



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 6/85, July 1985 (Released monthly at club nights.)

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## 1. NOTES FROM THE JUNE MEETING 12/6/85

a) Attendance - 44. A warm welcome to new members Robert Edden, Geoff Winning, Paul Huolohan, Michael Pope and Ann Marie Hunter. These additions bring this year's membership up to exactly 100. We also welcomed to our club night, visitors Andrew Hutton and Ken Johnson.

b) Bird Call of the Evening - Presented by Mavis Gillies.

Graham Pizzey describes part of the call of the Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) as being like a well strained wire-fence being twanged. However you describe it, this was the call that Mavis played and which wakens her up in the morning. Sue Hamonet has heard it give another, single call which is very parrot-like.

c) Bird of the Evening - Presented by Sue Hamonet.

Number one in the list of Australian birds is also the largest. It is, of course, the Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*), which is still common throughout most of Australia although by habit it avoids the thickly forested regions. Sue played the call of the female, which consists of a deep, resonant booming and she introduced us to 'Eric', who neatly demonstrated Emu walking and feeding behaviour.

d) Bird Quiz - Compiled by Ed. Hamonet.

Once again Ed had us completely foxed by some of the questions in the latest of his popular quizzes. Much debate was also sparked about the correctness of some of our answers. We learned a few interesting things about 'feathered cats', 'goatsuckers', 'spugs' and GST's. Thanks Ed.

e) Bird Films from the C.S.I.R.O.

After a few problems securing the film projector, which was missing, the second part of our evening's entertainment got under way with the showing of two films from the CSIRO. The first, entitled 'Penguins of Macquarie Island', showed us details of the lives of the four species of penguins which inhabit this small, sub-Antarctic island: the King, Gentoo, Rockhopper and Royal. It is the only nesting site of the Royal Penguin and the breeding colony numbers approximately 2 million birds. The other three species inhabit various other islands also, and all four have been recorded in Australia, mainly as vagrants. The Rockhopper is a regular winter visitor to southern Western Australia.

The second film in the programme was called 'The Superb Lyrebird' and had no commentary, as indeed none was needed. The soundtrack was made up entirely of the rich song of the Lyrebird itself. The bird was shown scratching the leaf litter for food and we saw a male giving his display, with tail thrown forwards over the head while he pranced around the forest floor. He accompanied this display with a vocal recital of his own song, interwoven with a medley of superbly mimicked calls. Altogether an outstanding performance.

## 2. VISIT TO AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM. Sunday June 23rd 1985

A total of 31 members and their families turned up at the Australian Museum for a look at the activities of the bird section, which is headed by Walter Boles. He very kindly gave up his Sunday morning to come in and show us round. The section is being completely re-organised and re-catalogued, and was in some turmoil. Nevertheless, Walter showed us some beautiful and rare volumes from the section library, the oldest dating back to 1678 (not on Australian birds of course). Other books we saw included a copy of Gould's

original, hand-painted synopsis of his 'Birds of Australia' (1837-38), originals by Lewin and Audubon, and many others, all beautifully bound in leather.

Moving into the storage and laboratory area, Walter explained the multitude of functions that are carried out when bird specimens are presented to the museum. Skins are prepared and stored in cabinets, to be used for research and reference. They also keep jar specimens, skeletons, mounted specimens, and even stomach contents, tongues and parasites for study. Other bird items are stored including nests, bowers and other bird paraphernalia and curios.

The tour finished with Walter opening some of the specimen cupboards to show us skins and mounted specimens of some rare and extinct birds, such as the Paradise Parrot and the Passenger Pigeon. He then made the storage, work and library areas available for members to peruse at their leisure.

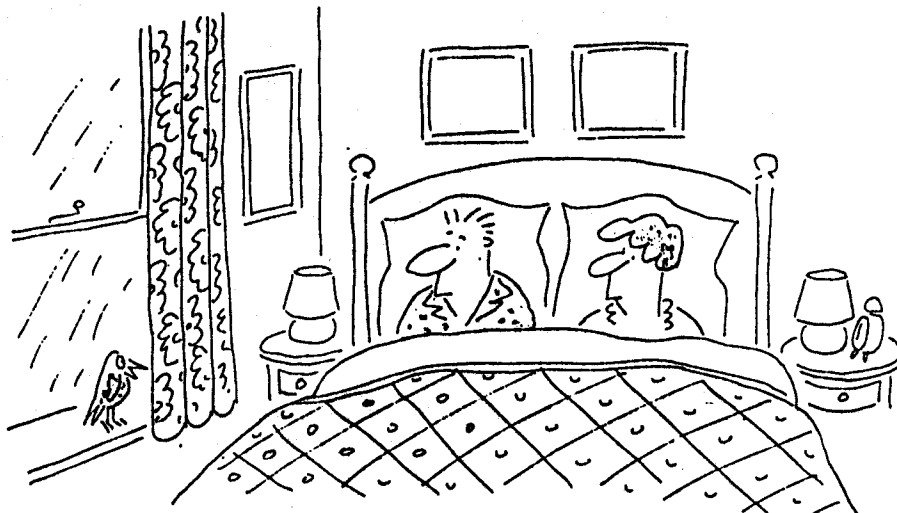
From what Walter told us it sounds as if the day to day running of the Bird Section could employ an army of workers 24 hours a day, so we certainly wish him well in the awesome task of reorganisation that he has set himself. We should also like to express our gratitude to him for coming in especially to speak to our group. Thank you Walter for a fascinating day.

### 3. BIRD CALLS OF THE HUNTER REGION

Additional stock is now in hand of Fred van Gessel's tape which has 52 calls on it, covering a variety of birds, including warblers, pardalotes, whistlers, robins, scrubwrens, flycatchers and thornbills. The cost is \$7.50 at clubnight from the Secretary or by mail \$9.00

### 4. COMING EVENTS

- SUNDAY 21st July. - Field Day to Mt. Sugarloaf. A walk along the Mt. Sugarloaf Range Road (carry lunch). Meet 9am lower car park. Contact - Nigel Walker 300138
- SUNDAY 25th August - Munmorah State Recreation Area. Meet Coles' car park, Belmont 8am. Contact - Sue Hamonet 581023
- SUNDAY 22nd Sept. - Martinsville. Meet Coles' car park, Toronto (behind Motor Registry) 7am. Contact - Ray Walker 585942
- MONDAY 1st July - Management Committee Meeting, Garden Suburb Public School 7.30pm.
- WEDNESDAY 10th July - Club Night, Garden Suburb Public School, 7.30 pm.



"Owing to adverse weather conditions, there will be no dawn chorus this morning. In its place, here is a little monologue entitled . . ."