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Editorial

We start a new feature in this issue. “In Their Own Words” will feature a long interview with a leading ornithologist. Thank you to Tony Hunt, who joined the Committee this year, for initiating this. The transcript is too long to be included in the Newsletter in its entirety, so part is published here, and the entire interview will be placed on the Association’s website.

Part of the Committee’s job is to manage the finances of the Association. Despite the savings made in the ways we publish Corella and the Newsletter, there is still a relentless pressure on the cost of publishing. In order to maintain a healthy balance sheet, we have reluctantly increased the cost of a subscription, after several static years. The sub is similar to that charged by other similar organisations and we trust that members will understand the reasons for this increase.

AGM 2016 - advance notice

We have tentatively fixed on a date of 23 January for the 2016 AGM and Scientific Day, to be held in the Hawkesbury region, north-west of Sydney. There will be the usual lectures/presentations, with the AGM held during the lunch break. Field trips the next day will include banding demonstrations in one or more of the many study sites nearby. As previously notified, the theme of the day will be “Birds of the Cumberland Plain”.

Full details will be given in the December Newsletter, but keep that date free in the meantime.

Subscription Rates - 2016

Committee has decided to increase the subscription rates from 2016. The new rates are:

Standard: \$65 Concession: \$45 Household: \$80
Institution/corporation: \$105 Overseas single: \$95
Overseas institution/corporation: \$110

Corella Contents: Sept 2015 - Vol.39(3)

Papers:

Post-fledging spatial use by a juvenile Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax* using satellite telemetry

F. Hatton, J. Olsen and B. Gruber

The Tasman Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra tasmani* of Nepean and Phillip Islands in the Norfolk Island Group
P. Coyne, B. Evans, O. Evans and H. McCoy

Assessment of band recoveries for three Australian eagle species

S. J. S. Debus

Some vocalisations of the Grey Falcon *Falco hypoleucos*

T. Baylis, F. W. van Gessel and S. J. S. Debus

Ageing Southern Boobook nestlings and fledglings

J. Olsen, D. Judge and S. Trost

Book Reviews:

Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Australian Birds
Reviewed by: J. Brazill-Boast

The World of Birds . Reviewed by: G Fry

Recovery Round-up

Corella Contents- Dec 2015 - Vol.39(4)

Papers:

Morphological sexing of Grey-crowned Babblers
Pomatostomus temporalis temporalis: near enough is not quite good enough

K. Teare, A. Lambert and C. J. Blackmore

Parental time-budgets, breeding behaviour and affinities of the Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radiates*

S.J.S. Debus, D.J. Baker-Gabb and T.A. Aumann

Banding Project Report:

No. 4. Nurragingy Reserve, New South Wales

J. R. Farrell, J. W. Hardy, D. McKay, K. Gover and D. L. Pepper-Edwards

Seabird Islands:

No. 42/1. Tollgate Islands, New South Wales

N. Carlile, D. Priddel, C. Lloyd, P. Craven and M. Jarman

No. 263. Snapper Island, New South Wales

N. Carlile and D. Priddel

Book Reviews:

Contributions to the History of Australasian Ornithology, Volume II

Reviewed by S. Debus

Pigeons and Doves in Australia

Reviewed by J. Hardy

Comments on the review of ‘Australian High Country Raptors’ by Greg Clancy

By J. Olsen

Recovery Round-up.

Regent Honeyeaters released into the wild

With a population that has declined greatly in recent years, the Regent Honeyeater needs all the help it can get. BirdLife is excited to announce its population received a huge boost with the largest-ever release of captive-bred honeyeaters into the wild. Nearly 80 birds, were released into Chiltern–Mount Pilot National Park in north-eastern Victoria to bolster the dwindling population of wild birds.

Already over 100 dedicated volunteers have contributed their time to track the birds' movements, noting their behaviour, what they're feeding on, which birds they associate with.

Each released honeyeater is colour banded, and some fitted with radio-trackers. Some of the honeyeaters have joined up with wild birds, and they have spread through the box-ironbark forest to all corners of the Park, and in some cases they are even forging new frontiers well beyond.

It's a great boost for the Regent Honeyeater. Nevertheless, the species is still considered endangered, and even with these extra birds its population is still critically low.

If you see one, ring 1800 621 056; if you can help monitor the birds, email BirdLife Australia <info@birdlife.org.au>

Night Parrot News

Greg Roberts had a feature published in 28 August edition of The Weekend Australian which explores why the parrot has managed to hang on at the site in south-west Qld where it is presently being studied, and looks at measures to control feral cats. Most of this is behind the paper's paywall; the transcript can be read in the blog post:

http://sunshinecoastbirds.blogspot.com.au/2015/08/night-parrot-news_29.html

COG Wins Award

Congratulations to Canberra Ornithology Group for winning the ACT "Sustainable Cities" Award. Details here: <http://kab.org.au/canberra-ornithological-group-wins-act-sustainable-cities-awards-2015/>

Tattler Available to Download

The latest edition of Tattler is available to download from this address: <http://www.awsg.org.au/tattler/Tattler-36.pdf>

Birding Event in Millmerran (Qld).

Over the long weekend in October (3-5), I am organising a birding event in Millmerran (between Toowoomba and Goodiwindi) which will include bus tours with local bird experts to private farms and bush blocks, a spotlighting evening and the launch of an App for the newly-revised book "Birds on Cotton Farms", as well as several talks on birds and wildlife.

The facebook page is: www.facebook.com/millmerranfocusonfeathers2015

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Bird in the Hand Uploads

The following species profile sheets for Bird in the Hand (Second Edition) have been completed and uploaded to the Association's website <www.absa.asn.au> with an amended Index and Recent Additions files.

Mistletoebird	Olive-backed Sunbird
Long-tailed Finch	Black-throated Finch
Masked Finch	Crimson Finch
Star Finch	Red-eared Firetail
Painted Finch	Blue-faced Parrot-Finch
Gouldian Finch	Nutmeg Mannikin
Yellow-rumped Mannikin	Chestnut-breasted Mannikin
Pictorella Mannikin	Pallid Cuckoo
Pilotbird	Rockwarbler
Fernwren	Tasmanian Scrubwren
Scrubtit	Bridled Honeyeater
Eungella Honeyeater	Yellow-throated Honeyeater
Strong-billed Honeyeater	White-throated Honeyeater
White-naped Honeyeater (updated)	
Western White-naped Honeyeater (new species)	
Black-headed Honeyeater,	Western Whistler (new species)
Grey Shrike-thrush	Olive-backed Oriole
Grey Butcherbird	Pied Butcherbird
Australian Magpie	Pied Currawong.

Jeff Hardy

And another tranche added last week:

Quails & Button-quails

Identification Key for Quails and Button-quails, Stubble Quail, Brown Quail, Painted Button-quail, Little Button Quail

Pigeons & Doves

Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Bar-shouldered Dove, Diamond Dove, Peaceful Dove.

Cockatoos, Lorikeets & Parrots

Australian King-Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Mallee Ringneck, Blue Bonnet, Red-rumped Parrot, Mulga Parrot, Blue-winged Parrot, Turquoise Parrot.

Scrubwrens - White-browed Scrubwren (updated).

Honeyeaters

Eastern Spinebill (updated),
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater (updated).

Sittella - Varied Sittella.

Swallows & Martins

White-backed Swallow, Welcome Swallow, Fairy Martin, Tree Martin.

Thrushes

Bassian Thrush, Russet-tailed Thrush.

Reminder - Grey Falcons

If you see a Grey Falcon - yes I am still doing this study, Australia-wide and since 2003 - please please drop me a line. All information will be kept confidential.

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In Their Own Words

We present here part of an extended interview conducted by Committee member Tony Hunt with one of Australia's most respected ornithologists. We hope that this will turn into a series that members will find both fascinating and illuminating.

This is only part of the transcript, representing about one third of the entire interview. The full interview will be shortly placed on the Association's website.

Interview with Dr Rohan Clark

Dr Rohan Clarke lectures in Ecology and leads the *ResearchEcology* group in the School of Biological Sciences at Monash University. His research interests focus on the ecology of Australian fauna, especially birds and the management and mitigation of threatening processes. Within these areas of interest, research is conducted at a variety of levels from organismal ecology to ecosystem ecology.



Tony: I wonder if you could start by giving me a bit of a background on how you originally came to an interest in birds and how that led you to becoming a professional ornithologist?

Rohan: I guess I've always been interested in birds. The bits I can recall are that I bought my first pair of binoculars when I was in grade six - so I guess that would make me about 10 or 12 or thereabouts? - and we had a family trip around Australia, taking the middle term off school, and that was pretty formative in terms of seeing a great diversity of birds; at that point I was already very interested. I got into bird banding with the Victorian Wader Study group when I was about 15 or 16 and that was also very formative, as a group like that was willing to take very keen but also very inexperienced people under their wing

and train them up. On the first outing we caught an amazing diversity of species and despite the fact I was on my first trip I was employed as a runner and so took all sorts of birds to the banders and watched them working.

Tony: That's a great experience for a young person to have, isn't it?

Rohan: Yes, it's a great hook, and so I was quickly hooked! I was already pretty engaged anyway, and so from then until at least some time when I was in University, when other things started to get in the way, I was a very active bander in the Victorian Wader Study group, going on almost every weekend trip, and I guess that's where I really cut my teeth on bird banding, and bird research more generally as well. I already had an interest in birds but that got me involved in data collection from quite an early age.

Tony: It can be quite a leap from bird watching to structured research.

Rohan: Absolutely. And I think the Wader Study group is particularly good in that space, because they also exposed you to publication of data all that time, from articles in the VWSG Bulletin right through to articles in internationally-recognised journals, so pretty much every time we got together there was something being published in those sorts of publications, it didn't matter at which level, so you saw the whole process from start to finish.

Tony: That's fantastic, isn't it?

Rohan: Yes, so even though you're not actually writing the papers you could still actually see the output of all your hard work in the field and you could really feel a part of it.

Tony: That's one of the really great things about bird banding, it does seem to provide a bit of a bridge between amateur birding and serious ornithological research, that's accessible to both professionals and amateurs.

Rohan: Yes, absolutely. Although there seems to have been a bit of a shift in the numbers of people that continue to band compared to what there was perhaps twenty years ago, that crossover is still there and it provides an opportunity for new people to enter the field.

Tony: I've heard a number of people comment on the changing demographics of bird banding, but I'm not sure why that might be?

Rohan: (Laughs) I'm not sure either! But I do have some theories, not necessarily grounded in real data though.

Tony: You're amongst friends Rohan, you're allowed to speculate.

Rohan: (laughs) Yeah. I suspect that one element that is likely in the reduction in the number of banders is simply the change in policy that was in place for a while there where you had to pay for your annual banding license. It may not have changed the number of active banders all that much but I think it certainly trimmed out a lot of the inactive banders. So at least on paper there was a rapid reduction in the number of banders out there. It may have also reduced the number of less active banders who only did a small amount of banding, because it would have made it harder to justify maintaining a permit under those conditions.

Tony: There also seems to me to be a bit of a gap between the older banders and the young ones, with not many in between.

Rohan: Yes. Well that may just reflect life of course (laughs), in between for most people there's a lot of other stuff like families and careers and everything else. It seems to be much the same sort of distribution in birdwatching, certainly on pelagic trips in many cases there are numbers of younger people and older people, with not all that many middle-aged people participating in those sorts of activities.

Tony: Let's move along. Could you give us a rundown of what your research interests are – what aspects of ornithology you have a particular interest in?

Rohan: I come from a fairly applied and conservation-focussed background. I did a PhD on Black-eared Miners, and before that I did some work on the behaviour of honeyeaters, so most of my research is reasonably applied and most of it ideally has some kind of link back to conservation benefits for birds. The very broad area that I'm interested in mostly now is the movement ecology of birds and how that might actually affect management. But in saying that, I'm one of those people who has a pretty broad or diverse portfolio when it comes to research interests in that space, I'm not a person who settles on, say, muscles of fruit flies (laughs) as a topic, I'm fairly broad and that's ultimately reflected in the sorts of projects I get involved in as well. They use birds as models and most of them you can link back to some sort of management issue, typically conservation-orientated rather than, say, management of pest species, and linked to some sort of aspect related to their movement. In some cases small levels movement, in species such as Mallee Emu Wrens, which we don't think move about very much at all; through to large scale movements of migrants and how you might manage and better conserve migrants in landscapes – looking at species such as Regent Honeyeaters.

Tony: That's very interesting; and reflects a number of conversations I've had recently with other ornithologists, basically around the notion that we really know very little about the movements of many birds in the context of the Australian landscape; and what we do know is often derived from a very large amount of inference connecting what is often a tiny amount of fact based on relatively small numbers of observations that are very scattered in both space and time. But it does seem we are now entering a potential golden age based on the increasing availability of really tiny tracking devices – I saw an ad last week for one that weighs barely more than a gram – and while a small amount of working has already been done using these, presumably there is still literally tons more to be done.

Rohan: Yes. The technology already exists, and the two critical components are the size, which translates into the weight being carried by the bird; and the cost. And these are both coming down, as you say there have been ads in the past couple of weeks for ridiculously small units, some

of which communicate to satellites, others that use GPS that is either UHF downloaded or pings the data to a satellite after 30 or 60 waypoints have been collected. We've probably been right on that cusp for nearly a decade in the sense that every year a new tool that comes out that allows us to do another bunch of things. It depends a little bit on whether you're at the front of the wave in trying to use the techniques, in part because they're novel; or whether you're sitting back a bit and waiting a little to make use of them when they'll be a bit cheaper as the novelty wears off and costs come down when production kicks in. So yes, I think it's got the potential to be a game changer; and if anything there's going to be ethical considerations about how many of these things we should be putting out, because they come at a greater cost to the bird than just a straight metal band.

Tony: Indeed, and I guess that will be one of the challenges for the future, which is a topic we'll come to shortly. Just out of interest, where is the state of the technology up to currently? Have we got to a device that, say, a large honeyeater could carry yet?

Rohan: Oh, absolutely. There was something just published in Nature in the last month or two, on one of the small American thrushes I think - maybe a water thrush, or perhaps an Ovenbird? – and they put GPS trackers on these birds that were on the order of a couple of grams. The devices had the capacity to record about 30 or 50 waypoints, and they set them up so that they recorded waypoints after a couple of months then deployed them on birds that were just getting ready to migrate. The equipment didn't record any positions for a couple of months and then recorded their positions after they had migrated, then when they returned to their breeding grounds they were recaptured and the equipment was downloaded to reveal their wintering location. These sorts of units would easily fit on our medium to large honeyeaters.

Tony: Which is pretty amazing when you start to think about birds like Blue-faced Honeyeaters, or Wattlebirds or Friarbirds, or any of those sized birds.

Rohan: Yes, I guess the 5g satellite tags that have been around for a few years now, in theory can fit on a bird that's about 110-120g size, so there might be a couple of species in that size at the upper end of the honeyeaters would already fit that so a harness attachment and a satellite tag that's pinging back a position every day, but were already well beyond that and so were down to half that mass with GPS tags and some of these tags now communicate to satellites so it's not essential to recapture the bird to be able to retrieve the data.

The rest of the transcript of this interview will be placed on the Association's website in the next few days.