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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Members will receive their renewal notices in the next couple of weeks. **A prompt reply would be appreciated by the Treasurer, for whom this is the most tedious and time-consuming part of the job.**

When our last attempt to find a new manager for the MNS fell through, Don Ripper shrugged his shoulders, announced he was only a couple of years out from retirement, and agreed to carry on. I would like to acknowledge the work Don has put in, and will now continue to put in, managing not only the MNS, but also the archives of the Association - back issues of Corella mostly.

Book your tickets to Albury for the 2011 Scientific day and AGM. This is ABSA's one big day out, and it takes a load of organising by committee members and others. It makes it all worthwhile when the effort is matched by high attendance.

Stein Boddington

President

New Subscription Rates

The Committee, after careful consideration has reluctantly raised the subscription rates for ABSA Membership in 2011. They have not been changed for several years, during which we have absorbed general increases in costs. We understand that there are financial pressures on everyone, but we have a duty to ensure the on-going financial viability of the Association. Note we have scrapped the overseas concessional rate.

The new rates are:

Full	\$60.00
Concessional (under 18yrs of age; pension card holders; f/t student)	\$40.00
Household	\$75.00
Outside Australia - full	\$70.00
Household - outside Australia	\$80.00
Institution - Australia	\$90.00
Institutional - outside Australia	\$100.00

FAR Awards

Two awards were made following the close of applications.

Stephen Debus - for assistance with fuel costs in an investigation of the ecology and behaviour of the Black Falcon and the Little eagle.

Jan Lewis - for assistance with fuel and mist nets in her research on the dispersal of Star Finch in the Wyndham District of the Kimberley, WA.

Donations to the ABSA Fund for Avian Research

Membership renewals will be sent out shortly. As an addition there is an option to donate an amount to the ABSA Fund for Avian Research. Members are encouraged to donate to this fund. The advantages of donating to this fund is:

1. There are no administration costs, all money donated is transferred to the ABSA Fund for Avian Research.
2. The fund directly assists avian research
3. The fund particularly encourages students who may have limited means to apply for these funds.

The fund has grown to over \$40,000, It received a significant boost from the NSW Twitchathon in 2007. With the current interest rates we have around \$2500 per annum available for grants but we would very much like to have more funds so more projects can be assisted.

Projects that have received funding over the past few years include.

- The Ecological Requirements of the Tasmanian Masked Owl
- Sexual Dimorphism and Taxonomic Position of the Eurasian Coot in Australia.
- Ecological Requirements of Star Finches in Northern Australia
- Ecology and Behaviour of the Little Eagle and Black Falcon.

Auditor

The Association's accounts are audited each year by Ross Fowler and Co, in Penrith, and they are kind enough to do this for a substantially reduced fee. However, it would be good if we could find a suitably qualified person to do this job *pro bono*.

If you know of such a person, please contact the Treasurer Graham Fry, who will submit the name to the AGM

AGM 2011 and Scientific day

Notice is hereby given that the Association's Annual General Meeting will be held at Charles Sturt University in Albury, on 9th April, 2011, commencing at 1.30 pm.

It was thought that Melbourne-based members could make the short journey, and we welcome the active involvement of CSU staff and students from the Ornithology course delivered there. Indeed, one of the students is assisting us organise the event.

A program of lectures will run from 10am, on the theme of "Threatened Species". We hope also to organise some excursions to nearby points of interest - Chiltern, River Red Gum National Park, Wonga Wetlands are in our sights.

Book for Review

The following books are held for review. Members wishing to review these are urged to contact the Editor, John Farrell <corella@absa.asn.au> to arrange same.

Parrots of the World by Forshaw and Knight

Members are reminded that it is ABSA policy to allow reviewers to retain the copy of the book.

Lord Howe Woodhen – for whom the bell tolls?

from Jonny Schoenjahn.

In late November 2008 I visited Lord Howe Island. During a bird-walk the local Ian Hutton point out the remains of a Lord Howe Woodhen, explaining that he saw a Masked Owl feeding on it a couple of days before. Soon after we were to see or better hear a Woodhen, its presence advertised from considerable distance despite the dense undergrowth by a very audible tinkle whenever the bird made a step, a tinkle caused by two metal bands put on the same leg. According to 'The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000', the introduced Masked Owl is currently the only significant threat to the endangered LH Woodhen and thought to be responsible for a mayor decline of the latter in 1989. I pointed out to Ian that the thus banded Woodhen hardly stand a chance against their main predator, and Ian assured me that he would pass on my concern to the people responsible for the research and the banding project. Two years down the track I'm very interested to hear whether my observation was of any concern and whether any action was taken.

Email: jonnybird@bigpond.com

PDFs of Corella and ABB

ABSA is embarking on a project to have all old copies of Corella and Australian Bird Bander preserved as PDF files electronically, and then to make them available on the web once they are no longer current.

If there are any members who have already transferred articles, editions to PDF of either journal, then they are urged to contact the Treasurer Graham Fry, and they may save him a whole lot of scanning.

Proposal to Split Ground Parrot Species

In a paper published on-line in Conservation Genetics, Stephen Murphy et al looked at the genetics variation within the Ground Parrot *Pezoporus wallicus*, which is split into two populations, in the south-east and one in the south-west of Australia. They “cautiously suggest the recognition of Western ground Parrots as a species *P. flaviventris*” This would make the Western Ground Parrot one of the world’s most threatened species, with a population of approximately 110 individuals.

Ref: Murphy, A.S., Joseph, L., Burbidge, A. and Austin, J. Cryptic and critically endangered species revealed by mitochondrial DNA analyses: the Western Ground Parrot.

CONSERVATION GENETICS

DOI: 10.1007/s10592-010-0161-1

Early Birdwatchers - a talk by Tim Birkhead

This is a fascinating talk by well-known naturalist Tim Birkhead, examining historic relationships with birds, leading on to teaching Bull finches to whistle tunes.

What I found intriguing was a throw-away comment that the Bullfinch can repeat a tune, but always a semi-tone above the demonstration. Try and work that one out!

http://www.ted.com/talks/tim_birkhead_the_wisdom_of_birds.html

Pelagics Website

At last, a comprehensive website listing the pelagic birdwatching trips that happen in Australia.

<http://bird-o.com/australian-pelagics/>

Bar-Tailed Godwits

A new batch of Alaskan Bar-tailed Godwits are headed across the Pacific. These birds from the North Slope of Alaska are likely to come to Australia, especially NSW.

Unfortunately the satellite transmitters (smaller and better??) ceased working. However one has already been observed on the NSW South Coast.

We need as many eyes as possible to look out for other colour-flagged birds (not just Alaskan banded birds). Please report ANY flag sightings (no matter how frequently you see the bird) to Heather Gibbs at mintons@ozemail.com.au and receive full details about the bird/s in return. Please

give location, species and how many birds in the flock, also your contact details of course!

Phil Straw. AWSG

On-line photo gallery: Crested v Lesser Crested Tern

from Robert Inglis on Birding-Aus email list:

Crested Terns (*Thalasseus Bergii*) are very common in Australia and are likely to be seen around the entire coast.

Lesser Crested Terns (*Thalasseus bengalensis*), on the other hand, are far less widespread in Australia and normally only occur along the coastlines of Queensland, Northern Territory and the northern half of Western Australia. This, in my opinion, means that many Australian birdwatchers are not likely to be very familiar with Lesser Crested Terns and will rely on their field guides or comments from other birdwatchers for their identification process for that species. The two species are very similar in appearance and a common method used by many birdwatchers to separate the species is to identify by bill colour. On the surface this seems easy and reliable but I contend that this method requires some care when assessing breeding-plumaged birds of both species and can, in fact, lead to incorrect identification.

I have created an on-line photo gallery which provides a graphic presentation of the differences and similarities of the bill colours of Crested and Lesser Crested Terns. Some tips on other diagnostic features are given but the gallery concentrates mainly on bill colours.

To see the photo gallery go to:

<http://ptiloris.smugmug.com/>

Morcombe field guide released as an iPhone/iPod-touch app

The Michael Morcombe ‘Field Guide to Australian Birds’ has been released as an *iPhone / iPod touch* app yesterday. It can be found by searching for "Australian birds" in the Apple iTunes store.

It comes with the calls of all but a couple of the regularly occurring species, provided by David Stewart. It sells for \$36.99. Beware that it's a very large download (over 300MB). For people who have not used iPods or iPhones before, this software will only run on those devices. The cheapest iPod touch is around \$280.

DNA Profiling of Wildlife in WA

Recently on 'The 7:30 Report' there was a very interesting item on a plan to obtain the DNA profile of as many species of WA wildlife as possible so as to differentiate between wild and captive bred species, as a means to combat wildlife smuggling. The technique is being further refined so as to be able to give the location from where the animals came from.

The strategy was originally an initiative to prevent illegal capture and smuggling of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. The profiling has been extended to mammals and reptiles. For reptiles they have developed a mouth swab technique. I wonder if they drew straws to take the swabs from the likes of Dugites or King Browns.

The major part of the item was to do with the Carnaby's and nest robbing, which is a real problem due to the high prices Carnaby's bring in the exotic bird trade OS. The WA wildlife people on the program strongly made the point that wildlife smugglers have become very sophisticated and frequently associated with organised crime.

On the bright side, every prosecution that the WA wildlife authorities have mounted, based on DNA evidence has been successful, with the offenders invariably putting their hands up when they discover that the prosecution was DNA based. Perhaps we should paraphrase the old war time slogan to "Loose lips sink species."

Carl Clifford (edited from a submission to Birding-Aus.)

Stridulation Confirmed In Manakin Courtship Sounds.

The use of stridulation (the creation of sound by rubbing things together) has been confirmed in the male Club-winged Manakin (*Machaeropterus deliciosus*) of Columbia and Equador. Researchers as far back as Darwin have long suspected that the specialised remiges on the manakin's wing were used in making its courtship song.

There are seven ridges on one feather of each wing, and the stiff curved tip of an adjacent feather rubs along the ridges when the wings are raised and shaken. The other feathers, which are shortened, resonate and amplify the sound.

By using laser Doppler vibrometry, Kimberly Bostwick of the Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates, and others, have confirmed the resonant properties of the hypertrophied shafts of the feathers, which were found to resonate strongly compared to the feathers on similar species. The resonance was near the frequency (1500Hz) of the Club-winged Manakin's call, and produce strong harmonics of higher frequencies.

Bostwick said that "although many insects do this, manakins are unique among vertebrates in using stridulation".

Published on-line; DOI:10.1098/rspb.2009.1576

Crows Recognise Faces

In an experiment that probably worried the neighbours, John Marzluff at the University of Washington in Seattle and colleagues put on a rubber caveman mask whilst capturing and banding crows. Later, when other people approached the crows wearing the same mask, the crows reacted and scolded the person. The same reaction was not elicited by the person wearing a Dick Cheney (then US Vice-president) mask. The effect lasted more than three years after the only bad experience the crows had with the mask. This result appears to confirm the feeling that many researchers have had that crows recognise them. The effect was only weak for other articles of dress such as coloured armbands and hats.

Not only does it indicate that faces are what the crows recognise - it also indicates that crows carry a grudge for a long time!!

Rufous Fantail at Prospect, Sydney. (photo by Darryl McKay)

