

Hammond



Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 6/87 JULY 1987.

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1. NOTES FROM JUNE MEETING 9/6/87.

a) Attendance: 46.

b) BIRD CALL presented by Wilma Barden: Southern Logrunner (*Orthonyx temminckii*) inhabits leafy floors of rainforest where logs, fallen limbs, debris, ferns and vines cover the ground. Its call is distinctive and varied, typically loud, resonant "Damit, damit, damit". Locally, this bird can be found in Barrington National Park and Craven State Forest.

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING presented by Leonie Storm: Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalonus frimbriatum*), also known as red crowned/ headed cockatoo/parrot and helmeted cockatoo. Leonie not only described this bird but brought along "Fred", a young Gang-gang Cockatoo she rescued from the bush at the Easter camp. His broken wing had made him quite helpless and now after veterinary attention Fred is doing well under Leonie's care, although he will never be able to fly. He is a somewhat owl-like grey bird, having not yet matured to the bright red head and crest of the adult male bird, when he will be beautifully mottled grey, with lower abdomen and under tail coverts margined orange-yellow, and outer webs of wing coverts washed dull green. Tail is dark grey and bill horn coloured. The adult females have grey head and crest, and feathers of the underparts broadly margined with orange and greenish yellow.

Gang-gangs are common in E. Victoria, S.E. N.S.W., the northern limits being upper Goulburn and Hunter River valley. The breeding season is October to January, they nest in holes in trunks of dead trees. They feed mainly on seeds, berries, insects, and larvae and use their foot to hold the food. Their holding technique is the most highly developed of all Australian parrots. The call of Gang-gangs is unmistakable - a 'creaky door' or 'rusty hinge' screech, terminating with an upward inflection. Fred gave us a demonstration of this call. Gang-gangs usually take three to four years to fully mature -- we hope young Fred reaches healthy adulthood.

d) MAIN FEATURE: KITE STUDY NIGHT.

This comprehensive survey of Diurnal birds of prey was introduced by Peter McLauchlan who had prepared excellent study sheets on eight Kites which clearly set out salient identification features, silhouettes and distribution of each bird. With these sheets in hand, plus what we learned from the four speakers, we should in future have no trouble identifying Kites.

Bill Cambridge began by talking about the Black-shouldered Kite and Letter-winged Kite. These birds appear similar when perched being much the same size and colouring, but in flight the differ-

ent underwing markings are clearly seen. The Black-shouldered Kite has a small black patch on underwing, the Letter-winged Kite has a black bar along underwing, forming a broken 'V' or 'W'. Their flight patterns also vary - the Black-shouldered has a direct gull-like flight, hovers and parachutes down feet first with wings up in a deep 'V', the Letter-winged Kite is a nocturnal hunter, roosts by day, doesn't hover and has a swooping flight. Its range is well inland, from the Gulf country to upper northern corner of S. Australia, while the Black-shouldered Kite is found Australia-wide.

Peter then spoke on the Crested Hawk and Black-breasted Kite (also known as Black-breasted Buzzard). As its name implies, the distinguishing feature of the Crested Hawk is its prominent crest, also bold dark barring across its whitish breast. The plumage of the Black-breasted is very variable, making identification difficult. In its dark phase the head and breast are black with round white 'bulls-eye' in black wing-tips; in its light phase it is pale with fine dark streaks and the white wing marks are indistinct. This bird is usually seen soaring high with its large wings markedly upswept. It lives inland. The Crested Hawk is found locally, its range being down the east coast from Cape York to about the Hunter.

Alan Stuart had prepared a sheet setting out distinguishing features of the Black Kite (Fork-tailed Kite) and Square-tailed Kite. These Kites are of similar size and colouring, but in flight the difference is obvious because the Black Kite has a long, deeply forked tail and holds its wings almost parallel; the Square-tailed Kite's wings are held upswept. The Black Kite is found world-wide, the Square-tailed Kite is found only in Australia, more commonly in Western Australia and Queensland.

To conclude the survey, Roger Heading dealt with the Brahminy Kite and the Whistling Kite. The Brahminy Kite has distinctive and beautiful deep chestnut plumage with white head, neck and breast; the Whistling Kite has less attractive buffish-brown colouring. The Brahminy Kite is a tame, inoffensive scavenger, favours beaches looking for fish washed up on the tide, is usually seen alone except during the breeding season. It is the commonest raptor in India, is found over rice growing areas. The Whistling Kite ranges all over Australia, is often seen in flocks soaring to great heights. It feeds on carrion, also harries feeding birds hoping to make them disgorge (especially Ibis). Its shrill and memorable call is heard over Shortland Wetlands and the shores of Lake Macquarie.

e) The Club's next presentation to the Shortland Wetlands Centre is to be an Azure Kingfisher. Donations collected will fully pay for this taxidermal specimen.

2. REPORT ON STROUD CAMP.

Beautiful weather over the weekend of 23rd and 24th May enhanced a very pleasant camp for the 22 campers and 8 day visitors who attended. The camp was held on a property, "Trelawny", located on the outskirts of Stroud.

The bird life at this time of year was rather subdued, despite a varied terrain, varied vegetation and the fine warm weather. A particular bonus for the camp was the log cabin on the property, equipped with a pot-bellied stove which added warmth to the bird count, which totalled 66 species seen during the two days. There were no outstanding sightings amongst 66 species, which included four raptors, three parrots including flocks of King Parrots gathering to roost in the evening, and three pigeons including a flock

of 15-20 White-headed Pigeons.

In summary, a most pleasant weekend, but with limited birding excitement.

- Keith Laverick.

3. WEEKEND CAMP AT CRAVEN STATE FOREST 6-8TH JUNE.

This camp was a fizzer! Seven hardy souls turned up, including for the first time, new members Beth and John Cockerell. It rained. Only 44 birds were observed over the weekend. Trail bike riders were a minor nuisance, but squelching mud was a bigger menace. There were few saving features: a bright campfire which was visited between showers; some periods of sunshine and a generally warm atmosphere made conditions otherwise comfortable.

There were lyrebirds calling, some infrequently but one character had quite a repertoire: Northern Logrunner (from where???), Grey Thrush, Pigeon, Pied Currawong, Yellow-tailed Cockatoo and Satin Bowerbird were among the mimicked calls we heard. A Catbird was seen by one of us and waited while the rest clambered up a steep 100 metres incline, only to dash off at the last inopportune moment. Most birds seen were in scarce quantity, except for the colony of Bell Miners near the camp.

The Cockerells and Imries left Sunday but the Stuarts soldiered on, finishing the day comfortably. The downpour that night made getting out difficult on Monday but they made it eventually.

Jim Imrie

4. FIELD DAY: FERN BAY, WILLIAMTOWN, SALT ASH AND OYSTER BAY. SUNDAY, 21/6/87.

Twenty-one club members, including three children, met at Stockton Bridge on Sunday, 21st June (the winter solstice) for what proved to be a calm, warm and enjoyable day.

Apparently, a large flock of waders took off just before I arrived. Red-Necked Avocets and Spoonbills were included in the sighting. On a swampy roadside paddock at Fern Bay we saw a flock of about fifty White-Faced Heron, together with White Ibis, feeding contentedly.

The next stop was near the Williamtown Air Terminal. It was thought that this area was on Water Board land and we were getting some good sightings when an irate farmer ordered us off his property in no uncertain terms.

A tea break was taken at Salt Ash. In this area of heath-like terrain we saw some small birds near the roadside but nothing at all on a short walk, except that on the way back we noticed a Brown Falcon on a power-pole close to the track.

After leaving Salt Ash we spent an hour at Oyster Cove where the highlight was a very good look at a Pheasant Coucal, identified for me by our leader, Rosemary Waymark.

We had lunch at Tanilba Bay, where the tide was low, and as we ate we watched Sharptailed Sandpipers, Godwits and a Red-Capped Dotterel doing likewise.

In all, sixty-four birds were sighted and identified by some knowledgeable, though modest, members whose assistance was appreciated by a perpetual tyro like your reporter,

Milton Booth.

5. COMING EVENTS.

SUNDAY 19TH JULY

FIELD DAY to Gresford/Mt. Rivers.
MEET: McDonalds Hexham. TIME: 7 a.m.
CONTACT: Alan Stuart 52 8569.

SUNDAY 23RD AUGUST

FIELD DAY to Buttai, E. Maitland,
Black Hill.
MEET: Intersection of John Renshaw Drive
and Lenaghan's Drive. TIME: 7 a.m.
CONTACT: Jim Imrie 52 4524.

SUNDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER

FIELD DAY to Bob's Farm, Anna Bay,
Taylor's Beach.
MEET: Fern Bay side of Stockton Bridge.
TIME: 7 a.m.
CONTACT: Jim Imrie 52 4524.

WEDNESDAY 12TH AUGUST

CLUBNIGHT at Shortland Wetlands Centre.
7.30 p.m. Feature: Keith Davey -
Marine Biologist.

WEDNESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER

CLUBNIGHT at Shortland Wetlands Centre.
7.30 p.m. Feature: Maddock/Markwell -
"Egrets v's Frogs" debate.

WEEKDAY OUTINGS:

27TH JULY
24TH AUGUST

TERALBA - meet Teralba turn-off. 8.30 a.m.
BENNETT'S GREEN are - meet Scrubby Creek
8 a.m.

COMMITTEE MEETING Wednesday 5th August 5.30 p.m. at Garden
Suburb Achool.

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with auto wrecker

Bird Call Bevan Bro T/Bull

B.O.E. M. Pope BFC

(John Hancock)

*Agnes H. J. model to Wetlands.
at Holden. 35*

mainly to IBIS WPB