

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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AFTER 50 YEARS BANDED STILT BREEDING AT LAKE KING

Following a phone call on the 3 August from local farmers Sylvia and Ian Brandenburg, I decided to investigate reports of large numbers of Banded Stilt with chicks observed from the causeway over Lake King on the Hyden-Ravensthorpe Road. Lake King is an ephemeral salt lake approximately 450 km south east of Perth.

On the 4th August with the help of Ian Brandenburg I made an aerial survey of Lake King and the surrounding lakes. As groups of birds were seen, their numbers and approximate positions were transferred on to a map of Lake King. All adults and chicks were seen in the water or on exposed mud flats. No birds were seen at possible nesting sites (e.g. sandy islands, spits or adjacent shorelines).

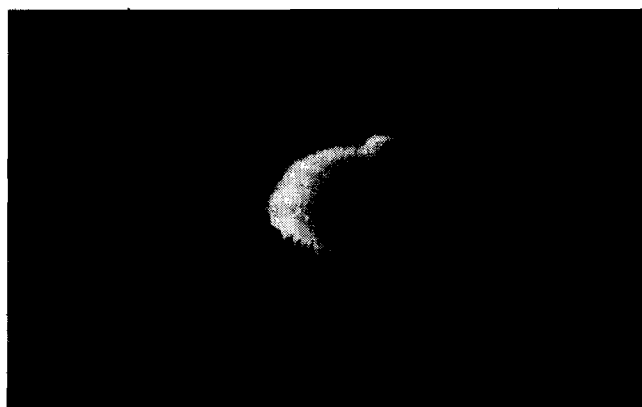
Estimates made from the aerial survey totalled approximately 4000 adults and 7000 chicks on Lake King. On Lake Camm, immediately to the north of Lake King a single flock of about 1000 adult birds were seen. Lakes Ronnerup, Milarup and Pallarup to the south east of Lake King had Banded Stilt on them.

On the next day I walked an area extending five kilometres south from the Lake King causeway. On the ground it was obvious that the bird numbers counted from the aerial survey were a gross underestimation - by as much as three to four times. All birds were again seen in shallow water or exposed mud flats. Groups varied in their composition from one adult with two chicks to 30 adults with 200 chicks. Some chicks had become separated, unable to keep up with a group.

Many dead chicks were seen on the shorelines of the lake and its numerous islands. Most appeared to be about a week old and were pure white except for a black bill, black eye and grey legs. On the 7 August a very young chick possibly only about a day old was seen on the western side of the Lake.

I searched numerous islands and spits on Lake King for signs of a rookery but without success. This was not so surprising as Lake King is approximately 35 km long and up to 10 km wide. I was only able to search a fraction of this area and the aerial survey gave me no indication as to where the rookery might be. Typically, the islands in the Lake were up to a metre above the mud flat level and vegetated with low samphire and *Rhagodia* with occasional small trees (*Callitrus* sp.). Remains of chicks were often found around the base of these small trees. Small groups of Raven were seen around the Lake but the only raptor sighted was a Wedge-tailed Eagle. Fox prints were seen on some exposed mud flats.

Like many wheatbelt areas, this year (1988) Lake King has received substantial autumn and winter rainfall. From the beginning of March to the end of July, Lake King has recorded



Banded Stilt chick, Lake King - 5.8.88

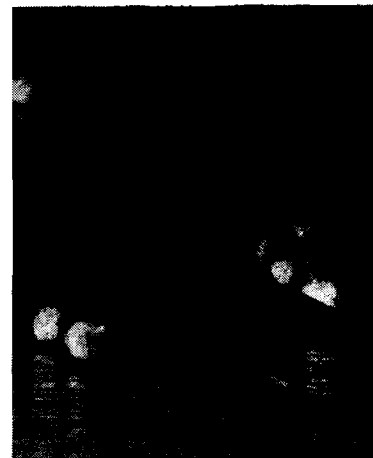
213 mm and the depth of water in Lake King was up to 30 cm.

Banded Stilt were seen feeding on small black ostracod crustaceans in the water. Brine shrimps documented as a main component of the diet of Banded Stilt were not numerous in Lake King. However, they were numerous in the adjacent lakes not being used by the Banded Stilt. Large flocks of Banded Stilt were also seen on Lake Grace; however, there was no sign of breeding having occurred.

The nesting habits of Banded Stilt were first described from a colony at Lake Grace in 1930. A breeding attempt (or success) was also made at Lake King in the same year. No further breeding has been recorded from Lake King until August, 1988.

A. Bougher

This report appears to confirm that brine shrimps are not vital to the breeding of the Banded Stilt. This was recorded in the Coorong in 1981 and 1982 (Lane, B.A. 1987, *Shorebirds in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne). The "creche" formation may not have been previously reported and is supported by Pringle J.D. (1987) *The Shorebirds of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, N.S.W.



Banded Stilt and chick, Lake King

OBSERVATIONS

Please send details of sightings to 'Observations Officer' at the W.A. Office of the RAOU. Unusual sightings should be accompanied by field notes. Preliminary checking of the following observations has been undertaken but further scrutiny should be given prior to inclusion in any official or technical report. This list of observations mainly covers the period from August 1988 to October 1988.

DOWN SOUTH

Great Crested Grebe - 1, 26/10/88, Lake Joondalup: nest with young - GL

Hoary-headed Grebe - 28/9/88, Toolibin Lake: at least four nests with eggs, on small islets (lake shallow) - RJ

Southern Giant-Petrel - 1, 10/7/88, North Mole (Fremantle) - RAOU

Hutton's Shearwater - 30+, 14/10/88, Point Peron (Rockingham) - GM

Great Cormorant - 17, 28/9/88 Blackwatch Swamp (W of Coolup): three pairs breeding - RV, BCa

Pacific Heron - nest with two chicks, 22/10/88, Hurstview Lake (Dandaragan Shire) - ABu, BBu

Cattle Egret - 2, 11/9/88, paddock near Kogolup Lake (Cockburn Shire) - DJ, BF * 12, 29/9/88, in pasture with cattle, near Jerdacuttup Lake (E of Hopetoun) - RJ

Great Egret - September-October 1988: active colonies at Needoonga Lake (45 pairs), Chandala Swamp (5 pairs), South Perth Zoo (7 pairs?), West Corio Swamp (42 pairs) South Munginup Swamp (10 pairs?), Rosamel Swamp (3 pairs), Australind Egret Swamp (16 pairs), McCarley's Swamp (55 pairs) - a total of ca. 183 breeding - RV, RJ

Little Egret - 15, 6/3/88, Creery Island (Peel Inlet) - GM * 1, 29/5/88, perched on top of dead pine tree in Ferndale - MB * 4, 12/9/88, Goegrup Lake - AD * 2, 28/10/88, West Corio Swamp (N of Pinjarra): nest with eggs - RV This is the third breeding locality in southern W.A. in addition to Australind, and Caris Park Rd Swamp (S of Pinjarra)

Little Bittern - 1, 30/9/88, swamp near Woodup Swamp (E of Esperance) - RJ * 1, 2/10/88, swamp E of Mortijinup Lake (Esperance Shire) - JE Both are new localities for this species. * nest with five eggs, 3/11/88, Herdsman Lake - SG

Australasian Bittern - 1, 30/9/88, swamp near Woodup Swamp (E of Esperance) - RJ * 2, September-October 1988, Mettler Lake (NE of Albany) - PL * 1, 27/10/88, Bengier Swamp - RV, SS

Sacred Ibis - 80+ pairs breeding, 17/9/88, swamp near south end of Harvey Estuary - RJ

Straw-necked Ibis - 150+ pairs breeding, 27/10/88, Crackers Swamp (Dandaragan Shire) - RJ

Royal Spoonbill - a pair at nest with eggs, 17/9/88, swamp near south end of Harvey Estuary - RJ (This is the second breeding record for the south-west, the first being at Barragup Swamp (near Mandurah) in September 1985) * 1, 29/9/88, in flooded pasture near Jerdacuttup Lake (E of Hopetoun) - RJ

Yellow-billed Spoonbill - 15 pairs breeding, 17/9/88, swamp near south end of Harvey Estuary - RJ * 3, 23/10/88 Mettler Lake (NE of Albany): nest with one large young - PL * 31/10/88, swamp west of Bambun Lake (Gingin Shire): colony of 10 breeding pairs sighted during aerial survey - RJ, RV

Plumed Whistling-Duck - 7/9/88, Paynes Find to Yalgoo Road- JMa

Freckled Duck - 1, 25/8/88, Toolibin Lake (lake probably too shallow for breeding) - GP, RV, SH * up to 5, including three coloured males, 13/8 to 22/10/88, Gibbs Rd Swamp (Armadale Shire): a nest with eggs, some ready to hatch was found on 22/10/88 - DJ, RJ, RV * a male on 14/9/88 and a pair on 26/9/88, shrubby swamp near Jurien Bay - NT, RJ * 1, 18/9/88, swamp 20 km S of Coorow - SF, AF * a pair, 26/9/88, thicket swamp near Jurien Bay (separate swamp to abovementioned) - RJ * 3, 28/10/88, Chandala Swamp: a pair, and a second coloured male attempting to win the paired female - RJ

Chestnut Teal - 6, 29/9/88, lower reaches Jerdacuttup River (near Hopetoun): with young - RJ

Australasian Shoveler - 20, plus two clutches of young, 28/10/88, Cockleshell Gully (fresh) Lake - RJ

Hardhead - 191, 16/7/88, Namming Lake (Dandaragan Shire) - ABu, BBu * 28-29/9/88, frequently seen in flooded wetlands from Lake Grace to Bremer Bay - RJ * 27/10/88, Crackers Swamp (Dandaragan Shire): nest with four eggs and nest with 12 eggs in *Baumea articulata* - RJ * 5/11/88, Gibbs Rd Swamp (Armadale Shire): nest with nine eggs in paper-bark fork - RJ

Blue-billed Duck - 32, 1/10/88, Byenup Lagoon (Manjimup Shire): paired and displaying - RV, BCa

Black Kite - 1, 16/10/88, near Ocean Reef Road (Joondalup): tail twisting and wing shape noted - SL (Record requires confirmation)

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 2/7/88, Kelmscott - PCu * 1, 18/9/88 & 4/10/88 at nest in jarrah/wandoo woodland, near Frankland - RW, RJ * 24/9/88, Boyagin Rock - PRH * 1, 2/10/88, near Bannitup Lake (Esperance) - RJ

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - 1, 3/9/88, Swan River near St Annes Hospital - SL

Little Eagle - 1, 18/8/88, Mt Lawley - RV

Spotted Harrier - 1, 8/10/88, Forrestdale Lake - PRH

Peregrine Falcon - pair nesting on cliff, August-September 1988, NE of Mingenew - CN, WN

Buff-banded Rail - 13, 10/1/88, Alfred Cove - GM

Baillon's Crake - 1, 28/9/88, Caris Park Rd Swamp (S of Pinjarra): flushed from small area of flooded pasture - RV, BCa

Bush Thick-knee - 2, 22/8-17/9/88, Seabrook (SE of Northam): heard calling and observed sheltering in clump of trees a pair or more has bred here for many years, rarely moving away except when paddocks are being cropped - LM

Sooty Oystercatcher - 32, 2/8/88, Leeuwin-Naturaliste NP - KH

Hooded Plover - 539, 9/4/88, Lake Warden (Esperance) - GM (Possibly the largest group recorded in W.A.) * 260, 1/10/88, Karbul Lake (Esperance Shire) - RJ

Large Sand Plover - 3, 2/11/88, Alfred Cove - JH, PRH

Banded Stilt - 3000, September 1988, a small lake at Nambaling (W of Dowerin) - CN, WN * thousands, September-October 1988, Lake King: including young birds and many dead juveniles - SH & others. (Banded Stilts bred at or near Lake King in winter-spring 1988, but the nesting site was not located. Please report observations of breeding Banded Stilts as soon as possible)

Wood Sandpiper - 4, 25/8/88, Toolibin Lake: new species for Toolibin - GP, RV, SH

Terek Sandpiper - 1, 13/9/88, Alfred Cove - JD

Black-tailed Godwit - 3, 22/11/87, mouth of Collie River - GM * 1, 2/8/88, Leeuwin-Naturaliste N.P. - KH

Red Knot - 49, 12/10/88, Woodman Point - DN

Great Knot - 153, 6/2/88, Alfred Cove - GM

Little Stint (?) - a possible juvenile, 17/10/88, Alfred Cove: dark cap, split supercilium and bright white mark on back - RJ
Red-necked Stint - a 'white bird', 10/9/88, Alfred Cove - JD
Sanderling - 37, 10/12/87, Woodman Point - GM * 7, 27/7/88, Hamelin Bay (near Augusta) - KH

Fairy Tern - 50, 5/9/88, Lake Clifton - AD

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo - pair at nest with chick in woodland near North Bannister, 29/10/88 - SF, AF

Regent Parrot - 12+, 2/7/88, Kelmscott - PCu

Cockatiel - 1, 15/10/88, swamp near Westfield Park Primary School - GMa

Ground Parrot - 4, 6/10/88, Fitzgerald River N.P.: along Fitzgerald Track - GHo (Imitation of call was given and three birds were identified from responding calls and one was seen)

Fairy Martin - 1, 3/9/88, Ellendale Water, N of Mingenew - BWn

Crested Shrike-tit - 2, 27/8/88, Flynn Rd (Mundaring Shire) - BBA, MC

Chiming Wedgebill - 7/9/88, near east side of Lake Moore on Maranalgo Station: Southern limit? - JMa

Variegated Fairy-wren - 5, 16/10/88, Kings Park Botanic Gardens: one coloured male and four uncoloured birds - DM

Western Bristlebird - 9, 6/10/88, near location for Ground Parrot (above): all singing males - GHo

Grey Honeyeater - 1, 23/9/88, Mt Magnet to Yalgoo Rd, near Munbinia turnoff: singing bird was recognised from tape recording - GHo * 2, 24/9/88, Yalgoo road east of Mullewa: in low shrubs adjacent farm land; short bill noted - BBa, ND * 4, early October, Z-Bend Gorge (Kalbarri) - DM

Pied Honeyeater - 24/9/88, Wanarra Station (43 km ESE Perenjori): nest with small young - RJ

Red-eared Firetail - 1, 25/9/88, Poison Gully (Armadale Shire) - GMa

Australian Magpie - immature, 21/10/88, Rottnest Island at West End - PP (Magpies occur as vagrants on Rottnest - RV)

UP NORTH

Least Frigatebird - 1, 10/5/88, Point Quobba (Carnarvon): immature - GM

Red-tailed Tropicbird - three pairs breeding, September 88, Pelsart Island (Abrolhos) - HP (Breeding has been recorded previously on the Abrolhos but according to the Atlas, not since 1954 - RV)

Cattle Egret - 10/10/88, Broome sewage ponds - BW, GH

Royal Spoonbill - 1, 15/9/88, Rudall River N.P. (Codbro Pool) - MBo

Square-tailed Kite - 10-24/8/88, dunes near Broome jetty - BW, GH

White-bellied Sea-Eagle - 1, 21/8/88, lower Dunham River (Kununurra): nest with month-old chick - MH * five nests with young, September 1988, Alrolhos Islands - HP

Grey Falcon - 1, 16/9/88, Balfour Downs Station (East Pilbara) - MBo (Description supplied)

Grey-tailed Tattler - 288, 9/5/88, Babbage Island (Carnarvon) - GM

Terek Sandpiper - 6, 21/9/88, Wyndham Port - KO

Sanderling - 1, 26/9/88, Quarry Beach (Broome): not common on Broome beaches - BW, GH

Little Bronze-Cuckoo - 18-30/8/88, observatory grounds - BW, GH

Barn Swallow - 50+, 29/10/88, Derby sewage Pond - LV, PM

Yellow Wagtail - 5, 29/10/88, Derby sewage Pond - LV, PM

Kimberley Flycatcher - 2/8/88 & 18/9/88, Crab Creek (Broome): on each occasion, two birds flying above mudflat - BW, GH (Record requires confirmation)

Little Shrike-thrush - 4-17/8/88, Broome observatory grounds, during sudden hot spell - BW, GH

Thick-billed Grasswren - 4, 3/5/88, Peron Peninsula - GM * 1, 18/9/88, Monkey Mia - BBa, MC

Black-tailed Treecreeper - 4, 7/8/88, Fortescue River bridge at Coastal Highway - AJo, RJ

Grey-headed Honeyeater - 9-11/9/88, edge of Roebuck Plain (Broome) - BW, GH

Gouldian Finch - 41, 14/9/88, Wyndham garden - KO

KEY TO OBSERVER CODES

ABu	- Anne Buchanan	KH	- Katherine Highman
AD	- Austin Daw	KO	- Kimberley Observer
AF	- Austin Fincham	LM	- Lindsay Milhinch
AJo	- Allan Jones	LV	- Lee Vernon
BBa	- Bryan Barrett	MB	- Max Bailey
BCa	- Ben Carr	MBo	- Mariee Bougher
BBu	- Bruce Buchanan	MC	- Margery Clegg
BF	- Bryony Fremlin	MH	- Mike Howell
BW	- Brice Wells	ND	- Norma Duff
BWn	- Brian Wilson	NT	- Noel Tyrer
CN	- Clive Napier	PCu	- Peter Curry
DJ	- David James	PL	- Pattie Leighton
DM	- Dusty Millar	PM	- Pam Masters
DN	- Doug Nash	PP	- Peter Pickford
GH	- Gail Hooper	PRH	- Peel Howden
GHo	- Glenn Holmes	RJ	- Roger Jaensch
GL	- Graham Little	RJo	- Rose Jones
GM	- Gordon McDonald	RV	- Rodney Vervest
GMa	- G. Marston	RW	- Rita Watkins
GP	- Grant Pearson	SF	- Sandra Fincham
HP	- Howard Parker	SG	- Sue Gordon
JD	- Jack Donohoe	SH	- Stuart Halse
JE	- Jack Ewert	SL	- Sophia Le Faucheur
JH	- Jack Hunt	SS	- Sheryl Stephens
JMa	- Jim Masters	WN	- Wendy Napier

NATIONAL BIRD WEEK

This year the sub-committee organising activities for Bird Week approached all secondary schools in Western Australia asking if they would participate in activities and have displays for this occasion.

The response was excellent with 71 government and private schools responding to our offer of materials for displays and 29 schools requesting speakers or leaders for bird walks. Twenty six country schools as far apart as Esperance, Newman and Kununurra were involved and in several of these country centres we were able to have our members as speakers.

A competition for secondary schools was widely publicised and the winner of the award was Martin Cake of Kalumunda Senior High School for his excellent study of the Boobook Owl. The competition will again be held in 1989.

The sub-committee thanks all those members who so willingly helped to make this a very worthwhile and successful event for the W.A. Group.

A. Jones

WATERBIRD STUDIES

ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNTS

From the experience of the RAOU's "Great Duck Count", we have established a new, and hopefully permanent enquiry: the BI-ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNTS. The counts will be made each year at the end of the waterfowl breeding season (November) and late in the dry season (March). We have secured funding from the Department of Conservation and Land Management for three years, i.e. six counts for the project. THE ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNTS have two main objectives:

(1) to provide an index of annual abundance of ducks, swans and coots in south-western Australia, and

(2) to compare regional distribution of waterfowl and types of wetlands used by them in the breeding and non-breeding seasons.

The project will be more precise than the "Great Duck Count". There will be a fixed set of wetlands, chosen by RAOU and CALM from the results of previous work and designed as a good representative sample of wetlands in the South-West and Eucla Land Divisions. Each observer will generally be allocated 2-4 small lakes or swamps, 2 river pools and 5 farm dams to survey in the nine day Count period.

Observers are not required to have previous experience in counting waterfowl, though this would be helpful, but we expect their surveys to be thorough and consistent. We hope that observers will survey their allocated wetlands in each of the first six Counts (November 1988 to March 1991), but we should be able to find replacements if needed.

THE ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNTS will be given a high public profile and will be of great benefit to the understanding and conservation of ducks, swans and coots in Western Australia.

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US in this vital research. Many of you will have already participated in the November 88 count. The second count of the first year of study will be in March 1989 (dates to be advised).

COASTAL PLAIN PROJECT

RAOU is seeking funds from the Water Authority for a three year study of waterbird breeding on the Swan Coastal Plain. (Money for our full-time staff runs out in April 1989!!) Our proposal has not been successful thus far, but we are still hopeful.

ROUTINE WATERBIRD SURVEYS

Formal collection of waterbird data from routine surveys of wetlands has now come to an end. Results from 1981-5 surveys in nature reserves have been summarised in RAOU Report No. 30 (see below), which is with an editor in Melbourne and should hit the streets early in 1989. Results from 1985-8 surveys of important and threatened wetlands have been summarised on computer and a report is currently being prepared. This report would also indicate the scope of RAOU data available for other wetlands for which we have received data in the period 1981-8.

The reports will be immensely helpful to CALM in its task of managing wetlands and waterbirds in W.A. Your work in collecting waterbird information has alerted CALM about many important waterbird breeding and refuge areas that were previously unknown.

RAOU generally gets some income from charges for access to its waterbird data. This revenue is sufficient to cover costs of computing small to moderate volumes of waterbird data. We are therefore able to store further incoming data and produce an annual printout of new information.

If you wish to continue counting waterbirds at a wetland in W.A., we will happily accept your data for storage in the "Waterbird Data Bank". We are always keen to get data from "new" wetlands and from important and threatened wetlands. The Bank will be accessible, at cost, to government and industry, for approved management and conservation purposes. In addition, we may continue to scan incoming data sheets for interesting records to be included in 'Observations' in W.A. Bird Notes. We cannot, however, guarantee that data from your future survey work will be included in a formal publication such as an RAOU Report.

REPORTS OF RECENT WORK

The following RAOU Reports are now available, at a cost of \$5.00 including postage, from the Perth Office.

Ducks, swans and coots in south-western Australia: the 1986 and 1987 counts, RAOU Report No.31, by R. Jaensch and R. Vervest (1988); 32 pages.

Ducks, swans and coots in south-western Australia: the 1988 count and recommendations, RAOU Report No.46, by R. Jaensch and R. Vervest (1988); 26 pages.

Waterbirds in the Eastern Muir Wetlands, 1986-1987, RAOU Report No.47, by R. Jaensch and R. Vervest (1988); 21 pages.

The following RAOU reports are in preparation or in press:

Waterbirds in Nature Reserves of South-western Australia, 1981-1985: Reserve Accounts, RAOU Report No.30, by R. Jaensch, R. Vervest and M. Hewish: ca. 250 pages.

Waterbirds at Remote Wetlands in Western Australia, 1986-8, RAOU Report No.32, by R. Jaensch and R. Vervest: ca. 80 pages.

Reports on Important and Threatened Wetlands (1985-8), Egret Breeding Colonies and Australasian Bitterns are due to be prepared in the next few months.

As reports are published, complimentary copies should be mailed by us to participants in the projects. If you think you have missed out, please let us know.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all RAOU members and friends who have contributed in any way to RAOU Waterbird Research in the past 7-8 years. Much has been achieved through your enthusiastic and dedicated efforts, for the benefit of waterbirds in Western Australia.

R. Jaensch & R. Vervest

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

Following the last RAOU Council and Research Committee meetings, we have been able to make headway at last. The pit toilets and bush showers, tolerable to those who roughed it for a couple of days, have become history. Their passing was noted, but not mourned. We still have a water problem, but a generous grant from CALM will ensure we can solve it and also instal some form of fencing.

Largely due to the generosity of the W.A. Group and aided by assistance from Jock McLaren and John Malcolm, the wiring of doors and windows is virtually finished. The film night presented by Kevin Coate, with assistance from The Friends of Broome was a huge success. Thanks to those who supported it. The proceeds enabled us to procure our first tea towels and T-shirts. We thank Rod Smith who may well be called the procurer. It seems likely we will have enough left over to buy a suitable freezer. This will be of great value with the "wet" season almost upon us.

After a difficult period, when nothing was happening and life became a little frustrating, it's good to be back on the rails. The value of this time lies in the knowledge that we have a lot of friends, not only in Perth, although this is where most of them are, but right across Australia. We are grateful for every supporter and every expression of support.

Broome itself is becoming aware that we exist. We are finding those who believe the Observatory has a place in the ongoing life of the area. The Shire has been very helpful; Lord McAlpine and his associates offer great assistance. The Chamber of Commerce is interested; Ansett W.A. through its local manager, have set up a wonderful raffle. (First prize will bring two people from any capital city in Australia to Broome and give them one week at Club Cable Beach). All this at peak wader departure time, March-April, to enable the winners to enjoy an epicurean feast of bird watching.

With the coming of the wet, birds abound. We can show you exciting species almost at the drop of a hat. The Dollarbirds are back and can be seen in the streets of Broome. Little Curlew, Varied Lorikeet and Banded Honeyeater can easily be seen within the town perimeters. There are 3 Cattle Egret at the sewage ponds, one in breeding plumage. Red-headed Honeyeaters, birds we had difficulty locating with consistency previously, have been seen at one site nine times in succession and seven times in the same tree.

It is a pity that more people do not come north during the "green" season when birding is at its best. In fairness however, we do point out that "early wet" and "heavy sweat" can become almost synonymous.

G. Hooper & B. Wells

DR DOMINIC LOUIS SERVenty

**FIRST EDITOR OF W.A. BIRD NOTES: DECEASED
8 AUGUST 1988**

The inaugural meeting of the Western Australian Branch of the RAOU was held on 22 May 1943. Ten persons were present; among them Dr D.L. Serventy.

The report of the meeting reads that Dr Serventy "wished to avoid the profitless type of meeting so often found in natural history organisations. The meetings should have the serious aim of making.... better ornithologists as well as providing an evening of entertainment. ... It was hoped to include a theoretical and practical topic at each meeting."

Dom Serventy actively participated in the early meetings of the W.A. Branch of the RAOU and the range of topics he introduced or contributed to is impressive. At the second meeting Dom Serventy led discussion of the importance of territory, then being recognised for the first time and on the identification of thornbills. At the next meeting he discussed bird display and the identification of beach-drifted petrels and in subsequent meetings contributed to the identification of albatrosses, the preparation of bird specimens, fauna boundaries, mortality of seabirds in Western Australia, bird social hierarchies, bird song, the resolution of differing interests in national parks, speciation of pardalotes, the pituitary gland and the breeding cycle, and the identification of ducks. In December 1944, Dom Serventy announced he was preparing a second edition of *Birds of the Swan River District* and at the fifteenth meeting in June 1947, he gave an account of the investigations he was then conducting on behalf of the CSIRO and the Tasmanian Fauna Board on the biology of the Short-tailed Shearwater. This CSIRO work developed into a major contribution to our knowledge of these birds.

In addition to his contributions Dom Serventy edited the early editions of Bird Notes, numbers 1 to 5 inclusive. The different conditions to these of today are illustrated by a report (July 1944) about Mr K.G. Buller presenting a collection of birds from the Canning Stock Route to the W.A. Museum. Mr Buller was included in a party reconditioning the wells along the Route between Wiluna and Halls Creek by being "given an official post with the party, that of pedal wireless operator and first-aid assistant. In his spare time he collected bird specimens and other natural history material, often under very trying conditions, the skinning being mostly done at night under the illumination of a carbide lamp."

It is also noticeable how many of the early meetings dealt with bird identification. Amid the large numbers of well photographed and illustrated bird books currently available and the ready accessibility of colour photographs and colour slides, it is difficult to grasp the difficulties of bird watching before these books and aids were available. It is clear the written word and personal interchange were the main means of passing on identification knowledge.

Throughout these early meetings, rarely attended by more than ten people, it is clear that Dom Serventy played a leading and significant role in setting a high standard of knowledge and breadth of observation, in motivating bird study and in making his knowledge available.

Dom Serventy's contribution to the establishment of the W.A. Group was significant and throughout his career he continued to give the Group encouragement.

ENDANGERED AND VULNERABLE SPECIES PROJECT (EAVES)

The W.A. Group Conservation Sub-committee wishes to receive records of sightings or breeding records of those birds, which in Western Australia, south of Shark Bay, are or may be endangered and vulnerable. The Department of Conservation and Land Management is currently revising the list of birds to be gazetted as in need of special protection (and other fauna and flora) and it is hoped contributions to the endangered and vulnerable species (EAVES) project will be a contribution to the work of CALM and in turn the conservation of birds.

Please send to the RAOU Office (or telephone) the date and location of any observations as requested in the list of the birds.

Locations should be from (i.e. mentioned in) the Travellers Atlas of Western Australia, published by the Department of Lands and Surveys (available from them and many bookshops). Locations to be reported on are south of Shark Bay.

The birds to be covered by the EAVES project are:

Red-tailed Tropicbird
Little Bittern
Black Bittern
Australasian Bittern
Royal Spoonbill
Freckled Duck
Cape Barren Goose
Square-tailed Kite - especially breeding records
Black-breasted Buzzard" " "
Peregrine Falcon " " "
Grey Falcon
Lewin's Rail
Dusky Moorhen - outside of Perth Metro area
Bush Thick-knee
Painted Snipe
Hooded Plover
Eastern Curlew

Asiatic Dowitcher
 Long-toed Stint
 Roseate Tern
 Little Tern
 Fairy Tern
 Lesser Noddy
 Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo - breeding records only
 White-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*baudinii baudinii*) long bills
 - breeding records only
 White-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*baudinii latirostris*) short
 bills - breeding records only
 Long-billed Corella
 Pink Cockatoo
 Alexandra's Parrot
 Ground Parrot
 Night Parrot
 Blue Bonnet
 Scarlet-chested Parrot
 Barking Owl
 Masked Owl
 Eastern Grass Owl
 Noisy Scrub-bird - other than Two Peoples Bay
 Crested Shrike-tit
 Western Whipbird
 Nullarbor Quail-thrush
 Red-winged Fairy-wren - north of Perth only
 Thick-billed Grasswren
 Western Bristlebird
 Rufous Bristlebird
 Slender-billed Thornbill
 Grey Honeyeater
 Red-eared Firetail

AUSTRALIAN WADER STUDIES

NEW PROJECT - RESIDENT WADER STUDY

The AWSG has instituted a new co-operative project: the Resident Wader Study. The objectives of the new project are:

- (a) to gather data on the breeding distribution, breeding seasonality and habitat requirements during breeding of resident waders,
- (b) to gather data with which to estimate the reproductive rates of resident waders and to identify the factors which may affect this,
- (c) to collect these data over as wide an area as possible,
- (d) to determine the relationship between breeding success, time of breeding and movements in the resident waders.

The resident waders are:

Comb-crested Jacana
 Bush Thick-knee
 Beach Thick-knee
 Painted Snipe
 Pied Oystercatcher
 Sooty Oystercatcher
 Masked Lapwing
 Banded Lapwing
 Red-kneed Dotterel
 Hooded Plover
 Red-capped Plover
 Black-fronted Plover
 Inland Dotterel
 Black-winged Stilt
 Banded Stilt
 Red-necked Avocet
 Australian Pratincole

Much of the information on breeding of these species is either anecdotal or from a small area over a short time. We hope that we can improve on this.

As co-ordinator of the project I would like to hear from you if you are interested in taking part in the project. Some data is already being collected through the RAOU Nest Record Scheme and the Australian Bird & Bat Banding Scheme, but even if you are already contributing through these schemes I would still like to hear from you. This will enable a Register of research on the resident waders to be built up. Regular reports will be published in *The Stilt*.

Contact: David Thomas
 9/26 Pearl Place
 Blackmans Bay Tasmania 7150

PALLID CUCKOO PROJECT

J. Gentilli reported on the first appearance or call of the Pallid Cuckoo in the south-west of Western Australia in 1949. A further short report was also made in 1950. As a result of his work Gentilli (1950) proposed a number of conclusions.

Central to his hypothesis was the concept that the male Pallid Cuckoo called and commenced breeding activity in moist or wet weather. The 1949 report states "very few calls are recorded because the weather is too dry" and "it is only later in July that the eastern agricultural districts are wet enough to provide suitable conditions for the birds' activities". It also stated "in the south-west.....there is no lag between the arrival of the Pallid Cuckoo and its first calling, because the arrival takes place....when moisture conditions are already favourable". Again "the exceptionally dry weather ... delayed the opening of the calling season" and "very late records show that the bird perhaps refrains from calling until adequate moisture for 'nesting' activities is available". (Gentilli, 1950)

Despite the assertion of a calling/breeding association with moist/wet conditions Gentilli (1950) also noted that the "particular dryness of June 1949 does not seem to have affected the calling of the bird" and he also was informed the Pallid Cuckoo had "whistled all through the drought year of 1914".

No hypothesis was advanced for the mechanism of association of moisture and calling/breeding activity, although an informant was quoted to the effect that "the birds frequent call generally foretells very wet weather. Whether it is because these caterpillars are very plentiful under such conditions, or that such weather pleases this bird" Gentilli could not determine. However, the same informant mentioned that the Pallid Cuckoo usually stays in the area (near Donnybrook) "all the spring even after the caterpillars have gone and does call then during fine weather".

The 1949 report mentions that Pallid Cuckoo calls are heard mainly in the south-west of Western Australia and that the bird tends to arrive at similar times each year.

Because of the association between moisture and calling/breeding and the pattern of information received on first calls, Gentilli (1950) concluded that the Pallid Cuckoo came from the north of the State into the south-west, moving down the west coast into the deep south-west and then, as moisture conditions improved further east, spread into the eastern parts of Western Australia.

In 1988 a similar project was undertaken. Members of the RAOU were requested at meetings to report their first sightings or hearing of the Pallid Cuckoo, other members were contacted through W.A. Bird Notes and a wider audience was reached through the medium of ABC Regional Radio. (Gentilli reached a wider public through a commercial station).

In 1988, 72 responses were received. Plotting these in monthly sequences showed results very different from those of Gentilli in 1949. In 1988 the earliest calls were north and east of a line from Gingin - Goomalling - Tammin - Corrigin - Kulin - Lake Grace - to Ravensthorpe. All Pallid Cuckoo calls in April were east of this arc. In May the original 'line' bulged in the centre and was then Gingin - Goomalling - Beverley - Darkan - Kojonup to Denmark. By June the calls/sightings of the Pallid Cuckoo were throughout the south-west of the State with the exception of the area south and west of a line Busselton - Bridgetown - William Bay.

A feature of the 1988 Pallid Cuckoo reports was their total absence from the Perth metropolitan area north of the Swan River. All metropolitan Pallid Cuckoo reports were in the area south of South Fremantle. This contrasts with personal experience of the Pallid Cuckoo in Cottesloe/City Beach/Mosman Park between 7 and 10 years ago. At that time Pallid Cuckoo calls were not uncommon, and in earlier years the Pallid Cuckoo was a common bird of the metropolitan area. It seems likely that the increasing urban spread of Perth, particularly the spread of the northern suburbs, has been steadily reducing the Pallid Cuckoo in the more central metropolitan areas; they may now be infrequent or rare.

A number of correspondents who reported on the Pallid Cuckoo were able to send records of first hearings going back for as long as 20 years. All these records tend to support the view which Gentilli (1950) expressed, that the Pallid Cuckoo like many other migratory birds, tends to arrive at a similar time in similar areas each year. If this be the case, it would be expected that the early calls/sightings of the Pallid Cuckoo would be heard in the more eastern areas of Western Australia each year and that a similar pattern of movement from east to west would be noticeable.

Unfortunately, earlier data that would give significant support to the east to west movement is lacking. Regrettably most of the *Atlas of Australian Birds* (Blakers et al, 1984) data is not date specific which results in much data being unusable. However, an analysis of the Pallid Cuckoo data for Western Australia for the years 1978 to 1981 inclusive does give support to the westerly movement. There is insufficient data for the year 1978, but in 1979 there is enough to give some support to a westerly movement and there is quite good support from the data of 1980. 1981 data is insufficient.

It is of interest that the first 1949 call was recorded at Mooliabeenee east of Gingin (3 June), that an early sighting in 1950 was at Mogumber (12 April) and in 1988 at Wannamal (11 June). These places are within 15 kilometres of each other.

For a bird which appears to migrate from the north of Western Australia into the south-west and subsequently to return each year, the Pallid Cuckoo has no record of migratory movement. Flocks of honeyeaters have been reported moving not far above tree height (WABN March 1983 and September 1985) and this has been suggested for the Pallid Cuckoo (K. Coate 1988, pers. comm.), following such a sighting in the Pilbara. It may be that there are few observers along a migratory route in the east of W.A.

Alternatively the Pallid Cuckoo migrates at night or at heights above normal visibility. Small migrants have been reported to climb to considerable heights in sub-tropic air masses (such as might be in the more northerly parts of Western Australia), above two kilometres and as high as six kilometres (Elkins 1983). Gentilli (1950) used meteorological records to relate calls of the Pallid Cuckoo to invasions of tropic maritime moist air.

In colder air most small migrating passerines fly below two kilometres and often between 250 and 500 metres. It may be that the Pallid Cuckoo flies at such altitudes. While this is a far cry from the swans (probably Whooper) observed at an altitude of 8200 metres from an aircraft, (and -49 degrees C!), Pallid

Cuckoos at 300 metres altitude would be unlikely to be observed even if travelling by day.

It is also known that where temperatures are high and humidities are low at low altitude levels it is beneficial for migrants to fly at a higher altitude (Elkins 1983). Such conditions may occur in April and May when Pallid Cuckoos commence movement into the south-west.

The connection proposed by Gentilli (1950), between moist conditions and the song of the Pallid Cuckoo seems unlikely. While it is known that song carries further under favourable meteorological conditions, it is likely that the frequency of song rather than the audible range is of greater biological importance (Elkins 1983). One of the features of the calls of the male Pallid Cuckoo is its frequency and persistence. Bird song has been related to relative humidity (as well as light intensity and temperature) and if there is a song/humidity factor it is likely to be associated with these conditions because the better carriage of sound, rather than the imminence of rain. Even so it seems unlikely that humidity is a significant factor in the calling of the Pallid Cuckoo. As the 1949 report makes clear, the Pallid Cuckoo sings throughout hot summer weather, low humidity and drought conditions.

It is well known that birds use favourable meteorological conditions and winds for their migratory passages whenever possible. Consequently the association of the appearance of the Pallid Cuckoo with northerly winds, which would be favourable for bringing birds from the north of Western Australia to the south, is not surprising. Northerly winds in Western Australia frequently back from north-east, usually a dry air-stream, to the north-west, often associated with rain. Pallid Cuckoos may fly on the leading edge of northerly winds or front, possibly at high level in upper winds and thus arrive in a given locality at some time shortly prior to the arrival of a rain-bearing northerly wind. The reputation of the Pallid Cuckoo enshrined in the alternative names of Rainbird or Storm bird, probably arises from its passage on such northerly winds combined with the phenomena of human selective attention and the power of intermittent reinforcement.

On arrival in an area the Pallid Cuckoo (both male and female) probably establish territories (McFarland 1981). Having determined a territory, like other birds the male Pallid Cuckoo will then call to advertise his presence and to defend the territory against later comers. This could be a reason for the frequent reported sightings of Pallid Cuckoo in an area prior to their commencing song. This of course, may be also due to a need to remain in the new area and be subject to the stimuli of that area to develop full breeding physiology. The presence of caterpillars may be part of the stimuli but the need for moisture as suggested by Gentilli (1950) seems highly unlikely.

An interesting feature of the data available has been the early presence of Pallid Cuckoo in the Bunbury area. In 1978 and 1979 Pallid Cuckoos were reported from the Bunbury area in April and 1988 in May. These reports were well westward of any other reported callings/sightings in those years/months. It seems likely that some Pallid Cuckoos use strong north-easterly winds across the suggested Gingin/Ravensthorpe line (see above), overshooting usual locations and stopping when they reach the coast. Such overshooting and falls are well studied occurrences in Europe. It is also possible that Pallid Cuckoos cross the sea and make landfall near Bunbury.

The absence of other early sightings between Bunbury and the Gingin/Ravensthorpe and Gingin/Denmark lines is striking for the years which there is data. This could be an artefact of the distribution of observers but the number of observations reported in May, June and July 1988 between the suggested lines and Bunbury would seem to make this unlikely.

The data collected in the 1988 Pallid Cuckoo Project suggest the Pallid Cuckoo does arrive at similar times each year in the same localities. Unlike Gentilli (1950), the 1988 project

suggests, as does the earlier Blakers et al (1984) data, that the Pallid Cuckoo spreads into the south-west of the State from the north, first into the drier eastern areas and then into the damper, cooler west and south-west. It is also suggested that the calls of the Pallid Cuckoo are independent of the imminence of rain.

Further surveys on similar lines need to be undertaken to determine whether the east to west movement is the usual mode of distribution.

I wish to thank all those who contributed to the Pallid Cuckoo Project, members of the RAOU and non-members alike, particularly those in non-metropolitan areas, whose observations were vital. I should also like to thank ABC Regional Radio, who allowed me to broadcast an appeal for contributions on the Gerry Gannon programme. His help is gratefully acknowledged.

B. Buchanan

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CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS

Your committee has frequently discussed the subject of junior participation in our Group and the National Council will examine a proposal for junior membership at the 1989 February Council meeting. By the time that you receive this WABN, Brian Wilson will have discussed with members at the October General Meeting, the possibility of organising junior activities within our Group. The support for Bird Week from our secondary schools is a clear indication that there are many young people who would be interested in participating.

There are now 2106 members of the R.A.O.U. of whom over 25% are in the W.A. Group. We have written to Melbourne setting out a case for a greater refund of fees to cover the costs of administration and the financing of the many and varied activities of our Group.

Members have often asked what facilities and services are available from our office. Two committee members have prepared a statement on resources considered necessary and these are being purchased, catalogued and stored at our office for use by members. Future WABN will indicate resources available. If you have any ideas to help in the selection of materials, ring or write to Claire Mercer, Resource Officer.

The provision of such services would not be possible without the outstanding work of Margaret Wilson and her band of willing workers. At this time \$8000.00 has been raised in sales from trading. As well as the many exhibitions and shows there have been displays publicising the activities of the R.A.O.U. and W.A. Group. Our thanks to all who have helped during 1988.

Members who have attended monthly meetings will have been impressed with the quality of our speakers and the variety

of topics. Thanks to the speakers and Geoff Shannon, the programme organiser, for making these such successful evenings.

The 1991 Congress will be held in Western Australia.

A sub-committee will be formed to ensure that planning, organisation and presentation will bring credit to our W.A. Group.

With this edition of W.A. Bird Notes you will find a revised set of rules for the Group which the committee will present at the A.G.M. for your consideration. Brian Wilson is to be commended for his work in drafting this set of rules.

1988 has been a successful year and members have been able to participate in a wide range of projects and activities. The introduction of new projects and new approaches in the organisation has helped to make our Group a vital and interesting one for members. My sincere thanks to all.

We look forward to meeting you at our Continental Breakfast and at the A.G.M. in 1989.

R. Denny

NOTICES

CORRECTION

W.A. Bird Notes Number 44 December 1987 contained an excursion report on a campout at Eneabba (p.9). In the second paragraph the nest of a Superb Fairy-wren was reported. This astonishing phenomenon appears to have gone un-noticed, certainly by the Editor, until re-reading the article recently. As the Superb Fairy-wren is confined to the Eastern States of Australia, it obviously was not the species seen. Possibly it was a Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, which does occur in the area.

COST OF W.A. BIRD NOTES

The cost of W.A. Bird Notes for 1989 will be \$5.00 for members of the RAOU. We have been able to achieve this reduction in cost by production economies, but the greater the number of sales the easier it becomes to keep the cost to a minimum. If you know of an RAOU member who does not subscribe to W.A. Bird Notes, please encourage the member to send \$5.00 to the RAOU office.

W.A. Bird Notes is now also sold to non-RAOU members for \$10.00 per annum. If you can encourage any non-members to subscribe, you will help keep the cost of W.A. Bird Notes down, help spread information and interest about the RAOU and most importantly, about our birds.

INJURED BIRD TELEPHONE NUMBERS

364 6463 (H) Barbara Porter
405 5555 (W)
275 2909 (H) Vicki Wakelam
389 2152 (W)
445 1986 Barbara Poor
295 1588 Sue Smith (WA Native Bird Hosp)
397 6380 Joan Payne (Waterbirds Conservation Group)
384 1564 Jean Canaway

The W.A. Native Bird Hospital can provide the names of carers for native birds on request.

Those listed work on a voluntary basis and cannot be always contacted easily - they have to live also.

Please keep this list readily available.

REQUEST FOR SLIDES

We have a collection of slides at the Office which are useful for meetings, presentations etc. but which cover only a limited number of species. If anyone has any spare slides to donate,

please bring or sent them to the Office where they will be gratefully received. Alternatively, if you would allow us to take copies of your slides we would like to hear from you. Bush bird slides are particularly required.

It is our intention to build a comprehensive library of slides, properly catalogued.

FITZGERALD RIVER N.P. ASSOCIATION

The Fitzgerald River National Park Association, PO Box 199, Ravensthorpe W.A. 6346 has purchased a 20 hectare block on a permanent pool on the Gairdner River as an alternative to Twertup Field Study Centre, which is not always accessible. The Association would like to hear from anyone wishing to join and/or willing to make a financial contribution, however small. Write to the above address.

FILM PRODUCTION OFFICE

Bob and Ann Goodale have set up a film production office in Perth and welcome all RAOU members in at any time. There is a constant think-tank on all conservation ideas - plenty of birds! - come and join in. Ideas (even just thoughts) eagerly sought. The chat and coffee breaks are great too. In case we are in the field you may like to phone 227 7519. But please call in anyway, any time.

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY RAFFLE

There will be two prizes: first prize will be a return air ticket for two from any capital city in Australia to Broome with one week's accommodation at Cable Beach Club. This prize is donated by Ansett & Ansett W.A.

Second prize, donated by Deluxe Coachlines, is a return coach trip for two from any mainland Australian capital city to Broome, with one week's accommodation at the Roebuck Bay Hotel.

Both prizes are to be taken in March/April 1989 (which will coincide with the main departure period for migratory waders). The prizes may not be commuted to cash.

The draw will be at the W.A. Group AGM on 6 February, 1989, and results will be published in *The West Australian*, 8 February, 1989. Tickets \$5.00 are available from Friends of Broome Committee.

Bryan Barrett 298 8245
Margery Clegg 364 5266
Norma Duff 364 4793
Dot Kingston 272 7872
and RAOU Office

MEETING REPORTS

9 SEPTEMBER - SLIDE EVENING

Kevin Coate, the wildlife tour operator, gave a talk (illustrated by his own excellent slides) entitled "Exploring the Kimberley". And it certainly did seem to be largely a matter of exploring, albeit with a clear end in view, meticulous planning and much enjoyment in the process. Starting with some background history of the particular area visited, Kevin led on foot with his hardy group, looking at birds, animals and local features. It is unlikely that anyone in the full house present came away without a much better idea of what to expect in that part of the Kimberley. Followed by a tasty supper provided by members, it was a pleasant and instructive evening, in the comfortable lecture theatre of Princess Margaret Hospital. Proceeds from the sale of tickets go to the new Broome Bird Observatory.

B.D. Wilson

26 SEPTEMBER - MEETING

This was a double-bill with Bert Keffe, a country member and farmer of Mullewa, giving us a picture of changes he has observed in birdlife in the area during his lifetime. Mullewa is situated on the watershed of the pastoral and agricultural area. Land development has resulted in increased run-off to creeks bringing waterbirds - crakes, rails, the Clamorous Reed-warbler and White-faced Heron. Unfortunately, land clearing has led to the all too familiar salinity and soil erosion, loss of nesting habitats and the disappearance of the once common Mallee Fowl.

Bert told us of seasonal changes in bird numbers and irregular and rare species. Through his collection of slides we learned of his great love for the area.

Before taking us on a journey to Antarctica, the opportunity of a lifetime, Phyllis Robertson made sure that we were adequately prepared against the cold weather by offering her Antarctica gear to the members to try on. Through her large and excellent range of slides and photographs we were able to meet and learn about the penguins of the south - Chinstrap, Adelie, Erect-crested and Gentoo. An excellent evening.

24 OCTOBER - PENGUIN ISLAND AND ITS BIRDLIFE

Penguin Island is one of a number of small islands off the W.A. coast, which are used by sea-birds and shore birds. As the name implies, it is the most northerly known breeding place of the Little Penguin. CALM took over management of the island in 1986.

The Island is under severe pressure from visitors - 58,000 from November 1987 to March 1988 - and plans will need to be devised to mitigate the disturbing effects.

Silver Gull breed on the Island; numbers have very greatly increased in recent years (which effect other seabirds because of the Silver Gull predatory habit). Bridled Tern (350 breeding pairs) are increasing in number as are Roseate Tern (which appear to have different breeding populations for Spring and Autumn breeding). Caspian Tern by contrast no longer breed there. Little Shearwater (20 pairs) breed on the Island.

The changes in breeding populations reflect the increased human interference and possibly the greater southward effect of the warm Leeuwin Current. Illustrated with attractive slides, an interesting and informative evening.

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

BRINGING BACK THE BIRDS

Over thirty years ago we built our home on a bare, windswept block. There was only one small *Banksia* growing on a great stretch of bare sand. Across the road from our corner block there was - and is - degraded bush with few trees. The only birds I remember from those early days were a pair of Scarlet Robins, three or four Willie Wagtail, Silvereyes, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes, Australian Magpies and Laughing Kookaburras. We had occasional visits from White-tailed Black Cockatoo and a Southern Boobook called from the bush at night.

Our garden now supports nearly thirty trees - mostly mature - shrubs galore and rampant creepers. Some trees have been planted or have grown in the land opposite. The Scarlet Robins, the Silvereyes and the Southern Boobook have gone. Australian Magpies, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes, Willie Wagtails, Australian Ravens and Laughing Kookaburras all nest not far away. As residents there are turtle-doves, Red Wattlebirds and honeyeaters - Singing, New Holland and

Brown, while White-cheeked Honeyeaters, and flocks of Little Wattlebirds are occasional visitors. Australian Raven, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin, Rainbow Bee-eater and Australian Kestrel visit more regularly.

The parrot population, though not nesting in the garden, is very much in evidence, both vocally and visually: White-tailed Black Cockatoo still come intermittently to enjoy Banksia nuts and pine cones while Port Lincoln Ringnecks spent more than an hour together pecking (seed presumably) on the lawn. One had a red strip across its head, the other, a blue strip. The nectar and pollen of gum-blossoms attract Rainbow Lorikeet, which have only recently appeared in numbers and now are present throughout the year. Last year a small flock of Galah moved onto the nearby Golf Course and visit us occasionally, while, in summer 1987/88, a Western Rosella came alone. For a few weeks it seemed to accompany a particular Port Lincoln Ringneck, but now the Western Rosella appears at the bird bath alone and is seldom seen pecking on the lawn.

The highlight of my Bird Year was the sight of a Brown Honeyeater taking nectar from a tall Blackboy spike, while its whirring wings held it steady in mid-air. It backed off, horizontally, a few inches, then shunted forward again to another tiny flower ... Is this Hummingbird-like behaviour common in the Brown Honeyeater?

C. Edwards

PELICAN POINT: JULY 1987 TO JUNE 1988

Forty-four visits during 40 weeks were made to Pelican Point Reserve in the period under review. The visits were usually made at 5.30 pm on a weeknight, but some visits were made at other times.

The number of species seen was 56, which coincidentally was the same as the previous period.

There continued to be low numbers of trans-equatorial waders. This may be attributed to lower overall numbers, environmental changes making Pelican Point less attractive or increased disturbance from traffic on the river.

An interesting observation has been the regular presence of Pied Oystercatchers. Not previously seen by me in the 20 years up to 1986, they appeared in December 1986, again in June 1987 and then regularly in the six months November 1987-April 1988 with 20 birds present on 15 March.

A single White-cheeked Honeyeater seen on 29 March was a new species for the Reserve.

M. Bailey et al.

Bird species seen and number of weeks present

40 Silver Gull	
36 Crested Tern	
36 Laughing Turtle-Dove	
35 Caspian Tern	Group A
34 Singing Honeyeater	seen > 75% of weeks visited
33 Black-winged Stilt	
31 Little Pied Cormorant	
28 Little Black Cormorant	
27 Tree Martin	
26 Red-capped Plover	Group B
25 Variegated Fairy-wren	seen 50-75% of weeks visited
22 Red-necked Stint	
20 Australian Pelican	
20 Pacific Black Duck	

18 Grey Plover
18 Brown Honeyeater
17 Pied Oystercatcher
16 Grey Teal
15 Rainbow Bee-eater
14 Common Sandpiper
13 Great Cormorant
13 Fairy Tern
12 Red Wattlebird
11 Darter
10 Red-necked Avocet
10 Willie Wagtail

Group C
seen 25-50% of weeks visited

6 Australian Shelduck
6 Port Lincoln Ringneck
5 White-faced Heron
5 Greenshank
5 Curlew Sandpiper
4 Black-shouldered Kite
4 Bar-tailed Godwit
4 Red Knot
4 Great Knot
4 Spotted Turtle-Dove
4 Silveryeye

Group D
seen < 25% of weeks visited

4 Australian Raven
3 Sacred Ibis
3 Western Gerygone
2 Mallard
2 Large Sand Plover
2 Galah
2 Grey Fantail
2 Sacred Kingfisher
2 Black-tailed Godwit
1 Pied Cormorant
1 Rufous Night Heron
1 Black Swan
1 Banded Stilt
1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
1 Richard's Pipit
1 Grey-tailed Tattler
1 Australian Magpie Lark
1 White-cheeked Honeyeater

Total of 56 species present in 40 weeks of visits

Month	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
No. of Weeks Visited	0	3	4	4	4	5	4	3	5	3	3	2

CAPE RANGE NATIONAL PARK - NINGALOO REEF

Mangrove Bay, towards the northern end of the park, proved an interesting spot for viewing waders, though it was a little too early (late September 1988) to expect large numbers of migrating birds.

Nine or ten species were observed feeding on the reefs at low tide, or resting on rocks in a mangrove-lined lagoon, where they could be viewed in comfort from the recently-constructed hide at the end of a short boardwalk. A telescope would have been an advantage here.

Yellow White-eye and White-breasted Woodswallow were common in the outlying mangroves or on the nearby dunes.

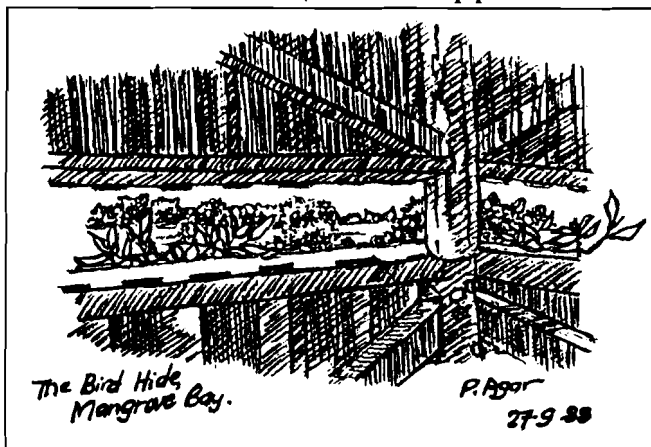
Mangrove Bore, in the same area, was a good point for watching birds as they came to drink. Flocks of 20 or so corella, Galah, Emu, Crested Pigeon and large numbers of Zebra Finch were seen on each visit.

The gorges at Mandu Mandu and Yardie Creek provided interesting walking as well as a number of different birds.

Grey-headed and White-Plumed Honeyeater and Little Woodswallow were seen at Mandu Mandu, while at Yardie Creek we found numerous Corella roosting on the rock ledges or in small caves in the gorge walls. Small flocks of ten to fifteen Spinifex Pigeon were disturbed on two occasions from resting places close to the water. Eastern Reef Egret both light and dark 'phases' were common and at least two nests were seen high on rock ledges. One adult bird, in light plumage was seen standing beside a nest which contained two half-grown chicks - one white and one grey.

Raptors seen in the park included Brahminy Kite, Osprey, Little Eagle and Wedge-tailed Eagle. By far the most enterprising were a pair of Osprey which had ventured beyond the park to build their nest at the top of a tall tower at Learmonth Airport.

During the five day visit a total of 59 species was identified, which included four species not on the current list which we picked up from the visitor centre, viz. Yellow White-eye, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Curlew Sandpiper and Darter.



G. & P. Agar

NIGHT SONG: A Query

Pizzey G. & Doyle R., (1986), *A Field Guide of the Birds of Australia* state on page 264 concerning the Willie Wagtail "Voice: Usual call spirited, sweet ... but varies much; often heard on moonlight nights". While this is so, the Willie Wagtail often sings at night, say up to 10 pm before moon rises and even if the moon does not rise. Having heard a good deal of Willie Wagtail song on a dark, moonless night recently at 3 am I wondered at the purpose of the song.

The Willie Wagtail is essentially a diurnal bird. Night song would seem to be maladaptive, by giving away a night roost to nocturnal predators, particularly owls, which have notably acute hearing. Defence or advertising of territory against (or for) other Willie Wagtails at night seems unlikely. What is the purpose of Willie Wagtail nocturnal song?

B. Buchanan

EXCURSION REPORTS

YANCHEP NATIONAL PARK

Nine observers visited Geoff Shannon's banding station in Yanchep National Park on 14 August 1988.

A brave team of banders had erected two mist nets and had commenced banding in heavy rain, before the visitors arrived. Despite the thunder, lightning and frequent downpours, 59 birds were caught throughout the morning, including nine retraps and one same day retrap. Four species were banded - New Holland Honeyeaters, Brown Honeyeaters, Little Wattlebirds and Grey Fantails, of which the New Holland Honeyeaters were the most abundant.

The visitors were shown how to take measurements, weigh each bird, fit the bands and also the techniques of ageing and sexing birds. Brood patches and any unusual features were also recorded.

One New Holland Honeyeater was offered a drink of sweetened water to illustrate the use of its tongue.

A family of Splendid Fairy-wrens was observed close to the mist nets and a Collared Sparrowhawk in a nearby gum provided a diversion during banding.

Many thanks to the banding group for a very interesting and informative morning.

C. Wilder

LEWANA - August 19-21

Fourteen people made the trip south for the weekend, arriving to find the cottages slightly altered. The removal of one section of an internal wall and the inclusion of an enclosed log fire was a very welcome improvement which made the cottages cozy throughout.

The other obvious variation was that the water level of the Blackwood River was considerably higher than the previous year.

Early morning walks to nearby areas provided good sightings of Spotted Pardalotes among roadside jarrah and marri, as well as Red-eared Firetails, and magnificent entertainment by both Red-winged and Splendid Fairy-wrens, including several males in full breeding plumage.

White-breasted Robins were again found in the gully behind the ranger's house.

During Saturday morning several of the group visited Wright's Bridge (Powlalup Reserve) and were able to add the following ten species to previous records: - Red-winged Fairy-wren, Red Wattlebird, Darter, Coot (nesting), Maned Duck (suspected breeding), Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Rufous Whistler, Welcome Swallow, Brown Goshawk and Little Pied Cormorant.

Saturday lunch at The Old Bakery Restaurant was enjoyed by some while others returned to the cottages.

Later in the afternoon, relaxing bird watchers were visited by two Splendid Fairy-wrens which came on to the cottage verandah to take crumbs.

Fourteen Australian Magpies invited themselves to share our pre-dinner nibbles. It seemed a large number to be a single family group but there was little animosity shown.

On Sunday morning most of the group wandered up the mossy track beside Running Brook, as far as a small dam, returning on tracks through the pine forest. Birds were few. Among the pines a Red-eared Firetail, carrying nesting material was seen, at the head of a small gully.

All in all it was a most enjoyable weekend, and we look forward to repeating the visit next year.



Running Brook Walk, Lewana

G. & P. Agar

A SPRING VISIT TO BOYAGIN ROCK

Boyagin Rock again provided good birding to the 35 to 40 people who gathered there on September 10. After early showers the weather settled down to a pleasant day with sunny periods and a few clouds to keep us from getting too hot as we negotiated the rather thick scrub on the Northern side of the rock. Carpets of pink everlasting and trigger plants made a beautiful setting for birding and a total of 15 different orchids were seen during the day. The birds were active and we saw the nests of the Red-capped Robin, Western Gerygone and Grey Fantail as well as many larger nests of Australian Magpies, Australian Ravens or unidentified birds of prey. A Square-tailed Kite and a Wedge-tailed Eagle were seen but we did not see either attending nests. Particularly attractive were the calls of the Golden and Rufous Whistler, Scarlet and Red-capped Robin, the Grey Shrike-thrush and the Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

After lunch we moved over to the south eastern section of the Reserve, where among the open Wandoo woodland we had excellent views of the Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, a Stubble Quail and Western Yellow Robins. White-winged Trillers were seen on the drive between the two sections of the Reserve. Fifty one species were seen on this trip, bringing the total of species recorded at Boyagin Rock to 76.

W. Napier

NALLAN STATION CUE - 24/9 - 2/10/88



To someone who had not been in that direction before, the prospect of seeing the birds in the Paynes Find, Mt. Magnet, Cue area was exciting.

We camped the first night west of Paynes Find and in the morning discovered Crimson Chats nesting, several Bourke's Parrots, a few Masked Woodswallows and later one Diamond Dove. Other birds typical of the dry mulga/acacia country were to be commonly seen and further north other birds were Southern Whitefaces, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Zebra Finch, Mulga Parrot, Crested Bellbird (often visible because of the lack of ground cover) and Red-capped Robin. Crested Pigeons were very common and Common Bronzings were fairly often seen. A number of species were breeding - mostly feeding young at the nest.

At The Granites, about 5km north of Mt Magnet we had good views of two Cinnamon Quail-thrush.

Using Nallan Station north of Cue as a base for three days we explored the surrounding area. At Nallan, a few Redthroats, Mulga and Bourke's Parrots, Diamond Dove, Grey-crowned and White-browed Babbler, Cinnamon Quail-thrush, Varied Sittella, Spotted Bowerbird and several Slaty-backed Thornbills were highlights. A couple were lucky enough to see Grey Honeyeater and Ground Cuckoo-shrike.

At Nallan Dam, which had little water left, there were a few waders including seven Wood Sandpipers and a pair of Hoary-headed Grebes with at least one downy chick. Three Australian Pelicans, one Grey Teal, five Hardhead, one Banded and six Black-winged Stilt were at the dam on one day though not there the previous day. A Red-capped Plover's nest contained two eggs.

Between Cue and Walga (previously Walganna) Rock to the west an early morning stop at a good patch revealed at least 4 White-browed Treecreepers, Varied Sittella and a few each of Masked Woodswallows, Crimson Chats and Bourke's Parrots.

At Walga Rock itself, the highlight was a Spotted Bowerbird in a bower adjusting the wall material. The bower contained 15-20 green berries. There were Little Woodswallows, a few Black-faced Woodswallows, a small group of Grey-crowned Babbler and Variegated Fairy-wrens.

After Nallan, the 20 people on the campout broke into smaller groups to make their way home. Near Paynes Find in a small patch of heath, a male Pied Honeyeater with food in its bill led to the discovery of a fledgling on the ground. White-fronted Honeyeaters were common and a small flock of White-backed Swallows was seen.

At Warne River there was a surprising number of immature Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and three Black-eared Cuckoos. White-fronted Honeyeaters were common and there were several Pied Honeyeaters in flowering callistemon in the almost dry river bed as well as White-fronted and Crimson Chats. Closer to Perth, east of Dalwallinu we saw our first Budgerigars - 3 birds and unfortunately one dead on the road. At Petrudor Rocks we were still able to see Zebra Finch, Mulga Parrot and Crimson Chat easily, and Spotted Harrier, Sacred Kingfisher, Little Eagle and White-winged Triller were recorded.

The dry country birds are fascinating, often easily seen and a trip to these areas is recommended. Many of the Stations have accommodation available to the public.

I. Standing

EAST GINGIN WETLANDS - 8 October

The East Gingin wetlands had more water than for a few years and the area has had the best growing/flowering season for some time. Contrary to what might be expected this resulted in both fewer waterbirds and markedly less bush birds than usual. Nevertheless 25 persons enjoyed fine weather, the flowers, the walking and the company. In between, 51 species were seen in the course of the day. Among these were a pair of Laughing Turtle Doves at Mogumber. This species appears to be slowly but steadily increasing in numbers in the area (and possibly north of Perth generally) and sightings are becoming more common.

B. Buchanan

PERRY LAKES/BOLD PARK EARLY MORNING WALKS

Many thanks to those members who led the early Sunday morning walks in September and October which were conducted in conjunction with the City of Perth. Thanks are also due to those members who came along to support the leaders in introducing the public to birds and birdwatching.

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 Standing 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.

Sunday 4 December - Morning Excursion

Flynn Road, The Lakes

An interesting small patch of Wandoo. Possible Hooded Robin, Elegant Parrot, Crested Shrike-tit. Take Great Eastern Highway from Perth and proceed through Mundaring and Sawyers Valley. About 9 km - 10 km from the latter there is a prominent road sign indicating Flynn Road to the right. Meet at 7.00 am in Flynn Road. Allow room for other cars to pull in. If you reach the "Y" intersection of the Great Eastern and Great Southern Highways, you have gone about 1 km too far.

Saturday 14 January - Excursion

Thomsons Lake/Kogolup Lake

Meet at 8.00 am in the carpark at the southern end of Thomsons Lake, off Russell Road between Pearse and Hammond Roads. Come prepared for wading through water and mud. A good area for bush birds as well as waterbirds. In the afternoon some may like to investigate Kogolup Lake to the north.

Monday 6 February - Annual General Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre: 7.45 pm for start at 8.00 pm sharp.

Saturday 11 February - Annual Social

Perry Lakes

Meet near the Cricket Pavilion at Oceanic Drive end at 6.00 am for bird watching and 7.30 am for Continental Breakfast - cost \$5 per person (children \$2.50) which also enters the raffle. If you wish to have the breakfast please notify the RAOU Office before 31 January 1989 to facilitate catering arrangements. BBQ's available for do-it-yourself breakfasters.

Sunday 19 February - Morning Excursion Lake Monger

An opportunity to see some common and less common waterbird species at close quarters. Secretive species such as crakes are also usually seen here if the water level is low enough. Meet at 7.30 am at the car park adjacent to the bowling club on the western side of the Lake, Wembley.

Monday 27 February - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Herdsmen Lake and its birds - members slides

March

No monthly excursion. Please take part in the Annual Waterfowl Counts, March edition.

Monday 27 March - Meeting

Herdsmen Lake Wildlife Centre, 8 pm

Rogar Draper will talk about the birds around Darwin.

ADVICE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor requests contributors to note the following copy concerning W.A. birds may be published; sightings etc in respect of birds outside W.A. will not normally be included. write legibly or type, **DOUBLE SPACED**. use RAOU recommended English names for W.A. birds - a list is available at the W.A. RAOU Office. copy will be edited where considered appropriate.

DEADLINE FOR MARCH 1989 ISSUE
JANUARY 20 1989



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 WA 6152 Tel (09) 450 2460

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	20 days
Perth to Darwin	
Sunday June 11 - Saturday June 30	Cost A\$1480.00
Tour Code F.T. 47	
North - South West Safari	20 days
Darwin to Cairns	
Sunday July 9 - Friday July 28	Cost A\$1480.00

SUPPLEMENT TO W.A. BIRD NOTES No. 48

PROPOSED RULES OF THE W.A. GROUP

The current rules for the W.A. Group require revision in the view of the Committee.

Set out below are proposed rules, which have been discussed at the members meeting in October and which are to be put before the Annual General Meeting in February 1989.

PROPOSED RULES OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GROUP OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

Preamble

These Rules are made under Article 65 of the Articles of Association of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union.

1. Name

The Group shall be known as the Western Australian Group Hereinunder called "the Group". The Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union is hereinunder called "the RAOU".

2. Objects

The objects of the Group shall be to further the aims of the RAOU in Western Australia.

3. Membership

Any person who is a member of the RAOU and resident in Western Australia shall be eligible for membership of the Group. All members of the RAOU visiting W.A. shall be eligible to attend all functions of the Group, but not to vote at an AGM or an EGM.

4. Management

The management, control, and general administration of the Group shall be vested in the Committee which may conduct its affairs in whatever manner as it shall from time to time decide.

5. Committee

The Committee shall consist of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and six Committee members, and shall be elected at the AGM by secret ballot after prior nomination on a prescribed nomination form signed by the nominee and another member, both of whom must be financial. Signed nomination forms should be handed to the Secretary beforehand up till the start of the meeting.

6. Subscriptions

The annual subscription for members of the Group shall be as decided by the Committee and payable directly to the Group.

7. Funds

- (a) The Group may raise and receive funds from any source. All funds received shall be paid into the Group's accounts.
- (b) The Treasurer shall be responsible for receiving, paying and handling funds, and for keeping books of the Group's finances.
- (c) At the AGM, the Treasurer shall present the past year's audited accounts for the Group.
- (d) The accounts shall be audited annually.

8. Annual General Meeting

- (a) The AGM of the Group shall be held in January or February, at a time and place to be fixed by the Committee.
- (b) The purpose of the meeting shall be to receive reports from the Chairman and Committee on the progress of the Group during the past year; to receive the financial report; to elect office bearers for the coming year; to appoint an auditor for the coming year; and to conduct any other business.

9. Extraordinary General Meeting

The Committee may call an Extraordinary General Meeting to discuss any matter of urgent importance, and shall be bound to do so on receiving a written request signed by twenty financial members.

10. Notice of Meeting

At least fourteen days' notice of an EGM and twenty-eight days' notice of an AGM shall be given to members, and the notice shall also specify the business to be transacted, together with the day, hour, and place of meeting.

11. Functions

The Committee may arrange its own periodic meetings, likewise general Group meetings, talks, functions, birdwatching outings and camp-outs, and other activities connected with birdwatching.

12. Elections

- (a) The election of office bearers shall take place at the AGM when posts on the Committee may be filled.
- (b) A member may be elected to fill more than one office at a time, but not more than two offices at once.
- (c) All offices shall be held for a year at a time, but an office bearer may be re-elected.
- (d) The office of Chairman shall not be held by the same person for more than three consecutive years. But, after a gap of at least one year, the person may be re-elected Chairman again.

13. Vacancies

If an office becomes vacant during the year, the Committee may appoint a member to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the current year.

14. Quorum

- (a) The quorum for meetings shall be:
AGM and EGM - twenty members
Committee - four members
- (b) No meeting shall be abandoned for want of a quorum, until thirty minutes after the time appointed for the start of the meeting.

15. Sub-Committees

- (a) To assist with aspects of its work, the Committee may set up Sub-Committees, with a convenor and members, all of whom shall be members of the Group, although not necessarily members of the Committee.
- (b) A Sub-Committee and its member shall exist only for the life of the Committee that appoints it, but may be re-appointed by the next Committee.
- (c) Sub-Committees shall not commit the Group to any policy expense, but may make recommendations within their terms of reference to the main Committee.

16. Group Representation

The Committee may appoint a member or members to represent the Group on any organisation which invites such representation. The Group representative shall from time to time report on proceedings to the Committee.

17. Amendment of Rules

These Rules may be amended only at an AGM or EGM and shall not be altered, unless:

- (a) a Notice of Motion, signed by two financial members and detailing the proposed changes, has been sent to all members at least twenty-eight days before an AGM or an EGM
- (b) The Motion has been carried at the AGM or EGM by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.

18. Termination of the Group

If the Group should be wound up, all assets of the Group shall, after payment of outstanding accounts, be transferred to and become the property of such organisation as the Committee shall decide.

19. No Financial Advantage for Members

Nothing in these Rules shall permit any member to derive pecuniary profit or advantage from the transactions of the Group. But the Committee may nonetheless pay an honorarium or salary to any member performing services for the Group.