



HUNTER BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB.

NEWSLETTER No. 11/82 DECEMBER 1982 (Released monthly at Club Nights)

President: Fred van Gessel

Hon. Secretary: Kay Imrie

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

Note: Subscriptions paid by members joining in November or December will carry through to the end of the following year.

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

Committee Meetings: First Monday of each month (Public holidays
(excepted) at Garden Suburb School at 8 p.m.

1. NOTES FROM THE NOVEMBER MEETING - Wednesday 10th ^{November} ~~December~~ 1982.

a) Attendance - 43 persons attended the November meeting and this is by far the largest number for the past two years. We extend a cordial welcome to new members: Dick & Nancy Fleming, Jean Henderson and Jan Hunter.

b) BIRD of the EVENING - JIM PERRY

The bird chosen by Jim for his talk was the BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE - Elanus notatus. Elanus = Greek word for Kite; notatus = Latin word meaning marked.

This Kite is a common bird of prey near farmland, market gardens, sewage farms and is attracted to the outskirts of towns by mice. It is found all over Australia but mainly in the coastal areas - occurs in Tasmania only as a vagrant.

The bird is small and elegant, about the size of a Kestrel. It is a good hoverer and flutters in the air while watching for movements of small ground animals. Insects and small mammals such as mice and rats are favoured food.

Field markings: a white hawk with pale grey wings and black shoulders; red eyes, black bill, yellow cere and yellow legs. In flight a small black patch can be seen on the underwing. The sexes are about the same size and this is unusual in birds of prey. The nesting pattern is similar to that of most members of the hawk family; bulky nests are built high in trees and the structure is line with leaves.

In appearance, the bird resembles the much rarer LETTER-WINGED KITE (Elanus scriptus)

Apart from his personal knowledge of this bird, Jim referred to two publications as having supplemented his own experiences - these are BIRDS OF PREY by Frank Morris and HAWKS IN FOCUS by Jack & Lindsay Cupper, the latter being in our Club Library.

c) GUEST SPEAKER - BILL COOPER

Bill Cooper is quite well known to 'Birdos' as the author and artist of BIRDS OF PARADISE and BOWER BIRDS and has now completed the illustrations for the recent Lansdowne publication AUSTRALIAN PARROTS by J. Forshaw.

It was a delight to listen to Bill who shared with members some six years of experience in 'close encounters of the BLACK COCKATOO kind'. I would guess we've all felt the same thrill of excitement at the unmistakeable harsh calls, and we'd all agree with Bill that there's something undeniably fascinating about all the Calyptorhynchus clan. Glossy Blacks feed almost exclusively on the Casuarina seeds which the bird holds in its (left) foot and cracks open with astonishing speed to extract the kernels, twirling the cone around, then dropping it to the ground. The mandibles have extraordinary strength and the width of the beak is probably the most striking feature when the bird is viewed through binoculars.

Nesting hollows in limbs or tree stumps are used and only one egg is laid.

The Yellow-tailed Black is the largest member of the groups and its favourite food is the larvae of the a wood borer (*Xyleutes boisduvali*) that forms a gallery in the middle of a tree trunk. *Eucalyptus grandis* is, in turn, the favourite food of this cossid or goat moth and where man has changed the ecological balance of making monocultures of this species, the resultant infestation of the borer has caused irruptions of the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, which are then blamed for the heavy damage ! Bill described the way in which the Cockatoo 'homes' in on a tree which has a pronounced swelling in the trunk; the obvious signs of the bird 'listening' to find the larva; then the ingenious stripping down of a 'spring-board' on which the bird will stand to complete access and final dislodgement of the grub, even producing for us the visual evidence in the form of a limb of an *Acacia* species to support this fact. The Bill adaptation in this species distinctly differs from the Glossy Black, being long and thin and well designed for the work it needs to do. Two eggs are laid in a hollow limb, but only one of the chicks will survive. Sadly, because of the decline in breeding hollows, and the fact that the birds do not reach full maturity for about seven years, it is felt that the survival of the species could be at risk.

We certainly thank Bill for another of his informative contributions to our meetings. At the conclusion of his talk, Jim Imrie moved a vote of thanks and on behalf of the members, presented Bill with one of our new Club Badges.

Sue Hamonet.

- d) CLUB BADGES - favourable comments were made about the design and appearance of our Club Badge - sales were brisk and almost half of our stock was disposed of at the November meeting - have you acquired one yet ?

2. FIELD DAY - OURIMBAH STATE FOREST - Sunday 21st November 1982.

There was a pleasing roll-up of 13 members and 1 visitor on this outing. The party had assembled at Coles Car Park, Belmont by 7 a.m. and we were on the road by 7.05 a.m. - quite our best effort to date. Members intending participating in Field Days are advised to inform the 'Contact' member if they aim to go along - in the event of non arrival at the appointed time, arrangements would then be made accordingly.

The day was overcast and warm but tempered with cool breezes. In all 68 species were recorded - about the same time in 1977 only 42 species were listed. Undoubtedly the sightings of the day were the CRESTED HAWK (*Aviceda subcristata*) and a pair of male Regent Bowerbirds (*Sericulus chrysocephalus*) whose brilliant velvet black and rich gold colourings were highlighted by the sunlight as they perched in a dead tree. The Forest was entered from the Wyong end but a future visit would probably be more rewarding if an early start was made with an entrance from the direction of Palmdale.

3. LIBRARY

Thanks to the generosity of Anne Kilshaw, our Library is now housed in a handsome cupboard which the School Principal has permitted us to leave in the room adjacent to our meeting place. Our Librarian, Eva Van de Werken is much relieved and her duties will be much less 'onerous' than heretofore.

Now that we have a repository for our books we would appreciate donations of any literary works of an ornithological nature. Next year for the benefit of members we will publish a list of the titles we have. Our Library books are there for the benefit of members and we would like them to utilise the facility and so increase their knowledge of our wonderful avian wildlife.

4. BIRD BOOKS - the following books were noticed on sale at the Nash Trading Book Supermarket in Burwood Street (Old Fredc. Ash Building):

The Australian Bird Spotter's Book by Harry Frauca - \$3.99 (Is in our Library)
Introduced Birds of the World by John Long - \$5.99. This is a West Australian publication of 528 pages.
Australian Birds by Serventy - \$6.99
Masterpieces of Australian Bird Photography - \$9.00
Neville Cayley's Collection of Parrots & Cockatoos by Prince - \$10.00
Dictionary of Birds in Colour by Campbell - \$11.00
A Sketchbook of Birds by Tunnicliffe - \$12.00
World Atlas of Birds - \$13.00
Birds of Prey by Parry & Putman - \$15.00

5. OBSERVATIONS.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>Date of SIGHTING</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>OBSERVATION</u>
David Waterhouse	16.10.82	Watagan Mountains	White-throated Nightjar - 2
	6.11.82	Mt. Ararat (Dungog)	Powerful Owl
	July 82	Telegherry River	Barking Owl
	23.10.82	Monkerai	Barn Owl
Jim Perry	24.10.82	Blackbutt Reserve	White-necked Heron
Wilma Barden	29.10.82	Stockton Sandspit	Pallid Cuckoo (H)
		Blackbutt Reserve	Channel-billed Cuckoo (H)
		" "	Brush Cuckoo (H)
W. Barden/K. Imrie	2.11.82	Kooragang Is.	Spotted Crake - 2
W. Barden et al.	4.11.82	Minmi	Plumed Tree-duck - 6
	"	"	Rufous-tailed Bronze-cuckoo
	"	"	White-winged Triller - 4
	"	"	Rufous Songlark - 2.
	5.11.82	Stockrington (Jacobs)	Wonga Pigeon
Wilma Barden	7.11.82	Pindimar turn-off	White-browed Woodswallow - 50+
	"	Tea Gardens Road	Masked Woodswallow - 3
	"	" " "	Dusky Woodswallow - 2
	"	" " "	Rufous Songlark - 4
	"	Camerons' Creek Area	White-browed Woodswallow 30 +
	"	Near Alworth	Dusky Woodswallow - 3
	"	" "	Speckled Warbler - 2
	"	" "	White-winged Triller
	"	" "	Rufous Songlark
	10.11.82	Blackbutt Reserve	Cicadabird - 2
	"	Argenton	White-winged Triller
R. & M. Walker	23.10.82	Teralba	Barn Owl
		Sugar Valley Golf Course	Chestnut Teal (on nest)
			Banded Rail
J. Imrie	20.10.82	E. Maitland - Buttai Rd.	Gang-gang Cockatoo - 9 - 10
J. Imrie et al	4.11.82		Turquoise Parrot - 2
			Dusky Woodswallow - 10
			Masked Woodswallow
			White-browed Woodswallow 50 - 70
K. Imrie et al	2.11.82	Kooragang Is.	Pectoral Sandpiper
V & D. Murphy	31/10/82	Martin's Creek	Bell Miner (H)
Sue Hamonet	10/11/82	Speers Point	Cicadabird - 2
Stuart Johnson	7.11.82	Wollombi	Rufous Songlark 5
			White-winged Triller - 2
			Hooded Robin
Fred van Gessel	12.10.82	Kooragang Is	Spotless Crake
			Red-kneed Dotterel (Nest/4 eggs)
			Red-necked Avocet - 100
	28.10.82		Brown Songlark
			Eastern Curlew - 800
	30.10.82	Barrington Tops	Greenshank 200+
			Rifle Bird (Paradise)
W. Barden et al	4.11.82	Minmi	Southern Logrunner - 2
			Southern Black-backed gull.

OBSERVATIONS OUTSIDE THE HUNTER REGION.

Sue Hamonet	22.10.82	Canberra	Little Falcon (nesting) 4.
Ted Felton	28.10.82	near Denman	Spotted Harrier
	19.10.82	Macquarie Marshes	White-winged Wren - 2
			Masked Woodswallow 2.

5. COMING EVENTS

Sunday 9th January 1983 - Half Day Outing to AWABAKAL AREA.
Meet at the Dudley School at 7 a.m.
Contact Person; Sue Hamonet - 581023
Leader: Bill Cambridge.

Sunday 23rd January 1983 - Field Day to GAP CREEK (Martinsville)
Meet at the Dora Creek waterfront Reserve (opposite shops)
at 7 a.m.
Contact Member: Sue Hamonet
Leader: Ray Walker

29-30-31 January 1983 - Week-end CAMP at CURRICABARK.
For details; See Sue Hamonet

Saturday/Sunday 5/6 February - SUMMER WADER COUNT - Newcastle Area
Contacts for details: Wilma Barden and/or Jim Perry

Wednesday 9th February - This will be the first Club Night for 1983.
Part of the programme will include the Annual General Meeting
but please dont stay away on that score - proceedings are brief -
you wont be railroaded into a job - we have nominations for all
official positions.

6. STOP PRESS !

Field Day to the BARRINGTON GUEST HOUSE AREA - Sunday 5th December 1982

Four overnight campers were joined by five more on Sunday morning. The Rocky Crossing walk provided some interesting observations. We viewed the nest and eggs of a Black-faced Monarch with the aid of Arthur's showing mirror. A family of Southern Togrunders was heard (and seen) in loud commotion, with the male adult in display and apparently asserting his authority. The not frequently seen Pale Yellow Robin (at the Southern end of its range) was feeding fledged young. A few Lyrebirds were heard, with one particularly vocal and involved in some fine mimicry of various birds. The area between the road and the Guest House, though drier, provided some excellent observations, especially nesting activity. Some nests were found, including those of a Leaden Flycatcher, an Oriole and a Noisy Friarbird. Fifty-nine species were observed, with the Black-faced Monarch particularly noticeable in large numbers.

JIM IMRIE.