



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

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## 1. NOTES FROM THE AUGUST MEETING 14/8/85.

a) Attendance - 43, the winter weather failing to deter the high numbers of members who now regularly attend club nights.

b) Bird Call of the Evening - Presented by Sue Hamonell.  
Sue played the call of the Mangrove Robin (*Eopsaltria pulverulenta*) which is to be found in suitable habitat along most of the Australian coastline north of the Tropic of Capricorn. She has seen this bird on the Cape York peninsula but on the recent trip to the Northern Territory members searched for it without success. It is unobtrusive but by no means shy, and the call reminds Sue of a child's toy whistle.

c) Bird of the Evening - Presented by Wilma Barden.  
With the snipe season approaching, and the fact that the local wetlands are well-watered, Wilma focussed attention on a rarely seen fringe-dweller of the marshy areas, the Painted Snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*). Although it bears a superficial physical resemblance to the Latham's or Japanese Snipe it is not closely related and belongs in a different family altogether - the Rostratulidae. Analysis of egg-white protein shows that the Painted Snipe is, in fact, fairly closely related to the Jacanas. Sexual dimorphism is apparent with the female being larger and more brightly coloured than the male.

d) Main Feature - Audio Visuals by Arthur Austin.  
The first audio visual that Arthur Austin presented was on the Myall Lakes National Park, in which he showed us all aspects of the park which contribute to the recreational possibilities. Slides showed people boating and fishing, as well as the natural beauty of the park: its plants and fungi, insects, reptiles, mammals and, of course, the birds.

Some members would have seen the second audio visual on the Glenrock State Recreation Area before, but no-one would turn down an opportunity to see it again. It follows a day through at Glenrock from dawn to dusk. A haunting soundtrack provided a counterpoint to the slides, which again covered all aspects of the area, both man-made and natural.

Both presentations combined to make us realise what a wealth of natural beauty we have within easy access from Newcastle, and we thank Arthur Austin for showing them to us.

## 2. FIELD DAY TO THE MUNMORAH STATE RECREATION AREA Sunday 25th August

The heathland outing to the Munmorah Recreation Area was attended by 17 members and 2 visitors. The weather was fine and mild - a typical late-Autumn day - and we could probably have expected to find a little more activity on the part of the birds, with a touch of Spring in the air.

The list for the park, however, while not a lengthy one, did produce a few highlights, including good numbers of Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, a Barn Owl, and a Sooty Oystercatcher and Australian Gannet from the Wybung Headland. There was certainly much of interest in the botanical field and our resident expert, Dot Bates, was kept on her toes with many questions concerning the splendid displays of heathland plants in flower

We concluded the day's activities at Budgewoi, where the sand spits near the bridge produced a good list of waterbirds to lift our day's total to 67 species.

Sue Hamonet.

### 3. H.B.O.C. NORTHERN TERRITORY SAFARI - July-August 1985.

Eleven H.B.O.C. members and 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  staff (Joe Fogarty, his wife Julie, his very bright 2year old daughter Nicole and his aunt Madge) assembled at Darwin's Shady Glen Caravan Park on Thursday, July 18. Fred van Gessel came to welcome us and we all had dinner together that evening. Next morning we set off on our 2000km trip in Joe's two vehicles: the Blitz driven by Joe himself was a Canadian built Ford ambulance going back to the 1940s, very powerful and reliable, and a Toyota Landcruiser driven by Julie. Most of the tents and camping gear and our own things travelled in or on the roof of the Blitz with us, while Julie, Madge and Nicky had the cooking gear, food, etc. with them in the Toyota. We spent the first week in Kakadu National Park and then moved southeast to Urapunga. During the final week we travelled, mainly on the Stuart Highway, back to Darwin with lots of stops on the way. We made camp some 13 times, mostly for one night only, except at Jim Jim Falls and Urapunga (3 nights), Daly River and Shady Glen (2 nights). Marie and I, the least experienced campers, found it hard and demanding to be fully packed with the tent down ready for breakfast by 7.30am on travelling days, but, like everyone else, we found the trip both fascinating and very enjoyable. I suppose that each one of us has returned with his own special memories; for me the highlights included the following:

The best Aboriginal rock painting was in a cave some 2 hours rough driving south from Urapunga and, close by, alongside a billabong, Sue discovered some Lilac-crowned Wrens.

On Sunday, July 28, we made a roadside stop at a recommended site a little south from Pine Creek. It looked most uninviting: lots of rubbish everywhere, the bush just recovering from a bushfire. We crossed the old abandoned railway line and slowly walked along a dry creek bed when Leif called out that he'd found a Hooded Parrot and a number of us managed to get a sight of this rare bird. A little later Sue and Ed discovered some Gouldian Finches and we were able to get a look at them. This was a special birthday present for Ed who celebrated his birthday that day. We saw more Gouldian Finches and Budgerigars at a waterhole a few days later, August 3. That was near our worst camp site, 20km or so from Katherine, not far from a sign post that said 'To the D.O.A.' This turned out to refer to the Dead On Arrival pit for cattle that had not made it to the abattoir!

I provided a spectacular diversion while taking a short cut back to the road after a fruitless search for Yellow Chats. A leap across a creek bed landed me up to my waist in fine gray mud and caused some consternation to the Mud Skippers. My only consolation was that Leif was similarly deceived a few minutes later. The next day we had a steep scramble up a rocky slope to see some ~~Chestnut~~-quilled Rock Pigeons. During the descent Marie had an encounter of a nasty kind with a nest of green ants. Common sense rather than modesty prevailed and, with the help of a nearby knight errant, peace was soon restored. Jim Imrie suffered a similar but less spectacular fate a little later. At one stage Ruth complained that she had not seen a single Blue-faced Honeyeater so we were all very pleased when one joined us for lunch at Katherine Gorge Camping Ground on August 4. A few days earlier Ruth and I had watched a Rainbow Bee-eater eating a yabbie near UDP falls. It had swallowed the body of the yabbie but the claws were still sticking out, one on each side of its beak; it gulped it all down while we watched.

Sue and Ed twice found bowers of the Great Bower Bird and took us to see them. The first was near the Aboriginal settlement at Urapunga on July 31, and the other, incomplete one, was within yards of a

tent and a parked car at Katherine Gorge Camping Ground on August 4. We all went for a boat trip at Yellow Water on July 22, an idyllic spot with hundreds of birds, including Black-necked Storks, (Jabiru), Lotusbirds, (Jacana), Brolgas, and Great-billed Herons. We camped there and had to be careful to keep food away from the very aggressive Fork-tailed Kites and Whistling Kites who swooped down on any scraps left lying about.

Ruth found a Rainbow Pitta at Daly River on August 6 and Sue conjured it up for us with its taped call. It is much more attractive than all the pictures of it that I've seen, with its iridescent blue shoulders, red under the tail and deep green back.

We were in Darwin for the last day and a half, anxious to increase the number of species seen to 200 because Fred had said we'd be lucky to get 150. Jim Perry and Bill had left us by then but the remaining 9, led by Jim and Kay who had organised the whole trip so admirably, were able to identify 18 new ones, mainly on the beaches and in the mangrove swamps of Darwin. That gave us a total of 211 for the whole trip including a Black Butcherbird seen first by Ed. We also saw both Freshwater and the much larger Saltwater Crocodiles, wallabies, and goannas, and Bill and Leif found lots of interesting flora. Wierdly shaped rocks and small and large termite nests dominate the landscape up north.

A Spotted Pardalote and an Olive-backed Oriole are calling almost continuously while I am writing this report. It's nice to be back in civilisation.

Rick Tietze.

#### 4. NEWS FROM THE SLIDE LIBRARY.

The club is very grateful to Arthur Austin for a very generous donation of approximately 60 slides covering a wide range of Australian bird species, and displaying his usual high standard of photography. Many thanks Arthur.

We still need a lot more slides to build up the slide library stocks so if you can donate any surplus slides please see Michael Noonan.

#### 5. COMING EVENTS.

SUNDAY 22nd Sept. -

Martinsville. Meet Coles' car park, Toronto (behind Motor Registry), 7am. Contact - Ray Walker 585942

5-7 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

23-24 Nov. -

Weekend camp at Craven State Forest, approx. 35kms north of Stroud. Contact - Ed Hamonet.

MONDAY 30th Sept. -

Management Committee Meeting, Garden Suburbs Public School, 7.30 pm.

WEDNESDAY 9th Oct. -

Club Night, Garden Suburbs Public School, 7.30 pm.

#### 6. SUPERB PARROT SURVEY.

The Commonwealth Government has recently provided funds to the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service under the States Assistance Programme for a one (1) year survey of the breeding habitat of the Superb Parrot. The Service has contracted a consultant, Mr. A. Webster, to undertake the survey.

The Service is now seeking the assistance of bird watchers to provide observation data to assist the project.

The consultant will undertake a survey of the habitat requirements of the Superb Parrot with particular emphasis on a field investigation of breeding within the area bounded in the north by the Murrumbidgee River Valley between Hay and Narrandera and in the south by the Murray River Valley between Barmah and Terraviva.

Specific objectives of the survey are to:

- i) define and describe a typical Superb Parrot nesting tree;
- ii) ascertain the distribution pattern of nesting trees (i.e. clumped or informally dispersed);
- iii) describe the association between nest sites and nearby vegetation types and land use patterns;
- iv) quantify the aspects, including extent, of the post-breeding dispersal of Superb Parrots.

It would be appreciated if club members holding any records of Superb Parrot sightings anywhere in New South Wales or Victoria could contact Mr. J. M. Hardy, Administrative Officer (Wildlife), National Parks and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 189 Grosvenor Street, Sydney, 2000 (Telephone No. 02/337,6650). All information received will be passed on to the consultant.