



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER No. 2/87 MARCH 1987.

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Annual Subscription: Family Rate: \$8.00)
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Club Badges: \$3.00 - available from Treasurer.
Car Stickers: \$1.50
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NOTES FROM FEBRUARY MEETING 11/2/87.

a) Our first Club night for 1987 was, as usual, also the Annual General Meeting. Forty-nine people were present. A welcome was extended to Denise Moore from Melbourne B.O.C., and to new members Ken Beath and Peter Vaughan.

b) ANNUAL MEETING: Jim Perry gave a comprehensive account of last year's activities and accomplishments. He thanked all those who had assisted in the smooth functioning of the Club, and called for a special vote of thanks to Ed. Hamonet who was standing down after years of service as Hon. Treasurer, also thanks to Kay Imrie who has cheerfully carried out the task of Hon. Secretary. A copy of the Report, which includes the financial statement and library/slide library report, is lodged in the Club library and is available for members' perusal.

Jim Imrie then took the Chair as Returning Officer for the election of officers for 1987, the result being:

President: Jim Perry
Vice President: Wilma Barden
Hon. Secretary: Rosemary Waymark
Hon. Treasurer: Alan Stuart.

The following persons were appointed to the positions shown below:

Committee Members: Roger Heading, Peter McLauchlan.
Kay Imrie, Bevan McGregor.
Activities Officer: Kay Imrie
Project Officer: Diane Rogers
Slide Librarian: Michael Noonan
Librarian: Ed Hamonet
Newsletter Editor: Ruth Parker
Newsletter Distributor: Jim Imrie
Atlas Recorder: Jim Imrie
F.O.C. Recorder: Wilma Barden
Public Relations Officer: Wilma Barden
Catering Officer: Margaret McLauchlan.
Auditors: Watson & Doherty.

The Annual Meeting was then declared over, and the usual Club Night activities carried on.

c) BIRD CALL: Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*). Presented by Sue Hamonet
This endemic species is quite unique among waterfowl, not only because of its rather bizarre appearance, but it has quite a

flamboyant courting display. The three characteristic sounds made by the male Musk Duck were played. Described variously as "whistle", "whirr", and "yelp", these are all calls made by vocal means. The fourth noise -- "ker-plonk" is thought to be made by the feet of the duck during the courtship ritual. Scientific study of the bird's vocal apparatus has failed to reveal evidence to suggest that the noise could be made vocally. Ducklings utter a continuous thin peep, which is the contact call, they also have a thin, soft quack. Females seldom make a noise except for a soft quack like that of the ducklings. An occasional male in display can be found at most times of the year, but the frequency increases greatly during Winter and early Spring.

(The calls Sue played were taken from the tape 'A Field Guide to Australian Birdsong' Vol. 2, available from Bird Observers Club, P.O. Box 185, Nunawading, 3131 for \$8.50 + \$2 postage. Some members have expressed interest in bulk ordering of this tape to cut down on postage costs. If others wish to be involved, please contact Sue Hamonet).

d) BIRD OF THE EVENING - presented by Kay Imrie.

Rhipidura rufifrons, literally translated from the Greek: Rhipodos = fan; ura = tail; rufus = red; frons = forehead, becomes a fantail with a red forehead, known to us as Rufous Fantail.

This delightful bird was chosen as the evening's subject by Kay who had a pair nesting in her garden just before Christmas. The Rufous Fantail is found throughout coastal northern and eastern Australia as well as New Guinea, some Indonesian and Pacific Islands. It is a bird of the rainforest and gullies particularly while breeding but resident in the more open areas of its northern habitats during the cold weather. Locally it is a Spring and Autumn visitor. The Rufous Fantail is an extremely active bird, about 150mm. long, and is ever on the move, with much fanning of its glorious tail. While much of its feeding is done on the wing, it also gleans insects from foliage and occasionally on the ground.

The nest on display was just under two metres above the ground in a Feijoa shrub. When found, it was completed but contained no eggs. Two eggs were laid, with a day in between, and both parents shared the incubation. After fifteen days the first egg hatched and the second on the following day. That day the younger bird disappeared and, four days later, so did the other fledgling. What a disappointment on Christmas Day! Suspects included Kookaburra, Currawong, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Grey Butcherbird. All were around at the time. The nest was then abandoned.

Lots of Rufous Fantails were observed at Rowley's River camp in January and currently they are active along the Flaggy Creek track to Glenrock Lagoon.

e) OBSERVATIONS: The first ever sighting of the Southern Emu Wren was reported at Shortland Wetlands Centre; Blue-billed Ducks at Morpeth Treatment Works; a Grey Goshawk in its white phase near Blackbutt; a Red Wattlebird was seen feeding a large fledgling (? Koel) and a pair of Dollarbirds and a Sea-Eagle at Tomaree Head.

f) MAIN FEATURE - presented by Gary Weber.

Norfolk Island and its birds was the subject of Gary's dissertation. Most of the Island's terrain has been cleared

in past times so that very little remains undisturbed. That which has been preserved in the National Park is mostly steeply sloping country densely covered with tree ferns, creepers and the two species of native tree, Norfolk Island Pine and Hibiscus. Colourful fungi grow beneath this green canopy. Because their natural habitat has been destroyed some native birds have died out. However, Red-tailed Tropicbirds and Black, and White Noddies nest here; Masked Gannets, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are numerous; and Grey Gerygones and Hummingbirds are found inland. Sooty Terns - called Whalebirds because they return each year when whales appear, also breed, and, unbelievably, there is still an open season for taking their eggs. Introduced birds such as Sparrows, Blackbirds and Crimson Rosellas also thrive, further depleting habitat for endemic species. Gary showed slides he had taken of immaculate White Noddies nesting precariously on lofty bare branches of N.I. Pines and spectacular Red Tropicbirds nesting in a scrape in the ground. Phillip Island, a tiny islet close by, is the subject of a regeneration programme being carried out to rectify the results of years of occupation by pigs, goats and rabbits. Congratulations Gary on your excellent photography.

2. FIELD DAY TO BARRINGTON GUEST HOUSE AREA 22/2/87.

A total of 24 people met at the gates of Barrington House on a clear sunny morning, full of anticipation at what the rain-forest might reveal in terms of birds to find and observe. After a pre-walk cuppa we set off into the cool of the forest along the track to Rocky Crossing. Before long we were strung out over a long distance as people found their own pace. The most common species were Rufous Fantails and Yellow-throated Scrubwrens which enjoyed foraging along the path itself. Brown Pigeons and Lyrebirds called in the distance, while a large red-bellied black snake basked in a patch of sunlight next to the path.

Some people got as far as Rocky Crossing before heading back to the cars for lunch. A Red-browed Treecreeper was watched as we ate. After lunch we scattered again, some cooled off in the river, while back along the track nearby the guest house our group found two Lyrebirds scratching along the path in front of us, one of them with a very conspicuous rufous throat. Shortly afterwards we found a Brush Turkey and finished off a tiring day by watching two Brown Pigeons feeding in the sunlight in the top of a tree.

A total of 50 species was recorded for the day and the long drive was regarded as well worthwhile.

-- Nigel Walker.

3. VISIT TO BARREN GROUNDS NATURE RESERVE.

Last year's visit proved so popular that another weekend is planned for November next 6/7/8th. Cost is \$64 and a deposit of \$10 to Kay Imrie (immediately!) will ensure you are included. Cost covers food and accommodation.

4. SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE FOR 1987.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW OVERDUE! IF A CROSS APPEARS ON FRONT PAGE OF THIS NEWSLETTER, IT IS YOUR LAST CHANCE!
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5. COMING EVENTS:

SUNDAY 22nd MARCH

*** FIELD DAY to STOCKTON BOREHOLE/
TERALBA AREA.
Meet: Teralba Caravan Park 7 a.m.
Contact: Sue Hamonet 58/1023.

EASTER CAMP 17/20th APRIL

** PRIVATE PROPERTY "MURRUMBO",
KERRABEE Via SANDY HOLLOW.
Details and Contact: Kay Imrie
524524.

WEEKEND CAMP 23/24 MAY
DAY VISITORS SUNDAY 24th

*** PRIVATE PROPERTY NEAR STROUD.
Details and Contact: Kay Imrie.

WEDNESDAY 8th APRIL

*** CLUBNIGHT at SHORTLAND WETLANDS
CENTRE 7.30 p.m.
Feature: Bird photographs from
Club member David Blagden's own
collection.

WEDNESDAY 1st APRIL

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

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6. The Committee is currently working on the FIELD DAYS AND
CAMPS PROGRAMME FOR 1988. Suggestions are requested. Please
return this form to Kay Imrie at next Clubnight or by mail.

1. DAY OUTINGS (up to eleven)

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(If space is insufficient
(please attach another
sheet.)

2. ORDINARY WEEKEND CAMPS (possibly in conjunction with above)

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3. LONG WEEKEND CAMPS (Easter, June, October)

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Name.

Telephone No.

Can you help us check out your suggestion? Yes. No.

Weekday/weekend