



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Hammond
NEWSLETTER No. 8/86 SEPTEMBER 1986.

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1. NOTES FROM AUGUST MEETING 13/8/86.

a) Attendance - 43 people despite the big contingent of those members presently enjoying an expedition to Cape York. President Jim Perry being one of these, Vice-President Wilma Barden chaired the meeting.

b) Bird Call of the Evening - Wilma gave us the strange frog-like croaking call of the Little Bittern, which is more often heard than seen as it is a very secretive bird and partly nocturnal. The deep monotonous call, repeated at two second intervals, is also heard more at night, so one could consider oneself lucky to both see and hear this bird.

c) Bird of the Evening - presented by Tom Douglas.

Tom chose to tell us about Red-necked Avocets (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*), which he has recently seen in flocks of over 1000 at Kooragang Is. Common names for this bird describe its distinguishing features and calls -- "Cobbler's Awl" refers to its peculiar long upturned bill; "Painted Lady" to its rusty red head, white body and black wings; "Yelper" and "Trumpeter" to its puppy-like yelping notes and musical fluty 'toot' when nesting. Avocets are found in other parts of the world, but the Red-necked Avocet is peculiar to Australia and is found over most of the country except the far north, is occasionally a visitor to Tasmania and rarely to New Zealand. It is the first Australian endemic bird to figure in an Australian encyclopaedia - a picture of it appears in Dampier's "Voyage to Australia" (1699). Avocets are seen in groups or large flocks on tidal mudflats, in estuaries and on shallow inland waters. They breed between August and December, nesting in a shallow scrape lightly lined, and lay 2 to 4 eggs. They often are seen together with Stilts but are easily picked out by their rusty red heads and up-curving beaks.

d) Observations - Eight King Parrots, Topknot Pigeons and Black-shouldered Kites have been seen recently at Cardiff, immature Pied Stilts at Toronto, Crested Hawks at Ourimbah, and some Glossy Black Cockatoos at Kooragang Island.

e) Main Feature - presented by Arthur Austin.

Because Gordon Harrison was unfortunately unable to come and give us his talk on Pigeons, Arthur Austin stepped into the breach and showed us a film he made during a trip from Victoria through Queensland to the Northern Territory visiting various wetlands. I'm sure we all agree that Arthur is a true artist at making this sort of film. His skill and patience at photographing beautiful birds in beautiful surroundings produced a first class film which

was a pleasure to watch.

An audio visual film on Slimbridge was also shown. This gave a good idea on the work being done in the United Kingdom to preserve and create wetland habitats for both resident and migratory birds. The setting up of "hides" so that hundreds of people may view the birds, the protection from predators and the preservation of endangered species by artificial hatching and feeding shows what will one day be achieved by our own Wetlands Trust.

2. FIELD OUTING TO SINGLETON AREA 24/9/86.

Much to my disappointment after a week of perfect weather Sunday dawned dull and spitting rain, and despite hopes that it would be finer further inland that was not so. However, the 15 of us who had gathered in Singleton's Burdekin Park set off for Lake Liddel in good spirits knowing that at least rain would not affect the water birds. Sure enough, the large expanse of water was dotted with hundreds of Coots, three species of Cormorants, various species of ducks, and Red-capped Dotterels ran about the shoreline. Altogether 29 species of birds were seen, all rather wet and bedraggled looking. Not discouraged by the drizzling rain, we then drove back towards Singleton and turned off along the Glennies Creek Road to Ravensworth State Forest. As we arrived the sky cleared and everything immediately looked better. We scattered off through the trees and the next two hours passed quickly. At lunch time we sat admiring the very pleasant prospect of green paddocks and rolling hills, and "bird call" revealed that 38 different birds had been seen in the forest. We also saw two kangaroos, red-necked wallabies, a hare and a rabbit!

After lunch Trevor took us along the Gresford Road to a reserve once used as a travelling stock route. But now the weather had turned windy and cold and except for a pair of Grey-crowned Babblers few birds were to be seen. This brought the total count for the day to 64.

For a city dweller like I, a day in the country is always enjoyable whatever the weather, and seeing birds as well always joyous. Thanks to Trevor Jurd for leading the group and arranging entry into the places we visited.

..... Ruth Parker.

3. NATIONAL PROJECT TO MONITOR BIRD POPULATIONS.

We have received a letter from Peter Smith of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union saying that he has been asked by the Union to prepare a report on the feasibility of a project to study bird movements and population changes. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has recently funded the R.A.O.U. to examine ways of running such a project. I quote from his letter:

'Lack of detailed knowledge about bird movements and population trends is hindering the development of effective conservation programmes for Australia's birds. Which species are increasing and which declining? How do the species use the different parts of their geographical range? The Atlas of Australian Birds has shown the enormous value of harnessing the skills and energies of Australia's many birdwatchers the network of observers could now be used for a follow-up study.....'

Anyone interested in this project, or with ideas of how to go about achieving the objective are asked to contact Peter Smith

on (047) 39 5312 (reverse-charge calls will be willingly accepted).
 A report will be prepared on the possible approaches to this project
 and it will be circulated to interested people, and a workshop will
 be held at Adealide University on 11/12 December just prior to
 the R.A.O.U. Congress. Those wishing to attend should 'phone
 Peter Smith, who ends his letter by saying 'the project will
 only be successful if it has wide support and involvement, not
 only during the fieldwork but in the planning stages as well'.

4. COMING EVENTS:

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| SUNDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER | - | FIELD DAY TO WARKWORTH/BROKE.
Meet 7 a.m. "Oasis" Edgeworth or
7.45 Cessnock Swimming Pool.
Contact - Jim Perry 432496. |
| WEEKEND CAMP
4-6TH OCTOBER | - | CAMP AT WIDDEN VALLEY
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.
(Suggest city mebers organise car pool
before Toronto). Contact Kay Imrie
524524. Optional extra: visit to
Askania Park (adults \$4, groups of 20
\$2). Situated 4 km down Ourimbah Creek
Road. |
| MID-WEEK CAMP
27/29TH OCTOBER | - | CAMP AT CROWDY BAY NATIONAL PARK.
Those interested contact Kay Imrie 524524. |
| WEEK-END CAMP
22/23RD NOVEMBER | - | CAMP AT KERRAPIT, GLOUCESTER TOPS
NATIONAL PARK. |
| SUNDAY 7th DECEMBER | - | FIELD DAY TO KOORAGANG ISLAND.
Meet 7 a.m. at Information Notice just
past Tourle St. Bridge.
Contact - Nigel Walker 300138 |
| WEDNESDAY
8TH OCTOBER | - | CLUBNIGHT at Shortland Wetlands Centre.
Guest Speaker: Hans Pacey - audio-visual
presentation on Myall Lakes area. 7.30pm. |
| WEDNESDAY
12TH NOVEMBER | - | CLUBNIGHT - Film Evening. |
| WEDNESDAY
10TH DECEMBER | - | END OF YEAR CLUBNIGHT.
Showing of members' slides & refreshments. |
| MONDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER | - | MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING.
5.30 p.m. Garden Suburb Public School. |
| MONDAY 3RD NOVEMBER | - | MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING as above. |

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