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Western Australian Bird Notes

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REMOTE WETLAND EXPEDITION - AUGUST 1986

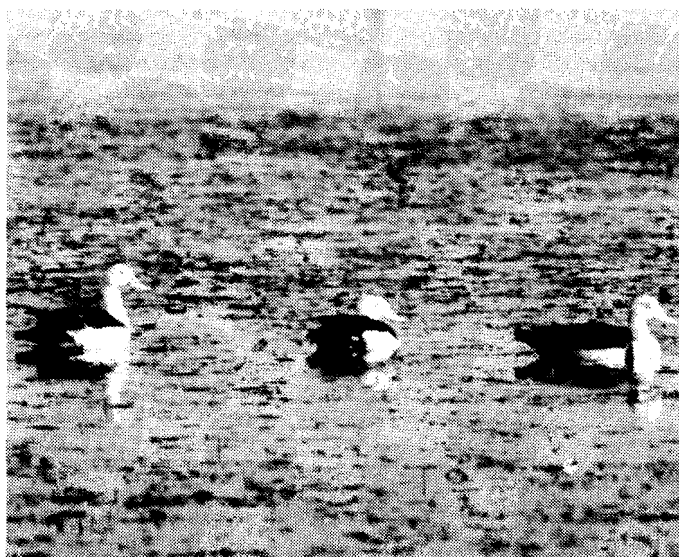
The R.A.O.U. Remote Wetland Expedition to Lakes Argyle and Gregory in August 1986 saw a blend of professional and amateur ornithologists working closely to produce some unprecedented results. Our team of 13 participants enjoyed some remarkable birding in two unique environments.

Lake Argyle (formed in 1971 by the damming of the Ord River) is a majestic wetland; who of us will forget the sunsets and that silent, glassy water stretching for kilometres towards the Carr Boyd Ranges? Add to this the total of some 180,000 waterbirds of 59 species and one could not help but feel a little 'special' being there.

Parties of observers were organized, in R.J.'s inimitable style, into shore or boat patrols and began counts in areas of bird concentrations spotted earlier by aircraft survey. Some of the more impressive statistics included counts, in excess of 50,000, for both Hardheads and Eurasian Coots. Interesting also were counts achieved for Radjah Shelduck (660) and Comb-crested Jacana (300); results that suggest Lake Argyle is important for these birds. Yellow Chats in surprising numbers (more than 100!) delighted the observers; especially as this count represented an important extension of the known range of this diminutive bird. The presence of a pair of Letter-winged Kites brought solace to a pair of fearless ornithologists stomping the hot mud of the eastern shoreline.



Ranges rising steeply from glassy water, disturbed by birds in boats searching for waterbirds: April '86.
Photo by Peel Howden



Mats of aquatic plants at Lake Argyle support large populations of waterbirds. Radjah Shelducks were often encountered in August 1986.

Photo by Peel Howden

From Lake Argyle the team of participants moved to Lake Gregory on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert. Any apprehension about this wetland (it was little known) matching Lake Argyle's uniqueness was immediately suppressed. The count of 60,000 Little Black Cormorants, including 11 breeding colonies, was staggering and the skies 'blackened' as observers boated slowly through the flooded woodland along the lake margin. To the enjoyment of all, the very same areas were harbouring small flocks of Freckled Ducks which eventually tallied 900 individuals. This figure is a record for Western Australia. For some of the team it was their first encounter with this species and to experience such numbers was a rare privilege.

Also of note at Lake Gregory were colonies of Pied Cormorants, very large numbers of Pink-eared Ducks (33,000) and Great Egrets (355). The presence of 842 Great Crested Grebes, in view of few previous sightings in the far north of W.A. was another valuable result.

The ingredients for success of the expedition lay not only with impressive and important counts in spectacular settings, but also with the ambience created by the participants. After all it's not entirely funny when you fall out of a boat in to a well-known crocodile haunt, nor when every attempt at identification fails and what you have witnessed can only be Cape Barren Geese!

The results are a credit to all who participated in organizing, in offering technical know-how and in contributing to the common good. I will certainly be booking my spot again.

R. Vervest

OBSERVATIONS

collated by Roger Jaensch

The following records have been partly vetted and should receive further scrutiny before publication in RAOU Reports or in technical journals. Observers are encouraged to submit copies of field notes with all accounts of unusual sightings. The *Atlas of Australian Birds*, Serventy & Whittell's *Birds of Western Australia* and regional lists (e.g. Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne) of the W.A. Museum should be useful guides to records that are unusual with respect to distribution or status.

This series mainly covers the spring of 1986. Shire names are given in brackets. Where known, the observer is identified by an abbreviation — abbreviations are listed below.

Observations that appear in other articles in this newsletter may not be repeated here.

Please send details of sightings to 'The Observations Officer' at the W.A. Office of the RAOU.

DOWN SOUTH

Southern Fulmar dead bird, 20/9, Woodman Point (Metro) — TJD

Great Crested Grebe — 2 with young, 20/9, Maitland Swamp SW of Beverley — KS, PC

Little Black Cormorant — more than 200 active nests, 3/11, Nambarup Swamps (Esperance) — RV, RJ • 35, 6/11, Katrine-Glen Avon Pools in Avon River (Northam): nests with eggs — JRM

Little Pied Cormorant — 70, 6/9, Gibb Rd Swamp in Forrestdale (Metro): 55 nests active — DJ

Pacific Heron — 2, 28/9, Mears Lake (Brookton): building nest — PC • 6, 5/11, Tyrell's yate swamp (Esperance): two active nests — RV, RJ

Little Egret — 1, 7/6, Bibra Lake (Metro) — DJ • 2, 16/9, Alfred Cove (Metro) — PRH • 1, late September, Narrows interchange lakes (Metro) — RV • 2, 11/10, old Belmont tip (Metro): in pools near Parry Field — RV, FC • 1, 4/11, Gore Lake (Esperance): first for Esperance district — RJ, RV

Australasian Bittern — 1, 20/9, Mettler Lake (Albany) — PL

Straw-necked Ibis — 2 pairs building nests, 14/6, Barraghup Swamp (Murray): nests not continued — AD

Yellow-billed Spoonbill — 60, 14/6, Barraghup Swamp (Murray): 30, possibly 50 nests active (young) on 1/10 — AD • 45, 9/8, shallow swamp SW of Byenup Lagoon (Manjimup) — RV, SS • 4, 4/10, Parry Inlet (Denmark) — SH • 6 active nests, 17/10, Ludlow (McCarley's) Swamp (Capel) — PL • 5 active nests, 7/11, Yellilup Lake (Jerramungup) — RV, RJ

Black Swan — c. 130 nests active, 27/9, N extension of Wonnerup Estuary — BK

Mute Swan — 74, 10/9, Northam Pool — JRM

Freckled Duck — 6, 17/5, Gore Lake (Esperance): first at this lake — JE • 7, 6/9, Gibb Rd Swamp in Forrestdale (Metro) — DJ • 2, 20/9, Forrestdale Lake — DJ • nest with eggs in October, Benger Swamp (Harvey) — DGW • 3, possibly 5, 25/10, a paperbark swamp in Southern River (Metro): also a dead bird caught on a fence — RJ

Chestnut Teal — 2, 10/9, Carrybump Swamp (Murray) — JS

Australasian Shoveler — 8/11, Manning Lake (Metro): with young — HF

Pink-eared Duck — 19, 1/8, Lake Claremont: with two clutches of young — EM

Hardhead — 4, 13/9, rushy swamp N of intersection of Nicholson Rd and Forrest Rd (Metro): nest with eggs — RJ • 11, 6/10, Mongers Lake: with young — NB • 4, 25/10, paperbark swamp S of Forrestdale Lake (Metro): nest with 3 fresh eggs — RJ • 39, 5/11, Northam Pool: with 5 broods of young — JRM • 38, 6/11, Katrine-Glen Avon Pools in Avon River (Northam): with young — JRM

Blue-billed Duck — 135, 29/4, Cardiminup Lake (Jerramungup) — JJ • 2, 17/5, Gore Lake (Esperance): first here, lake full — JE • 640, 7/6, Yangebup Lake (Metro) — DJ • 6, 13/9, Murchison River Ten Mile Pool — FNR et al. • 7, mid October, Murchison River near Kalbarri: first seen near Kalbarri — FNR

Collared Sparrowhawk — 1, 9/10, swamp in Wungong (Metro): nesting in paperbark above water — RV

Wedge-tailed Eagle — nest with two chicks in yate tree in lake near Munglinup, 6/11 — RV

Marsh Harrier — nestling (2/11) and nest with 2 eggs (5/11) in rushy swamps N of Cape Le Grand (Esperance) — RJ, RV

Peregrine Falcon — 1, 23/8, Pipidinny Swamp (Wanneroo) — BBa, MC, ND

Buff-banded Rail — 1, 13/9, swamp near Canning Vale Prison (Metro) — RJ • 1, 30 & 31/10, Gooseberry Hill (Metro): in yard near creek, confused by Cyclone fence — JB

Baillon's Crake — 1, 2/11, short-rush swamp N of Cape Le Grand (Esperance) — RJ

Australian Crake — nest with eggs, 6/9, Mogumber Swamp Nature Reserve (Gingin) — RV

Masked Lapwing — *Vanellus miles novaehollandiae* — 1, 31/10, Heirisson Island (Metro) — TJD. This is the usual subspecies seen in southern W.A.

Banded Lapwing — 2, 19/10, on oval behind Swanbourne Life Saving Club: not seen here for some years — EM

Lesser Golden Plover — 5, 3/10, Eurardy Station NE of Kalbarri — FNR • 1, 4/11, Alfred Cove (Metro) — PRH

Eastern Curlew — 9, 14/9, Creery Island area (Mandurah) — PW

Greenshank — 55, 26/9, Leschenault Inlet — CN

Marsh Sandpiper — 1, 3/10, Eurardy Station NE of Kalbarri: first for Kalbarri one degree block — FNR

Red-necked Stint — 2 200, Milyu Nature Reserve (Metro): one of the higher counts here for this species — BMH et al.

Red-necked Phalarope — 1: a number of sightings in October on Rottnest Island lakes. Also a report of a female Grey Phalarope at Rottnest on 15/10 by U.S. visitor Betty Gallagher: the bird was "deep red with white face pattern and dark cap....bobbing in the water — ; this record has not been verified.

Regent Parrot — 3, 9/9, Gunnadorah Station E of Rawlinna: at a donga 2 km W of homestead — CL. Regent Parrots are rarely seen this far E; they are known to feed on fruiting saltbush (see Atlas).

Barn Owl — 1, August and September, Roe Highway in Midland (Metro) — BBa

Rainbow Bee-eater — 6, 15/10, first arrivals for 1986 near East Fremantle Yacht Club. Other observers reported birds first in the metro area in the second week of October.

Crested Shrike-tit — 1, 20/9, Flynn Rd near The Lakes (Mundaring): second record here — BBa, MC, ND

Splendid Fairy-wren — and **Blue-breasted Fairy-wren** — 3/10, Beetalynna Pool on Greenough River E of Geraldton — PM

UP NORTH

Wilson's Storm Petrel — 3, 22-25/9, at sea near Pt. Samson — RS

Plumed Whistling-Duck — 15, October, Lyons River E of Kennedy Range — MG

Radjah Shelduck — 15, 31/8, Ord River below Kununurra Diversion Dam — MH

Chestnut Teal — 1, 16/8, Packsaddle Swamp near Kununurra: first Kimberley record? — RJ

Blue-billed Duck — nest with eggs in lignum bush, 5/9, claypan between Meekatharra and Cue — RJ, RV

Letter-winged Kite — 1, 1-2/6, Le Lievre Swamp near Camballin: underwing markings seen — DK

Pacific Baza — 2, 1/11, Bell Gorge (Kimberley) — BW, GH

Square-tailed Kite — 1, 20/8, Argyle Downs Station — RJ • 2, 30/8, savannah between Ruby Plains and Billiluna (S of Halls Ck) — RJ, RV

Black-breasted Buzzard — 1, late August, Lake Gregory (S of Halls Ck) — RAOU expedition • 1, late September, Errabiddy Station — RHS

Black Falcon — singles seen at NE and E sides of Lake Argyle, late August — PRH • 1, 26/8, between Lake Gregory and Billiluna — PRH, RJ

Peregrine Falcon — 1, 23/9, Yallalong Station (Murchison) — PM • 1, late September, at creek 105 km NW of Meekatharra — RHS • 2, late September, Lake Annean S of Meekatharra — RHS

Spotless Crake — 3, 4/9, Millstream — RJ, RV

Brolga — 13, 26/9, tidal salt flats at Wickham — RS

Painted Snipe — a male, 10/11, Lake Eda E of Broome: rarely seen in W.A. — BW, GH

Lesser Golden Plover — 1, 14/8, tidal mudflats at Derby — FER

Large Sand Plover — 33, 14/8, tidal mudflats at Derby — FER

Ruddy Turnstone — 1, 5/9, Lake Annean S of Meekatharra — RJ, RV

Black-tailed Godwit — 1, 5/9, Lake Annean S of Meekatharra

Long-toed Stint — 2, late August to November, Lake Eda E of Broome — BW, GH • 2, 31/8, Buckshot Bore Swamp near Camballin — RJ, RV

Oriental Pratincole — 19/10, near Broome: first for the season — BW, GH

Torresian Imperial-Pigeon — 1, 30/6, 20 k S of Kalumburu — DK

Flock Bronzewing — c. 150, late August, NE side of Lake Argyle: in grassland and coming to drink — RAOU expedition • up to 30, 26-29/8, Lake Gregory — RAOU expedition • 250, 31/8, Camballin Irrigation Area — RJ, RV • 1, 9/10, Lake Eda E of Broome: not often recorded on Dampier Peninsula — BW, GH

Brush Cuckoo — 1, 31/8, 17 Mile Dam in Fitzroy River floodplain — RJ

Fork-tailed Swift — 1, 19/10, near Broome: [first for season?] — BW, GH

Collared Kingfisher — 23/9, mangroves at Pt. Samson — RS

Barn Swallow — 2, 16/10, Raible Road, (Broome?): first for the season — BW, GH • 130, 10/11, Broome — BW, GH

Yellow Wagtail — 1, 19/10, Lake Eda E of Broome: legs dark, yellowish-buff wash on flanks, sides of chest and vent — BW, GH

Varied Triller — probable female, 23/8, Ord — Bow Rivers junction — JT

Leaden Flycatcher — 1, 8/10, Adcock Gorge 300 k ENE Derby: male on nest — PCoy

Cinnamon Quail-thrush — 2, 23/8, 2 km N Mt. Magnet — NMCK • 2, 23/9, Yallalong Station (Murchison) — PM

Banded Whiteface — 2, 24/8, 86 k N of Meekatharra — NMCK

Yellow Chat — 8 or 10, 14/9, Galileo Precipice SE of Wyndham — MHB

White-browed Woodswallow — common, late August, NE Kimberley: with Masked in flowering trees — RAOU expedition

AD — Austin Daw
BBa — Bryan Barrett
BK — Brad Kneebone
BMH — Barbara Hale
BW — Brice Wells
CL — Cyril Linto
CN — Clive Napier
DGW — Doug Watkins
DJ — David James
DK — Dot Kingston

MC — Margory Clegg
MG — Maree Gallin
MH — Mike Howell
MHB — Mary Bremner
NB — Norah Brockman
ND — Norma Duff
NMCK — Norm McKendrick
PC — Peter Congreve
PCoy — Peter Coyle
PL — Pattie Leighton

EM — Edna Milne
FC — Fred Coles
FER — Florence Robinson
FNR — Norman Robinson
GH — Gail Hooper
HF — Hazel Fermaner
JB — June Butcher
JJ — Jo Jones
JRM — Jim Masters
JS — John Start
JT — Jeremy Talbot
KS — Kath Shadbolt

PLa — Peter Lambert
PM — Peter Mack
PRH — Peel Howden
PW — Peter Wilmot
RHS — Roger Smith
RJ — Roger Jaensch
RS — Rod Smith
RV — Rodney Vervest
SH — Sheila Hill
SS — Sheryl Stephens
TJD — Tom Delaney

EYE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Warden's Report

Happy Christmas and thank you to all those people who supported and Visited Eyre in 1986.

The Pink Cockatoos have worked hard this year to retain their rights to the prestigious position of being Eyre's emblem. One morning in winter we witnessed a most unusual sight when two thirsty Pink Cockatoos visited the frozen bird baths (overnight minimum -5C). They appeared puzzled when unable to obtain a drink from a normally reliable waterhole. All three baths were investigated and one cockatoo stepped on to the ice and went skating. Rob came to the rescue by pouring water on to the ice.

We are often asked the best time to visit Eyre. Winter is very pleasant with lots of blossom and calm sunny days ideal for bird-watching, not to mention the added attractions of the whales. In summer the bird baths are heavily used by many honeyeater species, the waders have arrived and there is the bonus of a swim. Even foul weather has its joys as we discovered when we ventured along Kanidal Beach in a howling wind and a temperature of 36.2C. We sighted a Whiskered Tern and four Crimson Chats (both first sightings this year) and 14 Gull-billed Terns (last seen in 1982).

We hope that all members will support Eyre and the new wardens in 1987. The best way to do this is to visit. We have organized the courses for the whole of 1987 to give you plenty of notice. Book early to avoid disappointment — your place will be confirmed on receipt of \$50 deposit. A discount of \$10 is available if full course fees are received by the wardens not less than one month prior to the course.

If you intend to make a casual visit to Eyre please note that it is closed on some days and that there is a policy of not accepting casual visitors during courses. These steps have been taken to reduce the pressures on the wardens and to give course participants priority.

As Eyre has a limited number of places \$50 is necessary for a confirmed booking. This helps to overcome the losses incurred by late cancellations and the turning away of others.

You can support Eyre in 1987 by joining Friends of Eyre (FOE). Send the wardens an annual subscription of \$10 and you will receive two newsletters each year and support a unique observatory.

Book for 1987 courses soon and/or send in your FOE subscription.

J and R Hill.

Banding in September

While staying at Eyre for a month, I was able to carry out some concentrated mist-netting, the first major banding since Nick Dymond's work. Three hundred and three birds were trapped, including 124 re-traps. Two visits to Twilight Cove led to 34 birds being trapped there and a few hours at Nine-Mile Beach yielded 10 birds. Eucalypt blossom was very patchy, especially near the Observatory, resulting in relatively small catches at any particular trapping site.

Notable re-traps include Singing Honeyeater (031-56404) banded in 1978, now aged at nine plus, a Red Wattlebird (071-36716) banded in 1980, now aged at six plus, a White browed Babbler (050-82423) banded in 1980, now aged at seven plus and a Purple-gaped Honeyeater (022-40113) banded in 1980, now aged at seven plus. One of Steven Ambrose's colour-banded White-browed

Scrubwrens (022-61276) is now a six plus year bird. The most numerous birds trapped were Singing, White-fronted and New Holland Honeyeaters.

There is a lot of data in the detailed Eyre records and it would be an interesting job to work through the figures for some of the species. The banding field sheets are being microfilmed in order to make the raw data available in microfiche and more accessible.

D. Reid

Art Workshop

In September an art workshop was held. The participants consisted of experienced artists and aspiring artists of various ages. They worked individually and together on excursions and at the homestead. Some did finished watercolours and pastel drawings on the spot while others took note sketches and did finished pieces in the comfort of the Observatory verandah.

The week started with a late afternoon walk along the beach soaking up the scenery. Another walk was along the excellently laid out trail, sketching and learning about the wonderful Eyre flora. There was a sketching walk along the east track to the hidden valley and back across the dunes at sunset. A full day was spent on an excursion to Twilight Cove where there was temptation to use the time watching three parent whales with calves close to shore. Although there was a strong on-shore wind blowing, it was quite calm between the dunes and cliffs and some notable paintings and drawings were done of the cliffs. The sedge in its unusual rows was the subject of one interesting ink and stick drawing. Another day was spent at Burnabbie ruins and rockhole, where the masses of yellow everlasting provided background colour for old fences, buildings, rocks and gums.

During the week quick sketches of birds were possible when they were in the hand after being banded.

Many excellent paintings and drawings resulted from the workshop, as well as exchanges of ideas and techniques. All who participated were enthralled with the scenery, especially its changing colour and light. Eyre was a restful and inspiring place to work with tasteful and nourishing food served by the wardens. One day-visitor was heard to comment, "Why would they come all the way out here for an art workshop?" We hadn't noticed that he was blindfold, but he certainly must have been.

D. Reid

BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS COURSE — EYRE IN SEPTEMBER

Ever since being introduced to birding we had heard about Eyre and been intrigued. To have been to Eyre placed one into a special category of Birdo. Our initiation into the mystique of Eyre began when Jan and Rob met five weary but eager travellers at the bus at Cocklebidy. At the microwave tower we picked up three more and our group was then complete.

The programme that Jan and Rob had devised for us was packed with interest. Day one was a wader count along the Nine Mile beach. A particular highlight of this was the sight of ten large humans thundering down the beach in pursuit of one very small, pinionless, fledgling Red-capped Plover "runner" in order to capture and band it.

Our day on Hampton Plains was notable for the splendour of the colour in Tommy Graham's cave, the Richards Pipits flying from the rock face, the Banded Lapwings with young, Mulga Parrots, Crested Bellbirds and Blue Bonnets. Glorious! On the way home a Mallee Fowl plodded across the track in front of our vehicle and began scratching in the underbrush.

Twilight Cove provided an opportunity for us to observe "birds of a different feather", four Southern Right whales each with a calf, frolicking and "singing" fifty metres from the beach.

On a walk down the East Transect we saw a pair of Yellow-rumped Pardalotes bringing food to a nest burrow in the sand by the track. A total of eighty species was seen over the period of the course.

Besides the field trips there were many other attractions for us at the observatory. Watching honeyeaters at the birdbath outside the living room windows was a valuable learning experience in species identification. A dugite was also observed from this same vantage point after our attention was drawn to it by the alarm calls of Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens and White-browed

Scrubwrens. Evenings were spent discussing various aspects of birding, looking at slides (of birds, naturally) and getting pointers to assist us in identifying birds.

In addition to Jan and Rob's guidance in the field, Don and Donna Reid, who were assisting at Eyre, gave us the benefit of their expertise. Through Don's banding activities we were able to have "hands on" experience with some of the birds and his knowledge of geological features of the area was an extra bonus for us.

All too soon our time was over. Eyre more than lived up to our expectations. The beauty of the landscape, the wind sculptured dunes, twisted mallee trunks, the wonderful hospitality and enthusiasm of our hosts; and the birds. Eyre, we shall return.

P. Bentley, C. Comstock and D. Evans

WATERBIRD STUDIES

report by Waterbirds Officer, Roger Jaensch

BREEDING EGRETS

Judy Jenkins of 3 Trinnick Place, Booragoon 6154 is assisting with the RAOU survey of breeding colonies of egrets in WA. If you know of any colony, past or present, please contact Judy in writing or by phoning her on 364 2083. We are pursuing the history of colonies as well as the numbers of pairs breeding at present. Australia has international responsibilities to protect the Great Egret and Cattle Egret and we are also interested in data for the Little Egret.

As reported recently in *The West Australian*, a colony of 30 pairs of Great Egrets was reported to us in October by Ray Nancarrow. As with most egret colonies, Rufous Night Herons were breeding with the Great Egrets. Also, two pairs of Little Egrets appeared to be breeding — the second breeding site in WA. This colony is probably that which was described some years ago 'near Pinjarra'.

Colonies of egrets at Australind and Ludlow are active this year, but colonies at Toolibin Lake (dry) and east of Esperance are not active. Other known colonies are at Chandala Swamp and near Wokalup, i.e. seven colonies known altogether.

AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN

Another RAOU project in WA is concerned with the breeding ecology of the Australasian Bittern. This species was NOT found breeding in 200 nature reserves surveyed by the RAOU from 1981 to 1985. Rodney Vervest is searching for bitterns each month at Byenup Lagoon, near Manjimup and has located two males advertising territory. Rodney and I worked some bittern infested swamps near Cape Le Grand (Esperance) in November but we did not find any active nests.

Any readers knowing the whereabouts of Australasian Bitterns likely to be breeding should give us a call at the RAOU Office.

Egrets and bitterns are known to nest late — sometimes into January and February.

ESPERANCE WETLANDS AND WATERFOWL

The last big 'wet' years in the Esperance district were in 1968 and 1979 (according to the locals), but 1986 has seen water levels in lakes higher than in those years. Paperbark and yate wetlands in the Mortijinup-Nambarup, Gore-Quallilup and Jerdacuttup systems have become deeply flooded (up to 5 metres), mostly with brackish to saline water. This has triggered a great deal of breeding by waterfowl, though numbers of birds have not been spectacular in spring due to dispersion of birds in the district.

Of particular interest (as seen from 2-7 November by Rod Vervest, Jack Ewert and I) were Blue-billed Ducks with eggs at Mortijinup, Australasian Shovelers with young at Gore, and Chestnut Teal and Hardheads with young at Jerdacuttup Lake (single clutches in each instance). Also, ten Freckled Ducks (9 males) were seen in yates at Tyrell's property E of Esperance, four to ten were flushed in paperbarks at Nambarup Swamps, a pair was lurking in thickets at Jerdacuttup and two were in yates at Yellilup Lake (Bremer Bay district). Freckled Ducks have now been seen in three seasons and at eight wetlands in this south-east coastal region, suggesting that this may be an important refuge (and breeding?) area for them.

1987 GREAT DUCK COUNT

Yes folks, the next annual Great Duck Count is not far away! Mark the tentative dates 7 to 15 March 1987 in your diaries NOW so that you don't miss out on this great event. Once again we will be asking you to explore 'new' wetlands in your local area, so it would be wise to visit them soon to get the lay of the land (water). Remember that the onus is on you to obtain permission to enter private property. **Please let me know** if you are interested in joining the 1987 Great Duck Team.

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

BOP WATCHINGS

One of the great benefits of BOP Watch for observers is the greater awareness of raptors and their often amazing behaviour.

Recently Gail and I were at Lake Eda with two NSW birdos, when we saw a group of Magpie Larks pursued under a low bush by a Brown Goshawk, which took the rearmost about two feet above the ground. It was immediately assailed by a Brown Falcon that had followed both the pursued and the pursuer under the bush. The Brown Falcon physically crashed into the other bird, giving it what could only be called a heavy "shirtfront" which caused it to drop its prey. This was then seized by the aggressor.

Three Whistling Kites and one Black Kite then entered the melee swooping out of the sky intent on further acts of piracy. Unable or unwilling to fly under the bush they contented themselves with flying tight circles round the shrub and making tentative darts at the scene of the action. The Brown Goshawk's response to all of this was to fly to a small tree about ten feet away and sit there "sulking". The Brown Falcon dragged the Magpie Lark under an even lower bush and mantled until it was satisfied the others couldn't reach it, whereupon it began to pluck its stolen meal.

One of the Whistling Kites was very persistent and flew tighter and tighter circles round the concealed Brown Falcon, finally landing and walking round the bush only about a metre away from it, but unwilling to go closer. As this circular but careful menacing was ignored by the smaller bird the Whistling Kite finally conceded defeat and took to the air, where it continued its circling, even though that proved to be as ineffectual as the Brown Goshawk's motionless watching. We observed the whole drama from our front row seats, only about twenty metres away.

The second incident took place at Lake Le Lievre (pronounced by the locals Le Veer) and was notable not so much for unusual behaviour by the raptors involved as the almost suicidal behaviour of their prospective lunches. A group of Black-tailed Native-hens, numbering about two hundred and fifty had taken up a position on the edge of the lake, acting like 'a la carte meals' for any predator that cared to sample them even though good cover was available a couple of metres away. They were attacked in turn by a Marsh Harrier, a Brown Falcon and two Whistling Kites, taking frantic evasive action only when it was generally too late.

On a subsequent visit with Kevin Coate we found the Whistling Kites on a nest only about seventy metres from the still exposed Black-tailed Native-hens. Expecting to find either eggs or young in the nest Kevin nimbly climbed the tree but found only the legs of Eurasian Coots and BTNhs neatly arranged round the rim of the nest. Altogether we found enough legs to kit out four Coots and seven Black-tailed Native-hens, mostly in the nest but some of them on the ground directly below.

Earlier observations had given us the impression that the BTNhs were wary birds, very quick to use any available cover, but this group seemed impervious to danger in spite of their diminishing numbers. It may be worth observing that the Whistling Kites were very neat eaters or liked red ornamentation dangling round their roosting nest.

G. Hooper — B. Wells.

NORTHERN SAFARI

1986 saw a return to "old fashioned" winters and by early August we were more than ready to head North. We packed our large tent, etc. and took off for the Kimberleys.

A major reason for the six week campout was to join Roger

and the team inspecting Lakes Argyle and Gregory. This was a wonderful experience and is well reported elsewhere in this issue. Our report is about the other four weeks we spent poking about the North looking for birds.

We had decided to reach Broome a.s.a.p. and a highlight of the three day drive was the beautiful wildflowers around Paynes Find. The major 'lowlight' was the interminable road from Goldworthy to Broome. We reached Broome on the third day and it was crowded in early August and this is understandable considering its different culture, tourist features and the weather — clear blue skies, maxima of 28C and pleasantly cool evenings.

Broome's claim to ornithological fame is surely the variety of habitat. Tidal mudflats, rocky coasts, mangroves, grass plains and woodlands produce a wonderful variety of birds. In one brief visit to the main jetty we saw Brahminy Kites, Whistling Kites, White-bellied Sea-eagles and an Osprey on a nest on the light stand on the end of the jetty. The tidal flats of Roebuck Bay were alive with recently arrived waders while the woodland had Red-winged Parrots, Cockatiels, four species of finch, many honeyeaters new to us and the beautiful Red-backed Fairy-wrens.

We were walking through bushland when we saw five Blue-winged Kookaburras in the trees ahead. We approached quietly and discovered perhaps the cause of their interest when Wendy almost trod on two and a half metres of Black-headed Python. Harmless, slow and sleepy it was startling on first acquaintance. We assumed the Kookaburras were eyeing the snake with gastronomic interest in a classic case of "biting off more than they could chew".

Geikie Gorge National Park was our next stop and although it is fairly well developed and popular tourist spot it is relatively unspoiled. Birdlife abounds. Scenery competes with the birds for attention and the long deep pool fringed with majestic cliffs presents an ever changing picture. The Park Rangers produced a checklist of Park birds and were most helpful. Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens had been seen at the Gorge a few days before but we failed to do so. Rose and Allan Jones who were on a similar safari to us -including the Lakes — did see these beautiful and quite rare birds.

After two peaceful nights at Geikie we drove to Kununurra along the almost completed new highway. Only 18kms remained to be sealed. From the start we had been filling in the BOP Watch sheets and had become considerably better at identifying raptors while we were on the move. The drive from Fitzroy Crossing to Halls Creek gave several sightings of Black-breasted Buzzards, a Black Falcon, Wedge-tailed Eagles, Whistling Kites, Brown Falcons, Australian Kestrels and the ubiquitous Black Kites. During the entire trip we noted 16 different raptor species and dutifully filled in dozens of BOP sheets.

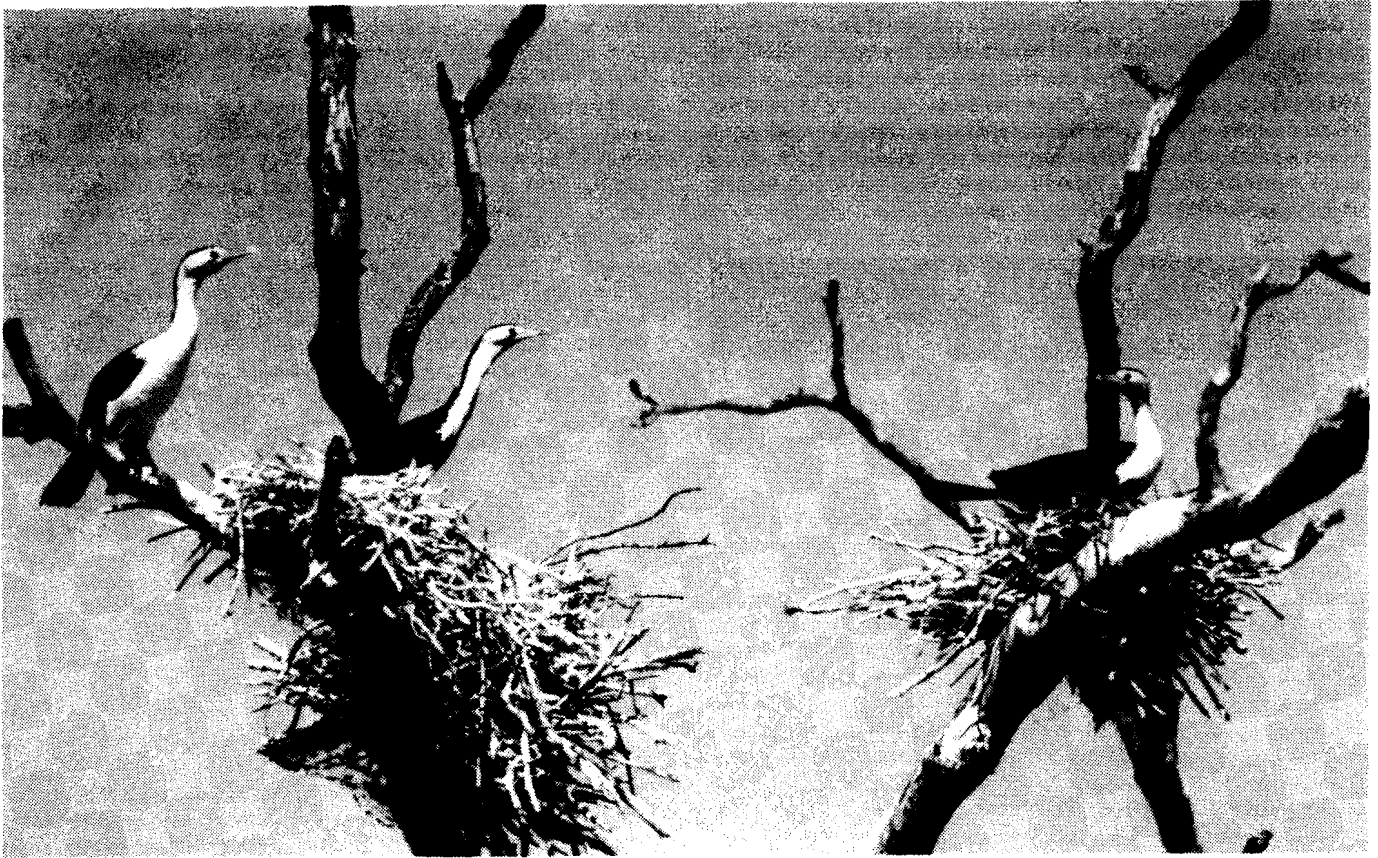
Kona Caravan Park at Kununurra was ideal and we used it as a base while awaiting the arrival of the Team from the South. Our camp-site was on the bank of the Diversion Dam which was home to numerous waterbirds and vast flocks of Little Corellas. It is also the home of crocodiles — freshwater and salty (so they say) but that did not stop us swimming when the temperature reached 38C.

Hidden Valley is a delightful natural park on the outskirts of the town which produced some new birds for us including a Grey Goshawk, the Sandstone Shrike-thrush and White-quilled Rock-Pigeon. Two top bird spots were located nearer to Wyndham. Moochalabra Dam provided a splendid view of Gouldian, Crimson, Masked, Long-tailed, Bouble-barred and Zebra Finches, while Bar-breasted and Rufous-throated Honeyeaters crowded into the same trees.

Marglu Billabong east of the Kununurra-Wyndham road is a spot not to be missed. Situated in a Nature Reserve the narrow ribbon of shallow water stretches for several kilometres and is home for most species of waterbirds found in the North, including Brolgas, Black-necked Storks, Black Swans, Comb-crested Jacanas and numerous waders.

After the birding experience of our lives with the Team from the South, we started home. At Derby we met up with Rose and Allan Jones and enjoyed the hospitality of the areas premier birdo Dot Kingston.

Windjana Gorge on the Gibb River Road is another unspoiled spot which provided excellent birding and spectacular scenery. Sandstone Shrike-thrushes abounded, Figbirds noisily advertised their presence and we sighted a Green-backed Gerygone. This



*Colonies of the Pied Cormorant, mainly a marine species, numbered 250 pairs at Lake Argyle and 1000 pairs at Lake Gregory.
Photo by Roger Jaensch*

little bird looks very ordinary in every way but its song is like that of a Fairy-wren which hasn't quite learnt to trill properly.

On the way south we stayed overnight at Eighty Mile Beach and had the interesting experience of following the waders which were following the tide — seemingly to Africa.

Our last stop of note was at Onslow where we saw a flock of 30 Brolgas at Five Mile Pool near the mouth of the Ashburton. The area also produced two more species of finch — Painted Firetail and Star — to add to our list. In all 220 bird species were seen during our trip.

W. & C. Napier

EAST KIMBERLEY VISIT

In September 1986 a trip to the East Kimberley showed a marked contrast in birdlife from that seen three years previously in July. Climatically there had also been a marked contrast in the "wet" seasons experienced in each of the years.

In the latter half of July 1983, with maximum temperatures around 30C and a record "wet" the whole landscape was ablaze with flowers and young immature birds were everywhere: young White-bellied Sea-eagles even scavenging on the roads in early morning and numerous young Pied Butcherbirds filled the air with their flute-like melodies. In early mornings as Wyndham, Brolgas danced in the main street.

However, in the latter half of September 1986 with temperatures 10 degrees higher (38C to 40C) and after an almost non-existent "wet" season, there was very little water around except in the deep gorges around Wyndham such as Emma and Chamberlain gorges and Galileo Precipice and the man-made dams and channels at Kununurra and Argyle around the Ord River. Apart from the Magpie Goose, water bird numbers were down as were the number of honeyeaters probably because of the lack of flowers on trees and shrubs. White-gaped Honeyeaters were seen with only occasional Singing, Grey-fronted and Brown Honeyeaters.

Moochalabra Dam The pools on the approach to this dam on the King River were almost dried up. However, on the one remaining pool were 13 Brolgas, 2 Black-necked Stork, 3 White-faced Herons, 2 Pacific Herons, 2 Great Egrets, 3 Little Egrets, 4 Little Pied Cormorants and 3 Little Black Cormorants. A Brahminy Kite flew overhead. Only 20 species of land birds were seen in contrast to 30 species in 1983.

Marglu Billabong In July 1983 this was a luscious area with 20 species of waterbirds including 50 Great Egrets and 20 Royal Spoonbills. In September 1986 there was only a very small pool remaining with 12 species of water birds: 6 Brolgas, 2 Yellow-billed Spoonbills, 2 Greenshanks, 12 Wandering Whistling Ducks, 9 Grey Teal, 6 Hardhead, two each of Little Egret, Little Pied Cormorant and Little Black Cormorant and one Pacific Heron and one Australian Pratincole.

Galileo Precipice The two large pools here were still quite deep. There were 5 Night Herons there. Between the pools 8 Yellow Chats were seen.

Wyndham Thirty species of birds were seen including the Silver-crowned Friarbird. At Wyndham Port there were 10 Curlew Sandpipers, 5 Silver Gulls, 4 Greenshanks, 4 White-faced Herons, 5 Sacred Ibis, 2 Straw-necked Ibis, 2 Pacific Heron, 2 Brahminy Kites and one each of Eastern Curlew and Beach Stone-curlew.

Cockburn Range West of Wyndham around the Cockburn Range there were large expanses of water in deep gorges: Emma Gorge, Chamberlain Gorge and the Pentecost River. Emma Gorge is a 45 minute walk, the last half kilometre through vine forest to a large ice-cold pool surrounded on three sides by a 10 metre rock face overhung with ferns and ripping water. The pool has its resident python and numerous aquatic plants. The bower of a Great Bower-bird contained bones only, both long bones and jaw bones. Chamberlain Gorge contained 3 kms of deep water — ideal for swimming or boating. Darters, Straw-necked Ibis, White-faced Heron, Rufous Night Heron, Magpie Goose and a Spotted Harrier were seen. Pentecost River crossing on the Gibb River Road still contained water with 6 Sacred Ibis, 12 Silver Gull, 2 Greenshank and 2 Gull-billed terns.

Oombulgurri on the tidal Forrest River Twenty five species of land birds were seen and 5 Brolgas, 3 White-faced Herons, 2 Greenshanks, 8 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Common Sandpipers, 5 Little Black Cormorant and 3 Little Pied Cormorant.

Kununurra Diversion Dam — Packsaddle area Each morning we were entertained by the male Pheasant Coucal with his continuous melancholy 'Hoop-hoo-hoo' whilst 100 metres in the other direction Yellow Oriole sounded more cheerful with 'cholonk-cholonk'. Forty two species of birds were seen including mixed finch flocks but it was a surprise to see flocks of Crimson

Finches of 8 or 10 birds both colourful and confiding. The commonest birds were the Restless Flycatcher and the White-gaped Honeyeater. Water birds were: 7 Curlew Sandpipers, 5 each of Glossy Ibis, Pelican, Little Pied Cormorant, four each of Little Black Cormorant and Tawny Grassbird, 3 Great Egrets; two each of Radjah Shelduck, Little Egret, Common Sandpiper, Black-necked Stork; 1 Pied Heron, 45 Magpie Geese and 6 Purple Swamphen.

On Lily Creek there were 35 Comb-crested Jacana and they were also seen in pairs in the cumbungi reeds along the Ord River up to Crossing Falls, together with 75 Wandering Whistling-Ducks, 50 Hardheads, 30 Pacific Black Ducks, 7 Little Pied Cormorants, 6 Black-necked Storks, 3 Great Egrets, 5 Royal Spoonbill and 5 Little Black Cormorant.

Argyle The most frequent birds seen were the Silver-crowned Friarbird and the Great Bowerbird. Inside the bowers were the native orange and outside the bower long bones and glass. In July 1983, Owenia nuts were often inside the bowers. The Spillway which enters Stonewall Creek had stopped flowing four weeks previously but there were 14 species of birds in the drying swamp at the entrance to the Spillway. Birds seen were: 25 each of Magpie Geese and Wandering Whistling-Duck, 15 Pacific Black Duck, 12 Black-winged Stilt, 7 Little Pied Cormorant, 5 each of Little Black Cormorant and Great Egret, 4 each of Glossy Ibis, Radjah Shelduck and Pelican, 3 each of Hoary-headed Grebe and Little Egret and 2 Masked Lapwings. At Dead Horse Springs just west of Pannikin Bay we disturbed 25 White-quilled Rock Pigeons together with 20 Peaceful and 10 Bar-shouldered Doves.

East of Argyle The Behn River which enters Lake Argyle from the east was mainly dry but there were interesting pools with Magpie Geese, Pacific Black Duck, Radjah Shelduck, Hardhead and Grey Teal, Royal Spoonbill, Rufous Night Heron, Brolga, White-faced and Pacific Heron, Black-necked Stork and Cattle Egret. There were also Black-fronted Plover and Masked Lapwing.

No magpies were seen except north and east of Lake Argyle. The only young birds seen were a Grey-crowned Babbler being fed in Hidden Valley, Kununurra and a young Spotted Harrier at Chamberlain Gorge west of Wyndham.

M.H. Bremner

PLAINS WANDERERS

Recently my wife and I drove from Perth to Mt Augustus via the dirt road running due north of Mullewa.

On Sunday September 21 at about 2.30 p.m. we had just cross-

ed Coorawandy Creek north of the Wooramel River crossing. We had only just negotiated the crossing when my wife saw a group of birds behind and to the left of us. At first glance I thought of quail, but immediately dismissed that as the birds were too large. I then thought of the Inland Dotterel and hurriedly looked into Slater. My wife had been watching the birds for two or three minutes through binoculars and she called out the features she observed. Yellow bill, black collar around the neck, rusty front, streaked back feathers and a peculiar habit of standing very tall and imperiously every few moments. When I had my binoculars on the birds I saw these features also, especially the latter, very distinctive standing habit. That triggered a memory and I turned to the page illustrating the Plains Wanderer. My wife and I both agreed that it was the Plains Wanderer we saw. Everything fitted except the distribution.

I counted eight birds, but as the group was constantly changing in aspect there were probably ten. The black collars were very noticeable as the birds moved steadily away across the yellow button grass plain until they reached the shelter of the Coorawandy Creek, about eighty to ninety metres from our van. The birds slowly increased their distance from us so our first sightings were our best. We followed them for about five minutes. We noted that the height of the birds as stated in Slater fitted them.

A few days later, in the region of Mount Gould, we saw two Inland Dotterels with their young which enabled us to compare the two sightings. We are confident that we saw birds quite different from the Inland Dotterels.

R.H. Smith

OWLET NIGHTJAR

Flushed from its cool cave
at noon, an Owlet Nightjar

dazed with light, clings
to a mulga branch.

Soft whiskers, round brown eyes
delicate tail flurred by the wind

— I want to advance
and stroke it, like a pet.

I think it might even purr.

D. Beckingham



*Dead woodland alive with breeding cormorants: Gregory '86.
Photo by Roger Jaensch*

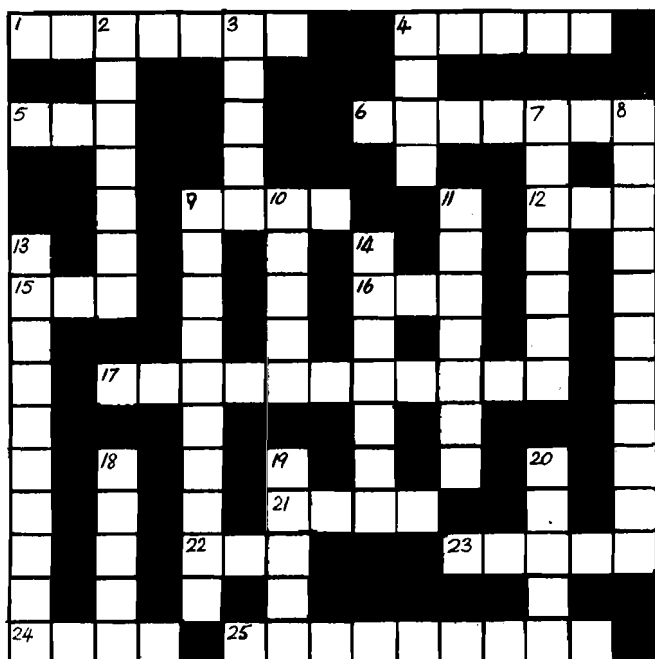
DO YOU REMEMBER

Another year of birding has all but gone. While reminiscing one night, we wondered just how much everyone else remembered of the year's activities.

The following crossword is based on a number of projects and excursions which occurred during 1986, plus a few odds and ends for good measure. If your memory fails you, a quick check through the back-copies of Western Australian Bird Notes (1986 only) should provide most of the answers. We are assuming the rest are so easy that you will not require guidance to be provided.

We would like to think that everyone has enjoyed the year's activities as much as we have. Here's hoping that 1987 is equally as interesting and rewarding!

G. & P. Agar



Clues Across

1. The BOP Watch concerns these.
4. It was supposed to be an added attraction for those who stayed over-night at Boyagin in March.
5. Alternative name for Black-headed Mannikins.
6. Three excursions have been made to this area this year.
9. Not all birds nest in one.
12. Avian method of reproduction.
15. A nocturnal bird of prey.
16. A necessity for distant excursions.
17. The interest we have in common.
21. Mecca for all keen birdos and pygmy possum enthusiasts.
22. Unusual place to which a band is attached.
23. Food of finches.
24. Abbreviation of group name.
25. If you're a keen sea-birder you may have seen one at close quarters.

Clues Down

2. A first sighting for Australia, seen at Lake Chandala in July.
3. Modern method used to track waders arriving from the northern hemisphere.
4. A common black and white water-bird.
7. A lake visited by Remote Wetlands Expedition in August/September
8. They commonly roost at Perth Zoo, though they are not inmates.
9. Dr. Harry Recher spoke about these at the August meeting.
10. Large white wader, seen locally.

11. The birds of this area are the subject of a book edited by Barbara Porter.
13. A black one was an exciting find at Boyagin in March.
14. The month in which Bird Week occurred.
18. A large area, including forty smaller areas, to be the subject of a book to be released shortly.
19. Theatre venue of fund-raising performance of 'The Nerd'.
20. An attempt was made to reintroduce these birds to King's Park between 1973 and 1976.

FEATHERY EXPERIENCE

This conversation was overheard recently at a W.A. Birdo's "nest".

- B (Birdo) Where have you been?
D (Daughter) Out.
B I can see that.
D What does that mean?
B Your dress for a start — it's so short it barely covers your Origma.
D Nonsense — it's a Long-tailed Jaeger — a model dress too.
B I suppose it cost a fortune.
D Naturally. I bought it at the Pacific Baza.
- B Alright, where have you been?
D To a nightclub. The Green Catbird as a matter of fact.
B But that's miles away, past Eastern Curlew and nearly in-to Whimbrel. How did you get there?
D By car of course.
B What car?
D A nice new Brown Falcon. We nearly ran out of fuel on the way though and we had to buy some of Gould's Petrel at Garganey.
B Who is "we" with the car?
D Jacky Winter.
B Him! An Australian Bustard if there ever was one.
D You are just a Grey-crowned Babbler. Jacky is nice and his car is lovely. Much better than your old Mallard.
B Why couldn't you go out with someone decent? That nice Martin for example.
D Why do you think they call him Fairy Martin?
B Jacky is just a Common Mynah.
D What's wrong with that: Before you got so high and mighty a Dollarbird you were just a Logrunner.
- B Alright. What was the nightclub like?
D Good. A lovely band, the Zitting Cisticolas with the Varied Triller singing. And a special new act was good — the Golden Whistler.
B Did you dance?
D Naturally. After we had some of the special Cockatiels — not too many because Jacky doesn't have a Hardhead for alcohol — we danced the Calamanthus and a new one, the Oriental Pratincole, which was fun.
- B And who else was there?
D There was Olive Whistler, Rose Robin, Willie Wagtail, Star Finch, the Reeves and all the Pittas. They arrived very grandly in Baillon's Crake. Mrs had a White winged Wydah over a Grey Teal dress and a splendid Ruff. But she was un-well with Redthroat. She has only just got over an attack of Silvereye. Noisy Pitta lived up to his name. But he really is just a Brown Booby. Did you know he has just started as a Sarus Crane driver? You should have seen Rainbow though. She's really beautiful, her lovely Glossy Ibis hair was gathered into a Great Knot and she was wearing a Spangled Drongo so sheer you could almost see her Little Lorikeet — despite a Crimson Rosella scarf. We had a little Yellow Chat together. She always seems nice but I think that she's just a Painted Snipe.
- B What did you get to eat?
D Supper was Torresian Imperial-Pigeon Pie or Greenshank of Magnificent Riflebird with Southern Cassowary sauce.

There were King Quails in aspic and Creme d'Emu soup. The special was Pheasant Coucal with Musk Duck and to finish Chowchilla and Osprey ice-cream. During supper there was a floor show — the Brolgas danced the Gang-gang Cockatoo. It was a bit spoiled by an invasion of insects — there were Little Bitterns as well as Black, and Noisy Pitta took off his Black Currawong to try to flap them away. He is odd! Did you know — Rainbow said anyway — that he has just bought a new Black Kite? At his age!

B The whole show must have cost a lot then.

D Oh no. Jacky said it was just a Weebill.

B What was it all about?

D I thought you knew. It was the Christmas Party of the RAOU.

Contributor

NOTICES

CORRECTION

The Northern Pintail scientific name is *Anas acuta acuta* and not as printed on the front page of edition 39.

MORE EXCURSION LEADERS REQUIRED

Every excursion needs an organiser. Please consider leading just one outing next year to help share and ease the unfair burden on a willing few. Roger Jaensch and Ron Van Delft have compiled some good notes on leading an outing — phone the office if you would like a copy. More help can be obtained from the leader workshop if required. Please contact Ian Standring at the next meeting or excursion, or at the address below if you would like to help. All welcome.

Ian Standring, 174 Daglish Street, Wembley. 6014. Phone 387 7326 (h)

EXCURSION LEADER 'WORKSHOP'

Organising and leading excursions is not difficult. Come to an informal group discussion at Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre on Saturday 17 January, 1987, at 2 p.m. to exchange ideas with those who have led an excursion before. Start a trend — be an excursion leader!!

The meeting will not last long — an hour perhaps — and you will find it interesting, satisfying and helpful.

1987 EXCURSIONS

Please make any suggestions for excursions to Ian Standring or any Committee member. During 1986 there have been four excursions to Boyagin Rock with the intention of obtaining information on its bird life at different times of the year. If you believe this structured approach to excursions to be of value — tell the Committee.

TRAPPING OF FINCHES TO CEASE

Conservation and Land Management Minister Barry Hodge has said he will stop the commercial trapping of finches in the Kimberley.

"In previous years tens of thousands of the birds were trapped, during open seasons, for sale on the domestic market throughout Australia," Mr Hodge said.

After approaches from Kimberley-based Members of State Parliament, Mr Hodge said he had reluctantly approved a finch trapping season from September 1 to November 15, 1986. However, for the first time a quota has been imposed on the number of birds permitted to be caught.

"Western Australia is the only State in Australia which allows its finches to be trapped for the purely commercial benefit of a few individuals. I can see no reason why our State's native fauna should be exploited in this way."

Mr Hodge said he was prepared to discuss with local MPs, the seven licenced trappers and conservationists his proposal to refuse any future finch trapping open season and applications for trapping licences.

SUSPICIOUS OF BIRD TRAPPERS??

If you encounter possible bird trappers, please note the following:

• time • date • place • vehicle description and registration; but DO NOT APPROACH as these people could be dangerous!!

NOTIFY C.A.L.M. as soon as possible by telephoning —

• Mike Mahoney
Special Investigations Officer
Wildlife Protection Branch, C.A.L.M.
on 364 9710 or 364 9666

1987 AUSTRALIAN BIRD CALENDAR

is now available from the RAOU office — \$8 plus post

MEETING REPORTS

25 August 1986

Harry Recher spoke about the foraging behaviour of thornbills, their food requirements and the impact of forestry practices and vegetation rehabilitation methods on thornbill numbers. Little work has been done on the foraging behaviour of bushbirds — only one foraging paper has been published in Australia and this on waders.

Foraging data collected by Harry Recher and his associates include location, time, weather, bird species, prey attack behaviour, plant substrate of prey, plant species where activity occurs, height at which prey is taken, size of plant and habitat description. Encouragement was given for others to collect foraging data as significant findings can be recorded in the course of a long weekend — and thornbills are a readily identifiable and useful species to study.

22 September 1986

John de Jose, Director of the Zoological Gardens in Perth, had an interactive discussion/address with the meeting. An excruciator of birds at Taronga Park Zoo in Sydney being his credentials, de Jose in his role as Director is now more concerned with the determining and implementing of policies, particularly in the role of the Zoo in conservation, research, education and recreation. The Zoo is concerned to effect the attitudes of people in their awareness of the importance of conserving the environment and the development of positive attitudes to animals. People are as important as animals, for without appropriate attitudes by people the richness and diversity of the total environment will not be maintained. All this is aimed for, while at the same time grappling with the practical difficulties of caring for the Zoo population, a number of which were explained. An entertaining and informative session.

Bird Week Meetings

Two well prepared and delivered public talks by Geoff Shannon at Kingsley and Murray Unkovich at Manning for Bird Week were heard by a very few. Given the effort put into preparation by the speakers and others it was a disappointing outcome.

The Red Wattlebird symposium was well attended by contrast and proved an informative evening. Perhaps the clearest message was that little is known of these common and fairly readily observed birds and that Red Wattlebirds with many species, await some patient and persistent observers.

B. Buchanan

EXCURSION REPORTS

Boyagin Rock — 9 August

The 40 people who attended enjoyed a good day's birdwatching at this Nature Reserve led by Doug Watkins. We were accompanied by Leon Silvester from CALM Pingelly and Argus and Pandu from the Indonesian Dept of Forests who were in W.A. to participate in the North-West wader expedition. Twelve species of honeyeaters were seen, including a Western Spinebill carrying nest material. The cuckoos had arrived, the Fan-tailed, Pallid, Horsfield's and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos being identified. By contrast only the Fan-tailed Cuckoo was recorded during our previous visit in Autumn (8 March). A Maned Duck's nest with 12 eggs was found. By the end of the day 64 species had been identified. A non-bird highlight was the sighting of 7 Echidnas.

I. Standring

Neerabup National Park — 13 September

Neerabup National Park was again visited by a R.A.O.U. group, a previous excursion having been made in February. About 20 birders experienced somewhat cold weather at the outset but in no time the day warmed to typical Perth spring conditions. Bird sightings were slightly more numerous than at the February visit and may have been even better if the quarry site had been visited earlier than midday when it was quite warm and sunny, by which time bird activity was much reduced.

At the southern end of the Park the jaunt began, and it was encouraging to see and hear so many birds. Not recorded on this occasion were Port Lincoln Ringneck, White-backed Swallow, Golden Whistler and Dusky Woodswallow, but appearances were put in by Weebill, White-winged Fairy-wren, Elegant Parrot, cuckoos and others. Thirty-five species were recorded in the Park up to early afternoon. An appealing aspect of the bush was the attractiveness of the wildflowers where flowering was at an early stage. Several orchids were noted.

Nowergup Lake was visited in the afternoon by a few of the morning group but access to the water was difficult. It is a likely place for snakes as the ground is well-covered with vegetation. A most interesting find was a group of about 30 Australasian Grebe. Other waterbirds were relatively few in number. A Little Eagle continued its surveillance of our party (at least two sightings were made earlier in the National Park) and a Sacred Kingfisher was sighted. Including the birds at the lake, the total number of species seen was 45.

Future intending visitors should note that entry to the southern end of Neerabup National Park and to Nowergup Lake is restricted and cars may not be driven in there. Off-road parking is available at the quarry about halfway along the Park.

R. Smith

Petrudor Rock, Pithara. 20-21 September

At this site 270km from Perth, we recorded 49 species and brought the total species recorded at this site to 76. We enjoyed seeing Mulga Parrots, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Zebra Finches and Redthroats.

In tea-tree and mallee scrub we located two disused mounds of Malleefowl and saw White-eared Honeyeaters, White-fronted Honeyeaters and Golden Whistlers in the same habitat. Not far away we found a Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest in a tall eucalypt with a young nestling visible from time to time. Closer to our camp we were pleased to see a Brown Goshawk returning to use the same nest which Jim Masters had shown us the year before.

Everlastings were still flowering in abundance and several species of orchids were noted around the granite outcrops. Eight people camped for two days and all agreed Petrudor Rock to be a very pleasant place to see a good variety of bush birds.

D. Beckingham

Tutanning Nature Reserve Camp-out — 27-29 September

The variety of habitat found in this Reserve gives ample scope for all to find something of consuming interest. The wandoo, open woodland, casuarina, heath etc all produced something that held attention. Everlastings carpeted the ground in a number of places and on the granite outcrops were dragon lizards and a couple of geckoes. Twenty-one species of orchids were identified. Several bird species had commenced breeding activity viz. Red-capped Robin (nest building and also dependant young not long out of the nest), Redthroat (two dependant young), Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (nest with two eggs) and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, and White-eared Honeyeater were all nest building. A Shy Hylacola was also seen.

Our thanks go to Leon Silvester of CALM Pingelly who arranged for us to camp on farmland adjacent to the Reserve and who also provided us with a bird list containing details of recordings since 1978. We identified 55 species within the Reserve during the camp-out, 6 of which were added to CALM'S list.

I. Standing.

PUBLICATIONS

YOU CAN BUY THE FOLLOWING ITEMS at the RAOU Office, Suite 30, first floor, 15 Ogilvie Rd, Canning Bridge 6153, W.A. Don't forget to add the cost of postage and packing if you are not calling to pick up purchases. Items are usually available for purchase at RAOU meetings and excursions.

This arrangement provides a service for members and much needed funds for the Group.

- The Atlas of Australian Birds \$49
(produced by the RAOU: shows distribution of bird species)
- overlays for the Atlas \$6
- Methods for Censusing Birds in Australia — 1982 \$5
(produced by the W.A. Group, RAOU)
- Report of the Middlesex Study Centre \$5
- A Pocket List of Australian Birds 70 c
(a handy checklist; produced by Canberra Ornithologists Group)
- A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, by G. Pizzey \$17
(1985 reprint, paperback; small format)
- The Birds of Australia, by Simpson and Day \$30
(1984, large format; text and plate facing each other)
- Every Australian Bird Illustrated \$22
(large format; 563 colour photos)
- In Quest of Bower Birds, by N. Chaffer \$26
(large format; text and photographs of all species)
- A Field Guide to the Birds of W.A., by Storr and Johnstone \$14
(W.A. Museum 1985 edition; solely birds of W.A.)
- New Zealand Birds \$17
(1983 edition; large format; text and photographs by several authors)
- The Birdlife of Rottne Island, by Saunders and de Rebeira \$8
(1985; text; colour plates; maps)
- Eyre Bird Observatory: Report 1981-83 \$5
- RAOU Calendar 1987 \$8
- Bird-call tapes \$10
(3 choices; mostly W.A. birds; announced version)
- RAOU Emu badges \$3
- RAOU ties (navy blue or maroon) \$10
- Western Australian Bird Notes \$1.50 per issue
- New Colour Guide to Hong Kong Birds by Viney and Phillips \$13
- Shorebirds, by Hayman, Marchant and Prater \$49
- The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds \$28

If you have suggestions for titles that we could obtain, please give details to the W.A. Office. Please bear in mind that the W.A. Group is reluctant to spend money on bird books that do not sell readily.

Also, few local publishers or distributors are prepared to offer a discount on bird books. Consequently our choices are rather limited.

ADVICE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editors of W.A. Bird Notes would like to ask those contributing written material to the newsletter, to note the following points:

- copy should be typed or legibly written with double spacing.
- text should be paragraphed, preferably containing not more than four or five sentences;
- careful attention ought to be given to use of upper and lower case letters: e.g. 'a flock of unidentified cormorants', or 'a flock of Great Cormorants'.
- a suggested method for recording dates and localities is, e.g. '11 May 1984, seven km SW of Moora' (i.e. spell out one to nine, then use figures).
- use the RAOU recommended English Names for Australian birds: these are given in a pocket list available at the W.A. Office,

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

for March 87 issue — February 20th, 1987

CONSERVATION SUB COMMITTEE

As a result of discussions between our Conservation Sub-Committee and the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) regarding areas of land considered important for preservation, CALM has suggested that the following reserves or proposed reserves in the Wheatbelt region should be surveyed:

In Merredin District Office of CALM

Karroun Hill Nature Reserve (No.36936) — a very large area north of Beacon and Bonnie Rock.

Yellowdine area (2179, 3112, 3113, 29823, 18996) — east of Southern Cross.

Buntine NR (16379, 26837) -Dalwallinu area.

Chiddarcooping NR (19210) — east of Mukinbudin.

Lake Champion NR (24789 and Common to north 21759) — Mukinbudin/Nungarin area.

Elphin NR (25808) and any other Wongan Hills Reserves.

Mollerin Lake NR (14429) — north of Koorda.

Holleton area — north-east of Narembeen, west of South Yilgarn.

In Narrogin District Office of CALM

Dryandra State Forest (51 and 53)

Highbury State Forest (52)

Dragon Rocks NR (36128) — between Newdegate and Hyden.

Boolanelling NR (22792) — north of Corrigin

Lake Cronin NR (36526) — about 80km east of Hyden.

Kondinin Salt Marsh NR (26692 and 26905) — Kondinin.

In Katanning District Office of CALM

Dongolocking NRs (several) -Wagin/Dumbleyung/Kukerin area.

Anderson Lake (25194) -south of Gnowangerup, south-west of Borden.

Lake Fox et al (39422) — east of Newdegate, north of Lake King.

Lake Dumbleyung R (26664).

Reserve 24589 — Shire of Kent -off Chester PassRoad — no further information yetChinocup NR (18803).

The aim is to have these areas considered for Class A reserve status before they are threatened with development. The more information we have on an area the stronger is our case.

If you are able to help by:

- (a) surveying any of the above places, or
- (b) providing information that you already know about the areas;

please contact Brian Wilson, the Convener of the Conservation Sub-Committee, on 293 1094 or 46 Farrant Street, Gooseberry Hill 6076.

We would particularly like information on bird species, an indication of how common they are, the vegetation types used by the various species and details of seasonal migrations. However, any information will be useful. If you are planning a day, a weekend or a week of birdwatching in the Wheatbelt, please consider one of these places.

The relevant District Office of CALM (as shown above) can be contacted to ascertain the exact location of any of the reserves and for background information on them.

COMING EVENTS

Sunday 11 January — Excursion: Boyagin Rock

This will be our fourth excursion -following previous ones in March, August and November 1986. Meet at the intersection of Brookton Hwy and Canning Rd in Karragullen at 7.30a.m.

Monday 19 January — Annual General Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 p.m.

Saturday 14 February — Excursion: Peel Inlet

Meet at 8 a.m. at the southern end of Wanjeep Street, Coodanup (follow the Mandurah-Pinjarra Rd and turn right into Wanjeep St. soon after leaving Mandurah; if you reach the Serpentine River Bridge before turning right you have gone too far). Bring a hat, insect repellent and wading boots or shoes. Leader: Doug Watkins

Sunday 22 February — Excursion: Ashfield Flats

Meet at Sandy Beach Reserve at the end of West Rd., Bassendean at 7:30 a.m. Leader: Ron Van Delft

Monday 23 February — Informal meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 p.m.

Sunday 8 March — Excursion: Woodman Point

Meet in first car park after the turn off to the Cockburn Power Boat Club at 8 a.m.

Saturday 14 March — Excursion: Lakes Clifton and Preston

Meet at the Lake Clifton Roadhouse on the Old Coast Rd, 35km south of Mandurah at 8 a.m. Leader: Roger Jaensch

Monday 23 March — Formal Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 p.m. Speaker: John Long, Agriculture Protection Board.

Saturday 28 March — Excursion: Lake Manning

Meet in the car park in Azelia Road, Spearwood (at the southern end of the lake) at 2 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS — subject to confirmation

Monday 4 May

Dr Stephen Davies, Director of the R.A.O.U. on "The R.A.O.U., past, present and future".

Monday 25 May

Red-capped Plovers & The Rolling Bird Survey.

Monday 22 June

Dick and Molly Brown of the Middlesex Field Study Centre.

Monday 27 July

Seabird night — Steve Keeling.

Monday 27 August

Nests and the Nest Record Scheme.

Monday 28 September

Professor D. Bennett of Muresk Institute of Agriculture.

Monday 26 October

Journal Club

Monday 23 November

Travellers' Tales — and up-date on the Bird of Prey Watch.

Saturday 5 December

Three Park Search and Social Night.