

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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FRANKLIN'S GULL IN PERTH

On Monday 22 February Bev Wilcox and I went to Lake Monger after work, partly to escape the heat and partly to see what was there. On Sunday 21st we had seen 12 Red-necked Avocets and a Banded Stilt, which is unusual at Lake Monger in my experience.

While looking through the telescope at an Australian Crane in its usual spot, Bev drew my attention to an unusual bird on the rocky spit which juts out from the island in the south-west corner of the Lake. I looked and became excited because I was sure it was one of those black-headed or hooded gulls with which I had become acquainted from perusing overseas field guides, but I had no idea of the species. The most obvious features of the gull were a partly blackish head (or half hood) against thick white crescents above and below the eye. Later we identified it as a Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* - an adult in non-breeding plumage.

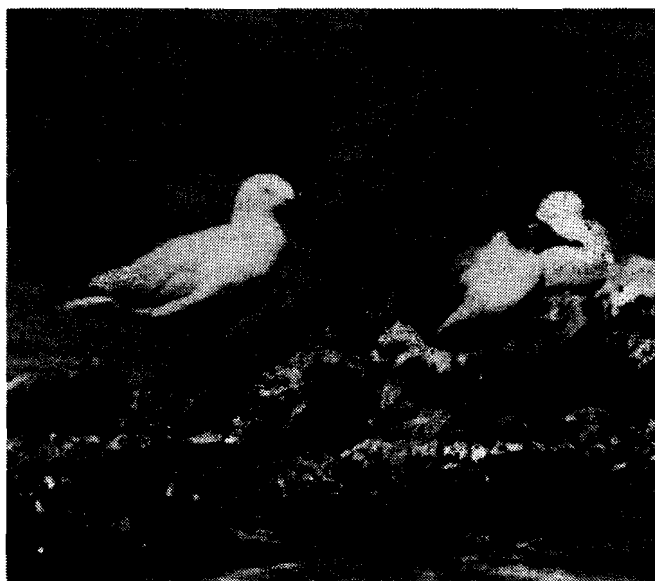
Franklin's Gull is a North American bird which is unusual in that it inhabits and breeds in the prairies rather than on the coast. However, it migrates south to winter on the coasts of Central America and western South America. The Atlas of Australian Birds records four sightings in Australia since 1951. It is also a rare vagrant to South Africa and Europe.

The bird at Lake Monger was seen amongst Silver Gulls but seemed to remain separate from them. This allowed a very good comparison to be made between the species.

Franklin's Gull is slightly but clearly smaller than the Silver Gull. The stance is more horizontal, the head rounder and the neck thicker and much shorter. The legs too are shorter.

The upper parts are darker than the pale grey of the Silver Gull. I called it mid or mid to dark grey but other people said dark or slate grey. The tips of the blackish bill (both upper and lower mandibles) were scarlet as was the gape.

We also heard the bird call a number of times. Wing patterns are important in identifying gulls and that of the Franklin's Gull was seen on Monday but not very well. However, very good views were obtained by several observers of the underwing and upperwing pattern when the bird took flight on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 February 1988.



The Franklin's Gull with Silver Gulls — Photo by Roger Jaensch

A more detailed description and a full report are being prepared for submission to the RAOU Records Appraisal Committee (Rarities Committee).

As far as is known the gull was last seen on Wednesday 2 March.

I. Standring

OBSERVATIONS

collated by Rodney Vervest and 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 and Whittell's Birds of Western Australia and regional lists (e.g. Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Eucla) by the W.A. Museum should be useful guides to records that are unusual with respect to distribution or status.

This series mainly covers the period from January 1988 to April 1988. Shire names or the nearest known locality 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

Great Crested Grebe — 190, 5/3/88, Lake Clifton North (Murray) — MHB

Darter — 3, 12/3/88, including recently-fledged young (first breeding record, Eucla Division), at Nambarup Swamps (Esperance) — RJ, RV

Great Egret — 75, 20/3/88, L.Gwelup (Metro) — GS

Little Egret — 1, 16/1/88, Herdsman L. (Metro) — MaB*3, 1/3/88, Joondalup L. (Metro) — NH*3, 14/4/88, Gwelup L. (Metro) — JH*1, 29/3/88, Blue Gum L. (Metro) — MC

Rufous Night Heron — 20+, Spring 87, Bicton: roosting in pine trees — Anon

Little Bittern — 1, 2-9/3/88, Monger Lake (Metro) — BW, JS

Australasian Bittern — 2, 23/2/88, Star Swamp (Metro): swamp nearly dry.

Glossy Ibis — 20, 25/1/88, Herdsman L. (Metro) — BS

Royal Spoonbill — 1, 21/3/88, free-flying at Perth Zoo — NH*1, March 88, Lake Saide (Denmark) — JB

Yellow-billed Spoonbill — 40, 28/1/88, Herdsman L. (Metro) — BS*4, Mortijinup-Nambarup-Mainbenup Lakes (Esperance): rare in Eucla Division — RJ, RV

Freckled Duck — 18, 29/1/88, Mortijinup L. (Esperance) — JE*10, 11/3/88, Namming Lake (Dandaragan) — BBu, ABu*52, 12/3/88, Barrett-Lennard Lake (Gingin) — BBu, ABu*20, 12/3/88, Nambarup Sw. (Esperance) — RJ, RV*1, 26/3/88, lakes at Narrows Interchange (Metro) — DM*2, 27/3/88, Monger Lake (Metro) — SF, BW, JS*4, 14/4/88, L.Gwelup (Metro) — JH*1, 17/4/88, L.Joondalup (Metro) — RAOU excursion

Osprey — 1, 2/2/88, Kelmscott (Metro) — GM

Black Kite — 1, 13/3/88, Dongara — RS

Square-tailed Kite — 1, 7/3/88, Canning Highway, East Fremantle — GS

White-bellied Sea Eagle — 1, 5/3/88, Avon River at Northam — JM

Wedge-tailed Eagle — 25, 13/2/88, 5 km E. of Naretha (Nullarbor Plain) — WK

Little Eagle — 1, 9/3/88, Bentley College (Metro) — EK

Peregrine Falcon — 1, 3/4/88, Leach Highway (Melville) — JH

Malleefowl — 1, 17/4/88, adjacent Namming Nature Reserve (Dandaragan) — BBu, ABu

Buff-banded Rail — 1, 17/3/88, Monger L. (Metro) — BW, JS*2, 23/1/88, Penguin Island — GS, RD, LD

Baillon's Crake — 3, 10/1/88, Forrestdale Lake — RAOU excursion

Australian Crake — 1, 21/2/88, Monger L. (Metro) — IS, BW

Bush Thick-knee — 3, 3/1/88, Dryandra Forest: 2 adults with one young — SF, AF

Lesser Golden Plover — 49, 2/2/88, Rushy Point (Albany) — MN*200+, 13/3/88, Blackwood Estuary tidal flats — MB

Hooded Plover — 350, 13/3/88, Kubitch & Gore Lakes (Esperance): recent unconfirmed report of 750 here — RJ, RV

Oriental Plover — 35, 6/1/88, Eyre B.O. — GS

Black-fronted Plover — 42, 17/4/88, Namming Lake (Dandaragan) — ABu, BBu*28, 19/4/88, Blue Gum Lake (Metro) — MC

Red-necked Avocet — 1, 12/2/88, L.Bagdad, Rottneest: with two young — MHB*2750, 2/4/88, Wilson Inlet (Denmark) — MHB

Eastern Curlew — 23, 5/3/88, Shell Bay, Lower King River (Albany): probably highest number counted in South by RAOU — DK

Wood Sandpiper — 8, 6/3/88, Serpentine River pools near Yalbanerup — PW*32, 11/3/88, Hurstview L. (Dandaragan) — BBu, ABu*5, 13/3/88, L.Gwelup (Metro) — GS

Greenshank — 62, 11/3/88, Namming Lake (Dandaragan) — BBu, ABu

Marsh Sandpiper — 60, 6/2/88, Forrestdale L. (Metro) — DJ*30+, 10/2/88, Thomsons L. (Metro) — RJ

Terek Sandpiper — 2, 5/3/88, Lower King River (Albany) — DK

Black-tailed Godwit — 2, 6/3/88, Serpentine River pools near Yalbanerup — PW*34, 10/3/88, Wilson Inlet (Denmark): probably highest number counted in South by RAOU — LB*3, 2/4/88, Thomsons L. (Metro) — GMcD

Great Knot — 80, 10/3/88, Wilson Inlet — LB

Pectoral Sandpiper — 2, 8/3/88, Grasmere L. (Albany) — LB*1, 14/4/88, Gwelup L. (Metro) — JH

Long-toed Stint — 4, 31/1/88, Forrestdale L. (Metro) — DJ*12, 6/3/88, Serpentine River pools near Yalbanerup — PW*12, 7/3/88, lake near Marapana Deer Park (Rockingham) — GMcD*4, 12/3/88, Baylemup L. (Esperance) — RJ, RV*1, 13/3/88, Thomsons L. (Metro) — GMcD

Broad-billed Sandpiper — 1, 23/1/88, Guraga L. (Dandaragan) — BBu, ABu*1, 8/3/88, Grasmere Lake (Albany) — LB

Ruff — 1, 13/3/88, Thomsons L. (Metro) — GMcD

Arctic Jaeger — 1, 21/3/88, North Mole, Fremantle — GS*3, 23/1/88, Penguin Island — GS, RD, LD

Pomarine Jaeger — 1, 18/3/88, Cape Naturaliste — GMcD

Silver Gull — 2040, 6/3/88, Bibra L. (Metro) — DJ

Kelp Gull — 1, 5/3/88, Shell Bay, Lower King River (Albany) — DK

Franklin's Gull — 1, 22/2-2/3/88, Monger L. (Metro) — IS, BW et al

Common Tern — 9, 21/2/88, Ocean Lagoon (near sea wall) at Mandurah — BBa

Roseate Tern — 18, 6/3/88, Phillip Point, Rottneest — HF

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo — 200, 16/3/88, near Merredin — RSc

Regent Parrot — 18, 6/3/88, Forrest Road, Banjup — DJ
Spotted Nightjar — 1, 12/3/88, Mimegarra Rd. (Dandaragan) — RS

Fork-tailed Swift — 36, 12/3/88, Yanchep N.P. — ID*20, 13/3/88, Wanneroo Hospital — GS*22, 13/3/88, Dongara — RS*70+, 13/3/88, travelling N. over Canning Valley, Roleystone — EK*15, 12/3/88, Enemunga Pool (Dandaragan) — BBu, ABu*4, 18/3/88, Carine (Metro) — JH*2, 19/3/88, Port Gregory (Northampton): twos and threes passing overhead all day — JD*35, 21/3/88, Salter Point (Metro) — BBu*4, 21/3/88, Cowaramup (Margaret River) — JH*20, 21/3/88, North Mole, Fremantle — GS*50-100, 22/3/88, Lower King & Lake Seppings (Albany) — DC, MCL

White-backed Swallows — 2, 16/2/88, Maddington (Metro) — RS*3, 11/4/88, sandpit, Orange Grove (Metro) — JH*3, 12/4/88, Queens Park (Metro) — JH

White-winged Triller — 1, 7/1/88, Canning Valley, Roleystone — EK

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater — 1, 2/4/88, Alfred Cove — ?JH or JD

Red-eared Firetail — 1, 26/3/88, Canning Dam picnic area — DJ

UP NORTH (also see other articles in this issue)

Streaked Shearwater — several dozens, mid March, 50 km S. of Steep Point (Zuytdorp Cliffs)*flocks of 50-100, 6/4/88, 50 km N. of North Island (Abrolhos) — DB

Glossy Ibis — 4000, 3/3/88, Parry Lagoons near Wyndham — JMCL

Black-breasted Buzzard — 2-4/3/88: 2 at 125 km W. of Fitzroy Crossing; 1 at 46 km N. of Halls Creek; 2 at 70 km N. of Turkey Creek — JMCL

White-winged Tern — many flocks, 27-28/3/88, at flooded plains between Pardoo and Anna Plains — JS, HS

Flock Bronzewing — 3, 12/4/88, flew beside highway for 500m, between Goldsworthy turnoff and De Grey River — JS, HS

Fork-tailed Swift — 350, 27/3/88, 20 km S. of Wyndham — KO

Chestnut Quail-thrush — 1, 26/3/88, just N. of Murchison River, near highway — JS, HS

Red-headed Honeyeater — 12 and **Bar-breasted Honeyeater** — 16-1/3/88, Wyndham School grounds in flowering *Melaleuca* — KO

KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

ABu	-Anne Buchanan	JM	-Jim Masters
AF	-Austin Fincham	JMCL	-Jock McLaren
BBa	-Bryan Barrett	JS	-John Start
BS	-Bob Smith	KO	-Kimberley Observer
BBu	-Bruce Buchanan	LB	-Lola Broadhurst
DB	-David Barton	LD	-Lyn Draper
DC	-Dan Carter	MaB	-Mandy Bamford
DJ	-David James	MB	-Mairee Bougher
DK	-Dot Kingston	MC	-Margery Clegg
DM	-Dusty Millar	MCL	-Michael Clark
EK	-Elizabeth King	MHB	-Mary Bremner
GM	-Greg Marston	MN	-Margaret Nash
GMCD	-Gordon McDonald	NH	-Neil Hamilton
GS	-Geoff Shannon	PW	-Peter Wilmot
HF	-Helen Fredericksen	RD	-Roger Draper
HS	-Helen Start	RJ	-Roger Jaensch
ID	-Ian Davis	RS	-Rod Smith
IS	-Ian Standring	RSc	-Ray Schulz

JB -John Boughey
JD -Jack Donohoe
JE -Jack Ewert
JH -Jack Hunt

RV -Rodney Vervest
SF -Sandra Fincham
VP -Vera Patterson
WK -Wally Klau

WATER BIRD STUDIES

THE GREAT DUCK COUNT

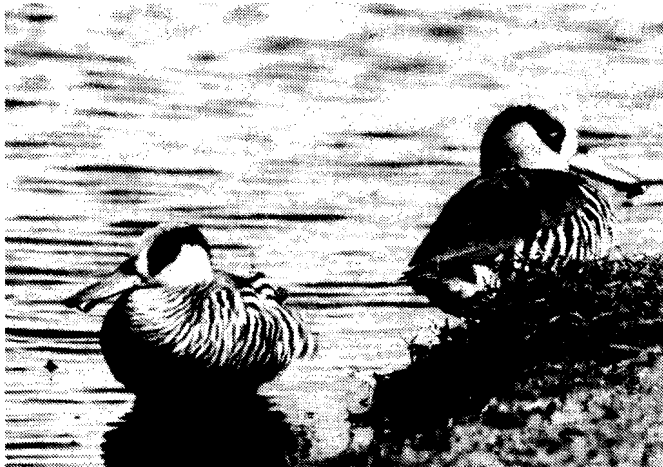
5 - 13 March, 1988

PRELIMINARY REPORT

Wetland conditions for the 1988 Count were ideal. Few inland wetlands held water in March 1988 so that waterfowl were concentrated near the coast, close to where most observers live. Dumbleyung Lake was dry (held 40,000 waterfowl last year), as were most other lakes in the Great Southern. There was no widespread rain just prior to the Count, as in 1986, so birds had not dispersed from their summer refuges. Also, few birds would have been lured away from the south-west to other parts of the State because most remote areas received little rain in January-February 1988.

Participants — Our thanks are due to the 213 observers who took part in the 1988 Count. We are especially grateful to those who organised groups of observers in their local area, e.g. Williams, Waterloo, Northam, Kalgoorlie.

Coverage — Some 1364 wetlands were surveyed in the 1988 Count (increase of 14% from 1987); these included 29 estuaries, 334 lakes and 815+ farm dams. Increases of more than 10% were recorded in the numbers of lower reaches of rivers, river pools and lakes/swamps that were surveyed in 1988 (cf. 1987).



Pink eared duck at Lake Monger — Photo Peel Howden

Results — (see table below) The total of 226,500 ducks, swans and coots realised in 1988 was 10% lower than in 1987. There were decreases of more than 15% in numbers counted of each of the Australian Shelduck, Pink-eared Duck, Black Swan and Pacific Black Duck. There was an increase of more than 15% in the number of Maned Duck and smaller increases for the Australasian Shoveler and Grey Teal.

As in previous years, the most abundant species were Grey Teal, Australian Shelduck and Pacific Black Duck (each 30,000+); the least abundant species were Freckled Duck (96), Chestnut Teal (1040) and Hardhead (1350).

Reasons for lower numbers than in 1987 may be the poorer breeding season prior to the 1988 Count, and/or poor survival in the long dry summer of 1987-88. Reasons for higher numbers may include one or more of the following: better coverage in 1988, less dispersal than in 1986 (local rain) or 1987 (inland rain), no official duck shooting season in 1988 or influx from other parts of Australia.

Key Wetlands — There were 41 wetlands that each held more than 1000 ducks and swans in the 1988 Count (cf. 40 in 1987); 19 of which were not recognised by this measure of importance in the 1987 or 1986 Counts. Wetlands with highest numbers of ducks and swans in 1988 were Peel-Harvey Estuary (18,000) Gore Lake (8000), S-J Lake near Wannamal (7500), and Wannamal Lake itself (6900). Joondalup and Guraga Lakes held the highest numbers of Eurasian Coots.

Remote Wetlands — Most of the 24 remote wetlands surveyed in 1988 were in the Kalgoorlie and Goldfields districts. Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Maned Duck and Eurasian Coot composed most of the total of 6200 waterfowl. The highest numbers of ducks and swans were at Rowles Lagoon (2700) and Swan Lake (2100).

GOOD BIRDING IN THE 'WET' THE KIMBERLEY WETLANDS, MARCH 1988

Most birdwatchers steer clear of the Kimberley Division during the wet season (December-March), and for good reason! High temperatures and high humidity sap energy by day and there is little relief at night. A few days of monsoonal rain or even a solitary thunder-storm can transform unsealed roads into impassable mud-slides.

There are, however, many rewards for the birdwatcher who is prepared to brave the oppressive climate, to make time during rain periods and to work close to sealed roads. A range of migratory waterbirds and passerines, some of which occur abundantly or only occur in this part of the State, may be encountered in the Kimberley in the Wet. In addition, the spectacular Kimberley landscape is clothed in the green of tall grass and the silver of waterfalls, a lush environment beyond the harsh desert.

I was privileged to visit two of the more accessible parts of the Kimberley on 22-29 March 1988, to assess wetland conditions for a forthcoming expedition. I spent four days at Derby-Camballin, hosted by Jock McLaren, and four days at Kununurra-Wyndham, hosted by Mike and Heather Howell. Despite some heavy rainfall and flooding of the Fitzroy River in December, there had been little monsoonal activity to produce substantial, widespread rain in the south-west Kimberley. Conditions were wetter in the north-east, but rainfall there was also well below average.

During my visit, monsoonal rain fell on six days but mostly at night and in the early morning. Tracks that had become wet dried quickly, so my travel was not greatly restricted. I did, however, remain watchful for showers emanating from the low, swirling clouds.

At the outflow swamp of the Derby Sewage Ponds we saw ten Yellow Wagtails, one in smart breeding plumage of gold, green and blue-grey. Sometimes on mudflat and sometimes in trees, the wagtails gave piercing calls as they flew, typically vanishing from sight. Parties of sleek Barn Swallows and piebald White-winged Terns swept over the bulrush and mudflats.

On the Yeeda Plain my vehicle flushed chestnut-breasted Oriental Plovers and raised the chestnut-lined wings of numerous Oriental Pratincoles, while flocks of Little Curlews spiralled overhead.

At Camballin, LeLievre Swamp was dry but 20,000 ducks, geese, ibis and other waterbirds were crowded around Moulamen Swamp. As the Grey Teal took flight five smaller, pale-winged ducks flew past them with rapid wingbeats and made a crash-landing among some Black-tailed Godwits: the ducks were Garganey *Anas querquedula*, migrants from Asia. To our further surprise, five Freckled Ducks rose with a bevy of Hardheads. Waders swarmed in front of me on the mud and shallows; there were Long-toed Stints (10), Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (1000+), the ever present Oriental Pratincoles and in the flooded grass, noisy Wood and Marsh Sandpipers (150 and 250). Two hundred outstretched Royal Spoonbills flew past purposefully. A jewel-like Yellow Chat perched daintily on a tussock and Barn Swallows whisked over the water.

We also looked at a claypan near 17 Mile Dam. Ten snipe took flight from where there seemed to be none; they were possibly Swinhoe's Snipe, too long-tailed to be Pin-tailed Snipe. Nearby, a Pectoral Sandpiper stood distinct among a variety of other sandpipers.

On the way to Wyndham, Fork-tailed Swifts swept past high rocky crags and two unhurried Square-tailed Kites.

The Parry floodplain, near Wyndham, was not fully inundated but the major swamps, claypans and surrounds were alive with birds. Red-chested Button-quail erupted from shorter grass as we walked on to the blacksoil and Pictorella Mannikins jostled for position in the tall cane. At the water's edge a throng of 6000 Plumed Whistling Duck was noisy in anticipation of an approaching rainstorm. Companies of Little Curlew rose unhappily from their hiding places between chest-high stands of *Sesbania cannabina*. In the water, Garganey seemed to be everywhere: seven pairs or groups totalling 24 birds were recorded. Ten of the Garganey were males, chocolate-fronted with a blazing white eye-stripe. Within rafts of Pink-eared Duck were 37 Freckled Duck; the first record of this rare species at the Parry wetlands.

Jogalong Billabong, a vast shallow swamp thickly vegetated with grass and short rush, held more than 40 Swinhoe's Snipe, scattered throughout. Individuals or groups leapt from the concealing marsh with loud, hoarse calls and flew swiftly away to eventually plunge back into cover. Pairs of Zitting Cisticola flitted from tuft to tuft fanning their white-tipped tails.

Over the eight days I saw 72 waterbird species, 17 of which are known or thought to be migratory. Apart from the enjoyment, the Kimberley offers a challenge to birdwatchers prepared to visit in the Wet. It is probable that species thought to be occasional visitors, such as the Garganey are regular and widespread and that other visitors from Asia remain to be discovered.

R. Jaensch

(The Atlas of Australian Birds, Blakers, M. et al 1984 categorises Garganey as an Uncommon or Vagrant species, and states it is "Accidental to Australia" p.655. Only 9 sightings are recorded since 1951, so that 29 in two locations is a significant event in Australian waterbird sightings. Ed.)

WEEKEND RETREAT FOR SALE

2brm asb./iron house with view over permanent lake and nesting colonies. About 2 acres land, part water.

In West Gingin, 110 km from Perth. Has well, rain tanks, gas stove, fridge, F/Furn. Owner will ask \$22,500 private sale.

More details from Diane 381 9035, or Mr. Pollard 419 2198.

1988 RAOU GREAT DUCK COUNT SOUTH-WESTERN AUSTRALIA

SUMMARY OF NUMBERS COUNTED 5 - 13 MARCH 1988

Species	Wetland Type (see list below)									Totals for each Species	Remote Wetlands
	A Esty	B Lowr	C Pool	D Lake	E Rsvr	F Dams	G Sewg	H Irig	I Other		
Black Swan	7662	91	126	7556	40	62	0	0	0	15537	439
Freckled Duck	0	0	0	96	0	0	0	0	0	96	0
Australian Shelduck	15836	247	2217	24381	217	4059	86	18	27	47088	353
Pacific Black Duck	3339	3490	3669	18941	397	2917	157	165	131	33206	293
Grey Teal	18533	1288	6150	40038	310	1970	358	25	0	68672	4717
Chestnut Teal	460	34	55	483	0	5	0	0	0	1037	30
Australasian Shoveler	43	75	137	4266	0	12	1	0	0	4534	24
Pink-eared Duck	0	0	100	5918	0	3	0	0	0	6021	124
Hardhead	0	0	39	1293	0	10	0	9	0	1351	0
Maned Duck	177	248	2378	3831	375	6989	120	37	0	14155	268
Blue-billed Duck	8	0	3	1802	0	2	0	0	0	1815	20
Musk Duck	207	3	37	3884	10	105	0	0	0	4246	0
Eurasian Coot	641	1958	1438	19904	361	1221	7	150	0	25680	1304
Totals for each Wetland Type	46906	7434	16349	132393	1710	17355	729	404	158	223438	7572
Unidentified ducks	1938	761	312	24		20				3055	
Total										226493	

Wetland Type	Number surveyed
A - Estuaries	29
B - Permanent lower reaches	25
C - River pools	117
D - Lakes, swamps and marshes	334
E - Water supply reservoirs	17
F - Farm dams	815
G - Sewage ponds	8
H - Irrigation areas	15
I - Other areas	4
Total	1364
	wetlands surveyed

(identified birds)

Total number of ducks, swans, coots	223438
Total number of swans, ducks	197758
Total number of ducks	182221

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

WARDENS WANTED — Chance of a Lifetime

Just imagine: your nearest neighbours an hour and a half's drive away, your historic home marked on the map, meeting lots of friendly people, a hundred kilometres of beach to yourself, over 250 species of birds in your backyard and getting paid for the pleasure. You need only to have an interest in birds and the desire to share your enthusiasm with others.

A warden at Eyre Bird Observatory has these special privileges. Two wardens are required. Direct your applications and enquiries to:

Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union,
Eyre Bird Observatory Management Committee,
Jan Hill (warden in 1986),
84 Buxton Street,
Mt Hawthorn WA 6016,
Phone: (09) 444 1323.

Observatory Report

After just one month at Eyre I feel I could write a book on what I have seen as every day brings its rewards.

In mid March we saw a Whiskered Tern 200 m from the Eyre Highway and then on 5 April we added a new bird to the Eyre list - Regent Parrot. There have been movements of Red Wattlebirds, Fork-tailed Swifts, White-faced Honeyeaters, and before long we should see the first Double-banded Plovers of the winter. A beach-washed Green Turtle was a real find. In July the Southern Right Whales should arrive - we still have places on our whale watching course.

In the September springtime we have a Megatwitch for some of Eyre's rare birds with Steve Keeling. Come down and join in. You could even become Warden!

Ian Ashton

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Since our arrival from Eyre on 14 March we have not made the progress we had hoped. As a result we still have few facilities at the Observatory. However, by the time this report is published we may be operational at a basic level. Doug Watkins worked hard over a period of some months to get the chalets to the stage where they provided a good standard of camping. We are grateful and indebted to him for his efforts.

However, there are many credits in spite of the initial frustrations. We learned a great deal from a very competent wader group who wielded shovels (for varying lengths of time and varying degrees of efficiency) to help us dig the massive trenches needed for the septic tanks and leach drain. These gaping cavities proved irresistible to many skinks, geckos, burrowing snakes (over 30 of them) and one Western Chestnut Mouse. Local identities have been helpful or have expressed a willingness to help. Ann and Alistair Cuthbert have been of particular value and Paul Foulkes has also made a big contribution. Others are waiting for us to call on them for assistance.

Already we have had some fine bird sightings. With the help of some very good observers 13 Yellow Wagtail were seen at Fall Point on 17 March and four more in Broome a week later. Based on their good breeding plumage and the availability of Bob Svindley's copy of *Birds of Japan* we identified them as the subspecies *simillima*. We have seen a Great Crested Grebe on the pool at the junction of the Highway and Crab Creek Road (18 March and again 25 March), Black Honeyeaters on Crab Creek Road during the week of 13 to 20 March, and 1 Hooded Robin on coastal heath near the abattoirs on 29 March. A common Noddy was seen by Ann Cuthbert on the Coconut Well Lagoon on 2 April and both Least and Great Frigatebirds were seen along 80 Mile Beach during 28 March to 2 April by the Wader Study group. Finally, and perhaps most surprising of all, one Star Finch at the Observatory on 13 April.

We have had good press from the Broome News, the North West Telegraph and also from the ABC reporter Jodi Rogers. The Observatory is becoming known among the locals and we confidently expect good support from the Broome community once they become convinced of the value and role of the strange establishment in the Pindan near Crab Creek.

Nobody will be surprised to know we need help. This has been alluded to in the RAOU Newsletter. We hope the WA group will be to the forefront. We have no desire to weaken the support Eyre Observatory receives from its friends in the West which we would wish to see strengthened and extend. There are enough Sandgropers to supply a strong contingent of Friends for both Observatories.

Our address is: Broome Bird Observatory, Crab Creek Road, Box 1313, Broome WA 6725. We don't expect to be on the telephone for some long time, but we do answer letters. If you are in Broome drive out to see us.

Gail Hooper
Brice Wells

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY IS NOW 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS'

There are limited facilities but there are beds,
electricity and food

Contact: Brice Wells,
Broome Bird Observatory,
PO Box 1313,
BROOME WA 6725

or, if urgent, Alastair and Ann Cuthbert (091) 921476

NOTICES

APOLOGY

The Editor apologises for the omissions and typing errors in No.45 WA Bird Notes, March 1988. These were a result of computer mishaps outside the control of the Editor.

CORRECTION

The following corrections should be made to the species recorded in the Twelve Hour Count in November 1987 and printed on page 10 of No.45 of WA Bird Notes, March 1988:

Grey Plover	W (not H)
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	H and V (not W)
Scarlet Robin	V (not H)
Grey Shrike-thrush	V (not H)
Variegated Fairy-wren	V (not H)
Red-winged Fairy-wren	V (not H)
Dusky Woodswallow	V (not W)

There was no vetting of species identified during the Twitchathon. It can be seen that both Variegated and Red-winged Fairy-wrens were reported at Helena Valley. This must be regarded as unlikely. Serventy, D.M. and Whittell, H.M. in *Birds of Australia* (1976) state "the two species never mingle, or occur close together" (p.351) and *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, Blakers, M. et al 1984 shows the two species in distinct locations.

NEW BOOK

The Governor of Western Australia, Professor Gordon Reid, officially launched a new bird book *Birding Sites Around Perth* on 28 April 1988. The book is the outcome of the Metropolitan Bird Survey and is written by Ron Van

PALLID CUCKOO PROJECT (PCP)

In the March 1988 edition of WA Bird Notes (No. 45) I asked for reports of sightings/calls of Pallid Cuckoo to be sent in. I have already had reports for this year, so it is apparent the Pallid Cuckoo is among us, possibly not in great numbers and not yet calling.

I would remind you therefore to keep a watch for Pallid Cuckoo and to let me know of dates and places of hearings/sightings. Only one report is requested of you from any given locality - the first you see/hear. If birdwatching elsewhere and you again see/hear a Pallid Cuckoo another date/place report would be appreciated.

Please help throw some light on the movement of Pallid Cuckoos in WA by sending your date/place/hearings/sightings to the RAOU Office, my home address (see front of WABN) or telephone my office (09) 350 7060.

B. Buchanan

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

MY GREAT DUCK COUNT — A significant Non-Event

One of the advantages of having a father-in-law who needs a plane to efficiently run his crop harvesting contract operations and enjoys flying is that he is easily convinced that a flight to count ducks is worthwhile.

Last year we flew over 17 lakes marked on the map and discovered only three had water and ducks. Flying at low altitude enabled me to count the birds, but trying to be scribe and observer was too much.

This year I was in luck; we had a visitor from England who happily volunteered to be scribe. Tim Hay is not a birdwatcher, so we spent time preparing our note pads with understandable abbreviations of the duck names I would call out amid the noise of a single engine four seater plane.

Strong winds and thick dust storms the day before we were to take off cast some doubt as to whether or not we could go. Our flight plan involved inspecting over 70 km of river and two major lake systems.

During spring 1987 the lake systems at Moora and on the Coondoroo River supported thousands of birds. We had waded through water 1.2 m deep at Moora to see hundreds of birds with most duck species present. On the Coondoroo River birds were so numerous and the lake system so extensive that we gave up counting as birds in their thousands moved from lake to lake. (Next spring I hope to lead an excursion to do simultaneous counts of the lake system when the birds have settled down.)

Fortunately the wind subsided to tolerable levels and at 7.15 am on Saturday 12th March we took off. Heading downstream (west) from Miling we watched as the broad flat valley that is the Moore River narrowed to a distinct stream bed that cuts its way through the Darling Fault.

Towards Moora river pools were numerous, but no birds! We flew at low altitude to make any ducks that were present move, but they were not there. The most likely reason is salt. With enormous salinity problems upstream and along the Moore River the pools were probably too salty to support ducks.

The next point of interest was the Moora Lakes. They were dry! Where we had waded waist deep in water there was nothing but dry cracked mud.

We kept going up the Coondoroo River to the lakes where the birds were too numerous to count in September 1987. Dry, and no birds. The lake system was more extensive than I had imagined, covering an area at least 4 km in length and 2 km wide, with the whole area dotted with circular lakes of varying diameter. We then turned back across the sandplain country to Miling.

The stories of encroaching desert seemed hellishly true from the air. Paddocks without stubble cover had blown over 100 m into the next paddock, leaving bare subsoil over large areas. It seems impossible for such land to support economic crops—or perhaps it doesn't.

I had enjoyed the flight immensely, but my travelling companion had gone a bit green and was rather disappointed at not seeing a single duck. However, the beauty of birdwatching is that even a nil result is significant. As the ducks were not on the River and lake systems we surveyed, they must have been somewhere else! I hope you found some of them!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank John Lewis for his generous donation of flying time.

R. Van Delft

BONUS FROM GREAT DUCK COUNT 1988

Near the end of my combined Great Duck Count/Waterbird Survey of Lake Grasmere (Powell) located some 10 km west of Albany, on 8 March 1988 I saw several Red-capped Plovers and Red-necked Stints sheltering behind rocks from the chilly S.E. breeze. I cautiously approached a rock-strewn, exposed sand/mud bar at the western end of the lake to count. Noticing sudden movement about eight metres ahead of me I spotted a stint sized bird standing among the rocks. It was slightly larger than the Red-necked Stints nearby, with a longish black bill slightly down curved at the tip. With total cloud cover preventing the sun shining the legs looked grey. Prominent dark stripes on the crown identified the bird as a Broad-billed Sandpiper. I had seen one of this species in summer 1987 at Wilson Inlet (Denmark) with a flock of Red-necked Stints.

Not wanting to lose sight of the Broad-billed Sandpiper, as I approached carefully I flushed two larger waders that immediately caused me great excitement. With their cryptic colouring they had been well hidden but when flushed they settled only about five metres away enabling me to obtain a good look at their fairly long straight bills, black at the tip with a yellow base. Clearly visible was a heavily streaked breast and yellow/orange legs. Larger than Sharp-tailed Sandpipers they lacked the rufous crown but rich brown feathers could be clearly seen on the face and behind the eye. Eventually they flew off in snipe-like fashion calling as they flew and showing a faint white wing bar. I lost them while retracing my steps but some five minutes later I saw them again, two Pectoral Sandpipers standing in shallow water beside a rock and spasmodically feeding. On the other side of the rock stood a Broad-billed Sandpiper, no doubt the same bird as was seen previously.

Most of the reference books I consulted state that Pectoral Sandpipers favour grassy margins to shallow freshwater. No grass was evident near the Pectoral Sandpipers and it appeared possible that the Broad-billed Sandpiper was accompanying them rather than the Red-necked Stints.

It was an exciting end to an interesting morning's observations. Among numerous other sightings, there were approximately 1800 Grey Teal, 105 Pink-eared Duck, 350 Australian Shelduck, 500 Australasian Shovelers, 18 Yellow-billed Spoonbills, several Spotless Crakes feeding in the open on the exposed margins of clumps of *Typha*, dozens of White-fronted Chats feeding on the drying mud, 725 Red-necked Avocets and 147 Banded Stilts.

The water level in Lake Grasmere was unusually low thus creating suitable conditions for many of my observations, presumably as the result of a very dry Summer.

L.M. Broadhurst

NOTES FROM DERBY — November/December 1987

With the Wet approaching both flora and fauna are responding to raised humidity. Boabs and coolababs have fresh growth on bare limbs and baumias sport new tan and lettuce green foliage — a visual, cool relief to the yellow grasses and dust.

The Dollarbird arrived at Derby several weeks ago and also at Christmas Creek, while areas north of Kununurra were a few weeks earlier. The Common Koel started calling on November 24. Two Barn Swallows were sighted on November 21-22 at Derby town and eight at the entrance to Broome on the power lines. Red-collared and Varied Lorikeets screech and eat their way through the mango season, while mainly roosting at Derby Caravan Park. Willie Wagtails are rarely seen now, but many Australian Magpie-larks. The Little Whimbrels have come and gone, and the Little Corella is moving on. The small bush birds are becoming more evident in town gardens, probably

due to increased dryness in the surrounding countryside.

On a short visit to Lake Eda (Roebuck Plains Station) on November 21-22 (only several large puddles) we observed a pair of Green Pygmy Geese in full colour as well as 96 Brolga, Pink-eared Duck, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck and one Hardhead. Waders included Red-kneed Dotterels, Black-fronted and Red-capped Plovers; Marsh, Wood, Curlew, Sharp-tailed and Common Sandpipers; Gull-billed and Whiskered Terns; Red-necked Avocet; Black-winged Stilt; Masked Lapwing; Australian Pratincole; Grey-tailed Tattler and Greenshank. The major raptor sighting was an immature Black-breasted Buzzard landing to drink — what a magnificent bird.

We had an overnight camp out at Munkayarra Swamp 20 kms south of Derby on November 27-28. Only one small dam remains of its waters and swamps. Few birds were there. One in particular caught our eye — a brown-patterned short-legged wader, with a long, sturdy, slightly down-curved bill. We observed, drew and noted the stranger for two hours and concluded it to be a Gallinago Snipe.

The Gallinago Snipe brings the species count at Munkayarra Swamp to 120. There are also many species of flora so the local conservation group is trying to have the area, plus two adjacent claypans set aside as a reserve. It is a valuable example of the flora and fauna of the south-west Kimberley.

In 1988 Flo Robinson moves to Wyndham and Rosemary Jasper and Ron Richards return south. This transient life is the bane of birding in the Kimberley. We welcome Pam Masters and look forward to Gail Hooper and Brice Wells rejoining soon.

D. Kingston

GALLINAGO SP IN KIMBERLEY

In the March 1988 edition of WA Bird Notes there was listed a sighting of a Gallinago sp. by Kevin Coate at Dampier Peninsula. Two more Gallinago sp. were sighted at a similar time in the Kimberley. Early in December two fellow birdwatchers and I identified a Gallinago sp. at Monkeyana Swamp which remained there for several weeks.

Late in December, a Gallinago sp. was sighted at the Leprosarium 18 kms from Derby. The bird was sick and subsequently died. Rosemary Jasper sent the specimen to the WA Museum where it was identified as a Pin-tailed Snipe. This is the first (confirmed) sighting from the Kimberley.

D. Kingston

HIDE AT MANGROVE BAY

Neatly hidden among the mangroves in a corner of Mangrove Bay in the Cape Range National Park is a lagoon with numerous weirdly shaped limestone rocks and islands. These are used as resting places for hundreds of shore birds, especially towards evening. There is a well built hide, single storey, in the corner (similar in pattern to that on Middle Reedy Lake near Kerang in Victoria) made of wood and circular. It affords a complete view of the lagoon through the windows. There are benches to sit on, with other benches just below the windows to rest one's binoculars, telescope, or camera. The smaller birds which inhabit the mangroves can also be observed.

I visited the hide one evening in early January and watched as the islands filled with terns, waders and plovers, as well as Silver Gulls, cormorants, and a White-breasted Sea Eagle.

Should you plan a visit be armed against swarms of mosquitoes and sandflies.

U.C. Edwards

VISIT TO ABROLHOS

On a holiday at Beacon Island in the Abrolhos from the first to thirteenth of March 1988, I observed five Osprey (there were two in 1986). Two nests had been built, one on top of a cylindrical oil tank and one on a stack of craypots. The nests consisted of: twigs, a rubber thong, rope of various colours and thickness, branches, fist sized chunks of coral, a sealant dispenser tube, seaweed, cuttlefish shells, plastic strapping, stranded copper wire, craypot battens, plate sized pieces of 3-ply, skeletons of large fish, feathers, rag, wooden blocks and a 285 ml bottle.

Also seen were: 500+ Sooty Tern, 8 Ruddy Turnstone, 500+ Crested Tern, 20+ Fairy Tern, Pacific Gulls (one picked up and dropped a shellfish 20 feet 15 times when I ceased to watch), 1 Eastern Reef Heron, 10+ Roseate Tern, Welcome Swallow, Pied Cormorant, Caspian Tern, 6+ Spotless Crake (which relished a bowl of fresh water placed nearby—they bathed constantly, clambering through the six feet high foliage, as at home up there as on the ground), Silveryeye.

D. Parker

TAWNY-CROWNED HONEYEATER KINGS PARK

Date of observation: 1st February 1988, Time: 11 am

Location: South-west area of Kings Park, Perth, WA

Glasses: 10 x 40. Light: excellent above. Time under observation: 4 mins. Habitat: low arid scrub. Notes taken at time of observation.

Initial impressions: A slim honeyeater size between Brown and Singing but with chin and throat wholly yellow, blackish ear coverts; breast, flanks streaked brown, grey-brown upper parts, bird sitting low down in exposed position. Joined by a more clearly marked bird that proceeded to feed the sitting bird. Second bird settled to preen and I recorded obvious 'fawny-orange' forehead, white eye stripe from lores to just behind eye: black ear coverts that followed neck line to form a continuous line to upper flanks.

Adult: Upper parts – Forehead, forecrown tawny; nape, brown; mantle; back, primary and secondary coverts grey brown streaked darker. Primary/secondary dark brown. Lores, ear coverts, broadening line running down side of neck to upper flanks, black; superciliary from loreal area to just behind eye white.

Under parts – Chin, throat, breast, belly, white, spotting or crescent markings on flanks. Underwing linings conspicuously yellowish/red or orange, obvious when preening.

Soft parts – Bill long thin curved black, eye dark, legs not recorded.

Voice – Silent but for begging "twitter" from first bird.

Conclusion: Tawny-crowned Honeyeater.

F.J. Walker

(U.K.)

SQUARE-TAILED KITES

For the last four summers I have watched for Square-tailed Kites over Roleystone. Most of my sightings have been over my home which is just below the ridge top of the northern slope of the Canning Valley. The area is a mixture of orchard and pasture, small clumps to large areas of Jarrah and Marri and housing on half acre blocks. The land slopes steeply down to the Canning River.

Other sightings in the area and elsewhere have been over this type of country where bush and open ground come together. I have had 8-10 sightings most years and have noticed:

1. Square-tailed Kites are usually solitary.
2. Many of my sightings have been in mid afternoon with the

birds flying into a light to moderate sea breeze.

3. Square-tailed Kites appear to avoid strong winds. I have never seen one on a really windy day.
4. Square-tailed Kite sightings often cluster. On several occasions I have seen a Square-tailed Kite frequently over several days, even 2/3 times on one day and then not again for weeks. Do they exhaust the possibilities of finding nestlings in an area over a period and move to another part of their territory?
5. They are often pursued by other birds. Australian Raven, Australian Magpie, Red Wattlebird and Australian Magpie Lark are the most frequent attackers. The Square-tailed Kites fly away or soar high above their pursuers. Once I saw a Square-tailed Kite attacked by a Little Eagle (2/2/87) over the Canning Valley.
6. Most sightings are December to early March. The earliest was 15 August (85) over the Gosnells scarp and the latest 16 April (86) over Roleystone.
7. Square-tailed Kites when circling low over trees generally circle anti-clockwise.
8. Square-tailed Kites do not appear concerned by human presence. They fly low over my garden when I have been clearly visible. I have also seen one near Roleystone Primary School at "Home Time", and adjacent to Pickering Brook Swimming Pool when it was crowded.
9. Peter Curry told me that individual birds may be identified by damaged or missing feathers in wings or tail. This has allowed me to identify some sightings as the same individual bird.
10. Summer 1987/88 I have had more sightings than usual and I may have been on the edge of a breeding territory for I have witnessed more pair and triple bird sightings as well as seeing Square-tailed Kites in the evenings.

E. King

OSPREY NEAR ALBANY

During the Great Duck Count at the Lower King area in Albany I observed an adult Osprey overhead carrying food in its talons. A young Osprey was clearly heard so I trekked up the bushy headland and located the nest high in a marri. As the young Osprey continued to return my calls, I sat and waited to get a glimpse of it/them.

The Bull-ants were vicious (they don't live in the Kimberley) so I left. Back on the beach fifteen minutes later I observed a fledgling Osprey perched high on a dead marri, about 100 metres from the nest. It continued calling and both parents circled the tree, one still carrying the food. They flew low over the fledgling but did not feed it. Nearly an hour later the feeding was unresolved, so I left.

Was the fledgling being trained to hunt for its own food, was I the distraction, or was there another reason?

D. Kingston

AN ALTERNATIVE BIRD BATH

The birds and I gain a great deal of pleasure (in different ways) from a simple bird bath hanging in my patio, in full view of my kitchen and living area windows.

It is made from a large plastic flower pot saucer, sitting in a flat cane basket purchased from a supermarket, supported in a macrame or twine net. I have a piece of paving brick in the base of the basket to give it stability in the wind.

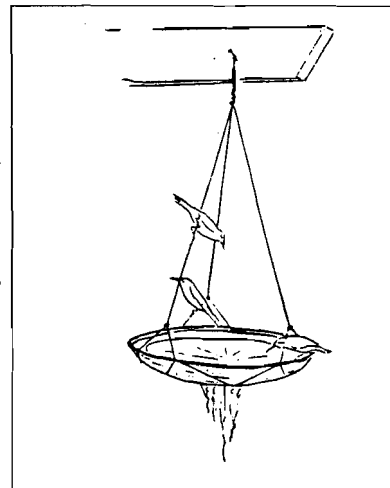
The honeyeaters like the macrame hangers as they can perch there before diving through the water. They use the rim to stand on for drinking but do flying dives from one string to another for their baths.

The bath is at the corner of the patio and at peak time

(around 4.30 in the afternoon) can have as many as four or five Brown and Singing Honeyeaters on the strings and in the water with others flitting nearby awaiting their turn. The flurry starts about 4.15 pm each day and for about half an hour there is a scramble for places for the daily bath. The rest of the day is fairly peaceful with quiet drinking as needed, but a few early risers seem to like to freshen up again just after dawn.

The bath has the advantage of safety from cats and other predators.

C. Mercer



VISIT TO FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

For a number of years Fitzgerald River National Park has been on our "must visit" list. This year we made it for nine days over an extended Easter break.

We entered the Park from the north and spent the first six nights at Pt Ann, going out to different areas each day.

Birds were plentiful in the heathlands and in stands of flowering yate. New Holland Honeyeaters were the most common species, closely followed by Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters.

Nine other honeyeaters were seen in the Park: Red and Little Wattlebird, Singing, Purple-gaped, Brown-headed, White-naped, Brown and White-cheeked Honeyeater and Western Spinebill.

We became familiar with the screech of Purple-crowned Lorikeets during our stay as small flocks (five to fifteen) flew swiftly overhead. They seemed to be present over heathland and coastal areas as much as over stands of taller timber.

Previously, we had mainly found Southern Emu-wrens on blustery cliff faces. Here we saw them in low shrubs (in a gully between cliffs) and also saw one in banksias on a sandplain section near Twertup.

Another bird which we previously associated with a quite different area was the Crested Bellbird. We had become familiar with them on a north-west trip but we saw them quite frequently within the drier wooded areas of the Park.

A first sighting for us was a Calamanthus which sang lustily from the top of a small heathland shrub.

Apart from a resident Australian Magpie trio and a pair of Willie Wagtails around our camp, relatively few birds were seen along the coast. Those seen included a pair of Great Cormorants, a White-faced Heron, Fleshly-footed Shearwaters and Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers. One obvious absentee was the Rock Parrot.

We spent our final three nights at Mylies Beach near the eastern end of the Park. Flowers were more numerous in this area and honeyeaters were very common, especially New Holland and Tawny-crowned, although White-cheeked Honeyeaters seemed to be more prevalent.

On two occasions we had long 'conversations' with Golden Whistlers, but perhaps the highlight of our trip was the close encounters with Southern Scrub-robins - at Twertup, at Mylies Beach (where a Southern Scrub-robin came within a metre of us) and during a climb up East Mt Barren. The climb provided views of Rock Parrots - the only ones we saw - among the granite boulders and shrubs.

On the west side of the Park we saw Hooded Plover and Banded Stilt. On the east side we visited Hamersley Inlet

where we added Pelican, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorant, Great Egret, Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, Grey and Chestnut Teal, Musk Duck, Common Sandpiper and Greenshank to our list. At Barren Beach we were lucky enough to see a Pied Cormorant and an Eastern Reef Egret.

Raptors were not common in any areas we visited, but seven species were sighted including a Peregrine Falcon at Twertup.

Red-eared Firetails were seen on both sides of the Park.

Other sightings of interest to us were a Crested Pigeon on the Fitzgerald River, an Osprey or White-bellied Sea Eagle's nest close to Quoin Head, a quail (probably a Brown Quail) and a Black-backed Gull at Pt Ann.

For variety of habitat and flowers, and for numbers of birds, the Fitzgerald River National Park is highly recommended. We eventually sighted a Mallee Fowl close to the Fitzgerald River, but well outside the Park boundaries - so we could not include Mallee Fowl on our list which totalled 77.

P.S. Beware of the ticks!

G. and P. Agar

FORK-TAILED SWIFTS

I have seen Fork-tailed Swifts four times this summer around Perth. Several other people have also seen them. This seems an unusual number of sightings and I would like to document these as there may be a similar increase in the Eastern States this year. Would anyone who saw any Fork-tailed Swifts this summer/autumn put their sightings on paper giving number, date and location (anywhere in the State) and send it to the Office with the envelope marked Swift Enquiry. These sightings will be collated and published.

G. Shannon

MEETING REPORTS

February Council Meeting in Melbourne

The RAOU Conservation and Research Committee reports to Council at each quarterly meeting. The Research Committee is concerned about the viability of the Observatories and is looking into the possibility of having them classified as education resources so that they can attract tax-exempt donations. It has also considered two new locations for observatories in the Eastern States.

A Conservation Statement on the Hooded Plover has been distributed and it is hoped one for the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren will be available in 1988. A Duck Hunting Policy was approved and will be printed in the RAOU Newsletter. A draft list of rare and endangered birds has been compiled and the export of native birds is on the agenda.

Preparations are well in hand for the Congress to be held from 10th-16th December 1988 at the Shortlands Wetland Centre near Newcastle, NSW. If you will be interstate in December it is strongly recommended you include this event in your travel plans. Plenty of accommodation will be available in nearby motels and in an adjacent camping area. The 1989 Congress will be in Canberra from 22nd-24th September 1989 and the International Ornithological Congress will be held in Christchurch, NZ from 2nd-9th December 1990. The RAOU plans to launch the first volume of the Handbook of Australasian Birds, which is now nearing completion, at the IOC in 1990.

Fund-raising efforts in 1987 had good results. In addition to donations from RAOU members, approaches in Victoria produced over \$400,000 from 34 major individual donors.

Individual and corporate donors will be sought in other states. The money raised goes wholly to the many research projects undertaken by RAOU, including the South-west Waterbird and the Red Goshawk projects. Interest-free loans are also being sought for research support.

The present Director's contract (Dr. S. Davies) ends in January 1989 and a sub-committee has been set up to consider recruitment of a Director.

B. Hale

29 February - Great Duck Count

Roger Jaensch spoke of the objectives and methods of survey for the 1988 Great Duck Count. Mandy Bamford made a special request for attention to be given to possible sightings of feral ducks and feral/wild duck crossbred ducks. Two such ducks were presented, live, as an illustration of crossbred outcome.

28 March - Bird banding

Perry de Rebeira gave an interesting talk on the purposes, results and how to do it of bird banding.

2 May

Eric McCrumb spoke of the activities of the Gould League. Named after the naturalist John Gould, the League is essentially aimed at primary school children with the object of awakening their interest in nature as a whole, with birds an important aspect. The League supports its activities through clubs, publications for teachers and pupils, activities for children, booklets, charts, etc. all with the purpose of increasing knowledge and awareness of natural history.

Dr. Boyd Wykes spoke of the phases involved in setting up an ornithological research project, illustrated by his own experiences and results. Dr. Wykes suggested:

1. talk to colleagues, friends, etc. to find out what people want to know;
2. choose a defined problem or specific question;
3. limit data collection to achievable, consistent items;
4. collect the data systematically; be committed and persistent;
5. analyse and interpret the data as the project progresses (and modify the project or data collection as need be);
6. write up the results.

Successful projects are usually local and easily accessible and deal with common, readily observable species. Bird projects can be about a species, about a specific population or about a community.

Dr. Kate Creed spoke on writing up results emphasising the need to match the medium of publication in style/presentation and with clear introduction, theme and conclusion.

An entertaining and useful meeting.

EXCURSION REPORTS

YANCHEP NATIONAL PARK AND COASTAL AREAS — 4 February 1988

The 6.30am start sorted out the true birders from the rest. However this outing was in the middle of the month of record breaking very hot weather so perhaps the starters weren't so smart after all. The early commencement was sensible as the maximum temperature was about 40C.

There was not a great deal of bird life in the National Park but we saw 33 species in all including Little Eagle, Scarlet Robin, 5 species of honeyeater—Red Wattlebird, Brown, New Holland and White-cheeked and Western Spinebill. Part of the

purpose of the outing was to record birds in the Park for the month of February for the National Parks Project.

At Two Rocks (Sun City) on the coast we saw a grey Eastern Reef Egret, 30+ Bridled Tern including at least one immature, one Fork-tailed Swift, one Common Sandpiper, one (probable) Grey-tailed Tattler and, in a park, nine Banded Lapwing.

Thanks to Geoff Shannon for leading the outing.

I. Standring

AVON VALLEY NATIONAL PARK — 9 April 1988

Only a tiny area of this large park was visited. A Southern Boobook was flushed, Hooded Robins, a female Red-capped Robin, several honeyeaters including a Tawny-crowned and a number of Mistletoebirds were the highlights of the day. A goshawk/sparrowhawk was also seen. The river pools held Australasian Grebe, Little Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Pacific Black Duck and an immature Rufous Night Heron.

The habitat, which includes patches of wandoo, is interesting and further visits are warranted. Thirty-seven species were seen in the Park. At our visit dirt roads into the Park were badly corrugated. The ranger said that grading was waiting on the first rains after the long dry summer.

I. Standring

PUBLICATIONS

YOU CAN BUY THE NEW FOLLOWING ITEMS at the RAOU Office, Room 218, 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.

- * A Birders Guide to Japan, J.W. Robinson \$25
- * Birding Sites Around Perth, Ron Van Delft \$10

If you have suggestions for titles that we could obtain, please give details to the WA 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 Editor of WA Bird Notes asks those contributing written material for publication, to note the following points:

- * copy concerning Western Australian birds may be published;
copy will not normally be considered in respect of bird sightings etc. outside W.A.;
- * copy to be typed or legibly written with **DOUBLE SPACING**;
- * text to be paragraphed, preferably containing not more than four or five sentences;
- * careful attention 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 WA Office.

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS — 22 July 1988

COMING EVENTS

Sunday 12 June - Day excursion

Rottmest Island

Seabirds on outward and return journeys: seabird watching from the cliffs on the Island. However, people should be forewarned there may not be any seabirds around. In which case it will be largely a free day for everyone, but there are plenty of good birding spots on the salt lakes, golf course, etc. Check ferry departure times and fares—some ferries are slower than others!

Sunday 26 June - Saturday 2 July

Eyre Bird Observatory

RAOU WA Group Excursion to Eyre

The cool calm sunny conditions of the winter at Eyre are ideal for birdwatching. These excursions have been most successful in past years.

Leader: Rod Smith

Phone Rod: 397 5319 for details.

Monday 27 June - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre 8 pm

"Birding round Australia, a zoo-geographical view". John Hansen will talk about his recent trip across the top of Australia and discuss the various habitats and their bird life.

Sunday 10 July - Half day excursion

North Mole, Fremantle

Meet at 8 am. We shall try to see some seabirds. We may see none but then again.... It's proposed to spend only an hour or so at the Mole but this depends on how many rare seabirds are to be seen.

Sunday 24 July - Approx. One and a half hours

Tomato Lake, Belmont/Kewdale

Essentially a beginners' outing. It will be advertised for the public but RAOU members who are in their early birdwatching are welcome too. A few experienced members are needed. Please help Ron Van Delft in showing the birds. Meet at 10 am in the carpark in Scenic Drive, Kewdale (near Kewdale Senior High School). Contact Ron if you can assist - phone 279 9913.

Sunday 24 July - Saturday 30 July

Eyre Bird Observatory

"Wintering With Whales". Southern Right Whales regularly visit the sheltered bays and inlets of the southern coast of Australia each winter to give birth to and rear their calves. Phone the Wardens at Eyre for details: (090) 393450.

Leader: Dr DJ Needham

Monday 25 July - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre 8 pm

Ron Johnston of the WA Museum will talk on birds of the Mangroves.

Thursday 28 July - Wednesday 3 August

RAOU Art Exhibition, Perth Concert Hall.

Sunday 4 August - Bird banding Excursion

Yanchep National Park

An introduction to the absorbing and fascinating hobby, study and science of bird banding. Meet at 8 am corner Wanneroo Road and Old Yanchep Road at the entrance to the National Park.

Friday 19 - Monday 22 August - Campout

Two cottages have been reserved at the Lewana settlement 17 km from Balingup on the Blackwood River. Join us for scenic beauty and bush birding for three nights. Artists welcome. Cost: \$18 for accommodation. Bring own food. No tents or vans. To reserve a place (14 only), ring Diane: 381 9035 on weekdays 5-8pm.

Organiser: D Beckingham

Saturday 20 August - Excursion

Fred Jacoby Park, Mundaring Weir

Meet at 8.30 am at the Mundaring District Office of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in Mundaring Weir Road at Mundaring Weir. Fred Jacoby Park is opposite.

Leader: Ron Van Delft

Monday 22 August - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre 8 pm

"Birds of the Arid Zones". Peter Curry will discuss the bird life of the pastoral country based on his extensive field work in the area over many years.

Sunday 28 August - Saturday 3 September - Eyre Bird Observatory

General Work Party

Come to Eyre with a reduced fee to help the wardens do some much needed maintenance. The wardens will ensure that as well as helping the Observatory you will get to see the sights and the birds of Eyre.

Saturday 24 September - Saturday 1 October - Campout

Nallan Station near Cue.
Accommodation will be in twin share rooms or camping if you prefer. Prices range from \$10 per night per person for rooms with use of all facilities to \$5 per night for camping and use of power, ablutions etc. but not kitchen. Book with Nallan Station direct. Phone: (099) 631054 (David and April Petersen) or write to them at PO Box 24, Cue WA 6640.

Phone Ian Standing 387 7326 (H) if you are attending and for any further details.

Sunday 25 September - Saturday 1 October - Eyre Bird Observatory

"A Springtime Megatwitch" Leader: Steve Keeling

Join Steve in his search for the rarer species of birds of Eyre. Phone Steve for details 291 9561.

Monday 26 September - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre 8 pm

Bert Keefe, a country member who has lived for many years at Mullewa, will talk about the many changes he has observed in the birdlife there during that time. Phyllis Robertson will show some slides of her Antarctic trip including shots of Penguins.

Sunday 2 - Saturday 8 October - Eyre Bird Observatory

"What's in a Song?"

Leader: Dr Thelma Volger

Saturday 8 or Sunday 9 October - Excursion

Sunday 23 - Sunday 30 October - Bird Week

Will you help organise Bird Week this year? As much or as little time and effort as you are able or feel inclined to contribute will be welcome. Things to do might include a display at your local shopping centre or library. (A poster may be available from the Melbourne Bird Week Organiser, Mrs Gillian Lord, for use in schools.) You can combine with others to make your own project or organise promotion of local birds with shrubs and trees at your local nursery.

Sunday 23 - Saturday 29 October - Eyre Bird Observatory

"History of the Eyre Telegraph Station".

Leader: Bill Graham

Monday 24 October - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre 8 pm

"Penguin Island and Its Birdlife".

Speaker: Nick Dunlop

Saturday 12 or Sunday 13 November - Excursion

Peel Inlet

Saturday 26 or Sunday 27 November - Excursion

East Gingin Shire Wetlands

Sunday 27 November - Saturday 3 December - Eyre Bird Observatory

"Ornithology With a Leader in the Field".

Leader: Dr Stephen Davies

Monday 28 November - Meeting

Saturday 10 December - ? Social Night

Wednesday 21 - Tuesday 27 December - Eyre Bird Observatory

Christmas at Eyre.

Wednesday 28 December 1988 - Tuesday 3 January 1989

New Year Resolutions.

Sunday 8 - Saturday 21 January 1989

Dune Stabilization Work Party Period.



FALCON TOURS

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Small Group Tours to:

Mitchell Plateau . Bungle Bungle . Darwin - Cairns

Iron Range - Lakefield National Park . Atherton

Tablelands . Nullabor . South West

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TOUR GUIDE

Tour Code F.T.10

KIMBERLEY - MITCHELL PLATEAU TOUR

14 days

Broome - Fitzroy Crossing - Camballin - Geikie Gorge - Private

Gorge - Drysdale River - Mitchell Plateau - Kununurra.

Tour Code F.T.20

BUNGLE BUNGLE TOUR

14 days

Kununurra - Piccaninny Creek - Wolfe Crater - Stuart Creek - Lake

Argyle - Keep River National Park - Kununurra.

Tour Code F.T.22

ACROSS THE TOP. DARWIN - CAIRNS

21 days

Darwin - Obin Rock - Jim Jim Falls - Muiarella Edith Falls -

Borrooloola - Westmoreland - Lawn Hill National Park - Leichardt

River - Normanton River - Georgetown Lake Eacham - Cairns.

Tour Code F.T.23

CAPE YORK - IRON RANGE-
LAKEFIELD NATIONAL PARK

14 days

Iron Range - Rokeby Croll National Park - Lakefield National Park -

Lake Eacham - Cairns.

Tour Code F.T.26

NULLABOR - BIRD OBSERVATORY

14 days

Perth - Dragon Rocks - Peak Charles - Islands of the Recherche - Cape

Le Grande - Balladonia - Nullabor - Eyre Bird Observatory - Newman

Rocks - McDermid Rock - Dryandra - Perth.

BIRD WATCHING - ISLANDS

Kevin Coate will be leading another organized group of birdwatchers to the Abrolhos Islands - one of Australia's most important breeding grounds for sea birds.

Weekend 10th - 11th December 1988

All inclusive cost (Perth and return) - \$233.00

COATE'S Wildlife Tours

21 Acanthus Road

WILLETTON 6155

Telephone: (09) 457 1515