



THE IBOC

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE No. 338

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB INC NEWSLETTER

JULY 2010

Zebra Finch

Scientific name: *Taeniopygia guttata*

Family: Passeridae

Order: Passeriformes

Description

Zebra Finches are mainly grey, with characteristic black 'tear drop' eye stripes and 'zebra like' black and white barring on the rump and upper tail. The throat and upper breast are pale grey, with fine



photo by Pam Hazelwood

black barring, and there is a broad black band on upper chest. The sides of the belly are chestnut with many white spots. The remainder of the belly and the undertail are white. The male is distinguished from the female by its chestnut cheek patches, a character that gave the species the alternative name of Chestnut-eared Finch. Both sexes have red eyes and bill. The legs and feet are orange yellow. Young are similar in plumage to the female, except that the clear black and white markings of the head are absent. The eyes are grey-brown and the bill is black.

Distribution

Zebra Finches are the most common and widespread of Australia's grassfinches, found across the Australian mainland, with the exception of Cape York Peninsula and some coastal areas. They are also found in Timor and the Lesser Sunday Islands.

Habitat

Zebra Finches are most commonly found in the drier areas of Australia, living year round in social flocks of up to 100 or more birds. They can be found in a variety of habitats, mainly dry wooded grasslands, bordering watercourses.

Feeding

Zebra Finches feed in large flocks on fallen or ripening grass seeds. Insects may be taken at any time of the year, but are particularly favoured when feeding young. Feeding takes place on the ground, and, unlike some other grassfinches, birds never pull seed heads down with their feet.

Breeding

Zebra Finches pair for life. The female alone selects the nest site, but both birds care for the eggs and young. The male gathers almost all the nesting material, with which the female constructs the loose dome-shaped nest. Birds have also been reported to nest in hollows in the ground, although this behaviour is uncommon.

(Zebra Finch information; supplied courtesy of Birds in backyards)

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**'ONE GOOD TERN
DESERVES ANOTHER'**

ILLAWARRA BIRD
OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 56
FAIRY MEADOW, N.S.W. 2519
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Founded in 1977

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

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JULY ACTIVITIES

Club Meeting – Monday 12th July 7.30pm - Fairy Meadow Community Hall.
Cnr of Cambridge Avenue & Princes H'way Fairy Meadow

Ron Imisides will be doing a compilation of images from four separate and exciting visits to the Cape, spanning fifteen years. Will cover most sites to be visited, and will give the travelling group an insight of the wonderful adventure that awaits the group travelling to the Cape.

July Mid Week Walk Wednesday 14th July 2010.
Stafford Farm Track, Kembla Heights
Leader Terrill Nordstrom.

Meet at 9.00am at the start of the Stafford Farm Track just east of the entrance to the Motor Bike Track on Harry Graham Drive, Kembla Heights. Access to Harry Graham Drive is from either Mt Kembla Road or Mt Keira Road. From Mt Kembla Rd the meeting place is approximately 200m before the Motor Bike Track Entrance. Bring a carry morning tea.
Contact Terrill on 0420 848 713 or Joan Wylie 4284 2051

July Monthly Outing - Saturday 17th July
Saddleback Mtn. & Jerrara Dam & Arboretum, Kiama
Leader Betty Hudson.

Meet at 9.00am in the carpark on the summit of Saddleback Mtn.. Travel via the Princes Hwy. to Kiama and take the 2nd (NEW) Kiama exit. Turn left into South Kiama Drive, then left again at the High School into Saddleback Mtn. Rd. Turn left at the next T junction and continue to the end. Bring morning tea and lunch to eat in the picnic areas. Contact Betty on 4236 0307 or 0432 892 945

July Committee Meeting –

The July IBOC Committee Meeting will be on Monday 19th July 2010 at 7.30pm at the home of Norma Almond, 2 Shoobert Crescent, Keiraville.

July 2010 Newsletter –

Deadline for Articles and **Photos** in the next IBOC newsletter is Friday 23rd July 2010
E-mail contributions to Charles Dove newsletter@iboc.org.au or post to 2/39 Purry Burry Ave. Primbee 2502. Ph: 4275 2383

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS – *2010 fees are now due:*

Family \$35.00, Single \$30.00, Junior \$10.00
please pay **Browyn Wilson Treasurer** by cash, cheque or money order.

IBOC Proposed Pelagic Trip

Last year we canvassed members regarding having a charter boat trip out to sea looking for pelagic birds. Due to insufficient numbers it has not proved possible to arrange a trip especially for IBOC. If you are still interested in going out on one of SOSSA 's regular monthly trips (on the 4th Sunday of each month) you should contact SOSSA direct and make your own arrangements. Now is the start of the best time to see the albatrosses and other pelagic birds as the cuttlefish have started arriving. SOSSA can be contacted via their web site www.sossa-international.org or ph 4271 6004
or email sossa@tpg.com.au you can also write to SOSSA P.O. Box 142 Unanderra 2526

REPORTS

Monthly Meeting Report 14th June 2010 (Members evening)

Alan Cousins

What an evening, my sincere thanks go to Brian (Puffin) Hales for organising, in my absence overseas, such a very interesting, varied and entertaining evening. Twelve members gave various presentations in the form of slides and a computer driven video and slide shows.

SYLVIA GARLICK - "Birds that come to my garden" Sylvia gave a very interesting talk assisted by a slideshow of birds and plants in her garden.

NICK & DAPHNE OUDTSHOORN - "A slow look at nature" Nick & Daphne produced a magnificent slow motion film of birds and animals. The film kept returning to a large heron type bird which was attempting to swallow whole a large fish, it succeeded eventually, and also the slow opening of a hippo's jaws - awesome!!

BILL & JOAN ZEALY - "Birds of Brazil" Bill & Joan's presentation provided us with a very interesting insight into South American birds, with Joan giving an excellent commentary and explanation of the different species.

NEIL MCKINLAY & PAM HAZELWOOD - "Spot the finch" Neil gave a humorous presentation involving a bush full of Zebra Finches that Pam had photographed at the Easter camp at Leeton. Members were encouraged to count the number of finches pictured in each slide.

ALAN COUSINS & BETTY HUDSON - "A trip to the Flinders Ranges" Alan gave a presentation from a CD produced by Betty who was away with family. He started giving a verbal commentary of each slide but the captions inserted by Betty made this superfluous so he just let the slide show run showing a brief resume of the IBOC trip to the Flinders Ranges in 2009.

RON IMISIDES - "Surrogate parents" Ron gave us an insight with great photos of the raising of a Masked Lapwing chick that had *been found* in the street. Each slide showed the various stages of its raising by being fed with food provided by Ron's wife Rita. The show went right up until the time that the Lapwing flew away for good.

NEIL & TERA WHEWAY - "Birds in Tera's backyard"

Tera always has great photos and the shots of the Southern Boobook were amazing but with 22 trees in her backyard the bird population is large and varied. Neil followed Tera's presentation by reading a poem reminding us that there is always "time for a coffee"

JANN GOWANS - "An American view" Jann gave us an interesting insight into some birds of America and she suggested that when her mum comes over to Australia from the USA she might give us a further insight- all agreed.

CHARLES DOVE - "Bird food" Charlie came up with a very professional standard even if the 'doors' did open slowly. He had photos of a variety of birds all feeding on something or other.

It was a memorable evening and this report cannot do justice to the standard of the presentations which everybody enjoyed and perhaps we should consider this type of event more often. Thanks to all who participated.

England given the Bird

Reporting on the goalless drawn game in Cape Town in the World Cup between England and Algeria, BBC Sport's chief football writer, Phil McNulty had this to say on 18th June about the England team's lacklustre display:

"The fact that a bird flew into the middle of the action [inaction might have been a more apt description] and landed on the top of Algeria's net, then perched blissfully undisturbed, was a fitting symbol of England's impotence."

McNulty rated each player's performance as only between 4 and 6 out of 10. On that basis, England could have done with this bird on the wing, which would have earned top billing for itself.

The bird species wasn't identified; a jeering fan-tale perhaps. Had it been a passerine, it could have ruled the roost over the match referee and whistled the end of the game without granting extra boring time, if it had been audible above the call of the vuvuzelas.

Mike Morphet

Sixteen members and a guest met at the designated car park with four meeting us part way into this large but isolated reserve with extra sightings. A little way along the central track a feeding party of birds passed through including Variegated Fairy-wren, Brown Thornbill and a male Golden Whistler being enjoyed by all. High above a male Rose Robin was sighted but it stayed high and moved quickly giving only a few of us a good view down the hill and into the rain forest walk where White-browed and Large-billed Scrubwrens were spotted in the gloom before



we stopped for morning tea in the brilliant sunshine on the dam wall. A pair of Black Swans were present on the dam with Purple Swamphens, Dusky Moorhens and Eurasian Coots on and about the dam.

Just after leaving the dam some of us walked under a feeding Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo several metres over head without noticing it but those further back spotted it and its mate further in the forest. The more eyes proved to be the difference in spotting birds being much quieter over winter. Back at the central car park we met the Wylies and then we walked along another trail finding another feeding flock giving us Silvereye to add to the list. Shellharbour City Council is trying to develop nature corridors so that species can move into areas that they have disappeared from and with hope birds such as White-throated Treecreeper and Eastern Whipbird will again enjoy Blackbutt Reserve.



Bird Sightings List

Black Swan	Laughing Kookaburra	Golden Whistler
Australian Wood Duck	Satin Bowerbird	Grey Butcherbird
Pacific Black Duck	Superb Fairy-wren	Australian Magpie
Australasian Grebe	Variegated Fairy-wren	Pied Currawong
Spotted Dove	White-browed Scrubwren	Grey Fantail
Little Pied Cormorant	Large-billed Scrubwren	Willie Wagtail
Australian Pelican	Brown Gerygone	Australian Raven
Australian Hobby	Yellow Thornbill	Magpie-lark
Purple Swamphen	Brown Thornbill	Rose Robin
Dusky Moorhen	Spotted Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin
Eurasian Coot	Eastern Spinebill	Silvereye
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Lewin's Honeyeater	Common Starling
Galah	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Common Myna
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird	Red-browed Finch
Rainbow Lorikeet	New Holland Honeyeater	
Crimson Rosella	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	

I Came across this carcass today in the middle of the forested old Excelsior #2 mine area:

A little penguin, at least a kilometre from the seashore as the crow flies. I've a hunch it was a casualty at the claws of a white-bellied sea-eagle; over time and especially lately this species has been recorded several times within and above this area.

Mike Morphett



The weather gods smiled kindly on the 23 members as they assembled for the Bulli Escarpment walk. The west wind, that had been blowing, fell away by the later, 9am start, to produce a glorious 'blue sky' winter's day.



photo by Charles Dove

The first section of the track led to a sealed road to the water storage tanks. From there we proceeded up a rougher vehicle track to a reedy dam. Eastern Whipbirds, Golden Whistlers, Eastern Yellow Robin and Australian King Parrots were recorded along with Dusky Moorhens on the dam. Unfortunately, the Azure Kingfisher, which sometimes is seen around the dam was not sighted.

From this point we went through the gate into the S.R.A. and walked to the intersection with the lower escarpment service trail. Mike's keen ear alerted us to the call of the Crested Shrike-tit and most of us present had good views of it. Australian Logrunners, which have territory along this stretch of the track, were not sighted, but Nerida and Cathy had goodsightings on the return journey.

BULLI ESCARPMENT BIRD LIST

Spotted Dove	Satin Bowerbird	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	Superb Fairy-wren	Crested Shrike-tit
Wonga Pigeon	Yellow-throated Scrubwren	Golden Whistler
Australian Pelican	White-browed Scrubwren	Grey Shrike-thrush
Dusky Moorhen	Large-billed Scrubwren	Grey Butcherbird
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Brown Gerygone	Pied Currawong
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow Thornbill	Grey Fantail
Rainbow Lorikeet	Brown Thornbill	Australian Raven
Australian King-Parrot	Spotted Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin
Crimson Rosella	Eastern Spinebill	Silvereye
Laughing Kookaburra	Lewin's Honeyeater	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Superb Lyrebird	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
White-throated Treecreeper	Australian Logrunner	
Green Catbird	Eastern Whipbird	

Unfortunately the group were well strung out by this time and no one else saw them.

Morning tea was taken on a not so perfect log and surrounding bank further along the fire trail and Crested Shrike-tits again honoured us with their presence, along with White-browed Scrubwrens, Brown Gerygone, Australian King Parrots, Lewin's Honeyeaters and White-throated Treecreeper.

The good quality and width of the trail allowed people to spread out and do their own birdwatching, rather than walk in single file, with the first half dozen or so getting to see most of the sightings, which sometimes happens with a larger number of people on a narrow track.

We re-assembled under the power lines above Gahans Lane around 12 o'clock still 20 minutes from Rixons Pass. Hunger pangs and diminishing energy prompted half the group to decide this is far enough and a good place for lunch. The rest of us pressed on to lunch at Rixons Pass, where we had a surprise visit from Neil and Pete McKinlay who pedalled up from the Corrimal end on their mountain bikes.

Logrunners were heard near Rixons Pass as we started back to Bulli and a dead antechinus, species uncertain, was found on the side of the trail.

Sightings of Green Catbirds and Yellow-throated Scrubwrens along with others were made along the way, giving us a total of 40 species for the day.

It was good to see a few new faces among the group. I hope you enjoyed your day and we look forward to seeing you again. Thanks for the good company of all those who helped to make it an enjoyable outing.

ITEMS & LETTERS OF INTEREST

As a foundation member of I.B.O.C., I feel I must register my disappointment in reading the announcement – by E-mail of the launch of “Illawarra Birders Inc”.

Those of us who were privileged to know the late Doug Gibson must be saddened.

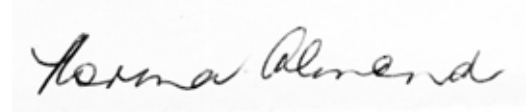
Doug had all the scientific knowledge of the birds at his finger tips, and after delivering a series of lectures through W.E.A., graciously helped with the formation of I.B.O.C. with its aim “to join together people with a common interest who wished to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the bird-life around them”.

Doug always maintained contact with his contemporaries, who in turn were always happy to share their knowledge with I.B.O.C. members.

This friendly helpful sharing has been a feature of I.B.O.C. right through his ‘life’.

Incidentally it was Doug Gibson who designed the logo.

So why “Illawarra Birders Inc” ?



Lorna Almond

IT'S meant to be the most environmentally friendly bird food that money can buy in UK.

By David Derbyshire

Free from pesticides, preservatives and chemical fertilisers, organic bird seed is scattered by those who don't mind paying a little extra to stay green.

There's just one snag. Birds don't like it. The first scientific study of its kind found they prefer conventional bird seed grown on intensive farms and doused with chemicals to the more expensive and 'natural' organic varieties.

Researchers who made the discovery at Newcastle University believe conventional bird food is higher in protein than the organic stuff and that the birds are voting with their beaks.

Dr Ailsa McKenzie, who led the study, said: 'Protein is an essential nutrient in the diet of all birds and mammals and getting enough of it especially in winter can be hard. We showed that when given free choice, wild birds opt for the conventional food over the organic, and the most likely explanation is its higher protein content.' The Newcastle team set up feeding stations in more than 30 gardens across the North of England. Organic and non organic wheat seeds were placed in adjacent bird feeders and monitored for six weeks over winter. Halfway through the experiment the feeds were swapped around. The experiment was repeated in a second winter using different wheat samples. Over the study, the birds ate far more of the conventional seed than the organic seed, the team reported in the Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture. When the feeders were swapped round, the birds quickly spotted the difference, and continued to shun the organic food. An analysis of the wheat revealed that conventional seeds had 10 per cent more protein than the organic ones. The researchers found no difference in the size of grains, energy content or pesticide residues.

The garden bird work was confirmed by laboratory studies on canaries, which also preferred conventional seeds to organic grains.

It's the second blow to the organic industry in weeks. Earlier this month, a Leeds University study found that some of Britain's best loved songbirds, including skylarks and yellowhammers, fare worse on organic farms than on fields sprayed with chemicals.

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIRD BANDING, DATA COLLECTION, FIELD SURVEY TECHNIQUES AND MORE...

Many people are looking for ways to become more actively involved with birds, their study and their conservation.

Together with ABSA (Australian Bird Study Association), BASNA want to increase the number of bird-banders, data collectors and surveys on birds and their behaviour. In order to encourage people these courses are being initially run at a substantially reduced rate.

We have organised a number of practical workshops in unique and interesting locations so that you can experience what is involved with a view to assisting in existing and future projects. This is a great opportunity for those who would like to take their birding to another level and is a rewarding experience for those involved.

Field Survey Techniques

Date: August 15th 9.00am - 3.30 pm Venue: Wirrimbirra Sanctuary, Bargo Presenter: Chris Lloyd and Dean Portelli

This course aims to introduce participants to some of the techniques used to study birds in the field. Many of these are techniques, which researchers and conservation agencies are looking for when they advertise for volunteers.

The course will go through a number of practical exercises, topics covered will include: An introduction to behavioural studies using time energy budgets Transects and point counts including the role of GPS units. How to interpret results

Wirrimbirra Sanctuary is a 95 hectare property owned by the National Trust of Australia (NSW), established and managed as a flora and fauna sanctuary. It was created in the 1960s by Thistle Harris to preserve the original 'Bargo Brush' and Australia's flora and fauna, and promote the use and propagation of Australian native plants. It is approximately 1 hour from Sydney Airport along the M5. Check out their [com.au](http://www.wirrimbirra.com.au) For those who want to stay the night, accommodation is available at Wirrimbirra

Registration: \$30 Includes morning & afternoon tea, notes, GPS units and other materials Bring lunch, notebook and pen, sunscreen, hat, water

For a registration form or to enquire about the course, please email basna@birdsaustralia.com.au or call Pixie on 02 96471033

An Introduction to Bird Banding - Country

Date: September (date to be advised)

Venue: Munghorn Gap (near Mudgee)

Presenter: Graham Fry

Banding is probably the most common field technique known to bird watchers but probably the least taken up. Putting a metal or plastic ring around the legs of a bird is probably the easiest part of the exercise. What takes years to learn is the measurements and observations that need to sit with the specific number or colour combination on an individual bird. Banding has provided ornithologists with a wealth of knowledge on movement, longevity, reproduction and more and remains one of the core field techniques for many studies.

The Australian Bird Study Association (ABSA) are our main banding practitioners and we are working with BASNA to try to increase the number of people learning banding skills. The course is aimed at introducing people to the techniques and the commitment involved. So if you have ever wanted go behind that little metal ring on a Thornbill or the leg flag on a Godwit then come along and see what happens.

Registration: \$30

For a registration form or to enquire about the course, please email basna@birdsaustralia.com.au or call Pixie on 02 96471033



Regular morning visitors lately for a feed. Youngsters lacking red breast (just a hint of red), which field guides don't mention.

Mike & Carol



Hi Folks, here is my best pic, juvenile Crested Tern taken at Tathra Wharf and the cockerel was taken in the middle of nowhere in the hills above Bega at a lookout picnic area on Myrtle Mountain. Every time I tried to snap him he turned his head away.

Cheers Barbara Hales

PS we did manage a coffee break



HUMMINGBIRD LANE

This woman lives in a Hummingbird fly zone. As they migrated, about 20 of them were in her yard. She took the little red dish, filled it with sugar water and this is the result.

The woman is Abigail Alfano of Pine, Louisiana – she has been studying them daily and one morning put the cup from the feeder, with water in it, in her hand; as they had gotten used to her standing by the feeder they came over to her hand. She says in touching they are as light as a feather. Abigail also said, 'if she had known her husband was taking pictures she would have put on makeup.'

Supplied by Edward (Ted) Simpson

IBOC ANNUAL PROGRAMME UPDATE FOR JULY - DECEMBER

Month	Action	Date	Speaker/Leader	Venue
July	Meeting	12.07.10	Ron Imisides	What we could expect to see on the Cairns to Cape York Trip
	Mid Week Walk	14.07.10	Terrill Nordstrom	Stafford Farm Track
	Outing	Saturday 17.07.10	Betty Hudson	Saddleback Mountain & Jerrara Arboretum
August	Meeting	9.08.10	Kevin Mills	TBA
	Mid Week Walk	11.08.10	Betty Hudson	Moeyan Hill Track Agars Lane Berry
	Outing	Sunday 15.08.10	Betty Hudson	Wirrimbirra Wildlife Sanctuary Bargo & Nepean/Avon Dams
September	Meeting	13.09.10	TBA	
	Mid Week Walk	15.09.10		Cascade Walk Macquarie Pass Nat Park
	Outing	Saturday 18.09.10	Betty Hudson	Bellawongarra Cambewarra Lookout & Bomaderry Creek Walk
October	Meeting	11.10.10	TBA	
	Mid Week Walk	13.10.10	Tom Wylie	Cooks Nose Barren Grounds
	Outing	Sunday 17.10.10	Betty Hudson	Abrahams Bosom Currarong
	Spring Camp	23.10.10 to 30.10.10	Betty Hudson	Sandy Hollow Upper Hunter Valley
November	Meeting/ AGM	8.11.10	TBA	
	Mid Week Walk	10.11.10	Darryl Goldrick	Killalea Lagoon
	Outing	Saturday 13.11.10	Betty Hudson	Various Locations around Lake Illawarra
December	Christmas Picnic	Saturday 11.12.10		TBA
	Christmas Meeting	13.12.10		

Farewell to Ron Hanks

Former I.B.O.C. member Ron Hanks passed away on Sunday 20th June after a long illness. Ron and Wendy joined the club in 1981 and were members for around 20yrs. Ron was the newsletter editor from 1982-1984 and was a valuable contributor to the clubs activities over that period.

Someone who always enjoyed a laugh, Ron participated in many of the comedy sketches staged at annual Christmas meetings. He particularly enjoyed our many bush camps and became the unofficial camp stoker, always keeping the boiler bubbling, providing unlimited hot water for washing up and showers. Through his contacts in amateur radio Ron was able to arrange a number of good bush camps on private properties for the club.

Ron will be fondly remembered by those long term members in the club who knew him.



Wal Emery

Leeton Camp Report

10 – 17 April 2010

Confessions of a new birdwatcher –

by Linda Cohen

Part 2 of 2

Day 5 :

Narrandera - Narrandera Common

Having explored most of the Leeton birding sites by now, we spread our wings further a field to the neighbouring town of Narrandera. We spent the morning at Narrandera Common, a large River Red Gum Forest with associated understorey and wetlands. One of our first sightings here was a large Koala sitting in a gum tree. It was a very enjoyable and easy walk along a raised track along the river with the bonus of both waterbirds and bushbirds at our fingertips. Katharine spotted some Varied Sittellas whilst exploring the forest (young eyes really helps!), and we couldn't miss a flock of White-winged Choughs calling and flying around. They are very striking birds – they appear to be completely black until they fly and then you see patches of white on their wings. I really like them.



Other birds here include: Purple Swamphen, Little Pied Cormorant, Grey shrike-thrush, Brown Treecreeper, Yellow Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Peaceful Dove, and both the Noisy Friarbird and the Little Friarbird. Besides the Koala, the most excitement here was caused by the Restless Flycatcher. There were several of them, including an immature, and they were exhibiting "textbook behaviour" –making their trademark "scissor grinding" noise to flush out insects. I couldn't get enough of them. I have noticed that it doesn't seem to matter how long or how well you see a bird, it is still never enough, and you want "just one more look". I will happily stand around for ages waiting, and waiting, hoping it will come back again. I wonder if this changes much with experience and more birds in your lifelist??



Narrandera Wetlands

This is a small wetland area on the edge of the township. It had been well set-up and had three bird hides, strategically positioned overlooking the wetland from different sides. There were also information plaques scattered along the main track with information on the various plant, bird and animal species typically found here. One of our first sightings here was a Little Eagle. There are several members keen on raptors so a raptor sighting always generates a lot of excitement – especially if we can get a clear identification. It's so frustrating when you're not sure what you've seen because you can't write it down. We also saw a pair of Grey Teal with two immature, and also an Australasian Grebe (male) with two immatures. I love seeing birds with their young; it's very rewarding and reassuring. I also learned that such sightings are important as they constitute a "breeding record", i.e. just seeing a nest doesn't count unless you see the parent feeding a young bird in the nest. As usual, I heard more birds than I saw, and I could only identify some of those, including: Grey Shrike-thrush, Clamorous Reed-warbler, Pied Butcherbird and Galah. When I get home I will need to study my bird call CDs to swot up on their calls ...

Narrandera to Leeton – drive home

We all split up after the wetlands to do our own thing for the rest of the afternoon, and the drive back to Leeton was exciting for me. Mum and I stopped at a dam next to the road because we saw lots of small white birds on the edge of the water and we wondered if they were Silver Gulls (I was surprised to see them inland!). On closer inspection we confirmed that they were Silver Gulls. Another one for the camp bird list. However, we also looked at the ducks on the dam and immediately noticed a pair that looked quite different, especially their bills. I thought they looked like Shovelers (I had read up on these hoping to one day see one). Suddenly we heard a horn tooting and a 4WD drive pulled over –Tom, Joan, Neil and Tera had spotted us with our binoculars and thought we were onto something. They confirmed that the ducks were indeed Australasian Shovelers. This was very exciting, and a new bird for me. It just goes to show that sometimes it is worth checking out a "familiar" bird because you never know what else you might see!

Gillenbah State Park

This was our last stop for the day and included a late lunch. We set up our chairs in a clearing in the Pine/Box woodland, being careful to avoid the many spider webs strung between understorey bushes. It was very restful to relax over lunch to the sound of a bird chorus. One of these birds was a Western Gerygone – confirmed by those who saw it. Certainly much better than being at work spending all day on a computer!

The bird brochure informed us that we could expect to see "Parrots, Honeyeaters, Robins, Thornbills and Sittellas". We saw all of these except the Sittellas. The bird of the day here was the Red-capped Robin which were everywhere! We were also fortunate enough to see (and hear) the White-browed Babblers again. Other birds included both the Pied Butcherbird and the Grey Butcherbird, Striated Pardalote, Rufous Whistler, Grey Fantail, Red-rumped Parrot, Common Bronzewing and Yellow Rosella. We were hoping to see some waterbirds at the dam (our afternoon tea stop) but no such luck.

Day 6 :

Billenbah State Forest

This is a small open pine forest area near the Murrumbidgee River – supposedly very good for parrots. We didn't see many birds here and no Superb Parrots. We did see the Red-capped Robins again, as well as the Yellow Rosella, Yellow Thornbill and Grey Fantail.

Euroley Bridge

We then explored the river red gum forest along the river at Euroley Bridge, described in the brochure as "a reliable site for Superb Parrots as the nest in the river red gums". I did see a pair of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos attending a nest hollow, but no Superb Parrots. We saw a few bush birds, including; Blue-faced honeyeater, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Fantail, Grey Shrike-thrush and White-plumed Honeyeater. I was desperately hoping to see a kingfisher at the river but it wasn't to be. A few of us heard Wrens in the bushes, and Joan, Tom, Mum and I stalked them for ages. I was determined to find out which wrens they were – Superb Fairy-wren or Variegated Fairy-wren. Eventually our patience was rewarded and we saw a male Variegated Fairy-wren. His colours were so striking in the full sun. As a result, we were the last ones back to the cars (not for the first time either!) – but it was worth it.

Yanco Reserve

After lunch at Euroley Bridge, we went at Yanco Reserve, a small natural bush area near the railway line and Yanco township. Several of us had come here earlier in the week (on our "free" afternoon) and our combined sightings included Grey-crowned Babbler, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Blue-faced honeyeater, Mistletoebird, Singing Honeyeater, Eastern Rosella, Apostlebird and White-winged Choughs (including one on a mud nest). We also saw a kangaroo. It was quite a hot day and not many birds were active. Our numbers gradually dwindled ...

Yanco Agricultural College

Neil had organised special permission for us to visit the Yanco Agricultural College. Because it was so hot we drove around the campus, hoping to see something interesting. We followed some Grey-crowned Babblers from tree to tree. They are now one of my new favourite birds. In theory it wasn't an ideal birding situation as it was set up as a farm with open paddocks, it was a hot day and we were driving not walking. However we managed to see quite a few birds, including the Red-rumped Parrot, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Crested Pigeon, Yellow-throated Miner, Willie Wagtail and White-winged Chough. Actually I think we saw more birds here than we did in some other places – but it all comes down to being in the right place at the right time.

One of the real highlights for me occurred when we were driving back to Leeton. Just outside Yanco we saw a Pacific-blue Whistler so I radioed to Tom, Joan, Neil and Tera in the other car to make sure they saw it too. It was the only one we saw all week and it created quite a stir.



Blue-faced Honeyeater
Photo by Betty Hudson



Yellow-throated Miner
Photo by Betty Hudson

Day 7 :

Narrandera

Officially this was the day we were to drive home – however I had been having such a good time that I wasn't ready to go home yet and there were still a few places we were keen to explore. Fortunately we were able to keep our cabin for another day. I quickly put together an itinerary of several places in Narrandera that I thought might be worth a visit. Mum and I were both keen to see the Blue Bonnets again so this influenced where we thought we would go.

Jerry's Hill

This was an open Box/Pine woodland out of Narrandera and on top of a hill. It was supposedly very good for parrots, including Blue Bonnets. We wandered around for a while and then Mum spotted them – six Blue Bonnets flying in and perched in a tree. We were so excited to see them again that we followed them across the reserve just to see them again and again. It was magical. Another excitement here was seeing three Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, including an immature with the different facial markings).

Mad Mile

The term "Mad Mile" refers to an area along the Barellan Road as well as a Pine/Box reserve. We stopped suddenly on the side of the road because I had seen some Apostlebirds (one of my favourite birds). That led us to several Grey-crowned Babblers fussing together in a tree. While I was busy watching them, Mum realised that there were Blue Bonnets in the same tree. We decided that this would make a good morning tea stop as there was plenty of bird activity. I had been learning about creeping up on birds by watching everyone else, and so we were able to get quite close to the babblers and watch them for ages. It is amazing to me how different all birds are – some live alone, some in pairs, and some in groups. I love the way the Babblers, Apostlebirds and Choughs chatter away to each other and hang out together. For me, it's not just about seeing new birds and ticking them off a list (although that is nice too!) but rather I just love watching them in their everyday life.

Another highlight a bit further down the road (actually within the reserve) was a Pied Butcherbird singing from the top of a dead tree. This was a true "Kodak moment" – but with sound as well. His clear piping calls were unlike anything I have ever heard before and it was magical just watching and listening as he called to his mate. It was so beautiful. Moments like this just make you so happy to be alive.

Five Mile Reserve

Mum was keen to check out this place with its listed variety of birds and wetlands along Bundidjarie Creek. We were hoping to see the Dollar bird but I think it might have been the wrong time of year. It was a beautiful spot, tucked away down a long and winding dirt road with very little traffic. We had barely got out of the car when we saw birds everywhere! Several Brown Treecreepers foraged on the ground all around us as we ate our lunch. We also saw Fairy Martins, Welcome Swallows, White-plumed Honeyeaters, numerous Little Friarbirds, a Darter drying its wings on a dead log, a Little Pied Cormorant fishing and both the Pacific Black Duck and the Wood Duck. One of the highlights here was seeing two Whistling Kites chasing away a single Wedge-tailed Eagle. It was so interesting to see them together and to realise just how much bigger the Wedgie is. Measurements in the field guide really don't give you the same idea as to size. It was peaceful and relaxing and a lovely way to end a very enjoyable week away.



Brown Treecreeper
Photo by Betty Hudson

Thank you and au revoir

I would like to end by thanking the group for having us with them – me, a new member, and my mother, Sylvia, a “ring-in” from Adelaide, South Australia. We have both had a wonderful week and it has been a truly memorable introduction to bird camps. We are both looking forward to coming on more camps. I would like to thank everyone who has helped us this week, especially Betty Hudson for organising camp and ensuring that everything ran smoothly all week and for taking us “under her wing” to make sure we were seeing lots of birds and having a good time. I have many happy memories to take with me and I am inspired to learn more and more about more and more birds. I would highly recommend camp to everyone, especially those who haven’t been yet.

Thank you.

Bird list for LEETON CAMP 10-17.04.10 126 SPECIES RECORDED		
Emu	Peregrine Falcon	Blue-faced Honeyeater
Plumed Whistling-Duck	Brolga	Noisy Friarbird
Black Swan	Purple Swamphen	Little Friarbird
Australian Shelduck	Dusky Moorhen	Grey-crowned Babbler
Australian Wood Duck	Black-fronted Dotterel	White-browed Babbler
Pink-eared Duck	Masked Lapwing	Varied Sittella (Orange Winged)
Australasian Shoveler	Painted Button-quail	Ground Cuckoo-shrike
Grey Teal	Silver Gull	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Chestnut Teal	Galah	Crested Shrike-tit
Pacific Black Duck	Little Corella	Golden Whistler – E Race
Blue-billed Duck	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Rufous Whistler
Australasian Grebe	Cockatiel	Grey Shrike-thrush
Rock Dove	Superb Parrot	Olive-backed Oriole
Common Bronzewing	Crimson Rosella (Yellow Form)	White-breasted Woodswallow
Crested Pigeon	Eastern Rosella	Dusky Woodswallow
Peaceful Dove	Australian Ringneck (Mallee form)	Grey Butcherbird
Tawny Frogmouth	Blue Bonnet-(Red Vent)	Pied Butcherbird
Australasian Darter	Red-rumped Parrot	Australian Magpie
Little Pied Cormorant	Mulga Parrot	Grey Fantail
Great Cormorant	Southern Boobook	Willie Wagtail
Little Black Cormorant	Laughing Kookaburra	Australian Raven
Pied Cormorant	Brown Treecreeper	Little Raven
Australian Pelican	Superb Fairy-wren	Restless Flycatcher
Eastern Great Egret	Splendid Fairy-wren	Magpie-lark
Intermediate Egret	Variegated Fairy-wren	White-winged Chough
White-faced Heron	Speckled Warbler	Apostlebird
Australian White Ibis	Weebill	Jacky Winter
Straw-necked Ibis	Western Gerygone	Red-capped Robin
Royal Spoonbill	Yellow Thornbill	Eastern Yellow Robin
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Golden-headed Cisticola
Black-shouldered Kite	Inland Thornbill	Australian Reed-Warbler
Whistling Kite	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Little Grassbird
Brown Goshawk	Southern Whiteface	Silvereye
Collared Sparrowhawk	Striated Pardalote	Welcome Swallow
Spotted Harrier	Singing Honeyeater	Fairy Martin
Swamp Harrier	White-plumed Honeyeater	Tree Martin
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Noisy Miner	Common Blackbird
Little Eagle	Yellow-throated Miner	Common Starling
Nankeen Kestrel	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Mistletoebird
Brown Falcon	Red Wattlebird	Zebra Finch
Australian Hobby	White-fronted Chat	Double-barred Finch
Black Falcon	Brown-headed Honeyeater	House Sparrow

a detailed list of which birds were seen where will be put on the IBOC web site in June.

In the Red

A sudden drop in shorebird numbers in the Yellow Sea, due to the reclamation of the extensive areas of mudflats, such as at Saemangeum in South Korea, has been mirrored by declines in the populations of migratory shorebirds occurring in Australia. Two species have been particularly hard hit: the Eastern Curlew and the Great Knot.

These species have declined so dramatically that both have had their official conservation status on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species (the most objective and authoritative system for classifying species in terms of the risk of extinction) upgraded from being of Least Concern to Vulnerable: they are now considered to be at 'high risk of endangerment in the wild'. With their conservation status upgraded, Eastern Curlews and Great Knots should now be afforded better protection.

This upgrade was only possible after much hard work by the Shorebirds 2020 project in conjunction with the Australasian Wader Studies Group. It is a graphic illustration of how our monitoring efforts can make a difference. For more information, head to [Birds Australia's website](#).

Bird List for May/June 2010

Compiled by Martin Cocker

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
White-headed Pigeon	2	13-Jun-10	Rhododendron Park Balgownie	Rainforest	Wal Emery
Black-browed Albatross	3	13-Jun-10	Off Wattamolla	Inshore	Bill & Joan Zealey
Yellow-nosed Albatross	1	25-May-10	Off Bellambi	Pelagic	Tom Wylie
Northern Giant-Petrel	1	24-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Brian White
Little Penguin	1 dead	15-Jun-10	Excelsior Mine Bulli	Bush	Mike Morphett
Cattle Egret	100	07-Jun-10	Kanahooka Point	Paddocks	Martin Cocker
White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	29-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
White-bellied Sea-eagle	1	30-May-10	Bulli	Overhead	Mike Morphett
Little Eagle	1	02-Jun-10	Killalea SRA	Overhead	Lorraine Pincus
Australian Hobby	1	13-May-10	Lake Illawarra	Residential	Darryl Goldrick
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	2	29-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	2	24-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Brian White
Sooty Oystercatcher	4	30-May-10	Sandon Point, Bulli	Coastal	Mike Morphett
Red-capped Plover	30	29-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
Red-capped Plover	9	24-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Brian White
Red-capped Plover	34	02-Jun-10	Windang	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Double-banded Plover	40	29-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
Double-banded Plover	35	24-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Brian White
Double-banded Plover	44	02-Jun-10	Windang	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Black-fronted Dotterel	50+	23-May-10	Killalea Lagoon	Mudflat	Chris Brandis
Ruddy Turnstone	2	29-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
Ruddy Turnstone	2	08-Jun-10	Bellambi	Shore	Tom Wylie
Red Knot	1	02-Jun-10	Windang	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Pacific Gull	1 Imm.	02-Jun-10	Bass Point	Coastal	Chris Brandis
Kelp Gull	1	29-May-10	Windang Estuary	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
Musk Lorikeet	2	27-May-10	Wollongong University	Park	Penny Potter
Azure Kingfisher	2	12-Jun-10	Jerra Dam Kiama	Wetland	Ian McKinlay
Azure Kingfisher	1	08-Jun-10	Hyams Creek Jamberoo	Riverine	Betty Hudson
Azure Kingfisher	1	12-Jun-10	Bulli Escarpment	Reedy Dam	Wal Emery
Noisy Pitta	2	13-Jun-10	Mt Keira Ring Track	Rainforest	Wal Emery
Australian Logrunner	1	12-Jun-10	Woonona Escarpment	Ginger Thicket	Wal Emery
Spangled Drongo	1	14-Jun-10	Primbee	Garden	Ron Imisides
Bassian Thrush	6	23-May-10	Fitzroy Falls	Bush	Sheila Emery
Bassian Thrush	1	20-May-10	Jerra Dam Kiama	Rainforest	Betty Hudson

Notes:

Also reported on Birding Aus was the recent visit of the Northern Giant-Petrel in Windang Estuary that was one of a number of records reported after recent storms.

Many thanks for all your records please send them to cocker@speedlink.com.au. Good Birding!

JUST A SMALL NOTE RE-BINDING MARGINS.

For those who require a binding margin for the filing of their newsletters they will now find extra space on the left hand margins for this purpose.

If you receive your newsletter by e-mail and you like to print a colour version of the newsletter it would best if you to make sure you print 2 pages on the 1 sheet of paper .

ie: Page 1 is to be printed on the reverse side of the cover page etc.

Happy Birding
Charles Dove
Editor