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Editorial

Yours truly saw an interesting article back at the beginning of April, and immediately copied it to the newsletter folder for possible inclusion in this edition. The article proposed that the five species of crow in Australia be collapsed to a single species, with eight sub-species - just the sort of thing for the newsletter!

Fortunately I subscribe to Birding-Aus, and discussion soon turned to whether or not this was a hoax. I was convinced when I confirmed on Google that the three author names were in fact German bird names, and closer reading turned up other clues to ponder on 1st April!

AGM12 and Scientific Day

The 2012 Scientific Day and AGM were held at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, Shortland, NSW on Saturday 10 March 2012.

The event was well attended by about 30 people, mainly locals and members of the Hunter Bird Observer's Club. The HBOC provided fantastic support and local advertising that contributed enormously to the success of the day.

In the morning session all the talks were presented by HBOC members. All of the talks were very well presented and most informative. The HBOC members are fortunate to reside in a hotbed area of migratory and resident waders and seabirds. The very capable presenters were Alan Stuart (Shorebirds in the Hunter Region); Chris Herbert (Shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary); Liz Crawford (Flagged Shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary) and Mike Newman, on behalf of himself and Ann Lindsay, (Shorebirds of Morpeth Sewage Treatment Works) and Jim Smart also chipped in with a short report of a very old Wandering Albatross that was observed and photographed off Port Stephens during a recent seabird boat trip.

The AGM followed a short lunch break and then we were into the talks again.

Greg Clancy entertained us with an update on the taxonomy of *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* which isn't really a "Jabiru" or a "Black-necked Stork", and his research on this bird, the Australasian subspecies *E.a.australis*, or the "Glossy Stork" (his **** * name – not mine) leading to his doctorate. Most of his research papers were, or will be, published in Corella.

The final paper, titled "20 years of Gould's Petrel research: A seabird in recovery" was very professionally presented by NPWS research officer Nicholas Carlile. This talk was most enlightening and demonstrated that NSW NPWS is very, very serious about conserving Gould's Petrel. The lessons learned and techniques developed in this recovery program have had far-flung application for seabird conservation throughout the world.

A very sincere thank you to all speakers for making 10 March 2012 most enjoyable for all involved.

Jeff Hardy

President

President's Report

2011/2012 has been a relatively quiet year for the Association. The former President, Stein Boddington, was a hard act to follow. But in this my second term as President (I served in the role in 1995 and 1996), we have rolled along doggedly to achieve our primary objectives to publish Corella and provide an essential resource to researchers through the Mist Net Service, as my colleagues will attest in their reports.

What else have we done?

First, I have to thank Stein Boddington for his continuous work for the betterment of the Association with the Newsletter and especially for his almost solitary review of the Associations' website. I would like the whole meeting to applaud Stein's efforts in this regard.

The Bill Lane Award was again made available to Charles Sturt University for presentation to the most outstanding student in the ornithology course – in 2011 the winner was Bronwyn McCulloch.

The winner of the Durno Murray Award for the "best" paper published in Corella Vol. 35 2012 will be announced by the Hon Editor in his report later.

There were only three applications for the ABSA's grants from the Fund for Avian Research. \$2700 was available for grants in 2012. The Committee agreed that all three had merit, so the available funds were split between Patrick-Jean Guay for the purchase of a walk-in duck trap to be deployed in his work on hybridization between Mallards

and Pacific Black Ducks; Tegan Douglas for the purchase of colour bands and nets for use in her project on thermoregulation in Australian birds; and to Catherine Young for the purchase of research equipment for use in her project on aggression in colonial finches.

Sadly, I have to report the passing of Ray Lonnon, one of the Association's foundation members. In recognition of his years as Treasurer and then as Auditor and also for many years the compiler of the Index for Corella, he had been granted Life Membership of the Association. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife Gail and family.

It is also my unfortunate duty to report that after 24 years continuous service on the ABSA Committee, serving as Secretary, Training Coordinator, President and finally as Treasurer, Graham Fry has decided to call it a day. In recognition of his valued contribution to the Association, the Committee has decided to grant him the status of Life Member. Congratulations.

I also thank retiring Committee member Chris Lloyd for his contributions, particularly in the role of lecturer at training events and his contributions to Committee meetings will be sadly missed.

As I mentioned earlier, Stein Boddington, has literally worked his guts out for the Association for many years, although he has indicated his willingness to continue to produce the newsletter and manage the website for the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, Stein could not be here today, but he told everyone at last year's AGM how wonderful it has been since the foundation of the Newsletter and HIS "bird brains" and through his Presidency. As I mentioned earlier, over the past year he devoted much of his time to redevelopment of the Association's website and it was launched in December 2011. It is now my honour, on behalf of the Committee, to formally recognise his valued support of the Association by also bestowing upon him, Life Membership of the Association. Congratulations.

Thank you. I move that my report be accepted.

Jeff Hardy

President

Editor's Report

In 2011 we again published a large range of papers covering a variety of Australian birds, including the Australian White Ibis, Black-necked Stork, native and domestic ducks, White-headed Pigeon, Little Eagle, Crested Pigeon, White-winged Fairy-wren, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Common Myna and Starling, Carnaby's Black Cockatoo, Northern Mallard, Chestnut Teal and Sandstone Shrike-thrush. We also featured several book reviews and some additions to our Seabird Island Series. The highlight though was the production of another special issue - this time on rare raptors: the Black Falcon, Grey Falcon and Red Goshawk. Stephen Debus is again thanked for his inspiration in preparing papers for these issues.

Our next issue will commemorate one of our 'founding fathers', Bill Lane, and the vast amount of research he produced. Included will be data from one of Bill's earlier banding sites at North Ryde.

The number of manuscripts plateaued during the second half of last year but we still have a small backlog of papers

ready for publication and again will be able to publish 4 issues this year.

I would like to again thank all those people who have worked behind the scenes: our sub-editors, Geoff Smith, Patrick-Jean Guay and particularly Peter and Judy Smith, who handle most of the manuscripts submitted, Peter Ewin for compiling the volume index as well as our book reviewers and the many referees who gave of their time to examine the submitted manuscripts.

This year we are instigating a new initiative in conjunction with the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes and Macquarie University. For many years researchers co-ordinating co-operative banding sites and those engaged in both short-term and long-term banding projects have had few avenues to publish their findings and all this valuable data inevitably never sees the light of day. This is, in some ways, because it encompasses very large data sets that can't be published in a journal as they take up too much space. So we have produced a format for these banding reports (similar to that for the Seabird Island Series). An abridged version of the report will be published in Corella while the full report will be posted on our website. The first report should appear in the 3rd issue of Corella this year and we encourage all banders to look at this report and think seriously about publishing their data. I wish to thank the steering committee of: Alan Leishman, Graham Fry, Jeff Hardy and Judy and Peter Smith for working on formulating an appropriate format. Dr James Brazill-Boast has agreed to take on the role of sub-editor of these Banding Reports and he is sincerely thanked.

Special thanks must go again to Alan Leishman for supervising the final production of Corella and for working with the Banding Office in the compilation of Recovery Round-up. He has done a fabulous job!

I say this each year but it worthwhile reminding students and supervisors of honours, masters and PhDs to think about getting their research published in Corella. It is an ideal venue!

This year it is my pleasure to announce the winners of the Durno Murray Award for the best paper published in Corella for 2011. The winners... receive a framed certificate, a cash prize of \$150 and membership of our association for 2012. This year it goes to Laurie Corbett and Tony Hertog for their paper entitled: Diet and breeding of White-bellied Sea-Eagles in subtropical river habitats in the Northern Territory. And to quote them: "Sea-Eagles breeding habitats in the Northern Territory are under increasing threat from urban and tourist developments. This threat needs to be addressed through a process of management plans and public awareness programs about the ecological role of these Eagles." I'm sure that their research will provide much needed data to underpin any plan or program. Unfortunately neither author can be with us today but we will notify them accordingly.

It has been a pleasure working with sub-editors and authors in the publication of Corella - even though we do have glitches from time to time. I feel that our journal continues to fill an important niche in disseminating knowledge of Australia's rich avian fauna.

John Farrell
Corella Editor

Committee Membership 2012

President:	Jeff Hardy
Secretary:	Cat Young
Treasurer:	Jo Dessman
Corella Editor:	John Farrell
Past President:	Stein Boddington
Ordinary Members:	
Darryl McKay	Alan Lill
Christian Scholz	Petra Hanke
Peter Ewin	Stephen Debus

Become and Osprey Watcher

The Center for Conservation Biology has launched Osprey-Watch, a project created to engage a global community to collect data on breeding osprey. Linked by an interest in osprey and a concern for the health of the aquatic environments on which they rely, this community will for the first time provide a global perspective on this charismatic species. The mission of Osprey-Watch is to bring citizen scientists together in order to collect information on a large enough spatial scale to be useful in addressing three of the most pressing issues facing aquatic ecosystems including global climate change, depletion of fish stocks, and environmental contaminants.

Osprey are one of very few truly global sentinels for aquatic health. They feed almost exclusively on live fish throughout their entire life cycle. They are a top consumer within aquatic ecosystems and are very sensitive to both overfishing and environmental contaminants. Nearly all populations breed in the northern latitudes and winter in the southern latitudes, effectively linking the aquatic health of the hemispheres. Their breeding season in the north is highly seasonal making them an effective barometer of climate change.

Osprey-Watch is a user-friendly, internet platform that allows observers across the globe to map their nests, log observations, upload photos, and interact within an observer forum. Information entered into the platform will be immediately accessible to users and will be summarized following the breeding season.

To join this growing community, please visit:
<<http://www.osprey-watch.org>>

Volunteers Needed for Gouldian Count

Volunteers are needed for the 2012 Save the Gouldian Fund annual count at Wyndham, in the east Kimberley of Western Australia. This year the count will be from the 2nd to 6th of September and as always we will be relying on willing volunteer to successfully complete the census. This is a great opportunity to not only see Gouldians in the wild (as well as a host of other spectacular Kimberley birds) but also to help with research. The count takes place in the first few hours of the morning with most of the rest of the day free to explore the area or socialise with others. Volunteers intending to participate in the census will need to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements and have his/her own pair of binoculars. Save The Gouldian Fund is a not-profit charity dedicated to promoting research into the Gouldian finch, and to provide conservation and management strategies to protect and promote this remarkable species in the wild. For further information and to register please visit the website:
<www.savethegouldian.org>

Canadian Building Owners Taken to Court over Bird Deaths

Two trials have begun in Canada of companies whose buildings are alleged to have caused the deaths of birds. The owners of a complex of three office buildings in Ontario were charged with 'discharging a contaminant - light reflected from glass - that causes harm to animals'. That case is proceeding under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

The other case is in Toronto, where Cadillac Fairview Corporation has been charged under the Species at Risk Act with the deaths of ten birds - Canada Warblers and Olive-sided Flycatchers - listed as Threatened under the Canadian Species at Risk Registry.

Both companies have pleaded not guilty.

More at: <<http://animalconnectionac.wordpress.com/2012/04/20/building-owners-in-north-america-taken-to-court-over-bird-deaths/>>

iPhone, iPad App: BirdSightAU

I read in the latest newsletter that you were looking for a review of the App 'BirdSight AU'. I downloaded it onto my iPad the other day and have been testing it a few times since. The App works on both iPhones and iPads, although it is a bit grainy when viewed at X2 on the iPad. However, it is easy to use on both. The App only costs \$1.99! You do have to be over 17 to download the App! (I think that Crested Shrike-tit has been up to no good again).

When you open the App it is very easy to set the location, time and date of survey. It will do all of this if you are connected to the internet and have good mobile coverage. It will record your current location details including the latitude and longitude, the time and date you start a survey and when you finish, using the inbuilt clock. It will also link to Google Maps to show you your position.

Entering the birds is also relatively easy! All you do is touch 'Add Sighting' and you can either search an alphabetical list or type the name or part of the name. Touch 'Search' when you think you have entered enough information and a short list matching your request will appear. This short list can be scrolled through and you just touch the species name to select it and add it to your list of observations. You can edit the information like count and sex of each bird species.

One of the great features of this App is that when you add a bird to the list it will be added in its correct taxonomic position in the list irrespective of when it was added, and the names follow Christidis and Boles 2008 as far as I can tell so far.

It might take a little longer to add a bird to a list compared with entering it by hand into a field note book, but with more practice it is surprising how fast new species can be added to the list. Now comes the best feature.

When you have completed the list you can email it anywhere as a .csv file which will open with ease into Excel and FileMakerPro, where you can manipulate the field order as columns etc. as you would do in any spreadsheet or database software. I emailed a file to myself each time I used the App and found that the data was accurately transcribed each time. This saves a lot of

time compared with transcribing your survey data from your notebook to an electronic file. This more than makes up for any time lost using the App to compile a birdlist in the field.

If you wish to check the ID of a particular bird you can link to Wikipedia by touching the blue arrow to the right of a bird name in your list. This will give information on status and if you touch images you will see pictures of the bird to aid identification. You can also cache this information onto your device for future reference.

If you like using devices to record information and don't like using paper you will find this App a very useful tool.

Tony Saunders

Thanks Tony. Readers might let us know of any other useful bird Apps out there. *Ed.*

More Penguins Than We Thought

Abstract

Our aim was to estimate the population of emperor penguins (*Aptenodytes fosteri*) using a single synoptic survey. We examined the whole continental coastline of Antarctica using a combination of medium resolution and Very High Resolution (VHR) satellite imagery to identify emperor penguin colony locations. Where colonies were identified, VHR imagery was obtained in the 2009 breeding season. The remotely-sensed images were then analysed using a supervised classification method to separate penguins from snow, shadow and guano. Actual counts of penguins from eleven ground truthing sites were used to convert these classified areas into numbers of penguins using a robust regression algorithm.

We found four new colonies and confirmed the location of three previously suspected sites giving a total number of emperor penguin breeding colonies of 46. We estimated the breeding population of emperor penguins at each colony during 2009 and provide a population estimate of ~238,000 breeding pairs (compared with the last previously published count of 135,000–175,000 pairs). Based on published values of the relationship between breeders and non-breeders, this translates to a total population of ~595,000 adult birds.

There is a growing consensus in the literature that global and regional emperor penguin populations will be affected by changing climate, a driver thought to be critical to their future survival. However, a complete understanding is severely limited by the lack of detailed knowledge about much of their ecology, and importantly a poor understanding of their total breeding population. To address the second of these issues, our work now provides a comprehensive estimate of the total breeding population that can be used in future population models and will provide a baseline for long-term research.

Citation: Fretwell PT, LaRue MA, Morin P, Kooyman GL, Wienecke B, et al. (2012) An Emperor Penguin Population Estimate: The First Global, Synoptic Survey of a Species from Space. *PLoS ONE* 7(4): e33751. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0033751

The Durno Murray Prize (2011)

Extract from Editor's report to AGM:

“This year it is my pleasure to announce the winners of the Durno Murray Award for the best paper published in *Corella* for 2011. The winners of this award receive a framed certificate noting their achievement, a cash prize of \$150 and membership of our association for 2012. This year it goes to **Laurie Corbett and Tony Hertog** for their paper entitled: “Diet and breeding of White-bellied Sea-Eagles in subtropical river habitats in the Northern Territory”. And to quote them: “Sea-Eagles breeding habitats in the Northern Territory are under increasing threat from urban and tourist developments. This threat needs to be addressed through a process of management plans and public awareness programs about the ecological role of these Eagles.””

Wing Tag Danger for Harriers?

Zuberogitia, I., Arroyo, B., O'Donoghue, B., Zabala, J., Martínez, J.A., Martínez, J.A. & Murphy, S.G. (2012).

Standing out from the crowd: are patagial wing tags a potential predator attraction for harriers (*Circus spp.*)?

Journal of Ornithology. DOI: 10.1007/s10336-012-0842-2

Abstract: Wing tags have been used on many bird species to facilitate individual recognition, although tags are not only conspicuous for humans but may also attract the attention of potential predators. During a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* monitoring program (1997–2011) we collected prey remains from the nests of 37 Peregrine territories in the Basque Country, Northern Spain. We identified 3,127 prey items representing 132 bird species. In the 2009 breeding season, we found, for the first time, four Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* remains and the two wings with orange wing tags of a Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* in one nest, 1 year later we found in the same nest eight Montagu's Harrier remains, one of them with wing tags, and in 2011 we found eight more Montagu's Harriers, one of them marked. Simultaneously, in the breeding season of 2010, the remains of another Montagu's Harrier were found in other Peregrine nest and two wings with orange and blue wing tags in the perch of a third pair. Our data thus shows an increase of predation rate of harriers by Peregrines; we discuss whether this could be related to the increasing use of wing tags in this species, and thus whether wing tags may have potential negative effects on the birds. We argue that further studies about the impact of identification techniques, and wing-tags in particular, on the survival of target species should be carried out.

AGM 2013 - Advance Notice

Committee recently decided to hold the 2013 AGM and Scientific Day in the Gold Coast, possibly at Currumbin Bird Sanctuary or nearby. It will be held in March. More details in next newsletter.