrush beds full of very vocal Australian (Spotted) Crakes.

Peter Curry

RECENT OBSERVATIONS

NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER feeding fledglings at Glen Forrest on 14 August.

RED WATTLEBIRDS were feeding fledglings at Glen Forrest on July 25-30. The adults spent much of their time on our lawn collecting black lawn beetles and carting them off to the nest. made me feel really pleased that I have not used any poison to kill the beetles.

TAWNY-CROWNED HONEYEATER on August 1st, sitting on eggs at Gooseberry Hill.

BROWN-HEADED HONEYEATERS are in the native gardens at C.S.I.R.O. in Helena Valley, late July.

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE feeding large nestlings at Helena Valley on 13 August.

SPOTTED SCRUBWRENS fledged 3 young from a nest on Gooseberry Hill on 10 August.

Graeme Chapman

SEABIRD SIGHTINGS from Stephen Davies Jar.

9 Jun 82 - North Mole: 3 Wilson's Storm Petrels

1-3 Jul 82 - North Mole: Southern Giant Petrel (immature)

3 July 82 - Radar Reef, Rottnest: 1330-1430 hrs:

Aust. Gannet: 52; Great Skua: 4; Southern Giant Petrel: 2;

Black-browed Albatross: 6; Yellow-nosed Albatross: 6; Albatross sp. (Probably Yellow-nosed): 10.