



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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1. NOTES FROM APRIL MEETING:

a) ATTENDANCE: 32. Apologies from the Rogers, Knights, Roger Heading, Alan Stuart, Stan Conn and Ruth Parker.

b) OBSERVATIONS: Noisy Pitta in the Watagans, Large numbers of Topknot and other Pigeons in Ravensbourne National Park, Grey Goshawks at Garden Suburb and a Crested Shrike Tit (first record) at the Shortland Wetlands Centre. An Australian Bittern was heard at the Wetlands, and a yellow (note lower case 'y') Silvereye has been seen in the region. Little Corellas have shown up at Cooranbong and Dora Creek and Alan Richardson was lucky enough to see a Rufous Bristlebird 'just hopping along beside the car' near Port Campbell, Vic. Some unusual behaviour was reported for a flock of about 200 Welcome Swallows seemingly constrained to fly within a rectangular prism of 50m by 20m for 10 minutes or so before suddenly stopping to perch beneath a bridge. Crested Pigeons were seen taking a shower, not forgetting to wash under the arms. Members have been advised to keep a lookout for Tawny Frogmouths which should find the recent outbreak of lawn-devouring army grubs (the larvae of a small grey moth) to their liking.

c) BIRD CALL: Jeanette Stephenson stumped most of us with a recording of the call of Bourke's Parrot (*Neophema bourkii*). This inhabitant of inland mulga areas has a pleasant trilling call, not unlike parts of the song of the Willie Wagtail. It is a bird which can be heard calling from as early as 4 O'Clock in the morning, in suitable habitat.

d) BIRD OF THE EVENING: Jim Perry related to the members present his experiences with the Paradise Riflebird (*Ptiloris paradiseus*), an inhabitant of highland rainforest and nearby eucalypt forest, from the Bunyah Mountains (Qld.) to the Barrington Tops area. Jim has seen them between Warwick and Brisbane and recently in the Ravensbourne National Park. They can also be seen at the popular O'Reilly's in Lamington National Park. The male is about 28cm long and is mostly black with an iridescent green and purple crown and throat. The female is brown above with a broad whitish eyebrow and a buff-white throat. The female is distinguished from the Victoria Riflebird by profuse brownish black chevrons on her underparts. The long curved bill of this species sometimes can lead observers into thinking they are seeing a honeyeater. The male performs a spectacular courtship display on a horizontal limb, during which his wings are drawn together and held open above his head. This bird has the peculiar habit of decorating its nest with dried snakeskins. It subsists on berries, fruit, spiders, insects and their larvae and has been likened to a cross between a Crested Shrike Tit and a Treecreeper in the manner of its foraging. It possesses a raucous call which can sometimes be difficult to use for location purposes. The bird is more frequently seen in the northern part of its range but can nowhere be considered common.

e) Bring and Buy Sale: A Bring and Buy Sale will be held at the June meeting to raise money to support the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation's drive to rid our National Parks of feral cats, a bird's number one enemy. Since 1880, when the NSW government tried to control the rabbit plague by setting cats loose in the bush, the number of feral cats has grown alarmingly. A ranger recently removed 2492 from the Royal National Park in just eighteen months, about four a day! So bring along something suitable for sale and help combat the feral peril; and, bring your money with you.

f) WINE: The Shortland Wetlands Centre has for sale some wine bottled under its own label. Two varieties are available; the white is a Verdelho/Semillon and the red a Syrah (Shiraz). Both vintaged at Tulloch's in The Hunter Valley. \$8.50 a bottle or \$96 a dozen.

g) NZ 1990: If you are planning a trip across the Tasman then 1990 is the year to go. The 20th International Ornithological Congress is being held in Christchurch in December and also an ICBP world congress is to be held in New Zealand next year.

h) GALAPAGOS ISLANDS: The Dept. of Biological Sciences from the University of Newcastle is running an excursion to the Galapagos Islands next January and February. Participants will travel about on yachts with 10-12 people per ship accompanied by a wildlife expert. One time HBOC president, Fred van Gessel is going on this trip which includes a four day side excursion to the Amazon jungle. Cost is just \$7,000 per person. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Charles Darwin. See what's left of the Amazon before it's all cut down and tour the Galapagos' before they sink beneath the rising seas.

i) MAIN FEATURE - Bill Worrada: Bill was an early member of our club and came along to show us the photographic style that earned him a prize at the recent Muswellbrook Photographic Competition. Bill showed us some good slides of some familiar local birds at the nest, interspersed with some shots of orchids and other wildflowers taken on

a recent trip to W.A. It was the photos of western birds, however, which drew the most enthusiastic response. Bill's shots of Crimson and Orange Chats and numerous parrots taken on a small (105,000 acre) property near Willcannia were well received but those of the White Winged Wren and an Inland Dotterel proved to be the highlights. Thank you Bill for an entertaining show.

2. FIELD DAY TO POKOLBIN, SUNDAY 23rd APRIL: Rain was pouring down when we met in Cessnock early Sunday morning. "Maybe it will clear" we decided hopefully, and sure enough a splendid rainbow arched across the western sky as we drove towards Pokolbin, although clouds to the east looked ominous. As we entered the State Forest via Chateau Francois Winery, the first thrill of the day was the sight of a small nest of grass and bark suspended about 2 metres from the ground from which, as we watched, darted a tiny bird. Yellow Thornbill? But we couldn't get another sighting. Arthur Williams - where were you! We needed your nest knowledge.

The damp bush was full of bird calls. Yellow-tufted and White-eared Honeyeaters darted through treetop blossom, and flocks of 30-40 Noisy Friarbirds flew overhead. Down came the rain again, a short shower. Emerging into cleared paddocks, there were exclamations of delight when we saw a pair of Scarlet Robins beautifully posed on a fencepost, the female being particularly well coloured. Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Double-barred Finches hopping around made a perfect picture.

Our wanderings after this bonanza yielded few birds, and when rain started to pelt down a bedraggled band of birdwatchers sloped back to base. Some abandoned the day altogether, but some lingered by Pokolbin Lake. A first sighting of Musk Ducks for visitor Tom Clarke was gratifying, and other inhabitants of shoreline and water added to the list of 22 non-passerines and 28 passerines seen during a morning not ideally suited to birdwatching. Of the original nine starters, four ended up at Allandale Hospital's spacious grounds for lunch, thanks to Fay Thomson, under shelter. Ruth Parker.

3. NEW MEMBERS: A warm welcome to Barbara Kelly and Eric Parker who have both recently joined the club.

4. REGENT HONEYEATERS: We have received a request from the National Parks and Wildlife Service for information on Regent Honeyeaters. A study of these birds has been going on for 12 months, during which, only 81 birds were located in 20 places in all of NSW and Vic. The study has been extended for a further year and anyone who sights any individuals of this probably endangered species is asked to ring the Regent Honeyeater Hotline on : (058)-812201 (Rick Webster) or Alan Morris on (043)-244911 (work) or (043)891390 (home).

5. REED WARBLERS: We have also received a request for volunteers to assist in a nationwide programme of study on Reed Warblers, being undertaken under the auspices of the RAOU. If you are interested in either observing or banding these birds, please contact Bob Reed at the Shortland Wetlands Centre, PO Box 130, Wallsend, 2287.

6. COMING EVENTS

Weekend 20/21 MAY

WATAGANS CAMP
Details and contact :
Kay Imrie 524524

Sunday 21st May

Field outing to WATAGANS
MEET : Cole's car park, Toronto
TIME : 6.30 AM
CONTACT : Alan Stuart 528569

Weekend 10-12 JUNE
(with Manning Valley Birdos)

TAREE AREA CAMP
Details and contact :
Kay Imrie 524524

Sunday 25th JUNE

Field Outing Walka/Bolwarra/Morpeth
MEET : 7 AM, M^CDonalds, Hexham
CONTACT : Peter M^CLauchlan 333224

Wednesday 14th June

Clubnight, Shortland Wetlands Cntr.
7.30 PM

Sunday 23rd July

Field Outing Kincumber/Lisarow
MEET : a) 7 AM, Charlestown Library
carpark
b) 7.15, Freemans Waterholes
CONTACT : Jim Perry, 43 2496