



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 7/85 August 1985 (Released monthly at club nights.)

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1. NOTES FROM THE JULY MEETING 10/7/85

a) Attendance - 35, not bad taking into account the awful weather. We welcome new members Edwina Pirie, Helen Conway, Reg. Vaughan and Val Babinski.

b) Bird Call of the Evening - Presented by Kay Imrie.

Kay played three calls of different members of the cockatoo sub-family: the Yellow-tailed Black (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*), the Sulphur-crested (*Cacatus galerita*) and the Gang-gang (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*) thus enabling us to compare their harsh, though generally dissimilar, voices.

c) Bird of the Evening - Presented by Mavis Gillies.

Three species of the family Hirundinidae were chosen by Mavis for her presentation, which provided us with some valuable hints for identifying and separating the Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), Tree Martin (*Cecropis nigricans*) and Fairy Martin (*C. ariel*). These birds often form mixed flocks and picking one species from another can often pose a few problems as they fly past at great speed. However, the Welcome Swallow is easily distinguishable by its deeply forked tail - both martins have only a slight fork in the tail. The Tree Martin has a dusky to blue-black head whereas the Fairy Martin has a rusty brown head. The talk also covered aspects of habitat preference, nesting behaviour and distribution, and was illustrated by several slides which also showed the other two members of the Hirundinidae found in Australia: the White-backed Swallow and Barn Swallow.

d) Main Feature - 'Hooded Parrots', a video by Bill Boyd.

In his book 'Australian Parrots', Joseph Forshaw, in the aviary notes section for the Hooded Parrot, comments that: "They are difficult to maintain in captivity so are recommended only for experienced aviculturists prepared to give up much time and attention to their care". Bill Boyd certainly demonstrated that he fits into this category with a video he has filmed on 'The Breeding and Care of the Hooded Parrot'. It showed the aviary conditions necessary for these beautiful birds, together with details on their breeding habits, feeding and social behaviour.

In their natural habitat, in the north-eastern sector of the Northern Territory, they nest in terrestrial termitaria, with the nest chamber being at the end of an excavated tunnel. To recreate these conditions Bill constructs special nesting boxes with an entrance spout and a short tunnel leading to a nest chamber, which is heated by a light globe in cold weather. He has had much success using this method with four young raised so far this year whose progress we saw from egg to fully fledged youngsters in the film.

As the Hooded Parrot is endangered in parts of its natural range it is good to know that there are dedicated aviculturists who are successfully breeding this bird in captivity.

We congratulate Bill Boyd on his success with the Hooded Parrots and with the other birds he is breeding, and thank him for filming them so we can all share his enthusiasm.

2. EXCURSION TO MT. SUGARLOAF. Sunday 21st July.

Even with many of the regulars away on their Northern Territory trip there were still 20 people assembled at Mt. Sugarloaf, including several newcomers, for a walk along the Mt. Sugarloaf Range Road. Although the morning was fine there was a very strong wind blowing from the west which tended to make the birds keep a very low profile. The only really abundant species was the Yellow-faced Honeyeater. There was a large Orienteering meeting on that day too, and it seemed that every time we found a little pocket of birds away from the main track a bevy of compass clutching runners would stagger out of the bush and frighten all the birds away. Similarly, back on the track trail bikes would inevitably thunder past just as we had found an interesting spot. However, we plodded on and enjoyed lunch at the Mt. Vincent picnic area, where Superb Blue Wrens hopped around at our feet.

The stroll back to the car park produced little in the way of interesting sightings and we ended the day with only 22 species overall. Even with such a paucity of bird life most people seemed to enjoy our extended bush walk. It certainly blew the cobwebs away, even if the birds did have more sense and stayed under cover.

3. WINTER WADER COUNT.

Volunteers from our club again ventured out to known wader spots to do the last of the counts in the present series. About 15 areas were covered, with 20 species and a total of 3073 birds being recorded. The largest numbers found were Pied Stilts 850, Bar-tailed Godwits 663, and Eastern Curlews 512. Thanks to all those who have participated in the wader counts over the years.

4. ADDITION TO THE CLUB LIBRARY.

One of our members is the well known bird painter Robert Edden who has presented the club with a copy of the book 'The Heritage of Australian Birds', with text by Glenn Holmes, for which Robert did the illustrations. A very kind gesture and a welcome addition to our library.

5. CLUB RECORDS.

The Management Committee has decided to set up a record of Club activities since its inception. From May 1978 this information is contained in our Newsletters, and a complete file of these has now been established. However, the Club (or Group as it was known then) came into existence in May 1976 as a sub-group of the Newcastle Flora & Fauna Protection Society. Reports on this group's activities were published in the journal of the Flora & Fauna Society. The title of this journal was 'Hunter Natural History'.

To complete our information file we wish to add to our Newsletters copies of the reports which appeared in the 'Hunter Natural History' journal between May 1976 and May 1978. Thanks to Ted Felton we have received all the relevant copies except two:-

Issue no.2 Vol.8 May 1976

and

Issue No.2 Vol.10 May 1978.

If any member has these journals and would like to donate them to our file we would be most grateful. If you can help please see Ed Hamonet.

6. NEWS FROM THE TOP END.

Recently Fred van Gessel and Tony Hertog 'perfected' a method for catching. Pied Herons (for banding purposes). The details are:-

1. Erect a wader net in a swamp.
2. Ensure that a Pied Heron will fly overhead.
3. At the critical time ensure that a Little Falcon attacks the Heron.

If these criteria are met there is a chance that the Heron will dive into the mist net in its efforts to escape the Falcon

7. DOGFIGHT OVER KOTARA HEIGHTS.

Tathra Reserve at Kotara Heights has a family of resident Australian Ravens. They are sleek and very happy in their habitat.

When the last Tiger Moth race from Rutherford was on the planes flew directly over Tathra Reserve, and our home. The ravens became particularly agitated at the dark coloured planes but the yellow and silver planes caused no consternation. The ravens flew above the dark planes and dive-bombed them. As each succeeding dark plane approached the dive-bombing continued.

After the planes had gone the ravens were exhausted, and just sat in a tree for a considerable time to recover.

June P. Gollan

8. COMING EVENTS.

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

5/6/7th Oct. - Long weekend camp at Wollar. As a fee is payable to the property owner a camp fee of \$2 per site, per night will be charged to cover this cost. Route details, see Ed Hamonet.

SUNDAY 30th Oct. - Field day to Martins Creek. Meet McDonalds', Hexham, 7am. Contact - Jim Perry. 432496.

MONDAY 2nd Sept. - Management Committee Meeting, Garden Suburbs Public School, 7.30pm.

WEDNESDAY 11th Sept. - Club Night, Garden Suburbs Public School, 7.30pm.

9. STATE HIGHWAY No. 23 - Sandgate to Shortland Section.

The concept plan for this section of Highway No. 23 has already responded to the environmental safeguards necessary to protect the ecology of the SHORTLAND WETLANDS. However, comments and details of objections/concerns would be welcomed by the Department of Main Roads.

In order to provide detailed information about the Proposal a display has been prepared and is available for viewing at:

Centre Court
Jesmond Shopping Centre
Blue Gum Road, JESMOND.

The display will be open to the public between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. until 22nd August. Comments can be lodged directly with the Department up until the 5th September, 1985. Letters to be forwarded to:

The Divisional Engineer,
Hunter Valley Division,
Dept. of Main Roads,
59 Darby St., Newcastle NSW, 2300