

Harmonie



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 4/87 MAY 1987

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

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1. NOTES FROM APRIL MEETING 8/4/87.

a) Attendance: 54. Welcome to new members Deborah Perry and Graeme O'Connor and welcome back to former members Ian and Carol McKean.

b) Bird Call presented by Jim Imrie.

Grey Butcherbird (*Cracticus torquatus*), race argenteus "Silver-backed Butcherbird". This bird from the Northern Territory has a clear vibrant call. Members at the meeting found the call hard to pick because it was somewhere between a Pied and a Grey Butcherbird in pitch and character. Later in the evening David showed a slide of this bird in his presentation.

c) Bird of the Evening presented by Diane Rogers.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta* (*Halcyon* = calm and peaceful, *sancta* = to make sacred). The ancient Greeks believed that the kingfisher bred in a floating nest on the sea and had the ability to calm the wind and waves.

The Sacred Kingfisher is a relatively short-tailed bird (190-230mm) with a plump body, large head and oversized bill. Its legs are short and its toes are united over part of their length.

Its calls include: a loud, four syllable ek-ek-ek-ek, repeated monotonously throughout the day at the beginning and during the breeding season (September to March); a modified and strained kee-kee, sometimes in excitement; and harsh, churring notes in alarm. The bird is usually silent when not breeding.

A regular breeding migrant to our area, the Sacred Kingfisher arrives September-October and departs March-April. Its nest is usually an unlined, rounded chamber at the end of a short tunnel drilled into a termite's nest and can be up to 20m. or more above the ground. Clutch may be 3 to 6 eggs. Kingfishers are solitary birds, pairing only for breeding. They stay in family groups for a short period before migrating north. Generally they are found in open forest and woodland, margins of lakes and rivers, sea-shores, mangroves, tidal inlets and mudflats. Their food consists of small lizards, crickets, grasshoppers, house mice, frogs, worms and beetles. When near water, fish and crustaceans will also be taken.

Sacred Kingfishers are found Australia-wide, excluding the dry interior and also inhabit the islands of the north as well as New Zealand.

d) Egret Research.

Greg Baxter spoke to the meeting regarding his current research programme on the feeding habits of egrets. He requested members' help in establishing where the Shortland and Seaham egrets go to

feed. Wilma Barden is organising the "Egret Watch". If you would like to help please contact her at home or the Wetlands Centre.

e) Main Feature presented by Club member, David Blagden.

When first approached to present a Clubnight programme, David's reaction was one of hesitation. "I'm not sure if I have enough material," he said. Those of us fortunate enough to be present at Clubnight enjoyed a superb collection of his own bird photographs. He admitted having great difficulty in deciding what to leave out when finally putting the slides together. So David, we will certainly be looking forward to another selection in the future.

We were impressed with the great patience with which David pursues his hobby. Imagine:- walking out into a swamp before dawn in a portable hide; - sitting so still on a beach that two Oystercatchers walked right into camera range; - hanging out over Dora Creek to photograph a Grey Thrush nesting.

David included pictures taken on his travels throughout Australia: - the Spinifex Pigeons west of Alice Springs that walked under the tripod; - Glossy Cockatoos drinking at Cooranbong; - Banded Plovers with young near Bourke; - White-tailed Kingfisher near Cairns; - Red-eared Firetails in Western Australia; - Sooty Owl at Lake Eacham. Other highlights included a Golden Whistler perched near its nest among fern fronds; a male Satin Bowerbird, a younger male and a female all in the one bower; three silent blobs of young Grey Fantails then all action as Mum comes in with food; a beautifully camouflaged White-throated Nightjar; Pied Stilts with pink legs in harmony with the colour of plants around the nest; young Wood Duck plopping onto the ground from their nest in a tree; a beautiful Wonga Pigeon which just happened to walk in to drink at a waterhole where David was waiting to photograph Bellminers; a Scarlet Honeyeater in a flowering Jacaranda.

Thank you David for sharing your work with us.

f) Information on a proposed Annual Migration was presented by Rosemary Waymark. Plans are for Sunday 5th July until Saturday 18th July, travelling south visiting Murramarang N.P. near Bateman's Bay, Ben Boyd N.P. near Eden, The Lakes N.P. (Vic.), Wilson's Promontory N.P. and Croajingalong N.P. Camping or motel accommodation are possibilities. Lodge type facilities are available at Wilson's Prom. but need to be booked in advance. If you are interested contact Rosemary on 75 1819 as soon as possible.

g) A raffle of various "birds" eggs netted \$36 to be put towards the audio library being established. (see below)

2. Establishment of an Audio Library.

The various calls made by birds can help identification. Voice is often one of the most important clues to a bird's identity, and in a few cases is almost essential to identification. However, describing many calls in words is unsatisfactory; once a call is known, the words can be seen to fit, but it is at the wrong end of the identification process.

Since there are many recordings of bird song available, an audio cassette library has been established for Club members. Initially, seven tapes of bird recordings have been purchased and it is hoped that these will be added to as funds become available. The recordings in the library range from bird calls of the Hunter Region, through birds heard in Queensland and Western Australia, to rainforest sounds of South East Australia. An index of

recorded Australian bird calls has been compiled which reveals that a total of 108 bird species appear on these seven tapes. It is interesting to note (perhaps predictably) that the Eastern Whipbird has the distinction of being the most recorded bird, followed closely by the Golden Whistler and the Grey Shrike-thrush. It can also be seen that the library covers only a small number of birds that has been recorded in Australia, therefore allowing plenty of room for expansion. Information from members about available bird call recordings would be appreciated. Donations would be gratefully received with thanks and acknowledgement. If you can help, please contact Peter McLauchlan.

Members are encouraged to use the audio library material either for use in presentations, such as Bird Call or Bird of the Evening, or for their own purposes. The tapes will be available on a monthly loan basis for a trial period. Pleasant listening!

-- Peter McLauchlan.

3. REPORT ON EASTER CAMP.

Rain on the east coast. How far inland does it go? Weather forecast no help. Go to bed, decide in the morning. Friday 7.30 a.m. cloudy but rain has stopped. Pack ute. and off I go.

The Easter weekend camp was held at a private property on the Sandy Hollow-Mudgee road at "Drummond" a large property with the Goulburn River winding through it, thickly wooded hills all around. Our camp site was flat with plenty of shade trees. We shared it with a large group of Noisy Miners and a family of Crested Pigeons, the two young ones still in the nest. Just around the corner were a flock of Gang-gang Cockatoos and not too far distant Sulphur-crested Cockatoos screeched at early morning.

Never having been able to find wombats in the wild, I set off on Sunday morning to try again. Lady Luck was with me at last - I almost walked on one. Just getting over that shock, I picked up in my sights a beautiful dingo, and for a bonus while sitting on a rock munching a meusli bar a Lyrebird sang its full repertoire. A morning not to be forgotten!

With 27 Club members and 7 guests the recorded bird list numbered 87, with Rock Warblers in abundance. All in all a very enjoyable camp with good company.

-- Brian Hare.

4. COMING EVENTS.

WEEKEND CAMP 23/24TH MAY

PRIVATE PROPERTY near STROUD.
Details and Contact: Kay Imrie
524524.
Day visitors welcome.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY WEEKEND
CAMP 6/8TH JUNE

CRAVEN STATE FOREST.
Details and Contact Kay Imrie.

SUNDAY 21ST JUNE

FIELD DAY to FERN BAY, WILLIAMTOWN,
SALT ASH.
Meet: Fern Bay side of Stockton
Bridge. Time: 8 A.M.
Contact: Rosemary Waymark 75 1819.

SUNDAY 19TH JULY

FIELD DAY to GRESFORD/MT. RIVERS.
Meet: McDonalds, Hexham.
Time: 7 a.m.
Contact: Alan Stuart 52 8569.

continued over/

WEEKDAY OUTING
MONDAY 18TH MAY

BLACK NEDS BAY. Time: 8 a.m.
Contact: Wilma Barden 573928.

NOVEMBER 6/7/8TH

VISIT TO BARREN GROUNDS NATURE RESERVE.
Still vacancies. Cost: \$64; transport
may be shared by arrangement.
Contact: Kay Imrie 524524.

WEDNESDAY 10TH JUNE

CLUBNIGHT at Shortland Wetlands Centre
at 7.30 p.m. Study night: Kites.

WEDNESDAY 3RD JUNE

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

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STOP PRESS

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

The Editor has graciously consented (albeit with some misgivings) to allow me a few inches of this and I hope, future Newsletters, to disseminate information relative to our Library.

ADDITIONS: The following books have been added to our Library since December last:-

1. WHERE TO FIND BIRDS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA by Noela Marr
2. BIRDS OF THE WEST by Ray Garstone
3. TASMANIAN BIRDS, kindly donated by Wilma Barden
4. The WATERBIRDS OF AUSTRALIA - this is the second volume of the series being produced by the Australian Museum and utilises photographs from the National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife.
5. BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA - kindly donated by Alan Stuart.
6. The ADVENTURE OF BIRDS - this book undertakes to account for the manifold appeal of Birds and the hold they maintain on countless thousands of people around the World.

In addition to the foregoing, NEWSLETTERS issued by the B.O.C (Victoria), the N.S.W. F.O.C. and the Cumberland B.O.C. are also available to members.

For the benefit of new members, Library borrowing procedure is as follows:

- a) Select a book or publication.
- b) Remove Card from book etc. and enter your name and date (month & Year)
- c) Place card in Filing Box.
- d) When the book etc. is returned, hand same to Librarian - if present - if not recover Card from Box, initial same and replace in the Book etc.

Ed. Hamonet.