



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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THE APRIL MEETING.

At the April Clubnight, held on Wednesday, 10th April, the Bird Call of the White-breasted Whistler was presented by Jim Imrie.

The Bird of the Evening, the Banded Lapwing, was presented by Peter Phillips.

The Main Feature was an illustrated talk by Bill Cambridge on his recent 10 week tour of Western Australia.

The President reported on the problems being experienced by golfers at the Shortland driving range with ravens stealing their golf balls.

The following observations were recorded:-

Diamond Dove at Woodberry - escapee?
 Rose Robin at New Lambton Heights.
 Striped Honeyeater at Speers Point and Teralba.
 Buff-banded Rail at Newcastle University.
 30 + Rufous Night-Herons at Beresfield.
 12 White-throated Needletails at Redhead Tip.
 Southern Black-backed Gull at Redhead Tip.
 8 King Parrots at Mayfield (immatures).
 3 Darters at Walka Water Works.
 Gull-billed Tern at Walka Water Works.
 Little Friarbird at Edgeworth.

4 young Darters reared at the Shortland Wetland Centre will soon be released at the Centre.

HBOC Library.

The latest addition to the library is a volume of the National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife.
 Honeyeaters and their Allies of Australia. Page 369 - Striated Pardalote was sponsored by Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc..

NEW MEMBERS.

We extend a very warm welcome to the following new members:-

Bridget Whitehead	Shortland.
Jenny Maynell	Ellalong.
Geraldine (Gerry) McCarthy	Balmain.
Brian and Charlotte Wiberley	Adamstown Heights.
Pam Durie	Coal Point.
Geoffrey and Debra Payne	Merewether.
John Grebert and Family	Redhead.
Douglas and Lorelle Biddle	Beresfield.
Henry and Terry Savella	Hamilton South.

EASTER CAMP 1991.

After a few attempts to attend a Widden Valley camp we finally got there and what a magnificent area we found. A warm start was followed by light rain when 33 members and friends (including 10 immatures and juveniles) camped by a dry Table Top Creek. Despite the dry conditions some creeks were still running others reduced to rather thick pools.

Mournful cries of Wood Ducks were heard during the night to be replaced by the various calls of the abundant White Winged Choughs along the creeks and the lilting tune of the Bell Miners up the steeper gullies. The flowers of the mistletoe attracted the many Eastern Spinebills in the valley. Male Robins were not in view although a few less colourful specimens were found.

Much enjoyable trekking and driving amongst the spectacular cliffs resulted in 108 species being recorded. Jeanettes persistence resulted in a sighting of a pair of Lyre Birds not far from the camp site.

I am sure all participants join us in thanking the Harrises for allowing us to invade their property and to Kay (for once speechless) for organising yet another enjoyable camp.

Was it a dream or did we see an artist at work in the moonlight at 4 one morning?

(Total of species recorded 111.)

Jim & Judy Cook.

Ball-crazy ravens oblivious to trickery face ultimate remedy

WHAT'S black and has thousands of white balls?

The answer is no joke for the Newcastle Golf Practice Centre which estimates it is losing about 500 golf balls a week because of a flock of scavenging Australian ravens.

With golf balls costing \$1 to \$1.50 each, the losses are a heavy burden for the operators of the Shortland driving range, Mr Rick Maclean and Mr Garry Barton.

So far no method has been found to discourage the feathered thieves since the range opened in January.

Balls have been painted with different colours. And coatings unpleasant to the crows have been tried.

The use of a trained dog has been considered, scarecrows have been set up and tapes of bird distress calls have been used.

Even full-blooded charges (with golf sticks raised) result in only a temporary relief from the constant flicking.

Late yesterday another option was revealed when a National Parks and Wildlife Service spokesman said the ravens were not protected, contrary to the beliefs of Mr Barton and many other golf course operators.

This makes the shooting or poisoning of the birds possible within guidelines set by the Newcastle City Council, the police and the NSW Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Evidence of the ball-snatching antics of the birds dot the landscape surrounding the range.

Mr Barton regularly hears golf balls rolling down the iron roofs of nearby factories. Children discover collections of about 10 balls under trees close to the range. Staff of the nearby Shortland Wetlands Centre find several balls around its grounds every day.

The writer of *The Newcastle Herald's* nature column, Professor Max Maddock, said the ravens (*corvus coronoides*) were commonly but incorrectly called crows.

He said the birds were scavengers and ate almost anything. This made the nearby Shortland dump a popular nesting place.

The ravens have been a minor problem to the colony of egrets which are breeding at the Wetlands centre. They steal eggs and attack the young in the nest and on the ground.

'It's one of the facts of nature that the raven is a scavenger and a predator,' Prof Maddock said. 'I don't find them particularly attractive because they are quite ruthless in killing the young.'

As to why they swoop on the golf balls, opinion is divided.

Professor Maddock feels the birds could be taking them because they resembled eggs.

Mr Barton was less charitable: 'It's obviously a game to them.'

— Stuart Washington

WHITE COCKATOOS.

The Club has received the following observation from Judy Adcock.

One or two flocks of White Cockatoos (approximately up to 50) fly northward over the University at about 8 a.m. and return southward in the late afternoon.

Possibly en route from the Blackbutt area to the Kooragang/Tomago/Grahamstown area.

Have any members also observed these flights or seen large flocks in the areas mentioned?

If so, please let us know.

1991 Birdathon.

The Committee is considering running another Birdathon. As last year with teams of 3 or 4, commencing the competition on a Saturday, late in October, to see which team can identify most birds in 24 hours. To be limited to the Hunter Valley and to members of the Club. Nominal fee to cover expenses and a small prize.

Would anyone interested please advise either Alan Stuart, 528569 or Peter Phillips, 516223.

Also any comments on how it should be run or any improvements on last year would be welcome.

In 1990 a fairly small group of members had a lot of fun but we want to see if there is a demand this year before we start to organise another Birdathon.

THE AUST. BIRD STUDY ASSOCIATION - FIELD OUTING

This years' field - camp outing will be held at Mootwingee National Park, situated approximately 120km north-east of Broken Hill, NSW. The camp is to be held from Sunday 29th September to Sunday 5th October, 1991.

Access to the camp is by dirt road from Broken Hill, the road to Mootwingee branching off the Silver City Highway to Tibooburra about 55km north of Broken Hill.

A central camping ground is available with water and toilets. Generators, chainsaws, firearms and domestic pets are not permitted. No food or fuel is available in the park; Broken Hill is the nearest place these items may be obtained.

Interstate visitors and banders are most welcome to join in the activities organised.

For further information and details please contact:

Fred van Gessel
1/ 38 Priestman Ave
UMINA, NSW 2257
Phone 043 - 431283 hme after 7.00 PM
02 - 5623151 wk



"For goodness sake will someone tweet or he'll be here all day."

THE MAY MEETING.

The May Clubnight was held on Wednesday, 8th. Alan Stuart presented the Regent Honeyeater for the Bird Call and Bird of the Evening, the Rainbow Bee-eater was presented by junior member, James O'Connor.

The Main Feature was a talk by Peter McLauchlan of a trip he and Margaret took to Mt. Isa and the Gulf country. Peter illustrated his talk with slides from the BOCA and HBOC slide libraries.

The following observations were recorded:-

Jabiru at Grahamstown Dam.
 Spangled Drongo at Newcastle Wetlands Reserve.
 Restless Flycatcher at Newcastle Wetlands Reserve.
 100's of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters migrating over Newcastle.
 Rose Robin at Garden Suburb and Rankin Park.
 Pair of Osprey at Teralba.
 Pair of Whistling Kite at Speers Point.
 Pair of Whistling Kite nesting at the Shortland Wetland Centre.
 King Parrots at Warners Bay.
 Striped Honeyeaters at Speers Point.
 Sooty Oystercatchers at Ocean Baths, Newcastle.
 Immature Satin Bowerbirds feeding on Banksia nectar at Rankin Park.
 6 Emu at Murrumbidgee Gap.
 2 N.Z. Paradise Ducks at Campbelltown.

After the meeting closed we celebrated the 15th Anniversary of the Club. Founder members present were Fred van Gessel, Wilma Barden, Tom Kendall, Ted and Rua Jones, Tom Douglass, Ted and Ilma Felton. A beautifully iced cake, made by Kay Marie, was cut by Wilma and Fred and we all enjoyed a supper enhanced by the birthday cake.

EASTER WITH THE BIRDS.

As this was my first Bird Camp I hesitantly joined 28 fellow campers on Thursday, 28th March, 1991, at Eddy Avenue, Sydney. Our two leaders, Norma Maxwell and Allan Richards soon put everyone at ease, so by the time we arrived at Mittagong for our evening meal we were one big happy family. To find our tents erected and the billy boiling on arrival at Wagga Wagga around midnight, was bliss.

The following morning, a pleasant drive to our base camp at "The Homestead" on the Sturt Highway, 25 kms. west of Darlington Point was easily accomplished, which enabled us to spend the afternoon exploring the banks of the Murrumbidgee River. After an early start on Saturday we picked up the local expert, John Brickhill and assistant and spent a rewarding and interesting day birding in the Cocoparra National Park. In addition to over 50 expected species the sighting of the Mallee Ringneck, Speckled Warbler, Mulga Parrot and White-browed Woodswallow were an added bonus. The hot showers and flushing toilets in the Shearers' Quarters revived us after our action packed day so that the evening was a time for much hilarity. The hours spent at Fivebough Swamp near Leeton, with local birdwatcher, Dr. Keith Hutton, was one of the many highlights of the camp. Telescopes were much in demand and we were kept extremely busy with over 50 species and extremely excited by the record count of 71 Freckled Duck. Our host generously gave up his Sunday afternoon to tramp with us across 6-8 kms. of his property. Not only did we add to our bird list but gained an insight into the local fauna and flora evolving over the last 40 odd years. During the hour before departure on Monday it was pure delight to wander, with binoculars at the ready, to the coach pick up point and realise that under the competent guidance of our two leaders and a keen group of birdos we had arrived at the rewarding total of 138 species.

Una Kennings.

Barbara Kelly's friend Una Kennings, a member of NSW FOC and CBOC, submitted the previous article, which I considered interesting to anyone contemplating a Bert Bolton tour or perhaps a bird watching tour for the first time. Editor.

Outing to Bulahdelah State Forest

21st April, 1991

Fifteen people in seven cars travelled north of Bulahdelah to an area immediately west of the O'Sullivan's Gap hill. Access was by Wang Wauk Forest Road which was entered just short of the hill.

Bird sightings were slow coming as we walked along the road. It was reasonably cool. About nine o'clock, the birds became more active. The best places were the picnic areas. Those which men have chosen as the best for meals, were obviously also in birds' favour. These were "Shorty's" Camp and the Trestle Bridge. Both had tracks and side roads which provided easier access and different habitat from those available along the main route. The Trestle Bridge formed part of a rail system which transported timber to Mayer's Point on Myall Lake, in earlier times.

Fifty two birds were observed. This was probably close to the total possible, considering that there were no water birds and that migrants had all left for the north. The vegetation was generally wet sclerophyll and had not dried out. Consequently, a Lyrebird was seen as were Pale Yellow Robin and Green Catbird. Overhead, Grey and Brown Goshawk, were heard and spotted. All of the Scrubwrens and Brown Warbler were readily accessible.

We stopped at O'Sullivan's Gap picnic area en route home. Its nature walk often yields bird "lovelies" such as the Logrunner and Scaly Thrush, but this time it was quiet...too many tourists? The venue for the outing was interesting and could well be used again in a future programme at a different time of the year.

Jim Imrie

Project Egret Watch

Volunteer observers are asked to record the date and time of the first arrivals of Cattle Egrets in their district, dates and times for sudden increases or decreases in numbers and date and time of the last departure as well as the colour, or colour combination and coding on any tags seen. They are also asked to keep a sharp lookout for spoonbills, ibis and pelicans carrying coloured wing tags and provide similar information about the tags. People who would like to register as regular observers are asked to notify the Wetlands Centre. The information should be sent to Project Egret Watch, the Wetlands Centre, Shortland, Box 130 Wallsend NSW 2287, Ph. 51 6466.

Co-ordinator Project Egret Watch, Seaham and Shortland Colonies

Contact

Associate Professor Max Maddock
The Wetlands Centre Shortland
PO Box 130, Wallsend 2287
Ph. (049) 21 5947 (direct line - work), 21 5906 (messages, work), 88 6128 (home).

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS?

Please notify the Secretary
so that Newsletters reach you
and not the dead letter office.

Outing to Martin's Creek - Hilldale19th May, 1991

Recent rain in Newcastle cast doubt on the outing eventuating. However, at Martin's Creek, the precipitation had been minimal. So despite drizzling rain at Hexham at 6.30 am, there were six starters. Two more joined at Paterson, and Brian Hare made nine at Martin's Creek.

The countryside was showing signs of stress. There were very few flowering trees and plants and consequently birds were in short supply. The home paddock yielded excellent views of Doube-barred Finches and Bar-shouldered Doves. The Chough family, usually a certainty, was away visiting. King Parrots and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos announced their presence with loud calls and perched well in view.

The theme for the day's birding turned out to be "BLACK and GOLD" not the grocery line but good numbers of Yellow Robins, Golden Whistlers, the Y-T B C's already mentioned, and a magnificent male Regent Bowerbird. Even with overcast skies, the Regent was beautiful. It flew out and back from a tree several times hawking for insects and putting on a fine exhibition.

At the Hilldale property, several honeyeaters were added to the list. The Peregrine Falcons seen last time were not evident, but an unidentified falcon stooped through the outer foliage of a eucalypt just as some Yellow-faced Honeyeaters arrived.

A farm dam nearby provided several water bird species. A most enjoyable day ended with 50 species recorded. Thanks Brian.

Kay Imrie

COMING EVENTS.Sunday, 23rd June.Field Outing:

Wetlands Day (Tour of the Swamps.)

Meet:

Shortland Wetland Centre. 8 a.m.

Contact:

Graeme O'Connor. 531304.

Wednesday, 10th July.Clubnight:

Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30 p.m.

Main Feature:

Audio Visual Programme - Parrots.

Sunday, 21st July.Field Outing:

Stockton/Fern Bay.

Meet:

Info. Sign Kooragang Is. 7.30 a.m.

Contact:

Jeanette Stephenson. 575255.

Wednesday, 14th August.Clubnight:

Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30 p.m.

Main Feature:

To be advised.

Weekend, 24th/25th August.Camp:

Sharpe's Creek, Gloucester Tops N.P.

Contact:

Kay Imrie. 524524.

Above information whilst as accurate as possible should be checked nearer to Field Days etc. with the contact person.

On Clubnights where newsletters are not issued an update of activities will be given by the Chairman.

PLEASE! More opinions of the pros and cons of feeding native birds. I will put together an article on the subject, so your views will be anonymous, unless you wish otherwise!

Deadline for your contributions to the newsletter - August/September - 24th July.

Apologies to the Treasurer for incorrectly spelling his name on various occasions in the previous newsletter. Editor.