



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

" One Good Tern Deserves Another"

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 OCTOBER 2005

CLUB MEETING – Monday 10th October - 7.30pm Fairy Meadow Community Hall - Peter Nolan will show some slides and talk about his last trip to America which included a visit to Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Kansas. **Please remember to bring a mug and a small plate for supper afterwards.**

MID-WEEK WALK – No mid-week walk

OCTOBER MONTHLY OUTING - No monthly outing.

It was decided that as most of the active members will be going away to camp that there would be no walks in October. So far we have 27 members indicating that they will be coming to the camp for varying periods.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING - Tuesday 22nd November 2005, at 7.30pm at the home of Val Dolan, 26 Morandoo Have, Mt Keira (4229 6737). Turn off Mount Keira Road at Yates Ave, first right heading down hill. All members welcome.

NOVEMBER 2005 NEWSLETTER Deadline for articles for the next *IBOC News* is **Thursday 27th October**. Please don't leave submitting your contributions to the last minute and where possible please submit by email.

AGM The AGM with election of the new Committee will be held at the start of the November Meeting. Are you interested in helping to provide ideas for IBOC Speakers, Walks or Camps? If so, the Committee are looking for new members of the club to join them for next year. Please contact Roger, Betty or any other Committee member before the start of the AGM at the November meeting.

From Your Committee

Finance

Balance of IBOC account on 31.8.05 was \$2,410.82. Expenses approved for payment totalled \$56.20.

Library

The sale of old library books was a huge success, raising \$67.00. There are just a few really old ones and newsletters left. A list of all overseas field guides is to be prepared and placed in the November Newsletter.

Insurance

The problems with the club's Public Liability Insurance have now been clarified and the cover renewed.

Birds Australia

We have received a letter from Birds Australia advising that there are having to sell their property Newhaven, although they will retain access rights. They are unable to raise the money needed to run the place.

OBSERVATIONS REQUIRED FOR COLOUR-BANDED OSPREY

As part of a study of population dispersal of Osprey in NSW, a number of Osprey chicks have been colour-banded along the Mid North and Far North Coasts. Assistance is required in carefully recording any future observations of colour-banded Osprey, providing details as follows -

- **Date**
- **Accurate description of location of sighting (distance and direction from nearest town etc. and GPS if possible)**
- **What colour band on right leg (there is only ever one band on the right leg)**
- **What colour band(s) on left leg and what colour band is on top of what other colour**
- **What the bird was doing**

Please note there are more birds than there are different coloured bands, so ***it is critical to accurately record the colour on the right leg, plus the top/bottom positions for each colour for the left leg.***

Please advise any sightings to Greg Clancy gclancy@tpg.com.au Phone 6649 3153, Tony Bischoff gcbabbler@optusnet.com.au Phone 6582 5055 or 0408 825055, or Andrew Marshall andrew.marshall@environment.nsw.gov.au Phone 6588 5505. Your assistance would be very much appreciated.

Wings Over The Alice

Alison Foley

If you live in Alice Springs, you are not likely to see any New Holland Honeyeaters, Wattlebirds or Indian Mynahs (woohoo!). Neither are you going to hear the raucous screech of the Sulphur-crested Cockie nor the whoop of the lovely Common Koel nor whip-cracks, "we're with you"s or creaky doors.

So, what are the noises that wake us up in the morning? What exactly is leaving those droppings on our freshly washed sheets?

The most prolific bird around town is the peewee, mudlark or Magpie Lark. They are everywhere and the Australian Magpie rarely gets a look-in. I think I've only seen two of the latter since we arrived in March 2004. The peewee rules the roost, spending a lot of time on the streets, only flying off nanoseconds before being run over. Every morning, they form a whistling choir around our house and then set off for a morning jog on the tin roof, sounding like a shower of medium-sized meteorites and postponing further sleep till, wings warmed, they head off for some lightly-toasted breakfast bugs. They are joined on the roof by my

favourite garden visitors, the Grey-crowned Babblers. One of their huge, communal nests hangs in a tree in front of our car park and the little dears bob and hop, blackbird-style, around the bushes, babbling to themselves non-stop.

The next most common bird in suburbia is our equivalent of the New Holland, the White-plumed Honeyeater or greenie. A flock of them in a flowering jacaranda reaches the zenith of colour and grace. They like to spend their time chasing each other's tails back and forth over the road, sweetly trilling. They are extremely attractive birds with bright eyes and a lovely snowy collar-stripe.

Our "myrna" representative is the Yellow-throated Miner, very aggressive and cheeky. We've seen them chasing Black Kites with the conviction of a rookie cop after a first collar. Our commonest parrot is the Port Lincoln or Australian Ringneck ("Coke-ee" according to our daughter, Keira who's 22 months). The Galah is very numerous and Red-tailed Blacks and Pink Cockatoos also exist quite close to town. We've seen a Collared Sparrowhawk at the Todd Tavern (well, not at the bar shouting a round – but just outside and no, we weren't under the influence either), Red-browed Pardalotes, also in town along the dry Todd River, Black-faced Woodswallows, Zebra Finches and Fairy Martins (very common all over suburbia). The other common honeyeater in town is the Spiny-cheeked which makes a sound like a droplet of water entering a pond.

Some birds around town are the same, of course, and are a welcome sight. Like friends from home, familiarity gives us comfort. Willie Wagtail, where would we be so unfortunate to live as to not have one of these around? Crested Pigeons are quite common but more so, are those feral yet beautiful STDs (Spotted Turtle Doves).

After that, things tend to get a bit more exotic yet our complete birdlist for our time in Alice so far (March 2004 to September 2005) is only 106 species and lifers over the same period only amount to 21. However, that said, it makes it all the more exciting when we do see that rare new bird.

If you are coming up in the next six months (I don't advise it – stinking hot), apart from giving us a ring (08 89522064), here are some places where we have been lucky enough to see some special birds (no guarantees, of course). There is also a great website - <http://members.iinet.net.au/~alicensats/FreqAskBirds.htm> - for any birdwatcher who is thinking of making a trip to the area.

The Olive Pink (her real name!) Botanic Gardens are an excellent place for birdos to visit and famed for frequent sightings of the Grey Honeyeater. Alas, we have not had the pleasure of a glimpse of His Drabness but spotted the Western Bowerbird and Gerygone there many's the time. There's also a specimen of the former who lives near the town vet and has added whining dogs and scared moggies to his repertoire of impressions.

We are lucky enough to live close to the sewage ponds (or to give them their official name, the Waste Stabilisation Plant) and that provides us with a host of birds not normally found in the desert – Glossy Ibis, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Marsh Sandpiper and Australian Pratincole have all been positively identified there and Red-necked Avocets are a permanent fixture (perhaps they too have been stabilised!).

At a great little spot called Kunoth Bore about 50k to the north-west of town, a flock of Bourke's Parrots are regular sunset visitors. At the Telegraph Station Historic Reserve, just 4k north of town and a lovely place to spend the day (walks, shady picnic spots), we've seen that indigo blot, the Splendid Fairy-wren. From Alice, you can cycle 23k west on a flat and smooth cycle track to Simpson's Gap, the first point of interest in the West MacDonnell Ranges. Once again, there is ample opportunity for solitude, picnicking, refilling water bottles and even bike parking spots along the way. We saw the Crested Bellbird here for the first time. A track leading up Mt. Gillen from John Flynn's Memorial (3k west of Alice) produced Grey-headed Honeyeaters, also seen at Simpson's Gap. Ewaninga Rock Carvings, worth visiting for that reason alone, also brought us our first encounter with White-backed Swallows, although admittedly it was after a lot of rain. The Brown Honeyeater and Dusky Grasswren were seen at Finke Gorge NP, the Southern Whiteface at

Chambers Pillar and a very precise spot on the Santa Teresa road, 38k past the airport where we had gone seeking the Rufous-crowned Emu-wren and the Spinifexbird (both still elude us). The Masked Woodswallow is and probably will always be our most central sighting at Lambert's Centre of Australia. Oh, and in addition, Dave has seen the Black-chinned Honeyeater at Redbank Gorge and a Black Falcon in town (Grrr!!!).

Finally, a bird that had escaped my lenses for many moons, the Pied Honeyeater, went from famine to feast as, in the space of two days camping at Arltunga and Ruby Gap in the East MacDonnells, there it was in black and white over and over again with its swooping display flight and piping call. My first reaction – “Wow!” - 48 hours later had become ““Aw, it's just a ‘Bob’” (our name for any commonly sighted species in a particular area). How fickle we birdwatchers can be!

Post Datum: We are currently nesting and are hoping to return to roost in the Illawarra in May next year with a chick and a fledgling so see you all then.

MID-WEEK WALK: BASS POINT ECO MARINE RESERVE **Mike MORPHETT**

Fortunately, the strong winds of the preceding two days lost much of their force, thus making very pleasant weather conditions, particularly on the northern leeward side, for the 13 members who came along for the morning walk on Wednesday 14 September. There was much bird activity in and around Basset Park, our meeting place. Taking up much of our attention was the extended family of 14 Australian Magpies, which were obviously well accustomed to humans and to being fed. Among them was an individual with a gammy right leg. I had seen this bird on my second recce in submissive pose, lying on its back while two others took turns at pecking at its head and chest and then pecked each other. No wonder the social behaviour of this species has attracted so much study. Evidently the lame one was still holding its own within the ranks.

We drove a very short distance to stop beside Shellharbour Swamp, the area of the proposed marina. At first it seemed birdless as on my two other recent visits, but then among the nearby reeds and lantana came the mournful three-note calls that betrayed the presence of the Little Grassbird, interspersed later with what Graham Pizzey termed a scolding rattle. Our patience was partially rewarded – as good as it gets, I guess, without many hours of watchfulness – by glimpses of two birds as they moved up and down the wetland edge.

Another very brief drive brought us into the parking area of The Shallows Coastal Reserve. Just earlier, agreement had been reached about the lack of sightings of the Richard's Pipit in these parts, so it was with extra pleasure that we observed four of these birds moving slowly through the grassed area near the roadside hedge. Another enjoyable feature was the sight of a pair of Welcome Swallows making visits to feed young in a nest built in the roof-ridge of a picnic shelter. Over in the open area beyond the road we spotted a Skylark in typical ascending and descending flight. The continual barking of two dogs chasing each other in the car park in the designated leash-free area drowned out any song it might have been producing.

Just inside Bass Point Reserve itself we visited Maloney's Bay, where the air was fresher, making use of the lookout platform and against the monotonous background din of the quarry machinery. Further on in the reserve morning tea was taken on the perimeter of the main picnic area near Beaky's Cove. From the sunny bank we had fine views of the Illawarra Escarpment round to Port Kembla and Big Island and the Pacific Ocean (or Tasman Sea?) horizon. We leisurely watched diving Australasian Gannets and the much less energetic Sooty Oystercatchers on the rock platform; off Boston Point a seal lying on the surface with a flipper straight up as if in a catatonic state; and just below the horizon many shearwaters that defied specific identification.

A circular walk then took in the Coastal Walking Trail, then through the smaller western picnic spot, and back along the gravel road. We had several sightings of Superb Fairy-wrens, New Holland Honeyeaters and Silvereyes, but missed out on the Mistletoebird. Time did not permit entry into the littoral rainforest or Fisherman's Walk or Bushrangers' Bay, as covered during the recces; otherwise, the morning's tally of 39 species would likely have been added to.

**Bird species list for Bass Point Reserve area for 14/9/05
plus sightings on recces made on 15/8/05* & 9/9/05+**

Australasian Gannet	Silver Gull	Little Wattlebird*+	Pied Currawong+
Little Pied Cormorant	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Lewin's Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Pied Cormorant	Crested Pigeon	New Holland Honeyeater	Skylark
Little Black Cormorant	Galah	Eastern Spinebill*	Richard's Pipit
Great Cormorant	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Eastern Yellow Robin	Red-browed Finch
Australian Pelican	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo*	Eastern Whipbird	European Goldfinch
Cattle Egret	Superb Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler	Welcome Swallow
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Variagated Fairy-wren	Magpie-lark	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Nankeen Kestrel*	White-browed Scrubwren	Grey Fantail	Little Grassbird
Sooty Oystercatcher	Brown Thornbill*+	Willie Wagtail	Silvereye
Masked Lapwing	Yellow-rumped Thornbill*	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	Common Starling
Kelp Gull*	Striated Thornbill	Australian Magpie	Common Myna*+

Stingray Swamp Flora Reserve, Penrose

Martin Cocker

Saturday 17th September 2005

The weather forecast was not promising. Wind and rain overnight clearing in the morning. So it was with some trepidation I peered out of the window early in the morning. However, we were in luck, a broad band of blue was advancing from the south. So a quick pack and out of the door. Just over an hour to the meeting point and eagerly looking forward to meeting the gang. A lone car parked on the verge with a rather disconsolate Betty Hudson studying her map. "Where is everyone?" I asked, but as the clock advanced to the quarter of an hour grace period we realised it would be just the two of us. So we drove off down the road to the park entrance in bright sunshine, shouldered our packs and set off. We had a couple of small creeks to cross and our gallant leader successfully walked along a fallen log across one stream while I took the safer route of jumping from one spot to another. Plenty of birds about in the thickets but very elusive and we missed the company of our bird call experts. However we quickly notched up a dozen species. A steady climb through constantly changing woods revealed a Grey Currawong and at the top Betty pointed out a male and female Scarlet Robin and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

We took our lunch by the swamp lagoon sitting out of the wind in variable sunshine and then back towards the cars where we spotted another pair of Scarlet Robins and an attendant Cuckoo. The robins were the high light of the day and we saw and heard many familiar species but we did miss the expert eyes and ears of our normal companions. So if you were one of those who was put off by the chance of inclement weather you missed a real treat! My thanks to Betty for organising such an interesting walk. See you all again at the next outing!!

24 Species recorded.

1 pair Scarlet Robins and a single female at a separate location chasing 2 Fantail Cuckoos off.

Australian King Parrot	Striated Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush
Crimson Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Fantail
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	White-eared Honeyeater	Willie Wagtail
Laughing Kookaburra	New Holland Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Eastern Spinebill	Eastern Spinebill	Pied Currawong
White Browed Scrub Wren	Scarlet Robin	Grey Currawong
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Eastern Whipbird	Australian Magpie
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Golden Whistler	Australian Raven

REPORT ON SEPTEMBER MEETING**Bronwyn Wilson****Birding on the Canning Stock Route – Stuart Almond**

Those that attended the September meeting were taken on a virtual tour of parts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia through a talk and slide presentation. Stuart Almond participated in an organised tour along the Canning Stock Route in June 2004 and shared his experiences. Stuart has been a member of our club for many years and has attended many bird camps and trips. He is a keen photographer.

The trip commenced at Alice Springs, and headed west along the Gary Junction Highway for 1,000 kilometres to meet the Canning Stock Route. They travelled 600 kilometres in a north easterly direction up the Canning Stock Route from Well 33 to Well 51. From there they headed east to Lake Gregory, then travelled south east along the Tanami Road. They spent 5 nights at Newhaven before returning to Alice Springs.

The Canning Stock Route is over 1,700 kilometres in length and crosses the heart of Western Australia. It runs from Halls Creek in the north, in a south westerly direction to Wiluna. It was originally considered that a stock route was impossible but in 1906 Alfred Canning, and his party surveyed the area and advised the Government it was possible. In 1908 construction began. Fifty one wells were dug along the route and lined with timber. Although the route had had little use, in 1929 it was refurbished. Canning was called on to assist with the refurbishment at 70 years of age. It was used a little more after this but truck transportation then took over. The last mob of cattle taken along the route was in 1958. In 1925 the first vehicle travelled on part of the route and in 1968 the length of the route.

Stuart's trip was organized by Outback Track Tours. Phil Neal led the trip. He first travelled along the Canning Stock Route by car in 1972. There were no marked tracks so he used the original maps and navigated by compass and the car trip metre. The trip took 2 months and he had 168 punctures which were caused by the Spinnifex grass. This was his 49th trip and on this occasion they had only 1 puncture and no significant mechanical problems.

There were 5 vehicles travelling in convoy. Phil, led the convoy in a 4WD truck, accompanied by his wife Klara, who served as the cook.. Phil's vehicle carried all the stores, fuel, water and equipment. Behind followed 4 x 4 Wheel Drive vehicles carrying the 11 passengers.. Allan Richards was their birding leader.

The tour was well equipped and carried 200 litres of water kept mainly as reserve. They used water that was available along the way at wells and ponds. The vehicles were fuelled at Aboriginal settlements. They were provided with good meals. Fresh vegetables or salad were provided throughout the 3 weeks with none bought on the trip. The group was provided with swags and they slept in the open amongst the spinifex. These were comfortable but it was quite a challenge to find the way back to your swag in the dark!

There was an abundance of wildflowers and vegetation as there had been good rain. The landforms were spectacular. In places trees and the ground were covered in salt, the result of flooded wells in previous times. The birding was also good. The Zebra Finches were abundant. A highlight for the group was the sighting of a group of Yellow Chats located by GPS. The Chats were spotted by 2 members of the group. They returned with all the group in tow and using a GPS went directly to the spot and there were the Chats!

From Lake Gregory the passengers were transferred to bus for the rest of the journey to Newhaven and back to Alice Springs. Thanks Stuart for sharing the experience. The information was very interesting and the slides were captivating. For those that may not have an opportunity to visit the area, we were able to experience it through your presentation. While for others, perhaps the more adventurous, it will no doubt wet the appetite.

BIRDS AROUND BERRY

Bob Ashford

I probably have about six pairs of old binoculars around the house, each treasured but none of much practical use. Some have only a functional left eyepiece, others only the right.

In moments of birding desperation I have been known to grab one of these old pairs and squint frenziedly through the one good eyepiece at my quarry while using my 'spare' eye to locate my only serviceable pair of binoculars. Many years of tolerating rudely shouted instructions to find my 'good' binoculars have prompted Noreen, my wife, to suggest I get them surgically implanted. She has even provided instructions on how this may be achieved.

Actually, it is very rare that I don't have my binoculars at hand, so to speak. Well, hung round my neck anyway. This often prompts people to ask me "Are you 'going' birdwatching?" as though it required the same strategic planning as painting a house. I don't 'go' birdwatching, it's something I do all the time. "It's an affliction" Noreen explains.

Well it probably is! The best place to hold a sensible conversation with me is in a windowless room. If I'm outside I really do try to sound and look interested in what people are saying. I offer regular grunts of acknowledgement, fleeting eye contact and practiced wrinkling of the forehead to suggest that whatever is being said is marvellously profound. In truth, of course, my radar is up and I'm scanning for birds. This sort of behaviour does limit friendships but allows plenty of time for birding!

A few days ago I turned off Moss Vale Road on to Bells Lane to give our dog, Skipper, a run. It's an excellent arrangement. I drive, he runs. When I see something of interest I stop and he gets to sniff and pee to his heart's content.

At a small swamp I spotted a Great Egret. This cousin of the common White-faced Heron is a tall, elegant snowy-white bird and largest of the egrets. I've seen them many times but this one's stance had me intrigued. It was motionless, its body almost horizontal to the ground and its long white neck stretched pencil straight. From its tilted head one eye scanned for prey. This is what I call the Standing Unbelievably Still Stance, behaviour typical of egrets and herons (and those street buskers who paint themselves grey and pretend they're statues!).

What came next was the Exceptionally Fast Stabbing Move followed by its long neck rising from the reeds like some exaggerated question mark. From each side of the egret's bill protruded two frog legs frantically flapping in the vain hope that this would be sufficient to free the rest of the frog's body from a long slide down the egret's gullet!

Totally engrossed I watched to see how the egret was going to subdue this large and very resentful frog. Flip, Catch and Swallow was the planned manoeuvre but the frog wasn't giving up that easily. Every now and then the bird would dip the frog in the water prior to an attempted swallow, rather like helping the peanuts down with a swig of beer. Eventually the frog vanished from view only to appear as a lump making the long journey down the egret's neck. After a short rest the egret recommenced its Feeding by Stalking Slowly program adding a bit of Head Tilting and Peering Over every now and then. I got back in the car and drove off. I hadn't 'gone' birding but I had certainly enjoyed watching the egret.

Half way up Cambewarra Mountain I turned back to pick up Skipper. We're great mates and he understands my affliction.

TRAVELLING NORTH - Part 3**Val Dolan**

We arrived at Cooktown via the Bloomfield Track after a very bumpy ride in a four wheel drive bus. The trip from Cape Tribulation through the Daintree by public bus costs only \$40 but pensioners can do it for \$20. What a bargain adventure!

When our guide, Mal, collected us to explore the Quinkin Rock sites at Laura he soon realised that we were also interested in local birdlife. A visit to the lighthouse above Cooktown in fierce offshore winds led to an exciting sighting of two Frigate birds happily soaring on the rising current, usually only seen out at sea or on islands. Just out of town our guide took us up a rough track to a waterway that could have been Yellow Waters in Kakadu, paperbarks, reeds and waterlilies everywhere (I'll bet there were crocodiles lurking in those reeds) but the birds had flown away to escape the wind. Further inland I spotted three Bustards in the corner of a grassy field. Instead of staying in the vehicle as the field guide suggests, I was so excited I walked towards the group only to have all take off in graceful seemingly slow motion. Boy, what a wing span!

A short distance away our driver took us down to another waterhole that usually has a profusion of bird life. All had fled the choppy water to seek shelter. As the car backed up we came to a ridge where seven Wedge-tailed Eagles were feeding communally on a large dead animal. Six flew away and circled overhead while one shiny black bird remained to be joined by another brave bird with a golden head and chest feathers. We were close enough to see the feathery 'pantaloons' that covered their strong legs.

As we continued inland there were many Brahminy Kites, Australian Ravens, Galahs, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Kingfishers, Rainbow Bee-eaters, Pee-wees, and Ibis to delight the French artist travelling with us and seeking inspiration from our environment. Returning from the climb to the rock art sites at sunset Mal pointed out three Jabiru flying in a line and shortly after two v's of Magpie Geese made their way to a safe waterhole for the night. Guess you can tell I enjoyed travelling north. And the ancient rock art? Well that's another story

Close Encounters of the Pelagic Kind**Penny Potter**

I booked our Pelagic boat trip from Wollongong Harbour in a burst of birding enthusiasm, conveniently forgetting that I don't have a very happy history with boats and with ocean going vessels in particular. (I was embarrassingly seasick on a punt in a river once many years ago, so have tried to avoid all things floating ever since!) Consequently as the big day grew closer and the reality of what I had committed to sank in, I found myself becoming increasingly nervous of spending eight or nine hours at sea, and instead tried to focus on the seabirds that we might see if we were lucky.

In "*How many birds is that?*" Sue Taylor recounts the story of her pelagic trips among her other birding adventures, and adopts the habit of researching a wish list for every new trip she does. Since we have very few seabirds ticked off on our own bird list we were excited about the likelihood of getting close to Albatrosses at least and a quick study of the previous two Pelagic trip reports on SOSSA's web page revealed a list of what we might expect to see. Given my fear that I would be lying prone on the deck much of the time I decided to keep my wish list short: a Yellow-nosed Albatross; a Brown Skua, a Fairy Prion and perhaps if I were really lucky ... a whale.

The day before our booking the weather was reassuringly calm and sunny and so it was with a sinking feeling that I noticed the wind howling around the house that evening as we went to bed. Convinced that I would be remaining on dry land the next day and that Martin would have to go out to sea on his own I

nevertheless got up early, took my Dramamine, and went down to the wharf in time to consult with Lindsay Smith about the weather forecast and conditions. He assured me that as far as he was concerned conditions were good and that as the (light) wind was Westerly it would keep the sea flat on the way out at least. Gathering my resolve, and knowing how disappointed I was at the prospect of not going on the trip, I realised that if I were ever going to go on a Pelagic trip it could only be when conditions were deemed to be good, took a deep breath and with some trepidation stepped aboard the *Sandra Kaye* with the other birds, including fellow IBOC member Val Dolan.

The view of Wollongong and the coast as we sailed out towards the continental shelf past the Five Islands and the tankers moored nearby was spectacular. A flock of Silver Gulls was soon following us, lured by the free feed being thrown into the water, and (unusually we were told) they stayed with us for the whole trip. It wasn't long before they were joined by a couple of Black-browed Albatross, and a Sea Eagle that hovered low over the boat for some minutes affording us the luxury of studying it at our leisure. When the first Yellow-nosed Albatross came to investigate us I struggled to focus my binoculars against the movement of the boat long enough to see it in detail, but oh joy, there were soon several of them, all staying close enough and long enough for us to get a good look – even without the binoculars! They are truly a beautiful bird and I was delighted to tick them off my wish list so early in the trip. When two Brown Skua arrived they were equally impressive and easy to study.

Soon we had added several other new 'lifers' to our list: Campbell's Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Fluttering Shearwater, White-fronted Terns, Solander's Petrel, Fairy Prion and eventually two fabulous Tristan Albatross. We also saw Australasian Gannet, Kelp Gull, Crested Tern, Great Cormorant and Little Black Cormorant. The Fairy Prions when they arrived, kept their distance but most of the seabirds came close enough and stayed long enough that I was content to look at them without trying to follow them in my binoculars while they circled around us. The assistance of Peter Milburn, Lindsay Smith and others in spotting and identifying the birds with shouts such as "Brown Skua at eleven o'clock!" and so forth, was invaluable, and their patience was much appreciated.

Unfortunately the ever present Silver Gulls made it difficult for SOSSA to net the banded birds and bring them on board, but they were able to read the band on the Southern Giant Petrel to find that it was an Argentinian bird, and eventually they managed to net what were initially believed to be two female Wandering Albatross but were later identified as male Tristan Albatrosses, one of which had last been picked up 30 years ago. It is reassuring to know that despite the perils of long line fishing some birds are still achieving a measure of longevity. Torn between wanting to literally twitch with excitement and the need to keep perfectly still, I found myself standing next to this beautiful creature and watched mesmerized while Lindsay and his colleague measured it and answered our questions. The bird stared back at me unblinking while I studied the delicate lace-like markings on its white breast, and when invited I was able to gently stroke the back of its head in a manner it is believed helps to calm the birds while they are being handled.

We stayed out at the shelf for some time before turning round and heading back to shore. Predictably the sea was not quite so flat on our return journey (by my standards anyway) and for a while I thought I might disgrace myself (I'm told I went extremely pale!), but happily the motion of the boat lessened the closer we got to shore and I soon recovered enough to focus on the birds again. We arrived back at the harbour tired and excessively pleased with ourselves – Val calls it our adventure and what an exciting time we had! I didn't see a whale, but more importantly I had ticked the three birds on my wish list, and although it has hopefully forgotten all about me I had fallen in love with an albatross!

UNUSUAL RECORDS for August 2005

Chris J. Chafer

Contributors: BA – Bob Ashford; GB – Graham Barwell; SB – Simon Blanchfellow; JB – John Blomsteadt; CB – Chris Brandis; CJC – Chris Chafer; MC – M. Cartlett; JC – Josh Coyte; GD – Garry Daly; TE – Terri Edwell; LE – Leo Edgar; ME – Mary Eskdale; DG – Darryl Goldrick; NJ – Nigel Jacket; KM – Kevin Mills; PN – Peter Nolan; DO – Danie Ondinea; MR – Michelle Rower; NG – Ngarla Tetley; RT – Roger Truscott; NW – Nathan Waugh; NTW – Neil Wheway; DW – David Winterbottom.

Send your records to: email cchafer@speedlink.com.au

Species	#	Date	Location	Habitat	Observer
Australian Brush-Turkey	1	15-Jul	Mt. Kembla	forest	LE
Australian Brush-Turkey	1	3-Aug	Mt. Kembla	rainforest	MR,TE
Musk Duck	6+	25-Aug	Killalea SRA	wetland	CB
Striated Heron	3	5-Aug	Fred Finch Pk, Berkeley	lake shore	DW
Square-tailed Kite	1	25-Aug	Nowra	overhead	BA
Whistling Kite	2	28-Aug	West Nowra	overhead	BA
Brown Goshawk	1	7-Aug	Shoalhaven Heads	overhead	BA
Grey Goshawk	1	6-Jul	Mt. Ousley	overhead	PN
Grey Goshawk	1	27-Jul	Elizabeth Brownlee Res.	woodland	JC
Grey Goshawk	1	5-Aug	Albion Park	urban	JC
Grey Goshawk	1	10-Aug	Bulli	overhead	RT
Grey Goshawk	1	25-Aug	Cataract Ck. F6	rainforest	NT
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	29-Jul	Elizabeth Brownlee Res.	woodland	JC
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	7-Aug	Primbee	overhead	GB
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	17-Aug	Bellawongarah	forest	BA
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	7-Aug	Bellawongarah	overhead	BA
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	25-Aug	Mt. Kembla	overhead	MR,TE
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	28-Aug	Bellawongarah	overhead	BA
Little Eagle	2	14-Aug	Mt. Kembla	overhead	RT
Australian Hobby	1	30-Jul	Elizabeth Brownlee Res.	woodland	JC
Peregrine Falcon	1	28-Aug	Depot Farm (Nowra)	overhead	BA
Buff-banded Rail	1	1-Aug	Cambewarra	roadside	BA
Black-fronted Dotterel	3	7-Aug	Bolong	wetland	BA
Gull-billed Tern	2	28-Aug	Shoalhaven Heads	beach	SB
White-headed Pigeon	6	26-Aug	Foxground	forest	DG
Bar-shouldered Dove	1	7-Aug	Primbee	woodland	GB
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	1	13-Aug	North Nowra	woodland	BA
Glossy Black-Cockatoo	2	17-Aug	west of Sussex Inlet	woodland	KM
Powerful Owl	2	1-Aug	Bellawongarah	forest	BA
Powerful Owl	1	24-Aug	Keiraville	garden	ME
Tawny Frogmouth	1	31-Jul	Windang	parkland	MC
Azure Kingfisher	1	12-Aug	Spring Creek, Kiama	wetland	CJC
Red-browed Treecreeper	1	17-Aug	west of Sussex Inlet	woodland	KM
Rockwarbler	1	28-Aug	Bamarang	woodland	BA
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	1	17-Aug	west of Sussex Inlet	woodland	KM
White-plumed Honeyeater	1	1-Aug	Corrimal	urban	GB
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater	1	23-Aug	Maddens Plains	overhead	NJ
Flame Robin	1	25-Aug	Barren Grounds NR	woodland	DG
Rose Robin	1	1-Aug	Berry	parkland	BA
Rose Robin	1	3-Aug	Mt. Kembla	forest	MR,TE
Logrunner	2	24-Aug	Bellawongarah	rainforest	BA
Varied Sittella	1	30-Aug	near Belmore Falls	forest	DG
Crested Shrike-tit	1	25-Aug	Mt. Kembla	forest	MR,TE
Spangled Drongo	1	1-Aug	Coniston public school	parkland	NTW
Spangled Drongo	1	7-Aug	Primbee	woodland	GB
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	1	4-Aug	Wollongong Bot Gardens	parkland	NW
Bassian Thrush	1	16-Aug	Bellawongarah	forest	BA
Bassian Thrush	1	26-Aug	Foxground	forest	DG