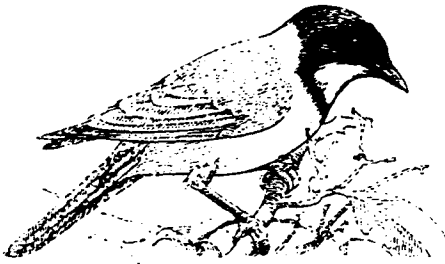


NEWSLETTER



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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Ann Lindsey
Peter Phillips
Tom Clarke

The aims of the club are:

To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat.

To encourage bird observing as a leisure time activity.

● August Club Night

From Rainforest to Desert Island.

Two very interesting presentations entertained and informed a full house at Club Night on 10th August, 1994.

David Geering combined our regular *Bird Call* and *Bird of the Evening* segments to share his knowledge and experience of the Logrunner *Orthonyx temminckii*.

This bird lives in rainforest areas on the east coast of Australia where it can often be found feeding in company with Yellow-throated Scrubwren and Eastern Whipbird.

David described the method of foraging as a circular raking of the litter with each foot. the Logrunner braces itself on its spiny tail as it rakes aside the litter in search of insects and their larvae.

Also of interest is the nest of this ground dweller. A lyrebird's nest in miniature is a good description.

A curious bird which, at times, can display apparent tameness but usually is shy and hard to find. Signs to look for are the circular cleared patches left from its foraging and of course, its calls. When disturbed, this bird has a rapid and loud utterance. The recording which David played featured this wild sounding off as well as a subdued contact call.

Main feature of the evening was a naturalist's view of a small sandy island in Bass Strait. Paddy Lightfoot presented slides and expert commentary of a recent holiday spent on Swan Island.

Swan Island is the first land off the north east tip of Tasmania and the beginning of a string of islands called the Furneaux Group. Much larger and more famous among these are Flinders and Cape Barren Islands.

Swan Island is fairly flat and the main habitat is tea-tree scrub. Little Penguin and Short-tailed Shearwater have large rookeries on this island while fourteen pairs of Cape Barren Geese keep watch over the fourteen headlands. Each pair reign over their own individual headland patch.

Paddy found the island had been invaded by some South African plants; African Boxthorn and Red Hot Poker are thriving on Swan Island. One particular boxthorn was curiously being used as a nest site for a pair of Cape Barren Geese! while the Red Hot Poker was offering great feeding opportunities for Crescent Honeyeaters. Lupins are also rampant.

A very interesting plant/bird relationship observed by Paddy was that of the Silver Gull and a species of *Leucopogon* (White Beard). Seeds of this plant are passed by gulls after digesting the attractive fruit. A mad collector of seeds, Paddy acquired both consumed and untouched examples to see how they would go back home. It is generally regarded that *Leucopogon* seed is difficult to germinate. Amazingly, the seed that had been eaten by the gulls has proved to be a success.

Rocky areas by the seashore of this island are favoured by Black-faced Shag while the endearing Hooded Plover can be found on the beaches. These birds lay their eggs on the sand but usually close to a landmark of some description like a rock. Paddy's explanation of this behaviour is that the parent birds need the "sign post" to locate their eggs. That still doesn't mean they are easy to find since the beach is littered with sign posts.

Paddy described many other lifeforms on Swan Island including two forms of Tiger Snake. These snakes apparently are extremely vicious if you are a muttonbird poacher. I wonder how they know?

Also of interest to any visitor is a dune blowout called Death Valley. This landform has revealed the ancient bones of wallabies and the feet of penguins that existed here around 8000 years ago when a land bridge linked Tasmania to mainland Australia. The land bridge is now just a series of islands but small passerines such as Flame Robin and Silvereye use them to great advantage during their seasonal movements to and from Tasmania. Migratory waders too, such as Ruddy Turnstone make their way to Swan Island during their stay in Australia.

Other birds to be encountered on Swan Island include White-fronted Chat, Australian Pelican & Crested Tern.

Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia

GPO BOX 3428 SYDNEY NSW 2001
TELEPHONE & FAX (043) 43 4708

The annual Garden Bird Count will take place on January 1st, 1995.

The Wild Life Preservation Society asks any interested person to walk around the garden between 7am and 8am recording, not only the kinds of birds they see or hear, but also the numbers present in the garden, or flying over.

Post your list with your address and POSTCODE to WLPS of Australia and enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a copy of the results. These may take a long time to evaluate so do not get disheartened if no immediate reply arrives.

Facts obtained will help our study of urban birdlife.

Vincent Serventy
President

Vale Alan Keating

Members will be saddened to learn of the loss of an old and much-respected colleague, in Alan Keating, who passed away on 22nd August after a long and distressing illness.

Alan joined HBOC way back in 1984 when he came to live at Bolwarra. He and his great friend Margaret Hamilton were keen to continue the birdwatching enjoyment they had begun in Sydney as members of FOC. They became regular attenders at Club Night meetings, in those days held in the library of the Garden Suburb School, where we all "perched" uneasily on small-scale chairs. Field outings from that time onwards never seemed quite complete without Alan and his two good mates and countrymen from "up north" - Brian Hare and Nigel Walker, affectionately known to us as the "Three Musketeers".

Those of us who shared experiences with Alan will remember him fondly as a warm-hearted friend and a true gentleman with an obvious inner serenity. His courtesy and graciousness endeared him to all. Birds were a source of great pleasure to Alan, and like most of us he celebrated the delights of just being outdoors.

After he returned to live in Sydney early in 1990 he retained his membership and will be remembered for his generosity to the Club in the valuable contributions made to the Library.

Our sympathies are extended to Margaret, his friend and confidante, who devoted much of her time and energies to caring for Alan in his last years.

Sue Hamonet

● Club Outing

A Hunt for the Uncommonly Numerous!

On a cool sunny morning (14.8.94) we assembled at Broke where everything was as dry as a chip and frost bleached. Our destination was a section of stock route just south of the MacDonald River Bridge along the Putty Road. As soon as we arrived we became aware of the Regent Honeyeaters' distinctive call in the vicinity, the Fuscous Honeyeaters' rattling call and the various yips and chips of the Yellow-tufted and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. This place was alive!

Allan Morris from the NPWS and his team were very busy banding

Regent Honeyeaters by the dozen. A Painted Button-quail and a Chestnut-rumped Hylacola had also been netted so quite a few photographs were taken.

This area had been badly burned in last summer's bushfires but by now the eucalypts were covered in lots of bushy regrowth which in turn was harbouring a healthy population of lerp on which the honeyeaters were feasting. To illustrate the surprising number of Regent Honeyeaters here, Damon (one of Allan's team who is doing a Ph.D) counted 142 of the species at one time.

After watching the banding for a while and gleaning some info, we made our way through the bush back towards the MacDonald River (which is now a rusty trickle) spotting quantities of Yellow-tufted and White-naped Honeyeaters along with Spotted Pardalotes, Red-browed Firetails and Peaceful Doves. Nesting activity of Yellow-tufted and White-naped Honeyeaters, also Double-barred Finches was noted.

Several species of thornbill were also seen and two different treecreepers, but the most surprising thing to all of us was how low in the canopy most birds were, enabling excellent viewing.

As we returned along the Putty Road we drove into a few "pull-offs", all beside a creek and all showing promise in the bird department. At one, distinguished by a big old fig tree, a Rose Robin and a White-eared Honeyeater were seen.

Thirteen people attended and 38 species sighted - quality over quantity this time.

Jenny Meynell

P.S. During this very dry period many water birds were seeking refuge on the dam at "Duck's Crossing" opposite Hungerford Hill.

1994 RAOU TWITCHATHON

SOUTHERN NSW AND ACT GROUP (SNAG)

**The Twitchathon this year is from
4pm Sat 29 October to 5pm Sun 30 October.**

In last year's Twitchathon SNAG raised around \$6000 - mainly to assist with Regent Honeyeater conservation. Since then the bird clubs and RAOU have been getting together to plant food trees and fence off areas of good habitat in the Capertee/Glen Davis area. We need to keep at it for some time yet if this endangered species is to be saved. Some of the funds raised will also be going to the RAOU Seabird Project.

So enter a team in one of the events OR sponsor a team OR send a (tax deductible) donation. This is a chance to help with bird conservation AND have fun.

HBOC entered two very successful teams last year and would just love to repeat that success again. There are three categories to choose from;

- 1) MAIN COMPETITION - a serious effort
- 2) CHAMPAGNE COMPETITION - more relaxed
- 3) NOVELTY EVENT - do your own thing

For more information and Sponsor Sheets see David Geering, Newcastle Coordinator.

Regent Honeyeater News

On the weekend of 13-14 August 1994, a total of 57 Regent Honeyeaters were banded at the Howes Valley site where over 150 have been present since May 1994. The site had been inspected by members of the **Regent Honeyeater Recovery Program Team** on Friday 5 August, when it was decided to attempt to colour band some of the birds. A banding team consisting of Alan Morris, Wynn Filewood, Tim Morris, Amanda and Michael Sullivan, Dave Kelly, John and Carol Carpenter and Damon Oliver (the research student working on the Regent Honeyeater from UNE, Armidale) put up the nets and caught the birds. The banding was done under the direction of P. Menkhorst, Chairman of the Recovery Program.

All birds have a metal band on the right leg and a mauve or magenta colourband on the left leg. Members of the Hunter Bird Observers Club joined the banding group on the Sunday and were able to report seeing four Regent Honeyeaters in Mistletoe in Ironbarks at Hungerford Hill, Pokolbin, enroute to the Howes Valley!

In addition to these banded birds, other Regent Honeyeaters have been colour-banded at the Warrumbungles (orange) so all observers are requested to check any Regent Honeyeaters they see for bands/colour bands so that information on movement can be ascertained. Regent Honeyeater sites at Munghom Gap, Widden Valley and Glen Davis should be given special attention in the search for colour-banded birds.

Alan K Morris.

● Club Outings

Discovering Awabakal Nature Reserve.

The coastal area situated between Dudley and Redhead is protected within the Awabakal Nature Reserve. Despite its close proximity to Newcastle, the reserve offers a wide range of habitats including sclerophyll forests, heaths, lagoons and abandoned pastures. A network of trails provides easy access to many areas of the reserve.

On Sunday, August 21st, approximately one dozen club members met at Dudley to explore this rich and varied site.

The night had been rainy and the skies were still overcast as we left our cars for the early morning dampness. Several in the group commented that the weather had almost kept them in bed. Fortunately for them it didn't. Accompanied by the mournful, incessant call of a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, we walked the forest trails for several hours as the rain stayed away. A Shining Bronze-cuckoo was called in by Ann Lindsey, allowing most participants a good look. A male Rose Robin added a delicate dash of colour, and nearby a Spangled Drongo was alert and energetic despite the heaviness of the day.

An Olive-backed Oriole remained in full view at the edge of the pastures, formerly used by the colliery ponies, and at a nearby pond we paused to admire a Pacific Heron in beautifully bright plumage. The wonderful Redhead Lagoon harboured several species of waterfowl, and provided an

opportunity to discuss the finer points of female teal identification. In addition to the birds, an unending array of wildflowers lined the forest track.

After morning tea it was time to visit the heathlands. Still no rain, and light winds provided good conditions. Tom Clarke's knowledge of the area produced excellent views of New Holland and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters and, for a lucky few, quick looks at Southern Emu-wrens. Below the bluff, Australasian Gannets and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters skimmed the waves. As we looked to the south and the remaining expanse of unexplored heath, the rain began. But it came too late to dampen our day, for by then we had seen approximately fifty five bird species.

Having moved to Newcastle from Canada only a few months ago, this was my first outing with the HBOC. It will certainly not be my last. As with birders everywhere, I was made most welcome and was given many helpful hints on where to find some of the many new birds that await me in Australia.

Richard Yank

P.S. An early morning visit to the Dudley heathlands one week later produced no fewer than eight Southern Emu-wrens and a Brush Bronzewing.

Morisset Hospital Grounds 24th July 1994

This field outing was originally intended for the Mandalong/Cooranbong area.

After overnight rain and a somewhat overcast morning, six members met at Coles carpark at Toronto and then on to Morisset. The site chosen was well past all hospital buildings into surrounding bushland. Birds were calling from all directions, flocks of White-cheeked honeyeaters and Silvereyes seemed to be everywhere. Other birds were Eastern Spinebills, Noisy Friarbirds and White-naped Honeyeaters to name a few which rely on this type of habitat to survive.

Once we walked out of this area birds were rather quiet. Onwards to the dam where fifty Hardheads were found sheltered in the reeds along with a Black Swan and a Great Egret. Other birds seen were Peaceful Dove and Jacky Winter.

Thankyou Ann, for taking us to this interesting area.

Jeanette Stephenson

The HBOC extends a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Stephen Bell of Eleebana

Michael and Pam Hely of New Lambton

Bruce Turnbull and Anne Robotham of New Lambton Heights

Sheila Addison of Adamstown Heights

Liz Ryan of Merewether

Birds on the Ross River

On a recent trip to Townsville we stayed in a house on a camping ground overlooking the Ross River. This is a record of the birds we saw at various times during our stay.

Numbers of Straw-necked and Australian White Ibis and Masked Lapwings frequented the rather dry grass on the camping ground. (We were there in the dry season). Also in evidence were Magpie Larks, Australian Magpies and flocks of Nutmeg Mannikins, Common Mynahs and House Sparrows. Rainbow Bee-eaters and White-breasted Woodswallows swooped around hawking for insects. Yellow-bellied Sunbirds and Mistletoebirds were sighted in the mango tree behind the house.

Beautiful flowering trees lined the nearby streets, and crowds of Figbirds and Blue-faced and Yellow Honeyeaters took advantage of the feast. A beautiful song proved to be that of the Brown Honeyeater. There were flocks of Peaceful Doves and a few Great Bowerbirds. Also seen were Helmeted Friarbirds and the occasional Spangled Drongo.

On the river Pacific Black Ducks dived for food or looked for handouts from the people who used the paths alongside for a morning walk or a cycle. Australasian Grebes, Dusky Moorhens and Cotton Pygmy-Geese swam around, and Comb-crested Jacana picked their way over the water lillies. Darters sunned themselves in the early morning sun, and Little Black Cormorants and Caspian Terns

dived for their breakfast. On the far bank Purple Swamphens and Magpie geese could be seen, one of the latter probably nesting. Welcome Swallows skimmed over the river, and occasionally an Australian Pelican came lumbering along.

Birds of prey were represented by the common Black Kites, the not-so-common Whistling Kites, and rarely the beautiful Brahminy Kites. Once an Brown Goshawk was sighted perched at the top of a gum tree. A raptor's nest was sighted in a tall tree over the river, but no birds were seen on or near it. Sometimes a raven winged past. The parrot tribe provided Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Little Corellas, flocks of Rainbow Lorikeets feasting on the gum blossoms, and occasionally a Galah or two. Laughing Kookaburras could be heard in the distance, and once a Pheasant Coucal.

At night a mournful screech seemed to indicate the presence of a Bush Thick-knee, but although we went looking for him with a torch, we did not succeed in a sighting.

Don Halliday



Curlew Awareness

Bush Thick-knees are a feature of Magnetic Island but they are under threat and an information pamphlet has been produced for public consumption to raise Curlew Awareness.

"The wailing cry of the Bush Stone Curlew is such a familiar sound on Magnetic Island, that most residents can't imagine the Island without these birds. Tourists are fascinated by them and no doubt their very presence add to the appeal of a unique lifestyle -- that of having wildlife living right in your own backyard!"

"It would be wonderful to keep our residential Curlews forever, but this is near impossible. Compared to the gradual development of the past, the Island is now experiencing rapid growth. Along with development comes the loss of the Curlew's natural habitat. The birds survival is further threatened by the increase in road vehicles, and of course the growing number of residential pets."

It is alarming to read of the Bush Thick-knee's plight but heartening to see that a community is making some effort to highlight a problem. General information on the birds habits, breeding season and aspects of early life of a chick are dealt with in the pamphlet. Advice on feeding Thick-knees, mowing and slashing, domestic and feral animals as well as visitors to the Island is offered also.

The long life span of these enchanting birds sometimes hides their vulnerability. Plenty of birds (but aging birds) without breeding success have no chicks to replace them. The decline may happen, therefore, very rapidly indeed.

A Recent Trip From Townsville...North.

At the start of August I arrived in Townsville, two days in town and out to the Palmatorium (well worth a visit and full of clouds of butterflies), brought Australian Brush Turkey, Australian Pelican, Spangled Drongo, Great Cormorant, Straw-necked Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Peaceful Dove, Welcome Swallow, Sacred Kingfisher, Leaden Flycatcher, Dusky Honeyeater, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Masked Lapwing.

We went across to Magnetic Island for two days, this is mostly dry sclerophyll country and coast. Soon picked up White-breasted Sea Eagle, on nest with young (at the nude bathing beach). Blue-winged Kookaburras, Silver-crowned Friarbird and dozens of Bush Thick-knees. The last were an absolute delight to me, not only had I been trying to see one for years but they are a fascinating and appealing bird. They are also under severe threat from housing and development and their days are numbered. A very sad state of affairs.

We then headed north to Hinchinbrook, the most magical island, like a slice of volcanic New Zealand and containing the complete range of habitats from mangrove swamp, estuary, mountains, rainforest and heath and everything else you can think of. A must for a future visit, beautiful orchids there as well. Bird list now included Chowchilla, Galah, Mangrove Kingfisher, Noisy Friarbird, Little Cuckoo-shrike. Hinchinbrook brought Caspian Tern, Orange-footed Scrub Fowl, Emerald Dove, Yellow-

spotted Honeyeater, dugongs, reef sharks and lovely rainforest walks.

On then to Mission Beach and then to the Atherton Tableland. This was my second visit there and I was looking forward to it greatly. Travelling brought Golden Whistler, Paradise Riflebird, Brolga, Eurasian Coot, Little Black Cormorant, Atherton Scrub-wren, Hardhead, White-browed Robin, Red-backed Fairy-wren (one of my favourites). The most beautiful family of Chowchilla were seen near one of the crater lakes, right next to the path just a foot away. Dad, Mum and three kids, and each with a very pronounced white eye ring, much more so than in "Pizzey". Bromfield Swamp was a disappointment, too far to see anything and little water to attract birds.

The next stretch was Cairns to the Daintree along the coast and Pied Heron, White-faced Heron and Black-winged Stilt were seen. At Daintree itself, Yellow-bellied Sunbird, Spectacled Monarch, Brown Falcon and two flocks of Shining Starlings, and on the road back down the coast, Brown Cuckoo-dove, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Pheasant Coucal, Gull-billed Tern and Bar-tailed Godwit.

In fact I wasn't going to write the trip up as the total species count was so miserable, particularly in view of the areas I visited. But I was travelling with a non-bird watcher and had to make the best of a few walks at midday and while sunbaking on a few beaches.

Puzzles from the trip:

Well what looked like a White-faced Robin on the Atherton, its not supposed to be there; and another bird seen with the riflebird and also on the beautiful, ancient and strange trees of the Daintree. These greenish birds were quite openly hanging upside down on the flowers that grow up and down the trunks of the trees, and checking up I am fairly sure they are the much looked for (by me) Tooth-billed Catbird. So that was good as I thought I had missed out on it.

Naturally I saw lots of birds that I am not up to identifying yet, and probably wont be for many years, so next time I'll take a birdwatcher instead of a lover, and have a much more rewarding time and a better species list!

(your kidding aren't you! - cd.)

Recommendations for a trip north? Well Hinchinbrook for sure, then a quick trip through the Tablelands, two days should get you most of the unique ones there, then by-pass the rest and head for the Daintree, the road to Cape Tribulation will be tar all the way by now, and to my surprise there are many resorts and forms of accommodation along the road, and the birds are almost as thick and good as Iron Range. Well worth a good long visit.

Another recommendation is staying at "backpackers" places, I don't know why birdos haven't discovered them yet, we stayed in them the whole time and they were very cheap. They are now my preferred form of accommodation, much more comfortable than camping, and best of all, after a long day of scrub bashing - a HOT shower!

Sue Owen

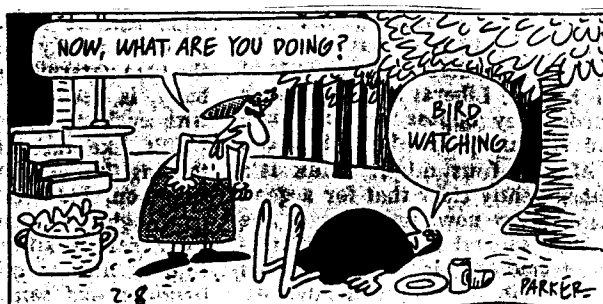
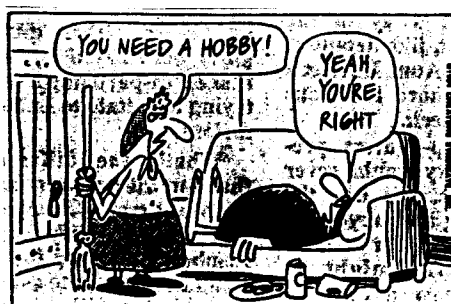
● Observations

Reports from July meeting

Mar. 20	Plum-headed Finch	?	Inverell	G. Walker
Jun. 7	Budgerigar	10	Inverell	G. Walker
7	Turquoise Parrot	1000	Inverell	G. Walker
10	Brahminy Kite	1	Hexham	G. Walker
?	Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	Coal Point	J. Peat
Jul. 10	Brown Quail	6	Stockton Borehole	P. Phillips

Reports from August meeting.

Jun. 13	Paradise Riflebird	1	Dusodie	R. Vank
Jul. 6	Pacific Baza	1	Coal Point	P. Durie
15	Brahminy Kite	2	Hexham	G. Walker
16	Crested Shrike-tit	3	Taylor's Beach	M. Diemar
16	Spangled Drongo	1	Soldier's Point	M. Diemar
17	White-headed Pigeon	1	Bob's Farm	M. Diemar
20	Glossy Black-cockatoo	2	Mt. Sugarloaf	G. Walker
24	White-headed Pigeon	8	Morisset	A. Lindsey
28	Mangrove Gerygone	1	S.W.C.	D. Geering
30	Banded Lapwing	3	Kooragang Is.	D. Geering
30	Emerald Dove	1	New Lambton Hts	D. Geering
30	Masked Owl (road kill)	1	Blackbutt Reserve	D. Geering
30	Skylark	2	Kooragang Is.	D. Geering
30	White-fronted Chat	40+	Kooragang Is.	D. Geering
30	Crested Pigeon	30+	Mayfield West	T. Clarke
31	Darter	1	Warner's Bay	R. Walker
Aug. 1	Crimson Rosella	2	New Lambton	A. Stuart
1	Eastern Rosella	4	Mirrabooka	G. McCulloch
1-10	Pacific Baza	3	New Lambton Hts	B. Turnbull
1-10	Crimson Rosella	2	Beresfield	D. Biddle
2	Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo	10	Morisset	A. Lindsey
2	Musk Lorikeet	1	Brightwaters	A. Lindsey
3	Pied Currawong	2	Stockton	J. Moyes
5	Little Falcon	1	Stockton	J. Moyes
6	White's Thrush	1	New Lambton Hts	P. Lightfoot
6	Black-shouldered Kite	1	Beresfield	T. Clarke
6	Black-shouldered Kite	1	Hamilton	T. Clarke
6	Laughing Kookaburra	2	Sandgate	T. Clarke
7	Australasian Gannet	100+	Bar Beach	M. Gillies
7	Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo	5	Morisset	G. McCulloch
8	Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo	50	Bob's Farm	M. Diemar
8/9	Scarlet Honeyeater	2	Tyrell St. N'cle	R. Parker
8/9	Topknot Pigeon	8	Cam's Wharf	M. Murray
9	White-breasted Sea Eagle	1	Morisset	A. Stuart
24	White-headed Pigeon	8	Morisset	A. Lindsey



Who gives a hoot about owls? We do!

Club night was held on Wednesday 14th September 1994 and once again we had *Bird Call* and *Bird of the Evening* combined. Local owl watcher, Michael Murray shared his knowledge and experiences of the Masked Owl, *Tyto novaehollandiae*, and started the presentation with a few sound recordings.

First up was a curious 'chattering' made by Masked Owls around the nest. A sound you probably won't hear very often at all. Another call made by this owl is something like an extended screech and is uttered while in flight and overhead the nest site.

Michael has been studying a pair of Masked Owls in the Lake Macquarie area. Exciting times for any bird watcher to find these birds but Michael has had the added bonus of observing their nest building and breeding attempts.

Masked Owls are similar to Barn Owls but with enough differences for the astute observer to correctly identify. For a start they are larger than Barn Owls but this alone is not much help especially if there are no Barn Owls about for comparison. Also the Masked Owl is generally darker than its cousin but at night this may not be real helpful either. Michael points to features of the legs and face for positive identification. The legs of the Masked Owl are fully feathered (trousers) while the Barn Owls legs are bare for the lower half (shorts). Also the dark area near the eyes is broader and almost surrounds the eye of the Masked Owl while that of the Barn Owl is a slight feature only.

A stuffed specimen of a road-kill Barn Owl was handed around for all to appreciate. The size and apparent strength of this birds talons cannot be overlooked but the magnificent patterns on its back, wings and tail are enduring impressions.

In the wild these birds can be inquisitive and a softly softly approach without even spotlights can bring good results for the observer. Michael stressed the point that these owls can be easily upset especially during breeding by overeager admirers. Spotlights and tape recordings mustn't be overdone and strict procedures should be adopted. A description of Owl Survey Techniques

developed by well known owl man Rod Cavanagh (research scientist with State Forests) is well worth a read.

Owls in general have been making the newspapers of late and this has sparked some good responses from the public and bird club members. People are seeing owls or having owl experiences all over the place it seems. Our personal desires to have a piece of the action must be tempered a little and the welfare of the bird given the thoughtful respect it deserves.

Main feature of the evening was a GEO video entitled "Woodland Birds". A very well filmed and produced account of the lives of a variety of birds dependent on woodland habitat. Birds covered included Kookaburra, Mistletoe Bird, White-winged Chough, Spotted Pardalote and White-throated Treecreeper.

The video finished on a topical note with some great footage of Regent Honeyeater. The success of our efforts to re-establish and protect suitable habitat for this honeyeater will be more assured with a good response to the RAOU Twitchathon. The fund raising effort that is the real purpose of this event should be encouraged by all HBOC members.

Annual Bird Report - Update

Finally, our (inaugural) 1993 bird report is back from the printers, and many members have already received their (free) copy. We cannot bear the costs of posting the report to other members, and the options for distribution are as follows:

- reports can be collected at club nights or on monthly outings.
- members who are unable to collect the report personally can organise for another member to collect it for them.
- we will post a copy upon receipt of \$1.50, or a self-addressed A5 size envelope bearing an 85cent stamp.

A report for 1994 is planned, and many members are submitting observation records. **Your sightings are also important - please send them in!**

Any unusual sightings are certainly of interest, but so too are the full records of what you see at some site that you visit. This information could well have future value in some conservation issue as well.

HBOC has a special record sheet for such site visits, and a revised version of it is included in this newsletter. You are welcome to use this form to report what you have seen while you were out and about (we'll send replacements). However, even something scribbled on a scrap of paper is of use - just make sure you put your name on it, and describe where you were! Alan Stuart.

● Field Outing

In Search of *Eucalyptus pumila*.

With yet another summer on the back of a dry and windy winter and an early start to the bushfire season well established, the prospect of our Pokolbin Field Outing being a success wasn't real crash hot. A couple of weeks of bushfires in the Pokolbin area was surely going to muck things up for us but none-the-less a cheerful group of twelve met at Cessnock determined to make a day of it.

At Cessnock it had been arranged to meet Bob Sargent, forester of the Morisset District with the State Forests of NSW. Bob proved to be an excellent guide as he certainly knows his way around the forests (and vineyards) of Pokolbin and in particular, the illusive Pokolbin Mallee. A patch of this unique habitat can be accessed through Don Francois' place, Chateau Francois Winery off Broke Road. This too had been previously organised. All that was going to spoil our day was if the place had been burnt out.

On the way out along Broke Road, our group took time out to stop at "Duck's Crossing" and take in the waterfowl etc on the Hungerford dam. Not a bad collection of birds stood, sat and loafed about allowing identification of all in relative ease. Greatest numbers of any one species would have been the Hardheads. Many of these birds were typically on the water but a large proportion were found standing on a narrow spit. Up on their feet, these ducks look different with their white bellies an obvious feature which otherwise goes unnoticed.

Through my spotting scope I also found, to my delight, that neat little bird of the edges, the Black-fronted Dotterel.

At Francois', a quick look around revealed that any fire in this neck of the woods had been only minor and a great day was in the offing.

Immediately past a dam and into the bush (dry as) we hit a "hot spot" and the bird watching was well underway. A pair of Rufous Whistlers called and called in the way they only know how, while a pair of Weebills entertained in energetic fashion by engaging in an extended game of chase. This action saw both birds racing about the tree tops at speeds that made binocular observation impossible! Many honeyeaters were moving about and calling while we all admired the perfect structure of a Grey Fantail's nest. From time to time a Grey Fantail would sit on the nest which was about 3 metres above the ground.

A walk in the bush with Bob Sargent is very educational and if you ever wondered about what wombats do to mark their patch then Bob had all the answers. Large square droppings on tops of rocks is a very conspicuous signpost. These things and more were freely pointed out by our guide who has an obvious affinity with nature.

The next thing you know, Bob has talked everyone into climbing and/or scrambling up a stoney spur, up out of the woodland. As we reached a high point which afforded us

magnificent views of the valley, we stopped for a sit down and a chat.

Well here it was, *Eucalyptus pumila*, Pokolbin Mallee!

A couple of previous outings by the Club had failed to locate this unique part of our natural heritage and it was very satisfying to know that it was in fact real and it was in good shape. The mallee was not in flower (autumn apparently is the time) so it was not attracting any great attention although a couple of White-eared Honeyeaters were close by.

Back down off the ridge other things held our gaze. Double-bar Finches were found attending a nest built in the heart of a Spiney-leaved Hakea and a White-throated Warbler whipped up more excitement.

Across a paddock, a good 150 metres away, a mysterious raptor was sighted in a tree top. This particular bird wasn't going to make things easy for us by way of identification either as it preened itself with its back to us. A volunteer (myself) walked across the paddock to the tree and soon we had a Brown Falcon in the air. This bird is described as very variable and I must admit that my previous experience with it is of a dark bird. The falcon we discovered was light brown with obvious head markings. Finally the falcon found another tree to sit in where it was harrassed continually by a Grey Butcherbird. Before long, we had found a second Brown Falcon sitting quietly on the opposite side of the paddock.

Walking back to lunch after a very satisfying morning we disturbed the animal emblem of the Cessnock area, a Laced Monitor. This goanna was a young one with a bright yellow throat and was quickly up a tree trunk as we came past.

Tom Clarke

Coming Events

Please check with the contact person for each outing in case of changed details or suitability of site for the camp or field day.

Sunday 30th October	Field Day: Venues: Contact:	Twitcherthon Novelty Event & BBQ Ritchley Reserve 10:00am (stay for picnic) S.W.C. mid afternoon till 5:00pm BBQ Tom Clarke 671396
Wednesday 9th November	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Win Filewood - Birds of New Guinea
Weekend 12th & 13th November	Camp: Contact:	Smith Lake. Extra outing with Win Filewood Ann Lindsey 73 3519
Sunday 27th November	Field Day: Meet: Contact:	Allworth - UTS Field Station MacDonald's at Raymond Terrace 7:00am Tom Clarke 671396
Wednesday 14th December	Clubnight: Main feature:	Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Xmas Party - Member's Night BYO slides, tapes, stories, etc.
Weekend 3rd & 4th December	Camp/Field Day: Meet (Field Day): Contact:	Ferndale Park, Chichester Dam MacDonald's at Hexham 6:00am Graeme O Connor 58 1304

Articles for our Newsletter are always welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is 30th November, 1994

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