

Hamonet



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 5/86 JUNE 1986.

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Annual Subscription: Family Rate: \$7.00 Single: \$6.00
School Student: \$2.00 (due on 1st Jan.)
Club Badges: \$3.00 available from Treasurer (Ed Hamonet)
Car Stickers: \$1.50.

1. NOTES FROM MAY MEETING 14/5/86.

a) Attendance - 40 people, including two visitors. Due to the absence of our President and Vice-President, the evening's proceedings were ably chaired by Bill Cambridge.

b) Bird Call of the Evening - Presented by Peter McLauchlan. Peter again gave us something different in his presentation of this segment. Instead of one bird call we heard a beautiful medley of songs in a 'soundscape' recorded by Bill Fontana in the rain forest at Barrington Tops and broadcast over ABC FM in January last. The crystal clear calls and mimicry of Lyre birds were difficult to distinguish from the calls of Whipbirds and others themselves. It was a veritable feast of sound, ending with the haunting cry of the Wonga Pigeon.

c) Bird of the Evening - Presented by Fay Heading. Roger and Fay had chosen to describe the Eastern Crested Shrike-tit (*Falcunculus frontatus*) because of its endearingly quaint appearance. This robust small bird has a well marked black and white head with black crest, bright yellow breast, olive green underparts and back. Its strong slightly hooked bill is used for tearing off bark in search of insects and this procedure is sometimes noisy enough to draw one's attention to its whereabouts. The call of the Crested Shrike-tit is also rather droll, being described as "knock-at-the-door-whack"!

d) Main Feature - Presented by Arthur Williams. From the wealth of knowledge he has gathered over the years, Arthur gave us only a fraction. His abiding interest in the nesting habits of birds has led him all over the Valley, into rain forests and up cliffs risking life and limb to observe eagles' nests, and with infinite patience he has watched hundreds of birds construct their small architectural masterpieces. Often he has photographed what he has seen, but better still, he can tell us all he has learnt. Nesting behaviour of mound building birds and their ability to determine the temperature of their mounds with their tongues were described, we heard of his three year search for an active nest of a Lyrebird, and saw a slide of him in the huge untidy stick nest of a White-breasted Sea-eagle 70ft. up. We were told of many curious and unusual nests, and the fantastic methods birds use to decorate (perhaps camouflage) their nests with lichen, bark, and growing leaves as does the Golden-headed Cisticola which stitches green leaves into the fabric of its nest with spider web. We marvelled at the beautiful little domed pouches of our tiniest birds, and heard about those birds which build no nests but lay their eggs upon the ground, such as the Spotted Nightjar, and the Cicadabird which lays its eggs precariously balanced in a depression on a limb. We are indeed fortunate to have Arthur as a member of our Club and that he is always willing to share the fruits of his many explorations with us.

2. ANZAC WEEKEND CAMP AT "MERNOT" CURRICABARK 25/26/27 APRIL, 1986.

Seventy-five species were observed on the property of Mr. Lindsay Hyem, 60 km. north-west of Gloucester. Nine members attended, six of whom overnighted en route at Woko National Park. Sighting of the moon eclipse and a last view of Halley's Comet were noteworthy.

Birds were difficult to find as the area was badly affected by drought. Water trickled in the creeks. The habitats were varied. In rain forest gullies, Bell Miners, Catbirds, Golden Whistlers, Scaly Thrush and even a Brush Turkey with an active mound were found. All three species of Scrub-wren were present. In more open, hillside country, Hooded, Flame and Scarlet Robins were seen. Diamond Firetails were delightful.

The wind blew strongly up the valleys for a day-and-a-half. A pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles were frequently observed, riding into the wind with forwardly braced wings. This caused some confusion regarding their identity. Yellow Thornbills and Blue Wrens were interesting. They'd perch in tree tops and fly outwards and upwards, hawking for insects in Grey Fantail fashion.

Our stay was enjoyable. We had interesting contact and chats with our host. In 60 years on the property, Mr. Hyem's bird list is over 200 species.

- Jim Imrie.

3. FIELD DAY SWANSEA SOUTH 25/5/86.

This regular monthly field outing marked the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Hunter Bird Observers Club.

To Vice-President Wilma Barden goes the credit for the first flicker of the flame - hers was the idea; perhaps the dream, and certainly the initiative to get started on something completely new to this area.

Amongst those who joined Wilma to launch the group under the umbrella of the Newcastle Flora & Fauna Protection Society on 12th May, 1976 were Fred van Gessel, Ted and Rua Jones, Gary Weber, Tom Kendall. The lusty infant born that night is now a healthy teenager, and reflecting on the first ten years should give a warm glow of satisfaction to Wilma in particular for the hours of pleasure and wealth of experience so many folk have had through association with the Club.

Thirty-six persons gathered at Nesca Park, Swansea South on a glorious Autumn day for early birdwatching, followed by a barbeque lunch. A beautifully decorated cake was produced by efficient Secretary Kay, complete with 'Golden Whistler motif and ten candles. Suitably, Wilma and foundation President Fred van Gessel delivered the surgical cut amid much self-congratulatory song.

We are indebted to Royce McCormack of Shortland County Council who generously gave of his time to act as our host for the day - thereby allowing us to have access to this attractive area, where our bird list for the day totalled 63 species.

- Sue Hamonet.

4. NEWS FROM THE SLIDE LIBRARY.

The Club acknowledges recent slide donations from Nigel Walker (10), Glen Albrecht (1 - Oriental Cuckoo), also slides lent to us by Tom Kendall of which 20 have been copied, and 3 slides from Arthur Austin.

The Slide Library is now well established with careful records kept, a good reference system, and each and every slide is valued

by the Club. Slides on loan to us are guarded carefully - they are copied with our own equipment and are not sent away.

If you can help us build up the Slide Library stocks with donations or lend slides for copying (even our 'backyard' birds i.e. Currawongs, Ravens, etc. are needed) please contact Michael Noonan - phone 468022.

5. Observations :

An item in the local lakeside newspaper recently stated that Eraring Power Station is one of only 10 nesting places in the State for Ospreys, and recently a pair of the rare birds returned there to nest. Peter Nelson, who works at the power plant, has been observing the Ospreys for the past 3 years and says this year the pair have raised two young. The nests, which are only 'a stone's throw' away from the power station's main building, are about 2 mtrs. in diameter and lined with seaweed.

6. Discount on Books:

Arrangements have been made with Books Unlimited of 495 Hunter Street, Newcastle for H.B.O.C. members to be allowed a discount of 15% off the retail price of bird books.

7. COMING EVENTS:

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| SUNDAY 22ND JUNE | - FIELD DAY to HEXHAM SWAMP. Meet 8 a.m. McDonalds, Hexham. Contact - Sue Hamonet 58 1023. |
| SUNDAY 20TH JULY | - DAY TRIP TO TARONGA. Meet 10 a.m. at Top Car Park. Contact - Kay Imrie 524524. (** See note below) |
| WEDNESDAY 9TH JULY | - CLUB NIGHT - Study Night on Waders presented by Jim Perry. Shortland Wetlands Centre at 7.30 p.m. |
| SUNDAY 24TH AUGUST | - FIELD DAY TO SINGLETON AREA. Meet 7 a.m. McDonalds at Hexham. Contact Ruth Parker 25569. |
| NOVEMBER 21/22/23 | - WEEK-END at BARREN GROUNDS. There are still some vacancies, contact Kay Imrie. |
| MONDAY 7TH JULY | - Management Committee Meeting - Garden Suburb Public School at 5.30 p.m. |

** TARONGA ZOO OUTING -- Those intending to be there, it is important to be there on time, as a member of staff will show us around the aviaries and behind the scenes. For parties of 12 or more the admission price is reduced to \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children.
