



"One Good Tern Deserves Another"

I.B.O.C. NEWS

The Newsletter of the ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.
POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 56 FAIRY MEADOW, N.S.W. 2519

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

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS due 1st January each year: **FAMILY \$25 SINGLE \$20 JUNIOR \$5**

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FORTHCOMING IBOC EVENTS August 2005

CLUB MEETING – Monday 8th August - 7.30pm Fairy Meadow Community Hall - Col Markham will talk about birds, animals and accommodation available to birdwatchers in Africa, including a visit to Kruger National Park. **Please remember to bring a mug and a small plate for supper afterwards.**

MID-WEEK WALK –Wednesday 10th August – Mount Pleasant & Mount Keira Ring Tracks – Leader: Mike Morphet. Meet at 8.30am at the parking space on the bend of Mount Keira Road, where the Mount Keira Ring Track meets the road. This spot is 4 km from the Princes Highway – Mount Keira Road intersection in West Wollongong and 900 metres past Byarong Park. We will set off along the fire trail, with a sign at the gateway: Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area – road subject to landslip. Past the junction with the Ken Ausburn Track the trail descends to Parrish Avenue, where we will take the ascent up to the Mount Keira Ring Track via the Mount Pleasant Track and then we proceed south back to the cars. Whilst the walk is undulating, it is a little over 3 km in length, so members will have plenty of opportunity to catch their breath. Morning tea could be accompanied by lyrebird calls and the Bassian Thrush. After the walk some folk may want to drive up to Mount Keira Summit Park and, from the landscaped viewing area, look down on the area we will have walked and the magnificent Wollongong panorama.

AUGUST MONTHLY OUTING - Sunday 14th August – Buderoo National Park Drawing Room Rocks Walk, Berry – Leader Betty Hudson. Meet at the back of the Apex Park, in Berry, by the Broughton Vale Road turnoff at 8.30am (take the 2nd right after the bridge and the next right alongside the back of the park). We will then drive up to the start of the walk at the head of Broughton Vale. Bring a carry lunch and morning tea. You will also need plenty of insect repellent for the leeches. Last time we visited this area we saw Rock Warblers, Gang Gang Cockatoos and Peregrine Falcons as well as magnificent views over the valley and coast.

COMMITTEE MEETING - **Tuesday 16th August 2005**, at **7.30pm** at the home of Fae and Kevin McGregor, 10 White Place, Figtree (4271 3762).

SEPTEMBER 2005 NEWSLETTER Deadline for articles for the next *IBOC News* is **Tuesday 23rd August**. Please don't leave submitting your contributions to the last minute and where possible please submit by email.

STYX RIVER CAMP - 22-29th October 2005

Some preliminary information for those intending to join the group.

- 1 Petrol, gas, bread milk, limited tinned food, biscuits, ice, lollies and some takeaway food is available from the Ebor Roadhouse. Other items can be ordered Monday to Friday from the owner and will be brought from either Armidale or Coffs Harbour and delivered to the Roadhouse by the regular courier run.
- 2 Accommodation. For those who would like accommodation and have not been able to book into the NPWS Cabins, there is alternate accommodation available at either the Ebor Falls Motel 02 6775 9155 (30km from camp) or Moffat Falls Cottage which is 3 to 4km from the campsite 02 6775 9166. Neil and Tera Wheway say this looks very nice from where they were able to observe it. For those who can rough it two basic fisherman style huts with outside toilets called Yaraandoo are also available to rent 02 6775 9246 (not too clean on visual inspection).
- 3 Ebor is accessed via either Armidale (good level road all the way from Armidale) or Coffs Harbour, via Dorrigo (steep winding road), or via Grafton (also steep and winding with logging trucks).

Thanks to Neil and Tera for making a diversion to check the area for us. Full details and map will be in the next newsletter.

From Your Committee

Finance

Balance of IBOC account on 31.05.05 was \$2,457.99. Receipts \$300.00. Expenses approved for payment totalled \$67.10.

Book Sale

Further to the note last month on sale of books, no books donated to the library will be included in the sale.

Missing Book

"Owls" a book of research papers on owls is missing from the library. Has anyone borrowed it and not written it in the book? If so please let Joan Wylie know.

For those interested in **a wonderful spot for seeing south-central Queensland birds**, you might plan a visit to the "Bowra Station", 16 kilometers west of Cunnamulla, South-West Queensland. There is both cottage and shearing quarters accommodation, van sites with electricity, or camping. Also hot showers, laundry and flush toilets!

Lots of lagoons from the station bore water with abundant birdlife (over 180 species identified, bird list available) and expert advice from the owners: Ian and Julie McLaren.

Contact details (pamphlet available):
Phone: 07 4655 1238 Fax: 07 4655 2368
email: gumholes@bigpond.com
web: www.birdingatbowra.com

- contributed by Ron Witton and Celli Lloyd

REPORT ON JULY MEETING**Chris Brandis****The Five Islands - Lindsay Smith**

The speaker for the evening was long time member Lindsay Smith, also president of the Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association (SOSSA), who talked about an area so close but visited by so few. Just off the industrial landscape of Port Kembla is a different world, one where nature acts out its part, the Five Islands Nature Reserve where there is little disturbance from man. But man's actions do affect many of the outcomes of this complex eco system. The islands have changed a lot since Europeans arrived, both with the weeds that have invaded and the changes in food supply for many of the breeding inhabitants. SOSSA have been involved in studying the birds on the islands since the early 1980s with banding of young birds which has increased the knowledge of their life cycles and given an insight into conservation methods required.

Silver Gulls were once low in numbers around Wollongong but with open rubbish tips and plentiful food scraps around eateries the population exploded. This is now dropping as the food supply is being reduced by better tip management and education. Australian Pelicans were virtually unknown on the coast before 1980 but now there are hundreds nesting on the larger islands all year round, partly due to the good supply of fishermen's scraps. Even White Ibis have started to nest amongst the Pelicans and have become scroungers of our rubbish as well as getting access to flooded paddocks where once forests grew.

Kikuyu grass now covers much of Big and Little Islands with the runners proving to be deadly for Little Penguins and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters who have to burrow through the grass, that may be half a metre thick, without getting entangled and left to die a slow death. Fishermen are not allowed on the islands but, due to some perverse bureaucratic demarcation between NPWS and fisheries, are allowed on the area between the high and low tides, thus disturbing nesting oystercatchers and allowing the gulls easy access to their eggs or chicks. A fungal disease that affected bait fish off the coast was thought to have originated from cheap imported bait and tuna food which resulted in a lack of food for the Little Penguins and a huge drop in the population, which is now only just recovering slowly.

Looking from Hill 60 at Port Kembla is a good as it gets for most people but a web cam is being installed so that we will be able to see the intimate side of the life of some of the birds without disturbing them, something to look forward to. We also saw photos of some of the volunteers who brave the sharp beaks of nesting birds to extract them from their burrows to measure and band them, then wait for a recovery record. The data collected helps us to understand the migratory routes, life spans of the birds, survival rates of fledglings and many other aspects of the birds' biology which is essential to ensure the survival of many species. There were many questions afterwards and we thanked Lindsay for opening up a world many will never get to see first hand.

**TREE PLANTING IN COWRA****September 17 – 18 2005****(rescheduled)****VOLUNTEERS WANTED**

At last, good rains in Cowra and the CWBP's postponed tree planting is on!
Please leave your name and contact details at BASNA Office.

Ph: (02) 9436 0388; Fax: (02) 9436 0466 Email: rosella63@bigpond.com

Jerrara Dam**Tera Wheway****Mid-week walk: Wednesday 13th July 2005**

Everyone arrived at the Jamberoo Hotel nice and early for a 9am start. However we were late leaving, this caused by the nearby cake shop proving to be too much of a temptation for some.

Ten people started out in what looked like being an overcast day; however this turned into a fine and sunny delightful morning of bird watching. The area is well set up with picnic tables and toilet provided. It was interesting to see the growth that the trees had made since our last outing in November 2003. There are more areas being vegetated with council workers still clearing lantana and planting new rainforest trees. It promises to be a lovely oasis of bushland in-between rural pastures.

On arriving at the dam Chris Brandis had already started on the bird list and it wasn't long before the list was being extended with a White-headed Pigeon. Red-browed Firetails, Lewin's Honeyeaters and Superb Fairy-wrens were seen in large numbers. It is a short walk but the whole morning was productively spent, with a short break for morning tea overlooking the dam.

The rain of the previous week was evident with storm debris left at the high water mark, not a place to be in heavy rain. The reed bed was flattened so no Reed Warbler this time. Some of the smaller trees and less established plants had been washed away by the obvious storm water torrent. Barbara, our leader, reneged on crossing the creek to test the water depth, which resulted in us all backtracking. This was lucky otherwise we would have missed seeing the Echidna. An Echidna foraging in the undergrowth looking for a meal was spotted by Ted, but the Eastern Whipbird, as always, was heard but not seen.



Neil and I detoured back home via the Swamp Road to look at the new highway extensions. We were rewarded by seeing a large number of Royal Spoonbills, Great Egrets, Pacific Herons, White-faced Herons, Sacred Ibis, and Straw-necked Ibis all feeding on the waterlogged pastures. End to a lovely morning and many thanks to Barbara Hales for leading us around this interesting spot.

Grey Teal	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Whipbird
Chestnut Teal	Superb Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler
Hardhead	White-browed Scrubwren	Grey Fantail
Australasian Grebe	Brown Gerygone	Grey Butcherbird
Little Black Cormorant	Brown Thornbill	Australian Magpie
White-faced Heron	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Raven
Grey Goshawk	Noisy Friarbird	Green Catbird
Dusky Moorhen	Lewin's Honeyeater	Satin Bowerbird
White-headed Pigeon	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Bar-shouldered Dove	Eastern Spinebill	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Galah	Rose Robin	Silvereye
Crimson Rosella	Eastern Yellow Robin	Common Blackbird

BOX VALE TRACK, MITTAGONG**Terri Edwell**Saturday 16th July 2005

There were only five of us, for the walk along the Box Vale Track. We saw lots of Tree Creepers and the dam yielded a Musk Duck, which according to a sign, is an area where they breed. The track was very interesting. It was built around 1888, and was a large project. It was built by Wards of the State, from Toombong School, and members of the Community Employment Programme. There are several, very big cuttings, through sandstone, which were dug out with picks, as the sandstone is too soft for blasting. The valleys are all built up to accommodate the rail track, and there is an eighty-four metre tunnel, cut through a large hill, also mostly by pick and shovel. The mine only operated for a period of eight years and closed in 1896. The walking track was opened in 1986, by the Nowra Lands Office.

We were hoping to see Robins, but none came bobbing along, except for one yellow one. We saw a flock of Varied Sittella (the second time only for me), White-eared Honeyeaters and quite a few Brown-headed Honeyeaters were high in the trees.

At the end of the track, it dips down into a steep valley, where the coal was mined. At the lookout, the Blue Mountains can be seen, a long way in the distance. There were lots of droppings on a ledge but no sign of the bird of prey. We could hear the lovely sound of Bell Birds down in the valley.

It was a very enjoyable walk and we were quite protected from the wind, which was quite strong at times. Many thanks to Betty for leading the walk. For anyone interested in Fungi, there were very good specimens to be found, in various shapes and colours. The wattle was just coming out in its beautiful yellow blooms. It was a lovely, easy walk, except for the tunnel, being very dark in the centre.

Musk Duck	White-throated Treecreeper	Little Wattlebird	Golden Whistler
Australasian Grebe	Superb Fairy-wren	Bell Miner	Grey Shrike-thrush
Pied Cormorant	Spotted Pardalote	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Eurasian Coot	Striated Pardalote	White-eared Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	White Browed Scrub Wren	New Holland Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Crimson Rosella	Brown Thornbill	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Eastern Rosella	Yellow Thornbill	Eastern Spinebill	
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Striated Thornbill	Eastern Yellow Robin	
Laughing Kookaburra	Red Wattlebird	Varied Sittella	

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF YOUR BINOCULARS

Chris Brandis

After reading articles by Keith Brandwood of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club and a follow up by Dick Cooper of the NSW Bird Atlasers, I thought a summary of these comments would be useful to any new members to ensure that they see birds as well as their equipment lets them. Firstly the best binoculars generally cost the most, and higher magnifications often give a shaky image in unstable conditions such as wind. If you will be focusing on birds at short distances in the rain forest then ensure you get binoculars with a focal length down to about 1.5 meters and the bigger the large end lens the better the light gathering power and field of view. Adjusting your bins requires several steps:

1. Adjust the cups on the viewing, small, end to suit whether you will be using glasses or not so that the distance between the lens and the eyes give you the maximum field of view.
2. Adjust the distance between the barrels about the centre pivot so that when looking through them you have a circular field of view.

3. Pick a spot about 15 metres away such as a number plate or fine branch. Close your right eye and using the centre focusing wheel focus the left hand barrel to get the clearest image of the chosen object.
4. Close your left eye and rotate the diopter, the eye piece with – 0 + on it, to again get the clearest image of the chosen object.
5. Open both eyes and the object should be clearly in focus. Repeat a few times to ensure the diopter reading is the same and note the reading in case it moves during use.

Seeing a bird clearly gives you the best opportunity to identify it and get the maximum appreciation of the plumage. If you have problems just ask one of the more experienced members for assistance as we were all beginners once and happy birding!

TRAVELLING NORTH – Part 1

Val Dolan

I first visited Green Island, close to Cairns, in 1972 and it was pristine and really beautiful. Shame about what popularity does to our environment, as Green Island is suffering from just too many human beings. I went to snorkel and see the beche-de-mer, corals, and fish. They are there but a vestige of what I remember. However the birds seem to coexist quite happily with the tourists. On the approach to the wharf a single Osprey was seen sitting at the edge of a very large nest of grey sticks, sited on top of a marker beacon. A large flock of White Herons roosted in the trees at the end of the wharf, while a lively tiny bird flew from wire to wire staying still long enough for me to identify it as a Silveryeye but the Barrier Reef variety which is much brighter than those seen locally. Down at the water's edge stood a single Reef Heron in its black phase, something I hadn't seen before. While I was swimming a huge Sea Eagle flew low overhead and onto the island. Around the resort Sparrows, Crested Pigeons and many Buff-banded Rails scavenged for food scraps. The Buff-banded Rail looked much more attractive in a natural setting scratching amongst the leaf litter beside the walking track, well camouflaged in the dappled sunlight. Back on the ferry the single Osprey had been joined by another and we can only hope they are a successful breeding pair.

Back in Cairns the trees of the main streets were full of noisy Rainbow Lorikeets fighting each other for a perch for the night. Formations of Ibis made their way to their resting place. The huge fig tree behind the library, a remnant of the original vegetation, held a colony of Golden Headed Flying Foxes. A smaller fig nearby had been colonised by family groups of Figbirds with their distinctive red eye patches but again the northern form was much more colourful than ours. Away from the high rise of the inner city evidence of destruction of the rainforest to make way for inappropriate McMansions was rife. A friend I was visiting proudly showed me a wonderful construction in her studio. Not her own art work but the nest of Sunbirds woven from cobwebs, dried grasses, leaves and feathers. The pair had constructed it over a clothesline oblivious to her working at her own art in another corner. Sitting down to dinner that night, just after dark, we were startled by the cry of a Curlew flying close by. Some Aboriginal groups further south thought this call was a foreboding of death or bad luck. We hoped this was not true in this area.

Important Groups of Wildlife Habitat Plants - Danie Ondinea 2002

Most Australian plants provide valuable resources for wildlife. The best habitat plants provide some food, shelter and nest sites for a range of nectar, fruit, seed, leaf and insect (and other prey) eating animals such as birds, mammals, lizards, frogs and insects and other invertebrates.

The top habitat plant groups which provide many resources for a wide range of Australian animals are ***Eucalyptus, Angophora, Melaleuca, Acacia, Banksia, Leptospermum*** and ***Kunzea***.

Shelter plants – many Acacia (wattles), Leptospermum (tea-trees), Melaleuca (paperbarks), Bursaria (blackthorn), Hakea, Ceratopetalum (Christmas bush), Kunzea, Clematis, Pandorea (wonga-wonga vine), Rubus (native raspberry) and any dense and/ or spikey planting.

Insect-pollinated plants - Acacia (wattles), native peas (eg. Dillwynia, Hardenbergia, Kennedia), Leptospermum (tea-trees), native daisies (eg. Olearia) as well as Hibbertia, Clematis, Pomaderris.

Nectar plants - Banksia, Grevillea, Hakea, Correa, Lambertia (mountain devil), Callistemon (bottlebrush), Eucalyptus, Angophora, Melaleuca, Xanthorrhoea (grasstrees) and others with big, showy flowerheads, Epacris.

Seed plants – Eucalyptus, Angophora, Acacia (wattles), Casuarina and Allocasuarina (she-oaks), Glochidion (cheese tree), Lomandra, native grasses (eg. Themeda, Danthonia), rushes (Juncus) and sedges (Gahnia).

Fruit plants - Acmena, Syzygium (lillypillys), Ficus (figs), Alphitonia, Trema, Cissus (native grape), Persoonia (geebungs), Dianella (native lily), Breynia, Stephania, saltbushes and many rainforest or wet forest species.

Native bee plants – Persoonia (geebungs), native peas (eg. Hovea, Pultenaea), native daisies (eg. Helichrysum), heath plants (eg. Epacris, Leucopogon), Goodenia, Tristaniopsis (water gum), Leptospermum.

Native butterfly plants – native peas, native daisies, native grasses (eg. Poa), sedges and rushes (eg. Carex, Juncus), Lomandra, Dianella, Bursaria (blackthorn), Macrozamia (burrawang), Dodonaea, Zieria, Correa, Indigofera, Cupaniopsis (tuckeroo), Melaleuca and mistletoes.

Ode to my Dear and Valued Friend Val and Others

Submitted by Carol Cruickshank, who is planning to found the Non-Watching Friends of Birdwatchers Support Group!

Pity us poor people with a certain type of friend
 Most of the time they're normal, and go with a usual trend
 Then they become a 'twitcher', how it happens I don't know
 From watching too many pelicans, flying high and low?
 The "Borer of the Year Award" would be theirs without half trying
 Because listening to bird stories nearly leaves us crying

A minor observation can be tolerated to hear
 It's the convoluted stories we await with dread and fear
 The nesting locations and different mating call
 Colour of each feather, we have to hear it all
 We're getting very drowsy, it's endless without pause
 Presuming that we're interested, part of the feathery cause!

A special Cone of Silence, or a membership who're mute
 Would raise a cheer from all of us, we'd shout "you bloody beaut!"
 Don't get us wrong, we love you all and hope you continue to have fun
 But the day after your bird watchers' walks
 You don't mind if we duck and run?

Birds around Berry - July 2005

Bob Ashford



Birdwatching, one might reasonably assume, requires a good pair of eyes. Equally, successful birders would say, we need a good pair of ears.

The calls and songs of different bird species provide important clues to their identification often long before you actually see the bird. Indeed, one of the great pleasures of birding is enjoying the fabulous songs many birds entertain us with. Even the croaky crackles of Wattlebirds and the steady midnight 'oo-oo-oo-oo' of the Tawny Frogmouth are strangely evocative.

Most calls and songs are about attracting mates and defending territories and reach their peak during spring and early summer. During winter calls are simpler and are about food, keeping in contact and keeping safe. Often when birding in winter I might not hear any calls at all but I'm still listening because there are other clues that birds are still about.

I first discovered Eastern Shrike-tits in Berry because of their distinctive feeding habits. These sparrow-sized birds, smartly dressed in yellow, black and white with a Mohican crest, rip off loose bark from trees in search of spiders and insects. A small party busily shredding bark can make quite a noise in an otherwise quiet wood.

'Rain' tumbling through the trees on a day of clear blue skies alerts me to the presence of Crimson Rosellas or Gang Gang Cockatoos picking off the gum nuts high in the canopy and if I hear small twigs and branches falling I'm fairly confident Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos are methodically tearing a rotten branch apart in their search for fat wood-boring grubs.

Motionless and silent birds of prey can remain invisible even to the most skilled birder but on one occasion a large Grey Goshawk dropped a portion of its prey on the ground in front of me. The 'thump' alerted me and I enjoyed thirty seconds of excellent views before it, and roughly half a Red Wattlebird, flew off. Then there are the noises on the ground.

'Scratchings' are the typical sounds on a forest floor. In my bit of rainforest I'm all ears for two particular birds - the Logrunner and the Bassian Thrush. Both birds are 'brown' birds well camouflaged among the leaves and twigs and while both have distinctive calls and songs I invariably discover them by listening for their scratchings. Both scratch and flick leaves turning them over in search of insects and worms and, if I'm quiet and they're busy, I can get quite close to be thoroughly entertained.

I've now got to the stage where I feel confident enough to teach other birders to use their ears to identify birds by the non-vocal noises they make. Out in the forest one day with my son I heard an Eastern Whipbird scuffling about in a bunch of leaves caught in a branch fork just above our heads. Having passed on all my 'noise identification' skills to him I asked him to name the bird. Turning to me, his young forehead creased in concentration, he thought for a moment and then said "Russell".

By the time I grabbed a suitable branch he was well out of range!