



**COMMITTEE MEETING** The next Committee meeting will be held at Kevin and Fae McGregor's, 10 White Place, Figtree, 4271 3762. on Tuesday 17th July at 7.30 pm. Club members are always welcome.

**AUGUST NEWSLETTER** Deadline for articles for the next *IBOC News* is Thursday 19th July. Please send items to the editor, cashmansjr@bigpond.com or mail them to him at 5 Madden Street, Fernhill 2519

### **June Monthly Meeting – Martin Potter**

Our June meeting saw the welcome return of intrepid explorer Col Markham to give a talk on his and Melissa's recent African expedition. The subject of his presentation was the Kenyan leg of their journey, and as always was accompanied by an impressive selection of stunning slides depicting the vast array of local wildlife and landscapes.

Their first port of call was the Samburu National Park which stretches along the banks of the tree-lined Ewaso Nyiro river and attracts a lot of game including elephant, buffalo, cheetah, leopard, lion, the oddly-named greedy zebra, and the oddly-patterned reticulated giraffe, only found in this region. Birds seen in the park included flocks of the spectacular Vulturine Guinea-fowl, Superb Starlings, Yellow-billed Hornbills, Blue-breasted Woodpeckers and the African Mourning Dove, whose mournful call is said to sound like it's saying "woe is me"!

Next on the itinerary was the Masai Mara, one of the most famous game reserves in Africa which has frequently been captured on film, with "Out of Africa" being the most well-known. The trip was not without risk, and many might find daunting the idea of staying in a tent with lions and leopards as neighbours, but the slides showed the tents to be quite luxurious and armed Masai rangers were on hand in case the neighbours became too friendly. The rule was not to go out at night without a ranger, and it was also not a good idea to take flash photos if elephants appeared, if one wished to avoid being trampled. Pictures of the wide variety of birdlife included an Ostrich protecting 17 eggs, Oxpeckers removing

ticks from Buffalo, Violet-breasted Rollers rolling, the Secretary Bird, so called because of the quills tucked behind its 'ear', Cranes, Hornbills, Snake-Eagles and many others. One of the highlights of the whole trip was to witness thousands of wildebeest crossing the Mara River as part of their annual migration.

The final part of the Markhams' Kenyan adventure took them to the Great Rift Valley, the place where the Earth is, tectonically, tearing itself apart. Major geological upheavals caused a series of lakes, five of which were visited. Some of the lakes such as Baringo and Naivasha are freshwater, and are renowned for their birds. Baringo attracts enthusiasts from all over the world, and the demand is such that it has a resident ornithologist who conducts bird walks and slide shows. Other lakes such as Lake Nakuru have a high saline content and are rich in algae and tiny crustaceans. As a result they are the setting for one of the world's most spectacular birding sights, that of brilliant pink flamingos as far as the eye can see. When conditions are right, between one and two million lesser and greater flamingos feed around the shores of Nakuru, together with tens of thousands of other birds. Fortunately Col was able to capture this spectacle for us with his camera.

The Markhams then left Kenya for their next destination, Kruger National Park in South Africa; hopefully this and other destinations may form the subject of future presentations from Col. His excellent photography and narration were very much appreciated by all members present, and a suitable vote of thanks was given.

## **BITS and....**

**First Wildlife Reserve.** The early christian saint, Cuthbert, in the Seventh Century was the first to create a wildlife reserve and bird sanctuary. Cuthbert went to and settled on the island of Inner Farne off the Northumberland coast. There, while being noted for his peacefulness piety, and wisdom, he created the first wildlife reserve. Having a great affection for the birds with whom he shared the island, he introduced laws in 676AD which protected the birds. Cuthbert died in 687 and is buried at Durham, but he left an enduring legacy.

Today, especially in the breeding season, there are thousands of birds on the island. 40.000 people come to see the birds, the seals and to visit Cuthbert's chapel. Terns, Puffins and Guillemots abound. During spring and summer wardens monitor all aspects of the birds' lives and their numbers are increasing.

*Beautiful Britain Autumn 2006*

## **TRIP REPORT HOOKA CREEK BERKELEY 13-6-07 Michelle Rower**

Sixteen members set off on a brisk morning for a walk around Hooka Point. After spotting some Yellow Thornbills, which were beautiful in the morning sunshine we made our way to the observation tower. We were blessed as just as we arrived the wind dropped which made the top section of the tower pleasant to take in some magnificent views of the lake.

Sylvia had brought her spotting scope and along with Joan found some Australasian Shovelers for members to look at. We found many small bush birds at the bottom section of the loop in the track including a female Mistletoebird, Golden Whistler, Silvereye, White-plumed Honeyeater, Grey Fantail and European Goldfinch. Three White-bellied Sea-eagles flew overhead and were closely followed by a Black-shouldered Kite.

As soon as we crossed the bridge into Fred Finch Park Joan heard a Flycatcher calling. We all had good views of a Restless Flycatcher as it hopped busily around catching insects. It is easy to see where this bird got it's name, as it was never still and twitched it's tail even when sitting quietly on a branch. We watched it for quite a while and were entertained by it's cheerful call whenever it caught an insect.

After the walk when we went for a comfort stop we met Tom and Joan and found a large flock of Figbirds in a small fig tree right next to the public toilet.

Many thanks to Tom and Joan for doing a great job of leading the walk as Chris Brandis was unwell. We hope you are feeling fully fit again Chris.

### **Bird List**

Black Swan	Black-winged Stilt	Eastern Spinebill
Grey Teal	Silver Gull	Rose Robin
Chestnut Teal	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Golden Whistler
Pacific Black Duck	Crested Pigeon	Restless Flycatcher
Australasian Shoveler	Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo	Magpie-lark
Australasian Grebe	Rainbow Lorikeet	Grey Fantail
Darter	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Willie Wagtail
Little Pied Cormorant	Laughing Kookaburra	Black-Faced Cuckoo-shrike
Great Cormorant	Superb Fairy-wren	Figbird
Australian Pelican	Spotted Pardalote	Australian Magpie
White-faced Heron	Brown Thornbill	Australian Raven
Little Egret	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	European Goldfinch
Great Egret	Yellow Thornbill	Mistletoebird
Australian White Ibis	Red Wattlebird	Welcome Swallow
Royal Spoonbill	Little Wattlebird	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Black-shouldered Kite	Noisy Friarbird	Silvereye
White-bellied Sea-eagle	White-plumed Honeyeater	Common Starling

## **BIRDING ABROAD at Samburu, Kenya**

David Winterbottom

Intrepid travelers, David and Elizabeth Winterbottom, have been on numerous overseas trips to look at birds and other things. Here is a vignette from a voyage in August, 2006

Whilst looking for Vulturine Guineafowl in the scrub along the river bank we soon found ourselves on the fringe of a viewing frenzy around a superb leopard at full length along the branch of a large tree. Returning to the fruitless search for the Guineafowl a splendid Gabar Falcon posed on a dead tree long enough to be photographed before flying down to drink from a puddle in the sands of the river. A little later a Rosy Patched Bush Shrike flaunted its macabre "blood streaked" throat for us all to see. A Golden Breasted Starling then put to shame the Superb Starlings which, hitherto, had seemed to be of unmatched beauty.

A late, but hearty, breakfast in the open dining area overlooking the river was enlivened by van den Denken's and Yellow-billed Hornbills and a White-bellied Go-away Bird vying with the vervet monkeys for bread crumbs. Two Blacksmith's Plovers patrolled the river sands.

After breakfast, a walk around the grounds yielded Firefinches making the most of the watering of the paths, some Marica Sunbirds and a Northern Black Flycatcher. Later, after seeing some birds that we had seen before, some of the people sweeping

the grounds noticed us peering up into the trees and showed us two magnificent Verreaux's Eagle-owls with their pink eyelids – another big tick! Later, the photo opportunities offered by a Tawny Eagle, a Fish Eagle and several Fan-tailed Ravens caused some disruption to the luncheon banquet.

The bush was very dry with many acacia trees mutilated by elephants. We watched in amazement as they nonchalantly pulled down branches which were covered with long vicious thorns and munched them unconcernedly. White-headed Buffalo Weavers with their scarlet backs, White-browed Sparrow Weavers, with heavy eyebrows, and non-descript Donaldson-Smith Sparrow Weavers seemed to inhabit every little tree. . Flocks of Black-capped Sparrow Weavers and the occasional Red-billed Buffalo Weaver added to the confusion of birds and their nomenclature. Flocks of Vulturine Guineafowl, with their fantastic violet plumes, were now all over the place.

The day ended with a real bang! First, we spotted a Banded Parisoma and it transpired that our guide had never seen one before. Then we found two cheetahs. Ten minutes later a lioness was seen taking a great interest in something. Twenty minutes after that we arrived back at the lodge to see the "tourist's" leopard, up the tree on the other side of the river, eating its goat. Three big cats in half an hour – beat that if you can!

### **Spring Camp - 20-27<sup>th</sup> October 2007 - Nymboida.**

The Spring camp will be held at the Nymboida Canoe Centre in the Clarence Valley. The centre is 34km south west of Grafton on the Armidale Grafton Rd. Grafton is approx 700km from Wollongong and you should allow for an overnight stay on the journey

This is an area with a great diversity of birds & several bird watching groups have stayed at the centre. The centre itself has recorded 66 species on its 100 acres.

The canoe centre has plenty of modern budget cabin style accommodation and unpowered campsites. The cabins are 4 to a building, each room has 2 single beds with mattresses and its

own outside door. There are amenities blocks with showers and toilets and 2 outside camp kitchens. The kitchens have gas BBQ's, gas burners, microwave, fridge freezers and electric jugs. No cooking equipment is supplied or plates cutlery etc. There are picnic style tables and chairs in this area.

Cabins are \$21 per person per night and campsites \$8 per person per night.

The owner has requested that all bookings are channeled through Betty Hudson . I have booked 8 cabins at this time. This number can be increased or decreased as required. No campsites have been booked so far. No deposit was required by the Centre.

If you wish to book a cabin or campsite please phone me on 4236 0307 or write your name on the list at the next two meetings. If required motel style accommodation may be available in the area, again contact me for information.

There will be more information and a map in next month's newsletter.

### **Back to Blighty ..... And back to birding beginners! - Penny Potter**

Not only was our trip to the UK in July 2006 our first trip back since arriving here nearly ten years ago, it was also the first time we would be seeing the place as birdwatchers. Mindful that we had many family obligations to fulfil, we were careful to add some guaranteed bird sightings into our itinerary. So it was that we acted on a hot tip from fellow IBOC members Brian and Barbara Hale and set off for Bempton Cliffs, near Bridlington in East Yorkshire, on a mission to find Puffins. This was our first UK birding trip ever and our excitement and expectations were high.

Travelling to East Yorkshire from Leicester in the Midlands you cross the magnificent Humber Bridge, and here we decided to stop to take a photo of the bridge at the Humber Bridge Country Park. As we walked the pathways searching for the riverbank and a suitable spot to take the photo we experienced a serious reality check. The surrounding birdsong was beautiful and constant, but the birds were well hidden by the dense foliage – we searched for them in vain and realised glumly that we were back to being birding beginners. As the birds continued to fly through the bushes unseen all around us, Martin was heard to coin the phrase “Show up, or shut up!” in total frustration. Finally, an hour later and aware that time was passing, we gave up on views of both the birds and the bridge and continued on

to the RSPB reserve at Bempton Cliffs in very much lower spirits.

There, in contrast, we experienced an absolute birding high. Literally thousands of sea birds could be watched at leisure clinging to their nests on the chalky cliffs: Guillemots, Gannets, Razor Bills, Kittiwakes, Herring Gulls, even Jackdaws and of course the stars of the show, those lovable Puffins. Excitement coursed through our veins – so many lifers at once! Despite the wind getting up and the constant trickle of other birders walking around us we spent a wonderful couple of hours walking along the cliff tops studying the birds, their chicks and their behaviour. At one lookout I was delighted to spot a Fulmar among the Kittiwakes. By late afternoon when we had had our fill, we moved on to the feeding station. Here we spotted Greenfinch, Dunnock, Tree Sparrow, Pheasant and Yellowhammer before retreating into the shop for a pie, and giving in to temptation to buy new binoculars.

After an overnight stay in Bridlington we took a more leisurely route home, stopping at Hornsea Mere to eat our lunch. Here we were surrounded by about a hundred curious Canada and Greylag Geese while trying to identify what turned out to be a Whooper Swan. At one point I found myself being chased by an angry parent, having stooped to photograph three cute

and curious goslings that were intent on investigating the camera at close quarters!  
We ate our sandwiches in the car overlooking the lake and were treated to the amazing spectacle of a mix of approximately 1,000 Swallows, Swifts and House Martins swooping for flies over the water. When we started our lunch we were hard pressed to tell the difference between them, but seeing all three together made identification much easier, and by the end of our sandwiches we had become experts!

Feeling very satisfied with our 48 hour birding escape we headed back to the motorway and family commitments. Already we were planning a trip to Gigrin Farm in Wales to see Red Kites .....



### Quiz

1. What bird is that ? *Photo Chris Chafer*
2. The old classic, *What bird is that ?* was written by a. Ailsa Ailey, b. Benjamin Basil Bailey, c. Dermot McDougal Dailey, d. Neville Caley, or e. Quenton deQuincey Qualey ?
3. In the Monty Python sketch about the bookshop, the customer, Marty Feldman, didn't want to buy *The British Book of Birds* from bookseller, John Cleese, because he didn't particularly like -a.

the Jackdaw, b. the Gannet, c. the Nightingale, or d. the Barn Owl ? included in the book!

### North American Birds Moving North as a Result of Climate Change

as forwarded by **Roger Truscott**

Lafayette, La. – June 07, 2007 - A new study in Conservation Biology analyzed the breeding ranges of North American birds over a 26-year period. The results show that the ranges have shifted northward; coinciding with a period of increasing global temperatures. These results were similar to those found in studies conducted in Great Britain, showing the worldwide extent of these distributional changes.

“Our results add to an increasing body of scientific research documenting the effects of global climate change,” says study author Alan Hitch, a wildlife ecologist at Auburn University. “It also raises questions about whether moving north could be detrimental to some species.”

According to Hitch, identifying the forces behind the shifts is the first step to understanding whether they may lead to the extinctions of local populations. “It was important to determine whether climate change was the likely cause of the range shift,” says Hitch. “Because the shift was only in the Northern part of the range, and because the shift was similar to that seen in Great Britain, we have some support for that conclusion.” The analysis was designed to help account for other factors that might explain the range shift, including population expansions and land-use changes.

“It is difficult to predict when or if the forces behind the distributional shifts of birds we report here may lead to extinctions of local populations,” says Hitch. “Birds are extremely mobile which allows them to move in response to climate change; however, prey that birds rely on for survival may not be able to adapt so easily.”

## The Wonga Pigeon

I’ve been spending some time watching the cows around Berry recently, as one does! At this time of year these same cows are invariably accompanied by flocks of a small white heron known as a Cattle Egret. As the cattle feed they disturb insects which the Egrets quickly snap up. Every so often I see an Egret jump up on the back of a cow, presumably to direct operations!

Cattle Egrets are found around the world in tropical and temperate climates but only colonised Australia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first record being in 1907. Some were introduced to help control insects but it was during the 1940’s and 1950’s when the Asian colonies experienced a huge population explosion that they established a foothold in northern Australia. Since then they have spread steadily southward.

Soon now the Egrets will develop their breeding plumage replacing plain white with rather striking orange-buff feathers on their head, neck and back. Then they’ll say goodbye to Berry’s cows and converge on their nearest breeding grounds at the Shortland Wetlands just north of Newcastle. There many hundreds of them mix with other species of Egret to create a typical heron nursery – smelly, chaotic and noisy!

Noise is also heralding activity on Berry Mountain. For hours each day lately I am subjected to an incessant – “woo, woo, woo, woo, woo, woo...” It is the advertising call of the Wonga Pigeon and I’m sure the only time it stops is to pop in another Strepsil!

### ...and PIECES

\* Last month’s Monthly Outing was cancelled because of the wild weather. Considering the variety of weather, very few of our walks have been cancelled.

\* **Quiz Answers** 1 Eastern Bristlebird 2.d. Neville Caley 3. b the Gannet

## Bob Ashford

It’s the male who is calling, enticing receptive females to walk through the forest, often quite long distances, to check him out. If, on arrival, the female considers he passes muster then what follows is a feathery flurry on the forest floor!

Wongas descended from an ancient lineage of Australian pigeons and were first described in December 1791 in a collection of drawings now known as the ‘Sydney Bird Paintings’, probably drawn by a convicted forger. They were given the name ‘Wunga-Wungee Pidgeon’.

These large, generally solitary ground pigeons search the leaf litter of wetter forests in search of food. Their alert and considered stance and their black, grey and white plumage always remind me of a rather haughty butler. When they do fly, usually only a short distance, it is with such a clatter that they can unnerve even the most experienced twitcher! The early explorers and settlers considered the Wonga a special delicacy! Skilled trappers called them in imitating the male’s advertising call and catching the birds in clever twig and vine traps. Over the following century and a half they virtually emptied the forests of Wongas.

In 1955 the artist Hugh Boyd declared his property, at the foot of Black Ash Reserve, a sanctuary, doing his bit to save the remaining Wongas from greedy trappers. This now forms part of the area know as Bellawongarah – “beautiful Wonga”. I can’t help believing that ‘my’ Wonga is actually cheering – “Hugh, Hugh, Hugh, Hugh, Hugh..”

\* Janis Hosking reports that the June 2007 Newsletter for the **Dubbo Field Nats** is now available at their website. [www.dubbofieldnats.org.au](http://www.dubbofieldnats.org.au)

\* **Tree Planting** for the **Regent Honeyeater** and other birds is on again in the Capertee Valley over the weekend 18,19 August. At the planting in May 2500 young trees were planted and it's hoped to plant a further 2,000 trees on two properties in August. It's a great weekend to join in and experience.

Further information and booking for accommodation and/or the dinner on Saturday night, which in itself is really special, from Tiffany Mason, PO Box 95, Lithgow NSW 2790, or phone 6350 3115, and at [tiffany.mason@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tiffany.mason@cma.nsw.gov.au)

## Unusual Records for May 2007

**Chris J. Chafer**

Send your records to: email [cchafer@speedlink.com.au](mailto:cchafer@speedlink.com.au)

Species	#	Date	Location	Habitat	Observer
Australian Brush-turkey	3	7-May	Mt. Keira	rainforest	VD
Great Egret	12	12-May	Windang	estuary	LP
Swamp Harrier	2	6-May	Tallawarra	overhead	BA
Grey Goshawk (white phase)	1	15-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	MR,TE
Grey Goshawk (white phase)	1	15-May	Albion Park	forest	JC
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	9-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	MR,TE
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	3-May	Jaspers Brush	overhead	BA
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	3-May	Bellawongarah	overhead	BA
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	3-May	Barren Grounds NR	overhead	MR,TE
Little Eagle	1	24-May	Dunmore	overhead	BA
Brown Falcon	1	8-May	Bellambi	overhead	AC
Australian Hobby	1	2-May	Geringong	overhead	BA
Peregrine Falcon	2	6-May	Yallah	overhead	BA
Australian Spotted Crake	1	13-May	Myamba wetland, Shelharbour	wetland	CB
Bar-shouldered Dove	4	17-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	RI
Gang-gang Cockatoo	6	25-May	Mt. Pleasant	woodland	RT
Musk Lorikeet	few	30-Apr	University of Wollongong	parkland	PP
Little Lorikeet	10+	15-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	MR,TE
Brush Cuckoo	1	24-May	Dunmore	late record	BA
Barn Owl	1	24-May	Ooaree Creek, Gerringong	overhead	BA
Barn Owl	1	30-May	Port Kembla harbour	urban	RB
Fuscous Honeyeater	2	15-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	MR,TE
Scarlet Honeyeater	3+	15-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	MR,TE
Spangled Drongo	1	29-May	Primbee	golf course	IM
Spangled Drongo	1	13-May	Nowra	urban	SE
Spangled Drongo	1	15-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	MR,TE
Spangled Drongo	2	17-May	Primbee dunes	dune woodland	RI

**Contributors:** RB – Roger Bogaert; AC – Alan Cousins; BA - Bob Ashford; CB – Chris Brandis; JC – Josh Coyte; VD – Val Dolan; TE – Terri Edwell; SE – Sheila Emery; RI – Ron Imisides; MR – Michelle Rower; KM – Kevin Mills; LP – Lorraine Pincus; PP – Penny Potter; RT – Roger Truscott.

### Thornbills

Their tiny torrent of flight  
sounds in the trees like rain  
flickering the leaves to light -  
a scattered handful of grain,  
the thornbills little as bees.

Judith Wright