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HUNTER BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB.

NEWSLETTER No. 7/82 August 1982 (Released monthly at Club Nights)

President: Fred van Gessel.

Hon. Secretary: Kay Imrie

Enquiries: Wilma Barden, 19 Carisbrooke Ave. Kotara. Phone (029) 573928

Annual Subscriptions: Family \$6.00; Single \$5.00; School Student \$1.00  
Due on 1st January each year.

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

Committee Meetings : 1st Monday of each month (public holidays  
(excepted) at Garden Suburb School at 8 p.m.

1. NOTES FROM THE JULY MEETING. - Wednesday 14th July 1982.

a) Attendance - another cold wet night but 22 enthusiasts braved the elements to participate in what proved to be a most interesting and informative evening.

b) Bird of the Evening and the Bird Call - because of the length of the programme these features were eliminated on this occasion.

c) Observations

Wilma Barden: 25 Caspian Terns at Swan Bay

David Waterhouse : an Osprey at Stoney Creek (Toronto)

Sue Hamonet: Two Sea Eagles with an aerial display at Speers Point.

White-fronted Tern and Australian Gannet off Stockton Breakwater.

Jim Imrie: Little Falcon at Rutherford

Fred van Gessel: Peregrine Falcon at Mayfield; a flock of 61 Magpie-larks  
at Kooragang - migrating ?

Arthur Austin: Albert Lyrebird, Queen Mary falls, Queensland/N.S.W. border.

Tom Kendall: In mid June sighted 500+ Albatrosses E.N.E. of Newcastle Heads;  
mostly Yellow-nosed but also Black-browed and Shy; off Redhead  
observed 200+ Fluttering shearwaters and a lone Prion.

d) PIGEONS AND DOVES.

One of the main features for the evening was a Study session on Pigeons and Doves. This session was introduced by Kay Imrie who had prepared a summary of the 25 species of this order found in Australia; this was supplemented by the showing of slides which had been obtained from the B.O.C. Slide Library in Melbourne.

After Kay's introductory remarks, members contributed various snippets about the species being reviewed. Features common to all the Pigeons and Doves are:

i) NESTS - these are flimsy, scanty structures or in some cases, scrapes on the ground. One reason for this is because fledglings are disposed of as soon as possible.

ii) EGGS of all species are white or creamy white in colour and more than two are seldom laid.

iii) BREEDING occurs usually only once per season.

iv) Young are fed on 'pigeon's milk' which is regurgitated from the parent bird's crop.

v) All Pigeons and Doves drink by 'sucking' water - most other birds take in water by sipping.

A number of questions remained unanswered at the end of the session:

(1) Do any other birds drink by sucking water ? According to ROWLEY, seven members of the FINCH family also have this characteristic; viz. Diamond Firetail, Gouldian Finch, Masked Finch, Star Finch, Long-tailed Finch, Black-throated Finch, Double Bar and Zebra Finch.

(2) Four of the fruit eaters: Purple-crowned, Rose-crowned, Wompoo and the Banded Pigeon have the word PTILINOPUS as part of the scientific name. PTILIN = feather; PUS = foot. Does this mean that these birds have feathers down to their feet ?

(3) The two imports - the Spotted and Laughing Dove both have STREPTOPELIA as part of their scientific name. PELIA = dove; what does STREPTO mean ?

(4) Ducula Spilorrhoa = Torres Straits Pigeon - what does DUCULA mean ?

Should anyone know the answers to the above queries we would be pleased to have them.

Thank you Kay for a very commendable effort - our interest in Pigeons and Doves has certainly been stimulated and we look forward to further study evenings.

e) FILMS

The second item on the features programme was the screening of two nature films by Fred van Gessel.

The first one dealt with Bower Birds and Birds of Paradise - this was a first class production with some excellent photographic work. All present had their eyes rivetted to the screen.

The second film took us from the tropical rainforests to Macquarie Island where Penguins, Albatrosses and Skuas were featured.

Thank you Fred for a very entertaining and absorbing session.

2. THE WADER SURVEY.

Extending over two week-ends 3/4 and 10/11 July, the Winter Wader count was considered to be quite successful. Two thousand, one hundred and sixty five (2,165) waders were recorded in the Kooragang, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens areas. Numbers ranged from 1 Curlew Sandpiper to hundreds of Pied Stilts but probably the most colourful observation were the 85 Avocets at Kooragang. Wader counters were Wilma Barden, Bill Cambridge, Al and Mavis Gillies, Sue Hamonet, Bob Heaney, Jim and Kay Imrie and the Co-ordinator cum Recorder, Jim Perry. Thanks folks - a good job well done.

3. FIED DAY - Redhead/Dudley/Jewells - Sunday 25th July 1982.

Thirteen members turned out for a pleasant day's birding in fine sunny conditions. Sixty species were recorded for the day and probably the most interesting sighting was a 'raft' of hundreds of Sliver Gulls feeding in the ocean off the cliffs at Dudley. According to Arthur Williams this is a prelude to the commencement of breeding on nearby Moon Island. A Brown Falcon and a Swamp Harrier also attracted attention. Our thanks are due to our two leaders - Bill Cambridge and Arthur Williams for an enjoyable and congenial day.

4. CLUB BADGE

Further to our report in the July Newsletter, the Management Committee has decided to go ahead and arrange for a supply of Club Badges and, hopefully these should be available before the end of the year. Members at the July Club Night gave an overwhelming preference for an ovalshaped badge.

5. NEW MEMBERS

Membership has now increased to 59 with the addition of David Wilks of Whitebridge - welcome to the Club, David.

6. READERS DIGEST BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.

This well known book is being reprinted and is expected to be available about September. The N.S.W. F.O.C. is arranging for a supply and it is expected that the price will be a considerable saving on book shop prices. Anyone interested should see Wilma Barden or Ed. Hamonet.

Whilst on the subject of books, we noticed that the Lake Macquarie Library has acquired copies of J.D. Macdonald's book UNDERSTANDING AUSTRALIAN BIRDS - this book was first published in 1980 under the title 'Birds for Beginners'. The book deals with the way birds live and behave; the importance of territory in successful breeding; how birds learned to fly and why flying birds can exceed a certain weight. These explanations and many other curious facts make fascinating and instructive reading.

7. COMING EVENTS

Sunday 22nd August - FIELD DAY to STANHOPE CREEK (N.E. of Elderslie)  
Meet at the OAK at Hexham at 9 a.m.  
Leader: Jim Imrie.

Note: Due to the absence on holidays of most of the Executive Officers, during September there will be NO Management Committee meeting in September. The next Committee meeting will probably be held on Monday 11th October - the first Monday in October being a Public Holiday.

Wednesday 8th September CLUB NIGHT

The special feature for this night will be a talk, illustrated with 80 slides on the subject WHERE HOME IS A HOLLOW.

Hollows are needed by about a quarter of our mammals and about 80 species of birds. Generally speaking it takes over 100 years for a hollow to form in our commonest trees, the Eucalypts. As the older forests disappear (and they are) these creatures lose their havens of safety, their homes and their breeding places. This talk deals with some of the problems and suggests solutions.

Wednesday 13th October - CLUB NIGHT.

The Guest Speaker on this occasion is to be the noted artist and author William (Bill) COOPER. This is the second occasion on which we have had the honour of hearing this speaker and judging by the response on his previous visit we are looking forward with pleasurable anticipation to renewing his acquaintance.

R.A.O.U. 80th ANNUAL CONGRESS AND CAMPOUT.

This annual event is to be held this year at Armidale from 26th November to the 4th of December 1982. The main theme for the Congress will be BIRDS OF FORESTS AND WOODLANDS. Anyone requiring further particulars please see Fred van Gessel.

Reminder weekend camp at Barrington Tops  
Members wishing to stay at the guesthouse should arrange their own booking by ringing 049-953212

Camp is arranged for weekend of December 4th & 5th.