

Western Australian Bird Notes



Quarterly Newsletter of the Western Australian
Branch of BirdLife Australia

No. 169 March 2019





Lake Claremont (see report, p46): (left) Grey Teal, photo by David Free



Great Cormorant showing red spot below the eye. Photo by Gary Tate (see report, p25)



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Eyre Bird Observatory. Photo by Alfred Lau (see report, p51)

Figure 1. Google Earth map of the Port Hedland Saltworks, showing survey locations (see report, p12).



Front cover: The Minister for Environment (The Hon Stephen Dawson) at BirdLife WA offices in January for the official presentation of LotteryWest funding of \$576 529 (see reports, pp10,13).

Front: The Minister and Dr Tegan Douglas.

Back L-R: Annette Park (Office Manager), Dr Mark Henryon (EC member), Dr Geoff Barrett (DBCA), Dr Vicki Stokes (BWA Program Manager), Mandy Bamford (BirdLife Board) and Dr Mike Bamford (Vice Chair).

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BirdLife Western Australia is the WA Branch of the national organisation, BirdLife Australia. We are dedicated to creating a brighter future for Australian birds.

General meetings: Held at the Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, commencing 7:30 pm on the 4th Monday of the month (except December) – see 'Coming events' for details.

Executive meetings: Held at Peregrine House on the 2nd Monday of the month. Communicate any matters for consideration to the Chair.

Western Australian Bird Notes

Print ISSN 1445-3983
Online ISSN 2206-8716

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Notes for Contributors

The Editors request contributors to note:

- WABN publishes material of interest to the WA Branch;
- contributions should be written or typed with double spacing—a copy on disk or emailed would assist, especially if in MS Word as a document without styles; do not embed pictures or graphics in MS Word;
- contributions to be sent direct to the Editors, either at the office or by email:
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- WABN uses BirdLife Australia recommended English names;
- except for Observations, contributions will be published unless the contributor is informed to the contrary;
- Full Editorial Policy is in WABN 74:10-12;
- WABN is not peer reviewed.

Printing Deadlines (at BirdLife WA Office)

June 2019 issue: 1 May
September 2019 issue: 1 August
December 2019 issue: 1 November
March 2020 issue: 1 February

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 2018

Chair: Mr Viv Read

Vice Chair: Dr Mike Bamford

Secretary: Felice Morcombe

Treasurer: Beverly Winterton

Committee: Plaxy Barrett, Alasdair Bulloch, Max Goodwin, Mark Henryon, Lou Scampoli, Jennifer Sumpton and one vacancy

Note: Results of the election of the 2019 Executive to be held on 25 February 2019 will be published in our June newsletter.



Red-headed Honeyeater, Broome. Photo by Chris Young

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Hooded Plovers continue to surprise us

BirdLife's Hooded Plover annual surveys in the south-west have been running for more than 20 years and here in the Capes we have been involved in additional local projects over those years. The most recent is the DBCA Capes Hooded Plover Monitoring Project, co-ordinated by Christine Taylor from DBCA Bunbury. BirdLife Australia has been involved through Dr Grainne Maquire, Marcus Singor of BirdLife WA and the local Cape to Cape Bird Group, with records entered on the BirdLife Beach Nesting Birds Portal.

With 20 enthusiastic volunteers trained up for the project, it was down to the beaches to check out what was going on, especially with the start of the breeding season and the peak holiday period. An influx of holidaymakers meant some beaches were under pressure, but we were kept informed daily, through emails flying back and forth over Christmas, as well as reports on the portal, with volunteers giving progress of Hooded Plover numbers, flocking birds, nests and chicks. A bonus for Jennifer Smith, Janet Dufall and Vic, was the interaction of a Beach Stone-curlew with a pair of Hooded Plovers fiercely defending their chicks. The dedication of the volunteers has been extraordinary, with their obvious excitement about their involvement, diligence in walking long distances, sometimes daily, and reporting what has occurred in detail.

Could the story get any better—about these birds and their resilience against many obstacles? But then followed the discovery of the floating eggs (Eds: see article by Marcus Singor, below). Everyone was very excited at this stage as we thought it was a WA first, but later found it to be a first for Australia. Some of us met at the banding/flagging session at the home of Kerry and Dave, a truly amazing couple, intent on giving the best care to their charges.

A lot of background work carried on, culminating in the choice of release site. Requirements—lots of seaweed wrack, with bugs, a secluded beach ideally with no human traffic, no vehicles or dogs, and other Hooded Plovers to encourage the young chicks to interact and learn.

Greg Woodward, a newcomer to this beach walking for birds, spent hours monitoring and checking the release site. The trek to 'Greg's Beach' on the release morning was a thrill, the setting a spectacular backdrop—cliffs, ocean and a long fairly deserted beach. We kept an eye out for any predators and/or threats—a Dugite on the beach, a Nankeen Kestrel perched on the cliff, an inquisitive immature Pacific Gull, two Silver Gulls and ravens. Christine Taylor drove the large gull away and placed five numbered shelters along the beach. Two adult Hooded Plovers were further along the beach. There was a small amount of wrack.

Kerry and Dave were quite emotional by this stage and released the two youngsters on to the sand. The birds walked around a little, calling to each other. These birds were not able to fly, we thought, so imagine our surprise when they both took off strongly in unison and flew way above us and out to sea and we lost sight of them for a few seconds. To our relief they reappeared above us and landed back with us once again, but not for long. They then walked away from us and we lost sight of them as they headed north around the point.

A check next day—the two orphans plus two adult Hooded Plovers plus one immature and a separate two adults with a possible immature. And the latest report at the beginning of February—the birds are thriving!

Christine Wilder



(above left) Release of the Hooded Plover chicks and (right) Kerry and Dave Bell, the Hooded Plover carers. Photos by Christine Taylor

SURVIVAL AGAINST ALL ODDS— THE RAISING OF TWO HOODED PLOVER CHICKS

An amazing story came to hand of a lady and her daughter walking along the beach when they found three eggs floating at the water's edge. Belinda McKinnon and her daughter Riley found the eggs in the water on a beach, in a small bay (perhaps Sarge Bay) east of the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse. They retrieved the eggs from the water, took them home and put them in an incubator. One was cracked. They put the other two with quail eggs that they were incubating and were surprised to have them hatch, on 4 December 2018. The incubation time for Hooded Plover eggs is about 28 days, so these embryos were already partially developed. They hatched simultaneously. The incubator used was a Foam HovaBator incubator with a fan, set at 38.7 degrees, humidity at 55 – 70%. Eggs were turned twice per day, morning and night.

Shortly afterwards the two Hooded Plover chicks were placed into the care of Augusta Wildlife Care.

Kerry and Dave Bell were the carers tasked with looking after the three-hours old chicks. They shared details of the specialized care they provided. They used a heat lamp which was kept on all the time for the first week. A heat disk (snuggle safe which can be adjusted for temperature) was placed in a long plastic container (1.2 metres long with lid) which provided security and shelter. The microwave heat disk retains warmth for about 12 hours and details can be found on their web site: <https://www.snugglesafe.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/heatpad-instructions.pdf>

A beanie was also placed in the container for comfort. The Hooded Plover chicks ingest their yolk for the first 24 hours and this can keep them going for 48 hours. They were fed with chick starter, meal worms (chopped up) and **Insectivore Rearing Mix which is a high protein mix enriched with vitamins and minerals**. Kerry dug up dirt from the garden and put it in their housing container so they could peck for insects and bugs. After about two weeks they were mainly interested in foraging and instinctively knew to crouch down and hide.

Kerry and Dave kept details on the weight of both chicks, to monitor their progress (Table 1).

The chicks were taken to the beach on three occasions. They stayed close to their carers on the first occasion, ran around confidently collecting food on the second, and were too adventurous to be left for long on the third. They ate so much the first day that on the second day they were too full to eat. They liked to peck for bugs in the seaweed. The

Table 1. Weights of two Hooded Plover chicks while being cared for by Kerry and Dave Bell.

Day	Date	Weight chick 1 (grams)	Weight chick 2 (grams)
Tuesday	4-Dec-18	9	9
Monday	10-Dec-18	19	19
Tuesday	18-Dec-18	40	46
Friday	28-Dec-18	49	61
Tuesday	8-Jan-19	74	77
Tuesday	15-Jan-19	82	83

Hooded Plover chicks showed quite an appetite as they ate about 200 mealworms a day between them, along with the bugs in the seaweed.

In late December 2018, as they grew older, the chicks were moved into a bird aviary about 3 m by 4 m and some seaweed was spread on the ground. They were fed chopped mealworms but they also gathered their own food from the seaweed, which was replenished from the coast every couple of days.

The Hooded Plover chicks were now showing more interest in their natural food (bugs in the seaweed) than the other food. On 1 January 2019 they turned four weeks old.

Identifying a suitable release site proved a challenge. The preference was to release them close to where they were found. Unfortunately, this time of the year falls in the middle of the holiday season when beaches are over run by tourists, vehicles and their pets.

We needed to find a site that had few people, ample seaweed for food, was predator free and hopefully had some other non-breeding Hooded Plover present. Bob's Hollow north of Conto's Beach seemed the best choice.

The Hooded Plover were banded on Molloy Island by Boyd Wykes (A692) whilst still in captivity on 15 January 2019. They were six weeks old at this stage.

This information supplements data previously collected on how to raise a Hooded Plover chick (Singor 2012).

The date of release finally arrived and the two Hooded Plovers were released on 31 January 2019 at Bob's Hollow (see article above).

Acknowledgements

Congratulations to Kerry and Dave Bell who successfully raised the Hooded Plover chicks to adulthood. Many people contributed in various ways; in particular, thanks go to Jenny Kikeros, Belinda McKinnon, Riley McKinnon, Karen Northcott, Christine Taylor, Boyd Wykes, Wally Smith, Christine Wilder, Greg Woodward, Mike Bamford and Grainne Maguire. Additional thanks go to F.A.W.N.A. Inc (**F**ostering and **A**ssistance for **W**ildlife **N**eeding **A**id), a not-for-profit government approved wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organisation for sick, injured and orphaned native fauna, and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Reference

Singor, M. (2012). Attempt to hand-rear a Hooded Plover. *Western Australian Bird Notes* **142**, 23-24.

Marcus Singor

Table 2. Banding and flagging details for two Hooded Plover chicks.

Band number	Metal band	Engraved flag	Letters	Head - Bill length (mm)
051 22138	lower right leg	dark blue flag upper left leg	BA	47.5
051 22139	lower right leg	yellow flag upper left leg	BA	47.5



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Letters to the Editors

A Junior Member: Benjamin Hicks

Hi, I am Benjamin Hicks and I am 12 years old. I have always been interested in marine life, mammals, reptiles and bugs. About three years ago I became captivated by birds!

I attended the Iluka Beach Coastal Biodiversity Event on 15 April last year, which combined all my interests, marine animals, mammals, bugs and of course birds. I met someone from BirdLife who told me about the organisation. So I joined, and I have been going on the weekly walks ever since.

I really love drawing, photographing and researching birds.

I am fascinated by the trans-equatorial shorebirds, that fly thousands of kilometres to go to Australia. My favourite bird is the Tawny Frogmouth. My favourite birdwatching spot is Alfred Cove. So far, I have been lucky enough to see 228 Australian birds. I can't wait to see more!

When I grow up, I would like to be a biologist.

Thank you to everyone at BirdLife for being really welcoming and generous in sharing your knowledge with me. I love being a member of BirdLife!

Benjamin Hicks

Observations

This list has been compiled by the WA Records Officer with input from the WA Records Committee. Metropolitan suburbs or shires are in parentheses. Please report interesting observations the WA Records Officer, John Graff (wasightings@birdlife.org.au) or to the BirdLife WA office (9383 7749). Sightings are included on the BirdLife WA sightings page (<http://birdswa.org.au/sightings.htm>) as soon as possible, and the most interesting are selected for inclusion in the next *WABN*.

Includes records received up to and including 16 January.

HIGHLIGHTS

An interesting quarter, with a number of exceptional records. **Oriental Honey-Buzzards** returned to Lake Joondalup for yet another year, as did a **Eurasian Hobby** at North Lake. This bird may be the same individual seen at North Lake in the previous two summers. A **Eurasian Curlew** re-appeared at Point Douro on the Leschenault Estuary near Australind and is likely the same bird present for an extended period between January 2016 and March 2017. Not everything was on repeat though, with a **Purple Heron** appearing along a mangrove creek in Carnarvon, just the second record for Western Australia (and the Australian mainland). A **Sabine's Gull** appeared at Bremer Bay in mid-January, while a **White Wagtail** was found on Rottnest around the same time. White Wagtails have been erroneously claimed on Rottnest a number of times, mostly by visiting birders unfamiliar with White-fronted Chats, so a genuine record is a pleasant surprise! Three **Garganey**

on a wetland near Broome were also an excellent record. Garganey were previously a rare but regular migrant to the Kimberley but there have been very few recent records, likely because of a major decline in the species' global population.

The influx of arid-zone nomads to the Wheatbelt continued into this quarter, highlighted by an exceptional count of over 200 **Pied Honeyeaters** in a small area of bush near Dalwallinu, including over 70 photographed together in one dead tree. **Black** and **White-fronted Honeyeaters**, **Crimson Chats**, and **Budgerigars** were also reported. Numbers of all species appeared to have subsided by December.

Fairy Martins were recorded breeding near Wandering, following on from several previous records of the species south-east of Perth. Individual birds were also observed at several locations near Perth away from their known breeding locations in the eastern metropolitan area, suggesting the species may be expanding into the far south-west. Two **Masked Lapwings** were also seen at Lake McLarty, as this species expands into the south-west from the east; they are now resident in small numbers along the south coast, particularly around Esperance.

Migratory **Peregrine Falcons**, probably of the subspecies *calidus*, continue to be seen in the north of the state during the Austral summer, with a long-staying bird seen near one of the town ovals in Broome in late 2018. Migratory Peregrines have accounted for over 50% of Peregrine records around Broome during the Austral summer in recent years, but it is likely they were overlooked to some degree previously.

METROPOLITAN (UBD STREET DIRECTORY)

Hooded Plover – 1, 18-21/12/18, Alfred Cove (Attadale) – CY *et al.* * 1, 07/01/19, Goegrup Lake (Barragup) – LGi (uncommon in the Perth area; Alfred Cove records possibly the same bird reported in *WABN* **165, 166, 168**)

Ruff – 1, 08-11/01/19, Forrestdale Lake (Forrestdale) – RB *et al.* * 1, 11/01/19, Thomsons Lake (Beeliar) – KG & JB (scarce migrant to Western Australia; both records involve same individual; photographs)

Red-necked Phalarope – 1, 22/11/18, salt lakes (Rottnest Island) – SR * 1, 05/12/18, Halls Head beach (Halls Head) – MN (rare migrant to Western Australia; photographs of Rottnest bird)

Oriental Pratincole – 1, 08/12/18, Alfred Cove (Attadale) – SN, CY *et al.* (vagrant to south-western Australia; photographs)

ORIENTAL (CRESTED) HONEY-BUZZARD – 3 individuals present, 18/11/18-16/01/19, Lake Joondalup (Joondalup/Wanneroo) – GG, DM *et al.* (vagrant to Western Australia; possibly the same individuals as recorded in previous summers; records of these individuals accepted by BARC; photographs) (see p44)

EURASIAN HOBBY – 1, 10/12/18-16/01/19, North Lake Reserve (North Lake) – RP, MP *et al.* (vagrant to Western Australia; subject to BARC acceptance; photographs, see p60)

Pied Butcherbird – 1, 28/10/18, Wanneroo Road (Ashby) – GL (rare in the greater metropolitan area)

WHITE WAGTAIL – 1 ssp. *leucopsis*, 15-16/01/19, Garden Lake (Rottnest Island) – MC (vagrant to Western Australia; subject to BARC acceptance; photographs, see p60)

SOUTH WEST (SHARK BAY TO CAPE ARID)

Masked Lapwing – 2 ssp. *novaeollandiae*, 28/12/18-14/01/19, Lake McLarty (Murray) – SA, MS *et al.* (rare but increasing in south-western Australia; photographs)

EURASIAN CURLEW – 1, 10/09/18-12/01/2019, Point Douro, Leschenault Estuary (Australind) – PM *et al.* (vagrant to Western Australia; subject to BARC acceptance; photographs; possibly same bird present in 2016 - see **WABN 158-161**)

SABINE'S GULL – 1, 14-16/01/19, Bremer Bay (Jerramungup) – KL *et al.* (vagrant to Western Australia; photographs, see p33)

Budgerigar – 5, 03/11/18, Reynoldson Reserve (Wongan-Ballidu) – GC (scarce visitor to inner Wheatbelt)

Black Honeyeater – several, 26/09 & 06/10/18, Wallaby Hills NR (York) – MLB * several, 07/10/18, Great Eastern Hwy, west of Bodallin (Yilgarn) – MLB * several, 12/10/18, Helm's Arboretum (Esperance) – MLB * 2 pairs, 28/10/18, Wandering (Wandering) – MN * 2, 08/11/18, Reynoldson Reserve (Wongan-Ballidu) – JB (rare visitor to the south-west; photographs)

Pied Honeyeater – up to 200+, 01/11/18, Damboring Siding (Dalwallinu) – PL *et al.* (rare visitor to the south-west; photographs, see p29)

White-fronted Honeyeater – up to 50+, 08-10/11/18, Reynoldson Reserve (Wongan-Ballidu) – JB *et al.* (high counts for the Wheatbelt; photographs)

Crimson Chat – up to 40, 12/10-12/10/18, Reynoldson Reserve (Wongan-Ballidu) – JB *et al.* (rare visitor to the south-west; photographs)

Fairy Martin – 10+, 28/10/18, Wandering (Wandering) – MN (scarce in Wheatbelt south of Perth)

ARID ZONE

Flock Bronzewing – up to 100, 07/11-08/12/18, Urala Causeway, Ashburton River (Ashburton) – SF & JG (scarce visitor to the Pilbara; photographs)

Broad-billed Sandpiper – 175, 09/12/18, Urala Creek (Ashburton) – SF & JG (high count)

PURPLE HERON – 1, 18-27/11/18, Violet Creek (Carnarvon) – LG *et al.* (2nd record for Western Australia; subject to BARC acceptance; photographs)

Eurasian Tree Sparrow – 1, 03/08-15/10/18, Woolworths supermarket (Port Hedland) – SF, JG *et al.* (rare but regular ship-assisted visitor to Western Australia; see also **WABN 167**)

KIMBERLEY

GARGANEY – 3, 02/11/18-09/01/19, Lake Champion (Broome) – NJ *et al.* (vagrant to Western Australia; photographs)

Pale-vented Bush-hen – 1, 08/12/18, 12 Mile (Broome) – GS, CH *et al.* * 1, 09/12/18, backyard near Town Beach (Broome) – via NJ (rare in Western Australia; 1st record from Broome; both records may involve same individual; photographs)

Red-necked Phalarope – 2, 11-17/11/18, Lake Eda (Broome) – CH *et al.* * 1, 17/11/18, Lake Champion (Broome) – GS (rare migrant to Western Australia; photographs)

Yellow Wagtail ssp. *macronyx* – 1-2, 29/12/18-12/01/19, Crab Creek and adjacent Roebuck Plains (Broome) – NJ *et al.* (vagrant to Western Australia; photographs)



Sabine's Gull, Bremer Bay. Photo by Keith Lightbody (see also p33)

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

Summary of Christmas Island records for the season to be included in **WABN 170**.

COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

Summary of Cocos (Keeling) Island records for the season to be included in **WABN 170**.

OBSERVERS

CH = Chris Hassell
 CY = Chris Young
 DM = Dan Mantle
 GC = Geoff Collis
 GG = Geoffrey Groom
 GL = Graham Little
 GS = George Swann
 JB = John Baas
 JG = John Graff
 KG = Ken Glasson
 KL = Keith Lightbody
 LG = Les George
 LGi = Linda Giblett
 MC = Mark Coates
 MLB = Michael & Lesley Brooker
 MN = Mark Newman
 MP = Morgan Pickering
 MS = Marcus Singor
 NJ = Nigel Jackett
 PL = Phil Lewis
 PM = Peter Morris
 RB = Raymond Bosman
 RP = Robyn Pickering
 SA = Sue Abbotts
 SF = Stewart Ford
 SN = Sean Nolan
 SR = Steve Reynolds

CHAIR'S REPORT

We are now well into the bird world of 2019 and there are very good reasons to be optimistic about it. As mentioned last quarter by Mike, I was trekking in remote Nepal and was delighted to see Himalayan Griffon up close and other vultures at high altitude. I have met many members who have also enjoyed birding while travelling abroad and at home, with exciting recent sightings, but the interest starts in our own backyards. It is that growing interest that we seek to foster so that birds can be conserved for our future enjoyment, and of course for their own future.

One of the reasons for optimism is our success in obtaining external funding. Appreciation is expressed to Dr Vicki Stokes (WA Branch Program Manager), other BirdLife Australia staff and members who contributed to submitting the successful applications. Firstly, there is significant funding (US\$300 000) provided by the Alcoa Foundation over three years to enable continuation of the Great Cocky Count and other black cockatoo conservation initiatives. This supports our highest priority for bird conservation in Western Australia. It is timely as we will soon commence preparation of the Conservation Action Plan (CAP) for black-cockatoos in this state.

The second significant successful funding application was through Lotterywest, \$576 529 over three years, for connecting urban communities with nature. This project is focused on working with local government and communities across Perth to actively and strategically create and connect habitat for urban birds, which is particularly pertinent in the face of environment pressures due to urban development around Perth. This funding was announced by the Minister for Environment, the Hon Stephen Dawson at BirdLife WA offices during January (see photo, front cover).

The third significant funding is through the Office of State NRM for \$294 000 over two years. This funding is to engage with farmers across the south-west to protect and conserve critical wetlands for the conservation of Australasian Bitterns. Considering their dire situation expressed clearly at the Australasian Bitterns and their Wetlands symposium convened by BirdLife Western Australia in November last year, this is a very timely and welcome funding allocation.

Additional State NRM funding to BirdLife WA is for research of Rainbow Lorikeets (\$20,000) and to work with communities to conserve black cockatoo habitat (\$22,000).

Your Executive Committee (EC) will also have a busy year ahead. Our focus will be on enhancing the roles of existing committees and regional groups. There are some outstanding contributions being made through these groups. We are also re-initiating a Research Advisory Committee to consult and influence future directions in research for bird conservation. Otherwise, EC members are looking at improving arrangements for volunteering with BirdLife WA, and also increasing our influence in assessing and advising on development proposals that impact on bird habitat.

There is a really interesting program of monthly general meeting speakers being arranged again for this year. Considering that the branch is for all of Western Australia, and that most who attend these monthly meetings are Perth-based members, EC will be looking at ways that we can make these presentations available more broadly to members. I look forward to your suggestion on how this might work best for you if you are not able to attend.

Once again there are some excellent on-going volunteer efforts and new initiatives. A huge amount of work goes into the high value Bird Guides that we produce for local communities. EC is looking at ways that we might engage better with local communities for their use. As an example of new initiatives, I have found *Osprey WA*, a community study of Osprey a refreshing example of what motivated community members can do. I commend this initiative and urge your support.

Please take the opportunity to contact myself or another EC member to discuss concerns or suggestions you might have about any aspect of birding and bird conservation in WA.

Your efforts are appreciated.

Viv Read

Quality of digital photographs

IMPORTANT —PLEASE READ!



When submitting photos for use in WABN, please send a high quality image, eg, 300 ppi, **with a file size of at least 600 kb (preferably over 1 mb)**.

It is suggested that the settings on your digital camera be changed to the maximum resolution (setting).

Another area that could cause a problem is that some e-mail programs automatically reduce the file size, so these settings could be adjusted to maintain the original file size.

When e-mailing images, please attach them to an e-mail and not embedded in a Word document or in the e-mail itself.

WA BRANCH REPORTS

End of Year BBQ/Picnic Variety Pavilion, Kings Park, 9 December 2018

Thanks to Andrew and Jill Hobbs for leading a bird walk as a curtain raiser to the event (see report, p46)

The barbecue/picnic was well supported with about 50 people attending, giving the opportunity for some of the older members, who resist attending evening events, to meet up and newer members to establish connections.

The Christmas Tree trimmed with delightfully knitted Australian birds was a focus for us and passers-by. The sales from the birds added to the range of items being sold as Christmas gifts. The interaction and chatter made it a very good wind up to a busy year that the Chair, Viv Read, acknowledged in his welcome and summary of the year.

Kings Park was at its best for our annual get together.

Lynley Davey



Knitted birds (we don't know who donated them).



Birddata challenge

Last spring, BirdLife WA ran a Birddata challenge—encouraging observers to submit ten Birddata surveys of any type in each of September, October, and November. The challenge saw people

submitting surveys from all over the state. However, there could only be one winner. And drawn randomly from the eligible surveyors, was John Masters.

Join us in congratulating John, as he is well-deserving winner and an amazing WA Birddata contributor. John's observations, collected in regular monthly visits to a number of fixed sites in his local area, tell us so much about what's happening with his local feathered friends. Congratulations! His prize—a copy of the new Penny Olsen *Night Parrot* book, has been sent out to him. A big thanks to everyone who participated, and stay tuned for more Birddata competitions this year.

WA List Review: 2018

This annual review lists changes to the state 'list' for Western Australia, arising from new records or changes in taxonomy, from the previous calendar year. It also reports decisions by the BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee (BARC) affecting WA and its adjacent Australian external territories, for purpose of revisiting records previously reported in the *WABN* 'Observations' column as "subject to BARC review". For the purposes of this review, 'Western Australia' includes pelagic waters and most islands out to 200 nautical miles, but excludes Ashmore and Cartier Reefs, Christmas Island, and Cocos/Keeling Islands.

'First for WA' records reported in 2018

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis* 01/2018, off Bremer Bay (*WABN* **166**); Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii* 02/2018, off Bremer Bay (*WABN* **166**, pending BARC review); Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* 06/2018, Barrow Island (*WABN* **167**, pending BARC review).

BARC decisions in 2018 for WA and adjacent territories

'Mainland' WA: ACCEPTED – BARC #964 Bulwer's Petrel, 03/2017 (*WABN* **162**), off Bremer Bay; #966 Barau's Petrel, 02/2015, off Bremer Bay (*WABN* **154**); #967 Barau's Petrel, 02/2017, off Bremer Bay (not reported in *WABN*); #989 Barau's Petrel, 01/2018, off Bremer Bay (*WABN* **166**); #1011 Grey-headed Lapwing, 10-11/2017, Halls Creek (*WABN* **164, 165**); #1017 Baird's Sandpiper, 12/2016-01/2017, Lake McLarty/Austin Bay (*WABN* **161, 162**); #1024 Blue Rock Thrush, 07-08/2018, Onslow (*WABN* **167, 168**).

NOT ACCEPTED – #990 Eurasian Curlew, 01/2018, Mardie Station (*WABN* **166**).

Ashmore Reef: ACCEPTED – #963 Oriental Honey-Buzzard, 04/2012 (*WABN* **143**).

Cocos/Keeling Islands: ACCEPTED – #961 Brown Shrike, 11/2016 (*WABN* **161**); #976 Tree Pipit, 12/2016 (*WABN* **161**); #981 Barau's Petrel, 03/2017 (*WABN* **162**); #995 Lesser Moorhen, 02/2018 (*WABN* **167**); #996 Common Kingfisher, 11/2017-03/2018 (*WABN* **166, 167**); #1010 Grey-headed Lapwing, 01/2016 (not reported in *WABN*); #1025 Little Stint 07/2014 (not reported in *WABN*; not currently on BARC review list).

NOT ACCEPTED – #962 Brown Shrike ssp. *superciliosus*, 11/2016 (not reported in *WABN*).

Christmas Island: ACCEPTED – #969 Little Egret ssp. *garzetta*, 12/2016 (not reported in *WABN*); #972 Asian House Martin, 12/2016 (*WABN* **161**); #975 Common Swift, 12/2016 (*WABN* **161**); #983 Northern Boobook, 02/2017 (*WABN* **162**); #994 Yellow Bittern, 02-03/2018 (*WABN* **167**).

Taxonomic 'splits' and 'lumps' of WA birds in 2018

IOC (8.2-9.1) (Gill and Donsker 2019): SPLIT – Black-throated Whipbird *Psophodes nigrogularis* (including *oberon*; a new WA endemic) and White-bellied Whipbird *Psophodes leucogaster* after Burbidge *et al.* (2017); Spotted Scrubwren *Sericornis maculatus* (including *balstoni*, *mellori*, and Kangaroo Island's *ashbyi*) from White-browed Scrubwren

Sericornis frontalis after Norman *et al.* (2018); Oriental Magpie *Pica serica* from Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* [records from Port Hedland in 2007 (BARC #558) and Finucane Island near Port Hedland in 2012 (WABN 142) are more likely to be Oriental Magpie given proximity and prevailing shipping, but may be unidentifiable from photographs].

Clements/eBird (Clements *et al.* 2018): SPLIT – Purple-backed Fairywren *Malurus assimilis*; Oriental Magpie *Pica serica*.

BirdLife International v3 (Nov 2018) (BirdLife International 2018): none.

Birdlife Australia Working List (BirdLife Australia 2017): none (no updates from v2.1).

Scientific name changes for WA birds in 2018

IOC (9.1) (Gill and Donsker 2019): Shy Heathwren *Hylacola cauta*, Spinifexbird *Poodytes carteri*, Little Grassbird *Poodytes gramineus*, Brown Songlark *Cincloramphus cruralis*, Rufous Songlark *Cincloramphus mathewsi*, Tawny Grassbird *Cincloramphus timoriensis*.

English name changes for WA birds in 2018

IOC (9.1) (Gill and Donsker 2019): Australian Boobook (was Southern Boobook); see also splits above.

Clements/eBird (Clements *et al.* 2018): Hardhead (was White-eyed Duck), Black-shouldered Kite (was Australian Kite); see also splits above.

These records bring the WA state bird list (excluding offshore external territories) to 598 species using IOC (9.1) taxonomy, or 595 species following BirdLife Australia's *Working List of Australian Birds* (v2.1). After the split of the whipbirds, WA now has 20 endemic species using IOC taxonomy (or 16 following the *Working List*).

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Martin Cake

Editors' note: We have been advised by National Office that a revision of the 'working list' is near completion, and will be released on the web site in the near future. The difference between the various lists is a little frustrating, so in some cases in following articles we have placed alternative names in brackets where there have been recent changes.

WA BRANCH PROJECTS

New initiatives for the WA BirdLife Program

The WA Program has successfully secured \$1.3 million of grant funding from various sources to continue priority project work in WA over the next two to three years. BirdLife WA is very appreciative of all our funders for their support and confidence in us to continue important conservation work across the state.

So, what exciting projects will we be delivering?

Lotterywest is supporting a three-year urban bird project to the value of \$576 000 and Minister Dawson presented Tegan Douglas (Project Coordinator for this project) with the grant certificate last month (see photo, front cover). BirdLife will work with all Perth communities, the City of Cockburn, the City of Joondalup and local universities to better understand how our urban birds are faring (not so well for some) and to look for opportunities to provide and improve much needed habitat for birds such as native food plants, shelter, nests and water. Keep an eye out in WA e-news and our Facebook page for opportunities to get involved. We will be needing help with bird surveys, monitoring pest birds such as Rainbow Lorikeet, community planting days in public spaces,

and spreading the word about how people can help birds by planting a native shrub or two and/or installing a bird bath in their backyard. Also look out for the launch of a new Perth NRM program called 'ReWild Perth'. BirdLife is partnering with Perth NRM to develop an exciting new web portal that will allow residents to access lots of great information, register their home as providing habitat for birds (and other wildlife) and see (on maps) how every contribution counts and helps connect habitat for birds across the urban landscape.

The Alcoa Foundation is supporting a three-year black-cockatoo project to the value of \$420 000. This funding will allow us to continue our important citizen-science monitoring programs including the Great Cocky Count, CockyWatch and breeding monitoring. Adam Peck (our Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator) is calling on volunteers to help with these programs. The data are used to inform land management practices for the conservation of all three black-cockatoo species. We will also be working with local communities and councils from Kwinana to Mandurah and across to Harvey, Dwellingup and Jarrahdale to enhance habitat for black-cockatoos by planting food plants and installing artificial nests in areas needed by the birds. Everyone can help

and make a difference by getting involved with the project activities.

The WA Government's State NRM office is providing \$294 000 over two years to support BirdLife in working with farmers across the south-west to identify, map and conserve critical wetlands for the conservation of the endangered Australasian Bittern, a unique and rarely seen wetland bird. Conservation actions that are critical for the survival of this species include ensuring there are enough suitable wetlands with the right water levels and good water quality, maintaining dense wetland vegetation (particularly important for raising their young) and keeping out feral predators and hooved feral animals that damage wetlands. A particularly exciting part of this project will be putting satellite trackers on birds and seeing how far they move and where they go. This is the first time birds in WA will have been tracked and we are hoping to learn a lot about the birds. This part of the project would not be possible without the support and expertise of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. We are appreciative of their partnership on this project, as well as the South West Catchments Council.

If you would like more information about any of these projects, please contact the WA Program Manager, Vicki Stokes on vicki.stokes@birdlife.org.au or 9287 2204.

Make your knowledge of black-cockatoos count

Do you know of trees regularly used by black-cockatoos in your neighbourhood? These may be trees that you have observed birds feeding from, or trees that birds fly into just going on dark to rest (referred to as 'night roosts'), or trees that have a hollow which you have observed birds entering or leaving. If you have observed any of these behaviours, we would love to hear from you because as part of a small grant provided by the WA Government, State NRM office we are collating all this information so that it is available to be used on a council by council basis to protect habitat and inform land management decisions. We are in the process of developing a web tool via which you can submit this information, but in the meantime feel free to contact Rebecca Boyland on Rebecca.Boyland@birdlife.org.au or 9287 2716 for a simple form to complete. We will keep you posted about the web tool via e-news and Facebook. Thanks in advance for your help!

Port Hedland Saltworks Shorebird Survey, 8-9 November 2018

Port Hedland Saltworks survey is one of the many voluntary projects BirdLife Western Australia (BWA) undertakes. Since 2012 (Abbotts 2013) the Branch has partnered with

Dampier Salt Ltd (DSL) annually to survey the shorebirds located in the north-west of Western Australia. This is a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) for Red-necked Stint and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper because the saltworks support >1% of the world population of these species. It is also the most important known Australian site for Broad-billed Sandpiper and the endangered Asian Dowitcher. The shorebird data also contribute to BirdLife Australia's Shorebirds 2020 project.

The 2018 survey was conducted at a range of sites across the DSL lease (Figure 1, see p2) by BWA volunteers Frank O'Connor, Plaxy Barratt and Tegan Douglas. Mark Henryon coordinated the survey for BWA, in conjunction with Brent Tobin, the DSL Environmental Specialist. While the shorebirds were the highest priority to be counted, all waterbirds and raptors were counted and a list of all other bird species was recorded.

There was a total of 16 800 shorebirds of 30 species. The count for each species is shown in Appendix 1 and compared to previous years. 1404 shorebirds were not identified (compared to 1553 in 2017 and 103 in 2016). Trans-equatorial migratory shorebirds are covered by international conservation agreements. There was a record 12 280 trans-equatorial migratory shorebirds of 23 species, and 4520 non-migratory shorebirds of seven species.

Discussion

The total of 16 800 shorebirds has only been exceeded in October 2013 when 7500 Banded Stilts were recorded compared to 4000 this year. The 12 280 migratory shorebirds is the highest number recorded. Why? First, this count was done with the highest tides ensuring that all the nearby shorebirds were pushed into or close to the saltworks. Another hypothesis is that the juveniles don't arrive until late October and this is the first November count since 2006. Another hypothesis is that it has been a very successful breeding season. A fourth hypothesis is that other sites might be less suitable and these birds have moved to Dampier. Unfortunately, there is no way to be certain of the reason for this higher count.

Comparison with population estimates of shorebirds in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway (Bamford *et al.* 2008, Hansen *et al.* 2016) indicate just how important the Dampier saltworks are for these species. The 2018 count exceeded the 1% population threshold for Red-necked Stints (5142 vs 4750) and was very close to the threshold for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (834 vs 850) confirming that the Port Hedland Saltworks is a KBA for these species, given that there would have been enough Sharp-tailed Sandpipers in the 1404 unidentified shorebirds to exceed the threshold. The counts also exceeded the 0.1% threshold for a nationally important



Figure 2. Oriental Plovers at south-west corner of Pond 6 . Photo by Plaxy Barratt

Appendix 1. Shorebirds at the Port Hedland RTM lease and adjacent mudflats. Pre 2012 data from Hassell (2006).

	Sep 2002	Oct 2003	Nov 2004	Nov 2005	Nov 2006	Oct 2012	Oct 2013	Oct 2014	Oct 2015	Oct 2016	Oct 2017	Nov 2018
Aust. Pied Oystercatcher*	0	0	3	3	4	3	12	11	25	7	20	24
Banded Stilt*	172	624	231	3604	34	58	7494	17	66	11	0	4051
Black-winged Stilt*	84	41	27	56	20	127	264	103	56	71	101	130
Red-necked Avocet*	243	541	130	500	635	147	340	482	132	170	279	84
Grey Plover	2	6	5	9	5	22	9	16	16	9	12	13
Pacific Golden Plover	4	0	6	9	3	1	2	3	12	1	5	2
Red-capped Plover*	31	10	46	406	793	821	219	653	234	178	199	204
Lesser Sand Plover	7	3	85	94	10	121	54	109	57	20	817	1248
Greater Sand Plover	0	2	72	53	58	19	163	26	47	23	94	13
Oriental Plover	0	21	9	85	0	392	10	141	1230	0	0	712
Black-fronted Dotterel*	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Red-kneed Dotterel*	0	0	0	0	0	11	44	1	0	0	35	26
Whimbrel	18	6	25	29	12	40	89	34	70	25	66	22
Little Curlew	0	11	0	0	0	1	0	151	0	0	0	0
Eastern Curlew	17	11	20	17	39	42	33	15	42	21	121	40
Bar-tailed Godwit	88	533	300	390	1273	242	311	325	453	525	335	1139
Black-tailed Godwit	0	0	1	2	5	3	1	0	0	1	0	0
Ruddy Turnstone	28	5	1	5	1	11	46	23	19	29	45	9
Great Knot	4	4	10	49	200	26	21	4	103	21	160	1220
Red Knot	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	17	13	10	0	30
Broad-billed Sandpiper	0	1	267	105	194	487	537	273	275	275	216	63
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	266	383	500	1233	2625	1100	3543	3885	2115	837	1366	834
Ruff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Curlew Sandpiper	818	511	80	61	51	344	806	662	280	710	504	192
Long-toed Stint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	17	0	0	0
Red-necked Stint	156	293	1576	2704	5152	2590	2846	2215	700	1243	1434	5142
Sanderling	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	18	3	0	6	1
Pectoral Sandpiper	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian Dowitcher	9	2	0	11	13	13	47	125	43	50	70	127
Terek Sandpiper	1	2	0	13	13	3	1	1	10	0	2	1
Common Sandpiper	5	4	4	2	5	4	3	25	10	4	6	3
Grey-tailed Tattler	2	10	8	21	39	45	50	16	25	6	27	13
Common Greenshank	16	25	23	34	46	24	34	1	46	30	36	31
Marsh Sandpiper	13	3	5	51	22	10	39	14	44	10	2	4
Red-necked Phalarope	42	48	38	14	48	0	4	2	0	0	47	17
Australian Pratincole*	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	16	0	88	1
Oriental Pratincole	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unidentified shorebirds	0	0	0	0	0	1802	1588	2135	1615	103	1553	1404
Yearly Totals	2027	3103	3472	9561	11 301	8516	18 612	11 504	7774	4390	7647	16 800
Migratory Shorebirds	1497	1887	3035	4992	9815	7343	10 239	10 237	7245	3953	6925	12 280
Non Migratory*	530	1216	437	4569	1486	1173	8373	1267	529	437	722	4520
# of Species	23	27	25	28	27	31	29	31	29	25	28	30

wetland for Lesser Sand Plover (1200 vs 180), Oriental Plover (Figure 2) (712 vs 230), Eastern Curlew (40 vs 35), Bar-tailed Godwit (1139 vs 325), Great Knot (1220 vs 425), Broad-billed Sandpiper (Figure 3) (63 vs 30), Curlew Sandpiper (192 vs 90) and Asian Dowitcher (127 vs 14). This is even without considering the 1,404 unidentified smaller shorebirds.

The Port Hedland Saltworks is probably the most significant Australian site for Lesser Sand Plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Asian Dowitcher.

The number of Lesser Sand Plovers (1200) was higher than in 2017 (817) and far higher than the earlier surveys, plus a significant number of the 1404 unidentified shorebirds would have been Lesser Sand Plovers, probably enough to exceed the 1% threshold. The count of Broad-billed Sandpipers (63) along with Curlew Sandpipers (192) with which they roughly associate were both surprisingly low, and this is not explained by the unidentified shorebirds even though some would have been these species. The count of Asian Dowitcher (127) is the highest recorded, but it was conservative and there is a significant chance that they exceeded the 1% threshold of 140.

The Banded Stilt is a highly nomadic species which disperses to breeding sites when conditions are suitable. They use the saltworks as a non-breeding refuge, as they did this year. A total of 4051 was counted but there was a very high variance on the count on Pond 4 and the count might have been as high as 5000. This is the second highest number recorded and only the third time in 13 surveys that the count has exceeded 1000. Red-necked Avocets often associate with Banded Stilts and so it was surprising that the count this year (84) was the lowest recorded over the 13 surveys.

Red-kneed Dotterels (26) were again relatively common in the mangroves. This is the third highest count. This species is normally associated with freshwater habitat.

The Oriental Plover is a very erratic trans-equatorial migrant shorebird which tends to favour suitable grasslands rather than mud flats (Rogers *et al.* 2011). If conditions in the Kimberley are suitable then they would not be expected in significant numbers this far south. This year's count of 712 was the second highest recorded (behind 1230 in 2015). It was of interest that they were recorded at six sites.

Port Hedland Saltworks is probably the most reliable mainland site in Australia to find Red-necked Phalaropes (9 out of 13 surveys). A female was seen swimming with the Banded Stilts on Pond 4 and a small flock of 16 was also seen on Pond 4. This species usually stays out to sea but will visit salt lakes to feed on Brine Shrimp and Brine Flies.

The Australasian Wader Studies Group (and many shorebird study groups throughout the East Asian Australasian Flyway)



Figure 3. Broad-billed Sandpipers. Photo by Plaxy Barratt

monitors the trans-equatorial migratory shorebirds by catching samples and fitting a coloured leg flag, which is usually uniquely engraved to identify the individual bird and the location it was flagged. We observed one Red-necked Stint with a yellow leg flag (Broome / 80 Mile Beach), and only a few have been observed in previous years. This strongly indicates that these birds are very unlikely to have passed through Roebuck Bay or 80 Mile Beach; that they arrive in Australia directly from their Asian stopover sites; and that these sites are probably further west than the Yellow Sea where many of the west Kimberley shorebirds

stopover. This is one of the reasons why the Port Hedland Saltworks is so important for these migratory shorebirds.

These surveys are very important for monitoring the populations of shorebirds, and the trans-equatorial migratory shorebirds in particular.

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Frank O'Connor

News from Operation Rainbow Roost

BirdLife's volunteer network has now counted Rainbow Lorikeet roost sites in February 2017, February 2018 and, by the time you read this, February 2019. Finding and counting lorikeet roosts provides the best way to estimate the population of this highly invasive species. During February 2017 at least 13 047 lorikeets were counted at 27 roost sites and another 480 lorikeets were estimated to be present at another four sites. In February and early March 2018, volunteers counted a total of 16 523 lorikeets at 48 roost sites and a minimum total of 450 lorikeets were estimated to be present at another seven sites. Figure 1 graphs the roost site data from the past two years. Further roost sites will be found before the 2019 February roost count.

Figure 1: Number of roosts in the different roost size categories for both 2017 and 2018.

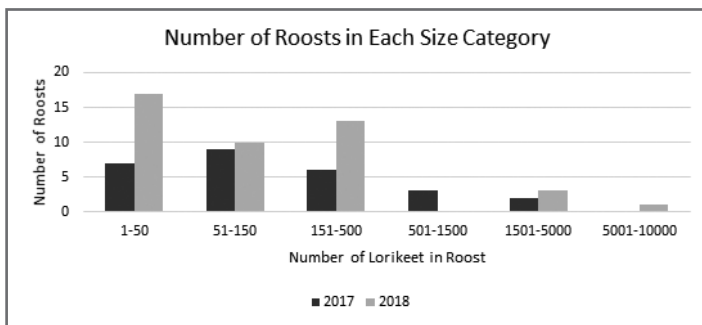
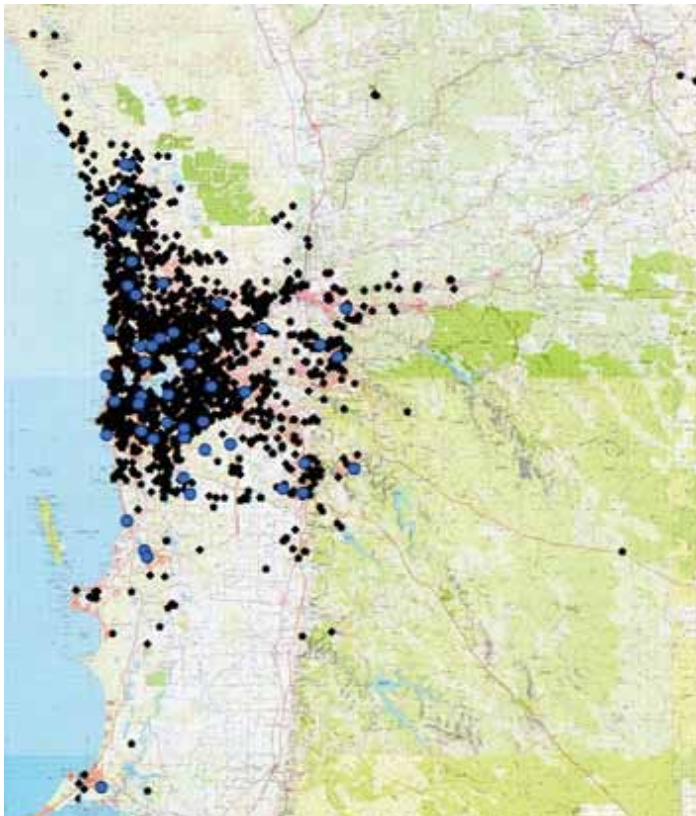


Figure 2: Rainbow Lorikeet roost sites active in 2018 (blue dots) and lorikeet records (black dots).



Distribution Data from a number of BirdLife databases were used to map the current distribution of the Rainbow Lorikeet and roost sites. This is shown in Figure 2.

Indigenous advice

Nyoongar elder Dr Noel Nannup provided an indigenous perspective on this pest species and the indigenous significance of the birds possibly being impacted by it. Nyoongar culture is very welcoming of newcomers to their country and this includes the Rainbow Lorikeet; however, he and elders he has spoken to feel the Rainbow Lorikeet population ought to be kept down to reduce the disturbance to local species. All local native species are important to Nyoongar people, as they belong to a totemic system that has been fastidiously maintained over many thousands of years.

Nectar feeder trial

A nectar feeder trial was conducted over two separate four-week periods. These were done in January and from mid-February 2018 to mid-March 2018. Nectar feeders were set up in five zones radiating out from major roost sites in Cannington, Cottesloe and Joondalup. Each nectar feeder had a camera trap installed to photograph all the birds that visited the nectar feeder. Unfortunately, during the trial no lorikeets were photographed drinking from the nectar feeder, even though some sites had Rainbow Lorikeets using nearby bird baths.

After these results, the Rainbow Lorikeet Working Group has decided to halt further research using nectar feeders for future control of the species.

A pretty powerful pest!

The "Rainbow Lorikeet: A pretty powerful pest" brochure was designed, and 5000 copies printed. The brochures are available at the BirdLife Western Australia Office, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) office in Kensington, and council community brochure racks.

Palm maintenance reduces breeding sites

BirdLife sent out letters and brochures to all councils within the range of the Rainbow Lorikeet in south-western Australia requesting that Date Palms or Cotton Palms on council property be properly maintained to reduce lorikeet nesting sites. Working with the City of Cockburn, Beaver Tree Services and residents of the City of Cockburn, BirdLife Western Australia reduced Rainbow Lorikeet nesting habitat by conducting palm tree maintenance on verges in front of residential gardens. This trial reduced 138 m² of potential nesting habitat at a cost of \$9240. This provides a cost per area of nesting habitat removed of \$67 per m².

A palm tree database was established to assess the number of palms in Perth that are available for nesting. Data was entered using a Google Docs form opportunistically or systematically.

Overall, we entered into the database 477 Date Palms with only 11% of these fully maintained and 384 Cotton Palms with 53% of these maintained.

A total of 1311 hectares were systematically mapped using Google Maps imagery in ten suburbs in five council areas. In this systematically mapped area, there were 508 Cotton or Date Palms or 0.39 palms per hectare with 0.29 palms per hectare providing nesting habitat (unmaintained). Date Palms are particularly difficult to maintain and provide



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Figure 3: Rainbow Lorikeets excavating nest hollow in partly maintained Date Palm stem bases.



nesting sites for both Rainbow Lorikeets and introduced corella species.

Competition with our native birds

A comparison of the changes in abundance of selected local native birds in the Perth Metropolitan Area was made by comparing data in the Birddata database from 1998 to 2004 with data from 2010 to 2016. This showed that the numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets are rapidly increasing across most of the Perth Metropolitan Area. In comparison, the numbers of Red-capped Parrots, Australian Ringnecks and Sacred Kingfishers are decreasing in most of the urban parts of the metropolitan area. These birds all nest in tree hollows of a similar size to those used by Rainbow Lorikeets and competition for nests with the more aggressive Rainbow Lorikeet may be contributing to their declines. Honeyeaters and wattlebirds compete with lorikeets for food resources and some of these species (Singing Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater and White-cheeked Honeyeater) are declining in abundance in the urban parts of the metropolitan area.

Please see the full report from 2018 at <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/operation-rainbow-roost/forms-downloads> for more details.

Thank you

Thanks to our many volunteers who assisted with reporting lorikeets or their roost sites. Many thanks to volunteers who counted lorikeets at their roosts! A big thank you to State NRM for funding the project in 2017 and 2018. We have received generous funding for the 2019 and 2020 roost counts from Lotterywest.

How can you help?

If you would like to tell us about a Rainbow Lorikeet roost site please email us at rainbowroost@birdlife.org.au

Robyn Pickering
Project Officer, BirdLife WA

Lightning never strikes twice—renewed fears for the Western Ground Parrot

Yet again, a lightning strike had set Cape Arid National Park on fire in January this year. The blaze burnt 6300 hectares of the remote national park including habitat occupied by Western Ground Parrots. A prescribed burn undertaken by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) in 2017 appears to have aided the fire-fighting effort and limited the spread of the blaze. Thankfully, only one of five locations where Western Ground Parrots were recorded last November was burnt. However, the impact of the fire on the birds is unclear at this stage. At the time of writing, staff from the DBCA are in the field attempting to locate surviving birds including several birds which last spring were fitted with GPS transmitters to study the movements and habitat use of the species.

With only a single wild population, the Western Ground Parrot will continue to face the risk of being wiped out by an out of control wildfire at Cape Arid National Park. In February I had the opportunity to join Paul Wettin, Chair of the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, and meet with Federal Government Environment Minister Melissa Price, discussing the urgent need for funding to establish a second population in the wild. We highlighted the fact that establishing additional populations of Western Ground Parrots is one of the priority strategies recommended by the delegates who attended the 'Creating a Future for the Western Ground Parrot' workshop and pointed out that several applications by both DBCA and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, to secure funding for this critical recovery measure, had been unsuccessful.

On a more positive note, it was great to hear that in spring, when the team was carrying out field work in Cape Arid National Park, a Western Ground Parrot nest was discovered. Here is an excerpt from the DBCA update provided by Sarah Comer and Allan Burbidge for the latest newsletter of the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot:

This appears to be the first Western Ground Parrot nest found since the early 1900s, when Whitlock found two nests, one with young and one with eggs, on the eastern side of Wilson Inlet in 1912 and 1913. During recent field work, DBCA staff and volunteers found a clump of feathers on the ground. Further searching by volunteer John Tucker, with Abby Berryman and Chris Powell found that there were actually several piles of ground parrot feathers in a small area. They quickly worked out that the bird appeared to be a victim of predation, and started searching for more evidence. They soon found some more feathers, and then discovered the parrot nest nearby. The nest was well hidden and without the nearby piles of feathers it is highly unlikely that it would have been found. The sad thing was that the Cape Arid nest was empty, there was no sign of successful breeding, and the feathers were from an adult that was presumably attempting to breed.

Some of the feathers appeared to have saliva on them, so they were collected and sent to the DNA lab at the University of Western Australia. Unfortunately, the results were inconclusive. Some predators (raptors, goannas) don't leave saliva, so cannot be tested for. However, it appears that the bird may have been predated by one such predator (perhaps by a Brown Falcon, which had been seen hunting in the area), and then subsequently

(from the DNA analysis) it seemed that a dog may have come along and investigated the remains.

So, we'll never know for sure what happened, but nevertheless the find was exciting. The predation of the assumed occupant of the nest also highlights the importance of the work being done controlling introduced predators.

Readers might be interested in joining the Threatened Species Habitat Visit in March to find out more about the plight of the Western Ground Parrot. The event is part of the South Coast Festival of Birds and Biodiversity in Albany and can be booked here: www.trybooking.com/457411

Anne Bondin

Bushfire impacts Western Ground Parrots—again

In the early hours of Sunday 13 January 2019, a band of thunder storms moved through Cape Arid National Park and the western end of Nuytsland Nature Reserve, with dry lightning starting five fires between Parmango Road, Wylie Scarp and Pasley Track.

These fires were of immediate concern to the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team (SCTBRT), in particular the Pasley Track fire which ignited in older unburnt bush very close to an area of core habitat for Western Ground Parrots (WGPs). We provided information to help inform suppression activities early on the Sunday, and DBCA's WGP Fire Management Information Note was used to help inform a response.

Smoke was reported from this area around 9 am and ground crews deployed to the site (some two and a half hours drive from Esperance). Two ignition points were identified to the east of Pasley Track, and in very high temperatures the fires were travelling rapidly south west on strong north-easterly winds. As the trough progressed eastwards the wind shifted to the west then south-west, pushing the fire to the north-east.

An incident management team was formed, and support staff, multiple ground crews and air support (two water bombers, a spotter plane and a helicopter) were deployed to assist with strategies for managing this fire and implementing containment efforts. The remoteness of the location of the fire and the intensity of the fire activity meant that crews were not able to commence containment work on the Sunday. Aerial intelligence gathered on Monday directed ground crews to the north-east end of the fire where it was burning into known occupied habitat. The active fire edge was tracked and contained by ground crews with support from the water bombers suppressing the active fire.

Fire activity eased back considerably over the next couple of days and further tracking was not required, but a few persistent hot spots remained on the east flank and the water bombers persistently saturated any signs of activity on the fire edge. Over four days, ground crews were deployed by helicopter to rake out and extinguish three persistent hot spots. This strategy worked and eliminated the need for the back-burning options that were being considered as a fall-back and meant that more habitat was retained unburnt. Nine days after ignition the fire was out.

Unfortunately, the fire burnt through the Pasley area very quickly in the extreme conditions on the Sunday, and winds changed to push the fire back in a north- easterly direction, towards two of the other core ground parrot areas that we have been monitoring since the 2015 fires.

A prescribed burn that was implemented in 2017, after discussion and endorsement by the SCTBRT, proved invaluable in holding this run of fire. As a consequence, the area to the north and east remained unburnt, and provided protection for other areas of WGP habitat. Nearly two weeks of effort and over 35 personnel went into securing this fire, and without this effort the outcome could have been far more serious for WGPs. Following the extensive 2015 fires, every bit of remaining core habitat is critical to the survival of the species, as it is this older vegetation that is favoured for roosting and breeding.

The Pasley area has been very important for ground parrot conservation since they were rediscovered here in 2003, with this area consistently showing the highest calling rates since we started the acoustic monitoring grids using ARUs (autonomous recording units) in 2012. That is why, following a significant spring monitoring effort, a team of DBCA staff and volunteers was confident in heading out to Cape Arid in November 2018 to attempt to catch ground parrots. Pasley was again a hotspot of calling activity, with many birds heard, including large numbers of younger birds. Breeding had finished, with young being independent from the adults, who were part way through their post-breeding moult. Capture work was focused on providing more birds for the captive program at Perth Zoo and we were fortunate to have some success in adding five new birds to the captive population (three males, two females, some birds in their first year, some older).

Five adult birds, three females and two males, were released where they were captured in the Pasley area. These birds were fitted with radio-transmitters that were a combination of a small VHF transmitter and a 'store-on-board' GPS tag. The GPS tags were programmed to store intensive movement data over a 14-day period, while the VHF transmitters last longer (up to 11 weeks) which theoretically allowed time to re-trap the birds. Intensive tracking of the birds took place during the field trip, and a follow up in December confirmed that all but one were still in the same area. One male had travelled around 7 km to an unburnt (in 2015) pocket to the north. Plans to re-trap these birds in January were put in place, but the bushfire put these on hold.

The first search for the birds was conducted during the fire, and one bird was located on the fire edge during a ground search. A subsequent flight on 26 January located three of the five transmitters, indicating that at least three of the five birds escaped the fire. For the remaining two, it is unclear whether the birds were killed in the fire, transmitter batteries had gone flat, or perhaps the birds had already moved beyond our search area. The DBCA team is currently trying to relocate these transmitters in order to retrieve the GPS units.

An additional danger after such a fire is that feral cats can focus on the fire boundaries, putting displaced parrots at risk. Quick action is needed in these circumstances, so an aerial drop of Eradicat® baits was done in the week following the fire being brought under control, in an emergency change to the Western Shield baiting program. This is being

followed up by ground baiting, and additional feral cat trapping which will take place in autumn.

As mentioned by Anne Bondin (see article p18 this issue), the SCTBRT priority of completing a translocation strategy to establish another population will be essential to ensure a safe future for this beleaguered species. In the face of continuing warming and drying of the environment in south-western Australia, being confined to a single fire-prone area is highly risky. Critical in this process will be continuing pro-active fire and introduced predator management, engagement with on-ground managers, continuation of the captive program, and support from community groups such as the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot. The present time is highly challenging for WGP recovery, but there is hope (Burbidge *et al.* 2018) and if we all work together, we can optimise the chances for this beautiful and enigmatic parrot, which is only found on the south coast of WA.

Thanks to all who assisted with the efforts to contain the January fire.

Reference

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Sarah Comer, Allan Burbidge, Greg Mair and Steve Butler

Field Techniques in Bird Studies Course

Eyre Bird Observatory—November – December 2018: report and summary of results

The weather had been highly variable in the lead up to this year's Field Techniques course, with temperatures from to -1.0 to 38.5 degrees recorded in the week prior, leaving course leaders Kelly Rayner and Tegan Douglas wondering what the coming week would bring. We had both a full schedule planned and a full house. Attendees came from far and wide, with April Slater, Karissa Haring-Harris, and Leah Petrie from Perth, Jess Overton from Busselton, Renae Richardson and Taylor Smith from Albany, and Charmaine Twine and Jennifer Jackson joining us from Kalgoorlie. BirdLife Western Australia generously provided grants to students April, Karissa Leah and Renae to help cover their costs. Together with our very obliging hosts, caretakers Mandy and Steve Edwards, we made a merry gang, and wrangled a full week of activities that made use of the patches of good weather and tides, and skirted the less pleasant conditions.

We started the week with a morning watching honeyeaters in the vicinity of the observatory, making notes about their behaviour so we could collate an identification key. This has been done previously with both honeyeaters and beach birds, and provides insight into the value of recording behaviour instead of relying solely upon appearance (e.g. Douglas and Rayner 2018). With only small patches of eucalypt flowering, honeyeaters were generally scarce, although we managed to gather enough observations to

Table 1: Results of 20-minute, 2 hectare surveys at Eyre Bird Observatory in 2017, expressed as birds per hectare.

ABC Survey Area	Standard	Rehab
Total size of area searched	6 ha	4 ha
Brush Bronzewing	0	0.25
Blue-breasted Fairy-wren	0	0.50
White-browed Scrubwren	0.33	0
Weebill	0.17	0
Spotted Pardalote	1.17	0.25
Red Wattlebird	0.17	1
Singing Honeyeater	0.17	4.25
New Holland Honeyeater	1.17	1.5
Brown-headed Honeyeater	0.83	0
Brown Honeyeater	0.33	0.50
White-browed Babbler	0.33	0.25
Grey Shrike-thrush	0	0.50
Golden Whistler	0	0.25
Grey Butcherbird	0.33	0
Grey Currawong	0.17	0
Australian Raven	0	0.50
Welcome Swallow	0	0.25
Silvereye	1.00	2.25

Table 2: Density of birds (birds/ha) determined by Point Count along the West Track in November 2018, with comparative data from earlier years. '-' Denotes where birds were not present in great enough numbers to run the analysis.

Year	Density (birds per ha)		
	2016	2017	2018
Species			
Brush Bronzewing	1.77	0.59	0.47
Blue-breasted Fairy-wren	--	3.89	2.12
Spotted Pardalote	2.48	0.24	1.77
Inland Thornbill	--	0.71	0.94
White-browed Scrubwren	9.55	2.12	0.47
Weebill	1.77	3.89	2.83
Singing Honeyeater	2.48	0.53	--
Brown Honeyeater	1.77	--	0.28
New Holland Honeyeater	3.18	1.59	0.41
White-eared Honeyeater	--	--	0.71
Red Wattlebird	1.77	0.71	--
Grey Shrike-thrush	0.24	0.33	0.59
Grey Butcherbird	--	--	0.47
Grey Currawong	0.25	0.33	0.38
Silvereye	18.4	8.13	7.43
Welcome Swallow	0.59	6.72	1.77

build a key for New Holland Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, and White-eared Honeyeater (see below).

Our first morning of mist-netting had to be rescheduled due to strong wind, but on Wednesday we had a crisp 0.1

degree start and a lovely calm morning for banding. With a total catch of 49 birds, everybody had the opportunity to see some of the observatory's feathered residents up close. As per usual, the most commonly caught species was New Holland Honeyeater (27), with flurries of Silveryeye (18), plus Blue-breasted Fairy-wren (2), Spotted Pardalote (1) and Singing Honeyeater (1) for variety.

Due to the intensive banding effort over the last 12 months, retrap rates were high, with 18% of New Holland Honeyeaters and 17% of Silveryeyes sporting jewellery from previous banding efforts. Amongst the birds of known age were some older repeat customers too, including 4+ and 5+ New Holland Honeyeaters and Silveryeyes. Everyone had the opportunity to learn appropriate handling techniques of birds, how bands are applied and measurements taken, and the types of information these data can provide. Many of the New Holland Honeyeaters were replacing their wing feathers, so everybody was able to try their hand at assessing wing moult too.

During the week participants learn different survey methods, gathering information on the densities of bushbirds around the observatory. We conducted a point count along the West Track, as well as undertaking territory mapping and standard atlas searches near the observatory. These allow for comparison between the different methods and with previous years. Results of data collected during the course have been published previously by Davies (2010) and Douglas and Rayner (2018) (and references therein).

The standard atlas surveys (20-minute 2-hectare area searches) were conducted in three remnant mallee and two recently vegetated sand dune search areas (Table 1). This allowed participants to practise skills and strategies for timed surveys in different habitats. From their search results,

Table 3: Bird densities determined by territory mapping a 22.5 ha grid around the observatory. Densities are shown as birds per hectare, and '-' denotes where birds were not present, or density was unable to be determined.

Year	Density (birds per ha)		
	2016	2017	2018
Species			
Blue-breasted Fairy-wren	2.49	0.84	1.20
Spotted Pardalote	0.44	0.49	1.02
Striated Pardalote	--	0.27	--
Inland Thornbill	0.40	0.40	0.53
White-browed Scrubwren	0.98	1.02	0.89
Weebill	1.16	0.71	0.80
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	--	0.27	--
White-eared Honeyeater	0.18	0.49	0.13
Brown-headed Honeyeater	0.53	0.40	0.58
White-browed Babbler	1.56	0.89	0.67
White-winged Triller	--	--	0.09
Golden Whistler	0.27	0.09	0.18
Grey Shrike-thrush	0.53	0.62	0.40
Grey Butcherbird	0.09	0.18	0.13
Grey Currawong	0.31	0.27	0.13
Willie Wagtail	0.27	0.31	0.18

the presence of territorial species such as Blue-breasted Fairy-wren and White-browed Babbler demonstrate how established the revegetated sites have become. Differences in food availability are evident when looking at differences in numbers of mobile insectivorous and frugivorous Silveryeyes and Singing Honeyeaters, both of which were more abundant in the revegetated areas than the remnant sites. However, nectar sources could be found in both, with similar densities of New Holland and Brown Honeyeaters between the sites.

Point counts, conducted along the West Track, are an effective way of monitoring mobile species (Table 2). Except for White-eared Honeyeater, all other honeyeater species were recorded in lower densities than previous years. It is uncertain whether this is a simple reflection of low nectar levels in the area, or whether the nearby 2017 fire scar is acting as a barrier to honeyeater movement.

Territory mapping in the immediate vicinity of the observatory gave us insight into the densities of the more sedentary species (Table 3). Inland Thornbill and White-browed Scrubwren numbers appear consistent, whereas other species like the Blue-breasted Fairy-wren and White-browed Babbler were much more variable. This variability may simply relate to whether these group-living species have already bred in the current season, so group sizes are bolstered with first year birds.

A visit to Burnabbie provided a change of scenery, some new additions to the bird list, and an opportunity for standard atlas surveys in a different habitat. Flowering eucalypts meant there was a solid contingent of honeyeaters, so good views of Spiny-cheeked, White-eared, White-fronted and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters were had. Rainbow Bee-eaters were in abundance, and Striated Pardalote and Western Yellow Robin also made an appearance.

A trip along Kanidal Beach and to Twilight Cove provided an opportunity to try our hand at identifying shorebirds, although species diversity was quite low. In addition to resident beach birds such as Red-capped Plover (111), and Australian Pied Oystercatcher (13), only three intercontinental migrants were recorded—Ruddy Turnstone (9), Sanderling (2) and Red-necked Stint (1). Other species recorded on the beach included Australian Shelduck (19), Grey Teal (2), Pied Cormorant (5), Australian Pelican (3), White-bellied Sea-Eagle (2), Wedge-tailed Eagle (1), Nankeen Kestrel (5), Banded Stilt (22), Silver (5) and Pacific (10) Gulls, and Caspian (3) and Crested (3) Terns. An Australian Sea Lion also made an appearance in the water off Twilight.

A beach-washed seabird provided an opportunity for identification and autopsy. Participants determined the bird was a Soft-plumaged Petrel, although a reasonably frequent beach-wash record for the observatory, was unusual in being a pale morph individual, where most specimens that turn up on Kanidal Beach have been dark morph. There was no evidence of plastic in the stomach or intestine and no obvious cause of death could be determined; however, the bird had bred recently.

As ever, there was some excitement caused by non-birds during the week. The Pygmy Possum nest boxes were filled with furry critters, but to the chagrin of course participants these were mostly gloriously large, hairy huntsman spiders, rather than Western Pygmy Possums. However, one lone male Pygmy Possum did come and visit us via the pitfall traps.

There was fantastic camaraderie during the week. The enthusiasm of course participants and the wonderful hospitality of Mandy and Steve ensured we had a marvellous week. We are grateful to BirdLife Western Australia for providing financial assistance in the form of student grants that allowed several of the students to attend. The course was also supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program, supported by Royalties for Regions.

Reference

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Tegan Douglas and Kelly Rayner

Behavioural key to the honeyeaters of Eyre Bird Observatory, November 2018

- | | | |
|------|--|-------------------------|
| 1 a) | Always in a group..... | New Holland Honeyeater |
| b) | Not always in a group..... | 2. |
| 2 a) | Hawks insects | 3. |
| b) | Does not hawk insects | 4. |
| 3 a) | Gives exaggerated tail flick when changing posture | Singing Honeyeater |
| b) | No exaggerated tail flick when changing posture | Brown Honeyeater |
| 4 a) | Gleaning while hanging | Brown-headed Honeyeater |
| b) | Did not glean while hanging | White-eared Honeyeater |

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(Note jacket only has BirdLife logo, not the Fairy-wren)

Across the Nullarbor: news from National Office

FLOATING SHOREBIRD ROOSTS

The construction of artificial shorebird roosts usually involves significant earthworks and hydrological alteration to create islands for birds to roost on. Although they successfully create suitable shorebird habitat, they're costly and may affect surrounding habitats.

Floating roosts are available throughout the tide cycle and immune to sea-level rise. They also thwart most terrestrial predators and colonising vegetation, and can be relocated to tidal feeding areas.

BirdLife Australia is trialling artificial roosts modelled on floating, long-line oyster bags as a cheap, low-impact alternative to traditional artificial roost construction for shorebirds. These roosts are being trialled in coastal habitats at three sites, with the response of shorebirds being monitored. If successful, floating roost sites may be deployed in degraded and threatened shorebird habitat throughout the Flyway.

SUCCESSFUL MALLEE EMU-WREN TRANSLOCATION

A devastating bushfire that razed the Ngarkat and Billiatt Conservation Parks in South Australia in 2014 caused the extinction of the Mallee Emu-wren in that state; they were the only places in SA where the emu-wrens occurred. This left the species surviving only in north-western Victoria.

The emu-wrens' dire predicament was recognised by BirdLife Australia, which quickly recruited a team of researchers to save the species.

The remaining birds have been the basis of an ambitious plan to return the Mallee Emu-wren back to South Australia. That plan is now bearing fruit, with a successful trial relocation of 38 emu-wrens back to Ngarkat last year. Some of these birds bred successfully within two months of being released, with young birds fledging from their nests in the spinifex.



Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos, Culham Inlet. Photo by John Tucker

RAVEN NUMBERS INCREASE

The Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour Disease has seen Tasmanian Devil numbers decline by up to 95 per cent as it spread rapidly across Tasmania over the past 20 years. Tasmanian Devils play an important ecological role in the bush, sniffing out and eating carrion (the remains of dead animals) on the ground. Fewer Devils means there's more carrion available for other scavengers, and one has come to the fore—the Forest Raven.

The reliable supply of carrion has seen Forest Raven numbers increase, doubling since the Devils began dying 20 years ago, according to BirdLife Australia's Birdata database. There's a combination of other factors, particularly changes in land use, but the decline in competition from Devils is certainly in the mix.



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Members' contributions

GREAT CORMORANTS IN PERTH

Over the years, the Great Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) of Perth have shifted the location of their breeding colony a number of times. Their current main breeding colony is located at Lake Brearley in Maylands and has been there since at least 2015. The colony can be found on a small island in the middle of the lake which is one of the old rehabilitated claypits from the colonial brickworks. The only other breeding colony of Great Cormorant in Perth that I know of is a small breeding population in Herdsman Lake.

Great Cormorants are not prolific in south-western Australia. Although they are often reported, survey results show their numbers are low. Past water bird surveys conducted across the Peel-Harvey estuary provide the following numbers: October 1996 (24), December 1996 (39), February 1997 (32), October 1998 (14), December 1998 (30) and February 1999 (22) with the grand total shown in brackets (Lane *et al.* 2002a, 2002b). The water birds in Nature Reserves of South-Western Australia 1981-1985 (Jaensch *et al.* 1988) provided an abundance figure of 243. Abundance was defined as the greatest number of individuals counted in any month, at all reserves e.g. the largest figure obtained from the sum, for each month, of the highest number counted at each wetland.

I have been monitoring the colony at Lake Brearley which is adjacent to the Swan River for a number of years and an overview of the observations made is provided. These cover the breeding cycle of the Great Cormorant colony in Perth in 2018.

Breeding cycle in Perth area

January 2018

There was no activity at the colony when checked in January.

March 2018

Lake Brearley at Maylands was surveyed on 20 March and 12 nests were found to be occupied. The Great Cormorant colony was active; much earlier than expected. One bird was seen flying with nesting material that was obtained locally from the lake. The trees were still green, indicating that the colony had only recently commenced. They become stained white from guano after a while.



Immature Great Cormorant showing white colouring on chest and belly. Photo by Gary Tate (see also photo, p2)

April 2018

During a visit on 5 April I counted about 28 active nests on the island.

Most nests were in casuarina (Sheoak) trees that were planted on the island. Occupation of nest sites was concentrated in the top of the trees with few nests lower down. There was little noise coming from the colony though some birds were calling when they arrived back at the colony. Many Great Cormorants were showing display behaviour by flapping/shuffling their wings and holding their tail in an upward position. These display movements are a good way to see where the nests are located. Males use the "wing waving" display to advertise and attract females to their nest site; they raise and lower their partly folded wings alternately hiding and exposing white patches on their thighs (Marchant and Higgins 1990). The white display patch is quite visible even from a distance.

Great Cormorants were in full breeding plumage, showing slight tufts on the head and white plumage from the eye down covering the cheek, throat and chin. A bright red triangular spot can be seen below their blue eye and above the gape (Marchant and Higgins 1990). In most guides this shows as a yellow spot and is probably only red for a short time when presumably the males are in peak breeding condition (see photo, p2)). At the sides of the neck and round to the nape white/silver hair there is speckling in the plumage. There is a bright white spot on the upper leg. Only a few birds were swimming in the water around the colony.

The colony was checked on 29 April and the Great Cormorants were busy displaying and bringing in nest material. One was seen gathering a stick at nearby Lake Bungana and flying back to the colony. There were no hatchlings seen. Around 30 active nests were counted.

May 2018

The cormorant colony was checked on 9 May and was fully active, with birds displaying on nests, and some new nests being built or restored. A Great Cormorant was bringing in nest material whilst the other bird was still sitting on the nest, and some birds were re-arranging nest material. There was only one nest with three juveniles begging for food. These seemed about two weeks old and were covered in black down and had a white throat patch. This pair must have started breeding much earlier than the other pairs as no other young were seen when the nests were scanned. The breeding population was approximately 30 pairs. There were no other cormorant species breeding on the island, only Great Cormorant.

Lake Brearley was visited on 29 May. Recently hatched young were showing a white pouch beneath their beak. These also have a whitish-grey forehead extending to above the eye. Older juveniles were exercising their wings and showed a pale, yellow sheen around the beak and a yellow throat pouch. Mating was observed on a nest; the male after dismounting stretched his head and neck back towards his tail.

A least six nests with young were recorded; the age difference of young between nests was noticeable. At three

nests the young were only about a week old while at another nest the juveniles were nearly fully grown and exercising their wings.

I counted about 35 active nests. Birds returning to the colony were calling just before landing and wing-waving behaviour was observed.

June 2018

There were storms and heavy rainfall early in June. The colony had weathered the storms as a visit on 15 June showed no damage. The colony was in full swing with many nests containing juveniles.

A Silver Gull was flying around the colony and making intrusions to nest sites. It seemed to be looking for unguarded eggs or young to predate. One Great Cormorant was seen walking on the ground under the trees and collecting twigs as nest material before entering the water and then flying off to the nest site. Some nests contained plastic as building material. Cormorants had been observed bringing a variety of material to their nest site, for example, a large Maple leaf, sticks, reed stalks, a feather and a twig with leaves. Five fledged juveniles were congregated on the edge of the island. One had a prominent white mottled chest. The amount of white colouring on the front of some juveniles seemed to vary and at times was quite extensive. The trees on the island were completely white due to being covered in guano. Around 50% of the nests had juveniles of different stages of development.

July 2018

Early July brought further rain and storms. A check on the 10 July showed the colony had come through the inclement weather without loss. Sixteen fledged juveniles were resting around on the rocky perimeter of the island. A number of fledged juveniles from the same brood were swimming and begging a parent bird for food. The parental bird ended up feeding one.

Juveniles that had recently fledged had a mottled brown and white front and showed white patches on the upper half of their chest down to the lower belly. The white colouring on the chest and belly was at times quite extensive. One juvenile cormorant had a nearly fully white front. The lighter colouring ran down the middle of the chest to the belly (see photo p25). This is a transitional plumage stage as older fledged juveniles show a fully coloured front.

Nest building and display behaviour were still observed in the colony with a number of cormorants sitting on nests. Juvenile birds in nests seem to be all around the same age.

On 31 July there were many Great Cormorants swimming around the island, and at least 64 birds were counted on the water. One grown juvenile flew in behind a returning adult, begging for food. As soon as they landed on a branch the juvenile was fed by the adult.

Great Cormorants were still flying in with nesting material and at least three male birds were showing display behaviour.

September 2018

A visit on 4 September showed the colony still had about 34 active nests. There were two Great Cormorants displaying on nests, 26 sitting

on nests and there were some nests with young ranging from recently hatched, right up to nearly fledged juveniles (8). The day was cold so some birds might have been sitting to keep the young warm. Some new nests had been built lower down in the trees.

On 27 September there were a few empty nests though most were still occupied. There were nests with recently hatched young begging for food. There was one Great Cormorant sitting on a nest still showing white plumage around the face, but this plumage characteristic was absent on other birds. Underneath the colony, on the higher ground of the island mound, a Black Swan was sitting on a nest built under the trees, an unusual location; this nest was not there three weeks ago. Black Swans collect nesting material from the immediate surroundings of their nest, which seems to indicate that this bird must have gathered nesting material from underneath the trees.

October 2018

A visit made on 16 October showed the colony was winding down. Many of the season's Great Cormorant nests were empty. There were 18 active nests of which 12 contained fully grown juveniles still showing part downy plumage and part adult plumage. Four nests had small young, probably only a week old, begging for food.

An Australasian Darter had moved in and was sitting on a nest in the lower branches of a casuarina tree. The Black Swan nest was deserted.

A final survey was conducted on 29 October. There were many fledged Great Cormorants, showing white mottled fronts, hanging around the colony, along the island fringe, in the trees, on the local jetty and swimming on the lake. Many were in the trees exercising their wings. There were 13 active nests, nine of which had fully grown juveniles ready to fledge and four nests still had downy half grown young. One nest had two young of a different size, one was twice the size of the other.

Indications were that the breeding season at the colony would possibly finish during the first half of November.



Great Cormorant colony at Lake Brearley, 2018. Photo by Marcus Singor

Discussion

In Perth, Great Cormorants start gathering at their breeding colony in autumn. Breeding at Lake Brearley started in March and the colony remained active till early November, a duration of about eight months. The different ages of the juveniles and length of the breeding season indicate a staggered breeding season. Taking into consideration that there are no other breeding colonies around Perth except for the Maylands and Herdsman Lake ones, the current number of breeding Great Cormorants in comparison to the numbers recorded in the 1980s (ANCA 1996) seems to indicate the breeding population has declined.

The current breeding population fluctuates between 35-45 pairs. Lake Brearley is the largest breeding colony in south-western Australia. The breeding season here lasts for close to eight months (mid-March to early November) and exceeds the breeding cycle of four months. New breeding pairs arriving later in the season are likely to bolster the actual number of breeding pairs. This is shown by the high number of active nests still occupied in September and ongoing display behaviour even in the latter parts of the breeding season. The number of birds in full breeding plumage is quite high early in the breeding season but becomes scarce as the season progresses.

The Great Cormorant incubation period is 27 to 31 days and clutch size varies from three to five eggs. Chicks tend to leave the nest at about four weeks old and fledge at about seven weeks. Once fledged they are fed by both parents until contact is lost about four weeks later (Marchant and Higgins 1990). The full breeding cycle should take around four months from egg laying to independence.

The location of the Great Cormorant colony at Lake Brearley is in a residential area, which poses some challenges. The smell of an active colony can be quite overpowering and the large amount of waste can impact the water quality of the lake. The high nutrient inflow can encourage the growth of algae and deplete oxygen levels. Lake Brearley is located in the City of Bayswater which has been active in mitigating some of the impact the colony has on their rate payers. The City of Bayswater in partnership with the community is working on reducing the nutrient inflow. They have taken measures such as the extensive planting of sedges, installation of floating wetlands, the application of "Phoslock" which helps the binding of the phosphorous, dredging and the installation of solar powered circulation pumps in certain areas.

Historical information

Great Cormorants have bred at a number of different sites around Perth and these have changed over time. In the 1980s, Great Cormorants used to breed at Booragoon Lake (in autumn-winter) in a colony of about 100 pairs. This was the largest known colony in Western Australia at that time (ANCA 1996).

Wynton Maddeford reviewed his records for Booragoon Swamp from 1975 to 2000 and reported that he usually could see between 20 and 35 breeding pairs. As the vegetation was very thick the actual number of breeding pairs might have been higher. At the time Great Cormorants were nesting on an island in Booragoon Lake. They last bred at Booragoon Lake around 2000 and moved to Herdsman Lake in 2001. The Booragoon Lake colony was about 1 km

from the Canning River and 3 km from the Swan River, their main feeding grounds.

About 35 pairs of Great Cormorant bred on a dormant dredging barge in Herdsman Lake in June 2001 (Maddeford 2001). Winter breeding on the Herdsman Lake barge was observed from 2001 to 2006. Nests were physically removed from the barge by February 2007. In the winter of 2007 and 2008 a few nests were constructed and suspected breeding did occur. The barge was physically removed from the lake by August 2009. In winter of 2010 to 2012 about 10 to 15 pairs then nested in a paperbark swamp about 200 metres to the south where the barge used to be located.

They have bred at Herdsman Lake at two different sites, originally on the dredging barge but later they bred in various dead trees surrounded by Typha at the north-west end of Maurice Hamer Reserve. There is no information available to clarify if they bred at both sites simultaneously or when they moved sites within Herdsman Lake. On 2 August 2012, 15 nests were reported by Nigel Jackett at the Maurice Hamer Reserve (Jackett 2012).

On 20 July 2013, Great Cormorants were nesting at Herdsman Lake, at the west end of Maurice Hamer Reserve and midway along eastern lake.

Great Cormorants were reported breeding at Herdsman Lake on 17 August 2014 when Nigel Jackett reported seeing 23 Great Cormorants and noted 14 active nests in five trees (Jackett 2014). Ray Turnbull mentioned many Great Cormorants on nests on 11 May 2014 and at least 16 on nests on 3 September 2014 (Turnbull and Oorebeek 2014).

Phil Snow advised that a small group of Great Cormorants had remained at Herdsman Lake and bred in the years 2014-2018. There was a small colony of 6 – 10 pairs nesting off Floreat Waters. The Herdsman Lake colony was situated the farthest from the Swan River, at a distance of 6 km.

Toolibin Lake had a breeding colony up to seven active nests which were found in fallen trees in May and August of 1982, November 1982, and September to November of 1983 (Jaensch *et al.*, 1988).

On 28 September 1988 three breeding pairs were noted at Blackwatch Swamp, West of Coolup, by Rodney Vervest and Ben Carr (Anon. 1988). On 19 March 1989, five nests with young were located by Roger Jaensch in paperbark trees at Dunns East Swamp near Hopetoun (Anon. 1989). John Tucker who monitors Dunn's Swamp mentioned there were possibly up to 20 Great Cormorant nests in Dunn's Swamp in 2017 and the breeding site is still in use.

Bunbury

Another active Great Cormorant colony is located near Bunbury though the exact breeding numbers have not been established. This colony has been there for some 60 years. As you cannot see the whole colony due to the location it is difficult to count the exact number of nests but counts vary from 25 to a possible higher number (pers. comments Chris Tate). The Great Cormorants at this location breed in a wetland and many nests are only a couple of feet above the water on dead tree trunks. On 18 May 2018, Great Cormorants were sitting on nests and at least 14 breeding pairs were confirmed. On 27 May some nests had juveniles a couple of weeks old. During a visit on 24 August it was noted that about a third of the nests were still occupied and

most seemed to have chicks, half to fledgling size. On 2 September the colony was checked and six active nests were confirmed. No other species were observed breeding at this location (pers. comments Gary Tate).

Anecdotes

There are two interesting anecdotes about Great Cormorants in past issues of *Western Australia Bird Notes* which are reproduced here.

"Cormorant eats grebe at Booragoon Lake

"At approximately 4 p.m. on Sunday 23 June 1985, I observed a Great Cormorant holding a full-grown Australasian Grebe in its beak. It was holding the grebe by the head, and diving under water in an apparent attempt to drown the grebe. The grebe struggled but finally died after about ten minutes. Then with great difficulty the cormorant swallowed the grebe. The last I saw of the grebe was its feet disappearing down the cormorant's throat. The crop of the cormorant was very distended for some time afterwards. I have lived opposite the lake for 12 years and have never seen such an action before (Fisher, H. (1985). Cormorant eats grebe at Booragoon Lake. *Western Australian Bird Notes* **35**, 9).

"A wonderful bird is the Pelican

"On August 16th 1990 at 10.30 am I was jogging along Riverside Drive. The river was like glass. Eighteen Australian Pelicans were spread out across the river to Heirisson Island, fishing with a large group of Little Black Cormorant and one Great Cormorant. One pelican suddenly attacked the Great Cormorant. At first I thought they were fighting over the same catch. To my surprise, the cormorant was the catch.

"Having moved toward the Great Cormorant, the Australian Pelican with its bill, took the cormorant and held it firmly by pressing its bill against its breast. The Great Cormorant was fighting to escape. I could see its shape inside stretching the pelican's pouch. The other Australian Pelican flew and the attacker attempted to follow. However, the weight of the cormorant had caused it to sink into the water and appeared to prevent take off. After a few take off attempts the Australian Pelican virtually spat the cormorant from its bill. The Great Cormorant then carried on as before the incident, the Australian Pelican flying to join the others (Hunt, J. (1990). A wonderful bird is the pelican. *Western Australian Bird Notes* **56**, 9) ."

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to Nigel Jackett, Sue Kalab, Wynton Maddeford, Phil Snow, Chris Tate, Gary Tate, Geoff Trott, John Tucker and Ray Turnbull who supplied information about the Great Cormorant.

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Marcus Singor



Ground Cuckoo-shrike. Photo by Peter Wittwer

BIRDING IN THE NORTHERN WHEATBELT

There is no doubt that 2011 was a very good year for rainfall in the South West Land Division, and this was certainly so in the Murchison and wheatbelt regions. A colleague of mine from WABBA (Wheatbelt Avon Branch of BirdLife Australia), who has visited the Murchison area regularly for the past 60 years, stated to me that 2011 was the best for birds seen in that area for 30 years.

So it was on the 27 August 2011 my wife Elaine and I travelled to Inering Hills, Carnamah, for a farm stay with BirdLife Australia members, Pauline and Peter Wittwer. Our main aim was to see a bird I have been trying to locate for a long time, the Ground Cuckoo-shrike.

On arrival at the farm we were treated to the resounding calls of the Rufous Songlark, which appeared everywhere. This was a common bird around my property in Toodyay about 10 years ago, until I presume new dwellings springing up, caused its decline.

Pauline showed us around the properties, and in a period of about three hours we had seen 40 species, one of which was the Ground Cuckoo-shrike, which was breeding. Another notable was the Pied Honeyeater which was feeding in a hakea on the road verge. This was a first sighting for Pauline in this area.

The country throughout the trip was in prime condition, and I would encourage anyone to have a look at this area in the spring; it is certainly worthwhile.

The accommodation on the farm was excellent, and the hosts very obliging. To top this weekend off, when we arrived home, we were greeted with the song of the Rufous Songlark which stayed all spring; fantastic.



Pied Honeyeater taken near the old Damboring siding, NE of Ballidu. Photo by Phil Lewis (see also p8)

Max Howard

Other actions observed by her were: tearing off the wiping part of the wiper and leaving the base rubber *in situ*; partially pulling out the blades so that the blade is rendered useless or stretched to a degree that it becomes less effective; ripping away paper or other material wrapped around wipers in an attempt to prevent access by the birds; and pecking at and trying to rip out rubber seals around car windows (involving hopping all over the car roof, bonnet or wing mirrors in order to gain purchase).

Shooing away the birds merely interrupted these activities for a few minutes. Many residents in these streets now cover their vehicles with heavy cloth or leave the wipers in the cleaning position (i.e. away from the glass). These actions, however, do not prevent the rubber seals around windows from being tampered with by the ravens.

Another friend has informed me of ravens stripping off wiper blades in the staff car park at Willetton Senior High School. This was 18-24 months ago. Are any readers of *Western Australian Bird Notes* aware of this behaviour or other destructive actions of ravens elsewhere in suburban Perth or of corvids in other parts of Western Australia?

Ian Abbott

AUSTRALIAN RAVENS DAMAGING WINDSCREEN WIPERS

Many native bird species are opportunistic and adopt new behaviours in order to exploit changed circumstances. Around the Swan River region, following European settlement, these have involved novel nesting sites (e.g. Peregrine Falcons and Welcome Swallows: buildings; Tree Martins: street lamps; Striated Pardalotes: Canary Island Palms) and eating seeds of introduced species (e.g. Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo: Pinaster Pine, Macadamia, Almond and Pecan); Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo: Cape Lilac, Kaffir Plum).

In September 2018, it came to my attention that Australian Ravens were damaging windscreen wipers of cars parked in Bowman Street, Evans Street and Smyth Road in Shenton Park. In October, when visiting a friend residing in Bowman Street, the rear wipers of my car were damaged by ravens pulling out the rubber blades and supporting metal struts. They did not fly off with them, but discarded the components on the ground behind where the car was parked in a driveway.

My friend also reported ravens alighting on car roofs and sliding down the front or rear windows; then, with their feet, hanging on to wing mirrors, parts of the car bodies or the wipers themselves and pecking at and around the wipers or rubber seals of the car windows. She originally thought that they were foraging for insects snared in spiders' webs and leaf fragments trapped behind the wipers. However, this behaviour occurred also with clean wipers.

OSPREY BREEDING RESULTS 2018/2019

The Osprey population around Perth was surveyed during the 2018/2019 season.

Additional records were collected for the Cape to Cape and Bunbury Region plus some incidental records that came to hand. Monitoring commenced in May 2018 when Ospreys were first observed bringing nesting material to their sites and ceased at the end of December 2018. An overview of known sites is presented.

Perth area

Successful breeding sites around Perth were Canning Bridge, Mt Pleasant (2 Juv), Manning Road, Waterford (2 Juv) and Whitfords Nodes (1 Juv).

Canning Bridge, Mt Pleasant. Osprey were seen bringing building material to the nesting site in a Norfolk Island Pine tree in mid-May 2018. The first Osprey chick was seen on 30 October 2018. A month later, on 27 November 2018 there were two grown juveniles in the nest. Australian Ravens had a nest in a nearby Norfolk Island Pine tree and were often observed chasing the Ospreys.

Point Walter, Bicton. Ospreys were seen bringing nesting material to the nesting site in a Norfolk Island Pine tree in

mid-May 2018. An Osprey was on the nest during August and early September. The nest was vacant during October, November and December.

Peppermint Grove, McNeil Street. The nest site visited in October 2018 looked neglected and was vacant. The nest is located in the top of a Norfolk Island Pine tree where McNeil Street and Bindaring Parade meet.

Bodkin Park, Waterford. This site had been abandoned half way through last year's (2017/2018) breeding season. The site was checked in August 2018, remained unoccupied and the nest was degrading. No further visits were made.

Manning Road, Waterford. This was a new location in a microwave communication tower on the Curtin Campus. The nest came to attention late in the season. On 19 December 2018 an adult and a juvenile were at the nest. The juvenile was occasionally exercising its wings but not taking off. On 21 December 2018 two adult Ospreys and two fully grown juveniles were at the nest.

Mount Henry, Salter Point. Osprey was seen on the nest, 17 August 2018. In late October a pair was seen in a nearby dead tree. On 7 November 2018 one Osprey was standing on nesting platform, in late November the site was vacant. A visit on 9 December had one Osprey feeding in a nearby dead tree.

Old Swan Brewery, Kings Park. Osprey was on the nest from late August to end of October 2018. No juveniles observed and the nest was vacant in November. The nest is in a Norfolk Island Pine tree along Mounts Bay Road.

Ascot Waters, Ascot. The Ascot transmission tower has two Osprey nests, one at the top and one half way up. Osprey was seen at the lower nest in August 2018.

In September Ospreys were observed bringing nesting material to the lower nest site in the transmission tower. Adults were on the nest in early November, no juveniles were seen. Nests were deserted in late November 2018.

Ron Courtney Island, Ascot. This site remained unoccupied this season. Visits made in June, September, October and December recorded the nest site in a eucalypt tree vacant.

Whitfords Nodes, Hillarys. Ospreys had taken up residence at this site in a mobile phone transmission tower. They were observed during November and December 2018. One juvenile was seen.

Shoalwater Bay, Gull Rock. Adult Osprey was seen on a nest in November and December 2018.

The nest was located on a small island in a mobile phone transmission tower.

Woodman Point. Near the Austal Marine site an Osprey had built a nest on the upper part of a derelict tug boat. The upper part of this vessel and the nest

were removed this year (2018). An unsuccessful breeding this season. James Bennett thought they were successful last year and the year before, perhaps one young each year. Austal is considering installing a nesting platform on site.

Cottesloe, Deane Str./Marine Parade. Osprey was at the nest during October, November and December. The nest was completed as last year it was only partially built. The nest is located right on the beach front and in the top of a Norfolk Island Pine tree making it exposed to the elements.

Alfred Cove/Pelican Point. Osprey artificial platforms not in use.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions is looking at ways to improve the Alfred Cove Osprey platform.

Bunbury Region

Seven Osprey breeding sites, of which five are believed to be successful, were monitored around Bunbury.

Pratt Road, Eaton. This site has been in use for many years and is prominent in an urban area. In early July 2018 two Ospreys were seen in the nest. By late August a female was reported sitting and by mid-October the adults appeared to be feeding chicks. On 17 November 2018 there were two large juveniles on the nest being fed. Three adult birds were observed active at this nest. Two different Ospreys were providing food to the young whilst the female was on the nest. The nest is located in a large dead tree. There were four Ospreys at the nest site on 5 December 2018, two adults perched nearby and two grown juveniles on the nest.

Eastwell Road, Australind. The nest is located right next to a look-out on the track back to Clifton Park. An adult was seen perched near the nest in August, September, October and December 2018.

Bar Island, at mouth of Collie River. Osprey at nest on 22 August 2018. Nest with two adults on 6 October 2018 with one adding sticks. On 23 December 2018 an adult



Osprey, Leschenault Inlet. Photo by Chris Tate

observed feeding one young, there was a second adult sitting in a nearby tree.

Leschenault Inlet. Two nesting platforms at Koombana Drive side, along north side of inlet, were installed by Newton Moore SHS students in 2017 in conjunction with the City of Bunbury. Nesting activity observed from July 2018. On 4 December 2018 adult was seen feeding one young chick.

Balmoral Boulevard. Osprey nest became active from late August and fish delivered to sitting female from early September. The nest was under attack from eight Australian Ravens on 28 September 2018 but the female stood her ground. One juvenile raised still seen around site mid-December.

Cristel Plant. Located on the Old Coast Road. This appears to be an abandoned site.

Belvedere. A check in October showed that the nest looked unstable and was about to fall. Not monitored.

Point Mornington. There are two artificial nesting platforms at Bunbury Port, inner harbour. These poles along Leschenault Drive have been in place for many years. In July 2018 two Ospreys were seen sitting on the nesting poles. On 22 August 2018 one Osprey was seen sitting on the edge of the nest at one platform.

Brunswick River and Collie River junction. This location has an Osprey nest in a huge dead tree overlooking the rivers and has been there for at least 14 years. Two Ospreys, one of which was a juvenile, were present near the nest on 27 December 2018.

Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin Region

Known Osprey breeding sites for the Cape to Cape region are listed though there are likely to be others.

Molloy Island. Osprey were present at the nest in a microwave tower on Molloy Island. The height prevents one seeing much activity though chicks were reported in November 2018. Osprey was present in November and December 2018. Dean McFaul reported that it was there in 2017 and from all accounts successful.

Hamelin Bay. There is an Osprey nest on the off-shore island. Status is unknown this year.

Margaret River. The Osprey nest is in the top of an eucalypt tree along Margaret River near the Margaret River Rowing Club. This nest site was used last year after the nest on Wallcliffe House disappeared. A pair of Osprey was seen at the nest site in early November 2018.

Cape Mentelle. Cape Mentelle is north of the mouth of the Margaret River. This Osprey nest is of historical importance. On 5 November 1889 Archibald James Campbell, a bird naturalist and egg collector, visited the site which is still there. At the time the nest was about four feet high and with a circumference of about 13 feet, constructed of sticks and roots, and situated about twenty-five feet above high-water mark. A new Osprey nest has since been built higher up on the cliff ledge but the remains of the original one can still be seen which is now at least 129 years old. Osprey was observed at the nest in early November 2018 by Peter St. Clair-Baker and at the end of December 2018.

Meelup. Last year (October/November 2017) a pair of Osprey had a chick in the nest at the upper car park at

Meelup Beach. This year the nest was destroyed during a winter storm on 24/25 May 2018. The old nest was found on the ground. The Ospreys built a new nest in the same tree and one juvenile was reported in December 2018 by Michael Sayers. The nest is located in a large dead tree.

Quindalup and Siesta Park. There is an Osprey nest in a Norfolk Island Pine tree in McDermott Street, Quindalup. The nest looks to be in good shape, present status unknown. The Osprey nest at Mitchell Street, Siesta Park had an Osprey at the nest in late December 2018. This nest was in good condition, status unknown, also in a Norfolk Island Pine tree.

Additional reports

Lancelin, Edward Island Reserve. Occupied nest in October 2018.

Lake McLarty. Osprey nest with two fully grown juveniles was seen on 28 December 2018 at south side of Lake McLarty.

Geraldton. On 18 August 2018 an Osprey nest with three young was seen at the Lighthouse pole. Nesting pole was erected in 2002.

Horrocks. Adult bird observed feeding young in nest at the end of the beach on 5 October 2018.

Discussion

One indicator that an Osprey nest is active seems to be the constant presence of at least one adult bird at the nest site, standing guard over eggs and chicks especially with the threat of Australian Ravens around. Norfolk Island Pine trees were one of the preferred nesting locations followed by man-made structures such as transmission towers. Young fledged Osprey that are still on the nest can be heard, by its continuous calling, from a long distance.

The Australian Raven seems to be a factor that is impacting on the breeding success of Osprey. They were observed harassing nesting Ospreys at Molloy Island in 2017. Ospreys were driven off their nest, in a communication tower, at Cervantes in 2018 by Australian Ravens. This site has been unsuccessful for the past four years. Harassment by Australian Ravens was observed at the Whitford, Cottesloe and Swan Brewery site.

On 18 November 2018, Gary Tate observed two different male Ospreys bringing fish (Whiting) to the Pratt Road site near the Collie River whilst the female was at the nest with the young. This seems to be a likely case of polyandry (Dennis 2007) which is not often observed. Polyandry is a pattern of mating in which a female animal has more than one male mate.

Osprey research conducted on Kangaroo Island, South Australia over 18 breeding seasons mentioned a number of interesting facts. An average of 29% of occupied territories was found to be inactive each year. An occupied territory was defined as one where a pair of adult birds appear together in the breeding season in the vicinity of the nest and territorial defence is observed. In three territories the average duration of pair-bond was 8.3 years and they remained together in their territory throughout the year. In some territories, long-term pairs were found to be active in most breeding seasons for several years. Other pairs bred in alternate years and in some cases, there were two and sometimes three years between breeding attempts (Dennis 2007).

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I must acknowledge the stellar work the members from the Bunbury Group and the Cape to Cape Group have done in monitoring their local Osprey sites.

Further acknowledgement goes to all the people who assisted in monitoring their Osprey sites: Shelley Altman, James Bennett, Richard and Lorraine Chyne, Peter St. Clair-Baker, Natalie Bell, Don Carlson, Graeme Clifton, John Collins, Barry Deacon, Julia Gross, Sue Kalab, Mike Lawrie, Anne Lee-Steere, Wynton Maddeford, Dean McFaul, Jane Putland, Dave Rees, Helen Reinhold, Janean Robinson, Michael Sayers, Brett Skoglund, Alanna Smith, Elizabeth Smith, Liz Smith, Chris Tate, Gary Tate and Christine Wilder.

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Marcus Singor

MISTLETOEBIRD ENJOYS A JUICY SNACK

Mistletoebirds occur all year round on our 10-hectare Jarrah/Marri property at Morangup, with breeding observed from September to December and February and March. The reason for the birds spending all year on the property is probably due to the abundant Mistletoe plant *Amyema miquellii* growing mostly on Marri trees (*Corymbia calophylla*). In December 2015 I counted a total of 1089 live *Amyema miquellii* plants growing on 233 Marri trees and two Jarrah trees (*Eucalyptus marginata*), providing a good food source for Mistletoebirds. I have also seen Mistletoebirds and Silvereyes feeding on fruit of *Leucopogon nutans* (Drooping Leucopogon), a small abundant shrub that produces a lot of fruit on each plant. HANZAB (Higgins *et al.* 2006) mentions fruits of many plant species are eaten by Mistletoebirds, with *Leucopogon parviflorus* being one of them.

Silvereyes have been seen feeding on fruit of *Leucopogon nutans* for several years at our property and this year Mistletoebirds have also been eating the fruit, but probably been eating the fruit in previous years. The fruit is picked from the plant or from the ground in their bill, taken to a nearby perch and continually squeezed between the bill before swallowing the squashed fruit. In November 2018 I watched a male Mistletoebird collect a *Leucopogon nutans* fruit from the ground and at a nearby perch, commenced squeezing the fruit before swallowing it, with the process taking fifty seconds. Two days later a male Mistletoebird

collected a *Leucopogon nutans* fruit from the plant and at a nearby perch, squeezed the fruit then swallowed the squashed fruit in 5 seconds. The fruit collected from the plant may have had a softer outer skin than the possibly slightly harder skinned fruit collected from the ground, which required a longer time to squeeze the fleshy part out. This suggests the skin is not digested in their gut, causing the whole fruit to be excreted without absorbing the nutrients of the flesh. Their faeces containing *Leucopogon nutans* fruit are deposited onto a branch in the same way that a Mistletoebird does when excreting faeces containing mistletoe fruit.

The excreted fruit of *Amyema miquellii* is a tapered cone shape with the larger end ending in a square shape with four protruding points, whereas an excreted *Leucopogon nutans* fruit is cylindrical in shape with the seed inside. I was fortunate to see the faeces from a male Mistletoebird fall to the ground and upon inspection, saw that it contained the single fruit each of *Amyema miquellii* and *Leucopogon nutans* (see photo). On the same day I noticed the faeces of a Mistletoebird on a dead branch, that contained two excreted fruits of *Amyema miquellii* (see photo).



(above) Mistletoebird with *Leucopogon nutans* fruit, Morangup and (below) *Leucopogon nutans* fruit and *Amyema miquellii* excreted fruit, Morangup. Photos by Allan Rose



Reference

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Allan Rose

SABINE'S GULL AT BREMER BAY

When Plaxy Barratt posted on 'Australian Twitchers', that a Sabine's Gull was photographed by Keith Lightbody at Bremer Bay on 15 January, we decided to "go for it". On 16 January we arrived at the boat harbour about 4.00 pm, but the bird was not present. Several Silver Gulls were perched on the large rocks sheltering the entrance to the harbour on the eastern side. After 30 minutes of scanning, the Sabine's Gull landed on the rocks with the Silver Gulls.

The gull had been seen on the Bremer Bay beach on 13 January by Anne Gadsby (pers. comm.) and fishermen reported it arriving on the beach as soon as they began gutting their catch and coming within three metres of them, and often seemed tame, as has been reported in Europe (Olsen and Larsson, 2007).

This is the eighth Australian sighting and fifth for WA, all single non-breeding birds: Darwin 1982; Port MacDonnell SA 1984; pelagic off Wollongong NSW 1985; Port Hedland, Lesley Salt works immature 23 February 1989; Port Hedland 23 January 1990 John Darnell (Johnstone & Storr, 1998); Coconut Well north of Broome 2001; 80 Mile Beach WA 2005 and Bremer Bay 13 - 18 January 2019 (see also Higgins and Davies (1996) and Menkhorst *et al.* (2017)).

The ages of these birds were as follows: Western Australia 4 adults and 1 immature; Northern Territory 1; South Australia 1; New South Wales 1 pelagic; total 8.

The original description of this trans-equatorial migrant was delivered to the Linnaean Society of London on December 15, 1818 by Joseph Sabine FRS, LS. It was so named after he received some specimens that his brother Captain Edward Sabine shot off the west coast of Greenland (Sabine, 1819).

Sabine's Gull is a small (27-36 cm), elegant bird with a buoyant tern-like flight. This bird appeared active and 'antsy' as it often poked and probed its feathers. Its primaries showed considerable wear, but its secondaries appeared fresh. A small headed, long winged gull, the two most easily seen diagnostic features are a fine black bill with a yellow tip and its unique wing pattern. In flight all birds of all ages have a tricoloured upper wing pattern with grey, white and black triangles and white underwing and tail, but this bird lacked an often present forked tail.

Generally considered monotypic, currently all four populations breed in the Arctic tundra returning to their breeding colonies

in late May to early June. Adult breeding birds have a dark slaty grey hood, narrowly bordered black rim at rear; neck, rump, tail white. This dark hood is lost soon after leaving the Arctic and birds seen south of the equator are always in non-breeding plumage.

From about September when they finish breeding, Sabine's Gulls are long distance pelagic migrants for the rest of the year, migrating to upwellings in the south-east Atlantic or south-east Pacific. They are therefore seen migrating through Europe to Namibia (Namibia even has a stamp of the Sabine's Gull) along the cold Benguela Current zone and Cape Province, some even foraging in the outflow of Cape Town sewerage works (Shirihai, 2002). The other migratory route is south along the eastern Pacific coast to north-west South America, where they frequent the Humboldt Current zone off Peru.

Shirihai also mentions that in summer records from one day pelagics out of Cape Town large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters, as well as Northern Skuas and Sabine's Gull are often seen. Perhaps Dan Mantle's *et al.* pelagic sighting of Cory's Shearwater over Bremer Canyon on 19 January 2019 raises the possibility that both birds came together in some unusual weather event?

References

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Sabine's Gull, Bremer Bay. Photo by John Baas (see also Observations, pp8)

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Xenia Dennett and Sue Abbotts

RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO FEEDING HABITS

For five consecutive days, one, two and occasionally three Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos fed on fruit, commonly known as 'honky nuts', of a single Marri tree (*Corymbia calophylla*) next to our house at Morangup. They would be there for most of the day snapping off branch tips, then breaking off the green honky nuts from the branch tip, to start extracting the seed from the nut by completely chewing away the rim to allow easy access to the soft seeds. The only way of knowing they were in the tree was the sound of them munching away at the honky nuts to extract the seeds, or the sound of munched or untouched nuts hitting the ground, as well as the branch tips falling to the ground. By the end of the fifth day the area under the tree was littered with honky nuts and branch tips. All but a few of the honky nuts remained on the tree.

A week later the untouched honky nuts on the ground were picked up by Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos and Red-capped Parrots and those nuts with edible seeds held in their claw to extract the seeds, with their long upper mandible. I am not sure how both species of birds determined if the honky nut had edible seeds or not as they discarded the unwanted honky nut within a couple of seconds of picking it up. Corellas also choose which honky nuts to feed on, apparently

by visual inspection, although it is unclear what cues they are using (Burbidge 2008).

One small Marri tree on our property, seven metres in height, must have had plenty of honky nuts on it for all of them were on the ground, mostly with the rim missing, as well as lots of small branch tips. This is evidence that Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos had feasted on the honky nuts from that tree. There are very few leaves left on the tree, leaving it very bare.

Reference

Burbidge, A. H. (2008). Little and Long-billed Corellas learning to use a new food source, the seeds of Marri. *Australian Field Ornithology* **25**, 136-139.

Allan Rose

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANTS IN PERTH

Little Black Cormorants, (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*), are a common sight around Perth and Mandurah. On the Swan River you can see flocks that will often exceed several hundred in number. These might be as a chain of Little Black Cormorants flying upriver, a large feeding flock on the river or a group roosting on a sand bar or jetty. Away from the river they will be found in smaller groups.

Some Little Black Cormorants breed in large colonies whilst others will breed in small groups (10-20) or even as low as a few pairs. Smaller breeding groups are found at small artificial lakes, wetlands or river back waters often in the company of Little Pied Cormorants. Nests are packed together and can be located close to the ground or above water. Some nests are situated high up in trees and I have measured them to be well above 20 metres.

Little Black Cormorants are known to have moved the location of their major breeding colonies in Perth. The three main breeding colonies in Perth are presently at John Oldham Park on Mounts Bay Road, G.O. Edwards Park in Burswood and Glendalough Open Space Reserve near Herdsman Lake. The colonies were not used each year.



(left) Female Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Morangup and (above) Marri nuts chewed by Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Morangup. Photos by Allan Rose

John Oldham Park, Mounts Bay, Perth

2015

Without doubt, one of the largest recent breeding colonies of Little Black Cormorants is found along the Swan River at John Oldham Park, opposite the Mount Hospital. This was in the Central Business District of Perth. The site was in a sheltered location, protected by the high rising Kings Park escarpment that looms in the background. The colony was conservatively estimated at around 180 pairs but probably considerably larger when checked on 12 July 2015. Some Little Black Cormorants were nesting in the top of Norfolk Island Pine trees, which seemed an unlikely location that high up. Large paperbark and bottlebrush trees along the water's edge contained most nests, some with juveniles. In some nests the chicks were nearly fully grown.

2017

The John Oldham Park colony usually has 100 or more breeding pairs but a number of visits confirmed that only two pairs had nested at this site in 2017, but this site is still considered active.

On 13 May 2017, two nests with large young were seen. These contained nearly fledged juveniles, with a reddish throat pouch. A survey on 1 June 2017 recorded four nests plus juveniles. In mid-June, some Little Black Cormorants were found to be breeding in the casuarina trees on the Mounts Bay Road side.

2018

No activity was observed during March. In late April 2018, several small flocks of Little Black Cormorants were noticed heading into the park. Confirmation was made on 7 May 2018 that several hundred Little Black Cormorants had returned to John Oldham Park and were busy nest building. During a survey conducted on 15 May 2018, it was estimated that there were around 150-160 active nests in the whole of John Oldham Park. A leucistic Little Black Cormorant was seen on 4 June 2018 at the G.O Edwards colony. On 6 July 2018, it was seen on the floating booms at Optus Stadium and the following day it was sitting in one of the trees at the John Oldham Park colony. See photo.

On 7 July 2018, the colony at the John Oldham Park was surveyed. There were nests with juveniles close to fledging, some birds still displaying, and others sitting on nests. The colony had expanded into areas where previously it had not been. A count of occupied nests came in at around 500 breeding pairs. They were nesting in a range of trees such as casuarina trees (*Casuarina* spp.), Broad Leafed Paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), Oleander (*Nerium oleander*), Peppermint tree (*Agonis flexuosa*), Norfolk Island Pine

(*Araucaria heterophylla*), bottlebrush, (*Callistemon* spp.), eucalypt species and Cotton Palm (*Washingtonia* spp.).

The Broad Leafed Paperbark was the preferred nesting tree at this site.

A visit was made on 13 September 2018 to check on the status of the colony. The colony had many empty nests indicating that it was winding down. Still some nests with recently hatched young were seen as were nests with fully grown juveniles. On a few nests, display behaviour was taking place. Some nests were in unlikely locations such as a couple of nests in the crown of a Cotton Palm tree at the base of the frond stems. One Little Black Cormorant was seen carrying nesting material. A count of nests, covering most of the park, gave an estimate of 620-640 nests. There was only a few Little Pied Cormorants (6) nesting in the southern corner. The colony was checked on 23 October 2018 and found to be largely deserted.



Little Black Cormorant Leucism, Optus Stadium footbridge. Photo by Gary Tate

G.O. Edwards Park, Burswood

The G.O. Edwards Park, along the Great Eastern Highway at Burswood, is a relatively small park that has a mixed breeding colony on a small island. This colony was comprised of Australian White Ibis, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant and Little Black Cormorant.

2015

There was only a small number of Little Black Cormorant breeding here in 2015. During July 2015 seven nests with young were recorded.

2017

In 2017, Little Black Cormorants established their first large colony on

an island in G.O. Edwards Park. Initially, the colony was in the lower branches of Japanese Pepper trees (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) mixed in with breeding Australian White Ibis. The colony later expanded into the larger and much higher eucalyptus trees in the centre of the island. On 10 May 2017, a count estimated at least 76 Little Black Cormorant breeding pairs. On 29 May, the number had increased to 171 nests, some juveniles had fledged, some were in the nest begging for food, while others were still quite small. A large number of Australian Ravens was preying on young Little Black Cormorants.

At the Little Black Cormorant colony, much nesting material was harvested from a surrounding grove of trees. The ground underneath these trees was covered in a carpet of small, freshly picked twigs that had been dropped.

2018

G.O. Edwards Park, functioned as a roosting site during April and May 2018 with up to 102 Little Black Cormorants

present. A visit on 4 June 2018 showed that the colony had come back to life. An estimated 400 Little Black Cormorants were present and displaying on old nests and branches. Only one was sitting on a nest. There was an estimated 23 breeding pairs on 19 June 2018, 64 nesting pairs on 14 July 2018 and 90 pairs on 29 July 2018. A visit on 24 October 2018 showed that the majority of nests were deserted. There were only four active nests, one nest with a grown juvenile, one nest with just hatched young and two Little Black Cormorants sitting.

Glendalough Open Space Reserve

Glendalough Open Space Reserve is located on the eastern side of Herdsman Lake on the corner of Jon Sanders Drive and Parkland Road, Glendalough. There was a large active Little Black Cormorant colony present in 2017. The colony was spread over two locations, both in Japanese Pepper trees.

The main colony was found on an island in the south-western corner of the reserve and the other in the middle of lakes towards the eastern side. There was no activity when checked on 21 April 2018.

During a visit on 5 May 2018, Little Black Cormorant was recorded flying in with nest building material. A number of birds was engaged in display behaviour. I estimated that 25 nests were active at both sites. Large flocks were circling overhead. A progress visit made on 4 June 2018 showed that the colonies had been abandoned at this site. I suspect these birds might have moved to the G.O. Edwards Park site. The island at the southern end of the park was completely deserted and the colony in the centre of the park only had five pairs of Little Black Cormorants present. On 14 July 2018, the colonies were checked. The two old colonies were both still deserted. One pair of Little Black Cormorant was present with two fully grown juveniles standing on a nest.

Discussion

The breeding season for Little Black Cormorant around Perth starts in April and finishes in October.

The smaller clusters of Little Black Cormorant seem to start breeding earlier than May when the larger colonies begin. On 24 April 2018, there were four pairs sitting on nests in trees overhanging the Canning River, upstream from the Kent Street Weir. On 20 April 2018 at Tomato Lake, Belmont there were two pairs sitting on nests, still re-arranging and shuffling twigs. The nests were located on an island.

In 2017 when breeding occurred at John Oldham Park, the birds also bred at G.O Edwards Park and Glendalough Open Space Reserve.

The two largest colonies in Perth in 2018 were at John Oldham and G.O Edwards Parks. Combined, these had in excess of 700 breeding pairs. This is a reduction in comparison to counts held in the 1980s.

Booragoon Lake was an important breeding and roosting site for cormorants in the years gone by. The most abundant species there was the Little Black Cormorant (up to 5000, May 1988) when about 1000-2000 pairs bred each winter-spring. This was the second largest, regularly used colony in south-western Australia at the time. Less than 100 pairs of Little Pied Cormorants were recorded breeding there (ANCA 1996). Booragoon Lake gradually fell out of favour with Little

Black Cormorants. Wynton Maddeford recalls that breeding numbers declined and were down to 75 nesting pairs in the winter of 2003. They last bred there around 2005 (Wynton Maddeford pers. comm.). It is around this time that Little Black Cormorants moved location. During visits to Booragoon Lake on 19 July 2015, 8 May 2018 and 17 August 2018 no breeding of Little Black Cormorants was recorded.

Wynton Maddeford recalls that on 12 June 2001 he first noticed 3000 Little Black Cormorants leaving their roosting spot at the Narrows Bridge ornamental lakes (facing Mounts Bay Road). In the decades prior to that they used to roost at Booragoon Lake.

At both G.O. Edwards Park, Burswood and at Glendalough Open Space Reserve, Little Black Cormorants preferred Japanese Pepper trees as nesting sites. Large sections of this dense growth died off during the breeding season and I am not sure if this was due to excess phosphate deposits and how this will affect future breeding seasons.

The incubation period for Little Black Cormorants is 27 to 28 days, clutch size varies from three to five eggs and fledging age is 56 to 70 days (Marchant and Higgins 1990). The breeding cycle is about three months from laying to fledging.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to Wynton Maddeford and Gary Tate who supplied information about the Little Black Cormorants.

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Marcus Singor

CRESTED PIGEON AT SPEED

During a trip to the central wheatbelt in October last year, I was travelling along a well-graded gravel road at a constant speed of 60 kph to reduce the dust for those travelling behind. A small flock of Crested Pigeon that were on the side of the road took flight as the vehicle approached. Instead of flapping their wings a few times and gliding off to one side, as they so often do, they flew strongly along the road in front of the vehicle at a little over bonnet height. This continued for some distance (hundreds of metres) before one veered across the roadside vegetation and into a paddock. One by one the others followed.

From a standing start these pigeons met and matched the constant speed at which the vehicle was travelling. By the time the last bird in the flock had veered away from the line of the road the vehicle had covered over one kilometre.

Peter Sandilands

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST COLLARED PRATINCOLE, *GLAREOLA PRATINCOLA*

On 22 January, Claire Gerrish and I visited Point Walter and we saw, and I photographed, a pratincole that I initially called an Oriental Pratincole (*Glareola maldivarum*). This would have been an uncommon visitor to Perth and we were both happy with the sighting. We watched the bird for 20 to 30 minutes and it did not move other than to shuffle 2 or 3 metres across the sea grass that it was resting on so we had no view of the bird in flight, nor even outstretched wings. The bird was not present the next morning when others visited the site.

However, on 1 February a pratincole was found at Herdsman Lake and a visiting South African birder questioned the identity of the bird due to the length of the tail. This report caused me to re-examine my photographs and the tail feathers did extend beyond the end of the wing tips. This feature is one of the identifying features of a Collared Pratincole when compared with an Oriental Pratincole.

Subsequently, other photographers at Herdsman Lake, where the bird remained for at least two weeks, obtained pictures of the outstretched wings of the bird, showing a narrow white trailing edge, confirming the Collared Pratincole identification.

Clive Nealon



(above) Collared Pratincole, Point Walter, and (below) showing the distinctive tail feathers. Photos by Clive Nealon



BIRD WALKS

at Stirling Range Retreat, 2019

The owners of the Stirling Range Retreat, Virginia and Darren, have requested that BirdLife Western Australia volunteers lead walks at Stirling Range Retreat again this year as we have done in the past. Each volunteer would spend one week leading daily dawn (8 a.m.) and afternoon (3 p.m.) bird walks during Spring 2019.

The walks this year will commence on Saturday 31st August (the first volunteer arrives on Friday 30th August) and conclude after the 8am morning walk on Saturday 2nd November 2019.

Again the walks will be conducted on well-pounded kangaroo trails, within the Retreat precinct and in the adjacent 50 acres of woodland north of the Retreat. The terrain is flat and the walks are very easily negotiated.

We would also expect to conduct evening talks at 7pm on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday that are illustrated with a Power Point presentation of bird photographs and accompanying bird calls. The computer and projector will be available pre-loaded with the necessary software for the duration of the program.

Accommodation arrangements in 2019 will be as follows:

- the leaders and their partners will be offered a 50% tariff on cabin accommodation.
- For those people who will be using their own caravan for accommodation a tariff free powered site will be available.
- 100% of all walk and talk fees will be donated to BirdLife Western Australia. Note: during Spring 2018 BirdLife volunteers raised more than \$3,000.00 from the walks and Power Point presentations.
- When available, leaders are invited to join the 9am Hidden Treasures Orchid and Wildflower Tour as guests of the Retreat.

All weeks are still available to volunteers who would like to take part in the program and weeks will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

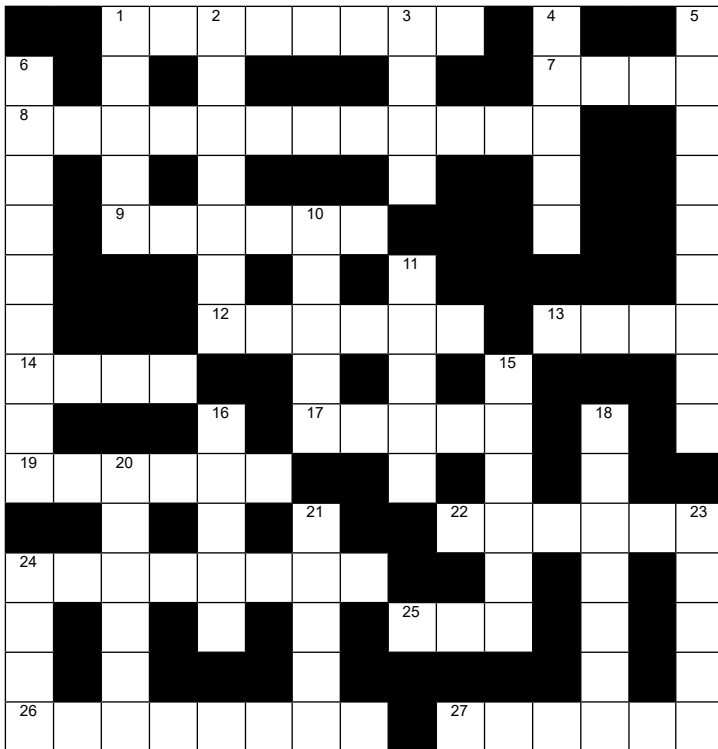
For further details please contact **Clive Nealon** via email at clivenealon@bigpond.com

or by phone at 9448 5921 or 0402 009 462

Crossword No. 38

by Pam Agar

CLUES



Across

1. Common Australian tree.
7. Facial organ of Musk Duck.
8. Condition of being at one's disposal.
9. Necessary for long haul to Siberia.
12. Entrance to a Bee-eater's nest.
13. Genus name of some owls.
14. Soft warm feathers.
17. Predator of birds.
19. Regular campout period.
22. Important reference of Australian birds.
24. Uncommon duck visitor to northern WA.
25. Food of summer visitor to south-west WA.
26. Interesting woodland reserve SE of Perth.
27. Black and white robin of inland areas.

Down

1. To avoid.
2. Potential nest site of Fairy Martin.
3. Light colour.
4. Road visited on many an excursion.
5. Manner of conduct.
6. The fairy-wren and grass-wren family.
10. Sub-group of scientific family.
11. State of deterioration.
15. Useful ponds in dry areas.
16. Postpone.
18. Large raptor.
20. Collect data to form a comprehensive view.
21. Discourage.
23. To construct.
24. Organisational framework.

See page 57 for Answers



Rufous Treecreeper, *Dryandra*. Photo by Chris Young



Little Ringed Plover, Lake Eda. Photo by Chris Young

Proposed Great Western Woodlands Surveys for 2019

“The woodlands are calling and I must go”

Autumn 2019

April 1 – 4: Credo.

May 1 – 9: Frank Hann/Peak Charles followed by Dundas.

Spring 2019

September 1 – 9: Helena and Aurora, followed by Jilbadji.

September 2 – 6: Transline, possibly extended to Naretha Bore.

These areas are remote and surveyors need to be fully equipped with 4 x 4 vehicles, all camping gear and capable of carrying food, water and fuel for the trip; and be competent to identify the birds likely to be encountered.

Further information: gww@birdlife.org.au.

Lorraine and Libby
GWW Volunteer Coordinators.

Donations to BirdLife Western Australia

The Western Australian Branch is aiming to be in the financial position to support conservation work through projects, particularly aimed at threatened species. With the decline in government funding, support for this work through donations and bequests is one way this aim can be realised in the future.

Tax deductible donations specifically for BirdLife Western Australia can be made to BirdLife Western Australia through our office at Peregrine House. A tax deductible receipt will be issued.

If the donation is being made as a direct deposit in the BirdLife Western Australia bank account, it is important to signify who it is from and that it is specifically for BirdLife Western Australia. Donations will then be held in a separate account so that they can be accounted for through the national office each year in accordance with the Federal Taxation Department requirements.

Such donations, unless specified by the donor for a particular purpose, will be used to assist in meeting the objectives of the organisation.

If you have decided to make a lasting legacy to BirdLife Australia in your Will, contact Bequests Officer, BirdLife Australia for a confidential discussion on your options, including any specific requests (e.g. support for black cockatoos in WA).

**Viv Read
Chair**

Great Cocky Count registrations are open!

This year the GCC is on Sunday 7 April. For the uninitiated the GCC is a south-west WA wide event which happens on a single night. We count three taxa: Carnaby's, Baudin's and Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos. 2019 will be the tenth consecutive count. No experience is necessary and we should be able to allocate you a roost near to your home.

Registrations close on March 17. Follow the link below to register.

2019 Great Cocky Count Registration Form
<https://tinyurl.com/y52rue7c>

The Great Cocky Count (GCC) is on Sunday April 7 at sunset (approximately 5.30-6.30pm in Perth). Please be aware registrations closes in 2 weeks.

New WA members

The following WA people joined BirdLife Australia during the period 7 November 2018 to 31 January 2019:

J Abuso, G Allen, A Anderson, G Ansell, I Barnes, A Bewsher, G Blake, A France, L Frizelle, J Guenther, S Guy, K Hastings, J Johnson, T Klessens, D Lawrence, D Lovell, T McNamee, G Scanlan, J Sirr, L Skinner, C Townsend, J Townsend, P Walkaden and C Wilson

Experience the Great Southern Outback Wilderness Like Never Before...



- ▶ Participate in a series of 4WD escorted private day and overnight tours to a variety of outback locations in the Ongerup-Boxwood Hill areas
- ▶ Optional overnight stay and dinner in Ongerup visiting "Gondwana Link" properties and experiencing the local Noongar indigenous meeting place. Next day visiting the Ongerup Museum and Wildflower Centre for morning tea with a visit to a local farming property to view nature at its best followed by lunch at the magnificent Yongergnow Malleefowl Centre in Ongerup to see the Malleefowl sanctuary
- ▶ Includes visiting the Wellstead CRC for morning tea, exploring the amazing Stirling Ranges and Bluff Knoll then proceeding to Ironwood winery in the Porongurup Ranges to meet Mary and Gene for wine tastings and afternoon tea
- ▶ Learn about the natural and cultural aesthetics of country with the diverse array of stunning landscapes and meeting local people
- ▶ Discover a range of amazing locations viewing wildflowers, vegetation restoration and re-establishing local species of wildlife such as malleefowl, tamar wallabies, pygmy possums and many more.

Express your interest or find out more all bookings via Wayne Monks on wmonks@westnet.com.au or 0499 113 193.

(Conditions Apply*).

Tours depart Albany (Kinjarling) between Monday-Friday.

Discover, Explore and Experience the Woodlands, Rocks and Trails Outback Wilderness...

Participate in 4WD escorted private 9 day tours along the "Holland Track and Holland Way" from Albany via Broomehill and Hyden to Bailey's Reward at the "Old Camp" (Coolgardie), the "Golden Mile" and the "Dundas and Norseman Goldfields".

Tours Include:

- ✓ Commemorative meals, camping under the stars and short stay chalet accommodation after a well earned "Aussie Sundowner" at a scenic location
- ✓ Indigenous culture with the Ngadjju Rangers and the "Emu Dance" around the campfire
- ✓ The rugged and seemingly endless "Great Western Woodlands" and climbing huge granitic outcrops and water catchments
- ✓ View remnant bushland reserves in the wheatbelt, wildflowers at their peak and wildlife spotting
- ✓ Wood lines constructed for timber (sandalwood oil and eucalyptus) harvesting
- ✓ Mining history from the 1890's and Kambalda - centre of the 1960's nickel boom
- ✓ The Australian Malleefowl Centre at Ongerup with a country lunch followed by tastings and afternoon tea at Ironwood winery in the Porongurup Range.

Express your interest or find out more all bookings via Wayne Monks on wmonks@westnet.com.au or 0499 113 193.
(Conditions Apply*). Tours depart Albany (Kinjarling) monthly from April-October.



Our Facilities

Enjoy our country style hospitality with tea and coffee making facilities, bar fridge and television with our country breakfast to your choosing. Additional services include evening meals either dining in private or sharing with us at our family table. Gourmet cheese platters, local wines, olives and Kalgan harvest produce also available (upon request).

Day Tours and Function Centre For Hire

We also offer day tours of the Gondwana Link sites and local farms, with lunch at the Australian Malleefowl Centre in Ongerup returning via the Stirling Ranges with wine tasting and afternoon tea at a selected Porongurup winery. To request a tour speak to your hosts.

We also have the outdoor entertaining area available for hire for private functions - weddings, anniversaries or birthdays!

Local Attractions

There are extensive tourist attractions available to you within the Albany region, such as:

- York Street and Stirling Terrace
- National Anzac Centre
- Middleton Beach
- Emu Point Boat Harbour and Beach
- Discovery Bay (Frenchman's Bay)
- The Gap
- Whale Watching (seasonal)
- Truly local first-class cellar door and restaurant within 5-10 minutes
- Spectacular Castle Rock Skywalk and adjacent Castle Rock Winery

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Regional Groups

ALBANY GROUP

Excursion reports

Cranbrook area: 13 November 2018

The plan for the day had been to visit the property of the late Frank Smith west of Cranbrook, but like the best laid plans things turned out a bit differently. We stopped at a patch of bushland west of the Frankland - Cranbrook / Boyup Brook - Cranbrook Road junction which offered us plenty of good sightings including Sacred Kingfisher, Regent Parrot, Rufous Whistler and Western Yellow Robin. However, after taking what we thought was a shortcut to the farm we suddenly found ourselves facing a road closed sign and decided to try our luck elsewhere. From a bridge crossing the Gordon River we spotted a Hardhead and at Rock Hole Dam Nature Reserve (didn't find a dam) we saw Spotted Pardalote and Scarlet Robin. Lunch at the Warrenup Nature Reserve added Rufous Treecreeper and Rainbow Bee-eater to the list. We then continued on to Tonebridge where many of us had our first encounter with Western Corella. The following two days we spent at Perup Nature's Guesthouse. While birds were a bit too thin on the ground to recommend it as a birding retreat, it was a wonderful place to relax and meet the possums.

Lake Powell / Torbay Hall, 11 December 2018

We started the excursion at Lake Powell with birds ominously silent along the track by the drain and things didn't get any better. The path to the bird hide was badly overgrown and once we reached the hide itself, we discovered that the reeds in front of it had grown so tall that it was impossible to actually see the lake. A climb up a tree afforded views of the lake, but no birds apart from a few distant ducks and grebes. The local Parks and Wildlife Service had been alerted and will hopefully soon clean up the access path and the area around the bird hide. En route to Torbay Hall we stopped briefly at the bridge crossing Unndiyup Creek and saw Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Some of the bush near Torbay Hall was burnt not too long ago, but we were still able to see the usual array of bushbirds. The highlight was no doubt spotting an Australian Owlet-nightjar in its hollow.

Lake Seppings / Emu Point, 22 January 2019

Summer had decided to take a break and we started our walk at Lake Seppings in drizzly conditions. This was obviously the kind of weather a duck would enjoy and we saw plenty of waterfowl. Blue-billed Ducks were quite close and so was a Great Crested Grebe. At the causeway end of the lake, we had the opportunity to compare three different cormorant species and saw Australasian Shoveler. With water levels still relatively high there was no exposed mud, so Spotless Crake was only heard rather than seen. At our morning tea break at Eyre Park we were alerted by calls to a single Little Corella. In recent months sightings of this species around Albany have increased. As the weather was not improving and the group had dwindled down to only four, we abandoned plans to visit Rushy Point and went to nearby Emu Point to check the mudflats there for shorebirds. As had been the case for most of this summer, the tide was a mile out. Only a few Red-capped Plovers and Red-necked Stints were present.

Future outings

Excursions will take place on Tuesday, 12 March, 9 April, 14 May and 11 June. More details about destinations, where to meet etc. will be made available on BWA e-news. You can also check the Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home>

and Facebook page. Excursion leader will be Anne Bondin (albanybirds@hotmail.com). Feel free to contact the branch for further information.

South Coast Festival of Birds and Biodiversity

In March, BirdLife will again partner with GreenSkills and take part in the South Coast Festival of Birds with a wide variety of bird-related activities on offer throughout the month. These include photographic exhibitions, bird walks, a two-day bird identification workshop, a wildlife photography workshop run by Georgina Steytler, a threatened species habitat visit and a symposium. For more details and how to register for events please check the festival website: <https://birdfestival.greenskills.org.au/>.

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CAPE TO CAPE GROUP

Program

Sunday 31 March: Redgate Beach North, Half-day excursion

Meet at 8.30 am at the Redgate Beach car park. Bring morning tea and chair.

This excursion is part of the CAPE TO CAPE TRACK BIRDBLITZ 2019.

Leaders: Rachel Kerr and Jennifer Smith

All excursions are for BirdLife Australia members and the general public. For details of any of the above, please contact:

Christine Wilder cwilderone@yahoo.com.au
or Boyd Wykes majyx@iinet.net.au

Excursion reports

Busselton Wetlands, 17 November 2018

Birders wandered the streets of Busselton in sheer enjoyment searching for birds on the vacant block and typha-fringed tracks. A total of 56 species was recorded in the block from the rear of Rotary Park to Ford Road. Honeyeaters were scarce and not a single Australian Ringneck or Black Swan in sight. The adult Banded Lapwings and their two offspring were present on the vacant block. Behind Rotary Park, a Pacific Black Duck and five young chicks relaxed in the sun, with a White-necked Heron and an obliging Nankeen Night-Heron amongst spoonbills, swamphens, ducks and ibis.

Bird numbers at the Vasse River Delta Bird Hide can vary and on this visit, there were ducks of various species, mainly around 500 Grey Teal. Yellow-billed Spoonbills and White-necked Herons put on a show balancing on the melaleucas. Little Grassbirds were heard, one near Carey Street and the other at Ford Road. Likewise, Australian Reed-Warblers were close but remained well hidden with their loud, easily recognisable calls heard at Carey Street and Ford Road. There were unconfirmed sightings of an Australian Hobby, Brown Goshawk, Chestnut Teal and Buff-banded Rail and other species seen earlier in the day were Galah, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Grey Butcherbird.

Birders Get-together at Glenbrooke Country Retreat, Margaret River, 8/9 December 2018

Eighteen gathered for the end of year get-together at Glenbrook Country Retreat. Afternoon tea was followed by a late afternoon bird walk along a mosaic of walk trails in the well-managed forest. A pair of Buff-banded Rail with a small chick was seen crossing the track by the creek. Some stayed on for a barbecue and a nocturnal walk, hearing an Australian Owlet-nightjar calling its soft contact call, seeing a Red Wattlebird sleeping very soundly and spotlighting a number of possums (both species). A few participants camped overnight. Thirty-seven bird species were recorded in between cups of tea and glasses of wine.

Thanks to Jason, campground manager, for his attention to detail and the new gas barbecue, Terry Scott for providing a generator to boil the billy and Betty, John and Cherie for allowing us to explore their beautiful property.

Capel/Wonnerup wetlands, 19 January 2019

Mid-summer is a tricky time to predict in advance where water and birds will be. Christine Taylor (DBCA) counted 26 000 birds around Busselton wetlands on 16 January and John Graff (BirdLife sightings co-ordinator) counted more than 20 000 birds on 18 January. Aware that no water had been released into the Stirling Wetlands, and it was dry, I checked out wetlands from Busselton to Capel in the week prior to the excursion. Gillian Richmond joined me on 16 January to explore the wetlands in Busselton. The shorebird/waterbird tally was not high at most locations. On 18 January, Gillian joined me at a stretch of water at Wonnerup Estuary where thousands of birds were feeding and roosting. We took a series of photographs to estimate numbers, which was later tallied up to a conservative number of 8000-10000 birds, mainly thousands of roosting ducks, Banded and Pied Stilts and a few Red-capped Plovers closer to us on the mud.

On the excursion day, 18 of us (including BirdLife Bunbury Group and others from Perth and Kojonup) met at Capel and travelled to Wonnerup. A conservative tally of 5000-8000 birds was made, despite the water having receded even more overnight. A count was not undertaken. The main bird species present were large numbers of Red-necked Avocets, thousands of Banded and Pied Stilts and several species of ducks—a small species list of 34 but a spectacular number of birds. After the excursion, Gillian took some of the group to Webster Road where Pied Stilt, Rainbow Bee-eater, Australasian Pipit, Elegant Parrot, Welcome Swallow, Magpie-lark and Willie Wagtail were seen.

Sue Kalab won a bottle of wine for positively identifying the only two Common Greenshanks seen feeding way on the other side of the estuary. It was great to meet up with members of BirdLife Bunbury Group and others who ventured further from home. Thanks to Mike Sayers and Gillian Richmond for assisting with convoy and 'reccies'.

Christine Wilder



Pacific Black Duck, Carine. Photo by Caroline Mynott (see report, p48)

Excursion reports

LAKE LESCHENAULTIA, 6 OCTOBER 2018

Twenty-seven members and visitors gathered at Lake Leschenaultia to follow a 6 km track, partly beside the lake and partly in the bush, through Jarrah, Marri and Wandoo woodland. The group was fortunate to see three cuckoo species: Shining Bronze, Pallid and Fan-tailed. Musk Duck, Australian Wood Duck and Pacific Black Duck were seen during the excursion. Three raptor species (Square-tailed Kite, Swamp Harrier and Wedge-tailed Eagle) were seen.

Of the honeyeaters, five species were present: Western Spinebill, Red Wattlebird, Brown Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater and Western White-naped (Gilbert's) Honeyeater. Smaller bushbirds included Splendid Fairy-wren, Weebill, Western Gerygone, Yellow-rumped and Western Thornbills and Striated Pardalote.

The total species count was 46, which was once again slightly up on the previous year, an encouraging trend.

Charles Merriam

ASCOT WATERS, 4 NOVEMBER 2018

It was a beautiful morning to be out and many others thought so too. There were two people flying drones, a peloton of bike riders and many dog walkers but none of these made any difference to the 21 birdwatchers. We started well with Rainbow Bee-eater, White-winged Triller, Rufous Whistler and White-cheeked Honeyeater. We saw six duck species, four of which had unfledged young and as we walked around we kept adding species. Brown Goshawk, Buff-banded Rail, Little Grassbird were common, Pied Stilt, Australian Pelican, Great Egret and White-faced Heron. We found an Australasian Pipit on our second attempt in recently mown grass.



Oriental Honey-Buzzard, Lake Joondalup. Photo by Caroline Mynott (see also p8)

The Osprey flew over just as we were leaving the car park for morning tea near the boat moorings. We then added Australasian Grebe, Australian Shelduck, Grey Fantail and Nankeen Night-heron bringing the final count to 54 species.

Sue Abbotts

LAKE JOONDALUP, 10 NOVEMBER 2018

Twenty members arrived in mild and partly cloudy conditions for the excursion along parts of this large metropolitan lake. Heavy rainfall over the winter months had caused the water levels of many lakes around Perth to be abnormally high and Lake Joondalup is no exception with levels higher than anyone can remember. Consequently, there were no waders to be seen and some tracks which are usually included in this walk were inaccessible.

Nine waterfowl species, all three of the grebes and three raptors were seen with one being a White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Five species were noted as breeding with one of them, the Australian Reed-Warbler affording some great views from the jetty; however, several species which co-leader Nigel Sutherland had seen when doing most of the reconnaissance work on this walk, decided not to show up. Any leader can attest to the fact that this is not an unusual occurrence!

Morning tea was rain delayed when a short sharp thunderstorm hit the area. Afterwards some of the group drove on to Picnic Cove where we managed a few additions to the final tally which came to 55. A couple of interesting observations were made here too, one being a leucistic Eurasian Coot, the other an adult Eurasian Coot either adding to or building a new nest which contained a fairly young chick. The chick was watching the process intently and even joining in and giving the adult a helping hand! 'Teach 'em while they're young' has always been a good strategy.

Many thanks must go to Nigel Sutherland for co-leading and to Wayne Merritt for imparting some of his local knowledge of the area.

Peter White

PELICAN POINT, 18 NOVEMBER 2018

A group of 16 birdwatchers met at Pelican Point on a rather windy morning. Of the shorebirds, there were views of Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt and Red-capped Plover. There were Fairy, Caspian and Crested Terns on the beach and in the air.

The only raptor seen during the excursion was Osprey.

The bird of the day was a Brown Songlark, as this species does not seem to have been recorded previously at this site. Our total for the morning's birdwatching was 25 species, the number reduced by the blustery conditions.

Charles Merriam

ASHFIELD FLATS, BASSENDEAN, 25 NOVEMBER 2018

Fourteen members and two guests attended the excursion in sunny mild conditions (see photo p59). This venue has a wide range of contrasting habitats with tall trees, medium bush, several areas of wetland and the Swan River. Consequently a good variety of species was seen with a fairly even mix of water related birds and bushbirds. Some excellent views were had of three species in particular, giving the photographers amongst us some great opportunities. A pair of Buff-banded Rail was quite content to hang around in full view for an extended period of time as was a brilliantly coloured male Mistletoebird. Later on in the walk a male Splendid Fairy-wren appeared and stayed long enough for some very good viewing and a few photos for those who were quick. He was a good looking guy and well he knew it!

With the help of a late fly-by of a Caspian Tern at morning tea, we ended with up with 51 species. A few recently joined members had some new and enjoyable birding experiences.

Peter White

PONY CLUB WALK, HERDSMAN LAKE, 1 DECEMBER 2018

On the first day of summer, 28 people had a very cool start to their walk. A couple of new members and a guest were ably assisted by more experienced birders. Many thanks to Andrew Hobbs for bringing his telescope and sharing the sightings and his knowledge with us.

The water levels in the lake remain high and there was a limited number of six duck species seen. Black Swans had cygnets. Australian Wood Ducks and Dusky Moorhens also had young. Swamp Harriers and Whistling Kites were often seen flying over the Typha and a Brown Goshawk was seen once. The Rainbow Bee-eaters were present despite the cloudy weather. Tree Martins and Welcome Swallows were also seen as were the other Rainbows Lorikeets.

Australian White Ibis were present in their hundreds as they constantly flew in and out of their breeding grounds in the Typha. The young were so obvious as they were the only clean ibis we saw. One roosting ibis caused interest as it had blue markings on its front from where it had been foraging.

A Great Cormorant entertained us for a while as it was seen, and photographed, swallowing a very large fish. The progress of the large lump in its neck was watched with interest. Many Little Black Cormorants were seen, but only one Little Pied Cormorant.

Bushbirds were seen and heard in the trees near the Settler's Cottage and the drain. A few people were able to record a new sighting with a Buff-banded Rail and then a short time later a Wood Sandpiper. Pied Stilts had young which we were able to compare with the Wood Sandpiper, thanks to the telescope and bearer.

Great pleasure was had by watchers and photographers alike on our way back to the car park when we found Great Crested Grebe chicks riding on a parent's back. We saw 56 species on the walk.

Claire Gerrish



Great Cormorant having its breakfast, Herdsman Lake. Photo by Chris Beebe

WALYUNGA NATIONAL PARK, SWAN, 8 DECEMBER 2018

Twenty-seven of us were fortunate enough to enjoy a warm, sunny morning of birdwatching in Walyunga. While the Avon was still running, the water level was low. However, there was still enough water for many ducks and waterbirds. In addition, the vegetation in the park provided good cover for bushbirds, though it was obvious that the area was drying after a poor November rainfall.

Much of the walk followed the river so we were able to find several ducks such as Pacific Black Duck, Australian Wood Duck, Hardhead, Grey Teal and Australian Shelduck. There were also several White-faced Herons,

Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants. We picked up most of the bushbirds seen on that section of the walk. One observant member saw a Mistletoebird while most of us picked up the two robins—Red-capped and Scarlet Robins. There were few flowering plants which may be the reason why the only honeyeaters seen were Brown and Singing Honeyeaters. However, it was wonderful to see and hear many Rufous Whistlers and Grey Shrike-thrushes along with Western Gerygones and Weebills. When we turned from the river to go up the hill and return, we continued to find the same bushbirds but finally spotted the only two raptors of the day—a Wedge-tailed Eagle being harassed by a Brown Goshawk.

We ended up in the picnic area for bird call and a well-earned morning tea. The count came to 45 species and this was very much due to Clive Nealon's knowledge of the area. We wish to thank him as leader and look forward to another trip next year.

Jill Hobbs

KINGS PARK, 9 DECEMBER 2018

This was a short walk prior to the BirdLife WA Christmas party. Twelve of us gathered at the party venue before walking along the paths to the Botanic Gardens and back. It was warm and sunny so there were not many birds but we did see 25 species, mostly bushbirds. The latter included Rainbow Bee-eater, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Brown Goshawk, but the highlight was a flock of Varied Sittellas and we spent some time admiring their antics. (see also p11)

Jill and Andrew Hobbs



Ruddy Turnstone, Woodman Point. Photo by Ian Wallace

PHOTOGROUP EXCURSION, WOODMAN POINT, 9 DECEMBER 2018

A small group gathered early on a lovely morning and after photographing Nankeen Kestrel hunting near the car park, we proceeded to the point. We saw and photographed all the usual waterbirds as well as a small number of waders, including Great Knot and Grey Plover. The highlight was a group of very obliging Ruddy Turnstone which approached very closely, resulting in great photos. Participants were able to leave in time to attend the BWA Christmas barbeque if they wished.

Ian Wallace

on the day before. Nothing very exciting was spotted but a total of 48 species was reported over morning tea in a shady spot outside the gym.

Nick Cook, Coordinator of the Friends of Lake Claremont, gave us some interesting information about the lake's population of oblong (long-necked) turtles.

David Free

LAKE CLAREMONT, 16 DECEMBER 2018

Seventeen members and five guests arrived at Lake Claremont in time to join me for the seven-thirty start. The day was warm and sunny with some breeze.

Lake Claremont normally dries completely in the summer. Heavy rain in January meant that this year the lake didn't dry, and the high water temperature produced ideal conditions for avian botulism. In early autumn we lost over 300 birds, mostly waterfowl. Good winter rains then filled the lake to the highest level seen in many years, and on the morning of our walk the water level was much higher than usual in mid-December. Waterfowl numbers have now mostly returned to normal, except for the Grey Teal. On our walk we saw seven duck species, including both Hardhead and Blue-billed Ducks with young in attendance. These two species do not normally breed in this shallow lake. The only waders spotted were Pied Stilts, Red-necked Avocets and a solitary Black-fronted Dotterel.

No crakes were seen but we were lucky enough to observe the Buff-banded Rail.

Unfortunately, we missed out on a Southern Boobook family that I had seen



Tree Martin, Lake Claremont. Photo by David Free (see also p2)

LAKE MCLARTY, 30 DECEMBER 2018

It was a beautiful, sunny day for the walk at Lake McLarty, attended by 29 people and led by Sue Abbotts. We were met by Bob Paterson, from Peel Harvey BirdLife, who gave us some information about the condition of Lake McLarty, and told us of the recent acquisition of adjoining paddocks by the DBCA (Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions). The water level was noted to be very high.

Raptors were well represented with Whistling Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Brown Goshawk, Nankeen Kestrel,

Australian Hobby and an Osprey with two young in a nest. We were delighted to see the two Masked Lapwings that had been seen a few days before. There was a bit of discussion about them being the same birds that were at Yanchep National Park. Sadly, no trans-equatorial waders were seen, but the abundance of waterbirds made up for it.

After morning tea, we went to South Yunderup (Austin Bay) where nine bird species were added to the list, including Red-necked Stint, Red-capped Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Little Egret and Caspian Tern. We waded through the mud in search of waders!

A total of 70 bird species were seen, with 61 at Lake McLarty and 33 at South Yunderup. A big thank you for Sue for leading the walk.

Benjamin Hicks

WATERFORD FORESHORE. SALTER POINT, 2 AND 6 JANUARY 2019

With the large number attending this excursion in the last two years, we decided to provide two dates for the Waterford excursion. And what a difference a few days and a low tide makes!

On Wednesday, a cool morning and high tide, the Canning River provided a nice selection of waterbirds including the usual three species of cormorants and on this occasion four tern species. Fairy Terns, not usually seen, were seen diving for fish. The resident male Blue-billed Duck obliged, emerging from the reeds in the pond at Cygnia Cove and a Buff-banded Rail was seen nearby while a large number of Musk Ducks 'pinged' in the adjacent cove of the river. A Sacred Kingfisher posed for some of the group and an Osprey was seen on the river shore along with Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos flying over the river. The Osprey pair had deserted their riverside nest and now breed on a mobile transmitter tower within Curtin University grounds along Manning Road. After morning tea some birders were up to a quick visit to Salter Point Lagoon where we added Caspian Tern and the bird of the day—an Australian Spotted Crake. It circled a clump of reeds at the inlet to the lagoon, providing us with very good views.

Sunday morning birding began with an Australian Hobby on a tree in the playing fields by Elderfield Road. With the tide out there was a large area of mud attracting Australian White Ibis, White-faced Heron, Great Egret and Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Aside from Caspian Tern seen through the scope at Salter Point, Crested and Fairy Terns and Great Cormorant were not present. At the jetty the Sacred Kingfisher gave another nice display and at the Cygnia Cove stream outlet Hardhead rested on a mud bank. This species is not usually



Australian Spotted Crake, Salter Point, Waterford. Photo by Andrew Hobbs

seen in this area. A female Brown Goshawk flew among the trees and two Ospreys were seen, one harassing the other for the fish held in its claws. Annoyingly, the Blue-billed Duck was unseen. Chris caught sight of Variegated Fairy-wren and proved it with a picture. Fairy-wrens are rarely seen along the Waterford foreshore and must be the sighting of the day. With the heat no-one had the energy to visit Salter Point Lagoon but all were pleased with the count of 61 birds. (Sorry folks, I forgot to tick Australian Magpie at the bird count).

The combined species list of the two days was 69, four more than each of the previous two years. We are seeing fewer parrot/cockatoo species with infrequent sightings of Australian Ringneck.

Wednesday, 2 January 2019

18 birders, max temp 23.8, tide medium high, count 57 with 2 added Salter Point Lagoon

Sunday, 6 January

22 birders, max temp 36.4 tide very low, count 61 without Salter Point Lagoon

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CARINE OPEN SPACE, 12 JANUARY

It was a beautiful, sunny morning for the 34 participants who attended the BirdLife excursion at Carine Open Space.

Waterfowl were well represented with ten species seen including Pink-eared Duck, Musk Duck with one duckling and Blue-billed Duck with several ducklings. (see photos, pp43,55,60)

The only honeyeater family species seen were Singing Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, Brown Honeyeater and New Holland Honeyeater.

The highlights of the walk were two pairs of Tawny Frogmouths, and a Sacred Kingfisher that sat on a dead branch long enough for everyone to get a good view of it.

Sixty-one species were seen including a last minute Brown Goshawk that flew over the car park when most people had left.

Thank you, Clive Nealon, for leading the walk.

Benjamin Hicks

BAIGUP WETLANDS, 17 JANUARY

Twenty-five BirdLife members, local residents and other interested people enjoyed a rewarding walk through Baigup Wetlands on a pleasantly mild morning. Rick Curtis and I split the group to reduce the number of birders at any given time on the sometimes hazardous sealed walkway/cycle path. At Bird Call it was realised that we had identified a total of 61 species in and over Baigup and on the adjacent stretch of the Swan River—a record for this site. Highlights included Osprey soaring overhead, nesting Grey Fantail, a good (though brief) view of Spotless Crake, Dusky Moorhen with still-fluffy young, a Buff-banded Rail foraging nearby, Rainbow Bee-eater pairs, Sacred Kingfisher, and Mistletoebird. The only other raptor was a Brown Goshawk. Fleeting glimpses of both Purple-backed (aka Variegated) and Splendid Fairy-wren, White-cheeked Honeyeater, and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo were had by some, along with good sightings of a Yellow-billed Spoonbill, a bird which had not been seen as often at Baigup in recent months as previously. A currently resident Australian Pelican on the Secondary (western) Lake was a delight to watch as it fed, although what it might be catching remains a mystery. Pacific Black Duck were abundant as usual, with Grey Teal, Blue-billed Duck, Australian Wood Duck and Hardhead also seen. An extremely vociferous Australian Reed Warbler frustrated one group until it came out into the open in its characteristic calling pose for long enough to delight those watching a short distance away.

On a sad note, participants were told of the large number of hooked and line-entangled birds currently being rescued (or often found dead) by the Western Australian Seabird Rescue group. An Australasian Darter seen near Garratt Road Bridge a few days earlier with a hook through its beak had fortunately been captured to remove the hook. Anyone seeing birds in need of help is urged to ring Wildlife Helpline 9474 9055 which has also produced a handy card providing guidance to fishers about what to do if they inadvertently hook a bird or turtle.

Penny Lee

Please report entangled wildlife



To minimise harm to wildlife:

- Do not feed wildlife – especially near fishers
- When fishing, do not cast near wildlife

If fishing and you hook a bird or turtle:

- Do not cut the line. Reel it in carefully
- Protect your eyes as birds may lunge in defence
- Grab the beak, cover its eyes & fold the wings
- Cut the hook & untangle the line
- If uninjured, release it carefully

For help call the Wildcare Helpline 9474 9055

LAKE RICHMOND, 19 JANUARY

With a temperature forecast to be just under 40°C, I was pleasantly surprised by the turnout of 25 birders on my maiden 'excursion-leader' outing. Water levels had dropped enough to offer a good viewing of waterbirds and some waders, mostly around the board-walk over the thrombolites, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Little Egret, Common Greenshank and Pied Stilt.

Among the swimmers we had Hardhead, Pacific Black Duck, Australian Shelduck, Musk Duck, Grey Teal, Australasian Grebe and Hoary-headed Grebe.

The raptors were represented by the Whistling Kite, Osprey and Swamp Harrier.

Some of the other usuals were the Australian Pelican, Eurasian Coot, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Spotted and Laughing Doves, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Red Wattlebird, Willie Wagtail and Silvereye, the last hard to miss as it was present in large numbers.

Australian Reed-Warbler, Little Grassbird and Nankeen Night-Heron were also spotted along the way.

The walk was completed in just over two hours and it was approximately 3 km to circumnavigate the lake. The temperature was still in the pleasant high twenties, (37°C at time of writing).

A total of 53 species was the final count. Thanks to all who attended for making my first excursion as leader an enjoyable and stress-free one.

Chris Van Haeften



White-breasted Robin, Castle Rock, Porongurups. Photo by Maris Lauva (see also p59)

We walked down to a paddock surrounded by eucalypts, hoping to see the feral population of European Goldfinches. Some lucky observers managed to catch a brief view of several goldfinches as they flew off into the distance. Other birds of interest seen here were Sacred Kingfisher, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, White-fronted Chat, White-winged Triller, Australasian Pipit, and Black-faced Woodswallow.

Throughout the walk we frequently saw Whistling Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Nankeen Kestrel.

After morning tea, some participants explored a bushland area just outside the Nambelup Settling Ponds. Here we added eight species to the list including Inland Thornbill, Western Spinebill and Little Eagle. The total count for the day was 53 species, a respectable total. (see photo, p59)

Thank you, Sue Abbotts, Bob Paterson and Bill Russell for leading the walk.

Benjamin Hicks

MOUNT BARKER, AUSTRALIA DAY CAMPOUT, 26-28 JANUARY

Thirty-two people including the leaders is a large group. That we efficiently got around to several excellent sites over the course of the long weekend attests to the good planning and leadership displayed by Jill and Andrew Hobbs.

Centred largely on the Porongurups, by Monday morning the group had seen 108 species of birds (plus the odd possum and antechinus). The weather was kind and as we were mostly walking through forest and we had plenty of shade as it warmed. White-breasted Robins were at most locations, often in numbers. The (newly split by some) Spotted Scrubwrens (White-browed Scrubwren) were being seen everywhere. Crimson Rosellas and Spotted Pardalotes were abundant, including in the caravan park. At Castle Rock, the Red-winged Fairy-wrens were playing around our feet. Most people saw Gilbert's Honeyeaters (White-naped Honeyeater) close up. Jill and Andrew chose locations where the group did not have to move as a gaggle so people were able to head in a direction that interested them.

Dinner at the Mt Barker Hotel on Saturday night was a happy and welcome social occasion. John Delaporte was the optimist who guessed the correct number of birds seen.

Maris Lauva

NAMBEELUP SETTLING PONDS, 3 FEBRUARY

With 20 people plus three leaders, we car-pooled into the Nambelup Settling Ponds. We were delighted to see nine shorebird species including Long-toed Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper and Red-kneed Dotterel. It was great to see the plumage difference between Red-necked Stint and the Long-toed Stint and the size comparison between the larger Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and the smaller Long-toed Stint.

MONDAY 4 FEBRUARY: BLACKWALL REACH, BICTON

As we grouped just prior to 7:30 am at the little beach at Kent Street, we were favoured with the appearance of three dolphins busy chasing fish and providing quite a bit of action. The bird list started immediately with a range of familiar birds. Being low tide, we were able to proceed along the shoreline right up to the spit, adding a new dimension to the walk. Along the way, we saw the three cormorant species common to the estuary as well as Australian Pelican, Black Swan, Fairy Tern and White-faced Heron and close by, a Sacred Kingfisher. At the spit, an Australian Hobby gave a serious aerial display. It is thought a Welcome Swallow was its target. Australian Pied Oystercatchers were intent on feeding and were accompanied by Crested Terns, Silver Gulls and Pacific Black Ducks. Due to the low tide, walking on the spit was easy and we were able to reach the special fenced off area for the Fairy Terns. Here Red-capped Plover dominated and with careful scanning Red-necked Stint were seen in their company. The Osprey was hunkered down next to the "Keep Out" sign. Returning to the car park area, the Nankeen Night-Heron was perched asleep high in the Norfolk Island Pine where the Australian Hobby had settled.

Back at Kent Street, while we were doing the bird call, to our delight, five dolphins swam by. Back on task—we recorded 40 species on our excursion and 21 people enjoyed the river environment.

**Lynley Davey and Jenny Sumpton
(Group Leaders)**

Observatory reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY

After January downpours brought relief to sticky Broome and flooded our access road, a changing of the observatory wardens seemed to bring a break in the rain. We have so far had a dry February, and the puddles are dwindling. The shorebirds that spend the wet season here remain in impressive numbers though, with some, in particular the Greater Sand Plovers, starting to moult into stunning breeding plumage. This is a wonderful sight against the red pindan and turquoise waters, and will only improve as more species colour up before their spectacular migration begins in March.

The wet season has brought other migrants too, with flocks of around 100 Eastern Yellow Wagtails recorded early in January, while parties of Oriental Pratincole passed overhead, presumably on their way to Eighty Mile Beach where there is now an enormous congregation of this species. We have enjoyed the cries and heavy wingbeats of Channel-billed Cuckoos overhead, while Brush Cuckoos remain largely heard and not seen, and an Oriental Cuckoo has been occasionally seen, and certainly not heard. Meanwhile many of our resident bushbirds, including Grey-



crowned Babbler, White-throated Gerygone and Magpie-lark, have been feeding nestlings and fledglings around the campsite. This has led to unusual sightings of Brown Goshawk way out in the bay, chased all the way by angry Magpie-lark parents.

And of course, there have been a few notable rarities: Garganey on the inland lakes of Roebuck Plains, a House Swift and *Aerodramus* swiftlet brought to Broome by Tropical Cyclone Riley (all found by previous warden Nigel Jackett), and most remarkably of all, a Fairy Pitta found by staff at Matso's Brewery.

As we begin our work as wardens, we'd like to thank our predecessors Nigel and Jaime Jackett. They have left the observatory in fantastic shape, and if we can carry on where they left off then 2019 should be a good year for the BBO. I've just been delayed in finishing this piece by the unexpected appearance of five Lesser Frigatebirds soaring on thermals over the pindan—what a place! Happy birding all.

BBO Wardens



(above left) Grey-crowned Babbler, Broome. Photo by Nyil Khwaja and (above right) Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Broome. Photo by Jane Taylor



(left) Whimbrel and (right) Black-tailed Godwit, Roebuck Bay, Broome. Photos by Chris Young



Observatory reports

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

In May 2018 on our initial visit to EBO, Mick and Di introduced us to 30+ Major Mitchell's Cockatoos. At the end of October Andrew and Sharon took us along Kanidal Beach where countless waders at Nine Mile jostled for shoreline space. In our first week at EBO we counted four Major Mitchell's each day and on our first beach run along Kanidal Beach, 15 species. Eighty-seven birds in total and if it hadn't been for the Red-capped Plovers our totals would have looked pretty lame. As novice birders we knew we'd struggle to identify birds but didn't expect we wouldn't actually see them. We have got better but the shorebird count has been less than we anticipated.

The birds around the house have kept us learning and on the ledger. Happily, we can say that in late December / early January, the Major Mitchell's have returned and they have been breeding. Upwards of 30 birds visit the bird baths every morning and evening and at least two young birds continue to be fed. Their announced arrivals and departures enable photographers and watchers to get into viewing positions.

Their hi-wire performances amuse adults and children alike. The low numbers didn't stop photographer Julie Powell from taking some superb photos of Major Mitchell's and Brush Bronzewing. Peter Smith took some great shots of honeyeaters from the bird-hide and happily shared his photos with EBO.

Our daily counts have been dominated by New Holland Honeyeater, Silvereye, Brush Bronzewing and the ever present Welcome Swallow and Tree Martin. A family of Australian Ravens took up residence at the north bird baths for a while. We were puzzled by the juvenile playing with and moving backyard shells. Who was rearranging them, and then we saw its antics. Singing and Brown Honeyeaters have been consistent honeyeaters at the bird baths. Spotted Pardalote was heard and seen until early January when a few have again been seen. Willie Wagtail has been an occasional visitor especially on hot days. Two Banded Lapwings made a surprise visit in late January.

On the various EBO walks, it has been common to hear and see White-browed Babbler, Weebill, White-browed Scrubwren, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Silvereye, Inland Thornbill, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Currawong, Grey Butcherbird and recently a juvenile Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Rainbow Bee-eaters have grown in numbers in January, and 21 were seen in one flock over the calcrete on a walk to the beach. Raptors have kept us searching the field guides, Australian Hobby near the Microwave Tower, Nankeen Kestrel across Blue Bush Plains, and around the house Collared



Sparrowhawk, Brown Falcon and Brown Goshawk. On one very special occasion, we witnessed a Wedge-tailed Eagle over Kanidal Beach catch a fish. The unconfirmed sighting of a juvenile Black-shouldered Kite is yet to be repeated.

January has been extremely hot and dry. Nine days over 30 degrees, with four of those over 40 degrees, and two of them over 48. The 2nd of January broke the EBO 2013 standing record of 47.7° when the mercury hit 48.5°. All the regular birds showed up, plus Brown-headed and White-eared Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebird, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren and even a Sacred Kingfisher came in for a drink. A surprise visitor was a Brown Goshawk that sat in the bird bath, glaring for well over an hour. Many of the birds suffered on those two hot days. As we kept the bird baths topped up, they watched us from between our feet, mouths open seeking cool air. None suffered more than the Nankeen Kestrels. On the day, we delighted in watching them dance on the shoreline in the wash of the waves.



Fledgling Nankeen Kestrels in cliffs, Eyre. Photo by Steve Edwards (see also p2)

Our weekly runs along Kanidal Beach and monthly extension to Twilight Cove have been eagerly awaited. Red-capped Plovers and their runners have been ever present, with up to 50 on Wader Beach. Regulars have been Red-necked Stint, Sanderling, Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Pacific Gull and juveniles. Nine Mile continues to throw up something of interest each week: Australian Pelican, Pied Cormorant, Grey Teal, Sooty Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, a small flock of Banded Stilt, Common

Sandpiper, Crested Tern and Silver Gull. White-bellied Sea-Eagle over the Baxter cliffs was special.

On the very hot 2 January, a small flock of Oriental Plover was seen on Kanidal Beach and surprisingly, a large penguin which is still to be identified, either a juvenile Fiordland or Southern Rock-hopper.

Andrew and Sharon introduced us to Nankeen Kestrel at the Doline. On our first trip with them, we saw what we thought were fledgling kestrels in the nest, and hiding in a tree, Mulga Parrot. Over the ensuing weeks we came to realise that what we had seen in the small rock cave nest, was the nesting kestrel adult, not the fledglings. We had the pleasure of watching the babies grow and eventually fly, although the parents always showed their displeasure at our presence. Another stroke of luck was finding a nesting Ground Cuckoo-shrike. Again, we watched the three youngsters become two and after four weeks, the abandoned nest. We only ever saw the rumps of Australian Ringnecks but we knew they were there on the Tower track. The arrival of hundreds of



Nankeen Kestrel cooling off in the ocean, Eyre. Photo by Steve Edwards

grasshoppers brought with them Australian Bustard strutting superciliously about Blue Bush Plains.

On one Friday we were surprised by 11 Banded Lapwings, on another a small flock of Black-faced Woodswallow feeding youngsters, and on one very windy north easterly Friday we came across several Galahs, heads into the wind hanging on for fear of being blown away to Esperance. We could have picked them off the branch. Magpie-larks in small numbers and Australian Magpies were always in family groups. We had one brief glimpse of a White-winged Fairy-wren. The ubiquitous Yellow-throated Miner count was usually around the 50+ mark. They display aggressive behaviours towards smaller birds such as Weebill and wrens so we hope they don't venture down the scarp.

Crystal Ponds sounds appealing but is not a good place for lunch. One week we saw three Brown Falcons, two teaching a young bird flight. In permanent occupancy is an Australian Spotted Crane. Other visitors have included Grey Teal, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint and one Red-kneed Dotterel.

Burnabbie is a birder's delight but for novice birders it can be frustrating at first. We grew to look forward to our visits to Burnabbie. Scrambling up the scarp from the ruins on one visit, gave us an appreciation of why, in 1931, the Carlyle brothers thought it would be good sheep country. The view from the scarp is stunning and gives the impression of open grassland with the natural barriers of the dunes and scarp. Shame they didn't consult the Aboriginal people about water. Visiting Burnabbie with Tegan Douglas was a learning experience. She pointed out how to identify, by sight and sound, White-eared, White-fronted, Yellow-plumed and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Golden Whistler, Rainbow Bee-eater, Inland Thornbill, Western Yellow Robin, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren and when the alarm calls went up, Wedge-tailed Eagle circling overhead.

Other wildlife of course include the hundreds of kangaroos on Blue Bush Plains, five camels, a sea lion on the way to Twilight Cove, dolphins, sting rays and large dead jelly fish

along Kanidal Beach, a rabbit near the 'vegie' patch and, drinking from the bird baths, a two metre black Dugite and smaller brown Dugite. A small but venomous Bardick snake was caught, photographed and observed by reptile enthusiasts. Other reptiles seen regularly have been bobtails, geckos, skinks, dragons and pygopus. A guest saw a cat on the beach. We've only ever seen footprints.

In late January we did a short beach run 2 km east of the Kanidal entrance to check on a lonely and injured Little Penguin we had seen on the 2nd. It was seen hunched over, wearing a large bite mark and damaged wing. We picked up seven dead and possibly drowned Nankeen Kestrels and saw a Dusky Woodswallow and two unidentified petrels. It was very, very hot on the 2nd.

Steve and Mandy Edwards



Penguin and plover on Kanidal Beach, Eyre. Photo by Steve Edwards



Australian Bustard, Eyre. Photo by Andrew Morgan

Coming events

Important note re campouts

Members anticipating attending campouts must notify the BirdLife WA Office (9383 7749) of the number in their party and when they will arrive.

If you are unsure, put your name down as you can always cancel.

An emergency contact number should also be provided in case of accident.

New members

Please let the leaders know that you are a new member and don't hesitate to ask for assistance with bird sightings.

Sunday 3 March: Lake Gwelup, Stirling **Half-day excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am in the car park at the corner of Stoneman Street and Huntriss Road, north of Karrinyup Road. We should see waterbirds and bushbirds, and raptors are often seen here. Lake Gwelup is within the Northern Swan Coastal Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Peter White

Saturday 9 March: Wellard Wetlands, Baldy **Half-day excursion**

Meet at 8:00 am at the entrance to Wellard Wetlands on the northern side of Bertenshaw Road, 1 km from St Albans Road. Coming from Perth, turn left off Kwinana Freeway into Mundijong Road, then right into St Albans Road and right into Bertenshaw Road. There should be plenty of bushbirds and waterbirds here, as well as several species of raptors.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Charles Merriam

Tuesday 12 March: Albany Group **excursion**

See p42 for more details.

You can also check the Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home>

and its Facebook page. Excursion leader will be Anne Bondin (albanybirds@hotmail.com).

Sunday 17 March: Garvey Park, Ascot **Half-day excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am in the car park, next to the rowing club, at the western end of Fauntleroy Avenue, off Great Eastern Highway. This area has a good variety of waterbirds and bushbirds. Species recorded here have included Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake and Mistletoebird.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 17 March: Photogroup activity, Leschenault Estuary, Bunbury **Full-day excursion**

Meet at 8.00am at Belvidere Campground. Turn west off Forrest Highway onto Buffalo Road and travel 6.8 km to the camp ground. You may choose to meet up with other people in the group and camp the night before. You must bring your own water as none is available at the campground. There are bush toilets provided. Don't forget your mosquito repellent. Fees are payable to Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Expect to see a variety of bushbirds, shorebirds and raptors. Splendid Fairy-wren, Inland Thornbill, Rufous Whistler, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, White-faced Heron, Black Swan, Little and Great Egrets, Pied Stilt, Red-capped Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Grey-tailed Tattler and Eastern Curlew have all been seen. Hobbies and kites, Osprey and White-bellied Sea-Eagles are often seen. A Eurasian Curlew has been seen recently.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Keith Wilcox

Thursday 21 March: Eric Singleton Bird Reserve, Bayswater **Half-day excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am in the car park on Bellevue Street. Travelling away from the city on Guildford Road, turn right at Garratt Road and then left at Williamson Street and right at Leake Street. Follow Leake Street until it terminates at the car park. We will walk around the main lake in the bird sanctuary and should see a variety of waterbirds.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Peter White

Friday 22 to Monday 25 March: Campout at Northcliffe

Believe it or not this will be our first ever campout in Northcliffe and we will be based at Sid's Campground, 4 km from the township. The campground is set amongst peppermints and surrounded

by Marri/Jarra/Karri forest and has a number of walk trails. It will be a very relaxed weekend with no rushing about or travelling long distances in convoys. The campout will commence at 5 pm on Friday 22 March and finish at lunchtime on Monday 25 March.

Amenities include hot showers, toilets and camp kitchen. Campfire restrictions apply. There are four powered caravan sites plus free range sites available. The cost per night is \$5 per adult.

ALL campground bookings will be on a 'first in' policy (for powered sites and free range sites) to be made with Christine Wilder - cwilderone@yahoo.com.au (not through the campground). Sites will not be specifically allocated as choice will depend on what sites are available when you arrive.

Numbers will be limited to 30, so those wishing to attend please call the BirdLife WA office on 08 9383 7749 to put your name, email/mobile, number of participants and whether caravan, camper trailer or tent, on the list as usual.

Further information will be emailed closer to the time.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Christine Wilder

Sunday 24 March: Bibra Lake, Cockburn **Half-day excursion**

Meet at 7:30 am in the first car park at the southern end of the lake off Progress Drive. This car park is between Hope Road and Gwilliam Drive. Bibra Lake is a part of the Beeliiar Wetlands chain and a large number of bushbirds and waterbirds can be seen here. Over 130 bird species have been recorded in this reserve. Bring water, hats, suitable footwear, etc.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Alan Watson

Monday 25 March: Bold Park Eco Centre, 165 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat **Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm**

Dr Saul Cowen from DBCA will be the guest speaker.

Saturday 30 March: Herdsman Lake, Stirling
Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am in the Maurice Hamer car park. Turn off Pearson Street into Falcon Avenue, then right into Lakeside Road. The car park is on the left, opposite Heron Place. This is one of the waterbird refuges which never dries up and 140 species have been recorded here. Bring your telescope if you have one.

For members and guests.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Sunday 31 March: Cape to Cape Regional Group excursion
Redgate Beach North, Half-day excursion

See report, page 43 for details.

Monday 1 to Thursday 4 April: Credo Station campout, Great Western Woodlands survey

See notice, p39, for details.

Sunday 7 April: Great Cocky Count

Reminder: Registrations close on 17 March for this south-west WA wide event which happens on a single night. Follow the link below to register.

[2019 Great Cocky Count Registration Form](https://tinyurl.com/y52rue7c)
<https://tinyurl.com/y52rue7c>

Sunday 7 April: Lancelin
Full day excursion

Lancelin is a coastal town 125 km north of Perth. Meet at Nilgen Lookout, 12 km north of the turnoff into Lancelin on Indian Ocean Drive. Meet at 8:00 am. There are toilets on the highway just past the Nilgen turnoff.

Nilgen Lookout is noted for its easy access to coastal heath where Rufous Fieldwren and Tawny-crowned Honeyeater are regularly seen.

We will then travel to Nilgen Bush, a pocket of inland bush that hosts a good variety of birds. Scarlet Robin, Western Corella, Little Eagle, White-backed Swallow, Western Thornbill and White-cheeked Honeyeater are all regularly seen here.

Finally, we will travel to the beach at Lancelin where gulls, terns and waders are regularly seen.

Bring morning tea and lunch. The ticks can be bad in the bush areas so bring repellent.

For members and general public.

Leaders: John Delaporte and Sue Abbotts

Tuesday 9 April: Albany Regional Group excursion

More details about destinations, where to meet etc. will be made available on BWA e-news. You can also check the Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home>

and Facebook page. Excursion leader will be Anne Bondin (albanybirds@hotmail.com). Feel free to contact the branch for further information.

Thursday 11 April: Tomato Lake, Kewdale
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am near the small tearooms at Tomato Lake off Oats Street, Kewdale. Travelling south along Orrong Road, turn left into Oats Street and about 800 m on the right there is a driveway into the parking area. Bring morning tea.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Ian Wallace

Saturday 13 April: Woodman Point, Cockburn
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at Woodman Point on Jervoise Bay. Turn right off Cockburn Road, into O'Kane Court, then left into Jervoise Bay Cove, and almost immediately right into Woodman Point Road. Drive to the end of the road and take the last left to the car park.

We will walk along the beach to Woodman Spit, and back along the other side to Cockburn Cement Jetty to look for waders and seabirds. After morning tea, we will move to a nearby location to look for bushbirds in the Woodman Point Regional Park where there are some large old Tuart trees. Over 100 bird species have been recorded here. Bring your telescopes.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 14 April: Tomato Lake, Kewdale
Photogroup excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the second car park by the bridge. Drive past the café at the entrance to the lake and continue onto the second car park which is at the end

of the road. Tomato Lake is an extremely popular venue for exercise, recreation and walking dogs and yet often has a surprising diversity of birds that are well habituated to people.

Tomato Lake provides a number of opportunities to photograph waterbirds and small bushbirds both at ground level and from the long bridge, boardwalk and lookouts, providing good opportunities for close encounters and challenges such as capturing reflections, low perspectives and in-flight practice. There are several good pockets of bushland with a variety of bushbirds to be photographed and the usual darters, cormorants, spoonbills, Nankeen Night-Herons, Blue-billed Ducks, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Ducks, Pink-eared Ducks and Hardheads which all breed at the lake. Bring morning tea and your camera manual as well as a means of downloading your best images on to a laptop.

For members and guests only

Leaders: Sandra and Ian Wallace

Friday 19 April to Monday 22 April 2019: Easter campout at Jaurdi Station, Shire of Coolgardie

Jaurdi Station, a former pastoral lease, was purchased by DBCA in 1989 for conservation and research. It is a good birding area due to excellent diversity of landforms and vegetation. Ninety-six species have been recorded, mostly during BWA visits. Some specialties include Gilberts Whistler, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Redthroat, Peregrine Falcon, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Ground Cuckoo-shrike and Southern Scrub-robin.

Jaurdi Station is approximately 500 km from Perth and 48 km north of Boorabbin off Great Eastern Highway. Travel directions will be emailed to participants a week before the campout.

There are three shearers' rooms each with two camp beds and a large machinery shed/shearing shed which can be used for camping. The rooms can be booked at the BirdLife WA office. There is abundant space for tents, camper trailers and caravans. There is a very basic camp kitchen, and two 'long drop' toilets. The water supply is unreliable so bring all the water you need. There is no power.

Numbers will be limited to 30 members so please book at the BirdLife WA office on 9383 7749.

Members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Saturday 20 April: Victoria Reservoir, Canning Mills
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park beside the information board at the entrance to the dam. From Perth, travel east along Welshpool Road and Welshpool Road East to the T-junction at Canning Road, turn right and travel for about 400 m to Masonmill Road. Turn right into Masonmill Road and continue along this road for about 600 m, following the signs to the dam past the Masonmill Gardens function centre, to the entrance to the car park. We will follow the walking track down to the dam. This walk is of moderate length, perhaps 5 km, but it does contain some steep steps that need to be negotiated both down and then up, so it does require a moderate level of fitness.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Sunday 28 April: Lake Coogee, Munster
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in Fawcett Road, 100 m from Mayor Road. Nearly 100 species of birds have been seen on and around the lake, including nine raptors. It is a large lake and has a path right around it so some people may wish to do the full circuit.

For members and guests only.

Leaders: Jan and Dave Crossley



Australian Reed-Warbler, Carine (see report, p48). Photo by Caroline Mynott

Monday 29 April: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat
Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm

Simon Cherriman will be speaking on *Tracking Wedge-tailed Eagles*.

Wednesday 1 - Thursday 9 May: Frank Hann/Peak Charles followed by Dundas campout, Great Western Woodlands survey

See details, p39.

Saturday 4 May: Ellis Brook, Gosnells
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the corner of Gosnells Road and Bygum Lane, Martin. We will walk up the steep path to the top of the falls and great views of the Swan Coastal Plain. It is a popular area where a variety of bushbirds can be seen, some of them not often seen near Perth, such as Red-eared Firetail, Red-winged Fairy-wren, and Red-capped and Scarlet Robins.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Caroline Mynott

Thursday 9 May: Victoria Reservoir, Canning Mills
Photogroup excursion

Meet at upper car park at 8:30am (this is when the boom gates open, permitting access to the upper car park).

From Perth travel east along Welshpool Road and Welshpool Road East, to the T junction at Canning Road, turn right and travel for around 400 m to Mason Mill Road. Turn right into Mason Mill Road and continue along this road for about 600 m, following the signs to the dam just past The Masonmill gardens function centre.

Birds: Victoria Dam is considered one of our hotspots for bushbirds with a variety of robins, wrens, thornbills, spinebills, firetails, parrots and cockatoos and the more common bushbirds.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Tony Richards

Saturday 11 May: Bannister Creek, Lynwood
Two-hour excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in Jaccard Way. From Leach Highway turn into High Road then left into Metcalf Road and then first right into Jaccard way, where there is plenty of parking.

Bannister Creek runs into Canning River and a South East Regional Centre for Land Care (SERCUL) Project has been working for some years on a significant rehabilitation project along this creek. The main activities have been weed removal, replanting with appropriate vegetation and sculpturing the creek so small weirs aerate the water. An annual bird survey is undertaken by Sue and the birds are starting to return. Bring morning tea to have while we do a bird list.

Members and guests only.

Leader: Sue Keogh

Tuesday 14 May: Albany Regional Group excursion

More details about destinations, where to meet etc. will be made available on BWA e-news. You can also check the Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home> and Facebook page. Excursion leader will be Anne Bondin (albanybirds@hotmail.com). Feel free to contact the branch for further information.

Thursday 16 May: The Spectacles, Kwinana
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park in McLaughlan Road. Proceed along Kwinana Freeway and turn right (west) into Anketell Road. Travel approximately 2 km then turn left into McLaughlan Road. A good variety of bushbirds including Grey Currawong can be found here.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Pauline Woolley

Sunday 19 May: Lake Goollelal, Kingsley
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at the car park on Woodlake Retreat. From the junction of Wanneroo Road and Hepburn Avenue, travel north on Wanneroo Road to the first set of traffic lights and turn left into Woodlake Retreat. The car park is 50 m from the turn off.

This lake offers a good selection of bushbirds and waterbirds. It is part of the Northern Swan Coastal Plain Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. Bring your scope if you have one.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Sunday 26 May: Ray Marshall Park, Viveash

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park of Ray Marshall Park. Go to the end of First Avenue, off Great Eastern Highway, just east of Governor Stirling Senior High School. We will take a morning walk along the John George Trail that runs beside the Swan River. On the return walk, we will divert to a swampy area 250 m off the track, and this will usually add up to six extra species to the list.

The walk includes big river redgums, waterbirds along the river, and the walk to the swamp mentioned above.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Peter White

Monday 27 May: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat
Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm

Guest speaker to be advised.

Saturday 1 to Monday 3 June:
Western Australia Day campout,
Dryandra Woodland

Dryandra is one of the most important bushland remnants in the wheatbelt, and

has over 100 species of birds including Crested Shrike-tit and Bush Stone-curlew.

Dryandra is 164 km south-east of Perth and 22 km north-west of Narrogin. From Perth, travel down Albany Highway and just past North Bannister turn left to Wandering. Travel 3 km past Wandering and turn into Fourteen Mile Brook Road for 25 km and then turn left into Williams York Road for 3 km.

We will be camping at the new campground 'Gnaala Mia' and the entry road is almost opposite the Congelin Campground. It is well sign posted. This is a popular weekend, even in June and the campsites are on a first in first served basis and cannot be booked. We are anticipating that ten sites will be available on Friday and you need to put your name down for a campsite at the BirdLife office. There are toilets and gas barbecue facilities. Bring your own firewood and water. Cost \$11 per night and concession, \$7 per night.

The cottages in Dryandra Village were fully booked at the time of writing.

Other accommodation may also be available in Narrogin.

For those interested, on Saturday night (1 June) there is a very good evening guided walk in the Barna Mia enclosure, where many native animals are protected from predators. To book, call DBCA at Narrogin on 9881 9200 and the cost is \$22 adults and \$16 concession.

Numbers will be limited to the number of camping bays available and to those who have accommodation in Narrogin or nearby. Please call the BirdLife WA office on 9383 7749 to put your name on the list.

For members and guests only.

Leader: David Secomb

Sunday 2 June: Manning Lake, Spearwood
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park, Azelia Road, opposite the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum, on the western side of the lake. This is a semi-permanent wetland, with a fringe of paperbark trees, noted for its waterbirds. Bushbirds are also plentiful in the reserve and in bush to the west.

For members and the general public.

Leader: Pauline Woolley

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Photo: Carnaby's
Cockatoos by
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Thursday 6 June: Lake Monger, Cambridge
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park at the end of Dodd Street, which runs off Harbourne Street. The walk around the lake will take 2-3 hours. This is a good opportunity to see many species of ducks, waterbirds and some bushbirds. Resident Variegated Fairy-wrens are often seen.

For members and general public.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Sunday 9 June: Garvey Park, Ascot
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park next to the brown building on the left at the end of Fauntleroy Ave, off Great Eastern Highway. This area has a good variety of waterbirds and bush birds. Species recorded here have included Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake, and Mistletoebird.

For members and guests only.

Leader: George Agar

Tuesday 11 June: Albany Regional Group excursion

More details about destinations, where to meet etc. will be made available on BWA e-news. You can also check the Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home> and Facebook page. Excursion leader will be Anne Bondin (albanybirds@hotmail.com). Feel free to contact the branch for further information.

Saturday 15 June: Flynn Road, Mundaring
Half/Full-day excursion

Meet at 9:00 am at the corner of Flynn Road and Great Eastern Highway, about

10 km past Sawyers Valley or 1 km on the Perth side of The Lakes (the York turnoff). We will look at several areas of Wandoo woodland. Species seen here include Western Yellow Robin, Restless Flycatcher and Painted Button-quail.

Bring morning tea that you can carry. Bring lunch if you would like continue with us at a further area nearby.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Charles Merriam

Saturday 22 June: John Oldham Park (opposite the Mount Hospital)
Photogroup excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the John Oldham car park, Mounts Bay Road. Parking is \$4 per hour unless you find somewhere cheaper and walk.

For members and guests only

Leader: Lesley Macauley

Sunday 23 June: Jandakot Regional Park, Harrisdale
Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am in the car park at Carey Baptist College, Wright Road, Harrisdale. Park near to Wright Road. We will cross the road to access the park through a gap gate.

This reserve has good tracks throughout with varied vegetation including wetland areas which may have some water in them if we have had enough winter rain. Many bushbirds have been seen including Splendid Fairy-wren, Western Spinebill, White-browed Scrubwren, Grey Shrike-thrush, Fan-tailed and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos, Red-capped Parrot and Red-

tailed Black-Cockatoo. Wetland species are also a possibility, as are several species of raptor.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Debbie Walker

Monday 24 June: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat
Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm

Plaxy Barratt will be speaking on *Seabirds and the Bremer Canyon*.

Saturday 29 June: Yanchep National Park
Half-day excursion

Meet at the Lakeview picnic area inside the park at 9:00 am. Entry is \$12 per vehicle or \$6 per vehicle for seniors. Proceed through the entrance gate and go left at the roundabout. There is a large parking area and I suggest we meet near the covered barbecue area that is adjacent to the toilet block. There should be a variety of bushbirds and waterbirds. Yanchep National Park is part of the Northern Swan Coastal Plain KBA for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo.

For members and guests only.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Monday 27 July: Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat

Vicki Stokes will be speaking on *Birds of Sri Lanka*.

Crossword No. 38 answers

ACROSS

1 Eucalypt, 7 lobe, 8 availability, 9 energy, 12 tunnel, 13 Tyto, 14 down, 17 snake, 19 Easter, 22 HANZAB, 24 Garganey, 25 bee, 26 Dryandra, 27 hooded.

DOWN

1 evade, 2 culvert, 3 pale, 4 Flynn, 5 behaviour, 6 Maluridae, 10 genus, 11 decay, 15 sewage, 16 delay, 18 buzzard, 20 survey, 21 deter, 23 build, 24 grid.

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7/2017

- Sun 3 Mar:** Lake Gwelup, Stirling, Half-day excursion
- Sat 9 Mar:** Wellard Wetlands, Baldivis, Half-day excursion
- Tue 12 Mar:** **Albany Group** excursion
- Sun 17 Mar:** Garvey Park, Ascot, Half-day excursion
- Sun 17 Mar:** Photogroup activity, Leschenault Estuary, Bunbury, Full-day excursion
- Thu 21 Mar:** Eric Singleton Bird Reserve, Bayswater, Half-day excursion
- Fri 22 to Mon 25 Mar:** Campout at Northcliffe
- Sun 24 Mar:** Bibra Lake, Cockburn, Half-day excursion
- Mon 25 Mar:** Bold Park Eco Centre, 165 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm
- Sat 30 Mar:** Herdsman Lake, Stirling, Half-day excursion
- Sun 31 Mar:** Cape to Cape Regional Group excursion, Redgate Beach North, Half-day excursion
- Mon 1 to Thu 4 Apr:** Credo Station campout, Great Western Woodlands survey
- Sun 7 Apr:** Great Cocky Count
- Sun 7 Apr:** Lancelin, Full day excursion
- Tue 9 Apr:** Albany Regional Group excursion
- Thu 11 Apr:** Tomato Lake, Kewdale, Half-day excursion
- Sat 13 Apr:** Woodman Point, Cockburn, Half-day excursion
- Sun 14 Apr:** Tomato Lake, Kewdale, Photogroup excursion
- Fri 19 Apr to Mon 22 Apr 2019:** Easter campout at Jaurdi Station, Shire of Coolgardie
- Sat 20 Apr:** Victoria Reservoir, Canning Mills, Half-day excursion
- Sun 28 Apr:** Lake Coogee, Munster, Half-day excursion
- Mon 29 Apr:** Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm
- Sat 4 May:** Ellis Brook, Gosnells, Half-day excursion
- Wed 1 - Thu 9 May:** Frank Hann/Peak Charles/Dundas campout, Great Western Woodlands survey
- Thu 9 May:** Victoria Reservoir, Canning Mills, Photogroup excursion
- Sat 11 May:** Bannister Creek, Lynwood, Two-hour excursion
- Tue 14 May:** Albany Regional Group excursion
- Thu 16 May:** The Spectacles, Kwinana, Half-day excursion
- Sun 19 May:** Lake Goollelal, Kingsley, Half-day excursion
- Mon 27 May:** Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm
- Sun 26 May:** Ray Marshall Park, Viveash, Half-day excursion
- Sat 1 to Mon 3 Jun:** Western Australia Day campout, Dryandra Woodland
- Sun 2 Jun:** Manning Lake, Spearwood, Half-day excursion
- Thu 6 Jun:** Lake Monger, Cambridge, Half-day excursion
- Sun 9 Jun:** Garvey Park, Ascot, Half-day excursion
- Tue 11 Jun:** Albany Regional Group excursion
- Sat 15 Jun:** Flynn Road, Mundaring, Half/Full-day excursion
- Sat 22 Jun:** John Oldham Park (opposite the Mount Hospital), Photogroup excursion
- Sun 23 Jun:** Jandakot Regional Park, Harrisdale, Half-day excursion
- Mon 24 Jun:** Bold Park Eco Centre, Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, Monthly meeting, 7:30 pm
- Sat 29 Jun:** Yanchep National Park, Half-day excursion

Members in the field



Enjoying the viewing, Nambelup Settling Ponds. Photo by Alan Watson (see report, p49)



A lovely mild morning at Clarkson Reserve. Thank you, Jennifer and Lynley. Photo by Penny Lee



Thank you, Peter White, for an interesting and relaxing Ashfield Flats excursion on a lovely mild morning. Photo by Penny Lee (see report, p45)



Relaxed chats between excursions were a highlight of the Mt Barker campout. Here at Wamballup Lake Conservation Reserve, hundreds of Black Swans and other waterbirds were seen on the lake on Saturday afternoon. Photo by Penny Lee



John Delaporte with the winner's cup for guessing the correct number of birds, Mt Barker. Photo by Alan Watson (see also p49)



Dusky Moorhen, Carine. Photo by Caroline Mynott (see report, p48)



Bridled Tern, Penguin Island. Photo by Chris Young



White Wagtail, Rottnest Island. Photo by John Baas (see Observations, p8)



Eurasian Hobby, North Lake. Photo by Caroline Mynott (see Observations, p8)

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