

No. 103 March 2011

Contents

Editor's Report to AGM.....	2
Treasurer's Report to AGM.....	3
Hooded Plover newsletter.....	3
Egg Dumping.....	3
Manx Shearwater - response.....	4
Bird Movement in Great Eastern Ranges.....	4
Altruism - further findings.....	4
Ruddy Turnstones - more on migration.....	4
Cuckoos mimic Hawks.....	4

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The AGM was held at Charles Sturt University, Albury in April 2011 and I wish to thank Dave Watson for the local organization of the event. I thank the researchers for the very well received papers that were presented prior to and after the AGM. They were:

Dr Judit Szabo
Dr Peter Menkhorst
Dean Ingwerson
Dr Nick Nicholls
Dr Natasha Schedvin

Unfortunately, heavy rain forced cancellation of the field day activities that were planned for the following day.

Stein Boddington stepped down from the role of President, because of personal reasons, after a record 10 years at the helm of the Association. Stein was a tireless worker for the Association in this role. I sincerely thank him for continuing his commitment as Newsletter Editor and website manager. I have therefore asked Stein to publish in this Newsletter his AGM farewell address as President of the Association.

Stein is a hard act to follow and I don't quite know how I got back into a role that I had performed in 1995 and 1996. Nevertheless, I am proud to again serve as President. I hope I will live up to the confidence and expectations of the Committee and members who put me back in this role.

The inaugural *Durno Murray Award* 2011 for the best paper published in *Corella* for 2010 was presented at the AGM to Gregory Lollback, Hugh Ford and Stuart Cairns

for their paper entitled '**Recruitment of the Black-chinned Honeyeater *Melithreptus gularis gularis* in a fragmented landscape in northern New South Wales, Australia**'. I again congratulate the recipients of this award that carries a prize of \$150 and complimentary membership of the Association for one year. I also thank our sub-editors who assessed the published papers.

The *Bill Lane Award* for the best student at the CSU's Graduate Certificate in Ornithology course in 2010 was also presented at the AGM. The winner was Peter McGregor of Brunswick, Victoria. The winner is nominated by faculty staff based on results of the course. On behalf of the CSU, David Watson (course convenor) thanked the Association for creation of the Award.

Dr Stuart Halse has decided to step down from the Waterbirds Sub-editor's position due to the pressure of other commitments. He is thanked for his time and effort over many years in organizing thorough reviews of all submitted research to *Corella* on waterbirds. Dr Patrick-Jean Guay has agreed to step into the position.

Jeff Hardy

President

AGM 2011

The Association's Annual General Meeting was held during the Scientific Day on April 9th. The following reports were presented to the meeting:

President's Report

Thank you all for attending this AGM.

This is my last address to you as president, as I am not standing again for the position. You will forgive me a chance to reflect on the ten years I have held the position.

When I took the presidency, it was with high hopes of helping to transform the organisation into a powerful, progressive, expanding, well-resourced guardian of Australia's birds.

Well so much for that. The reality is that there is a limited number of people who make the study of birds their passion, and who need an organisation like ABSA. Indeed, that number of people seems to be getting smaller and smaller, as gen-Y looks more to the internet for its information than journals such as *Corella*.

With falling membership comes falling income, and I salute the genius of the founding members of ABSA for taking on the Mist Net Service, which subsidises the main body. Without it, we would have gone broke many years ago.

Nevertheless, my time in the position has had its rewards. Corella continues to make progress, and the recent March edition on Rare Raptors is a fine example of that. We have seen the change to a new printer with greater IT expertise, and you see the result in the colour photos, and if you are an author, in the smoother, quicker processing of papers for publication.

Likewise the Newsletter has evolved and been upgraded - although the recent 100th edition included extracts from Number 1 that demonstrated a much greater proportion of membership news than we publish today. Over the years, I have had very little feedback from members on the newsletter, and even fewer contributions. At least what I have had has been positive, and I will continue in the role of newsletter editor for the time being.

We have over the years, instituted a number of prizes, for Best Student at the CSU ornithology course, for best Student poster at the AOC, and this year sees the first award for best Paper in Corella. Two of these honour founding members Bill Lane and Durno Murray - both of them giants in the field.

The whole decade has been overshadowed by a recurring issue that could potentially trigger the end of amateur banding studies in Australia. That issue is Animal Care and Ethics Committee approvals.

We have been fortunate indeed that no-one, so far, has insisted on ACEC approval for an amateur banding study, even though various bodies have the power to do so. If they do, it will be catastrophic. Most of the remedies would be horrendously expensive, or politically difficult. Our approach so far has been to let sleeping dogs, fearing that to try to solve the problem may trigger the very behaviour we dread. But it will have to be faced one day.

The other issue that will have to be addressed is the declining membership, and the declining number of banders and trainees. It is not just ABSA's problem. Most of you will be aware of the impending merger between BOCA and BA. Last weekend saw the announcement of the winding up of the Gould League of Bird Lovers in NSW. Other organisations are known to be struggling. Through any changes ahead, I hope and trust that ABSA will cling to its niche position as a purely scientific organisation, devoted only to the study and conservation of our beloved Australian birds.

Falling membership will also impinge on any future decision to make Corella a web-based journal. We are at the lower limit of an economic print run, and any further drop, due to some people opting for an electronic copy only, would make life very difficult. On the other hand, we do not want to disenfranchise those who still want or need a hard copy.

I need to thank the members of the Committee for their calm deliberations, their support over the last ten years, and their devotion to the business of the Association, especially mentioning Don Ripper at the Mist Net Service, and John

Farrell as Editor of Corella, and everyone who has served as Treasurer. But there are many others whose voluntary work keep the association going - the sub-editors of Corella; Alan Leishman, our Production Editor; Peter Ewin, our membership secretary: right down to my step-daughter Erin, who still puts the stickers on the envelopes for Corella.

It is good to see some new faces around the committee table in the last year: Jo Dessman happily put her hand up to be Secretary, and her youth is hopefully the start of a Committee renewal - we older gentlemen can't last forever.

Lastly, I thank Dave Watson and ILWS Events and Website Coordinator Simone Engdahl for their assistance in arranging this event.

Stein Boddington

President 2001-2010

Editor's Report

During 2010 we again published a large range of papers covering a variety of topics on Australian birds, including several book reviews. As indicated in my last report we were to devote an issue to Rare Raptors. In fact it is the current issue. Copies are available on the desk if you haven't already got a copy. It highlights three raptors: the Black and Grey Falcons, and Red Goshawk. I thank Stephen Debus yet again for his inspiration and work in tracking down and preparing papers for this issue. Thanks also go to our sub-editors, production editor and of course referees for pulling this issue together.

The number of manuscripts continues to allow us to have a good working backlog of papers ready for publication and again will be able to produce 4 issues this year. This is great for the journal but it does mean that authors may have to wait a little longer before seeing their papers in print. Could I mention that we try to publish by receipt date of the original manuscript taking into account several factors but principally the limit on the number of pages we can print per issue. If a manuscript is held up in the review stage this should not affect final publication date.

Our friends at Penrith Art Printing Works continue to provide helpful assistance with the compilation of each issue - in fact nothing is too much trouble for their compositor, Ethel Sherratt, and it has been a pleasure to work with both her and the team. They continue to print a high quality production.

I would like to again thank all those people who have worked behind the scenes: our sub-editors, Geoff Smith, Peter Fullagar, and particularly Peter and Judy Smith, and Stuart Halse who handle most of the manuscripts submitted and Peter Ewin for compiling the volume index.

Special thanks must again go to Alan Leishman for organising the final production of Corella. He has had some very challenging printing issues lately including trying to enhance photos taken and printed from film. He had also continued to work with the Bird and Bat Banding Scheme in the compilation of Recovery Round-up.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure editing Corella and working with sub-editors and particularly seeing the hard work of many researchers being published. I hate to hear of

projects, whether they are honours, masters or PhD, languishing in a library or on a bookshelf in some researcher's home never to be seen in a published form. As I mentioned last year I would encourage supervisors and candidates themselves to think about getting their research published in Corella. It is an ideal venue! In fact I'm working through one such study on the Black-necked Stork at the present time.

I continue to feel that our journal fills a vital niche in disseminating knowledge of our rich avian fauna.

John Farrell

Editor, Corella

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Graham Fry spoke to the audited accounts, which were presented to the meeting. A summary of those accounts follows:

GENERAL FUND:

Income:

Subscription	\$14,458
Other	<u>\$ 2,143</u>
TOTAL:	\$16,602

Expenditure

Corella	\$19,752
Newsletter	\$ 1,859
Internet	\$ 1,140
Other	<u>\$ 1,494</u>
TOTAL	\$24,245

RESEARCH FUND

2009 balance	\$35,180
Income: Interest	<u>\$ 327</u>
2010 Balance	\$35,507

The Treasurer noted that a contribution from the Mist Net Service was forwarded in the last financial year, but not banked until the current year.

Note: As at 30/9/2010, there remained a further \$1,582.50 to be transferred from the General Account to the Avian Research Fund.

Committee for 2001/12

President:	Jeff Hardy
Secretary:	Jo Dessman
Treasurer:	Graham Fry
Editor:	John Farrell
Past President:	Stein Boddington

Ordinary Committee Members:

Chris Lloyd, Stephen Debus, Don Ripper,
Daryl MacKay and Alan Lill.

Hooded Plover Newsletter

The sporadic newsletter "Word about the Hood", which gives a good rundown on the status of the Hooded Plover and the efforts being made for its recovery, has launched its 5th edition, which can be accessed from:

<www.birdsaustralia.com.au/beach>

If you have trouble locating this, email the Newsletter editor at <info@absa.asn.au> and I can forward you a copy.

Egg Dumping in Scottish Seabirds

Media release. Issued 25th May 2011

A study of over 69,000 nests around the west coast of Scotland has revealed the full extent of egg dumping by seabirds. The findings show that cuckoos aren't the only birds to lay eggs in other birds' nests, and may give an insight into how brood parasitism evolved.

While the cuckoo is famous for laying its eggs in other birds' nests, this habit is poorly understood among seabirds.

Dr Clive Craik from the Scottish Marine Institute discovered that 13 different seabird species lay their eggs in other birds' nests, which scientists call 'egg dumping'. The birds that dump most frequently are the oystercatcher and the common eider duck.

'Both oystercatchers and eider ducks dump their eggs in gull nests, possibly because gulls are the most common species. But they are unlikely to successfully rear the alien chick. There may be a slim chance that some unusual species combinations might work,' says Craik.

'An eider duckling is more likely to be seen as food than family if it hatches in a herring gull nest, but there is a small possibility that it could escape undetected and find a nearby crèche of eider ducklings,' he adds.

Over the course of his 14-year study from 1996 to 2009, Craik found 123 nests with more than one species of seabird egg in it, with 13 different species of seabird being parasitized by an alien seabird laying in their nest.

Over half of the cases of egg dumping were between three pairs of species: common gull and oystercatchers (the victim was the common gull), herring gull and eider duck (victim the herring gull) and common gull and black-headed gull (the victim, the common gull). Though the frequency of egg dumping is low (one in 500 nests), the common gull seemed particularly susceptible.

Dr Craik commented: "Some seabird eggs look very similar to the untrained eye, some differing only in size. Egg dumping of this sort may be a primitive version of what the cuckoo does – a crude attempt by one bird to make others raise its young."

Ref: Craik, J.C.A. (2010) **Mixed clutches at seabird colonies in west Scotland 1996-2009**. *Seabird* 23:41-52

Images available at: <www.sams.ac.uk/Media%20images>

Has anyone seen this in Australia? ...Ed.

First recovery of a banded Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) for Australia - response from David Purchase

I was interested to read in the latest ABSA Newsletter the piece titled 'First recovery of a banded Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* for Australia'. To my mind it creates the impression that this had not previously been reported in Australia. There are in fact quite a number of previous references to this recovery in Australian publications. These include:

Serventy, D.L., Serventy, V. and Warham, J. (1971) 'The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds'. Reed: Sydney (p. 137).

Condon, H.T. (1975) 'Checklist of the Birds of Australia, Part 1 Non-Passerines'. RAOU: Melbourne (see page 35).

Blakers, M., Davies, S.J.J.F. and Reilly, P.N. (1984) 'The Atlas of Australian Birds'. Melbourne University Press: Melbourne (see page 654).

Marchant, S. and Higgins, P.J. (1990). 'Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds, Volume 1 Ratites to Ducks' Oxford University Press: Melbourne (see page 648).

They all refer to the paper in which the details were first published: Spencer, R. (1962) 'British ringed Manx Shearwater in Australia' *British Birds* 55: 86-7.

Serventy et al. correctly make the point 'The specimen was battered and could have drifted many miles before being washed ashore'.

I would be surprised if the recovery had not been reported to the Australian Bird-banding Scheme in 1961-62. During the period I was running the Scheme, Robert Spencer, who ran the British scheme, was quite meticulous about notifying me of the recovery in Australia of British ringed birds. Although the incident was before my time, I certainly knew of the recovery which, as you can see, was common knowledge.

David Purchase

Bird Movement in the Great Eastern Ranges

The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative aims to maintain and improve long-term connectivity conservation of mountain ecosystems running the length of eastern Australia. The 1,200 km New South Wales section of the Great Eastern Ranges is the current area of focus.

They have recently published a series of animated maps showing the movement of bird species along, through and across the Great Divide, based on nest reports, atlassing and sightings.

Check it out at:

<www.greasternranges.org.au/site-information/resources/bird-of-australia>

Altruism - further findings

Below is the abstract of a paper published in *The American Naturalist*, showing that altruism in Purple-crowned fairy-wrens is driven by more than just kin selection.

“Several hypotheses exist to explain the seemingly altruistic helping behavior of cooperative breeders, although the general utility of these hypotheses remains unclear. While the potential importance of inclusive fitness benefits (kin selection) is traditionally widely appreciated, it is increasingly recognized that direct benefits may be more important than assumed. We use an integrative two-step framework to assess support for current hypotheses in purple-crowned fairy-wrens, a species where subordinates vary in relatedness to breeders and helping increases productivity. After establishing that assumptions of pay-to-stay and social prestige hypotheses (predicting that helping functions as 'paying rent' to stay on the territory or as a signal of individual quality, respectively) were not met, and that parentage by subordinates is extremely rare, we tested whether subordinates adjusted nestling feeding rates following the predictions of the kin selection and group augmentation hypotheses. Benefits of kin selection result from investment in relatives, and group augmentation benefits accrue when subordinates invest more in their own future helpers, for example when they have a better chance of inheriting the breeding position. We found that subordinates fed siblings more than unrelated nestlings, who indicating that kin selection could facilitate cooperation. Moreover, the effect of relatedness on feeding effort varied depending on the probability of inheriting a breeding position, suggesting that active group augmentation can explain investment by unrelated subordinates. This statistical interaction would have gone undetected had we not considered both factors simultaneously, illustrating that a focus on single hypotheses could lead to underestimation of their importance in explaining cooperative breeding.”

Kingma SA, Hall ML, Peters A (2011) Multiple benefits drive helping behavior in a cooperatively breeding bird: an integrated analysis. *The American Naturalist* 177(4): 486-495. doi:10.1086/658989

Ruddy Turnstones - more on migration

Some more details of the unfolding story of trans-pacific migration:

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/migratory-bird-clocks-up-27000-km.htm>

Cuckoos mimic Hawks to avoid being mobbed

Some cuckoos seem to have evolved hawk-like features that trigger predator responses in victims, which then do not mob the cuckoo as they do non-imitative cuckoos.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_9458000/9458906.stm