

# Hunter Bird Observers Club



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## 1. NOTES FROM MAY MEETING.

a) ATTENDANCE: 44. Welcome to visitors Gaynor Pike and children, Jenny Hanson, Anne Feighan, and to first club-nighter Neil Granter.

b) BIRD CALL presented by Graham O'Connor. One of the calls of the Scarlet Honeyeater had most of us puzzled. Graham played the intermittent squeak this colourful bird utters, often during the midday heat of summer.

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING presented by Fay Heading. The Tawny Frogmouth (Podargus strigoides) is commonly called Mopoke or Morepork in the mistaken belief that it makes the familiar 'mopoke' call. This is not so, as its voice is a deep low 'oom-oom-oom' repeated. It also hisses when frightened or aggressive, showing its large yellow gape. This very large night bird becomes active at dusk, but during the day sits motionless, well camouflaged against the grey tree trunks. We were shown parts of a skin of a road-killed bird, a good way of learning the plumage colouring. Fay has observed a group of six Tawny Frogmouths, all within a radius of 6 ft., quite near a popular picnic spot, and all but invisible.

d) MAIN FEATURE: Talk and Slides by Graham Brown.

Graham was this year's winner of a Churchill Scholarship, which enabled him to travel overseas to further his knowledge of birds and wetlands management. Tonight we saw some of the places he visited, which included Minnesota and Wisconsin in U.S.A., London, Slimbridge, Wales and Scotland in U.K., France and Jersey. Worth noting is that the International Wildlife Laboratory at Wisconsin has a yearly budget of \$21M.(U.S.), all financed by hunters, and the Crane Foundation costs \$500,000 yearly and is privately funded. We saw the enormous number of waterfowl which take refuge on the Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust's: 900 acres, and a farm on Solway Firth which is the winter refuge for thousands of waterbirds from northern Europe. Graham found that research on Cattle Egrets in southern France's marshlands has had similar results to that being carried out here at Shortland Wetlands.

e) OBSERVATIONS: A flock of 60 Little Penguins were seen on Redhead Beach, two pairs of Crested Hawks at Eleebana, and a variety of raptors observed in the vicinity of Garden Suburb. Members are reminded to note their observations in the Record Books provided (see Wilma Barden).

## 2. FIELD DAY TO CLARENCETOWN.

Sunday 23rd May was a perfect day for the outing to John and Leonie Storm's property at Clarencetown, and the 23 members who attended were rewarded with many delightful sightings. Highlights included a Satin Bowerbird's bower, a Scarlet Robin flitting in the forest, a Boobook Owl who thought he was hidden, and Speckled Warblers, a first for some members.

After morning tea we crossed to an adjoining property and followed the creek which runs to the Williams River. This part of the outing was most rewarding as we saw two Azure Kingfishers, one of which was swooping in the water for food. The thrill of the day was the sighting of two Tawny Frogmouths, easily visible in poplar trees which had shed most of their leaves. This part of the day also yielded the distant sighting of Wedgetail Eagles and a Whistling Kite, making a total of 57 species for the morning.

On the way home we stopped at Seaham Swamp, where a Swamp Harrier was hovering over the usual collection of water birds, and a flock of Grey-crowned Babblers were frolicking on the other side of the road. At Irrawang Swamp we added two Black-shouldered Kites, Shovellers and flocks of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins to our list - 86 for the day.

Many thanks to John and Leonie for their hospitality - they even provided maps and interviewed neighbours to make sure we were not trespassing - and also to Alan and Kay for setting up telescopes at Seaham. A really enjoyable day.

-- Eva Seale and Milton Booth.

## 3. BIRDING IN HOBART.

Prior to my sailing adventure from Hobart to Newcastle, I spent three days exploring the city, walking many miles. In Sandy Bay I found my first Kelp Gulls, with many immatures, one immature Pacific Gull amongst them. There I met two local birdos who told me the University grounds would be a good place to visit and it was within easy walking distance from Battery Point, where I was staying. Further around the bay were many New Holland Honeyeaters and a few Crescent Honeyeaters feeding on native shrubs.

The next day I walked to the University and soon after entering the grounds I found my first Yellow Wattlebirds - the largest and most impressive Honeyeater, with its long pendulous yellow/orange neck wattles. It is also very noisy, the call described as raucous gurgling or inelegantly likened to coughing and vomiting. They were feeding with Little Wattlebirds. I followed the road beside a steep and wide gully and soon found numbers of Strong-billed and Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, so within about an hour I had good sightings of three of the four honeyeaters only found in Tasmania, King Island and Flinders Island. In the same area I found a Beautiful Firetail (another first), also Tasmanian form of the Brown Thornbill, Grey Fantail, Golden Whistler, female Pink Robin and a Scarlet Robin.

In the afternoon I took a 2-hour harbour cruise and saw all four Cormorants, the Black-faced Shag I had not seen before. I had thought the Botanical Gardens would produce some interesting birds, but I only saw a few New Holland Honeyeaters, one having a lovely time in the Fuchsia House, Blackbirds and Sparrows. I found Spotted Pardalotes and (I think) a Brown Goshawk in a small park in Battery Point. In all, about 30 species found just

wandering around Hobart. Sea birds seen after leaving Hobart were Wandering Albatross, many Shearwaters and Pacific Gulls. Unfortunately, when I saw my first Albatross I was in the process of finding my sea-legs and sounding something like a Yellow Wattlebird!

-- Rosemary Waymark.

4. BIRDSONG MYSTERY SOLVED.

For four days I'd been puzzled by the sounds wafting from a neighbour's garden. First to grab my attention was the sound of a Regent Honeyeater coming in intermittent bursts on the morning and evening air. No sign of the culprit could I spy, in spite of long spells of waiting and scanning with the binnoculars. There it was again right after lunch this afternoon. It was fascinating! To-day's concert included short bursts of Noisy Friarbird, some Grey Butcherbird, interspersed with Fig-bird, Eastern Rosella, Common Myna, and the occasional Australian Magpie. Not a full-throated performance, but a sub-song, and always beautifully melodious. Then I found the virtuoso! An immature Grey Butcherbird - head thrown back, and obviously enjoying himself immensely. His mimicry was excellent.

-- Sue Hamonet (23/2/88)

5. COMING EVENTS.

QUEENS BIRTHDAY WEEKEND  
CAMP 11-12-13TH JUNE

MUNGHORN GAP NATURE RESERVE.,  
CONTACT & DETAILS: Sue Hamonet 581023.

SUNDAY 19TH JUNE

FIELD DAY TO TOMAGO.  
MEET: McDonalds Hexham  
TIME: 7 a.m.  
CONTACT: Alan Stuart 528569

SUNDAY 24TH JULY

FIELD DAY TO MORPETH, BOLWARRA,  
WALKA WATER WORKS.  
MEET: McDonalds Hexham.  
TIME: 7 a.m.  
CONTACT: Kay Imrie 524524.

WEDNESDAY 13TH JULY

CLUBNIGHT AT SHORTLAND WETLANDS CENTRE  
TIME: 7.30. Programme two videos:  
'Birds of the Sun God' and 'Inflight  
Movie'.

WEEKDAY OUTINGS:

THURSDAY 16TH JUNE

Shortland Wetlands Centre 8.30 a.m.

MONDAY 27TH JUNE

Rutherford to Cessnock. Meet S.W.C.  
8.30 a.m.

MONDAY 25th JULY

Dora Creek. Meet Shopping Centre  
8.30 a.m.

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