

Western Australian Bird Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of the Western Australian
Branch of BirdLife Australia

No. 179 September 2021



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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.

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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- WABN is not peer reviewed.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)

December 2021 issue: **22 October**

March 2022 issue: 1 February

June 2022 issue: 1 May

September 2022 issue: 1 August

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Front cover

Western Ground Parrot being released with radio transmitter and GPS logger attached. Photo: Alan Danks/DBCA

A NEW HOME FOR KYLORING: THE FIRST PHASE OF A WILD-TO-WILD TRANSLOCATION COMPLETED

In April 2021, many years of careful planning, research and population management led by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and the WA South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team (SCTBRT) came together, with critical support from BirdLife WA and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot. In an exciting development, seven critically endangered Western Ground Parrots (*Pezoporus flaviventris*, or Kyloring to the Noongar Aboriginal people) were successfully moved from Cape Arid National Park to a new location on the south coast of Western Australia. This was the first stage of a project aiming to re-establish the species in habitat close to a location last occupied by the birds in the early 2000s.

The critically endangered Western Ground Parrot has been restricted to a single refuge in Cape Arid National Park and the adjacent Nuytsland Nature Reserve since 2012, following the last confirmed record in the Fitzgerald River National Park (Burbidge *et al.* 2016). With only 150 birds estimated to remain in the wild, the last known population faces significant threats from bushfire and introduced predators. An estimated 80% of their remaining habitat has burnt following extensive bushfires in the last six years, removing secure roosting and nesting sites (Comer *et al.* 2019). The ground-dwelling behaviour of the birds makes them highly susceptible to predation, in particular by foxes and feral cats (Burbidge *et al.* 2016). Extensive introduced predator management and ongoing acoustic monitoring of Western Ground Parrots in Cape Arid by the DBCA has returned encouraging results, with the population remaining relatively stable in recent years despite the fires (Comer *et al.* 2020). However, the threat of bushfire remains ever-present, and the likelihood of lightning-initiated fires is predicted to increase in response to climate change. In 2016, a group of conservation professionals assisted DBCA and the SCTBRT to plan for the future of Western Ground Parrots, and this group identified establishing a second population to be a priority for their conservation (Burbidge *et al.* 2016). In April 2021, through the dedicated efforts of

DBCA, the recovery team and supporting partners (BirdLife Australia and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot), the first step of a wild-to-wild translocation was achieved.

Preparation for the move

Selection of a release site was decided based on several factors, including long term climate predictions (Molloy *et al.* 2020), habitat suitability and capacity for management. The chosen site is close to an area where Western Ground Parrots persisted until the early 2000s, with vegetation structure and floral diversity comparable to Western Ground Parrot habitat in Cape Arid and Nuytsland. With a translocation proposal, risk assessment and translocation strategy completed, externally reviewed and approved, the comprehensive preparation for translocation could commence.

Extensive release site preparation was carried out prior to the translocation. Increased introduced predator management was a priority, which included additional baiting and trapping for foxes and feral cats, and camera surveys to monitor introduced predator activity. Fire mitigation measures were undertaken by DBCA to reduce potential impacts of bushfire and improve capacity for bushfire suppression. A monitoring network of autonomous recording units (ARUs) was established by BirdLife Australia and DBCA staff to confirm that no Western Ground Parrots were present in the area, as well as providing a monitoring network for the translocated birds. Finally, a disease risk analysis (DRA) was undertaken by Perth Zoo staff, to evaluate the risk of injury or disease to translocated birds, as well as to other species at the release site.

The remaining population of Western Ground Parrots in Cape Arid and Nuytsland has been extensively monitored since 2013 by DBCA, with listening surveys supported by ARUs on several intensive monitoring grids, and more recently an additional landscape-scale solar-powered ARU grid which covers some 60,000 ha of Western Ground

Parrot habitat. Consequently, areas occupied by Western Ground Parrots (where calling activity is higher) are known with a level of confidence, and this helped to identify potential locations from which parrots could be sourced for translocation. The team of project staff, A-class bird banders and volunteers had the capacity to run a few hundred metres of mist nets each capture session, but the specific sites needed to be identified within approximately 15,000 hectares of potential habitat. To achieve this, one month before the capture trip, project staff and volunteers installed more than 120 ARUs in the park.

Capture and release

In April 2021, a combined field team of up to 26 staff and volunteers departed for Cape Arid, where a self-sustaining and comfortable bush camp was set up, complete with kitchen, office, temporary bird holding facility, and a veterinary and bird processing tent. The initial few days in the field were spent retrieving pre-capture ARUs and locating potential mist netting locations through analysing ARU data and carrying out listening surveys before dawn and after dusk. After four days of pre-capture analysis and targeted listening surveys, it was time to start setting up the first mist nets.

After a delayed start to the trip caused by the wet and windy weather conditions from ex-cyclone Seroja, luck was on side for the capture sessions



Abby Thomas (DBCA) instructs staff and volunteers in how to deploy ARUs, as part of pre-release monitoring. Photo: Helena Stokes

A New Home for Kyloring: The First Phase of a Wild-to-Wild Translocation Completed, ctd

with beautiful still mist-netting conditions. Within the first few sessions, three males and two females were caught – a credit to the team's pre-capture ARU analysis and excellent knowledge of the birds' locations. All birds were examined by a vet from Perth Zoo during processing, which consisted of banding, weighing and measuring each bird, collecting samples for health and disease screening, and taking photos and observations. Each bird was then placed in a holding box, and provided with food and browse, including native plants from the surrounding habitat and a mixture of different seeds. They were kept under intensive CCTV observation, carried out by experienced zoo staff. Four of the five birds settled in well, adapting to their holding conditions, eating well and appearing settled. However, very sadly, one of the female birds passed away while in holding facilities. Investigation into the cause of death is ongoing. A post-mortem was carried out at Perth Zoo, but test results are inconclusive, although suggesting that the injury may possibly be linked to the unusual skeletal anatomy of the Western Ground Parrot.

After all the effort and care that had been put in, the loss of a bird was highly distressing for the team. However, after detailed discussion and consideration by the whole team, including a review of the success and failure criteria for the translocation, it was determined that the translocation and further captures should proceed as planned. Subsequently, the four birds were carefully transported to their new home, ready for a morning release the following day. Once they arrived at the release site, each bird was fitted with a harness with either a VHF transmitter or combined GPS logger/VHF transmitter (depending on bird weight) to enable the team to track the birds' movements following their release. The next morning, the birds were given an hour of daylight to feed in their boxes, after which the vision of several years' careful planning and hard work was achieved: four birds were released, in the potential start of a new Western Ground Parrot population.

Meanwhile, as the first four birds were transported and released, the team in Cape Arid established new mist-netting locations. Over the next ten days, four more birds (one female and three males) were caught, at two different capture sites. Birds were transported to the release site,



A Western Ground Parrot is fitted with a GPS/VHF transmitter, shortly before release. Photo: Helena Stokes

and again fitted with loggers and transmitters to track their movements.

All of the birds transported to the release site travelled well, feeding throughout the journey, and acclimatising to the novel transport conditions. The second release took place six days after the first event, with two males and one female released together. Unfortunately, on the morning of the final release attempt, the remaining male bird could not fly properly. He was recaptured and taken to Perth Zoo for examination and observation, where it was decided that the best course of action would be for him to join the captive population. He has recovered well, and it is hoped he might successfully breed with one of the captive females in the future.

Home away from home: the translocation camp in Cape Arid National Park. Photo: Deon Utber



A New Home for Kyloring: The First Phase of a Wild-to-Wild Translocation Completed, ctd

Of the seven translocated Western Ground Parrots, six still have VHF transmitters, and the team has been able to follow their movements for the three months post-release. One of the female birds quickly settled close to the release site, in an area of fantastic habitat with plenty of food and shelter. The other five birds have spent most of the time exploring the wider region around the release site. They moved greater distances than anticipated during the immediate post-release period, making on-ground tracking challenging, and resulting in more aerial tracking than had been anticipated. However, the distances flown by the birds, and the fact that they have found other good habitat, have also been encouraging, as this suggests the birds are healthy and able to find enough food. The rubber harnesses for the transmitters have a weak link, designed to break before the end of the VHF transmitter battery life, which is approximately three months. Once the harnesses have broken, the field team will aim to collect the GPS loggers, which recorded detailed location data for the first two to three weeks after release. This data will be invaluable for understanding post-release movement and preferences for habitat, and will shed further light on the significant movements of the birds during this period. At the time of writing, three months after release, aerial tracking results show that the birds are still active, but they appear to be moving back closer to the release site after their exploratory period, with all birds located within approximately 20km of the release site.

What next?

The survival of all birds at the new site, as indicated by radio-tracking results, is very promising and shows that the initial short-term success criteria for the project have been met. In the upcoming months, radio tracking will continue, and monitoring will then shift to using ARUs installed at the release site to monitor Western Ground Parrot calling activity, as well as listening surveys carried out by the team. Manual analysis of ARU data from the immediate post-release period is currently in progress, and findings will be reported in due course. The source population of Western Ground Parrots in Cape Arid will continue to be monitored, to ensure that there has been no significant impact from the removal of birds, and as part of continued long term population monitoring. If all success criteria outlined in the translocation proposal are met and future funding can be secured, further translocations will be carried out, which will help to maximise the success of establishing a second Western Ground Parrot population. In the meantime, introduced predator management will be continued at both sites for the foreseeable future, benefitting not just the Western Ground Parrot, but a whole suite of animal species including other threatened bird and mammal species native to the region. Similarly, continued fire management will benefit a broad array of plant and animal species, helping to ensure maintenance of good habitat not just for ground parrots, but many other species as well. The realization of the translocation project has been a strong collaboration, from oversight by the recovery team to the DBCA led project team supported by our BirdLife project officer, Friends of the Western Ground Parrot and numerous volunteers. The achievement of the first wild-to-wild translocation has only been possible through long term collaborative vision and commitment of multiple partners and supporters from all parts of the community. These collaborations bring a range of skills and experiences, and are contributing to improving the prospects for the Western Ground Parrot and ensuring it has a future.

This years' trial translocation is an exciting first for this species and the first step towards the vision of the SCTBRT to re-establish Western Ground Parrot populations in

the west of their former range, a vision endorsed at the IUCN workshop in 2016 (Burbidge *et al.* 2016, 2018). The results of this work will help to inform the conservation management of these birds and the habitat they occupy for years to come.

Acknowledgements

This project was led and implemented by DBCA, supported by the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team, and partners including BirdLife Australia and Friends of the Western Ground Parrot. The work carried out on the translocation trip and the field trip prior to this would not have been possible without the fantastic effort of a number of volunteers who committed thousands of hours to support this project, in particular Nick Hart, Lucy Dadour, Tegan Douglas and Amelia Catterick-Stoll as banders, Larisse Guislain as chief camp cook during the translocation trip, and Jim Creighton for long-term assistance with WGP monitoring. Generous financial support for this project has also been provided by the Australian Government's Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Program, DBCA and the Threatened Species Commissioner. Other financial support for Western Ground Parrot recovery efforts has been provided by South Coast NRM and Friends of the Western Ground Parrot.

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Helena Stokes, Vicki Stokes and Sarah Comer

Allan Burbidge, Stewart Ford, Abby Thomas, Abby Berryman, Mark Blythman and Deon Utber also contributed to this article.

BirdLife Australia Awards 2021

Dr Allan Burbidge - Fellow of BirdLife Australia

The award of Fellow of BirdLife Australia recognizes distinguished services to ornithology, particularly through BirdLife Australia and its predecessor organisations. It is the highest award available to both professionals and amateurs.

Allan Burbidge grew up immersed in natural history on the family farm near South Australia's Murray Bridge, joining the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union as a teenager in 1968. It marked the start of a lifetime's dedication to birds, bird conservation and ornithology. Though he was nearly tempted away by plants, completing a PhD on triggerplants at the University of Western Australia, he still continued to work on birds and became the founding warden of the Rotamah Island Bird Observatory in Gippsland in 1980. A year later Julie Raines (also a biologist) came to volunteer for four days ... and it was there that they later married and were wardens together until 1984. A stint working together on the Riverlands' Regent Parrots – a foundational study still quoted today – was followed by a return to the west where Allan joined the newly formed Department of Conservation and Land Management. There he worked on biogeography and threatened bird species. Over 35 years later he is still there in that department's successor, an ornithological institution in his own right.

Allan's official role in the Western Australian government involved birds from the start, but few public servants can say that some birds would no longer exist but for their efforts. Allan can, though would never boast, and would rightly attribute the successful conservation of species like the Noisy Scrub-bird and other threatened south coast birds to the extraordinary team he has long worked with. He has contributed also to several other bird recovery teams, including those for the Gouldian Finch and Kangaroo Island Glossy Black-Cockatoo, while being involved closely with Ground Parrot and Night Parrot conservation. With Sarah Comer and others, he instigated and made a significant contribution to the 2016 Western Ground Parrot Workshop which was attended by 39 invited specialists from 19 organisations across Australia and New Zealand (including BirdLife Australia) and resulted in the report 'Creating a Future for the Western Ground Parrot'. There are few parts of the State he has not visited on biological surveys, which has given him a broad knowledge of bird conservation status in WA. Utilising this knowledge, he was a member of the Western Australian Threatened Species Scientific Committee (a Ministerial committee providing advice with respect to those plant and animal species that are considered for declaration as threatened in Western Australia) from 1997 to 2019.

At the same time, he has shown a long-term commitment to science communication and the effectiveness of BirdLife Australia, building on his experience at Rotamah. He has been a core part of the Western Australian part of the RAOU/Birds Australia/BirdLife Australia – which has included co-editing Western Australian Bird Notes, an exacting task, for over 25 years, while also serving on the State Research Committee for more than two decades. At the same time, he served on the national Research and Conservation Committee from 2002 to 2007 and was a foundation member of the BirdLife Australia Threatened Species Committee on which he continues to serve; he has in fact read and commented on full drafts of every Australian bird action plan (1992, 2000, 2010 and 2020), as well as contributing to many of the species accounts. He has been an Associate Editor for BirdLife's flagship scientific journal, *Emu - Australasian Ornithology*, since 2009 and a member of the Editorial Board of BirdLife's *Australian Field Ornithology* since 2013. Allan was the inaugural Chair of the Australasian Ornithological Conference Advisory Committee from 2002 to 2015, and a member until 2019. These bi-

annual conferences play an increasingly important role for BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand in communicating the latest ornithological knowledge from the region, and provide an important role in encouraging young and emerging ornithologists.

In Western Australia, he has served on BirdLife WA's Sightings Committee for more than two decades, on the Carnaby's Research Advisory Group for several years until 2014, and in recent years on BirdLife WA's Bittern Advisory Committee. He was also on the WA Group Executive Committee for several years in the 1990s.

As a biologist, Allan has about 90 peer-reviewed publications covering a wide range of topics related to conservation. Many are about birds but Allan's skills as a botanist and ecologist have also led to many contributions on plants as well as on the processes involved in producing and interpreting sound biological surveys. In addition, he has also written hundreds of short notes, articles and reports for various natural history magazines, newsletters, etc. Allan has also appreciated that good science is not just about publications – it is about collaboration, empathy, mentorship and the provision of sound evidence-based advice. Bird conservation in Western Australia and beyond has benefitted enormously over the last three decades from Allan's enduring calm commitment.

Overall, Allan's commitment to birds, their conservation and to the organisations that have the responsibility for caring for them, make him a most deserving candidate for election as a Fellow of BirdLife Australia.

From BirdLife Australia webpage

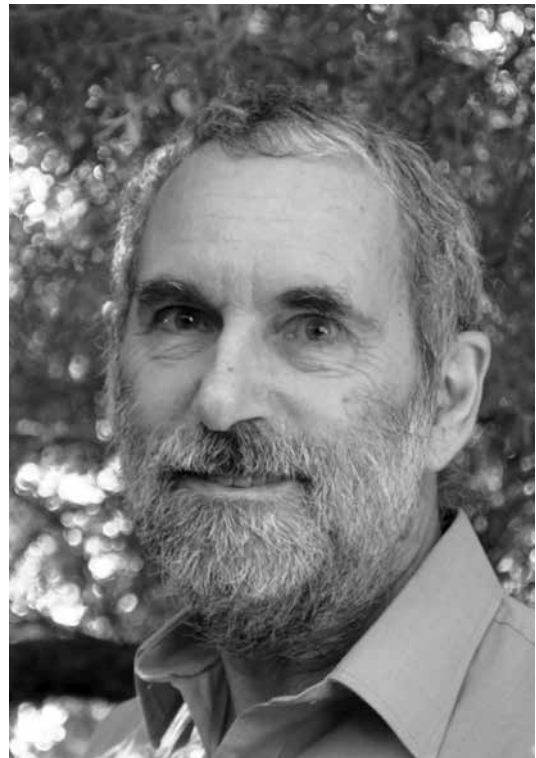


Photo courtesy of Allan Burbidge

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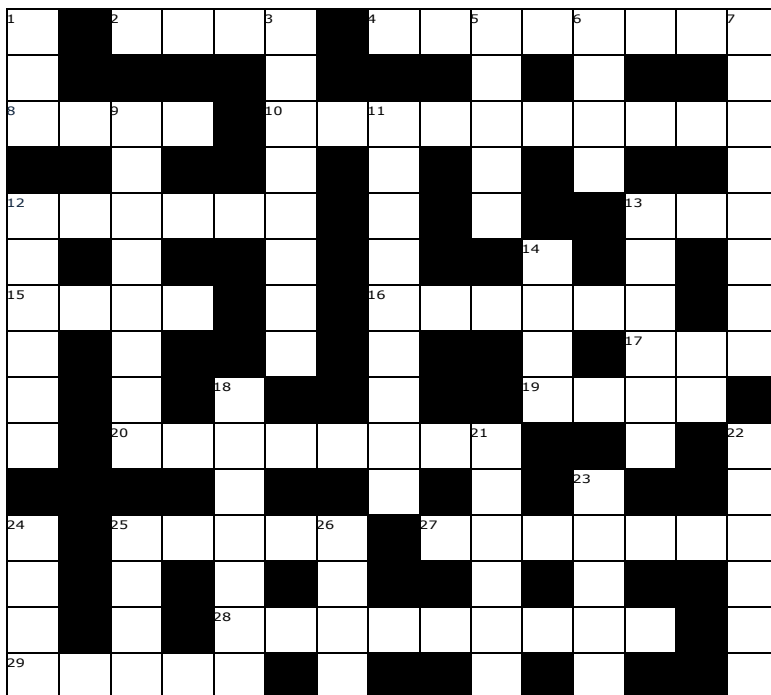
CLUES

ACROSS

2. Birder's temporary home
4. Bristles round beak
8. Track
10. One-off records
12. Area of trees
13. A short one isn't always quicker
15. To plunder
16. To journey
17. To be indebted
19. Approx no. of eggs laid by Emu
20. Nectar-eating parrot
25. Display area
27. Having erectile feathers on head
28. Ecological unit
29. Dull, pale

DOWN

1. Nest shape
3. Unspoiled
5. Alphabetised list of contents
6. Quail of Kimberley area
7. Welcome if trying to locate an elusive bird
9. End bar of tail
11. Grouped together
12. To search for
13. Breeding group
14. River home of WA's Mute Swan
18. State of nesting colonies
21. Songbird, not in WA
22. Concealed
23. To shepherd
24. Uncommon wader visitor to southern WA
25. Strong link formed by swans
26. Might shelter burrow entrance



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TERRY KIRKLAND
AMY LOFFLER
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LILY MARTIN
JACQUI REEVES
SHEILA ROWLANDS
DARREN SCULTHORPE
MIKE SENIOR
JOHN TAYLOR
STEPHANIE VAN DEN HOEK
CAROLYN WILLIAMS
ALICE WORSWICK

From the Editors

WABN 178 CORRECTION

WABN 178, page 31. The Crested Pigeon winning photo was incorrectly attributed to Ralph Darlington. Patricia Martin was the photographer.

CHANGES TO WABN

The BWA Executive Committee has informed the Editors that Western Australian Bird Notes has been running at a loss over the last three years whereas prior to this it often returned a profit to BWA. Postage has increased as have the number of pages in the issues and the inclusion of more colour pages, and these factors have all contributed to this deficit. So this cost issue is being addressed by:

- increasing the cost of subscribing to \$30 a year i.e. for 4 issues
- increasing the number of subscribers
- omitting the metropolitan Excursion Reports but including these in eNews each fortnight, still edited by the WABN editing team

- reducing the number of pages by moving suitable items across to eNews
- increasing revenue producing advertising.

We have looked at competitive printing quotes and are continuing with the current company. We are well aware of the difficulties faced by subscribers who want to subscribe to WABN on line through the BirdLife website. We have advised potential subscribers to contact the BWA office for assistance with this.

Co-editors, Suzanne Mather and Allan Burbidge

BirdLife WA 2022 Calendar

The 2022 calendars are now available at the BirdLife WA office for \$10 each (over the counter) or \$13.30 including postage. Contact the office for the postage rate if purchasing more than 1 calendar. You can order calendars from the office by phoning 9383 7749 or emailing wa@birdlife.org.au. Payment can be made by credit card, cash, direct deposit or posting a cheque. Calendars will also be sold at the Monday monthly meetings and some bird excursions between now and the New Year.

All photographs are by BirdLife WA members and photographs were chosen by professional wildlife photographers Jiri and Marie Lochman.

All profits aid the BirdLife WA Australasian Bittern Project.



BirdLife WA Conservation Program

METROPOLITAN BIRD GEOGRAPHY NO. 5

Yellow-rumped Thornbill

The two historical ornithological surveys of the Perth metropolitan region (as it was in the 1910s-1940s) characterised the biogeography of this species as very common everywhere and generally distributed. Seventy years later this species remains widely distributed but is no longer abundant. For example, in Kings Park and Bold Park it is no longer encountered on every visit. It was last reported from both localities in April 2020.

The preferred habitat of this species is the ecotone between shelter and grassland. At Herdsman Lake, birds move frequently between foliage and the lower branchlets of Flooded Gum and the adjacent pasture, where they forage on the ground. They will make use of ecotones in smaller reserves as well, venturing onto the edges of ovals and open spaces where they abut patches of remnant bushland.

Dom Serventy noted that up to the 1940s, small flocks formed after breeding and sometimes visited suburban streets. This still happens in rural towns (e.g. Manjimup) but no longer around Perth (as confirmed by the paucity of records in the densely-suburbanised parts shown on the map).

Readers' comments about this species' abundance in the Perth metro region, as well as in regional towns, are most welcome.

Ian Abbott and Tegan Douglas

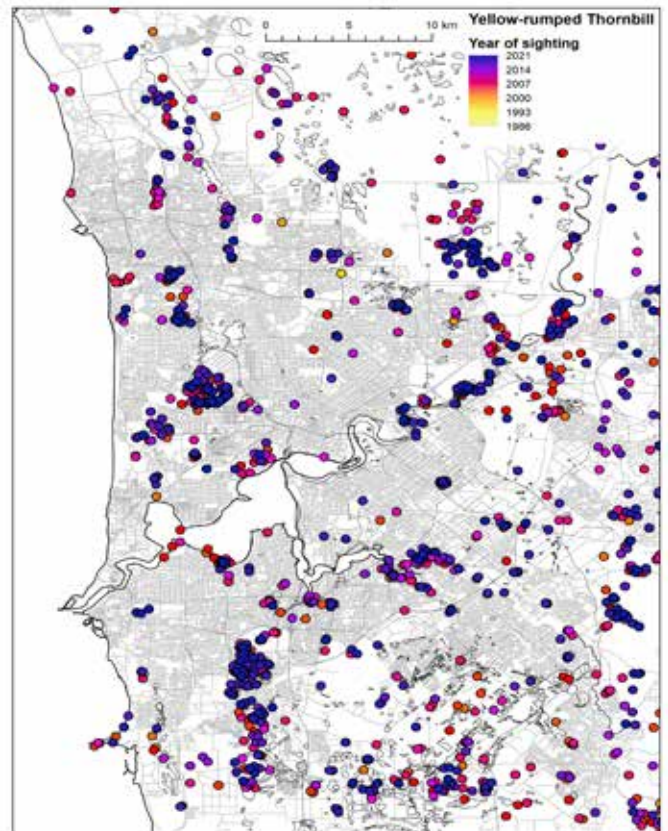


Figure 1. Distribution of Yellow-rumped Thornbill in the Perth region

ADOPT A COCKY NEST INITIATIVE PROVIDES MORE NEST HOLLOWS FOR BREEDING CARNABY'S

BirdLife WA's Adopt a Cocky Nest project has been a great success with 39 new artificial nest hollows recently being installed across 32 properties in the Bullsbrook, Chittering and Bindoon areas. This far exceeded our original goal of 24 artificial hollows. When installed in known breeding locations with adequate food and water sources nearby, artificial hollows have previously been shown to provide successful replacements to lost natural hollows for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos.

The money to purchase the nest hollows was donated by members of the public, who will now receive yearly updates of hollow activity during the breeding season for the next three years. The high-quality nests were manufactured and installed by Dean Arthurell from Carnaby's Crusaders, with project partner Hesperia funding their installation, staff time and future monitoring. This project, along with a recent bushfire relief project which installed 18 artificial nest hollows within the adjacent Wooroloo fire scar, will provide vital nesting habitat in an important breeding area.



Cocky Nest installation



Adopt a Cocky Nest finished tubes

The hollows have been installed just in time for the winter/spring breeding season. We have already had reports from some landowners that Carnaby's have been seen prospecting some of the new hollows, so we have high hopes the nests will see some action in their first year.

Thank you again to project partners Hesperia and Carnaby's Crusaders, our generous donors who purchased and adopted the nesting tubes, and the landowners who volunteered their properties to host the artificial nest hollows.

<https://www.facebook.com/Carnabys-Crusaders-103755334826928/>

<https://www.hesperia.com.au/>

WA PROGRAM UPDATE – A FEW CHANGES AHEAD

BirdLife Australia is presently undergoing a restructure to build capacity to better deliver the organisations strategic priorities through continued development of our bird conservation programs, evaluation of program successes and development of scientific partnerships.

In WA, we will continue to work on priority conservation projects such as black-cockatoos and other threatened species, wetland birds and key habitats for migratory shorebirds, and our many citizen science projects that dedicated WA volunteers and project partners continue to contribute to and support. But moving forward, these projects will sit within our large national programs, rather than stand alone in a WA program. This will help to achieve continuity across our projects and help to build support and capacity to continue to develop and evaluate our projects.

So what will this look like?

- Black-cockatoos and a possible 'Birds on Farms' project (that we are presently seeking funding for through a grant) will become part of our Woodland Birds Program and be ably led by Dr Tegan Douglas in WA.
- WA wetland bird projects such as the shorebirds project will become part of our Coastal Birds Program (pending continued funding).
- Our Western Ground Parrot project on the south coast will become part of the Preventing Extinctions Program (pending continued funding).

Staff on WA projects will continue to be based in WA.

Projects that will discontinue this year that have been grant funded include the Lotterywest supported urban bird project and the State NRM supported Australasian Bittern project. While we will not have capacity to continue to fund these projects in their current form, the gains and learnings achieved through these projects will be maintained.

GREAT COCKY COUNT 2021

The 2021 Great Cocky Count was held on the evening of Sunday the 28th of March earlier this year. The GCC is an annual single day event held each year in autumn, where volunteers count Black-Cockatoos as they arrive at dusk to known roost sites across the southwest from north of Geraldton to east of Esperance. The count ran consecutively from 2010 to 2019 before being cancelled in 2020 a week out from the scheduled date due to Covid-19 restrictions. It was great to resume counts again this year.

The Great Cocky Count is one of the largest citizen science field surveys in WA and would not be possible without the dedication of close to a thousand community volunteers each year. This massive effort reflects the passion and concern in the community for these charismatic birds. The count contributes essential data to estimate and track population trends for our threatened cockies and to help identify and protect critical habitat.

This year over 750 people registered with 462 roost sites counted across the southwest, of which 160 roosts were located in regional areas and 302 were located within the Greater Perth-Peel Region. A total of 17 773 white-tailed black-cockatoos and 6692 Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos were counted across the three species' ranges with an overall roost occupancy rate of 55%. Of the 255 roosts where black-cockatoos were recorded, 48 had both white-tailed and Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos roosting,

A huge thanks to Tegan Douglas for her dedication to urban birds in recent years. Community engagement in the urban bird space will continue through the nationally run Birds in Backyards project, and ongoing engagement of local councils, community groups and the broader community will continue through branch activities and the many resources that Tegan has developed as part of her project.

Many thanks to the tireless efforts of Plaxy Barratt on the Australasian Bittern project, which resulted in greater monitoring of bitterns, location of important bittern sites on private properties, and engagement and support of landholders on the south coast to protect and improve wetlands on their properties. BirdLife WA plans to continue monitoring and advocating for the endangered Australasian Bittern through the WA Bittern Committee. Plaxy is a valuable member of this committee and with other dedicated committee members will guide and coordinate continued monitoring and research efforts, and continue to explore options for funded projects.

WA Program Manager, Vicki Stokes – will continue to be based in WA, but will take on a new role within the organisation, leading a new Program that will work closely with the conservation and science programs and science partners to deliver a new Bird Conservation Strategy. Assurance of the strategy through consistent program planning, and clear evaluation and communication of our programs and their outcomes, will keep the new team busy. The team comprises staff based in WA, Victoria and Queensland.

Projects and conservation work in WA continue to be supported by the State NRM office, Alcoa Foundation, Lotterywest, South Coast NRM and the federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Thanks to our project partners, supporters and volunteers for your continued support of our WA projects and we look forward to continuing working with you all.

Vicki Stokes

94 had only white-tailed black-cockatoos, and the remaining 113 roosts had only Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

Population trend analysis is ongoing, and more details will be made available when the official Great Cocky Count 2021 report is released later in the year. The next few years of the Great Cocky Count will be critical for monitoring the movements and population dynamics of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo as the remainder of the Gnarup pine plantations are harvested and cleared. Over the last five years 62% to 73% of all Carnaby's counted on the Swan Coastal Plain during the Great Cocky Counts have been counted within these pine plantations.

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who continue to help us monitor the endangered black-cockatoos of WA's southwest and contribute valuable data for their conservation.

Merryn Pryor

GREAT WESTERN WOODLAND

Note from the Chairman

Once again our thanks go out to our awesome Great Western Woodlands survey volunteers who were able to successfully survey five areas over autumn 2021. There were a few challenges like staked tyres, locked gates and woeful weather in the mix, but everyone, thankfully, returned safely to their homes.

The GWW team led by our coordinators Libby and Lorraine are now busy organising the spring survey schedule which is listed below and will also appear in eNews for those interested in taking part.

Our Credo Skills Course run at the end of May was once again a huge success. Fourteen participants led by Dr Tegan Douglas and assisted by Libby McGill and Frank O'Connor managed to work around frequent rain interruptions to complete a happy and enthusiastic weekend with 73 species identified.

Alasdair Bulloch - Chairman - Great Western Woodlands Committee

Proposed program for Spring 2021

September 6 - 8 Karroun Hill

Karroun Hill is the survey area which is the nearest to Perth. Large areas suitable for camping, marvellous Salmon Gum woodlands and a variety of other habitats like Acacia, Callitris, Eucalyptus and mallee. Birds you may see include Australian Bustard, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Malleefowl and Black Honeyeater. Part of the survey route follows the Vermin Proof Fence.

October 18 - 22 Helena and Aurora Range, followed by Jilbadji Nature Reserve.

Helena and Aurora Range lies north-east of Southern Cross, and is a magnificent banded ironstone formation with spectacular rock formations and scenery. Salmon Gum woodlands, shrubland, mallee and spinifex, together with a large range of bird species occur here. Possibilities include Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Rufous Fieldwren, Shy Heathwren and Western Yellow Robin.

Jilbadji has a range of habitats varying from woodland to shrubland and spinifex. Three sheltered campsites and

plenty of other camping spots are available. Malleefowl and Emu have been recorded, along with Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Western Rosella and Southern Whiteface, plus twelve species of raptor. Lake Cronin is an ephemeral freshwater lake, which, when it has water in it, can host thousands of waterbirds, including Pink-eared Duck, Freckled Duck, grebes and herons. Picnic tables are available, but no camping is allowed at the lake.

October 26 - 29 Dundas Nature Reserve

Dundas Reserve survey area follows the line of the Old Telegraph Track through salt lakes, woodlands and shrublands. Various camping spots may be found plus relics of the old days of the telegraph line. Interesting birds recorded here include Australian Bustard, Black-eared Cuckoo, Western Yellow Robin and Copper-backed Quail-thrush. This area has hosted a large number of raptors, from kestrels, harriers and kites, to eagles, as well as up to fifteen different species of honeyeaters when flowering occurs.

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Group Touring Schedule

2021 TOURS

OCT- Top End Birding & Photography Tours
NOV

2022 TOURS

APR Kimberley Landscape Photo Workshop 5 Days
MAY East Kimberley Bird Photography Tour 5 Days
JUN Kakadu Birdwatching Tours 3-5 Days
JUL Northern Territory Naturalist Tours 1-5 Days
AUG Tropical Bird Photography Expedition 9 Days
AUG Top End Finch Frenzy 7 Days
AUG Northern Australia Outback Birding 8 Days
(Darwin to Mount Isa)
SEPT Kakadu Bird Photography Workshop 5 Days
SEPT Arnhem Land Photography Workshop 5 Days

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Book Review

'BIRDS OF THE PERTH HILLS' by Talitha Huston

Birds of the Perth Hills, authored by Talitha Huston, is a 110-page guide to the avifauna of the Perth Hills, as the title suggests. The text contains species accounts for the numerous species of birds found in the Perth Hills, with accompanying photographs. The photographic skills of Ms Huston are exceptional.

The introduction of the text elucidates that Ms Huston commenced writing the text at the age of fourteen, having finished the text at the age of seventeen. Texts written by minors are few and far between, as it is no easy feat to write and publish a text.

Birds of the Perth Hills is particularly well suited to photographers, with Ms Huston including a number of photographic tips at the beginning of the book, as well as general photographic tips within each species account. A "Skittish Rating" is also to be seen throughout the book, providing a general indication of how easy or difficult it may be to approach a species and photograph it.

Each species account includes the diet of a species, how to determine which bird of a species is male or female (if the species is sexually dimorphic), the current conservation status, the life span of the species, and their breeding period. This information is rather interesting, and not something that one would necessarily ponder on when observing a bird. Thus, the information provided in the text could perhaps add to one's knowledge of bird species and their habits rather than just their identification.

A quick reading of Birds of the Perth Hills will reveal some errors in spelling and grammar, range maps, scientific names and species names. Each error is easily rectifiable – I am certain that these errors will be fixed when the next edition or revision of this text is released, if that is planned. Bird taxonomy can be difficult to navigate, and Ms Huston has performed satisfactorily in ensuring that the taxonomy is

consistent and for the most part correct, throughout the text.

The text is spiral bound, with the paper relatively thick, ensuring the longevity of any individual copy of the text. Birds of the Perth Hills is 150 mm by 210 mm and weighs 290 grams, small and light enough to carry with you while you may be walking in the Perth Hills and appreciating the scenery and birdlife.

In closing, Talitha Huston is to be commended for her work and high-quality photographs within Birds of the Perth Hills, and I look forward to the release of the next edition or revision of the text.

Drew Davison



Talitha Huston with her book Birds of the Perth Hills. Photo by Bob Huston

Culjum House

Culjum House is a Bird Watchers Lodge and secluded lovingly restored heritage listed cottage built in the 1850s by an Apothecarist. Situated on a picturesque farming property on the Peel inlet only an hour south of Perth, it provides a fully equipped self-contained 2 bedroom cottage that enables the perfect environment to relax and reconnect, whilst being immersed in nature.

Perfectly located for bird watchers and nature lovers, there is an abundance of bird life to enjoy. There are over 130 different species of native and migratory birds, where the Peel-Harvey Estuary has been classified by the Ramsar Convention as a Wetland of International Importance.

You will find Culjum House listed on Airbnb, however for best available rates please contact us directly at:

culjumhouse@plpr.com.au



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.com.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 17th July.

Highlights

The major highlight was an Amur Falcon found on West Island in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in early June. This represents a first for Australia if accepted by the national rarities committee.

As usual, winter brought some interesting seabird records brought in by stormy weather systems. Unusually for winter though, the most unusual of these was a pair of Lesser Frigatebirds found along the Perth coast following the passage of a low pressure system in June. This system originated in warmer waters to the north-west in the Indian Ocean, rather than the usually southerly lows and cold fronts. Another frigatebird was seen a few days later but not identified to species level. A Royal Albatross, probably a Northern Royal, was seen from Cape Naturaliste during the passage of a cold front in July, while a Common Diving-Petrel was found ashore in Albany following a system earlier in July.

Scarlet-chested Parrots are being reported relatively regularly from the Great Western Woodlands, but good numbers in a very accessible area at Credo Station drew a number of observers to see these stunning but elusive parrots, which were still being reported as we go to press.

METROPOLITAN (UBD Street Directory)

Brush Bronzewing – 1, 30/06/21, Kings Park (Kings Park) – TGT (rare in the metropolitan area; photographs)

Red-tailed Tropicbird – 1, 29/04/21, Hillarys Boat Harbour (Hillarys) – DM (rare in the south-west)

Fork-tailed [Pacific] Swift – 1, 20/05/21, Lake Baghdad (Rottnest Island) – BR (rare migrant to the south-west)

Antarctic/Salvin's Prion – 1 beach-washed alive, taken into care, 16/07/21, Perth area – via FiO (now scarce in south-west; possibly due to global declines or warming waters off Western Australian coast; photographs)

LESSER FRIGATEBIRD – 2, 10/06/21, Perth coast, tracked from Hillarys Boat Harbour (Hillarys) south to Rous Head (North Fremantle) – DM, BH *et al.* (vagrant this far south; following passage of low pressure system from north-west of Perth; photographs)

FRIGATEBIRD sp. – 1, 13/06/21, nr Burns Beach Café (Burns Beach) – MOM (any frigatebird spp. vagrant this far south; following passage of low pressure system from north-west of Perth; photographs)

Masked Lapwing – 2 ssp. *novaehollandiae*, 30/01-06/02/21, Loch McNess, Yanchep NP – MG *et al.* * 2 ssp. *novaehollandiae*, 12/02-16/04/21, Sun City Golf Course

(Yanchep) – MG (rare but increasing in south-west; photographs; records almost certainly involve same pair; see also WABN 177-178)

Spotted Harrier – 1, 19/05/21, Nowergup Lake (Nowergup) – MG (rare in Perth region)

SOUTH WEST (Shark Bay to Cape Arid)

ROYAL ALBATROSS sp. – 1 probable Northern Royal, 13/07/21, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) – DM *et al.* (rarely reported off Western Australia)

White-headed Petrel – 1, 15/06/21, Cave Point, Torndirrup NP (Albany) – SF * 1, 05/07/21; 1, 13/07/21, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) – DM *et al.* (uncommon)

Flesh-footed Shearwater – 1, 15/06/21, Cave Point, Torndirrup NP (Albany) – SF * 2, 05/07/21; 1, 12/07/21; 9, 13/07/21, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) – DM *et al.* (small numbers overwinter; count of 9 on 13th July may include first early returns)

Sooty Shearwater – 1, 05/07/21; 1, 12/07/21; 1-2, 13/07/21, Cape Naturaliste (Busselton) – DM *et al.* (scarce visitor to Western Australian waters; photographs of bird from 12/07)

COMMON DIVING-PETREL – 1 beach-washed alive, taken into care but later died, 04/07/21, Kalgan (Albany) – via FiO (rare visitor to WA waters; photographs)

ARID ZONE

Scarlet-chested Parrot – 3+, 30/05/21; 11+, 31/05/21; 3++, 06/06/21; 20+, 10/06/21; 15, 16/06/21; 2 males, 1 female, 04/07/21, Credo Station (Coolgardie) – CP, FO *et al.* (scarce, but increasingly regularly reported in Great Western Woodlands; photographs)

Western Whistler – 1 adult male, 11/07/21, 40 km NW of Newman (East Pilbara) – ASR (1st record for the Pilbara; photographs)

KIMBERLEY

Common Redshank – 1, 22/04/21, King River Rd Causeway (Wyndham-East Kimberley) – PV (rare migrant to Western Australia; rarely reported away from Broome/Roeback Bay; photographs)

Dusky Honeyeater – 1, 27/06/21, Cave Spring Rd, Kununurra (Wyndham-East Kimberley) – SS *et al.* (rarely reported in WA; photographs)

Eurasian Tree Sparrow – 1, 12/06/2021, Wyndham town oval (Wyndham-East Kimberley) – SA (vagrant to Western Australia, likely ship-assisted)

COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

AMUR FALCON – 1, 03-06/06/21, near airport, West Island – AJ, JS *et al.* (1st record for Australian territory; subject to BARC acceptance; photographs)

OBSERVERS

AJ = Ash James

ASR = Allan & Sandy Rose

BH = Benjamin Hicks

BR = Bill Rutherford

CP = Cameron Platell

DM = Dan Mantle

FO = Frank O'Connor

FiO = Fiona O'Sullivan

JS = Joanne Soderlund

MG = Martin Greenwood

MOM = Matthew O'Meagher

PV = Peter Valentine

SA = Sue Abbotts

SF = Stewart Ford

SS = Steven Spragg

TGT = Tim Graham-Taylor

BirdLife WA Committees

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Winter Bird Class was booked out (50 places) and despite the requirement to wear masks, 90% of registered people turned up on the day! The majority were not BirdLife members and all three speakers were rated highly for their talks. The hardworking Sales team sold over \$600 worth of merchandise. Clearly this event, which was last held in 2019, can still draw the numbers and hopefully has encouraged new members to join.

Community talks and walks have continued throughout the last months, when restriction allowed, and the committee has developed a program of a talk, show and tell and colouring-in package suitable for pre-primary children. This was successfully piloted at Kensington Pre-Primary School last month for 75 children aged 5-6 years. The talk was followed by walks with the BirdLife's children sized binoculars. The feedback was very positive and the team of five was deemed to be amazing.

Lorraine Marshall, Chair CEC

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SECRETARY

BirdLife Western Australia is seeking an Executive Committee Secretary.

Hours: approx. 15 hours a month (1x2-hour meeting monthly, plus meeting preparation and producing minutes. Annual General Meeting held in February).

Function/Role:

- Scheduling Executive Committee meetings and Annual General Meeting
- Collation and distribution of meeting papers
- Recording minutes of Executive Committee meetings, ensuring their accuracy and distribution
- Following up actions with Executive Committee members between meetings
- Ensuring BirdLife WA is meeting the requirements and policies of both BirdLife WA and BirdLife Australia, particularly the 'Network Governance and Policies Document'
- Performing other ad hoc administrative duties as the need arises (may include checking BirdLife WA email account and forwarding enquiries to relevant committee members for response).

Key responsibilities

- Ensure compliance with the Constitution of BirdLife Australia
- Attendance at monthly Executive Committee meetings and Annual General Meeting
- Be informed of the work of BirdLife Australia and publicly support and promote it.

General responsibilities:

- Understand strategic, operational, and financial decision making, as appropriate
- Assist the Chair or Vice Chairs, where required
- Provide support to the Executive Committee on compliance with policy and procedure.

Qualifications/Skills and experience:

Ideal candidates will have:

- Previous experience as a meeting secretary (desirable)
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Excellent organisation skills
- Good computer skills.

Please forward your application and resume to the Joint Chair, Dr Beth Walker at bethwalker.bwvicechair@birdlife.org.au

MOVING TO AN ON-LINE BOOKING SYSTEM: OUR REQUIRED RESPONSE FOR THE CONTINUOUS COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS.

As you are all aware, Perth went into Phase 1 restrictions, followed very quickly by a full lockdown at the end of June 2021. These two events coincided with a campout, our monthly Monday meeting and an excursion. As we are currently using a manual booking system for campouts and have no booking system for excursions and the monthly meeting, several different members needed to be involved with cancelling two of the events. This took a lot of volunteer time on a Sunday and the people were only informed that the June monthly meeting was cancelled on the Monday morning when the office was open. There were numerous telephone calls on Monday morning to check if the meeting was on, despite being in lockdown.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 situation is not going to change in the short term, and we need a better system of informing and updating members in regard to the status of events.

The Executive Committee of BirdLife WA has made the decision to put all events and activities onto Eventbrite. We do understand that this might cause some people some difficulty but we do not have any option. We intend to phase this change in over the next few months, with the aim of having people attending the October monthly meeting, booking on-line. We are working closely with the excursions committee to introduce on-line bookings for excursions as soon as possible. All 2022 campouts will be booked on-line.

There are benefits to having an on-line booking system, in particular being able to contact everyone at the same time to save confusion. It also gives us the ability to alter or amend any details, such as change of excursion venue immediately and again, everyone is given the same information at the same time.

We sincerely hope that everyone understands that we have not taken this decision lightly, but in this new COVID-19 world, the safety and security of the membership is paramount

BirdLife WA Executive Committee

WA Regional Groups

ALBANY BIRD GROUP

MAY OUTING – TWIN CREEKS CONSERVATION RESERVE

This reserve, one of our favourite places for outings, had benefited from recent rain. Yet, we initially seemed to struggle in our quest to find birds when we explored the trails of the reserve. Elegant Parrot, a species we had always recorded in good numbers in the past, was absent. While we did find all other parrot species we usually record there, including Regent Parrot, their numbers appeared quite low. Perhaps it was not surprising that we failed to locate Painted Button-quail and Western Yellow Robin. A Scarlet Robin eventually turned up and the total species count for the day was a mere 36. To our delight we heard the call of an Australian Owlet-nightjar close to one of the trails. We checked some of the hollows visible from the trail, but were unable to see from where the bird was calling.

JUNE OUTING – KAMBALLUP NATURE RESERVE

A rather cool and overcast morning required a fair amount of effort to find birds as they were pretty quiet when we arrived at Kamballup. We explored a track leading up a hill where we encountered a pair of white-tailed black-cockatoos, but were unable to determine with certainty to which species they belonged. White-browed Scrubwren, Weebill and a few Red Wattlebirds were not enough to warrant further exploration, so we made our way back to the road and then explored the track along the Kalgan River, which held plenty of water after recent rains. We found several duck species and a few coots in the wide part of the river. We slowly ticked off the local parrot species, but 'dipped' on the Regent Parrot. Singing Honeyeaters were quite plentiful as were Weebills. Walking back to the parking area we had good views of a pair of Restless Flycatcher and a Grey Shrike-thrush. After morning tea we moved on and found that birds were more cooperative at the Kalgan River near Syred Road, where we quickly saw a whole host of bush birds. Waterbird numbers on the river were low with only a few ducks and coots and a lone Little Pied Cormorant present. A large puddle, which had formed after recent rains, proved popular with half a dozen different species including Western Gerygone which we had never before observed taking a dip.

Our July outing had to be cancelled due to the severe weather warning in place. Anyone planning to visit Albany in the near future, please note that it is very wet everywhere, making access to some popular birding places difficult. There has been major flooding in the Elleker area, for example. The boardwalk to the Lake Seppings bird hide sustained damage in a recent storm and it is currently impossible, even in gumboots, to negotiate the flooded parts of the Lake Seppings bird walk.

Insert attached photo if you like

Lake Seppings Bird Walk under water. Photo: Albany Bird Group

UPCOMING OUTINGS

Outings will take place on Tuesday, 14 September, 12 October and 9 November. More details about destinations, where to meet, etc., will be made available on 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 get in touch for further information.

Anne Bondin

BIRDLIFE BUNBURY

OUR TENTH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

2021 marks our tenth year, having evolved in August 2011 from an education weekend with BirdLife WA when we were visited by Sue Mather, Rod Smith, Brice Wells from Perth and Dick Rule and Bill Russell from Peel Bird Observers' Group, who gave inspiring presentations. I convened the weekend, finding a venue and promoting it.

It was popular, with 50 people attending. Many are active in 'the flock'. I became Convenor and have remained in the role.

The Mandurah Peel Group's boots and binoculars in the field, with BYO morning or afternoon tea, model of monthly birding excursions and sometimes more became our model too. Since then, BirdLife Bunbury has lodged around 110 bird lists with Birdata.

Our notifications e-list has grown to around 150, including some friends who like to learn about our activities and our area's birds through our newsletters. Some are natural resource management agencies and staff. Some are BirdLife WA members. Some are local government and their staff. Around 45 - 50 of us are active birders, but not all attend every excursion.

The education weekend's presentations set the tone of respect towards birds and their immeasurable benefits in the world around us. Conservation became a key focus from the outset.

Many friendships have developed among us over the years. Conservation, our love for birds and information-sharing remained our focus.



Australian Shelduck pair in flight at Stirling Wetlands. Photo by Mark Locker

APRIL – BUNBURY TUART FOREST

This is at the southern end of Ocean Drive in south Bunbury and a special favourite of mine. In 2000 a group of us saved this remnant forest from development. I am still astonished that we saved this forest with its ancient trees and forest understory!

We did not see many species, but the occasion was special in that we had the little bush birds and bird song accompanying us almost the entire walk. Grey Fantail heralded the presence of the LBBs with its distinctive seven-note call.

The highlight that took our collective breaths away was indisputably a pair of Scarlet Robins along the pathway, basking nearby in a patch of afternoon sunlight.

WA Regional Groups, ctd

MAY - PULTANAEA LOOP, COLLEGE GROVE

In uncertain weather, a small BirdLife Bunbury team led by Richard Routh spent a two hour walk around Manea Park's 2.4 km loop.

Just 14 bird species were recorded. Again, it was quality, not quantity of species. At the start of the walk, eight Red-tailed Black Cockatoos flew over into the forest. The highlight at the end of the trail was seeing a Western Yellow Robin sitting very still and singing. Mid-way into the walk a pair of Scarlet Robins appeared in a Peppermint tree. The birds seen were in corridors of bush enjoying the sunlight.

Richard said, "For those birders who missed the survey, take yourself up to Manea Park with your binoculars and have a walk around the loop. There will be a Rufous Whistler waiting for you and robins too".



White-bellied Sea-eagle at Stirling Wetlands. Photo by Carol Strang

JUNE – STIRLING WETLANDS VIA CAPEL

This wonderful winter wetland lies behind Peppermint Beach village, near the ocean. Highlights were great sightings of raptors, including a Wedge-tailed Eagle perched nearby, and Little Eagle. Our photographer had a field day with photogenic conditions and a variety of birdlife to find and focus upon including a Yellow-billed Spoonbill displaying nuptial feathers.

Over 455 birds counted, and 34 species.

(ML's photos of pairs of ducks show clearly the distinctive male and female markings)

Bruce Buchanan added these notes that will interest WABN readers:

There were two Little Eagles flying overhead at one point, lower than the first sighting and with markings very clearly seen. Little Eagle is stated to be 'common' over the Coastal Plain, although I have only seen the species four times in 20 years.

Also present were two young, small Grey Butcherbirds, perching and feeding only five metres away. Two adult Grey Butcherbirds flew into the area and the two smaller birds immediately flew to them. Young butcherbirds are stated



Western Yellow Robin singing at Pultanaea Walk. Photo by Mark Locker

to often stay with their parents and help feed the next generation (perhaps learning parenthood?) and this would seem to be what we saw. It is the first time I have observed this.

Sue Kalab, Convenor

CAPE TO CAPE BIRD GROUP

All excursions are advertised in the Cape to Cape Bird Group newsletter (see publications on BirdLife WA website), may be advertised on BirdLife WA E-news and are for BirdLife Australia members, supporters and the general public. If you wish to be on the newsletter mailing list and/or monthly seabird charter list, contact Christine Wilder cwilderone@yahoo.com.au

EXCURSION REPORT, BIRDBLITZ AMBERGATE RESERVE, BUSSELTON, 18 APRIL

Around the end of April, National Volunteer Week 2021 recognised the major contribution made by volunteers Australia-wide. The volunteers at the Busselton Naturalists Club deserve accolades for their dedication to the management of the Ambergate Reserve over a period of around 33 years. Some of the various projects and tasks carried out on the reserve over time include plant research, fauna surveys (including bat species), fire management, foot bath maintenance for control of dieback, possum nest box installation, weed control, revegetation, trimming track vegetation, name tags on plants, rubbish collection, and feral bee control.

Ambergate Reserve is an island of bushland divided into four sections by cross-roads, surrounded by paddocks with no corridors of vegetation leading to it. Connecting each section are four kilometres of walk trails. Twenty-one of us met at the reserve for the BirdBlitz and Cape to Cape Bird Group members volunteered to lead four survey teams. The bird list stood at 82 species before we started out with a total of 35 species recorded on the day. A full count was not undertaken as our survey areas were close together and there would have been considerable overlap, however we did count in the SE section. Prizes were handed out to Karen and Paul for best dressed volunteers and gifts were presented by Bernie and exchanged by Bernie and Christine. Later, bird photographs were sent and as usual the decision for the photography prize was too difficult, as they were a wonderful example of the birds on the day, so each will receive a prize - Golden Whistler by Carolina Masters and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos by Alfred Lau. Thanks so much to Bernie Masters and the Busselton Naturalists Club for inviting us and to team leaders and members of both organisations for contributing to a very enjoyable morning.

INVESTIGATIONS FROM AUGUSTA BOAT HARBOUR AND RETURN, 15 MAY

Every day out on the ocean is exciting and this bird charter on board "Diversion" was no exception. The north easterly wind, at 18 knots, was a little stronger than forecast, meaning there was a bit of chop. However, once past the lighthouse on the west coast it was cruisy with a little cold spray to keep our group of twelve on our toes.

Heading west from Deepdene, one of the first birds seen was a Brown Skua, then a second skua joined it close to the boat. When close you can almost feel the power of these large solid birds. Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses were seen in the distance but were giving the skuas a wide berth. As we headed south-west and finally turned towards the lighthouse, several albatrosses joined us – Indian Yellow-nosed and Black-browed – with one magnificent mature Black-browed Albatross sitting on the water next to us. A single Flesh-footed Shearwater flew by with no other shearwaters seen at all. The ocean temperature in the past few months has been noticeably warm when swimming, an indicator perhaps for shearwaters feeding ability? We passed Seal Island where only a small number of gulls was counted and on our way to St. Alouarn Island, we stopped to watch about a dozen Wilson's Storm-Petrels skipping across the ocean surface after food. It was a treat to watch these tiny birds at the back of the boat, flitting back and forth while feeding, with bait fish and a dolphin in the vicinity. Not a lot of birds were seen on or around St. Alouarn Island, but next door on Flinders Island were around 120 Crested Terns and 66 fur seals lounging about, while Australasian Gannets were keeping close to a small fishing boat nearby.

Some on board were taking photos while others just enjoyed the view. Thanks to David Muller for an exhilarating trip into which was packed so much – awesome birds and awesome scenery. We now have been surveying for two years. We were looking forward to participating in the Blessing of the Fleet and the Whalesong Festival at the Augusta Boat Harbour.

EXCURSION REPORT, BIRDBLITZ THE RIDGE – GNARABUP, 23 MAY

The weather report was ominous, with a storm warning for 11:00 am, but our small group of six, including new members, was lucky with the lightning and thunder overhead only when we returned to the car park at the end. We commenced walking along the northern section of the Cape to Cape Track from Rainbow Cave Road (near Yates Road) and completed a rectangular circuit walk past the tank and communications tower back to our cars. There was no blossom whatsoever, and the forest seemed completely devoid of any birds, so our attention was focussed more on orchids and fungi. Thanks to Ann Storrie who knows a great deal about orchids, finding and identifying them for us. A feeding flock of four Varied Sittellas and several Silvereyes were seen at the beginning of the walk. Two Emus walked slowly ahead of us and there were several other species seen and heard. An unidentified bird of prey flew quickly out of sight in the grey mist west of the tower.

A beautiful walk – shame there weren't more birds on the day.

INVESTIGATIONS FROM AUGUSTA BOAT HARBOUR AND RETURN, 26 JUNE

The long-range weather forecast was so bad that we postponed our planned trip out until the following week and then we were lucky to squeeze it in as the following day

was gale force winds, heavy rain and wild storms all day. On the day our group of eleven as if we were in the tropics with warm sun and aqua ocean. Our special guest was Lynnath Beckley, Emeritus Professor (Marine Science) at Murdoch University, who provided us with information on the Leeuwin Current and other topics, and a link to the IMOS website for Ocean Currents: <http://oceancurrent.imos.org.au/>

(Just click on the whole of Australia image; specific areas will pop up).

Due to the wind direction, we headed towards the west coast, passing Seal Island and the lighthouse. A whale was immediately seen, two more performing and another giving a huge tail slap, a total of five Humpback Whales altogether. But we weren't chasing whales and came upon three juvenile Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses sitting on the water, with one feeding on a cuttlefish, later adding two Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses to the tally. We headed south in an arc cutting across to Spout Rock, between Flinders Island and SE Rocks, around to St. Alouarn Island, lastly to Seal Island. A Brown Skua was seen alongside a small dinghy with fisher folk on board. We couldn't make radio contact to ask if we could go closer to investigate if it was the same bird with a numbered band that had been seen and photographed earlier in the month by Dean McFaull. No shearwaters or storm-petrels recorded but there were quite a lot of gannets, some sitting in small rafts and others diving. The usual terns and cormorants were counted on the islands, with one small bird amongst the Crested Terns – an overwintering Ruddy Turnstone. Five dolphins at the harbour entrance to top off the morning.

We had a number of bird photographers on board and it was a little disappointing not seeing more pelagic species, but we have to accept what we find. Thanks to David Muller for another interesting area search off Cape Leeuwin.

Christine Wilder, Convenor CCBG

EXCURSION REPORT, BIRDBLITZ THE RIDGE, NORTH FROM COWARAMUP BAY, 27 JUNE

GRACETOWN GRIZZLER - We should have heeded the early morning shepherd's warning: the sparkling sunrise producing azure colours beneath the looming bank of rolling clouds. No rain yet, so maybe, just maybe it would hold out till later in the day. What optimists! After the 45-minute drive to Gracetown from Augusta things did anything but improve. Were we mad? Absolutely. The carpark was a lake of deep puddles, rising, as four of us forlornly sat waiting for any other crazily keen birders. Nothing for it - headed for Gracie's Café for hot coffee solace - and home again. Bird count: one Pacific Black Duck swimming round and round in an ever-deepening puddle on the track to the car park.

Mary Whittall

DENMARK BIRD GROUP

WILSON INLET: THE SANCTUARY STORY

Whilst the mouth of Wilson Inlet at Denmark will be familiar to many as a scenically beautiful place in our landscape, it is also known to many BirdLife members and visitors that it supports a wonderful variety of shorebirds, seabirds and waterbirds.

Bird surveys have been recorded in Wilson Inlet since 1982 in Birddata and its previous versions with most of these surveys at the eastern end (Morley Beach). In 2009, monthly surveys commenced of the bar and delta area to conform with similar surveys at Morley Beach. Other sites

around the Inlet were surveyed (and still are) but it became evident that the two most important sites for shorebirds were Morley Beach and the bar/delta precinct based on populations and species diversity. Along with bird surveys, in 2011-2013 this conclusion was supported by benthic invertebrate surveys over the two sites. This provided details of the food resource present at each site with some differences in invertebrate abundance and diversity recorded between each.

Wilson Inlet is well recognised for its important role in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway where it attracts over 20 species of migratory shorebirds with several regularly recorded with significant population levels (e.g. Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Common Greenshank) and five listed as either Critically Endangered or Endangered.

In 2014, recognising the importance of the bar and delta area for birdlife, a proposal was put to the Shire by local BirdLife members to have a bird sanctuary declared over that entire area. The proposal was defeated by councillor votes due mostly to strong opposition by dog walkers who had used the area for many years and who saw a bird sanctuary as a threat to their dog exercising activities. Strangely enough, we saw dog exercising as a threat to the bird sanctuary.

Although the proposal to protect the entire bar and delta area was logical and sound in conservation terms given the extent and utilisation by the birdlife, it was simply not achievable practically at the time due to the opposition by dog walkers. The strategy adopted, albeit reluctantly, was one of "sharing the space".

At that stage we had not assembled an evidence-based case which was sufficiently compelling to convince the Shire of the need for protection of the birdlife. The Shire then formally declared the area to be a dog exercising area under pressure from dog walkers, which also largely reflected the views of Council and staff at the time. In making the declaration the Shire omitted to undertake any prior review of the environmental values of the area (we would like to think that omission would not occur again here or elsewhere).

In consideration of the Shire's action, tacit permission was given to erect temporary fencing to protect nesting Red-capped Plovers and Australian Pied Oystercatchers but the fencing was not always respected by dog walkers in controlling their dogs. The temporary fencing continues to be installed seasonally.

Two necessary actions became evident, firstly the need for better community support and secondly that we needed to improve the evidence to support a formal sanctuary for the birds.

Increased community support came from rounding up all the BirdLife members in Denmark, about fifteen in number at the time. In July 2016 the Denmark Bird Group was formed as a means of attracting greater community membership and support which slowly happened when the sanctuary mission became better known.

Although the need for the bird sanctuary drove the formation of the local bird group, the additional aim was to raise the community's level of knowledge and awareness of the local and regional birdlife. A particular emphasis has been upon Wilson Inlet which, though dear to the Denmark community, was not well known for its highly significant role as a wetland home to thousands of birds of over seventy species, especially to migratory shorebird species being probably the least known.

The compilation of survey data dating from 2009 began at the end of 2017 from which population trends for shorebirds (resident and migratory separately), seabirds and waterbirds were extracted from Birddata for the nine-

year period for the area of the delta extending about 1.5km northward from the sandbar at the mouth. At the same time, the proposal for the sanctuary was compiled, providing evidence-based justification for the sanctuary to be established. The evidence for all bird groups showed their populations were declining for which recreational disturbance was given as a significant contributing cause. The value of the data gathered over this time proved to be fundamental to the proposal; without the data the cause would most likely have been lost.

The sanctuary proposal was submitted to the Shire in May 2018. At that time the Shire personnel and some of the councillors had changed and were somewhat more receptive to the proposal. However, the resistance of a vocal minority of dog walkers influenced the Shire to remain tentative towards progressing the proposal amidst other development issues in the precinct being dealt with by the Shire.

In the last year and a half, the Shire senior management has changed again along with their attitude which is now altogether positive in acceptance of the sanctuary and is viewed as a benefit to the community (e.g. ecotourism and education) and of course to the birdlife.

Since the lodgement of the proposal in 2018, the Bird Group has been active in raising awareness within the community of the necessity to provide protection for the birdlife over the entire precinct with special emphasis on migratory shorebirds where there are three Critically Endangered and one Endangered species utilising the area. This activity included numerous presentations of the proposal at public meetings, to the Shire, to associated groups and to the local newspaper.

In May this year, seven years after the initial proposal, the Shire approved the sanctuary in principle by unanimous council vote. Discussions with the Shire are ongoing for the development of the infrastructure within the sanctuary as proposed by our Group.

The area of the sanctuary, whilst not large at around 12 ha, does include a significant area of the delta comprising open shallow water, deeper channels and sand banks, the mix of which varies with the season and the status of the bar, that is whether it is open or closed. It also includes the northern half of Prawn Rock Island and Tern Island, the former having sufficient sandy beach where nesting activity occurs for Red-capped Plovers and Australian Pied Oystercatchers. Tern Island has origins from remnant dredge spoil which has supported previous Fairy Tern breeding and where there is now consideration being given to rehabilitating the habitat to encourage further breeding.

The southern part of the delta and the bar will remain as a dog exercising area divided from the sanctuary to the north by a managed fence across the delta. As the water rises during winter until the bar is opened (by mechanical means normally around August), this fence will be removed coinciding with the departure of shorebirds and the sanctuary area will then be inaccessible to dogs.

The sanctuary (northern) portion of Prawn Rock Island, which includes plans for a bird observation hide/interpretive centre, will be separated by a permanent fence from the southern part of the island. The entire island is now prohibited to dogs other than allowing access on leash to the dog exercising area east of the island.

Negotiations are continuing with the Shire towards formal declaration of the sanctuary and establishment of parameters for the permanent fence, boardwalks, signage and the observation hide. Funding sources are also under investigation but are expected to be mainly from grants.

Brad Kneebone, Convenor, Denmark Bird Group

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Looking north from the Ocean Beach bar over Wilson Inlet. Photo by Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

ESPERANCE BIRD OBSERVERS' GROUP

Every second Sunday of each month, weather permitting, a small but enthusiastic group of Esperance Bird Observers' Group members and guests set out to a local location. Our birdwatching can range from bush birds and raptors to waders and shorebirds. The varied habitats we visit can be heathland (kwongan), mallee, open forest, pastureland, salt lakes, wetlands and beaches. They can be reserves, private properties, and Unallocated Crown Land.

On our last outing to Swan Lagoon and Truslove Reserves, north of Esperance, 24 species were seen or heard including Australian Ringneck (Port Lincoln), Fairy Martin, Varied Sittella, and Tawny-crowned, White-eared and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters.

We are an incorporated group so are required to have general meetings and an Annual General Meeting each year. We always take a picnic morning tea and lunch to our excursions so hold our meetings in a shady or sheltered spot. Our meetings are pretty informal, and we suspend 'standing orders' if a bird is sighted so discussion on its identity can take place.

We support the Eyre Bird Observatory with a donation each year and support is given, by members who can, to BirdLife and other projects such as the Shorebird and Hooded Plover Surveys, and the Great Cocky Count. The Esperance Bird Observers' Group through BirdLife Australia is the Guardian for the Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) of the Lake Warden suite of wetlands. A Health Check of the system is carried out each year at or near Easter and the data recorded.

Every few years a BirdLife WA campout is organised and enjoyed by metropolitan and other birders who attend. Our Western Australian endemics are usually spotted. It's such a thrill to observe species such as Red-eared Firetail, Red-capped Parrot, Gilbert's Honeyeater (aka Western White-naped), Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, Golden Whistler, Western Wattlebird and Western Spinebill plus western subspecies of Cape Barren Goose, Australian Magpie, Purple Swamphen and others.

We have a presence on Facebook as a public group and if you are visiting the Esperance area please contact us on 0428 325 021.

Jennifer Ford, Past President Esperance Bird Observers' Group

MANDURAH BIRD OBSERVERS GROUP

MAY, JUNE AND JULY OUTINGS

The May, June and July outings of the Mandurah Bird Observers Group were affected by extreme weather conditions but the enthusiasm of members did not deter them from enjoying our wonderful wetlands and bush environment.

The outing to the Len Howard Conservation Park on Friday 28th May was rewarding with 19 attending and 48 species observed. This interesting area embodies lakes and pristine bushland abutting the Peel Harvey Estuary. This area always has much to offer birding enthusiasts.

On 25th June the outing was to the St Ives Peninsula Reserve which surrounds the village I live in. It is a 4.5 hectare bush reserve with the Serpentine River on two sides and a lagoon, providing a healthy habitat for many water and land bird species. The 21 members who attended were able to observe some 46 species of birds.

The outing on Friday 23rd July was to Marlee Reserve, a bushland with a seasonal swamp. Although the weather forecast was not favourable, the seven who attended enjoyed a rain free period during the walk, but our luck ran out with a light shower just before finishing morning tea. Such is the spirit of our members who chanced the conditions. Only 27 species were observed but a bonus was a Scarlet Robin that was putting on a lovely display for us to observe.

On July 31st, nine people attended our outing at Wellard Wetlands. The weather forecast was not favourable, but we did not experience any rain and there were only a couple of short light showers that did not dampen our spirits. The lakes were brimming over with water which restricted access. However, 44 species were seen and on departing there were Straw-necked Ibis and Cattle Egret seen in a paddock opposite the Wellard Wetlands.

Bill King, Convener, Mandurah Bird Observers Group

WHEATBELT AVON BIRD GROUP

The following are extracts from the *Western Warbler*, the newsletter of the Wheatbelt Avon Bird Group.

RESERVE IN FOCUS

This quarter we are focussing on the Shires of Lake Grace and Kulin, which share the Dragon Rocks Nature Reserve, listed on Australia's Register of the National Estate as an area of significance for rare species of plants and animals. The rare Lake Varley Grevillea is found in this reserve, as well as the Malleefowl, Numbat, and other native mammals. The reserve takes its name from the Ornate Dragon which is found throughout the reserve.

It has also been identified as an important bird area because it supports populations of the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, Malleefowl, Western Rosella, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Purple-gaped Honeyeater, and Western Yellow Robin. My data indicate it has a bird list of about 60 species, although this could have been improved on since the late 1970s, and a plant list of 576, some of which are rare. The best time to visit would be spring due to plants flowering, however November is the recommended time by some people due to the spectacular displays of the flowering *Verticordia* species.

The reserve has an area of 30,203 ha which is of considerable size. So if you are in this part of Western Australia call in and have a look. Camping sites are limited, and it does not have any drop toilets. All amenities are available at Lake Grace, Kulin, and Hyden townsites.

Max Howard

A VISIT TO CENTRAL WHEATBELT RESERVES IN 2020

It was May 2020 and Western Australia was controlling the spread of Corona virus by restricting people to their regional areas. Toodyay Shire is in the wheatbelt region and as we live in this region, we decided to do a ten day birding trip to reserves in the northern part of the region.

Having driven through parts of the region to further destinations, we mapped out a route that included reserves set aside in the older inner part of the wheatbelt to the eastern edge, close to or abutting the Great Western Woodlands. We also tried to include some reserves that had a lake in case we returned to survey for birds when the lake contained water.

When we started out there were very few tourists, which felt great, but by the end of the trip the regional boundaries were open and more tourists were on the road.

Our first stop was Oak Park Reserve and the adjoining Walyormour Nature Reserve, north of Goomalling. Oak Park campsite has a small salt creek running next to it and emptying into Walyormour Lake which is a nature reserve. Seven Grey Teal, two White-faced Heron and a lone Black-fronted Dotterel were on the edge of a small shallow pool on the creek next to the campsite. Eighteen bush birds were seen including six Mulga Parrots and a couple of unidentified quail. An Australian Owlet-nightjar was heard at night.

Walyormour Lake is surrounded by dead tree trunks, salt bush and a bare area in the middle with taller native vegetation on the outer higher ground. In the middle area of the lake, 95 Red-capped Plovers were feeding and running across the dry surface.

The Mount Matilda walk in Wongan Hills Nature Reserve

was enjoyable for the 14 species of birds seen and the informative information along the walk. Tree Martins and Inland Thornbills were the most common birds seen.

From Wongan Hills we headed east, visiting Gatercole NR, a small reserve with very old unburnt vegetation. At Dingo Rock, three Chestnut-rumped Thornbills were seen having an intense 'fight' on the ground and at sunset, a male Hooded Robin and an Australian Hobby were seen hawking insects.

Vegetation at Manmanning NR had mature woodland with some mallee and scrub as well. Tree Martins were seen entering tree hollows, while the sound of Striated and Spotted Pardalotes' beaks closing could be heard as they fed on lerps. Twenty species of birds were seen here.

On the way to Manmanning Dam NR (vegetation similar to Manmanning NR) we were surprised to see a family of White-winged Fairy-wrens, in very little roadside vegetation at the corner of Ward Road and Dowering – Kalannie Road. The tall gum trees at both these reserves are old and the trees would provide good nesting hollows for birds. Mollering Lake is a big lake and only accessible from two points but was dry in the western half.

By the time we reached Beeringbooding Rock, which had the largest water storage tank in Australia when built in 1937, the regional boundary closures were lifted and several campers were at the campsite. The water tank is still used today, but used for farm spraying, etc. By now we were near the eastern edge of the wheatbelt and the vegetation was more like that of the Great Western Woodlands. We camped at Jouerdine NR for a couple of nights, amongst old Gimlet vegetation, where we saw 39 bird species.

Elachbutting Rock Reserve has a large campsite with a toilet and information, and a walk to a short narrow rock crevice and a lookout from the top of the rock made for an interesting area. Fourteen Major Mitchell's Cockatoos visited the campsite in the morning. The reserve's eastern side abuts the Great Western Woodlands.

Chiddarcooping NR is an interesting large reserve and has several vegetation types: mallee, tall heath to eucalypt woodland. We camped for two nights next to the start of a creek and a breakaway. Eucalypts grew in the creek valley and mallee and heath above the breakaway on sandy soils. Some of the 45 species of birds were Australian Owlet-nightjar heard at night, three Elegant Parrots that landed in the eucalypt trees with one looking at tree hollows for possible nesting, Southern Scrub-robin, White-eared and White-fronted Honeyeaters and 19 Striated Pardalotes that fed briefly in the eucalypt trees before flying east.

The lakes at Lake Champion NR were dry and the old vegetation looked a bit that way. We turned west and camped at Mount Marshall (near Bencubbin) and it was obvious the regional boundaries were open with seven other campers there. A flock of noisy Little Corellas greeted campers before sunrise the next morning. The walk around the base of the granite rock added more birds to the list, giving us a total of 27.

We had lunch amongst old Wandoo trees at Durokoppin NR, but few birds were seen. At Burges Spring NR we located a rock-lined well amongst the old vegetation. We enjoyed a walk around the hill area of Yorkrakine Rock NR and out on the flat areas, where mature Salmon Gums grow.

Seventeen reserves were visited with a total of 64 bird species seen. By May, flowering plants were few and with a long dry hot summer and autumn, we did not see as many honeyeaters as expected. Some reserves have very old vegetation which may be becoming senescent.

Allan and Sandy Rose

Members' Contributions

Olympic Lockdown

Mid-July and Australia is in a total lockdown. Covid? No Olympic, here we all are watching the television like hawks, waiting for another gold from one or more of our heroes to give us something more to crow about. A corvid lockdown? This year we have yet more new events in the Games, six in total, there's sports climbing, skateboarding, surfing, karate, baseball and softball. Some of them seem to be more like pastimes than sports but I think there's a very popular, skilful and potentially dangerous one that's still lacking. Birding! Think of it, the top birders from every corner of the world converge on the Olympic venue after winning the qualifying knockouts in their respective countries. Once at the finals each birder would go out to a selected venue accompanied by two expert birding judges from the host nation. Every sighting would have to be confirmed by at least one of the judges and the birder who comes back with the most sightings wins the gold medal. Of course, no playback would be allowed, and each birder would need to be drug tested; drugged up birders just cannot be tolerated!

There's no doubting that birding is popular and skilful, but potentially dangerous? Well, I certainly know of several incidents where birders have sustained injuries that required an ambulance and hospital treatment, and unlike other Olympic events it's also possible to get lost! I've personally taken part in two search parties looking for lost birders. So, extremely popular, skilful and with an element of danger. What more could be wanted?

I firmly believe that BirdLife Australia should put together a program and submit it to the IOC, International Olympic Committee that is, not the other one, and get something moving by the next Olympics.

And furthermore seeing that this idea emanates from me maybe I should get an honorary gold medal for thinking of it, 'cos I sure won't get one any other way!

Peter White

Rain and Red-necked Avocets

As the rain has continued throughout the winter months, many of the dry inland lakes have been filling up and providing breeding opportunities. I decided to check out some of the lakes.

On Wednesday 9th June 2021, I went to several of the salt lake systems 25 km north of Wongan Hills. A survey of the islands revealed 18 Red-necked Avocet nests at various stages, including six nests still under construction and 12 nests supporting eggs from one egg to full clutches of four eggs. I noted evidence that indicated a previous nesting attempt had failed due to flooding.

There were two eggs in separate nests that were partially under water and on another section of the island, a low lying section, there was evidence of four empty nests fully submerged under approximately 50 mm of water.

A visit to a nearby lake also revealed three fully developed chicks feeding with both parents.

A later visit to Lake Chillinup on Friday the 18th of June 2021 had 12 breeding pairs of Red-necked Avocet, with other pairs still arriving at the lake. A follow up visit to Lake Chillinup on the 9th of July showed that flooding had destroyed this colony, although many pairs had remained there and were observed building on higher ground. I estimated about 30 pairs were still present.

At Lake Grace on 10 July 2021, I found a large Red-necked Avocet breeding colony. The colony was east of the causeway and spread over four islands. There were nests everywhere. I estimated 300 plus breeding pairs. There were six pairs of adult Banded Stilt mixed in with the Red-

necked Avocets on one of the islands.

Driving back past the Pingrup Lakes I noticed that these had two to three breeding pairs at some of the lakes.

A follow up survey was conducted on the Red-necked Avocet breeding colonies in Lake Grace and Pingrup on the 17th July.

There were approximately 300 birds in the Lake Grace colony, nesting on six islands. The water levels had dropped since the last visit, allowing foxes to access the islands. Fresh fox prints around the nests indicated that they have removed most of the eggs as 100 nests were empty. Thirty active nests supported clutches ranging from two to five eggs per nest.

A pair of Silver Gull had recently arrived at the lake and were observed harassing the colony, and broken Red-necked Avocet eggs were located around the islands. This is usually a sign of Silver Gull predation.

Scattered pairs of Red-necked Avocets were nesting, all doing well with many clutches close to hatching, on most of the Pingrup Lakes.

I checked out many of the salt lakes north and south of Pingrup and saw no signs of Hooded Plovers on any of the lakes. Of interest, many of the duck species have arrived on lakes that support deep water, flooded paperbarks and samphire. The lake in Pingrup town site supported Pink-eared Ducks, Australasian Shoveler, Hardhead, Grey Teal, and Black-tailed Native-hen. Banded Plover was observed on most paddocks supporting low grasses and two nest were found with clutches of four eggs.

Steve Elson

Planned play

It is well known that corellas are playful birds, often to be seen tumbling on the ground, twirling on branches or wires and dangling by their beak or by one foot, usually interacting with other corellas. The play seems to flow spontaneously according to where the birds are and the willingness of others to join in.

At Bibra Lake on 24 June 2021 a friend and I observed a Little Corella dangling by one foot from the end of a pendulous frond of a Lemon-scented Gum. A wing was out and the body was jerking up and down spasmodically. Surely it was not stuck? Soon it became clear what was happening and it was something we had not seen before. The bird had twisted the pliant stem many times in one direction. Then it closed tail, wings and feathers in tightly, and, shaped rather like a skittle though with its head back and beak nearest to the ground, it began to spin, unwinding the twists and going faster at every turn (Figure 1). Afterwards, a little shake and it flew off to merge in amongst the 270 or so other corellas in the nearby trees. This looked like pure and planned fun for one.

Brenda Newbey



Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of a Little Corella at play.

Waterbirds at Hardy Inlet, Augusta, Western Australia. Part 3. Shorebirds

Introduction

The Blackwood River Estuary (Hardy Inlet) is located at the southern tip of Western Australia near the town of Augusta (34°18'53" S; 115°09'33" E).

The Blackwood River and Scott River discharge into the Hardy Inlet at Molloy Island and this water body flows through a channel that opens into the Southern Ocean at Flinders Bay (see Figure 1 and McFaul and Wilder (2020a)). The total surface area of the inlet is 20 square kilometres. Sediment deposited by the rivers flowing into the inlet creates extensive mudflats that are frequented by shorebirds. These are especially evident over summer when water levels drop. A study was undertaken from 2018 to 2021 to compare past shorebird populations at the Hardy Inlet with present populations. Parts of this study have been published previously: cormorants and herons were covered in Part 1 (McFaul and Wilder 2020a) and swans, ducks, gulls and terns in Part 2 (McFaul and Wilder 2020b).

Earlier studies of the shorebird populations at Hardy Inlet were conducted in 1974 and 1975 (Lane 1976). These studies were in response to proposed dredge mining for mineral sand deposits located within the estuary. The estuary was visited at monthly intervals from March 1974 to June 1975 inclusive (except for June 1974). The visits lasted for 3-6 days and were made during the latter half of each month. Three main shorebird feeding areas were identified. These were the tidal flats of the Lagoon located between Thomas Island and Island Point within the Hardy Inlet, the sandflat/samphire marsh area at the mouth of the Deadwater and lastly the Deadwater shoreline (Lane 1976).

We undertook a comparative study from November 2018 to June 2021 to establish what numbers and species of shorebirds still frequented the Inlet. In addition, we looked at population trends and which locations were frequented by shorebirds.

the Lagoon tidal mud flats between Thomas Island and Island Point (Figure 1). Only a partial shorebird count was held in January 2019, and counts were not held during August or September 2019.

A boat was critical in gaining access to the flocks of shorebirds feeding out on the mudbanks and in obtaining reliable data. Surveys were conducted in the early morning (7:30 am) and the late afternoon (5:00 pm). Counting started at Lion Island and proceeded through the Lagoon mud flats towards Molloy Island. Photographs and video were used as a supporting resource to assist in the verification of numbers and identification of species. The shorebirds were normally on the mudflats and islands on either side of the Lagoon channel (the "sticks"), although in late 2019 shorebirds started to frequent the Lion Island rocks and were found on the shore line around Point Irwin.

At high tides, when the mudflats were covered, some shorebirds, such as Red-necked Stint and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, diverted to the Lion Island rocks to roost. Water levels rose in winter and made the mudflats inaccessible to shorebirds which then moved to the river mouth sandflats. Shorebird surveys were conducted during the winter months when the mudflats were under water. A total of 175 surveys were conducted: 4 in 2018, 74 in 2019, 57 in 2020 and 40 in 2021. High water levels in the summer of 2020/2021 reduced the exposure of the mudflats and consequently resulted in lower shorebird numbers. These were due to high tides and episodes of heavy rain. There were occasions when shorebirds remained un-identified to species because they were too distant for positive identification.

2. Blackwood River Spit (34°19'28 S; 115°10'11 E)

Shorebirds were only monitored for a limited period at the Blackwood River Spit.

Christine Wilder conducted 30 shorebird surveys from March 2019 to December 2019 from the Colourpatch boat ramp car park looking towards East Augusta, the Deadwater, an area of sandbanks and the Augusta Spit, where the Blackwood River enters the ocean. Shorebirds diverted to the river mouth at high tides and in winter when rising water levels covered the mudflats, making feeding areas inaccessible.

3. Deere Street foreshore (34°19'52 S; 115°10'13 E)

Shorebirds were monitored intermittently at Deere Street foreshore over a number of years (2018-2021). The Deere Street foreshore fronts Flinders Bay and is subject to tidal fluctuations. The survey circuit commenced at Deere Street where it meets the foreshore then followed the beach towards the river mouth and back down the coast to Loch Street, returning back to finish at Deere Street. The foreshore consists of sandy beaches interspersed with granite boulder outcrops and there is a reef offshore. High tides left pools of water on the beach and during summer there were extensive seaweed banks on the beach. Jenny Kikeros looked after this study area and also conducted incidental shorebird surveys between Augusta and Cape Leeuwin.

Results and Discussion

A total of 21 shorebird species were recorded during the study period. Maximum monthly numbers are shown in Table 1. From zero to 16 species were recorded per month, with highest numbers of species (16) in December 2019 and January 2020. Migratory shorebirds arrive in force from October onwards.

1. Hardy Inlet mudflats

Shorebirds that were not seen during recent surveys but were present in 1974-1975 were Double-banded Plover, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Terek Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper. Shorebirds that were encountered during the



Common Greenshank. Photo by Dean McFaul

Methods

The focus of our surveys was on the Hardy Inlet, but some additional shorebird sites were covered, although less frequently. These were the Blackwood River spit and Deere Street foreshore, with some notes also provided for the coastline between Augusta and Cape Leeuwin and offshore islands.

1. Hardy Inlet mudflats (34°17'06 S; 115°10'45 E)

The counts commenced in November 2018 and were conducted on a near weekly basis with the main focus on

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Table 1. Highest monthly shorebird counts at Hardy Inlet, 2018-2021

Species	2018			2019			2020												2021													
	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	20	25		38	1	4	9	3	5			7	12	20	36	40	8		3	7	2	5	10	21	19	14	15	29	8	4	8	
Sooty Oystercatcher																											2					
Banded Stilt							1	3						43		5																
Red-necked Avocet	46	42		150	98	180	159	200	74			60	144	37		58		3				19	9	57	20							
Pied Stilt				11											4	25	15	4								1	5					
Grey Plover		3		4			5					4	8	3	24	9	18	10	5	7		6		1	15	30	17	1	4			
Pacific Golden Plover							1							2	11	2	21									2	8					
Red-capped Plover					7		65	1				1	1	20	27	1	4	3	7					2		2	3					
Greater Sand Plover														5	1																	
Bar-tailed Godwit	3	2					1					4	6	6	3		1	2						3	4		4					
Black-tailed Godwit													1	3	2	2																
Ruddy Turnstone													6																			
Great Knot	4			6			12	9				6	2	5	15	3	1	1						1	3	7						
Red Knot	3			40			15	6				30	30	18	32						2		8		11	10						
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper												21	31	134	202	198	56							2		14	50					
Curlew Sandpiper				1			2					3		2	1								1		3	2						
Red-necked Stint					40		107	34				169	107	290	228	123	152	81					46	18	49	163	102	23				
Sanderling				20			3						2	9	36	96	55	10						4		32	16	3	18			
Terek Sandpiper																																
Common Sandpiper				1											2											1						
Grey-tailed Tattler													17																			
Common Greenshank				3				8					2	6	9	52	19									5	7					
Unidentified shorebirds			125	140	50	128							300	70	201	43								45			80					
Number of species	5	4		10	4	2	12	8	2			10	14	16	16	13	11	8	3	2	1	4	2	9	6	6	15	9	4	3	1	0
	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
n/s = month not surveyed			n/s							n/s	n/s																					

Hardy Inlet shorebirds. Photo by Dean McFaul



recent surveys 2018-2021 but were not seen in 1974-1975 were Banded Silt, Red-necked Avocet and Black-tailed Godwit. The current surveys found that the Red-necked Avocet is a regular visitor for most of the year and flock sizes reach up to 200 birds (Table 1).

Shorebird species that showed an increase in numbers were Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt, Grey Plover, Red Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Sanderling. Australian Pied Oystercatchers congregate at the Inlet over summer and were most numerous between October and February. The presence of a flock of Sanderling on the Hardy Inlet mudflats is an unusual phenomenon as this is not their usual habitat. The Sanderling is a coastal shorebird that prefers the beaches. Jim Lane also made reference to this in his report, which confirms this Sanderling behaviour has been long standing at the Hardy Inlet.

During the study period a Red-necked Stint with black over white leg bands was seen, indicating that it was banded at Chongming Island, China (McFaul 2019).

Swan Lake and Deadwater were less attractive to shorebirds than in the years past. At Swan Lake, Sooty Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt and Common Greenshank were sighted.

The sandbanks at the river mouth are important to the local shorebirds especially when the Hardy Inlet mudflats are under water.

2. Blackwood River Spit

A range of shorebirds have been seen at the Blackwood River mouth and spit, such as Australian Pied Oystercatcher (27), Red-necked Avocet (150), Grey Plover (5), Red-capped Plover (1), Bar-tailed Godwit (1), Great Knot (38), Red Knot (1) and Red-necked Stint (7).

Solitary Bar-tailed Godwits were seen at the Blackwood River mouth and sand bars and were mainly present during the winter months (June to August). Grey Plover (5) were present over the winter months (June to August). A small flock of Great Knot (13-38) were present from August to October 2019. In late August 2020 a few Grey Plover and a Red Knot were seen at the river mouth.

The Australian Pied Oystercatcher was found breeding near the river mouth (east of the spit) in late August 2019. The breeding attempt had failed by early September 2019. Australian Pied Oystercatchers were present at the Hardy Inlet all year round and at the river mouth most of the year.

A Red-capped Plover nest with two eggs was found on 13 October 2020. It was located 50 m north of Jay's Beach and 4 m from the embankment at the river mouth.

The Blackwood River Spit is subject to intense recreational pressures over the summer period.

3. Deere Street foreshore

The ocean foreshore near Deere Street (Figure 1) is immediately south of the Blackwood River mouth and provides a diverse range of habitats for shorebirds.

The rock area to the south of the Deere Street foreshore is a favoured site for Common Sandpipers (2) as are the boat ramp (3) and the jetty in Augusta and the Flinders Bay Caravan Park foreshore. Common Sandpiper sightings were made between the months August to April (Wilder 2019a, 2020a, b).

Sooty Oystercatcher sightings come from a number of sites such as the beach at the end of Deere Street and June's Beach north-east of the Flinders Bay Caravan Park.

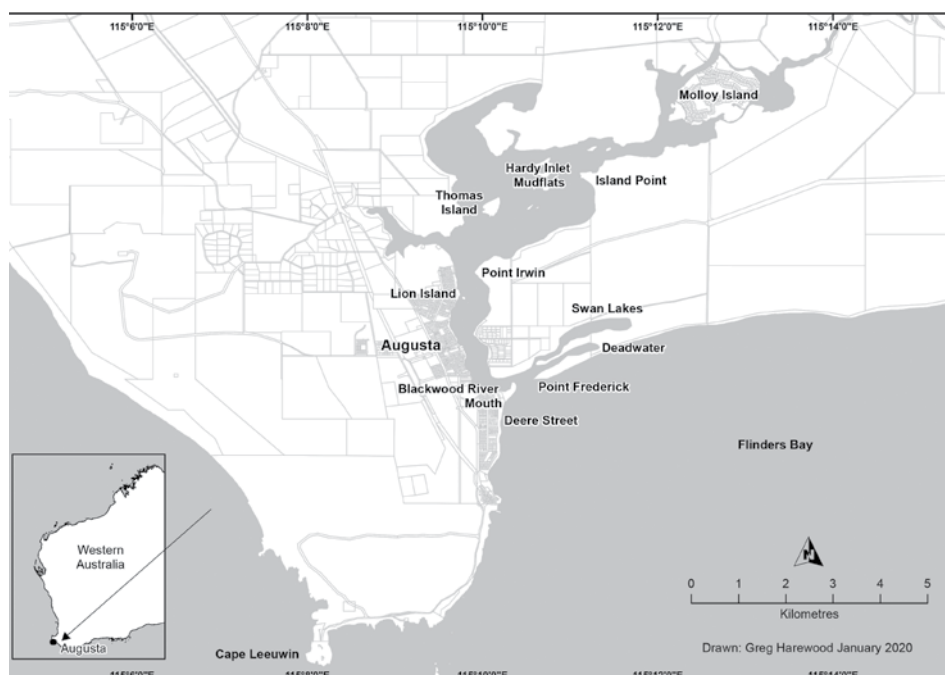


Figure 1. Lagoon tidal mud flats between Thomas Island and Island Point, Hardy Inlet, Augusta

On 6 September 2020 a pond had formed on the beach at Flinders Bay Caravan Park and 20 Australian Pied Oystercatchers and 24 Sooty Oystercatchers were attracted to this and the nearby rocks and seaweed piles. They remained there for a few weeks.

On 31 May 2021, at Deere Street beach there was a sighting of 25 Australian Pied Oystercatchers and ten Sooty Oystercatchers.

Sooty Oystercatchers and Australian Pied Oystercatchers have been observed foraging in the grass along Albany Terrace about 100 m north of the Caravan Park. This is a little grassy park area.

Red-capped Plovers have been recorded breeding at Deere Street beach which is near the Blackwood River mouth. A pair with two chicks were seen on 21 December and 29 December 2019. Red-capped Plover nested near this location in late November 2018 but were unsuccessful as the nest was flooded at high tide.

An occasional sighting of Ruddy Turnstone and Red-necked Stint has been made at Deere Street foreshore. On 31 July 2021, three Grey Plovers showed up on Deere Street beach.

Some additional shorebird sites were covered. These were the coast line between Augusta and Cape Leeuwin, off shore islands and the Augusta Water Treatment Plant. There are sightings of Black-fronted Dotterel from the Augusta Water Treatment Plant where two were seen on 27 April 2020 and, on 29 December 2020, five adults and two juveniles (Wilder 2020e, 2021).

Coastline between Augusta and Cape Leeuwin

The coastline between Augusta and the Cape Leeuwin lighthouse consists of a number of sheltered bays with rocky outcrops (Sarge Bay, Ringbolt Bay, Groper Bay and Dead Finish Anchorage) which attract a range of shorebirds. These bays were frequently checked and Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Sooty Oystercatcher, Hooded Plover, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone and Common Sandpiper were recorded.

Sightings of solitary Whimbrel were made during the months October, February and March. The most recent record was at the rocks by the Cape Leeuwin lighthouse in

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March 2020 (Wilder 2020c).

Sightings of Ruddy Turnstone were made from September to June (Wilder 2020b). Sarge Bay seemed their preferred site as most sightings came from this location, with a maximum of 13 seen on 2 October 2016 by Jenny Kikeros and 13 seen on 28 February 2021 by Natalie Bell. Ruddy Turnstones (12) have been seen on Flinders Island off Augusta. Sooty Oystercatcher and Ruddy Turnstones were seen in the St. Alouarn Island group (Wilder 2019b). Sanderling (13) too were seen on the rocky slopes of Flinders Island in mid-April 2020 (Wilder 2020d).

Sightings of Common Sandpiper were made during the months September, October, January, February, March and April.

Sooty Oystercatchers were found at Sarge Bay, Dead Finish Beach and the rocky bays near the Leeuwin Lighthouse. Sarge Bay has had high counts in April 2016 (25) and May 2020 (29). Sooty Oystercatchers were found all year round in the vicinity of the lighthouse.

The Future

It has been about 45 years since the shorebird populations at the Hardy Inlet were last surveyed. When comparing the results of the 1974-1975 shorebird surveys with our present findings a number of changes are evident.

A comparison of the maximum number of shorebirds seen over the two survey periods is shown in Table 2. The Australian breeding shorebirds were more prolific in the recent surveys, except for Red-capped Plovers where the numbers were much lower. However, some shorebird species have declined in numbers between the two survey periods. The most dramatic decline has been for Bar-tailed Godwit, Pacific Golden Plover, Greater Sand Plover and Curlew Sandpiper.

Hardy Inlet is a site of national importance for Sanderling, based on the numbers recorded (Weller *et al.* 2020) (Table 1). A nationally important habitat for migratory shorebirds has been defined as a site that regularly supports 0.1 per cent of a single species of migratory shorebird of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway population (Table 1). In the case of Sanderling this equates to 30 birds (Weller *et al.* 2020).

Table 2. Comparison of maximum shorebird numbers at Hardy Inlet from 1974-1975 and 2018-2021. Breeding records are denoted by an asterisk. The Black-fronted Dotterels were seen at the Augusta water treatment plant.

Common name	Scientific Name	1974-1975	2018-2021	Deere Street	River Spit	Status
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	10	40	25	27*	Increased
Sooty Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>		2	24		New to site
Banded Stilt	<i>Cladorhynchus leucocephalus</i>	absent	43			New to site
Red-necked Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra novaehollandiae</i>	absent	200		188	New to site
Pied Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	1	25			Increased
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	4	30	3	5	Increased
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	46	21			Reduced
Red-capped Plover	<i>Charadrius ruficapillus</i>	220	65	11*	1	Reduced
Double-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius bicinctus</i>	2	absent			Reduced
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	50	5			Reduced
Black-fronted Dotterel	<i>Eseyornis melanops</i>			7**		New to site
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	6	absent			Reduced
Far Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	1	absent			Reduced
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	39	6		1	Reduced
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	absent	3			New to site
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	1	6	4		Increased
Great Knot	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	31	15		38	Reduced
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	23	40		1	Increased
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	23	202			Increased
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	110	3			Reduced
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	700	290	9	7	Reduced
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	60	96			Increased
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	1	absent			Reduced
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	1	absent			Reduced
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	20	2	3		Reduced
Grey-tailed Tattler	<i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>	2	17			Increased
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	<90	52			Reduced
Number of species		22	21	7	8	

The tidal mudflats are the most important habitat for shorebirds in the Hardy Inlet. However, a boat is essential to accurately survey the tidal mudflats between Thomas Island and Island Point. The site's isolation protects the shorebirds. The downside is that these shorebirds have

been overlooked for decades due to access challenges. The exposure of the mudflats in the Inlet is determined by the inflow of water from the Blackwood River and Scott River and the tidal range. Shorebird numbers increase when the mudflats are exposed over the summer months.

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Inflow of water has been impacted by changes in rainfall. According to the Water Corporation (2021),

"Since the 1970s rainfall in the South West of WA has reduced by around 20%, and according to future predictions, the drying trend will continue with winter rainfall forecasted to decrease by 15% by 2030. And while we have seen an increase in rain in some of the northern and eastern parts of our state, the projected drop in the number of deep low-pressure systems that drive winter rainfall in the South West means much less rain for our southern regions."

"A 20% drop in rainfall may not sound very dramatic until you understand the impact it has on streamflow – the water that runs off into our dams and other storages. The decline in rainfall throughout Perth and the South West has seen streamflow reduce by an average of over 80%! And it all has to do with dry catchments."

"Declining rainfall means the soils in our catchment areas are a lot drier than they used to be. So, when rain does fall, they act like huge sponges soaking up the water. This leaves us needing a lot more rain to soak into the soils and eventually release water into our dams. That's why even if we do get decent rainfall in any 1 year, we'll still get a lot less runoff into our dams than we would have from the same amount of rainfall, several years ago".

What are the likely consequences of a reduced inflow of fresh water from the Blackwood- and Scott River? The salt water from the tides is likely to extend further inland and alter the composition of invertebrates living in the mudflats. These factors might actually benefit migrating shorebirds and deserve closer study. Will the reduced inflow of water from the rivers result in lower sediment loads and reduce mud deposits? Will tidal movement further upstream lead to increased erosion and scouring of the mudflats?

Monitoring the size and boundaries of the mudflats will be important to enable any changes to be identified and determine the impact on shorebird populations.

The Hardy Inlet is strategically located, near the most southern point of the West Australian coast line, and as such offers shorebirds a number of options. The mudflats here seem to function as a final migration destination, a roosting site, refueling site or temporary stopover for shorebirds on their way to other estuaries along the south-western coastline.

Increased housing development around the perimeter of Hardy Inlet will result in higher levels of boating traffic and disturbance of shorebirds and other waterbirds. Climate change will alter waterflows within the inlet but the impact of this has not been investigated. Removal of vegetation around the perimeter, which acts as a nutrient filter, may affect the water quality.

Acknowledgements

We thank Natalie Bell for her contributions. A special thank you to Greg Harewood for producing the map.

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Dean McFaull, Marcus Singor, Christine Wilder and Jenny Kikeros

Blue-throated Little Black Cormorant

Whilst doing research on cormorants around Perth I recently came across a colony of breeding Little Black Cormorants, *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*. What struck me was the bright blue colour of the skin on the throat (Figure 1). This adult had a full crop and was feeding two juveniles.

I had not noticed this before but, according to HANZAB (Marchant and Higgins 1990), the skin on the throat is violet, appearing black in the field, and fading to grey-blue in non-breeding birds. The text in field guides is confusing and to some extent contradictory, so perhaps there is more variation than we realise.

Have other observers noted throat colour in this species? And under what circumstances?

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Marcus Singor



Blue-throated Little Black Cormorant. Photo by Marcus Singor

Members' Contributions, ctd

Dryandra Woodland Trip Report, 13 to 16 July

Introduction

Dryandra Woodland is a 28 000 ha nature conservation area and proposed national park located on the edge of the wheatbelt region, approximately 150 km south-east of Perth. Dryandra Woodland is renowned for its conservation importance for bird and mammal species, including the Numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*), once widespread across southern Australia but now restricted to several small populations in Western Australia. About 105 bird species have been recorded within Dryandra Woodland.

The three-night stay at the Lions Dryandra Woodland Village this year was for the primary purpose of birding, with a secondary purpose of mammal observation. The only accommodation within the reserve is a number of cottages located at the Lions Dryandra Woodland Village off Tomingley Road.

Overview

The trip was very successful, with two 'lifers' observed (Bush Stone-curlew and Jacky Winter). Good numbers of both these species were present, with up to five Bush Stone-curlews and five Jacky Winters seen at any one instance. Forty-six species were observed by myself within the Dryandra Woodland, with a further six species observed in the environs of the Woodland. A full annotated list of the bird species observed is available on request.

Daily Records

Day 1 13 July 2021

Weather Cloudy, with 5.2 mm of rain throughout the day, minimum temperature 9.8°, maximum 17.0°.

Record Pumphrey's Bridge served as a lunch stop, as well as a hasty walk around the site for birds. The highlights were a single male Red-capped Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Teal and Eurasian Coot. A total of 12 species were observed in the half-hour.

Within about ten minutes of entering Dryandra Woodland, a Numbat was sighted from the vehicle. This was only a brief view; however, this was not to be the last Numbat sighting on this trip.

John Lawson, the caretaker at Dryandra Village, provided general directions to some of the target species. The Bush Stone-curlews were precisely where he mentioned they would likely be, which was in fact less than 50 metres from the office (Figure 1). Bush Stone-



Figure 1 Bush Stone-curlew and Jacky Winter sightings in the Lions Dryandra Woodland Village, Old Mill Dam and environs. Red – Bush Stone-curlew sightings; Green – Jacky Winter sightings.

curlew was my first lifer for the trip. Five individuals were observed along the tree line on the opposite side of the road (which runs through the village) to the caretaker's office.

At the same location as the Bush Stone-curlews were at least four Jacky Winters, three Gilbert's Honeyeaters, a Western Yellow Robin and a Golden Whistler. Jacky Winter was the second lifer for the trip. A light morph Little Eagle was photographed flying over the paddock adjacent to the village, a relatively infrequent occurrence in the region.

The 23 km drive trail begins at the Lions Dryandra Woodland Village, then along Gura Road, Coolbardi Road, Marri Road and finishing along Tomingley Road back at the village. When completed at night, this drive can often yield good sightings of birds such as the Barn Owl, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Tawny Frogmouth and Southern Boobook. The only nocturnal bird species sighted while completing the drive trail was Tawny Frogmouth, with two individuals seen at different points along the trail.

Day 2 14 July 2021

Weather Partially cloudy with 1.4 mm of rain throughout the day, minimum temperature 9.0°, maximum 15.0°.

Record I awoke at 7:00 am for a walk through the village, adjacent paddock and Old Mill Dam, across Tomingley Road at the southern end of the village. The first section of the walk, through the village, yielded two Gilbert's Honeyeaters, White-browed Scrubwren, a Golden Whistler and Rufous Treecreeper, among other species. Upon reaching the Old Mill Dam, I quickly located two Bush Stone-curlews in the bush just to the east of the dam. The Bush Stone-curlew were distant, obscured by trees and bushes, and not wishing to disturb the birds, I did not approach any closer for photographs. Commencing to walk around the dam and environs, I heard a distant Fan-tailed Cuckoo. The descending trilling sound made



Bush Stone-curlew. Photo by Drew Davison

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by the species is often heard during winter in southern and eastern Australia. The Old Mill Dam is a good site for Western Thornbill (at least eleven of which were seen on this morning alone), Jacky Winter (five seen on this morning) and Rufous Treecreeper (at least sixteen seen). Each of these three species allowed for close views and photographs. A number of Australian Wood Ducks were on the banks of the dam, and a lone Australian Shelduck was perched in a tree nearby, as they are wont to do given their nests are typically in the hollows of trees.

Walking back to the cottage I crossed the paddock adjacent to the village. Three Bush Stone-curlews were seen, one of which was harassed by an Australian Magpie, eventually flying off. As there was a total of five Bush Stone-curlews sighted on this morning (in separate groups of two and three, respectively), it is likely that these were the same individuals sighted in a single group of five on the previous afternoon. A Grey Currawong was sighted near to the cottage, allowing for good photographic opportunities.

After breakfast I walked the 800 m to the Kawana Road dam. Three Dusky Woodswallows were seen flying over the village during the walk. At the dam, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Western Yellow Robin and Rufous Treecreepers were seen. Golden Whistler and Grey Shrike-thrush were heard calling. The five km Ochre Trail walk takes walkers to an ochre pit, used by Noongar people. At the beginning of the Ochre Trail, a Rufous Treecreeper and a Western Yellow Robin were sighted. The Western Yellow Robin was soon joined by another individual of the same species, allowing for close views and photographs. A number of Western Thornbills were also present and calling. As we walked further, two White-eared Honeyeaters were photographed in tall eucalyptus trees. The White-eared Honeyeater is relatively common in the Dryandra Woodland, however it is still frequently sought after by visiting birders. A Yellow-plumed Honeyeater was also observed feeding from Parrot bush (*Banksia sessilis*). Nearing the end of the Ochre Trail walk, three Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens were heard calling and subsequently located and photographed. The three included a male in partial breeding plumage, a male in non-breeding plumage and a female. I had not taken photographs of this species before so was pleased to do so at this point. A personal aim of mine is to photograph every species observed. Currently, I have photographed 98.2 percent of the species I have seen in Western Australia.

Another walk around the Old Mill Dam yielded a number of species including a calling Fan-tailed Cuckoo, two Jacky Winters and a male Scarlet Robin.

After lunch, I walked around the paddock adjacent to the village, sighting at least eight Brown-headed Honeyeaters feeding in *Eucalyptus kruseana*, a species I suspect was introduced to this species before so was pleased to do so in the area. This was the only sighting of Brown-headed Honeyeater throughout the stay at Dryandra. Two Splendid Fairy-wrens, including a male in full breeding plumage, were photographed in *Eucalyptus macrocarpa*, a species of mallee endemic to south-west Western Australia. Four Jacky Winters and three Western Thornbills were also observed near to the fence line on the edge of the paddock.

Day 3 15 July 2021

Weather Partly and windy with 3.0 mm of rain throughout the day, minimum temperature 7.6°, maximum 14.7°.

Record On an early walk around the village, adjacent paddock and Old Mill Dam I saw four Australian Wood Ducks foraging in the paddock, with up to eleven at one instance in the paddock at various times. An Australian Shelduck was also in the paddock. A Magpie-lark, two Jacky Winters

and two Western Thornbills were seen around the village. Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, an abundant honeyeater species throughout the stay at Dryandra, was also present.

The walk around the Old Mill Dam, with increasing wind, was still successful with four Grey Teal seen at the Old Mill Dam, as well as six Australian Wood Ducks. An immature Golden Whistler, four Rufous Treecreepers and five Western Thornbills were calling and also photographed. Jacky Winter and Scarlet Robin were present.

We decided to complete the 'Woylie Walk,' a signposted 5.5 km trail. The walk begins at the Old Mill Dam, and crosses Tomingley Road a few hundred metres into the walk. Rufous Treecreeper, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater and Golden Whistler were seen, and two calling Western Wattlebirds among *Dryandra* plants, an abundant group of plants for which the Dryandra Woodland was named. The *Dryandra* plant genus has now been merged with *Banksia*, a large genus with over 170 species largely occurring in Australia. A Wedge-tailed Eagle was flying in the distance, however good views were still had. An Inland Thornbill and Grey Shrike-thrush were heard at this point during the walk. Nearing the end of the walk, and crossing Tomingley Road for the final section back to the starting point of Old Mill Dam, a Jacky Winter was seen on the side of the road, diagnostically wagging its tail. Back at the Old Mill Dam, again for a barbequed lunch, three Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos flew over with two Galahs doing a similar thing.

I walked from the Old Mill Dam back to the cottage through the paddock, where a breeding male Splendid Fairy-wren and a female companion were sighted. Two Red-capped Robins, one a female, the other a male, were photographed. Three Jacky Winters were also seen in close proximity to the Red-capped Robins. Weebill, Western Gerygone, Golden Whistler and Western Thornbill were present as well.

Day 5 16 July 2021

Weather Mostly sunny with no rain, minimum temperature 7.4°, maximum 15.5°.

Record Just before 9 am I spotted a single Bush Stone-curlew flying and landing in the paddock adjacent to the village. We walked to the area where it was seen to land, and it was unfortunately flushed from a distance of perhaps 50 metres away. Flight photographs were taken, but the Bush Stone-curlew flew into the woodland not to be seen again. Other species seen at this time include Scarlet Robin, a single Tree Martin, Golden Whistler, Western Thornbill and Splendid Fairy-wren.

After 10 am, we left the village. Five Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens were seen on a road adjoining Tomingley Road near to the village. We decided to visit Narrogin via Congelin Dam, which was overall disappointing with regards to birds with one species present – two Australian Wood Ducks on the bank of the dam. Driving on to Narrogin, before passing through Williams, a large flock of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos were seen from the vehicle. Narrogin served as a lunch stop, with a number of species recorded including Australian Hobby, Nankeen Kestrel and Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon). The route to Perth took us back past the Dryandra Woodland, through the Shire of Cuballing. A juvenile Black-shouldered Kite and an Australasian Pipit were seen from the vehicle, among other species.

We arrived back in Perth just before 4pm, after a most enjoyable and successful birding trip to Dryandra.

Drew Davison

In search of the Black Grasswren

The Black Grasswren has a limited distribution around the coastal areas of the north-west Kimberley. There are few

Members' Contributions, ctd

places where you have a reasonable chance of seeing one, the most accessible of these being the Mitchell Falls area.

We had tried to see a Black Grasswren before. On our first attempt all our searches for this elusive bird in the Mitchell Falls area were in vain. Our second attempt ended before it started when mechanical failure of our vehicle on the Gibb River Road forced us to miss the Mitchell Falls altogether. This was our third attempt. We had made it to the Mitchell Falls and after enduring hours of bone shattering corrugations, we decided it would probably be our last.

Before we arrived there, two people, including a well-known birding tour guide, had told us to search around the rocks on the right hand bank above Little Mertens Falls. We should pay particular attention to fairy-wrens and Willie Wagtails since they often accompany the grasswrens as the latter stir up insects as they forage. Our searches in this area on the first two days of our stay had failed. We had sat and listened for several hours but to no avail. On the final day we sat and listened for some time. Just as Jill thought she may have heard a call, we were distracted at successfully finding a Kimberley Honeyeater, another objective of ours for this trip. We continued down to Big Mertens Falls for a delightful morning tea overlooking the lily covered pools.

On our return Jill wanted to listen again. It was hot so we sat quietly in the shade of a large boulder for half an hour, until Jill thought she might have heard something. A moment later she called and I jumped up with the camera, but the grasswren had hopped down out of sight. Then a moment later several fairy-wrens appeared, followed by a grasswren which perched on a rock in a perfect pose. It stayed there for a minute or two while I took numerous photos. Soon after it hopped down. This was when we realized that there was a group of at least three as they followed the leader. They disappeared around the boulder we had been sheltering behind, so we moved to the other side and had yet more good views as they hopped around on the rocks.

They finally disappeared and we were jubilant. Having talked to so many others about their attempts to find this species, we realize just how lucky we were.

Andrew Hobbs



Black Grasswren. Photo by Andrew Hobbs

Prey choice of White-bellied Sea-Eagle

Chris Tate reported some interesting observations from the Bunbury region at a White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) nesting site, which revealed some prey choices.

At an initial visit to the site there were approximately two dozen turtle shells and six cobbler skulls at the base of the nest, which was how the nest was discovered.

Based on the number of Western Long-necked Turtle (*Chelodina oblonga*) shells, these turtles seem to have formed a regular part of the White-bellied Sea-Eagle's diet and were likely obtained from a nearby wetland.

On another occasion the White-bellied Sea-Eagle was seen bringing a large bird to the nest, probably a Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*).

Marcus Singor

Most of our birds in the south-west breed in spring

It may not come as a complete surprise, but most of our birds in south-western Australia breed in the springtime. Almost all species breed in the second half of the year, with most species breeding from early September to late October.

Breeding seasons of birds have long interested Western Australian naturalists (e.g. Serventy and Marshall 1957). Knowing their breeding seasons enables bird watchers and ornithologists to understand and predict the behaviour of birds. It also helps wildlife managers control bird populations by developing strategies that regulate the number of juveniles recruited into breeding populations. This is particularly relevant for strategies to conserve threatened species, where managers aim to increase the number of juvenile recruits. Here, we summarise the breeding seasons of our 190 bird species – terrestrial and waterbird species, but not seabirds – that inhabit the south-west land division of Western Australia.

Our summary is based on the breeding season provided for each species in Storr's (1991) compilation of the *Birds of the South-West Division of Western Australia*. Storr defined the breeding season of each species as the time that eggs are laid. The striking feature of Storr's breeding seasons is that they were derived from confirmed breeding records – nests with eggs or young – where the time that the eggs were laid could be established. Storr recorded these times as the 'early', 'mid', or 'late' period of the laying month.

We did not include breeding seasons from other literature sources – most notably field guides – for two reasons. First, these sources often include breeding behaviour as a criterion to define breeding season. We do not consider breeding behaviour to be a diagnostic indicator of breeding. Second, the breeding seasons in these sources often include breeding records from the whole distribution range for each species. This would presumably bias the 'south-west' breeding seasons for species with a distribution range that extends beyond the South-West Land Division. Birds that inhabit regions north of the South-West Land Division, for example, breed earlier than their species counterparts in the south-west (Johnstone *et al.* 2000).

Our analysis of Storr's data shows that almost all 190 terrestrial and waterbird species breed – have eggs in the nest – in the period from early July to late January (Figure 1). The highest number of species breed from early September to late October. Between 83-85% of the species are likely to be breeding at any time during this period. By contrast, few species breed from early February to late June. The lowest number of species breed from early March to late May. During this period, only 1-3% of the 190 species are likely to be breeding.

Davies (1979) found a similar breeding pattern for birds in south-west Australia, even though his sample was somewhat smaller than in our data set. He used data from the RAOU/BirdLife Nest Record Scheme, supplemented by records made by himself and colleagues.

Members' Contributions, ctd

A feature of our analysis of Storr's data was that the breeding pattern for all 190 species also applies across specific groups of birds. For example, we found a similar distribution of breeding seasons for:

- Terrestrial birds that inhabit the south-west forest block (Figure 1). This group consisted of 97 species after we excluded waterbirds and species that do not inhabit the forest block.

Number of species

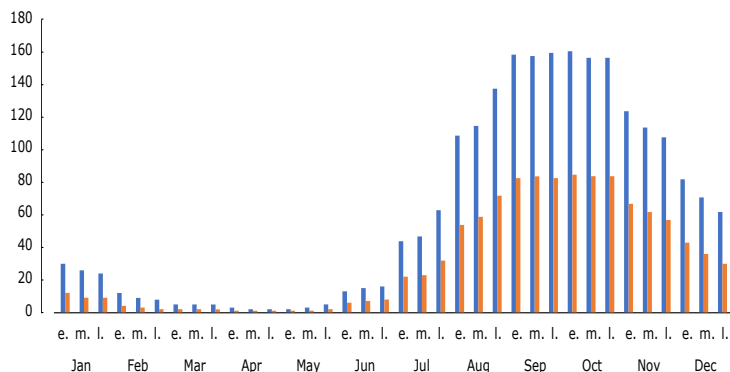


Figure 1. Number of bird species in the south-west land division of Western Australia that are likely to be breeding in each month of the year. Each month has been divided into 'early' (e.), 'mid' (m.), and 'late' (l.). The blue bars represent the 190 bird species – terrestrial and waterbird species, but not seabirds – that inhabit the south-west land division. The orange bars represent the 97 terrestrial species that inhabit the south-west forest block.

- Waterbirds – 45 species of grebe, cormorant, heron, bittern, ibis, spoonbill, duck, swan, rail and crane, plover and dotterel, freshwater tern, coot, moorhen, stilt, avocet, swamphen, reed-warbler, and grassbird. Halse and Jaensch (1989) showed a similar distribution of breeding seasons for waterbirds in the south-west land division. They found that waterbirds respond to rainfall and high-water levels in wetlands, which occur more often than not, between July and October.
- Threatened species and species that are endemic to the south-west land division. A notable exception is the threatened and endemic Noisy Scrub-bird. The Noisy Scrub-bird is a winter breeder. Its breeding season starts as early as late May and can extend into early October (Storr 1991, DPaW 2014).

There are, of course, some species that show bursts of breeding activity at other times of year, particularly during autumn. These include the endemic Western Wattlebird and the threatened Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. Western Wattlebirds breed mostly between June and November, but they may also breed in March and April (Storr 1991). The Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo has been recorded breeding in all months, with peaks in autumn-winter (April–June) and spring (August–October) (Johnstone *et al.* 2013).

So, with spring upon us, it's an exciting time of the year to be a birdwatcher in south-western Australia. Our birds are in their breeding glory and wildlife managers are reaping the benefits of their strategies to conserve our threatened species. It's also a time when we all can be 'wildlife managers' by giving birds the space they need to rear their offspring.

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Mark Henryon and Allan Burbidge

More bird art

In WABN **167**:20 I drew attention to black cockatoo sculptures in Claremont and Subiaco. Valerie Hemsley followed up with a picture of Emu sculptures at Booragoon (WABN **168**: 26).

I recently discovered a very large mural showing two Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos perched and one of their foods (Marri fruits). It is by James Giddy, but is undated. It is best viewed from Forrest Street in Subiaco.

Ian Abbott



Albany's Ospreys

As you follow the south-west coast of Western Australia east from Augusta the number of breeding Ospreys declines. Albany is the last location, going in an easterly direction, where you find a concentration of Osprey nesting sites. There are few known locations past Albany, with Bremer Bay and Fitzgerald River National Park being the furthest breeding sites east along the south west coast.

At Albany the Osprey nesting sites are concentrated around the Kalgan River area. We have been monitoring these sites and provide the following information. Four Osprey nests are found between the Oyster Harbour Fish traps and Honeymoon Island on the Kalgan River (Figure 1). All four pairs can be found in the vicinity of their nests throughout



Figure 1. Map of Osprey nesting sites along Kalgan River and Oyster Harbour (Pink markers)



Figure 2. Osprey nest on East Bank Road, Kalgan, near the water-skiing area. Photo by Anne Bondin

most of the year. There is another nest on the western side of Oyster Harbour.

Known Osprey nesting locations near Albany are:

- Near Oyster Harbour Fish traps, Kalgan Heights. This nest, which is in a tall tree, was first established in 2016. Ospreys were observed adding sticks to the nest in January 2020.
- In a pine tree on private property at the start of East Bank Road, Kalgan.
- Along East Bank Road near Water-skiing area there is a nest being re-established in the same pine tree after the nest fell down in a storm in 2018 (Figure 2). There was no breeding evidence in 2019.
- In a pine tree on private property on the west side of Kalgan River near start of Luke Pen walk trail at the end of East Bank Road, Kalgan. This site is opposite Honeymoon Island, also known as Elbow Island.
- There is a known Osprey nest site on the western side of Oyster Harbour off Alison Parade, Lower King, but its present status not known.

In 2018 there was also a nest further along the Luke Pen walk closer to the Upper Kalgan bridge, but it is not known whether this is still active.

Ospreys nested successfully during the 2020/2021 summer near Honeymoon Island, Fish traps and on the private property at East Bank Road.

The conditions at the Kalgan River are ideal for Ospreys

as they are adjacent to Oyster Harbour. Oyster Harbour is a large, shallow and sheltered estuary subject to tidal influences through a channel at Emu Point. The Kalgan River is renowned for large Black Bream and the lower reaches offer a range of coastal estuarine species including Herring, juvenile Salmon (and the occasional adult Salmon), Flounder, Yellowtail, small Pink Snapper, Silver Bream, and Whiting, as well as Mulloway. In summer, more of the other estuarine species tend to move into the river (Recfishwest 2021).

The annual report from the Albany Port Authority (2011-2012) mentioned that a pair of Osprey moved into the nesting crate erected at the end of berth six at Albany Harbour.

There was a nest at Wilgie Road in Torbay which had fallen down in September 2016. A new artificial nest was installed in the same tree a year later. The current status is not known.

There was an occupied Osprey nest at Cheynes Beach Caravan Park back in 2015. Raeline Smith saw an Osprey taking bundles of seaweed to this nest on 19 June 2021.

It is likely there are other nesting sites around Albany that we are unaware of and are keen to hear about.

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Anne and Fred Bondin, and Marcus Singor

Submissions to Birdnotes

It is abundantly helpful if attachments to articles are submitted individually.

Photographs High resolution images only. Photo size should be not less than 300 ppi, with a file size of at least 600 kb (preferably over 1 mb).

Maps & Graphs Separate pdf to accompany article

Tables Excel spread sheet to accompany article is ideal. Tables in Word can accompany article as separate document or be embedded in your article.

Large files may require multiple emails.

When possible, please **avoid embedding** photos, maps, tables or graphs into pdfs, word docs, or emails.

Thank you for your support

Birds of Julimar Conservation Park – potentially at risk

Julimar Conservation Park, 75 km north-east of Perth and 25 km NW of Toodyay, has long been recognised for its high conservation values (e.g. Department of Conservation and Environment 1983). It has a rich bird fauna and is also important for other animals. Various mammals occur there, and it is one of the most important populations of the threatened Chuditch (Johnson *et al.* 2006; B. Johnson pers. comm.). Much of the area is Wandoo woodland. Wandoo woodland was popular with the early settlers because it was easily cleared and pastured. Much of it has been cleared long ago, but stands in the Julimar area are thought to be some of the best remaining (Underwood 1988).

However, there is a proposal to mine much of the area for palladium, copper, nickel and platinum (Chalice Mining: <https://chalicemining.com/project/julimar-nickel-copper-pge-project>). The deposit is 26 km long, the proposed mine would be open cut, and go right through the Conservation Park, from south-west to north-east (Figure 1). The deposit is roughly aligned with Julimar Brook, which is unfortunate for the birds, because this is the part of the park supporting the greatest number of birds. In addition, the tenement includes the upper reaches of Spice Brook, which runs down to Lake Chittering, in the Chittering Lakes Nature Reserve. Lake Chittering is highly important for waterbird breeding, including colonial breeders, being among the top five wetlands in south-western Australia in terms of its diversity of breeding waterbirds (Raines *et al.* 1995). The wetland provides important habitat for thousands of birds annually (Lane *et al.* 1996). It is therefore important to ensure that sediments or other mine contaminants are not introduced into this catchment.

in Julimar has been recorded within the tenement area, and some occur almost exclusively within the tenement area. To put it another way, no species has been recorded in Julimar but not within the tenement area. This highlights the value of the Julimar Brook area for birds within the Julimar Conservation Park.

For example, in Julimar the rare Crested Shrike-tit occurs almost exclusively in the vicinity of Julimar Brook. Of the 14 records of this species in Julimar, only 1 comes from outside the Julimar Brook valley, and that was in wandoo in the south-western part of the mining tenement.

Most raptor sightings have been along Julimar Brook, especially the uncommon Square-tailed Kite. Similarly, all or almost all records of Elegant Parrot, White-winged Triller, Varied Sittella, Restless Flycatcher, and Painted Button-quail, are from close to Julimar Brook. The Barking Owl, which is extremely rare in south-western Australia, has also been recorded in this area by an experienced observer (John Dell) (Observations Committee 2000; Liddelow *et al.* 2002).

The above brief review indicates that there are significant conservation values in Julimar Conservation Park, and these values are concentrated in the valley of Julimar Brook. This means they are at risk of habitat destruction by open-cut mining. We would therefore welcome further observations of birds, or information on their habitat use, in this area.

The mining company has purchased adjacent farms where they are currently carrying out drilling, and they have been conducting soil sampling within Julimar. They do not yet have environmental approvals to go further, but we assume that there will be opportunities for comment as part of the process.

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Tegan Douglas

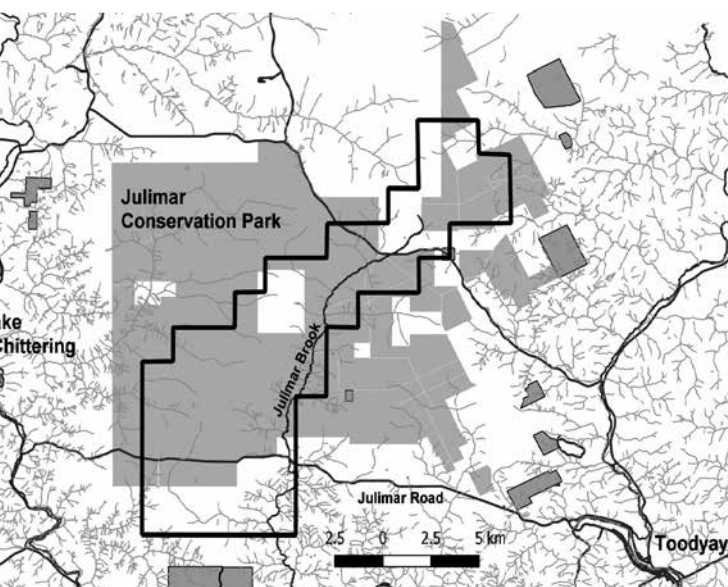


Figure 1. Proposed mining tenement across Julimar Conservation Park

Given the known conservation values of the area, and the likelihood that the area may be subjected to open-cut mining, we compiled records of observations of birds in Julimar Conservation Park, based on records in Birddata (<https://birddata.birdlife.org.au/>) and personal records made by ourselves and other reliable observers.

About 90 bird species have been recorded in the mining tenement area. Every bird species that has been recorded

BIRD WALKS AT STIRLING RANGE RETREAT 2021

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 am) and afternoon (3 pm) bird walks during spring 2021. After the devastating fires in the National Park in early 2020 and the effects of the Covid pandemic, we have an excellent opportunity to support the Retreat once again.

The walks this year will commence on Saturday 28th August (the first volunteer arrives on Friday 27th August) and conclude after the 8 am morning walk on Saturday 30th October 2021.

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 7 pm on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, that are illustrated with a PowerPoint 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 2021 will be as follows:

- the leaders and their partners will be offered a 50% tariff on cabin accommodation.
- 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 2020, BirdLife volunteers raised more than \$3000 from the walks and PowerPoint presentations.
- When available, leaders are invited to join the 9 am 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

ACCESSING BACK ISSUES OF WABN

BirdLife WA has provided all the back issues on the web at <http://www.birdswa.com.au/WABN/?C=N;O=D>

- Go to the BirdLife website
- then into the section for BirdLife WA
- and then into 'publications' which is publicly accessible

Thanks to Margaret Philippon, who put an amazing amount of effort into this, the files are searchable. Searches in older issues are not always 100% exact, because while they have been scanned from the originals, the typeface in those early days was not always clear, so some errors will occur.

Bruce Buchanan, a previous editor of WABN, went to extraordinary lengths to write an index for the first 50 issues and this covers the most problematic issues, so it is best to use his index for older issues. This is available in the BirdLife WA Library.

Scans on newer issues will be highly reliable and, of course, searches on the most recent issues will be exact.

What's new in AFO and Emu?

Well, there's been quite a few articles lately that are of interest to Western Australians!

In *Australian Field Ornithology*, there have been several papers on Malleefowl, including one on a neat method developed by Mark Blythman to predict laying dates of Malleefowl eggs without excavating the mound. How did he do it? Read it to find out how! On Rotttnest, Claire Greenwell has revealed the identity of an unsuspected predator of eggs of the threatened Fairy Tern, in the form of a Ruddy Turnstone! In another paper by Claire and colleagues including BirdLife's Tegan Douglas, she describes a novel method of studying plumage changes in young Fairy Terns, using photographic techniques to identify individual birds. The most recent paper in AFO from WA is a detailed review by Marcus Singor on Australian records of the Eurasian Hobby.

Some of us find genetics to be a bit scary and complicated, but it is an essential tool in modern conservation management. It needn't be scary if you read past the jargon and look at the outcomes of these fascinating studies. The latest issue of *Emu – Austral Ornithology* is a special issue on conservation genetics, with some intriguing stories about several WA birds. Saul Cowen investigated Noisy Scrub-bird translocations, and makes some recommendations for minimising inbreeding and promoting genetic health in future actions that are being considered by the recovery team. Allan Burbidge and others have looked at the perennially contentious question of fieldwren taxonomy, and concluded that there is no basis on which to recognise the Western Fieldwren as being distinct from the Rufous Fieldwren – it is simply a case of gradual variation from the south-west out to the desert areas, with no break in morphology or genetics. And in another look at cryptic variation, Leo Joseph and colleagues ask "How far east can a Western Whistler go?". Answer: a lot further east than previously thought! So, check it out now to get all the details.

You can access AFO (free to members) at <https://birdlife.org.au/education-publications/publications/australian-field-ornithology/>

and Emu at <https://birdlife.org.au/education-publications/publications/emu-austral-ornithology/>

You will need to login with your user name and password, as Emu is only available freely to BirdLife Australia members.

Excursion Reports

KUNUNURRA CAMP-OUT, 3-9 JULY

What a lovely week for those of us who managed to be there!

Disappointment though, for some who couldn't take part, for whatever reason, stemming from the impact, or fallout, of the current Covid 19 situation. Flights, accommodation and car hire all proved hard to book and therefore cancellations had to be made.

Due to said difficulties I arrived by air a day late on the 24th and met the others at 'Birdcall'. By then, with good bird sightings on Lily Lagoon and the Swim Beach on Lake Kununurra the total was already in the 60s. What would be the final number? We were all more than happy for the most optimistic punter to win. Friday started with a quick look at the town end of Lily Creek, then we spent the morning at Weero Road. The possibility of Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens kept some people sitting (on lots of stones) and patiently hoping, while others circumnavigated the water. A great variety of water birds was present too.

A visit to the sewage ponds was the afternoon entertainment, most notably for the huge number of Wandering Whistling-Ducks.

On Saturday we walked into the Hidden Valley National Park from the eastern side of the caravan park and the greatest excitement was caused by the Dusky Honeyeater, a very obliging bird that stayed long enough for all to observe, watch and photograph. Red-backed Fairy-wrens were, as always, lovely too.

North along the Weaber Plains Road to Butterfly Caves, incidentally bumping into flocks of Star and Double-barred finches and Yellow-rumped Mannikins on route, and the walk on the track to the cave was full of exciting new species. Concentration was continually being interrupted by shouts of 'what's the?' from left and right.

Sunday. Well worth another visit, and earlier in the day, we enjoyed a morning on the same track, many of us seeing species we hadn't seen the day before, such as the Green-backed Gerygone and the Silver-backed Butcherbird.

John Files Park where there was a large body of shallow water was the afternoon visit.

We were divided into two groups for the boat trip on Lake Argyle, one group going early on Monday and the other the following day. This was a great experience, leaving the jetty at 6am in early light, with a cool breeze, and lovely colour on the hills, cliffs and rocks, we sailed to a spot where we had breakfast. Now the breakfast was delicious but complicated by the difficulty of avoiding fall out on binoculars, consuming a mouthful, bowl down and binoculars up again to look at something new and exciting. All good, but the cherry had to be the Tawny Grassbird. A walk on Chat Island followed with clear sightings of Yellow Chats and Australian Pratincoles.

After a lunch at the pub accompanied by bowerbirds, we popped into various spots along the Argyle Road, and although the number of birds was limited, we picked up more species. A large flock of Brown Quail delighted a couple of us by scratching and eating on the verge in front of the vehicle, seemingly unbothered by us.

The alternate walk was very productive along the levy bank at the golf course in the morning with a free afternoon. On the final day we had a walk to Spring Creek on the east side of Hidden Valley and ended with birdcall at morning tea.

The total number of species was 144. This was such a well-organized campout, and both sightings and information generously shared by all. Thank you, Sue Abbotts, for all your hard work and a very happy week.

Stella Stewart-Wynne

KUNUNURRA CAMPOUT, 3-9 JULY

SO GOOD, THERE'S A SECOND REPORT!

Wow! What a campout. We were fortunate to take part in an amazing week-long campout in the land of Mango Smoothies, and birds rarely seen by those who live in the south-west. We liked the way Sue Abbotts organized the campout. There was plenty of birding early in the morning while it was cool, with a break in the middle of the day, before going out again in the afternoon. Sue took us to a variety of different habitats including lily covered lakes, tropical streams and woodland. As a result, we ended up with a total of 138 species.

One of the highlights was a boat trip on Lake Argyle. Leaving the camp at 4.30 in the dark we arrived at the dock at first light to board our boat skippered by Greg. At the first stop, while having breakfast, we had good views of several waterbirds, including a Pied Heron and a Tawny Grassbird. Later, on a short walk surrounded by high rocky cliffs, we saw quite a few species including Pictorella Mannikin, Golden-headed Cisticola, White-browed and Baillon's Crake. When back on board, Greg took us out to another, low lying island called Chat Island. Along the way he pulled up close to the rock faces of several islands and found a couple of Sandstone Shrike-thrush for us.

At Chat Island we had to wade through knee deep water to get to dry land. On our walk around the island we saw numerous Australian Pratincoles and Yellow Chats. In addition, we saw the largest congregation of Caspian Terns we had ever seen.

Another highlight of the campout was a walk around Lily Lagoon and the nearby park, especially for those who had never been this far north before. On the lagoon it was amazing to see so many waterbirds such as Wandering Whistling-Duck, Intermediate Egret, White-browed Crake and Comb-crested Jacana. In addition, we saw numerous finches emerge from the reeds on to the grassy areas: Double-barred, Crimson and Long-tailed Finches as well as Chestnut-breasted Mannikin. In the park we found numerous Great Bowerbirds, orioles and various honeyeaters such as Blue-faced, White-throated and Rufous-throated Honeyeaters.

Most of us scored 'lifers' on this campout and there was much celebrating at the evening bird calls. Some of the 'lifers' included Buff-sided Robin, Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, Yellow Chat, and Yellow-rumped Mannikin. Alan Watson was the winner of the prize for the closest guess at the numbers of species seen on the campout.

A special thank you to Sue for putting in a lot of hard work doing a 'recce' prior to the campout and for doing such a great job of organizing and running it. We all appreciated how Sue was happy to pass on her detailed knowledge of many of the birds and their habits.

Jill and Andrew Hobbs

FLYNN ROAD, 5 JUNE

On a cold but clear morning a group of 29 birdwatchers assembled at Flynn Road. Numerous quarry trucks had been thundering past during the 'recce' a few days earlier, but fortunately there were none during the official walk, which was on a Saturday during a long weekend. Also, we had only one trail bike disturbing the peace during the lunch break.

We stopped to check for birds on the farm dam, where we saw Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe and Little Pied Cormorant. We then drove to the parking place from where we walked to the rocky outcrop. On the way there and back, Rufous Treecreeper, Dusky Woodswallow and Yellow-plumed Honeyeater were present,

Excursion Reports, ctd

but in smaller numbers than usual. Painted Button-quail was also seen by some of the group.

After moving to another spot for lunch, we walked uphill to a rocky outcrop surrounded by casuarina trees. During that walk we had good views of Crested Shrike-tit, and rather fleeting views of Western Rosella and further Painted Button-quail.

Other sightings during the day included Scarlet Robin, Western Yellow Robin, and a good variety of honeyeaters in addition to Yellow-plumed mentioned above: Singing, Tawny-crowned and Brown Honeyeaters, Western Spinebill, and Western and Red Wattlebirds.

The species total was 39.

Charles Merriam



Yellow Chat at Kununurra Campout. Photo by Andrew Hobbs



Male Mistletoebird at Tom Bateman Reserve. Photo by Ian Wallace



Crested Shrike-tit at Wearne Road. Photo by Ian Wallace



Mirima National Park. Photo by Stella Stewart-Wynne

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.

Wherever you are, please observe your relevant state and territory advice and maintain social distancing and good hygiene when planning birding outings, events, monitoring, surveys or fieldwork, where this is allowed.

Sunday 5 September: Bibra Lake, Cockburn

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the southern end of the lake, off Progress Drive. This is the car park nearest to the jetty and not far from 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.

We will circumnavigate the lake which is an 8 km long path and visit 2 bird hides on the way. The walk will take 3-4 hours and for those who don't wish to walk the full distance – a car can be left at the half way mark, if you let the leader know. Bring water, hats and suitable footwear as snakes have been seen in the area.

Leader: Alan Watson

September 6 - 8 September: Karroun Hill

Great Western Woodland spring survey

Saturday 11 September: Lake Leschenaultia, Chidlow

Half-day excursion

Meet at 9:00 am at the carpark at Lake Leschenaultia. Travel 10.5 km past Mundaring on Great Eastern Highway and turn left into Old Northam Road and it is 2 km into Chidlow. At the roundabout turn left into Thomas Road, and after 300 metres turn right towards Lake Leschenaultia (signposted) along Rosedale Road. After 2 km turn left into the park. It is now free to enter the park. Inside the gate bear left and keep going round clockwise, past the camping area on your left, until you reach the carparks between the park office and the lake.

A 6 km walk on an excellent track takes us through Jarrah, Marri and Wandoo woodland where 77 species have been recorded.

Leader: Charles Merriam

Tuesday 14 September: Albany Bird Group

Details about destinations, where to meet, etc., will be made available on e-News or visit Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home> and Facebook page or email albanybirds@hotmail.com

Leader: Anne Bondin

Thursday 16 September: Star Swamp, North Beach, Stirling

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the end of Mary Street, Waterman. To get there, turn off West Coast Highway at Mary Street, and drive to the car park. Alternatively, from Marmion Avenue, turn left into Beach Road, left into Ethel Street, and then left into Mary Street.

Species that may be found here include Purple-backed Fairy-wren, White-winged Fairy-wren, Southern Boobook and Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. Star Swamp is part of the Northern Swan Coastal Plain Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo and has Tuart and banksia woodland and heath. A variety of raptors and bushbirds can be seen. Over 70 species of birds have been recorded here.

Leader: Stella Stewart-Wynne

Sunday 19 September: Fred Jacoby Park/Portagabra Track, Mundaring

Half-day excursion (8:15 am – 12 pm)

Directions to Fred Jacoby Park: drive along the Great Eastern Highway to Mundaring township and turn right into Mundaring Weir Road at the only set of traffic lights. Follow Mundaring Weir Road until you get to Hampel Road on the right, just past Lavender Patch Chalets. Park in the gravel area to the left of the entrance.

We start at 8:15 am to walk around this park, which was gifted to the conservation estate by a local family, before walking the Portagabra Track (3.8 km) that starts and finishes at the park. There are some steep sections along the track plus a couple of creek crossings. Bring morning tea to have while the bird list is compiled. After tea, those with energy left, can walk along

the perimeter of the water treatment plant, which is across the road from the park, to see if there are any waterbirds present.

Leader: Peter Sandilands

Monday 20 September: Bold Park Eco Centre, 165 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat

Monthly meeting, 7.30 pm

Member's Forum on BirdLife WA's future priorities

Saturday 25 September: Collins Road, Flint

Half-day excursion

Meet at 9:00 am on Collins Road. Drive about 1 km from Brookton Highway and park on the left-hand side of Collins Road. The Collins Road turnoff is about 50 km from the junction of Brookton Highway and Canning Road, on the right-hand side coming from Perth. We will walk through this area of Wandoo woodland where 61 species have been recorded. This is thought to be the closest breeding site to Perth of Blue-breasted Fairy-wren. Also, this area has an abundance of Rufous Treecreepers and frequently seen birds include: Crested Shrike-tit, Restless Flycatcher and Western Yellow Robin.

As there will be birds breeding here, members are asked to follow BirdLife guidelines regarding nesting birds.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Sunday 3 October: Ashfield Flats, Bassendean

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park at the southern end of West Road, Bassendean. From Guildford Road turn into Colstoun Road, turn left into Haig St and right into Fisher Street. Follow Fisher Street into Reid Street and then turn right into West Road. Follow West Road to the end car park at Sandy Beach Reserve. There should be a variety of water birds and bush birds.

Leader: Peter White

From the field



Golden-headed Cisticola at Kununurra Campout.
Photo by Andrew Hobbs



Birdwatching on Chat Island, Lake Argyle. Photo by A. Hobbs



*Encounters
with
Oystercatchers*
Art of the Bush & Beach
An exhibition of watercolours by
SUE KALAB

9-29 September 2021

Open times 10am - 4pm daily

OPENING EVENT

3-5pm Saturday 11th September
with speaker Dr Holly Raudino ~ Marine Scientist

RSVP suekalab@hotmail.com

This will be Sue's 25th solo exhibition.

See website for programme of events - not to be missed
www.suekalab.com

Stirling Street Arts Centre Gallery

Cnr Charles & Stirling St, Bunbury

08 9721 1256



Pied Heron at Kununurra Campout.
Photo by Andrew Hobbs



Western Yellow Robin at Dryandra. Photo By
Drew Davison

Saturday 9 October: Whiteman Park, Whiteman

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8.00 am at the end of Car Park 23 near the Dog Park.

From Marshall Road turn north at the roundabout with Dulwich Street, and enter Whiteman Park. Please note: only the Dulwich Street gate will be open early (7:00 am); all other park gates open at 8.30.

Drive until the T-junction, then turn right. Follow the signs for the dog exercise area, and turn right into car park 23 which is crushed limestone.

We will walk the 2.5 km loop Werillyup Bush Trail (Blue Poles), which goes around Horse Swamp. At this time of the year, the seasonal swamp should still be filled with water and surrounded by boggy meadows. This mixed habitat provides a good opportunity to see a variety of both bush and water birds. Grey Butcherbird, Scarlet and Red-capped Robins, Splendid Fairy-wren, Striated and Spotted Pardalotes, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, and duck species and raptors have all been seen.

Park gates open as in the note above and entry is free. Bring morning tea.

Leaders: Shelley and Meir Altma

Tuesday 12 October: Albany Bird Group

Details about destinations, where to meet, etc., will be made available on e-News or visit Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home> and Facebook page or email albanybirds@hotmail.com

Leader: Anne Bondin

Saturday 16th October to Wednesday 20th October: Nallan Station Campout Repeated

Nallan Station is about 680km north of Perth, 12km north of Cue. This campout offers the opportunity to see arid zone species such as Western Bowerbird, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Slaty-backed Thornbill, Southern Whiteface, Mulga Parrot, Bourke's Parrot, Crested Bellbird, Grey-crowned Babbler, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, Jacky Winter, Redthroat, White-fronted Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Little Woodswallow with good chances of Australian Owlet-nightjar, Chestnut-breasted (Western) Quail-thrush, Rufous Fieldwren, Banded Whiteface, Red-backed Kingfisher, White-backed Swallow and chances of Black-breasted Buzzard, Grey Honeyeater, Little Button-quail, Black-eared Cuckoo, White-browed Treecreeper, Orange Chat and Inland Dotterel. With some rain already in the area this year, there are chances of

nomadic species such as Black-tailed Native-hen, Budgerigar, Cockatiel, Crimson Chat, Black Honeyeater, Pied Honeyeater and Masked Woodswallow. There are a variety of habitats around the station plus we will visit Nallan Lake, Milly Soak, Walga Rock and Lake Austin. We will not be going out at night to look for night birds, but you may if you wish to try for Spotted Nightjar and Bush Stone-curlew. Some birds are difficult to show a group, so you may wish to stay an extra day or two to look especially for these birds.

Numbers will be limited to 25 so please register first at the BirdLife WA office on 9383 7749. Note that we will need to car pool (4 or 5 per vehicle) when travelling on the station. We will be returning to the station for lunch each day, except for when we visit Walga Rock.

The Station offers accommodation in the Shearer's Quarters: two rooms with a QS bed, and two rooms with a KS bed at \$40/person/night. There is a communal bathroom, laundry and a camper's kitchen. The adjacent campsite is \$12.50/person/night. Generators are permitted but there is access to limited power in the kitchen to charge phones, cameras etc. The accommodation has been booked out to BirdLife WA, and bookings need to be made directly with the station on 0498 747 422, or visitnallan@outlook.com. The arrival is Saturday and departure on Thursday (so the campout is for five nights).

Leaders: Frank O'Connor, Sue Mather

Saturday 16 October: Forrestdale Lake

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:30 am at Moore Street car park. From Perth, drive down the Freeway, turning left into Armadale Road. Continue on across Nicholson Road, then just over 1 km along turn right into Weld Street, then second left into Loftus Street, and then right into Moore Street.

There should be plenty of waterbirds, bushbirds and possibly some raptors. Over 110 bird species have been recorded here. The wildflowers should be good too. Bring morning tea, telescopes if you have them and rubber boots, as it will be muddy.

Leader: David James

October 18 - 22 Helena and Aurora Range, followed by Jilbadji Nature Reserve.

Great Western Woodland spring survey

Thursday 21 October: Lake Claremont, Swanbourne

Two-hour excursion

Meet at 8.00 am at the Lake Claremont Golf Club car park off Davies Road, Claremont. We will look for waterbirds and bushbirds around this pleasant suburban lake.

Leader: David Free

Saturday 23 October: Yangebup Lake, Cockburn

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in Parkes Street. Turn into Osprey Drive from North Lake Road and immediately turn into Parkes Street. Parkes Street now only runs for about 200 m before being shut off. Park in this area and walk to the barrier across the road. There should be a good variety of waterbirds and bushbirds. Bring your scope if you have one.

Leader: Robyn Pickering

Monday 25 October: Bold Park Eco Centre, 165 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat

Monthly meeting, 7.30 pm

Guest speaker: Talitha Huston – Birds of the Perth Hills

Talitha Huston is a 17-year-old high school student and she has a love for nature photography—particularly birds.

After taking hundreds of photos of birds, she decided to make use of them in producing a book on local birds called *Birds of the Perth Hills*.

What is remarkable about this book is that not only did Talitha take all the photos, hand-paint the maps and do all the research, she completed it without anyone, including her family, knowing she was doing it!

Within a week of launching her book at the Blue-Sky Festival in Mundaring in March 2021 she had sold 190 copies. In one week, she had been requested to do a podcast, feature in a National wildlife magazine and present at local clubs.

Since then, she has done numerous radio interviews and presentations. Due to the book's popularity she has just printed her 1700th book!

October 26 - 29 Dundas Nature Reserve

Great Western Woodland spring survey

Sunday 31 October: Len Howard Conservation Park, Mandurah

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am at the car park at the end of Marina Quay Drive. From the Mandurah Bypass turn into Sticks Boulevard (left when travelling from Perth) and then turn right into Marina Quay Drive. After morning tea we will move to Erskine Lakes to look for additional species.

Bring your scope if you have one.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Sunday 7 November: John Forrest National Park, Mundaring

Half-day excursion (8.00 am – 12 noon)

John Forrest National Park is located approximately 28 km east of Perth along the Great Eastern Highway. Turn off the highway into Park Road and follow it to the facilities area. If you have a National Parks pass bring it with you. Otherwise, entry is \$15 per vehicle or \$8 per vehicle for seniors. Meet near the information board in the facilities area. We step off at 8:00 am following walk and fire trails over undulating terrain and can expect to see a mix of the birds of the Jarrah Forest and the drier Wandoo Woodland areas, as both vegetation communities are represented in the park. Previous visits have recorded between 40 and 50 species. As this is a long circular walk you may wish to carry something to eat/drink with you. We will have a cuppa while the bird list is compiled.

Leader: Peter Sandilands

Tuesday 9 November: Albany Bird Group

Details about destinations, where to meet, etc., will be made available on e-News or visit Albany Bird Group's website <http://sites.google.com/site/albanybirds/Home> and Facebook page or email albanybirds@hotmail.com

Leader: Anne BondinFObituar

Saturday 13 November: Wearne Road, North Bannister

Full-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am on the east side of the first paddock on Wearne Road.

Wearne Road is on the left side of Albany Highway about 37 km south of the corner of Jarrahdale Road and Albany Highway and immediately before the sign "North Bannister 2 km". Follow Wearne Road for approximately 10 km until you descend into an open Wandoo valley with a farm on the right. Turn right directly before this farm and park in this area.

We will explore the Wandoo woodlands

looking for robins, babblers, and other bushbirds. After morning tea we may look at another area nearby.

Leader: Robyn Pickering

Thursday 18 November: Ascot Waters, Ascot

Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am in the car park at the end of Tidewater Way. To reach the area from Great Eastern Highway, turn into Stoneham Street, then into Resolution Drive, and left into Tidewater Way. Continue through two roundabouts, over the bridge, and up to the car park at the top of the rise. This is getting better as the thousands of shrubs and trees that have been planted start to mature and blossom. A wide variety of habitats can provide shelter for many birds and it is well worth a visit to this promising site.

Leader: Sue Abbotts

Sunday 21 November: North Lake, North Lake

Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am at the gate on Hope Rd. Hope Road runs between Bibra Drive and Progress Drive. The gate is situated one (1) kilometre west of Bibra Drive, or 300 metres east of Progress Drive, with parking availability on either side of Hope Rd.

Leader: Alan Watson

Monday 22 November: Bold Park Eco Centre, 165 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat

Monthly meeting, 7.30 pm

Guest speaker: Mark Henryon - Bushfires

Saturday 27 November: Walyunga National Park, Swan

Half-day excursion

Meet at 8:00 am in the car park at the end of Walyunga Road (off Great Northern Highway, Upper Swan, near Bungara Pool). If you have a National Parks pass, bring it with you. Otherwise, entry is \$13 per vehicle or \$7 per vehicle concession. The National Park lies along the Darling Scarp. The Avon River bounds one part of the planned walk which includes good areas of Wandoo, so we should see an excellent variety of birds. This walk finishes at about lunchtime so bring lunch if you wish.

Leader: Clive Nealon

Sunday 5 December: Garvey Park, Ascot

Half-day excursion

Meet at 7.30 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.

Leaders: Pam and George Agar

Thursday 9 December: Penguin Island, Rockingham

Half-day excursion

Meet at Mersey Point Jetty, off Arcadia Drive, Shoalwater at 8:30 am at the ticket office for Penguin Island. The ferries travel hourly between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm and cost \$18 (with concession \$16) return. We will catch the 9:00 am ferry.

The group will walk to the various places of interest on the island and, if people wish, can attend the penguin feeding in the DEC facility housing injured or orphaned penguins (additional cost). Bridled Tern, Little Penguin and Buff-banded Rail are often seen here and it is a haven for nesting sea birds.

There is a nice picnic area on the island but no shop so please bring all food and drink requirements. There are also nice beaches and it is a good swimming area.

Leader: Pauline Woolley

Sunday 12 December: Alfred Cove, Melville

Half-day excursion

Meet at 7.30 am in the car park in Troy Park next to the oval, off Burke Drive, Attadale.

There should be migratory waders and waterbirds around the river, and there are always bush birds in the park. Over 110 species have been recorded here.

Bring your telescope if you have one.

Leader: Toni Webster

Saturday 18 December: Carine Open Space, Carine

Half-day excursion

Meet at 7:30 am in the car park off Beach Road, Carine. Carine Open Space is part of the Northern Swan Coastal Plain KBA for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. Over 90 species have been recorded at this lake, including the three Ibis, Buff-banded Rail, several species of duck, and various raptors.

Bring your telescope if you have one.

Leader: Claire Gerrish

Observatory reports

BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY



Excitement is building in the north of Western Australia as the Broome Bird Observatory (BBO) nears completion of a 4-year project to establish and fit out a new visitor centre.

The Clive Minton Discovery Centre focuses on the migratory shorebirds for which the BBO is so famous. Interpretive panels explain what we know of their amazing migrations, while other displays feature stunning murals of Broome landscapes painted by local artist Chris Hill. Visitors will experience the sounds of our local habitats through an immersive audio installation, and can take a closer look at the mud-living invertebrates that make Roebuck Bay such a special area for birds. A highlight for many will be our interactive How Far Can You Fly challenge, which is sure to captivate the young and not so young!

The dream of an interpretive centre is almost as old as the BBO itself. It has been finally realised thanks to two generous donations: the building itself, donated by Woodside

Australia and Brajkovich Demolition in 2017, and the funding for most of the fitout, donated by Charles Allen OAM.

Charles suggested naming the centre after Clive Minton following Clive's untimely death in November 2019, and there was unanimous agreement from all associated with the BBO. Clive's legacy in the shorebird world is immense. He was a founding father of the BBO, whose infectious enthusiasm and love for shorebirds inspired generations of researchers and volunteers. We hope the centre that bears his name will carry on that vital role.

The Broome Bird Observatory is located 25 km from Broome on the shores of Roebuck Bay. Accommodation and camping are available onsite, or take a day trip from Broome to see the new centre.

EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY

May 2021 to July 2021

Our drive into the Observatory was such a different one to that of four years ago. Where we had previously seen dead trees, burnt sticks and grey ash covering the ground, this is now mostly replaced by different shades of green and a whole lot of fresh regrowth.

The birds, like us are affected in their daily activities by the weather. May, with warmer temperatures, meant that the Major Mitchell's Cockatoos (our star attractions), were showing up in large numbers around the observatory (sometimes up to 72 in the flock) until the weather became cooler and rain came in June (67 mm). Since then, the group seems to number around a dozen, generally arriving after a leader flies in. Our visitors never fail to be impressed by them and I'm sure the birds know they are being photographed.



Red-kneed Dotterel. Photo by Andrew Watson

Warmer weather meant that all the watering points were busy – honeyeaters to the fore with New Holland, Singing, Brown, Spiny-cheeked, a few White-eared, Brown-headed and White-fronted as well as the pushy Red Wattlebird. Not to be missed were the Silvereyes darting in and out amongst the frenetic bathing. More sedate but very showy was the Willie Wagtail and the beautiful Grey Fantail usually coming later in the afternoons. A Grey Shrike-thrush foraged on the ground looking for tasty morsels. Early on, the Brush Bronzings were thirsty with up to 22 in a group and who called in along with a Rainbow Bee-eater and an Inland



Thornbill. Overcast and rainy days in June, then very strong southerly wind events, meant bird numbers were fewer.

As some of the mallees along the north track and around the observatory burst into flower following both the rain and changes in the weather, so too did bird activity increase. The Silvereye, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and huge numbers of Red Wattlebirds passed through, stopping to gorge themselves on the nectar. We were also treated to very showy Spotted Pardalotes – a veritable smorgasbord of them.

Our unusual sightings have been a Collared Sparrowhawk seen a couple of times and a much smaller one who visited the southern watering point twice as well. White browed Babbler has been seen a few times, an Australian Hobby was sighted on a walk amongst the dunes and a Southern Boobook was disturbed on the east track. Golden Whistler was seen once in the bush on the north track around home and we've since heard its call. We won't forget the single note calls of the Spotted Pardalote and the quite melodious tune of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

Kanidal Beach trips usually turn up something noteworthy and did not disappoint with the favourites Red-capped Plover, Australian Pied Oystercatcher, sometimes a couple of Sooty Oystercatchers, Grey Teal, Eastern Reef Egret, Pacific Gull, some Banded Stilts one visit and lately three Red-kneed



Nankeen Kestrel. Photo by Murray Watson

Observatory reports, ctd

Dotterels. A lucky sighting for two trips was an Osprey sitting on the twelve-kilometre post and just once a White-bellied Sea-Eagle on top of a shrub quite close to the beach at Nine Mile.

It has been difficult to identify birds on our trips to Burnabbie, mostly due to weather conditions and also the fact that they are so high up in the mallee canopy and so active with so much flowering. Our last trip was more successful, with Silvereye and Weebill and a couple of young male Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens.

Blue bush plains has not been a happy hunting ground for birds for us this time of year either but last visit we travelled through the plains on the way to Cocklebidy and were rewarded with sightings of thirteen Banded Lapwings, Australasian Pipit, Australian Magpie and an Australian Bustard walking across the road and into the bush. Three Grey Teal have made their home on an alternative pond to Crystal Ponds so it will be interesting to see how long they remain.

Interspersed with all the bird sightings and activity, other creatures shared a spot too. June and July have seen

baby New Zealand Fur Seals (Australian sub species – *Arctocephalus forsteri doriferus*) resting and sleeping on Kanidal Beach while Mum forages and then returns to feed and collect them. The resident observatory Dugite had to be relocated two kilometres away as it was getting too close for comfort, emerging from holes near the back tap and sunning himself on the path to the rota-loo. A Chocolate Wattled Bat fell down when a broom was moved and was settled in the shed to warm up and fly away at nightfall while three Western Pygmy Possums were found in the possum boxes. However, when we went to set up motion sensor cameras near their homes, they had left them. Hope they found lots of blossom and a new place to rest during the day.

All our guests have taken away very happy memories of their visit to the observatory and have enjoyed the chance to slow down and enjoy the bush, animals and the experience of being so far away from the madding crowd. We've enjoyed sharing the experience with them and being able to learn and absorb so many experiences ourselves.

Murray and Jeanette Watson

More from the field



Scarlet robin at Dryandra. Photo by Drew Davison



Rufus treecreeper at Dryandra. Photo by Drew Davison



White-breasted Sea-Eagle at Eyre. Photo by Murray Watson



Australasian Shoveler pair at Stirling Wetlands. Photo by Mark Locker

Calendar of events

BirdLife Western Australia Western Australian Bird Notes

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7/2017

Sun 5 Sep: Bibra Lake, Cockburn

Mon 6 - Wed 8 Sep: Karroun Hill

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Tue 26 - Fri 29 Oct: Dundas Nature Reserve

Sun 31 Oct: Len Howard Conservation Park, Mandurah

Sun 7 Nov: John Forrest National Park, Mundaring

Tue 9 Nov: Albany Bird Group

Sat 13 Nov: Wearne Road, North Bannister

Thu 18 Nov: Ascot Waters, Ascot

Sun 21 Nov: North Lake, North Lake

Mon 22 Nov: Bold Park Eco Centre, Monthly meeting

Sat 27 Nov: Walyunga National Park, Swan

Sun 5 Dec: Garvey Park, Ascot

Thu 9 Dec: Penguin Island, Rockingham

Sun 12 Dec: Alfred Cove, Melville

Sat 18 Dec: Carine Open Space, Carine

CROSSWORD NO. 48 ANSWERS

ACROSS

2 camp, 4 whiskers, 8 path, 10 incidental, 12 forest, 13 cut, 15 raid, 16 travel, 17 owe, 19 nine, 20 lorikeet, 25 bower, 27 crested, 28 ecosystem, 29 faded

DOWN

1 cup, 3 pristine, 5 index, 6 King, 7 solitude, 9 terminal, 11 clustered, 12 forage, 13 colony, 14 Avon, 18 crowded, 21 thrush, 22 hidden, 23 usher, 24 Ruff, 25 bond, 26 root



BirdLife WA Shop
Clothing

We have a large range of clothing with our logo on.
Postage and packaging is extra.

Payment can be made over the phone using a credit card or by filling out the Clothing Order Form that is downloadable online and either posting it or emailing it to us.

To download the form please visit
www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-western-australia/sales

Postage address is BirdLife Western Australia, 167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat WA 6014.
Email address is wa@birdlife.org.au

If you would like to purchase some clothing over the phone, please call
08 9383 7749 Mon-Fri 9:30am-12:30pm.



DONATION FORM

Donations will be used to assist in our mission to make a real and positive difference for Australian birds in the state of Western Australia.

If you would like to make a donation please fill out this form and post or email it to us. Alternatively, you can call us on 61 8 9383 7749.



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CITY

PHONE

STATE

POSTCODE

DONATION INFORMATION

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EMAIL: WA@BIRDLIFE.ORG.AU | POSTAL ADDRESS: PEREGRINE HOUSE, 167 PERRY LAKES DRIVE, FLOREAT, WA 6104

Birdlife WA Shop Greetings Cards

We have a large range of cards with beautiful illustrations of Australian Birds. All cards cost \$2 each including an envelope. Postage and packaging is extra.

Payment can be made over the phone using a credit card or by filling out the Bird Card Order Form that is downloadable online and either posting it or emailing it to us.

If you would like to purchase some cards over the phone, please call 08 9383 7749 Mon-Fri 9:30am-12:30pm.

To download the form please visit
<https://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-western-australia/sales>

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Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

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