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Applications for Research Grants 2012

The Australian Bird Study Association operates a fund to provide financial assistance to researchers. The fund, known as the ABSA Fund for Avian Research, provides grants on an annual basis. The total value of grants this year is in the order of \$2500 and is intended to provide researchers with assistance in the acquisition of equipment and research material.

Expressions of interest for obtaining a grant are now being sought from members of the Association. The Association would like to encourage grant applications from both amateur and professional researchers. Expressions of interest must be in writing, clearly setting out the aims and objectives of the proposed study.

The successful recipients would be encouraged, at the completion of their study, to provide a paper for publication in *Corella* outlining the results of their research.

All applications should be forwarded by **31 Jan 2012** to:
The Secretary,
Australian Bird Study Association,
PO Box A313, Sydney South, NSW 1235.
or by email to <info@absa.asn.au>

A decision will be made at the February meeting of the Committee.

AGM 2012 - advance notice

At the recent meeting of the Committee, it was decided that next year's AGM and Scientific Day will be held in Newcastle, NSW. The theme of the day will be "Sea and Shorebirds. We are looking at a number of dates in March, and the final date will be advised in the December Newsletter.

Mist Netting Evaluated

Scott Jennings, Thomas Gardali, Nathaniel E. Seavy, and Geoffrey R. Geupel. (2009) **Effects of Mist Netting on Reproductive Performance of Wrentits and Song Sparrows in Central Coastal California.** *The Condor* 111(3):488-496. 2009

<<http://www.bioone.org/doi/abs/10.1525/cond.2009.080107#aff2>>

Abstract.

Mist netting is widely used to monitor the reproductive success of passerines, yet little is known about its effects on bird ecology. Using a 25-year data set from central California, we evaluated the effects of constant-effort mist netting on the reproductive performance of the Wrentit *Chamaea fasciata* and Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*. We compared nest survival, number of young fledged, and an index of nestling condition (mass corrected for body size) at nests where at least one parent was captured while the nest was active to these variables at nests where neither parent was captured. We also compared these characteristics for nests at varying distances from nets run at different frequencies. Wrentit nestlings from nests closer to less frequently run nets were in poorer condition than those from nests close to more frequently run nets and than those far away from any nets. For the Song Sparrow, daily nest survival was higher where at least one parent was captured while the nest was active. For all other comparisons, there was no statistical evidence that mist netting had an effect on reproductive performance of these species. **This information should ease concerns about the use of mist nets in monitoring avian demographics.**

Wonderful Pauline Reilly passed on in late April at the age of 92.

She was a - perhaps the - leading light of the early days of the research on Little Penguins at Phillip Island, a member of the RAOU from 1956, serving as its publicity officer and President (1972-75). She was first woman Fellow of the RAOU, and awarded the OAM for services to ornithology in 1994, the John Hobbs Medal for her amateur contribution to ornithology, and the Australian Natural History Medallion.

One of her most lasting contributions, I believe, will be her initiation and leadership of the first Atlas of Australian Birds that ran from 1977. This is just one memorial to her commitment to getting ordinary people to study, popularise, and conserve birds and other animals.

Pauline wrote at least 40 books, amongst them a magnificent 'Penguins of the World' translated into many languages, several on the penguins of Phillip Island, many children's books, and 'Cannabis and Cancer: Arthur's Story', a brave and well-publicised account of her use of cannabis to ease her husband's pain towards the end of his life.

Turning to Bayside, one her publications was 'Common Birds', No. 1 in the remarkable Sandringham Environment Series published by Sandringham Council from 1977 onwards. At that time, the Reillys lived in Hampton with Arthur serving as a Councillor (1974-78) and Pauline being a member of the Council's Flora, Fauna and Natural Environment Panel that later became the Natural Environment Advisory Group.

Another local publication was 'A Thirteen-month Study of Birds in a Suburban Coastal Environment' (Australian Bird Watcher, 1981) that compares the foreshore areas around Picnic Point and Love Street. It involved many local bird lovers and its recommendations are, to me, as relevant today as they were then.

Pauline returned to Bayside from her new home at Fairhaven to launch the study that eventually led to the publication of 'Local Birds of Bayside' (1995) which I helped to write with contributions from around 100 residents. Her preface to the booklet summarises the changes in the avifauna of Bayside with a concluding - and true - warning that "birds are one of the first indicators of environmental problems". Unfortunately she could not contribute her own local records as most of her papers were lost in the Ash Wednesday fires of 16th February 1983.

I owe her a debt of gratitude for her help in editing 'Local Birds' and for the pleasure of her company at her and Arthur's home, where she showed me the yet unpublished Japanese edition of 'Penguins of the World' and took me to see my first Rufous Bristlebirds in a friend's garden and by the Airey's Inlet lighthouse.

It was a brief meeting with a marvellous woman and I treasure the memory.

Michael Norris

Curlew Sandpiper set for Endangered listing.

The NSW Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Preliminary Determination to support a proposal to list the **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* (Pontoppidan, 1763) as an ENDANGERED SPECIES in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Act. Listing of Endangered species is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The full document is at
<<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/determinations/curlewsandpiperPD.htm>>

White-fronted Chats

I am conducting my Honours thesis on the population of White-fronted Chats at Towra Point Wetlands, Kurnell, NSW. I am interested in any records (within past 11 years) anyone may have of White-fronted Chats seen in this area, or anywhere else in Sydney.

If you have any recent records, I would greatly appreciate if you could please forward them to me at:

<kurtis.lindsay@students.mq.edu.au>

I am also interested in any Sydney records (past 11 years) of Jacky Winter and Turquoise Parrot.

Kurtis Lindsay

Bell Miner

I am Honours student at UNE and I am currently researching the habitat requirements and movements of **Bell Miner** *Manorina melanophrys* colonies.

To achieve the largest sample size, I am looking to collate historical records from across the species distribution. I am seeking any information on the location of colonies, timeframe of occupancy and, if known, new locations colonies occupied after relocation (for example colony moved 1km downstream/south etc). Further, any information relating to the region occupied, such as the approximated area occupied by the colony, floristic composition or habitat structure of occupied areas would be greatly appreciated. However, records that are not able to provide all information are still valuable and would be appreciated.

I have a data sheet if required.

Natasha Marshall

nmarsh10@une.edu.au

Pigeon and Two Juveniles

Want to see a clucky photo?

<<http://andjoh.posterous.com/how-precious-is-this-nice-photo>>

SOSSA NewWebsite

SOSSA is pleased to announce that it has updated its website, so please have a look. The address is

<<http://www.sossa-international.org>>

We have updated many of the links and content on the site and have plans to introduce further features.

One of the main changes is the addition of a forum for discussions and photos of sea birds. The forum can be accessed via the home page.

We hope the site will become a useful resource for people interested in seabirds and that you enjoy it.

The SOSSA Team

Eastern Yellow Robins

Coping in the big city: Investigating the effects of urbanization on Eastern Yellow Robin populations in Melbourne, Victoria

I recently began a project at Deakin University looking at the effects of urbanization on Eastern Yellow Robin populations. Various researchers have explored how the expansion of urban areas is affecting bird communities, but there is a need for studies that focus on individual species. EYR are an ideal model species because they are commonly found in the parks and reserves of Melbourne's outskirts, but have been shown to disappear as the degree of surrounding urban development increases. Other researchers have studied EYR in fragmented agricultural systems, but not much is known about their responses to urban development; for example, why they are absent from the smaller reserves closer to the city and just how well yellow robins living in more isolated reserves are faring.

I aim to examine four aspects of urbanization that may be affecting EYR: (1) the area and quality of habitat patches and degree of surrounding urbanization, (2) availability of resources, especially food (insects), (3) reduced dispersal capacity due to isolation, and (4) higher levels of predation. I will be conducting this study in parks and reserves across the suburban-forest gradient of greater eastern Melbourne. I wish to compare morphological traits and breeding success of birds across this gradient, as well as other possible effects, such as differences in the frequency and tempo of songs and calls. I plan to be capturing and banding EYR over the coming months, and making observations about breeding success. If anyone wishes to discuss this project further, please contact me. I would also be very grateful to receive reports of any active EYR nests around eastern greater Melbourne.

This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr John White, Dr Mike Weston and Dr Raylene Cooke.

Christine Connelly, PhD student
Email: <caconnel@deakin.edu.au> Phone: 0403 195 663

Plea for More Sound Recordings

I am writing to you on this subject as I believe you are one person who could have a major influence on birders that sound recording calls of our rarer species is equally, if not more important to science, than getting a nice photograph for personal collections.

I am constantly seeing reports on birding-aus in recent times about the wonderful experiences birders are having since the rains made conditions around Australia so much better for wildlife to breed. I also note that quite a few are using play back to call in birds so they can get a good photograph.

What frustrates me greatly is sound recordings of the wide repertoire of bird calls is severely lacking. The only two people in Australia (as far as I am aware) who are making an effort to record calls of birds all around Australia are Fred van Gessel and myself. Birders spend a lot of money on photographic equipment and by comparison good sound recording equipment is relatively cheap.

I am only one sound recordist and I have barely touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to having a comprehensive collection of Australian bird calls. With the army of bird watchers running around out there nowadays this could change dramatically if people were to record calls they hear rather than just put a few words on birding-aus about their observations.

David Stewart

I reproduce this plea from David because the study of bird sounds is an integral part of bird study. Birding-aus is an email network for birders, and generates much that is of interest beyond the twitching focus of the network. Ed.

Geoffrey Lodge awarded OAM

Geoffrey Lodge, of Cheynes beach, WA, was awarded an OAM in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours list. For over 40 years, Geoff has served as a volunteer, contributing to work done by the Ornithology Dept. of WA Museum, eventually becoming an Honorary Associate of the Museum. He made a major contribution to the Handbook of Western Australian Birds, Volume 2, and is a Life Member of BA.

His interests are wide, and his work has included expeditions along the Ord River in his boat the Sea Eagle, which he also used for trips around Wyndham and Broome. He assisted with seabird surveys in the Houtman Abrolhos, with a cockatoo project, and with preparing specimens for the Museum collection.

Without formal qualifications, Geoff epitomises the amateur ornithologist, showing that hard work, determination and continuity can result in significant contributions to ornithological knowledge. Congratulations Geoffrey.

Recent ecological responses to climate change support predictions of high extinction risk

Maclean, I.M.D. & Wilson, R.J. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of USA.

Abstract Predicted effects of climate change include high extinction risk for many species, but confidence in these predictions is undermined by a perceived lack of empirical support. Many studies have now documented ecological responses to recent climate change, providing the opportunity to test whether the magnitude and nature of recent responses match predictions. Here, we perform a global and multi-taxon meta-analysis to show that empirical evidence for the realized effects of climate change supports predictions of future extinction risk. We use IUCN Red List criteria as a common scale to estimate extinction risks from a wide range of climate impacts, ecological responses, and methods of analysis, and we compare predictions with observations. Mean extinction probability across studies making predictions of the future effects of climate change was 7% by 2100 compared with 15% based on observed responses. After taking account of possible bias in the type of climate change impact analyzed and the parts of the world and taxa studied, there was less discrepancy between the two approaches: predictions suggested a mean extinction probability of 10% across taxa and regions, whereas empirical evidence gave a mean probability of 14%. As well as mean overall extinction probability, observations also supported predictions in terms of variability in extinction risk and the relative risk associated with broad taxonomic groups and geographic regions. These results suggest that predictions are robust to methodological assumptions and provide strong empirical support for the assertion that anthropogenic climate change is now a major threat to global biodiversity.

doi: 10.1073/pnas.1017352108

”Priority! The Dating of Scientific Names in Ornithology”

Compiled by Edward C. Dickinson, Leslie K. Overstreet, Robert J. Dowsett and Murray D. Bruce is a new book to be published soon by *Aves Press*. “This is the first book to explain the importance of priority in relation to names in ornithology and in the context of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. Backgrounds are first provided on the Code and on printing and publishing over the last 250 years. The compilers then bring together reports on 148 books and 121 periodicals in zoology which, between them, present almost all the challenges that can make date determination problematic. The reports provide links to the published authorities and are supported by tables containing extensive detail about the subsidiary parts or issues with their pagination and dates. This book and the included CD Rom are a searchable treasure trove.”

Pre-publication orders can be placed with Aves Press <www.avespress.com>.

Why Penguins are Afraid of the Dark.

Ainley, D.G. & Ballard, G. Non-consumptive factors affecting foraging patterns in Antarctic penguins: a review and synthesis. *Polar Biology*.

Abstract

Recent research has clearly shown that the fear of predation, i.e. aversion to taking risks, among mesopredators or grazers, and not merely flight from an apex predator to avoid predation, is an important aspect of ecosystem structuring. In only a few, though well-documented cases, however, has this been considered in the marine environment. Herein, we review studies that have quantified behavioral responses of Adélie penguins *Pygoscelis adeliae* and emperor penguins *Aptenodytes forsteri* to the direct presence of predators, and question why the penguins avoid entering or exiting the water at night. We also show, through literature review and new analyses of Adélie penguin diving data, that Antarctic penguins are capable of successful prey capture in the dark (defined here as <3.4 lux). Finally, we summarize extensive data on seasonal migration relative to darkness and prey availability. On the basis of our findings, we propose that penguins’ avoidance of foraging at night is due to fear of predation, and not to an inability to operate effectively in darkness. We further propose that, at polar latitudes where darkness is more a seasonal than a year-round, daily feature, this “risk aversion” affects migratory movements in both species, consistent with the “trade-off” hypothesis seen in other marine vertebrates weighing foraging success against predation risk in their choice of foraging habitat. Such non-consumptive, behavioral aspects of species interactions have yet to be considered as important in Southern Ocean food webs, but may help to explain enigmatic movement patterns and choice of foraging grounds in these penguin species.

DOI: 10.1007/s00300-011-1042-x

Audubon's Birds of America



Returning by popular demand is a close up view of Audubon’s Birds of America. In 2010, the book became the most expensive in the world, selling for \$11.5 million. Ben Clark and Daniel Parsa lead you on an informative journey on the book’s creation and why it is so important.

6.00 pm to 8.00 pm, Thursday 6 October 2011 at Friends Room, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW

Cost: \$50 Adult, \$40 Friends & Concessions

Bookings: <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/events/bookings/index.html>