



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

President: Peter M^CLauchlan
 Secretary: Rosemary Waymark
 Correspondence: P.O. Box 24 New Lambton 2305
 Telephone enquiries: Alan Stuart 528569
 Newsletter Editor: Paul Osborn 781151
 P.O. Box 83 Jesmond 2299

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1. NOTES FROM MAY MEETING:

a) ATTENDANCE: 37. Apologies from Jim Perry, Barbara and Garry Bean.

b) OBSERVATIONS: A Cockatiel (escapee ?) was seen at Eraring; Little Corellas reported again, this time at the Wetlands Centre; a flock of about 150 Topknot Pigeons was seen at Lisarow. Striated Thornbills were observed bathing in a pool of water trapped in a tree hollow high above the ground.

c) BIRD CALL: Once again most of the members present were stumped by the evening's bird call. On this occasion, Fay Thomson presented one of the calls of the White-browed Scubwren (*Sericornis frontalis*). Although this is a familiar bird to most of us, the call was one of its more musical songs and not the more easily recognised chatter with which most would associate the bird.

d) SCIENTIFIC NAMES: In place of the usual Bird of the Evening we had a discourse on scientific naming from Ed Hamonet. This binominal system, which has been universally adopted by life scientists throughout the world, was devised by a Swedish naturalist, Carl Linne in 1758. As the system uses mostly Latin words for the names, we Latinise the gentleman's name and refer to him as Linnaeus. Every species of living thing on the planet is given a unique name consisting of two parts; the first portion is the generic name and the second the specific name. Groups of closely related species are placed together in a genus, for instance *Falco* is the genus to which all the world's Falcons belong. The honour of naming a newly discovered species is given to the first person to formally describe the bird and very often, for Australian birds, that honour went to one of the subjects of this meeting's main feature, John Gould. Ed went on to give some examples of the scientific names of some Australian birds and their meanings and indicated that the only currently available publication which lists these is Cayley's 'What Bird is That?'. HBOC Inc. members have the advantage of access to a comprehensive list of the meanings of the scientific names of Australian birds compiled by Ed Hamonet. This document is available for reference in the Club's library.

e) MAIN FEATURE: - John and Elizabeth Gould in the Hunter Region
 Guest speakers for the May meeting were Jill and Glenn Allbrecht who gave us a well prepared and well presented talk on the journey's of the world's best known ornithologist and his wife in Australia over one hundred and fifty years ago. Glenn is a past Secretary of the Hunter Wetland Trust and, together with Jill, helped mount the well received exhibition, 'A Paradise for Birds', in the Cultural Centre. Their talk particularly focussed on the Gould's activities in the Hunter region and gave us some enlightenment about the difficulties of travelling in the 19th century as well as having a local historical flavour. Their talk was illustrated with slides of Gould lithographs, many of the original illustrations coming from the hand of Elizabeth Gould herself, a competent artist and bird illustrator. The Newcastle City Library is the depository for many of these important lithographs. The presentation included descriptions of the flora and fauna of the Hunter Valley, and particularly, that occurring on the islands near the river's mouth at the time of Gould's visit. These extracts from Gould's writing made it very clear how much impact man has had on the environment and the subsequent effect on the numbers of bird species to be found here. Also evident from the talk was the difficulties Gould must have faced in studying birds without a field guide and without the advantage of modern optical equipment, two things we modern birdwatchers tend to take for granted.

2. WEEKEND CAMP AND FIELD OUTING - WATAGANS 20/21 MAY

The weather forecast of yet another wet weekend probably deterred some members from attending the Watagans Camp, held in the Gap Creek Reserve of the Olney State Forest. In the final count, approximately two members camped amongst the towering Eucalypts in the Bangalow Rd. camping area. This number was doubled when the day trippers arrived on Sunday morning, and a further two members plus child brought the grand total to seven by Sunday lunchtime.

Although most of this reserve is comprised of rainforest (with the emphasis on the rain), the majority of the birds sighted were in the adjoining (very) wet sclerophyll forest. Of greatest interest were the Rock Warblers, who gamely hopped about within two metres of the campers' tent at breakfast time, every morning. The sounds of Superb Lyrebirds reverberated throughout the area from early morning till after dark every day, and on one occasion we were treated to a view of a magnificent tail held quiveringly aloft amongst the undergrowth. The clear nights were full of the calls of Boobook Owls and Owlet Nightjars and one Tawny Frogmouth was caught in our spotlight. Some rather bloodthirsty screams were heard during the night (Barn Owls ?) but the owners could not be found. The campers felt safe, however, with a brushtail possum keeping guard from his sentry post on the tent roof.

The total number of species recorded was kept down to 39, four of them 'heard only', by the rain on the Saturday and the very low number of observers on the Sunday.

Irene Osborn

6. COMING EVENTS

Wednesday 14th June

Clubnight, Shortland Wetlands Cntr.
7.30 PM

Sunday 25th June

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

Wednesday 12th July

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

Wednesday 9th August

Clubnight, Shortland Wetlands Cntr.
7.30 PM

Sunday 20th August

Field Outing Allworth
MEET : 7 AM, M^CDonalds, Hexham
CONTACT : Peter M^CLauchlan 333224