



Hunter Bird Observers Club

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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 Treas.

MEETINGS: Club Nights - 2nd Wednesday of each month (except Jan.) at Garden Suburb Public School at 7.30 p.m.

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

1. NOTES FROM THE NOVEMBER MEETING - 14th November, 1984.

- a) Attendance A warm welcome is extended to new members
3/ Bill Boyd and Jenny Axtell.

b) BIRD CALL OF THE EVENING: The Blue-Winged Kookaburra (*Dacelo leachii*) is said to call regularly morning and night, and usually in a chorus of several birds. Certainly not the most melodious of our native songsters, but for sheer enthusiasm it would have to score highly. Graham Pizzey describes the call in one word - "Appalling". The bird differs in appearance from our own Laughing Kookaburra, and the call of this tropical cousin is a series of squawks and screeches. Alec Chisholm wrote that "it just never learned to laugh".

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING: I'm sure we all enjoyed Ray Walker's typically light-hearted presentation of the Azure Kingfisher (*Ceyx azureus*). This beautiful member of the family Alcedinidae is one of the smallest Kingfishers, and one of the only two Australian Kingfishers which hunt exclusively over water. The bird perches characteristically on roots or low branches over-hanging water. It bobs its head and raises its very short tail, and it's always a thrill to catch that flash of brilliant blue and orange as the bird speeds along the waterway to the next perch.

There are strange legends about Kingfishers; the ancient Greeks believed that they conceived at sea and built floating nests, and so at this time the Gods favoured them and kept the seas calm. The Greek word for Kingfisher, ALKUON, is derived from HALS - of the sea, and KUO - I conceive. Hence "halcyon" days are calm days, or kingfisher days.

The scientific name of the Azure Kingfisher - *Ceyx* - is the Greek

word for Seagull - another reference to the Kingfisher as though it is a seabird, which it is not.

For comparison Ray produced for us slides of the bird itself, and of the Sacred, Red-backed and White-Tailed Kingfishers.

c) MAIN FEATURE: The C.S.I.R.O. film on the Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*), showing predation on the Cossid Moth Larvae in Eucalyptus Grandis forests in the Coff's Harbour district was very much appreciated. This short documentary was made following a study on the Y.T.B.C. carried out when it was discovered that many saplings were blown down in windstorms after the Cockatoos had been at work.

Eucalyptus Grandis is a fast-growing Hardwood and the timber, therefore, tends to be not as hard as other Eucalypt species, and the trees are frequently infested by these larvae. This rather juicy morsel, from the same family as the Witchetty grub, hatches in the heartwood of the tree, expanding its gallery as it grows.

The film was an excellently produced record of the Cockatoos at work, highlighting the anatomical and behavioural adaptations of the species.

Due to an unforeseen chain of events our main feature film found its way to the Warrumbungles - thus, in spite of all our careful pre-planning Murphy's Law once again prevailed. However, we were grateful to Bill Boyd for filling the breach for us at a moment's notice.

Bill presented for us something quite new in our experience at Club level - a Video film taken by him at Mount Seaview (west of Wauchope), and the subject was the Satin Bowerbird. The audience appreciated the painstaking work of this master builder and agonized with him when he returned on the second day to find his work torn down by a young male. Obviously annoyed and upset, he immediately set about repairing and replacing everything into its rightful order. Bill's observations on the bird's behaviour were a most enjoyable accompaniment to the film, as were the background calls of many species. Many thanks to Bill, and we look forward to more of the same at some later date.

Sue Hamonet.

d) QUIZ: The quiz on Bird Identification created much interest, and caused a fair amount of hilarity into the bargain. No results can be published as the computer appears to be on the blink - when we fed the answers in, it spat out - a raspberry!

2. A PARADE OF PIGEONS: Weekend Camp at Brett's - November 24/25. Topknot, Brown, Wompoo, White-headed and Wonga Pigeons were all present in the areas near our campsite at Brett's on the bank of

the Barnard River, North-West of Gloucester. Following the rain of recent weeks the level camp site was lush with fresh green grass and small birds were active in the bottlebrush trees on the water's edge. The river provided us with excellent bathing facilities.

With us for the camp were Rod and Sandy Cox from Taree. Rod is the editor of the newsletter for the N.S.W. Bird Atlassers. We look forward to seeing the family again at a future camp.

On several previous visits some of our members had heard the Varied Triller calling. This weekend it did not prove its usual evasive self. It was well and truly seen.

It had been expected that the Red-backed Wren would be easy to find but it almost did the Varied Triller trick - not showing itself until the Sunday afternoon when three of the ladies spent some time searching the river bank vegetation along the Little Manning. Their efforts were rewarded with a well-coloured male.

Probably aside from the pigeon parade the other noteworthy observation for the weekend was the discovery of three different nests on the same horizontal branch about six metres above ground. Nearest the trunk was a Tawny Frogmouth with two young, next, a Magpie Lark with three young and further out a pair of Willy Wagtails taking it in turns to incubate their eggs. "Safety in numbers?"

The total number of species recorded was 107 and the attendance was 15 adults and 4 children.

Kay Imrie.

3. LIBRARY REPORT - The latest addition to the library is "Bird Families of the World", purchased at a bargain price from Nash Trading's Warehouse. Edited by Dr. C.J.O. Harrison, with illustrations by A.D. Cameron, it is a fully comprehensive coverage of every bird family and includes a most interesting evolution "tree". Written in non-technical language, it is a valuable and also entertaining reference, containing both essential and fascinating information with detailed illustrations.

End of the year means stock-taking time, so I hope you have all done the right thing and brought your books in! I will be checking those already in, before the December meeting, so that borrowing can go on without interruption over the Christmas break.

Eva Van de Werken

4. ANNUAL MIGRATION - NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES AND SOUTHERN Q'LAND.
Jim Perry, Ed and Sue Hammet, Charlie Mann, Bill Cambridge and Rosemary Waymark met at Yuraygir N.P., north of Coffs Harbour, where we camped for two nights. After a wet start we had a successful day and a half in the Park and recorded a total of 187 species. Habitats within Yuraygir are forest, heathland, swamp & freshwater, marine and littoral, grassland and estuary. Highlights were White-throated Honeyeaters, Red-back Wrens, numerous Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Tawny Grassbirds, Black-headed Pardalote, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, Painted Snipe and Torresian Crow.

We proceeded up the coast to Evans Head and Broadwater N.P. via Bundjalung N.P. The weather was very unsettled but we were rewarded with many waders and an excellent sighting of an Azure Kingfisher. Leaving Bundjalung an Osprey was seen and Ed and Sue saw a pair of Brolgas, just off a sharp corner on a rough bit of road, so those of us driving missed them. After a night at the Evans Head Caravan Park we restocked with food at the Ballina Super K Mart, very impressive as supermarkets go! We decided to head inland in an attempt to escape the rain and had a very wet drive along the Bruxner Highway to Tenterfield unfortunately being unable to appreciate the scenery, let alone do any birding. We spent that night in the Tenterfield Caravan Park.

On the 23rd into Queensland and to Girraween N.P. A very well maintained park, where we spent one night. Many interesting walking tracks, including various granite hills and expansive granite outcrops with precariously balanced rocks. Numerous Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, the main highlights being a Turquoise Parrot and several Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens.

From Girraween we proceeded to Crows Nest N.P., north east of Toowoomba. A fairly small N.P. but very scenic with a creek running close to the picnic and camping area. Many various Honeyeaters and White-headed Sittellas. The first Pale-headed Rosellas for the trip were seen whilst leaving the Park for Ravensbourne N.P., which is south of Crows Nest.

Ravensbourne is a relatively small area of rainforest, a remnant of the vast forests of the area prior to the 1860's and subsequent settlements of timber-cutters and gold prospectors. No camping but picnic facilities and well defined walking tracks. Here we had good sightings of Whipbirds and Catbirds, also Rufous Shrike-thrush, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Paradise Riflebird displaying on the trunk of a Sydney Blue-gum, a pair of Brush Turkeys working their mound and Noisy Pitta. After lunch we headed for Chinchilla and stayed the night in a caravan park.

In the morning we went north to the property of Val and Roy Hando, members of the Chinchilla Naturalist's Club, we were then taken to Old Man Lagoon Sanctuary, which is on their property. There we saw an abundance of water birds, including a Plumed Tree Duck, as well as many other birds of the bush. The Handos have a large garden, full of shrubs and trees and the noise of the various Honeyeaters, Apostlebirds and Lorikeets was almost deafening! We were given morning tea by our kind hosts and then left for Wonga Hills.

On arrival at Wonga Hills we were given afternoon tea by our hosts, Janice and Don Carlyle. Those of you who went to Iron Range last year will remember Janice. We then set up camp and the next morning started to explore some of the property. Several Spotted Bowerbirds were found and Red-winged Parrots were also new for the trip. One of the most spectacular sights of the trip, was to watch at quite close quarters a group of Red-wing Parrots and King Parrots feeding together on seeds from some kind of shrub. The following afternoon Janice took us out in the 4 WD, to some quite different country to where we had been walking, heavily timbered area where we found Cicadabirds, Fuscous Honeyeaters and Little Cuckoo-Shrike. In the evening Janice and Don's son came back from a camp with the Chinchilla Nats and Monday a.m. drove us out in the 4 WD to look for the Bustard. Reg took us to an area,

on a ridge, of dry rainforest, which they are trying to give to the Queensland N.P. & W.S.. This pocket of dry rainforest is fairly unique and hopefully it will be preserved, certainly the Carlyle family will do all they can to keep it in its natural state. On the way we stopped at a dam and in the dead trees in the dam found Little Pied Cormorants and White-necked Herons with young in their nests. Also nesting were Dusky Woodswallows and Pale-headed Rosellas.

Ed finally spotted a male Bustard and we had a good view from the hill, we then drove down to the plains to get a closer look, this we managed before he took fright and flew off. This was a spectacular sight as a male's wing span is 2.3 metres.

Unfortunately the inclement weather caught up with us again and we had to head back to camp. As we had over 11 kms from the homestead to the road and the road was a further 20 kms before the bitumen, we were advised to leave as soon as possible. Had anyone been timing us we could have set a record for dismantling a camp site. Three vehicles got out safely, if only just, two got bogged. Reg had followed us in the 4 WD, so came to the rescue.

A great pity we had to leave Wonga Hills earlier than planned, it was a most interesting experience and we all thank the Carlyles for their kind hospitality.

Back at Chinchilla we again stayed at the caravan park where we were mistaken for mad fossickers, we owned up to being equally mad bird-watchers!

In spite of the bad weather between Chinchilla and Kyogle we listed over 100 species. The rain at Kyogle was so heavy and we were all so waterlogged by the next morning we decided to "call it a day" and head for home. We went our different ways and it was unfortunate the trip was cut short by three days.

The total number of species seen or heard was 246, we all, except Ed, recorded something new, some more than others!

Rosemary Waymark. 19/10/84-31/10/84.

5. ATTENTION: Members have been invited to attend a public meeting to discuss the Myall Lakes National Park "Plan of Management". The meeting will be held in the Supper Hall, Newcastle City Hall, commencing at 8.00 p.m. on Friday 14th December, 1984.

COMING EVENTS:

SUNDAY 20th January - Field Day to FLAGGY CREEK
Meet: Kahibah Bowling Club Car Park at 7 A.M.
Contact: Eva van de Werken - 488967
Leader: Arthur Williams./Sue Hamonet

WEEKEND 26-28 January - Camp at ROWLEY'S RIVER
Contact: Kay Imrie - 524524
H.B.O.C. signs will start approx. 28km N.E. of Gloucester along the North Coast Railway Line at BUNDOOK where the line has to be crossed by turning left.

WEEKENDS 9/10 February
15/16 February - NATIONAL SUMMER WADER COUNT.
Contact: Jim Perry. - 432496

SUNDAY 24th February - Field Day to ALLWORTH
Contact: Sue Hamonet-581023
Leader: Jim Perry.
Meet: 6.30 a.m. McDonalds Car Park, HEXHAM.

SUNDAY 24th March - Field Day to GRAHAMSTOWN DAM.
Contact: Wilma Barden - 573928
Leader: Wilma Barden
Meet: 6.30 a.m. McDonalds Car Park, HEXHAM

MONDAY 4th February - Management Committee Meeting.

WEDNESDAY 13th February - Club Night. NOTE: No meeting in January.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous
New Year.