

Ed/Sue



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER No. 11/86 DECEMBER 1986.

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

* * * * *

1. NOTES FROM NOVEMBER MEETING 12/11/86.

a) Attendance: 53 (including 3 visitors).

b) Bird Call of the Evening presented by Wilma Barden: Crested Hawk (*Aviceda subcrestatata*). This is our only crested hawk. Its slim black crest is set off by large yellow eyes in the grey head, its breast is buff-white with bold dark bars, making it easy to identify. It inhabits open forests and woodlands and lives in two regions, one around Roper River-Kimberlies-Arnhem Land, and the other from Cape York down the Great Dividing Range to about Newcastle. The books say it is rarely seen south of Grafton but it has been seen quite often around here, in Blackbutt Reserve, at Cardiff, Warners Bay and Grahmstown. The call is surprisingly feeble for such a large, distinctive bird, and is described as a repeated weak piping and a mellow double call 'wee-choo', this call commonly heard during the breeding months (September to March). The Crested Hawk is usually a quiet and unobtrusive bird, however during the mating season it indulges in spectacular aerial displays, tumbling and swooping while uttering loud calls.

c) Bird of the Evening presented by Rosemary Waymark: Eclectus Parrot (*Eclectus roratus*). This brilliantly coloured parrot was one of many beautiful birds observed by Rosemary during her recent trip to Cape York. The range of the Eclectus Parrot is restricted to rainforest on the eastern coast of the peninsular and inland to Iron Range. It is also found in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea. The remarkable feature of this species is the extreme sexual dimorphism, which for many years caused endless confusion, as the male bird is bright green with large yellow beak, bend of wing and flight feathers blue and rich scarlet flanks, and the female is mostly scarlet with blue shoulders and blue band across breast. The Eclectus Parrot was discovered in 1913 by William McLennan and there is a large old tree in Iron Range called the Eclectus Tree, which presumably he climbed to find it. These birds nest in tree hollows, the clutch of two chicks being fed by not only the parents but sometimes up to eight other adult birds. Eclectus Parrots move around in small noisy parties high up in forest canopy where they feed on berries, seeds and nectar. They are conspicuous by their brilliant colour and harsh screeching while in flight, although they are said to also utter a wailing cry and flute-like whistle. They are quite common in the relatively small area which they inhabit, only a few sightings are recorded elsewhere.

d) Observations: There were many birds recorded as having been seen during last month, including Crested Hawk at Cardiff, dark-coloured Pelicans at Stockton Borehole, Little Corella at Shortland Wetlands Centre, Pied Stilts (with ^{one} young) at Stoney Creek, Spiney-cheeked Honeyeaters at Kurri, and Bul-buls at Toronto.

e) Main Feature - Films: Albatross Island in Bass Straight was the subject of the first film. This is where the White-capped Albatross breed, and is one of only six rookeries for this bird in the world. The island is almost inaccessible and now a protected reserve, not so in the past when the birds were slaughtered for their meat, eggs, and feathers. The other film was a visual treat depicting the daily activities on and around a billabong from sunrise to glorious sunset, with no sound other than birdsong and the croaking of frogs.

f) Nesting of Little Terns: Both the National Parks & Wildlife Service and the R.A.O.U.'s Nest Record Scheme would be most interested in details and locations of any nesting pairs of the Little Tern in the Hunter region. This species is increasingly in danger of becoming extinct on the Australian mainland and records are therefore valuable. The success rate of breeding is very low due not only to natural causes such as abnormally high tides and strong winds but to human disturbances e.g. illegal motor-bike and dune buggy riding and predation by domestic dogs. The B.O.C.'s (Victoria) newsletter states: "...dogs.....were the single most important source of predation identified, and probably facilitated desertion of nests as well....The Shire of Phillip Island Council is to be congratulated onrecently banning dogs altogether from one of its most important roosting areas for international migratory waders....Other local Councils could perhaps be persuaded similarly to control specific sites for particularly good reasons, if local B.O.C. members approach Council with details".

This could very well apply to our own region, so let's hear from you if any Little Tern nesting sites are found.

-- Wilma Barden.

2. WEEK-END AT BARREN GROUNDS NATURE RESERVE 21-23RD NOVEMBER.

We were walking in line abreast round the hill, about 10 metres apart with the sun behind us, when the Ground Parrot took off and flew right across in front of the line, brilliant green in the sunlight. This, for me, was the most unforgettable moment of the week-end camp at Barren Grounds, although we were later to catch a Ground Parrot in the mist net and admire it in the hand before releasing it with its piggyback transmitter.

Fifteen Club members had arrived in weather which made those of us who had started our bird-watching in English Novembers feel quite at home. The weather for days had been cold, wet and windy, but at least it was dry by Friday evening, and Saturday and Sunday were glorious days. We were keen to emulate the recording of 82 species made by our illustrious predecessors, which remains a record count for one week-end at Barren Grounds. By Friday night the list stood at a mere 19. Reference to the check list revealed that such stalwarts as the Willie Wagtail and Magpie-lark had only each been seen twice, and Galahs and Starlings were scarcer still. The sighting of 15 Tree Martins on the last morning was a notable event.

We did find the first recorded Red-browed 'Treecreepers' nest for the Park. Other sightings included a Collared Sparrowhawk feeding young at the nest, and a Grey Currawong feeding a skink (? Golden Water Skink) to a fledgling. White-browed Scrubwrens, Brown Thornbills, and Superb Blue Wrens were abundant, and Southern Emu-Wrens widespread. Some of us were lucky enough to see Brown Bristlebirds, and some, Pilotbirds and Lyrebirds. Beautiful Fire-tails were mostly elusive. A walk to the escarpment on Sunday

morning was rewarded with a Great Cormorant soaring hundreds of metres above, a Grey Goshawk soaring below, and close views of Rock Warblers visiting the nest.

We also saw Swamp Wallabies, a Greater Glider, and an Echidna, but the only Mars Bar awarded for a new species was for Roger Heading's Rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*.

The bird list finally reached 60. Many thanks to Richard and Pat Jordan for working so hard towards a very enjoyable week-end.

-- Keith Howard.

3. Interested in helping atlas the birds of far western New South Wales? Bert Bolton is running two 9-day safaris for \$395.00 each, (a) commencing 14th March and (b) 17th October 1987. Contact Wilma Barden.

4. Club Night Visitors - A special request is made to members at Clubnight to look after visitors (easily identified by the blue name tag).

5. STOP PRESS: In time for Christmas!! Iron-on Club badges suitable for T-shirts, sloppy joes, etc. Now available for \$2 from the Treasurer, Ed. Hamonet.

6. REQUEST FOR HELP IN KOALA SURVEY:

We ask for your co-operation in this 1986 New South Wales Koala Survey.

KOALAS: Are there any in your area (please circle answers) YES? NO?
IF YES, Where:



POSTCODE:

(e.g. distance and direction to nearest town or prominent feature)

Do you see Koalas WEEKLY? MONTHLY? YEARLY?
Do you think Koala numbers in your area are STABLE? INCREASING? DECREASING?
In the last year have you seen any SICK? INJURED? DEAD? Koalas in your area?
IF NO, have there been koalas in your area in the LAST 5 YEARS? LAST 6-10 YEARS?
BEFORE THAT TIME? (When:)

COMMENTS:

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Phone:

This information is strictly confidential. Thank you for your assistance,
Philip Reed, NPWS Koala Survey Program, (02) 237 6898 or reverse charge.

Please send to: FREEPOST 36
NPWS Koala Survey,
P.O. Box N 189
Grosvenor Street,
SYDNEY 2000.

7. COMING EVENTS:

SUNDAY 18th JANUARY

* FIELD DAY TO WALKA WATER WORKS/
BOLWARRA/MORPETH.
Meet 7 a.m. at McDonalds Hexham.
Contact - Ruth Parker 25569.

(continued overleaf)

COMING EVENTS continued:

AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND CAMP
24/25/26th JANUARY

* ROWLEYS RIVER - Private Property
near Krambach.
Contact - Sue Hamonet 581023.

WEDNESDAY 13th FEBRUARY

* CLUBNIGHT, ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
& ELECTION OF OFFICERS.
Guest Speaker: Gary Weber.
7.30 p.m. Shortland Wetlands Centre

SUNDAY 22nd FEBRUARY

* FIELD DAY to BARRINGTON GUEST
HOUSE AREA. Meet 6 a.m. McDonalds
Hexham. Contact Kay Imrie 524524.

MONDAY 11th FEBRUARY

* COMMITTEE MEETING at Garden
Suburb Public School 5.30 p.m.

* * * * *

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 1987:

NAME

ADDRESS

.

TELEPHONE No.

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

Single
\$7

Family
\$8

Junior
\$2