



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 4/86 MAY 1986 (Released monthly  
at Club Night)

President: Jim Perry. Secretary: Kay Imrie  
Correspondence: P.O. Box 24, New Lambton 2305  
Newsletter Editor: Ruth Parker - 25569  
Telephone enquiries: Wilma Barden - 573928.

## 1. NOTES FROM APRIL MEETING 9/4/86

a) Attendance - people including 5 visitors and welcome to new member Keith Laverick and welcome back to our Northern Territory representative Fred Van Gessel.

b) Bird Call of the Evening - presented by Nigel Walker.  
The Mistletoe Bird is nearly always heard before it is seen. Its high pitched 'per wita' call is often the only clue to its whereabouts but it also has a warbling song, which sometimes includes mimicry of other birds.

c) Bird of the Evening - presented by Peter McLauchlan.  
The Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) has been closely observed by Peter and Margaret in their garden at Maitland, especially over a period during which a pair built four successive nests and eventually two fledglings appeared. This bird is commonly called echong because of its well-known call, and also "thickhead", which is not a complimentary name at all for this charming little bird. Its joyous song is heard in early Spring; both male and female sing, although their plumage is different. They are also called thunderbirds because thunder or sudden loud noises often sets off their 'ee-chong' or rapid 'pee-pee-pee' calls. Peter's presentation of this popular was excellent and informative.

d) Observations - Anyone sighting colour-dyed waders are asked to let Jim Perry know so that the information can be passed on to the Victorian Wader Study Group. Four white-breasted Sea Eagles have been seen at Blackbutt, and a flock of Ruddy Turnstones near Newcastle baths. Reminder also to report sightings of Black Cockatoos.

e) Scientific Names - presented by Ed Hamonet.  
This segment dealt with some of our Honeyeaters. There are over 60 species in the MELIPHAGIDAE family. (Meli = honey; phagidae = to eat) This family is divided into a number of sub families, one of which, the LICHENOSTOMUS, contains 17 species. Five of these are found in the Hunter Region. LICHENOSTOMUS is made up of two words: Lichen = lichen and Stoma = mouth. Apparently this name has been given to this genus because the first one to be recorded (in 1801) - the Yellow-faced Honeyeater - decorated its nest with lichen. The five birds are as follows:

Yellow-faced Honeyeater: *Lichenostomus chrysops* - chrysos = gold; ops = face.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater: *L. melanops* - melas = black; ops = face.  
The specific part of this name is a description of its black face not its yellow tuft.

White-eared Honeyeater: *L. leucotis* - leucos = white; otis = the ear.

Fuscous Honeyeater: *L. fuscus* - fuscous = a reference to the drab colouring on the back of this bird.

White-plumed Honeyeater: *L. pencillatus* = pencilled. Refers to the white line on each side of the neck.

f) Egret Watch being conducted by Hunter Wetlands Trust.  
Progress made so far in this project was related by Leif Lemke. The research programme is centred around Shortland Wetlands Centre and

Seaham Swamp and it is hoped to plot the breeding season, feeding patterns and winter migration patterns. Four species of egrets have been closely watched - Large, Little, Plumed and Cattle - 500 nests located, and 210 birds marked with wing tags. Field observers are needed throughout the year to keep their eyes open for colour-banded and wing-tagged birds. Anyone willing to act in this capacity is asked to make a note of colour tags and location of sighting, and inform the Wetlands Centre. Alternatively if unable to identify the birds, telephone the Centre and observers will be sent out. The wing-tags are brightly coloured (green for Large Egrets, red for Plumed, orange for Little and yellow for Cattle), with a colour patch (blue for Shortland, pink for Seaham) to identify the colony where they were tagged. The colony patch carries the number 1 for Shortland and 9 for Seaham, and the species colour has 3 for 1985-86 season and a number identifying the individual. The tags are easily seen with the naked eye and the numbers easily read with binoculars or a telescope.

g) Slide of Oriental Cuckoo - This bird was seen from his office window by Glen Albrecht, who quickly took an excellent slide. After showing the slide, Glen donated it to the Club, for which many thanks.

h) Main Feature - presented by Al Gillies.

The title of tonight's talk - "Bahrein, Bermuda and Birds in Between" - was fascinating, and Al's presentation was certainly that. Pictures of Bahrein's deserts, extensive mud flats and reed beds, date plantations, the urban environment and the accompanying resume of the political climate gave an idea of the difficulties of bird watching in foreign lands. There are 23 species of native birds but most of these have been wiped out by falconry, which is the sport of kings in Arabia and has been since 1100 A.D. The Peregrine is the most prevalent falcon and is highly prized. Every year some 2-3 million migratory birds pass through Arabia mostly north to south. All endemic birds are paler in colour and some have developed amazing adaptations to deal with the heat of the desert. Larks abound around building sites (Arabia has 13 species) there are Sand Grouse, Coursers (like our Pratincole with similar behaviour), and the Hoopoe, a bird which is featured in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Bermuda is another archipelago but in the Atlantic Ocean sitting on top of a subterranean volcano and washed by the Gulf Stream. Birds have a hard time here also, there is but one nature reserve, although many golf courses surrounded by large gardens of casuarina trees. There is one endemic species left, the Petrel, of which there are 50-60 birds. Introduced birds include the North American Robin, Magnolia Warbler, Redstart, Yellowthroat, Eastern Blue Bird, and the Kiskadee which was introduced from Trinidad in 1957 to eat skinks which were introduced to eat lady-birds which in turn were introduced to eat scale insect pests. Altogether, Al saw 50 species of birds, 8 or 9 which were new to him. Thanks, Al for an intriguing account of your bird watching abroad.

## 2. Notes from Management Committee Meeting from Kay Imrie.

- a) Suggestions for the 1987 programme are needed.
- b) Those interested in a weekend at Barren Ground should contact Kay Imrie - 524524.
- c) Name tags are to be introduced at the first (and subsequent) Club Nights at Shortland Wetlands Centre - remember, May Club Night will be the last held at the present venue.

## 3. Request for Assistance - Superb Parrot (*Polytelis Swinsonii*)

N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service is concerned about the future of this bird, which is endemic to N.S.W. and Victoria. It is threatened by illegal trapping and by habitat destruction. In order that a study commenced in 1985 may continue "permanent" observers are requested to report sightings over the next three or four years.

Details sought are:

Date, time and precise location of observing; flock composition; type of vegetation associations (River Red Gum, Box; Box-Cypress; Pine woodland; other) evidence of breeding; food resources utilized; any further information, name and address of observer to The Director (attention Mr. J. Hardy), N.P.W.S., P.O. Box N189, Sydney 2000.

4. Easter Camp at Munghorn Gap 28/29/30/31 March, 1986.

On Friday 28th members departed for the picturesque site of Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve which lies some 142 km SW of Muswellbrook and 36 km NE of Mudgee. The area has recently been affected by drought and consequently was extremely dry. Interesting species reported on the first night included Yellow-tufted and Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Turquoise Parrot and Superb Lyrebird. Later in the night an Owlet Nightjar was heard. Also that night, or was it early morning, Roger Heading was keen enough to view the spectacular Halley's Comet while others were too sleepy to bother. Next morning I was fortunate enough to go into Mudgee with Brian Hare and I enjoyed the opportunity to view this scenic town on the Cudgegong River. (Why did Brian have to go to Mudgee? Editor.) Later in the afternoon Varied Sittellas were observed down the road from camp. Those who had brought their bikes went for a peaceful afternoon ride. I rode down Moolarben Rd. for 3.1 km. until I came to a sign indicating Ulan 11 miles.

That night was entertainment night as Arthur Williams got out his guitar and played such songs as 'Camooweal' and, in true birding spirit, 'Mad Jack and his Cockatoo'. After this event some members spent the evening stargazing while others preferred to go spotlighting in search of nocturnal birds and animals. The spotlighters returned after about half an hour and informed us that they had picked up a solitary Tawny Frogmouth some 700 metres from camp. However, it had flown by the time we went back to check.

Easter Sunday brought the bird count to 93 species, the day's highlight being the Rock Warbler. Members who hadn't been to the area previously picked up a few 'newies' on this day including the fidgety White-browed Babbler, Hooded Robin and Diamond Firetail.

Monday came quite suddenly and we were all packed up and ready to go when Jim Cook informed us that he had tracked down the Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo. Then Jim Imrie told us that he had found a Spotted Quail-thrush further up the gully. The total bird count was now 95. Previous counts were 106 in October, 1982 and 91 in June 1984. Thanks to the 28 members who attended for an enjoyable weekend.

- Mathew Stephenson.

P.S. On the way home through the Goulburn River National Park the Imries saw an 'Old Man Emu' with eleven half grown chicks.

5. Field Day at Ellalong/Paxton/Millfield.

On Sunday 20th April under clear azure blue autumnal skies (a perfect day) 10 people, including some new members who took their first outing with the regulars, gathered at Ellalong to view the birds on the nearby lagoon. A considerable number were present on this swamp, including Black Swans, Australian Pelicans and a Musk Duck. A good sighting was made of a Swamp Harrier as it patrolled its domain in searching for a tasty meal.

A reasonable variety of scrub dwellers was found in the surrounding bushland and by lunch time the roll call totalled 83 birds. Lunch was at Millfield on the property of a friend of Nigel. Not many

birds were seen after lunch other than a vast colony of Bell Miners. The real highlight of the afternoon was the sight of a recumbent koala in the limbs of a stringy bark about 8 feet from our gaze. Many of the group had walked past it and would have missed seeing it altogether had it not been for the sharp eyes of Jim Perry.

On wending our way to the cars some of us saw a small flock of Varied Sitellas and as we gathered at the cars a pair of Nankeen Kestrels soared above. In all, 39 non-passerines and 57 passerines were sighted, making a total of 96 for the day.

Those who were chauffeured home by Jim Imrie were rewarded by an extra sighting - a flock of Grey-crowned Babblers.

- Roger Heading.

## 6. COMING EVENTS.

SUNDAY 25TH MAY

- 10TH ANNIVERSARY - Field Day at Nesca Park, Swansea South (Bargoed House). Barbeque Lunch - B.Y.O. + firewood. Meet 8 a.m. at locked gates. Latecomers may leave cars outside gates. Contact Wilma Barden 573928.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY  
WEEK-END CAMP  
7-9TH JUNE

- CAMP AT SMITH'S LAKE FIELD STATION (University of N.S.W.) Cost \$3 per person per night (includes dormitory accommodation, use of kitchen etc.) Details - Kay Imrie 524524.

SUNDAY 22ND JUNE

- FIELD DAY TO HEXHAM SWAMP. Meet 8 a.m. McDonalds, Hexham. Contact Sue Hamonet 581023.

WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE

- CLUB NIGHT - Guest speaker Steve Heeren, Taxidermist. NEW VENUE - Shortland Wetlands Centre, Sandgate Rd., Shortland at 7.30 p.m.

MONDAY 2nd JUNE

- Management Committee Meeting - Garden Suburb Public School at 5.30 p.m.

SUNDAY 20TH JULY

- DAY TRIP TO TARONGA ZOO. Meet 10 a.m. at Top Car Park. Contact Kay Imrie 524524.

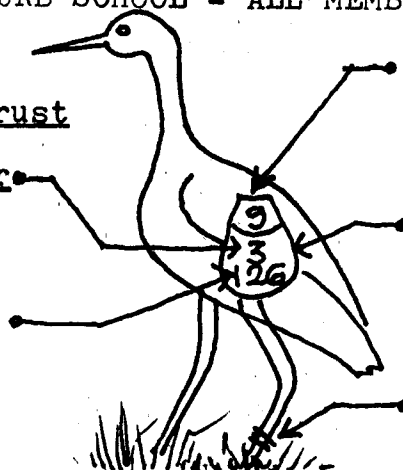
### SPECIAL NOTICE--CHANGE OF VENUE FOR CLUB NIGHTS:

BEGINNING IN JUNE, CLUB NIGHTS WILL BE HELD AT THE SHORTLAND WETLANDS CENTRE, SANDGATE ROAD, SHORTLAND. COMMITTEE MEETINGS WILL CONTINUE AT GARDEN SUBURB SCHOOL - ALL MEMBERS WELCOME.

An Egret Wing-tagged  
by Hunter Westlands Trust

Season number

Individual  
Bird Number



Colony colour & number  
Seaham: Pink 9  
Shortland: Blue 1

Species Colour  
Large: Pale Green  
Little: Orange  
Cattle: Yellow  
Plumed: Red

Australian Bird Banding  
Scheme metal band.