



THE IBOCC

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE No. 335

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB INC NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2010



photo Charles Dove

Bassian Thrush

Scientific name: *Zoothera lunulata*

Family: Muscicapidae

Order: Passeriformes

Description

The Bassian Thrush is a secretive bird. Its plumage is mottled brown to olive-brown, heavily scalloped with black crescent-shaped bars on the back, rump and head. The paler underparts all have brown-black scalloping. It has a white eye-ring. In flight the Bassian Thrush shows a broad dark diagonal bar across the white underside of its wing. This species has also been referred to as White's Thrush, Ground Thrush, and Scaly Thrush.

Similar species

The Bassian Thrush is very similar to the Russet-tailed Thrush, *Z. heinei*. The latter has slightly brighter rufous upper parts. The tail of the Bassian Thrush is slightly longer.

Distribution

The Bassian Thrush is found predominantly around the south-east of Australia, and also in the Atherton Tablelands, Queensland.

Habitat

Damp, densely forested areas and gullies are favoured by the Bassian Thrush, usually with a thick canopy overhead and leaf-litter below.

Seasonal movements

Resident, probably sedentary.

Feeding

The Bassian Thrush feeds on the ground, scratching under the leaf-litter for small invertebrates.

Breeding

The Bassian Thrush builds a large, deep, cup-shaped nest in a major tree fork or in a depression on top of a stump. The nest may be quite low or up to about 15 m above the ground. Both parents care for the young.

Living with humans

The Bassian Thrush is adversely affected by clearing of densely vegetated habitats.

(Bassian Thrush information; supplied courtesy of Birds in backyards)

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'ONE GOOD TERN
DESERVES ANOTHER'

ILLAWARRA BIRD
OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.

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Founded in 1977

Club's Aim: To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the birdlife around them.

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APRIL ACTIVITIES

Club Meeting – NO MEETING THIS MONTH DUE TO SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Midweek Walk - Wednesday 7TH April 2010 –

Puckeyes Estate

N.B This walk is a week earlier than normal as some club members will be away at the Easter Camp on the second Wednesday.

LEADER - ALAN COUSINS

Please meet at the Fairy Meadow Surf Club car park, Elliots Road, Fairy Meadow.

This part of Elliots Road is left at the traffic lights at Carters Lane/Squires Way if coming south or right off Squires Way if coming north. Meet at this car park at 8.30am. Bring morning tea and hope to see some small birds!!

Contact Alan Cousins 42833197 or 0413869534

Monthly Outing – NO OUTING THIS MONTH DUE TO CAMP

March Committee Meeting - NO MEETING THIS MONTH

May 2010 Newsletter - Deadline for Articles and **Photos** in the next IBOC Newsletter is Friday 23rd April 2010
Email contributions to Charles Dove newsletter@iboc.org.au or post to 2/39 Purry Burry Ave. Primbee 2502.
Ph:4275 2383 M. 0417 422 302.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS – 2010 fees are now due: Family \$35.00, Single \$30.00, Junior \$10.00
please pay Browyn Wilson Treasurer by cash, cheque or money order.

Sandy Hollow Camp 23rd to 30th October 2010

The October 2010 Camp will be at Sandy Hollow Tourist Park, Golden Hwy, Sandy Hollow. Phone 65474575 or www.sandyhollow.com.au or email info@sandyhollow.com.au. An online booking form is on the website. I strongly recommend that you book cabins etc as soon as possible.

Sandy Hollow is at the N.W. corner of the Upper Hunter Valley, near both the NW fringe of Wollemi and Goulburn Rivers National Parks, and Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve. Travel is via Putty Rd or Newcastle Freeway and New England Hwy to Singleton, and then along the Golden Hwy via Denman to Sandy Hollow which is 2hrs west of Newcastle. Further details and a map later.

The Sandy Hollow Tourist Park which is sited on 20acres backing onto the hills of the parks, is the only suitable accommodation in the area. I strongly suggest that 2 couples share a cottage to reduce the cost. Where a **SHARE** price is indicated that cottage is suitable for sharing.

Accommodation is as follows:

All cabins and motel style units must be booked for the full week at this stage, but this may change at any time. All accommodation is ensuite, has full cooking facilities and all linen, towels and bedding are supplied. *All prices are for 1 or 2 people per night, additional people are \$15 per night*

2 x Park Cabins one bedroom with bunks,	Double bed in main room	\$86.00
3x Motel Units with Queen beds	Sleep 2 only	\$95.00
3x Motel Units with King beds	Sleep 2 only	\$100.00
Dangar Cottage 1 room studio cottage	Sleeps 2 only	\$100 00
Wollemi & Goulburn Cottages Sleep 6	\$100.00	Shared \$65 per couple
	1 bed room, double bed & 1 bedroom, bunks + 2 on a sofa bed in main room	
Giants Leap Cottage Sleep 6	\$106.00	Shared \$68 per couple
	1 bed room, double bed & 1 bedroom, bunks + 2 on a sofa bed in main room	
Hunter Cottage Sleep 6	\$116.00	Shared \$73 per couple
	1 bed room, queen bed & 1 bedroom 2x single beds, + 2 on a sofa bed in main room	
Valley View Cottage Sleep 7	\$130.00	Shared \$80 per couple
	1 bed room, queen bed & 1 bedroom 1x single bed + bunks, + 2 on a sofa bed in main room	

Powered Sites \$28.00 for 2 persons additional people \$6.00

Unpowered sites \$19.00 for 2 persons or \$17.00 for 1 person

A deposit of 50% is required when booking Cabins Cottages etc. Payment by Visa & Mastercard only for phone bookings. Online booking is available. Cheques accepted but must clear before date of arrival, also direct deposit to their bank account.

Any queries please phone or email Betty Hudson on 42360307 or elizabethhudson@bigpond.com Please let me know when you have booked with the park.

Two speakers treated the IBOC meeting held on 8 March 2010 with their presentations. The entrée was given by Joshua Coyte, who gave a wonderful display of the birds seen by members during the camp to Baradine (northwest NSW, near Coonabarabran), held in October 2009. Josh is an excellent bird photographer, and it seems he took photos of virtually all the birds seen during the camp. Interestingly the first

several photos were of wet and bedraggled birds, given the wet weather at the beginning of the camp, including for the first time in my memory, a photo of a House Sparrow. However, the camp soon became sunny, and Josh was able to take the more usual photos of birds under sunny skies, including many of the Square-tailed Kite. Thanks Josh, keep the photos coming!

The guest speaker for the evening was Holly Parsons, now a staff member of Birds Australia and responsible for managing the Birds in Backyards project. While she is the only staff member there is also a steering committee, so Holly is not all alone with this work. Holly last spoke to IBOC several years ago while she was doing her PhD (thankfully completed), when she particularly spoke about her research on Superb Fairy-wrens including their place in the urban environment.

Birds in Backyards is a major Birds Australia project that has continued to grow since it first began in 1998. The theme of the project is 'Sharing spaces: connecting birds and people'. In Australia over 85% of people live in urban areas, the vast majority along the coastline. The idea behind Birds in Backyards is to spread the message of biodiversity to people within the urban landscape, as birds are a highly visible way to observe nature just outside the home. The program is trying to change the attitudes and actions of ordinary people, and is able to provide research to the community about how birds are faring in our cities and towns. In this way the community has a way of connecting with the environment.

Since 1998 Birds in Backyards has been encouraging people to observe the birds in their backyards and report them, similar to the idea behind bird atlassing, but not so scientifically rigorous, as usually the reports are from people who are not necessarily birdwatchers, but mostly from people who are inexperienced about birds. Having had reports over such a long time it is now becoming clear that there are currently large declines in bird numbers, both in Australia and overseas, and that these declines are occurring even in those species that we think of as being common. For many species the urban environment is proving to be a refuge from natural phenomena such as droughts and man-made changes to the rural landscape, such as continuing losses of native vegetation. However, birds can also face significant dangers in the urban environment, such as predation by cats and dogs, predation or harassment by larger bird species, feeding of the wrong foods to birds, pesticides, etc. If we wish to help the birds in the urban environment, Holly mentioned that we should think about their needs, such as shelter, food, water, and somewhere to nest. She encourages gardens that have multiple plants, including an understorey for small birds. The complete removal of vegetation is not recommended. Public parks and gardens that have a lot of vegetation also have a lot of value in creating corridors in the urban landscape.

Given the length of the project it is possible to draw some conclusions about our Birds in Backyards. Overall the larger bird species are faring much better in the urban environment, to the detriment of many smaller species. Birds seen most often, at least in the Sydney and surrounding areas, include the Galah, Pied Currawong, Red and Little Wattlebirds, Rainbow Lorikeet, Australian Magpie, Common Myna, and Spotted Turtledove. As well as being larger these are also the more aggressive species. Bird species not seen as frequently in our backyards include the New Holland Honeyeater, the Fairy-wrens, Eastern Spinebills, Finches, and the like.

Probably the core of the Birds in Backyards project is its website, www.birdsinbackyards.net. This is targeted mainly for adult education and communication, and includes a bird finder that gives details about species commonly found in backyards, how to make your garden bird-friendly, and other similar features. But the program is now expanding into school education and is forging links with other groups to have sub-projects, such as school surveys. Between 2004 and 2009 there was a partnership with the Australian Museum that has now ended, but the Birds in Backyards project is still heavily involved with councils, universities, urban and regional communities, and other research. There is also a growing body of resource material to provide to interested people, including flyers, guidelines, fact sheets on birds and bird groups, and bookmarks. The program has even translated brochures into seven community languages in order to reach elements of Australia's multicultural population that is often not targeted in environmental education.

The website reaches a large audience, and allows people to become less scared of science. It is building up a nationwide dataset. The program as a whole is alerting the general population to birds as environmental and ecological indicators, and getting us to think about biodiversity and sustainability as we watch the birds struggle to live with us and with each other.

Holly has been working on this program for many years now, including when she was a student, and she speaks enthusiastically and passionately about Birds in Backyards. It is my hope that this program is able to continue and grow further, and that it will encourage people to provide the best habitat in their gardens and surroundings to obtain the widest number of bird species possible. Thank you Holly for the great work that you do, and for coming to share it with us.

TRIP REPORT FOR MID-WEEK WALK TO CROOME ROAD 10-3-10*by Michelle Rower*

Twenty-six members gathered on a very overcast morning at Croome Road sporting complex. The resident pair of Australian Kestrels were perched in their usual spot on the light tower next to the oval. After spraying ourselves liberally with insect repellent we headed into the bush. Birds were patchy and we seemed to come upon areas where there were several different species foraging, then walk into a section where there was silence. One bird that appeared in several places as we walked was the Rufous Fantail and everyone enjoyed some good sightings of this beautiful bird flitting amongst the trees displaying its magnificent tail.

The highlight for most of us was the juvenile Brush Cuckoo down by the creek that sat patiently TWICE and allowed all of us to get a good long look through our binoculars as well as snap quite a few pictures. It was nice to see a female Mistletoe bird hopping, where else, but in the mistletoe along the creek. Towards the end of our walk we saw several raptors with the Grey Goshawk providing us with opportunities for a good

look at him in flight and a Brown Falcon being disturbed next to the road by an Australian Raven. It was disappointing that we couldn't locate the Double-barred finches we saw a couple of days earlier when we surveyed this site prior to the walk. A productive morning's walk with 39 species seen.



Brush Cuckoo juvenile
Photo by Charles Dove

BIRD LIST FOR MID WEEK WALK AT CROOME 10-03-2010

Great Cormorant	Superb Fairy-wren	Magpie Lark
Brown Goshawk	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Grey Goshawk	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Kestrel	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Magpie
Brown Falcon	Brown Thornbill	Australian Raven
Spotted Turtle-Dove	Lewin's Honeyeater	Satin Bowerbird
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	New Holland Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Little Corella	Eastern Spinebill	European Goldfinch
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Mistletoebird	Welcome Swallow
Galah	Eastern Yellow Robin (heard)	Silvereye
Rainbow Lorikeet	Golden Whistler	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Crimson Rosella	Rufous Fantail	Common Myna
Brush Cuckoo (juvenile)	Grey Fantail	
Laughing Kookaburra	Willie Wagtail	

Report for Royal National Park Walk Sunday 14th March 2010*by Betty Hudson*

Waking to find that there had been heavy overnight rain and continuing showers in the southern suburbs, but with a forecast of a fine day we left home for the Royal National Park. 16 members met on a very busy morning at the southern end of the Lady Carrington Drive where a Walkathon was also starting. With the bush sparkling and vivid green in the early morning sunlight, we prepared for the leeches we had been warned about and set off. At first it was silent except for the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, but as we attuned our ears to the small sounds those at the back spotted a Rose Robin among others. Turning off along the Walumarra Track we crossed a wide creek on stepping stones and soon encountered the promised leech legions, many as small as threads. Last time we had visited this area the birds were prolific, where had they gone this morning! Due to the leeches no one was game to stop still for very long, so after the track started to turn uphill, we wended our way back to the creek crossing where a Superb Lyrebird was seen scratching in the litter across the creek, and an Azure Kingfisher was spotted sitting on a branch over the creek. Morning tea called, but the spot we had chosen with a table had already been taken, so we found some logs to sit on, and checked for leeches, several were attached to clothing but only one had found flesh for a good meal. After a brief stop we then started along the Forest Track when another Superb Lyrebird was seen crossing the track just ahead. The track wound along a creek in rainforest which looked great after all the rain. Birds were scarce especially as we were all looking at our feet, so many leeches. Alistair gave up counting after he had removed 30 from his shoes! The track slowly climbed away from the creek and the bordering rain forest and we realised that we had left the leeches behind us. Now we could bird watch in peace. Sightings were more plentiful with a White-plumed Honeyeater, Lewin's



Blood Sucker Leech

Honeyeater and a Red-browed Finch all seen, with a Bassian Thrush crossing the track. Suddenly rounding a corner we heard screeching tyres and realised that we were almost back at the road. We had completed the track in near record time. Back at the cars it was decided that we would head to Audley Weir for lunch as there were facilities there. After a leisurely lunch in the picnic shelter and checking out the pool behind the weir, we set off for a walk along the Hacking River towards Grays Point. More birds were evident in the picnic areas and on the river. Along the river bank Kookaburras were chasing a pair of Noisy Miners away from an area beneath a huge gum tree. Walking along a treed track beneath a steep hillside we had few sightings, but stopping at a boat ramp we watched a White-bellied Sea-Eagle over the river, and Little Pied & Pied Cormorants fishing. Starting back along the track as a few spots of rain fell we spotted movement in a tree, an adult Crested Shrike-tit feeding a fledgling. Cameras out as we tried to get a photo between the leaves only partially successful. Shortly after this Tera spotted a very clean looking Water Dragon in the dried litter beside the track where it was perfectly camouflaged and watched with interest as its picture was taken.

A rewarding day's bird watching, in beautiful surroundings, with a total of 41 species recorded.



Crested Shrike-tit
By Charles Dove

Bird List for Walumarra & Forest Tracks 35 species

Wonga Pigeon	White-throated Treecreeper	Brown Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird
Topknot Pigeon	Satin Bowerbird	Eastern Spinebill	Grey Fantail
Grey Goshawk	Superb Fairy-wren	Lewin's Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Variiegated Fairy-wren	White-plumed Honeyeater	Black-faced Monarch
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow-throated Scrubwren	New Holland Honeyeater	Rose Robin
Australian King Parrot	White-browed Scrubwren	Eastern Whipbird	Eastern Yellow Robin
Crimson Rosella	Large-billed Scrubwren	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Bassian Thrush
Azure Kingfisher	Brown Gerygone	Golden Whistler	Red-browed Finch
Superb Lyrebird	Striated Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	

Bird List for Audley Weir 21 species

Australian Wood Duck	Dusky Moorhen	Superb Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler
Pacific Black Duck	Silver Gull	Brown Thornbill	Pied Currawong
Little Pied Cormorant	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Pied Cormorant	Azure Kingfisher	Noisy Miner	Willie Wagtail
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Laughing Kookaburra	Crested Shrike-tit (B)	Welcome Swallow
Purple Swamphen			

(B) indicates a breeding record

Atlas & Birdata

An Ongoing Monitoring Project

The Atlas is one of Birds Australia's greatest resources, allowing us to track changes in birds across the country. Atlas data forms the basis for research such as [The State of Australia's Birds Report](#). Since 1998 a dedicated band of over 7000 atlassers have amassed over 420,000 surveys, comprising over 7.1 million bird records. Unlike most Atlases conducted around the world which collect data in grids, observers are asked to give the precise coordinates of where they undertook their survey. Knowing this information adds greatly to the value of the data and allows observers to go back to that precise location and conduct repeat surveys. With large numbers of observers collecting data, the Atlas provides a good insight into the changes in bird populations over time.

Atlas Search Methods

2-ha Search

- This is our preferred method
- Search a 2 hectare area for 20 minutes
- We encourage you to survey your selected area once each season for at least one year

Fixed-route Monitoring

- Choose a survey route. This survey route is a repeated sequence of activities in time and space. It is a combination of location, timing and effort (i.e. is it you alone, you and three friends, you on a bicycle?)
- Survey that route with roughly the same effort at least once a month
- Enter the data in Birdata and identify the route as a long-term monitoring route
- Enter enough information about location, timing and effort that someone else could do the same thing. This may involve the use of GPS
- Enter some basic habitat data and make notes of substantive changes to the site, if any

If in doubt, email atlas@birdsaustralia.com.au or call 03 9347 0757.

BIODIVERSITY

more info at www.sustainableillawarra.com.au/Backyard-Biodiversity.html

Enhancing Biodiversity around your Home

Sometimes in urban environments we can feel stressed with the pace of life and very separate from the natural world. Creating nature spaces in and around your property can provide healthy, peaceful and fun family places to spend time in. Nature spaces can be anything from seating in the centre of a shrub garden, to mini forests, nature trails and frog ponds. The trick is to create beautiful spaces for you to relax in (or play and discover!) while at the same time providing healthy habitats for native animals such as birds, frogs and lizards. Creating urban environments that are rich in a diversity of different living things (biodiversity) means a healthier community for us all.

Why is biodiversity so important?

Our Food depends on it - one of the great benefits of protecting biodiversity is that it provides a pool of genes to improve our crops. Wild genes can provide resistance to disease, improve production and protect against long-term changes in temperatures and rainfall. Everything we eat has a genetic tradition.

Our Medicines are made from it - over 21,000 plants around the world have reported medical uses. Lymphoid leukaemia once killed 90 per cent of its child victims within six months. Now the disease is being effectively treated with tylocrebrin, a drug derived from an Australian native vine, Tylophora.

We are all Connected - we are connected to all other things in the web of life through the air we breathe, water we drink and food we eat. By destroying other parts of the web, we are destroying our own chances of survival.

Natural spaces are healing places, places of discovery and adventure, places of sport and relaxation. It is well known that communities with plenty of healthy green spaces are much happier and have a higher quality of life.

Designing Nature Spaces

Redesign your yard to welcome back the birds, butterflies, possums and lizards by:

- Converting some lawn to mulched garden beds. Mulched native gardens need less watering than lawn and ornamentals, and are easier to maintain.
- Remove plants from your garden that can become weeds in our bushland. Common weeds are Honeysuckle, Large Leaf Privet, Mickey Mouse Bush, Asparagus Fern, Black-eyed Susan and Morning Glory
- Plant local native species of trees, shrubs, grasses and ground covers.

You can use the Flora for Fauna web-site (www.floraforfauna.com) as a step by step guide to help you select which plants are best for your climate zone and which birds, butterflies and other fauna you can attract to your yard. Once you have picked your selection of natives you will be able to design a plan on a sample grid which will give you a top and side view of your new garden.

Ecological Gardening

Ecological gardening has to be the way of the future. It involves almost a complete turnaround in approach. Instead of just choosing plants that appeal to you and adapting your garden conditions to suit them, you assess what your site offers and select plants that suit it - often with very different results.

Although species native to your area will form the core of plantings (because they are naturally adapted to the climate, soils, drainage and so on), exotics are not out of the question providing they match your local conditions.

Pesticides and herbicides are frowned upon because the aim of ecological gardening is to encourage a system in balance with local wildlife. Birds, insects, lizards and perhaps even small mammals will then seek out the refuge you are creating. Water availability and a new attitude to 'tidiness' can encourage the return of wildlife, which, in turn, helps keep pests and diseases under control.

There are many other benefits too. Some gardeners find endless interest in the procession of new wildlife visitors and residents. You're also likely to feel more in tune with the world around you.

SHOALHAVEN BIRDWATCHING OUTINGS 2010

We have a small informal group down here and have planned monthly outings. I used to send a copy to iboc in case members were down this way or wanted to join us on any of our outings so if you would like to publish it in the bulletin.... any visitors would be most welcome.

Every third Sunday meeting at 8.30 am

APRIL 18	Bamarang Dam/Yalwal: meet Jet pole roundabout Kalander/Berry Sts Nowra
MAY 16	Jerrara Dam/ Spring Creek: meet Berry Apex Park
JUNE 20	Bomaderry Creek: meet trackhead, Nerang Road
JULY 18	Bass Point: meet Berry Apex Park
AUGUST 15	Fitzroy Falls East Rim: meet Kangaroo Valley Showground
SEPTEMBER 19	Lake Wollumboola/ Callala: meet Archgate Nursery
OCTOBER SAT.16	Weekend: Canberra, Gunning, Canyonleigh
NOVEMBER 21	Florence Head: meet Bewong Roadhouse
DECEMBER 19	Basin Xmas with Stan and Su at 5 pm ; 43 Harris Ave Basin View. BYO picnic/drink for after a short walk.

A Trip to the Flinders Ranges August 2009

BY Betty Hudson

PART 2 OF 2

Continued from March Newsletter

An early start next morning found us on our way to what most people consider to be "The" Flinders Ranges - Wilpena Pound-with of course many stops on the way to take photographs of the ranges in the morning light, before meeting with Andy & Anna at the Visitors Centre. The Flinders Ranges are the eroded remnants of a huge uplift of the ground, with the remaining rock strata rising vertically. This makes for spectacular scenery with many gorges. The rain had brought out a spectacular display of wild flowers. The weather was beautiful, the wildflowers glorious and the birds plentiful as we walked along the track beside a flowing Wilpena Creek, Red-capped Robins taunting me as I tried to photograph them before they moved. We passed the restored Hills Homestead where we had morning tea and admired a sculpture of traditional owners, before making the climb up to Wangarra Lookouts on the rim of the Pound. By now it was hot in the sun and the track led through a display of wild flowers with many magnificent golden wattles. On the rocks lining the track edges a great variety of lizards had emerged from the winter torpor to sun themselves. One spectacular blue green and orange dragon was still unmoving when we came down again oblivious of the constant stream of people passing. The view from the top lookout was well worth the climb. We returned to the main track but took a different path back to the track head climbing above the creek through areas of bare rock in much drier vegetation. Here we all had good sightings of one bird we had come to find, the Redthroat, perched in a wattle bush and then crossing the track. We saw a pair both carrying, in turn, small grubs away to what we suspected was a nest. In the same area we saw many honeyeaters making the most of the blossom amongst them the Yellow-throated Miner,

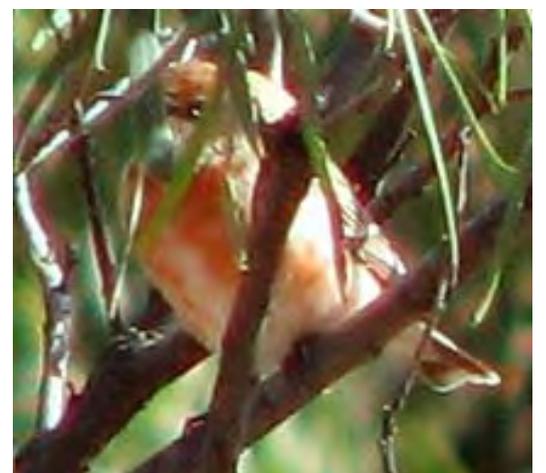


Little Eagle Bunyeroo Gorge

Photo Betty Hudson

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Black-chinned and Brown-headed Honeyeaters as well as the Chestnut-rumped, Inland and Slender-billed Thornbills. After lunch at the Visitors Centre we headed out to Stokes Lookout where we had been told we should find our first Grasswrens. No such luck. On the way, we had to stop to allow an Emu with 15 chicks to cross the road, one of many we saw in the ranges. Someone needs to teach them road sense!! We then headed onto Willow Station Campground where we had also been told we were sure to see them. This area had recently been burnt and the porcupine grass was very short and no birds. We stopped at an area of lush Saltbush by a creek bed at the bottom of the Stokes Hill Rd on the return trip and had a walk. No Grasswrens were seen, but White-winged Trillers & Elegant Parrot, were found and I got my photo of the Red-capped Robin at last! As it was getting late and we didn't wish to be dodging emus and 'roos on the road back we left to return to Hawker.

Another day, another excursion to the ranges, this time to Bunyeroo and Brachina Gorges. Bunyeroo Gorge was a drive through spectacular country of steep dry ridges and deep valleys scoured out in times of heavy rain, a bonus on the way, was a pair of Banded Lapwings with 4 chicks. Bunyeroo Gorge was very dry as it faced west. We followed a track along a rock strewn creek bed between rising cliffs. Birds were very few with an Emu with 10 chicks and a Nankeen Kestrel using a nesting hole but plenty of flies sheltering from the wind. Back at the car park we stopped for lunch in a picnic area by the creek. Here we found a pair of Little Eagles and Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters feeding along the regrowth in the creekside vegetation. Leaving here Anna & Andy had to return to Wilpena as they were returning to Hawker for the night, while the rest of us had a look at Brachina Gorge, one of the iconic places in the ranges, travelling along a good gravel road in the valley bottom before heading back to Hawker. Entering the gorge from the east on a road that was obviously the creek bed with the large boulders removed, it was everything you expected of the ranges – dry, huge towering red rock walls either side of the road with the colours ranging from pale to deep red ochre. Stopping for photos at one point we went for a short walk up the side of the gorge with a female Crimson Chat, Pied & White-fronted Honeyeaters & a Brush Bronzewing our reward. We continued along the gorge for another 6 km with no time or places for stops – the shops shut at 5pm! Leaving the park to cross grazing land we found the worst road of the trip.



Female Crimson Chat Brachina Gorge

Photo Betty Hudson

Huge corrugations covered with large gravel rattling our teeth. From this the western side, the Ranges were very impressive rising from the dry red sand & salt bush plains. Stopping briefly, for a photo, I though I glimpsed Lake Torrens glistening in the west. Wishful thinking? Andy & Anna made a short trip back to Stokes Hill and after speaking

to another group of bird watchers who arrived at that point, found a Crimson Chat and the Short-tailed Grasswrens – they had moved about 60m down the hill from Stokes Lookout.

Leaving Hawker & travelling north the next day for 117km, we found the saltbush close to the side of the road on the long straight sections very mesmerising. We stayed at Copley, the town for the Leigh Creek Brown Coal Mine which supplies Port Augusta Power Stations. The longest train I have ever seen left there each night at 6pm. It had 3 diesel Locos, 169 coal wagons, and a generator car at the rear. It took forever to pass as it slowly picked up speed after leaving the mine. I would have hated to have had to wait for it at the level crossing on the highway to the south. Changing into shorts as it was now very hot, we headed to Aroona Dam, the water supply for the mine and the new



Aroona Dam –
Water supply for Leigh Creek Mine

Photo Betty Hudson

Leigh Creek Township. The country is extremely arid with steep stony hills and few trees other than along watercourses. The dam was quite a contrast as it has been rehabilitated as a wildlife sanctuary by the locals and the water seeping from the dam provided permanent water along the creek with plenty of Australian Reed-Warblers calling. After lunch in a picnic area under a gnarled old flowering gum we followed the walking trail along the creek, hearing lots of calls but seeing little except a Little Grassbird. The trail was poorly marked and we headed the wrong way along a dry stony side creek & then eventually finding a way across the main creek to the other bank where we had seen activity by birds. Returning towards the dam we found we had strayed onto private land, but soon found the correct way back across the creek on 3 sets of stepping stones. The day being now very hot, we returned to the dam wall and from the shade of the trees checked out the water birds, Musk Ducks, Australasian & Hoary-headed Grebe, & Grey Teal. Calling at Leigh Creek Village for supplies we then headed back for tea while watching a magnificent sunset over the desert.

From here we again headed north for a day, hoping to get to Maree at

the start of the Birdsville Track. This was definitely desert country, with bare sand or sparse salt bush plains between sand ridges, stretching into the distance. The only evidence remaining of the old Ghan Railway Line to Alice Springs was the embankment. The first stop of the trip was a flooded causeway where we added the White-backed Swallow to the list. The road changed to a good gravel road once we left Lyndhurst which sees the start of the Strzelecki Track, and was surprising busy with a constant stream of laden 4 wheel drives heading to Birdsville for the weekend races. After many kilometres I called, "Orange Chats" over the two way radio as I screeched to a halt! There they were, little orange glowballs crossing the road and perching in the saltbush but never sitting still for long enough to photograph, then reappearing several hundred metres further along and crossing the road several more times. In the same spot while chasing the chats we saw Thick-billed Grasswrens, a female Crimson Chat and a Eurasian Skylark. When I called in to Canberra on my way home, Kathryn asked "Where are your photos of the Orange Chats Grandma?!!" This was to my mind was the highlight of the trip and one of the many birds we had come to see. Moving again we arrived at Farina Historic Site, once a thriving community on the Old Ghan Railway now in ruins. After a look round we headed to the camp ground for morning tea followed by a walk along a dry creek. Birds were plentiful as there was water in the area. Many new birds were recorded, Chirruping Wedgebill (like a pale fawn Whipbird – not small as I had imagined!), Budgerigar, Zebra finch, White-breasted & Black-faced Woodswallow. Making our way out through waist high Saltbush David almost stepped on a very large greyish bird which disappeared rapidly in the bushes. Could it have been a Bush Stone-curlew? Who knows! The

day now turning cloudy & very windy, we left to find a large tank a little further up the road in the hope of finding some dry land birds. Arriving at the tank we crossed the old Ghan Embankment to the fence round the dam. No obvious gate in the fence was seen so we split up and went both ways round. The men found the gate and also saw an Inland Dotterel scurrying off in front of them, to become totally invisible against the terrain. The ladies were frustrated being able to see small birds on the edge of the water but not to identify them, so hurried to find out how the men had got in – Oh a gate! The birds were soon sorted out as Orange & Crimson Chats & Zebra Finches. What a sight both chats made side by side, but too far away to take a picture! As the weather was looking very ominous, and with memories of the slippery road earlier we started back along the road towards Copley, dashing our hopes of reaching Maree, with rain forcing us to eat lunch in the cars by a creek crossing. A special roast dinner at the pub ended the day. We arrived early, as we had found at Quorn, country people dine before heading back home so that at 6.45pm there was little choice left!

Next day we stated the long haul back towards the east coast, stopping at Brachina Creek for morning tea and a good sighting of a Mulga Parrot, and then on to Hawker for a quick stop before heading via Craddock –with a lovely old pub and 2 beautifully maintained churches, and on to Orroroo for lunch. We had now left the ranges behind and were travelling through paddocks green with wheat or yellow with canola. A walk to the Orroroo Reservoir Reserve starting behind the caravan park followed on a perfect afternoon. This was an interesting walk with plenty of bird life along a



Ruined Building at Farina Historic Site

Photo Betty Hudson

trail either side of the creek to the dam wall. There were many ducks on the water including Musk Duck, Pink-eared duck, Australian Shoveler and Black-tailed Native hens, while the surrounding woodland saw the elusive Red-backed Kingfisher recorded as well as Yellow-throated Miner, White-bellied and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Rufous Songlark White-winged Triller and Varied Sitella, and once again, the black phase of the Grey Currawong. A Yellow Thornbill was seen at its nest in a low bush.

Rain started as we were preparing to leave the next morning and dogged our journey for long periods as we travelled south through Jamestown to Burra, a historic town with well restored stone buildings, where we stopped for morning tea beside the river. The bird life was over friendly with Coots, Moorhens and Ducks all clamoring to share with us. A walk along the river to where David had previously seen Nankeen Night Herons only added the Diamond Firetail & European Goldfinch to the list. Leaving Burra we headed once again to Morgan leaving the arable land and hills behind for the saltbush plains, finally leaving the rain behind as we got close to the river. Shopping completed and lunch finished we took the car ferry over the Murray River to Morgan Conservation Reserve, which features a large lagoon full of water. This proved a great birding spot with Black-winged Stilts, Black-fronted Dotterel, Wood Ducks, Black Swans and Australian Shelduck all with young; Egrets, Herons, Cormorants, a Yellow Spoonbill, Coots and a Silver Gull were also seen. 6 Raptors were seen including Swamp Harrier and Collared Sparrowhawk. Land birds were just as prolific with several good sightings of the Regent Parrot, Musk & Rainbow Lorikeets, Singing Honeyeater, & Pied Butcherbird, amongst many others.

Next day was an early start on a blustery cold day as we were going to Gluepot to meet up with Anna & Andy who were camping there. Birds were very scarce as they had

missed all the rain & were very dry. We were given directions to an active Mallee Fowl Mound and coming upon it suddenly Andy & David saw a grey shadow move swiftly off. Was it the elusive Mallee Fowl? Who knows! The mound was interesting and was being monitored by a camera. Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters were very common everywhere at Gluepot. To get out of the wind we ate morning tea at a bird hide but no birds came to drink. The afternoon saw us go on a longer walk which rewarded us with a White-fronted Chat, White-browed Babbler & Chestnut Quail Thrush. We returned to Morgan for the night, with only Myself returning the next day due to the long drive for few birds, the others preferring to look round Morgan. Out at Gluepot, a better day with many more birds about including large numbers of White-browed Woodswallows low to the ground, the Chestnut-crowned Babbler seen in a few places and many birds at



Pair of Mulga Parrots Gluepot Reserve

Photo Betty Hudson



Yellow-plumed Honeyeater on water trough
at Gluepot Reserve

Photo Betty Hudson

a hide including numerous Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters drinking & bathing. Woodswallows in the trees and a pair of Mulga Parrots in the shade of nearby bush just refusing to come into the sunlight for a decent photo. Meanwhile those in Morgan had a great day with 12 plus sightings of Regent Parrots, and good views of the Chestnut Crowned Babbler.

Next day we met up with Andy & Anna at Taylorville and began the long drive back east, stopping in Renmark for Gloria & David to pay brief visit to family and then on to Balranald for the night dodging extremely heavy rain showers along the way. I was very surprised that at the first town in NSW, Gol Gol, the local IGA could not provide any apples and directed me back to Mildura! Next day was the long drive across the Hay Plain, straight & flat, with many on-coming trucks. Despite this David managed to

spot an Australian Pratincole beside the road, but was unable to let everyone know in time to stop & look at it. This brought the count to 183 over 41 locations for the trip. I left the others at Darlington Point where Superb Parrots were again seen, to divert to Leeton, while they continued on home spending the last night in Wagga.

I eventually arrived home to warm spring weather after a round trip of 5000km, the only hiccup to my trusty Toyota, was a puncture from a nail, luckily found and fixed before we headed off one morning.

Thanks to everyone who shared the trip and had the patience to put up with my getting bird lists at every place we stopped as well as stopping to photograph plants and scenery as well as the birds. I hope you all had a great experience, as I did.

Betty

Farewell

A last sight of the Flinders Ranges as we head south. Viewed from the west over the plains



Photo Betty Hudson

Flinders Ranges Bird List

Ostrich	Brown Falcon	Superb Fairy-wren	White-winged Triller
Emu	Australian Hobby	Splendid Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler - E Race
Musk Duck	Peregrine Falcon	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Rufous Whistler
Black Swan	Brolga	Short-tailed Grasswren	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian Shelduck	Purple Swamphen	Thick-billed Grasswren	White-breasted Woodswallow
Australian Wood Duck	Black-tailed Native-hen	Redthroat	Masked Woodswallow
Pink-eared Duck	Dusky Moorhen	Weebill	White-browed Woodswallow
Australasian Shoveler	Eurasian Coot	Brown Gerygone	Black-faced Woodswallow
Grey Teal	Black-winged Stilt	Yellow Thornbill	Dusky Woodswallow
Chestnut Teal	Red-necked Avocet	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird
Northern Mallard	Inland Dotterel	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Pied Butcherbird
Northern Mallard X Pacific Black Duck	Black-fronted Dotterel	Slender-billed Thornbill	Australian Magpie
Pacific Black Duck	Red-kneed Dotterel	Inland Thornbill	Pied Currawong
Hardhead	Banded Lapwing	Southern Whiteface	Grey Currawong (Black-winged Form)
Blue-billed Duck	Masked Lapwing	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Australasian Grebe	Marsh Sandpiper	Striated Pardalote	Willie Wagtail
Hoary-headed Grebe	Australian Pratincole	Eastern Spinebill	Australian Raven
Rock Dove	Caspian Tern	Pied Honeyeater	Little Raven
Common Bronzewing	Silver Gull	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Restless Flycatcher
Brush Bronzewing	Galah	Singing Honeyeater	Magpie-lark
Crested Pigeon	Long-billed Corella	White-eared Honeyeater	White-winged Chough
Peaceful Dove	Little Corella	Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	Apostlebird
Tawny Frogmouth	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	White-plumed Honeyeater	Jacky Winter
Australasian Darter	Cockatiel	White-fronted Honeyeater	Scarlet Robin
Little Pied Cormorant	Rainbow Lorikeet	Noisy Miner	Red-capped Robin
Great Cormorant	Superb Parrot	Yellow-throated Miner	Hooded Robin
Little Black Cormorant	Regent Parrot	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Eastern Yellow Robin
Pied Cormorant	Crimson Rosella (Yellow Form)	Red Wattlebird	Eurasian Skylark

Australian Pelican	Crimson Rosella (Adelaide Form)	Crimson Chat	Australian Reed-Warbler
White-necked Heron	Eastern Rosella	Orange Chat	Little Grassbird
Eastern Great Egret	Australian Ringneck	White-fronted Chat	Rufous Songlark
White-faced Heron	Blue Bonnet-Yellow Vent form	Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	Brown Songlark
Australian White Ibis	Red-rumped Parrot	New Holland Honeyeater	Silvereye
Straw-necked Ibis	Mulga Parrot	Black-chinned Honeyeater	White-backed Swallow
Royal Spoonbill	Budgerigar	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Elegant Parrot	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Fairy Martin
Black-shouldered Kite	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Noisy Friarbird	Tree Martin
Whistling Kite	Black-eared Cuckoo	Grey-crowned Babbler	Common Blackbird
Black Kite	Pallid Cuckoo	White-browed Babbler	Common Starling
Brown Goshawk	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Chestnut-crowned Babbler	Mistletoebird
Collared Sparrowhawk	Southern Boobook	Chestnut Quail-thrush	Zebra Finch
Spotted Harrier	Laughing Kookaburra	Chirruping Wedgebill	Diamond Firetail
Swamp Harrier	Red-backed Kingfisher	Varied Sittella Orange Winged	House Sparrow
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Sacred Kingfisher	Varied Sittella Black Headed Form	Australasian Pipit
Little Eagle	White-throated Treecreeper	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	European Goldfinch
Nankeen Kestrel	Brown Treecreeper	White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	

Bird List for Trip 183 species recorded over 41 locations

A full bird list showing the species recorded at each place we stopped will be posted on IBOC's web site.



Cape Barren Goose
sighted at Ulladulla headland (near lighthouse), feeding on football ground at 7.30 p.m. Tuesday 16th March 2010.
Dave Stephens



“Scaly Breasted Rainbow Lorikeet”
cross breeding in the wild -----
Terry Edwall



Racing Cocky?
No, my neighbour across the road hasn't branched out into racing cockies as well!
Mike



Common Tern – not so common Purry Burry Point Primbee – March 2010
Charles Dove



Juvenile Sea Eagle – Purry Burry Point Primbee – surprised 200+ cormorants and silver gulls when he landed. Charles Dove



Surprise in the garden pond – red belly Black Snake feeding on frogs eggs –
Terry Edwall

Looks like the the Albatross are starting to arrive.... Not sure of identity yet

forever vigilante

Bird List for February & March 2010*compiled by Martin Cocker*

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
Australian Brush-turkey	1	18-Feb-10	Mangerton Park	Rainforest/Park	Danie Ondinea
Cape Barren Goose	1	16-Mar-10	Ulladulla Lighthouse	Playing field	David Stephens
Blue-billed Duck	1	03-Mar-10	Berrima Road, Moss Vale	Farm Dam	Terry Dunlea
Blue-billed Duck	1 M.	19-Mar-10	Woodland Road, Mittagong	Farm Dam	Terry Dunlea
White-throated Needletail	12+	27-Feb-10	Bundewallah/Berry Mtn	Bush/Paddock	Carla Jackett
Australian White Ibis	12	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
Royal Spoonbill	31	17-Mar-10	Whyjuck Bay, Lake Illawarra	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Eastern Osprey	1	17-Feb-10	Bass Point	Ocean Cliffs	Tom & Joan Wylie
White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	19-Feb-10	Tallowarra Power Station	Lakeside	Darryl Goldrick
White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
White-bellied Sea-eagle	1 juv	Feb-10	Primbee	Lakeside	Charles Dove
White-bellied Sea-eagle	1A 1J	19-Mar-10	Purry Burry Point, Primbee	Overhead	Charles Dove
Brown Goshawk	1	Feb-10	Primbee	Lakeside	Charles Dove
Grey Goshawk	1	19-Feb-10	Tallowarra Power Station	Lakeside	Darryl Goldrick
Grey Goshawk	1	19-Feb-10	Irvine's Road, Bellawongarah	Bush/Paddock	Carla Jackett
Grey Goshawk	1	Feb-10	Primbee	Lakeside	Charles Dove
Nankeen Kestrel	1	Feb-10	Primbee	Lakeside	Charles Dove
Brown Falcon	1	18-Mar-10	Purry Burry Pont, Primbee	Garden/Bush	Charles Dove
Australian Hobby	1	19-Feb-10	Tallowarra Power Station	Lakeside	Darryl Goldrick
Australian Hobby	1	Feb-10	Primbee	Lakeside	Charles Dove
Australian Hobby	1	08-Mar-10	Warilla	Overhead	Lorraine Pincus
Peregrine Falcon	1	Feb-10	Primbee	Lakeside	Charles Dove
Sooty Oystercatcher	2	08-Mar-10	Little Beach, Warilla	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Pacific Golden Plover	163	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
Red-capped Plover	40	07-Mar-10	Windang	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Double-banded Plover	5	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
Double-banded Plover	7	07-Mar-10	Windang	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Double-banded Plover	6	25-Feb-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Sand Dunes	Betty Hudson & Blue Mtns BOCA
Bar-tailed Godwit	169	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
Bar-tailed Godwit	10	07-Mar-10	Whyjuck Bay	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Bar-tailed Godwit	13	07-Mar-10	Primbee	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Bar-tailed Godwit	50+ with 3-4 Breeding Plumage	25-Feb-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Wetlands	Betty Hudson & Blue Mtns BOCA
Eastern Curlew	18	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
Great Knot	1	20-Mar-10	Purry Burry Point, Primbee	Estuarine	Charles Dove
Red-necked Stint	60	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
Common Tern	5+	07-Mar-10	Purry Burry Point, Primbee	Estuarine	Charles Dove
Musk Lorikeet	6	19-Mar-10	Purry Burry Point, Primbee	Bush/Garden	Charles Dove
Eastern Koel	1	07-Mar-10	Albion Park Rail	Garden	Barbara & Brian Hales
Dollarbird	1	19-Feb-10	Tallowarra Power Station	Lakeside	Darryl Goldrick
Eastern Bristlebird	1	24-Feb-10	Irvine's Road, Bellawongarah	Rainforest	Carla Jackett
Pilotbird	1+Regular Sighting	Feb-10	Irvine's Road, Bellawongarah	Bush/Paddock	Carla Jackett
Bell Miner	Colony	19-Feb-10	South Avondale Road-Dapto	Bush	Darryl Goldrick
White-fronted chat	5	05-Mar-10	Shoalhaven Heads	Estuarine	Martin and Penny Potter
Australian Logrunner	1+Regular Sighting	Feb-10	Irvine's Road, Bellawongarah	Bush/Paddock	Carla Jackett
Spangled Drongo	1	23-Feb-10	Farmborough Heights	Garden	Chris Blatch
Spangled Drongo	4	20-Feb-10	Primbee	Bush	Charles Dove

An interesting month and an interesting time of the year. The return of our shorebirds to the northern hemisphere means that birds of passage can turn up anywhere, for instance there has been a Dunlin sighted and photographed at Tuross Heads, a first I believe for New South Wales? If this bird came into our area would you be confident in identifying it correctly? The continued rain and flooding in the west together with the change of season must be having a strong influence on bird movements so we can expect the unexpected.

Many thanks for all your records please send them to me, in the above format if possible, to cocker@speedlink.com.au and don't forget that these are always posted on the IBOC website. Good Birding.