

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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Peter McLauchlan

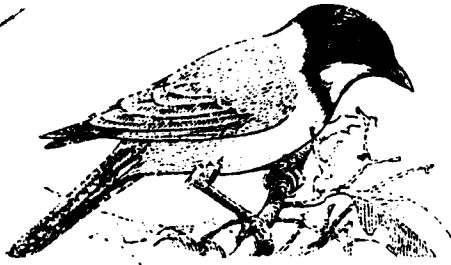
Peter Phillips

Rosemary Waymark

President:

Secretary:

Newsletter Editor:



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 followed by the Clubnight was held on the 10th February, 1993.

The following members were elected unopposed:-

President: Peter McLauchlan.

Vice-President: Sue Hamonet.

Hon. Secretary: Peter Phillips.

Hon. Treasurer: Alan Stuart.

Committee: Tom Clarke, Ann Lindsey, Graeme O'Connor, Jeanette Stephenson

Other positions filled were:-

Activities Officer: Graeme O'Connor.

Assistant Activities Officer: Jeanette Stephenson.

Librarian: Ed Hamonet.

Assistant Librarian: Max Blanch.

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: Ruth Parker/Margaret Woods.

Assistants at Clubnights: Judith Smith/Adrian Ryan.

Messrs Doherty and Watson were appointed Auditors.

Clubnight activities followed the AGM. Kay and Jim Imrie gave an illustrated talk on their Canning Stock Route Safari.

NEW MEMBERS.

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

Shirley Eagles Toronto.

Terry Stephenson Salt Ash.

Observation reports from February meeting

Jan. 3	Peregrine Falcon	1	Mayfield	T. Clarke
Jan. 20	Pale-headed Rosella	1	New Lambton	A. Stuart
Jan. 26/27	Wood Sandpiper	1	Stockton Borehole	S. Hamonet
Jan. 29	Long-billed Corella + Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo with hybrid chick.		Brightwaters	A. Lindsey

Field Outing to Kooragang Island and Stockton - Sunday 24 January 1993

On this sunny warm day 12 club members were joined by 7 visitors from the Canberra Ornithologists Group.

There were many passerines seen and heard from the Kooragang Island track, the most numerous being White-fronted Chat. Other small birds seen in the bushes were Reed-Warbler, Superb Fairy-wren, Silvereye, Little Grassbird, Cisticola and, in a tree near the main road, Brown Honeyeater. The waders and water birds were less numerous. In addition to the common species there were Musk Duck, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Greenshank.

We then proceeded to the Stockton Sewage Ponds where there were hundreds of birds resting on the bank between the two ponds, but not many different species. A few Crested Tern were among the Silver Gull. What looked like an area of brown pepples was, on closer inspection, a large group of Curlew Sandpiper!

The Stockton sandspit yielded very few waders, a mystery as the tide was going out. Golden Plover and Eastern Curlew were the only waders here. However a Cisticola perched obligingly in full view for several minutes to the delight of our Canberra visitors.

A total of 55 species were recorded.
(for Reed-Warbler read Clamorous Reed-Warbler)

Barbara Kelly

Atlas outing - 7th February, 1993.

Eight people attended the atlas outing to the Mulbring and Quorrobolong areas where we surveyed three private properties. The main habitats were open woodland, grassland, wetland and a small pocket of wet sclerophyl. Despite the heat, we managed to see and hear sixty six species including Grey and Brown Goshawks, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Leaden Flycatcher and Speckled Warbler. The new form and method of counting abundance were considered to be very successful - thanks to the people who were involved in that. A great day!

Ann Lindsey.

Field Day — Barrington House area — Sunday February 21

A brief description of our outing to the Barrington House area would perhaps be "Nice day, but where were all the birds?"

The day started promisingly enough for the 16 participants, with all 3 local species of scrub-wren seen before we had gone 50m from the carpark, and 4 Australian Brush Turkey on the lawn of the guest house, but things quietened down after that. We walked first along the main rainforest track leading from the guest house. Amongst the highlights were a Logrunner, an Emerald Dove and two pair of Pale Yellow Robin, and also a Green Catbird heard. Lucky stragglers on the way back again met up with Jeannette Stephenson who had found on a side track the mound of an Australian Brush Turkey (with the adult bird in active attendance).

After a late morning tea, we explored the drier forest area along the road leading into the guest house. This search revealed large numbers of Bell Miner, and a few other species including a Satin Bowerbird and a pair of Brown Cuckoo-dove, but little else.

Overall, we recorded only 44 species, but the turkey mound was a considerable plus for those fortunate enough to have seen it.

Alan Stuart

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1992

Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the HBOC Incorporated, Wetlands Centre, Shortland 10 February 1993

President's Report

Introduction

The activities of the HBOC during 1992 resulted in a busy and rewarding year for its members.

Through the keen interest and efforts of members, the HBOC continued to develop links with both community and bird groups. An active role in fostering an interest in birds was developed through the presentation of talks to community organisations.

The HBOC was also an active participant at meetings of combined major bird groups in NSW and the ACT. In July, representatives attended a RAOU hosted meeting at the Wetlands Centre to discuss ways of promoting the knowledge and conservation of birds in NSW and the ACT. In November, an Ornithological Database Workshop, hosted by Canberra Ornithologists Group, was attended by two HBOC delegates.

Meetings

Eleven regular monthly meetings were held during the year at the Wetlands Centre, Shortland. Between 30 and 50 members and guests attended each monthly meeting.

'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. These 'short talk' segments provided the opportunity for members to research a bird species and share their knowledge with others. My thanks to all contributors who gave interesting and informative presentations.

A 'Discussion Bird' segment was integrated into the program during 1992. Members and guests were encouraged to report their observations and experiences and to ask questions about a nominated species each month.

Special thanks go to guest speakers who visited the Club to give authoritative talks on a variety of avian related topics. Other main features were presented by Club members or took the form of an audio-visual presentation.

Ruth Parker and Jean Henderson are to be congratulated for providing a much awaited supper at the conclusion of each clubnight. Thanks also to those who contributed in any way to the running of meetings over the year, especially Bridget Whitehead and Judith Smith.

Newsletter

The Club's *Newsletter* continued to be produced on a bimonthly schedule in 1992. It contained articles and notes of broad general interest to birdwatchers. The highly readable content was due to the skillful editing by Rosemary Waymark and Barbara Kelly.

All members who did not regularly attend meetings were kept informed with Club activities by receiving a *Newsletter* through the post. The HBOC *Newsletter* was regularly exchanged with eight other bird groups in New South Wales, ACT and Queensland and circulated to four organisations who advertised through the *Newsletter*. An increase in advertising revenue provided for more than half the costs of production and postage.

I wish to thank all those who contributed articles and reports to the *Newsletter* and also those who were involved in its printing and distribution, especially Alan Stuart and Jeanette Stephenson.

Membership

The Club finished the year with a membership of 140 — an increase of eleven from the previous year. The total was made up of 42 single members, 96 family members and 2 juniors.

Finances

The Club finished the year with a balance of \$686.05 — this represented a loss of \$103.45 for the year. However the anticipated revenue from the sale of copies of *Birds of North East Queensland* in early 1993 should recover \$156.00.

Public Relations

The Club continued to maintain a telephone enquires service listed in the Yellow Pages of the Newcastle District Telephone Directory. A total of 50 calls were received not including several calls concerning homing pigeons. As usual, the callers sought information on a full range of bird topics and enquired about Club membership and activities. The HBOC agreed to support a telephone birdline in Sydney. This service should be operational, once organisational difficulties are overcome, in 1993.

I would like to compliment all those who promoted the activities of the HBOC during 1992, especially Alan Stuart and Judith Smith.

Field Activities

Graeme O'Connor organised an interesting and challenging schedule of camps and outings. Atlas outings were added to the program for 1992 so that bird counts could be conducted in areas beyond the range of regular field outings. These outings were designed to appeal to experienced field observers, however all members were welcome to participate. I would like to thank Graeme for his organisation of the program and to all those who assisted in leading outings during the year.

Records

During 1992 a total of 241 different bird species was recorded at field outings and camps — this compared with 230 recordings in 1991. Birding highlights for the year included Little Penguin, Yellow-nosed and Shy Albatross on the September seabird trip. Other unusual sightings were a white phase of the Grey Goshawk, Painted Button-quail, Musk Lorikeet, Rufous Scrub-bird, Satin Flycatcher, Painted Honeyeater and Diamond Firetail.

I am indebted to both Mathew Stephenson and Sue Hamonet who continued to compile and maintain all the field observations.

Thanks are due to Alan Stuart who prepared a booklet *Records of Outings and Camps 1991*. The observations by members during outings and camps were compiled and collated according to location on a grid system of

the Hunter Region. This document will undoubtedly be used as a basis for impending HBOC Annual Bird Reports.

Libraries

The number of books, Journals and Reports in the Club Library totalled 231 — an increase of 19 over the previous year. Thirteen of these items were purchased with Club funds and the remainder were donated. A big thank you to the Mullard family, Margaret Piefke, Alan Stuart and the Victorian Department of Conservation for their generous donations. Sixty-nine books were borrowed at least once during the year, the most popular being *Gone Birding* by Bill Oddie.

During 1992 ten items were added to the Audio-Video Library. At the end of 1992 the library contained 39 audio cassettes, 3 video cassettes and 2 compact discs. The recorded calls and songs of 562 species of Australian birds, which is 73% of all Australian species, were included in the Library's collection. There was a remarkable increase in loans from the Library in 1992 — up 128% from 1991. All the recordings continued to be available for members' free use on a monthly loan basis. I am gratified to know that members continued to enjoy the recorded sights and sounds of nature for both learning and relaxation.

During 1992 the Slide Library again provided a vital service to members of the HBOC. The slides were an essential part of many 'Bird of the Evening' segments and were also an important part for several member's presentations to other organisations. The number of slides borrowed during the year was 228 — down from 345 in 1991 but up on 145 borrowed in 1990. Members are encouraged to continue to use the Slide Library and, of course, donations of any bird slides would be greatly appreciated.

I thank my fellow librarians, Ed Hamonet and Mathew Stephenson who again provided an indispensable service to members throughout the year.

Projects

A new project was launched in September to monitor the number and distribution of birds in suburban gardens. This project was based on the Garden Bird Survey which the Canberra Ornithologists Group have successfully conducted over several years. All members and other interested people were encouraged to record birds in their gardens on a Garden Bird Chart. It is expected that this project will be on going with replacement charts supplied free in exchange for completed charts. This project will not only prove to be rewarding for participants but will further our knowledge of urban birds of the Hunter Region.

Conservation

The HBOC was involved in many conservation issues during the year and made several submissions, mainly concerned with wetlands.

- Comment was made on a Kooragang Island Wetland Compensation Project. A preliminary design and feasibility study for this project was undertaken by the Wetlands Centre.
- The HBOC was invited to resubmit to the Resource Assessment Commission's Coastal Zone Inquiry an earlier submission. This submission expressed concern about the effects of the Stockton marina

development on the area's birdlife. A *Coastal Zone Inquiry Draft Report* was released in early 1993 for comment.

- A submission was made to the Maitland City Council which commented on the zoning of environmental protection wetlands in the *Draft Maitland Local Environmental Plan 1992*. A new environment plan will now provide for the further protection of wetlands and the creation of a green belt.
- Representatives of HBOC discussed Maitland's Recreation and Open Space Strategy with a study team engaged by Maitland's Council. Discussion focused on maintaining urban wildlife corridors, making provision for passive recreation areas and fostering an appreciation of native flora and fauna.
- A significant contribution was made by the HBOC at the Port Stephens Wildlife Summit in October. A comprehensive paper *Humans and Birds—A Community Together* was professionally prepared and presented by Alan Stuart.

Under the coordinating control of John Moyses a willing team of members and other volunteers participated in the March 'Clean Up Newcastle Day' at a popular wader (and mosquito!) site adjacent to Stockton Bridge.

The HBOC participated with Maitland Landcare and the Hunter Water Corporation during 1992 to establish regional environmental parks around the wetlands in the Maitland district. A management plan for the area of Hunter Water Corporation's land adjacent to the treatment works at Bolwarra has been commissioned by Maitland Landcare. Since this is a notable birdwatching site, the Club is keen to have a bird hide incorporated in this project.

Conclusion

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 1992.

Foremost among these is Peter Phillips who so capably administered the demanding duties of Secretary and Public Officer. Sue Hamonet also deserves a special mention for her continued guidance and devotion and for being an ever reliable source of ornithological knowledge.

The success of the HBOC over the past year owes much to the efforts of the management committee members: Marta Hamilton, Graeme O'Connor, Judith Smith and Jeanette Stephenson.

The HBOC continued to fulfil its objectives by encouraging members and others to enjoy their leisure time birdwatching activities. An important outcome of members' participation was an increase in collected data which are so essential for the effective conservation and management of Australian birds and their habitat.

I extend my sincere thanks to you all for contributing to the achievements of our organisation and look forward to another rewarding year of birdwatching in 1993. The management committee has arranged an ambitious activities program for 1993 that I trust you will find both interesting and stimulating.

Peter McLauchlan
President

End of November at Iron Range.

At Cairns Flight West a few of us eyed each other up and down concluding that some must be birds. A short flight later we were deposited in the tropical sun of an exceedingly dry Lockhart River, with Oriental Pratincoles to greet us. We met officially, and our guide, Klaus Uhlenhut, melded a motley lot (we were 6 plus a child) into a bird observing group. After a quick sandwich Klaus took us to a long ago inhabited patch of bush with old machinery, mango trees and frangipani poking out of the rainforest. Here we were straight away introduced to a Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, Magnificent Riflebird, Trumpet Manucode, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater and White-faced Robin. Then quickly along to a tree full of Metallic Starlings and with its other noisy occupants, a pair of Eclectus Parrots! The vividly coloured female obligingly popped her head out of the nest-hole to see what was going on. In one spot along the track to the starling/eclectus tree an extraordinarily sweet smell pervaded everything. Nothing to see around, but on looking way up I saw some unusual yellow flowers. (When I returned home I went through my books and came to the conclusion it could have been the Perfume Tree (what else?!)) - *Cananga odorata*.

Despite no daylight saving we tried to be on the road by 6.30 am.. Klaus used a tape-recorder or we would never have seen all the special birds in the allotted time. The ranger's house is in a clearing surrounded by rainforest, a good position which produced a Yellow-billed Kingfisher, White-eared Monarchs, Frilled Monarchs, a Palm Cockatoo, a pair of Yellow-breasted Boatbills, Red-winged and Red-cheeked Parrots and the poinciana tree was busy with Yellow-bellied Sunbirds. In the forest we saw various pigeons, the male Magnificent Riflebird, a Graceful Honeyeater and the flowering Leichhardt trees were full of Dusky Honeyeaters.

Next day in different, recently burned country, full of re-grown cocky-apple trees with blossom carpets beneath, we came across a certain species of flowering tree which was very attractive to birds. They were loaded with White-streaked Honeyeaters, a pair of White-browed Robins and the brilliant speck of a male Mistletoebird. In this area we tried unsuccessfully to call up a Fawn-breasted Bowerbird after admiring its 'handiwork' - the most incredibly solid structure raised about 15cm above the surrounding ground and decorated with the typical green berries. However, we had to make do with Black-winged Monarchs. The grey on these birds is almost silver (which contrasts greatly with the dark grey of the Black-faced Monarchs of the Border Ranges).

Before dinner one evening when poking around the mangroves, egrets, White-breasted Woodswallows and a pair of Least Frigatebirds flew overhead, while in the mangroves a Mangrove Robin, Large-billed Gerygone, a pair of Shining Flycatchers, varied honeyeaters and a glimpse of what could only have been a Fawn-breasted Bowerbird. We were so busy it was difficult to know which way to look. Along the road some trillers and an Australian Brush-turkey - bluish white of collar and purple wattles! (Cape York subspecies *Purpureicollis*). Each night returning to the guesthouse we came across one Large-tailed Nightjar after another, squatting on the dusty road till the very last moment before flying and showing off its markings. Frilled Monarchs were plentiful, riflebirds answered to any taped call at all - their 'wolf-whistle' being one of the outstanding calls of the trip. One evening Klaus took us down a 6km track, so bad it took approximately half an hour to drive it. At the end was Chilli Beach - another of those ever-so-long scarcely populated, coconut-fringed North Queensland beaches. The tide was out and a selection of waders were seen along with a Darter, hung out to dry and a Bridled Tern. About sunset the campstools were set out in a row and we were instructed to wait. We became aware of a cloud of smallish black birds flying in unison above an off-shore islet, Old Man Rock, to be joined over the next half hour by wave after wave of these whistling-winged birds until there was a mass of many thousands, twisting and turning in unison like an enormous genie, or some ethereal ballet. It was unforgettable. The birds were Metallic Starlings. We were told the nest-trees cannot cope with the night-time roosting population and so some of their number spend the nights offshore with quite a bit of argument from the Torresian Imperial Pigeons.

One of our party particularly wished to see a Noisy Pitta and they were proving very elusive (we never saw the Red-bellied Pitta). However, on the last full day a perching pitta posed for us. He was exceedingly well-coloured, and as a bonus another Yellow-billed Kingfisher came in close. On the last morning it was very humid and we saw the first sprinkle of rain which augured well for birdwatching. We were in more open country near the airstrip and along with some other birds we notched up a Northern Fantail, Blue-winged Kookaburra, lovely wrens and, at last, a pair of Northern Scrub-robins perched together on a low branch. One last look at the eclectus tree to find a great disturbance - a determined Grey Goshawk kept perching in the tree causing great consternation to starling and parrots. Returning to the van we fluked a Green-backed Honeyeater low down in a shrub, reputedly not an easy bird to find. The final bird count provided a score of approximately 110 and for myself 32 new species. And the memories are for ever.

Jenny Meynell.

Swan Island - A different holiday.

In January, our family was lucky to visit Swan Island in Bass Strait. This sand on dolomite outcrop lies 3 km off Cape Portland, NE Tasmania.

Swan Island is a wildlife refuge managed by Jill and Ron Harris and their family. There is 12.5 km of coastline, glorious beaches and rocky headlands, as well as 20 km of walking tracks with patches of rare remnant natural vegetation missed by the grazing which took place between 1846 and 1975. Jill thinks she is the only RAOU bird observer and nest recorder on the Bass Strait Islands.

Thrills for us were seeing the Little Penguins returning to their downy chicks in the evening. While standing watching the penguins, Short-tailed Shearwaters brushed our ears as they homed in on their own burrows. They are extremely cumbersome on land and dive bomb the burrow entrances. We sailed through a flock of Shearwaters which we estimated was 100,000 strong. 14 pairs of Cape Barren Geese nest each year with individual families controlling a headland of their own. We were able to see the geese at close quarters. On nearby Little Swan Island we watched adolescent Australian Pelicans waddling in a most ungainly fashion to escape the intruders. We viewed newly hatched Silver Gull chicks and watched one cracking its egg-shell to hatch. A Hooded Plover nest with three eggs was spotted camouflaged between rock and seaweed. The next day the eggs were covered by sand, a wind change. The following morning the eggs had been rolled to the other side of the rock into a newly excavated and lined nest. Two eggs hatched. Crested Terns have a rookery on the Island.

Birds I observed included Crescent Honeyeater, Silvereye (the distinct Tasmanian variety with brown flanks), Forest Raven, Brown Falcon, Marsh Harrier, Little Penguin, Australian Pelican, Black-faced Shag, Grey Fantail, White-fronted Chat, Sooty Oystercatcher, Pied Oystercatcher, Hooded Plover, Welcome Swallow, Cape Barren Goose, Silver Gull, Pacific Gull, Common Starling, Blackbird, Brown Quail, Caspian Tern, Short-tailed Shearwater, Red-capped Plover, Long-toed Stint, Ruddy Turnstone, Richard's Pipit and Shy Albatross (corpse).

As well as the bird watching, walking, rock hopping, fishing, swimming and snorkelling for holiday makers there is the interest of the European Heritage. Habitation dates from 1845 with ruins and three lighthouse keepers' houses plus the lighthouse.

Added to this are the Aboriginal artefacts and Death Valley - an ancient penguin rookery causing a dune blow out and uncovering masses of penguin and wallaby bones thought to be five to eight thousand years old, originating at the time Tasmania had a land bridge to Victoria.

Jill and Ron have converted the 1907 Federation Style House into a comfortable guest house accommodating seven guests. Tariff can include full or self catering. Access is by a short plane ride from Cape Portland - Ron has a commercial pilot's licence. For bookings phone/fax Jill on 003-572211 or contact Paddy for details on 049-521820.

Paddy Lightfoot.

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A GUIDE TO CHOOSING BINOCULARS**What the figures mean:**

The most important information about a pair of binoculars is their size, this is in the form 7 x 50, 8 x 30, 9 x 21 etc: two numbers separated by a multiplication sign. The code is easy to decipher; the first number is the magnification of the binoculars, that is, how many times closer they make objects appear. The second number is the size of the front lenses in millimetres. This is a measure of how much light can enter the glasses.

Magnification and Field of View:

Magnification and field of view are in inverse proportion. Very simply: Large field of view, low magnification. High magnification, smaller field of view.

Viewing with or without spectacles:

If you wear spectacles you will almost always have had problems with binoculars. With spectacles your field of view was severely restricted, and without them you lost the advantage of your own correction lenses. Not all visual defects can be compensated for by the binocular's focusing system, however, this problem has now been overcome with easy to use retractable rubber eyecups, fitted to most binoculars today. With most of these binoculars the exit pupils of the eyepieces have also been specially recessed so that spectacle wearers enjoy a full field of view, too. Without spectacles you keep the rubber eyecups turned up. When wearing spectacles you simply fold the cups down. This makes them universal.

Be sure when choosing your binoculars that they meet the following requirements which are essential for clear, bright detail viewing of birdlife:

- they have high quality optical glass with anti-reflection coatings
- they have a close focusing capacity for sharp detail viewing
- they have the correct magnification so that prolonged viewing does not cause eyestrain.
- they are lightweight and compact.

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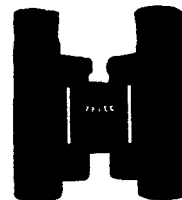
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YELLOW WAGTAIL ON KOORAGANG ISLAND

It is generally accepted that the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, is an uncommon yet regular summer visitor to Northern Australia and sightings in the South are rare. One individual was seen at Baker's Lagoon (33/150) in April 1979.

On Sunday 21st February 1993, I visited Kooragang Island to "test drive" a new spotting scope I had recently purchased. At about 11.30AM ESST while watching waders, I noticed a peculiar bird which I eventually identified as a Yellow Wagtail.

Kooragang Island is located in the estuary of the Hunter River (33/152) and the observation was made at the edge of a large and shallow pond adjacent to the main road, Cormorant Drive. This area is one of many favourite sites to watch waders and water birds in general. A feature of this particular pond is the dead mangroves standing like sticks in the water. Many small insectivorous birds fly about these 'sticks' seeking prey items.

When I first noticed the bird I thought it to be a Clamorous Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*, since I had seen a few about as I walked in, and this particular bird was striking a 'reed-warbler' pose as it held onto a dead mangrove. I then noticed that the bird waved it's tail up and down from time to time and I supposed it to be a Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. At a range of 30m and through the spotting scope I could now tell that the bird was neither of the above and so I frantically started to take notes.

The bird had a yellow throat and belly; a dirty looking chest; white eyebrow; black eye; olive-green crown, cheek and back; primaries edged buff. It was slightly built and had a pipit's shape and form, long black legs and a long thin tail with white outer feathers. I would like to think that this bird was moulting into breeding plumage in preparation for a Northern Hemisphere breeding season.

The bird continued to move about the 'sticks' without ever getting above them. I watched the bird for about fifteen minutes and during that time I saw it catch an insect of some description 'on the wing'. After eating the morsel the bird wiped it's beak on the stick it was perched on and then hovered briefly over the water as it dipped it's beak and appeared to take a drink.

During the following couple of weeks since this sighting many other bird watchers have searched feverishly all over the Kooragang Island area in an attempt to confirm my observation. I wish to thank them for their efforts.

References.

- Blackwell, G. & Yates, N. 1979 'A Yellow Wagtail Near Richmond' Aust. Birds Vol. 14, No. 2 35-36
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 Schodde, R. & Tidemann, S.C. (Eds) 1986 Reader's Digest Complete Book Of Australian Birds
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 Slater, P. 1986 The Slater Field Guide To Australian Birds.

By TOM CLARKE 24 Ackeron St., Mayfield N.S.W. 2304

BOCA BIRDS & WATTLES SURVEY - Or - Follow that Parrot.

The Bird Observers Club of Australia is undertaking the above survey in an attempt to find out more about the birds, such as parrots, which are seed-eaters, and may eat the seeds of Acacia [Wattle] species. Information gained in this way will assist in advising people who may ask for guidance about what plants to use in gardens in order to attract birds.

HBOC members may like to assist by reporting any activity of this nature. A special recording form has been devised and will be available at club nights. We are asked to notice and report the following types of activity or usage:- birds foraging on foliage, foraging on trunk, foraging on ground, feeding on green seeds, feeding on dry seeds, feeding on fallen seeds, feeding on insects from galls, feeding on insects from foliage, feeding on insect larvae from inside branch/trunk, feeding on gum/sap on branch/trunk, feeding on exudate from gland at base of phyllode/leaf, feeding on pollen, or any other use. The Wattle species, if possible, should be identified.

See Sue Hamonet for forms.

THE MARCH MEETING.

The March Clubnight was held on Wednesday the 10th. Max Blanch presented the Bird of the Evening and talked about the Long-billed and Little Corellas. The Main Feature was presented by Phil Straw, a professional ornithologist, his subject "The Role of the Amateur Ornithologist".

Observation reports from March meeting

Feb.	Black-necked Stork	2	Mandalong Lagoon	S.&K. Smith
Feb.12	Brown Quail	4	Fame Cove	G. O'Connor
Feb.7/9	Long-billed Corella	30	Lemon Tree Passage	M. Blanch
Feb 4/5	Black-necked Stork	2	Mandalong	A. Lindsey
Feb. 6	Black-necked Stork	1	"	A. Lindsey
Feb.10	Spotted Pardalote	1	N'cle Art Gallery Car Park	J. Gardner
Feb.21	Yellow Wagtail	1	Kooragang Island	T. Clarke
Mar. 6	Spangled Drongo	1	East Maitland	P. McLauchlan
Mar.	Spangled Drongo	2	Belmont South	J. Cockerell

Camp at Milbrodale - 20/21 March.

The Sunday of the weekend camp at Milbrodale was the autumn equinox, so those of us who braved the elements and camped overnight could not complain about an imbalance between light and dark. We could not complain about the weather either, it treated us very kindly, the rain that had been hanging about Newcastle for most of the week stayed away.

The camp site nestles below some well timbered sandstone overhangs with some quite rugged ridges providing a more distant and quite spectacular backdrop. Sprawling north from the camp is typically lush Hunter Valley farmland. In the distance we could just make out an interesting but rather bare ridge, which turned out to be an open cut mine, (probably Mt. Thorley). A short walk from the camp site reveals the cave home of "Milbrodale Man", an extraordinary well preserved stencil of the aboriginal God Bimbee.

A gentle stroll on Saturday afternoon rewarded us with a huge flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos feasting on the seeds thoughtfully scattered for their express benefit by friendly farmers. Three Australian King-Parrots and a family of Pied Butcherbirds added to the delights of our late afternoon ramble, made more ornithologically productive by Sue Hamonet's sharp eyes and wealth of knowledge.

Sunday and the five hardy campers were joined by fifteen day trippers and together we made two forays into the wilderness, one before and one after morning tea. The first expedition began well with the sighting of a pair of Tawny Frogmouths only a few metres from the camp. This trip also yielded the sighting of the weekend, an Australian Owlet-nightjar spotted by Alan Stuart. Our second foray took us up the convict built Old Bulga Road where we were rewarded with sightings of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. In total we recorded 75 species, this number when added to the 77 species recorded during our last visit to Milbrodale in the spring of 1992 increased the total number of species recorded there by 17 to 94.

A special thanks to Marlene and Rod Smith for allowing us to camp on their property and for the "Saying hullo" visit by Marlene on Saturday evening.

David Kibble.

Advice for contributors to the Newsletter.

The policy of the HBOC is to use in all publications the nomenclature as recommended by the NSWORAC. This list closely follows that of Condon in the Checklist of the Birds of Australia Part 1 (1975). It consists of Non-Passerines as used in HANZAB, and thence the names as used in the Atlas of Australian Birds.

Specific names need capital letters e.g. Splendid Fairy-wren, whereas collective terms e.g. fairy-wrens do not.

When producing an item, if possible please type on A4 paper, or write clearly.

SOME BIRDS OF TROPICAL AUSTRALIA

Don Halliday

During the month of August my wife and I, with our daughter and her family, undertook a trip through parts of Queensland and the Northern Territory. While this was not primarily a bird-watching expedition, and while we did not go to out-of-the-way places especially to see rare birds, I would like to set down here a record of some of the birds seen by two very ordinary bird-watchers.

We first went to Townsville, where our daughter lives. The house is at Aitkenvale, on the outskirts of Townsville, on the banks of the Ross River. There we saw such common birds as House Sparrows and the Common Mynas, as well as Pied Cormorants, Whistling Kites, Australian Magpie Larks, and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. Birds more familiar in the tropics included both Straw-necked and Australian White Ibis, Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds, Nutmeg Mannikin, Peaceful Doves, and Magpie Geese.

We also made a trip to Townsville Common, an area near the sea shore set aside as a nature reserve. The season was dry, and the swamp land one would usually expect there had dried up. The most startling feature was a large flock of Brolga. There were a few Comb-crested Jacanas on the pools. Yellow and Yellow-spotted Honeyeaters, Little Friarbirds, and Yellow-bellied Sunbirds made the most of the blossoms, and we also caught sight of Spangled Drongos, Figbirds, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes, and Little Shrike-thrush. Black-breasted Buzzards and Black Kites sailed around overhead.

On the way to Darwin through the towns of Western Queensland and the Territory, we noticed that there seemed to be a number of Black Kites circling overhead at each town. Was this because they were attracted by some sort of rubbish or other food available only in these settlements, or was it just that we had more time to see them when stopped in a town? As we traversed the open eucalyptus forest approaching Darwin, we were interested to see a flock of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos.

Leaving Darwin after a week-end, we made our way towards Kakadu. On the way we stopped at Foggs Dam. This was built to provide irrigation water for a rice project. Unlike most dams I have seen, it was low and crossed a stretch of rather flat country. Again it was the dry season and there was not too much water round. We were fortunate in sighting a variety of birds, many of which were familiar to us from the years when we lived in New Guinea. The flycatchers were represented by the Leaden, Lemon-bellied and Restless Flycatchers, the latter looking very much like the Willie Wagtails, which were also present, along with Northern Fantails. The Honey-eaters were there - White-gaped and Dusky. The Sacred Kingfishers were joined by their cousins the beautiful little Forest Kingfishers, and their more distant relations, the even more beautiful Rainbow Bee-eaters. The smaller birds included Striated Thornbills and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, and the largest birds were again the Brolgas, feeding in what was left of the swamp. In between there were Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Yellow Orioles, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes, Rufous Whistlers, Varied Trillers, and the ever present

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Australian Magpie Larks. The commonest birds of prey were again the Black Kites, and Whistling Kites were also heard.

After a night camped at Kakadu, we went out on the early morning Yellow Waters Cruise - a very popular trip, with enough sight-seers on this occasion to fill three boats. The highlight of this trip was a sighting of the rare Great-billed Heron, the largest, and possibly rarest, of all the heron tribe. But there were plenty of other birds to see. The Intermediate Egrets and the Darters were there; and Rufous Night Herons were half hidden in the trees. A couple of Tawny Frogmouths were also trying to be inconspicuous as they had the daytime rest. In addition to the Sacred and Forest Kingfishers, we sighted some Azure Kingfishers, but regrettably no Little Kingfishers, which are sometimes seen there. Comb-Crested Jacanas (also called lotus-birds) stepped over the water-lilies foraging, Little Pied Cormorants fished in the river, and Black-necked Storks strolled along the banks. (A nearby town, Jabiru, is named after them.) Plumed Whistling Duck and Green Pygmy Geese flew off at our approach. We were greatly surprised to see large flocks of Bar-shouldered Doves; on one excursion to Dora Creek this year we felt we were lucky to sight a few, but here hundreds were flying past. White-bellied Sea-eagles and Ospreys looked down from their perches high on the bare branches of trees along the river banks, while Whistling Kites circled overhead. Other more common birds included Straw-necked Ibis, Restless Flycatchers, and Blue-faced Honeyeaters. It was indeed a memorable trip, and we only regretted that there was no time to go looking for more birds back in the hills.

In the drier southern parts of the territory round Alice Springs, there was still a good variety of birds. Again we did not have time to go looking for many, but one we did notice near Ayers Rock was the Masked Wood-swallow.

At a small wayside stop over the border in South Australia, we had an enforced stay of several days; and here we were able to observe more closely the local bird population. Most of the vegetation was low and scrubby, though it was a little better near a waterhole about two kilometres away through the bush. Our most interesting find was the nest of a Richard's Pipit, hidden in a tussock alongside a track. The parrot tribe was well represented here; species seen included Little Corellas, Mulga Parrots, Port Lincoln Ringnecks, Galahs, and Budgerigars. Of the finch family we saw Painted Firetails and Zebra Finches. A new bird to us was the White-browed Babbler, whose cousins the Grey-Crowned Babblers we had also seen further north near the Cutta Cutta Caves. The usual Whistling and Black Kites were joined by a kind of hawk which we did not identify. Other doubtful identifications included the Little Wood-swallow, a White-fronted Chat, and a Marsh Sandpiper. The Diamond Dove seemed to be the common dove here, and there were also Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Australian Magpie Larks, and Australian Ravens. If men had trouble in finding food in that country, it seemed that a variety of birds had little difficulty.

We returned home impressed by the vastness of our country and the great variety of its bird population.

COMING EVENTS.

<u>Sunday 25 April.</u> 03	<u>Field Day & BBQ:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Swansea South. Coles Car Park Swansea. 7.30 am. Graeme O'Connor.
<u>Sunday 2 May.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Four Mile Creek - Maitland. McDonalds - Greenhills. 7.30 am. Peter McLaughlan.
<u>Wednesday 12 May.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u> <u>Main feature:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30pm Paddy Lightfoot. SGAP. Plants and Trees to attract Bird.
<u>Weekend 12-14 June.</u>	<u>Camp:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Murrumbo Station (Private Property) Graeme O'Connor.
<u>Sunday 20 June.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Wetlands Day. Shortland Wetland Centre. 8 am. Ann Lindsey.
<u>Wednesday 9 June.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u> <u>Main Feature:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30pm. Arthur Austin presents his videos on Rainforests & Wetlands.

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 HBCO to the newsletter are welcome and the deadline for the June/July newsletter is 26th May.

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

Editor.



CAPE YORK BIRD WEEK

January & April 1994

at the Tip of Cape York

Highlights: Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, Magnificent Riflebird, Red-bellied Pitta, Pale White-eye and more Cape York endemics

Other fully accommodated birding events:

Golden-shouldered Parrot/Lakefield N.P. Tour (May)

Atherton Tablelands/Mission Beach Bird Tour

Iron Range Bird Tour (June, July, September + December)

Gulf and Inland Bird Tour Mt. Isa, Lawn Hill, Karumba, Georgetown,

Undarra Lava Tubes (August + November)

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