



# THE NOVOCASTRIAN WARBLER

October 1981



NEWSLETTER of the HUNTER (Newcastle) BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB.

Issue No. 9/81 - released monthly at Club Nights.

MEETINGS: Club Nights, 2nd Wednesday of each month (except January) at the Garden Suburb Primary School at 7.30 p.m.  
Committee Meetings: 1st Monday of each month (public holidays excepted) at Garden Suburb Primary School at 8 p.m.

Chairman: Fred van Gessel. Enquiries: Wilma Barden 573928.

## 1. Notes from the September Meeting - 9/9/81.

- a) Attendance: 23
- b) Sea Bird Trip - further to Sue O'malley's account in the September Newsletter, Bill Cambridge gave a verbal report on the day - this proved to be very interesting and confirmed the general impression that the trip was really worthwhile - this was even conceded by the 'rail hangers'.
- c) Membership Report - our membership has now grown to 39, additions to the list since the last meeting being: Arthur Austin, John and Kay Clulow, Tom Douglass, Allan & Mavis Gillies, Dave and Debbie McGregor, Charles Mann and Gary Weber. Incidentally, the Vera Ralston reported in the last newsletter is 'non est', Jim assures us that OLGA is still the light and love of his life - sorry about that Jim.
- d) Narla Village (Belmont) Residents of this complex are seeking assistance/support to retain trees and vegetation growing near the village - members who can spare the time are requested to visit the area and compile a bird list of the species which frequent this area. Please hand your findings to Jim Imrie.
- e) 1982 Programme - a copy of the 1982 draft programme was circulated at the Club night and comments invited re alterations, amendments or additions.
- f) Handlist of the Birds of N.S.W. A supply of this booklet has been received from the F.O.C. Price is \$5 and copies may be obtained from Ed Hamonet.
- g) Nomenclature of Australian Birds - it was decided that for the purpose of reporting from our Club that the common names to be used will be as published in the 'Handlist of the Birds of N.S.W.'
- h) The matter of a Club Badge is under consideration by the Committee and members were asked to comment on the birds which have been suggested for inclusion in the badge design - these are: Golden Whistler, King Parrot, Regent Bowerbird or Scarlet Honeyeater. Members were also invited to add to the list if they wished to do so.

## 2. BIRD of the EVENING - Mavis Gillies.

Following on from our Sea-Bird trip Mavis presented a well compiled and documented talk on the NORTHERN GIANT PETREL (*Macronectes halli*). Status of this bird is uncertain because of former confusion with the Southern Giant Petrel - distributions of both species apparently coincide. Juveniles are similar. The main features are the enormous bill and the tube nose. Its feeding is more that of a scavenger but sometimes it comes ashore to feed; another notable characteristic is its ability to fly underwater. Under good viewing conditions the grey freckled plumage in conjunction with the grey eyes and reddish tinged bill, dark towards its tip, are diagnostic. Birds of the southern species in similar body plumage have brown eyes and straw coloured bills often tinged with green. Thank you Mavis.

3. MAIN FEATURE of the EVENING

Tony Balfour aided by some relevant comments from his better half Judy (newly acquired) entertained us with a talk on the BIRDS of CANADA. In his introductory remarks Tony spoke of and showed us some of the Field Guides in use in North America - these, as one could expect are first class and one could see where Graham Pizzey could have been influenced by these books when he set about compiling his own book on the Birds of Australia. In addition to showing us some slides of the Canadian avian population, Tony also gave us viewings of the habitat, animals and wild flowers which abound in that region. Many thanks Tony and Judy for enlightening us about another part of the world, particularly the birds that live therein.

4. UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS - Baby Rock Warblers at Wollombi; a Whistling Kite at Halifax Park (Shoal Bay); at Yango Creek - Scarlet Honeyeaters; Striated Pardalotes using a Welcome Swallow's nest; at Cardiff Heights - Swallows and Sparrows apparently using the same nest.

5. REPORT FROM THE SEPTEMBER COMMITTEE MEETING.

Most of the matters dealt with at the September Committee Meeting have been reported on earlier in this Newsletter. However, one other matter concerned the question of a project for 1982. As the Atlas programme is scheduled for completion this year it is proposed, for our next project, that we should endeavour to compile a Handlist of the BIRDS of the HUNTER VALLEY. According to the information in the N.S.W. Handlist, we have over 350 species in our valley and it should be a worthwhile project to not only list them but to also indicate where they have been sighted

6. CARROWBROOK CAMP - 3-5 October 1981.

Ten Club Members and two F. & F. members participated in the long week-end camp which was based on Courtney Smithers property, the TUGLO wildlife Refuge, situated at the foot of Mount Royal - this being the northern extremity of the Hunter Valley.

The weather, on leaving Newcastle was anything but pleasant and to add to our woes a complete fire ban had been imposed. However, early on Saturday afternoon black clouds rolled over the mountain and down came the rain which then continued until 26 mm had been deposited on the ground (exit fire ban). Sunday was rather cold but periods of sunshine gradually increased as the day wore on and Monday was really a beautiful sunny day with a gentle cool breeze.

We cannot speak too highly of the hospitality extended to us by Courtney Smithers, his Wife, 'Smiler' and their two sons.

Highlights of the week-end apart from the bird and animal life were: the woodcraft displayed in lighting and maintaining a fire with rain soaked wood: Fred dropping his binoculars whilst locating possums: Mavis losing hers; Al Gillies who was a picture of sartorial elegance in his borrowed short long pants and the smoky eyes affliction caused by the burning of aforesaid wet wood. If anyone learnt anything from this week end, it was to go camping prepared for both wet and dry weather and cold weather as well as hot.

Birdwise, Tuglo has a bird list of some 80 species and more may be seen within walking distance of the property. Wallabies abound in the area and on our spotlighting expedition we picked up quite a number of Greater Gliders (beautiful black and white animals); several brush possums, some mountain possums and a Koala. One of the most rewarding sights during the night was a family of Kookaburras - Mother, Father and one youngster who was huddled up close to Mum. In all 47 birds were sighted at Tuglo and another 39 in the nearby forest areas. Probably the most interesting recording would have been the Olive Whistler who was heard but not seen.

One of the more pleasant aspects of the camping area was the complete absence of flies, ants, grass seeds, burrs or nettles. Water was not available but by now with our 2 - 3 years of drought experience, we know how to cope with that.

Carrowbrook Camp (Continued)

Altogether a most enjoyable week-end and one we shall remember for a long time; The enjoyment being contributed to in no small measure by the thoughtfulness and hospitality of the Smithers family.

7. ABBREVIATIONS

Some of our members may be a little confused by the terms which are 'thrown around' from time to time, such as B.O.C.; F.O.C.; R.A.O.U. etc so we thought it would be appropriate to enlighten you re same. These are:

B.O.C. Short term given to the BIRD OBSERVER CLUB (Headquarters in Victoria)  
This Club produces an excellent monthly Newsletter and a quarterly publication - the 'AUSTRALIAN BIRD WATCHER'.

C.B.O.C. This is the Cumberland Bird Observers Club - meetings are held at the West Pennant Hills Primary School and a very good Newsletter is issued every two months.

C.O.G. The Canberra Ornithologists Group.

F & F. Short term ascribed to the Newcastle FLORA & FAUNA PROTECTION SOCIETY.

F.O.C. Short name given to the N.S.W. FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS CLUB. Meetings are held in Sydney. A Newsletter is issued monthly and also a quarterly publication entitled 'AUSTRALIAN BIRDS'.

H.B.O.C. That refers to we us and Co. - the HUNTER BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB.

R.A.O.U. Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union. This organisation issues a Newsletter and also a scientific journal titled THE EMU - the latter being published every two months.

8 THANK YOU.

The September Newsletter, in my absence, was produced by that charming young lady, Sue O'Malley, and we would like to take this opportunity of thanking Sue very much for helping out.

9. LARGEST FLYING BIRD The largest flying bird in the World is reputed to be the South American JABIRU STORK (Jabiru Mycteria) . The bird is nearly 1.5 m (5') long with a wing span of almost 2.4m (8') - individual primaries may be over 30 cm (1') long. It has a broad red band at the base of the neck which consists of very loose skin. This can be blown out like a bladder when the bird is wounded or enraged - it may also have a function in the sexual display.

10. COMING EVENTS

Sunday 25th October - Outing to Chichester State Forest  
Meet at The OAK, Hexham at 7 a.m. Leader: Bob Sargent.

Week-end 7/8 November - Atlas Camp in the UPPER ALLYN area.  
Details: Jim Imrie - phone: 524524

Monday 2nd November - Management Committee Meeting  
8 p.m. Garden Suburb Primary School - open to all Members.

Wednesday 11th November Club Night 7.30 p.m.  
Main Feature: The Birds of IRON RANGE.