



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER No. 10/86 NOVEMBER 1986.

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## 1. NOTES FROM OCTOBER MEETING 8/10/86.

a). Attendance. 44 members + 2 visitors.

b). Bird Call of the Evening. (Sue Hamonet) Orange-footed Scrubfowl; (*Megapodius reinwardt*). This active, noisy and strictly tropical member of the trio of Australian moundbuilders produces numerous loud, raucous screams, crows and cluckings. It calls persistently in the early dawn and at dusk, and is heard at its operatic best well into the still, late night hours. Frequenting tropical and sub-tropical rainforest this bird's call is usually well-remembered by those who have shared the experience of camping out in these fascinating areas of the North. The male of the species accumulates a huge incubation mound by scratching with its very well-adapted, large, strong, orange legs and feet, (the scientific name *Megapodius* comes from the Greek *megas* = large; *podos* = a foot) and the female deposits an uncertain number of eggs in deep excavations in the mound. The male then attends to the mound, maintaining a suitable temperature by adding to or reducing the mound material as required.

c). Bird of the Evening. (Bill Cambridge). Banded Rail (*Rallus philippensis*). This beautifully marked, attractive species, although fairly common in its own habitat, is rather shy and elusive, and therefore not easily observed. Bill, however, is fortunate to have a pair of Banded Rails as regular backyard visitors and so was able to give a most interesting account, complete with mounted specimen, of this member of the family Rallidae. Bill has noticed the nervous behaviour of the birds while feeding in the open grassed areas, and its apparent unwillingness to fly. It prefers to run to shelter if disturbed, but will become airborne if pressed. Although the wings are quite short and rounded and the flight is usually described as weak, it is known that these birds do make quite long migratory or nomadic flights, usually at night. The nest is very well concealed in dense vegetation and 5 - 8 eggs are laid. Some weaklings are usual in each clutch, and only the healthy chicks are permitted to survive, the weaklings being driven off quite savagely by the parents, to die of starvation.

d). Observations. Jim Perry produced an impressive list of seabirds following his outing during the recent game-fishing titles off Swansea, including Fluttering and Flesh-footed Shearwater, Black-browed and Wandering Albatross, White-faced and Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Cape, Great-winged and Bulwer's Petrel. A breeding record for Regent Honeyeaters in the Hunter Valley. Grey Plovers (4) in Lake Macquarie reported by Bill Cambridge.

e). Guest Speaker. We were pleased to welcome Dr. Hanns Pacy to our meeting to present for us a beautifully-prepared and presented audio-visual on the Myall Lakes. In an effort to attract tourists to walk and appreciate the diversity of the ecosystems of this interesting area, the Lions Club of Tea Gardens, and one suspects, chiefly the energetic and enthusiastic Dr. Hanns, have developed a walking trail of 21 Kms. in length from Hawk's Nest to Mungo Brush. The audio-visual programme touches on the history, geology and natural beauty of the area, and the Mungo Track takes us between outer-barrier sand dunes and coastal

lagoon systems, through dry and wet Schlerophyll forests, heathlands, and even a remnant of sub-tropical rainforest, each system with its specially adapted plant and animal life. Hundreds of species of wildflowers can be seen along the track, at their best during August/September, while in July/August the orchids are blooming; and for those who choose to camp overnight, the morning bird chorus at Bramble's Green is something to remember.

The fishing traditions of the Tamboy area are probably well-known to most Hunter residents, and a slight detour off the track will take you into the small settlement; and where the track ends at Mungo Brush, the Lakes begin and the ocean is only a short distance away, so there is no end to the attractions for the enthusiast. There is scope for the short, exploratory ramble, as well as the longer, perhaps all-day outing, or even back packing with overnight camping.

A bird list prepared by Michael Rowe of Hawk's Nest takes in river and estuary, lakes, dunes and heathland, ocean and offshore islands, and includes some 198 species. Obviously this will attract some attention from H.B.O.C. members and a copy of the accompanying booklet and guide should be consulted by those interested in trying the track.

Many thanks to Dr. Pacy and his good wife for sparing us some of their valuable time to introduce us to these beautiful possibilities.

## 2. CAMP AT WIDDEN VALLEY 4/5/6 OCTOBER.

A weekend of beautiful weather and scenery was enjoyed by a large camp of 33, made up of 26 adults and 7 children; we had 6 guests including Dawn and Arnold Magarry from Cairns. We hope they enjoyed their weekend with us, also the rest of their holiday.

The camp was reached by driving through the Widden Valley to the property "Holbrook", a very lovely area. We camped by the Table Bay Creek, which is a tributary of the Widden Brook and meanders through the valley. The valley finally divides into two valleys surrounded by sandstone cliffs. The country was looking fresh and green after some good rains.

The birdlife was interesting and varied, with a lot of nesting birds evident. 108 species were recorded by the group; the highlights were numerous Crimson Rosellas, Rufous Whistlers everywhere, Speckled Warblers, Blue Wrens in fine breeding colours, Dusky Woodswallows in abundance, Scarlet Honeyeater, Regent Honeyeaters, Diamond Firetail, and seen by a few the Lyrebird and Turquoise Parrot. Nesting birds seen were Jacky Winter, Noisy Friarbird, White-plumed Honeyeater, White-winged Chough, Regent Honeyeater and Yellow-rumped Thornbill.

The camp had a resident Red-bellied Black snake, which evaded Fred's attempts to catch it, and two visiting goannas. There were numerous wombat holes in the area but to my knowledge no wombats were seen.

Two campers went to a lot of trouble to bake us all a damper on the final night, we much appreciated their efforts in spite of some members trying to dampen the proceedings with their 'witticisms'.

Monday dawned cloudy but a brief shower did not spoil a most enjoyable weekend. We are all indebted to the Harris family who own "Holbrook" for allowing groups, such as ourselves, to camp on their property and enjoy the peace and beauty of the Widden Valley.

-- Rosemary Waymark.

## 3. FIELD OUTING TO OURIMBAH STATE FOREST 19/10/86.

Twenty-four people including seven visitors met and enjoyed Ourimbah State Forest. It was a beautiful day and for the first few hours the birds were very co-operative and we had a lovely time trying to work out which call went with which bird. Our walk was through wet sclerophyll and at the far end a grassy paddock. We then

ventured further into the forest along roads that made cars groan and drivers hope for the best. The birds on our next three attempts were not so helpful, thanks mainly to the Bell Miners everywhere. However, we did manage a bird list of 60 for the day.

After lunch half of our party went home, while the others continued on to Askania Park. Here we walked along a cool and placid path beside a running brook and the quiet stillness of rainforest, broken only by the calls of our avian friends. Askania Park is well worth a visit and for anyone interested a Naturalist does spotlighting once a week. (Ring and leave your name (043) 621855).

Some of the birds which brightened our day were: White-headed Pigeon, Litter and Long-billed Corellas, Golden Bronze-cuckoo, Wonga Pigeon, Cicada Bird, Black-faced Monarch, Scarlet Honeyeater, Golden and Rufous Whistlers, Brown Warbler and nest.

We wish to thank Sue Hamonet for a very enjoyable day.

-- Diane Rogers.

#### 4. NEST RECORD SCHEME.

Do you want to know MORE about our birdlife? The perfect opportunity to learn is presented by the R.A.O.U.'s Nest Record Scheme, as assistance is required for this worthwhile project.

There are a number of species requiring more data, e.g. Welcome Swallow for the 1984/85 season (158 records). "Despite the large number of records for this species, the incubation period could only be determined from four records and the nestling period from only two records .....Very few of the records contained sufficient information about the time of egg-laying, hatching or date of fledging. Similarly, clutch size was known for only 55 of the 158 records (35% of total).....More data at the critical times of egg-laying, hatching and fledging are needed".

There were only 85 contributors including 7 groups for the whole of Australia during 1984/85 who submitted records - more are needed. So come on you Birdo's! It's time to try your skills using care and patience. Remember - the safety of our birds is paramount. Happy nest recording!

N.B. For Nest Record Scheme details and sheets - see Wilma Barden.

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(COMING EVENTS - overleaf)

#### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 1987:

NAME: . . . . .

ADDRESS: . . . . .

. . . . .

TELEPHONE No.: . . . . .

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

Single ☐  
\$7

Family ☐  
\$8

Junior ☐  
\$2

5. COMING EVENTS:

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| WEEK-END CAMP<br>22/23 NOVEMBER                  | * | CAMP AT KERRAPIT, GLOUCESTER TOPS<br>NATIONAL PARK. Contact Wilma Barden 573928.  |
| 22/23RD NOVEMBER                                 | * | WEEK-END AT BARREN GROUNDS NATURE<br>RESERVE. Contact - Kay Imrie.  |
| SUNDAY 7TH DECEMBER                              | * | FIELD DAY TO KOORAGANG ISLAND.<br>Meet 7 a.m. at Information Notice<br>just past Tourle St. Bridge.<br>Contact - Nigel Walker 300138. |
| WEDNESDAY<br>10TH DECEMBER                       | * | END OF YEAR CLUBNIGHT.<br>Showing of members' slides & supper -<br>bring plate. 7.30 p.m.   |
| MONDAY 8th DECEMBER<br>(N.B. not usual date)     | * | MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING<br>5.30 p.m. Garden Suburb Public School.  |
| SUNDAY 18th JANUARY<br>1987                      | * | FIELD DAY TO WALKA WATER WORKS/<br>BOLWARRA/MORPETH.<br>Meet 7 a.m. at McDonalds Hexham.<br>Contact - Ruth Parker 25569.              |
| AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND<br>CAMP 24/25/26th JANUARY | * | CAMP AT ROWLEYS RIVER - PRIVATE<br>PROPERTY NEAR KRAMBACH.<br>Contact - Sue Hamonet 581023.   |

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