



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 8/84. September 1984. (Released monthly at Club Nights.)

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Newsletter Editor: Bronwyn Taylor - 595692.

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

Club Badges: \$2.50 - available from Treasurer (Ed Hamonet)

Car Stickers: \$1.50

Handlist of the Birds in N.S.W. Available from Club Treasurer.

Meetings: Club Nights - 2nd Wednesday of each month (except Jan)

Management Committee: - 1st Monday of each month (public holidays excepted) at 7.30 p.m.

1. NOTES FROM THE AUGUST MEETING - 8th August, 1984.

a) Attendance - 32, which included visitors Janet Keegan, Rick Tietze, Brian Hare, Ted Scott and son David from Detroit, (U.S.A.) and new member Sandy Thompson.

b) BIRD CALL OF THE EVENING: Nigel Walker presented something a little different with several calls from a tape made at Washington Wildlife Park in the north of England, and accompanied by slides of the performers. Featured were a series of "honks and hisses" from Emperor Goose (*Anser canagicus*) - a handsome bird which breeds in N.E. Siberia and N.W. Alaska and which migrates as far as the Aleutian Islands. Paradise Shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*) of the lakes, estuaries and rivers in New Zealand. Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) which breeds in Northern Europe and Northern Asia and whose migration path takes it to Central Europe, Central Asia and China.

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING: Jim Perry presented the Brush Bronzewing (*Phaps elegans*), one of a group of three medium-sized, plump pigeons which comprise the genus, the others being the Common Bronzewing and the Flock Pigeon. All have long, pointed wings which permit powerful and swift flight. The Brush Bronzewing is predominantly a coastal dweller of South-east and South-west Australia preferring heathland and forest with dense undergrowth. However, it is not confined to these areas, and is also found in or on the edge of damper gullies, where tree-ferns grow, and in Mallee scrubland. Jim traced the earliest history of the bird, pointing out that the first illustrations of the bird were the work of John Hunter in 1788. A moderately common but secretive species, its numbers are declining due to loss of habitat. For those keen to observe for themselves, a walk through the Awabakal Nature Reserve should prove productive. The bird usually prefers to run rather than fly over short distances. It feeds on the seeds of native shrubs and grasses and nests quite low to the ground, making it a frequent victim of foxes and feral cats.

Sue Hamonet

d) GUEST SPEAKER: Colin Driscoll, who describes himself as a part-time Nature Photographer presented a programme of nature slides with emphasis on birds, but including many other facets of nature, including butterflies, frogs, lizards, insects, trees etc. Colin specializes in shots which present the subject in its natural environment and we recognise the many hours which must have been spent to produce this fascinating collage. We compliment him on his very obvious sense of the artistic and his ability to recognize the natural beauty around him.

2. FIELD DAY - MONKERAJ - Sunday 19th August, 1984.

What a roll up! 25 people in 10 vehicles, must be something of a record for a field day. The weather was kind as well sunny, with only a few strong gusts from the westerly which had plagued us during the week. We welcomed several visitors for the day and hope they see fit to come again. Bob Sargent, our friendly Forest Ranger, joined us at Dungog to head this expedition into the depths of the Chichester State Forest.

Our first stop was to give the newchums their first look at White-winged C^hghs feeding in a paddock. After travelling further along a small brush area, 100 Koel promising but did not add many to the list, although a Pied Butcherbird serenaded those who decided to take this opportunity to have a cuppa. Determined to reach the forest before it got too late in the morning our President Jim, set the pace. At a delightful spot beside the Karuah River some of the group stopped to bird watch while the rest followed the Ranger in his 4-wheel drive up Mountain Road.

Several wet patches were inspected before traversing in the lower conventional vehicles. At one such stop the screeching call of at least 20 Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoos were heard as they flew overhead. Finally we left the vehicles and proceeded on foot and before the river stopped us again we had a good sighting of a Rose Robin who made his particular call which sounded more like an insect than a bird. Topknot Pigeons were out in number, for a sighting of 50+ was recorded. Azure Kingfisher, Brush Turkey, Pale Yellow Robin, Lyrebird, Green Catbird and Crested Shrike-tit were only some of the birds sighted in the rainforest. Upon our return to the Karuah River for lunch our Forestry vehicle, which we thought we could rely upon in case the cars were in trouble was unfortunately having problems with the clutch.

A short walk after lunch showed the masochistic tendencies of some members when they discarded shoes and socks to wade across the icy cold river to look for birds on the other side. Bob Sargent related interesting points about rainforest plants and some of their uses including Churnwood, Citronella moorei, which in the days of wooden clothes pegs was cut down for this purpose because the timber did not stain material.

Reluctantly we departed this pleasant area but hope to return for a camp at a future date. A total of 67 bird species was the tally for the day and our thanks to Bob Sargent and the Forestry Commission for his contribution.

Dorothy Bates.

3. LIBRARY REPORT

During the last few years, this Club has been involved in the "atlasing" of the birds of this region, and the effort has now been rewarded by the

publication of "The Atlas of Australian Birds". Many members purchased their own copy, but one has also been added to our library, and the July issue of "The Bird Observer" stated that further copies are available, \$39.00 plus \$4.50 postage from the B.O.C. shop.

Members wishing to reserve popular books such as the Atlas, may do so by having their name written on the book-card, then it will be lent to them when available. Usual lending period is for a month, and in the case of a book in demand, a special effort should be made to either bring or send it to the next monthly meeting. Other additions to the library, all donated by Wilma Barden, are :-

"Birds of Geelong" - Trevor Pescott - a hardcover book, describing the occurrence, status and distribution of all species recorded in the district. Some b/w photographs.

"A Bird Atlas of the Adelaide Region" - S.A. Ornithological Assoc. Results of a 20 month survey, recorded as in the Atlas, but with no discrimination as to numbers. The introduction outlines the methods used in conducting the survey.

"Birds of the Ballarat Region" - Roger Thomas & Jack Wheeler. A very impressive "guide to identification, numbers, dates and places", this paperback would be a handy field guide. Birds are grouped according to habitat, an interesting identification key is included, as well as a checklist and a guide to good "birding" location in the region. Not illustrated, but very comprehensive.

Thank you Wilma, for these three interesting publications, also to Jim Perry for providing processing material.

Eva van de Werken, Librarian.

4. JAPANESE SNIPE SURVEY

The first of the allotted weeks for the Japanese Snipe Survey took place between Sept 3 - 7. Wilma Barden, along with Rosemary Waymark and Stuart Johnson carried out the survey. They noted that there was an apparent decline in numbers at the end of the week. The swamps survey included Cedar Hill Drive Swamp, Shortland Swamp, Seaham Swamp, Irrawang Swamp plus another small swamp nearby, and Max Maddock Swamp.

Members are reminded the dates for the next survey are Oct. 15 - 19 and interested parties should see Wilma Barden.

5. HUNTER WETLANDS TRUST

The Hunter Wetlands Group has been reformed as The Hunter Wetlands Trust to provide a more appropriate structure to achieve the objectives enunciated for the group in July 1980. Among their aims is the promotion of public awareness and education of the value of wetlands for wildlife conservation, fishing industries, passive recreation, tourism and education.

The Trust is looking for membership (see noticeboard for information) and they are holding a Public Meeting and Wetlands Open Day on

Saturday 29th September, 1984.

11.00 a.m. Room R04 Geography Dept. UNIVERSITY.

2.00 p.m. Marist Park, Sandgate Road, SHORTLAND.

6. NEST RECORDS.

Attention of members is drawn to the new R.A.O.U. Nest Record Sheet. These have undergone something of a facelift, and the new format appears to be more accommodating and more easily interpreted than previously. Members are invited (nay, incited) to record any observations of nesting in the Club Record Book, and to seriously consider compiling a Nest Record Sheet. These are available from Wilma Barden, who will also assist with advice where required.

7. SYDNEY to HUNTER PROJECT.

We have received an invitation from the National Parks Association N.S.W. Hunter Branch to attend a public meeting regarding the new Sydney to Hunter Project.

The scheme is aimed at establishing and managing an environmentally sensitive 200 km. long bushwalking trail from Sydney to Cessnock and Newcastle with the assistance of appropriate local organizations. Support for the project has been sought from the N.S.W. Bi-Centennial Authority.

The Hunter Branch of the N.P.A. has arranged for the organisers to conduct a slide presentation and discussion in Newcastle on Friday 21st September, at 8.00 p.m. in Room R04 Geography Building, University of Newcastle.

For further information on this worthwhile project please see noticeboard.

8. OBSERVATIONS. Some interesting observations reported this month include:-
 Avocets - 18 birds now at Kooragang Island.
 Magpie Goose - 4 birds still present at Seaham Swamp
 Osprey - Now nesting at Lake Macquarie.

9. COMING EVENTS. Sunday 23rd September.

Field Day to VACIJ Meet: The Oak, HEXHAM. Contact member and Leader: JIM PERRY. 432496.

Week-end 29 Sept. to 1 Oct. : CAMP at 'Carlton' GUNNEDAH. Meet: Gunnedah Park 11 a.m. Contact: Sue Hamonet. - 581023

Sunday 21st October. FIELD DAY to TELESHERRY FOREST. Meet McDonalds Car Park, HEXHAM. 6.30 a.m. Contact - Kay Imrie 524524

Week-end 24/25 Nov. CAMP at BRETTJ/GIRO. Contact: Jim Perry 432496
 H.B.O.C. will start from Rookhurst School.

Friday 19th Oct. to 3rd Nov. ANNUAL MIGRATION TO NORTHERN N.S.W.
 Meeting for participants after meeting.

CLUB NIGHT. 10th Oct. GUEST SPEAKER. Allan Morris.

Management Committee Meeting: Monday 8th Oct. 7.30. p.m.

Kalcharri
 Gerald - mouth of Chapman
 E/Endah Pool San Hopeval
 Cockshell gully - Durea