



Hunter Bird Observers Club

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1. NOTES FROM OCTOBER MEETING 14/10/87

a) ATTENDANCE: 45.

b) BIRD CALL presented by Barbara Bean: Clamorous Reed Warbler. The full-throated call of this outstanding singer may be heard now around the reedbeds at Shortland Wetlands. When singing, it puffs out its throat, raises its crown-feathers, and opens its beak wide so that the yellow gape may be seen.

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING presented by Michael Noonan: Beautiful Firetail (Emblema bella). Members of the grassfinch family have a special place in the affections of many bird fanciers, their beautiful plumage and their minute size make them favourites. The Beautiful Firetail is a plump dark finch with bright red bill and rump, small black mask around eye and pale blue eye-ring, underparts very finely barred black and white. Female and immature birds are duller in colour. Their habitat is mostly confined to very dense scrubby vegetation and ranges from coastal se. Australia to Mt. Lofty Ranges. Like all grassfinches they gather in small groups or flocks. The pair-bond is strong and they build a roosting nest as well as a breeding nest, both of these being very bulky and made mostly of grass. Michael gave many fascinating details of the behaviour of Beautiful Firetails and I hope he will one day have the pleasure of seeing them in the wild.

d) OBSERVATIONS: Waders from overseas are now visiting Koorang and Stockton Bridge areas; Koel and Dollarbirds have been heard locally; Jabiru are at Richardson's Swamp (near Glen Oak) and a flock of 2000 Woodswallows were seen at Hillston.

e) MAIN FEATURE: Sydney Harbour National Park.

Allan Morris is the Head Ranger of National Parks in the Sydney district and also a keen bird observer. The slides showed some of the eleven parks which encircle Sydney Harbour and Allan told us the pleasures and problems in the maintenance of these diverse areas. Most headlands were fortified in the early days and some of the historic buildings, gun emplacements, moats and tunnels remain. With panoramic views, natural bushland, walking tracks and quiet, secluded beaches, the Sydney Harbour National Park would take days to explore fully. In four years 160-170 bird species have been recorded in the Park, some widespread and some occupying special habitats. Many varieties of sea birds can be seen off-shore from North Head including four species of Albatross; Petrels and Gannets follow ships in and out of the Heads; Sea Eagles, Kestrels and Goshawks are seen, and a Peregrine Falcon has been photographed feeding on top of the Bridge. Wattlebirds and Honeyeaters find good feeding in the bottlebrushes and coral trees, Thornbills have their habitat around Royal Sydney Golf Course and Rainbow Lorriquets nest in Neilsen Park. The most common bird seen is the Silvereye and

Red-browed Firetails are widespread. Sydney people are fortunate to have easy access to this interesting Park, and its good to know that so many native birds survive and indeed flourish so close to the "big smoke".

2. LONG WEEKEND AT WOLLAR 3RD-5TH OCTOBER

As we entered the "Coerheide" property, we were greeted with the overwhelming sound of Rufous whistlers. It seemed that territories and partners were still to be decided. However, other birds had made their choices. Warblers (western, white throated and speckled), wee bills, yellow robin, chough and pardalotes were spotted tending nests. A variety of nest construction was seen from a tangled grass dome on the ground (speckled warbler) to one of mud (chough). Meanwhile colourful torquoise parrots fed on the yellow fire weed.

On Sunday we went for a long walk and were rewarded with sightings of a male crested bellbird. It was difficult finding this bird because of its ability to perform a ventriloquist act. This bird was recorded in the same vicinity two years ago, by our birdclub members. Further along the road we had a brief glimpse of heath wrens.

Returning to the camp, a good spot for birdwatching was the dam. The birds sighted included honeyeaters (yellow face, white eared, brown headed, yellow tufted, white naped), grey fantails, silver eyes, superb blue wrens and willie wagtails.

Storm clouds had been building up in the afternoon and in the evening we had a violent storm; lightning flashed and rain poured down. However, it soon passed over and Monday dawned to a fine but cool day.

Throughout the weekend we heard the call of cuckoos, waiting for a chance to lay an egg in the chosen host's nest.

Twenty-seven people were at the camp, and we had a count of 90 birds.

-- Margaret McLauchlan.

3. FIELD DAY SUNDAY 25TH OCTOBER: Heavy rain on the first morning of daylight saving discouraged everybody from turning up for the outing to Wangi and Eraring - except the leader, Bevan!

4. BIRD SIGNS AT WALKA WATERWORKS AND MORPETH COMMON.

The Club has received advice from the Maitland Bicentennial Community Committee that we have been allocated \$500 for the erection of signs which will identify waterbirds likely to be in their vicinity (see item in August Newsletter). The full cost will be \$650, so that the Club will contribute the balance, \$150.

5. The Australian National University 1988 programme for residential Summer Schools may interest some members:

24-28 January: Kosciuszko in Summer, in Kosciuszko Nat. Park.

3-6 February: Rainforests of Southern NSW, at Kioloa.

12-14 February: Nature & Landscape Photography in Kosciuszko Nat.

8-12 February: Native Plant Identification at Jervis Bay. (

Further details from Centre for Continuing Education, A.N.U.,
GPO Box 4 Canberra ACT 2601, or 'phone (062) 493016, 494754.

6. COMING EVENTS:

WEEKEND CAMP
21-22ND NOVEMBER

DYERS CROSSING, TAREE AREA.
CONTACT: Kay Imrie 524524.

SUNDAY 29TH NOVEMBER

TWILIGHT WALK at ASKANIA PARK.
Bar-B-Q tea and spot lighting.
ENTRANCE FEE: \$3.50 - reduces to \$2.50
if we get 20 starters. A cost of \$30
extra to be shared by group for
1½ hours spotlighting.
MEET: At carpark, Askania Park at 4 p.m.
CONTACT: Rosemary Waymark 751819.

SUNDAY 6TH DECEMBER

FIELD DAY to Warkworth.
MEET: McDonalds, Hexham.
TIME: 6 a.m.
CONTACT: Kay Imrie 524524.

WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER

Clubnight and Christmas Party, Members'
slides. Donations please for raffle.

SUNDAY 24TH JANUARY '88

FIELD DAY to Grahamstown.
MEET: McDonalds, Hexham.
TIME: 6 a.m.
CONTACT: Sue Hamonet 581023.

WEEKDAY OUTINGS:

16TH NOVEMBER
30TH NOVEMBER
28TH JANUARY

BLACKBUTT RESERVE. Meet 7.30 a.m. Top
LOCAL PARKS. Meet 7.30 a.m. Aviary.
GLENROCK LAGOON.

COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday 2nd December at Garden Suburbs
School 5.30 p.m.

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 1988.

NAME

ADDRESS

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TELEPHONE NUMBER

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

SINGLE \$8.00 ☐

FAMILY \$10.00 ☐

SCHOOL PUPIL \$2.00 ☐