



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 8/87 SEPTEMBER 1987

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## 1. NOTES FROM AUGUST MEETING 12/8/87.

a) ATTENDANCE: 43. Apologies from Graham O'Connor, Lesley Marshall, C. Mann.

b) BIRD CALL presented by Ruth Parker. The lilting song of the White-throated Warbler (Gerygone olivacea) brought a touch of Spring to a cold wet evening. During Spring and early Summer this oft repeated melody is heard, but not much at other times. Common names for this small bird are Bush or Native Canary, and when one glimpses it flitting among the high foliage, sees the clear yellow breast plumage and hears its sweet, cascading song, one must agree that these names are very apt. It inhabits eastern coastal regions, in open forest, woodlands and along watercourses. Not often in closely settled areas, but it was once heard and seen in Tyrrell Street, Newcastle.

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING presented by Auriol Royds: Red Wattlebird (Anthochaera carunculata) also called Gillbird, Gilly Wattler, and What's o'clock. This bird is the largest, longest-tailed honeyeater in mainland Australia (335-360mm.) It is found right across the southern regions and in Perth it is one of the most common honeyeaters. It is a highly mobile species with complex movements relating to blossoming, found singly and in pairs, and when migrating, flocks sometimes number hundreds. As the name implies, the Red Wattlebird's most prominent feature is its red fleshy wattles located just below a white mark on face below the eye. Upper plumage is brown, boldly streaked white, underparts white, lower breast and belly yellow. They feed on nectar from garden flowers, insects, and are attracted to vineyards and orchards but only occasionally damage fruit. The call of the Red Wattlebird is unmistakable, described as a single, double, or treble cough, sounding like 'tobacco box, tobacco box'. Also has a mellow ringing call 'tew, tew, tew', and an emphatic alarm call 'chock', heard especially when cats come into Auriol's garden, where these birds flock to feed from the fuschia blossoms.

d) OBSERVATIONS: Jacana at Robinson's Swamp, Caspian Tern at Raymond Terrace, Western Warbler at Bolwarra, and the first sighting this far south was made of a Torresian Crow. News came from Judy Cook of sightings of two fully white Wrens at Willandra National Park in June.

e) MAIN FEATURE: TALK AND SLIDES BY KEITH DAVEY.

Tonight we were entertained by something completely different by way of a dissertation and slides on CRABS! Some of us know of Keith's interest in and enthusiasm for marine biology, but I think we were all surprised and charmed by the beauty and colour of the many crabs Keith has photographed. We have often walked over what

seemed to be drab grey crabs - 10, after a splash of salt water administered by Keith and some nifty manoeuvring with one hand while the other clicked the shutter - they emerge in rich colours of pink, red, purple, navy blue, green, white and yellow! All these and more inhabit the sand and salt marsh between high and low tides on our eastern coastline. The slides will illustrate the book Keith is at present writing on Australian Crabs. Other books he has written are on subjects widely different - arid zone reptiles and animals, and we heard of his early exploits with the Leyland brothers in Central Australia. One thing is certain - thanks to Keith, when next observing wading birds we will pay more attention to those scuttling crabs.

2. REPORT ON ANNUAL MIGRATION 5-19TH JULY 1987 - KIAMA TO WILSONS PROMONTORY.

Pam and I met Fay and Roger Heading at Kiama and after inspecting the Blow Hole, we headed to points south, firstly to Murramarang N.P., near Batemans Bay. On the way we detoured to the coast and at Narrawallee we saw a pod of about 10/12 whales heading north. We camped for three nights at Pebble Beach in the northern sector of the Park, the camp site being populated by at least 30 kangaroos and a few wallabies, very tame and almost into your car and tent looking for food. Murramarang is mainly vegetated by tall spotted gums with understory of burrawang, coastal she-oaks and various shrubs. A total of 60 bird species were recorded for the two whole days spent in the Park, the only location where both Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers were seen. Other highlights were excellent sightings of a Reef Heron, Wonga Pigeon and Scaly Thrush.

We then travelled to Ben Boyd N.P., near Eden where we camped for two nights at Saltwater Creek. A fascinating and beautiful part of the coastline, with many coloured cliffs, caves and jagged rocks formed by red and brown shales, conglomerates and sandstones. Roger gives a more descriptive account of the geology of the area. 'The headlands at either end of the beach are geologically spectacular, reflecting their volcanic origins. The cliffs at the southern end consist of convoluted bands of alternating chocolate-red basalt and yellow sandstone. Tongues of purple basalt lava, pitted by time, lap the sea. Bands of silica, exposed by erosion, provide added interest. The beach's northern end also reveals its turbulent past. Tilted walls of basalt appear to rise from the sea. Contained within is an inlet leading to a substantial blow hole, for added effect.' A large expanse of heath stretches along the coast and much of the vegetation was in flower, the coral heath perhaps being the most spectacular. A smaller species count in the Saltwater Creek area, 31 in the full day, 6 of which were new for the trip. Highlights were Southern Emu-wrens, an abundance of Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters and one lonely Hooded Dotterel. We experienced our one and only very cold night, the first time I have seen frost on a beach. This was followed by a spectacular sun-rise with mist rolling off the sea. The Hooded Dotterel was still on the beach, as huddled up as we were and we hoped his feet weren't frozen!

The sixth day found us back on the road heading for Lakes N.P. in Victoria. We recorded our highest daily species count of 60. Highlights of the day, for me, were my first Pacific Gulls, at Lakes Entrance - together with some immatures. They were then seen every day in Victoria. The first Emus and a Scarlet Robin. The Lakes N.P. conserves some of the remaining bushland around the shores of the Gippsland Lakes. Eucalyptus and banksias cover much of the park with a ground cover of bracken and heath shrubs, also a stand of southern mahogany.

We camped at Emu Bight for two nights, and recorded 46 species in the full day spent there. I had my first prolonged close-up view of a Brush Bronzewing, other firsts for the trip were Crescent Honeyeaters, White-eared Honeyeaters, Musk Lorikeet, our one and only Boobook and at least 20 Grey Currawongs, feeding on the ground near a picnic area. Also Caspian Terns, Crested Terns, Black Swans, Pacific & Silver Gulls, Pied Oystercatchers and Pelicans. A very windy spot and an area the Rangers are trying to keep clear of tourists and fishermen, as it is a nesting place of the Little Tern.

At the end of the first week we were well on the way to Wilsons Promontory, having detoured to Port Albert and Port Franklin. We recorded over 50 species for the day, and our first Blackbird which we saw every day in Victoria. Fay and Roger had over 150 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos fly over the road, also saw White-winged Choughs. Others recorded for the first time were Eastern Curlews, White-fronted Chats, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Little Raven.

We arrived at our flat at Tidal River, and found clean and comfortable accommodation, gas cooking and heating and lots of lovely hot water! Four full days at Tidal River gave us the chance to see quite a bit of the Park. We explored Norman Bay, Little Oberon and Oberon Bays, Squeaky Beach, where Roger and Fay found the only Little Penguin, unfortunately dead; Lilly Pilly Gully, and around Tidal River. The last day Pam and I reached the top of Mt. Oberon, magnificent views made the ascent well worthwhile despite gale-force winds. That was the only time I felt cold, we had a variety of sunny days, cloud and light showers, and an exceptionally high tide, which was quite spectacular. Some lovely sunsets, and we usually spent the last of the daylight walking along the beach, when wombats came out to feed, quite unconcerned by our presence. A number of Emus were seen as we drove through the Park, the Forest Raven was seen, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were seen most days. Our species count for Wilsons Prom. was 44 but we felt happy with the result, considering the mostly windy conditions and habitat covered. Perhaps more birds are evident in the spring/summer but I am sure I would rather visit the Prom. in winter without crowds of people. It is hard to choose just one highlight but I have to plump for the Pink Robin, I was lucky to have more than one sighting, the ultimate being a pair on the track down from Mt. Oberon. Running a close second were the Pacific Gulls, Brush Bronzewing, Hooded Dotterel and Scaly Thrush, all new to me.

On the way home at Longford near Sale over 300 Black Swans were seen, and at Nowa Nowa in a paddock next to a huge pile of sawdust, 22 female and/or immature Satin Bowerbirds with 1 male.

Birds seen on all 14 days were Silver Gull, Crimson Rosella and Red Wattlebird. on 13 days, Grey Shrike-thrush, Magpie, Kookaburra, New Holland Honeyeater and Superb Blue Wren. On 12 days, Little Wattlebird, White-faced Heron, Little Pied Cormorant, Eastern Yellow Robin, White-browed Scrubwren and Eastern Spinebill. On 11 days the Brown Thornbill and so the list goes on! A total of 61 Passerines and 70 Non-Passerines.

I thank you Pam, Fay and Roger for deciding to go on the trip and thereby turning an idea into a happening.

-- Rosemary Waymark.

To those who said 'You're going to WHAT? WHERE? WHEN?? I wish to thoroughly recommend camping (basic hut-ing really) at Wilsons Promontory in Winter! Unequivocally!! Highlights to and from the Prom.? Has to be sharing cheek-by-jowl living with a male Superb Lyrebird at Pebbly Beach campsite. Probably the lack of

people he could show himself and serenade at will. It has to be the Reef Heron rock-hopping as the waves grabbed at him - with sure feet and excellent timing he fed literally (littorally!) at the water line., on the pebbliest beach ever seen, composed of metres of cricket-ball size pebbles. It has to be sharing the iced-over beach at Ben Boyd with a Hooded Dotterel who hadn't been told it was warmer at the Prom! So cold, we were both slit-eyed watching the rising sun catching the mist. The nearby heath yielding Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters; the Bellbirds calling, carrying so faintly across still water protected from the surf noise by incredibly formed rock cliffs. It has to be the Wonga Pigeon and our other camp-site groupies - White-browed Scrubwrens, Blue Wrens and the ubiquitous Grey Shrike-thrush - helping themselves to crumbs. AND AT THE PROM! It has to be seeing a Peregrine Falcon, after some swift acrobatic displays, descend in 1 second the distance that had taken me 1½ hours to ascend to Mt. Oberon. The hugh beach of Norman Bay pounded by gale-whipped seas during an exceptionally high tide, so that the first rows of dunes were awash where yesterday 2 wombats grazed serenely. Stormy skies, blue black, contrasting dramatically with sun-drenched breakers; rocky island visible and not visible and visible again within minutes; Sooty Oystercatchers waiting till the tide was kinder; Tidal River swelling from dribble to river marooning the foot bridge, with a sign nearby surrounded by water insisting WALKERS ONLY NO BICYCLES.

Thank you Rosemary for organising the trip. A priceless experience.

-- Pam Grice (Brisbane)

### 3. COMING EVENTS.

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.

SUNDAY 25TH OCTOBER

FIELD DAY to Wangi, Eraring.  
MEET: Toronto Coles Car Park.  
TIME: 7 a.m.  
CONTACT: Bevan McGregor 59 4141.

WEEKEND CAMP  
3-4-5TH OCTOBER

WOLLAR Private Property. Sue Hamonet 581023  
CONTACT & DETAILS: Kay Imrie 52 4524/ c  
Fees payable to owner - probably \$2-3 per  
adult.

WEEKEND CAMP  
21-22ND NOVEMBER

DYERS CROSSING, TAREE AREA.  
Details & Contact next newsletter.

WEEKEND 6-7-8TH NOV.

BARREN GROUNDS EXPEDITION.  
Details: Kay Imrie 52 4524.

WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER

CLUBNIGHT. Feature: Alan Morris (to be confirmed).

WEDNESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER

CLUBNIGHT. Feature: Greg Little.

WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER

CLUBNIGHT and Christmas Party, members' slides, etc.

WEEKDAY OUTINGS:  
28th SEPTEMBER  
26th OCTOBER

HUNTER BOTANIC GARDENS. Meet there at  
SWANSEA SOUTH. Meet at ( 7.30 a.m.  
Swansea Park at 7.30 a.m.

COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 7TH AT GARDEN SUBURB SCHOOL.  
5.30 p. m.