

# NEWSLETTER

Number 113  
December 2013

**Editor: Stein Boddington**

**<info@absa.asn.au>**

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## Editorial

See page 4 of this newsletter for information on the AGM and Scientific day in Canberra next year.

**D**on't forget to renew your membership, and a special plea to those who have not yet included their email address, or haven't updated it. Without it, you will not be notified when the 2014 Corella editions are available on the web, and the Newsletters will be ready to download and read.

Your email is also your username for your initial registration with the website, so make sure we have it right.

**A** big thank you to Graham Fry for scanning the entire Australian Bird Bander and Corella, from the year dot, for inclusion on the website - a mammoth task involving upward of 500 papers. We hope to have it all up by the time of the March Corella

## New Members

We welcome the following new member(s) to the Association:

Drs J. & S. Brown of Lyneham, ACT

## Correction:

In the last newsletter (No. 112), we asserted that ABSA follows the taxonomy in Christidis and Boles "The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories" (1994). This is incorrect, and ABSA actually uses "Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds" (2008) by the same authors. Thanks to Stephen Totterman for alerting us to the error.

**ISSN 2202-297X (Online)**

## Membership renewals

An insert in the December Corella will contain details of renewal of your subscription and membership. Please attend to this promptly, preferably using the direct deposit payment option provided (don't forget to send your name or membership number as the reference.)

Note that the previous, perhaps over-generous overlooking of missed / late payments will go by the board from now on, and only those who have paid will receive access to the online and print copies of Corella in 2014.

## From the WEBMASTER

Preparations are progressing well for the inaugural online edition of Corella. From March 2014, we will publish at the usual times on-line (March, June and September), with a paper edition comprising all the year's papers sent out in December each year.

There will be a members-only section of the website (some members may have already noticed it on the website, but only the testers can access it as yet). From there, with a user-name and password, members can access the current year's Corella, as well as the previous two years. After two years, they will be moved to the public part of the website. The entire backlog of Australian Bird Bander and Corella will soon be available there.

Details of how to log on will be sent with the usual email in March 2014, and you will be asked to create a new password the first time you log on. **NB: please keep a note of your membership number printed on the address label of the Corella envelope.** It is a letter followed by one or more numbers.

We hope to soon develop a facility for non-members to be able to purchase a single article on the web. And we will be exploring how else we can use this space available only to members. We would be pleased to receive your suggestions.

In the meantime, if there are any members who are experts in Joomla Content management System, I would be pleased to have someone to advise me.

*Stein Boddington*

## AGM 2014

Formal notice is hereby given to members of the Association that the Annual General Meeting will be held, in conjunction with the Scientific Day in the lecture theatre at:

**National Botanic Gardens, Canberra**

**15 March 2014.**

**Cost: \$40 (\$30 students)**

ABSA will hold its AGM in the theatre during the lunch break. Please note that there are parking fees in the NBG - \$10 per car per day.

The registration form is on the website. Please print it out, fill in and return by post or email to the address specified. A nomination for election to the Committee is also on the website.

See page 4 for full details.

## Applications for Research Grants 2014

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 \$2000 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 2014** to:  
**The Secretary, Australian Bird Study Association Inc.**  
**PO Box 1867**  
**Penrith BC, NSW 2751**

or by email to [<info@absa.asn.au>](mailto:info@absa.asn.au)

The final decision will be made at the February meeting of the Committee.

## EPBC Act needs a good clean-out

In an article in the *Australian* on 24 October 2013, Stephen Garnett, Professor of Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods at Charles Darwin University, Darwin, argued that the EPBC Act is in need of a thorough review, in two respects - firstly to weed out a long list of birds that should not be there, and secondly to include another list of birds that should be there but are not.

He mentions that several birds are on the list that are actually extinct, and one that "we think never existed". There are birds listed as sea-birds that never go near the water. Because they are listed, they have to be given attention by anyone doing environmental assessments, and reasons given as to why a particular development will not impact on them. This is a waste of everybody's time and money, and dilutes the public regard for the Act and its processes.

Similarly, there are many birds that need to be included if they are to get the protection and even recovery efforts that they need. He says, for example, that "53 per cent of the 206 birds that regularly cross Australian borders on migration are omitted from the migratory bird list attached to the EPBC Act."

He recommends that the list be reviewed in its entirety, by the same committee that reviews recommendations for species to be added to the list.

Full article at: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/big-idea/threatened-species-list-in-need-of-a-good-edit/story-fnjtmnp-1226746203192>

## Emails

P Dann	X Dennett	M Denny	H Stevens
D Gosper	J Hills	D Larkins	
L Llewellyn	G Mitchell	J Nicholls	
H Recher	A Reid	R Sonnenburg	

If your name is on this list, then the email notifying you of the publication of the last Newsletter failed. This is why you received no email notification.

Please up-date your email address to [<info@absa.asn.au>](mailto:info@absa.asn.au) if you have not already done so, or ensure it is included in your renewal. Thank you.

*Stein Boddington*

Newsletter Editor

## Did postglacial sea-level changes initiate the evolutionary divergence of a Tasmanian endemic raptor from its mainland relative?

Burridge, C.P., *et al.* Proc. R. Soc. B 22 December 2013 vol. 280 no. 1773 20132448

**Abstract** Populations on continental islands are often distinguishable from mainland conspecifics with respect to body size, appearance, behaviour or life history, and this is often congruent with genetic patterns. It is commonly assumed that such differences developed following the complete isolation of populations by sea-level rise following the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM). However, population divergence may predate the LGM, or marine dispersal and colonization of islands may have occurred more recently; in both cases, populations may have also diverged despite ongoing gene flow. Here, we test these alternative hypotheses for the divergence between wedge-tailed eagles from mainland Australia (*Aquila audax audax*) and the threatened Tasmanian subspecies (*Aquila audax fleayi*), based on variation at 20 microsatellite loci and mtDNA. Coalescent analyses indicate that population divergence appreciably postdates the severance of terrestrial habitat continuity and occurred without any subsequent gene flow. We infer a recent colonization of Tasmania by marine dispersal and cannot discount founder effects as the cause of differences in body size and life history. We call into question the general assumption of post-LGM marine transgression as the initiator of divergence of terrestrial lineages on continental islands and adjacent mainland, and highlight the range of alternative scenarios that should be considered.

## A Poisonous Bird??

A Pitohui from New Guinea sports a toxin similar to the one derived from frogs in South America and used on dart-tips, according to Jack Dumbacher, Curator and Department Chair, Ornithology, at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.

He and another student both suffered the same symptoms after licking a scratch from the Variable Pitohui *Pitohui kirhocephalus*, and later identified the active ingredient as a Batrachotoxin, an alkaloid neurotoxin found more commonly on certain frogs. (he doesn't canvas the possibility of the birds having picked up the toxin from the frogs - Ed)  
See his talk at: <[www.wimp.com/poisonousbird](http://www.wimp.com/poisonousbird)>

## Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group

The TWSG was established in 1990 and is coordinated by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), as part of the specialist group network of Wetlands International (formerly IWRB), and the IUCN Species Survival Commission.

**Aims:** Identify which Anseriformes taxa are globally threatened, monitor their status, produce international action plans, and carry out and exchange information on conservation projects on globally threatened Anseriformes.

**Membership:** Membership of the TWSG is free. In September 2013, the group had 1,006 members in 144 countries worldwide.

**Bulletin:** All members receive the group's bulletin, TWSG News. The bulletin disseminates new information on status and threats, promotes the exchange of information between conservationists in different countries, and encourages participation in threatened waterfowl conservation.

**Becoming a Member:** If you wish to join please contact the Chair at the address below stating your title, first name, last name, position, organisation, telephone number, E-mail address and areas of special interest. We look forward to hearing from you.

### Dr Baz Hughes

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W [wwt.org.uk](http://wwt.org.uk)

## Volunteer Assistant Warden Wanted

The Broome Bird Observatory (BBO) is seeking Assistant Wardens from Mar through to Oct 2014.

This role requires living at BBO. Activities include conducting birdwatching tours; cleaning and maintenance; running the shop, taking reservations & tour bookings; assisting with research. An allowance is provided. Must have C class licence (for driving cars) with no restrictions and be eligible for an F class endorsement (requires 4 years licensed experience).

See: <<http://www.birdlife.org.au/visit-us/observatories/broome>>

Email your resume and references to the BBO Warden at <[broome@birdlife.org.au](mailto:broome@birdlife.org.au)>

## The impacts of fire on birds in Australia's tropical savannas

J. C. Z. Woinarski and S. Legge

Email: [john.woinarski@cdu.edu.au](mailto:john.woinarski@cdu.edu.au)

Emu 113(4) 319-352 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1071/MU12109>

### Abstract

The ecology of Australia's tropical savannas is shaped by the near-pervasive influence of fire. Constituting ~20% of Australia's land area, tropical savannas contribute >75% of the area burnt in Australia each year. Across most of Australia's tropical savannas, components of biodiversity are declining, including many species of birds. This review seeks to assess whether that decline is linked to current fire regimes. However, relevant studies are few, short-term and opportunistic, and indicate rather than demonstrate the effects of fire. There is no set of agreed paradigms for contextualising the relationship between birds and fire regimes in this region or for any management consequences. We conclude that the current fire regime is suboptimal for many species of birds, particularly for granivores, frugivores, hollow-dependent species and those that nest on or near the ground. For conservation reserves, we recommend that fire management protocols include the explicit targets that: (1) at least 25% of the savanna landscape is at least 3 years unburnt; (2) at least 5% is at least 10 years unburnt; (3) fire-sensitive non-savanna vegetation types are increasing or stable and (4) populations of selected hollow-nesting, ground-nesting, frugivorous and granivorous birds are increasing or stable. We also identify key knowledge gaps that currently inhibit conservation management.

## Atlas of the Birds of NSW and ACT.

In early-mid 2014, the *Atlas of the Birds of NSW and ACT - Vol 1* will be available for purchase. This will be the first of three volumes. A discounted pre-publication price of \$115 applies prior to distribution. Retail price will be \$135 plus postage and handling.

When completed, the three volumes will cover all birds found in NSW, the ACT and the waters of western Tasman Sea. Volume 1 covers 183 residents and migrant birds from the Emu to the Plains Wanderer. Volume 2 will cover the Comb-crested Jacana to the Striated Pardalote, and Volume 3 the Eastern Spinebill to the Common Greenfinch as well as all vagrant species, and the birds of the Lord Howe Group.

The text was written by Ian McAllan and Richard Cooper. Brian Curtis produced the maps and designed the graphs.

Please contact Richard Cooper by email at <[origma@yahoo.com.au](mailto:origma@yahoo.com.au)> or by post to PO Box 717, Woolgoolga NSW 2456.

## Wader ID App

Birdpedia has released a Shorebird/Wader App for mobile devices. This application currently covers all the shorebirds/waders that you are likely to encounter in Australia and its territories.

Download from: <http://www.birdpedia.com/waders.htm>

[Your editor would love to have a review of this: Anyone?]



## Annual Conference with the Theme of Raptor Studies

hosted by

### BirdLife Southern NSW & The Australian Bird Study Association

The Annual General Meeting of BirdLife Southern New South Wales and the Australian Bird Study Association's Seminar Day and AGM will be jointly held at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra on 15th March 2014.

#### Confirmed speakers

Judy Harrington – EagleCAM/Raptors at Sydney Olympic Park  
Ding Li Yong—Raptor migration through the Indo-Malayan Archipelago  
Victor Hurley—to be announced  
Jerry Olsen - Little Eagles in the ACT  
Brian Cooke – Eagles and rabbit virus  
David Bain – BirdLife Powerful Owl project  
Leah Tsang (poster) – Comparative diets of the Black-shouldered Kite and Nankeen Kestrel

#### more speakers to be arranged...

**Location:** The theatre at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra

**Date / Time:** 15 March 2014 9:00 – 16.30

ABSA AGM to be held during first half of lunch break

BirdLife SNSW AGM to be held during second half of lunch break

A short presentation by the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) is planned after the lunch break

#### Registration:

Students: \$30 All others: \$40 [Registration and payment details can be downloaded from our website <http://www.absa.asn.au/> or payment can be made on the day]

ABSA members: Visit <http://www.absa.asn.au/>

BirdLife members and all others: Visit <http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-southern-nsw>

A parking fee of \$10/day applies for parking at the Botanical Garden. Refreshments will be provided throughout the day, excluding lunch, which can be purchased at the café in the Botanical Garden or BYO.



**ABSA**  
AUSTRALIAN BIRD STUDY ASSOCIATION Inc.



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Unsubscribe: Send "paper email please" to <[info@absa.asn.au](mailto:info@absa.asn.au)>