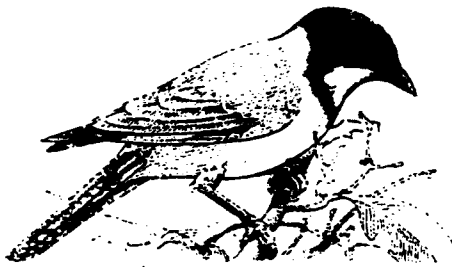


# NEWSLETTER



## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

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

Telephone: (049) 585942

President:  
Secretary:  
Newsletter Editor:

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.*

---

### ● Annual General Meeting

## Twenty Years and Two Hundred Members - a proud moment for Wilma Barden.

This year's AGM heralded some significant milestones in the history of HBOC. For one, the club has been in existence now for nearly twenty years since it was formed as a sub group of the Flora and Fauna Protection Society. It was originally named the Hunter Bird Observers Group when it was decided at a special meeting on 12th May 1976 that a group should be formed.

That meeting was attended by 14 people. The HBOC can now boast a membership of 200.

This has been achieved through the contributions of many people over the years but if it wasn't for the initial inspiration and drive of those foundation members it may never have got going or even continued.

It is fitting therefore, at this stage of the club's development that Wilma Barden be honoured with a Life Membership of HBOC as recognition of her continued involvement as well as her early efforts. A motion to that effect was put forward by Ann Lindsey and eloquently supported with references by Sue Hamonet. A proud Wilma

Barden graciously accepted to the acclamation of all those present.

Later in the year at the May Clubnight, a 20th Birthday celebration will feature presentations by Foundation Members.

To other business and it must be said that the election of officers for the next twelve months was completed with precision. As it turns out, all positions of delegated duties have been gladly retained by those of last year except for the job of Treasurer.

Alan Stuart has decided to retire from those responsibilities after nine continuous years of dedicated and skilled service. One more year and he could have claimed long service leave! Alan will continue to help the HBOC as Annual Bird Report Editor, a job that requires many hours of patient and meticulous work that results in a wonderful publication.

Rowley Smith will take over the duties of Treasurer as well as Membership Officer.

With all the election of officers etc completed it was time to enjoy more interesting fare; something about birds. It has almost become traditional now that David Geering be called on to give a presentation at the AGM and while David insists that this should not be the case, he agreed to it anyway.

Last year, David and his family travelled to Japan where he participated in research on Latham's Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*) or as the Japanese call it, *Ogishiga*. The Latham's Snipe breed in the north of Japan and particularly on the

island of Hokkaido. Links have been established between the school children of Kushiro Ishi and Jesmond High School through the Japanese Snipe Project.

Here in the Hunter, Latham's Snipe are furtive and hard to find among the grasses of wet meadows and the edges of swamps. Back in the farming areas of Hokkaido where these birds breed they are immediately obvious. Males make themselves particularly visible as they perch on the tops of fence posts, power poles and in trees. A spectacular display flight is also witnessed there as they fly high into the air, singing and then plummet to the grass below.

Latham's Snipe numbers have declined over the years as a result of the destruction of their Australian summer habitat but enjoys an apparent increase in breeding habitat in Japan. The clearing of mountain forest areas for pasture has helped to secure the breeding range.

While in Japan, David had a chance to look at a couple of bird species that are not doing so well. The Japanese Crane, *Tancho*, is a national monument in Japan and is featured in many paintings and statues about the place. Yet the wholesale drainage of marshes throughout China and Japan has drastically reduced the available wetlands for these graceful birds. The situation for the Japanese Crane is so desperate that a special sanctuary has been created on Hokkaido as shelter for the remaining six hundred birds.

Even worse off is the plight of the extremely rare Blackissson's Fish Owl. This owl has suffered from the destruction of its forest streams habitat and only a handful remain in the east of Hokkaido near a place called Nemuro. This owl requires rivers with turbulence that do not freeze over in winter which allow it to continue to catch fish all the year round. A captive breeding program is in place in an attempt to offset the likelihood of this bird's demise.

David illustrated his presentation with slides taken during his stay in Japan, some of which highlighted an artistic streak previously unwitnessed by many of our members.

Articles for our Newsletter are always welcomed.

Closing date for the next issue is  
31st May, 1996

Mail to: Tom Clarke 28 Kokera St, Wallsend 2287  
Phone: 513872 (h) 686316 (w) Fax: 686390

## Office Bearers and Appointed Positions for 1996

President  
Vice President  
Hon. Secretary  
Hon. Treasurer  
Management Committee

Ann Lindsey  
Peter McLauchlan  
Peter Phillips  
Rowley Smith  
Wilma Barden  
Tom Clarke  
David Geering  
Graeme O'Connor  
David Kibble  
Ray Walker  
Glenn Albrecht  
Bruce Turnbull  
Graeme O'Connor  
Stan Etheridge  
Keith Wood  
Pat Pountney  
John Cockereil  
Peter McLauchlan  
Peter Phillips  
Marian Walk  
Judith Smith  
Tom Clarke

Conservation Committee

Activities Officer  
Ass. Activities Officer  
Librarian (Books)  
Ass. Librarian  
Librarian (Slides)  
Librarian (Audio/Video)  
Public Officer  
Public Relations  
Publicity Officer  
Newsletter Editor,  
Production & Distribution.

**Atlas Recorder**  
Records Officer  
Garden Bird Survey Coord  
Annual Bird Report Editor  
Suppers

Assist. at clubnights

Appointment of Auditor

**NOT FILLED**  
Sue Hamonet  
Peter McLauchlan  
Alan Stuart  
Barbara Kelly  
Rosemary Waymark  
Judith Smith  
David Geerir  
Peter McLauchlan  
Tom Clarke  
Randall Watson

## NEW MEMBERS

The Hunter Bird Observers Club extends a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Greg Newling of Scone  
Bob Jackson of Pelican  
Stuart Chapman of Tanilba Bay  
Philip Rankin of Whitebridge  
Debbie & John Hancock of Dungog  
Sarah Tibbey of Lambton  
David Bore of Valentine

we look forward to meeting you  
at Clubnights and field outings during the year.

# Hunter Bird Observers Club - 15th Annual Report - 1995

1995 stands out as a year during which several significant events took place. Firstly, there was some excitement and anticipation amongst the committee during the latter half of the year as our membership entered the one hundred and nineties. Would it go as high as two hundred? Well, it did. The December membership list came in at exactly 200! This increase is due to several factors which have combined to raise the public profile of the club. The wider community now knows that there is an active club and more people know about our precious native birds.

Another significant event was the formation of a Conservation Committee. Although the club has always taken an interest in and where possible taken action over certain conservation issues this was the first year we had a formal group to deal with it. The club's first official Conservation Policy was produced upon which future actions can be based.

\* As part of a national effort to save the Regent Honeyeater from extinction, the club held regular surveys in the Paterson Valley. Despite not finding any sign of these rare birds the exercise has revealed good general knowledge of the area.

\* Two teams competed in the RAOU Twitchathon this year. The Champagne team, Lesticum Phorade, took out third place and the Twenty-four Hour team, Hunter Thickheads, came second. With corporate and private sponsorship the HBOC raised over \$1500.

\* HBOC was represented at the Bird Interest Groups Network (BIGNET) meetings during the year. Conservation issues and the collection

of standard bird data were discussed.

\* Once again, data collected from Garden Bird Survey Charts were correlated and analysed. And our second Annual Bird Report was published. This report included 18 species previously not listed in the first report.

\* The club finished the year with a bank balance of \$6434.78. Included in that is the Alan Keating Legacy of \$5000 which is available for projects that further the study and conservation of wild birds in the Hunter.

\* The club finished the year with a total membership of 200. The increase has been due to a very low drop-off rate from existing members with 17 new members being welcomed in the last twelve months.

\* 11 monthly meeting nights were attended by an average of 48.5 people.

\* 12 field outings were attended by an average of 14 people with an average of 56 species sightings.

\* 3 camps were attended by an average of 17 people with an average of 101 species sightings.

\* Nine new titles have been added to the Library stock during 1995. Four were purchased by the Club, the remainder donated by members. Total Library items now stands at 239.

\* The Audio-video Library now contains a total of 73 recordings comprising 50 audio cassettes, 16 video cassettes and 7 compact discs. The calls and songs of 607 species are now represented.

\* Slides were borrowed over 14 occasions from the Slide Library. 92 new slides have been added. There are still a number of birds of our region that are not represented in the library.

\* A pamphlet, titled *Living Jewels - How to Attract Native Birds to Your Garden*, was produced and issued to all

members. More copies will be available to the wider community through selected nurseries and at displays.

\* The Club had a presence at the Society for Growing Australian Plants, Wildflower Spectacular in September. Over the weekend, members chatted to the public about birds, led Bird Walks about the centre and handed out Garden Bird Survey Charts.

\* Several letters were written on conservation issues. Amongst them; to Maclean Shire Council re the purchase of significant wader habitat near Yamba; to Lake Macquarie City Council about the maintenance of swamp mahoganies in a creek at Morisset and to Maitland City Council about the Thornton Industrial Estate.

As new members come into the club new talents come along with them. It is its membership that makes a club successful and one of the things that is noteworthy about the Hunter Bird Observers Club is the willingness of people to make activities happen.

I hope that each and every one of you will find something of particular interest in the Club program and I believe that we can all look forward to another year of fascinating birdwatching.

Ann Lindsey  
HBOC President.

The Annual Report for 1995, in its entirety and along with all its appendices can be found in the Club Library and is available for inspection by any member of HBOC.

## Beach Survey N.S.W. and Victoria

The RAOU is organising a bird survey of all beaches along the south east coast and would like as many people as possible to take part.

The main weekend for the survey will be 16/17th November. However, if you cannot walk your beach on that date then a survey on the weekend 9/10th November will be accepted.

Keep a date open for this important survey and watch this space for more details in the future.

## PELAGIC TRIPS

From time to time, some birdwatchers, desperate to see new birds and experience a bit of the romance of the sea, start making noises about chartering a boat and setting off over the foam.

For those interested, the following information may be of benefit.

The NSW FOC organizes one pelagic trip a year in August, which leaves from Botany Bay. Details can be obtained from the Activities Officer, Allan Richards (02) 660-8062.

In addition, privately run monthly pelagic trips are available from Wollongong or Sydney Harbour on alternate last Sundays of each month.

For Wollongong trips, phone Phil Hansboro (06) 249-3091 (work) or (06) 249-8234 (home).

For Sydney trips, phone Tony Palliser (02) 9900-1678 (work) or (02) 427-7563 (home).

If anyone does wish to go on one of these trips and would like to go with fellow HBOC members, please let the Newsletter Editor know and it will be duly advertised.

## Clean Up Australia Day Throsby Creek Mangroves.

First the good news; a group of five birdwatchers enjoyed a relaxed but rewarding session in at the harbour entrance for about three hours over the high tide. The rubbish at Carrington could wait for a little while till we were ready and access not so wet.

A walk out along the Nobby's Lighthouse breakwater put us in good position to view quite a large number of seabirds feeding in the ocean just off the reef.

Diving with great accuracy were about ten Australian Gannet and these birds always put on a spectacular show. Through binoculars at such a close range it was easy to pick out the younger birds with dots of brown still showing on their backs.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater numbered about two hundred and sailed up and down along the swell along with Crested Tern and Silver Gull.

Over on the harbour side, our group was delighted by the elegant and active Little Tern. Eight of these fine featured birds were feeding very close to the breakwall and collected small fish from near the surface with shallow dives that never saw their wings getting wet. A binocular view at this range was good enough to pick out the black tip of their yellow bills.

Around on the rock platform at Newcastle Baths the birdwatching was hardly a challenge at all with 300 plus birds roosting and waiting for the tide to drop. Among this gathering we could see Silver Gull, Little Tern, Common Tern

and Crested tern.

Standing in their own little group, over by themselves, fifty Ruddy Turnstone and eight Sooty Oystercatcher showed little concern at the approach of birdwatchers hiding behind binoculars.

Later, as the tide started to turn, some of these birds did appear to get active with Turnstones and Oystercatchers moving over the wetter areas of the rocks.

But of course the big event of Clean Up Day was our objective for the morning and so off to Throsby Creek we went.

The area of mangroves at the bend of the creek just downstream from the Industrial Highway is a natural rubbish trap for anything that comes down from the urban catchment or gets pushed up from the harbour on the rising tide.

For years this section of Newcastle has been overlooked as a place of value but views are changing, be it ever so slowly.

Four more HBOC members joined us there and all put in excellent efforts. A bit disheartening though, when after filling to capacity one standard Clean Up Day bag you realise that you have only moved a couple of metres along behind the mangroves.

That place is riddled with garbage and it will take many hours of attention to get on top of it.

Thanks to all who participated and well done.

Tom Clarke.

## Swan Island, Pelican Island; good nesting places but birds still feeling the pressure.

A favourite holiday destination for Paddy Lightfoot is Swan Island located just north of Tasmania. During Paddy's most recent visit to this place he was fascinated by the local breeding population of Pacific Gulls (*Larus pacificus*). Having secured some pretty good slides of these birds he was keen to share them and his experiences in a *Bird of the Evening* presentation.

The Pacific Gull is the largest gull found in Australia and is identified by its very deep bill of orange with a red tip.

They are usually solitary birds and even during breeding they can be found as isolated pairs. They prefer the islands and headlands of Tasmania and South Australia as places to nest and Swan Island is no exception.

The nests are placed on the ground in some rocky situation and can be made up of all sorts of debris. However, seaweed and other plantlife is regularly used. One of Paddy's birds had built its nest between two rocks covered in Pigface.

The diet of the Pacific Gull is varied and these birds can be found feeding on fish and squid caught at sea as well as intertidal animals.

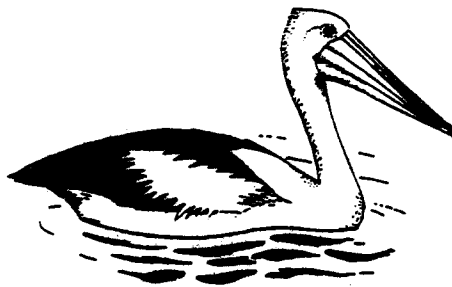
Paddy was lucky enough to witness these birds dropping turbo shells onto rocks until they opened and the contents devoured. One particular rock shelf actually formed a large shallow dish which meant that no matter where the shells were dropped they would tend to bounce or roll to the centre. The resultant "midden" of shell fragments testament to years of this activity.

Also making up part of this bird's diet is the chicks of other nesting birds including shearwaters.

The Pacific Gull is under some pressure as the competition from the Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) increases. The Kelp Gull is slightly

smaller but very similar in appearance and is expanding its breeding range.

In flight, the Kelp Gull has a blank white tail while the Pacific Gull has a black band near the tip of the tail. A closer examination shows that the Kelp Gull has a more slender bill and its nostrils appear as slits compared to the oval shape nostrils of the Pacific Gull.



A bit closer to home, the main feature dealt with the Pelicans of Wallis Lake. National Parks and Wildlife Service "Pelican Man", David Turner of Forster shared his knowledge and experiences of the Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*)

Pelican Island is a tiny sandy piece of real estate in the south end of Wallis Lake that has built up as a breeding colony for Pelicans in the last ten years.

On such a tiny area it can become very crowded once egg laying commences with "fringe dwellers" left to the mercy of the tides. David showed us slides of birds actually sitting (on eggs) in shallow water!

Nest building appears to be of secondary consideration and can take place after the eggs have been produced. Sticks, grasses, bits of plastic, anything at all it seems is gathered in around the scrape as

incubation proceeds. Once secured, these adornments are jealously guarded and an opportunity to pirate something from the neighbour is never missed.

David showed slides of breeding birds with their bright red and pink bills with dark blue line features at the base. This colour vanishes very soon after mating is complete so usually the bird watcher will only see these things very close to a breeding colony. Male birds are usually larger than their female partners but the size variation in both sexes means that you need to have the pair together to determine the sex.

The Pelicans of Wallis Lake do not have things totally easy at all and suffer from harassment by fishermen and residents.

Fishermen apparently see these birds as competition for the fish of the lake and some breeding efforts have been aborted due to nest destruction by human interference.

Despite this pressure, and the fact that changes to the mouth of the lake have resulted in some flood tides completely covering Pelican Island, the Pelican persists. It is David's intention not to further interfere with modifications to the island or anything else except to warn people off and leave nature to do its own thing.

The Australian Pelican will breed at any time of the year as long as conditions are favourable but there are only eighteen known regular breeding sites in the whole country!

David also had some fascinating Pelican behaviour captured on video which showed the antics of a young bird being fed by its parent. The youngster would clown around as if it was necessary to draw attention to itself. After securing a meal from the crop of the adult it would then apparently become disorientated and confused causing the youngster to stumble about as if drunk and in a bad temper.

Many plausible explanations to this behaviour were offered by various people however David is at a loss with that one.

## Some Birds Of Tasmania

We recently spent two weeks in Tasmania. We made sure to take our binoculars and bird book with us in case we saw some birds peculiar to the island state.

Along the roads we often saw Black Currawongs, which are endemic to Tasmania. There is also a race of Grey Currawong, the "Clinking Currawong", in Tasmania but we did not hear anything like a clink from the currawongs that we saw. Also in evidence along the roads, cleaning up the animals that had been run over by traffic were the Forest Ravens, which *Simpson and Day* assure us is the only corvid in Tasmania.

Once while looking at Grey Fantails and Silvereyes in a blackberry patch, we caught one sighting of a Beautiful Firetail. I found our field guide a little misleading on this one as the bird I saw had a distinct white eye ring (pale blue?) which did not show up in *Nicolas Day's*

painting. A Tasmanian bird book shows this distinctly.

The honeyeaters were represented by the Crescent Honeyeaters, seen among other places as the Hobart Botanical Gardens. They have the yellow wing markings of the New Holland Honeyeaters but their throats are white, surrounded by a crescent of black (brown in the female) which gives them their common name. There were plenty of Little Wattlebirds but we were not fortunate enough to see the endemic Yellow Wattlebird.

We frequently saw the Green Rosella, which is Tasmania's main contribution to the Rosella family. In the forests that they usually inhabit they seem to be very dark indeed: but then the same could be said for some other green birds (eg. Green Pigmy-Goose and Dollarbird). If you see them in sunshine, they really are green.

When we walked in the

rainforests and fern gullies which are so common in Tasmania, the few birds we saw seemed to be Thornbills and it was hard to tell whether they were the Brown Thornbill or the endemic Tasmanian Thornbill. As there seemed to be a white patch on the flank they were probably the latter.

Along the shore there were almost as many Pacific Gulls as Silver Gulls. Often we saw some brown gulls and wondered what they were until we realized that they were the young Pacific Gulls.

While visiting Strahan on the west coast, we went out to the beach at dusk to see the "Mutton Birds" or Short-tailed Shearwaters coming home to their burrows. The air was full of the adult birds circling around before dropping down to their burrows in the sandhills. Often we could see the sand flying as they cleared it away to get in to their young. Later, on the north coast we hoped to see the Fairy Penguins coming home in the same way (except that they swim) but although we went along to a place called Penguin, we missed out. A local resident told us that their nesting grounds were hard to get to, but we should find them near Turner's Beach where we were staying. By the time we got back there it was too late.

We would have liked to have seen some of the other birds peculiar to Tasmania but that would have taken more time and there were many sights other than birds that we went to see.

Don Halliday.

*Attract native birds to your garden with native plants from*

*Newcastle Wildflower Nursery*

45 PACIFIC HIGHWAY  
BENNETTS GREEN  
TELEPHONE: 48 8576

*Specialising in Native Plants For All Australian Gardens*

A small nursery with a wide range of plants



including:

Banksias  
Bottle Brush  
Kangaroo Paws  
Grevilleas  
Tree Ferns

Ground-covers

Bird attracting plants and many rare and endangered species.

## ● Observations

Observations from the February meeting.

### December '95

	White-breasted Sea Eagle	1	Jesmond	G.Brosie
	White-throated Needletail	20+	East Maitland	G.Brosie
16th	Black-necked Stork	1	Bulahdelah	B.Kibble
19th	Musk Duck	1	Myall Lakes N.P.	B.Kibble
21st	Reeve	1	Kooragang Island	A.Lindsey

### January '96

	Wedge-tailed Eagle	4	Wallarobba	R.Smith
1st	Galah (hybrid)	1	Woodberry	L.Marshall
5th	Galah (part melanistic)	1	Woodberry	L.Marshall
10th	Grey Goshawk	1	New Lambton Heights	M.Hamilton
10th	Red-browed Finch	2	New Lambton Heights	M.Hamilton
15th	Sooty Oystercatcher	6	Newcastle Beach	A.Lindsey
15th	Common Tern	100	Newcastle Beach	A.Lindsey
15th	Flesh-footed Shearwater	1+	Newcastle Beach	A.Lindsey
15th	Ruddy Turnstone	50+	Newcastle Beach	A.Lindsey
16th	Little Corella	1	Woodberry	L.Marshall
27th	Diamond Firetail	1	Glendonbrook	R.Walker

### February '96

	White-throated needletail	15	Jesmond High School	G.Brosie
4th	Koel (immature)	1	Warners Bay	R.Walker
6th	Spangled Drongo	1	Belmont South	J.Cockerell
11th	White-winged Chough	30	Mount Sugarloaf	R.Walker
12th	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	14	Blackalls Park	R.Walker
13th	Apostlebird	1	Birmingham Gardens	W.Barden

The Reeve at Kooragang Island was first reported by a Sydney observer. Ann Lindsey and Wilma Barden were able to locate and confirm the observation.

Two other interesting sightings in the same area at about the same time were those of two Banded Stilt (immature) and a single Pectoral Sandpiper. Both these species were sighted and confirmed by HBOC members on the January Field Outing.

A single Apostlebird was reported from Birmingham Gardens and was confirmed by Wilma Barden.

## ● Mid-week Outing

### Myuna Bay/Wangi 6th February 1996

On arrival at Myuna Bay the start of this year's second Mid-week Outing we saw the result of the previous night's thunderstorm. Five large casuarinas and two magnificent gums had been blown over, the power lines that run along side the dirt track flattened with the fallen trees and branches and leaves strewn everywhere. What a way to begin an outing!

Six people gathered and we set off in overcast conditions with a cool northeasterly

blowing. In the following two and a half hours we watched and admired thirty-seven species of bird.

The Sacred Kingfisher eating crab for breakfast, teenage Dollarbirds practicing their calls, a White-faced Heron walking through the air roots of the Grey Mangroves and Little Terns feeding in the water outlet of the power station. White-breasted Sea Eagle watching from its perching tree and Striated Heron flying quietly across the water to vanish into the distance.

All of these birds and the good company of other birdwatchers made a very enjoyable morning. Thank you friends.  
Diane Rogers.

## Coastal Heath of Awabakal Nature Reserve

Over the years, I have spent some time wandering about the area between Dudley and Redhead. My main interest and source of enjoyment has been the birds that find the various habitats to their advantage but this place has also impressed me with many other aspects of nature.

Even the casual observer cannot visit Awabakal and ignore the amazing diversity of plant life that exists there for instance. And after any sort of examination, the change of habitat that you find as you make your way from the sea cliffs of Dudley Bluff, across the heath and through the woodland to Redhead Lagoon surely can't go unnoticed.

There are, of course, many aspects of Awabakal Nature Reserve which attract the naturalist but for my mind the heathland is the jewel in the crown.

Our field outing in March was blessed with perfect weather. Sure it was overcast and cool with rain threatening, but the air was still. No sea breeze blowing over the bluff to keep the small birds in cover; and it remained that way all morning.

Walking into the heathland we could hear Eastern Whipbird, Little Wattlebird and New Holland Honeyeater but not much else. By the time we had set ourselves patiently waiting among the stunted banksias and acacias of the bluff, the drizzle had ceased and birds started popping up everywhere.

A terrific view of three Southern Emu-wren was thoroughly enjoyable as they

made their way across the brow of the cliff. One blue bearded male standing on top of a dwarf Old Man Banksia, tail erect and with a sunlit ocean as the backdrop had at least three birdwatchers in raptures.

Also moving about but less obvious at this stage were the Brown Thornbills and White-throated Scrubwrens that share this low and dense arrangement.

A feature of this heath has always been its honeyeaters and no one was going home today disappointed. Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters did seem to be a little scarce but New Holland Honeyeaters and Little Wattlebirds were in abundance.

Down in one particular section, the Little Wattlebirds had gathered and lots of calling and racing about behaviour was the order of the day. It appeared that these birds were having a feast of insects and the sound of bills snapping while they were in flight was plainly audible.

As we made our way around amongst the shrubs and wildflowers (there is always something flowering at Awabakal) more excellent encounters were made. Eastern Spinebill, Superb Fairy-wren, Silveryeye and Eastern Whipbird all appeared to make binoculars temporarily redundant.

After a pleasant morning tea, sit down and chin wag, it was decided to explore the area around the lagoon.

We immediately struck it rich just as we made it down to the line of melaleucas that border the wetland. Variegated Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Rufous

Whistler and Red-browed Finch had us looking high and low to spot everything.

Out on the water, not much was happening as a pair of Chestnut Teal sat idly while the discovery of two Black-fronted Dotterel standing on a small patch of mud nearby caused more interest.




The bush had grown silent as we moved around the lagoon to the southern side and it was starting to look like we had birded the place out; then a Grey Goshawk was flushed. This bird had been sitting quietly, high in an angophora with its eye on everything until disturbed by our approach.

With more care, it wasn't long before we found it again and some excellent views through binoculars were to be enjoyed.

Some non-bird wonders of nature that attracted our attention during the day included the smallest Red-bellied Black Snake I have ever seen and the large examples of fungi. Two "toadstools" the size of pumpkins were found growing just above the wet of the margins of the lagoon. Since the outing, I have researched this and I feel that what we found was a fungi of the *Boletus* genus which establishes itself on the roots of host trees, like melaleucas.


Tom Clarke







## "BIRDS ON FARMS" - *Let's Get BIRDING!*


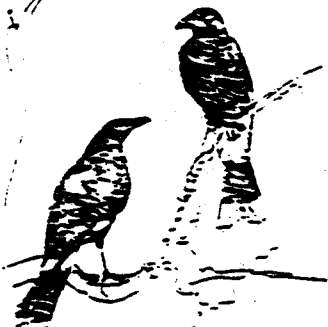
How many different kinds of birds are there on your farm? Did you know that birds are considered to be good indicators of the health of a farm? If many different kinds of birds occur regularly on a farm the native ecosystem is still intact. This means that there is a good balance between farm production and protecting the natural environment.



The goal of the National Decade of Landcare is to achieve sustainable land use by the year 2000. Half-way through this ten year plan, our knowledge of the causes of land degradation has greatly improved. However, we have not managed to halt the degradation process and much of Australia's native fauna and flora continues to decline in rural areas. There is good reason to expect that measures required to sustain farm productivity are consistent with those necessary for conserving many bird species. It appears that with the careful management of remnant bushland and revegetated areas, at least 80% of Australia's rural bird species can survive comfortably in farming areas.

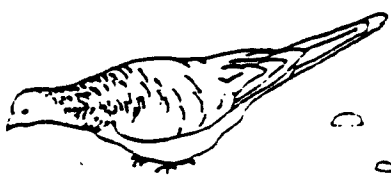






Increasingly the rural traveller is confronted with a landscape of dead and dying trees. It is likely that throughout Australia, farm trees will continue to become unhealthy and die if there are no native birds to harvest the leaf-eating insects which destroy the tree canopies. Trees are the key to sustainable farming in many areas, and currently enormous resources are being directed towards planting trees in order to reverse land degradation. However, this is false economy if the native fauna, which keep the trees healthy, is not also protected. As well as birds, native mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates all play an important role as biological controls for pest species on farms. The presence of a rich diversity of bird species on a farm indicates that the majority of local plants and animals are also present. That is why birds are often referred to as "indicator species".



The Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union is setting up a Birds on Farms survey. The primary aim is to examine the degree of success of revegetation programs in bringing birds back into rural areas. Any farm is suitable for the survey. Volunteers are needed to "adopt a farm" and survey birds once each season for 2 years. If landholders would like to be involved but do not have time to survey birds, they may be happy for a couple of bird watchers to visit their properties to conduct the surveys. If you would like to volunteer your avian skills, offer your farm for the survey, or you are simply interested in further information, please contact:

Geoff Barrett, RAOU National Office,  
415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East, VIC, 3123.  
Ph (03) 9882 2622, Fax (03) 9882 2677.



# 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.

Saturday 4th May	1996	Regent Honeyeater Survey - Paterson River Valley
		Meet: Park by the river at Paterson 7:00am
		Leader: Ann Lindsey 512008
Tuesday 7th May		Midweek Outing: Blackbutt Reserve
		Meet: Richley Reserve Car Park 8:00am
		Contact: Keith Woods 633070
Wednesday 8th May		Clubnight: Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
		Main feature: HBOC 20th Anniversary
		Presentations by Wilma Barden, Fred Van Gessel & Gary Weber
Sunday 19th May		Field Day: Woodville/Martin's Creek
		Meet: Woodville Post Office 8:00am
		Leader: Mike Newman 305564
-Saturday 1st June		Regent Honeyeater Survey - Paterson River Valley
		Meet: Park by the river at Paterson 7:00am
		Leader: Ann Lindsey 512008
Tuesday 4th June		Midweek Outing: Kooragang Island/Ash Island
		Meet: Stockton Sand Spit 8:00am
		Contact: Max Blanch 611655
Queen's Birthday Weekend 8th - 10th June		Camp: White Box Camp, Goulburn River N.P.
		Contact: Sue Hamonet 581023
Wednesday 12th June		Clubnight: Shortland Wetlands Centre 7:30pm
		Main Feature: Birds and Wetlands - A View From Ramsar by Max Maddock
Sunday 23rd June		Field Day: Wetlands Day
		Meet: Shortland Wetlands Centre 8:00am
		Leader: Ann Lindsey 512008

## NORTHERN INSTRUMENT SERVICES

990 Hunter Street, Newcastle

Ph: 69 4021

SPECIALISING IN SALES AND SERVICE OF:  
BINOCULARS, SPOTTING SCOPES & TELESCOPES

Binocular Repairs done professionally, quickly  
and at reasonable rates.