

## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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President:

Peter McLauchlan

Secretary:

Peter Phillips

Newsletter Editor:

Rosemary Waymark

The aims of the Club are: To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat and to encourage bird observing as a leisure time activity.

The Annual General Meeting and Clubnight were held on the 12th February.

The following members were elected unopposed:-

President:	Peter McLauchlan.
Vice-President:	Sue Hamonet.
Hon. Secretary:	Peter Phillips.
Hon. Treasurer:	Alan Stuart.
Committee:	Marta Hamilton, Graeme O'Connor, Judith Smith and Jeanette Stephenson.

Other positions filled were:-

Activities Officer:	Graeme O'Connor.
Assistant Activities Officer:	Jeanette Stephenson.
Librarian:	Ed Hamonet.
Assistant Librarian:	Ruth Parker.
Slide Librarian:	Matthew Stephenson.
Audio/Video Librarian:	Peter McLauchlan.
Public Officer:	Peter Phillips.
Public Relations:	Alan Stuart.
Newsletter Editor:	Rosemary Waymark.
Assistant Newsletter Editor:	Barbara Kelly.
Newsletter Printer:	Alan Stuart.
Newsletter Distribution:	Jeanette Stephenson.
Conservation Officer:	John Moyse.
Atlas Recorder:	Matthew Stephenson.
FOC Recorder:	Sue Hamonet.
Suppers:	Jean Henderson/Judith Smith.
Assistants at Clubnights:	Judith Smith/Bridget Whitehead.

Messrs. Watson and Doherty were appointed Auditors.

### NEW MEMBERS.

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

Carre and George Southwell	Cooranbong.
Margaret and Keith Woods	Merewether Heights.

Clubnight activities followed the A.G.M.. Sue Hamonet presented the unusual call of an Immature Olive-backed Oriole, for Bird Call of the Evening and Kay Imrie gave an illustrated talk on the Tawny Frogmouth for Bird of the Evening. The Main Feature was presented by Peter McLauchlan who talked of the history and current activities of the HBOC.

Members were informed that there was soon to be more tree planting at the Shortland Wetland Centre and volunteers were requested.

The following observations were recorded:-

Plumed Whistling Ducks at Shortland Wetland Centre.  
 Marsh Crake at Shortland Wetland Centre.  
 Figbird at Belmont South.  
 Channel-billed Cuckoo at Edgeworth and Cardiff.  
 Pacific Baza at Newcastle University and Morisset.  
 Satin Bowerbird at Rathmines.  
 White-headed Pigeon at Dorriggo.  
 Red-crowned Pigeon at Dorriggo.  
 Paradise Riflebird (male and female) at Dorriggo.  
 Wedge-tailed Eagle at Shortland Wetland Centre.  
 Spectacled Monarch at Green Point.  
 Collared Sparrowhawk at Edgeworth.  
 Black-necked Stork at Cooranbong.  
 Pallid Cuckoo at Cooranbong.  
 Varied Sittella at Cooranbong.  
 Blue-faced Honeyeater at Edgeworth.  
 Channel-billed Cuckoo at Buttaba.  
 Dollarbird + 3 young at Buttaba.  
 Eastern Whipbird at Buttaba.  
 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo at Buttaba.  
 Mangrove Heron at Buttaba.  
 Scarlet Honeyeater at Wangi.  
 Brown-headed Honeyeater at Ellalong.  
 Yellow-tufted Honeyeater at Ellalong.  
 Tawny Frogmouth at Newcastle University.  
 Southern Boobook at Rankin Park.  
 Wedge-tailed Shearwater at Stockton Breakwater.  
 Shining Bronze-Cuckoo at Newcastle.

The Spectacled Monarch at Green Point is an interesting observation and follows an earlier sighting in December 1991 at Rankin Park. Have we been overlooking this species in the past?

The Wedge-tailed Shearwaters reported from the mouth of the Hunter River were in a large flock estimated to be 10,000 strong. The birds were feeding for hours on schools of small fish.

#### Newcastle Clean-up Day.

As announced at the meeting the Club's contribution would be to help at Stockton Bridge. On Sunday 1st March, 14 members helped clean-up the area east of the bridge. An estimated ton of varied rubbish was collected and many thanks go to John Moyse, he volunteered to be the coordinator and had to remain at his post until the truck arrived, the rest of us had left by lunchtime.

Editor.

#### Library Report.

Four books were purchased from the estate of the late Arnold McGill:

The Flight of the Snow Geese.  
 Birds of Prey.  
 The Young Specialist Looks at Birds.  
 Birds in Bass Strait.

In addition from the funds provided by the Mullard Family, Birds of the Night has been purchased and an order placed for a copy of Parrots and Pigeons, the cost of this book will be partly covered by the balance of the Mullard grant.

# ANNUAL REPORT

## FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1991

Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the HBOC Inc., Shortland Wetlands Centre, 12 February 1992

### President's Report

#### Introduction

Fellow Birdwatchers, I have much pleasure in welcoming you all and in presenting to you the Eleventh Annual Report of the Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. It will be tabled for members' perusal at this meeting.

In 1991 the Club celebrated its fifteenth anniversary. We were delighted to share a tasty birthday cake at the May Clubnight with 8 founding members. Unfortunately it was the same year that the Newcastle Flora and Fauna Protection Society was wound up. The HBOC began as a sub-group of the Society and remains as one of its most active offspring.

Nineteen Ninety One was also a year in which the Club strengthened its ties with other kindred organisations.

- In November, 5 delegates attended a weekend workshop organised by the newly formed RAOU Sydney Committee. This historic occasion involved the meeting of representatives from most major bird clubs in NSW and the ACT. The primary aim of the workshop was to discuss the possibility of the clubs collaborating with each other to promote and co-ordinate a common state-wide bird project. Subject to available funding, this will take the form of a survey to monitor the long term changes in waterbird populations in the wetlands of New South Wales.
- The NSW Rarities Committee was formed and two representatives from HBOC were invited to attend its first meeting. We wish Sue Hamonet and Wilma Barden well in the challenging task of authenticating rare sightings. Sue was also appointed Newcastle representative for the Victorian based Bird Observers Club of Australia.
- At the request of the Hunter U3A, the HBOC conducted a spring term course on Ornithology. We are most grateful to Marta Hamilton for acting as course organizer and volunteer tutor. This educational exercise provided an excellent opportunity for the Club to promote bird observing activities to the senior citizens in the community.

#### Clubnight Programs

Eleven regular monthly meetings were held during the year. The first, in February, included the Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers for 1991. Attendance at meetings averaged 34.3. By comparison in 1990 it was 31.3.

'Bird of the Evening' and 'Bird Call' continued as integral parts of the program and were supplemented on one occasion by a talk on scientific nomenclature. My thanks to all who contributed to these segments, for their willingness and the quality of their presentations.

Special thanks go to two guest speakers who visited the Club to give illustrated talks. In June, Walter Boles of the Australian Museum spoke on the *Riversleigh Fossil Finds*. In November, Allan Morris of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service gave an illustrated talk on the *Birds of Kakadu*.

Other main features during the year were presented by Club members or took the form of an audio-visual

presentation. Our thanks go to Bill Cambridge (*Birds of Western Australia*), Ann Hatton (*Birds of Thailand*), and Kay Imrie and her band of volunteers who conducted a *Wader Study Night*. Greg Little, a former club member, presented a selection of excellent wildlife slides and the President gave an illustrated talk on the *Birds of Mt. Isa and the Gulf Country*.

#### Newsletter

The Club's Newsletter was published six times in 1991 under a new bimonthly schedule. This resulted in giving the Editor and Assistant Editor the opportunity to produce a more informative publication. This consistently newsy product contains articles and notes of broad general interest and is testament to the efforts of Rosemary Waymark and Barbara Kelly. For the first time, members who do not attend activities now receive regular communications from the Club. The increased circulation has allowed some increases in advertising revenue.

Jeanette Stephenson should be thanked for organising its distribution and Alan Stuart for taking over the printing task from Bevan McGregor. Unfortunately Bevan was unable to continue this duty throughout the year and we thank him for his reliable effort during his term as printer. Thanks too, to all members who contributed articles and reports of Club events throughout the year.

#### Membership

The Club finished the year with a membership of 129 — an increase of one from the previous year. The total was made up of 39 single members, 88 family members and 2 juniors.

#### Finances

The Club finished the year with a balance of \$675.50 — this represents a profit of \$201.15 for the year. This unusually high profit comes partly from certain bills not yet presented, from a return to profit by the camping fund and from the absence of major expenditure items for the first time in many years.

The incoming committee will be well placed financially for 1992 thanks to the careful management of Alan Stuart, the Treasurer. We thank Mr. Randall Watson for again auditing the Club's accounts.

#### Public Relations

The Club continued to maintain a telephone enquires service in 1991, through a Yellow Pages entry in the Newcastle District Telephone Directory. A total of 46 calls were received not including several calls concerning homing pigeons. As usual, the calls covered the full range of bird topics, including bird identification, reports of sick birds or abandoned nestlings, as well as enquires about Club activities and how to join.

#### Field Activities

Ten Field Days were held during 1991 with an average attendance of 14. The average number of species

observed was 68 with the most productive outings being those to Kooragang Island (86 species), Swansea/Belmont (83) and Stockton/Fern Bay (80).

Five Weekend camps were conducted in 1991 with an average attendance of 14. The average number of species was 81. The highest attendance by far was at Widden Valley over Easter (33 people). Widden Valley also led in terms of species observed (111) followed by 90 at Ferndale Park and, despite rain disruption, 79 at Munghorn Gap.

### Atlas Records

During 1991, from the field outings and camps, 230 different bird species were recorded — this compares with the 218 recordings in 1990. Birding highlights for the year included White-throated Nightjar, Noisy Pitta, Pale-yellow Robin, Spotted Quail-thrush, Regent Honeyeater, Regent Bowerbird and Spectacled Monarch.

### Libraries

The number of books, journals and reports in the Club Library now total 212 — an increase of 22 over last year. Fifteen of these additions were purchased by the Club with the remainder being donated. We thank Fay Thomson, Alan Stuart and Jenny Meynell for their donations. Special thanks go to Alan Keating who generously donated a copy of *Birds of Australian Gardens* and the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, Volume 1, parts A and B. This valuable and definitive handbook produced by the RAOU takes pride of place in the library.

During 1991 three additions were made to the Audio-video Library. This library now contains a total of 33 tapes comprising of 31 audio and 2 video cassettes. The first compact disc was added to the library and it is hoped to be one of many in a future collection of natural sound recordings to which this format is so perfectly suited. There have been 43 borrowings by club members throughout the year — an increase of 48% from 1990. The library includes the recorded calls of over 70% of all Australian bird species. I am gratified to know that many members are enjoying the recorded sights and sounds of nature.

During 1991 the Slide Library again provided a vital service to members of the HBOC. The slides were used for many 'Bird of the Evening' segments and for other presentations, both at club nights and for outside use by members. The number of slides borrowed during the year was 345 — an increase of 200 on 1990. This high rate of use indicates the importance of the Club's Slide Library. Members are encouraged to use the Slide Library and, of course, donations of any bird slides would be greatly appreciated.

### Environmental Issues

Once again, the migratory wader feeding sites became the centre of concern with the announcement of the development of an aluminium fluoride production facility at Kooragang Island. Thanks to the vigilant efforts of our Environmental Officer, John Moyse, a submission was presented to a Commission of Inquiry raising several issues related to the impact of fluoride emissions passing up the food chain. Following the Inquiry, it appears that this facility has been granted a development application. It is imperative that stringent

monitoring and control of emissions are maintained to allow the adjacent nature reserve to remain in a healthy state.

Links were established with the Maitland Landcare Group in 1991 to work together on a common issue of habitat conservation. An area near Morpeth Sewage Treatment Works has been targeted for a tree planting program. Since this locality has long been recognised as an important birdwatching site, the Club is keen to provide facilities to enhance its conservation value. It is expected that a bird hide will be incorporated in this project.

### Conclusion

Although the total number of members has remained essentially the same as the previous year I am delighted to report an increase in participation in all activities and in the use of the Club's expanded libraries. The HBOC has therefore played a significant role in encouraging members to enjoy their leisure time birdwatching activities. An important outcome of your involvement is an increase in recorded bird observations. The information is used to further the study and ultimately contribute to the conservation of Australian birds and their habitat.

I have already singled out certain individuals for praise. It would be remiss of me if I did not pay special thanks to several others who made outstanding contributions to the HBOC during 1991.

Foremost among these is Peter Phillips who so capably administered the demanding duties of Secretary and Public Officer.

I cannot let this moment pass without making a special mention of our Vice-President Kay Imrie who is not standing for re-election in 1992. Kay is taking a well earned rest from Club duties to share Jim's retirement with some travelling combined, of course, with some serious birdwatching. Since 1980 Kay has continuously held either a position of office (Assistant Secretary, Secretary and Vice-President) or a voluntary position (Activities Officer). On behalf of all members, I would like to express to Kay our appreciation for her tireless enthusiasm, inspiration and guidance over the last 12 years.

The success of the HBOC over the past year owes much to the efforts of the management committee members, Sue Hamonet, Graeme O'Connor, Judith Smith and Jeanette Stephenson. The efforts of both the Public Relations and Activities Officer have also been invaluable. I thank my fellow librarians, Ed Hamonet and Mathew Stephenson for again providing an indispensable service to members throughout the year. I am indebted to both the Atlas and FOC Recorders for continuing to compile and maintain all the field observations. Thanks go also to Beth Mullard and Judith Smith for providing a much awaited supper at the conclusion of each clubnight.

I extend my sincere thanks to you all for contributing to the achievements of our organisation and look forward to a rewarding year of birdwatching in 1992. The management committee has adopted an ambitious activities program for 1992 that I trust you will find both challenging and interesting.

Peter McLauchlan  
President

Draft Maitland Local Environmental Plan 1992.

On the 22 February, 1992 Peter McLauchlan, on behalf of the HBOC, submitted comments to the Council of the City of Maitland on the New Plan for Maitland. The submission dealt with a feature of the Draft Plan of special interest to the HBOC, Part U111 Environmental Protection. This zoning is designed to protect wetlands from development and preserve them as habitats for indigenous and migratory birds.

Anyone wishing to read Peter's letter in full, please contact Editor for a copy.

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Outing to Telegraphy State Forest.23rd February, 1992.

We birded from the Chichester road, near Bandon Grove, to the beginning of the bitumen on Main Creek Road on the return to Dungog. Six enthusiastic members made an early start and reached the forest about 7 a.m.. The picnic areas at Telegraphy River and Frying Pan Creek yielded many birds but few species. We expected Pigeons but none gave as much as a hoot, let alone a sighting. An out-of-season, out-of-sorts Lyrebird gave a few quillips, to gain listing as a 'heard'. Whipbirds were all around and called frequently. Rose Robins tantalised with their calling and eventually one was seen; after the initial sighting we were rewarded with excellent views, even during morning tea. In keeping with current weather conditions it became very hot and humid, by 11 a.m. few birds were heard or seen. An isolated Fan-tailed Cuckoo trilled and flew about at the northern end of Frying Pan Creek and kept our binoculars busy. Lunch was taken at the cars before we started towards home. We visited the Gum Leaf Hotel and the fire tower, both on Skimmings Gap Road and at the latter, a Grey Goshawk flew across our view about 100 metres away and a Spotted Pardalote whistled its plaintive song. Our list grew to 45 species as we came down from the heights into more open habitat on the edge of the forest. We met the southerly change at Dungog - relief at last!

Jim Imrie.

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No report of the Atlas Outing to the Wauchope area, 7/8 March.

Field Day to Black Hill/Buttai/Stockrington, 22 March cancelled due to rain.

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## N.S.W. ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS APPRAISAL COMMITTEE

It may be of interest to newer members to learn that observations recorded in the State of New South Wales become part of the N.S.W. Bird Report for that particular year. This Report is compiled annually by the Records Officer of the N.S.W. Field Ornithologists Club and published in "Australian Birds". All records from H.B.O.C. are forwarded at the end of each year, and are automatically included in this Report.

On 11th January, 1992 Wilma Barden and I attended an important meeting held to set up the N.S.W. O.R.A.C. - a Committee formed to assess records of unusual or rare species within the state of N.S.W. This body will operate under the umbrella of the N.S.W. F.O.C. and its findings will supplement the N.S.W. Bird Report.

The aim of the Committee will be to determine which species are unusual or vagrant in N.S.W. and to add to our knowledge of the status of such species as subsequent reports become available.

To achieve this end it will be the function of the NSWORAC to review all reports of sightings considered to fit these categories and to accept these or not, according to the information available. The Committee will not reject records, and in some circumstances some records may be re-submitted.

The Committee will also ensure that the first three records of a new species for N.S.W. are appropriately published.

Feedback from the Committee will be regularly available to participating Clubs and this will be published in our Newsletter, thus keeping members up-to-date with the current status of species within our own State.

As a Club we are in complete accord with the aims of the NSWORAC and welcome the opportunity to have an input into this important function. We are pleased to have recruited the services of Wilma Barden as our delegate, and those who know Wilma will be aware of her sincere and dedicated interest in matters of this nature. We are quite sure that hers will be a thorough and impartial assessment of records.

Where a record is received for a species thought to be rare or unusual the observer will be asked to provide further details on a prescribed form, and this will be submitted to the NSWORAC for deliberation.

It is hoped that members will see this as an opportunity to add to ornithological knowledge in this State, and we take the opportunity to urge your full support. Please report all sightings that you consider important. Certainly any bird new to you should be carefully noted, and details entered immediately in a field notebook. Draw sketches to illustrate features of the bird. Photographs, where possible, will be valuable. But most importantly, try to get hold of somebody else to support your observations.

Sue Hamonet.

## NSW ORNITHOLOGISTS RECORDS APPRAISAL COMMITTEE (NSWORAC)

Alan K. Morris

On Saturday 11 January, 1992 the NSWORAC was formed. This Committee consists of members of the NSW FOC, Cumberland BOC, Illawarra BOC, Hunter BOC and the NSW Atlassers. The members of the Committee are: R.M. Cooper (Chairman), A.K. Morris (Secretary), W. Barden, C. Chafer, D. Hobcroft, I. McAllen, A. Palliser and R. Turner. The objective of the Committee is to provide an informed, discerning and impartial appraisal of claimed records of birds rare in New South Wales and Lord Howe Island. The work of the Committee will supplement the NSW Annual Bird Report.

To guide potential contributors of records, the Committee has established a Review List of those species which they will consider in addition to records of birds far outside their accepted range within New South Wales. The names used are based on the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (HANZAB) (RAOU, Oxford University Press 1990). The species listed are those that have been recorded in NSW on an average of less than 1.5 occasions per year in seven of the last ten years. Included are pelagic seabirds within NSW and up to 50 kilometres offshore, tide-line specimens, collected specimens, road kills, deceased passage migrants and other specimens excepting caged or aviary birds. The Committee has set 1987 as the date from which records made can be appraised, although older records may be reviewed at the Committee's discretion.

Contributors are encouraged to keep full field notes on unusual birds that they see, as such notes will be of major importance in the assessment of records. While a submission form exists, it is not necessary to use this when making submissions. Any submissions should be sent to The Secretary, NSWORAC, 1 Wombat St, Berkeley Vale NSW 2259.

## DRAFT REVIEW LIST

as of 1 December 1991

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>
Fiordland Penguin	<i>Eudyptes pachyrhynchus</i>
Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea epomophora</i>
Grey-headed Albatross	<i>Diomedea chrysostoma</i>
Sooty Albatross	<i>Phoebastria fusca</i>
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross	<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>
Southern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Kermadec Petrel	<i>Pterodroma neglecta</i>
Herald Petrel	<i>Pterodroma arminjoniana</i>
Tahiti Petrel	<i>Pterodroma rostrata</i>
Kerguelen Petrel	<i>Pterodroma brevirostris</i>
Mottled Petrel	<i>Pterodroma inexpectata</i>
Soft-plumaged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma mollis</i>
White-necked Petrel	<i>Pterodroma externa</i>
Cook's Petrel	<i>Pterodroma cooki</i>
Juan Fernandez Petrel	<i>Pterodroma cervicalis</i>
Blue Petrel	<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>
Broad-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila vittata</i>
Medium-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila salvini</i>
Grey Petrel	<i>Procellaria cinerea</i>
Black Petrel	<i>Procellaria parkinsoni</i>
Westland Petrel	<i>Procellaria westlandica</i>
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>
Streaked Shearwater	<i>Calonectris leucomelas</i>
Audubon's Shearwater	<i>Puffinus lherminieri</i>
Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus creatopus</i>
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>
Grey-backed Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites nereis</i>
Black-bellied Storm Petrel	<i>Fregatta tropica</i>
White-bellied Storm Petrel	<i>Fregatta grallaria</i>
Common Diving Petrel	<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>
Georgian Diving Petrel	<i>Pelecanoides georgicus</i>
Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>
Black-faced Shag	<i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i>
Greater Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Red-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon rubicauda</i>
Pied Heron	<i>Ardea picata</i>
Great-billed Heron	<i>Ardea sumatrana</i>
Cape Barren Goose	<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>
Burdekin Duck	<i>Tardonra radjah</i>
<b>Northern Shoveler</b>	<b><i>Anas clypeata</i></b>
Cotton Pygmy-Goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
Green Pygmy-Goose	<i>Nettapus pulchellus</i>
Red Goshawk	<i>Erythrotriorchis radiatus</i>
Black-breasted Button-quail	<i>Turnix melanogaster</i>
Red-backed Button-quail	<i>Turnix maculosa</i>
<b>Corncrake</b>	<b><i>Crex crex</i></b>
American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>
<b>Ringed Plover</b>	<b><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i></b>
<b>Oriental Plover</b>	<b><i>Charadrius veredus</i></b>
<b>Upland Sandpiper</b>	<b><i>Bartramia longicauda</i></b>
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Asian Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>
<b>White-rumped Sandpiper</b>	<b><i>Calidris fuscicollis</i></b>
<b>Baird's Sandpiper</b>	<b><i>Calidris bairdii</i></b>
Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>
Long-toed Stint	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Cox's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris paramelanotos</i>
<b>Buff-breasted Sandpiper</b>	<b><i>Tryngites subruficollis</i></b>
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
<b>Wilson's Phalarope</b>	<b><i>Phalaropus tricolor</i></b>
Oriental Pratincole	<i>Glareola maldivarum</i>
South Polar Skua	<i>Stercorarius maccormicki</i>
<b>Sabine's Gull</b>	<b><i>Larus sabini</i></b>
<b>Franklin's Gull</b>	<b><i>Larus pipixcan</i></b>
<b>Black Tern</b>	<b><i>Chlidonias niger</i></b>
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougalli</i>
Black-naped Tern	<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>
Fairy Tern	<i>Sterna nereis</i>
Common Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Black Noddy	<i>Anous minutus</i>
<b>Grey Noddy</b>	<b><i>Procelsterna albiguttata</i></b>
Torresian Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula spilorrhoa</i>
Flock Bronzewing	<i>Phaps histrionica</i>
Squatter Pigeon	<i>Geophaps scripta</i>
Double-eyed Fig-Parrot	<i>Psittaculirostris diophthalma</i>
<b>Night Parrot</b>	<b><i>Geopsittacus occidentalis</i></b>
Paradise Parrot	<i>Psephotus pulcherrimus</i>
Bourke's Parrot	<i>Neophema bourkii</i>
Scarlet-chested Parrot	<i>Neophema splendida</i>
White-rumped Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia spodiopygia</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
<b>Yellow-headed Wagtail</b>	<b><i>Motacilla alba</i></b>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Pink Robin	<i>Petroica rodinogaster</i>
Red-lored Whistler	<i>Pachycephala pectoralis</i>
Thick-billed Grasswren	<i>Amytornis textilis</i>
Banded Whiteface	<i>Aphelocephala nigricincta</i>
Black-eared Miner	<i>Manorina melanotis</i>
Purple-gaped Honeyeater	<i>Lichenostomus cratilius</i>
Yellow-bellied Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia jugularis</i>
Yellow Chat	<i>Ephthianura crocea</i>
Black-throated Finch	<i>Peophila cincta cincta</i>

Entries in bold print are on the RAOU Review List for Australia



## ANTARCTIC DREAM

Last Christmas Joe and I went on a trip of a life time cruise from Tierra Del Fuego to the Antarctic Peninsula. Not for us the luxury cruise with casinos and discos; our ship was a Russian hydrographic research vessel with room for only 38 passengers, with the sort of comforts provided for Russian scientists. The Professor Molchanov is only the size of the South Steyne, which seemed to be a remarkably small vessel to be battling the potentially enormous seas of the Drake Passage. It is, however, an ice strengthened ship and the captain and crew, who all come from Murmansk, have considerable experience in ice bound waters.

The trip was not a specific birding trip (fortunately, otherwise Joe would not have been interested!) but one cannot fail to take an interest in the birdlife as it makes up such a large and visible proportion of the ocean and Antarctic ecosystems. On board were three leaders, the leading Australian naturalist, Vincent Serventy, mountaineer Greg Mortimer and Antarctic explorer Colin Monteath. All three were ever willing to answer our numerous queries and were a mine of information regarding life in the Antarctic.

The cruise started from Ushuaia on the Beagle Channel. Ushuaia developed around the estancia of the first successful Welsh settlers of Tierra Del Fuego who managed to make contact with the indigenous Yahgan and Ona Indians. (Jimmy Button and Fuega Basket, two "savages" that Charles Darwin took back to England aboard "The Beagle" were Yahgans from Ushuaia) It is now an Argentinian duty free port that has attracted a host of electrical manufacturing companies.

We set off down the Beagle Channel in the early evening past sunken ships carrying bibles, strange rock formations like rows of terraced houses and between beautiful green and ochre hills and snow capped mountains. As the sun dipped below the hill tops we headed south for the notorious Drake Passage and the Antarctic.

The seas were moderate, for the Drake Passage. In our round bottomed icebreaker we pitched and rolled. Faces turned green and disappeared to berths or the deck. Unfortunately my bird watching was severely curtailed by seasickness; I managed stints of fifteen minutes before I had to go and lie down.

The ocean birds were tremendous to watch. The ship was doing a steady 10 knots and these birds appear to just hang in the air beside or behind the ship. Occasionally they would swerve off to one side and go right down to the water, only to rise again to a position some 20m about the waves. (See diagram below for the theory behind this flight pattern.)

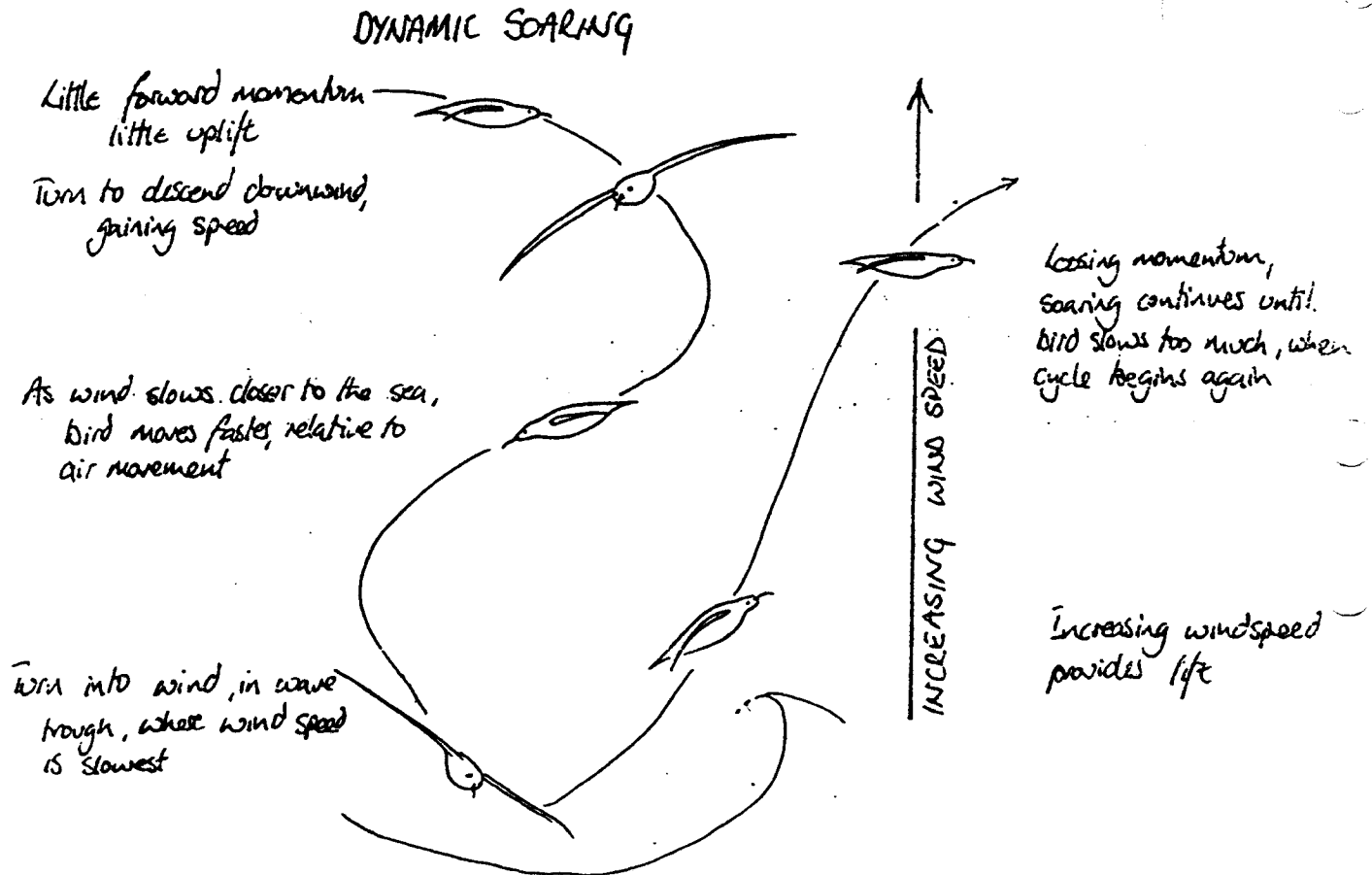
Of the pelagic birds I think my favourite is the Cape Pigeon or Pintado, literally painted bird (*Daption capensis*). With its black and white plumage and low flight it provided a strong contrast to the dark ocean. Other sea birds seen during the crossing of the Drake Passage were the graceful Sooty Albatross (*Phoebastria fusca*), the Southern Giant Petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*) with its heavy yellow beak and single tube nose and the Grey headed Albatross (*Diomedea* sp). We saw Wilson's storm Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*) pattering across the waves and Broad billed Prions (*Pachyptila vittata*) skimming the sea for plankton. The Broad billed Prion is also known as the whale bird; where there was plankton for the birds the whalers also found whales.

As we crossed the Antarctic Convergence the water temperature dropped and the seas grew calmer. Here the weight of ice on the ocean surface dampens the effects of the waves, making conditions far more pleasant for those with weak stomachs. We sighted numerous blue white icebergs, some tabular, others of imagination defying shape and then we saw land, stark and black rising above the brilliance of the ocean. On New Years Eve we anchored and celebrated the coming of the new year and the raising of the red, white and blue Russian flag on the Professor Molchanov.

Penguin rookeries smell. They are also noisy, but that is soon forgotten in the delight of watching these entertaining birds. We saw three species of penguin, Adelie (*Pygoscelis adeliae*), Gentoo (*P. papua*) and Chinstrap (*P. antarctica*). By landing at various latitudes on the Antarctic Peninsula we gained a fascinating insight into penguin breeding habits, seeing various stages from egg incubation to half grown chicks. The Adelie penguins looked as though they were wearing big fluffy slippers as they stood with their backs to the wind with two sooty grey chicks at their feet. The Sheathbill (*Chorionis alba*), the scavengers of the land keep the rookery tidy and the Great Skua (*Catharacta skua*) and McCormicks Skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*), prey on the weak and sick.

The Blue eyed Shag (*Phalacrocorax atriceps*) is often found nesting in the penguin rookeries, maybe through shortage of snow and ice free land. This cormorant looks similar to our Great pied Cormorant, until you see the small yellow crest at the top of the beak and the brilliant blue of the eye.

From a distance the Antarctic landscape appears hostile and sterile, close up every possible niche is exploited by some form of life, specifically adapted to the rigours of the environment. Man is clearly least well adapted, but modern technology enables even tourists to visit this marvellous world, with a minimum of discomfort. It was a trip to remember and one that I would thoroughly recommend to anyone, bird watcher or not.



Bridget  
Whitehead.

# Net thieves disrupt migratory bird studies

By KIRSTEN STOOP  
Staff Reporter

IMPORTANT volunteer studies on the migratory birds of Kooragang Island, Coffs Harbour and Sydney has been halted by the theft of \$1500 worth of special netting equipment from Kooragang Island on January 26.

Members of the NSW Wader Study Group appealed yesterday for any information on the theft, which has left them unable to properly carry out their studies.

The 20 metre by 14 metre net and related equipment was stolen while members of the group were carrying out research at Kooragang Island.

One of the members, Mr Fred Van Gessel, said yesterday, 'I checked the net at 1.30 a.m. and everything was hunky dory.'

Mr Van Gessel said, 'When I came back at 6.30 a.m. it was gone.'

Mr Van Gessel said he felt certain the thieves were watching the group and planned to use the equipment for illegal bird catching, prawn netting or possibly for the protection of fruit trees.

'I just hope that sooner or later they will be caught in some illegal activity,' he said.

The equipment was initially funded by the groups volunteers in the 1970s when studies first began into the birds which come to the area each year from Asia, Japan and Siberia.

The birds are caught, weighed, tagged, measured and released.

'It's not only expensive to replace, we rely on our members' donations and we don't have any money,' Mr Van Gessel said.

One of the researchers based in Newcastle, Mr David Geering, said the group had a few smaller nets it could use until the large net was replaced.

'It will be a lot of hard work before it is replaced,' he said.

Any information can be given to Mayfield Police Station.

*The Newcastle Herald*  
Thursday, February 6, 1992

## JAPANESE MIST-NET BAN

After persistent pressure from the Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ), ICBP and other environmental groups, a ban by the Japanese government on the possession, sale or export of mist-nets came into effect on 15 September this year.

Up to three million birds each year were caught for consumption in mist-nets in Japan. The use of mist-nets for anything other than scientific purposes has been illegal since 1950, but the law proved largely ineffective, mainly because it did not make any attempt at all to control the sale or possession of the nets.

Moreover, the birds that are killed in Japan are just the tip of the iceberg. A significant proportion of the millions of migratory birds that are killed in the

Mediterranean each year are caught in mist-nets, almost all of which are manufactured in Japan.

At the 1990 World Conference in New Zealand, ICBP passed a resolution calling on the Japanese government to ban the production, sale, possession, transfer and export of mist-nets. Prior to this, WBSJ had collected 380,000 signatures from all over the country on a petition to ban the nets.

This new law is of course welcomed by ICBP and WBSJ. The fear is that manufacturers in other countries will expand to fill the gap left in the market.

In the long-term, the most effective way to halt the netting of birds is to remove demand for them. Japan currently imports frozen birds, whose capture is prohibited within the country, for consumption. WBSJ are now press-

ing the government to ban this trade, which not only provides a market for other countries to supply, it also affords cover under which poachers within Japan can sell their ill-gotten gains.

*This article is from  
World Birdwatch,  
December, 1991.  
The Newsletter of the  
International Council  
for Bird Preservation.*

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## PIED CURRAWONG STUDY

Most members will be aware of the recent publicity given to the poor old Pied Currawong. It is the belief in some quarters that this species has increased to plague proportions and should be the subject of a culling programme, because of the Currawong's habit of plundering the nests of smaller species.

Many reasons are given for the bird's population explosion and there is much debate about where to point the finger. In the meantime, however, R.A.O.U. would really like to know just how rapidly the population is growing in NSW and ACT, and this is where members can offer assistance.

We are asked to conduct a Currawong survey each month. All you need to do is to visit the same site each month and count the Currawongs. The site selected can be your own back garden, or street, an urban park, or public reserve, or a natural piece of bushland near you. Please record the name and location of the area of study, its size [in hectares], the date and time of your survey, and the duration of your count [in minutes].

Records should be sent to Stephen Ambrose, RADU, C/- Australian Museum, P.O. Box A285, Sydney South, N.S.W. 2000 [Phone 02. 339. 8183]. If preferred, lodge your monthly figures with the records officer on Club night, and have the results forwarded in total.

MARCH MEETINGS.

At the Clubnight held on Wednesday 11th March, Sue Hamonet presented the Owllet-nightjar for Bird Call of the Evening. For Bird of the Evening. Ed Hamonet gave a talk on scientific nomenclature, featuring an Identification quiz on ten birds based on interpretation of scientific names and other clues. The Main Feature was a talk by Mark Maher from Maitland Landcare outlining their various activities.

Observations recorded were:-

Little Lorikeet at Mulbring and Ellalong.  
 Scarlet Honeyeater at Ellalong.  
 Sooty Oystercatcher at Newcastle.  
 Pacific Baza at Bonnells Bay.  
 Channel-billed Cuckoo at New Lambton.  
 Pied Butcherbird at New Lambton and Wallsend.  
 Glossy Black Cockatoo at Brightwaters.  
 Osprey at Teralba.  
 Mountain Duck at Lake Liddell.  
 Painted Snipe at Wallis Creek.  
 White-breasted Sea-eagle at Fullerton Cove.  
 Black Bittern at Buttaba.  
 150 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at Valla Beach near Sawtell.  
 Magpie Geese - nests and eggs at Shortland Wetland Centre.

Interesting to see the record for Painted Snipe at Wallis Creek. Not a species which is often seen so difficult to estimate its abundance. It should be noted that the observations as listed are those reported by members and have not been verified in any way. Further details if required may be available from the Records Officer.

Format of Clubnights.

It has been suggested that members' contributions would be increased by specifying a species in advance, in the Newsletter, members then to bring to the designated Clubnight sightings, questions, anecdotes etc.\*. This segment to be of perhaps 15-30 minutes. If you have any ideas on the subject or any suggestions for other changes to Clubnight activities, the Committee would like to hear from you.

\*The bird for discussion in May will be the spangled drongo, and June will be the yellow faced honeyeater. All comments from members on these birds will be welcome.

COMING EVENTS.

<u>Weekend 11/12 April.</u>	<u>Atlas Outing:</u>	Murrumbidgee/Timor.
	<u>Contact:</u>	Graeme O'Connor - 531304.
<u>Easter Weekend</u>	<u>Camp:</u>	"Carlton" via Gunnedah.
<u>17 - 20 April.</u>	<u>Contact:</u>	Sue Hamonet - 581023.
<u>Weekend 9/10 May.</u>	<u>Atlas Outing:</u>	Goulburn River National Park.
	<u>Contact:</u>	Sue Hamonet - 581023.
<u>Wednesday 13 May.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre - 7.30.
	<u>Main Feature:</u>	To be advised.
<u>Sunday 24 May.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u>	Dora Creek/Cooranbong.
	<u>Meet:</u>	Coles Car Park, Toronto. 7 a.m.
	<u>Contact:</u>	Alan Stuart - 528569.
<u>Queen's Birthday W/E.</u>	<u>Camp:</u>	Smiths Lake.
<u>6/8 June.</u>	<u>Contact:</u>	Jeanette Stephenson - 575255.
<u>Wednesday 10 June.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre - 7.30.
<u>Sunday 21 June.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u>	Walka/Morpeth/Tenambit.
	<u>Meet:</u>	To be advised.
	<u>Contact:</u>	

The above information whilst as accurate as possible should be checked nearer to Field Days etc., with the contact person. An update of activities will be given on Clubnights.

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Deadline for your contributions to the June/July Newsletter - 27 May.

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