



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 7/86 AUGUST 1986.

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## 1. NOTES FROM JULY MEETING 9/7/86:

a) Attendance - 30, including two visitors. This was excellent as the evening was extremely cold. It was pleasing to have Diane Rogers back, fully recovered from her car accident and Fred van Gessel in transit from Darwin to Sydney.

### b) Bird Call of the Evening:

Jim Perry played a recording of the Grey-crowned Babbler (*Pomatostomus temporalis*) which Fred van Gessel had recorded in the Northern Territory. As its name indicates, the chattering of the bird was very evident. Other sounds heard could variously be described as short, sharp barks, cat's meowing, "all right" and the "peeoo" as mentioned in Pizzey.

### c) Bird of the Evening - presented by Jim Imrie.

White-throated Treecreeper (*Climacteris leucophea*) -  
Climacter = staircase, leuco = white, phea = grey. A darkish bird with distinct white throat and no eyebrows, about 165 cm. Female has rust-red spot near cheek. Found in dense to light timber from edge of dry areas to the coast from Capricorn to Mt. Lofty. Call is high pitched or liquid warbling. Breeds August to December in hollows with loose arrangements of material... 2 to 3 eggs. Both parents share duties. Equipped with strong legs and long feet, they ascend trees in search of insects. These are found in cracks. Bark is not removed to any extent. They enjoy sun-bathing and bath standing in shallow water. The species is abundant.

### d) Main Feature - Wader Study Night.

With the assistance of slides from the Bird Observers Club and our own slide library and a prepared summary sheet, Jim Perry guided us through some 16 members of the family Scolopacidae within the order Charadriiformes. These were presented from the smallest - the Red-necked Stint, to the largest - the Eastern Curlew. Jim has been responsible for co-ordinating our Club's participation in national wader surveys in recent years. He indicated that his main reason for joining the Hunter Bird Observers Club some years ago was to find out more about these migratory birds. It is encouraging for those less experienced in wader watching to know that, with patience, it is possible to sort out these interesting birds by carefully studying body size, bill shape and length, leg length and colour and feeding habits. The sandspit under Stockton Bridge is an ideal observing spot to see massed waders when the tide is high. It is advisable to continue watching as the tide recedes to see the birds move out to feed.

All species recorded in Australia are regular international migrants that breed mostly in Northern Asia and winter in the Southern Hemisphere. Most arrive August-September and depart in March-May. While in Australia they are mainly rather dull in

their non-breeding plumage but on arrival and departure, the richer colourful breeding plumage is evident. Jim showed several well-coloured rusty red godwits to illustrate this.

Thank you Jim for sharing your knowledge with us.

## 2. FIELD OUTING TO TARONGA PARK ZOO 20TH JULY 1986.

On a beautiful clear winter's morning 31 people, including 8 children, gathered at the entrance to Taronga Park Zoo for what promised to be a delightful and informative visit. After passing through the turnstile, where we received a substantial saving on the entrance fee, we were met by the Curator of Birds, Graeme Phipps. He organized two volunteer guides to conduct us around the zoo via all the aviaries and bird houses, ending at the Bird Administration and Care Facilities. Because of timetabling reasons this tour was conducted in a brisk manner but nevertheless quite extensive and some treasures were viewed along the way. Perhaps most notable was the "Poor Bustard". This bird was the victim of a fox attack at the Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo, and had had its upper mandible severely damaged. The Bird has survived, now proudly sporting a finely crafted bill and able to feed itself once again. Other items of special interest was the viewing of a male Regent Bowerbird and a clever male Satin Bowerbird doing sparrow impressions.

Upon arrival at the Bird Administration Centre a real treat was in store for us. We had just caught sight of a beautiful yellow and blue Macaw in an aviary, whereupon a zoo member unlocked and removed the bird in order that we could closely view and even touch the Macaw. The story that unfolded about this bird, known by the staff as Eleni, was as lovely as the bird itself. The keeper told us that Eleni was artificially incubated from a cracked egg (repaired with nail polish) laid by a pair of resident macaws. Eleni was reared and hand-fed by the keeper and when young often travelled between the zoo and the keeper's home riding on the back seat of his car, talking all the way. At one stage of Eleni's life (she is now two years old) she escaped from the cage and was missing for three days before arriving back at the zoo into the keeper's arms. The keeper said that he wasn't sure who was the more excited, he or Eleni! It was obvious that a very close bond of love and affection has developed between them. Eventually Eleni will be on display for all the public to see, so I am sure we all feel privileged to be shown and told about what must be one of nature's most beautiful birds.

At this stage, Graeme Phipps met us again and talked about the future direction he wants to take the zoo's avicultural activities. He spoke at length about compiling a complete computer record of all aviary birds in Australia, conducting extensive analyses and then adding to these records for the purpose of bird conservation. He envisages that people such as ourselves will be involved in helping with the compilation of these records. (I am sure that members of our club will be more than willing). Graeme sees himself as a leader, not a follower, in the development of zoo exhibits and bird conservation; he gave us some exciting examples of displays which the public will see in the near future, perhaps in 1988!

Graeme presented to the Club library a copy of 'Bird Keeping in Australia' which contains his paper entitled "Aviculture and Conservation". I wish to sincerely thank Graeme, on behalf of the Club members and families, for his article, valuable time, organization of our visit, and conveying to us his enthusiasm for a subject which is quite clearly close to his heart, i.e. birds and conservation.

Oh, by the way! Graeme mentioned in passing that Wilma's Booby is doing well.

The afternoon was spent at our leisure retracing our steps viewing in more detail some of the exhibits that took our fancy, namely the

parrot collection, Superb Lyrebird and Variegated Wrens (labelled Lovely Wren, *Malurus amabilis*) involved in nest building. Overhead, perched in a tall pine tree with a good vantage, was observed a Little Falcon surveying the goings on at the zoo.

An excellent day was enjoyed by all, and thanks to all the zoo staff involved.

..... Peter McLauchlan.

3. CORRIGENDUM - JUNE NEWSLETTER 5/86:

In the report of the Main Feature please delete CICADABIRD. It is the White Tern (*Gygis alba*) which lays its single egg precariously balanced in a depression on a limb. References indicate that it is a rare straggler to Eastern Australia and among its breeding islands are Norfolk and Lord Howe.

4. VOLUNTEERS are needed to assist with tea/coffee at Clubnight - especially washing up!

5. COMING EVENTS:

- SUNDAY 24TH AUGUST - FIELD DAY TO SINGLETON AREA.  
Meet 7 a.m. McDonalds Hexham or 8.15  
Burdekin Park Singleton.  
Contact - Ruth Parker 25569
- SUNDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER - FIELD DAY TO WARKWORTH/BROKE.  
Meet 7 a.m. "Oasis" Edgeworth.  
Contact - Jim Perry 432496.
- WEEKEND CAMP - CAMP AT WIDDEN VALLEY.  
4TH-6TH OCTOBER Contact - Sue Hamonet 581023  
Travel Details: Ed Hamonet.
- SUNDAY 19TH OCTOBER - FIELD DAY TO OURIMBAH STATE FOREST.  
Meet at Coles Car Park, Toronto 7 a.m.  
Contact - Kay Imrie 524524.  
(Suggest city members organise car pool before Toronto).
- WEEKEND 21/22/23 - BARREN GROUNDS NATURE RESERVE.  
NOVEMBER Several vacancies still.  
Contact - Kay Imrie.
- WEDNESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER- CLUBNIGHT at Shortland Wetlands Centre.  
Guest Speaker Mr. L.W. Filewood on "Birds of New Guinea". 7.30 p.m.
- MONDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER - MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING at Garden  
Suburb Public School at 5.30 p.m.

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