



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

P.O. Box 24, New Lambton, N.S.W. 2305

Telephone: (049) 52 8569

President:
Secretary:
Newsletter Editor:

Peter McLauchlan
Peter Phillips
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 DECEMBER MEETING.

The December Clubnight was held on Wednesday the 9th and the evening commenced with Bird Call, Garry and Barbara Bean presented the calls of the Crested Bellbird and Chiming Wedgebill. The Bird of the Evening and the bird for discussion was the Channel-billed Cuckoo, presented by Peter Phillips. A guest speaker was not part of the evening and the meeting proceeded with members slides, Max Blanch showing some of the birds of Lemon Tree Passage, including the Bush Thicknee. Matthew Stephenson presented a selection of slides from the Club Library and Marta Hamilton reported on the results of the survey she conducted earlier in the year. The evening concluded with the Christmas raffle and supper, many members contributing an excellent variety of food.

Observation reports for December meeting

Nov. 3	Striated Heron	1	Carrington	T. Clarke
" 10	Channel-billed Cuckoo	4	Lambton	R. Waymark
" 8	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Kitchener Pde. N'cle.	J. Gardner
" 29	Cicadabird	1	Minmi	A. Zoneff
Dec. 3	Little Bronze-Cuckoo	1	East Maitland	P. McLauchlan
" 8	Blue-faced Honeyeater	1	Green Hills	M. McLauchlan
" 18	Y.T. Black Cockatoo	2	Charlestown	H. Reedman
1993				
Jan. 2			Shoal Bay	
to 11	Long-billed Corella	3	[Port Stephen]	D. Biddle

The Little Bronze-Cuckoo observed by Peter McLauchlan at Verdant Drive is a very interesting sighting, this species being more at home in the Northern Rivers, and Tablelands areas of N.S.W., where it is an infrequent migrant. Previous records for this State appear to be restricted to the Grafton and Nambucca Heads areas.

Doug Biddle reported Long-billed Corellas nesting at Shoal Bay, with at least one chick ready to emerge from the nest.

NEW MEMBERS.

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

Jillian and Glenn Albrecht
Marea and Philip Diemar
Noreen Fleming
Audrey and Ross Mahaffey
Hannah Smith

New Lambton Heights.
Bobs Farm.
Lambton.
Birmingham Gardens.
Tighes Hill.

Welcome back to Jill and Glenn Albrecht.
The Club membership is now 140.

LIBRARY REPORT.

The following books and reports have been added to the Library:-

No. 227/92. Addicted to Birds by Annie Rogers.

This highly entertaining book describes the author's transition from a sceptical observer to a full-blooded bander and champion of conservation. It deals with her experiences in Iran, South Korea and Australia.

No. 228/92. Records of Outings and Camps of the HBOC from 1988-1990.

Alan Stuart has painstakingly compiled a meticulous record of Field Days and Camps held during the years 1988, 1989 and 1990.

No. 229/92. Birds of the Australian Capital Territory - An Atlas.

The content of this publication is a credit to McComas Taylor and his many contributors; it gives a detailed account of the species usually found within the boundaries of the ACT. However, HBOC members would find, with few exceptions, that all the birds listed are also found in the Hunter region.

No. 230/92. Putting Biodiversity on the Map.

This is an outline on Biodiversity published by the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP). It summaries three questions:-

1. What is Biodiversity.
2. Why conserve Biodiversity.
3. How should Biodiversity be conserved.

Throughout the year Newsletters are received from other Ornithological groups. Due to lack of space on the Library table these are not displayed on Clubnights but they are available to members on application to the Librarian. Borrowers of same are requested to return the file at the next Clubnight, so that additions can be filed.

Publications received are as follows:-

1. Wingspan.

Published by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (RAOU), the magazine also contains a supplement "NSW Bird Notes". The last issue of the magazine covers articles about Two Lakes in SW Queensland; Conservation and Cats; Waderbirds; the Bird Observatories; Book Reviews.

2. The Bird Observer.

This is the official magazine of the Bird Observers Club of Australia (based in Victoria). The December 1992 edition contains articles about Fairy Martins; Summer Foods for Birds; Fox Control and an article on Birdwatching by Graham Pizzey.

3. Newsletter of the NSW Field Ornithologists Club. (Based in Sydney).

This Newsletter is published bi-monthly, the format being similar to the HBOC Newsletter.

4. Cumberland Bird Observers Club Newsletter. (Based in Castle Hill).

This is a very good publication - the last issue received contained inter alia, articles on Cats and Wildlife; Birdwatching in Venezuela.

5. NSW Bird Atlassers Newsletter.

This publication is of more interest to those involved in the statistics of birdwatching.

6. Manning Valley Bird Observers Club Newsletter.

7. Queensland Ornithological Society Newsletter.

This would be of interest to members contemplating a visit to Queensland.

8. World Birdwatch.

This is the Newsletter of the International Council for Bird Protection. It contains articles about birds in other countries.

In addition to the above Newsletters the Club receives the quarterly journal published by the NSW Field Ornithologists Club. Titled Australian Birds, it contains mostly technical articles about birds.

SLIDE AND AUDIO LIBRARY REPORT.

No additions to the Library.

Field Day - Swansea - Sunday, 6th December, 1992.

16 members of the Club met at Nesca Park near Swansea. This is a regular venue for the Club and it was a pleasant surprise this time to find a much reduced traffic flow on the road leading up to the Park, following road changes.

On a day in which storms were as likely as sun, a good tally of birds were seen and weather conditions remained basically fine. Among the 70 or so species seen, the highlights were a Cicadabird, several Mistletoebirds, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes and a Rufous Whistler. There were also a number of birds observed at the nest, including Willie Wagtail, Australian Magpie-lark, White-faced Heron and Olive-backed Oriole. The oriole nest was directly over a path and a number of experienced birdwatchers (including this writer) passed underneath unobservantly.

Relatively disappointing was the lack of Southern Emu-wrens, usually regular sightings and no sign or sound of the Superb Lyrebird, occasionally seen here. In general, the consensus seemed to be that despite the abundance of species there was a reduction in the actual number of birds over previous years.

Lunch was taken near the caravan park on Coon Island, under the shade of trees and next to a delightful paddling beach, good views were had of many wading birds on a sandbank. A highlight was a pair of Pled Oyster-catchers that dive-bombed Alan Stuart and myself. Thanks to those who had the foresight to bring their telescopes.

A total of 86 species were seen on a very pleasant day.

Peter Phillips.

Port Stephens Wildlife Summit

A one-day meeting was held in Raymond Terrace on October 31 last year to discuss wildlife issues for the Port Stephens region. The Port Stephens Shire Council was the main financial supporter for the meeting, at which a number of organisations presented their thoughts on important issues to do with protecting and fostering local wildlife. The HBOC was a participant[#], with many other organisations from the Port Stephens and Hunter regions.

A series of key recommendations was agreed at the summit meeting, and a working group (the "Port Stephens Wildlife Coalition", involving local residents and most of the organisations which participated in the summit) was subsequently formed as a way to try to get those recommendations implemented. The HBOC has remained involved; our main role will be to advise lobby groups on matters relating to bird life.

The first meeting of the "Coalition" was held at Soldiers Point on December 12. The immediate objectives that it was decided to try to progress were:

- A significant expansion of Tomaree N.P. to encompass a number of botanically or geologically important areas and improve the long term viability of the N.P. A number of areas that are of importance to birds are included within the proposed new boundaries.
- Positive actions implemented to reduce the populations of feral animals, including cats.
- Introduction of domestic cat control measures along the lines of those adopted, to the great benefit of local wildlife, by Sherbrooke Council in Victoria.
- Introduction of an improved Tree Preservation Order, which includes recognition of the importance to wildlife of dead trees/limbs, and plant understorey.
- Appointment of a full-time Shire Wildlife Officer.
- Recognition of "ecotourism" as a profitable, environmentally friendly alternative to the conventional tourism industry with its high development needs.

Lobby groups have been established for each objective. For the benefit of birds and other wildlife in the Port Stephens region, we hope that these objectives, and others to be addressed later, can be achieved.

Alan Stuart

[#]Spare copies of the paper we submitted to the summit are available; contact me if you would like a copy.

At the turn of the century, cattlemen in the Kimberley looked to the goldfields in the south as a market. Because cattle tick flourished in the humid conditions, normal transport options were closed to them. They pressed the W.A. government to provide an inland route as it was believed that the tick would perish as they passed through the arid country to the south.

Thus, in 1906, Alfred Canning surveyed the CSR and later led the construction party. It was completed in 1910 and was some 1600 km long. From Wiluna in the south to near Hall's Creek in the north, there were 54 wells, numbered 1 to 51, 2A, 4A and 4B. These utilised ground water, not artesian, and were from 3 to 30 metres below ground level. Each was equipped with a windlass, whip pole, two steel 50 L buckets and galvanised iron troughing. It took up to 10 hours to water a herd of 500. Re-conditioning of wells took place twice between 1910 and 1958 when the last drive occurred. It took three to five months to move a herd south on the route.

In recent years, 4WD vehicles have travelled part or the whole of the route, creating a track which approximately follows the route. There are more than 900 dunes, up to 17 metres high, running west to east. In some places, a well may be 20 km off the track, but most are close to it. In 1988, CSR signs were erected at each well and on the track as a W.A. Bicentennial project. These and some excellent maps produced are aids to navigating in this difficult landscape. Nevertheless, travelling the CSR is not easy. Winter is the best time as summer temperatures can reach 50°C. Each group needs to be self-contained. There is no population anywhere. However, petrol can be pre-purchased from Newman. This is left near well 23 to be collected when passing through. We took on 1 000 litres there.

Wild Country Safaris (Allen Mulder) did this trip in 1991 and 1992. It is not on his 1993 calendar as it is a most difficult undertaking. He may not attempt it again. Our party of 14, plus staff, left Alice Springs in two International 4WD ex-Army trucks. One fitted with bus seats facing forward, carried us, our luggage and the tents. The other carried food, stove, freezers, etc. and the cook. She is 29, and is the best Allen has had. She cooked beautifully in the camping situation and is very amenable.

Our route was via Ayers Rock and the Olgas (only a brief stop for distant photos), into W.A. and onto the Gun Barrel Highway to Wiluna. Heavy rain preceded us and we were often bogged but we made Wiluna in nine days. However, the CSR was closed there. Instead of waiting for over a week, we travelled west to Meekatharra, then north to join the CSR at well 23. North of well 11, the CSR passes through mostly sandy country, so we bogged no more. Progress over the dunes was slow but by deflating tyres considerably, crossings were achieved. Days 13 to 30 were spent on the CSR with distances ranging from 22 to 80 km daily. Four times, we had two nights at the same camp site.

Of the 29 wells left, we passed 22. Some were filled in; others had good water. Two have been restored, while others retain some of the equipment described previously. The tops were covered with iron sheets. Occasionally, water was rationed but there was never a crisis.

The days began about 6.30 and after packing up, many of us walked out ahead. These walks offered opportunities for photography, plant observation and collecting and birding. During each day we stopped at wells, dry lakes, rocky features, etc., giving us time to take in all which we could. The route passes through the Great Sandy and the Gibson Deserts but at no stage was this obvious. Rain in 1991 had brought the vegetation to life. Spinifex, eucalypts, melaleuca and acacia were dominant and many eremophila, grevillea and hakea were in flower. During the safari, over 600 different flowers were collected.

Bird-wise, there the specials and the ubiquitous. Almost every day on the CSR we saw Budgerigahs, Zebra Finches, Singing Honeyeaters, Pallid Cuckoos, Black-faced Woodswallows and Willie Wagtails. At well 23 we saw three Rufous-crowned Emu-wrens and 24 Flock Pigeons (Phaps

histrionica). Later, east of Hall's Creek, we encountered more than 200 of these magnificent pigeons. One afternoon, as we stopped to set up camp north of well 39, the first person out yelled, "There they are!" We knew exactly what the message was - PRINCESS PARROTS HAD BEEN FOUND. There followed excitement and near pandemonium as the other 13 tried to squeeze through the rear door and down the ladder at once. There were five, the first for us all. We need not have been so anxious because over the next five days, we saw up to 50 at a time. They were not as beautiful as Superbs or Regents, but they were rare! Elsewhere, to these we added Black-breasted Buzzard, Square-tailed Kite, Bustard, Chiming Wedgebill, Golden-backed (Melithreptus laetior) and Grey Honeyeaters, Banded Whiteface, Red-browed Pardalote and Painted Firetail.

Daily on the CSR, we found only 10 to 20 species, with large numbers of Budgerigahs, Crimson Chats and Little Button-quails. Black and Pied Honeyeaters were more common than in our previous experience. 75 species were recorded on the CSR and 126 for the five weeks trip. Other notable birds seen were Grey, Little and Peregrine Falcons, Inland Dotterel, Bourke's Parrot, Northern Rosella, Pratincole, Orange Chat, Crested Bellbird (every day except on the CSR), Great Bowerbird, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush and Redthroat.

After we passed through Hall's Creek on day 32, we continued on the Duncan Highway, south through Gordon Downs and back to Alice Springs on the Tanami Track - no longer a track because of its upgrading to service gold mines in the Tanami area. So ended the safari which Kay and I had anticipated for quite a while. We were not disappointed. It was a terrific experience.

Further Reference: Australian Geographic, July-Sept, 1989. Issue #15.
Jim Imrie

EXPLORING THE MANNING RIVER BY HOUSEBOAT THIS COMING MAY

Anyone interested in houseboating on the Manning River in May this year? Maybe a full week, or Monday to Friday, or a weekend. The cost should be about \$15 per person per day. The houseboats are fully equipped. We need to take only linen and food. The Manning is navigable from Taree to Wingham upstream and to Harrington and Farquhar Inlets downstream. The Dawson and Lansdowne Rivers are also navigable. For further information please phone Max Blanch, PH 82 4708. Booking is essential to secure the boat so do this NOW.



Cassowary House

Phone (070) 937318

Black Mountain Road
P.O.Box 252
Kuranda
Queensland 4872

Cassowary House.

*Borders the Wet Tropics World Heritage Rainforest.
Known for its comfortable accommodation and good food.
Excellent guiding to the Cairns coast and Atherton Tablelands.*

1993 Speciality Weeks.

June 26 - July 3. July 24 - 31. August 21 - 28.

Details from Rita and John Squire, Cassowary House, Kuranda.

Garden Bird Survey

Some months ago, the club initiated a Garden Bird Survey, and many members now have a wall chart on which to record their observations each week. At the time, we gave only sketchy details of what we planned to do with the records when they were handed back. In this article, I will attempt to explain more.

The idea of the survey is borrowed from the Canberra Ornithologists Group, which has been carrying out a similar survey for about ten years and has been seeing some interesting changes. We are unashamedly adopting their idea and their methods of data analysis.

The current charts are due for return after June 30 (at which point we will provide a free replacement for 1993/94 observations). As quickly as we can after that, we plan to generate a brief report of the survey to distribute to members. For the most significant species (e.g. more common, more abundant, etc), we will aim to report the following information:

- i) Abundance data ("A"): the average maximum number of individuals of a species recorded at a site for each week over the full year (obtained by adding all the weekly observations of a species and dividing by the number of weeks during which observations were made).
- ii) Distribution data ("F"): the number of sites at which a species was recorded at least once (expressed as a percentage of the total number of sites).
- iii) Number of weeks ("W") in the year for which a species was recorded at any site. Thus, W for residential species might be around 52, but will more likely be 30-40 for migratory species, and perhaps smaller still for nomadic species.
- iv) Recording rate ("R"): the number of weeks during which a species was recorded, as a percentage of the total number of observer-weeks for the year.
- v) Flock size ("G"): the average number of individuals of a species recorded in each observation.

This information will no doubt be interesting to consider in its right, but of more interest will be to follow how these descriptive statistical values change from year to year, and to speculate on and perhaps investigate the reasons for the changes.

I remind participants that the procedure is to record the maximum number of each species seen each week. Thus, if you see 2 magpies on the first day of a new week, 4 magpies a couple of days later and 3 magpies on the final day, the number you record for magpies that week is 4 birds.

It is not too late to start recording, and spare charts are available if you don't yet have one. There is a charge of \$2 for the first chart we issue to an observer, replacement charts are free in subsequent years.

Alan Stuart

COMING EVENTS.Sunday 21 February.Field Day:Meet:

Barrington Guest House area.

McDonalds, Hexham. 6.30 am.

Meeting places and times at Dungog and/or Barrington will be arranged if required.

Contact:

Alan Stuart - 528569.

March.Atlas Outing.Contact:

Warkworth area.

Peter McLauchlan for date and details. 333224.

See note on 1993 programme re Atlas outings.

Wednesday 10 March.Clubnight.Main Feature:

Shortland Wetland Centre - 7.30

Phil Straw. RAOI Ornithologist.

"The role of the amateur ornithologist."

Weekend 20/21 March.Camp:Contact:

Milbrodale (Private property).

Peter McLauchlan - 333224.

This venue is also suitable for a Field Day - 21st.

Easter 9/12 April.Camp:Contact:

Canberra.

Graeme O'Connor - 531304.

Wednesday 14 April.Clubnight:Main Feature:

Shortland Wetland Centre - 7.30

Allan Richardson.

Nature Photography - from one of our talented photographers.

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

Contributions from members of the HBOC to the newsletter are welcome and the deadline for the April/May newsletter is 29th March.

The statements and opinions expressed in this newsletter are the responsibilities of the authors concerned. The HBOC relies on the reputation of advertisers and their integrity for quality and nature of their products and services.

Editor.

NORTHERN INSTRUMENT SERVICES

990 Hunter Street, Newcastle West

Ph: 69 4021

SPECIALISING IN SALES & SERVICE OF:

**BINOCULARS
SPOTTING SCOPES AND
TELESCOPES**

**Binocular Repairs done professionally, quickly
and at reasonable rates**



OUTINGS AND CAMPS PROGRAM 1993

January 24th.	Kooragang Island	Field Day
February	Mulbring	Atlas*
February 21st	Barrington Guest House Area	Field Day
March	Warkworth	Atlas*
March 21st	Milbrodale (Private Property)	Camp
April 9-12th	Canberra (with CBOG)	Camp
April 25th	Swansea South	BBQ/Field Day
May 2-3	Four Mile Creek (Maitland)	Field Day
June 12-14th	Murrumbo Stn (Private Property)	Camp
June 20th	Wetlands Day	Field Day
July	Singleton	Atlas*
July 25th	Wollembi	Field Day
August 22nd	Buchanan	Field Day
September	Sharpes Creek	Atlas*
September 19th	Hawks Nest	Field Day
October 2-4th	Widden Valley (Priv. Property)	Camp
October	Scone-Gloucester Road	Atlas*
October 24th	Cooranbong	Field Day
November 21st	Port Stephens	Field Day
December 5th	Stanhope Creek.	Field Day.

SPECIFIC DETAILS for field days and camps will be provided in the Club newsletter and at Club nights.

* Atlas Outings are most suitable for experienced birdwatchers. Dates and other details available from the contact person. Subject to cancellation or alteration.

CAMP FEES. A fee of \$1 per member per camp with \$3 being the maximum for a family will generally be levied. Non members will be charged the current annual membership fee. Occasionally private property owners have their own charges.

MEMBERSHIP FEES Fees are due 1st January 1993 -See membership renewal form for details.