



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 10/85 November 1985 (released monthly  
at club nights.)

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## 1. NOTES FROM THE OCTOBER MEETING 9/10/85.

a) Attendance - 39, including several guests, and we welcome new members Jim & Betty Russ and John and Mrs. Moyses.

b) Bird Call of the Evening - Presented by Nigel Walker.  
The Little Grassbird (*Megalurus gramineus*) is much more often heard than seen as its mournful little whistle carries across the reedbeds of wetlands which are its home. This was the call played this evening, while a few slides were shown to illustrate what the bird looks like should you be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of it.

c) Bird of the Evening - Presented by Brian Hare.  
A call which is familiar to most people, and not just birdwatchers, is that of the Bell Miner (*Manorina melanophrys*) with its clear, high-pitched, bell-like 'tink'. Brian played the call as part of his description of this bird in tonight's 'Bird of the Evening' segment. A slide showed the striking colours, - the red facial patch and bright orange beak and legs. Despite this, however, it is surprisingly difficult to detect in the foliage. They are colonial birds and, while only females build the nest, several birds may feed the young, including fledglings from a previous brood.

d) Scientific Names - Presented by Ed Hamonet.  
Ed chose some members of the Acanthizidae, (better recognised from the Latin translation of Thornbills) to expound upon this evening. The local members of the family are:-  
Brown Thornbill - *Acanthiza pusilla* - Latin for small.  
Buff-rumped Thornbill - *A. reguloides* - means 'kinglet' like from its resemblance to the small N.American birds, the Kinglets.

Striated Thornbill - *A. lineata* - means lined.  
Yellow Thornbill - *A. nana* - from the Latin nanus, meaning dwarf.  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill - *A. chrysorrhoa* - means gold (yellow) rump.  
Thanks, Ed, for some more interesting snippets of information.

e) Guest Speaker - Bird Surgery with Graeme Brown.  
Tonight's main feature was something a little different, as Graeme Brown, a local veterinary surgeon, spoke about his experiences treating sick and injured birds. The talk was illustrated by a series of interesting slides showing (sometimes in gory detail) the various maladies and injuries that birds are prone to. Birds come to Graeme as wild species found injured or as cage birds, usually with some disease. They can weigh from a few grams to many kilos, so they present a very wide diversity of shapes and sizes.  
We heard, amongst other things, about eye problems in canaries (caused by a protozoan), magpox (transmitted by mosquitoes) and gout (caused by a poor diet). Birds can also suffer from psychological problems which can be treated with drugs or by behavioural therapy, in the case of parrots by them lying on a couch and talking it through.

One of Graeme's main interests over the past few years has been pelicans and it was, therefore, appropriate that he should treat a pelican which was found with its lower mandible snapped off.

This patient became known as Percy and we followed his fascinating case history from start to finish, from Newcastle Harbour to The Entrance finding particularly interesting the use of prosthetic lower bills. Percy's status as a local celebrity came to a shocking end, however, between two power lines at Tea Gardens.

Many thanks to Graeme Brown for presenting an entertaining and informative talk.

## 2. LONG WEEKEND CAMP AT WOLLAR - 5th-7th October

This weekend was an important one for Wollar for this very small town celebrated its centenary with a 'Back to Wollar' parade. We only managed to see a group on horseback but other club members found themselves in the procession!

The land seemed very dry to our eyes but locals stressed that the bush was at its best. The ground was certainly hard and it was extremely difficult driving the tent pegs home. The property, 'Coerheide', is approximately 100 acres and adjoins the Goulburn River National Park. The Club appreciated camping on private property and having the use of the log cabin for the two Bird Call Evenings. A personal touch was added when we had access to the owners' Project Book which listed the birds to be spotted and suggested walks to explore. We also had the use of the toilet; it would have been a mighty effort to dig a bush one! A new 'Vacant / Engaged' indicator, crafted by Charles Mann, was used for the first time. One question remained unanswered, however, - what was the rope behind the toilet door for?

A short walk away from camp was an excellent viewing position - the d. Among the birds spotted here was the Regent Honeyeater, which didn't turn up on the second evening although a larger audience awaited. At the camp site an unusual discovery was swallows with chicks nesting in a disused water tank with two small openings. We wondered how the young birds' first flight would be achieved.

On Sunday we awoke to a world full of bird calls. After breakfast we ventured into Lyre Bird Gully; the Lyre Birds were vocal but elusive. There were many caves in this sandstone area and we discovered Rock Warblers and wombats inhabiting them. Whip-birds punctuated our adventure. Cuckoos called constantly and seven kinds were noted, a rare one being the Black-eared Cuckoo.

A very pleasant stopping place en route to Wollar was O'Brien's Crossing on the Goulburn River, which supported an assortment of bird life including a Sandpiper and White-backed Swallows. I was really impressed by the colours in the Rainbow Bee-eaters, for it was my first sighting.

It was an enjoyable weekend, spent in good company, with a total bird count of 105.

Margaret McLauchlan.

## 3. FIELD DAY AT MARTINS CREEK - Sunday 20th October.

Not discouraged by the previous day's rainstorms, and heeding Nigel's reproaches to those who did not turn up at last month's outing when similar weather conditions prevailed, twenty people, including two visitors from Gosford, came to the Martins Creek Field Day. Again we were lucky as the day remained fine, and good sightings of 86 species of birds were made by various members of the group.

On the way up to Paterson we saw muddy evidence of the previous week's flooding along the river. Brian Hare met us at Paterson village and we followed along to his house, set in very pleasant rural surroundings at Martins Creek. We scattered off across the paddock and up the hill and keen eyed birdos soon had pencils and notebooks out to record a number of small birds seen among the understory of tall trees. Loud,

raucous, trumpeting calls were heard in the distance and the more knowledgeable among us quickly declared that Channel-billed Cuckoos were in the vicinity. The birds circled about for a time but soon a pair were sighted perched high on a dead tree. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo was not so obliging; its mournful call sounded tantalizingly close to me, but always one tree ahead. Other cuckoos seen were the Pallid Cuckoo and the Koel. Must be quite a few eggs being kicked out of nests in the Martins Creek area !

After a satisfactory morning's birding we headed off to the hillside home of Allan and Jan Thomas. Their interesting mud brick house was beautifully situated against a backdrop of steep cliffs and overlooked Hilldale, with extensive views beyond to Barrington Tops. Jan told us of the Peregrine Falcons which nested on the cliffs and a short but arduous climb through a rocky rain forest gully rewarded us with a close view of a family of these majestic raptors. While climbing through the gully the youngest member of our party, Guy Harrison, was badly stung by the stinging tree *Dendrocnide excelsa* and others had painful brushes with the shiny leaved variety of the same genus - *photoinophylla* - plants I now know to avoid.

In the afternoon a walk up and over the hill brought us to a spot overlooking a deep, thickly wooded gully. Here we saw a big flock of Topknot Pigeons feeding on the fruit of a fig tree. Estimates as to the number were between 40 and 60, and it was an extraordinary sight to see these birds clustered so thickly and wheeling about in flocks. Spotted Pardalotes, wrens, thornbills, a Speckled Warbler and other birds of forest edges were seen as we straggled back to the house. There it was so peaceful and such a lovely place that we were reluctant to leave. Our thanks to Brian for his part in organising a most enjoyable day.

Ruth Parker.

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

The club gratefully acknowledges a donation of 21 slides from member Jim Ralston. These slides are all of a very high standard, one that only a few bird photographers achieve. We also thank our ex-president (new Darwin correspondent), Fred van Gessel, for a donation of 16 slides, and Tom Kendall for the loan of about 30 slides which he allowed us to copy and add to the club library.

If you can help us build up the slide library stock please contact Michael Noonan.

#### 5. COMING EVENTS.

23rd - 24th November -	Weekend camp at CRAVEN STATE FOREST, approx. 35km north of Stroud. Contact:- Ed Hamonet. Camp Fee - See below.
SUNDAY 8th December -	Field day to Bennets Green. Meet car park adjacent Charlestown Library, 7am. Contact:- Kay Imrie, 524524
SUNDAY 19th Jan. 1986 -	Field day to Morisset. Details next newsletter.
MONDAY 2nd December -	Management Committee Meeting, Garden Suburb Public School, 7.30pm.
WEDNESDAY 11th December -	End of Year Club Night, members slide night and refreshments, Garden Suburb Public School, 7.30pm.

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CAMP FEES - these have been set at 50c. per person per camp with a maximum of \$2.00 per family.

<u>FOR SALE:</u>	Club Badges	\$2.50	) Available from Treasurer.
	Car Stickers	\$1.50	