



Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the WA Group
Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union

No 76 December 1995

Robins: Are They Declining?

The Australian Robins (family Petroicidae) are most closely related to the Honeyeaters (Meliphagidae), Pardalotes and Thornbills (Pardalotidae). Within Australia the family comprises eight genera and 20 species, of which 10 species from six genera are found in Western Australia (Christidis & Boles 1994, p.23). The robins seem to be seen less frequently than many bird species and this may be cause for concern. Their watch and pounce technique of feeding can make them less visible at times although their tendency to remain in a given area plus the marked colouration of some species can make them more noticeable. However, the Southern Scrub-robin does not fit into this category, being more of a ground feeder. As a group, they tend to retreat before the advance of civilisation and do not adapt well to changes in their environment. They are believed to be highly susceptible to the many and varied pesticides that are in common use throughout the State.

The records of robins used in this article are taken from the Database of Western Australian Birds and cover the nine year period 1/7/86 to 30/6/95. The species breakup of records in the database for this period is shown in Table 1. The 10 species together make up only 1.93% of the total database and provide a basis for future comparisons on the birds' status using frequency of observation at individual sites. It should be noted that the number of records shown for any particular location do not represent a measure of abundance, rather the number of times the observer(s) have recorded it at that site.

Scarlet Robin records in the database are mainly from the more heavily wooded areas of the south-west and range from Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park in the west to Jerramungup Shire in the east, and from Watheroo National Park in the north to Albany Shire in the south.

Atlas No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Records	Locations
377	Jacky Winter	<i>Microeca fascians</i>	237	53
379	Lemon-bellied Flycatcher (incl. Kimberley subspecies)	<i>Microeca flavigaster</i>	25	5
380	Scarlet Robin	<i>Petroica multicolor</i>	695	108
381	Red-capped Robin	<i>Petroica goodenovii</i>	357	127
385	Hooded Robin	<i>Melanodryas cucullata</i>	139	48
394	Western Yellow Robin	<i>Eopsaltria griseogularis</i>	386	69
387	White-breasted Robin	<i>Eopsaltria georgiana</i>	213	49
388	Mangrove Robin	<i>Eopsaltria pulverulenta</i>	6	2
390	White-browed Robin	<i>Poecilodryas superciliosa</i>	9	2
441	Southern Scrub-robin	<i>Drymodes brunneopygia</i>	118	31
Totals			2185	230

Table 1 Records of robin species in the Database of WA Birds for the period 1/7/86 to 30/6/95



A young White-browed Robin

Location	Records	No. of Lists
Bibra Lake	1	55
Forrestdale Lake Nature Reserve	6	21
Kogolup Lake	1	5
Lake Joondalup	30	80
Pinnaroo Valley	9	12
Thomsons Lake Nature Reserve	2	21
Whiteman Park	1	4
Woodman Point	1	16
Woodvale Nature Reserve	1	1
Yangebup Lake	1	8
Yellagonga Regional Park	1	1
Totals	54	224

Table 2 Records of Scarlet Robins from the Perth metropolitan area.

There are two interesting outlying records from Mt. Gibson Station (Yalgoo Shire) (J. & J. Blyth, 1/10/94) and Shark Bay Shire (George Agar, 11/7/91). As the more heavily wooded areas are reduced by clearance for farming, forestry and infrastructure uses, could we possibly see a reduction in the range of this species? A number of sightings have been in the Perth Metropolitan Area (Table 2) and tend to indicate that this species can still be found in the larger bushland remnants of the Swan Coastal Plain. Of the metropolitan locations, Pinnaroo Valley is the most promising place to see the Scarlet Robin, as it has been recorded there on 75% of visits. In contrast, it would appear to be only a casual visitor (recorded in only 1 out of 55 visits) to Bibra Lake. Whether it is declining or just moving away from the more settled areas needs to be ascertained, so any lists including sightings of this bird on the Swan Coastal Plain would be welcome additions to the database as would any records from outlying areas such as those mentioned earlier.

Where the forest has been thinned out and/or corridors are available for movement, it is possible that the Red-capped Robin will move from the drier inland into those areas favoured by the Scarlet Robin (Table 3).

Location	Records	No. of Lists
Augusta-Margaret River Shire	1	10
Bickley Brook	4	79
D'Entrecasteaux National Park	1	8
Helena Valley	3	3
Kalamunda National Park	1	29
Lake Muir Nature Reserve	2	3
Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire	1	4
Stinton Cascades Nature Reserve	1	3
West Arthur Shire	1	4
Woodanilling Shire	5	6
Wungong Gorge	1	35
Totals	21	184

Table 3 Records of Red-capped Robins in areas normally occupied by the Scarlet Robin.

Its presence on Rottnest Island (17 records) and occasional sightings from a number of other metropolitan and outer metropolitan sites (Table 4) indicate it is possible that it also used to be resident on the coastal plain. Database records show that the species still has a wide distribution in the less intensively farmed and/or settled areas of the State from Karijini National Park in the north to Stirling Range National Park in the south, and from Rottnest Island in the west to Nuytsland Nature Reserve in the east. There is one interesting outlying record from Broome Bird Observatory.

Location	Records	No. of Lists
Austin Bay Nature Reserve	2	7
Avon Valley National Park	3	10
Forrestdale Lake Nature Reserve	1	21
Lake Joondalup	2	80
Amarillo Pool	2	4
Pipidinny Road	2	54
Walyunga National Park	1	15
Whiteman Park	1	4
Yanchep National Park	1	8
Totals	15	203

Table 4 Records of Red-capped Robins from the Perth metropolitan area and outer metropolitan area.

The Hooded Robin may be less tolerant of change to its environment than the Red-capped Robin and seems to disappear quickly in front of man's activities. All the locations it has been recorded at have a sizeable area of natural or semi-natural vegetation remaining.

Table 5 lists the shires with their corresponding number of records in the database and illustrates that the Hooded Robin still appears to be widespread even if it is only sparsely recorded. There is one record from the outer metropolitan area at Pipidinny Road (B. Barrett 19/5/91). Other records close to Perth are listed in Table 6.

Shire	Records	Shire	Records
Ashburton	13	Kulin	1
Beverley	1	Lake Grace	2
Boulder	6	Leonora	2
Broome	2	Meekatharra	2
Carnamah	1	Menzies	11
Carnarvon	2	Mt. Magnet	2
Coolgardie	4	Mt. Marshall	1
Cuballing	17	Northampton	2
Cue	4	Perenjori	1
Dandaragan	4	Sandstone	1
Dumbleyung	1	Shark Bay	2
East Pilbara	1	Upper Gascoyne	1
Esperance	4	Yalgoo	2
Gnowangerup	3	Yilgarn	4
Jerramungup	3	York	1
Kondinin	1	Total Records	102

Table 5 Records of Hooded Robins in shires outside the Perth metropolitan area and outer metropolitan area showing its widespread distribution.

Location	Records	No. of Lists
Amarillo Pool	1	31
Avon Valley National Park	3	10
Flynn Road Forest Reserve	32	41
Totals	36	82

Table 6 Records of Hooded Robins close to the Perth metropolitan area and outer metropolitan area.

For the two robins found only in the north of the State there are not enough records in the Database to make any assessment of them. For the Mangrove Robin there are two records from Cape Keraudren and four from West Kimberley Shire. The White-browed Robin has three records from Kununurra Town and six from East Kimberley Shire. Checklists with either of these species recorded would be valuable additions to the database.

The White-breasted Robin is restricted (endemic) to Western Australia while the Western Yellow Robin occurs from south-western Western Australia to south-western South Australia. Both appear to be fairly sedentary, although it is possible that there is some seasonal movement within their ranges. Records within the database have the following distribution:

White-breasted Robin	north to south:	Geraldton City to Hardy Inlet
	west to east:	Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park to Waychinicup National Park
Western Yellow Robin	north to south:	Kalbarri National Park to Albany Shire
	west to east:	Boranup Management Priority Area to Nuytsland Nature Reserve

They are both found along the Darling Scarp and have been recorded at the locations shown in Table 7.

Location	White-breasted Robin	Western Yellow Robin	No. of Lists
Avon Valley National Park	-	4	10
Bungendore Park	1	11	18
John Forrest National Park	-	7	36
Kalamunda National Park	2	2	29
Mundaring Weir	-	1	1
Stinton Cascades NR1	3	3	
Stony Brook	4	45	109
Wungong Gorge	20	1	35
Totals	28	74	241

Table 7 Records of White-breasted and Western Yellow Robins along the Darling Scarp.

No records have been received for the Swan Coastal Plain although the Western Yellow Robin is known to have been resident on it. Perhaps the White-breasted Robin was also?

The Southern Scrub-robin is probably the least tolerant of the family to changes to its environment. Like the Hooded Robin, all the locations it has been recorded at have a sizeable area of natural or semi-natural vegetation remaining. This is a very interesting species with relatively few records. Checklists that include it would be a most welcome addition to our knowledge of its current distribution. Database records for the species range from Kalbarri National Park in the north to Ravensthorpe Shire in the south, and from Dryandra Woodland in the west to Nuytsland Nature Reserve in the east.

The Jacky Winter is a species that can appear almost anywhere in the State where there is enough habitat to attract it, although it is not sighted often enough to be thought of as abundant. It has been recorded in locations as far apart as Argyle Diamond Mine, Mt Elvire State Forest, Rottne Island, Lake Toolibin Nature Reserve, Eyre Bird Observatory and Porongurup National Park. It has also been recorded at metropolitan sites.

The Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, like the Mangrove and White-browed Robins, has very few records. As more recordings are made in the north of the State, a clearer picture of it will probably emerge. The five locations it has been recorded at in the database are Broome Bird Observatory, Broome Shire, Derby Town, East Kimberley Shire, and West Kimberley Shire.

This article is intended to stimulate thought and discussion. It is not intended to be the definitive scientific answer to any of the issues raised and is used to show some of what can be gleaned from the information in the Database of Western Australian Birds. A future article is proposed on Bitterns.

Since mailing out the special newsletter to all WA members in winter, a number of new contributors have joined and are sending in checklists from their areas. The revised 'RAOU Checklist of Birds of WA' has now been put on hold until the research sub-committee decides what format it is to take. However, there are still a large number of the old checklists left and it is hoped that members will send more

checklists to the office to increase the information in the database. We are still looking for more members who are interested in collating and keying in data for this project – approximately one morning every three or four weeks. If you require details about this project, please write to or telephone the office and an instruction sheet and checklists will be sent to you.

Peter Sandilands

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References:

Blakers, M., Davies, S.J.J.F. & Reilly, P. 1984. *The Atlas of Australian Birds*. R.A.O.U. and Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Christidis, L. & Boles, W.E. 1994. *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. R.A.O.U. Monograph 2, Melbourne.

Observations

Compiled by the Observations Committee. Shires are in brackets.

Names and order follow Christidis, L. and Boles, W. (1994) *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories*. RAOU Monograph 2.

SOUTH-WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

Malleefowl 1, 21/8/95, 50 km east of Merredin (Westonia) - KL * 2, 28/10/95, 50 km south of Moorine Rock (Yilgarn) - RS

Osprey - 2, 6/9/95, near Garrett Road bridge, possibly nesting on power pylon (Bayswater) - DD

Baillon's Crane - 2, 29/9/95, about 3 km north of Muchea, in rehabilitated sand pit, in tall flooded grass on edge of open water (Chittering) - MBa

Whimbrel - 13, 21/10/95, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

Eastern Curlew - 3, 21/10/95, Boundary Island, Peel Inlet (Murray) - MS

Common Greenshank - 122, 17/9/95, Mandurah estuary (Murray) - MS

Terek Sandpiper - 1, 7/10/95, Alfred Cove (Melville) - KL * 4, 21/10/95, Creery Island (Murray) * 1, 22/10/95, Alfred Cove (Melville) - PS

Red-necked Phalarope - 3, 9-12/10/95, Government House Lake, Rottnest Island - PC * 3, including a female in breeding plumage, 30/10/95, Government House Lake, Rottnest Island - JP, MC

Elegant Parrot - 1, 22/9/95, 13 km NNE of Manjimup (Bridgetown-Greenbushes) - MC (just south of normal southern limit of distribution in this area) * 2, 15/10/95, 21 km NE of Manjimup in recently logged forest (Bridgetown-Greenbushes) - MC

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo - widespread in October, Kingston forest block, 16-23 km north-east of Manjimup (Bridgetown-Greenbushes) - MC (not normally south of Boyup Brook)

Weebill - 2, 10/10/95, 23 km NE of Manjimup, in wandoo (Bridgetown-Greenbushes) - MC (unusual this far south-west)
Red-capped Robin - 1, 15/10/95, 19 km NE of Manjimup (Bridgetown-Greenbushes) - MC (unusual this far south-west)
Golden Whistler - 1, 17/8/95, Woodvale Nature Reserve, Woodvale (Wanneroo) - AB * 1, 17/8/95, Lake Joondalup North (Wanneroo) - EB and RAOU excursion (unusual in this part of the Swan Coastal Plain)

White-winged Triller - 1 pair, 3/10/95, 20 km NE of Manjimup (Bridgetown-Greenbushes) - MC * 1 pair, throughout October, 22 km NE of Manjimup (Bridgetown-Greenbushes) - MC (unusual this far south-west)

ARID ZONE (including the Pilbara, Gascoyne, interior and Nullarbor)

Letter-winged Kite - 1, July 95, Lyndon River crossing on Exmouth road (Carnarvon) - PSt

Square-tailed Kite - 1, 26/10/95, 5 km SW of Kalgoorlie, soaring over woodland (Kalgoorlie-Boulder) - MBa (scarce winter-spring visitor to this area)

White-winged Fairy-wren - 1, black or blackish, 17/8/95, Well 43, Canning Stock Route 21 13, 125 58 (East Pilbara) - AF (Note: males can look black or blackish in poor light and, when in fresh plumage, sometimes even in good light because the feather bases are black, not blue)

Barn Swallow - 6, 10/10/95, Port Hedland sewage works (Port Hedland) - FO

KIMBERLEY

Magpie Goose - 67, 7/6/95, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO

Plumed Whistling-Duck - 220, 7/6/95, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO

Australian Shelduck - 1, 4-6/10/95, marsh near Derby sewage works (Derby - West Kimberley) - FO * 1, 7/10/95, Broome sewage works (Broome) - FO (scarce visitor to the Kimberley)

Green Pygmy-goose - 1, 7/9 and 29/9/95, Taylor's Lagoon (Broome) - BBO (uncommon near Broome)

Nankeen Night Heron - 14, 27/8/95, The Grotto (near Wyndham) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO * 50+ (breeding colony?), 20/8/95, along creek near Marglu Billabong (near Wyndham) (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Black Bittern - 1, 17/9/95, entrance to Lily Creek Lagoon, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Letter-winged Kite - 7, 9/10/95, edge of salt marsh near Crab Creek (Broome) - FO

Black-breasted Buzzard - 2, 7/6/95, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO

Brolga - 111, 7/6/95, Lake Eda (Broome) - BBO * 80, 6/10/95, marsh near Derby sewage works (Derby - West Kimberley) - FO

Oriental Plover - 18, 16/9/95, Kingston Rest Station, about 70 km south of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (reasonably early date for this species) * 29, 26/9/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - BBO

Red-kneed Dotterel - 1 immature, 7/6/95, Taylor's Lagoon (Broome) - BBO

Caspian Tern - 2, 12/8/95, Gap Dam at Argyle diamond mine (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO * 2, 16/9/95, Kingston rest station, south of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Common Bronzewing - 2 or 3, 2/9/95, near Tanmurra Ck on Carlton Hill station (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO * 1, 3/9/95, Packsaddle Springs near Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (uncommon in East Kimberley)

Grass Owl - 1, 27/8/95 and 1, 3/9/95, Ivanhoe Road near Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (long, trailing legs seen as bird flew)

Azure Kingfisher - 1, 6/10/95, Windjana Gorge National Park (Derby - West Kimberley) - FO

Red-browed Pardalote - 1, 6/10/95, 70 km from Broome towards Derby (Broome) - FO (at or near northern limit of range)

Large-billed Gerygone - 2, 27/8/95, mangroves near Wyndham wharf (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO * 1, 2/9/95, Tanmurra Creek mangroves, Carlton Hill station (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Green-backed Gerygone - 4, 19/8/95, Point Springs Nature Reserve, NE of Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (scarce in the East Kimberley)

Yellow Chat - 12, 2/8/95, Roebuck Plains (Broome) - GC * 7, 20/8/95, Parry Creek floodplain (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Lemon-bellied (Kimberley) Flycatcher - 1, 20/8/95, mangroves near Wyndham wharf (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO

Hooded Robin - 3, 26/7/95, Lake Eda (Broome) - GC (uncommon near Broome)

Shining Flycatcher - 1 male, 13/8/95, Coolamon Creek off the Ord River near Lake Argyle dam (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (uncommon this far inland in this area)

Northern Fantail - 1 on nest, 19/8/95, about 40 km from Kununurra along the Cave Springs/ Keep River road (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO * 3, 25/8/95, Barred Creek (Broome) - GC

Masked Woodswallow - 200, 23/7/95, Broome Bird Observatory (Broome) - BBO

Little Woodswallow - 13, 3/8/95, Lake Campion (Broome) - BBO (uncommon near Broome)

Gouldian Finch - 1, 29/8/95, Durack Homestead (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - AF

Clamorous Reed-Warbler - 1, 7/9/95, Lake Campion (Broome) - BBO

Zitting Cisticola - 6, 20/8/95, Parry Creek floodplain (Wyndham-East Kimberley) - FO (in dry, 0.5 m high grass; call a two note 'see-sick', very different from Golden-headed Cisticola; small white tip seen on tail)

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Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Group
- contributions should be written or typed with **double spacing**
- WABN uses RAOU recommended English names
- contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary

Deadline for the March Issue

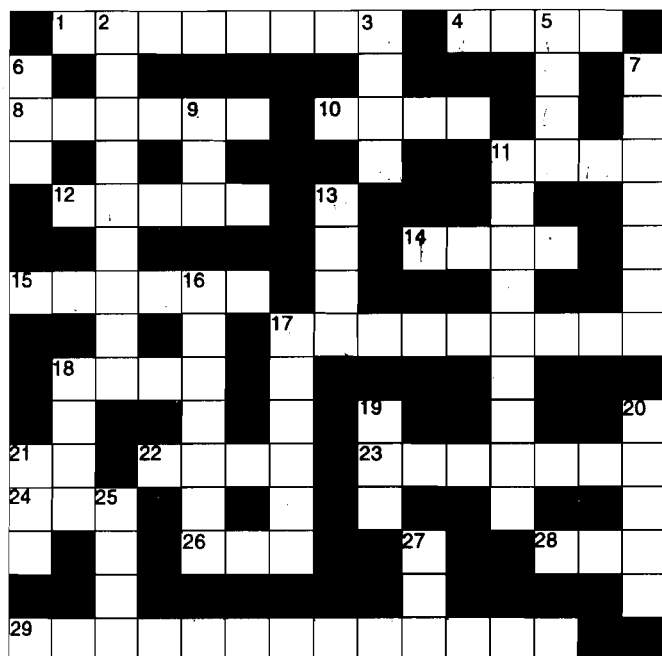
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Crossword



CLUES ACROSS

1. An egg could be patterned in this way.
4. A twitcher would be keen to add another one.
8. The Sandpiper has a white rump.
10. A Coot chick can do it within 24 hours of hatching.
11. Unless you saw a male, it would be difficult to tell whether it was a grey or a chestnut one.
12. A bird with a preference for shallow water.
14. WA's bird observatory with a claim to historical fame.
15. Its nest is a shallow depression in the ground.
17. Kind of bird with the audacity to lay its eggs in another's nest.
18. In front of undertail coverts.
21. If it were longer it might be the favourite food of a Rainbow Bee-eater.
22. Small, secretive waterbird.
23. Bird of prey which usually flies low when hunting.
24. Finding yourself in the midst of a colony of several thousand nesting penguins may evoke this feeling.
26. As the Common Starling hasn't managed to become established in WA.
28. A Raven may do this to another bird's nest.
29. Australia's only representative of the Flowerpecker family.

CLUES DOWN

2. Forages on foliage, usually heard before it is seen.
3. Soft underfeathers.
5. The captive breeding of rare species may be reason to need one.
6. As an emperor with specially adapted feet, you wouldn't mind this underfoot.
7. Of the deep sea.
9. In a Kestrel, a keen one may mean an earlier dinner.

11. Area proclaimed by song.
13. Raptor with a barred belly.
16. Tidal mouth of river.
17. One of these may contain remnants of an owl's last meal.
18. It would be great if everyone in the group got a good one every time.
19. Secretive.
20. Small diving waterbird.
21. A white one in the wing may help to identify a fast-disappearing wader.
25. Common to birds and many reptiles.
27. A Common Sandpiper will do this frequently.

Questions and Answers

A number of contributions from members include questions about the occurrences being reported. We believe that WABN should help to generate discussion between members, and invite contributions in later editions which can help to answer members' queries.

Editors

Members' Contributions

YUIN STATION

Yuin Station was the first to be founded in the Murchison District. It was established in the 1860s after pioneers journeyed up the Greenough River and pronounced the area to be excellent for grazing.

The Yuin Homestead, at which accommodation may be obtained, is near the Greenough River and is classified as a National Trust Historic Homestead. The buildings are of interest in themselves, but the Station has the advantage of a wide variety of birds and after good rains as in 1995, a fine display of everlastings and eremophilas, as well as many other interesting plants of the semi-arid region.

The Station is a little over 469,000 acres (189,000 hectares). It has land on both sides of the Greenough River, but the greater part lies to the north of it. Some of the northern area had been burned (lightning strike) in the last 2-3 years and was relatively poor for birds and I spent most of my time (28 August to 2 September) in areas near the northern side of the Greenough River, where birds were more plentiful.

The Greenough River had large pools of water and is lined with casuarina trees. The *Travellers Atlas* shows Curdy Curdy Rocks (not very interesting apart from Fairy Martins nesting in the scalloped rock edges of the river), but it does not show Nangcarrong Springs or Teamurra Pools, both of which appear on the Central Map Agency 1:250,000 map. These pools had breeding Black Swans and Australasian Grebes as well as 10 other species of waterbirds.

Oddly the *Travellers Atlas* names the Geeloo Claypan, whereas the CMA larger scale map does not (though the location is apparent). There was water in the claypan, a circular area some 250 metres in diameter and no more than 20 millimetres deep. The Claypan and its immediate surrounding area produced a list of 50 species, with one visit yielding 45 species before breakfast.

A list of 60 species on my first full day (including 10

waterbird species) was impressive but was superseded by one, at 61 species the following day (also including 10 waterbird species from a different location). These two days yielded 69 species, but some change in the weather resulted in less total species being seen on any other day. The grand total was 80 species comprising 65 bush and 15 waterbirds.

A Collared Sparrowhawk pair were of interest at one of the bores. They perched in open sunlight less than 10 metres away and always less than two metres above ground, remaining at a similar distance while lunch was eaten (over 40 minutes). Twice they mated, between perching, preening and calling. There was a flat stick nest nearby which had no lining; this may have been that of the sparrowhawks – but they did not approach this structure while being observed. The same bore had Little Crows and Pied Butcherbirds sitting on nests.

Another item of interest was a 'fight' between a Black-faced Woodswallow and a Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush. The sight of a pair of quail-thrush was good in itself as they are not frequently sighted, but as the pair worked slowly over a stony breakaway area accompanied by many Bourke's Parrots (almost tame, perching within two metres) and a large flock of wood-swallows, one of the Black-faced Woodswallows alighted on the ground near the male Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush. He leapt to attack and the birds appeared to struggle on the ground for some seconds before the woodswallow flew up apparently unscathed, while the male quail-thrush 'strutted', with its head drawn well back and upright and its tail fully fanned and inclined forward, as in a male peacock display. After a few moments strutting in this striking pose, the bird lowered its tail and head and resumed its usual rather inoffensive stance.

The total bird list was as follows (species marked with an asterisk were not recorded in this Atlas block [27/116] by Blakers *et al* 1984): Emu, Black Swan, Australian Shelduck, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Australasian Grebe, Darter*, White-faced Heron, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon, Australian Hobby, Nankeen Kestrel, Eurasian Coot, Common Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt, Black-fronted Dotterel, Banded Lapwing, Common Bronzewing*, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Cockatiel, Mulga Parrot, Budgerigar, Bourke's Parrot, Elegant Parrot*, Pallid Cuckoo, Black-eared Cuckoo*, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo*, Red-backed Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher*, Splendid Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, White-winged Fairy-wren, Western Gerygone, Inland Thornbill*, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Southern Whiteface, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater*, Pied Honeyeater, Crimson Chat, White-fronted Chat, Red-capped Robin, Grey-crowned Babbler, White-browed Babbler, Chiming Wedgebill, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, Crested Bellbird, Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush*, Magpie-lark, Grey Fantail*, Willie Wagtail, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike, White-winged Triller, Black-faced Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird*, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Australian Raven* (called several times whilst at close range near Teamurra Pools), Little Crow, Richards Pipit, Zebra Finch, Mistletoebird, Welcome Swallow, Fairy Martin, Rufous Songlark, Brown Songlark, Silvereye*.

During my stay two Australian Bustards were observed by Mr Foulkes-Taylor during sheep mustering, but I did not see them.

Yuin is a pleasant birding location. My thanks to Jano and Michael Foulkes-Taylor for guiding me to likely bird localities about the Station.

Bruce Buchanan

References:

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WHITE WILLIE WAGTAIL

Geoff Stanton of Wannamal reports having played host to an almost entirely white Willie Wagtail which came to his bird bath. He was visited by the same (or a very similar) bird at about the same time last year.

Editors

BARKING OWL IN AVON VALLEY

During a continuing survey of Avon Valley National Park, a Barking Owl was heard over three nights in October 1994. Both the typical yapping "wuk wuk" and the hair-raising screaming call were heard. The habitat was wandoo woodland. The Barking Owl is very rarely recorded in the south-west. It is believed to be the same subspecies as in south-eastern Australia.

Jim Masters



FLOCKING OF RED WATTLEBIRDS

The land between Peel Inlet and the ocean is at its narrowest point at Dawesville. The movements of bush birds north from the south-west are funnelled into this natural bottleneck.

Over the Easter break I witnessed Red Wattlebirds flocking on the south side of the Dawesville Cut. On the 15th April I was observing birds in a small pocket of Tuart and Banksia between the Bouvarde Bowling Club and the Cut. My attention was drawn to a gathering of Red Wattlebirds in the bare topmost branches of some Tuart trees closer to the water. Some of the birds had flown directly into the top of the trees. Other birds progressed from the lower branches with short flights and hops until there was a bird approximately every 30-40 centimetres along the bare branches. I would estimate at least 150 birds.

The flock then took flight, led by the topmost birds flying out over the channel in a NE direction. Some of the birds wheeled and dipped almost like Tree Martins. When the leading birds were almost halfway across the Cut the flock turned and flew directly back to the trees, diving into the lower branches within seconds.

Then the pattern of getting into the top of the Tuarts was repeated and after about five minutes another flight out over the water would be made.

On the sixth attempt when the flock reached the centre of the Cut the birds split into two groups. Half of the Wattlebirds flew on to the northern side without any aerobatics. This enabled me to count them. There were 64 birds. The rest of the flock returned to the south side of the channel flying into the Banksias and lower branches of the Tuarts. They subsequently gathered in small groups with only a few birds going into the top branches. No further flights over the water were attempted.

The following day I went down to the Cut and again the Wattlebirds were flocking. They had obviously been joined by more birds as the numbers had increased. The pattern was the same as on the previous day but although the birds flew out over the water no birds completed the crossing. The possible reason was a Peregrine Falcon on the north side that flew across and into the trees on the southern side.

On Monday the 17th I was late getting down to Dawesville. However the Wattlebirds were still flocking in the Tuarts. Once again I did not see them complete a flight over the Cut.

Have Wattlebirds previously been recorded flocking in large numbers?

Has there been study of bush bird movement along the south-western coastal plain?

Colin Davis

FRESH FROM THE PRINTING PRESS

Weekends unlimited – that's what would be needed to make maximum use of RAOU WA Group's latest publication, *Birdwatching: Perth and Environs*.

This booklet describes about 90 sites either around Perth or within reach of a day's trip into six areas beyond it – Darling Range, south of Perth, Mandurah district, Northam, Rottneest and north of Perth. Maps and site information enable readers to tap the local knowledge of the many experienced birdwatchers who have contributed data. The book is not aimed at identification, and illustrations are few – rather, it is a matter

of the RAOU "telling people where to go".

As well as facilitating, satisfying birdwatching, the editors, Allan Jones, Max Bailey and Judy Blyth, hope that use of the booklet will enhance feelings of appreciation and protection towards the environment on which wildlife and plants depend.

The south-west of Western Australia has 11 endemic species of birds, and nine of these occur in the areas covered by the booklet. These birds are all described towards the back.

Finally, there is a separate addendum, Bird List For Perth and Environs compiled by Peter Sandilands from the RAOU Database. It indicates some of the sites at which the 248 species in the areas covered by the booklet may be found. Imagine this as an aid to your Twitchathon effort!

The final draft was checked by John Dell of the WA Museum before the Museum printed it with its shiny and colourful cover.

All in all, *Birdwatching: Perth and Environs*, which grew out of the popular Country Brochures project, is another example of the co-operation of many volunteers of our thriving and busy organisation, the RAOU.

At \$4.00 per copy (add \$1.00 if posting is required), the booklet is available from our headquarters in Perry House – or from other outlets at Kings Park Tourist Kiosk, the National Trust, the WA Museum Shop and the Gould League. Why not succumb to temptation and buy one for yourself – or several for friends or family members for Christmas?!

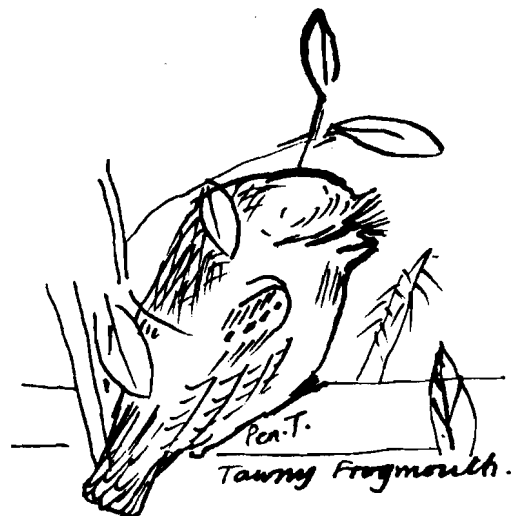
Judy Blyth

TAWNY FROGMOUTH AT BOLD PARK

During the public bird walks associated with Spring Fling in September 1994, all walk participants were able to see a Tawny Frogmouth at close range. The bird was first seen about 5 m up in a Tuart tree, by Clive Napier.

The public bird walks were also run as part of Spring Fling in September 1995, with Clive again leading the first walk, and there was the Frogmouth again, in exactly the same tree! If it was one of Clive's props, nailed to the perch, he must have forgotten to take it down because it was there again in the first week of Bird Week in October 1995. Unfortunately, it had apparently gone to another perch by the time of the public walks on Sunday 29th October.

John Blyth



John Blyth

SHELDUCK WITH MIXED BROOD

Geoff Harris reports an unusual family of Australian Shelduck (locally known as Mountain Ducks) which he saw recently on his farm near Boyup Brook. The family consisted of two adults and nine ducklings. What was unusual was that the ninth duckling was smaller than and marked differently from the other eight. On closer inspection, Geoff determined that the small duckling was a young Australian Wood Duck.

This is not the first time Geoff has noticed this – it happened once before, about three years ago.

It is not known how these “mixed” families originated, but Geoff’s suggestion is that the Shelducks may have taken over a recently commenced Wood Duck nest.

It would be interesting to know how this duckling fares in future. Can Shelducks raise a Wood Duck successfully? If so, does it think it is a Shelduck or a Wood Duck?

Editors

DEPARTING SANDERLINGS?

I would like to share with others my experience during late March or early April some three years ago. I walked along the beach for a couple of miles south of Halls Head, Mandurah looking for waders. I saw very little on the way down but on the way home was surprised to see a large group of Sanderlings feeding frantically where the beach was flat and the waves were breaking well out and rolling up the sandy beach. On counting the birds I made the total 53.

On looking further along the beach I saw a similar sized group of 55 Sanderlings about 50 metres away. I took up a position high up on the beach between the two groups to watch for a while, and wondered why the two groups stayed relatively near one another but did not join forces.

Suddenly the first group took off and flew directly out to sea until they were difficult to see through my binoculars. They then wheeled around and came back. I thought they might join the other group, but they returned to their original position.

The second group then went through the same routine. As they returned they came towards the first group, then veered off and landed precisely where they had taken off from.

I presume both groups were doing trial runs before setting off on the long migratory flights homewards. I would be interested to hear if any other RAOU members have had a similar experience.

Austin Daw

ORIENTAL PLOVERS

On Saturday 16 September, Jim Gardner (from Kununurra) and I visited Kingston Rest Station about 70 km from Kununurra towards Halls Creek. We went to several sites including a dam built in late 1994 to reclaim water after irrigation.

I observed 11 waders on the muddy shore close to the water. I approached on foot to less than 10 metres before they took flight which confirmed that they were Oriental Plovers (no white rump or wing bars, etc). It is very seldom that I can approach waders this closely. It was only when I got very close that they started to call and to walk along the shore before they flew.

They flew a few hundred metres along the dam and disappeared over the surrounding earth bank. We followed

about 10 minutes later and found them on a small area of open ground near some small (about 0.5 m) bushes. Some were standing in the shadows, while others were standing still, first on one leg and then on the other as if the ground was hot. Again, I was able to approach to less than 10 metres in the car without flushing them. They were calling but made no attempt to walk or fly away. Jim was able to video some of them through the open window.

We continued around the dam to another area where we found seven more Oriental Plovers roosting on a large open area about 30 m from the shore. We didn’t try to get closer than about 30 m, and they largely ignored us. We couldn’t continue any further because of a drain, so we returned the way that we came. The first group was still there, although some had moved under some taller (2 to 3 m) bushes and were almost hidden under the lower branches. I have not heard of waders taking shelter under trees or bushes before.

Frank O’Connor

GLENFLORRIE STATION

During the months of August and September I had a busman’s holiday on a cattle station 108 kms SE of Nanutarra Roadhouse (NW Highway). On several occasions we visited windmill tanks/troughs, and always a fire was lit for smoko and lunch. I noticed that after the ashes had cooled down, usually to powderform, Black Honeyeaters flew down and appeared to peck into the ash. Coming back a week later it was noticed no ash remained except a grey circular patch on the ground. Two of the men said that they had seen Crimson Chats acting similarly at another place on the station. Can anyone explain why?

Other interesting observations from the trip are listed below:

- Star Finch – 20 including young, 26/7/95-28/9/95 in date palms on a creek bed near the homestead
- Painted Finch – 40+, 30/7/95-10/9/95 in three areas
- Spinifex Pigeon – 100s including nests and young, 28/7/95-29/9/95
- White-necked Heron – 1, 12/9/95 on a permanent pool in the Wonnery River
- Bourke’s Parrot – 1 dead, 12/9/95
- Budgerigar – 1000s flying like a green cloud; many young in nests along creeks, 26/7/95-28/9/95
- Spotted Harrier – 1 flying, 1 dead, caught in recently completed fence, 15/9/95
- Little Button-quail – 100s including young (look like brown cotton wool on match sticks), and nests 29/7/95-27/9/95
- Australian (Port Lincoln) Ringneck – 10 at nest hollows along dry creek, 2/9/95
- Willy Wagtail – 2/7/95-29/9/95 with nest on hook on homestead verandah; 4 broods hatched – 2,2,3,2 eggs – seemed to be same parents
- Black-tailed Godwit – 2, 22/8/95 at Carnarvon
- Wedge-tailed Eagle – 1, 25/7/95, seen from bus window and nearly hit as it rose from side of highway with a snake in its talons. This was north of Minilya Roadhouse. I saw a similar happening out of Wyndham 5 years ago.

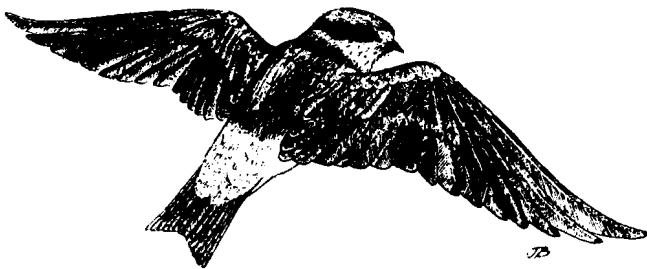
F. Robinson

TREE MARTINS AND STREETLIGHTS

It was one of those mornings when you are stuck in the traffic going nowhere in a hurry. Trying to pass the time, I watched the aerobatics of some Tree Martins. One settled on the top of a streetlight, and then flew off again, only to return in a moment. The martin flew up to the base of the light, fluttered and disappeared inside. On closer inspection, a large gap was evident where the support joined the light fitting. Tree Martins apparently use streetlights for breeding, and my observations suggest that are these sites very popular with martins. The preferred lights are the larger ones such as found along the major roads and in shopping centre car parks.

On 29 June 1995, as dusk was settling in, several Tree Martins were seen disappearing into lights along Albany Highway at Kenwick. It would have been too early for breeding so the most likely explanation would be that the lights were being used for roosting purposes. The lights would provide warmth and shelter during the winter months.

Whilst checking out the street lamps, another breeding site frequently used by Tree Martins was uncovered. The old wooden power poles are presently being replaced by concrete ones and the wooden cross beams at the top of these poles are being replaced by galvanised box-steel beams. The cross beams hold the porcelain insulators for the power lines. It is these hollow steel beams that are providing an additional and common breeding site for Tree Martins. Some power poles have several cross beams with Tree Martins nesting at each end and you will frequently see a swarm of martins around these sites. The beams have adjustment holes drilled through them, and these provide ventilation for nesting martins.



Just as Welcome Swallows have adjusted to breeding in new locations such as service station workshops, drive-in bottle shops (Gosnells), shopping centre entrances (Riverton), so Tree Martins have been quick to exploit these artificial nesting holes.

How successful these breeding sites are is unknown, but two sets of observations suggest that such alternative accommodation does have some draw backs. Firstly, Australian Ravens have been seen standing near the exits of Tree Martin nests. Although no actual predatory behaviour has been observed, these locations do provide opportunity. They allow ravens to stand near the nest exit and pick off young martins venturing out. Secondly, the smooth metal surfaces do not provide any grip for young birds and presumably they sometimes slip off before they can fly. On several occasions young birds have been found dead at the base of these poles in September and October. The location along roads or above concrete foot paths is not particularly conducive to a soft landing.

Marcus Singor

POINT PERON IN MARCH

I have been going to Point Peron (near Rockingham) for many years and have always associated the area with Grey-tailed Tattlers. It is one of the few locations I know where you can find this wader even out of season. Other species often found in and around the rocky coves include the Eastern Reef Egret, Osprey, Sacred Kingfisher and Sooty Oystercatcher. The Sacred Kingfisher can even be seen here during the winter months.

If you visit Point Peron at dawn in March, you may well leave with the following images:

- a Black-shouldered Kite hovering over the sand dunes, or perched high in a favourite dead tree, behind the Education Department camp-school buildings
- a group of Ruddy Turnstones busily tossing seaweed about in their search for food; some are already displaying the first signs of breeding plumage, with prominent rufous colours evident on their back, and black and white around the head
- a pair of Crested Terns calling out as they patrol just beyond the breaking surf
- further down, where the beach stops and the lime stone cliffs extend into the sea, a Grey Plover standing motionless; the black armpits are clearly visible as it flies off
- when the tide is out you can walk around the base of the cliffs; the limestone cliffs extend upwards and on the many limestone ledges Welcome Swallows shelter, only to swarm out over the sea as you pass below
- out in the water a Common Sandpiper stands nervously bobbing up and down on a rock; quick to take flight, it soon disappears, calling out while it skims low over the sea.

If you visit Point Peron, you will notice several sheltered coves facing Garden Island. In one cove, a solitary grey wader moves busily around the rocks prodding here and there. A small crab is extracted. It then moves to the ridge of seaweed lining the beach. Some flies are flushed out of the banks of weed and chased across the wet sand, where they are snapped up. The wader's yellow legs stand out clearly in the morning sun. As the incoming waves start to catch up, it runs to higher ground, never letting the water get above its knees. When the sea recedes, it follows, once again resuming its search for food. You are watching a Grey-tailed Tattler.

It was this sort of experience which aroused my interest in tattlers, resulting in the following article.

Marcus Singor

GREY-TAILED TATTLER: TAIMYR TO PERTH

The Grey-tailed Tattler is an attractive greyish-coloured wader with a straight, tapering bill and yellow legs. Its scientific name is *Heteroscelus brevipes*. *Brevipes* means short-footed, short legs being a characteristic of this wader.

Migration

The Grey-tailed Tattler breeds in alpine tundra in Northern Siberia and its distribution ranges from the remote mountains south of the Taimyr Peninsula (Central Siberia) to the Verkhoyanskii highlands and the remote mountains near Anadyr (North-Eastern Siberia) (Lane 1987).

The exact breeding range is still not completely known and the first nest was only discovered in 1959 by a Russian geologist. This tattler is quite an intrepid traveller - a round trip from the Taimyr Peninsula to Perth is about 25,000 kilometres. One tattler banded at Roebuck Bay on 12 April 1990 was caught on 5 May 1990 in Taiwan. In just 23 days it

had travelled 4,771 km. The Grey-tailed Tattler begins to leave its breeding grounds in mid August and arrives in Northern Australia in late August and early September. They over-winter here and depart Australia by early to late April, arriving back on their breeding grounds in mid May to early June. The Grey-tailed Tattler also over-winters throughout parts of South-East Asia, Malaysia, Indonesia, New Guinea and New Zealand.

The migration pattern on the Australian east coast commences with the arrival of small groups of Grey-tailed Tattlers in July to September. They progressively move further south to the south eastern coastal mudflats in August-September, suggesting movement southwards along the east coast in this period.

Records show a large drop in numbers on the east coast sites in September/October followed by an large increase during the months February and March. It is not clear where the tattlers go to or come from during these fluctuations as numbers do not correspondingly vary at other known sites. One suggestion put forward to explain the variation in numbers involves a change in roosting habits, such as a move from mangroves out onto the flats, thereby becoming more noticeable. Other suggestions are movements from north-west Australia or the Gulf of Carpentaria to the east coast (Alcorn *et al.* 1994).

The Great Barrier Reef's many islets may be considered another potential dispersal area for Grey-tailed Tattlers. Wader counts in the far northern parts of the Great Barrier reef, facing Cape York, showed the presence of groups of Grey-tailed Tattlers on many islets. Groups of several hundred were seen on different islands during counts made in April 1986 and November/December 1987 (Cornelius 1987, 1988).

Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach in north-western Australia are important refuelling stops for Grey-tailed Tattlers before they commence their migration back to the breeding grounds. Measurements have shown that a 40% weight increase from late March to mid April is not uncommon. Analysis of data obtained from 1,237 birds caught in north-west Australia and Victoria between 1981-1988 showed that average adult weights are approximately 99 grams in the October/November period, increasing to around 127 grams in early April. The heaviest bird weighed 155 grams, with 13% weighing greater than 140 grams, ie, 40% or more heavier than the average October/November weight. The juveniles, however, did not show any marked increase during the same period (Haward and Barter 1991).

A substantial number of Grey-tailed Tattlers stay in Australia throughout our winter. The individuals that remain, mainly immature birds, do not assume breeding plumage.

Some juvenile plumage characteristics not usually described in guides are the edge of the tail feathers, which are clearly notched whitish, and small, neat whitish-buff spotting on the upper parts. The spotted coverts of juveniles are usually replaced by about December. Bills of juveniles are shorter than bills of adults.

The Grey-tailed Tattler is often found roosting at high tide in exposed sites such as rocks, mangroves or man-made structures. The affinity with mangroves may have something to do with behaviour displayed on its breeding grounds where it likes to perch on dead tree branches. Even some of its nests have been found in old bird's nests. The same behaviour has also been observed in some *Tringa* species including Wood

Sandpiper and Green Sandpiper.

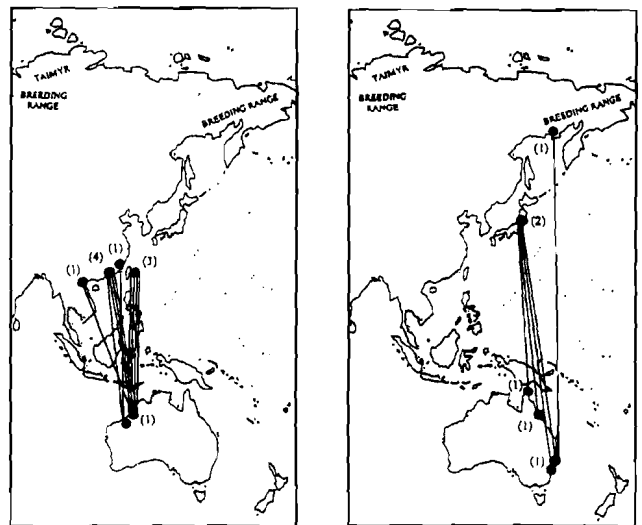
The preferred breeding habitat is along stony mountain streams at high altitude. The nest is often in a shallow depression among stones.

Banding data

Information provided by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA) shows that 16 banded tattlers have been recovered. This figure includes both national and international recoveries and spans a period of nearly 30 years! Russia, Taiwan and Japan operate extensive banding schemes; some of the banded tattlers caught in China and Vietnam, however, were captured for food.

The first Grey-tailed Tattler was recovered at Manly (Qld) on 11 September 1966 and had originally been banded in Japan on 29 August 1965. The most recent recovery was a Broome banded specimen recovered on 3 May 1994 in Northern Vietnam. The largest period elapsed between banding and recovery is 7 years and 9 months.

Analysis of the banding data (Map 1) shows some interesting patterns. The Grey-tailed Tattlers that over-winter in Australia come from two widely separate regions in Siberia.



Map 1 Grey-tailed Tattler banding recoveries for west coast ([Perth]-Siberia) and east coast ([Sydney]-Siberia).

First, there's a population that breeds in Central Siberia (Taimyr) and these Tattlers seem to follow their own migration route to Australia. They travel from their breeding grounds in Central Siberia to Guang Dong province in China and then on to Broome. Banding information suggests a Taimyr-Perth Flyway. For instance, nine birds banded in Broome were all recovered in broadly the same region in China (Guang Dong province), eg, Hong Kong (1 recovery), Taiwan (3 recoveries), Qinzhou City (1 recovery), Guang Dong (3 recoveries) and Vietnam (1 recovery). The same pattern emerges when applied to tattlers travelling in the opposite direction eg, birds banded overseas and caught in Australia. One tattler banded in Taiwan was caught at Broome. Grey-tailed Tattlers breeding in Central Siberia seem to migrate exclusively to the north-west coast of Australia. This would mean that the Grey-tailed Tattlers residing around Perth originate from the Taimyr region. Movement of banded birds between Western Australia and the Taimyr region would support this suggestion.

The second population of Tattlers breeds in North Eastern Siberia and migrates via Japan and the Philippines down to the Australian East Coast. This is supported by Grey-tailed

Tattlers that were banded on the East Coast and were consequently recovered in the Tokyo Bay region e.g. Obitsu estuary (opposite Tokyo City), (2 recoveries). Another Tattler banded on the Eastern seaboard was recovered in Magadan (Russia). Again, the reverse pattern applies to birds travelling in the opposite direction. For example, three birds banded in Japan all turned up on the eastern Australian coast at Hinchinbrook Island, Possession Island and Manly. This would indicate that the population breeding in North-Eastern Siberia has a separate migration route into eastern Australia.

There is, however, confirmation of movement between the tattler populations of the north west and the east coast. A Grey-tailed Tattler leg flagged (yellow) in north western Australia moved across the continent within three months of being tagged. It was located on North Stradbroke Island, Moreton Bay, Queensland on 23 November 1992 (AWSG).

No geographical variation is known between the two populations, although a comparison of biometric data from north-western Australia and the east coast does show up some small differences. For example, in north-western Australia, the average adult bill length is 38.2 mm, while the total-head length is 68.6 mm. Both measurements are marginally shorter in Victorian birds. In north-western Australia, adult primary moult commences soon after arrival in late August to early September. Moult in Victorian birds appears to occur later than in north-western Australia (Haward and Barter 1991). Could these subtle variations be due to geographical variation?

Red Knot, Red-necked Stint, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Whimbrel have a similar division of breeding grounds and it would be interesting to make a comparison of migration patterns and of any geographical variation between populations.

Distribution in Western Australia

The Grey-tailed Tattler is widespread in Australia. It is most plentiful in the northern half of Australia, becoming progressively less common to the south. It is one of the commonest migrant waders in Australia in summer.

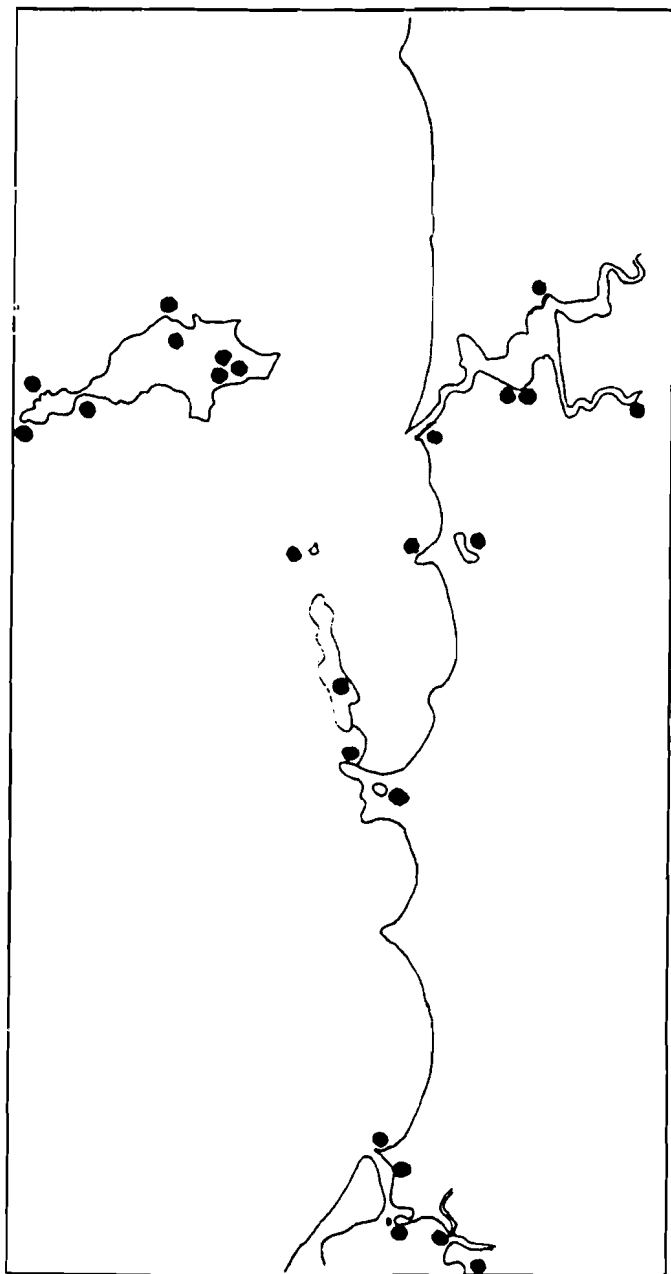
Numbers decline markedly south of about Sydney on the east coast and Perth on the west coast (Pringle 1987). Some of the largest concentrations in Australia are in the Broome-Port Hedland area. For example, five counts held in 1982/1983 at Eighty Mile beach produced 8500 individuals and six counts at Roebuck Bay produced 3180 individuals. The tattler has been recorded as plentiful at Melville Island. In the eastern States five counts at Moreton Bay (Qld) produced 3190 individuals (Lane 1987). Numbers decline south of Perth and the Grey-tailed Tattler is rare along much of the south coast, although the Kalbar and King River estuaries near Albany are preferred sites.

One of the earliest and most often quoted observations from the Swan River estuary is recalled by D.L. Serventy. He mentions that "the Grey-tailed Tattler occasionally appears at Pelican Point and one was noted on the rocky beach near the Crawley Baths, Perth (March 1931)." Sightings are no longer forthcoming from areas such as the Como foreshore where Tattlers were seen in the 1950s. Most recent observations from the Swan estuary are restricted to Alfred Cove and Pelican Point (Map 2).

Storr and Johnstone (1988) mention that the Grey-tailed Tattler is an uncommon visitor on the Swan Coastal Plain. It is present from September to June, though mostly from November to March; usually single, but occasionally in small parties (up to 5). Observations have been made at Rottnest,

Carnac and Garden Islands and occasionally near coastal lakes eg, Government House (Rottnest), Coogee Lake and Richmond Lake (Rockingham) and the Peel Inlet. Storr (1991) goes on to say that tattlers are most numerous in the Abrolhos. His records show that they occur usually in ones or twos but also in small flocks up to 35.

The Grey-tailed Tattler was not recorded by Storr during his surveys of Rottnest in the 1950s; however it is now a regular visitor in small numbers (less than 25) and may be found there all year. Serpentine and Herschell Lakes appear to be favoured as feeding areas (Saunders and De Rebeira 1993).



Map 2 Locations (•) near Perth where Grey-tailed Tattler have been recorded.

My own records show the Grey-tailed Tattler as a regular visitor to Point Peron, Woodman Point and the Creery wetlands at Mandurah (Map 2).

Certain areas around Cockburn Sound are preferred by the Grey-tailed Tattler and these correspond closely with the remaining vestiges of the once extensive seagrass meadows

(*Posidonia*) e.g Woodman Point, Garden Island and Cape Peron.

I have often found different waders foraging through the banks of washed up seagrass. In this context, it is interesting to note that during 1973-1989, a major dieback of seagrass occurred in Westernport Bay, Victoria, resulting in an 85% loss of biomass. Only the Grey-tailed Tattler declined in number to the same extent (Loyn, 1989).

The tattler is exclusively a bird of coastal and near coastal sites in its Australian wintering grounds, as demonstrated by its behaviour in the Perth Metropolitan area.

The Grey-tailed Tattler shows a preference for a number of sites around Perth. These can be divided in broadly four regions: the Swan River area (Alfred Cove, Pelican Point, Canning River mudflats), the Cockburn Sound area (Point Peron, Woodman Point, Coogee Lake), off-shore islands (Rottnest, Garden and Carnac Islands), and the northern shores of Peel Inlet (Coodanup, Styx Channel, Creery wetlands and Mandurah estuary). Of these sites, Rottnest appears to be the stronghold.

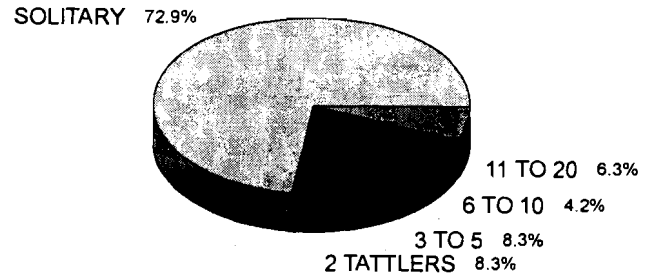
The preferred tattler habitat in Perth changes, depending on the time of the year. During the summer months, tattlers are seen on the Swan River and Peel Inlet intertidal mudflats as well as in the coastal areas. However, observations for the Swan River and Peel Inlet areas are virtually absent during the months April to September. This may be attributable to the higher winter water levels which largely eliminate suitable feeding areas in these estuaries, and confine the tattler to the rocky coastal habitats around Perth at this time.

The Grey-tailed Tattler shows a preference for foraging among the seaweed banks and the rocky areas in the intertidal zone and is often in the company of Ruddy Turnstones and Grey Plovers.

The bar graphs were compiled from information obtained from the Western Australian bird data base maintained by the RAOU, the G. M. Storr and R. E. Johnstone data base held at the Western Australian Museum, observations recorded in WABN and my own notes. The Perth metropolitan graph covers the Perth area down to Mandurah and includes the off shore islands.

PERTH METRO AREA BASED ON 48 OBSERVATIONS

COMPARISON OF TATTLER NUMBERS SIGHTED



The pie chart showing the comparison of tattler numbers sighted is only based on 48 observations as many sightings did not record numbers.

Grey-tailed Tattlers were recorded in several major surveys of waterbirds in south-western Australia. Jaensch *et al.* (1988) found them in Peel Inlet (up to five birds), Alfred Cove (2), Grasmere Lake (Albany) (2) and Canning River reserve (1). In the expanded waterbird usage survey (RAOU unpublished, 1981-1988) it was also found at Vasse-Wonnerup (highest count 1). From July 1987 to June 1988, forty four visits made during 40 weeks to Pelican Point, resulting in only one Grey-tailed Tattler being observed during one week (Bailey *et al.* 1988). Jaensch *et al.* (1993), summarising all the RAOU/CALM surveys and published observations in WABN, noted that up to 12 Grey-tailed Tattlers had been recorded at the King River mouth, up to 10 at the entrance to Peel Inlet and up to 9 at the Kalgan River mouth.

Summary

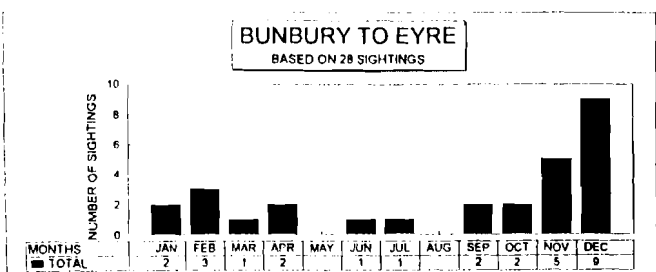
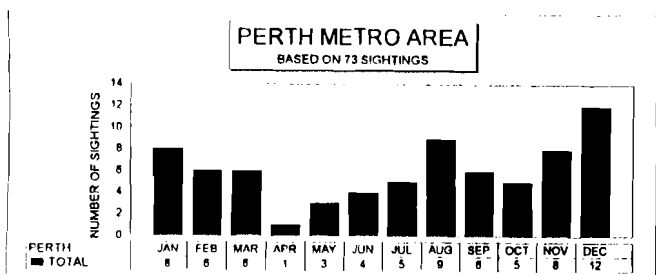
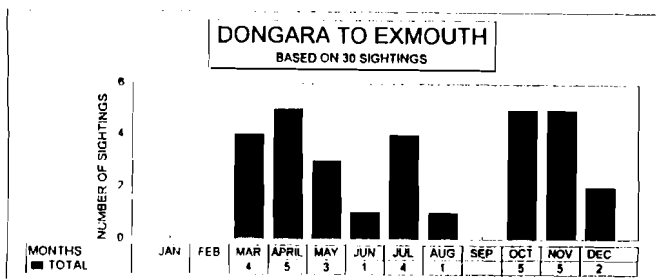
The Grey-tailed Tattlers seen in Western Australia appear to be from the breeding population in the Taimyr area, Central Siberia. They may be a separate population from those occurring on Australia's east coast. Most observations around Perth take place during the months October to March, although sightings do occur in all months. A number of individuals over-winter around Perth (eg, Rottnest Island and Cockburn Sound).

The tattler is uncommon in the greater metropolitan area, but there are locations where it is a regular visitor and these offer the best opportunities for observation (eg, Rottnest Island, Peel Inlet and Cockburn Sound, including the Point Peron area).

The preferred habitats around Perth are river estuary mudflats and rocky beaches with seaweed banks, and vary from summer to winter.

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provided courtesy of Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

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Marcus Singor

Country Groups

ALBANY GROUP

Two South Australian visitors joined the group for a Denmark outing in September, as a result of the *WA Bird Notes*, and we have had other enquiries. The outing involved 26 people, and 53 birds were recorded. Outings were also held in October and November, at Cranbrook and the Porongurups respectively.

Notices

NEW MEMBERS

The following people joined the RAOU WA Group between 26 July and 22 October 1995. We look forward to meeting you at our excursions and general meetings.

Cossack Historic Town, J Cartwright, P Coleman, G Davies, R Davis, M Fay, N Liebmann, V Mishkin, N & L Porteous and R Richardson

Margaret Philippon

SEABIRD TRIPS FROM PERTH

I recently came across a brochure from Mills Charters advertising fishing and whale watching trips out of Hillarys. I rang them (246 5334) to enquire about seabird trips and spoke to Bill Mills. They operate three boats which can be chartered for the day, although bookings are fairly heavy for the weekends.

The boats are quite fast and they regularly go 40 to 50 miles (yes, Bill said miles) off the coast for big game fishing which is past the continental shelf and should provide good chances for a range of pelagic seabirds. They could depart as early as 6.30 am (7.30 am would be my preferred time) and usually return about 4 pm.

The 40 ft boat costs \$750 a day and can take a maximum of 23 people although 15 might be a more reasonable number. The 60 ft boat costs \$980 a day and also takes a maximum of 23 people although 18 might be more comfortable. The 70 ft boat costs \$1,150 a day and takes a maximum of 30 people although 24 would be more comfortable.

This would work out at \$50 to \$75 per person depending on the numbers, which compares very favourably with the seabird trips organised monthly by Mike Carter that operate out of Portland or Port Fairy in Victoria.

I am interested in organising some seabird trips out of Perth. I would think that two to four a year would be enough to start with. If anyone is interested, could they ring me at home on (09) 386 5694 (9 am to 10 pm) or at work on (09) 482 1445 (6 am to 6 pm).

Alternatively, if you ring Mills Charters, you may be able to tag along as an observer on a deep sea fishing trip for possibly as little as \$20, although the fishing by the others is the priority and you won't have the benefit of other birders to help to identify the species.

Frank O'Connor

RURAL BROCHURES PROJECT

We have received a grant from Down to Earth Foundation to continue the project.

Any country member/s or others with the necessary knowledge who would like to prepare information for a brochure on a particular shire, please contact Rural Brochures Project, PO Box 199, Jolimont WA 6014.

We need volunteers for four shires; Moora, Cue/Mt. Magnet/Yalgoo, Karratha and Exmouth.

Allan Jones

PERRY HOUSE LIBRARY NEWS

The following reports/journals/books have been received during August and September 1995:

The Tattler. Newsletter of AWSG. No 4, July 1995

Emu. Journal of the RAOU. Vol 95, Part 2, June 1995

Newsletter – Broome Bird Observatory. July 1995

Report – RGC Wetlands Centre. RAOU. August 1995

Newsletter – Barren Grounds Observatory. June 1995

RAOU Conservation Notes – *Birds on Farms*. No 16, August 1995

NSW Bird Notes. Newsletter of NSW/ACT Group RAOU. December 1991-June 1995 (13 issues)

The Greener Times. Conservation Council of WA. July and August 1995

The Flow. Water Authority of WA. No 8, August 1995

System 6 – A Representative Conservation System:

Discussion Paper. EPA. August 1995

Floristics of Lowlands. B Keighery, G Keighery, N Gibson. WA Wildflower Society. March 1995 (donated by Wildflower Society)

Kings Park and Botanic Garden Draft Framework Plan. July 1995

Kings Park: Western Gateway Concept Plan. July 1995

West Cape Howe National Park – Management Plan 1995-2005. CALM for National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority of WA.

West Cape Howe National Park – Analysis of Public Submissions to Management Plan No 28. CALM. 1994

Perth's Water Future – A Water Supply Strategy for Perth and Mandurah – Overview. Water Authority of WA. June 1995

The Bird Observer. Newsletter of Bird Observers Club of Australia. No 755, August 1995

East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network Proposal. Prepared by: Asian Wetland Bureau, September 1995

Newsletter – South Australian Ornithological Association Inc. March 1995

Gulf Savannah Birdwatchers Guide (incl bird list). Gulf Savannah Tourist Organization. 1995

Wingspan. Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia, Canada. Spring 1995

Helen Clark

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

Preparations for this event, to be held in Albany, October 5-9, 1996 and hosted by the RAOU, are well underway. Already, about 160 people have registered. Of these, about 25% are from overseas. There are many well known ornithologists planning to attend, and a wide array of topics will be covered in the program, so it should be an interesting event.

Further information can be obtained from Professor Brian Collins, School of Environmental Biology, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth, WA; Tel (09) 351 7041, Fax 351 2495, e-mail B.Collins@info.curtin.edu.au.

BEACH PATROL SCHEME

With the approval of the Committee, I have handed over the organisation of the Beach Patrol Scheme to Ross Payton of 20 Bayview Crescent, Dunsborough (Phone/Fax (097) 55 3263). Ross has considerable knowledge of our seabirds and will be a great asset in that particular study of Australian birds. He is also a member of the Southern Oceans Seabirds Study Association which has RAOU backing.

Bryan Barrett

RAOU (WA GROUP) COMMITTEE

Meetings of the WA Group Committee are held on the third Wednesday of each month at Perry House.

It is through the committee that the business of the RAOU (WA Group) is managed. Matters for consideration by the committee should be communicated to the office with adequate time for distribution to committee members.



A guide to 90 birding sites within 100 km of Perth

The booklet is in colour and contains
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- Supplementary list of birds recorded in the area covered by booklet

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CAN YOU HELP THE SYSTEM 6 UPDATE PROGRAMME?

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is coordinating a programme to update the recommendations of the System 6 Red Books on behalf of the Environmental Protection Authority. The primary objective is to provide Government with a series of recommendations that would ensure a conservation system that was representative of the ecological communities and habitats found in the study area.

The identification of communities will mainly be on a floristic basis since information on fauna is sparse and generally incomplete. Nevertheless the DEP is very keen to take into account information on the fauna where it is available.

To assist with this study the System 6 study team would like to invite members of the RAOU to advise it of any bushland areas that they consider to have high conservation value for avifauna, particularly if a reasonably intact

community is indicated, eg, good representation of insectivorous species.

It would be appreciated if your responses, including a copy of the relevant survey information, could be directed to:

Mr Kevin McAlpine
Conservation Branch
Environmental Protection Authority
141 St George's Tce, Perth WA 6000

There are also a number of specific areas for which the DEP is keen to receive information on the avifauna. Some of these areas are known to have high conservation value from a plant community perspective while others are areas for which additional information might help in the selection process. Some of the areas containing important plant communities are listed below for your information:

Talbot Road Reserve and bushland to the south
Shireview Hill, Neerabup
Landsdale Rec reserve
Hartfield Park
Brixton Reserve and adjacent bushland
Waterloo Townsite
Manea Park, Bunbury
Capel Nature Reserve and adjacent bushland
Yoongarillup reserve, Busselton
Ambergate reserve, Busselton
Carbunup Townsite
Yallingup siding, Dunsborough
Philips Road Nature Reserve and adjacent bushland,
West Pinjarra
Clifton Townsite

Bushland north and south of rifle range, South Yarloop

If there are any members interested in surveying one or more areas for the System 6 update programme, including those listed above, could they please contact Mr Kevin McAlpine of the DEP (Tel 09 222 7055, fax 321 5184).

Any assistance you can give us would be greatly appreciated.

System 6 Study Team

FOR SALE

Zeiss Binoculars 8 x 20B with leather case as new \$330.00
ono : Ring Nancy Stewart – Tel (09) 383 3492

NW 1996 EXPEDITION

The north west of Australia is one of the top regions in the world for waders with up to three quarters of a million individuals of 50 species spread between three main locations:

- Roebuck Bay/Roebuck Plains (near Broome)
- 80 Mile Beach/Anna Plains (250 kms SW of Broome)
- Port Hedland Saltworks (600 kms SW of Broome)

The 1996 expedition will be the sixteenth to NW Australia and will last for **seven weeks – from 2 March to 20 April**. Participants are encouraged to come for as long as possible (preferably a minimum of 2-3 weeks). They are also welcome to stay at Broome Bird Observatory outside the 'core' expedition dates – counting of migration departures will, for example, be continuing until the end of April.

The main objectives of the expedition will include banding – mainly by cannon-netting, but with some mist-netting – and associated leg-flagging (yellow flags) and moult/weight/other biometric data measurement. During the 1994 expedition 6,000 waders of 36 species were caught (as well as eight species of terns and several hundred passerines).

Would prospective participants please indicate their preferred dates as soon as possible so manpower can be scheduled to give as even a cover as possible? It is necessary to do this for logistic reasons – particularly with transport limitations in mind.

For full details of the expedition including itinerary, climate, costs, travel, etc, contact Clive Minton, 165 Dalgety Road, Beaumaris, Victoria 3193, Australia. Phone/Fax (61) 3-9589-4901.

Snippets

A Sooty Tern, banded by New Zealand meteorological staff on Raoul Island 35 years ago, has been found 14,000 kilometres away on the Seychelles group of islands in the Indian Ocean. The bird was still breeding! Banding studies are almost the only way such fundamental life history information can be gathered about many species.

AWSG WADER CONFERENCE – AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR

Plans are well underway for the first International Wader Conference to be held in Australia, on 16/17 March 1996. This event will be one of the most significant wader conferences to be held and will be a truly international affair.

Although the full program for the Conference will not appear until the October issue of "The Tattler" it can be safely said that the Brisbane Wader Conference will be the most significant milestone event in wader conservation to be held in this part of the world, and will have major implications on the future activities of the AWSG. The Wader Conference will also provide a unique opportunity for Australian ornithologists to meet and talk to wader specialists from other parts of the globe. At least one evening is planned during the Ramsar Conference for Wader Conference participants to meet with Ramsar delegates to discuss important wader sites within the Flyway. This information will be essential to delegates when addressing the importance of Ramsar sites.

Activities during the Conference will include a Conference Dinner to be held on the Saturday evening. Excursions are being organised by the QWSG to allow participants of the Wader Conference and Ramsar to visit important wader sites in and around the Moreton Bay Ramsar site. It is hoped that a number of participants from both conferences will attend the NW '96 Expedition to take part in the cannon-netting and wader monitoring program carried out by the AWSG.

Conference fees will be A\$65 and will include morning and afternoon teas and lunches for both days, Conference package, program abstracts and post seminar proceedings. Proceedings will be available to non-participants for A\$40 (A\$25 to AWSG members).

Billeting: the QWSG will play host to a number of members of AWSG by providing accommodation at members' homes. This will substantially reduce costs for interstate and overseas visitors. Anyone looking for a bed during the Conference should notify Peter Driscoll, Fahey Rd, Mt Glorious, Qld 4520, early to avoid missing out.

BANDED STILTS COMPLETE THE JOB

Research work by Jim Lane, Grant Pearson and other officers from the Department of Conservation and Land

Management (CALM) in Western Australia has continued at the Banded Stilt breeding locations in the Goldfields. The ABC Natural History Unit also made a follow-up visit in late May to film chick creching and fledging.

Overall it appears that breeding success was good with an excellent survival rate of young birds to fledging. Mark Lamble, the ABC cameraman, reported "tens of thousands" of well grown chicks on the western end of Lake Ballard. It seems that although the chicks could swim and feed in the normal metre deep water during their first few days after hatching they preferred to gradually make their way down to the shallow parts of the lake, 30 kms away, for the bulk of their fledging period. There they marched around on the wet mud or very shallow water picking up minute items of food – thought to be too small to be the traditional brine shrimps.

In contrast the accompanying adults, which had greatly reduced in numbers as the chicks gradually coalesced into hundred strong groups, seemed to find feeding unsatisfactory. They thus periodically left the chicks and flew to deeper water, presumably to feed on the now abundant supply of brine shrimps.

In contrast to Lake Torrens in 1989 there has apparently been no 'second round' of breeding at Lake Ballard. Plenty of adults are still present on the lake however and some excited gatherings and even copulation have been observed, and so a further nesting event may occur.

A small nesting colony (5,000 pairs) did form on nearby Lake Marmion and at least 2,000 chicks were seen in June, but nesting success was probably lower than at Lake Ballard due to the regular presence of a Wedge-tailed Eagle and a Peregrine Falcon at the colony.

Considerable success was achieved in banding and colour-flagging chicks, with nearly 1,000 birds being marked altogether. It was reasonably straightforward to catch chicks in a handnet from a moving boat. When birds were still in family parties it was necessary to only catch part of the brood. This precautionary procedure was also followed with larger groups of chicks. It does incidentally provide yet another contrast between Banded Stilts and other waders. Banded Stilts do not defend their young and do not carry out agitated distraction displays such as the "broken-wing trick" like other waders.

A further aerial survey is planned for mid-July to see if any further nesting attempts have been made and to log the numbers of adult and juvenile birds still present. The water levels are holding up well, which is encouraging.

Would everyone in Western Australia, please keep a lookout for banded/flagged birds? Please also monitor, by regular counts, the return of birds to traditional non-breeding areas as they leave the drying salt lakes in the future.

Clive Minton, Jim Lane and Grant Pearson
from *The Tattler* 4 July 1995

Excursion and Observatory Reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

The dry season of 1995 at BBO has been the busiest on record. There has been an increased demand for nature-based experiences such as birdwatching and the peaceful

surroundings of Roebuck Bay provide the perfect setting. Our exciting news is that an Ecotourism Grant application for a 24 hour power system (just 4 hours at present) was successful. RAOU Headquarters applied for the grant from the Department of Tourism on BBO's behalf and we were told the amazing news in May. Over two years work have gone into the development of a suitable remote area power supply by Western Power, who will use the system to promote renewable energy. The Observatory and Western Power will also contribute to the capital cost.

The system, as specified by the Murdoch University Energy Research Institute, will be capable of supplying air conditioning during the hot tropical summer months and enough power for peak use during the busy dry season. The good news is that the gas fridges will be replaced with electric and there will be power for fans, lighting and office equipment. The system will comprise an array of solar panels tracking the sun, batteries, inverter and backup generator. Installation is expected to be completed by end of January. The benefits will be enormous and hopefully the enjoyment of all visitors to BBO will be enhanced.

The new power system will be well tested in March and April 1996 when the Australasian Wader Studies Group descend on BBO for a seven-week expedition. The reputation of past expeditions has created a demand for places, resulting in a strong team representing 11 countries. To make the best use of these wader experts, our first course *Wave the Waders Goodbye* will overlap a few days when the expedition is at the Observatory. Danny Rogers, course leader, will fill in the story of our waders as they leave Broome, as he was lucky to visit the northern coast of Russia last year. Please book early (discount for RAOU members).

Broome and Russia continue to play international ping pong with the third sighting of an individual Red and White colour banded Great Knot from Russia:

1. 22/06/94 Banded NE Siberia (adult female)
2. 09/09/94 Seen Roebuck Bay, Broome (three occasions)
3. 27/06/95 Seen NE Siberia (same breeding grounds)
4. 17/10/95 Seen Roebuck Bay, Broome.

The last sighting was on the beach directly in front of the Observatory. Becky, keen to have a witness, ran to find Jon. Fortunately Jon had a good look just before an Australian Hobby sent the flock into a panic. It seems a remarkable set of sightings, as more than 22,000 Great Knot occur in Roebuck Bay and such huge distances have been travelled. Considering the odds, this Great Knot might as well have landed in BBO car park and stretched out her leg for examination!

Another record was established in August when a Great Knot was caught on exactly the same beach as it was banded way back in 1981. Aged as a juvenile, it is now 15 years old making it the oldest Great Knot on record and certainly the oldest retrap for NW Australia.

After welcoming back the waders in August and September this year we farewelled our four workers who had worked for so long and so hard. Tim and Kerry Thornton were Assistant Wardens for over four months and Emile and Francine Delhaize were volunteers for six weeks. They all contributed so much to BBO's success and helped us look after some 4,500 visitors to the Observatory. It is only with such dedicated volunteers that BBO can continue to be the special place it is.

Many of the waterholes surrounding Broome continued

to hold water over the dry season. Though Lake Campion eventually dried, Lake Eda was teeming with birds, Hooded Robins a nice surprise, and also birds of prey, including the Black-breasted Buzzard and Spotted Harrier. Taylor's Lagoon yielded a Green Pygmy-Goose, the first for our list in two years. The Little Curlew arrived on 19/9/95 just one day later than last year. Dr Roz Jessop and Peter Collins arrived in Broome to do a six months study on many aspects of the birdlife of Broome and were rewarded with a big flock of Little Curlew on the saltmarsh of Crab Creek Road to study.

BBO's first publication *The Birds of Broome – An Annotated List* is selling well and WA Group have kindly let us store copies at Perry House. If members are able, we would be most grateful if they could bring up copies. We thank Mary Vaughan for doing this already and Mavis Norgard for bringing more shop items. Mavis also treated course participants to a beautiful slide show of all her own shots. Broome's newest outdoor picture theatre was opened this year at BBO, with several outdoor slide shows underneath the stars. Mike Weston and Danny Rogers donated many superb slides from their trip to Siberia last year, so we can tell the complete story of shorebird migration, including the important part Lemmings, Arctic Foxes and other predators play.

Jon Fallaw and Becky Hayward

WALYUNGA NATIONAL PARK 13 August

I, for one, had listened to the weather forecasts with some foreboding as the weekend approached. It seemed as if we were in for one of the gloomier walks of the winter, and certainly the storm that swept through the district in the small hours of the morning did little to lift my spirits. But, in dramatic contrast, the day dawned with clear skies and cheerful sunshine. My optimism was heightened when, whilst waiting at the park entrance, we saw a covey of Dusky Woodswallows clustering on a branch, shoving together in a tight bunch for comfort perhaps, or just habit, some leaving the bunch for a few moments and others joining, so that there was a constant buzz of activity. It was the first time that some of us had seen this characteristic behaviour and it seemed to be a good omen on which to start the walk. We also saw a pair of White-winged Trillers here, apparently only the second sighting of this bird in the park.

Our route was to follow the river's edge for a couple of kilometres as far as Syd's Rapids and then strike inland and follow a track through higher ground and more open woodland back to the starting point. From the start we were struck by the numbers of Australasian Shelduck arrowing across the area in pairs. There seemed to be no pattern to their direction of flight but just a regular crisscrossing of pairs of birds. Striated Pardalotes were most noticeable everywhere and we were able to pinpoint several nesting holes in use by them, and others being used by Tree Martins and Galahs. The rushing river level was too high to permit any of those quiet stretches on which we usually see ducks and so we only observed one pair of Grey Teal on the water. We caught glimpses of them in the inundated swamped undergrowth on the river bank and were able to confirm that they were mating. A little later we had good sightings of both the Shining and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos.

In contrast to almost frenzied activity along the river bank, the elevated track seemed almost devoid of birdlife. The same cannot be said of the meat ants though as they were very active,

and so were their victims. Apart from this, it was a pleasant walk in delightful countryside and we saw a total of 40 species.

Peter Anson

LAKE JOONDALUP 17 August

Eight people met at the Neil Hawkins car park for this mid-week walk. The morning was damp but not cold and as time went on we had patches of sunshine.

As we set off we were joined by a duck, all white with yellow bill and feet, one of several presumably ex-domestic ducks which are frequently seen at this part of the lake. This duck, on foot, followed us throughout our walk, a distance of five or six kilometres.

The lake was very full of water but somewhat empty of waterfowl. None of the heron-ibis group was sighted, nor any grebes or coots. Ducks were very few and we would not expect to see many waders here at this time of year.

Bounded by Joondalup Drive and Burns Beach Road, the patch of bush at the north-western corner of the lake is vegetated with a mixture of paperbark, marri, jarrah, and some tuart trees. Amongst the understorey are banksia and some patches of dryandra. Some of the gum trees and the dryandra were showing some blossom.

In this area many birds were calling and there were good numbers to be seen. Some birds were observed entering and leaving holes in trees, among them two Little Corellas in a tree by the amenities block. Bird of the day for most of us was, probably, Elegant Parrot which is, indeed, aptly named.

The final count showed that 43 species of birds had been identified. In addition there were two 'possibles' of Yellow-plumed Honeyeater and Western Rosella. Thank you to the Excursions Sub-committee for organising another pleasant morning's birding.

Eric Banfield

THOMSONS LAKE 20 August

It was an overcast morning that saw 22 members join Bill McRoberts in the hope of sighting a number of waterbirds and bushbirds at Thomsons Lake. Despite the clouds and difficult light, 53 species were seen.

There was a notable absence of some previously recorded waterbirds on the lake, though a Black-tailed Native-hen was seen on an adjoining property.

A cacophony of calls from Red Wattlebirds and Little Wattlebirds greeted us as we ventured into surrounding bush. Splendid Fairy-wrens were in abundance and a pair of Scarlet Robins and a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo added to the blaze of colour.

We were treated to a display of aeronautic skills by a Little Eagle as it soared in tight circles. A second raptor was sighted but not identified.

J Marsland

LAKE GWELUP 14 September

An overcast morning saw 17 people meet for this mid-week walk. Twelve were members and five non-members. The latter had seen the notice in the newspaper and all five expressed interest in applying for membership.

As we set off from the car park we saw two Nankeen Kestrels soaring and swooping together over the playing fields. We guessed that this was probably mating flight.

The water in the lake was very high and there were few

birds on the open water. However, as we proceeded, we heard (and saw) Clamorous Reed-Warblers in the fringing reeds and at the northern end a Little Grassbird was heard (but not seen). Eight species of duck were present in small numbers. No herons or ibises were sighted, nor any waders.

Black Swans were seen with cygnets and Pacific Black Ducks with ducklings. Magpie-larks and Red Wattlebirds were observed feeding young in nests and Galahs and Australian (Port Lincoln) Ringnecks were busy in holes in trees.

A Sacred Kingfisher was spotted sitting on a branch in some scrub and presently a pair of Rufous Whistlers began fluttering and hopping around it. Perhaps the kingfisher was too close to their nest?

At the end of the walk we had circled the lake (anti-clockwise) and counted 47 species. Thanks to the Excursions Sub-committee, Gwelup is a good place for birds at most times of the year.

Eric Banfield

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Think of purchasing your gifts from the Perry House office.

Books, field guides, calendars, cards, tapes, videos, CDs.

Call at the office any weekday morning, see our range of stock or check catalogues for items that can be ordered. We can post.

New releases available now:

Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland
Jo Wieneke \$15.00

The Birds of Broome – An Annotated List
BBO \$15.00

Birdwatching Perth and Environs
RAOU WA Group \$4.00

Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia
Christidis and Boles \$23.00

NANGA BRIDGE TO SCARP POOL 24 September

Fifteen people met for a combination birdwatching/bush walking day at the Dwellingup pub car park on a sunny spring Sunday morning. The group was joined by a visitor from Queensland and another from Seattle, USA. After a quick hello and an organised car pool, six vehicles headed towards Nanga.

The walk commenced on a Jarrah/Dryandra ridge following a track down along a creek that feeds into the Murray. It wasn't long before we started hearing and seeing many of the 41 species seen that day.

Spotted and Striated Pardalotes were in abundance and nesting. Inland Thornbills, Western Gerygones, White-naped

Honeyeaters, Splendid and Red-winged Fairy-wrens and Elegant Parrots to name a few, were seen prior to a welcome cup of tea and some enquiries about Sue's mini gas stove for the billy.

During our tea break were our first sightings of the Red-eared Firetail and the White-breasted Robin. The Wattle was in full bloom and a plethora of flowering ground plants lit up the area with a range of colours and scents. Further along this track we heard, then saw at leisure, four Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, magnificent with the bright sunlight enhancing the vibrant colours of their feathers.

Lunch was enjoyed by the Murray River on a granite outcrop that extends out into the middle of the river creating a rapid. The billy was put to the boil again, allowing lunch to be consumed with a welcomed hot cuppa. This area was abundant with New-Holland Honeyeaters and a Brown Honeyeater sighting. We all heard but did not see a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

We returned to the cars east via the main track that follows the river. Along the walk were excellent views of Red-eared Firetails, Pardalotes, Dusky Woodswallows, Australian (Port Lincoln) Ringnecks, Western Rosellas and Red-capped Parrots and a Mistletoebird. The last couple of hundred metres of the walk was up a fairly steep hill which had us panting. The actual distance covered was a comfortable 12 kms.

This day was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by all who came. Our thanks go to Sue for leading our walk and organising the abundance of birds that were present for us on this day!

Dee Smith

PIPIDINNY ROAD 14 October

On quite the worst day imaginable the RAOU returned to Pipidanny, last visited in September 1987. The wind blew a small gale and as the sun rose the temperature went up to a record 32°C. It was a pity, as three weeks earlier we had looked at the area on a lovely quiet spring day and found many birds in the areas in which we intended to take the group. However, even with the adverse conditions experienced, birds were seen and 52 species were recorded at the lunch-time bird call.

The wind made viewing of fairy-wrens and scrub-wrens on the heath and amongst the dunes nearly impossible. The birds were there, as people with keen hearing were able to verify, but they kept low and out of sight. The best sightings for this part of the walk was a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and 4 or 5 White-backed Swallows which have returned, after an absence of four years, to nest in road cuttings. Sightings of several raptors tested everyone's powers of identification but it was agreed that there were two Little Eagles, one of which was light phase with a very clear underwing pattern.

The swamp has now been officially incorporated within the Yanchep National Park and the Rangers have reopened the track leading in from the Park. After the '91 fire it had become choked with vegetation making access very difficult. Unfortunately, there is very little water in the swamp and only a handful of birds was seen.

We had planned a walk through the Tuart forest after lunch, but most people found the heat too much and only four brave souls took part. However, they were rewarded by sighting a Rufous Whistler's nest containing 3 large chicks.

Bryan Barrett

MALLEEFOWL MOUND SEARCH AT MOORINE ROCK 28/29 October

The recent weekend mound search at Moorine Rock was attended by only a lone metropolitan supporter. The property visited has at least three active Malleefowl mounds and two Malleefowl were also seen. The possibility of more mounds is fairly high as bushland on the property is extensive. Convenient basic accommodation and facilities are available for visitors. Anyone wishing to visit the property, which is about 5 hours drive east of Perth, may contact Rod Smith.

Next year another organised search is planned for no later than October.

Rod Smith

Coming Events

Saturday/Sunday 2/3 December – WA Twitchathon 3 pm Sat to 3 pm Sun and End-of-Year BBQ

The WA Twitchathon will be held during December as part of our end-of-year program. So get your teams together – minimum of three and maximum of four. If you do not have a team but would like to participate contact Clive Napier (09 332 7265), John Blyth (405 5161) or Trevor Stoneman (387 2467). It is suggested that each team contributes 10¢ per species of bird seen during the 24-hour period with monies raised going to support the Hooded Plover Project.

A celebratory, pre-Christmas barbecue will be held at Perry House on the Sunday commencing at 5 pm when the winner will be declared.

Sunday 10 December – Half-day walk at Mary Carroll Park Lake and Wright Lake, Gosnells

Meet at 8.30 am in the car park off Eudoria Street, Gosnells.

This is a small but important wetland in the metropolitan area, with over 38 species of waterbird on its list.

We'll then go to Wright Lake for an hour or so, where we may see waders at this time of year.

Leader: Bill McRoberts

Thursday 14 December – Mid-week walk at Bungendore Park, Bedfordale

Meet at 8.00 am at the Park entrance on Admiral Road, just past the entrance to the Emmaus Christian School, on the right-hand side going towards the Dam. We will walk in an area of the Park which escaped the disastrous fire in January '95. Birds not common on the coastal plain can be seen here such as Rufous Treecreepers and Western Yellow Robins.

Leader: Les Harris

Sunday 31 December – Half-day walk at the Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis

Meet at 8.30 am at the corner of Zigzag Road and St Albans Road, Baldivis. The Wellard Wetlands were once clay pits which in 1983 RAOU members helped to replant to make the area more attractive to birds. Come and see the result of these efforts after 12 years.

Those who wish to can lunch in the picnic area and perhaps return home via Woodman Point to 'wader watch'.

Leader: Clive Napier

NO DECEMBER EVENING MEETING

Sunday 7 January 1996– Half-day walk at Piesse Brook, Kalamunda

Meet at 8.00 am at the junction of Hummerston Road and Schipp Road at the southern end of Kalamunda National Park. Take Mundaring Weir Road from Kalamunda and turn left into Hummerston Road. Possible sightings could be Golden Whistlers and maybe introduced Red-browed Finches.

Leader: Brian Wilson.

Saturday 13 January– Full day excursion to Coodanup, Mandurah

Meet at 8.30 am in the car park 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 1 km on the right. Distance from Perth and return approximately 180 kms. We will join the Mandurah Group to look at waders around the Inlet. Bring a hat, insect repellent and old shoes/wellies.

Leader: Frank Pridham

Wednesday 17 January– Mid-week walk at the Canning River Regional Park, Wilson

Meet at 8.00 am at the Kent Street Weir car park near the Canning River to explore the varied bird life of the Canning wetlands.

Leader: Bryan Barrett

Monday 22 January 1996 Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Our chairman, Brian Wilson, continues to watch birds in out-of-the-way parts of the world and will on this occasion report to us on what he saw in the Galapagos Islands, the unusual animal life of which played such an important part in Charles Darwin's thinking on the subject of evolution.

Friday 26 January to Sunday 28 January – not one but two campouts:

Australia Day Campout 1 – Esperance Hooded Plover Survey

This is a repeat of the 1995 January survey, and continuation of this important RAOU project.

Arrive at Esperance Caravan Park on Thursday evening or Friday morning. Caravan/camping sites booked. Contact RAOU office for details and to reserve your choice of site.

Friday morning will be free for general birdwatching, while that afternoon and all day Saturday will be organised searches for Hooded Plovers.

Sunday is a free day, with a boat trip organised, which last year was a great success.

Those who can stay longer could help to complete the HP surveys on Monday 29th, and on Tuesday 30th trips will be made to Israelite Bay/Stokes Inlet. Please obtain the details of this trip from the RAOU office.

For those who do not wish to travel as far as Esperance: Australia Day Campout 2– Dwellingup on Jan and Rob Hill's property

Meet at 11.00 am on Friday at the property entrance. Head east from Dwellingup for 1.5 kms on the Pinjarra to Williams Road. Turn right into Vandals Road and travel 2.7 kms; turn

left into River Road (not signposted, but look for the RAOU sign) and travel for 1.2 kms; turn right into the property at the RAOU sign.

Enjoy forest birding, bushwalking, swimming and canoeing. Self-sufficient camping – water, a gas BBQ and basic bush toilet available. Gas stoves would be advisable in case of a total fire ban.

Leaders: Jan and Rob Hill (Phone: 09 538 1381)

Sunday 4 February– Full day excursion to Lake McLarty, Pinjarra

Meet at 7.30 am at the intersection of South West Highway and the Old Bunbury Road, approximately 5 kms south of Pinjarra, turn right into the parking area. We hope to see large numbers of waders and other water and bushbirds. There are occasional rarities to be seen on this large shallow lake. Wellington boots/old shoes are recommended, plus hats, insect repellent and water. Those wishing to walk right round the lake should take their lunch with them.

Leader: Colin Davis

Saturday 10 February– Full day excursion to Penguin Island

A charter ferry will leave the Mersey Point Jetty, off Arcadia Drive, Shoalwater, at **9.30 am sharp** for a one and a half hour cruise of prime birding spots in Warnbro Sound landing on Penguin Island at 11.00 am for an island walk. We will then have lunch – bring your own as no food or drink is available on the island. After lunch we will have an opportunity to visit the new penguin-viewing facility presently being erected on the island by CALM.

Ferries return to the mainland regularly at hourly intervals.

The cost of the one and a half hour cruise and return trip is \$20.00 Please advise Clive by 7 February if you wish to participate.

Leader: Clive Napier (Phone: 09 332 7265)

Wednesday 14 February– Mid-week walk at Piesse Brook, Kalamunda

Meet at 8.00 am at the junction of Hummerston Road and Schipp Road at the southern end of Kalamunda National Park. Take Mundaring Weir Road from Kalamunda and turn left into Hummerston Road. Red-browed Finches have been seen here as well as Golden Whistlers, Grey Shrike-thrush and other bushbirds.

Leader: Peter Anson

Sunday 18 February– Half-day excursion to Lake Joondalup, Joondalup

Meet at 8.00 am in the Neil Hawkins Park car park, off Shenton Avenue. We will look at the numerous waterbirds and bushbirds in this area of the lake, and later look for waders at the southern end of the lake, off Ocean Reef Road.

Leader: Eric Banfield

Sunday 25 February– Full-day excursion to Rottnest Island

Meet at 10.15 am on Rottnest at the Tourist Bureau at the end of the jetty. It has been some years since the RAOU has been to Rottnest. There are 49 species which are regularly seen and 112+ when vagrants are included. Rottnest has a variety of habitats including the shallow salt lakes, the coast,

fresh water swamps, woodland and heath.

We will walk down to the salt lakes where we should have good views of the waders, then across the golf course where pheasants and Red-capped Robins are often seen. We return to the Settlement for lunch, after which the more energetic can walk or hire bikes to look at the further parts of the Island.

Most ferries leave the Island at about 4.00 pm.

Leaders: Sue Abbotts (Phone 09 444 1607) and Helen Clark

Monday 26 February Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Jiri Lochman, whose striking photographs of scenery and wildlife will be familiar to readers of the CALM journal *Landscape* and other publications, will show slides of birds and discuss the circumstances in which he took them.

Saturday 2 March to Monday 4 March– Long weekend Campout at Claire House, Broke Inlet, near Walpole

Claire House is a private waterfront residence overlooking Broke Inlet. We have been invited by the owners to compile a bird list for the area, using Claire House as our base. Close by is the D'Entrecasteaux National Park.

A 240v diesel generator provides power. There is gas cooking and refrigeration, and a solar water heater.

All crockery, cutlery and cooking utensils are provided, but you will need to bring your own food, linen and pillows. Blankets are supplied.

There are two double bedrooms, one twin room, and one large room with a set of bunks and two single beds.

We have room for 10 in the house; others can come self-sufficient for camping. Bookings can be made on a first-come, first-served basis by ringing Dave Crossley on 09 434 2000.

Claire House is located between Manjimup and Walpole, approximately 400 kms from Perth. Travel south on the South Western Highway. Ninety-three kms south of Manjimup, turn right from the Highway into Broke Inlet Road. The junction is clearly signposted. RAOU signs will also be present. The gateway to Claire House is on the left-hand side of Broke Inlet Road, about 10 kms from the Highway.

Leader: Dave Crossley

Monday 25 March Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Dr Graeme Smith of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology at Helena Valley conducted research on the Noisy Scrub-bird in the 1970s and was involved in censuses of that species and of the Western Bristlebird until 1988. In addition, recent work in Two Peoples Bay has given him a valuable historical perspective on the birdlife of this most important nature reserve. His talk will concentrate on the general ecology of the three rare bird species to be found in that reserve, namely, the Noisy-Scrub-bird, the Western Bristlebird and the Western Whipbird.

Easter 1996 – 5th to 8th April – Preliminary notice

Campout near Lake King. There is a very significant chain of nature reserves, based on a system of salt lakes, from Holt Rock to Lake King. None of these has been surveyed in detail for birds. The area is also the centre of a most unexpected

cluster of six Night Parrot reports, from the 1930s to the present. Our trip can act as a first assessment of the likelihood of finding Night Parrots there. Details in next issue.

Leaders: John Blyth, Mal Graham (Katanning)

Monday 22 April Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

As was announced on page 19 of the last issue of *WA Bird Notes*, tens of thousands of Banded Stilts nested at Lake Ballard near Menzies following cyclonic rain early in 1995. Jim Lane of CALM (who recently spoke to us about Black Swans at the Vasse Estuary, Busselton) will describe this memorable breeding event and what it has added to our knowledge of this unusual wader species.

Monday 27 May Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Associate Professor Ron Wooller of Murdoch University will describe the landmark study on Short-tailed Shearwaters (Muttonbirds) begun by the late Dom Serventy (one of the most important figures in WA ornithology) in 1947 and still continuing today. Although the study is conducted in Bass Strait and the shearwaters which are its subject breed only in small numbers in WA in the Archipelago of the Recherche, the findings about this bird's natural history have implications for other shearwaters and seabirds generally.

Monday 24 June Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Dr Nic Dunlop, a consulting ecologist known for his work on seabirds, will talk to us about the natural history of the Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* in Western Australia.

Monday 22 July Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Andy Chapman of CALM in Kalgoorlie works in an area with major salt lake systems and a high diversity of eucalypts and will be telling us about the changes which have taken place in the birdlife of that area since European settlement.

Monday 26 August Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

Russell Barrett, a keen naturalist with a particular interest in birds and plants, lives on Beverley Springs Station in the Kimberley and will describe his experience of the birdlife of a region in which few people have had the opportunity to observe birds at all times of the year.

Tuesday 1 October Meeting – Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre 8.00 pm

The name of Dr Clive Minton is associated in Western Australia with the NW Australia wader expeditions which he has led for the last decade and which have been based in Broome. His talk, the final details of which remain to be settled, will concern an area considered to be one of the most important for waders in the world.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre on Monday February 26th 1996 at 8pm. All committee positions will be declared vacant and office

bearers will be elected for 1996/97. Nomination forms may be obtained from the office and must be signed by the proposer, seconder, and the person nominated, all of whom should be paid-up members. The completed form should be sent to the Secretary or handed in prior to the commencement of the AGM.



Crossword Solution





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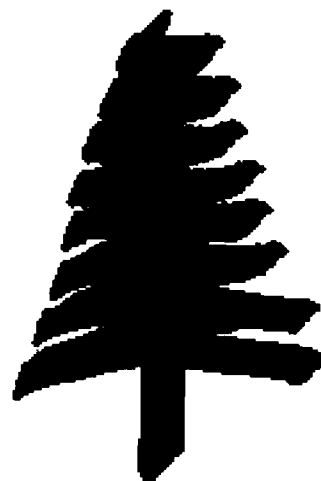
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