

May 1981

NEWSLETTER of the HUNTER (Newcastle) BIRD OBSERVER GROUP.

Issue No. 4/81 - Released monthly at General Meetings.

MEETINGS: 2nd Wednesday of each month (except January) at the Garden Suburb Primary School at 7.30 p.m.

Principal Officers: Chairman: Fred van Gessel
Secretary: Mrs. Wilma Barden (57 3928)

1. Notes from the April Meeting - 8/4/1981.

- (a) Attendance 20 - down slightly on our two previous meetings but still quite good in comparison with 1980 figures.
- (b) Our Chairman, Fred van Gessel read a letter of thanks from Clive Minton the leader of the Victorian Wader Group who recently visited our area. Clive expressed thanks for the hospitality shown to his group and the assistance given with banding etc.
- (c) Gary Weber reported on activities of the Hunter Wetlands group and advised that it was proposed to make a pilot study of the Hexham, Irrawang and Williams River area.
- (d) The election of Officers scheduled for April was deferred to the May meeting
- (e) Wilf Dews reported that the B.H.P. Company was to build a loop railway line through the Borehole swamp. Decided that a letter be sent to B.H.P. requesting that as much swamp land as possible be retained.

2. Bird of the Evening

We were pleased to see a notable absentee, Bill Murphy, back with us again to deliver an interesting and informative talk on the SPANGLED DRONGO (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) in his usual whimsical manner. Many thanks Bill.

3. Guest Speaker

Graham Phipps of the Macleay Museum in Sydney gave us an absorbing talk on AVICULTURE and CONSERVATION. Aspects dealt with by Graham were:

- a) Aviculture - the breeding of birds under conditions controlled by man - e.g. aviaries.
- b) Liberty Birds - birds which would not be in certain areas except for man - e.g. the lorikeets which are fed daily at Currumbin. Normally these birds would follow the flowering gums on which they feed but the intervention of man causes them to remain in the one area
- c) Breeding for release - e.g. the Lord Howe Island Woodhen - but for the efforts of man there was a strong possibility that these birds would have become extinct.
- d) Providing a home for birds which should not be released into the wild. e.g. a bird which had been so injured that it could not fly again.
- e) Bird Traffic - such as smuggling. Our abhorrence of this practice needs no further comment.

Graham wound up his talk with a viewing of colour slides of some of the species with which he had been working and also various types of bird enclosures. The talk concluded with Graham adroitly fielding the searching questions fired at him.

Our thanks are due to Graham Phipps for giving us an insight into an area of Ornithology which was quite foreign to most of us.

4. Atlas Outing to Curricabark area - week-end camp 4/5 April

This outing was postponed to some future date. The heavens opened on the eve of departure and it was mutually agreed by the participants that it be deferred.

5. Easter Camp - 17 -20 April.

Nine members of our Group joined with over 80 others from the Flora & Fauna Society and the National Parks group in the four day Easter camp. Campers were spread for several hundred metres along the banks of Table Bay Creek which joins the Widden Brook about $\frac{3}{4}$ kilometre from the Campsite. The Widden valley is a beautiful spot enclosed on each side by ranges which in parts reach a height of 2,900 feet. Each morning it was a fascinating sight to see the mist slowly lifting and the sunlight gradually advancing along the floor of the valley. Bird-wise it proved to be a very fruitful week-end. Over 90 species were sighted and this included 16 not recorded before in this area. All told a very enjoyable week-end, blest with good company, fine weather and plenty of birds. The only unsavoury aspect were the millions of grass seeds which sought transportation to Newcastle via our socks and trouser/slacks legs .

6. Atlas Outing May 2/3 Krambah - Nabiac.

Wet weather seems to be plaguing our Atlassers as the second outing in succession was postponed due to the inclement weather - camping is no fun in the wet. In lieu thereof, the five atlassers concerned, organized a day trip to the grid which included Belford, Glendon and Roughit. In all 78 species were sighted. Returning from this outing the party checked out a lagoon on the Gosforth road (north of Rutherford) and were pleased to see inter alia quite a number of Blue wing Shovellers - Anas(duck) rhynchotis(beak)

7. Coming Events:

May 24 - Sunday Morpeth-Maitland Sewerage Treatment Works + Nature Wonderland + Pokolbin Area. Meet: Oak, Hexham 8 a.m.

May 29 -Friday This is the tentative date for the ANNUAL DINNER. Confirmation of the date and a final decision re the venue to be decided at the May meeting.

May 31 - Sunday Atlas Outing to Mt. Rivers - details Jim Imrie (524524)

June 6/7/8 Queen's Birthday week-end.

A camp at Munghorn Gap with the N.S.W. F.O.C. is on the programme but this may not eventuate - apparently F.O.C. members are having second thoughts about chilly evenings.

June 10 - 2nd Wednesday - next General Meeting.

24/25 August 1981 - R.A.O.U. Congress on 'Birds in Northern Australia' at Katherine in the Northern Territory

26 Aug to 5th September 1981 R.A.O.U CAMPOUT near Top Springs, Northern Territory
The aim of the Campout is to survey for the Atlas of Australian Birds as many as possible of the grid blocks not yet visited in Northern Australia and to conduct preliminary surveys for wader counts and banding in conjunction with the Australasian Wader Study Group.