



*"One Good Tern
Deserves Another"*

The Newsletter of the ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.
POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 56 FAIRY MEADOW, N.S.W. 2519
Founded in 1977. website www.iboc.org.au

I.B.O.C. NEWS

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

Issue No. 317 August 2008

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS for the Club due 1st January each year: **FAMILY \$30 SINGLE \$25. JUNIOR \$5.** If you are overdue with your subs, please promptly pay Bronwyn



Sooty terns Photo Alan Cousins

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FORTHCOMING IBOC EVENTS August 2008

CLUB MEETING Monday 11th August 7.30pm Fairy Meadow Community Hall. Records Officer, Martin Cocker, will speak about Australian Shore Birds. Please remember to bring a plate of goodies to share and your cup for supper.

MID-WEEK WALK – Wednesday 13th August– Primbee Dunes. Leaders Joan and Tom Wylie. Meet at **9 am** at the small parking area near the Southern end of the Port Kembla Golf Course, off Windang Road, near the radio towers. This is a gentle dunes walk.

MONTHLY OUTING – Sunday 17th August 2008 Bangadilly NP, Canyonleigh. Leader Betty Hudson.

Meet at the layby immediately after Hoddles Cross Roads (where the Illawarra Hwy joins the Hume Hwy. Proceed over the bridge to the layby) at 8.30am. From here we will drive another 22km to the western end of the park and walk to the summit of Mt Penang. This is an easy walk along fire trails, except for the last ¼ km scramble up to the summit. We will return the same way. On the return trip we will visit the eastern section of the park for an easy walk along a level fire trail. Bring a carry morning tea. Lunch will be at the cars. We aim to finish about 2.30pm.

COMMITTEE MEETING. The next Committee Meeting will be at **7.30pm on Tuesday 19th August** at Sylvia and David Garlick’s home, 6A Lynn Street, Oak Flats. Phone 4257 9750. Club members are always welcome to attend Committee meetings

September NEWSLETTER Deadline for articles and reports for the September *IBOC News* is Friday 22nd August. Please send items to the editor, cashman5@bigpond.com or mail them to 5 Madden Street, Fernhill 2519

Regent Honeyeater Talk

Tiffany Mason, Threatened Species Officer at the Department of Environment & Climate Change in Bathurst, is managing the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Project. Tiffany gave a fascinating talk with many illustrations through photos, diagrams and graphs. She described the ecology of the Regent Honeyeater, and the reasons it is endangered. The Regent Honeyeater is

Jill Molan

nationally endangered through habitat fragmentation and loss, and the Recovery Project aims to reduce fragmentation of habitat through twice yearly planting days in the Capertee Valley, one of the main strongholds of the species. The Capertee Valley is located on the western side of the ranges, north of Lithgow. The outcomes of the planting will be long term. In addition, a

captive breeding program has recently been commenced, and earlier this year a number of captive bred Regent honeyeaters were released into Chiltern forest in northern Victoria, one of the other strongholds for the species. Radio tracking devices were attached to the birds and volunteers have been out assisting in daily tracking of their Members who would like to participate in the tree planting on 16-17 August can contact Tiffany: Regent Honeyeater Recovery Project

Next treeplanting Capertee Valley - 16th and 17th August 2008

To register and arrange accommodation, contact Tiffany Mason

Tiffany.Mason@cma.nsw.gov.au Tel: (02) 6332 7640 Fax: (02) 6332 7650

Adventure Birds and Volunteers

Anzac Day 2008 - IBOC members Jack Baker and Jean Clarke with *Rover* and *Digger* the 49th and 50th Eastern Bristlebirds to be caught for translocation.

With much encouragement and support from 23 volunteers, Jack and Jean have completed the project to translocate 50 Eastern Bristlebirds from Barren Grounds Nature Reserve north to the Sydney Catchment Area in the Cataract catchment. Outstanding among the volunteers were Chris Brandis and Norma Burke from IBOC together with Laura Raynor (student from the Australian Catholic University, Sydney) and Andrew Ley (Birds Australia, Armidale). Our President Roger Bogart spent one day with us and, although the weather was glorious, the Bristlebirds refused to cooperate that day. Kelsey and Bruce O'Brien also turned up one rainy day to experience the frustrations of not catching Bristlebirds.

Altogether, 75 days worth of extra volunteer help went towards making this project a success. The project was managed by Jack as a DECC employee in a voluntary capacity during his long-service leave. DECC provided lots of other support including a 4WD vehicle and seven employees

movements. Tiffany also described the species' feeding habits, seasonal movements and other species that are commonly confused with the Regent Honeyeater, pointing out the identification features to look for. An article on the Regent Honeyeater will be published in a later newsletter.

Jack Baker

undertaking various support jobs. The University of Wollongong provided logistic support for the project. Professor Rob Whelan was the principal collaborator. Jean was employed as an expert trapper and she also coordinated the University's involvement. Three casual employees were used as couriers to transport and release the birds using a University 4WD vehicle.

It was an arduous 56 days with only four days off, 22 days without a Bristlebird in the bag – although they were always there taunting us, working in the rain and wind and cold, a lot of foot-slogging, Tiger and Red-bellied Black Snakes to extract from the nets, rampaging Potoroos destroying our nets, ravenous leeches and ticks, the rising damp in the old rangers' residence ... Ah, but looking back, it was great fun. There was also a sense of privilege both in working to save a threatened species and to have so much willing help from so many other concerned conservationists. See the box for more info on the Eastern Bristlebird.

It may take you a little longer now to spy a Bristlebird at Barren Grounds but hopefully this project will give the species a better chance of survival for many years to come.



Jean Clarke with Jack Baker, and Eastern Bristlebirds-‘Rover and Digger’ Photo Ford Kristo

Macquarie Rivulet and Koona Bay Walk

Wednesday, 16 July 2008

Bird Sightings

Black Swan	Black-winged Stilt	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Wood Duck	Masked Lapwing	Australian Magpie
Grey Teal	Silver Gull	Pied Currawong
Chestnut Teal	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Fantail
Pacific Black Duck	Rainbow Lorikeet	Willie Wagtail
Spotted Dove	Eastern Rosella	Australian Raven
Crested Pigeon	Laughing Kookaburra	Magpie-lark
Australian Darter	Superb Fairy-wren	Rose Robin
Little Pied Cormorant	White-browed Scrubwren	Eastern Yellow Robin
Little Black Cormorant	Yellow Thornbill	Silvereye
Australian Pelican	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Welcome Swallow
White-necked Heron	Spotted Pardalote	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Eastern Great Egret	Lewin's Honeyeater	Common Starling
White-faced Heron	White-plumed Honeyeater	Common Mynah
Australian White Ibis	Little Wattlebird	Red-browed Finch
Straw-necked Ibis	Red Wattlebird	House Sparrow
Eastern Osprey	New Holland Honeyeater	European Goldfinch
Purple Swamphen	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	
Dusky Moorhen	Golden Whistler - E Race	

Macquarie Pass National Park Walk

Eleven very cold people walked along the track in the shade of the trees: no sun in sight. High in the tallest trees some birds moved about, but too fast for us to identify them. Growing along the track were ferns and bright yellow flowers of Hibbertia. Some mounds had been worked over by lyrebirds earlier in the morning.

White-throated Treecreepers were sighted, followed by Brown Thornbills, Lewin's Honeyeaters and a Wedge-tailed Eagle. In the tall trees by the old bridge was a Grey Shrike-thrush. Superb Lyrebirds called from deep in the understorey.

We stopped for morning tea at a grassy clearing: beautiful sunshine and great views to the coast. Nearby, at the edge of the clearing was an interesting derelict stone cottage. After photos were taken we moved on to the Rainbow Falls. Very pretty, the

Sylvia Garlick

water was crystal clear tumbling down into pools large and small, before disappearing behind the rocks and making its way to the Macquarie Rivulet. Lunch was at the old picnic grounds with nice sunshine and two Grey Fantails.

In the turpentine forest we found several stumps in which we saw the notches that tree-fellers had used when cutting down trees for timber. No birds in this area. On the walk back to the cars were two Yellow Robins and two Yellow-throated Scrubwrens searching for food on the track. This was a great opportunity for a close-up look, and the scrubwren was a first sighting for some of us. Unfortunately, not all of us saw a male Satin Bowerbird: perhaps next time! All told 23 bird species were seen. Around two o'clock we packed up and headed for home after another pleasant walk. Thanks Betty!

Bird List for Macquarie Pass NP Walk 19.07.08

Brown Cuckoo-Dove	Yellow-throated Scrubwren	Crested Shrike-tit
Wedge-tailed Eagle	White-browed Scrubwren	Golden Whistler - E Race
Laughing Kookaburra	Brown Gerygone	Grey Shrike-thrush
Superb Lyrebird	Brown Thornbill	Pied Currawong
White-throated Treecreeper	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Satin Bowerbird	Lewin's Honeyeater	Eastern Yellow Robin
Superb Fairy-wren	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Variegated Fairy-wren	Eastern Whipbird	

Note re Ben Hall

At the Grenfell Camp several campers visited Ben Hall's Cave in the Weddin Mountains

"The bushranger Ben Hall (1837-1865) had a 'run' (squatter property) called Cubbin Bin on Sandy Creek in the Weddin Mountains. When police persecution drove him from his settled life there, he began his depredations with the stated object of destroying the power of the police by bringing popular

ridicule on them, rather than through bloodshed. Hall never killed anyone but the remarkably bloodless reign of his gang ended when Johnny Gilbert shot and killed Sergeant Parry near Jugiong in November 1864. Hall's enemy, the police commander, Sir Frederick Pottinger died, allegedly of an accident while cleaning his pistol, while en route to Sydney to face charges of cowardice in pursuing the bushrangers.

Les A Murray *The Venacular Republic. Poems 1961 – 1981*

Club Website

The traffic to the Club's website site is increasing. In May 2008 the website had more than 400 visitors. Although some of these 'callers' are automated search engines, indications are more people are having a look at us.

On the site, members can check coming activities (when you can't find the

The Human Nature of Birds, Theodore X Barber (1999) reviewed by Penny Potter

This book has kindly been donated to the library by a club member. It sets out to prove that birds are in many ways as intelligent and feeling as humans are, and that they are not simply creatures of instinct with no consciousness beyond their own need for preservation. The author argues that birds are intelligent beings capable of flexible thought and discusses different types of intelligence, some of which are found in both humans and birds, including musical, social and practical. He feels that although humans are better at symbol using (eg writing) and tool making, we are not necessarily superior in other kinds of intelligence or alone in possessing such qualities as the ability to feel the feelings of others or in experiencing joy and grief. Written in 1937, the author was trying to raise people's awareness of the "human qualities" of birds and other animals, at the

Chris. Cartledge
Newsletter) as well as additional information on Camps etc. Previous IBOC Newsletters are archived on the site.

Recently, 'Members Monthly Sightings' as produced by Martin Cocker has been added. Go to 'Member Services', 'Sightings'. Also worth a look are the new links to 'Bird Cinema' and 'Birdway' sites.

same time raising awareness of human destruction of the earth's flora and fauna.

The author had a long career as a behavioural scientist and at first glance the book may seem daunting because of its academic flavour. If you persevere you'll find it's packed with examples of birds demonstrating both their intelligence and their ability to cope with changing life needs. It includes numerous examples of communication between humans and birds, and later in the book between humans and signing apes. I'm sure many of us these days would agree with the author but whether you do or not it does make interesting reading. If you don't want to read the whole book, Chapter 8 on personal friendships between humans and birds is fascinating, particularly the touching story of Blue Bird a male parakeet.

THE PLIGHT OF THE PELICANS...



Pelicans and other seabirds are frequently injured by accidental hooking. The hooks do not simply rust away, and fishing line can sever limbs and wings. If left unattended, these injuries can cause infection, gangrene/loss of limbs and a slow, painful death.

If you'd like to learn how to rescue these beautiful big birds and become a member of Australian Seabird Rescue, or just learn more about pelicans and other seabirds, you are invited to attend Australian Seabird Rescue's **PELICAN & SEABIRD RESCUE WORKSHOP** on Saturday 23 August 9am to 4.30pm at the Illawarra Yacht Club, 1 Northcliffe Drive, Warrawaong. Cost \$30, includes Manual, lunch and M & A teas. Topics covered include

- Understanding pelicans, recognising/locating injured pelicans, handling, first-aid.
- Capture techniques for pelicans that can still fly (and any bird that can be lured).
- Seabird handling and first-aid; and rehabilitation issues for pelicans and seabirds.

Note: You will not be required to leap into the water on to a pelican!

Contact Julie to register Phone: 0431 282 238 •Email: julieclarke.ica@bigpond.com

Migrating Birds

Migrating Birds may 'see' the Earth's magnetic field.

Migrating birds, it seems may 'see' the Earth's magnetic field which they use as a compass to guide them around the globe. Specialized neurons in the eye, sensitive to magnetic direction, have been shown for the first time to connect via a specific brain pathway to an area in the forebrain of birds responsible for vision.

Scientists have known for many years, from behavioural experiments, that birds use an internal compass to navigate on their epic journeys. But exactly how the system works has been a mystery. Now work by Dominic Heyers and colleagues at the University of

Reuters News Release 25.9.2007

Oldenburg in Germany has started to unravel the mechanism at a neuroanatomical level – and it shows that the eye is the key.

Magnetic sensing molecules in the eye, known as cryptochromes, appear to stimulate photo-receptors depending on the orientation of the magnetic field. This strongly suggests that birds perceive the magnetic field as a visual pattern. 'It is a pity that we cannot ask them, but what we imagine is that it is like a shadow or a light spot on the normal vision of the bird,' Heyers said. The German team based their research on laboratory studies of the garden warbler, a highly migratory bird

BIRDS and WARFARE

Mike MORPHETT

Continued from the July IBOC News

Through their behaviour other avian species have effectively served as a warning sign against danger in the air, on and in the ground, and at sea, but with some exceptions. Pheasants crowed some 15 to 30 minutes prior to zeppelin raids; wild birds and canaries helped in the detection of poisonous gas; and seagulls revealed the presence of floating mines and the protruding periscope of submarines. Confusion caused soldiers to dive for cover in the Great War when starlings mimicked the three shrill whistle blasts given to warn of approaching enemy aircraft. In the 'Battle of Barking Creek' late in 1939 formation enemy aircraft was thought to be

detected by radar over the Thames Estuary, which turned out to be a flock of geese in flight, but not before two defending fighter squadrons attacked each other. Parrots were kept at the Eiffel Tower to announce enemy approach until they became unreliable when unable to discriminate between French and German aircraft.

In the Great War farmers viewed pheasants with some ambivalence: such birds were useful as an insect-killer, but harmful as a grain-eater. The problem of the proliferation of insects and vermin in the trenches was eased by some birds.

Even when the guns were active, by day kestrels caught mice, and swallows and martins circled closely to take advantage of insects disturbed by the troops, whilst at night brown and little owls hawked mice and rats. Gladstone suggested that, although bird casualties must have been heavy, their dead bodies were seldom seen as they would have been quickly eaten by the “numberless armies of vermin which swarmed the country”.

Besides human suffering, birds were adversely affected too. In WW1 there were accounts of mixed responses of some species to approaching aircraft: curiously pursuing them or becoming terrified, mistaking them for huge raptors. Seabirds were disabled by oil spill from the sinking of oil-carrying/using vessels. Attracted

Stupidity Street

I saw with open eyes
Singing-birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For people to eat:
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

I saw in a vision
The worm in the wheat,
And in the shops nothing
For the people to eat:
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street

- Ralph Hodgson (1871-1962)

Despite the hardships brought about by the two wars, it seems from eye-witness accounts that birds in general displayed remarkable resilience and adaptation, at times to the point of indifference amid the din of battle, as shown in the above lines written by (Harry) Willoughby Weaving while serving in the Royal Irish Rifles. Some swallows took to nest-building in billets, using shell-holes for access and mud gathered from old shell-holes and canal banks, whilst others used caves and trees when buildings were levelled. Magpies settled for small trees where large ones had been felled, and woodpeckers moved out to more timbered areas. Chaffinches nested in barbed-wire entanglements in lieu of

by the disturbance of fish, gulls were killed by shell-fire. Many wild birds, insectivorous ones in particular, perished during the successively severe winters, which brought about further food shortages. Fines could be imposed for feeding birds. In such conditions it was hard to keep birds in captivity, including zoos. Consequently, birds became a food source: in London smoked seagull was added to the diet. In response to the sale of certain song-birds for food in English shops, Ralph Hodgson wrote the poem ‘Stupidity Street’, which appeared in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 1918 Annual Report. During and after WW2 muttonbirds (short-tailed shearwaters) were canned and sold as squib in aspic; their feathers and down were used to make pillows and quilts and stomach oil for medical products.

Birds in the Trenches

Ye fearless birds that live and fly where men
Can venture not and live, that even build
Your nests where oft the searching shrapnel shrilled
And conflict rattled like a serpent, when
The hot guns thundered further, and from his den
The little machine-gun spat, and men fell piled
In long-swept lines, as when a scythe has thrilled,
And tall corn tumbled ne'er to rise again.

Ye slight ambassadors twixt foe and foe,
Small parleyers of peace where no peace is,
Sweet disregarders of man's miseries
And his most murderous methods, winging slow
About your perilous nests – we thank you, so
Unconscious of sweet domesticities.

- (Harry) Willoughby Weaving (1885-1977)

briars. A blackbird was reported to have nested with four eggs on a siege gun that was in daily action on the front; a robin nested in a dugout, having been seen perching on a French soldier's bayonet; and song thrushes took up residence in a tree close to a large artillery gun.

As shown in the introductory poem, the presence and behaviour of birds gave much relief, diversion and comfort to their observers, be they in the corridors of power, combat or captivity or when confined by curfew. Among statesmen who were keen ornithologists were Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary and author of a best-selling book, *The Charm of Birds*; he shared

his interest with American President Theodore Roosevelt. Similarly, birds promoted relations between Field Marshall Lord Alanbrooke and General Eisenhower. In the field of combat, the skylark was welcomed for its singing above no-man's-land, as was the nightingale during London air-raids at night. Fighting over in Italy in 1944, rifleman Alex Bowlby became aware of the perfection of a nightingale's song and its affirmation: "And as if showing us and the Germans that there were better things to do it opened up until the whole valley rang with song". Twenty-seven years earlier on, a front-line soldier, J.C. Faraday was similarly impressed during the temporary night-time stillness amid the hostilities: "Out come the nightingales, right about the guns... And another kind of love music is introduced to our ears and souls, which does us good...and beautiful thoughts come along to relieve you from the devilment of war and the men who cause it". In that same year serving as a front-line army chaplain in northern France, Charles Earle Raven came across a swallows' nest in the entrance to

their makeshift HQ in an old signalling station and wrote: "These birds were angels in disguise. It is a truism that one touch of nature makes the whole world kin: those blessed birds brought instant relief to the nerves and tempers of the mess". Canaries were put on board WWI ambulance trains to cheer the wounded soldiers. Prisoners of war also gained benefit: John Buxton, who later published a book on redstarts, was detained for five years in a Bavarian camp at Eichstätt from 1940 and enlisted the help of fellow captives to conduct a systematic study of this species that regularly visited their area, despite the shortage of note-paper. "One of the chief joys of watching them in prison," he wrote, "was that they inhabited another world than I;...They lived wholly and enviably to themselves, unconcerned in our fatuous politics...They lived only in the moment". Peter Conder, another Eichstätt prisoner, made similar detailed studies of goldfinches and crested larks; the call of the latter to him amusingly sounded like 'God Save the Queen'.



Illustrations from *Birds and the War* by Hugh S. Gladstone

Perhaps in recognition of birds some of their names have been given to certain sections and personnel in the armed forces both here and in Britain. In the Great War the Women's Royal Naval Service became the WRENS whilst women attached to the Royal Air Force were called Penguins. Not surprisingly, flying attracted avian nomenclature: males who could fly were Roosters, those still learning were

Fledglings, and a staff officer unable to because of duties on the ground was a Kiwi. When the Australian military units entered WW2 against Japan, the forces operating in Timor, Ambon and New Britain were respectively named Sparrow, Gull and Lark. In the vernacular of Vietnam veterans, 'bird' referred to any aircraft, usually helicopters; and American soldiers called any airplane that returned them home at the end of

duty in Vietnam freedom birds. Outside the theatre of war we have in Australia two avian species that have earned combat epithets on

account of their agonistic behaviour: the frigatebirds and noisy miners, known as man-o'-war birds and soldierbirds respectively.

To be concluded

MEMBER'S SIGHTINGS-JULY 2008

Compiled by Martin Cocker

Obviously a quiet time of the year for us all!! Many thanks to those brave souls who have been out and about and below are all the records received. Several of you have sent me past records of Logrunner sightings and I will use these to base our proposed survey. I am hoping that we can have some additional field trips to target this species. Good Birding!!

Species	No.	Date	Location	Habitat	Observer
Brush-turkey	1	10-Jul-08	Wollongong Botanic Gardens	Park	Penny Potter
White-headed Pigeon	1	08-Jul-08	Balgownie	garden	Terry Edwell
Shy Albatross	1	15-Jul-08	From boat off Bellambi	Ocean	Tom Wylie
Southern Giant Petrel	1	17-Jul-08	From boat off Bellambi	Ocean	Tom Wylie
Pacific Baza	1	23-Jun-08	Bulli	Overhead	Roger Truscott
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	1	08-Jul-08	Figtree	Overhead	Kevin McGregor
Brown Goshawk	1	09-Jul-08	Lake Illawarra	Suburban	Peter Nolan
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	03-Jul-08	Jamberoo	Rural garden	Betty Hudson
Powerful Owl	1	30-Jun-08	Excelsior Mine Thirroul	Forest	Mike Morphet
Green Catbird	2	10-Jul-08	Mt. Pleasant	rain forest	Wal Emery
Southern Emu-wren	1	06-Jul-08	Budderoo Firetrail	Heath/Wood land	Jill Molan
Eastern Bristlebird	1	06-Jul-08	Budderoo Firetrail	Heath/Wood land	Jill Molan
Brown-headed Honeyeater	1	06-Jul-08	Budderoo Firetrail	Heath/Wood land	Jill Molan
Bassian Thrush	2	08-Jul-08	Mt. Pleasant	rain forest	Wal Emery

SWEET SUFFOLK OWL Thomas Vantour (c1580 – 1620)

Sweet Suffolk Owl, so trimly dight
 With feathers like a lady bright,
 Thou singest alone sitting by night,
 Te whit, te whoo.
 Thy note that forth so freely rolls,
 With shrill command the mouse controls,
 And sings a dirge for dying souls,
 Te whit, te whoo.

OOPS !

From the 2006/7 Annual Report of the President of a Bird Observers Club somewhat to the southwest of the Illawarra. "However my biggest failure as President has been the inability to spend more of our large surplus of funds!..." Eat your hearts out Roger and Bronwyn !