

Hunter Bird Observers Club



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1. NOTES FROM SEPTEMBER MEETING.

a) ATTENDANCE: 34. In the absence of the President, Wilma Barden chaired the meeting.

b) BIRD CALL presented by Fay Heading: Bar-Shouldered Dove. This prettily marked dove is common in the Hunter Valley, having adapted well to human settlement in agricultural areas. They feed entirely on the ground and when disturbed fly away rapidly. Their call is a high pitched melodious "kook-a-wook", also an emphatic "hook, coo! hook, coo!".

c) BIRD OF THE EVENING presented by Kay Imrie: White-faced Robin.

The yellow robins are among the first birds to call in the morning and the last to call at night. This fact was recognised in their genus Eopsaltria from the Greek 'eos' meaning dawn and 'psaltria' meaning harper. While early texts called the White-faced Robin Eopsaltria Leucops, it has recently been given an intermediate status between the genus Eopsaltria (which includes Eastern Yellow Robin) and the genus Poecilodryas (which includes the White-browed Robin). It is now known as Tregallasia Leucops after one T.H. Tregallas, an early Victorian bird lover (1864-1938), and from the Greek 'leucos' - white and 'ops' - face.

The White-faced Robin is found in the northern part of Cape York Peninsula and in New Guinea, in tropical lowland rainforest and vine scrub. The bird is a little smaller than the familiar Eastern Yellow Robin and is easily recognisable by its pure white facial disc split vertically in half by a thin black line. One writer has likened it to a Giant Panda because of its very black boot-button eyes sparkling in its white face. Others have labelled it "C.I.A. bird" because of its habit of silently appearing clinging to a tree trunk and closely scrutinising the observer. It also reminded one of the cartoon character "Felix the Cat."

d) OBSERVATIONS included Crimson Rosellas at New Lambton looking for nesting holes, Brush Turkey in Sugarloaf area, Spotted Quail-thrush at Booragul. Don't forget to note any unusual sightings in the Observation Book.

e) MAIN FEATURE: Video "The Kingdom of the Lyrebird" presented by Peter McLauchlan.

This remarkable video was photographed in Victoria. A year in the life of Superb Lyrebirds in a remote forest is shown, culminating in the elaborate mating dance. The male bird's repertoire of its own and mimicked calls was truly amazing, and the (human) commentary and photography sensitively presented.

2. FIELD DAY to MARTINS CREEK SUNDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER.

It was a warm and very clear day when 10 Club members met Brian Hare at his property at Martin's Creek. We spent an hour or two exploring here, but Brian first took us to two places of special interest. The first was the bower of a Satin Bowerbird, easy to spot in the undergrowth because of its collection of bright blue trinkets. We managed to catch a glimpse only of the male bird but saw and heard several females in the trees nearby. We wondered if the slightly off-beat call of what we took to be a Whipbird at first, may have been the Bowerbird's effort at mimicry. The second special feature was the beautifully crafted nest of the White-winged Chough - smooth as though turned on a potter's wheel. We saw the scrawny necks and wide red mouths of three young pop us each time an adult arrived with food. In fact there was a great deal of activity around the nest, as often several members of the community arrived together with their offerings.

Altogether about 45 species were counted on Brian's property. The White-throated Treecreepers were extremely active and vocal and we enjoyed the flashes of colour provided by Mistletoebirds, Scarlet Honeyeaters, Superb Blue and Variegated Wrens and King Parrots. We repaired to Paterson Park for a cup of morning tea and here we saw numbers of Scaly-breasted Lorikeets and Eastern Rosellas and were entertained by the song of the White-throated Warblers.

Thanks again to Brian, we had permission to explore a property in the hills along Webber's Creek Road. Here we watched a pair of Rufous Whistlers, the male displaying the see-saw posturing of courtship. As the day grew warm we had lunch in a shady spot from where we could clearly see the city of Newcastle in the distance. A Red Wattlebird kept us company. The bush became very silent after noon, except for the calls of the energetic and ubiquitous Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. We thought the count of 65 species was a good total, considering it didn't include the usual count of water birds - no swamps, rivers, or seashores!

-- Barbara Bean.

3. COMING EVENTS.

SUNDAY 23RD OCTOBER

FIELD DAY TO COORANBONG.
MEET: Coles Car Park, Toronto
TIME: 6.30 a.m.
CONTACT: Paul Osborn 781151.

19/20TH NOVEMBER

CAMP AT FERNDALDE NEAR CHICHESTER DAM.
CONTACT & DETAILS: Kay Imrie 524524.

SUNDAY 20TH NOVEMBER

Day visitors to Campsite above.
MEET: McDonalds Hexham
TIME: 6.30 a.m.
CONTACT: Alan Stuart 528569.

SUNDAY 30TH OCTOBER

ERECTION OF BI-CENTENNIAL SIGNS.
MORPETH COMMON 10 A.M. (Bring picnic lunch).
WALKA WATERWORKS 12 NOON.

SUNDAY 11TH DECEMBER

FIELD DAY TO KOORAGANG ISLAND.
MEET 6.30 A.M. on " " side of
Toule St. Bridge & wait at first sign
on left. Contact: Kay Imrie 524524.

WEDNESDAY 9TH NOVEMBER

CLUBNIGHT AT SHORTLAND WETLANDS
CENTRE 7.30 P.M.