



NEWSLETTER NO. 6/88 JULY 1988  
**Hunter Bird Observers Club**

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1. NOTES FROM JUNE MEETING.

a) ATTENDANCE: 31; apologies from the Rogers, Seales, Imries, and Auriol Royds.

b) BIRD CALL presented by Bevan McGregor: The White-winged Triller is distributed throughout Australia, but it seems to favour dry country. Its territorial song, especially in Spring, is loud and clear, described as 'deet-deet-deet-dip-dip-dip', uttered frequently.

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING presented by Graham O'Connor: The Double-barred Finch (Poephila bichenovii) is a neat owl-faced finch, identified by two narrow black bands above and below its white underparts, and black and white spotted wings. Double-bars live in close-knit communities, sometimes in pairs, and one often first hears the soft calls of the flock before they are seen. Their habitat is in woodlands, along watercourses, in parks and cleared areas, and along roadsides where there is long grass, as their diet is grass and plant seeds. These attractive little birds were once plentiful around Wallsend and Beresfield, but trapping and close settlement have caused their demise; one must travel farther afield to find them.

d) OBSERVATIONS: Sea-eagles at Toronto and the University, Spangled Drongo at Edgeworth, and 9 Grass Whistle-ducks at Shortland Wetlands.

e) MAIN FEATURE - RAPTOR STUDY NIGHT. This completed our study of diurnal birds of prey of the Accipitridae Family, the first part of which was given at Clubnight last June. Sue Hamonet started by explaining the nomenclature of birds of this family, and Rosemary Waymark began the survey with commentary and slides on the Brown Goshawk and Collared Sparrowhawk. Next, the Grey and Red Goshawks were presented by Wilma Barden; Sue gave a dissertation on the Sea-eagle and Wedge-tailed Eagle, and Ruth Parker finished the overview with a few remarks and slides on Spotted and Marsh Harriers. The study sheets handed out will help identify these eight birds of prey when seen in the field.

f) SLIDES WANTED. Roger Heading has made a list of bird species we do not have in our Slide Library. Have you any slides which will help fill out our collection?

g) The Club is considering having a 15 minute segment on 2 NUR FM to publicise Club events, observations, bird calls, bird of the month etc. A pre-requisite for this programme

presenter is a 9-week 4-hourly course. More details from Jim Perry.

h) N.S.W. STATE WETLANDS POLICY. The Shortlands Wetlands Centre has been engaged by the Dept. of Water Resources and Sydney Water Board to carry out work associated with the preparation of a State Wetlands Policy, and the Director is seeking the Club's help in gathering information. If you have knowledge of any significant wetland and think you may be able to supply even the smallest bit of information, you are asked to complete a questionnaire and return it to the Shortland Wetlands Centre by the end of July. See Wilma Barden or Kate Boyd at the Wetlands Centre for further details.

Another survey, separate to that outlined above, is being launched by the Bird Observers Club of Victoria. This will be a 5-year study on the bird population of a particular wetland of your choice. Observers will be required to count the birds on their chosen wetland four times a year - early February, late March, mid-June and mid-October. Those living near a wetland would be ideally situated to help with this important survey. If interested, please contact Wilma.

2. BOOK REVIEW: 'Where to find Birds in Australia' by John Bransbury.

This book is intended as a guide for travellers. Though not a book of identification, it is recommended that it be used in conjunction with Pizzey's or Slater's Field Guides.

Each State or Territory is dealt with and in turn each chapter deals with different regions in that State. Capital city areas are well covered but only certain sections in each State receive the same treatment. In this region we may find ourselves wondering loudly at the omission of Kooragang Island - acknowledged widely as the prime Wader-viewing area in N.S.W.

Details are given of road conditions, accommodation, camping, petrol supplies, etc., as well as some of the birds likely to be found in the particular locality. Intending travellers would find this book of considerable use, provided the planned route encompassed the areas covered by the author. This book can cut down the "searching time" and give some local knowledge that is invaluable when travelling.

The size of the book is 21 cms. x 13.5 cms. with 539 pages. The retail price is \$35, but members may obtain a copy for \$28 - see Rosemary Waymark for details.

Through the generosity of the publisher, Century Hutchinson, a complimentary copy resides in the Club library.

-- E.L.

3. WEEKEND CAMP AT MUNGHORN GAP.

Whether republican or royalist, there is one thing for which we can all thank Her Majesty: Queen's Birthday weekend. Seventeen club members celebrated by camping under the magnificent old peppercorn tree at Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve.

The reserve is situated some thirty-five kilometres east of Mudgee, on the crest of the Great Divide, and comprises some open grassy fields surrounded by lightly timbered ridges, through which run more densely vegetated gullies. This varied habitat, combined with a location on the junction of the Bassian (coastal)

and Eyreian (inland) avifaunal subregions leads to a large and diverse bird population.

Within minutes of arriving, it was obvious that the weekend should provide good birding as the camp site abounded with New Holland Honeyeaters and Hooded Robins. After a few light showers on the Friday evening, the days were mercifully fine and sunny. The nights, on the other hand, were decidedly chilly, making the campfire efforts of James and Graham O'Connor even more appreciated.

Highlights of the weekend's birding included sightings of Flame and Scarlet Robins, Turquoise Parrots, Origmas (Rock Warblers), and the aptly named Diamond Firetails. A feature of the bird population was the large number of honeyeaters present, at least 14 of the species were sighted, including Striped Honeyeaters and Red Wattlebirds. Whilst some were lucky enough to get a fleeting glimpse of a Superb Lyrebird, others had to be content with seeing their nests, stuck up on rock ledges and in small caves. All were entertained by their song and mimicry.

Total bird count for the camp was 92<sup>017</sup> species seen and 2 heard. This was quite good considering the shortness of the days and the absence of the migratory species. Notable omissions were most of the raptors, although many were seen on the trip back. Those who stopped for lunch at Cox's Gap on the way home were entertained by the song of the soprano of the bird world, and a short search was rewarded by views of Scarlet Honeyeaters high in the foliage. This rounded off a very enjoyable weekend, spoiled only by the sound of gunfire on the Sunday night, and the discovery of dead kangaroos the next morning.

-- Paul Osborn.

#### 4. FIELD DAY AT TOMAGO.

The June outing was held at the Hunter District Water Board property at Tomago, and eighteen members attended.

The weather at first was very cold, but birdwatchers generally take such slight inconveniences in their stride. What we could have done without, however, was the gusty North-Westerly gale which was quite inescapable.

The site consists of a vast area of practically untouched woodland with mainly Paperbark, Eucalypts and Banksia species. There is permanent water in the form of filtration ponds, slurry dams etc., and following the unusually wet conditions of the past month or so, large areas of wetland have been created by the very high water-table.

Some blossom was evident on Eucalypts and this was attracting attention from Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets. In the mainly bracken fern understorey we found several small Passerine species, while Honeyeaters squabbled over the few remaining blossoms on the Banksias. Newer members were pleased to have good views of Varied Sittellas, busily working over the Melaleucas in one of the more sheltered spots. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew over to check out the intruders.

Overall list of 57 species, plus 3 heard, was perhaps a little disappointing for the day, but reflects the time of year and the most unfavourable weather conditions prevailing. All agreed that another visit would be desirable, in Spring or Summertime.

Our thanks are due to Rowley Smith for arranging access to this lovely area, and also for the guided tour of the Water Treatment Plant, which we found most instructive.

Sue Hamonet.

5. COMING EVENTS:

SUNDAY 24TH JULY

FIELD DAY TO MORPETH, BOLWARRA & WALKA  
WATER WORKS.

MEET: McDonalds, Hexham.

TIME: 7 a.m.

CONTACT: Kay Imrie 524524

SUNDAY 21ST AUGUST

FIELD DAY TO GIRVAN & STROUD.

MEET: McDonalds, Hexham

TIME: 7 a.m.

CONTACT: Sue Hamonet 581023.

WEDNESDAY 8TH AUGUST

CLUBNIGHT at Shortland Wetlands Centre

TIME: 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME: Slides & talk by  
Arthur Williams.

WEEKDAY OUTHINGS:

MONDAY 25TH JULY

Dora Creek. Meet Shopping Centre  
8.30 a.m.

MONDAY 22nd AUGUST

Mt. Vincent. Meet Mt. Sugarloaf 8 a.m.

MONDAY 19th SEPTEMBER

Quarrybolong. Meet Crossroads 7.30 a.m.

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