



Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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ORIENTAL CUCKOO IN DAMPIER

Dates observed: January 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 22, 23, 24 1988

Place: Dampier: In a large open residential garden on the corner of a main road planted with mixed medium to large trees (Eucalypts, Melaleucas, Poincianas, Ficus and Frangipani). The favourite perch seemed to be small Mango tree with dead branches from which the Oriental Cuckoo flew to ground for large insects or grubs. Sightings were taken each morning between 7.30 and 9 a.m.

Description:

Distinctive barring across underparts together with yellow eye-ring and yellow legs. The photograph in the Readers Digest Book (p.294) appeared to confirm identification. The bird seemed to be alone. I did not hear it utter any sound. It perched quietly until I would disturb it, when it flew a short distance to another perch, usually to a dead or open branch. After the neighbour, in whose garden the Mango tree is situated, pruned the tree, the bird was not seen again.

P. Walker

References:

Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds (1979), Readers Digest Services, N.S.W.

[Atlas of Australian Birds, Blakers M., Davies S.J.J.F., Reilly P.N. (1984), R.A.O.U., Melbourne University Press show the only W.A. reporting of Oriental Cuckoo to be north of Fitzroy Crossing i.e. north of the Great Sandy Desert. The Atlas remarks "appearance at any one locality is unpredictable" (p.293) Ed.]



Adult Oriental Cuckoo — Photo by P. Walker

OBSERVATIONS

collated by Rodney Vervest

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 April 1988 to August 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

Hoary-headed Grebe - 4900, 6/3/88, Bibra Lake (Metro) - DJ
Cape Petrel - 1, 24/7/88, North Mole, Fremantle - JH

Short-tailed Shearwater - 20+, 16/3/88, 1 km off Silver Sands, Mandurah - AD

Cattle Egret - 1, 5/5/88, South Lake (Metro) - SMC * 2, 20/5/88, Yakamia Swamp, Albany - TB

Little Egret - 4, 1/3/88, Goegrup Lake (Mandurah) - AD * 1, 11/5/88, Blue Gum Lake (Metro) - BBa, MC

Eastern Reef Egret - 1, 10/5/88, Artificial Boat Harbour, Mandurah - AD

Little Bittern - 2, 19/1/88, Herdsman Lake (Metro): nest with two young and one egg - SG * 1, 16/4/88, Lake Monger (Metro) - BWi, IS

Australasian Bittern - 2, 28/7/88, Thomsons Lake (Metro) - PC, BC * 2, 30/7/88, Kulunilup Lake Nature Reserve (Manjimup) - RV, JH * 1, 31/7/88, Boat Harbour Lake (Denmark) - RV, JH * 1, 31/7/88, Owingup Swamp (Denmark) - RV, JH

Royal Spoonbill - 1, 22/5/88, Peel Inlet (Mandurah) - PW

Freckled Duck - 2, 25/4/88, Monger Lake (Metro) - BWi, IS * 1, 1/5/88, Herdsman Lake (Metro) - EMC

Blue-billed Duck - 600+, 18/6/88, Namming Lake (Gingin) - ABu, BBu

Osprey - 1, 15/5/88, Lake Monger (Metro) - BWi, IS

Little Eagle - 4, August 88, road to Woodmans Point (Cockburn): flying together - BK

Spotted Harrier - 1, August 88, flying over Welshpool (Metro) - SK

Peregrine Falcon - 1, 8/6/88, Bayswater Sanctuary (Metro) - PRH

Brown Quail - 7, 1/5/88, Anstey Rd, Forrestdale (Metro) - JM (probably aviary escapees or descendants thereof - RV)

Masked Lapwing - 1, 9/5/88, Yangbup Lake (Metro) - DJ (seen again on 21/5/88 - BBa, MC, ND)

Hooded Plover - 4, 23/4/88, Gracetown (Margaret River) - BBa, MC

Whimbrel - 4, 3/7/88, Smiths Beach, Yallingup (Margaret River) - JB

Terek Sandpiper - 6, 14/2/88, Serpentine-Murray Delta (Mandurah) - AD

Black-tailed Godwit - 1, 1/3/88, Goegrup Lake (Mandurah) AD * 3, 18/6/88, Guraga Lake (Gingin) - ABu, BBu

Pectoral Sandpiper - 1, 24/4/88, Lake Gwelup (Metro) - JH
'hooded gull sp.' - 1, 20/6/88, Kalbarri rubbish tip - DB (The bird was not observed flying and therefore not possible to determine species. Wing pattern is a very important characteristic to note when viewing 'hooded gulls'. Was this the Franklin's Gull from Lake Monger? - see W.A. Bird Notes No.46 - RV)

Common Tern - 6, 24/2/88, Artificial Boat Harbour, Mandurah - AD

Roseate Tern - 20+, 22/4/88, Mandurah Sea-Wall - DM * 6, 8/5/88, Robert Point (Mandurah) - AD

Rainbow Lorikeet - 1, mid May, Chertley St, Morley (Metro): in flowering Lemon-scented Gum - RS

Regent Parrot - 27, 5/5/88, Eyre Bird Observatory - IA, BS * 9, 28/5/88, Mundijong (Metro) - SvA

Elegant Parrot - 108, 2/7/88, west side of Forrestdale Lake (Metro): in one flock - DJ

Fan-tailed Cuckoo - 1, 20/6/88, Furnissdale (Mandurah): first seasonal calls - GB

Southern Boobook - 1, 25/4/88, Applecross (Metro) - KH

Barking Owl - 1, 12/7/88, Bindoon Army Training Area - RSm * 1, 30/7/88, Kulunilup Lake Nature Reserve (Manjimup) - RV, JH

Golden Whistler - 1, 3/7/88, west side of Forrestdale Lake (Metro) - DJ

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater - 1, 5/6/88, Bickley Brook (Metro) - MB, KC * 1, 10/7/88, Kalamunda National Park - MB, KC

White-cheeked Honeyeater - 15, 5/5/88, bushland near Kenwick (Metro) - SvA

Red-eared Firetail - 1, 17/4/88, near Willowdale Rd, Waroona - DJ

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin - 120+, 20/6/88, Herdsman Lake (Metro) - MO

Australian Magpie (albino) - 1, May 88, Lake Cooloongup (Rockingham) - TM (unconfirmed report)

UP NORTH

Great-billed Heron - 1, June 88, 10 km up Sale river: making a nest - MHB

Intermediate Egret - 3, 4/6/88, 17 Mile Dam, Camballin Station - JMc

Grey Goshawk - 1, June 88, 10 km up Sale River - MHB

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - 1, 13/5/88, Fitzroy Crossing - JMc * 2, 5/6/88, 17 Mile Dam, Camballin Station - JMc

Peregrine Falcon - 2, July 88, near Tunnel Creek: a pair nesting - BBa, MC

Orange-footed Scrubfowl - 1, June 88, St Patricks Island in St George Basin - MHB

Red-chested Button-quail - 3, 15/5/88, Roebuck Plains near Broome - RJ * 8, 18/6/88, Roebuck Plains: male with 7 chicks - BW, GH

Beach Thick-knee - 2, 2/6/88, Barred Creek, Broome - BBa, MC

Mongolian Plover - 2, June 88, Riddell Beach, Broome - MHB

Redshank - 1, 20/4/88, 20/6/88, 18/7/88, Roebuck Bay, Broome - BW, GH

Asian Dowitcher - 1, June/July 88, Roebuck Bay, Broome - BW, GH

Oriental Cuckoo - 1, January 88, Dampier - PWA

Brush Cuckoo - 1, 8/6/88, Kununurra Caravan Park - BBa, MC

Collared Kingfisher - 1, 29/6/88, Crab Creek, Broome - GT * 1, 10/7/88, Wyndham Harbour - BBa, MC

Rainbow Pitta - 1, June 88, rainforest near Sale river - MHB

Sandstone Shrike-thrush - 1, June 88, rainforest near Sale River - MHB

Broad-billed Flycatcher - 1, June 88, rainforest near Sale river - MHB

Clamorous Reed-Warbler - 1, 3/7/88, Pearl Coast Zoo, Broome: moved in and breeding at the zoo in past six months (Curator) - BW, GH

Zitting Cisticola - 2, 10/7/88, Marlgu Billabong, Wyndham - BBa, MC

Black Grasswren - 3, 22/5/88, between Hanover Bay and Pantajin Station, North Kimberley: 1 juvenile bird observed also - LV * pairs, June 88, Camp Creek: a tributary near the mouth of the Prince Regent River - MHB

Star Finch - 200+, 14/5/88, Derby Sewage Works - JMc

Pictorella Mannikin - 1, late June, early July 88, Broome Bird Observatory - BW, GH

Gouldian Finch - 8, 29/6/88, behind the shop at Lake Argyle Tourist Village - KO (other reports also received from here during June/July 1988) * 12, 16/7/88, Wyndham: 2 red and 4 black-headed - KO

Common Starling - 1, 3/6/88, Roebuck Caravan Park, Broome: shot by the Agricultural Protection Board - BW, GH

OBSERVERS CODES

ABu - Anne Buchanan	KC - Kate Creed
AD - Austin Daw	KH - Katherine Highman
BBa - Bryan Barrett	KO - Kimberley Observer
BBu - Bruce Buchanan	LV - Lee Vernon
BC - Brian Clay	MB - Max Bailey
BK - Ben Keeling	MC - Margery Clegg
BS - Bob Smith	MHB - Mary Bremner
BW - Brice Wells	MO - Margaret Owen
BWi - Bev Wilcox	ND - Norma Duff
DB - Don Bellairs	PC - Pauline Clay
DJ - David James	PRH - Peel Howden
DM - Dusty Millar	PW - Peter Wilmot
EMc - Eric McCrum	PWa - Pamela Walker
GB - Gordon Baker	RS - Ray Schulz
GH - Gail Hooper	RV - Rodney Vervest
GT - Graham Taylor	SG - Sue Gordon
IA - Ian Ashton	SK - Steve Keeling
IS - Ian Standring	SMc - Shapelle McNee
JB - John Brooke	SvA - Sean van Alphen
JH - Jack Hunt	TB - Tony Bush
JM - John Malone	TM - Terry Mead
JMc - Jock McLaren	

WATERBIRD STUDIES

Thanks to all waterbirders for their continuing efforts with the waterbird research programme. Our data bank is growing rapidly with many hundreds of wetlands now documented. The data bank represents a most effective tool in the efforts to secure the future of W.A.'s waterbirds.

Chief Wetfoot takes a break. The Waterbirds Officer, (Roger Jaensch), is currently on leave in Europe and the U.S.A. (returning in September). Meanwhile, the Waterbirds Assistant (Rodney Vervest), continues with the waterbird research programme.

Ongoing Monitoring. A report is being prepared on waterbird data to June 1988 and all waterbirders should receive a copy in due course. Participants are hereby asked to put all outstanding data (up to June 30, 1988) on sheets and send them complete to the W.A. Office by September 15, 1988. Please keep up the good work at 'your' wetlands.

Great Duck Counts. Reports of the 1986-7 and the 1988 GDC have been published and most participants should have copies. We apologise if an oversight has left you without copies (practically inevitable when dealing with hundreds of observers!). If so, please contact Rodney Vervest and arrangements will be made to send them out.

Egret Monitoring. Some of you will be aware of RAOU research involving the Great Egret in W.A. In the past two breeding seasons active colonies have been monitored carefully and intensive ground and aerial searches have been conducted in the hopes of finding new colonies. A major concern to waterbird researchers is that only one breeding colony in the south-west (during this current study) has been in a nature reserve (which is threatened by pollution); all others are in unprotected areas.

As part of your ongoing monitoring work or otherwise, we would be grateful to hear of any information concerning egrets, i.e. concentrations of birds, birds seen roosting in trees, birds showing bright coloured facial skin/legs or birds seen with head plumes. Please contact Rodney Vervest with any information you may have. Such information will be treated in strict confidence if necessary. A small group of 'wild' egrets have bred in pine trees at the South Perth Zoo in past years and interested people could observe breeding characteristics of the Great Egret with relative ease at this location. October and November would be good times to visit.

Boomer listening surveys. The 'boomer' or Australasian Bittern is considered a declining species in W.A. and numbers may be perilously low. We are keen to establish a network of observers (listeners) at various bittern sites in the south-west at pre-selected times in order to gain some measure of abundance. The first listening survey will already have been conducted (late July) but further surveys will be conducted in late September and November. Interested people are required to listen in the evening at sites allocated by the co-ordinator on one night during a weekend (date to be advised). If you would like further details on this project please contact Rodney Vervest. (A tape of calling bitterns is kept at the W.A. Office and people are welcome to call in and listen to it.)

A note of appreciation. I would personally like to express my thanks to all of you who have donated money to W.A. waterbird research. This money has been used to employ myself as assistant to the research programme, allowing the Waterbirds Officer to devote valuable time to preparation and publication of reports. We have been able to conduct several new projects (some of them unique in Australia) and W.A. continues to set a very creditable lead with volunteer-based waterbird research. Your commitments to the programme thus far have guaranteed its success.

R. Vervest

REMOTE WETLANDS EXPEDITION - MAY 1988

Initial planning for RAOU's 1988 remote wetlands expedition envisaged the surveying of waterbirds in the Roebuck and lower Fitzroy floodplains i.e. in wetlands roughly within the Broome/Derby/Fitzroy Crossing triangle. It was thought that these wetlands might contain enough waterbirds to be classified as being of international importance for the purposes of the RAMSAR Convention, to which Australia is a party.

As it turned out, very poor rains in 1987/88 in much of the Kimberley region resulted in the early drying up of many of the target wetlands and hence in a change of expedition itinerary. The participants gathered at Broome on the morning of 2 May and set off to cross the Kimberley from west to east and north to south.

The members of the expedition fell into several groups. The first, consisting of Simon Nevill of Falcon Tours and those he took from Perth to the Kimberley and back in his stretched Toyota Landcruiser and trailer, set off for the north on 28 April. Nora Brockman, Ben Carr (who left us in Broome for the Department of Conservation and Land Management "duck truck"), Ros Denny (who joined us in Broome), Barbara Hale, Peel Howden, "Jake" Jacobs, Rose Jones, Sophia Le Faucheur, Bill McRoberts, Richard Stone (who joined the group in Broome), Rodney Vervest and the writer made up the company.

There were many highlights to the journey up the Great Northern Highway - Cinnamon Quail Thrush on top of the breakaway near our Mount Magnet campsite, the prolific birdlife around Bilyuin Pool on the upper Murchison River where we lunched on 29 April, the numerous Wedge-tailed Eagles along the road in mulga country, the huge iron ore trains on the railway linking Newman and Port Hedland, the interesting old buildings at Cue, the frequent Brown Falcons by the roadside as we drove through the Pilbara and on to Broome, the bright green spinifex on the red Pilbara hillsides following recent rain, the dawn chorus of Blue-winged Kookaburras and other northern bird species around our campsite on the De Grey river, the open expanses of the Roebuck Plains with the odd Spotted Harrier as we approached Broome and, finally, meeting Bryce Wells and Gail Hooper at the RAOU's new Bird Observatory outside the town. The Observatory lacked telephone, plumbing and water supply facilities, but Brice and Gail are cheerful pioneers.

At Broome the other individuals and groups began to join us. Roland and Hazel Hill had come up from Carnarvon in their Landrover and were staying at the Observatory, while Ros Denny and Roger Jaensch had flown up from Perth; and Richard Stone, who was visiting Australia from his home in Wales, had come across from the Northern Territory. The three had been out birding before our arrival and had seen, among other interesting species, a Yellow Wagtail. Richard, moreover, had narrowly avoided a large Mulga Snake. A smaller Mulga Snake later sped past the writer's feet after dark at the Observatory; Broome seems to be a good place to meet the species.

On the morning of 2 May, the weather warm and humid and the mosquitoes of previous nights still a vivid memory, those who had spent the night at the Observatory went into the centre of Broome to do last minute shopping and meet the CALM duck truck with its trailer, loaded with two aluminium dinghies and two motorbikes. Don Munro and Kate Creusot had driven the duck truck up from Perth and all was now ready for waterbird surveying to begin.

After leaving Broome, we searched part of Yeeda Station south of Derby for waterbirds with little success owing to the dry conditions and the expedition, now augmented by two more four wheel drive vehicles containing John and Judy Blyth

from Perth and Jock McLaren and Kim Edmonde from Derby, camped beside Chestnut Pool on a branch of the Fitzroy River. While some members of the party checked out a few nearby wetlands, finding few birds apart from 70 Royal Spoonbill, others did their birdwatching around the campsite. A Black-breasted Buzzard on a large nest across the pool raised hopes of a breeding record, but the nest probably belonged to raptors of another species. A pair of Weebill appeared startlingly yellow by comparison with their southern counterparts and a number of bird species found in Western Australia only in the north included Red-winged Parrot, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and White-gaped and Yellow-tinted Honeyeater.

After a morning interesting not only for its birdlife but also for the finding of part of the saw of a sawfish of the genus *Pristis*, we moved to the Camballin irrigation scheme and camped close to the 17 Mile Dam. Surveys of Moulamen Swamp, two-thirds of the 17 Mile Dam and one other dam yielded a total of 5,716 waterbirds, of which Grey Teal (1747), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (501), Australian Pratincole (395), Black-winged Stilt (365) and Black Swan (350) were the most numerous. Unusual records were those of Great Crested Grebe (2) and Long-toed Stint (7), with 27 Yellow Chat to remind us that in the Kimberley their species is local rather than rare. Flocks of up to 600 Flock Pigeon were, as Roger Jaensch pointed out, an increasingly uncommon sight and we saw our first Black-necked Storks as well as numbers of Brolga and Australian Bustard in the huge open paddocks between the irrigation channels. Around the 17 Mile Dam were seen, among other species, Crimson, Star and Zebra Finch, Black-tailed Native-Hen, Red-winged Parrot, large numbers of Restless Flycatcher and all three of the *Geopelia* doves (Bar-shouldered, Peaceful and Diamond). Not far from the nest of a White-bellied Sea-Eagle towards the top end of the Dam was a colony of flying foxes in the freshwater mangroves. Swimming was extremely popular despite the presence of freshwater crocodiles nearby and we celebrated Sophia's birthday with a party.

The morning of 5 May saw us visit the Fitzroy Weir which diverts water to Camballin and those who penetrated the narrow belt of riparian forest were rewarded by seeing Great Bowerbirds, Variegated Fairy-wrens and White-gaped Honeyeaters. Next came a call on Liveringa Station with its historic homestead, where we missed seeing the occupants of the homestead but encountered Spinifex Pigeons. During the afternoon more waterbird surveying was done.

Our destination on 6 May was the Parry floodplain near Wyndham. It was decided that the duck truck, accompanied by Jock McLaren and Kim Edmonde in their vehicle, would make the long journey in one day, while the Falcon Tours people would camp the night at Mary River and arrive the following day. Stopping at Fitzroy Crossing for a quick bit of shopping and lunch at the Crossing Inn, we duly made Mary Pool on the Mary River after a hot day's travelling. The campsite was well used by both people and cattle and the pool itself was in a far from inviting condition. The vegetation consisted mainly of River Red Gums and thorny thickets of *Acacia farnesiana*, a shrub we had already met at the 17 Mile Dam, and was frequented by Red-winged Parrots and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.

The next day was hotter and we noticed that the Ord River was dry at the road crossing, although the Dunham River still held some water. Our campsite at Parry Creek lay among baobabs and tall grass near a long pool where three female Green Pygmy-Geese swam among the blue waterlilies. It was good to find that there were no crocodiles in the pool and that we could cool off in it.

We started off early at 6 am on 8 May to survey the Parry floodplain. Flo Robinson from Wyndham accompanied us and, after we had received our instructions on a hill which had

once had buildings on it and which overlooked the claypans and billabongs we were to look at, we broke up into separate teams to cover our allotted areas. The writer was pleased to spot his first Zitting Cisticola since leaving Africa ten years before and to see all three ibis and four Comb-crested Jacana on the claypans. That afternoon we paid a brief visit to Wyndham, too brief to allow a drive up to the Five Rivers Lookout and the celebrated view of Cambridge Gulf and the rivers flowing into it.

On 9 May we again rose early to have another look at the Parry floodplain and the writer had the good fortune to see the other Australian cisticola, the Golden-headed. Roger Jaensch pointed out distant Australasian Shoveler and Garganey, the former a new Kimberley record and the latter an uncommon(?) and easily overlooked migrant to the Kimberley being given to lurking in inundated vegetation. Bill McRoberts found the nest of a Yellow Chat with two young in it and we came across some Painted Snipe feathers without laying eyes on their owner. During the afternoon some members of the expedition visited Kununurra, where a White-browed Crake was seen and on the way back called in at the Grotto, a sandstone chasm with water at the bottom, where White-quilled Rock-Pigeon were seen. Those who remained behind did a few chores and saw, among other birds, Blue-faced Honeyeaters and a Yellow-tinted Honeyeater feeding from a waterlily flower.

The Parry floodplain wetlands produced some 18,914 waterbirds, though not all areas of water could be checked. (One inaccessible claypan was, however, surveyed from the air). The most plentiful species seen were Grey Teal (6980), Australian Pratincole (1685), Black-winged Stilt (1210), Masked Lapwing (929) and Magpie Geese (906). Whistling-duck were in smaller numbers than we had expected (69 Wandering and 698 Plumed). Interesting sightings included Australian Crake (40) *Gallinago snipe* (4) and Black Bittern (1). There were also 85 Yellow Chat.

The morning of 10 May saw another early start, this time to make the long journey to Lake Gregory. After Hall's Creek we turned south off the bitumen and reached Mulan Settlement after dark. There we made our presence known to an official of this Aboriginal settlement before pushing on to Lake Gregory. Simon Nevill's party, the duck truck crew and Jock McLaren and Kim Edmonde had already settled in when Roland and Hazel Hill were guided to our encampment by the bookkeeper from Mulan after mechanical trouble had delayed them on the road.

The morning of 11 May was windy, with swarms of flies ready to take advantage of any lull. The two boats went out on reconnaissance and Simon Nevill's party noted Orange Chat and probably Yellow Chat in the herbage along the shoreline. The water level was down considerably on that of 1986, but the lake was still an impressively large area of water in an arid setting. During the afternoon we visited Sturt Creek several kilometres above the point where it enters Lake Gregory and saw extensive rafts of duck and cormorant which promised well for the morrow. A dingo, which appeared to have been feeding on the corpse of a Brolga at the water's edge ran off at our approach and back at camp that evening we heard dingoes howling, as they did the following evening also.

As we breakfasted the next morning, dingoes were seen going down towards a belt of dead acacias situated between us and the Lake. The presence of so many flies and so many dingoes was no doubt explained by the numbers of cattle carcasses littered along the Lake shore. Counting of waterbirds continued throughout the day for some, while others who finished earlier were able to enjoy the luxury of a wash under the overflow from a bore tank! Again, Orange Chat and probably Yellow Chat were seen. (The nearest known locality for Yellow Chat is some 300 km north of Lake Gregory). The flies continued to plague us during the day, but a cold wind at

night kept mosquitoes away.

Lake Gregory surveyed by land, air and water, produced the biggest bird tally of our survey areas, some 75,524 birds, and, as the 1986 expedition had found, the species composition (Grey Teal excepted) differed markedly from that of Kimberley wetlands to the north. The five most numerous species were Grey Teal (21,015), Little Black Cormorant (15,480), Hardhead (9936), Pink-eared Duck (9423) and Black Swan (4027). Also well represented were Eurasian Coot (3407), Whiskered Tern (1795), Plumed Whistling-Duck (1750), Pied Cormorant (1340) and Pacific Black Duck (1198). The importance of Lake Gregory for Freckled Duck was again demonstrated by the presence of 52.

We left Lake Gregory on 13 May and the Falcon Tours Party decided to visit Wolf Creek Crater National Park before returning to the Great Northern Highway. A few kilometres before the turnoff to Carranya Station and the National Park we came across a marsupial road kill which may have been a Spectacled Hare Wallaby. Enlargements of photographs taken at the scene by the writer have led mammal experts at the Western Australian Museum to agree that the corpse was probably that of a Hare Wallaby, but damage to the head and the absence of a sample of the animal's pelt make it impossible for them to commit themselves to a species identification. Many marsupials in the size range to which Hare Wallabies belong are endangered or have become extinct since European settlement of Australia, so it is important that specimens, whether of the whole animal or of fur, be preserved and brought to the W.A. Museum if at all possible. Wolf Creek Crater, which some expedition members had visited in 1986, was worth the detour, although the sunshine was too strong for the red of the soil and rock and the greens of the vegetation within the crater to be properly appreciated. Chris Done from CALM at Kununurra confirmed that *Grevillea wickhamii* and *Cassia venusta* were flowering close to the excellent National Park information board on which they were depicted.

The long haul back to Perth took the Simon Nevill contingent via Hall's Creek, where Richard Stone left us for Kununurra, the Mary River campsite, Willare, where we lunched in riverine forest by the Fitzroy and saw Great Bowerbirds, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and a Bar-breasted Honeyeater, the Sandfire Roadhouse camping ground, Port Hedland, the Sherlock River where we had lunch, Roebourne, a campsite at the Red Rocks 20 km southwest of Nanutarra, Carnarvon, a campsite by the Murchison River and Geraldton to Perth. Of interest on the journey home were some Ground Cuckoo-shrike near the Cadjabut Mine turnoff between Mary River and Willare, and the degraded state of the mulga country along the North West Coastal Highway.

Looking back on this 1988 expedition, the international importance for waterbirds of the Parry floodplain and Lake Gregory was confirmed, but a proper assessment of the lower Fitzroy floodplain awaits a wet season with rainfall closer to the average. It is to be hoped that there will be another opportunity to census waterbirds in the Broome/Derby/Fitzroy Crossing triangle. In all, 69 waterbird species were recorded out of a grand total of 213 species noted by expedition members. The Falcon Tours party conducted a BOP watch along certain sections of the drive north and the raptors of the north certainly came up to expectations, with 19 diurnal birds recorded, but not a Grey Falcon.

Thanks go to Roger Jaensch for his leadership under sometimes difficult survey conditions, to Simon Nevill for hard work in driving the Falcon Tours vehicle and still finding time to look after his charges in camp, to Rodney Vervest for helpfulness beyond the call of duty and to each and every companion in our odyssey for the cheerfulness and willing co-operation which made it so memorable.

J. Talbot

RAOU REMOTE WETLAND EXPEDITION 1988

SUMMARY OF NUMBERS COUNTED

Species	Number Counted in each Wetland Area			Total Counted
	4-5 May Camballin Area	7-9 May Parry Floodplain	11-12 May Lake Gregory	
Great Crested Grebe	2		77	79
Hoary-headed Grebe	1		47	48
Australasian Grebe		10		10
Australian Pelican	331	55	824	1210
Darter	35	14	684	733
Pied Cormorant	10	3	1340	1353
Little Black Cormorant	200	21	15480	15701
Little Pied Cormorant	21	35	10	66
Pacific Heron	6	25		31
White-faced Heron	26	29		55
Pied Heron		90		90
Great Egret	19	76	35	130
Little Egret	1			1
Intermediate Egret	5	4		9
Rufous Night Heron	100	12		112
Black Bittern		1		1
Black-necked Stork	8	6		14
Glossy Ibis	29	240		269
Sacred Ibis	12	95	2	109
Straw-necked Ibis	125	490	56	671
Royal Spoonbill	119	79	16	214
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	15	22	2	39
Maggie Goose	19	906	3	928
Wandering Whistling-Duck		69		69
Plumed Whistling-Duck	305	698	1750	2753
Black Swan	350		4027	4377
Freckled Duck			52	52
Radjah Shelduck		17		17
Pacific Black Duck	72	624	1198	1894
Grey Teal	1747	6980	21015	29742
Australasian Shoveler		2		2
Garganey		2		2
Pink-eared Duck	10	400	9423	9833
Hardhead	67	407	9936	10410
Maned Duck			105	105
Green Pygmy Goose		93		93
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	4			4
Marsh Harrier	1	9	4	14
Australian Crake		40		40
Black-tailed Native-hen	8	5		13
Purple Swamphen	2	1		3
Eurasian Coot	43	79	3407	3529
Brolga	63	293	499	855
Comb-crested Jacana		105		105
Masked Lapwing	310	929	8	1247
Red-kneed Dotterel	1	504		505
Red-capped Plover	8	131	116	255
Black-fronted Plover	80	88		168
Black-winged Stilt	365	1210	18	1593
Banded Stilt			9	9
Red-necked Avocet	15		174	189
Little Curlew	1	14		15
Wood Sandpiper	2			2
Greenshank	52	38		90
Marsh Sandpiper	16	85		101
Gallinago Snipe		4		4
Black-tailed Godwit	52	25		77
Bar-tailed Godwit	8			8
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	501	540	10	1051
Red-necked Stint	100	1	100	201
Long-toed Stint	7			7
Curlew Sandpiper		3	10	13
Australian Pratincole	395	1685	16	2096
Silver Gull			486	486
Whiskered Tern	10	51	1795	1856
Gull-billed Tern	2	54		56
Caspian Tern	5	50	760	815
Clamorous Reed-Warbler	3			3
Yellow Chat	27	85		112
unidentified duck		1200	2000	3200
unidentified wader		180	30	210
Totals	birds			
	species	5716	18914	75524
		53	55	36
				100154
				69

COMING EVENTS

Excursions are usually held on the second weekend of the month on either the Saturday or Sunday. The RAOU and CALM have agreed upon a National Parks project whereby individuals and/or groups are asked to compile a bird list each time a National Park is visited.

Any members willing to show beginners (members of the public, juniors, new club members) around their metropolitan bird site please contact Ian Standring on 344 3651 (home).

Have country members any suggestions for outings in their areas?

Meetings are generally held on the fourth Monday in the month.

Friday 9 September - Slide Evening

Princess Margaret Hospital Lecture Theatre, Roberts Road, Administration Block adjacent to Hospital: 8 pm

"Exploring the Kimberleys" with Kevin Coate.

Tickets: \$7. On sale at RAOU office and at the door. Bring your friends: Refreshments served. To help BBO.

Saturday 10 September - Day Excursion

Boyagin Rock Nature Reserve.

An interesting Reserve. Mainly Powderbark Wandoo.

Moderate to easy walks with the Rock itself more strenuous.

An early start as the Reserve is near Brookton. Meet 7.20 am just past the intersection of Brookton Hwy and Canning Road, Karragullen, leaving here 7.30 am latest or at the Rock car-park about 9 am or lunchtime.

Sunday 11 September - Bird walk

Perry Lakes/Bold Park. In conjunction with the City of Perth (see Notices). Meet at 6.50 am at Children's Adventure Playground. Proceed west along Underwood Ave and turn right into Perry Lakes Drive. Take first turn right to playground. Walk ends at 8.30 am.

Saturday 24 September - Saturday 1 October - Campout

Nallan Station near Cue.

There has been a change in the accommodation arrangements for Nallan Station. The shearers quarters will not be available to us. The only accommodation for those not camping is one 3-bedroom twin share basic "cottage". Therefore if you did not intend camping it is important that you contact Ian Standring: 344 3651 (H) before proceeding in case your accommodation requirements cannot be met. There is plenty of room for campers. No pets! An unstructured, informal excursion.

Book with Nallan Station direct. Phone: (099) 63j1054 (David and April Petersen) or write: PO Box 24 Cue WA 6640. Mention you are with RAOU.

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 October - Bird walk

Perry Lakes/Bold Park

Meet at 6.50 am at Children's Adventure Playground, near corner of Perry Lakes Drive and Underwood Ave. Ends 8.30 am.

Sunday 2 - Saturday 8 October - Eyre Bird Observatory "What's in a Song?"

Leader: Dr Thelma Volger

Saturday 8 October -Day Excursion

East Gingin Shire Wetlands

Meet 8.30 am at Wannamal Rest Area, on Wannamal-Moora-Mogumber road. Turn left 200 metres beyond Bindoon Hotel on Gingin Road, then turn right at signpost 4.5 km on to Wannamal-Mogumber-Moora road. Travel 22 km to Wannamal and Rest Area on right side of road. Sign-posted. Rest Area is nearly opposite Wannamal Community Hall and tennis courts. One and a half hours drive from Perth GPO. If desired, campers can stay overnight at Rest Area, toilets, wash-basins, BBQ. Bring wading shoes/boots. For further information contact Bruce Buchanan phone 350 7060 (W) or write to 2 Jarman Ave Manning 6152.

Sunday 23 October - Bird walk

Perry Lakes/Bold Park

Meet at 6.50 am at Children's Adventure Playground near corner of Perry Lakes Drive and Underwood Ave. Ends 8.30 am.

Sunday 23 - Sunday 30 October - Bird Week

See NOTICES for information.

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

Sunday 30 October - Bird walk

Perry Lakes/Bold Park

Meet at 6.50 am at Children's Adventure Playground near corner of Perry Lakes Drive and Underwood Ave. Ends 8.30 am.

Sunday 13 November - Excursion

Peel Inlet

Meet at 8 am at the southern end of Wanjeep Street, Coodanup. Follow the Mandurah-Pinjarra Rd and turn right into Wanjeep Street soon after leaving Mandurah. If you reach the Serpentine river bridge before turning right you have gone too far. Bring hat and other sun protection and wading boots. A very good area for waders, Little Egrets, Regent Parrots etc.

Saturday 26 November - Twitchathon: 5 am - 5 pm

The aim is for teams to identify as many species as possible during the 12 hours. Each species to be identified by at least two team members. Teams members must keep together as a group and no air travel is allowed during the 12 hours. Use National Parks RAOU checklist to record species - small cross in box. If you visit a National Park please keep a separate list so that the information can be recorded in the National Parks Project. There are no restrictions on distance from GPO and you may visit any sites you wish. You must however go to one particular site which will be announced later. Cost \$2 per person. After the event you may like to meet at the barbeque area at the Ernst Wittwer (Children's Playground) area at the corner of Saw Avenue and May Drive, Kings Park. BYO meat, salad, drinks. Intending participants should contact Ian Standing (344 3651) by 4 November.

Sunday 27 November - Saturday 3 December - Eyre Bird Observatory

"Ornithology With a Leader in the Field".

Leader: Dr Stephen Davies

Monday 28 November - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre 8 pm

Wednesday 21 - Tuesday 27 December - Eyre Bird Observatory

Christmas at Eyre.

Wednesday 28 December 1988 - Tuesday 3 January 1989

Eyre Bird Observatory

New Year Resolutions.

Sunday 8 - Saturday 21 January 1989

Eyre Bird Observatory

Dune Stabilization Work Party Period.

Saturday 11 February 1989 - Social Event

See NOTICES for information.



FALCON TOURS

SPECIALISTS IN BIRD TOURS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA

Small Group Tours to:

Mitchell Plateau . Bungle Bungle . Darwin - Cairns

Iron Range - Lakefield National Park . Atherton

Tablelands . Nullabor . South West

Send for Brochure

38 Pether Road, Manning, Perth. W.A. 6152. 09 450 2460

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

October 29 - November 11 1988

Cost A\$ 750.00

Seats still available!

TOUR GUIDE 1989

Camping Tours

Tour Code F.T. 40

West Australia - Kimberley Region 1

14 days

Perth to Kununurra

Monday May 1 - Sunday May 14

Cost A\$ 924.00

Tour Code F.T. 40

14 days

West Australia - Kimberley Region 2

Kununurra to Perth

Tuesday May 16 - Monday May 29

Cost A\$ 924.00

Tour Code F.T. 50

20 days

South West, Nullabor

Perth to Perth

Sunday September 3 - Friday September 22 Cost A\$ 1168.00

Camping/Hotel Tours

Tour Code F.T. 46

Northern Safari

14 days

Perth to Darwin

Sunday June 11 - Saturday June 30

Cost A\$ 1480.00

Tour Code F.T. 47

North - South West Safari

14 days

Darwin to Cairns

Sunday July 9 - Friday July 28

Cost A\$ 1480.00

NOVEMBER DUCK COUNT

Funding has recently been approved for continuation of The Great Duck Count. It is now proposed to make two counts per year; the usual MARCH COUNT (late in summer) to assess populations that are concentrated in summer refuges, and a NOVEMBER COUNT that will assess populations at the end of the breeding season. Results of this research will allow us to compare distribution and types of wetlands used by duck, swan and coot during these important periods, and provide very useful information for scientific and general management of waterbirds and wetlands.

As wetlands are altered (draining, salination etc.) it is increasingly likely that waterbird numbers will decline. Annual counts are our best method of monitoring these waterbird numbers and hence detecting changes in abundance. The RAOU has co-ordinated the efforts of hundreds of volunteer observers in the past, and we hope to secure your commitment once again to continuing this important research. All former participants will be contacted and advised of dates and procedures in due course. However, if you would like to join our dedicated team of 'great duck counters' please contact Rodney Vervest at the W.A. Office by the end of September.

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

We would like to begin this report by thanking all those members of the W.A. Group who have demonstrated they are friends of Broome by their gifts and support. We cannot send letters to you all - we do not have addresses and we do not even know who all of you are. We can express our gratitude here - please keep up the good work - it is reassuring to know we have support. Special thanks to Simon Nevill for his flair in delivering goods.

Progress has been slower than we had hoped because funds have been sparse and communications lacking or difficult. However, we are hopeful that some progress is being made. Water may be on tap soon - even if on a somewhat truncated basis.

Telephone connection seems far away. However, we have established a radio link with Ann and Alistair Cuthbert due to the assistance of the State Emergency Service (Brice has become a member). A call to them (A. & A.C.) on 921-476 will find its way to us within a few hours.

We have been a little profligate with cement and now have three bird baths. Two of them are being heavily used, the third more sparsely. The first walk trails are in place and more are planned. Hides are high on our priority list and should be in place within the next month. We now also have enough equipment to start some serious banding and look forward to adding extensively to our meagre achievements so far.

June was good for both visitor nights and day visitors. While we are not in a position to make any capital out of our day visitors yet, we have generated a small cash flow from our guests.

Through these pages we propose to make a few of our most pressing needs known each quarter. You may know best how to assist. We hope the local schools will use the Observatory as part of their environmental and science curriculum, if not by the fourth term, then at the start of 1989 so we need good bird slides as teaching aids. We are also desperate for a typewriter - good enough to get through a fair amount of work and strong enough to withstand the assaults of inexperienced operators.

Our immediate crockery, cutlery and linen needs are being met - although they will become inadequate once we really

begin to attract larger numbers of people. We do need tools of all kinds and some good sized cooking utensils. If possible big enough for ten to twenty people.

If you are planning a trip north, plan to stop at Broome Bird Observatory - our rates are cheap in line with pioneer conditions and our welcome is warm and the birds a delight; and if you are going east do not miss the three wonderful Observatories in that direction.

G. Hooper & B. Wells

During the meeting on 25 July it was agreed to donate \$500 to BBO: the Wardens to decide the spending priority.

The Committee is also pleased to acknowledge with thanks the generosity of the WA Naturalists Club in making a donation to BBO of \$200.

Please help again - see Coming Events of September.

Ed.

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

A warm welcome to Ian Ashton who has taken up the position of Warden at Eyre. Ian was one of the enthusiastic people who went to Eyre earlier this year to run the Observatory during the period it was without a permanent warden. After several months he fell in love with Eyre, as many of us have and decided that he would stay on until December 1989.

Ian, a keen birder from England, has only been in Australia for a short period but has already established a high level of expertise on Australian birdlife due to his enormous enthusiasm and he is eager to share what he has learnt with visitors to the Observatory.

Amanda Lilley is assisting Ian with the running of the Observatory until the end of September. Anyone interested in the position of Assistant Warden later in the year should contact Ian (tel: 090 393450) or Jan Hill, 84 Buxton Street, Mt. Hawthorn, 6016. Telephone: (09)4441323.

RAOU WA Group Excursion 26 June to 2 July 1988

This year's RAOU excursion to Eyre was attended by only a small group, Ian and Amanda taking the tally to five. It was an interesting week, with some notable bird sightings; Shy Hylacola, Redthroat, Rock Parrot, Naretha Blue-bonnet, Inland Dotterel, Dusky Woodswallow and White-bellied Sea-Eagle were among those seen. Our visits included Twilight Cove, Arubiddy and Burnabbie. Near Eyre the East Track proved to be the most bountiful and was (as usual) tantalizing with its various calls through the day. Another interesting feature was the swift passage of Purple-crowned Lorikeet which numbered 200+, 300+ and 60 on the days spent near the Observatory. Practically all of the flocks were headed westwards on the northern side of the large dunes.

The January dune planting was aided by sufficient rain to allow much of the planted vegetation to sprout and it now looks as though it has taken a firm hold. The work of 1987 continues to look a healthy and stabilizing green. Overlooking this is the extensive work done by Bill Graham on Irene's Peak and nearby areas; all treated areas have held firm while erosion is obvious in the adjacent regions.

While promises were made to present course participants with the opportunity to experience Western Pygmy Possums, the nesting boxes proved far from bountiful until our last day. One sleepy individual could barely be roused for photographic modelling duties and when returned to the box seemed to be grateful. No others were found. An investigation (and

recording) of the tracks in the dunes showed only a few recent movements, mostly of cats, foxes, rabbits and kangaroos, but it did reveal the presence of an Emu. Six months ago a party of four young and an adult were seen frequently in the area. Gradually the young ceased to appear and now the group is down to an individual adult.

Our hosts, Ian and Amanda, take pride in their work at Eyre and with their hospitality we enjoyed the week's stay. Eyre is recommended as a welcome break from the usual routine and an entertaining place for birding.

R. Smith

MESSAGE FROM ROTAMAH

We have now been Wardens at Rotamah for 12 months and are impressed by the number of W.A. members who wish to visit us. However we have had a number of members arrive without prior notice and they have been unable to stay with us due to heavy bookings, boat out of action for maintenance, Wardens on leave etc.

We hope these people are not returning to W.A. and giving other members the impression that it is impossible to visit Rotamah!

We would like to explain that members should phone us a few days ahead so we can make arrangements that suit everyone. Rotamah is only accessible by boat, so prior arrangements must be made. I know other observatories have similar problems (like Victorians expecting to be picked up at Cocklebidy without prior notice!), and we apologise to any W.A. members who have missed out.

Murray & Coral Dow — Wardens Rotamah

NOTICES

CORRECTION

In W.A. Bird Notes Number 46 June 1988 an observation of Great Egret (75 at Lake Gwelup) on page 2 should have been, Hardhead - 75, 20/3/88 L. Gwelup (Metro) - GS

COLOUR-BANDED CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLERS

Clamorous Reed-Warblers are being banded with CSIRO metal and colour bands at Thompsons Lake. This has been done at Lake Forrestdale and possibly in the near future at Herdsman Lake (all Metro). If you are lucky enough to see a banded Clamorous Reed-Warbler could you please let me know. Phone 383 2848 (H). Clamorous Reed-Warblers are known to move between wetlands so you may see a colour-banded one almost anywhere. We wish to know to where the birds move and will be most grateful for any information about sightings.

S. Gordon

BIRD WEEK 23 - 30 OCTOBER

This year our Bird Week activities will be directed at secondary school students. We have written to schools introducing the RAOU, telling them of Bird Week and how they can participate, offering support material such as bird posters, details of bird books available, bird call tapes, local bird walks and speakers during school lunch-hours etc. More than 60 schools have replied.

A Bird Week competition for secondary school students has also been launched. Secondary school students have been invited to make a bird study based on original observations and research and to submit their work to the RAOU. A prize of \$100 will be presented to the winning student.

Our Bird Week sub-committee is Dot Kingston, Margaret Owen, Jack Donohoe, Allan Jones, Ros Denny and Ian Standing who have done much, but could use more help. The smallest offer can aid greatly.

We would appreciate offers (contact any sub-committee member) to go to a school to conduct a short bird walk in the school grounds or speak to students during a lunch hour during Bird Week.

SOCIAL EVENT

It has been decided to defer our annual social event to early 1989 as a change from a date close to Christmas. We hope that you can all attend on 11 February 1989. More details in the next WABN. It has been suggested that we have a champagne breakfast and then some bird-watching, but as that may be too much for mid-summer, perhaps the reverse order. If you have any ideas (location, style) for our social event please contact any committee member by early October if possible.

THE CITY OF PERTH BOLD PARK/PERRY LAKES RECREATION PROGRAMME

The City of Perth will be conducting a variety of nature based recreation programmes during September and October at Bold Park and Perry Lakes. There will be natural history, wildflower and early morning bush walks, bush photography etc. There is also a separate programme for children. Details from the Council's Recreation Officer - see also Coming Events.

THE INJURED BIRD TELEPHONE NUMBERS ARE:

364 6463 (H)	Barbara Porter
405 5555 (W)	
275 2909 (H)	Vicki Wakelam
389 2152 (W)	
445 1986	Barbara Poor

COMMITTEE

As many of you will be aware, on 30 May I stood down as your Chairman. It was a decision that was required because of changes in my professional life. I am sorry I had to do this so soon after my re-election. However, I have every confidence in Ros Denny who will replace me in the Chair.

It was also time for me to stand down from the Committee in any case and events brought this forward by some seven months.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported me during my time as Chairman. I enjoyed working with you all. You have not seen the last of me as I will still be at meetings and depending on my professional commitments I hope I will again be able to play a more active role in the not too distant future. Again thank you for all your support and encouragement.

Good birding.

G. Shannon

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman:	Ros Denny	
Treasurer:	Clive Napier	
Secretary:	Judi Jenkins	
Committee:	Bruce Buchanan	Allan Jones
	Peter Curry	Claire Mercer
	Barbara Hale	Ian Standing
	Brian Wilson	

CONSERVATION GROUP

At the March Committee meeting Peter Curry offered to convene a group to represent members' conservation interests in WA and to liaise with the RAOU (Melb.) Conservation Sub-committee. At its first meeting on 6 July, those present expressed the wish that no formal sub-committee structure be set up, but that meetings would be publicised and open to all interested members. A further meeting was held on 24 August and the next meeting will be Tuesday 11 October at the RAOU office, Canning Bridge, at 5.00pm. If you are unable to be present to find out what we're up to, write to me and say which bird conservation matters concern you.

PALLID CUCKOO PROJECT

My thanks to all those who have sent in records of Pallid Cuckoo so far. I hope more hearings/sightings are to come particularly from the Perth metropolitan and coastal areas, from where few reports have been received to date. A full report in the December issue of W.A. Bird Notes.

B. Buchanan

NEST RECORD SCHEME

The Nest Record Scheme aims to increase our understanding of the breeding biology of Australian birds. This is achieved by collecting information on nest building, clutch size, fledging success and the timing and location of breeding.

Studies of the breeding biology of birds is of value to basic science as well as to wildlife managers who need such information in order to manage and to ensure the survival of bird populations. The Nest Record Scheme (NRS) has already helped to identify the few sites in Australia where herons, egrets and ibis are still able to breed.

Wildlife managers need answers to such questions as:

- Are birds breeding successfully?
- Are changes in environment affecting the timing and success of birds breeding?
- Have introduced mammalian predators affected the breeding success of birds?
- Is the breeding success of birds different in areas subject to different types of long term land management and will this lead to the disappearance of some species from some areas or invasion by others of new areas?

Such information is essential for rational land management in conservation reserves and is helpful to landowners who wish to preserve birds on their own land. It can be obtained only by analysing detailed records of breeding attempts by birds.

An example of how NRS data can be used in land management can be seen in the following case. The effectiveness of rehabilitation of land that has been subject to sandmining was gauged. This was done by comparing the breeding success of birds on the rehabilitated land with the average level of breeding success as recorded in the RAOU Nest Record Scheme which showed that breeding success was lower on rehabilitated land. Many nests are needed before such comparisons can be made and valid conclusions reached. Hence, the Nest Record Scheme's value is limited by its

number of participants. This is why the RAOU needs your contribution.

The RAOU Nest Record Scheme was founded in June 1964 and currently has over 60,000 nest records. The scheme has grown rapidly in recent years. This is in part due to funding by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and several benevolent funds, which has enabled computerisation of data storage and analysis and the employment of a scientific officer to manage and promote the scheme. In addition, more and more birdwatchers are finding nest recording a fascinating and valuable component of their hobby, one in which they increase their knowledge of the birds they watch enormously, while contributing to the overall understanding of the breeding biology of Australian birds.

Every birdwatcher finds a few nests, even if only by chance. Finding nests of some species presents a real challenge and may become an absorbing part of your birdwatching. Whatever the level of effort, the information can be usefully documented if details of the number of eggs or young are accurately entered onto a nest record sheet and contributed to a national scheme. Nest record sheets are easy to fill in and this survey is ideal for participation by new members. The amount of time and effort spent remains under your control. Anyone may participate, whether a member of the RAOU or not. Active nest finders may wish to aim for complete coverage of all species in a particular area throughout the year, or to concentrate on a selected species. The value of the scheme is proportional to the support it receives from all parts of Australia. All contributions, from one to one thousand records, are welcome.

Valuable information is provided where nests are visited only once, but observers are encouraged to make follow up visits. Data on clutch size, incubation and fledgling periods, and nesting success usually require two or more visits. Visits should be brief. A few well planned visits can provide a great deal of information.

Nesting periods vary enormously between species: some chicks take over three weeks to fledge, others fledge almost as soon as they hatch. Nestlings of small passerines are naked, blind and helpless when hatched and gradually acquire feather quills from which the feathers grow during the following few weeks. On a visit to a nest containing young, it is helpful to note whether they are blind, naked, eyes just open, quills only, quills sprouting, or feathered, as their approximate age can be calculated from these details. In species such as waders and many waterfowl, the young hatch with their eyes open, leave the nest shortly after hatching and are able to run within hours. For these species it is helpful to record whether the chicks appear downy or feathered.

If you want further information or are interested in joining the Nest Record Scheme, contact Bryan Barrett, 17 Shepherds Road, Glen Forrest, 60761.

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

[Those of us who know Syd will welcome his inimitable self to our contributions. He has changed address since this letter.]

"Abydos Gold",
PO Box 1913,
South Hedland 6722

G'day, I've moved from "Spinifex Plains House" to the above address. I won't be able to see the Curlew's each night as they come into drink, used to be four, then three, don't know what happened to other, unless left area or died, when hot

weather on, around 46 degrees, come in at daylight before sun set, so got good view of birds' and marking's, still going back there now and then to keep bird bath and drink tray full, hope to get some photo's, have photo of Spotted Nighjar if any use, regards Syd.

P.S. I know they are called a ghastly name (Thicknee).

Syd Baker

RESERVE AT KELMSCOTT

Since November 1985 we have been monitoring monthly the bird species that occur in Reserve Number 34155. This 100 hectare block of Jarrah/Marri forest is situated on the escarpment edge above Kelmscott and is the block that we covered for the Metro Bird Project.

During this period there has been no fire or other major disturbance and some of the area has reached "climax" state. We spend about two hours between 8am and 10am near the beginning of each month and follow roughly the same route on each occasion, choosing a day when there is as little wind as possible.

During the 12 months of 1985 we averaged 18.0 species per visit, during 1986, 15.9 species and only 14.5 species in 1987. We cannot suggest any obvious reason for the decline. (Increased surrounding urbanisation? Ed.)

The most obvious change is the decline in number of thornbill species. These used to be the most numerous species and now sometimes they are completely absent.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike have decreased dramatically. Grey Shrike-thrush were common in 1985 and we have not recorded one since September 1986. White-cheeked Honeyeaters seem to be the only species that have increased in numbers.

A pattern is beginning to appear in the annual bird movement. Red-capped Parrots are absent in October and November, Silveryeyes in April and May and Grey Fantails in November, December and January. Tree Martins are present from about January until May and Sacred Kingfishers from November until January.

J. & H. Start

THE ALCOA CLAY PITS, MANDOGALUP

The figures shown in the accompanying table are based on recordings made at monthly intervals between 8.00 and 9.00 am in 1987. The main points are:-

- The area plays an important role as a refuge and resting area for large numbers of Australian Shelduck, Straw-necked Ibis and Eurasian Coot when other water bodies have dried.
- Small numbers of Pacific Black Duck, Blue-billed and Musk Duck are present throughout most of the year. The Blue-billed Duck increase significantly in the early winter months.
- Breeding activity in 1987 appeared to be restricted to Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebe and a pair of Black Swan (observed with three half-grown young in early October).
- Despite the apparent lack of fish (?), Darter and cormorant (four species) were consistent visitors, as also were Whistling Kite.
- Apart from the occasional presence of Greenshank, waders were not seen, a reflection of the steeply shelving nature of the banks.

As rushes and other vegetation become better established round the edges, the bird population may alter and breeding activity can be expected to increase.

S. Houghton

ALCOA CLAY-PIT 1987/8	21M	19A	16M	14J	11J	8A	6S	4O	1N	29N	26D	27J	20F
Grebe (H-h and Australasian)	19	2	15	10	9	10	15	8	7	21	10	?	9
Australian Pelican								1					
Darter		1	1		1	1			1			4	8
Pied Cormorant				1						1			2
Little Pied Cormorant	8	2	4	2				2	1			4	5
Great Cormorant	1	1		1			1	1				2	
Little Black Cormorant											5		7
Pacific Heron								1					
White-faced Heron	1	29		1	14		1		1	1	1	10	17
Great Egret	1	2	1	1		1						1	
Little Egret												1	
Straw-necked Ibis	4	162	1	1	50	7	1				38		
Yellow-billed Spoonbill		6	1	3							1	8	
Black Swan	8	4	2					5					
Australian Shelduck	125	97		8			3	2	22		10	238	400
Pacific Black Duck	13	18	11	21	3	12	6	3	4	4	17	10	17
Grey Teal	1			24						4			
Australasian Shoveler				4									
Hardhead	4	2	1			1	1	1	1	1	1		
Maned Duck	20											22	19
Blue-billed Duck		14	22	28	7	14		4	1	6		8	4
Musk Duck	26	10	12	6	4	4	3	1		12	6	6	2
Eurasian Coot	41	33	31	9	5		2	8	8	4	34	47	25
Black-winged Stilt	1							4					2
Greenshank	4	1									9	1	
Black-fronted Plover	2	2	3				2*				1		3
Whistling Kite		2		1	1	1	1	2				1	2
Marsh Harrier	1	2											?
Little Eagle	1		1	1									
Australian Kestrel		3						1					

* in adjacent paddock

BICKLEY RESERVOIR

October 1985 - July 1988

Bickley Reservoir, an easily-reached hills picnic site, is an attractive birding area. It has been surveyed monthly for the past two and a half years. Seventy-nine species have been recorded of which seventeen are dependent upon water, but only half a dozen of those are sighted with much frequency.

Much of the vegetation is low, thick and prickly bush which supports wrens, thornbills and robins; high-flying raptors, martins and woodswallows enjoy the airspace above the deep valley and honeyeaters (nine species) obtain provisions from the abundant flowering vegetation. Many other species also find a niche in the area.

True to the form of any 'good' spot, there are some unusual features. Not only are there odd sightings of such birds as the White-breasted Robin and the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater (which are hardly typical metropolitan types, and therefore have to expect to be sighted only once or twice), but the following also must be regarded as unusual for the area:

Australian Shelduck
Pallid Cuckoo
Welcome Swallow
Willie Wagtail
Mistletoebird
Singing Honeyeater

The surrounding built-up areas appear to support sufficient numbers of these species to lead one to expect that their appearance in Bickley would be a matter of course, but they don't seem to find Bickley Reservoir an attractive place. Only one of the above-listed species was seen as a group, that being the Welcome Swallow on April 7 1988 (for the first time). All the others were sighted as individuals. None has been seen more than twice.

Galah are usually present except in summer; raptors are absent in winter, and most of the waterbirds are present for extended periods with apparent disregard for the season. At any time, the most obvious species is the Western Thornbill and though by no means easy to find, the Southern Emu-wren is probably a permanent resident. We have recorded it only six times.

Observations of species new to the area are made on most surveys, so the list grows steadily. Two hours with your binoculars at Bickley is time well-rewarded, with perhaps forty species at this agreeable spot only half an hour from the city.

Most Commonly Reported Species	% of Surveys (N=34)
Grey Fantail	100
Western Thornbill	100
Inland Thornbill	100
Western Gerygone	97
Pacific Black Duck	94
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	91
Brown Honeyeater	91
Red-capped Parrot	88
Laughing Kookaburra	88
Splendid Fairy-wren	88
Silvereye	88
Australian Raven	88
Port Lincoln Ringneck	85
Australian Magpie-Lark	85
Striated Pardalote	85
Australian Magpie	85
New Holland Honeyeater	82
Rufous Whistler	82
Western Spinebill	82
Eurasian Coot	79

R. Smith

KIMBERLEY RARITIES

On a recent trip to Mornington Station (1-3.7.88) we found colonies of Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens on a tributary of the Adcock River. There were 6 birds (4 female and 2 male in eclipse plumage) on a typical section of creek. This was at 17 degrees 31' south and 126 degrees 7' east. (On Mt House Station, Ed.)

The RAOU Conservation Statement on the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren (Rowley 1988) does not list the Adcock River as having any and I am fairly sure a careful search would reveal more in the Adcock River area.

We also saw a Black Bittern at the same place. (Not reported in this 1 degree Block in the Atlas of Australian Birds, Blakers M. et al 1984. Ed.)

J. McLaren

RAPTORS IN THE KIMBERLEY

Square Tailed Kites: Further to E. King's observations on the Square-tailed Kite, (W.A. Bird Notes No 46, June 1988), I have been taking part in the BOP Watch since January 1 this year. The first STK for the year was seen at Willare, at the Fitzroy Bridge, on 13.4.88, and since then, they have become quite common throughout the Kimberley. I have seen most in the vast tracts of semi-open woodland north of the King Leopold Ranges.

The best tally so far was five birds seen in 680 km on May 31. Assuming that one can survey a strip 250 m wide in this country, that amounts to approximately one STK per 35 square km. As the area of suitable habitat here may be of the order of 150,000 square km, which could suggest a maximum population of something over 4,000 birds - although the actual figure is probably quite a lot less.

During the first part of the year, I travelled some 18,000 km through the Kimberley without seeing one Square-tailed Kite. This corresponds with E. King's report that they are more common at Roleystone during the southern summer months. Jim Masters has mentioned that the same is true of his property at Toodyay.

The Atlas (p.93) says they appear "to undertake a regular seasonal movement, south in summer and north in winter, in S.E. Australia, and probably in S.W. Australia as well." Pizzey (p.80) suggests they are nomadic, and Hollands (pp.42,43,191) believes they are great wanderers, but return to the same nesting territory each year. It may in fact be the case that they are migratory, rather than strictly nomadic.

Black-Breasted Buzzards: The BOP Watch survey forms classify the Buzzard as one of the five rare diurnal raptors, but they appear to be quite common in the Kimberley. In the period 8.3.88 to 8.6.88, I travelled about 16,000 km and saw 14 of them, more or less evenly distributed over the region. In a seven day period last October, I saw six in 1980 km. One pair is regularly seen 125 km east of Derby. Only once have I seen Black-breasted Buzzard on the road-side, and due to its lack of fear, it very nearly became the first complete specimen in an Australian museum!

J. McLaren

References:

Blakers M., Davies S.J.J.F., Ridley, P.N. (1984), *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, Melbourne University Press.
Hollands D, (1984) *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of Australia*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne.
Pizzey, G. & Doyle R., (1981) *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, William Collins, Sydney.

MEETING REPORTS

27 June - Birding Around Australia

A well illustrated tour of many of the significant bird areas of Australia without the necessity of leaving Perth was provided by John Hansen, together with commentary.

25 July - Mangrove birds

Mangrove birds are an interesting study and while their habitat, often neatly zoned by distance from water, looked splendid and inviting in colour pictures, Ron Johnstone testified as to its general obnoxious hazards. Not deterred by mud, mosquitoes, crocodiles and swordfish Ron Johnstone's work has added important information on the distribution, food, nesting and sub-speciation of mangrove birds. His well photographed journeyings added to his unmistakable enthusiasm for the mangrove birds (a necessary prerequisite for mangrove bird watching). At least one listener envied Ron's experiences, but was glad to see and hear of them in the relatively small discomfort of Herdsman Wildlife Centre.

PUBLICATIONS

A large selection of birding books are available for purchase at the RAOU office, and at most meetings. Sales of these, plus other items such as RAOU ties, key-rings and cards contribute much needed funds for the Group. The new sets of cards featuring bird paintings by Martin Thompson cost \$7 for set of 8 cards.

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
21 October 1988

EXCURSION REPORTS

BILLYACATTING NATURE RESERVE - May 21 - 23

Owing to the sudden arrival of Cyclone Herbie, only the most intrepid birders abandoned their doonas for this one. Six of us lingered in the shelter of the historic Mangowine Homestead until we saw the skies clear in mid-afternoon. Then some began birding at the Reserve, while others picked fresh mushrooms for tea.

On the eastern side we recorded 46 species and were particularly delighted to have two sightings of Mallee Fowl. 'Dry area' birds can be easily seen in close proximity: Redthroat, Southern Scrub-robin, Shy Hylacola, Spiny-cheeked and White-eared Honeyeater.

On Sunday, while some of us lunched and lazed in the sun, Chris Wilder discovered some Southern Whiteface feeding with Yellow-rumped Thornbill on the grassed area below Yarragin Rock (Mt Stevens), which is just 2 km west of the Reserve.

Before dawn on Monday, Les Harris was keenly on the trail of elusive Crested Bellbirds and he succeeded in making his first sighting of them.

The Reserve is about 270 km north-east of Perth, to the north of Kununoppin. The vegetation is varied (Gimlet, mallee, Acacia, Hakea, ti-tree) and the scenery is attractive. We consider it well worth a return visit in a year or two. Our list of species has been sent to the C.A.L.M. Officer at Narrogin.

D. Beckingham



Billyacatting Nature Reserve

NORTH MOLE - 10 July

We only saw a few species but a Southern Giant Petrel came very close to the rocks at the Mole affording excellent views. A Great Skua was also seen at fairly close quarters. On Sunday 16 July there were two Southern Giant Petrel in the water, again very close to the rocks and Great Skua were seen without difficulty.

I. Standing