



Western Australian Bird Notes

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Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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RAOU ACTIVITIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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STARLINGS: DARK INVADERS FROM THE EAST

Two major outbreaks of starlings discovered within W.A. in October 1982 caused a major deployment of APB personnel to facilitate the eradication of these birds. At some times, over twenty men were engaged in starling control.

A flock of approximately 120 birds was discovered at Merivale, east of Esperance. Starlings have been destroyed in the area in previous eradication campaigns. This flock probably arose from a breeding up of some missed starlings. The initial flock may have been established by aviary escapees.

However, a second method of establishment could have occurred. Starlings have been recorded flying long distances. Migration from South Australia or Tasmania would be possible. The migration of a small flock would explain why starlings were not reported during the intervening years between destruction campaigns.

Further east, starlings were discovered in a large flock, by Western Australian standards. Five hundred starlings were monitored feeding extensively on sea lice in the sea-weed banks which have been prolific over much of the coastline from Eucla to Eyre.

Smaller flocks were also monitored at Eucla and Madura. The Eucla flock was successfully controlled while the Madura flock was not. The Madura birds (approximately 80) may have moved east and intermingled with the Mundrabilla starlings. It was unlikely that they would have moved westwards as Eyre is constantly watching for starlings.

Approximately 500 starlings were destroyed and of these, one hundred were eliminated at Merivale and the remainder on the Nullarbor. The latest W.A. starling count (12.7.83) was: Eucla area—12, Mundrabilla—6 and Esperance—22.

Peter Coyle, 14 July 1983
AGRICULTURE PROTECTION ADVISER



Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*.

Photo by Jeremy Dixon, A.P.B.

HAPPY HERONS, DELIGHTED DUCKS, & CLUCKY COOTS

or Waterbirds 1983-84: a special challenge

Intense periods of winter rain have filled the wetlands under study in the South-West Waterbird Project, pushing levels to the highest seen for five or more years. Data from reserves monitored by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife indicate that 14 wetlands have more than 2.0 metres of water (at the deepest point), while 25 have depths of more than 1.5 metres (compared with 12 and 18, July 1982).

Such good levels often only occur at intervals of perhaps five to ten years. Although the floods in January 1982 caused a similar effect in part of the South-West, the current water 'surplus' will provide an abundance of waterbird breeding habitat within the more usual breeding season. We expect the birds to fully capitalise on this situation.

Some wetlands should be used by greater numbers of birds than in recent years and by different species in some cases. For example, Blue-billed Ducks, which dive for their food and prefer fresher water, may appear for several months on salty lakes flooded by one or two metres of relatively fresh water. Fringing vegetation not usually flooded by a lake, might support breeding by ducks, coots and grebes where it is now inundated.

Of course, lakes improved by the floods will retain water and hence waterbirds, further into summer or autumn in this waterbird season. Some wetlands may benefit from small nearby swamps, which will hold water long enough this season to provide breeding or feeding habitat for waterbirds (eg. feed for herons). As many wetlands dry out later in the season, the good breeding success of many species should become apparent as immatures and adults gather at remaining water bodies.

Participants in the SWWP are encouraged to make full use of these opportunities to boost waterbird usage data for their wetlands. Observers may need to set aside more time to achieve complete coverage of their wetlands if that is their usual goal. In larger lakes and swamps, forays could be made into sections not previously flooded within the Project period. If access to canoes or rowboats is possible, now is the time to get them into action!

The challenge is out in front of the 'wetfoots' (SWWP participants) in 1983-84. Also, any birdo with time to stop at a SWWP wetland in travels about the South-West, should contact the Field Officer for suggestions of places to visit. Anything could turn up — there is only one way to find out what it might be!

(see more on the SWWP in this issue)

COMING EVENTS CALENDAR

- Sep. 5—**Meeting**, Cygnet Hall: G. Chapman.
 Sep. 6-11—**CAMPOUT**, Yallingup.
 Sep. 17—Local Excursion, Bickley.
 Sep. 18—Tree Planting, Alcoa Wetland Reserve, Baldivis.
 Sep. 24—Local Excursion, Pelican Point/Alfred Cove.
 Sep. 26—**Meeting**, Cygnet Hall: J. Lane.
 Sep. 29-Oct. 5—**CAMPOUT**, Fitzgerald R. Nat. Park.
 Oct. 15—Local Excursion, Walyunga Nat. Park.
 Oct. 29-30—Weekend Trip, Karakin/Samphire/Moore R./Guraga L.
 Nov. 5-6—**CAMPOUT**, Woodanilling.
 Nov. 12—Local Excursion, Wungong Gorge.
 Nov. 26—Day Trip, Cooloongup L & Alcoa Claypit Reserve.
 Nov. 28—**Meeting**, Cygnet Hall: B. Wells.
 Dec. 2-3—Summer Bird Tally.
 Dec. 3—*****Annual Social Night*****, Applecross.
 Dec. 10—Local Excursion, Canning Estuary.
 Jan. 6—**A.G.M.**, Clunies Ross Centre.

READ ON FOR DETAILS . . .

COMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held in Cygnet Hall, on the waterfront at the corner of Hackett Drive and Mounts Bay Road, Crawley, commencing at 8.00 p.m. There is ample parking adjacent to the hall and visitors are always welcome.

Monday, September 5. Special Meeting No.1. Graeme Chapman will speak on "Photographing Australian Birds". All who saw Graeme's excellent exhibition will be keen to learn about the art of stalking birds in order to obtain candid photographs of the highest quality.

Monday, September 26. Jim Lane—"Duck Hunting in Australia". This will be our usual (tremendous) September meeting. Jim is a research officer at the W.A. Wildlife Research Centre of the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife and his responsibilities are with waterbird management, particularly regulation of the game duck harvest. We will be shown why W.A. leads the way in the area of duck hunting management in Australia.

Monday, November 28. Special Meeting No.2. Bert & Babs Wells—"Let's Go Wild"—a slide/sound production, programmed on tape, especially put together for the annual convention of the Australian Photographic Society in Hobart, during September 1983. The production has an agreeable mix of field photographic techniques and wildlife photography.

Saturday, December 3. Annual Social Night alias Christmas Dinner. This year we have planned an informal extravaganza separate from the A.G.M. and it will be held in the spacious rear grounds of No.3 Jane St., Applecross (phone 364 6514). Our **all-inclusive price of \$10** includes sizzling sumptuous **steak**, salubrious salads, succulent sweets and refreshing wines, soft drinks and beverages. School age children will be admitted for **half-price** and those under 10 will gain entry free of charge!

There will be countless **prizes** to be raffled off against your entry ticket, which you will receive at the door at **no extra cost**. Prizes so far donated are:

Books—several bird books valued at over \$100;
Binoculars—two pairs of new Steiner binox valued at over \$200;
Exquisite Pen-Sketch—donated by the famous recluse, Michael J. Bamford, framed by the P. de Rebeira Gallery: value—beyond price!

We really do need more prizes. These can be quite small, so please make an effort to contribute. Also needed are 'nibbles' (caviar is acceptable) for 200 people — can anyone help? In addition and finally, we are desperately in need of man and woman-power: any volunteers?

Please **book** immediately, or at latest by **30 November**, with Joan Seabrook or Roger Jaensch: addresses on page 1.

Friday, January 6, 1984. A.G.M. at the Clunies Ross Centre, 20 Stirling Highway, Nedlands. Parking available underneath. Commencing at 8.00 p.m.

COMING EXCURSIONS AND CAMPOUTS

September 6—11. Campout near Yallingup: Rufous Bristlebirds (Note the later start due to special RAOU meeting on September 5).

This school holidays venture should interest those who are prepared to spend many hours beating, listening or watching patiently in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste coastal scrubs, for any sign of the Rufous Bristlebird. Previous organised attempts to prove that this secretive ground-bird is not extinct, have not succeeded. However, a number of reports indicate that there is still hope of finding the Rufous Bristlebird alive and well.

Our campsite will be on the Barker property near Yallingup. Campers will need to be entirely **self-sufficient**, but emergency shelter and bush toilets may be available. Local members and interested persons are particularly welcome.

Directions:

Take the Yallingup road from Dunsborough and turn into Old

Caves Road just before the Yallingup settlement. Follow the bitumen southward for about 7 km to the Barker property which is on the right hand side of the road. The entrance will be clearly marked with an RAOU sign. If you get to Moses Rock Rd., you have gone too far south.

Saturday September 17: Bickley Brook Reservoir

Meet at the reservoir BBQ area at 9.00 a.m. for a half-day stroll in the flowering Darling scarp heath and wandoo. Bring BBQ lunches.

Sunday September 18: Tree-Planting at the RAOU-Alcoa Artificial Wetland Reserve. The rehabilitated claypit reserve is located on Zig Zag Road, Baldvis. Take Kerosene Lane off the old Mandurah road and you will see the pit banks as you reach the end of the lane. Turn right, continue for a few hundred metres and then turn left off the bitumen into the gravel **Zig Zag Rd.** The claypit entrance is on the left after a similar distance (soon after the drain).

Alcoa has offered a large stock of seedlings for us to plant out on the banks and edges of the lagoon. These will provide shelter and nesting sites for waterbirds. Meet on site at 10.00 a.m. for a day of constructive fun!

Saturday September 24: Pelican Point/Alfred Cove

Meet at 2.00 p.m. outside the Pelican Point Reserve, Crawley. If birds are scarce here, we will proceed to Alfred Cove.

Thursday September 29—Wednesday October 5: Fitzgerald Campout.

The 1983 October Long Weekend campout will be held at the **Twertup Field Studies Centre**, in the Fitzgerald River National Park. This is a unique wilderness area which, in the vicinity of Twertup is clothed in mallee-heath, interrupted by steep breakaways and yate-lined creeks with deep waterholes.

Our planned activities include searches for the elusive **Ground Parrots** and **Western Bristlebirds** in an area adjoining the northern boundary of the FRNP. An 'out-camp' may be set up there to facilitate dawn and dusk searches. At the base camp we plan to mist-net and census the more abundant bush-birds and investigate Western Whipbird territories.

Some RAOU people should be at the campsite by early afternoon on the 29th, and members and visitors (particularly from the Ongerup-Ravensthorpe region) are welcome to arrive at any stage. Most participants should **provide their own accommodation** (no caravans), although the spongolite-brick house will accommodate 12 people (book with R. Jaensch: 4 have booked already) and some cooking facilities. There are also two toilets and two rainwater tanks and a 240V generator will be connected to the lighting system.

Directions:

From Jerramungup, proceed towards Ravensthorpe on Highway One for 18 km and then turn right, into Quiss Road, (where the FRNP meets the highway). Follow Quiss Rd. (and the rabbit-proof fence) southward for about 18 km and then travel eastward for 16 km to Twertup house (passing a 'crossroad'). The track ends at Twertup after some 34 km (less than one hour) of travelling from the highway.

Access is generally quite reasonable for conventional vehicles, although the presence of as many 4WD vehicles as possible would be a great asset to the campout.

Saturday October 15: Local Excursion to Walyunga National Park.

Meet at 0800 at the Long Pool carpark in the Park. Note that an honour box is placed at the entrance! Bush-birding and possibly hiking, in mixed woodland with good scenery. As always, newcomers welcome!

October 29-30: Weekend or day trip—Karakin/Samphire/Moore R. /Guraga.

Meet at 0830 at the Moore River bridge on the **Lancelin Road**. We will proceed to look for Emu-wrens and Calamanthus in coastal heath and then go on to **Karakin Lakes** for (hopefully) a host of waterbirds. Those who wish to stay overnight will adjourn to Di Beckingham's sanctuary in Wanerie Rd., West Gingin (see **Notices**).

Campers must be self-sufficient. Di has seen the Little Bittern in the swamp on her sanctuary.

On the Sunday, we will gather at 0900 at the bridge over the Moore River on **Cowalla Road**, from where we will investigate part of the Moore River National Park. After lunch at Reagan's Ford, we plan to continue up the Brand Highway for 18 km (just before a small 'lake' next to a farmhouse), turning left into a prominent firebreak. This 4WD track leads to **Guraga Lake**, a rarely-visited wetland in 'untouched' Banksia woodland.

November 5-6, Campout: Woodanilling. Members and friends have been invited by **Ray Garstone** to camp at the **Woodanilling Sports Ground**, in the small town of Woodanilling, between Wagin and Katanning. We will have access to hot showers and some power and the camp area is adjacent to good birding spots. Again, be self-sufficient please, although shearing sheds will be available if weather is wet.

Our visit should be at the **peak of breeding** by Regent and Elegant Parrots, sittellas, robins, Little and Wedge-tailed Eagles and possibly even Crested Shrike-tits. Ray is particularly conversant with nest-finding and is an accomplished photographer. He will lead us to salmon gum, wandoo and sandplain habitats in three handy nature reserves and we may also have time to look at waterbirds on the chain of lakes to the west.

An event not to be missed! Just roll up at the camp on Friday night or on Saturday morning. We will **rally** in camp at 1000 on Saturday.

November 12, Local Excursion: Wungong Gorge. Meet at 0800 on the South-West Highway, at its junction with Eleventh Rd., Wungong. The Gorge is one of the most **northerly haunts** of White-breasted Robins, Red-winged Fairy-wrens and Red-eared Firetails.

November 26, Day Trip: Lake Cooloongup and Alcoa Claypit Reserve. Meet at 0800 at the deli/petrol station near the intersection of the old Mandurah road and Fifty Rd., Baldvis. Water and bush-birds (e.g. herons, Regent Parrots) at the south end of Cooloongup Lake; afterwards to the claypit (see directions for 18/9/83).

December 2-3, Summer Bird Tally. There will be a thrilling bird tally in the **24 hours** leading up to the Social Night on the 3rd. The objectives will be for individuals or teams to find **as many bird species as possible** within the boundaries of 31° and 32° latitude South and 116° 30' longitude East. The time scale allows for nocturnal birds and restrictions on **distance** travelled will be set.

This will be a great opportunity for newcomers to learn a terrific lot about *where and when* birds can be found, close to Perth. Interested persons should contact **Peter Curry**, 29 Canning Mills Rd., Kelmescott, 6111 (phone 390 6995) by 30 November, to enter themselves or their teams or ask to join a team. No prizes will be given but there will be a **competition at the party** on the 3rd, to guess the total number of bird species found in the Tally.

Saturday, December 10, Local Excursion: Canning River, Wilson.

Meet at 0800 at the Kent St., weir on the Canning River, Wilson. A guided tour of a beautiful riverine forest and wetland complex, right in the metro area! Possible crane and rail spotting if the tide is suitable.

NOTE: Keep an eye on the 'West' and local newspapers for impromptu excursions. These usually start at the John Forrest Roundabout in Kings Park.

MEETING REPORTS

June 27, Members' Night

Despite wild, wet weather and an unavoidable puddle at the entrance to Cygnet Hall, 65 enthusiasts attended the June RAOU Meeting. Mutton-bird man Peter Curry had been left speechless by a throat infection, so two video-tapes were shown instead. The first was taken during the joint RAOU-Durham University Great Sandy Desert Expedition in 1981 and the other, shown by Peter Coyle, was about Starling eradication by the APB. Dr. Stephen Davies also presented slides of ostrich farming in South Africa, from his recent study tour.

The rest of the evening was left to short accounts of RAOU member activities in W.A. Mike Bamford spoke on the Wader Study Group, Roger Jaensch on the Waterbird Survey and Geoff Shannon on the Annual Bird Report. Jim Lane gave an account of progress with RAOU-Alcoa artificial waterbird reserve at Baldavis and other speakers included Steve Keeling who spoke on his study of Reed Warblers at Herdsman Lake.

A large display of bird books and Christmas cards (depicting birds), was presented and many sales were realised. Bob Goodale held the winning ticket in the raffle of Graeme Chapman's Blue-billed Duck print. Proceeds from this generous donation went to the Eyre Suzuki motor 'appeal'.

The meeting was particularly successful because members had sufficient time to talk to each other and to newcomers.

EXCURSION REPORTS

May 21, Yanchep

About 25 local members were joined by a couple of interstate visitors to the ANZAAS Conference, for an outing to Yanchep National Park on Saturday, 21st May. On a fine sunny day, Geoff Shannon led the group to some of his banding sites in the less-frequented parts of the Park. A total of 33 species was seen, adding five to the short list that had been handed out at the start.

Early on, a Brown Goshawk and a Collared Sparrowhawk were seen 'thermallling' together, giving a useful comparison between these two very similar species. Later, two Wedge-tailed Eagles performed for us. A Striated Pardalote showed an interest in a hole in a jarrah tree, rather early for nesting. A couple of White-backed Swallows were flying near their spring nesting site. Fan-tailed Cuckoos had arrived for the winter and most people saw a party of Varied Sittellas, which are uncommon in the Park. The five common honeyeaters rounded off a pleasant day.

Geoff Shannon

Wheatbelt Excursion

On Saturday, June 11th, 26 members and interested friends travelled to the wheatbelt from Perth, initially stopping at Northam where they were met by seven country birdos (5 from Northam-Toodyay and 2 from Williams).

During a day of exceptional beauty, four areas were covered. The Avon River in Northam (briefly); the western side of Wongamine Reserve; the eastern or top side of the same reserve; and Majestic Heights, near the Toodyay Racecourse. All these sites were interesting because of their contrasting environments quite apart from the birds that we found there. Wongamine (east) surprised us with its wandoos and sandplain heath living cheek by jowl, whilst Majestic Heights offered us steep hills, valleys and impressive jarrah and powder-bark wandoos woodland.

We saw a total of 51 birds including one, a Barn Owl, new to the Wongamine locality. Other interesting observations included White-cheeked Honeyeaters, a Painted Button-quail, a White-fronted Chat's nest with 3 eggs, a brightly coloured White-winged Fairy-wren and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

The city birdos would like to record a vote of thanks to Lindsay Milhinch and Jim Masters who led the excursion.

B. Wells

June 25, Local Excursion

Several newcomers were among those birdos who gathered in King's Park for the June Local Excursion. Instead of speeding off to some distant destination, we decided to show newcomers what King's Park had to offer to bird students. We were fortunate in being able to compare the diagnostic features of New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeaters and Red and Little Wattlebirds. Newcomers were especially impressed with Western Spinebills feeding within arm's reach.

After a while we rendezvoused with jet-setting Steve Keeling, who had momentarily alighted in the reed beds of Herdsman Lake. Besides a fair variety of waterbirds, the group was intrigued by the now-resident Chestnut-breasted Mannikins. All in all, another great outing, 42 species being tallied on the day.

Simon Nevill

ROTTNEST RETREAT

The RAOU has recently been investigating ways of establishing an 'observatory' with high visitor use, on Rottnest Island. As a test of the year-round appeal of Rottnest to birdos, the W.A. Group booked one of the old Rottnest chalets (Cottage G) from June 30 to July 11, offering cheap but comfortable accommodation to members. At various times, 27 birdos stayed overnight and at least seven day-visitors joined our group.

After the Field Officer took possession of the cottage on the 30th, Steve and Diana Keeling and family came across and took on the job of organising the catering and activities for the bulk of the retreat period. Our sincere thanks to them for a tremendous effort, enabling the RAOU to even make a token profit from the venture. Meals were sumptuous and the mulled wine was apparently a delirious success! Weather conditions were variable but sometimes very pleasant. A log book of all events and observations was dutifully maintained and is available for members to scrutinise.

Activities:

- 1) **Bus trips to Cape Vlamingh and daily sea-watches** from closer capes yielded number of Gannets, Black-browed and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, a single Wandering Albatross, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and a Giant Petrel, while skuas were seen from the ferry.
- 2) **Daily wader counts on the lakes** and on some beaches produced 12 wader species including Pied Oystercatchers (up to 9 on the golf course), 147 Ruddy Turnstones, seven tattlers and two Sanderlings.
- 3) **Osprey-watching** led to ten nests being located. One adult was seen bathing on Ricey Beach.
- 4) **A census was made of nesting Silver Gulls and Crested Terns** on six islands and spits within the lake complex. One Crested Tern site had 34 nests with sitting birds and 53 with downies, while 180 runners screamed nearby. Fourty-one dead young were found at one gull colony.
- 5) **Perry de Rebeira** gave a talk on the history of bird study at Rottnest and recent CSIRO work. Perry suggested that while White-faced Herons and swans had decreased in numbers since settlement, Red-necked Avocets, Sacred Kingfishers and Tree Martins had increased.
- 6) **Colour-banded Red-capped Robins, Golden Whistlers and Singing Honeyeaters** (an endemic subspecies) were searched for with a little success.
- 7) **Ring-necked Pheasants** were widespread at the east end of the island, the Golf Course surrounds being a stronghold.
- 8) **Sacred Kingfishers**: at least eight were seen at the settlement, in copses beside lakes and at caves.
- 9) **Other bird highlights included Rock Parrots (up to nine, on ten days), a Spotted Harrier, a Long-billed Corella and a possible Buff-banded Rail.**

Results from observations during the retreat were therefore pleasing, adding a little more to our knowledge of birds on Rottnest.

RAOU/APB STARLING SEARCH

The APB/RAOU Common Starling search once again provided the opportunity for RAOU members to do valuable work and enjoy themselves at the same time.

Sixteen RAOU members helped the APB search along known tracks between Madura and Israelite Bay for starlings. Starlings had been found at Israelite Bay and increasing numbers were caught in trap cages at Madura, sparking fears of a westward migration of these birds. Starlings are aggressive birds that displace native bird species and cause extensive damage to crops, fruit, stock feed and buildings.

So it was with visions of finding lots of starlings and a nice lamb on a spit that we drove the 1000 km to base camp near Balladonia. From there the party split into four groups (in only seven vehicles!) in order to cover the maximum area possible. Searching was undertaken by observing from moving vehicles at dawn and dusk, supplemented by forays on foot. Three days later, as previously agreed, all vehicles returned to the base camp — except for one! After much speculation as to whether the absent party had got lost at the Balledonia Pub, one of the absent party returned in another vehicle to announce that they had staked two tyres!

Fortunately no starlings had been sighted and after some reassessment and swapping of people and vehicles, a further three day search was mounted. As we had covered most of the tracks, considerable freedom of searching area was given to most parties. Although some new areas were covered, most parties seemed to think a brief look around Eyre Bird Observatory would be useful!

A total of 92 species of birds was seen between Madura and Israelite Bay. Highlights were Naretha Blue Bonnets, some Ground Cuckoo-shrikes, and a magnificent White-bellied Sea-Eagle seen at Toolina Cove. Numerous incredible sights and encounters with birds and other fauna were reported in discussions around the campfire on the final night.

Although no starlings were seen by us, unfortunately this does not mean that none were there. The APB has since written to the RAOU expressing sincere thanks for our effort and noting that it was a most valuable exercise.

Ron Van Delft.

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

1. Report from Di Congreve

The second quarter of 1983 was relatively quiet at Eyre, although some interesting sightings were recorded. In contrast, the first half of July was extremely busy and produced many worthwhile results, especially during the Botany Course held from 10-16 July by Dr. Stephen Hopper from the Wildlife Research Centre of the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife. Extracts from our logbook follow:

- April 29 — The annual invasion of Silvereyes started and 31 birds were trapped in one net.
- April 30 — An immature White-winged Triller was seen on the Hampton Tableland. This is much earlier than in past years.
- May 2 — While visiting Twilight Cove, we recorded the White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Peregrine Falcon and on Kanidal Beach, an Oriental Plover. The 'Friends of Eyre' association was founded, the first project being to raise enough money to repair 'Suki', our old Suzuki.
- May 11 — An Echidna had to be bodily removed from the track to Twilight Cove to allow the vehicle to pass. This is the only one seen in the past three years.
- June 5 — Beach count to 9 Mile recorded 137 Red-capped Plovers, 7 Double-banded Plovers, 12 Sanderling, 21 Red-necked Stints, 11

Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Grey Teal, 2 Pied Oystercatchers, 1 Sooty Oystercatcher, 8 Silver Gulls and 6 Caspian Terns.

- June 10 — On the weed bank at 9 Mile were 22 White-faced Herons.
- July 4 — Two Southern Right Whales (mother and calf) were sighted close inshore off Kanidal Beach.
- July 10 — A Bustard was seen on the Haig track, SE of Cocklebidy.
- July 16 — National Wader Count, Twilight to 9 Mile: a disappointing result compared with 5/6/83.
- July 17 — Don and Donna Reid arrive to look after Eyre while we (Peter and Di) have our annual holiday.

2. Courses at Eyre

- September 4-10 — **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.
- September 11-17 — **Bird's Nests and Territories.** Stephen Ambrose and Peter Congreve. A course aimed at increasing the knowledge of the birds breeding in this area. How and where to look for nests, and the pointers provided by the behaviour of nesting birds. Nest card records and the mapping of Scrub-wren territories. Expeditions to explore the Burnabie area, and the grasslands of the Hampton tableland will be undertaken. Stephen is studying Scrub-wrens for his Ph.D. thesis and contributed much to the 60 nests found at Eyre in 1982.
- October 30th-November 5th — **Shore Birds.** Jim Lane and Peter Congreve. The beaches at Eyre are a passage stop for migratory waders. Sightings of interesting and rare waders have been made in the area, including the Oriental Plover, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper and the Northern Phalarope. Time will be spent on the identification of the shore birds observed, and on cannon-netting as technique for catching them, so that they may be studied in the hand.
- December 11-17 — **Field Ornithology.** Dr. Stephen Davies and Peter Congreve. This course is the fourth organised by Stephen, and will be marked by his expertise and systematic approach to field work. The course will include mist netting as a means of studying birds in the hand, techniques for counting birds and field census methods. Sound records as a means of studying and mapping territory. This course is most interesting in its suggestion of methods to carry bird watching a step further.

Eyre Bird Observatory is staffed by a resident Warden and run by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union. It lies 1160 km east of Perth on the Great Australian Bight. Access is by road along the Eyre Highway to Cocklebidy. Public transport from Adelaide or Perth is available on Greyhound buses and enquiries may be made through any travel agent.

Each course will be limited to twelve people and will run from Sunday afternoon to the following Saturday morning to allow people to use the weekend to get to and from Cocklebidy. Bookings will be accepted in order of receipt. The inclusive cost of each course will be \$95.00. University students should note that some university Guilds or students unions will subsidise students attending these courses.

The RAOU reserves the right to vary fees and charges should circumstances over which it has no control make this necessary.

The above programme may be subject to amendment and applications for each course (with preferences for other courses in case one is full), should be directed as soon as possible to:

The Warden,
Eyre Bird Observatory,
COCKLEBIDDY, Via Norseman,
Western Australia, 6443.

3. Courses at Rotamah and Barren Grounds.

BARREN GROUNDS COURSES

September 9-11 — **Bird Calls.** Their identification and recording.

September 30-
October 3 — **The Wild Flowers of Barren Grounds.**

October 7-9 — **Birds' Nests and Territories.**

November 11-13 — **Birds for Beginners.**

November 18-20 — **Ground Parrots and Bristlebirds.**

November 25-27 — **Fire Ecology Workshop (2).**

December 2-4 — **The Reptiles and Amphibians of Barren Grounds.**

December 30, '83-

January 2, '84 — **Ground Parrots and Christmas Bells.**

Barren Grounds Bird Observatory,
Box 3, Jamberoo, N.S.W. 2533.
Telephone: (042) 36 0195.

ROTAMAH COURSES

October 14-17 — **Finding Nests.**

October 29-

November 1 — **Native Animals.**

December 2-5 — **Ants and Other Insects.**

Rotamah Island Bird Observatory,
P.O. Box 75,
Paynesville, Vic. 3880.
Telephone: (051) 56 6398.

W.A. BIRD REPORT

Enclosed with this issue is a Bird Report form for the year 1983. You need not use the forms, but if requiring more, please write to Geoff Shannon, 15 Lagonda Dr., Gwelup, 6021. This form does at least indicate the type of information we would like for casual observations or trip lists. Refer to previous issues of this newsletter for more information on the Report. The 1982 Report should be out shortly.

WADER STUDY GROUP

1. Report on Activities.

Just when participants in the various activities of the Study Group were thinking how nice it was to be able to watch the few waders around without counting them or considering how best to net them, a meeting of the Group was called. This was for several purposes, one of which was to discuss plans for the coming season. It probably seemed that the '82-'83 season was hardly over before the beginning of the '83-'84 season was announced!

At this meeting, held on June 18, results of further analysis of the '82-'83 season were presented, most attention being paid to ageing, moult, recaptures and monthly counts. Some of these points were considered in the June *Bird Notes*, but mention of a few additional findings here won't go astray. Firstly, the mystery of ageing and sex in the Red-capped Plover.

While samples of the three migratory waders which we caught in large numbers (Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Red

Knot) were dominated by juveniles (42%, 76% and 62% respectively), a meagre 7% of the Red-capped Plovers captured were in this age category. This can be explained by any one of a multitude of reasons, but it does suggest that juvenile Red-capped Plovers move away from the areas where they are raised. Unusually large flocks of Red-caps were observed at Pelican Point early in the season, and these may have been juveniles about to embark upon such a movement. On the other hand, the observations may be quite unrelated.

An additional peculiarity of the Red-capped Plover was the sex ratio recorded among the adult birds caught. Males accounted for 75% of these, if the colouration of the head is a reliable guide to sex in this species. Perhaps it isn't (which would upset a lot of what has been said about Red-capped Plovers over the years); or does the data reflect a real imbalance? Do the females leave with the juveniles, assuming that the juveniles themselves leave, or are males simply easier to catch?

Another interesting result unearthed by further data examination relates to the age of recaptured Red-necked Stints. Only 16% of the first-capture Stints were one year old (the 1⁺ age category), but an amazing 44% of recaptures belonged to this age category. It would seem that 1⁺ Stints are more sedentary, at least on the Swan Estuary, than either younger or older birds. Once again, we have nearly as many theories as to why this should be so as we have members in the Study Group!

The local monthly counts conducted from November to April produced some valuable observations on the importance of particular sites and on the habitat preferences of different waders. Wader habitats in the coastal region from Rockingham to Wanneroo can be divided into four categories (lakes, estuary, coastline and islands) and it was found that the majority of individuals counted of each species were in only one of these habitats. The only species which appeared to have no habitat preference were the Red-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper.

In addition to looking at some of the results of the '82-'83 season, part of the meeting was devoted to the coming season. In particular, the new programme of wader counts was discussed. For some years, the Australasian Wader Studies Group (based in Melbourne) has organized two national counts a year, one in February and the other in July. For the '83-'84 season, these counts will continue and indeed the July count has already been carried out, picking up non-migratory waders as well as overwintering individuals of migratory species. However, to find out what happens between July and February, the AWSG has initiated a monthly national counting programme, in which our local group is now taking part. Although the coverage will be less than that of the biannual counts, the monthly counts will provide details of changes in wader numbers at specific sites, which should be especially interesting at the crucial times in spring and autumn when the migratory waders are entering and leaving Australia.

The banding activities of the WAWSG are expected to begin during September, depending on such variables as wader numbers and bander enthusiasm. It is hoped to produce a timetable of banding excursions early in the season so that people who would like to get involved, even for just one night, can do so more easily. However, it will always be a good idea to give Mike or Doug a call beforehand, just in case we decide to go somewhere else.

Mike Bamford 367 3032
Doug Watkins 364 6514

North-West Expedition: 22 Oct.—12 Nov.

There are now opportunities for birdos to travel to the North-West by a hired mini-bus at a cost of around \$200 per head. This arrangement is subject to all places being filled, so please contact Mike Bamford if interested. Phone 367 3032 a/h or 332 2468 at work.

SOUTH-WEST WATERBIRD PROJECT

Report by RAOU Field Officer, Roger Jaensch

1. Exposé: Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchos*

The SWWP has stimulated a great deal of interest in the Australasian Shoveler. This species has probably declined in inland wetlands in the South-West since settlement, as a result of land clearance and subsequent salting of runoff. Shovelers are specialised feeders, filtering animal life from the surface and top centimetres of water bodies. They seem to prefer to feed in fresh water. Although 'deep' salty lakes often support prolific numbers of several invertebrate species, these are not usually taken by shovelers.

Expectably, the fresher coastal plain lakes are the present stronghold of *A. rhynchos*. Thomsons and Forrestdale Lakes have consistently supported the largest concentrations of this bird during the SWWP. The largest flock for the Project has been 2000 at Thomsons Lake in March 1982. Besides these two wetlands, only five others have held more than 100 shovelers: Pinjarrega, Wannamal and Coyrecup Lakes, Peel Inlet and The Broadwater.

Clearly, shovelers are able to exploit salty wetlands at times when large volumes of 'fresh' winter runoff have run in. Of the five wetlands just listed, all but one are almost as salty as seawater for one or two months of the year. Furthermore, shovelers have been recorded at 26 wheatbelt wetlands, besides the 32 near-coastal wetlands they frequent and most of the 26 have supported lowest shoveler numbers in autumn, when levels were lowest and salinities highest.

A different pattern occurs at Esperance where all records fall from October to May. Perhaps these are birds which have used widespread temporary fresh pools until they dried up in late spring, thereafter retreating to the permanent coastal lakes under study?

Australasian Shovelers have now been found at 58 wetlands but only found breeding at five of these. Duck nests are frequently difficult to locate but this is particularly difficult with shovelers, as they tend to nest in tall grass, often not immediately next to water. Observers may be more successful through patient observation of movements by pairs of these birds, but in any case, ducklings are often much easier to spot!

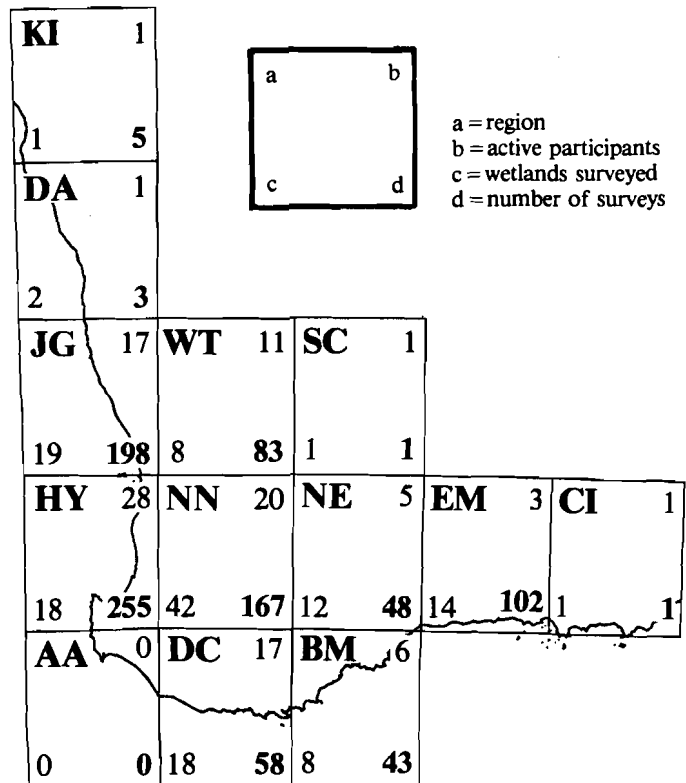
The largest monthly totals for this species in the whole study area, have been 2485 (Jan.) and 2482 (Mar.), no doubt due largely to post-breeding refuge concentrations. Although these figures are bound to be underestimates of the Australasian Shoveler population in the South-West, they look small when compared to the Grey Teal's 24,252 (Dec.). The importance to the Shoveler of wetlands around Perth cannot be too highly stressed and conservationists should not be deceived by the comparative abundance of this species here, where a disproportionate amount of South-West birding time is spent.

2. How it all looks on a map

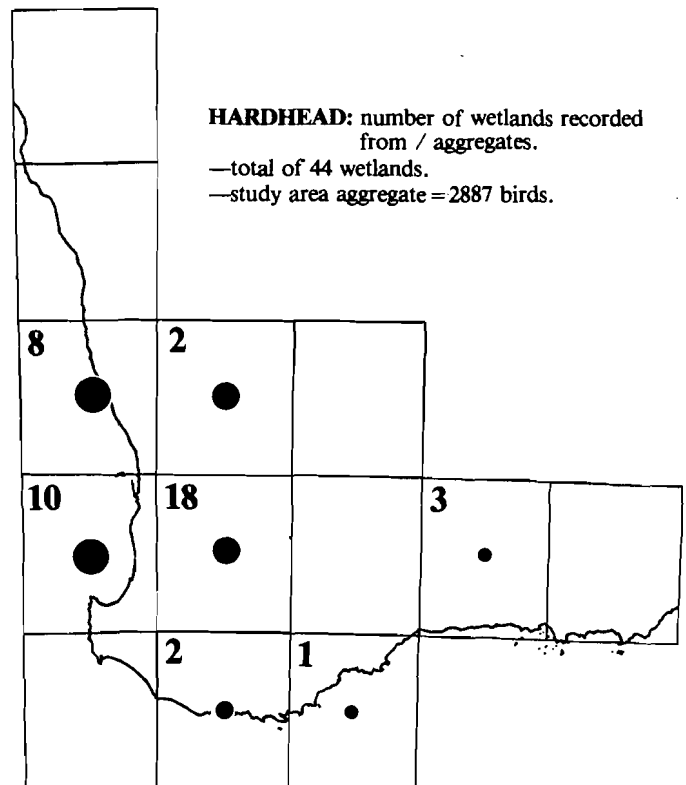
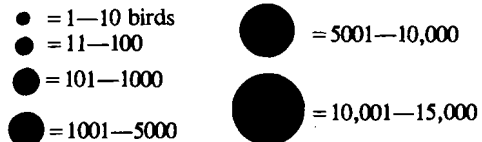
Data received to 22 July, 1983.

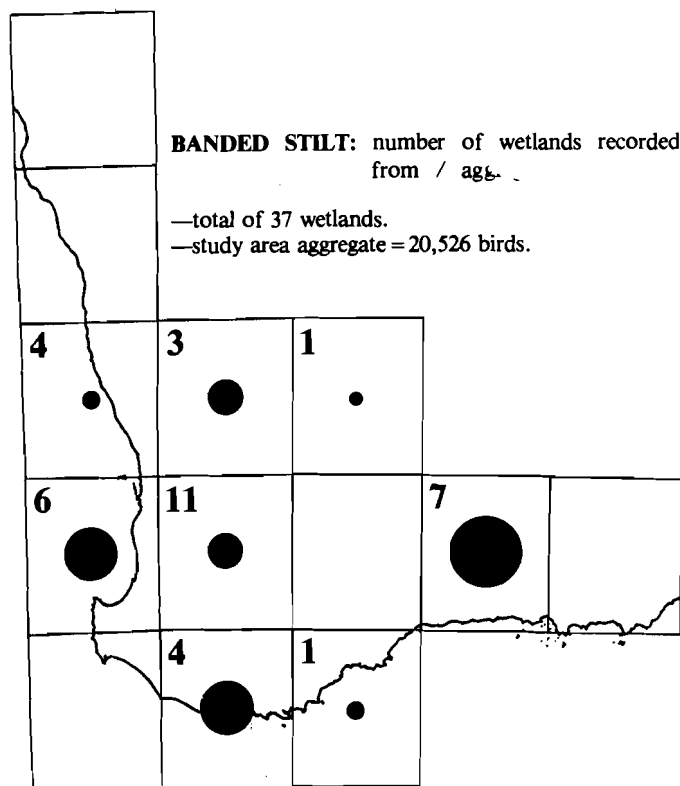
Regions used by the SWWP (grid blocks of 2 degree sides):

KI = Kalbarri	NN = Narrogin
DA = Dongara	DC = Denmark-Cranbrook
JG = Jurien-Gingin	SC = Southern Cross
HY = Harvey	NE = Newdegate
AA = Augusta	BM = Bremer-Manypeaks
WT = Wongan-Tammin	EM = Esperance-Munglinup
WT = Wongan-Tammin	CI = Condingup-Israelite



SPECIES MAPS: highest regional aggregates (for any month).





NOTE: key statistics for the study area are:

1. highest number of birds (all species) = 106,816 in Jan.'83.
2. total number of species recorded = 92.
3. total number of breeding species = 40.

3. Things to do and look out for: Spring.

- 1) **Tiger Snakes** *Notechis scutatus*: particularly potent and irritable if disturbed at this time of year. Avoid lifting sheets of iron, logs and rocks and don't put hand where eye has not seen!
- 2) When wearing protective **waders**, be prepared for deep holes and submerged logs which could topple you over. Don't wear them in a boat or canoe: they are worse than cement shoes if you get tipped out in deep water!
- 3) **'Deep' open water** bodies frequently support rafts of grebes, stiff-tailed ducks and/or coots. Don't forget to scan these lakes thoroughly, even when water is choppy. Record as 'unidentified grebes' etc. if unsure of species.
- 4) **Flooded fringing vegetation** and flooded stands of dead trees usually shelter flocks of waterbirds, though they may not be immediately conspicuous. Count birds before and after moving into the cover.
- 5) Keep an eye open for **tell-tale nest clues**, such as a piece of down at the edge of a tree-hollow or single herons or spoon-bills loitering near, or leaving potential tree nest sites. Also beware of distraction displays by ducks and stilts and persistent calling from likely nest sites by crakes and bitterns. Note that White-faced Herons and Australian Shelducks need not nest in trees standing in water, while several duck species may nest in rank grass away from the wetland edge.

4. Your objectives, 1983-84.

Ten participants have been making special studies of the water-birds and wetlands that they are currently monitoring, the added work being concerned with vegetation, water quality and human use. Some intend to publish their findings in report form and both the RAOU and Department of Fisheries and Wildlife will happily give advice to assist any such initiative.

You may not (and need not!) have such aspirations but you might consider the most effective approach that you could make to your waterbird surveys. Making the best use of time spent in fieldwork is sensible, and following the various snippets given in the SWWP Report in each issue of *W.A. Bird Notes*, will help you greatly.

Your specific objectives for 1983-84 could include:

- 1) To confirm the presence of species that you think might still occur at your wetland,
- 2) To read any references available on nesting behaviour of species already found at your wetland and attempt to find them breeding there also (e.g. read *Birds of Western Australia*, Serventy & Whittell),
- 3) To establish a more consistent survey route (if not already so),
- 4) To occasionally visit 'new' areas within your wetland (if you don't normally get to cover all of it),
- 5) To make extra surveys at the suspected peak of breeding activity (eg. October-November), and as the wetland gets close to drying out.

5. Information.

- a. **New Reserves.** Reserves are periodically added to the Project and two of the latest are: PWNo.24—a small swamp adjacent to Peel Inlet, which supports a Darter breeding colony. PWNo.290—LaPorte Egret Swamp: the well-known egret colony site near Bunbury. Special access conditions may apply here.

As well as these two reserves, a decreasing number of reserves still require observers. Three of the most urgent needs are at Nonalling Lakes at Yealering, Dumbleyung Lake (part thereof) and Gundaring Lake (near Wagin). Nine people have joined the team in response to a letter that I sent to 20 RAOU members in June. Have you spoken to local birds about becoming involved?

- b. **Annotations.** Don't forget to add comments to the maps or 'photos' on the backs of the computer forms, if you can. Breeding sites are especially important to note.
- c. **Power Boats.** Powered boats may be used, with care, to count birds on Yenyening (Beverley) Lakes, Dumbleyung Lake, Towerrinning Lake, Anderson Lake and Peel Inlet Nature Reserves. These are all approved lakes for motor-boating by the general public.
- d. **Preferred Survey Periods.** Sep. 10-18; Nov. 5-13; Dec. 31-Jan. 7.
- e. The **Field Officer** will be 'unavailable' for immediate help from 6-10 Sep. and 29 Sep. to 12 Oct. (fieldwork), and possibly from Nov. 9-21.
- f. **Grant Pearson** (F & W) and the F.O. will visit most of the 60-or so lowest priority reserves during 1983.
- g. **Corrigendum.** The bar for the Chestnut Teal in Fig. 1 of issue 26 of *W.A. Bird Notes*, should not have any black shading.
- h. **Tortoises.** Mike Bamford (Wader Study Group) would like to hear of any tortoises that you might find during your surveys on nature reserves. You could record the details (location, date, time, numbers) under 'Comments' on the waterbird data forms.



The Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* has a distinctive flight profile and style (long, outstretched neck, rigid flap and glide style), which distinguishes it from the cormorants. Darters are not uncommon on the coastal plain and one of their nesting colony sites near Peel Inlet is now a reserve under study in *The Waterbird Project*.

INTERESTING WATERBIRD SIGHTINGS

No. 8: Winter 1983

Note: * indicates wetland is **not** within a WAWA Wetland Nature Reserve being studied in the Waterbird Project. Unless otherwise indicated, the place names refer to lakes or swamps. To assist the reader, shire names are given in brackets following the wetland names.

(a) Interesting localities (new or unusual):

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Hoary-headed Grebe | — 9, 13/7, Altham (Kent): rarely enough water here for a grebe to swim in! |
| Great Egret | — 1, 14/5-17/7, 4 Mile Pool, Murchison R. (Northampton). |
| Little Egret | — 1, 6/5, Joondalup (Wanneroo): recently at Gwelup — see last issue. |
| Australasian Bittern | — 2, 18/6, Yarnup (Cranbrook): new locality. |
| Chestnut Teal | — 50, 19/4, Gidong* (Esperance): 'new' locality. |
| | — 2, 24/6, Chittering (Chittering). |
| Australasian Shoveler | — 220, 13/5, Cooloongup* (Rockingham): at fresh-water soakage. |
| | — 2, 11/7, Cairlocup West (Kent). |
| | — 2, 11/7, Salt River* (Quairading). The last two wetlands are saline for most of the year. |
| Blue-billed Duck | — 1, 11/7, Mears (Brookton): usually too salty for this species. |
| | — c.100, 25/6, Guraga* (Dandaragan): rafted. |
| Buff-banded Rail | — 7, 4/2, Canning R. Estuary near Riverton Br. |
| Hooded Plover | — 3, 12/7, Ace (Lake Grace), 4, 14/7, Shaster (Ravensthorpe); both new localities for the Project. |
| Red-necked Stint | — 30, 12/7, Varley (Kulin): unusual(?) this far inland in flocks, during winter. |
| Sanderling | — 13, 9/7, Gore (Esperance): 6 km inland; sheltering? |

(b) Uncommon or rare species:

- Royal Spoonbill — 1, 15/5, Peel Inlet (Murray).

(c) Interesting high totals:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Great Egret | — 36, 7/7, Windabout (Esperance): maximum for one site in the Esperance district (greatest monthly aggregate here = 40). |
| Pacific Black Duck | — 800, 9/7, Walyormouring (Goomalling): previous highest was 500 in June 82. |
| | — 1366, 5/7, Bengier (Harvey): prev. max. = 1288 in June 82 = 7067. |
| Hardhead | — 150, 11/7, Mears (Brookton): 'new' to Mears; 2nd highest count for Narrogin region. |
| Maned Duck | — 540, 21/5, Coyrecup (Katanning): max. for study, at one site. |
| Dusky Moorhen | — 232, 13/4, Canning River* between Kent St. Weir and Nicholson Rd. Bridge: a max. count for this species in the South-West? |
| Red-necked Stint | — 320, 5/6, Sandy Cape Lake* (Dandaragan): rather large overwintering flock. |

(d) Breeding observations:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Great Cormorant | — 200 adults, 23/7, Booragoon* (Melville): at nests with eggs and large young. |
| Little Black Cormorant | — 600 adults, 23/7, Booragoon: at various nesting stages but mostly with fledged young. |
| Black Swan | — 14 adults, 1 nest with eggs, 17/7, Flagstaff (Woodanilling). |

(e) Interesting dates:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Marsh Sandpiper | — 3, 13/5, Cooloongup*: rarely overwinters. |
| Sharp-tailed Sandpiper | — 1, 10/6, Broadwater (Busselton): rarely seen in winter in southern Australia. |
| White-winged Tern | — 5, 15/5, Peel Inlet: see last issue. |

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

(A) South-West and Escha

- Spotted Harrier.** Bob Goodale notes that he saw an adult at Pt. Peron in late autumn and one has been seen before at L. Richmond (see pt. 8 on p.10, last issue).
- Hooded Plover.** Austin Daw writes that he has banded runners at Station Lake, and that he found tiny young on a salt pan near L. Gore in April, 1983. He often sees juvenile-plumaged birds near Esperance, so despite a lack of breeding records in the Waterbird Project, he feels sure that this species must breed regularly in that area.
- Ground Parrots.** In late July, the Newbeys and other birdos from the Fitzgerald R. Nat. Pak. Assoc. heard five to eight birds calling in unreserved heathland north of the Park. These called between 35 and 45 minutes after sunset. The RAOU has submitted a proposal to Fisheries and Wildlife for a study of Ground Parrots in W.A.
- Regent Parrots.** In response to the note in the last issue, we have received reports of 70 birds flying S. at Forrestdale on 30/7/83; 18 flying S. at Westfield on 10/7/83; and groups of seven and three around Forrestdale on 22/7/83 (D. James, J. Malone). Also 5 near L. Walyungup on 10/8/83.

5. **White-backed Swallows.** Two at West Gingin on 26/5 and three at a vacant sandy industrial site in Roberts St., Osborne Park on 5/7/83.
6. **Yellow Wagtail.** Lola Broadhurst was fortunate to have an adult of this vagrant Northern Hemisphere migrant at Denmark in early May. It fed with Black-fronted Plovers at a fresh swamp near the mouth of Wilson Inlet and was seen on nine consecutive days. Possibly a bird migrating in the wrong direction from the North-West.
7. **Black-eared Cuckoo.** I had an interesting encounter with this species at Yarding (Bruce Rock Shire) on 12/7/83. On hearing the fine whistling of a Black-eared Cuckoo, I called it in with an imitation and then deceived it for 15 minutes by 'throwing' imitations in different directions, causing the bird to dash about frantically. A group of Redthroats was busy nearby in the thick shrubs and some called whenever the cuckoo had just completed a set of calls. Redthroats are known hosts for the parasitic Black-eared Cuckoo.
R.J.
8. **Woodswallows clustering?** In the early morning of 12 July, my passing car flushed groups of about 15 Black-faced Woodswallows from two roadside bushes between Quairading and Bruce Rock. As the overnight minimum had been close to zero Celsius, it seemed likely that the woodswallows had been 'huddling' together (clustering) to keep warm. This habit is commonly reported for woodswallows (eg. see article by Ross Annels in *The Aust. Bird Watcher* Vol. 10: pp. 69—72).
9. **From the Leeuwin-Naturaliste coast.** On May 26, a single Wilson's Storm-Petrel, about 2km towards Augusta from the lighthouse: a moderate NW wind was blowing. Pacific Black Duck: three in turbulent seawater, N. of C. Leeuwin on the same day. Also, at Canal Rocks, Wyadup: two Whimbrels, six Hooded Plovers and a Sanderling.
Ray Schulz
10. **South-East coast.** Twelve Cape Barren Geese flying south at the junction of the Gairdner R. and Devil's Ck. Road; one Kelp Gull and two Little Egrets in the Wellstead Estuary; two White-faced Herons feeding at a kangaroo carcass on the roadside S. of Ravensthorpe. Dates: 5/6; 5/6; 31/5.
Ray and Ros Hart
11. **Central Wheatbelt.** On a trip to Wave Rock and back, from 5 to 6 June 1983, George and Pam Agar noted a Kookaburra at Kondinin, Aust. Hobby E. of Kondinin, Western Yellow Robin W. of Hyden, Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters near Hyden and a triller on the road between Kulin and Wickepin.

(C) Pilbara and Kimberley

1. **Port Hedland Saltworks.** Allan and Sandy Rose report approximately 50 White-winged (Black) Terns in late April, of which ¼ were in full breeding colours.
2. **Glenelg River.** Kevin Coate was fortunate to be exploring this part of the Kimberley in mid-June and he caught up with a total of 26 Black Grasswrens. A more complete account of this may appear in the next issue.
3. **North-East Kimberley.** Lilac-crowned Fairy-wren: feeding young, 7/7/83, Durack R; Red Goshawk: harassing Little Corellas, 8/7/83, near Mt. Barnett; Lemon-breasted Flycatcher: one in mangroves at Wyndham, 5/7/83; Maned Duck: two on a pool in the Laura R., W. of Halls Ck., 20/5/83; Hooded Robin: one near Ellenbrae on the Gibb R. road, 16/7/83.
Ken & Liz Mills

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

THICK-BILLED GRASSWRENS IN COTTONBUSH

Extract from a talk by Peter Curry

Last August on the Dept. of Agriculture's Carnarvon area survey, we were working our way through wanyu scrub on the huge red sandplain that lies east of the North-West Coastal Highway, to the south of the Wooramel River. Wanyu is a

relative of mulga: it is a bean-producing, shrubby *Acacia*. In parts that were burnt out in a series of fires that swept through the area 20 years ago, the sandplain no longer supports wanyu shrub communities, which we can regard as the mature or climax vegetation there. In most cases, burnt-out wanyu has been replaced by lower, more open shrubland with many large cottonbushes. These are a type of perennial mulla-mulla that we would regard as being moderately palatable and useful to stock.

As a life-long student of bugs and birds, I always keep a look out for interesting plants and animals on the properties we visit. One day just in this area, I caused great consternation among my colleagues by screaming our survey vehicle to a halt because I had noticed a very unusual bird, a Thick-billed Grasswren, shoot out along the track. This is a small, streaky brown bird with a long, heavy-looking tail, which moves at unbelievable speed at its dashes from shrub to shrub and invariably evades close observation. The point of this anecdote is that the Thick-billed Grasswren is one of the very few rangeland birds that has, evidently, disappeared from most of its former known haunts across the pastoral zone of Western Australia. I knew that where we were seeing it was not actually in part of its former known range. It turned out that the bird was known to local station people and it proved to be widespread in the fire-affected and thus newly grown up cottonbush shrublands. This is an intriguing observation, when one considers that rare species are more usually associated with undisturbed or climax vegetation.

P. Curry,
Rangelands Management Branch

NOTE: Unfortunately, space prevents all contributions received being printed in this issue. Some may appear in coming issues.

—Ed.

NOTICES

1. Noisy Scrub-bird Translocation

The Fisheries and Wildlife Dept. is currently undertaking a project to establish a second colony of this rare and endangered species by translocating Noisy Scrub-birds from Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve to nearby Mt. Many Peaks. An experiment using traps to capture female Noisy Scrub-birds is planned to run for four weeks in November of this year.

Assistance from one or two volunteers would be appreciated by the Dept. Duties would entail regular monitoring of traps and assisting with the feeding, translocation and release of the captured birds. Accommodation will be provided in the research quarters at Two Peoples Bay.

Interested persons are invited to contact Mr. Graeme Folley, Reserve Officer, Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, RMB 8609, Two Peoples Bay, Via Albany, 6330. Or phone (098) 46 4276 evenings only.

2. Breeding colonies of small terns—information needed.

The RAOU is presently collecting data on the location and status of breeding colonies of the Fairy and Little Terns (*Sterna nereis* and *S. albigrons*). Information is being compiled on the history of the sites and their usage by small terns. This will hopefully enable the status of these species to be determined on an Australia-wide scale. Information from Western Australia is rather sparse, so if anyone has information tucked away in field notebooks and is willing to make them available to the RAOU, this would be much appreciated.

The information required is as follows; precise location of colony, number of pairs using the colony, presence and quantity of eggs or young, history of the site (if known), any changes in numbers of small terns using the site and if any problems were noticed in the area which could adversely affect breeding activities. This information should be sent to: Brett Lane, C/o RAOU, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds, 3039, Victoria. It will be used as the basis for preparing a conservation statement and policy on small terns.

Brett A. Lane

3. Silver Gull Study.

Sonya Soans is currently studying Silver Gulls for a thesis at Murdoch University and would be pleased to receive any information on banded gulls. Sonya is particularly concerned with gulls having yellow bands on their right legs (juveniles) and others having yellow bands on their left legs, but any data on gulls is of interest. The basic information needed is location, time of day, what birds were doing and the date. Send data to Sonya Soans, 13 Doric St., Shelley, 6155. Phone: 457 5096.

4. Square-tailed Kite survey in Darling Scarp.

Perth residents are particularly fortunate in being able to regularly observe Square-tailed Kites *Lophoictinia isura* in the wandoo-studded heathlands and adjacent forest areas of the Darling Scarp. Birds living in the Eastern States rarely see this magnificent bird, and if they are successful, only at some distance from the larger centres.

Square-tails are the only species in their genus, they are unique to Australia and have an unusual ecology. They seem to feed a great deal on nestlings plucked from tree canopies, but our knowledge of them is otherwise poor.

We would like to find as many territories of these birds as we can, in the scarp close to Perth. This will enable some detailed ecological studies to be conducted later on. To do this, we would like some assistance from observers on possibly two or three separate days in the coming spring. All that is required is several hours scanning ridges and slopes from a number of vantage points.

Any interested persons should contact Peter Curry, 29 Canning Mills Rd., Kelmscott, 6111. (390 6995), or Roger Jaensch (see p.1) immediately.

5. Book Offers.

Don't forget that right now is your last opportunity to order books in order to receive them before Christmas. Books always make a wonderful present — secure your selection by sending a cheque (made out to the RAOU), to S. Keeling, 31 Lawnbrook Rd., Walliston, 6076. Remember to add \$1 p & p for each book.

Titles from the last newsletter:

Crows of the World—4 remaining copies; RR\$25, clearing at \$7.

Introducing Birds of the World—RR\$35, RAOU price \$19.

Swans of the World—RR\$15, RAOU price \$9.

New Titles:

Bird Families of the World—Detailed discussion on behaviour, distribution, ecology; 900 species illustrated. Editor C.J.O. Harrison.

Usual Price: \$24.95

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$13.

Birds of Man's World—Derek Goodwin. Discusses man's positive effects on bird life.

Usual Price: \$11.95

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$7.95.

R.S.P.B. Guide to Birdwatching—Peter Conder. Comprehensive introduction to the 'business' of birding.

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$7.

Bird Flight—Georg Ruppell. Fabulously illustrated — well recommended.

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$19.

The Life of Birds—Welly. 600 pages covering everything you are ever likely to want to know about bird biology — great value!

Usual Price: \$28.95

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$19.

Australian Birds and their Young—O'Grady and Lindsey. A portfolio of breeding species.

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$15.

The Pigeons and Doves of the World—Goodwin. A definitive work, large format, 446 pages, lots of maps and drawings.

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$18.

Nature Reserves in Europe—Wirth. Great for those going o/s.

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$9.95.

Wildfowl of the World—Soothill and Whitehead. Well illustrated.

Usual Price: \$19.95

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$9.95.

Currassows and Related Birds—Delacour and Amadon. Fabulous book about an incredible group of birds — big format, well illustrated.

Usual Price: \$24

R.A.O.U. Members Price: \$14.95.

We are also able to order books and bird lists through the Audubon Society in the USA. Virtually every worthwhile bird book, covering every country in the world, is available and should be of great help to those who expect to travel. Delivery is very slow, so you must order well in advance.

This will purely be a break-even service to members. The booklist has more than 400 titles, so I would suggest that you ring S.K. on 291 7592 to discuss choices. Examples include *Checklist of Hong Kong*, \$2.50 + p & p; *Birds of Tahiti*, \$17 + p & p.

6. Special Card Offer.

We have obtained a selection of high quality cards, each depicting a bird. A short comment is made on some, but otherwise no writing appears on the card: ideal for birthdays, Christmas and other occasions. These are currently on sale in the shops for \$1.20—\$1.50 each, whereas our price is \$5 for 10, p & p included. If ordering by post, then you will be sent a selection. Send monies as for books: all proceeds to the RAOU.

7. Bird Video Hire.

The following video cassette films (V.H.S. only) are now available for the use of members.

The Secret Reeds. Produced by the R.S.P.B., this film shows the birdlife of a reedbed through a year. Species filmed include the Bittern, Shoveler, Water Rail, Marsh Harrier, Cuckoo and various warblers. It has received many awards and runs for 28 minutes.

Seabirds. A fascinating study of how the thousands of birds that live and breed along coastlines, have adapted to cope with their harsh environments. R.S.P.B., 28 minutes.

These films are for hire at the rate of \$4 + \$1 p & p, for two days. The proceeds from hire will be the property of the R.A.O.U. If anyone has a VHS video unit that I could borrow, please let me know as I would like to show these films at a public meeting.

Steve Keeling

8. Christmas Island—Naturally.

Over the long weekend of 1-3 October, Airlines of Western Australia, in conjunction with Hoyer's Australian Adventure Tours, are presenting a very special adventure — 3 days and 2 nights safari style holiday to Christmas Island.

As this is one of the first times that such a tour has taken place, the offer is truly unique. Special approval has been secured to enable this group to visit the island in a chartered Airlines of Western Australia jet. The tour will be self sufficient and the group will camp on the island.

The tour will be escorted by Western Australian Howard Gray who spent several years on the island. Mr. Gray is author of the book *Christmas Island—Naturally* and considered well versed in the flora and fauna of the island.

Christmas Island was first discovered in 1615 and permanently settled in 1888. The island is isolated in the Eastern Indian Ocean and is situated 360 kilometres from its nearest point in Indonesia. Christmas Island is 1400 kilometres from Exmouth, the point from which the Airlines of Western Australia jet will depart Western Australia. Christmas Island is only made up of 13,500 hectares, the greatest distance across being 17 kilometres. The terrain rises by a series of terraces and cliffs from the Indian Ocean leading to an un-

dulating plateau of rainforest. The island's highest point is Murray Hill, 361 metres above sea level. The population is 3,308 mainly made up of Chinese/Malay/European/Indian and Eurasians. Phosphate mining is the only industry on the island and is undertaken by the Christmas Island Phosphate Company.

The weekend visit has been very carefully designed to show members of the touring party the island with particular emphasis being placed on its natural habitat. Excursions into the National Park will provide the opportunity for interesting walks with your tour leader and officials from the Island. A visit will also be made to the settlement during the weekend. Members of the group will certainly be "explorers" visiting a truly unique non-tourist "duty free" destination.

Except for sleeping bags and air mattresses, just about everything is supplied. Complimentary beer, wine and soft drink will be provided as well as two-man tents. All camp meals will be prepared by a chef from one of Perth's leading hotels. The Airlines of Western Australia F28-4000 jet will be remaining on the island over the weekend and the air crew will stay with tour passengers. It is interesting to note that the island is celebrating "Territory Day" and its 25th Anniversary on the Sunday.

Only 50 passengers can be accommodated on this trip of a lifetime. What a different way to spend a long weekend. Truly a trip that people down the street could not have been on! Considering what is included, the \$698 per seat is exceptionally good value. Seats will not last long — contact Airlines of Western Australia — 325 0401, Hoger's Australian Adventure Tours — 335 6884.

9. Birds in the Bush.

An introduction to observing wild birds. September 14 to October 19 by Stephen Davies.

The U.W.A. course will comprise six weekly lecture periods and three or four excursions at the weekend. It will introduce participants to the range of bird life, both in Australia and overseas, describe life histories and the ways in which birds come to terms with their environment. The evolution, ecology and behaviour of birds are all aspects of biology to which amateurs can make a great contribution and emphasis in the lectures will be placed on ways in which ordinary bird watchers can make useful studies of our native species.

Excursions will include day outings to Bickley Brook Reservoir, Pelican Point and Alfred Cove and a weekend at the Twertup Field Studies Centre in the Fitzgerald River National Park. These excursions will be led by members of the Western Australian Group of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union and participants will have the opportunity to meet other amateur and professional ornithologists in Perth.

Texts:

A useful book written by Stephen Ambrose and Don Bradshaw of the Department of Zoology, UWA, describing the birds of the Crawley Campus will shortly be available. Other useful reference books are:

SEYMOUR, O. 1978. *Birds for Beginners*. W.A. Gould League.

ROWLEY, I. 1974. *Bird Life*. Collins. Australian Naturalists Library.

10. Post-Graduate Diploma in Natural Resources.

The W.A.I.T. Division of Engineering and Science is inviting applications for admission to the Post-Graduate Diploma in Natural Resources, a two year part-time course with electives in biology, environmental studies, geology and marine studies. The course consists of core units, seminars, electives and a project and electives to be offered in 1984 are Coastal Processes, Energy Resources, Exploration Geophysics, Environmental Remote Sensing, Environmental Image Interpretation, Environmental Geology, Pest Biology, Physical Oceanography, and Terrestrial Biology.

Candidates must possess a Bachelors Degree or equivalent, with a major study in an appropriate field. Students must

pay an amenities fee of \$40.50 for a single unit and applications for enrolment must be lodged in November 1983. For further information contact Dr. K.K. Sappall, Co-ordinator, School of Physics and Geosciences (350 7314).

11. Samphire Bird Sanctuary.

Diane Beckingham has recently acquired a 17 acre property on Wanerie Road (off Cowalla Rd.) West Gingin, and invites members to contact her (381 9035 a/h) if they would like to visit it. A permanent freshwater lake exists on the property and Diane has established the area as a bird sanctuary. Overnight visitors may use the small shed, rainwater tank and boat but are asked to leave lists of birds, reptiles and plants encountered. From all accounts, a really pleasant spot!

12. Goodale Sanctuary.

Bob and Ann Goodale have asked us to mention that RAOU members are most welcome to visit their sanctuary, east of Harvey Estuary, either in organised groups or on their own. See the March 1983 issue of this newsletter for a report on the area. Write to Bob at 218 Arcadia Drive, Safety Bay, 6169 for details.

13. Tasmanian Shorebird Study Group.

This group, part of the Bird Observers Association of Tasmania, has now published its first and second bulletins called *An Occasional Stint*. Contents include articles on wader, tern and gull studies in Tasmania and a report on a Tasmanian wader 'resort'. For copies of both issues, send \$8.35 to Shorebird Study Group, c/- Mrs. P. Park, Campania, Tasmania, 7202. The editors of *W.A. Bird Notes* have indexes to both bulletins.

14. Bold Park.

Suzi Wood, a Recreation Officer with the Perth City Council, is looking at developing programmes for walks in Bold Park (west of Perry Lakes). She would be very thankful for any birdlists of the bush area and for any volunteers to lead walks that might be organised from time to time. If you can help, ring Suzi on 425 3144.

15. Electric Typewriter.

The Waterbird Project Office (which doubles as an office for this newsletter) is in need of an electric typewriter of good quality. If you would like to donate your 'outdated' typewriter to the Office (eligible as a tax deduction), please contact Roger Jaensch.

16. Pelican skeletons.

The W.A. Wildlife Research Centre is keen to obtain a number of sound Australian Pelican skeletons. If you have, find or know the location of a top quality carcass, please contact Grant Pearson on 405 1555 (095) as soon as possible. Arrangements will be made for its obtention.

While you're all reading this, note that the popular **wader study course at Eyre** is on again from Oct. 31 to Nov. 5. The Observatory has a unique ability for providing the unusual in waders, and various trapping methods will once more be demonstrated with any waders present during this year's course. (See also the Eyre Report & Courses).

17. Lost your binoculars?

Mr. Glyn Standring of 7 Elabana Cr., Dianella, 6062 (ph: 276 2954), has in his possession a pair of 8x30 Jupiter binox. These were left on the Yanchep excursion and Glyn is anxious that the worried owner be contacted.

18. Deadline for Contributions.

For the December issue of *W.A. Bird Notes*, all articles and observations must be with the Editor by **Friday 21 October**. Please try to get contributions typed as this saves a lot of office work.