

NEWSLETTER



Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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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.

June Club Night

"JAMBO HABARI !"

Club Night was held on Wednesday 14th June 1995 and it was a big, boisterous African greeting from our guest speaker, David Bishop, which rocked the building and ensured that all present were paying attention. But of course Africa is big and David's enthusiasm for the place is big enough to match it.

The theme for the presentation was a travelogue around East Africa with a slight emphasis on its birdlife but also including many other natural wonders. David has travelled about Africa on several occasions and his desire for more is evident.

Obvious features like the Rift Valley with its lakes and abundant waterfowl are a great attraction to any birdwatcher but any waterhole is well worth a look. David's favourite passtime is to park his vehicle nearby and spend the whole morning watching the various comings and goings. Staying in the vehicle is very sound advice as the mammals on this continent are just a little bit more dangerous than those of Australia.

Africa must have one of the richest variety of wildlife and this is due to the great variety of habitat. David described the many landforms including the vast savannahs which support seemingly infinite numbers of wild animals. The most abundant species it would seem are the Wildebeest, Hartebeest, Burchell's Zebra and Thomson's Gazelle.

Also of great interest are the swamp lands and the variety of fish eating birds. Herons, egrets, ibis, storks and pelicans are abundant. The far carrying wild cry of the African Fish Eagle mustn't be missed and David's attempt was very convincing.

At the other end of the scale, these wetlands are also



home to the diminutive African Jacana, a handsome cousin of our own Comb-crested Jacana. Slides of Carmine Bee-eaters, Masked Weavers and Secretary-birds highlighted the treasures that can be found while an encounter with the Crowned Crane would be well worth the trip.

In the soda lakes of the Rift Valley, the Greater Flamingo and the Lesser Flamingo filter small organisms from the mud of the lake beds. The story of the Lesser Flamingo's breeding efforts and the struggle of the chicks to survive is awe inspiring.

Two of David's favourite beasts are the Rhinoceros and the Elephant and it was with a bellowing bull's roar that he concluded the talk.

Also on safari, but in Australia, Sue Owen led us through Arnhem Land in search of White-throated Grasswren as she presented *Bird of the Evening*. White-throated Grasswren are confined to the sandstone country of the Arnhem Land escarpment where they live among the boulders and tussocks of Spinifex.

Sue has seen these birds first hand and is adamant that any illustration or photograph in a book does their striking appearance little justice indeed.

Considered shy and avasive, these birds disperse and vanish among the boulders if disturbed. Sue described their quick running behaviour as they dash from cover to cover. Sue found that with patience, any birdwatcher can be rewarded with good views as they may become inquisitive at times.

This bird must be seen to be appreciated and a trip to Kakadu wouldn't be complete without a sighting.

Singing in the Rain.....what a Wonderful Feeling.

This was a very wet and cold day, and I didn't expect to see anyone else turn up. I had made up my mind to go anyway because if all else failed I was going to explore the Yacaaba headland. To my amazement two other persons, Pat Pountney and Jim Perry, did show up and were keen to go bird watching in the Hawk's Nest area. So we did.

Well the bird watching really started with a bang as we travelled across the Singing Bridge and to our delight and astonishment we saw a Black-necked Stork standing on the low tide mud flat on the Hawk's Nest side and a little upstream from the bridge. White Ibis and Pelican were also to be seen through the fogged up windows of Jim Perry's car.

Our first effort on foot was further up the road at the start of the Mungo Track. This is a mixed habitat of tall heath and associated woodlands nestled behind a line of dunes at the back of the beach.

Most abundant within this area were the honeyeaters. Eastern Spinebill, Noisy Friarbirds, New Holland Honeyeaters and Tawny-crown Honeyeaters all appeared to be active. Other birds observed or heard included Eastern Whipbird, Grey Fantail, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo and Grey Butcherbird. By the time we had reached the dunes White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill and Silvereye had all made an appearance to brighten the otherwise drab day.

Over the dunes for a quick look at the beach revealed a very deserted shoreline from Yacaaba in the south to as far as you can see to the north. Such a cold, bleak day with a squawl over the town is not that inspiring for "beach goers", but for three mad birdwatchers it couldn't have been better. This whole area was all ours for the day, and the birds of course.

Below our sand hill advantage we could see some Masked Lapwings standing about on the beach while up north towards the bend a group of Pied Oystercatchers were just distinguishable through binoculars.

Soon that squawl was upon us and so we sought shelter immediately. The warmth of the car was just great as we drove back to the river and a convenient shelter was comfortable enough as we drank some hot coffee and found a dry jumper to put on. Our new location gave us some good bird watching opportunities as well.

Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron and Bar-tailed Godwit went about the business of feeding in the mud apparently oblivious of the down pour. And that "Jabiru" had moved upstream so we were able to watch the bird with steady binoculars for as long as we wished. A comical sight is that of Pelicans drinking rainwater and several birds could be seen with bills open wide, catching the raindrops.

Our next effort was in a patch of mixed country

between the Mungo Road and the Myall River. As you walk from the road you pass through several bands of habitat. Firstly, coastal woodlands, then a scrubby heath, a swamp area, a line of Casaurinas, then Melaleucas, a wide salt marsh, and finally a line of mangroves along the river.

This area was also jumping with honeyeaters including Red Wattlebirds, Lewin's Honeyeaters and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters.

In among the Casaurina section a treasured moment for all of us when we encountered a Shining Bronze-cuckoo. Only a couple of metres away and at eye level this bird sat quietly on a level branch; no need for binoculars here! The complete barring of the bird's chest and the non existence of an "eyebrow" proved its identity. And the green/bronze shimmering bits are an absolute delight for the human eye.

Again the rain came and the copse of trees afforded us some refuge. Our friend the Shining Bronze-cuckoo had showed up again and a Golden Whistler to boot! Sharing this space with these gems was a tremendous experience.

Yes, I do derive great joy from this activity, even though my boots and sox were soaked, my trousers from the knees down were soaked, my duffle coat was heavy from the rain and my notebook was so wet I could hardly scribble a thing that was legible. A careful procedure of drying my hands on a patch of shirt before handling the notebook was just getting the job done.

But of course it did stop raining once again and so we pressed on. In a clear area an osprey was sighted sitting high in a dead tree. Below this bird, in a major fork, a huge structure of sticks was obviously its nest. This one must be many years old as the size of the arrangement dwarfs the bird.

From large to small and the first bird we found on the salt marsh was a Southern Emu-wren as it was flushed from the grass on our approach. The tiny bird flew for about 15m before diving for cover. Pat Pountney has been getting pretty good at finding these "Blue Beards" just lately and it is always a thrill to discover a bird from time to time.

After lunch we decided to go for a walk along the beach to Yacaaba which proved to be pleasant enough as the sun had come out. Not too much to report by way of birdlife was found at all but the whole beach was strewn with dead Pilchards. The result of some strange marine phenomenon which still has the experts apparently scratching their heads.

Driving home the three mad birds reflected on a miserable but very rewarding day. Our birdcall tallied 28 non-passerine and 28 passerine species for a total of 54. A spring time visit to this area would also be well worthwhile.

Tom Clarke

Stockton Bridge Sandspit Rehabilitation

Finally, after years of watching shorebird high tide roost habitat in the Hunter Estuary slowly become degraded, or even lost, moves have been made to restore one of the estuaries most important roost sites. The sandspit at the base of Stockton Bridge became the major daytime roost site in the estuary, being used by thousands of birds, after its formation from dredging associated with the construction of the bridge in the early 1970's. However over the past ten years the area has slowly been invaded by Bitou Bush, mangroves and, most seriously, Spiny Rush. This had made the sandspit area unsuitable as a high tide roost due to the small area of open saltmarsh that remains and the impact on the birds line of sight, and hence sense of security.

A report on shorebird habitat in the estuary by Shortland Wetlands Centre for the Kooragang Wetlands Rehabilitation Project in 1993 highlighted several opportunities for habitat restoration and construction. After two further reports outlining the proposed rehabilitation of the sandspit and the impacts of such a project, input by various interest groups and much tireless work by staff of the KWRP work commenced at the sandspit on June 26, 1995.

Rehabilitation essentially involves the removal of all Spiny Rush, Bitou Bush and some areas of young mangrove to create an open saltmarsh community and sandspits around a shallow tidal lagoon with a sand island. The lagoon is to be a semi-open system, that will be flushed on tides greater than 1.8m over topping a weir. This arrangement will create an environment that will greatly reduce the area of weed infestation that will need to be controlled in the future while providing a safe high tide roost for a range of shorebird species. The sandspit will be serviced by a new roadway on the southeast side of the bridge, a formal carpark under the bridge, a bird hide overlooking the roost site and a mangrove boardwalk terminating at another bird hide overlooking the adjacent feeding area. These facilities will be hidden from the birds by a screen of native plants. Interpretive material will be provided on the rehabilitation work, migratory shorebirds and estuarine, including mangrove, ecosystems.

Earthworks are well advanced, with Brambles and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service providing an excavator and bulldozers. The care with which the machinery operators were able to remove weeds while leaving areas of saltmarsh untouched was astounding and will result in a final product superior to that envisaged in the initial stages. Throsby Landcare participants, through the Landcare and Environmental Action Program, are removing large areas of Bitou Bush and Spiny Rush by hand in areas where damage by machinery was unwarranted. The transformation has been miraculous with the area already attracting birds that have not used the site for the last couple of years.

David Geering

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27 LAMBTON ROAD, BROADMEADOW (NEAR TO JOYCE MAYNE'S)

**Society for Growing Australian Plants
Newcastle Group**

Wildflower Spectacular 1995

**The Shortland Wetlands Centre
Saturday and Sunday
2nd & 3rd September**

**Why don't you come along and enjoy this
very successful exhibition?**

Themes will include native plant nurseries, crafts, SGAP plant, cut flower and floral arrangement sales as well as various native flora, conservation and environmental group displays.

Look for
the Hunter Bird Observers Club
display in the marquee.

Harrington Lions Forest Camp June Long Weekend, 1995

The camp was situated in a pleasant site among casuarinas and eucalypts in the Coopernook State Forest. Eight people from the Manning Valley Birdwatchers and five HBOC members were accommodated in the cabins and two caravans.

Electricity, comfortable beds, nice tank water and hot showers made for a very comfortable camp. An added bonus was the surprisingly warm and fine weather, although Saturday and Sunday were cloudy.

Everyone had a great time with good fellowship and laughter a feature of the evenings. Could this have occurred because there were only three males in the group? The men however, were able to keep pace with the discussions.

Bob and Marie Langdowne, long term members of the Manning Birdos are now also members of HBOC. Bob entertained the boisterous bunch on Saturday night with a collection of excellent bird slides.

Over the weekend, 76 species of birds were observed in the area of the forest trails and farm dams. Highlights were six Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos and an estimated 100 Rainbow Lorikeets flying over the

campsite. A number of Brown Thornbills were ever-present and four Logrunners were also seen near the camp.

Some of the birds seen were Peregrine Falcon, Comb-crested Jacana, Superb Lyrebird, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Eastern Whipbird and Green Catbird. A highlight for me was my first close up view of two Crested Shrike-tits, especially when one flew straight at my binoculars.

On Saturday afternoon the intrepid birdos Graeme O'Connor, Pat Pountney and Denise Cusack visited Crowdy Bay National Park. They recorded thirty species of birds and two large whales. Pat said two White-bellied Sea Eagles were soaring in the updraught close to the cliffs where they were standing. The whales also put on a show by jumping and splashing nearby.

Pied Oystercatcher, Azure Kingfisher, New Holland Honeyeater, Nankeen Kestrel and Bar-tailed Godwit were some of the birds observed.

A contrast of forest and ocean cliffs when observing the birds certainly made for an enjoyable weekend.

Stan Etheridge

Wetlands Day at Shortland

Twelve hardy souls braved the elements for the winter Wetland Outing on the 25th June, undeterred by early thick fog and icy winds. An early start was made on the Lorna Street wetland area, where much activity held our interested gaze.

A number of Great Cormorants were observed carrying nesting material. A male Musk Duck steamed purposefully from the northern edge of the wetland *cherchez la femme?* Numbers of Australasian Shovelers and Hardheads mingled with the more numerous Teal and Black Ducks, and yes, a female Musk Duck was seen loafing at the southern end of the swamp.

In the acacia woodland area several honeyeater species were observed using the bright scarlet blossoms of the Coral Trees, and this area produced a fair list of other passerine species as well.

The deep water at the golf club end provided much interest. Nesting Great Cormorants, some already with young in the nest, seemed to have made an early start on domestic chores. A Whistling Kite was observed plucking prey in a dead tree, and aerial skirmishing between Whistling Kites and Ravens and Currawongs led our gaze to a Kite's nest with young.

And so to the morning tea break at the Centre where a circumnavigation of the ponds produced a creditable list of species, including numbers of Nankeen Night Herons. After lunch we rounded off our morning activities very nicely with a short trip down the road to see a roosting pair of Southern Boobooks, by courtesy of Max.

In all a list of 75 species for the morning seemed more than satisfactory for such a cold and windy Winter outing.

Sue Hamonct.

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Eco-tourism on the East Coast of Australia.

Eco-tourism has become a bit of a catch cry in the nineties as a cure for some of our economic woes. There is no doubt that more and more people (locals and overseas visitors) are willing to pay for the pleasure of escaping the rat-race and taking in some of Australia's natural wonders.

But as the increased interest and expectations gathers momentum, fears of thoughtless actions by tour operators in the pursuit of the tourist dollar may be placing some of our treasures under more stress than they can bear. In short, we are in danger of loving it all to death unless the whole eco-tourism game is not managed wisely and strictly.

Our guest speaker for the evening, Arthur Austin, offered some well chosen words on this subject as he introduced the theme for his audio-visual presentation on "National Parks - from Victoria to Cape York".

Arthur has travelled the length and breadth of eastern Australia and has visited many of the National Parks several times. He never tires of experiencing what each place has to offer. From a blizzard in the Snowy Mountains to the sunny expanse of a Fraser Island beach, Arthur's photographic images reflect the great joy he derives from the natural landscape as well as a profound respect of all its elements.

Arthur's slide shows with accompanying back ground music plus some commentary is always an inspirational production and makes it impossible to think of anywhere else for one to have a holiday but in Australia.

Not strictly eco-tourism but a holiday flavour just the same set the scene for *Bird of the Evening* as well with Tom Clarke describing a recent trip to Adelaide.

Tom's subject was the Crimson Rosella and its various forms.

Crimson Rosellas are common birds of the east coast and ranges. In the northern half of their range they are regarded as birds of the mountains, basically above 450m but in the south can be found at all altitudes. These "red" birds are traditionally birds of the heavily timbered country but have found some advantages from cleared ground. Reports of Crimson Rosellas in parks and gardens are not that unusual with birds seen feeding on the seeds and berries of introduced plants.

Two other colour forms occur; the Yellow Rosella of the Red Gum flood plains about the Murray-Darling area and the Adelaide Rosella (orange form) found in the savannah woodlands of the Mount Lofty Ranges.

Tom drove to Adelaide last Easter and was lucky enough to encounter these three colour forms in his travels.

The blue cheeks, wings and tail are constant features throughout the three forms but each bird is so distinct with

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

Barbara & Griff Greffinius of Floraville
Cherie & Ted Gwatkin of Balcolyn
Beverly & Peter Roderick of Ashtonfield

Notes From A Victorian Holiday

On our recent trip south, we spent an exciting day at the Western Plains Zoo, near Dubbo NSW. Our bikes enabled us to explore off the sealed road along the paths meandering amongst the thousands of trees and shrubs which provide a sanctuary for over 200 species (of birds) which choose to live or visit as the environment provides them with all their needs.

Grey Fantails, Willie Wagtails and Superb Fairy-wrens were seen in abundance along with White-plumed Honeyeater and Spiney-cheeked Honeyeater. Apart from pollen and nectar, the later also eats insects, lizards and the nestlings of other birds!

Noisy and active were the Apostlebirds, which build a mud nest in which all females lay their eggs and the whole group helps to incubate and raise the brood.

There were also many Red-rumped Parrots, Eastern Rosellas, Galahs and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.

The Little Black and Pied Cormorants, Australian White Ibis, Hardhead, Masked Lapwing (and I could go on and on) were always found amongst the wetlands. We are able to list some of the common variety.

Incidentally, we did look at the animals!

Highlights for us (in Victoria) were seeing the Scarlet Robins at Hall's Gap, Red-capped Robins and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters at Deniliquin, and scores of Musk Lorikeets at Bendigo.

Audrey Mahaffey

their major colouration that no mistake should be made in identification.

All three forms exhibit very similar breeding biology and diets with the bulk of their intake being the seeds of native grasses, acacias and eucalypts.

Regent Honeyeater Ground Survey

The following letter by Peter Davie (NSW FOC) has been sent out for publication in all the bird club newsletters etc. to find support for this special survey effort.

The movements of the Regent Honeyeater are an enigma despite substantial effort during the last few years to define the extent of its presence in South East Australia.

Whilst many sightings have been made at different locations over a wide area there has been no increase in the identity of major locations used regularly in New South Wales during the breeding season beyond those already known about at Capertee Valley south of Kandos/Rylstone, at Bundarra west of Armidale, and in the Warrumbungles National Park.

It is with this in mind that a ground survey is to be initiated by Cumberland Bird Observers Club, Hunter Bird Observers Club, NSW Field Ornithologists Club and RAOU Southern NSW and ACT Group to try and identify further areas used by the species from mid-August to end of November during the breeding season this year when it is anticipated that the birds will be more or less sedentary.

Resources are limited and therefore the places to be visited must also be limited to those that can be surveyed thoroughly.

It has been provisionally agreed that:-

- a) each club/group will select one area for its members to survey.
- b) each area will be surveyed thoroughly, if possible, two, three, or more times during the period.
- c) standard Regent Honeyeater Record Forms will be distributed to observers and completed for each visit.
- d) it is particularly important that negative reports be made.
- e) Record Forms will be collected by NSW FOC, a copy will be sent to Allan Morris, and the originals will be sent to Natasha Schedvin, RHE Recovery Programme Co-ordinator.

The areas which are thought to offer some of the best prospects and which are within 4-5 hours drive of Sydney/Newcastle are listed below; it is from these that the clubs/groups will select their area to be surveyed.

- i) Howes Valley and Putty Road
- ii) Upper Colo River
- iii) Widden Valley south of Widden
- iv) Goulburn River National Park
- v) Paterson River Valley (north of Maitland)

Members interested in taking part or hearing more about this important survey should contact NSW FOC by mail or phone Peter Davie (02-326-2145 H), Peter Mack (02-666-3039 H), or Cindy Ryan (02-365-4530 H).

How can you help? Get involved.

The Hunter Bird Observers Club has agreed to survey the Paterson River Valley in this project. Organised dates for group excursions have been nominated but all individual surveys will be gladly received if you cannot be part of these outings.

Please note the following dates on your calendar.

9th September
14th October
4th November
2nd December

These dates are all Saturdays and people are asked to meet at 8:00am at the park by the river at Paterson. This is about a 40 minute drive from Newcastle. Any further enquiries should be directed to Ann Lindsey (733519) who will remain the survey contact for our club during this project.



● Observations

Reports from June meeting

May/June

Eastern Spinebill	5+	The Junction	M.Blanch
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	40+	The Junction	M.Blanch
Musk Lorikeet	100+	Coal Point	P.Durie

June

	Whistling Kite	1	Jesmond	G.Brosie
	Darter	1	Boolaroo	G.Brosie
	Turquoise Parrot	2	Yango N.P.	A.Lindsey
3-5	Musk Lorikeet	24	Brightwaters	A.Lindsey
	Silvereye (Tasmanian race)	6	Brightwaters	A.Lindsey
5	Masked Owl	1	Yengo N.P.	B.Roderick
5-21	Peregrine Falcon	1	Blackbutt Reserve	B.Orr
10	Crimson Rosella	1	Nesca Park	J.Moyse
11	Plumed Whistling-Duck	100+	2km south of Singleton	R.Waymark

Reports from July meeting

May	28	Black-shouldered Kite	1	Gully Line, New Lambton	T.Clarke
June	10	Paradise Riflebird	1f	Telegherry S.F.	R.Walker
	11	Peregrine Falcon	1	Gloucester Bucketts	T.Clarke
	12-16	Figbird	60+	The Junction	M.Blanch
	30	Satin Bowerbird	1f	Merewether Heights	K.Woods
July	8	Black-shouldered Kite	1	Rathmines	B.Kelly
	9	Regent Honeyeater	3	Swansea South	B.Turnbull
		Peregrine Falcon	1	Munmorah S.R.A.	B.Turnbull
		Tawny-crowned Honeyeater		Munmorah S.R.A.	B.Turnbull
	10	Brown Cuckoo-dove	2	Soldiers Point	M.Diemar
	12	Eastern Reef Egret	1	Merewether Baths	K.Woods

* The Masked Owl reported from Yengo National Park is at this stage unconfirmed. An Unusual Observation Report form has been requested for this category 3 species.

* The Peregrine Falcon observed in Blackbutt was seen to be carrying a Ring-tailed Possum.

* Two unconfirmed sightings of an unfamiliar, large, dark raptor at Tarro, near the Woodberry intersection, near the locality of an earlier sighting of Square-tailed Kite reported in F.O.C. newsletter.

* An interesting observation by Mrs Barbara Bourke, an early Flora & Fauna member, who reported the continual use of blue Westringea flowers in her garden by Eastern Spinebills, in

spite of availability of other red flowering natives. This behaviour was supported by at least one other member.

* The Regent Honeyeaters at Swansea South were feeding in Swamp Mahogany (Eucalyptus robusta) in heavy blossom. This appears to be the first report of the species from the locality.

Suc Hamonet (Records Officer)

1995 RAOU TWITCHATHON - WEEKEND 28-29 OCTOBER

This year's Twitchathon will be bigger and better than ever.

As in the past the competition will be split, firstly into the **serious 24-hour marathon** and also the opportunity for a **more relaxed fun approach**. So, no matter what your approach to birding, there will be something for you.

The RAOU already have excellent sponsorship and great prizes. Several pairs of binoculars from *Proust Optical*, three complimentary wills prepared by *Muggletons Solicitors*, birding computer software from *Intelligent Birding* and two perpetual trophies from *Emu Tours*.

This year the money raised will be used for;

a) enlarging and refurbishing the Lodge accommodation at Barren Grounds Bird Observatory, and

b) assisting with conservation of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in South-Eastern and South-Western Australia.

The RAOU urges you to support this worthwhile cause, whilst having fun!

Request an entry form and information on the competition rules etc. from Peter West, 12/45 Edward Bennett Drive, Cherrybrook NSW 2126 - phone (02) 875-4482 - and start organising your entry now!

HBOC members can also approach David Geering (Newcastle Co-ordinator) for more information and Sponsor Sheets.

Barren Grounds.....

.....a well kept secret.

Barren Grounds is a Nature Reserve of over 2000ha, situated some 20km west of Kiama, on the South Coast, and offers magnificent facilities for those interested in nature.

It is surrounded by vertical cliffs of the Illawarra Escarpment, offering wonderful views over the coastal plain, from Wollongong down to Nowra and over the upper reaches of Kangaroo Valley to the south and

west.

Most of the vegetation is heathland, but there are significant areas of woodland and rainforest. This variety of habitats gives rise to a great diversity of flora and fauna, and Barren Grounds can boast a plant list of over 500 species and over 150 species of bird have been seen in the area.

Barren Grounds is a Nature Reserve, and as such, it was set up to protect the environment, but it is also maintained for research and educational purposes. Two Wardens, employed by the RAOU monitor the research done there. Volunteers also help out and they are offered free board and lodgings for their labours, as well as a rewarding experience.

The spectacular Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo is running out of forest and time...

Both sub-species of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in south-western and south-eastern Australia are on the Threatened List. The main cause for their decline is the loss of old growth forests and woodlands which contain suitable nesting hollows.

To protect these endangered native birds and strengthen their dwindling numbers, the RAOU plan to study their breeding and feeding patterns and implement a recovery plan. This project is one of the RAOU's major tasks for 1995.

The population of the south-eastern sub-species occurs in south-eastern South Australia and south-western Victoria. Surviving birds are largely confined to remnants of Brown Stringybark forest for feeding, and dead or senescent River Red Gums for breeding. Breeding trees are becoming particularly scarce and there are few young trees growing up to replace them.

There are currently thought to be 500-1000 individuals with no more than 100 breeding pairs.

All known nests occur on private property where trees are still being felled for fire wood and are not being replaced, most regeneration being prevented by grazing.

The development of a co-operative land management program with land managers and timber harvesters plus a public awareness campaign must be high on the agenda.

So Let's Get Serious

Get three or four bird watchers together, think up an appropriate team name and start planning your strategies for the event. And remember the most important part of the exercise, hassle everyone you know to be your sponsor.

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.

Last year HBOC entered a very successful team called **The Hunter Thickheads** which managed a very creditable second place in the competition. With a total of 199 species on their list they were just pipped at the post by the ruthless Grey Toilet Thrushes with 201 species. Not a bad day's work when you think about it and the sponsorship effort was just as impressive.

The More Relaxed Approach

This year, HBOC will also be staging the **Ultimate Wetland Experience** as an alternative activity. This is a chance for all to get down on the swamp, commune with nature and help a worthy cause all at the same time.

For just \$8 per head you can participate in games, produce craftwork with a wetlands theme and generally enjoy exploring the flora and fauna of the Shortland Wetlands Centre. Two hours of organised fun expertly conducted by some well known swampies from 1:30 to 3:30pm Sunday 29th October.

Anyone can come; your kids, your spouse, your friends, even the neighbours. For further details see Tom Clarke - phone 671396.

Bird Study in the Good Old Days

Back in the 1860's, the Rev. G.J. Wood had such a passion for wildlife he was moved to write several pieces including *Anecdotes of Animal Life, Common Objects of the Sea-shore and Country* and *My Feathered Friends*. He also wrote a series called *Wood's Natural History*.

From the pages of this work, I found the following of interest. The author is describing the Superb Lyrebird and introduces the reader to the method of obtaining specimens.

"At Illawarra it is sometimes successfully pursued by dogs trained to rush suddenly upon it, where it immediately leaps upon the branch of a tree, and its attention being distracted by the dogs below barking, it is easily approached and shot.

Another successful mode of procuring specimens is by wearing the tail of a full plumaged male in the hat, keeping it constantly in motion, and concealing the person among the bushes, when, attention of the bird being arrested by the apparent intrusion of another of its own sex, it will be attracted within range of the gun. If the bird be hidden from view by surrounding objects, any unusual sound, such as a shrill whistle, will generally induce him to show himself for an instant, by causing him to leap with a gay and sprightly air upon some neighbouring branch to ascertain the cause of the disturbance; advantage must be taken of this circumstance immediately, or the next moment it may be half-way down the gully."

Later in this chronicle, the author describes the method of simply watching the bird.

"To watch its action it is necessary to be perfectly motionless, not venturing to move even in the slightest degree, or it vanishes from sight as if by magic."

Keith Woods - Club Librarian

How to be a HBOC Field Day Leader

The position requires some knowledge of the area but does not presume bird identification skills. By the time you get the job the venue, meeting place and meeting time will have been decided.

You may be familiar with the area or you may need to familiarise yourself with a visit. Either way you should check near the date for changes in conditions.

You need to check how to get there; including approximate driving time from the meeting point. Perhaps a rough sketch map for those who want to go direct to the venue.

You need to liaise with private property owners when the outing is on private land; Secretary will write indemnifying them against insurance claims if this is an issue.

Whether private property or not, you need to check access, where to park and what route to take when birdwatching. This may be a walking circuit or a series of spots interspersed by vehicle driving. Consider a spot for morning tea and lunch; perhaps back at the car parking place. Also, is there water and shade available.

Your telephone number will be in the Newsletter. You may need to give directions, you may choose to organise car-pools or lifts. If the weather is uncertain you will need to make a decision on whether the Field Day is cancelled. If you cancel you should advise callers and the Committee and then turn up at the meeting point to send the hopeful home.

During the outing your duties are to meet people at the meeting point, conduct them to the venue and lead them around the area. You are not responsible for bird identification or the recording of birds seen by the group. Try to line up someone to write a brief report for the Newsletter, unless you want to do this yourself.

Finally, when the outing is over make sure that private property owners are thanked.

Peter Phillips - Hon. Secretary

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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.

Weekend 2nd/3rd September	Wildflower Spectacular 1995 - SGAP Newcastle Group Place: Shortland Wetland Centre HBOC Stall Volunteers Required Recruitment: Tom Clarke 671396
Tuesday 5th September	Midweek Outing: Teralba Meet: Speers Point Swimming Pool 9:00am Contact: Sue Hamonet 581023
Saturday 9th September	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Paterson River Valley Meet: Park by the river at Paterson 8:00am Contact: Ann Lindsey 733519
Wednesday 13th September	Clubnight: Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Main Feature: Birdwatching in the U.S.A. Presented by Bonnie Orr
Sunday 24th September	Field Day: Howes Valley Camp Meet: Broke Corner (opp store) 8:00am Leader: Ann Lindsey 733519
Labour Day Long Weekend 30th September -2nd October	Campout: Rowleys River Contact: Alan Stuart 528569
Tuesday 3rd October	Midweek Outing: Mount Vincent/Sugarloaf Meet: MacDonalds - Edgeworth 9:00am Contact: Max Blanch 611655
Wednesday 11th October	Clubnight: Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm Main Feature: Gould's Petrel - Cabbage Tree Island Nicholas Carlile (NPWS)
Saturday 14th October	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Paterson River Valley Meet: Park by the river at Paterson 8:00am Contact: Ann Lindsey 733519
Sunday 22nd October	Field Day: Wollombi Meet: McDonald's Cessnock 7:00am Contact: Peter Phillips 547118 Leader: TBA
Weekend 28th/29th October	1995 RAOU Twitchathon (see article in this Newsletter)

This fundraising event will be followed by a Club BBQ at the Shortland Wetland Centre from 5:00pm 29th October. Bring your own everything.

For more details see David Geering 282636 (h) or 516466 (SWC)