



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

NEWSLETTER NO. 11/87 DECEMBER 1987.

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## 1. NOTES FROM NOVEMBER MEETING.

### a) Attendance: 35

b) BIRD CALL presented by Roger Heading: Brown Pigeon (also known as Brown Cuckoo Dove). This long-tailed coppery-brown bird is often seen among thickets of wild tobacco on the edge of rainforests. It has a mellow, high pitched 'coo-crrork' call rising at end, repeated several times, and sounding like "Did you walk?"

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING presented by Ed Hamonet: Scarlet Robin (Petroica multicolor). Birds of the family Muscivora (of which there are 15) came under Ed's precise scrutiny. He began by examining the relationship, if any, between the English Robin and our Australian counterpart. The name 'Robin' has a special place in English literature (Shakespeare's Robin Goodfellow), legend (Robin Hood) and folklore (Robin Redbreast), and Ed had intriguing snippets of fact and fable to tell. His conclusion was that, when early English settlers first sighted our bird with a red breast, similarity and nostalgia combined to result in the name 'Robin' being given to our bird. There are five Robins with red (or pink) breasts, and all of these except the Pink Robin may be seen in the Hunter Valley. The plumage of the male Scarlet Robin is jet-black above with white forehead, white slash on wing, white edges to tail, throat black, and breast vivid scarlet. Females are greyish-brown above, buff-white forehead also wing & tail feathers, and are the only females of the Robin family to have a pale red wash on the breast. Scarlet Robins inhabit woodlands and foothills along the coast of N.S.W., and almost all of Victoria. In autumn and winter they move out into cleared areas into parks orchards and gardens, and their bright plumage makes a glowing spot of colour for the field day observer.

### d) MAIN FEATURE: Slides presented by Greg Little.

Beginning with a beautiful scene taken on a frosty morning at Warrumbungle National Park, Greg's camera has captured moments in the day of all sorts of small animals, insects, reptiles and birds, and the results shown to us this evening are of a very high standard. The many beautifully coloured snakes, skinks and lizards must have been a bit tricky to photograph, birds and bush rats, dragonflies and cicadas seem to have been most obliging, and the 'Pelican Sunset' at Wangi was a dream of delight. Greg finished his collection with slides of florid frogs demonstrating their sound apparatus, which he admitted took almost all night to achieve. The Club is lucky to have yet another talented photographer among our ranks.

2. CAMP AT DYER'S CROSSING 21/22 NOVEMBER.

That was a most agreeable week-end! Beautiful surroundings, pleasant company, 88 bird species, while the weather was just about perfect. Our many thanks to Jim and Judy Cook for the groundwork done in preparation for the camp, and of course to George, our host, for making us feel so welcome. Fourteen campers and two day visitors unanimously awarded the gold seal of approval to that "bright blue loo", which after extensive plastic surgery now sports an enviable four-star rating!

The property adjoins the Wang Wauk River, gurgling merrily over small rapids, and bordered by densely-foliaged trees in a veritable spectrum of greens. A tangled mass of rainforest scrubs, as well as Eucalypt woodland and creekside vegetation were there for exploring. From the ridge where we camped there was a panoramic view of the Bunyah Valley on the one side, and the Boulby Valley on the other, with the lake at Forster visible out to the east, the whole overlooked by the Boulby Mountain.

Just as darkness settled on Saturday night our ears were assailed by a swelling crescendo of sound, which encompassed us on all sides. Some thought of frogs, while others insisted it was crickets, but the sharp senses of James O'Connor enabled us to trace the culprits - cicadas - apparently triggered into song by the fading light. My research identifies the species as "Cystosoma saundersi, a bladder cicada, pale green with a largely air-filled abdomen so distended as to give a striking appearance. Formerly plentiful on the Hunter River, now becoming rare, possibly as a result of settlement". (Australian Encyclopaedia, 1958 edition). Fortunately the love song was of short duration, lasting only 30-40 minutes, so after watching the spectacular night skies, complete with two satellites, we settled down to a peaceful rest, broken only by the calls of Frogmouth, Owlet Nightjar, and plentiful Boobooks announcing "all's well".

-- Sue Hamonet.

3. Thirty-seven people, including ten visitors and five children enjoyed the TWILIGHT WALK AT ASKANIA PARK. What a splendid way to spend a summer Sunday evening - an easy stroll along a rainforest creek, then a picnic tea while the sky gradually coloured up with sunset clouds. As darkness fell Danny O'Brien gave a short talk on night creatures we were likely to see, then led the way with his spotlight. Not a great deal of wild life showed up - fireflies were pretty to see, a sleepy Green Catbird was spotted and the bladder cicadas were again heard. The forest looked peaceful and mysterious in the moonlight. As a gesture of his appreciation of this beautiful reclaimed forest, Peter McLauchlan had etched a copper plaque with a poem entitled "The Tree's Prayer", which he presented to the proprietors Cathie and Ed Manners.

4. WEEKEND AT BARREN GROUND NATURE RESERVE 7/8TH NOVEMBER.

We did not achieve the tally of bird species seen on previous visits (H.B.O.C. has the honour of having recorded the greatest number of species seen in the Reserve), but a weekend spent at Barren Ground is a rewarding experience. Why 13 people spent hours trudging through wet, soggy heath in hopes of seeing the elusive Ground Parrot, and stood around in the chilly dusk listening for its tiny, almost inaudible call, only dedicated Bird Observers could explain! The Bristlebird was much more co-operative. After giving us his

early morning recital of melodious song, he hopped out onto the path in full view. As usual, Pat & Richard Jordan looked after us well, and judging from the merriment around the dinner table on Saturday night, 'a good time was had by all'. -- R.P.

5. FIELD DAY AT WARKWORTH SUNDAY 6TH DECEMBER.

Thirteen members including first timer Deborah Perry, spent an enjoyable morning in the area. While the object of our search, the Painted Honeyeater, did not make an appearance, we were delighted with excellent views of five Glossy Black Cockatoos, several pairs of Scarlet Honeyeaters and many Mistletoebirds, one with nest and young. Altogether 59 species were recorded.

-- Kay Imrie.

6. ANSWERS TO BIRD COMPETITION:

1. Sandpiper	18. Martin	35. Mistletoebird
2. Muttonbird	19. Toucan	36. Falcon
3. Tern	20. Partridge	37. Crane
4. Brolga	21. Kingfisher	38. Skylark
5. Lyrebird	22. Crow	39. Grouse
6. Noisy Friarbird	23. Robin	40. Heron
7. Magpie	24. Stork	41. Bishop(bird)
8. Bustard	25. Swallow	42. Blue Bonnet
9. Bellbird	26. Cockatoo	43. Bristlebird
10. Warbler	27. Albatross	44. Turkey
11. Whipbird	28. Wren	45. Butcherbird
12. Parrot	29. Sparrow	46. Chat
13. Honeyeater	30. Eagle	47. Dollarbird
14. Turtledoves	31. Nightingale	48. Chowchilla
15. Quail	32. Riflebird	49. Firetail
16. Cicadabird	33. Pitta	50. Frigatebird
17. Duck	34. Peacock	

7. COMING EVENTS:

SUNDAY 24TH JANUARY

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

SUNDAY 21ST FEBRUARY

FIELD DAY TO SOMERSBY.  
MEET: Charlestown Square, lowest parking area.  
TIME: 6 a.m.  
CONTACT: Diane Rogers 761686.

SUNDAY 20TH MARCH

FIELD DAY TO SWANSEA SOUTH.  
MEET: Swansea Park  
TIME: 7 a.m.  
CONTACT: Rosemary Waymark 751819

WEDNESDAY 3RD FEBRUARY

COMMITTEE MEETING at Garden Suburb P.C.  
5.30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 10TH FEBRUARY

CLUBNIGHT and ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.  
Shortland Wetlands Centre 7.30 p.m.  
Feature: Gary Weber, photographer.