

# Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group  
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

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No 60 December 1991

## Australian 1st : Black-headed Gull in Broome

On Saturday 19th October 1991 a local birder, Brian Kane, rang the Broome Bird Observatory to report a dark headed gull at the Broome sewerage ponds. Later the same day, Bruce Ferry, (Assistant Warden BBO) with two others observed the bird from between 50m and 20m for a period of 40 minutes before it was disturbed and left the area. The conclusion was that it might be a Laughing Gull, but that there were a number of details that did not seem to fit, such as the head colour and wing markings.

The bird was seen by local birders on the Sunday. Bruce Ferry and I again saw the bird on Monday. We stayed for two hours, observing from within 15m at times, although I was distracted for about 30 minutes looking at Yellow Wagtails etc. I spent most of the time updating the notes I had made on Saturday and looking for possible Black-headed Gull features such as no windows in the primaries, as we knew the bird was not a Laughing Gull and could be a Black-headed Gull.

On Tuesday, Stuart Jackson (Warden BBO) phoned RAOU HQ in Melbourne and asked for details of any relevant gulls to be faxed. The bird was seen on Wednesday and on Thursday when Stuart Jackson visited the sewerage ponds at about 7:30 am and then picked up a fax from Melbourne. This meant the details of the bird could be confirmed. The white wedge and leading edge on the top of the wing and the dark patch under the primaries were again noted. The bird was a Black-headed Gull.

The most obvious aspect of the bird's behaviour was that it rarely stayed still. On the water, it continually swam back and forth feeding. On the bank, it preened. The preening of its wings and body was mostly with its bill, although on one occasion it scratched its head with its right foot.

The gull swam with its head held high, frequently dipping its bill, presumably to catch small prey near or just below the surface of the water. There were no noticeable mannerisms that indicated if the gull was successful or not. The gull swam laps near one side of the

pond of no particular preferred length (1m to 20m was observed) and reversed direction at no particular place or for any discernible reason. Laps were shorter when we were closer. The gull made none or several dips on each lap.

With caution, the bird could be approached comparatively closely (between 10m and 15m), especially when it was on the water. It did not appear to be disturbed when several Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal took off close by during our initial approach.

The Silver Gulls seldom came within a metre of the Black-headed Gull when it was swimming. On the Thursday as we initially approached, a Silver Gull came within half a metre (or vice versa) near a corner of the pond. Both gulls called and the Black-headed Gull appeared to peck in the direction of the Silver Gull. After about 10 or 15 seconds the Silver Gull moved away. The Black-headed Gull appeared to be dominant.

On the bank there appeared to be no interaction between the two species, even though on the Saturday two Silver Gull were standing within half a metre of the Black-headed Gull, allowing us a very good comparison of size and colour.

**Size:** When the bird was on the bank, it was the same size as the Silver Gull that were close to it, or very slightly smaller, if there was any difference. However, when swimming the Black-headed Gull appeared slightly but noticeably larger than Silver Gull, but this may have been because of its upright posture.

**Head:** The head was a dark chocolate brown colour mostly, although the forehead and down to the bill was lighter. The line of the edge of the hood was distinct and from the rear it was level with the eyes. From the side, the line was slightly more vertical than diagonal and from the front, it could be clearly seen below the throat. From behind when swimming, the neck appeared much thinner than the head, probably because of an upright posture.

**Eye-ring:** The bird had a pale yellow or cream coloured eye-ring, although the front half (or part of it)

was often not apparent. The eye was dark.

**Bill:** The bill was a very deep red colour and was similar in shape and size to that of the Silver Gull. There was no significant difference in the colour of the tip of the bill.

**Legs:** The legs were also a deep red colour, very similar to the darkest leg colour of the Silver Gull and of similar length. The legs did not quite extend to the end of the tail in flight.

**Wings in flight:** There was a thin black band on the trailing edge of the outer primaries and a bright white wedge on the leading edge of the primaries joining (but not as wide as) the black band. The white continued along the leading edge of the full wing. The remainder of the top of the wing was silver grey. There was a dark patch and smudges underneath the primaries. The remainder of the underneath was whitish.

**Wings not in flight:** The wings were slightly but noticeably greyer than those of the Silver Gull. There was no hint of any brown. The primaries had black tips without windows, unlike the Silver Gull. The wings crossed in a deep V when the bird was swimming. The bottom of the wing was sometimes partly tucked into the body feathers when the bird was on the bank.

**Body:** The back of the head, the front and the

belly were a clean white. The colour of the back in flight was silver grey, or white.

**Tail:** The tail was a clean white above and below in flight. It was very slightly rounded, occasionally fanned wider. The underneath of the tail appeared discoloured when the bird was swimming due to the reflection of the colour of the sewerage pond water.

**Call:** The call was very similar to that of the Silver Gull, although it could be distinguished when both called together when it seemed to have a slightly higher tone. The Black-headed Gull called once while it was preening, a couple of times as it took off and a few times when Silver Gull were too close when it was swimming.

**Gape:** The inside of the mouth was a bright red when it opened its bill to call.

The breeding distribution of the Black-headed Gull is from central and southern Europe (including the UK) through to central continental Asia but not including Japan. In the non-breeding season the normal range extends southward to include parts of Africa, India, the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra (but not Java, Borneo or the Philippines) and Japan. It is somewhat surprising the Black-headed Gull has not been sighted in Australia before.

F. O'Connor

## Rural Roadside Bird Counts— Summer 1990 / 1991

During the spring and summer of 1990-91 large numbers of Australian Plague Locusts (*Chortoicetes terminifera*) moved through the farming areas of Western Australia, threatening damage to crops and gardens. The Agriculture Protection Board planned and executed a spraying campaign to destroy major concentrations and many farmers destroyed small pockets by spraying with their own equipment. It seemed to us to be worth attempting to document the effect of such spraying on farmland birds.

Accordingly three roadside routes were selected and surveys conducted along them during the months when locusts were most active, September 1990 to January 1991. One route (named Beverley) was on the Talbot West Road from the divide between the Helena and the Dale Rivers, to Beverley, south along the Great Southern Highway to Mt. Kokeby, then west along the Dale-Kokeby Road to Carrs Road, about three km west of Mt Kokeby. It was almost all in farming country, except for the first kilometre of partly cleared land and was 57 km long. The second was 44 km long, named Dumbleyung and starting there, then north along the Mount Pleasant Road to the One Fourteen Road, east to Tincurrin Road, south to White Well Road, east to Wishbone Road, south to One Twenty Five Road, south west to One Twenty Nine Road and then west back to Dumbleyung. The third (Moulyinning) followed the rabbit fence north from its intersection with One Twenty Five Road to North Boundary (of Dumbleyung Shire) Road, east to Springhurst Road, south west to Moulyinning North Road. It followed this road into Moulyinning South Road, turning east to meet and follow Carwardine Road south to One Twenty Five Road and so back to the rabbit fence. It was 90 km long.

The Beverley route was counted on October 20, 27, 31, November 7 and December 11. The Dumbleyung route on September 23 and January 27 and the Moulyinning route on

October 2 and January 27. No spraying was done in the Dumbleyung and Moulyinning areas. When counting, vehicles were driven at 40 km/hour and birds seen while moving were counted. If stops were made for identification no additional birds were counted until the vehicle was moving again. A single driver/observer operated the Beverley route but two people were involved on the Dumbleyung and Moulyinning routes.

The results are set out below. It is apparent that more birds were counted on the Dumbleyung (4.205 birds/km) and Moulyinning (2.871 birds/km) routes than on the Beverley (0.610 birds/km) route. We think this to be simply the effect of having a full time observer as well as a driver on the southern routes rather than a real difference between the areas. On all three routes more birds were counted in the later counts than on the early ones.

Inspection of the results from the Beverley route shows this to be mainly due to an increase in the number of Australian Ravens, from 4 on October 20 to 21 on December 11. The birds were feeding on locusts on the road. Two other changes show up in the Beverley counts; Richard's Pipit had a maximum count on October 31 and woodswallows decreased in numbers from 7 on October 20 to 0 on December 11. In both these cases the numbers involved are small.

In the Dumbleyung count many more birds were counted on January 27 than on September 23, 264 compared with 106. Most of this is accounted for by an increase in the numbers of Richard's Pipit (23 to 103) and White-fronted Chat (5 to 26).

On the Moulyinning route a substantial increase in numbers of birds also occurred between October 2 and January 27 (198 to 336). Again some of this was due to species counted only on the second count, the Yellow-throated Miner (28) and the Australian Raven (36). Eliminating these leaves a difference

of 74. Three species increased noticeably; Richard's Pipit from 36 to 75, Willie Wagtail from 20 to 46 and Australian Kestrel from 1 to 7.

The species that showed increases between spring and summer are known to make movements. We think it likely that they increased in these counts because they moved to take advantage of the numbers of locusts (including those killed on the roads) available along the routes we counted. Richard's Pipit increased along all routes; the Australian Raven increased quantitatively on the Beverley route and a subjective opinion was that it had also increased on the southern routes. The Willie Wagtail was unchanged on the Dumbleyung route, increased on the Moulyinning route and showed a slight increase on the

Beverley route on October 31 (as did Richard's Pipit), at Talbot Road. The White-fronted Chat increased on the Dumbleyung route but not on the Moulyinning route. It was not seen on the Beverley route. The Australian Kestrel increased on the Moulyinning route: it is known to feed on insects.

It appears that spraying cannot be said to have reduced the numbers of birds on the routes surveyed, although it is known that some birds died in Beverley town at the time spraying was taking place. In the countryside the birds seem to have taken advantage of the abundant insect food provided by the locust plagues. Counts obtained in non-plague years will be interesting to compare with these figures.

S. Davies, T. & D. Lloyd

| <b>BEVERLEY</b>           |           |           |           |           |           |            |             |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Species                   | Oct 20    | Oct 27    | Oct 31    | Nov 7     | Dec 11    | Total      | Birds/kms   |
| White-faced Heron         | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 2          | .007        |
| Brown Falcon              | 0         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1          | .003        |
| Laughing Kookaburra       | 1         | 1         | 2         | 0         | 0         | 4          | .014        |
| Rainbow Bee-eater         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1          | .003        |
| martin / swallow          | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 2         | 2          | .006        |
| Richard's Pipit           | 1         | 4         | 10        | 2         | 6         | 23         | .079        |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         | 2          | .006        |
| Willie Wagtail            | 3         | 4         | 7         | 1         | 3         | 18         | .062        |
| woodswallow               | 7         | 4         | 2         | 4         | 0         | 15         | .052        |
| Australian Magpie-lark    | 3         | 1         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 5          | .017        |
| Pied Butcherbird          | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 1          | .003        |
| Australian Magpie         | 8         | 5         | 8         | 11        | 9         | 41         | .141-       |
| Australian Raven          | 4         | 10        | 9         | 16        | 21        | 60         | .207        |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>28</b> | <b>32</b> | <b>38</b> | <b>37</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>177</b> | <b>.610</b> |

| <b>DUMBLEYUNG</b>         |            |            |            |              | <b>MOULYINNING</b> |            |            |              |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Species                   | Sep 23     | Jan 27     | Total      | Birds/kms    | Oct 2              | Jan 27     | Total      | Birds/kms    |
| White-faced Heron         |            |            |            |              |                    |            |            |              |
| Australian Kestrel        | 2          | 0          | 2          | .023         | 1                  | 7          | 8          | .043         |
| Brown Falcon              |            |            |            |              | 0                  | 1          | 1          | .005         |
| martin / swallow          | 3          | 0          | 3          | .034         | 6                  | 3          | 9          | .045         |
| Richard's Pipit           | 23         | 103        | 126        | 1.432        | 36                 | 75         | 111        | .597         |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike |            |            |            |              | 0                  | 1          | 1          | .005         |
| Willie Wagtail            | 18         | 18         | 36         | .409         | 20                 | 46         | 66         | .355         |
| song-lark                 | 0          | 3          | 3          | .034         |                    |            |            |              |
| Yellow-rumped Miner       |            |            |            |              |                    | 28         | 28         | .151         |
| White-fronted Chat        | 5          | 26         | 31         | .352         | 17                 | 13         | 30         | .161         |
| woodswallow               | 15         | 17         | 32         | .364         | 36                 | 42         | 78         | .419         |
| Australian Magpie-lark    | 8          | 11         | 19         | .216         | 14                 | 21         | 35         | .188         |
| Australian Magpie         | 32         | 28         | 60         | .682         | 68                 | 63         | 131        | .704         |
| Australian Raven          |            | 58         | 58         | 1.318        |                    | 36         | 36         | .194         |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>106</b> | <b>264</b> | <b>370</b> | <b>4.205</b> | <b>198</b>         | <b>336</b> | <b>534</b> | <b>2.871</b> |

## OBSERVATIONS

Sightings, with numbers, location and relevant notes (particularly for unusual sightings), should be sent to "Observations Officer" at the WA Office.

Some checking of these observations has been made but further scrutiny should be given prior to inclusion in any official or technical report.

### DOWN SOUTH

**Yellow-nosed Albatross** - 3, 18/8/91, Rottnest seabirding trip - GL et al

**Southern Giant-Petrel** - 1 beach-washed, 7/8/91, Halls Head, Mandurah - JH

**Cape Petrel** - 1, 23/7/91, North Mole - MCr \* 2, 3/8/91, Lancelin - JD

**Soft-plumaged Petrel** - 2, 18/8/91, Rottnest seabirding

trip - GL et al

**Blue Petrel** - 1, 4/8/91, North Mole - MCr \* 1 beach-washed, 25/8/91, Trigg Beach - MB

**Prion sp.** - 1 beach-washed, 5/8/91, beach at South Mole, Fremantle - BS, IS. Measurements appeared to fit Slender-billed Prion but R. Johnstone (WA Museum) could not rule out an immature Antarctic Prion.

**Hutton's Shearwater** - several, 18/8/91, Rottne seabirding trip - GL et al

**Little Shearwater** - 1 beach-washed, Aug 91, Rottne Island - BB, MC

**Little Egret** - 1, 4/11/91, Alfred Cove - JH

**Little Bittern** - 1, 17/10/91, Lake Joondalup - AB \* 1 heard calling, Nov 91, Nine Mile Lake Nature Reserve (Murray) - RV

**Australasian Bittern** - 2, 3/11/91, Byenup Lagoon (Lake Muir Nature Reserve) - RV \* 1, 3/11/91, Tordit Garrup Lagoon (Lake Muir Nature Reserve) - RV

**Freckled Duck** - 1 with 2 young, (nest found had just hatched), 1/11/91, Chandala Swamp (Muccha) - RV

**Square-tailed Kite** - 11-13/10/91, Dryandra - MM, PM \* one building nest, Oct 91, Stirling Range Nat. Park - AR

**Peregrine Falcon** - 1, 9/9/91, Toolbrunup Peak, Stirling Range National Park - BS, IS \* 1, 6/10/91, Wongan Hills - BS, IS et al

**Common Pheasant** - 1 male, 26/9/91, Parkerville - BB

**Buff-banded Rail** - up to 5 adult birds including a pair with 2 young, Oct 91, Riverton Bridge - JH

**Bush Thick-knee** - 1 + 2 young, 11-13/10/91, Dryandra - MM, PM

**Ruddy Turnstone** - 6, 4/11/91, Alfred Cove - JH

**Grey-tailed Tattler** - 1, 4/11/91, Alfred Cove - JH

**Terek Sandpiper** - 1, 20/10/91, Quinns Rock - PT \* 3, 4/11/91, Alfred Cove - JH

**Arctic Tern** - 1 non-breeding and 1 breeding plumage, 3/8/91, South Mole, Fremantle - BS, IS

**Gull-billed Tern** - 1, 16/9/91, Mandurah - TJ

**Brush Bronzewing** - 1, 3/9/91, Wilderness Road, Margaret River - IR

**Barking Owl** - 1 calling, 26/9/91, Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park - RS, JS

**Southern Scrub-robin** - 2+, 6/10/91, Mt Matilda Nature Reserve, Wongan Hills - BS, IS et al

**Western Whipbird** - 1 calling nr. Hassell Beach, 30/9/91 - AR \* 1 heard, mouth Waychicup River, 13/10/91 - AR

**Shy Hylacola** - 2+, 6/10/91, Mt Matilda Nature Reserve, Wongan Hills - BS, IS et al \* 2, 6/10/91, Mt O'Brien, Wongan Hills - BS, IS et al

**Rufous Treecreeper** - 1, July 91, Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary, Bayswater - ES \* 1, 30/10/91, Kalamunda National Park - CW, BW

**Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** - 1, 27/6/91, grounds of Murdoch University - BN

**Little Woodswallow** - 1, 5/10/91, Mt O'Brien, Wongan Hills - BS, IS et al

**Little Crow** - 1, 11-13/10/91, Dryandra - MM, PM

#### UP NORTH

**Garganey** - 2 very probable, 26/10/91, Parry Lagoons near Wyndham - FO

**Pacific Baza** - 1, 11/10/91, Packsaddle Springs near Kununurra - FO

**Redshank** - 1, 13/10/91, Roebuck Bay near Broome Bird Observatory - FO

**Gallinago Snipe sp.** - 1, 15-16-24/10/91, Broome Sewerage Ponds - FO et al

**Northern Rosella** - 2, 11/10/91, Packsaddle Springs near Kununurra - FO

**Common Koel** - male and female, 26/10/91, Kununurra - FO

**Dollarbird** - 4, 26/10/91, Dunham River near Kununurra - FO

**Yellow Wagtail** - 3, 21/10/91, Broome Sewerage Ponds - FO

**Tawny Grassbird** - 1, 8/10/91, typha reeds near Argyle Diamond mine - FO

#### OBSERVER CODES

AB - Allan Burbidge

AR - Allan Rose

AT - Audrey Turner

BB - Bryan Barrett

BF - Bruce Ferry

BN - Brenda Newbey

BS - Bev Stranding

BW - Brian Wilson

CN - Clive Napier

CW - Chris Wilder

ES - Eric Singleton

FO - Frank O'Connor

GL - Graham Little

IR - Ian Rooke

IS - Ian Stranding

JD - Jack Donohoe

JH - Jack Hunt

JS - Jim Shaw

LS - Leon Silvester

MB - Mary Bremner

MC - Margery Clegg

MCr - Michael Craig

MM - M. Massam

PM - P. Mawson

PT - Patricia Todd

RS - Robyn Shaw

RV - Rodney Vervest

TJ - Tom Jeffcote

WN - Wendy Napier

## Scopewest

YES, the waterbirds officer is still alive and kicking!

Due to a perplexing array of activities in the run-up to the last issue of WA Bird Notes, I missed the deadline and failed to appear. Apologies to all 'wetfoots' for the delay in reporting.

April, July and October surveys have been completed and data is now being vetted and entered. There is still some data outstanding: please check that you have submitted your records. Remember we require a sheet even if you saw no birds or the wetland was dry.

We have now completed nine survey periods for the Scopewest project. Only the January 92 survey remains before data gathering is complete - how quickly the time seems to have gone! January 92 will have a shorter survey time because the final analysis and writing-up will be under way and a final data set is needed by the end of January 92. I will contact all Scopewest participants during mid-December in preparation for the January survey and to tell you of forthcoming developments.

The October survey revealed a significant waterbird activity on the Swan Coastal Plain. Many of the 255 Scopewest sites had breeding records and some wetlands had very high numbers of birds also. Most notably, the presence of 15 Freckled Duck across the study area was pleasing, particularly as 3 breeding records

were recorded.

\* The opening talk at the recent RAOU Congress concerned Scopewest and I have had some keen interest shown in the project since. Some delegates have requested more information about the running of the project and many were impressed by the dedication of you the people who collect the data.

\* The project recently featured in the RAOU section of GEO giving the project even wider recognition.

\* As writing-up of Scopewest will commence shortly, my office will be (part-time) at the CALM office, Woodvale. To contact me after November 1991, please call 09 405 5100 or the RAOU Office).

### **Birds to watch**

I was very encouraged by the response to the Black Bittern article and will follow up with others in forthcoming issues of WA Bird Notes. Unfortunately due to a host of project commitments and other work I have been unable to feature another bird for this section so far.

Two records resulted from the article. One of an adult bird roosting in Flooded Gum at the previously known site at One Tree Bridge (Donnelly River) and similarly, a record from the Joondalup Lake area, also a previous haunt of Black Bittern. A new locality near Normans Inlet (Two Peoples Bay) was revealed to the RAOU (a bird in November 1980) and also a record near Northcliffe (April 1976).

I am particularly grateful to Jim Masters for sharing his knowledge of this species and to all the others who rang the office or wrote to me on these birds.

Thank you and keep a look out for Black Bittern!

R. Vervest

## **Silvereye movements in the South-West**

Early in September I climbed Bluff Knoll. At the summit I saw a young man observing White-browed Scrubwren in the stunted vegetation. Because I too have more than a passing interest in scrubwrens (and as I needed a rest after my climb) I sat on a rock and talked to the observer. He was an ABC participant from Esperance.

Several days later I met many more cabbies (Counters of Australian Birds) at the Perth RAOU Congress. More were encountered during the Campout which followed. There are 98 people/groups counting regularly from 146 sites in WA. Most send in counts every month, some less frequently and a handful are counting birds fortnightly or weekly. Two, Margaret and Stan Telford count birds in the same area on a daily basis, except when on holiday!

All these contributions comprise a data bank which can be used to document the seasonal movements

of bush birds as well as the seasonal and long term changes in distribution and abundance. However it is still extremely important to have both a good distribution of cabbies as well as numbers. Consequently I am making a special plea for greater active participation in the ABC by WA Group members.

Silvereye have been counted in 47 locations in the South-west (fig A). Most of these sites are in the Wheatbelt (particularly important as information on birds in remnant vegetation areas). Sites where Silvereye were present in winter but not summer (fig B) and sites where there has been 1.5 times or more increase in the relative abundance (birds/30 mins/5 ha) of Silvereye in winter (fig C) appear to be in the northern and southern extremities of the Wheatbelt. In summer Silvereye are in more coastal sites (fig D) and in general are more abundant in the northern Wheatbelt (fig E).

These trends suggest some Silvereye over-winter in the inland and move to the coast in summer. Some may also move south to coastal sites. However the close proximity of some sites where there is an increase in the relative Silvereye abundance in both summer and winter suggests there are also short range or localised movements of Silvereye in these Wheatbelt areas.

These results support the findings of banding studies. Dick and Molly Brown have recorded banded Silvereye moving between Manjimup and Margaret River. Perry de Rebeira has record of banded Silvereye moving from Yanchep to Augusta. These observations, with other known movements of Silvereye near the coast suggest a seasonal north-south migration. At the same

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
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| <b>Chairman</b>        | B. Wilson, 46 Farrant Street<br>Gooseberry Hill 6076 |
| <b>Editor</b>          | B. Buchanan, PO Box 10<br>Wannamal 6505              |

### **Notes For Contributors**

The Editor requests contributors to note :-

- \*material concerning WA birds may be published
- \*sightings in respect of non - WA birds will not normally be published
- \*contributions should be written or typed with Double Spacing
- \*WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- \*copy will be edited where appropriate
- \*contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

**Deadline for the March Issue  
28th January 1992**

time these banding studies have also shown some South-west Silvereye are sedentary or only locally nomadic.

We will only know certainly of these matters if we have more cabbies in the area. Southern locations — Bunbury, Yallingup, Augusta, Point D'Entrecasteaux, Walpole, Bremer Bay and Hopetoun would be ideal sites for ABC counts if we are to determine the nature of Silvereye movements to and from and along the coast. Cabbies are counting in coastal sites like Busselton, Margaret River, Albany and Esperance but the picture will only become clearer if there are observations at the sites/areas requiring them. Can you help? The Central Wheatbelt also requires observers and I should like to have sites established at Narrogin, Wagin, Lake Grace, Hyden, Merredin and Wongan Hills.

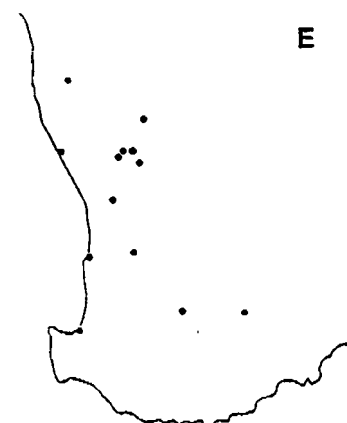
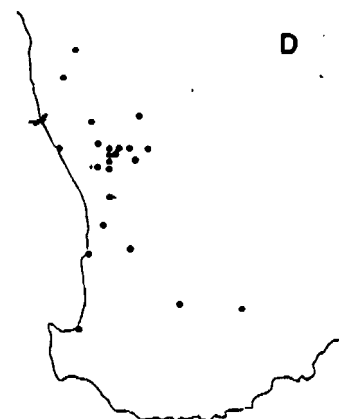
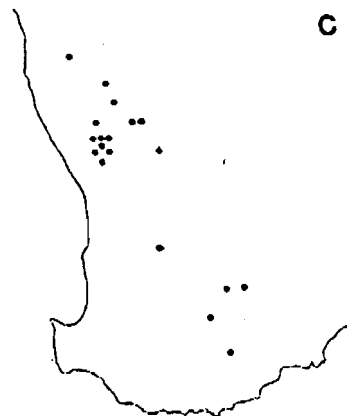
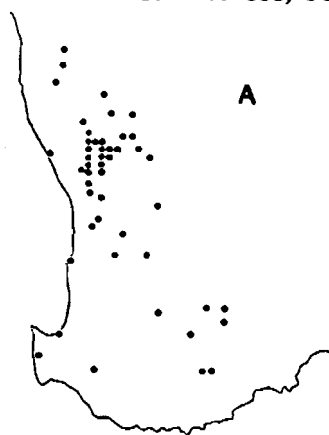
CALM and APB studies have found Silvereye moving seasonally in and out of the tall forests of the South-west. The ABC has not detected this movement because of a lack of participants in the region. ABC counts are greatly required in the Pemberton, Manjimup, Nannup, Jarrahood, Collie, Dwellingup and Jarrahdale areas.

Counting sites in heathland and wetland vegetation sites also need to be set up across Australia. Those WA Group members who census waterbirds for Scopewest could make a valuable contribution by counting the bushbirds in the vegetation (melaleuca or reeds) bordering their wetland.

Please contact me to receive a participation kit at the RAOU Sydney Office, c/o Australian Museum, PO Box A285, Sydney South, NSW 2000 (tel. 02-339183).

All are most welcome to call to say "hello" whenever you are in Sydney. Our office, together with the other office's of the RAOU is always open to members.

S. Ambrose, Co-ordinator ABC



- Fig 1A - all sites where Silvereye were counted
- Fig 1B - winter sites where Silvereye not seen in summer
- Fig 1C - sites where relative abundance of Silvereye increased x2 or more in winter cf summer
- Fig 1D - summer sites where Silvereye not seen in winter
- Fig 1E - sites where relative abundance of Silvereye increased x2 or more in summer cf winter

# Members Contributions

## FEEDING BY WESTERN WHIPBIRD

The unusual call of the Western Whipbird drew me to a patch of mallee scrub within the Stirling Range National Park, on Sunday August 11, 1991. The mallee scrub is of medium density to 1.5 metres dominated by *Melaleuca pungens* and *Lambertia inermis*, taller shrubs to 3 metres are sparse and consist of *Eucalyptus tetragona*, *Banksia attenuata* and a few clumps of an unknown mallee species.

A single Western Whipbird was seen calling and chattering as it fed only 5 metres from me. Feeding was by turning leaf litter over with its bill. Not once did I see the bird use its feet to move litter for feeding purposes.

The distant call of another Western Whipbird was heard. As it approached, both birds chattered and called to each other before coming together in a relatively open patch where they both fed on the ground by turning litter over with their bills.

Both birds continued to feed, with one bird climbing two metres to the top of a *Lambertia inermis* to feed on the spherical remains of a spider or caterpillar nest covered in leaves of the same plant.

A Southern Scrub-robin moved into the same area only three metres in front of me. A Western Whipbird feeding nearby moved towards the Southern Scrub-robin. The birds came to within one metre of each other before the Southern Scrub-robin moved away, but stayed in the area, showing more interest in me than the other near-ground dwelling bird species possibly competing locally for the same food. It seemed that the Southern Scrub-robin and the Western Whipbird tolerated each other.

Both Western Whipbird chattered and called from time to time while feeding. One called from a sparse *Eucalyptus tetragona* branch two metres above the ground, at this height very open and well above the moderately vegetated lower scrub.

Another bird that uses its bill to turn leaf litter in a similar fashion is the Noisy Scrub-bird, which I have witnessed feeding on a controlled diet during the translocation project at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve.

A. Rose

## PARASITIC POSER

From time to time during bird surveys I labour under the extra weight of camera gear. On most occasions the camera lies undisturbed during its free ride. Rather than photographs I get aches.

However my optimism prevailed once more at the beginning of October when the day was cool, the vegetation colourful and my camera beckoning. Shining Bronze-Cuckoo were calling and a fledgling soon attracted my attention with its unusual call. It had an insect-like quality, more like a cicada than a bird. It squeaked constantly at a rate of more than one a second, both in flight and at rest with hardly a break, in quite a gentle tone.

Out came the camera. The cuckoo was not so stupid as to allow a close shot but I persisted. Eventually it posed in the sunlight and I approached from behind a fairly large trunk so that the distance was minimal. Pose acceptable.. light correct.. focus.. ! With no warning an Inland Thornbill appeared in the viewfinder and thrust its head into the cuckoo's open mouth! Click!

It may be a great photo, or not, but there was delight in having a bird unexpectedly posing for an impatient photographer!

R. Smith

## LAKE JOONDALUP, SOUTH END

Since 1983 we have surveyed the waterbirds on the southern end of Lake Joondalup, the area south of Ocean Reef Road, forty-six times. It has proved to be an important sanctuary, particularly in late summer and early autumn. Although quite a small area of water, in February 1983 there were 583 waterbirds present. Other high tallies were 500 in March 1987 and February 1988 and 350+ birds in March 1984, March 1985, November 1985 and February 1986. This year, 1991, there were 300 birds in both February and March.

In very dry seasons the water contracts to a pool 200 metres by 100 metres in the south-western corner. It was so in April 1988, when there were 130 birds and again in April 1991 with 169 birds. Only once, in May 1985, has there been no standing water and even then Black-fronted Plover were present around small trickles.

Each year there has been breeding by Blue-billed Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Shoveler and Great Crested Grebe. Of particular note was the breeding of Freckled Duck in November 1986 and the sighting of Black Bittern with immature young in 1986 and again in 1987.

On the western side of this lake area on higher ground there have been many old grand eucalypts with many dead limbs and nesting holes. Gradually these trees have been and are still being felled to make way for a housing estate and new roads; the most recent road being only 150 metres from the lake edge. On the eastern side of the lake "Yellagonga Park" is being developed and the surrounds and the lake itself are to be "prettied". This will almost certainly be disastrous to a significant feeding ground and sanctuary for waterbirds. As it is, it is likely that fertiliser and pesticide run-off from the housing estate on the higher ground to the west will soon reach the lake and particularly the small area in the south-western corner which is the final refuge when all else is dry.

M. Bremner

## BUSH THICK-KNEE AT DRYANDRA

During the weekend of 18th to 20th October, 1991, I and others stayed at the Lion's camp in Dryandra State Forest. The weather was cold, windy and frequently very wet.

On the night of Friday 18th, a friend and I decided to go spotlighting for birds and animals despite the weather conditions. Shortly after dark we heard the call of a Bush Thick-knee. It sounded close to the chalet we were in, but looking from the verandah into the darkness

revealed nothing. We heard the call several more times before we set out at about 2100 hrs. Once outside we swept the paddock facing the chalets with our torches and almost immediately picked up eye reflections. We approached the area slowly and were delighted to see four Bush Thick-knee, two adult and two small juvenile birds.

As we approached one of the adults called and moved towards some taller grass at the edge of the paddock. The other adult and one of the young started to follow, but the other young bird headed off at about 90 degrees from the others. Both adults called, without apparent effect on their prodigal offspring.

The adults and attendant juvenile reached the tall grass, by which time the other young bird was uttering a series of high pitched single notes. As soon as the juvenile with the parents was safely into the longer grass, one adult bird ran to the other young bird, did a "U" turn around it and led it off to the high grass where the other two birds waited. As soon as the family were re-united they all ran off.

We saw the birds again later that night across the track from the paddock and in the same place again the following night.

It was interesting that the parent birds ensured that the juvenile with them was safe before a "rescue" attempt was made of the other juvenile. It did not appear as though the juveniles could fly, as they were only about half of the size of the parent birds.

I would be interested to hear if anyone else has seen "shepherding" by this bird in similar circumstances.

J.G. Little

## BE A BIRD LISTENER

Watching birds has become more popular, but how many watchers listen to the birdsong? While many recognise Australian Magpie song and kookaburra "laughter" most find it hard to pick out all the performers in a dawn chorus. However with a little effort you will be surprised how quickly you can learn.

Commence by listening to early morning bird calls in your garden. Pick one you cannot identify and repeat it until you memorize it. When you next hear the call try to find the bird that made it. However it is much better is to put a tape recorder in the garden and record at dawn or at other times and then pick out the calls you wish to learn. When you hear these calls again, look for the bird that is calling. You will find this becomes a challenge that is always with you and you will constantly add to your birdsong vocabulary.

Then you can commence a new adventure, the "meanings" of bird calls. Once you recognize calls you can learn their significance if you watch bird behaviour. Is there a raptor overhead or a cat nearby? Is another bird trying to enter the territory? There are many situations that provoke a call and you have a whole new field of bird behavior to explore.

There are now many published recordings of bird calls to help you. Thirty seven of these are listed in "A Guide to Recorded Australian Wildlife Sounds" published by the National Film and Sound Archive and available from your library. There is a book/cassette "What Bird Call Is That?" published by Angus & Robertson that has

two cassettes of the calls and an illustrated booklet of the more common species which is a great help to beginners (considered in WABN No 45 March 1985. Ed). John Hutchinson has published a number of cassettes including "Dawn Chorus", that is both a delight to hear and a real challenge to any who wish to increase their knowledge of our bird calls.

There is a new challenge awaiting you. Why not give it a go?

N. Robinson

## GASCOYNE WINTER BIRDING

Where do the Rainbow Bee-eaters in the South-west go in winter? Some birding guides mention that the Rainbow Bee-eater moves to the north of Australia and to the islands of New Guinea and Indonesia during the winter. However some do not go quite so far as we discovered when birding in Carnarvon and along the Gascoyne River at the end of July. At a large pool in the river at Gascoyne Junction on July 28th Rainbow Bee-eater were in the river gums along the pool. Again at Chinaman's Pool near Carnarvon a week later we saw many Rainbow Bee-eater diving and swooping above the pool and perching in the trees nearby.

Carnarvon also proved to be a good place for studying waders at close quarters. Along the shoreline where a dredge was pumping out mud and sand we had wonderful views of Red Knot in breeding plumage and a fully coloured Curlew Sandpiper - according to an English bird watching friend with us only a sight to be seen near the Arctic Circle. There were large numbers of Bar-tailed Godwit, some Black-tailed Godwit, Grey-tailed Tattler, Whimbrel, Grey Plover and Large Sand Plover. Further out among the mangroves many Great Egret were perched and there were also Osprey and a Brahminy Kite patrolling the shoreline.

Good rains around Carnarvon had resulted in a fine flush of spring growth and the air was loud with the calls of Rufous and Brown Songlark. White-winged Triller were nesting and much to the delight of our visitor from England, south of Shark Bay, Pied Honeyeater were displaying with their typical vertical dives. On the samphire flats towards the mouth of the Wooramel River we saw Orange and White-fronted Chat. Altogether in the Carnarvon area we recorded 102 species of birds. An exceptional display of wildflowers throughout the shire added to the pleasure of the trip.

W. Napier

(Rainbow Bee-eater "are found throughout the year from the Gascoyne and upper Murchison Rivers (Mileura Station) northwards to the Kimberleys" (Serventy & Whittell 1976 p.313). Curlew Sandpiper in full breeding plumage overwinter in the South-west, also in New Zealand, see Pringle JD (1987) *The Shorebirds of Australia* Angus and Robertson London p 366 Ed.).

## LAKE HURSTVIEW

Water was scarce in the early days of the development of the south Dandaragan area, (the 60's) so a well was dug at a low point 500 metres West of a rough track which was the main road to Perth. Though the well was used for stock watering, crop was also planted in the winter soggy area. A crop of hay was last garnered from



there in the late 1960's. After this the dampness increased to the point where cropping was no longer feasible and water gathered in the low area every winter.

The low area is now the permanent Lake Hurstview and the rough track has become the Brand Highway. The Lake is 19 kilometres North of Regan's Ford, 14 kilometres South of Cataby and easily visible from the Highway. The Dandaragan map shows a spot height of 79 metres, a point which is near the centre of the Lake, which now contains water all year round.

The Lake is one of five significant areas of wetland in the vicinity. The others are Lakes Guraga (see WABN No 51 Sept 1989) 2 kms W and Namming 6.5 kms S, Enemunga Swamp & Pools 5 kms NE and Namming Nature Reserve 7 kms SSE. Guraga was dry from November 1989 to June 1990, a reduction of available habitat that probably affected the Hurstview counts in that period, as it is clear waterbirds move between these five wetlands.

At the height of the winter wet, usually August/September the Lake is some 1200 metres North to South and 500 metres East to West. There is no depth gauge. At lowest water, usually April/May the maximum depth is about 500 millimetres (determined by wading) and the highest levels are some one metre higher. The Lake is principally fed by two creeks, one entering at the North and North-east, which flows all the year round and another at the South-east which is seasonal only. Both flow through areas of swampy marsh, particularly the northern creek, where the reeds etc cover a large area.

Essentially the Lake is situated in a large cattle grazed paddock. Dead Marri trees (presumably drowned) are at the South-eastern margin (which nest Whistling Kite and Australian Kestrel) and there are both living and dead casuarina species particularly along the Western edge. Some living Flooded Gum are East and South.

Lake Hurstview is unusual in that it is a "man made" lake in an area which has more usually witnessed the disappearance of wetlands. Furthermore it is a significant habitat for water and shorebirds. The Lake was surveyed every month from July 1988 until August 1991 (with July 1990 missed), 37 monthly surveys in all. During this period 45 species were recorded, a number which would have ranked 10th in the 285 wetlands surveyed in Jaensch et al (1988). Probably because of the open-ness of the Lake breeding species were only four - Pacific Heron (in a casuarina) 1988, Black Swan 1988, 89 and 90, Australian Shelduck 1988, 89 and 90 and Grey Teal 1988.

The highest number of individual waterbirds seen at one survey was 4506 in December 1989, which would have ranked 26th in the Jaensch et al (1988) surveys. The highest number of waterbird species seen on any survey was 29 - a personal record for a lake in the South-west. On average the number of species seen was 17.2, with a low of 6 and a high of 29. Because of the presence of migratory waders and the summer refuge season, the period October to March each year had the highest number of species and birds.

The numbers of Wood Sandpiper, Hoary-headed Grebe, Red-kneed Dotterel and Pink-eared Duck were significant and would have ranked 1st, 3rd, 2nd and 3rd

respectively in the Jaensch et al (1988) surveys. Prior to the survey period dealt with here, with a maximum of 22, 36 Wood Sandpipers were counted.

The Hurstview surveys came to a premature halt in August 1991 when the owner of the land withdrew permission for me to continue. The owner has informed the Shire that he is "to implement a drainage and irrigation plan to utilise the water which runs into the depression in our paddock, therefore there will be no lake & in about two years time we will be able to reseed the depression to pasture". Given the vital need for the preservation of wetlands in the South-west coastal plain, this raises some interesting conservation issues.

| Species                       | High | Date Highest                                   | No. |
|-------------------------------|------|--|-----|
| Australian Shelduck           | 3000 | Dec 1989                                       | 37  |
| Grey Teal                     | 2600 | Jun 1990                                       | 37  |
| Hoary-headed Grebe            | 767  | Aug 1991                                       | 30  |
| Pink-eared Duck               | 694  | Aug 1991                                       | 28  |
| Red-necked Avocet             | 580  | Feb 1991                                       | 20  |
| Red-necked Stint (J)          | 411  | Feb 1989                                       | 16  |
| Red-capped Plover             | 360  | Mar 1991                                       | 17  |
| Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (J)    | 302  | Nov 1990                                       | 11  |
| Pacific Black Duck            | 276  | Mar 1989                                       | 37  |
| Maned Duck                    | 262  | Feb 1989                                       | 26  |
| Black Swan                    | 183  | Dec 1989                                       | 33  |
| Curlew Sandpiper (J)          | 131  | May 1989                                       | 11  |
| Hardhead                      | 122  | Nov 1989                                       | 17  |
| Straw-necked Ibis             | 114  | Nov 1989                                       | 23  |
| Black-winged Stilt            | 101  | Apr 1990                                       | 31  |
| Red-kneed Dotterel            | 82   | Jun 1990/Feb 91                                | 14  |
| Eurasian Coot                 | 67   | Jan 1989/Aug 91                                | 19  |
| Silver Gull                   | 61   | Dec 1989                                       | 28  |
| Whiskered Tern                | 58   | Nov 1990                                       | 5   |
| Australasian Shoveler         | 56   | Oct 1990                                       | 25  |
| White-faced Heron             | 37   | May 1991                                       | 29  |
| Black-fronted Plover          | 37   | Dec 1989                                       | 29  |
| Musk Duck                     | 32   | Sep 1989                                       | 20  |
| Blue-billed Duck              | 25   | Oct 1990                                       | 12  |
| Pacific Heron                 | 24   | Nov 1988                                       | 4   |
| Wood Sandpiper (J)            | 22   | Mar 1990                                       | 11  |
| Banded Stilt                  | 21   | Apr 1991                                       | 8   |
| Greenshank                    | 18   | Feb 1991                                       | 17  |
| Little Grassbird              | 6    | Aug 1991                                       | 3   |
| Great Cormorant               | 5    | Aug 1989                                       | 1   |
| Banded Lapwing                | 5    | Jan 1991                                       | 1   |
| Australian Grebe              | 3    | Jun 1991                                       | 3   |
| Glossy Ibis                   | 3    | Sep 1990                                       | 6   |
| Yellow-billed Spoonbill       | 3    | Jul & Oct 1988,<br>Feb & Oct 1989,<br>Nov 1990 | 12  |
| Common Sandpiper (J)          | 3    | Dec 1990                                       | 7   |
| Black-tailed Native-hen       | 2    | Aug 1991                                       | 2   |
| Marsh Sandpiper (J)           | 2    | Nov 1990                                       | 4   |
| Long-toed Stint (J)           | 2    | Feb 1991                                       | 1   |
| Clamorous Reed-warbler        | 2    | Nov 1990                                       | 1   |
| Australian Pelican            | 1    | Jun 1990                                       | 1   |
| Little Pied Cormorant         | 1    | Oct 1988/Jun<br>1989                           | 2   |
| Chestnut Teal                 | 1    | Sep 1989/Aug 90/<br>Jul 1991                   | 3   |
| Marsh Harrier                 | 1    | Mar 1990/Oct 90                                | 2   |
| Pacific Golden Plover (J)     | 1    | Jan 1991/ Mar<br>91                            | 2   |
| Broad-billed Sandpiper<br>(J) | 1    | Mar 1989                                       | 1   |

The above list is set out as in Jaensch et al (1988) with the addition of the date of the highest number counted and the number of times each species was recorded (maximum 37). (J)=species covered by JAMBA.

Minimum number of waterbirds that used the Lake during the survey period (sum of the above) = 1095

**B. Buchanan**

Reference: Jaensch RP, Vervest RM, Hewish MJ ((1988) *Waterbirds in Nature Reserves of SW WA 1981-1985: Reserve Accounts*, RAOU WA

## SEA-EAGLE OVER BOORAGOON

At about 4pm on a cold, overcast day in mid-September I walked to the Karoonda Oval in Booragoon to try my new binoculars. My attention was soon drawn by a flock of about ten Australian Raven who were noisily mobbing a large raptor. At first I thought it was an Osprey which are often seen at nearby Alfred Cove. However, as I watched I noted upswept wings and a wedge shaped tail. The raptor continued to circle the Oval, climbing higher, with the raven still accompanying. I watched for at least five minutes as it flew higher and disappeared from view towards the river with one very persistent raven finally shaken off. I was convinced that the raptor was an immature White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

**M. Clegg**

(White-bellied Sea-Eagle is recorded at Alfred Cove but with few sightings. See WABN No. 43 September 1987. Ed.).

## PELICAN POINT

During the year 1 July 1990 - 30 June 1991 at Pelican Point Reserve, Crawley, Perth 59 species were seen during 43 visits in all months during 40 weeks (and usually after 5pm). Two species were added to the list of those recorded since 1 July 1983 — Feral Pigeon and Zebra Finch (this presumably an aviary escapee). This makes a total for the Reserve of 85 species.

White-cheeked Honeyeater, recorded on only two previous occasions, were seen regularly during the autumn and winter months.

**M. Bailey et al**

## Eyre Report

The last three months have resulted in the addition of three new species for the EBO.

There have been four beach-washed specimens of note. An Australasian Gannet with a numbered leg band was found on the 24 August. Banded as a nestling at Lawrence Rock, Victoria on 17 December 1990, it had travelled at least 1552 km in just over eight months. On 3 September the carcass of a Blue Petrel was found (later confirmed by the WA Museum), our first record of this species. A White-faced Storm Petrel found on the 15 October was the first record since January 1981, while a White-headed Petrel found the same day was the tenth record, nine of which have been in the months October to January.

It has also been a fruitful period for migratory waders. Some of the species exceeded their previous highest number during the 14km weekly beach count, but the real highlight has been the sighting of what we think is a Grey Phalarope on West Kanidal Beach on 10 September - still to be verified.

Two Ospreys were seen 9km west of the Observatory on 15 October: there were two subsequent sightings. Osprey have not been reported since July 1987. A lone Square-tailed Kite continued a pattern of this species as an occasional spring/summer visitor.

The sighting of a Yellow-billed Spoonbill, perched conveniently on the telegraph pole at the front of the Observatory on the 30 September was a first EBO record. On the same day one of our visitors saw 12 of them perched on the MWT 16km away, where an adult Australian Bustard with a small chick was seen on 17 September.

**T. Hunt**

## B B C B Q

Big Bird is sure all know of Willie Wagtail (WW) and Rufous Whistler (RW) —

1. Do WW seek prey or pursue when it is seen ?
2. Why is WW distrusted by aborigines ?
3. WW often nests near what other bird ?
4. The exterior of WW nests is covered in what ?
5. In a conflict between two WW's how can the aggressor be determined?
6. Do RW form a permanent pair bond ?
7. Do both male & female RW sing ?
8. RW behave differently to intruders in their territory in the afternoons to the mornings. What is the difference
9. Does the male RW assist in nest building ?
10. In the occasional 3 chick brood of RW what does the male bird do ?

Answers on page 14

## Notices

### MEMBERSHIP 1992

Western Australian members are requested to forward their subscriptions for 1992 direct to the RAOU Office, 218/15 Ogilvie Road, CANNING BRIDGE 6153 not to Melbourne HQ.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre on Monday 3rd February 1992 at 8pm sharp.

All positions, including Chairman, will be declared vacant and office bearers will be elected for the coming year. Nomination forms may be obtained from the office and sent to the Secretary or handed in prior to commencement of the meeting.

### DONATIONS TO RAOU

Members who make a donation to the RAOU intending it for the WA Group, are requested to make this clear at the time. Where this is not stated, all donations are passed to Melbourne.

## RAOU TRADING TABLE

We require a commercially astute volunteer organiser to take over the Trading Table. Buying and selling stock at various venues and to Tourist Bureaus etc. make it an interesting job for a retired couple. There is plenty of volunteer assistance, but we need an organiser. Contact Clive Napier tel. 09 332 7265 or leave a message at the RAOU Office tel. 09 364 6202.

## 1991 Congress Report

The annual RAOU National Congress on Australasian birds and their habitat took place this year in Perth from September 20th to 22nd at the University of Western Australia, with delegates from all parts of Australia and New Zealand. Over 110 persons attended the Congress; in fact, numbers so far exceeded expectations that the venue of the meetings had to be shifted to a larger hall.

Friday September 20th was taken up with registration of delegates, and the official opening by Professor Brian Collins (RAOU President) followed by a slide presentation on birds of Western Australia by Michael Morcombe, the well-known bird photographer. Saturday saw the main body of papers; fifteen in all, covering a wide range of topics of ornithological interest. The evening ended with a splendid Congress dinner in Kingswood College, the hall of residence of most delegates. Sunday 22nd produced another seven papers before midday, when Dr. Philip Moors (RAOU Director) wound up the Congress with closing remarks and the presentation of prizes for the best papers in various categories.

At the conclusion of the Congress, many delegates and Western Australian members left on the long 400km journey to the Panorama Caravan Park in Albany, for the five day campout. Over 50 people attended and took part in the various daily activities of bird banding, visiting Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve (to see inter alia the elusive Noisy Scrub-bird), Stirling Range National Park and Torndirrup National Park, wader counts, seabirding and visits to other birding sites round Albany. An all-day sea trip (helped by seasick pills all round to combat the Southern Ocean swell) saw a happy boatload sailing near the Continental Shelf, pursued by flocks of Flesh-footed Shearwaters, a Southern Giant Petrel and three species of albatross (Yellow-nosed, Black-browed and Shy), all attracted by the bits of fish thrown astern. The trip finished with close-up views of three Southern Right Whales. Similar trips were repeated on other days.

Some delegates and Western Australian members continued from Albany for a further three days' campout at Lesley Harrison's property some 10kms south of Northcliffe. Here there were excellent close-up views of birds attracted to a feeding table, including Red-eared Firetail, White-breasted Robin and Red-winged Fairy-wren. The object of the campout was to survey the southern end of D'Entrecasteaux National Park to see

whether it contained any Ground Parrot. The habitat there was thought to be suitable for these rare parrots. Sadly, despite prolonged beating through thick vegetation and wet ground, there was no sign of the parrots, nor any sound of them after sunset when they are believed to call.

It was generally felt by all concerned that the Congress had been a success, in the sense that the papers were stimulating: attendance was surprisingly high, helped no doubt by current lower air fares and the organisation was excellent. Rod Smith was responsible for general administration, Allan Burbidge for organising speakers and Chris Wilder for the campout and activities. Other W.A. members contributed with help in publicity, display boards, trading table, transport, flowers, catering, walks, etc. Added advantages were the fine weather throughout the period of the Congress and the campout, and the spring wildflowers in blossom.

The RAOU can be proud of this Perth Congress which was well up to the usual high standard of the premier ornithological society of Australia. Western Australia looks forward to the rest of Australia trying to catch up with us.

B. Wilson

## Excursion Reports

### JULIMAR FOREST

About 35 members gathered with leader Clive Napier at the Bullsbrook meeting place where we welcomed a visitor from California, Charlie Sellers. We split into two parties and set off disregarding unpromising weather with high winds and overcast skies. Despite the weather we enjoyed the varied scenery ranging from Dryandra scrub interspersed with Marri to spacious Wandoo woodland. One remarkable feature was a long stretch of forest track, bordering on farmland, that was a busy continuum of ants nests of the red, race-up-the-trousers-and-bite species, which lived up to their reputation. Few of the trees or shrubs were in flower apart from a few banksias and although there was an abundance of mistletoe, it only had a meagre scattering of blossom.

In all the circumstances, it wasn't surprising that birds were hard to spot and most sightings were glimpses of single birds, but the scenery and companionship were adequate compensations. Wandering homeward we met with the second of our parties. We consolidated our bird lists and to everyone's astonishment had 50 species - including two not previously recorded for the area.

Sightings included Restless Flycatcher, White-naped and Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Rufous and Golden Whistler, Western Yellow, Scarlet and Red-capped Robin, Black-faced and Dusky Woodswallow. Our experience shows that given more favourable weather conditions, the Julimar Forest would offer some rewarding birding and I recommend it as a site to visit.

P. Anson

### WAMBYN NATURE RESERVE

Sixteen people met on the Great Eastern Highway at 8.30 am on 28th July, 1990. Bryan Barrett then led the

party to Wambyn Nature Reserve where we met a further 12 people from the Toodyay/Northam area. We were delighted to see Jim Masters who shared his considerable knowledge of the Reserve with us.

Wambyn is a small, pleasant reserve with areas of fine Wandoo. The enthusiastic crowd dispersed for an hour and a half and reassembled to compose a bird list of 41 species. This included Wedge-Tailed Eagle, Scarlet, Red-capped and White-breasted Robin, Pallid, Fan-tailed and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Yellow-plumed, White-naped and Brown-headed Honeyeater, Rufous Treecreeper and Varied Sittella.

We then moved to the nearby St. Ronans Well Reserve for lunch where we recorded 27 species, again including Pallid and Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Both New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeater were seen as well as Rufous and Golden Whistler.

Although records of these areas have been kept for several years it is only within the past year (1991) that Golden Whistler has been recorded.

It was a delightful outing and our thanks to Bryan Barrett and Margery Clegg for leading.

N. Duff

## WUNGONG GORGE

Twenty-five birders met on a cool but fine morning. Forecast rain did not eventuate and by 11 am the day was quite warm.

Birds were enjoying the change. Red-winged Fairy-wren seemed to be everywhere, the resplendent males giving very good views. Red-eared Firetail were busy collecting nesting material as were Spotted Pardalote, nests of which were found both in the gorge and near the car park.

White-breasted Robin were difficult to locate as usual apart from one seen in the picnic area at lunchtime. It is unusual to see this bird in the open.

A total of 41 species was seen during the day.

J. Hunt

## NORTH LAKE

Fierce squalls and torrential downpours were not enough to deter 18 hardy souls, including 6 guests responding to newspaper advertising, from investigating one of the more intensively studied wetlands in the metropolitan area. One of the Beeliar chain, these could become the best waterfowl areas on the coastal plain if the water level and quality are maintained.

The lake is a good example of merging habitat with bush vegetation encircling both swamp and lake environments. The bird list for the area reflects this interfacing, with a good mix of bush and water species. On the outing 52 species were located, although checks with Murdoch University and CALM staff indicate many more species have been recorded in long term studies by both.

Areas of kunzea, banksia and melaleuca habitat contained Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Splendid Fairy-wren and Silvereye engaged in the seasonal round of nesting and breeding. On the lake fringes, Clamorous Reed Warbler betrayed their presence with their loud melodious voice, whilst Willie Wagtail twitched their tails on rushes overhanging the water.

On the lake, assertive Eurasian Coot screeched their territorial rights at Grey Teal and Pacific Black Duck, whilst Dusky Moorhen drifted close to the reeds.

If your birdwatching activities are spread across a range of environments, yet you lack a lake in your collection, you could do worse than adopt North Lake as your wetland; from several perspectives, it presents interesting facets, and rich potential for further study.

J. Ashford

## KARAKIN LAKE / DOOPITER SWAMP

Nine people braved the inclement weather on 14th September, to meet at KW Road gravel pits. These were last visited by RAOU in 1985 and have been worked since, changing their topography. The area is now covered by dense low scrub and the walk tracks have disappeared. In spite of the strong cold wind we observed several White-cheeked and Brown Honeyeater and four White-backed Swallow.

Karakin Lake - a vast sheet of shallow water - held many species of waterbirds. Flocks of Grey Teal flew up and down the lake with small parties of Hardhead and Australian Shoveler. Our highlight was to see a 'ney' of Rufous Night Heron (18 were counted) flying over the southern end of the lake with a Pacific Heron circling below. There was also a creche of 33 young Australian Shelduck being guarded by two adults. Two intrepid members of the group who walked round the lake found several nesting pairs of Black-winged Stilt and Black Swan amongst the low rushes on the far side of the lake. Two Emu were also sighted in the distance. At this lake we noted 40 species.

After lunch we drove to Doopiter Swamp where we spent a cold, gloomy afternoon finding 36 species. There were several nesting pairs of Yellow-billed Spoonbill with young and several more broods of Black Swan. The swamp is "home" for a greater variety of duck and waterbirds than Karakin Lake and along the edges we found several wader species - one Greenshank, several Wood Sandpiper, a Black-fronted Plover and many Black-winged Stilt. Nine species of duck were seen and a further four Pacific Heron. We felt that both areas deserved a full day's inspection each. People who wish to visit either area on their own must obtain permission from the Station Manager, Bill Vogan on 341.7263 (home), (096) 551176 (work) as both areas of water are on private land.

B. Barrett

## Coming Events

As an experiment, we propose to initiate a monthly 'Beginners Walk' aimed at introducing our diverse birdlife to those who may not be fully conversant with some of the species around Perth. The first of these will be at Alfred Cove on 12 January 1992 - see below.

We are also considering a mid-week bird walk for those who find week-ends difficult. If interested in a mid-week outing please telephone the RAOU Office: 364.6202.

A note for your diaries; it is proposed to visit Lake

MacLeod (approximately 60km N of Carnarvon) at the end of March/early April 1992. We shall spend at least a week in its vicinity. Full details in the next issue of WA Bird Notes.

**B. Barrett, Excursions Organiser**

**Saturday 7th - Sunday 8th December Campout - Lake Muir**

Meet at 12 noon on Saturday 7th December at the CALM office, Brain Street, Manjimup. Rodney Vervest will lead the convoy a further 60km. It is planned to search for Australasian Bittern in Lake Muir and adjacent small wetlands. A cottage will probably be available for a limited number - booking essential! Bring suitable footwear and be self-contained for the whole weekend. Contact Rodney (09) 364 6202 for further information.

Leader: Rodney Vervest

**Sunday 15th December Half day excursion - Grove Farm Reserve, Belmont**

Meet at 7.30 am at the entrance to Parry Field Stadium which is off Stoneham Street, Belmont.

This area was visited last April and a return visit was recommended by Tom Delaney who has recorded 54 species there. Early morning birding close to the city.

Leader: Tom Delaney

**Sunday 12th January 1992 Half day excursion - Alfred Cove, Attadale**

Meet at the carpark in Troy Park (by the radio mast) off Burke Drive, Attadale.

Ring the Hotline: 364 7349 for the start time closer to the date when we shall know the state of the tide, or check "Grassroots" in Earth 2000 Supplement of *The West Australian* on the Monday prior to the outing.

An opportunity to identify migratory waders in this important area of the Swan River. Experienced birders will be on hand with telescopes to assist. This will be a preparation for further outings to Coodanup (Peel Inlet) and the Vasse Estuary, near Busselton. Bring suitable footwear.

Leader: Norma Duff

**Saturday 18th January Full day excursion - Coodanup & Mandurah**

Meet at 8 am in the carpark at the southern end of Wanjeep Street, Coodanup on the shores of Peel Inlet. From Perth follow the Fremantle-Mandurah Road to Pinjarra Road, turn left and Wanjeep Street turnoff is about 1km on the right. Distance from Perth and return approximately 180km. We will look for waders around the edge of the Inlet, lunch at the picnic area and then go to the Mandurah Seawall. Bring a hat, insect repellent and old boots/shoes.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

**Monday 20th January Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm**

Grant Wardell-Johnson, a senior research scientist at the CALM Research Centre, Manjimup, on various aspects of the birds of Karri forest.

**Saturday 25th January - Monday 27th January Busselton meeting/Campout with B. Nats. Club**

Saturday 25th January meet at 1 pm at crossroads to

Ambergate Reserve 9kms S. along Queen Elizabeth Avenue. Visit Ambergate and Wicher Reserves.

7.30pm - Bernie Masters on "Conservation of the Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary" & Geoff Shannon on "Bunbury Birding", Venue - Busselton High School Library.

Sunday 26th January. Survey of Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary. Led by R. Vervest, B. Masters, D. Watkins. In the evening there will be a barbecue and guitar concert.

Monday 27th January Cowaramup Bay heathlands and coast.

A number of camping and caravan sites have been reserved at the Kookaburra Caravan Park, 66 Marine Terrace, Busselton. All enquiries including bookings for accommodation to Allan Jones, RAOU.

The public will be invited to sections of the programme.

**Sunday 2nd February Half day excursion - Lake Gwelup**

Meet at 7.30 am at the carpark on the corner of Stoneman Street and Huntriss Road (N. of Karrinyup Road). A large permanent lake; an important summer refuge for waterbirds. Bushbirds can be seen in the forest at the north end of the lake.

Leader: Chris Wilder

**Monday 3rd February Annual General Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm**

**Saturday 8th February Full day excursion - Serpentine National Park**

Meet at 8.30 am at the junction of the South West Highway and Falls Road (the turnoff to Serpentine Falls).

A further visit to this large and diverse park to continue the survey of its bird species. The CALM Ranger, David Lamont, will take the group to areas of the park not normally accessible to the public.

Leader: Rod Smith

**Saturday 15th February Half day excursion - Alfred Cove, Attadale**

Meet at the carpark in Troy Park (by the radio mast) off Burke Drive, Attadale.

Ring the Hotline: 364 7349 for the starting time closer to the date, or check "Grassroots" in *The West Australian* on the Monday prior to the outing.

The second of two outings to identify some of the waders who spend their summers in the southern hemisphere.

Leader: Jack Hunt

**Monday 24th February Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm**

Doug Watkins, a founder member of the W.A. Wader Study Group, member of several of wader expeditions to Eighty Mile Beach and Broome and Interwader participant, will talk about shorebirds in southeast Asia.

**Sunday 1st March Half day excursion - Ellis Brook,**

Meet at 7 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin. An interesting site for bushbirds close to Perth which may have some species not often seen in the metropolitan area.

Leader: Les Harris

**Monday 23rd March Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm**

Dr John Long, Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology, Dept of Earth and Planetary Sciences at the W A Museum, will talk on the evolution of birds. Birds tend to be poorly represented in the fossil record, but Dr Long will speak about some interesting recent developments.

**Monday 13th April Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm**

Norman Robinson, who established a Laboratory of Animal Sounds at CSIRO's Division of Wildlife and Research at Canberra in 1960 and has made a major contribution to Australian ornithology in the field of bird vocal mimicry, will speak about listening to birds and what can be learned by doing so.

**Monday 25th May Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm**

Ray Garstone, who farms near Woodanilling and has frequently guided RAOU visitors around his area, will talk about the birds observed there.

**Monday 22nd June Meeting - Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, 8pm**

Ron Johnstone, who has collected bird and other fauna data throughout the State for the W.A. Museum and who has in recent years visited several parts of Indonesia during the course of his work, will deal with the birds of the Lesser Sundas (the group of islands stretching from Bali to Timor).

## BBCBQ Answers

1. Pursue p.381
2. Thought the WW eavesdropped and carried tales p. 384
3. Australian Magpie-lark p. 384
4. Cobweb p. 384
5. The aggressor has the largest white eyebrow p. 384
6. Yes - usually p. 224
7. Yes p. 224 - female usually quieter/sweeter (BB)
8. Intruders are attacked in the mornings but allowed to pass through in the afternoons p. 224
9. No, but incubates eggs and feeds young p. 224
10. The male looks after the weakest of the three young p. 224

Big Birds Clever Birdo Quiz is derived from Boles WE (1988) *The Robins and Flycatchers of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, NSW to which the page numbers refer.

## Publications for Sale

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Atlas of Australian Birds — members only at —                                 | \$15.00                          |
| Atlas of Australian Birds   | Overlays \$6.00                  |
| Australian Waterbirds-Fieldguide  | Kingsford \$15.00                |
| Birders Guide to Japan  | Robinson \$25.00                 |
| Birding Sites around Perth  | Van Delft \$10.00                |
| Birdlife of Murdoch   | Porter \$6.00                    |
| Birdlife of Rottneest   | Saunders & de Rebeira \$8.00     |
| Birds of Australia-Logbook  | Simpson & Day \$11.00            |
| Birds of W.A.   | Serventy & Whittell \$12.00      |
| Check List of Birds of W.A.   | 10 for \$1.00                    |
| Eyre Bird Observatory Report 1986/87  | Money to E.B.O. \$6.00           |
| Field Guide to Birds of Australia   | Pizzey \$23.00                   |
| Field Guide to Birds of Australia   | Simpson & Day \$25.00            |
| Field Guide to Australian Birds   | Slater \$28.00                   |
| Field Guide to Birds of W.A.  | Storr & Johnstone \$20.00        |
| Great Australian Birdfinder   | Morcombe \$55.00                 |
| Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the Rockingham Offshore Island and Cape Peron | W.A. \$10.00                     |
| Guide to Hong Kong Birds  | Naturalists                      |
| Attracting Birds to a W.A. Garden   | Viney & Phillips \$7.00          |
| Methods of Censusing Birds in Australia                                       | .50                              |
| National Photographic Index Books   | \$5.00                           |
| Seabirds  | \$61.00                          |
| Shorebirds  | \$61.00                          |
| Honeyeaters and Allies  | \$64.50                          |
| Wrens and Warblers  | \$51.00                          |
| Robins and Flycatchers  | \$68.00                          |
| Parrots of the World  | Forshaw \$95.00                  |
| Pocket List of Australian Birds   | Schodde .70                      |
| Portrait of a Peninsula   | Smith \$9.00                     |
| Report of Middlesex Study Centre  | \$5.00                           |
| Save that Song  | Hutchinson \$25.00               |
| Shorebirds  | Hayman \$49.00                   |
| Shorebirds in Australia   | Lane \$45.00                     |
| W A Bird Notes  | per issue \$3.50                 |
| Waterbirds in Nature Reserves of S.W. Australia 1981-85                       | Jaensch Vervest & Hewish \$35.00 |
| Waterbirds at Remote Wetlands Parts 1 & 2                                     | Jaensch & Vervest \$12.00 each   |
| Where to Find Birds in Australia  | Bransbury \$30.00                |
| <b>Other Items for Sale</b>   |                                  |
| Audubon Squeakers   | \$13.00                          |
| Bird-call tapes   | \$11.00                          |
| Calendars 1992  | \$12.50                          |
| RAOU Emu badges   | \$3.00                           |
| RAOU ties (Navy or maroon)  | \$9.00                           |
| Car stickers - Splendid Fairy-wren  | \$2.00                           |

**Tailpiece** : The Bird Observers Club of Australia has initiated a project for 1991/2 to record the species of birds which utilise sunflowers. If you are willing to participate in this project you should contact BOCA, PO Box 185, Nunawading, Victoria 3131 tel (03) 877 5342 from whom you will receive a small packet of seeds.