

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING - Tuesday 17th October 2006, 7.30pm, at Norma Almond's, 2 Shoobert Ave, Mt Keira. (4229 6737) All members are welcome.

New Website for IBOC

Chris Cartledge

The Club's new website is now up and running at www.iboc.org.au The site was developed by a trainee under the 'Websites for the Community' project which is run by Wollongong City Employment Training and funded by Centerlink.

Web surfers will be able to check on current Club activities (as reported in the monthly newsletter), view and/or print the 2006 Club Program and look up past Newsletters. An on-line membership form allows people to join or renew their membership. There are links to other birding sites and an on-line form for direct reporting of unusual sightings (to Chris Chafer) is under development.

The site is a work-in-progress and future changes will be made by the Club's webmaster Chris. Cartledge supported by Martin Cocker. As reported at the Club meeting on Monday 11 Sep, it is hoped to make the new site interactive, with Club members participating in future development of the site through feedback on the current pages and suggestions for future development. One thought is an area where members can have their latest pictures displayed for the world to view. Please send your ideas to webmaster@iboc.org.au

BITS and....

A 'Birding Essentials' Day will be held on Sunday 22 October at the Coastal Environment Centre, North Narrabeen, Brochures at IBOC Library or phone 9970 6905. \$55 for the day

Wednesday walk at Tallawarra, 13 th September

Chris Brandis

After a short compulsory induction on the safety aspects of entering the TRUenergy ash pond 3 site, 22 members and guests set off under blue skies across the old iron Duck Creek bridge noting a Nankeen Kestrel sitting at the entrance of a large hollow in an eucalypt while Sulphur-crested Cockatoos eyed off other hollows. With the wet weather of the previous week there was plenty of water around the district and, as expected, the number of ducks and species were well down and no dotterels were to be found at all. Black Swans were breeding, two pairs with cygnets and one on a nest while a few Black-winged Stilts needed all their leg length to keep above the water.

There were a few tantalising views of Golden-headed Cisticolas as they popped up and then down before all could get a view, but there was a Whistling Kite watching us for a while from a large gum tree, with a stick nest in it, before taking off as we approached. Although the mournful call of the Little Grassbird could be heard none were spied but there were several obliging Clamorous Reed-Warblers. During the morning tea break a dark crane was spotted skulking in the reeds and then again later being confirmed as a Spotless Crane. The Haywoods Bay housing project was interesting to see from our side with a huge 6 m high pile of coal wash being moved along and smidgen of soil placed over the remaining 3 m thick layer for housing. As we entered the casuarina area a male Mistletoebird was spotted but flew off before all could have a look but the tail enders saw a pair as well as adding Yellow and Brown Thornbills.

It is hoped that with the re-zoning of the 600 ha Tallawarra site, the great wetlands and bush areas will be retained and still available for conservation and nature lovers and we can continue to be permitted to visit this great area for birding.

Bird List

Black Swan	Australian Wood Duck	Pacific Black Duck
Australian Shoveler	Grey Teal	Chestnut Teal
Hardhead	Australian Grebe	Little Pied Cormorant
Great Cormorant	Australian Pelican	Great Egret
Australian White Ibis	Straw-necked Ibis	Royal Spoonbill
Black-shouldered Kite	Whistling Kite	Grey Goshawk
Little Eagle	Nankeen Kestrel	Spotless Crake
Purple Swamphen	Dusky Morehen	Eurasian Coot
Black-winged Stilt	Masked Lapwing	Crested pigeon
Topknot Pigeon	Galah	Long-billed Corella
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Eastern Rosella	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
White-throated Treecreeper	Superb Fairy-wren	Brown Thornbill
Yellow Thornbill	Noisy Miner	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Magpie Lark	Grey Fantail	Willie Wagtail
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Australian Magpie	Australian Raven
Red-browed Finch	Misttotoebird	Welcome Swallow
Clamorous Reed-Warbler	Little Grassbird	Golden-headed Cisticola
Common Starling	Common Myna	

Birdsville & Back with Chris Brandis. 11th September, 2006 Val Dolan

Once again a good crowd braved a cold wet night to be rewarded by a interesting presentation. In October, 2005, Chris Brandis and Chris Chaffer repeated a trip they had made ten years earlier giving them the opportunity to see first hand the poor state of the countryside and how stressed the area was compared to the well vegetated, plentiful birdlife experienced previously. Their journey led them through Wilcania, along the Birdsville Track, to Cameron's Corner, down the Strezlecki Track, to Marree, along dirt roads and sand dunes negotiable only by four-wheel drives. (Read C.B.'s own report NEWS, March, 2006).

Chris Chafer had a wish list of five birds to add to his sightings and only the Red-browed Pardalote eluded him. Eyrean Grasswrens were seen in the dunes near Cameron's Corner. Grey and Thick-billed Grasswrens perched long enough for identification and excellent photographs. The Chestnut-banded Whiteface (found in a limited area according to Slater Field Guide) completed his previously unseen list. It is a striking bird with pastel shades of chestnut and grey. A whole family was observed in a rocky area. Many varieties of lizards such as Shingle-backs were photographed sunning themselves on the roads. We were also treated to photos of both our intrepid travellers in their fly nets as protection from flies in plague proportions.

Bruce O'Brien thanked Chris for his enjoyable presentation and remarked on our great opportunities for bird watching here in Australia. This was demonstrated by Chris Chafer's great photographs and Chris Brandis' enthusiasm for this journey.

The ALICE SPRINGS DESERT PARK

Mike MORPHETT

Last month (July) Carol and I spent two full days in Alice Springs in perfect weather conditions as a lead-in to our round-trip through the Kimberley. Day 1 we made use of the 'Hop-on Hop-off' Alice Explorer Town Tour and visited the Old Telegraph Station, Alice Springs Reptile Centre and Olive Pink Botanic Gardens among the ten possible locations. Day 2 we caught a cab to the Alice Springs Desert Park, situated west along Larapinta Drive in the foothills of the MacDonnell Ranges. The suggested stay is 2-4 hours; we were there for seven, including a stop at the café for lunch and a rest. At the conclusion we fully agreed with Sir David Attenborough's opinion (who are we to argue otherwise?) that "There is no zoo or wildlife park in the world that can match it". Also, with the Park's claim that "You will never look at deserts the same way again". The management's mission statement included the aim that "We want visitors to leave the Park with an increased desire and ability to respect, enjoy and look after the Australian desert environment and its inhabitants". After

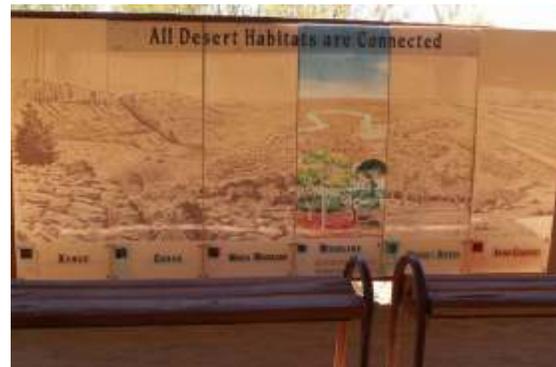
seeing much human detritus, mainly car wrecks and beer cans, during our 5000-plus km trip, we hope many more people will visit and leave with a changed or reinforced attitude towards our desert places.

Opened in March 1997, the Desert Park covers 1300 ha and contains representatives of over 400 plant species (mulga, wattle, melaleuca, hakea, grevillea, senna, ptilotus and spinifex feature prominently) and over 100 arid zone animal species. All are easily accessible within the core exhibit area of 50 ha along the very gentle gradient tracks that interconnect three different habitats: the sand country, woodland, and desert rivers. Needless to say my main focus was on birds. The design of the aviaries with very large glass windows or walk-throughs affords great views and opportunities for photography. In such a setting my digital camera worked overtime. The following species I particularly noted as we don't see them at all in our Illawarra region or are otherwise recorded as rare or accidental:

Emu	White-winged Fairy-wren	Orange Chat
Inland Dotterel	Southern Whiteface	Hooded Robin
Banded Lapwing	Banded Whiteface	Grey-crowned Babbler
Spinifex Pigeon	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Chiming Wedgebill
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Singing Honeyeater	Cinnamon Quail-thrush
Princess Parrot	Grey-headed Honeyeater	Black-faced Woodswallow
Australian (Western) Ringneck	Black-chinned Honeyeater	Pied Butcherbird
Budgerigar	White-fronted Honeyeater	Western Bowerbird
Bourke's Parrot	Grey Honeyeater	Painted Finch
Scarlet-chested Parrot	Black Honeyeater	Spinifexbird
Red-backed Kingfisher	Pied Honeyeater	
Splendid Fairy-wren	Crimson Chat	

The Park takes pride in the birth of Cinnamon Quail-thrush chicks last October, the first known captive breeding success of this secretive species. It has also won awards for design and education. We made our first target the Native Theatre bird of prey show at 10 am (another at 3.30 pm), where we marvelled at the majestic movements of the Barn Owl, Hobby and Black Kite. In contrast a Tawny Frogmouth remained motionless throughout on a roof rafter. The raptors weren't the only free-fliers in the Park; a variety of birds, especially honeyeaters, called and flitted through the vegetation.

We were impressed too by the graphics and art-work of the interpretative signage at the various shelters and houses; they complemented the information available at the 26 audio-guide points. The nocturnal house provided a refreshing break from the sun, where, after eye adjustment, we picked out a bilby, quoll, hopping mice, ghost bats, and



various reptiles. While I was outside checking out more birds, Carol enjoyed further 'time-in' by watching a 20-minute film 'The Changing Heart', depicting four billion years of desert evolution, and then beholding the sun-soaked backdrop of the MacDonnell Ranges through the large glass window after the cinema screen was slowly rolled down. A walk through the adjoining Exhibition Centre gave us further insight into the use of natural resources, bush

foods and medicines by indigenous peoples, in particular the Arrente, the traditional custodians of the land. Before picking up the shuttle bus back into town, we browsed through the gift shop, but I was disappointed not to be able to get an illustrated book about what we had seen or missed. The Friends of the Park are still collating information with a view to such a publication. That was my only criticism. I would strongly recommend that club members make the Desert Park a top priority place to spend a day if ever they're in the Alice.

“Avondale Station” Coolamon August 23rd and 24th Neil Wheway

Five of us, Joan and Tom Wylie, Betty Hudson, Tera and I visited Avondale Station at Coolamon to have two days of birding. We all arrived in Coolamon around midday. Tom checked out the lunch menu at the Royal Tavern: prawn cutlets, chips and salad for \$7 was just what we travelers required (good spotting Tom). Upon arrival at Avondale we were given a warm and enthusiastic welcome by the owners, Jan and Col Lucas. After being shown to our accommodation which were refurbished and well appointed railway guard vans, we were driven around the property in their Toyota bird mobile.

Avondale Station is Col and Jan's pride and joy. They have planted hundreds of native trees, providing a diverse habitat for local bird life. Their hard work on their property has been rewarded with several awards of which they are justifiably proud. However, as with many other rural properties they are in desperate need of rain, only one of the dams had any water. In a normal season these dams are hosts to many water birds, today only a few very skittish Pacific Black Ducks. The station is lucky to have town water to replenish the water troughs for the sheep, cattle and of course the bird population also uses this supply. Our first morning Tera and I wandered around the dry water holes and tree plantations and were rewarded with a good sighting of a pair of Little Friarbirds and Blue Bonnet Parrots, both a first for me.

It was overcast and cool the first morning but undeterred we birded on. Col and Jan took us to Kindra State Forest which adjoins Avondale, where we were introduced to Cheryl and Ted Hutton, (long term members may remember them). In the forest which is mainly Callitris (native pines) and some Eucalyptus we had sightings of Tree-creepers, Robins and Thornbills. Lunch was had in the old disused and restored Coolamon railway station to which Ted had a key, even better we had the heater on, to keep out the chill. Close to town is Government Dam now mainly dry. We saw many water birds from a distance, but getting close was not possible again very skittish and wary of people. Maybe they remembered that people carried guns for the duck hunting season; however a few Black-fronted Dotterels stayed behind to taunt us from a distance. This water area was initially used by the railways in the steam train era; it is now part of a traveling stock route.

In the afternoon we drove out to Ganmain the home of the rounded haystacks which unfortunately will no longer be built because they are labour intensive and costly and don't have a place in modern farming. We did see the remaining ones and also an interesting diorama in the town centre. Close to town along Boggy Creek is a walk well worth taking. Amongst the older trees many new trees have also been planted. Two bird hides make viewing water birds easier. Whilst wandering along the path a galah was observed going into a hollow in a gum. Col remarked he had been clearing dead trees from Avondale in the past not realizing that such places were nesting sites for birds. Afternoon tea was taken at Cheryl and Ted's place, ten acres just outside town. Once again, wonderful, hospitable people.

Our second morning's weather was uncooperative with rain overnight, foggy, and a cold wind blowing. Betty ventured out for an early morning walk and bird look but soon hurried back inside to the warmth of the community room which is a converted barn and very comfortable. Unfortunately there was to be no bird watching on our last morning, only a few millimeters of

rain during the morning, enough to discourage visitors but gratefully welcomed by the locals. On Avondale Station there were no sparrows or Common Mynas, but if we suffered from withdrawal for not seeing Common Mynas the Noisy Miners more than compensated. Any bird watcher in the area would find Avondale Station with its unique accommodation a rewarding place for a few days birding.

Bird List for all Coolamon Locations Visited 23-25.08.06. 60 species recorded

Australian Wood Duck	Brown Treecreeper	Magpie-lark
Pacific Black Duck	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Grey Teal	Striated Pardalote	Willie Wagtail
Little Pied Cormorant	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Little Black Cormorant	Buff-rumped Thornbill	White-winged Triller
Black-shouldered Kite	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird
Nankeen Kestrel	Yellow Thornbill	Pied Butcherbird
Purple Swamphen	Red Wattlebird	Australian Magpie
Black-fronted Dotterel	Little Wattlebird	Pied Currawong
Masked Lapwing	Little Friarbird	Australian Raven
Rock Dove	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Little Raven
Common Bronzewing	Noisy Miner	White-winged Chough
Crested Pigeon	White-plumed Honeyeater	Apostlebird
Peaceful Dove	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Singing Bushlark
Galah	Scarlet Robin	Richard's Pipit
Eastern Rosella	Red-capped Robin	House Sparrow
Blue Bonnet	Eastern Yellow Robin	Welcome Swallow
Red-rumped Parrot	Varied Sitella	Silvereeye
Laughing Kookaburra	Rufous Whistler	Common Blackbird
White-throated Treecreeper	Grey Shrike-thrush	Common Starling

Monthly outing: Bicentennial Park, Homebush – 16 September Penny Potter

Spring was in the air when 16 IBOC members arrived at Bicentennial Park for what proved to be a very fruitful and informative day's birding. Our leader Val Dolan had arranged for ranger Judy Harrington to show us around the site and it soon became clear that she had a wealth of knowledge about the site and birds to share. Originally saltmarsh, Bicentennial Park was built on top of two rubbish dumps and opened to the public in 1988. In 2001 it was incorporated into 430 hectares of Millennium Park to commemorate 200 years of European settlement and includes 60 hectares of nationally significant remnant wetland and 40 hectares of parklands.

First stop was Lake Belvedere where we walked out onto the Belvedere to look at a Darter sitting on a nest through the spotting scope. Fairy Wrens, Swamphens and Reed Warblers could be seen nesting on the island while a White-plumed Honeyeater went about its business in the nearby trees. Mallards, Coots and Chestnut Teal splashed about in the lake while a Little Pied Cormorant sat sentinel in a branch nearby and Lorikeets flew noisily overhead. Judy was delighted to tell us that a pair of Black Swans had recently nested in the park for the first time and that Lorikeets and Kookaburras nest in the palm trees in the showground. On the other hand Ibis have been nesting in large numbers in the park and are a real problem.

Across the road was the Fishway – a device that enables fish, mainly mullet in this case, to get safely from the saltwater creek to the freshwater lake and back again. Here we disturbed a Striated Heron fishing in the creek bed but most managed to get views of it before it flew off into the reeds.

We drove on to Wentworth Common, stopping on the way to look at a pair of Olive-backed Orioles in the trees, and some Fairy Martins fly over the grassy bank behind them. The

Eastern Water Quality Control Pond is designed to store and slow down storm water, reducing the amount of pollution and sediment spilling into Haslam's Creek and Homebush Bay. Some of the water is recycled and used to irrigate the parkland and landscapes. Judy told us that Snipe had been seen there the week before and Buff-banded Rail could occasionally be seen, but neither were present on this occasion. Instead we watched Hardhead, Australasian Grebe and a White-faced Heron at leisure while we had morning tea and learned about the endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog discovered in the park in 1993. Frog fences have been put up to contain them in various locations throughout the park and it is estimated that they now number around 1500.

Moving on we walked along Haslam's Creek, past the mangroves to the other side of the pond and had another good sighting of a Striated Heron in the open on the gabion wall. The path then took us to the top of a hill giving us clear 360° views of the surrounding parkland, Olympic Site and Badu Mangroves across the Parramatta River (100 hectares of mangrove forest).

Setting off for the Waterbird Refuge, we stopped at Shipwreck Lookout on the Parramatta River – the site of the old shipwrecking yard for the Port of Sydney. Not surprisingly Silver Gulls and Cormorants could be seen congregating on an old coal tanker, but it was a treat to find two very fluffy Silver Gull chicks and their parent nesting precariously on a wooden post near an old dredging barge. The hide at the Waterbird Refuge afforded excellent views of a group of about 10 Red-knecked Avocet and several Black-winged Stilt. Chestnut Teal could be seen dabbling and 'suzzling' nearby – that is straining food from the water and mud – and our thoughts began to turn to suzzling, sorry I mean guzzling, our own lunch.

We farewelled our guide and some members also left, but a group of us continued on to the Ring Walk at the Brick Pit – the site of the original discovery of the Green and Golden Bell Frog. When the pit was flooded 19 ponds were constructed around the site in the hope that the frogs would move into them, which happily they did. The elevated circular walk runs 18 meters above the pit and for me was one of the most interesting parts of the walk. The height gives a bird's eye view of the pit landscape below and also gave new views of familiar birds. Martin and I stood watching an Australasian Grebe diving, fascinated by the fact that we could see his every move both under and on top of the water. All morning we had been hoping to spot a raptor and it was here that we finally had excellent views of a Kestrel, and unexpectedly of a Black-fronted Dotterel feeding in the shadows below.

Thanks Val on behalf of us all for an excellent walk.

Bird List

Black Swan	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Olive-backed Oriole
Pacific Black Duck	Nankeen Kestrel	Grey Butcherbird
Grey Teal	Purple Swamphen	Australian Magpie
Chestnut Teal	Dusky Moorhen	Australian Raven
Hardhead	Eurasian Coot	Red-browed Finch
Australasian Grebe	Black-winged Stilt	European Goldfinch
Hoary-headed Grebe	Red-necked Avocet	Welcome Swallow
Darter	Black-fronted Dotterel	Fairy Martin
Little Pied Cormorant	Silver Gull	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Pied Cormorant	Superb Fairy-wren	Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Little Black Cormorant	Spotted Pardalote	Little Grassbird
Great Cormorant	Little Wattlebird	Golden-headed Cisticola
Australian Pelican	Noisy Miner	Common Starling
White-faced Heron	Brown Honeyeater	Common Myna
Striated Heron	Magpie-lark	also heard - Figbird*
Australian White Ibis	Willie Wagtail	- Pied Currawong *

...and Pieces

* What is it with some of the ladies? Not only are they able to enjoy a great Wednesday walk, but then they repair to a member's home to savour more than a soupcon of hot soup! What about us blokes? Is there a queue somewhere where you can join ?

*Birding NSW is running a photo competition. Entries close on 1 December. See Betty Hudson

Of Birds and Poems

John Douglas Pringle

John Pringle, came to Australia, shortly after World War II. He was editor of the SMH. This essay was published in 1971, from his On Second Thoughts Continued from the August News

The citizens of Canberra are even more fortunate. A member of Parliament, leaving the House to walk to the Canberra Hotel, can see on any evening numerous crimson and eastern rosellas with countless red-backed parrots on the stately avenues of the capital. If he drives even a few miles into the country he is bound to see the white cockatoos and galahs, and in winter, when he goes to a diplomatic reception in Mugga Way he will see flocks of the noisy but beautiful gang-gang parrots craning down their rosy heads to peer at him while they scream their harsh sardonic cry from the gum-trees on each side of the road. And if he cares about birds he can drive up into the prickly ranges of the Brindabella and glimpse, as I once did, a flock of giant yellow-tailed black cockatoos, looking almost as large as eagles as they flap heavily through the big timber, calling harshly to each other. In the dark, somber gullies they seemed like evil spirits or huge bats aroused from a tomb;

the wild black cockatoos, tossed on the crest
of their high trees, crying the world's unrest.

Nothing is more difficult than to describe a bird to someone who has never seen or heard it. But here I am lucky. All the poets of Australia seem to love birds and have described them with a vividness and precision I could not hope to rival. I propose to borrow from them shamelessly. Judith Wright, from one of these poems these lines are taken, is the richest source: in 1962 she published a whole volume of poems on birds. But there is hardly a contemporary Australian poet who has not written at least two or three. I think of Judith Wright as the poet of parrots and birds of the forests; of Douglas Stewart as the poet of little finches, scarlet robins and honeyeaters; of David Campbell as the poet of hawks which hang motionless over the bare Monaro hills and 'windy crows' whose harsh melancholy cry is perhaps the most unforgettable of all the Australian bird-sounds. But birds, like flowers and words are the poet's currency: I could fill an anthology with poems on the magpie alone.

Far the commonest of Australia's cockatoos are the sulphur-crested white cockatoos and the galahs. Galahs especially can be seen in enormous numbers almost anywhere in the inland; they are as common as wood pigeons in England – and almost as unpopular with farmers. Indeed because they are so common they are not appreciated. Galahs are something of a joke to people in the country, and, for some reason which I can't understand, the word is used to describe any stupid or idiotic individual – 'You silly galah!' But poets and writers have always been quick to recognize their beauty. Let me quote from Francis Radcliffe's *Flying Fox and Drifting Sand*, one of the best books ever written about the Australian outback

Galahs are lovely things. Their breasts and underparts are of varying shades of rich rose. Their backs and wings are bluish grey. Sometimes, when the light falls on them, this colour looks almost as pale as clean smoke - rather like the colour which the sky assumes when there is a haze on the horizon. At all times of the day galahs can be seen in twos and threes sailing about with their easy but unsteady flight, but it is in the evening that they provide their great spectacle. At the close of the day they gather together in flocks, and fly about in mass formation and fly about like so many of the parrot tribe. And with every swift change of direction the birds take on a different hue. One moment they will be flying down the light, a cloud of grey ghosts barely visible against the eastern sky. Then in a flash they will wheel around towards the sun: and it seems to all the world as if a new flock had suddenly come into being, as though solid bird bodies had been created out of nothing but the thin air and the sunset colours.

To be continued