

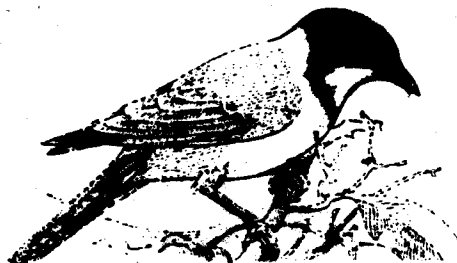
Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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 AUGUST MEETING.

The August Clubnight was held on Wednesday the 11th. For the Bird Call John Moyle presented the Weebill and Peter Phillips presented the Pheasant Coucal for the Bird of the Evening. The Main Feature for the evening was a talk given by David Geering, a Researcher with the Shortland Wetland Centre, David talked of the exciting results from Project Egret Watch. Project Egret Watch is to be placed yet again in the international spotlight. Max Maddock and David Geering will be presenting a paper to the Southern African Ornithological Society Symposium on Migration, Dispersal and Nomadism in mid September 1993. The symposium will be held at Langebaan West Coast National Park, north west of Cape Town.

Observation reports from August meeting

July 17	Pacific Baza	2	Wangi Point	R. Waymark
Aug. 2	Rose-crowned Pigeon	1	Blackbutt Reserve	A. Thomson
8	White-headed Pigeon	2	New Lambton Hts.	F. Thomson
9	" " "	4	" " "	"
5	W/Breasted Sea-eagle	1	Mayfield	T. Clarke
10	Black-should. Kite	1	"	"
13	" " "	1	"	"
19	Australian Kestrel	2	"	"
31	Brown Honeyeater	1	Port Waratah	"
31	European Goldfinch	2	"	"

NEW MEMBERS.

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

David Geering
Sue and Michael Newman
Coralie and Bob Teale

Fullerton Cove.
Woodville.
Terrigal.

Hunter leads the world on bird migration study

NEWCASTLE researchers conducting one of the world's leading studies on bird migration will present the latest results of their 11-year project to a symposium in South Africa in the next few weeks.

In doing so they will acknowledge the efforts of hundreds of amateur birdwatchers, many of them from the Hunter, who have assisted the project by recording the travels of tagged birds.

Principal researcher Professor Max Maddock, from Newcastle University, and Shortland Wetlands researcher Mr David Geering are recognised as world experts on cattle egrets, the graceful white birds often seen feeding near grazing cattle.

Mr Geering last week gave advance details of Project Egret Watch to a meeting of the Hunter Bird Observers Club prior to the South African conference.

'Over the past 50 years cattle egrets have exploded around the world, whereas before they were confined to central Africa and South-East Asia,' Mr Geering said.

'They are really the only birds ever to be able to expand to such an extent without the help of man.

'We have found that they have a number of built-in mechanisms to enable them to do this.

'Nobody has been able to study the movements of the birds as closely as we have.'

Project Egret Watch is assisted by about 200 observers in south-eastern Australia and New Zealand.

The birds have 10 breeding colonies along eastern Australia, from Bundaberg in Queensland to Toronto in the south.

About 6000 egrets have been tagged since that part of the project began in 1986, and 15,000 sightings have been recorded by observers as far away as New Zealand.

'We band them on the leg and with a coloured tag on the wing,' Mr Geering said.

'The wing tag is coded with numbers and letters that are quite easy to read with binoculars.'

Project Egret Watch found that in Australia there was a strong bias for the birds to head south in winter for wetter conditions, although they travelled in all directions and had been reported on Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands.

'They don't fly directly to their wintering sites but more or less fly from valley to valley, stopping to gain weight before they continue on,' Mr Geering said.

'To get to New Zealand we find that birds from around here go to Tasmania first and wait for a favourable wind.'

Field Outing in the Buchanan area. 22nd August, 1993.

Our meeting place was adjacent to Buchanan Gallery with a good view of a dam, which naturally was not wasted! A large flock of Straw-necked Ibis was seen in the distance, various ducks, Black Swans and little grebes were on the dam. When no more could be seen, we were guided to a large parking area by a bridge on George Booth Drive (not far east of the Mulbring turnoff) by Andrew Richardson, a keen young birdo who knew the area like the back of his hand.

Our goal was a stretch of good bush between the north side of George Booth Drive and the track-bed of an old colliery railway. A fair variation in plant species, native grasses and some good nest-hole trees, though the latter are gradually toppling to firewood seekers. (Most of those flowering wattles were *Acacia elongata*, incidentally).

And the birding was very good. Some of the highlights were a Peregrine Falcon sighted a couple of times and posing for all to see. A Pallid Cuckoo atop several trees and in full voice, as were unseen Fan-tailed Cuckoos. A pair of Shining Bronze-cuckoos obligingly perched in the sunlight. White-throated and Brown Treecreepers were seen, also an Australian Raven at nest. At least half a dozen species of honeyeater were sighted, the most numerous and cheeky were the Yellow-tufted Honey-eaters. Eastern Yellow and Rose Robins were also seen. Spotted Quail-thrush had been seen here yesterday (of course), however we were not in luck.

Back at the carpark a pair of White-faced Herons circled lazily overhead. After a cuppa some of us explored a dry sandy creek bed until we reached bellbird territory. A Spotted Pardalote was hanging around waiting to dive into its hole, while a pair of Rose Robins were not at all shy. It was a very beautiful spring day and 17 of us spotted 80 species over both locations.

Jenny Meynell.

Bird Observation Records

This year, the club started a long-term project to build up a picture of birds in the Hunter Region. The project has two main objectives:

- To monitor the distribution and population density of Hunter Region bird species, so that trends of change are spotted early on (when there is perhaps still time to do something about it)
- To identify the significant sites for birds and build up a data base on their importance, for use in future conservation battles.

These twin objectives highlight the importance of individual members observation records. Every observation may be important, if not now then perhaps in the future.

A few months ago, we invited all members to submit observation records, and distributed copies of some record sheets that could be used for this purpose. I am happy to report that many people are now regularly handing in these sheets, based either on a deliberate birding expedition somewhere or just on what they saw during an outing, picnic, or whatever. However, more records are needed. What about submitting yours?

If you can't find where you put the record sheets we sent out before, or if for some reason you didn't receive them, let me know and I will arrange to send you some more.

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING.

The September Clubnight was held on the 8th. The evening commenced with Bird Call, Tom Clarke presenting the Brown Honeyeater. Glyn Walker then presented the Chestnut-rumped Hylacola for the Bird of the Evening. For the Main Feature the Guest Speaker was Ian Hutton, who gave an illustrated talk on the history and birds of Lord Howe Island.

Observation reports from September meeting

Aug.	1	Brahminy Kite	1	Kooragang Island	F. van Gessel
	22	Figbird	13	Belmont Sth.	J. Cockerill
Sep.	7	"	3	" "	"
	8	Sacred Ibis	24	" "	"
	2	Striped Honeyeater	2	Ellalong	J. Meynell
	6	Sacred Kingfisher	1	Edgeworth	G. O'Connor
	7	Buff Banded Rail	1	Stockton S.T.W.	J. Imrie
	8	White-br. Woodswallow	3	S.W.C.	W. Barden.

The Rose-crowned Pigeon was seen walking across the track in the Rainforest area of Blackbutt.

The Brahminy Kite reported from Kooragang is an exciting record of a bird missing from this area for some long years. The species seems to be extending its range South into its historic territories once again, and this may indicate the number of birds is increasing.

Correction: The Glossy Black Cockatoos [6] shown on 27/5/93 at Lenaghan's Drive were in fact seen at Bluegum Forest at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains.

NORTHERN INSTRUMENT SERVICES

990 Hunter Street, Newcastle

Ph: 69 4021

SPECIALISING IN SALES AND SERVICE OF:

**BINOCULARS
SPOTTING SCOPES AND
TELESCOPES**

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



BREAKFAST WITH THE BIRDS - COOLOOLA NATIONAL PARK (1.9.93)

The Cooloola National Park is located between Noosa Heads and Hervey Bay, in south east Queensland. In a recent trip to this splendid area, I was told by the Ranger that the Bymien picnic area, in the north of the park, was a good place to see Noisy Pittas. Even though I had seen this bird before, it seemed an opportunity too good to be passed up. Having packed early from the previous night's camp, I started what turned out to be a slow drive to the aforementioned spot, although it was only 20 kilometres away. The trip took me across some rather sandy ground and through some of the most scenic rainforest I have experienced. The landscape was very similar to that on Fraser Island (the whole area has been described as a mainland version of Fraser Island). On arrival at the picnic area, breakfast was first, then some bird watching. I soon started to hear the soft call of the Wompoo Fruit-dove, so I picked up my binoculars and started looking. Sure enough, up high, I spotted the first of several of these handsome birds that I was to find in the area. They seemed everywhere. Soon, a flock of at least 15 Topknot Pigeons flew over, and they were followed by some White-headed Pigeons. Walking further towards the road, up flushed a rather plump bird. I thought to myself that it looked like a small, fat dove. The bird then perched itself in the top of a palm, joining another of its type. To my delight, the bird turned out to be a Rose-crowned Fruit-dove. I cannot describe my amazement, as I had never imagined to ever see this bird. It is almost as stunning as the Wompoo Fruit-dove, but one that has avoided me until this time. Only a bird watcher can understand the delight at finding a bird that is normally very hard to locate, due to the area in which it lives.

As far as I was concerned, finding this bird was superior to seeing a Noisy Pitta. However, I heard the pitta call twice and found some snail shells, indicating its presence nearby.

In other areas of the park I was lucky enough to sight another five species of pigeons and doves, including Brown Cuckoo-dove, Emerald Dove and many Bar-shouldered Doves. I do recommend this superb National Park to anyone who gets the chance to travel in the area. It is certainly one of the most delightful districts in southern Queensland. Of course, the Bymien picnic area is well worth a visit. The road into this picnic area is gravel, and sandy in patches, but open to conventional vehicles. However, if you intend to travel beyond this point, and further into the park, only 4WD should be used.

Jeanette Stephenson.

Birdline N.S.W.

Rare, uncommon and interesting birds regularly visit our region. Many, of course, pass through without notice, but there are always those spotted by some keen birdo. Unfortunately, often this is as far as it goes and the rest of us hear of the sighting as a record in this newsletter, perhaps months later.

Realising that there are many people who are interested in seeing rare or interesting birds, a group of the local clubs have combined together to provide a new service, Birdline N.S.W.

Birdline N.S.W. is for hardcore or budding "twitchers". A service where one can phone in for a recorded message highlighting the latest sightings or leave your own details of a sighting you may have had.

The service will be available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and will be set up in early August 1993.

If you want to find out the latest, or leave your message, then just call (02) 267 8961 - Birdline N.S.W.

Sponsoring clubs are the N.S.W. Field Ornithologists Club, Hunter Bird Observers Club, Hunter Wetlands Trust, the RAOU and, of course, Cumberland. The FOC is administering the programme for the first 12 months and if that is successful, this will pass on to one of the other clubs. The phone is, in actual fact, situated in the RAOU's new Sydney office in Bathurst Street.

Thanks to both organisations.



**Royal Australasian
Ornithologists Union**

Established 1901

ACN 004 076 475

Head office: 21 Gladstone Street,

Moonee Ponds, Victoria, 3039

Tel: (03) 370 1422 Fax: (03) 370 9194

7.

July 1993

Dear Member,

REGENT HONEY EATER
Conservation Programme In The Capertee Valley Near Rylstone

As you may be aware, a conservation programme aimed at saving and enlarging suitable Regent Honey Eater habitat has been set up by your Southern N.S.W. and A.C.T. committee. Our focus for this programme is the Capertee Valley, one of the last remaining areas in N.S.W., where this bird is regularly seen.

To date, we have received some initial funding from the Save The Bush Programme and have developed an initial plan for the project. The other communication with this letter also advises that the majority of funds (75%) raised in Southern N.S.W. and the A.C.T. for the Twitchathon will also go towards this project. However, whilst additional financial support and donations for the project will be required and are most welcome, we are looking for concerned people interested in giving their time for conservation work. We have already received support from two of the NSW bird groups, the N.S.W. Field Ornithologists and the Cumberland Bird Observers Club. We are looking for R.A.O.U. members to support and expand the small team already involved, to further this conservation work.

Initially, regular surveys to selected sites in the valley are required and if you would be interested in supporting this on a regular or occasional basis, then please call either: Kristine French (042) 674 125, or Peter West (02) 875 4482, or write to us through the N.S.W. office of the R.A.O.U. at Locked Bag 600, St. James Post Office, Sydney NSW 2000.

Thanks for your support and we look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

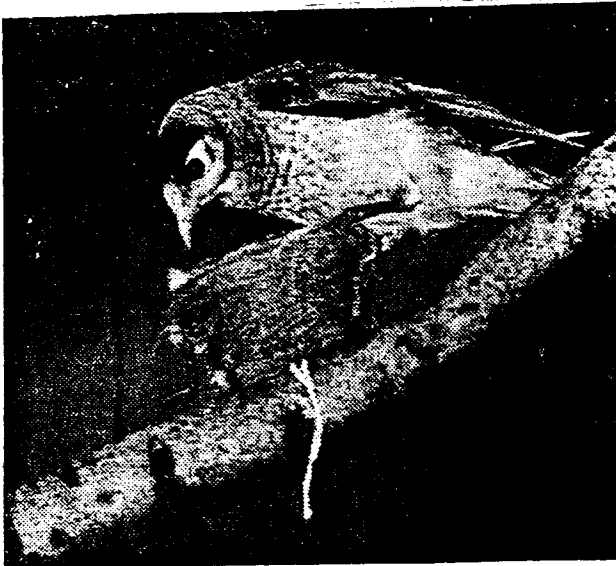
Peter West
Vice Chairman
Southern NSW & ACT Committee

Other offices:
Observatories:

c/- Australian Museum, P.O. Box A285, Sydney South, N.S.W. 2000. Tel: (02) 339 8183.
Barren Grounds, P.O. Box 3, Jamberoo, N.S.W. 2533. Tel: (042) 36 0195.
Broome, P.O. Box 1313, Broome, W.A. 6725. Tel: (091) 93 5600.

P.O. Box 199, Jolimont, W.A. 6014. Tel: (09) 383 7749.
Eyre, Cocklebidy via Norseman, W.A. 6443. Tel: (090) 39 3450.
Rotamah, P.O. Box 75, Paynesville, VIC. 3880. Tel: (051) 56 6398.

Birds have a ball in the case of the feathered felons



By KATE SOUTHAM
Environment Writer

The Australian Museum is staging an ornithological whodunnit, complete with suspects and props.

The museum's ecologist, Dr Richard Major, said 2,000 volunteers were being armed with fake willy wagtail nests made from tennis balls and containing Plasticine eggs in an effort to find out just who was raiding nests in suburban backyards.

He said the pied currawong had long been suspected of being the main culprit behind the egg robbing, which in turn had been cited as a reason for the decline in the number of native birds living in our cities.

But Dr Major said the evidence against the pied currawong had been largely anecdotal and it was time to find out just who was behind the raids on the nests of such birds as the willy wagtail, superb fairy-wren and scarlet robin.

"There has been a lot of debate about the pied currawong . . . some people have said let's poison them," he said.

Other suspects include the cat, the rat and other birds such as the noisy miner and indian myna and the starling.

The project started three

months ago with volunteers making the fake nests. Half of the nests are a tennis ball dyed brown and with the top cut off.

With the other half, sheep wool and coconut fibre were added to the tennis ball to make them look more like a real willy wagtail's nest.

Of each group of 1,000 nests, half contained speckled eggs while the other half were plain. Those two groups of eggs were hung in trees and the other half on clothes lines.

Nests have been sent to volunteers all over Sydney as well as Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane, but 200 still need to be sent.

Each volunteer is being asked to send their "eggs" back as soon as they have been attacked so that the marks left by the would-be thief can be examined to establish the identity. Nests will be hung for more than two weeks - the time it takes for an egg to hatch.

Volunteers are also being asked to keep their eyes open in case they catch the thief in the act.

"Two thousand pairs of eyes are better than one little research team," Dr Major said.

The results of the project will be used to guide public debate on what should be done to protect eggs.

Anyone interested in helping should call (02) 339 8357.



The Sydney Morning Herald
Wednesday, September 15, 1988



evidence . . . high up a tree, Dr Richard Major watches as a noisy miner, inset, raids a phony nest.

COMING EVENTS.

<u>Sunday 17 October.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Bayswater Lake (Power Station). McDonalds, East Maitland. 7 am. Peter McLauchlan. 333224.
<u>Sunday 24 October.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Cooranbong. Coles carpark Toronto. 7.30 am. Ann Lindsey - 733519.
<u>Wednesday 10 November.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u> <u>Main feature:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30 Bev and David Kibble <u>Birdwatching in Indonesia.</u>
<u>Sunday 21 November.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Port Stephens. Information sign across the Tourle Street Bridge. 6.30 am. Max Blanch. 824708.
<u>Sunday 5 December.</u>	<u>Field Day:</u> <u>Meet:</u> <u>Contact:</u>	Stanhope Creek. McDonalds, Hexham. 6 am. Sue Hamonet. 581023.
<u>Wednesday 8 December.</u>	<u>Clubnight:</u> <u>Main feature:</u>	Shortland Wetland Centre. 7.30 Social Evening, supper etc.,

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 HBCC to the newsletter are welcome and the deadline for the December/January 1994 newsletter is the 24th November. PLEASE NOTE. Barbara Kelly will be producing the next newsletter, her address and telephone - 19, Ilford Avenue, Buttaba, 2283. 752551.

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

Editor.

