



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER No. 10/84. November 1984. (Released monthly  
at Club Nights)

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Annual Subscriptions: Family Rate: \$7.00; Single: \$6.00;  
School Student: \$2.00 (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 Treas.

MEETINGS: Club Nights - 2nd Wednesday of each month (except  
January) at Garden Suburb School-7.30pm  
Management Committee: 1st Monday of each month  
(Public holidays excepted) at 7.30 p.m.

## 1. NOTES FROM THE OCTOBER MEETING - 10th October, 1984.

a) Attendance -32 A warm welcome is extended to new members, Graeme and Anne Brown.

b) BIRD CALL OF THE EVENING: Jim Perry. Jim chose three birds as his subjects for the evening. They were Western Warbler (*Gerygone fusca*), White-throated warbler (*Gerygone olivacea*), and the Mangrove warbler (*Gerygone levigaster*). Jim pointed out the similarities between all three birds. Alan Morris, our guest speaker, pointed out that the Western warbler seems to 'falls asleep before it finishes its call'.

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING. Bill Reedman. Bill presented Yellow-tailed Black cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) which belongs to the genus CALYPTORHYNCHUS.

Distribution: Common throughout Great Dividing Range; found in rainforest, dry woodland and alpine woodland.

Food: Seeds from pine tree, banksias and hakeas and also feed extensively on moth larvae. The Y.T.B.C. has a narrow, protruding bill with the tip of the upper mandible elongated and pointed, an adaption for digging into timber to extract the wood-boring insect larvae.

Nest: A hollow in a tree, usually very high up.

Eggs: Usually 2, although only 1 chick survives. Breeds March-August in north; July-January in south.

d) MAIN FEATURE - Conservation of Waders in N.S.W.-Alan Morris.

Alan, from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, presented a number of slides to accompany his talk on waders. He has been co-ordinator in N.S.W. of the National Wader Survey which deals with the problems of protecting habitats in N.S.W.. Being involved in the Plan of Management of Towra Point Nature Reserve has allowed

Alan to study several species at close range, one of them being the Pied Oystercatcher. Because of its declining numbers in the first half of this century, the bird was listed as 'endangered' under the provisions of N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Act in 1973 From 1973 when 1 bird was recorded at Towra Point the numbers have (now grown to 22 being recorded in the 1983 Winter Wader Survey.

Some of the other species covered included Sooty Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Banded Plover, Red-kneed Dotterel.

We thank Alan for a most interesting presentation.

\*2. FIELD DAY. <sup>FRANCIS</sup> Fraser Property near Vacy, September 23, 1984.

On a fine day 21 observers travelled to Vacy and beyond by 10 km to the north-west to the Fraser's property. At first sight it appeared to be a most unlikely spot for good birding. However, by tracking westwards into the hills, plenty of bush and even a rain-forest gully were found with adequate accompanying birdlife.

One patch of dry schlerophyll yielded many small birds including ~~Thornbills~~, Pardalotes and Speckled Warblers. Near the gully higher up was a Striated Thornbill's nest, in the open, hanging in a lantana bush only 1.2m from the ground. Adult birds flew in and out - eggs were not yet laid. In the higher areas Topknot and Wonga Pigeons and both Regent and Satin Bowerbirds were seen. One group observed a Chanid-billed Cuckoo, perched and flying, but not sounding off. Probably the most unexpected sighting was of a Masked Woodswallow, near the top of the range.

By lunchtime, the day was hot. We settled on the verandah of the old house, ate lunch and relaxed. A pair of Welcome Swallows occasionally visited the house through a broken window. In the afternoon the majority walked down to the Paterson River to watch the Rainbow Bee-eaters. During the day 72 species were recorded in the area.

Jim Imrie.

3. FIELD DAY - Telegherry, October 21, 1984.

Telegherry Forest Park in the Chichester area was the destination for our field trip on Sunday 21st October. Although the weather looked doubtful and several members were away 'on migration', seventeen starters turned up, a reflection of our dedication (6.30 a.m. starting time is a challenge for night owls) and the growth rate of our club.

The weather relented; it didn't rain in earnest until we were on the way home. However, the birds were less co-operative. Perhaps they decided to have a little gentle sport with their seekers by spending much of the day eluding us. An alternative theory held that the present good conditions may have had a dispersal effect. Whichever, we really worked for our quarry and plenty of exercise was had by all. By the end of the day our dogged determination resulted in a tally of 65 species.

Near the beginning of the path that leads to Jerusalem Falls we were treated to a view of three incubating eggs in the resident Grey Butcherbird's nest, by courtesy of Arthur's magic mirror trick. Later, a Brown Thornbill's nest was found discreetly hidden in

thick overhanging vegetation clinging to the cliff adjacent to the falls.

Raptors were scarce, but we were able to study an obliging Collared Sparrowhawk for several minutes, and later a Little Eagle circled majestically above us. Golden Whistlers and Black-faced Monarchs were in abundance, but some of the rainforest birds one would hope to see just didn't oblige. We did find Rose Robins, both male and female, but the Azure Kingfisher was notable by its absence at the river crossings. The beautiful Yellow-throated Scrubwren was seen but fleetingly as it scurried about its business in the undergrowth. Some were fortunate to see the Brush Turkey and the odd Lyrebird called hauntingly from the depths of the valley, but few pigeons were in evidence. A male Satin Bowerbird was in residence at our lunch place by the palacial "Gumleaf Hotel," a fan of the wild lemons growing there.

A most enjoyable day was completed by a stop at Seaham Swamp where the Magpie Geese are still staying on.

Mavis Gillies.

#### 4. CAMP AT "CARLTON".

A party of 13 adults and 3 juniors made the pilgrimage to Gunnedah for the October longweek-end, where we camped on the property of Rob and Denise Shanley. It was Easter '83 when we last visited the area and the land was at that time very much in the grip of drought. It was a good opportunity, therefore, to compare conditions. The country was a panorama of greens and yellows, where previously all was dry and brown.

The gale force North-Westerly blew on Saturday, but despite that inconvenience we still found ourselves with quite an impressive bird list for the day. After a frosty beginning on Sunday, the weather improved rapidly until by Monday we could almost call it perfect. A total list of 104 species were recorded which did not appear this time, whereas 36 are included this time which were not found previously. All members remarked on the large numbers found nesting or nest-building.

On the stony hill slopes and ridges Cypress Pine (*Callitris glauca*) was in full flower and it was Rob Shanley who alerted us to the phenomenon of the dehiscence of the seed of these trees. Without warning the tree would explode in a cloud of white as all the seed was scattered to the wind at the same moment. Rob's photographic evidence of this occurrence is really fascinating and some campers were fortunate to witness it at first hand during the week-end. Rob and his father say that they have never seen it before in all their years on the property.

Notable amongst the birds seen were Diamond Dove (this species known to be increasing again following the drought years), Turquoise and Blue Bonnet Parrots, Singing Honeyeater, Striped and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, White-winged Triller, Plum-headed Finch, Red-capped Robin.

Sue Hamonet.

5. BLUE AND WHITE WRENS.

On our way to the "Carlton" Camp we spent a night at my sister's property at West Narrabri, and we were treated to something of a feast of bird life. While at breakfast we enjoyed the company of a very large flock of Zebra and Double-bar Finches who came to the verandah each morning to clean up a handful of millet seed left for them each night. A beautiful pair of Spotted Harriers cruised up and down the front paddock, using the thermals provided by the contour banks of the dams and taking what appeared to be a Stubble Quail.

But what delighted me most was the four fully-coloured male Blue and White<sup>wrens</sup> (*Malurus leucopterus*) perched on the fence wire just by the house, resplendent in the morning sun. At a fishpond close by they would bathe and drink, then sit on the rockery and preen and sing joyously. While I watched I was fascinated to notice each of the males pluck a blue flowering head from a native plant (*Wahlenbergia trichogyna*/ Austral Blue Bell) growing around the pool. Each male would then carry the pretty blue flower in his bill and fly to the fence wire where he would sit holding the flower for quite long periods of time. During the time I watched, some 15-20 mins, I did not see a male approach a female but in one or two instances uncoloured birds which I would presume to be females came to sit near the flower-carrying male. It seemed rather unusual to see so many fully-coloured males in the same party, and I wondered if perhaps this was a way for the male to advertise his availability. I would be interested to hear if others have noted similar behaviour and can shed any light on the subject for me.

Sue Hamonet.

6. The following item will be of interest to members who visited Iron Range in 1983. It was extracted from "URIMBIRRA", the newsletter of the CHINCHILLA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB.

• A WEEK AT IRON RANGE, NORTH QUEENSLAND

My visit to Iron Range really began at Cairns Airport at 6.30 a.m. on 16/8/83. It was there that I met for the first time, the "Birdo" companions I would be spending my holiday with. After we all introduced ourselves, I found myself with a group from the HAWKESBURY RIVER BIRD CLUB, and what a keen and energetic group they were."

The author of this faux pas admitted that she didn't know where we came from.

Ed Hamonet.

7. An article which recently appeared in "The Age" (31/10/84) tells of Tasmanian M.P., Dr. Bob Brown's attempts to ban entry of the French Antarctic ship, "Polargjorn" to Australian ports. The ship carrying equipment to build an airstrip in French Antarctica which has already caused a furore in Europe when it was reported that preliminary work has caused the destruction of a breeding colony of 3000 Adelie Penguins by smashing the eggs and dynamiting the nest site. Dr. Brown adds that despite a report to the contrary by the French there is serious concern that the only Antarctic mainland

colony of Emperor Penguins is under serious threat. Dr. Brown intends to appeal to the Prime Minister for the Government to refuse entry to the ship.

8. An invitation has been extended to all members of the Club to the official opening of an exhibition of paintings by ROBERT EDDEN at Simpson Cottage, Industrial Highway, Mayfield (opposite Tubemakers) at 6.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. on Friday, November 23rd, 1984.

See noticeboard for further information.

9. KERMIT "Kapers"

A Willie Wagtail recently built a nest near the tank-stand on my brother-in-law's property at West Narrabri and Ken and Elspeth took a very keen interest in the comings and goings of the pair. One day Ken glanced out at the nest in the course of his daily chores and was surprised to see what appeared to him to be a fairly large grey bird occupying the nest. Full of fatherly concern, he approached to investigate and found not a Cuckoo, but 30-50 (his estimate) frogs of assorted sizes all packed 'stacks-on-the-mill-fashion' in the bowl of the nest. They had eaten the eggs and the nest was damaged. Ken despatched the intruders and rescued the nest which he patched up and replaced with sticky tape onto a nearby branch. The Wagtails inspected the nest from all angles and proceeded to dismantle it. Using the same materials, they then rebuilt the nest in a hanging basket on the verandah of the house. Nightly vigilante patrols will make sure there is no repeat performance by the frogs.

Sue Hamonet.

10. BINOCULAR REPAIRS.

Mr. Wolfgang Reigert who is skilled in all types of Binocular repairs has changed his address from Five Dock to:

48 SYDNEY STREET,  
CONCORD.

TELEPHONE: (02) 7643476

11. REMINDER: Members are reminded to bring their favourite slides for inclusion in the slide night to be held on December Club Night. A small plate would be appreciated as ~~their~~ will be supper following the meeting. There will be no meeting in JANUARY.

STOP PRESS: The Management Committee has decided that to run the Club successfully in 1985 there will be an increase in the Annual Subscriptions. These will be as follows:

\$6.00 - Single  
\$7.00 - Family  
\$2.00 - School Student.

12. COMING EVENTS

- WEEKEND 24/25 Nov. : CAMP at BRETTI  
Contact : Jim Perry.- 432496. *Bring water*  
H.B.O.C. Signs will start from Rookhurst School.
- SUNDAY 9th DEC. : FIELD DAY to SWAN BAY  
Meet: 6.30 a.m. McDonalds Car Park, Hexham.  
Contact: Kay Imrie - 524524  
Bring boots or extra pair of shoes.
- SUNDAY 20th Jan. : FIELD DAY to FLAGGY CREEK.  
Meet: 7.00 a.m. Kahibah Bowling Club Car Park.  
Contact: Eva van de Werken. - 488967  
Leader : Arthur Williams
- WEEKEND 26-28 Jan. : CAMP at ROWLEY'S RIVER  
Contact: Kay Imrie - 524524  
H.B.O.C. signs will start approx. 28km N.E. of  
Gloucester along North Coast Railway Line at  
Burdook where the line has to be crossed by  
turning left to the northern side!
- SUNDAY 24th Feb : FIELD DAY to ALLWORTH  
Contact : Sue Hamonet 581023  
Leader : Jim Perry.
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