

NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Stein Boddington
<info@absa.asn.au>

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Editorial

Members will find the proceedings of the Scientific day at Canberra Botanic gardens in March, in the current issue of Corella.

Members are also reminded that all current financial members will receive a hard copy of Corella in December, consisting of the entire year's publications. However, when you next renew, you will have to tick a box to receive the hard copy.

Mist Net Service

The Mist Net Service has been an integral part of ABSA for many years, and delivers not only a source of research equipment to members and other researchers, both in and out of Australia, but also a key boost to the annual budget of the Association. At the moment, the MNS is in caretaker mode under the President, Jeff Hardy.

We now need a person to take on the managing of the MNS for ABSA, so this essential component of the Association can continue to support members and the Association as a whole. The job entails a few hours work a week, and attracts an honorarium related to total sales.

Please contact the president <info@absa.asn.au> if you might be interested, or just want more information. If you know someone who has the skills to do this job, please talk to them about this opportunity, even if they are not a member of ABSA.

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AGM and Scientific Day

We made a modest profit from the day in Canberra, and held a successful AGM.

The Committee was elected at the AGM, and consists of the following office bearers and ordinary members:

President: Jeff Hardy

Vice President: Alan Lill

Secretary: Katy Wilkins

Treasurer: John Farrell

Editor: John Farrell

Past President: Stein Boddington

Committee Members: Stephen Debus, Don Ripper, Daryl MacKay, Petra Hanke, Christian Scholz, Ken Gover, Cat Young, David Hamilton.

Night Parrot

The Night Parrot - An evening with John Young

23rd July, 6:00pm for 6.30pm at the Guthrie Theatre, UTS (the University of Technology, Broadway, Ultimo, Sydney)

Southern NSW and UTS are very pleased to announce that John Young is coming to Sydney on the 23rd July to talk about his discovery of the Night Parrot. John is currently monitoring a pair of Night Parrots and it will be interesting to hear from him. Don't miss out on this fabulous opportunity to get first hand information about this enigmatic bird, the Night Parrot.

Professor Graham Pyke will be introducing John with a talk concerning the conservation and management issues of the Night Parrot and other threatened species.

It is a free evening but we are hoping for donations to help John with his research of this remarkable bird. There will be a raffle of a pair of fabulous Swarovski binoculars, with a full cleaning kit and harness, kindly donated by Swarovski, books donated by Andrew Isles Books and a family pass to Taronga Zoo.

Please register with Pixie at southernnsw@birdlife.org.au
There is plenty of parking available.

Cassowaries

The Community for Coastal Cassowary Conservation (C4) has successfully secured a portion of land after a twenty-year campaign of publicity, lobbying, legal challenges and fundraising. The land allows a passage for Cassowaries to travel between Mission Beach and the rain forests of the Atherton Tablelands in far north Queensland.

Lot 66, comprising 24.5 hectares, was an unprotected and vulnerable part of a corridor which allows cassowaries to follow seasonal food from the upland forests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in the west to a coastal wetland refuge at Mission Beach in the east.

The importance of Lot 66 was recognised in 2008 when a 40-lot residential development on the 24.5ha site was blocked by the then Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

2014 Australasian Bird Fair

The 2014 Australasian Bird Fair will be the first large-scale bird and wildlife event of its kind in Australasia. It will be held from 25-26 October 2014 at the Newington Armory, Sydney Olympic Park.

The Fair aims to raise community awareness about the plight of so many bird species in peril across the Australasian region. All profits go to bird conservation and endangered species programs in this region. There will also be many prizes for visitors including tour packages, books and optical equipment

The Bird Fair will have something for everyone irrespective of their level of expertise or experience in birding! The venue provides a variety of birding locations including the 65 hectare Badu Mangroves, which is listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. These wetlands play host to a variety of significant bird species including migratory birds which visit Australia from as far away as Japan, Siberia and Alaska.

Other things to attract visitors include:

Informative presentations that will cover endangered species in the region, including an update on the latest research, management techniques and success rates as part of BirdLife Australia's "Preventing Extinctions Program";

Tips from top wildlife photographers and optical experts who will be at the Fair;

Photo and arts pavilions that will offer a stunning array of images from some of the world's top nature photographers. Many items will be on sale:

Expert advice from BirdLife Australia's Birds in Backyards program about how to landscape your garden and what to plant to attract birds to your garden.

The Sunday afternoon will mark the finish of the annual NSW bird race, known as the "Twitchathon". This event raises tens of thousands of dollars every year towards a worthy project associated with bird conservation.

For more information: www.birdfair.com.au or contact:

Phil Straw

admin@birdfair.com.au

Life-span linked to predator pressure

M. Valcu, J.Dale, M.Griesser, S.Nakagawa, B.Kempenaers
"Global gradients of avian longevity support the classic evolutionary theory of ageing"

Ecography, article first published online: 25 April 2014 DOI: 10.1111/ecog.00929

"Ageing inevitably occurs both in humans and in other animals. However, life-span varies widely across species. Researchers of the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Seewiesen have now found a possible general mechanism explaining differences in longevity. They investigated life history data of nearly 1400 bird species and found that avian life span varies considerably across the entire Earth, and that much of this variation can be explained by the species' body mass and clutch size and by the local diversity of predator species. With their data the researchers were able to confirm a key prediction of the classical evolutionary theory of ageing that had been proposed more than 50 years ago."

More details on the website of the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology <www.orn.mpg.de>

Film: "Healing"

Keep a look-out for a new film called "Healing". This film is about a program jointly run by Healesville Sanctuary and the Won Wron prison, rehabilitating raptors. Starring Hugo Weaving, 'Yasmine' the Wedgie, and directed by Craig Monahan.

Indian Mynas

Australia is not the only country with an Indian Myna problem. There are dozens of eradication programs around the world, mostly on islands, where the prospect of success and non-reinvasion is higher.

There is a good description of the program on the island of Aitu in the Cook Islands, where the population has been largely wiped out and the project workers look forward to killing the last of the Mynas.

See: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-25/hunting-down-the-common-myna-in-the-cook-islands/5475868>

Wikipedia and the capitalisation of bird names

Carl Clifford passed this on to 'Birding-Aus' that:

"Cas Liber informs us, if anyone is interested/amused: A several year standoff ended on Wikipedia last month regarding capitalisation of bird names. Several regulars (including me) who write on birds had kept around 9000 articles with capitalised names (as per IOC). However a group of editors who are interested in guidelines and conformity pushed for lower case renditions of bird names. A poll held fell firmly in favour of lower case names and the articles are all being rapidly de-capitalised..."

An Atlas of the Birds of NSW & the ACT – Volume 1

NSW Bird Atlasser members' 'hundreds of hours of recorded bird distribution information', has been published (May 2014) in "**An Atlas of the Birds of NSW & the ACT – Volume 1**".

The Atlas with 19% more recorded coverage of NSW/ACT than 1998-2001 New Atlas for all of Australia, includes maps, current distribution, breeding, seasonal, historical changes and current status of 183 birds from Emu to Plains Wanderer.

Volume 2 will cover resident and migrant species from Comb-crested Jacana to Striated Pardalote and, Volume 3 Eastern Spinebill to Common Greenfinch, all vagrant species and birds of the Lord Howe group.

Dr Richard Major, of the Australian Museum, wrote that "mapping the fine-scale distributions of each species is just the launching pad, with the Atlas also providing an invaluable index of changes in species occurrence over time. Critically for conservation assessments, these changes are recorded over a 25-year period, providing the multiple-generation time frames necessary to assess population trends using IUCN listing criteria." He adds "These quantitative data have already proved to be highly influential in (assessing and) listing threatened species such as the Little Lorikeet and White-fronted Chat under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. The Atlas will have even greater influence in the future" and "will prove an invaluable tool for scientists and wildlife managers" serving as "an early warning system (by) flagging species that should be monitored closely and providing the basis for targeted research and conservation ... (and) ... the detection of biodiversity hotspots and critical locations in a species' range that might be added to the conservation reserve network before the species requires direct conservation intervention."

Prices are \$135.00, NSWBA members \$95.00. NSW p&h \$25.00
Contact Richard Cooper: origma505@yahoo.com.au or Ph 02 6654 8447

Field Guide to NSW Fauna - App

This App by the Australian Museum in Sydney is a valuable tool for anyone with an interest in wildlife. Use it in urban, bush and coastal environments to learn more about the animals around you.

Browse over 1000 species including birds, mammals, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, insects, arachnids and more.

Discover detailed species descriptions including conservation statuses.

See stunning images of every species.

View maps of recorded observations.

See more at: <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Field-Guide-to-NSW-Fauna-Mobile-App#sthash.bCf1BZQc.dpuf>

Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle PhD.

A PhD project is available investigating the breeding behaviour and response to disturbance of the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax fleayi*). The project is a collaboration between Professor Elissa Cameron from the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Tasmania, Dr Amelia Koch from the Tasmanian Forest Practices Authority, and Dr Clare Hawkins from the Threatened Species and Marine Section at the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.

Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles are listed as endangered and are known to be extremely sensitive to disturbance at the nest site. This study aims to assess the behaviour of eagles while on the nest, including their response to disturbing activities, in order to determine the effectiveness of current management around eagle nests. Methods will include remote sensing, and potentially the use of cameras and GPS dataloggers. Data collection will occur around Tasmania. Results will inform a review of eagle nest management.

Field work will be financially supported (AU\$20,000) by an industry grant. The student will need to obtain an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) scholarship at the University of Tasmania; thus a background in ecology or animal behaviour, as well as a first class honours mark or publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals, will be essential. The preferred starting date for this project is between July 2014 and February 2015.

Please email a cover letter and 2-3 page CV with contact details for two referees to: Dr Amelia Koch (Amy.Koch@fpa.tas.gov.au) at the Forest Practices Authority, 30 Patrick St Hobart, Tasmania, 7000. Phone 03 6165 4082. The student will be encouraged to apply for a Postgraduate Scholarship to cover living expenses.

For further information, please contact Dr Amelia Koch (details above) or one of the other collaborators.

Making Albatrosses Safer

DOI: 10.1111/acv.12126

The issue of Albatross mortality has bubbled along for years. This article confirms that death rates can be reduced by up to 95% by the use of bird-scaring lines, a simple line with streamers fed out the back of the fishing trawler.

Other complementary techniques include using a tube to feed the baited line to a lower depth, so that birds do not attack the line whilst it is on the surface, and not disposing of offal whilst the fishing lines are being fed out, as the birds cannot distinguish between the two sources of food.

Search the DOI above for the paper on bird-scaring lines, and search 'bird-scaring lines' for info on the various techniques used, and how they work.

Sugar-gliders Eat Swift Parrots?!

<http://theconversation.com/sugar-gliders-are-eating-swift-parrots-but-whats-to-blame-19555>

ABSA Grey Grasswren Survey

We were hired to survey Grey Grasswrens near Adelaide Gate east of Tibooburra along the Dog Fence. We had 13 in our group and met up at North Bourke Caravan Park. One of us brought along 2 spares just in case. He blew one on the trip to Bourke and then one of his front tyres had a slow leak. We headed out on Sunday morning, but didn't read the sign to Wanaaring properly and after driving about 50 k's discovered we couldn't get through because some truckie had demolished a bridge on the main road. So we had to back track to the Hungerford- Bourke Road. The guy with the tyre troubles had another puncture so we had to put on the leaking tyre, pump it up and headed him back to Bourke.

The rest of us headed up to Fords Bridge (the detour) and back down to the main road to Wanaaring. We arrived with no mishap and set up camp. Well after dark, Jeff turned up minus his A van – he had a tale of woe. One of the U bolts holding the springs to the axle gave way so he did some running repairs with a length of the universal fixer (fencing wire). This lasted about 100ks until it gave way but this time the whole wheel was pushed back and jammed against the frame of the van so he unhitched it and left it on the road. Jeff, myself and a couple of others headed back to the van about 45 km away. When I saw it I thought “!#&*%” but we had found some more wire and it was really thick stuff. We pushed the wheel back into place and Jeff worked his genius again. He finally got it roadworthy and we crawled back to the camp about 12.30am. Next day we knew he couldn't take it on the track so he hobbled off to Tibooburra to see if he could get someone to fix it

The rest of us set off on the 70 kms to Adelaide Gate along mostly property tracks and we were doing well until we hit a patch where the track was lower than the surrounding paddock and had collected a fair amount of water. I was the lead vehicle so I drove up on the high side but forgot that the caravan was wider than the car and it slid into the mud. I tried to steer out but to no avail so I tried to cross the track and headed for the other side. Down went car and caravan to their axles. Well it took us three goes with the shovel and winch hooked up to the Prado to get it out. Away we went, very wary of any mud puddles after that but when the lead vehicle detoured around a big puddle on a claypan and headed into the sand I followed and got stuck again. We were prepared this time and it only took us one quick winch out and we were moving again. We found some of those shield shrimp I'd seen on many documentaries but never seen a live one before – it was one of the highlights of the trip for me. We finally got to the dog/border fence and who should meet us but the patrol guys. We knew that there was a huge fine if they caught you travelling along the dog fence road so we had to do some really fast talking. As our camp site was only about 2 kms along the road they reluctantly let us drive along it and set up camp – I thought for a horrible moment that our trip would end at that spot.

We set up camp and proceeded to erect our nets – we had about 15 so it took a while. Only problem was that the Lignum (the bush that covers the swampy parts and where the Grey Grasswrens live) grows in big clumps and much higher than a person. There's nothing else growing in between just bare sand that forms the channels when it is in flood. The whole area is like a giant maze and it's very easy to get lost so we had to tie a coloured bag to the top of the net poles so we could find them again and then used pink flagging tape to show the way from net to net. The next day we used a GPS to locate each net site so we could find them again in 2 years' time - we also didn't want to leave any behind.

Jeff arrived later in the afternoon with a repaired van. The guy at the servo just south of the main street put him in touch with a bush mechanic who said he'd have a go. Well Jeff arrived back with new U bolts, plate and everything all lined up. The guy told Jeff that he had to charge \$140 – Jeff gave him \$200 with a big smile and a heartfelt thank you. Before the sun went down our other team member, the one with the flat tyres, arrived with 4 new tyres so at last we had everybody back together again.

The next two days were uneventful. Didn't catch any Grey Grasswrens and only scored a few other species – very poor result. The only highlight was a big baked dinner for everyone – a veritable feast, all cooked in a couple of camp ovens and all sloshed down with copious quantities of wine!

On day 3 we headed to our new site about 10 clicks back along the track. Set up our nets again and hoped for better luck. The next day was hot and the flies were horrendous – couldn't do anything without a fly net on. We closed the nets just after lunch and headed into Tibooburra for a beer. On the way noticed a few rain showers about but when we got to Tibooburra there were lots more. I fuelled up and headed straight back to camp. The rain beat us so we slipped and slithered along the track, no bogging this time, but there were a few hairy moments when we were sliding towards a gateway. The mud out there is like the black soil stuff. It rained off and on over the next day and we were worried we were going to get caught out there. A bright note though was that we finally caught a Grey Grasswren – a long way to travel to catch just one but they are listed as rare and endangered. That night we had another baked dinner – thank god the flies go to sleep – drank more wine and decided that we had better pack up next morning and head back to civilisation. We didn't want to tempt the rain gods any further.

All went well so we just moseyed on home, stopped at Wanaaring and then at Nyngan beside the Bogan (compulsory dinner at the RSL club). You should have seen all the nice clean vans and cars all parked neatly at the Riverside Caravan Park – then I drove in covered in mud and shit. Did raise a few eyebrows.

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