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Editorial

As part of the membership renewal process, our website automatically sends emails to those whose are a little late. It has come to our notice that the wording of those emails is curt, bordering on rude. We apologise for this, and are now desperately searching the Content Management System for their origin, so we can instruct it to be a little more gentle with you, our members, without whom the Association would not exist.

A big thankyou to all those who attended the AGM and Scientific day, making it one of our most successful to date. See Tony Hunt's summary below.

Note the passing of the baton from John Farrell to Alan Lill, who takes on editorship of *Corella*. Another baton change is happening too, with Tony Hunt taking on running the Mist Net Service for the Association. These are both key roles within the Association, and we welcome Alan and Tony to their respective jobs.

ABSA Conference 2016 and AGM

Our annual conference was held on a warm and sunny Saturday 23rd January at the Yarramundi Conference Centre in Western Sydney at the foot of the Blue Mountains. The

hall was soon packed with some 80 attendees, showing the widespread interest in the theme for the day, "The Birds of the Cumberland Plain – past distributions, present studies and the outlook for their future".

The conference program quickly got under way, with the panel of nine speakers providing a wide range of interesting and thought provoking insights into the bush birds of the Cumberland Plain and the challenges facing them as the pace of urbanisation increases in this fast-growing region. The day began with Tony Saunders providing an overview of the bird populations that have been recorded from the area in the past, followed by Katy Wilkins on the effectiveness of woodland restoration plantings in providing additional habitat (not so great, so far); Peter Smith talking about the factors affecting bird diversity in bushland remnants in the Blacktown area; Alan Leishman looking at the changes observed in the course of a long-term bird-banding study at the Mt Annan Botanic Gardens in the southern part of the region, especially the influence of African Olive infestations as a food source; Amy Greenwood discussing the effects of the recent Psyllid outbreak on both the trees and the birds; followed by Kathryn Lambert describing the ecology of the Bell Miner and why it's numbers are on the rise, a trend identified by several speakers as one of the more significant pressures on the woodland birds of the region.

Every talk sparked a barrage of questions for the speaker and a lively discussion ensued when we broke for an excellent lunch and stretched our legs in the sunshine outside. However, the day was far from done and we were soon back in our seats for another series of fascinating presentations, starting with John Farrell on another long-term bird-banding study, this time in a series of woodland patches in the north-west part of the Cumberland Plain; followed by Holly Parsons describing the trends in the populations of key species revealed by careful analysis of survey records in Birdlife Australia's Atlas database; and finally Peter Ridgeway outlining the future urban growth planned in the region and reflecting on the potential implications of this for bird populations. The day concluded with thanks to all the speakers for such an interesting day and the organisers for putting on such well-run event, followed by concluding remarks from ABSA's Chairman, Jeff Hardy. The Annual General Meeting was held immediately afterwards.

All in all this was a most successful conference. It certainly generated a lot of interest and it is clear that there

is much still to be done if we are to know enough about the birds of the Cumberland Plain to be able to secure their future in the face of many threatening processes as the inexorable westward expansion of Sydney continues.

The following day dawned cool and overcast with the threat of rain, but birders are a hardy lot and about two dozen turned up at Wianamatta Nature Reserve near Penrith for the bird banding demonstration. A light shower did eventuate as we put up a series of mist nets, but fortunately it quickly passed. The birds cooperated and in our first round of the nets we found we had caught ~40 birds, so we closed the nets and settled down to a couple of hours work banding and processing the catch. The participants were treated to close-up views of a good diversity of birds, including several species of honeyeaters, as well as an assortment of fairy wrens, finches, whistlers and more. Throughout the morning there was much discussion across a broad selection of ornithological topics, ranging from field trip anecdotes to ecology, plumage details and moult patterns. By late morning we were finished and everyone dispersed to enjoy the rest of their Sunday, slightly muddier than when they started but very satisfied by an enjoyable morning spent studying the birds of the Cumberland Plain.

Tont Hunt

Vice-President

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Papers:

Diurnal birds in the Bungawalbin Creek catchment, northern New South Wales, with a focus on spatial and temporal changes in reporting rates of declining woodland birds.

D. G. Gosper and C. R. Gosper

Breeding diets of four raptor species in the Australian tropics

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

Seabird Islands:

No.265. Leo's Island, Easter Group, Houtman Abrolhos, Western Australia

C. A. Surman and L. W. Nicholson

No. 266. Newman Island, Easter Group, Houtman Abrolhos, Western Australia

C. A. Surman and L. W. Nicholson

Erratum

Recovery Round-up.

Banding Snippet:

Pink Robin

J. Farrell and J. Hardy

AGM Reports

President:

2015/16 was a very busy year for the Association.

The new website has now been operational for just over one year. Publication of *Corella* and our *Newsletter* have continued on the new website. The website has also made it possible to upload PDF copies of all back issues of *The Australian Bird Bander* and *Corella* Volumes 1 to 37 for free availability. The last two Volumes of *Corella* are available only to current members, so the restriction on access to Volume 38 will be lifted at the end of 2016.

We have also uploaded a number of other publications including the original *Bird in the Hand* and its supplements, *Banders Aid* and its Supplement. But more importantly, the new website has allowed us to publish species profile sheets for *Bird in the Hand (Second Edition)* as an up-to-date aid to field workers, such as bird banders. The sheets are primarily compiled from data and illustrations published in the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* with the permission of BirdLife Australia. Profile sheets for over 300 species have so far been published and a number of these have already been updated thanks to the input of several banders.

Amy Greenwood and Catherine Young collaborated to establish and maintain the Association's Facebook and Twitter pages. Basically Amy now looks after Facebook and Cat keeps her finger on the pulse with Twitter. They have both been a resounding success for the Association.

The Association's Bill Lane Award was again made available to Charles Sturt University for the most outstanding student in the 2015 Graduate Diploma of Ornithology course. We congratulate Kirsty Wilkes as the winner of the Bill Lane Award in 2015. She received a \$150 and a year's subscription to the Association.

Petra Hanke was successful in winning the ABSA sponsored Poster Award at the Australasian Ornithological Conference in Adelaide in November 2015 with a presentation related to her doctorate work on Superb Fairy-wrens. The prize is \$150 and a one-year subscription to the ABSA.

The winner of the Durno Murray Award for the "best" paper published in *Corella* Vol. 39 in 2015 will be announced by the Hon Editor in his report.

Three applications were received for the ABSA's grants from the Fund for Avian Research. All three were judged by the Committee to have merit and worthy of funding by the Association. However the availability of funds for the FAR is limited by the amount of interest earned on a special investment account. I am pleased to announce that two of the applications will be fully funded and the third will be partly funded. The two fully funded projects are:

- John Farrell - \$1661 for Grey Grasswren radio tracking;
- Donna Belder - \$525 for Survival and persistence of woodland birds in restoration plantings;
- The partly funded project (balance of funds available) will be granted to Christa Beckman - \$330 toward her project on the evolution of female song in birds.

ABSA was again contracted by the Save Our Species Program of NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to continue the biennial surveys on the status of Grey Grasswren in north-western NSW. Seven ABSA member volunteers spent up to 10 days braving the dust, wind, rain and flies to complete the survey in September 2015. Hopefully we will be invited to tender for a repeat the survey in 2018.

Finally, I wish to thank John Farrell for organising this Conference and it is my pleasure to announce that in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Association over many years, the Committee has decided to bestow upon John, Honorary Life Membership of the ABSA.

Jeff Hardy

President

Treasurer

The audit was completed on 20th November 2015 for the financial year ending 30th September by Ross Fowler & Co.

Annual income received during 2014-2015 financial year (1st Oct. – 30th Sept.) was \$30,313.62. Primary source of income were subscriptions (\$12,160.38 - down from \$13,230.00 in 2014) and the Mist Net Service (\$5,000).

Total expenditure was \$30,961.09 with the main cost being the establishment of our new website and publication of *Corella*. The cost of printing the full volume of *Corella* for 2014 wasn't paid until this financial year – this meant a profit for 2014 but an operating loss of \$647.47 for this year.

The total cost of artwork, printing and postage for *Corella* in 2015 was \$14,174.35. This was a saving of \$1,192.10 from last year.

Editor of Corella

This year is the second printing of the full volume of *Corella* and again we have received positive feedback on the quality of papers and overall presentation.

This volume highlights papers on a variety of different species. Several banders have taken the challenge to write up their data for our Banding Project Reports section. Our Seabird Island Series continues to attract a number of contributions from researchers from coastal NSW and WA.

We have had a steady flow of manuscripts over the year and again we were able to produce four issues.

As per previous years I would like to thank all those people who have worked behind the scenes: our sub-editors, Geoff Smith, James Brazill-Boast, Patrick-Jean Guay and particularly Peter and Judy Smith, who handle most of the manuscripts; Peter Ewin for compiling the volume index; Stephen Debus who is always on the lookout for manuscripts for publication; our book reviewers and the many referees who gave of their time to review submitted manuscripts. They are listed in the printed volume.

Alan Leishman has, as always, done a fantastic job supervising the production of *Corella*, and continuing to work with the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme in the compilation of Recovery Round-up.

I have been Editor now for 12 years and I think it is time for someone else to take over the reins. During that time, and working in conjunction with Alan, we have seen the introduction of colour and the use of better quality paper to enhance overall presentation, especially of figures. We have produced a new logo and now, I feel, the Association has a much more professional presence. We have seen the introduction of Banding Reports and the transition to online delivery of papers with no loss of quality. As always it has given me great satisfaction to see the work of researchers published in *Corella* – especially those from aspiring ornithologists. Professor Alan Lill has kindly agreed to take over this role from 2016 and I hope he gets as much pleasure out of it as I have.

Durno Murray Award

It gives me great pleasure to declare the winner of The Durno Murray Award for the best paper published in *Corella* for 2015. The winners receive a framed certificate, a cash prize of \$150 and a free membership to ABSA for 2016.

This year's winners are: Andrew Black, Graham Carpenter, Roger Jaensch, Lynn Pedler and Reece Pedler for their paper: A survey of outlying populations of the Grey Grasswren *Amytornis barbatus*. They documented their occurrence in isolated pockets over an extensive area encompassing NE South Australia and SW Queensland. An admirable task especially when the flies are bad.

John Farrell

Corella Editor

Mist Net Service Report

The Mist Nets Service operations through 2014/15 were fairly uneventful except for the unreliability of our preferred new mist net supplier in China. As a consequence we ran out of the most popular 12m nets so had to pay an exorbitant price for 50 nets from Finland.

Supplies from China have now resumed and outstanding orders have all arrived, so we have a large stock of nets of all sizes at present.

Items sold by the MNS in the year to 30 September 2015 were consistent with expectations and we had sales totalling \$11349.43. Purchases of stock totalled \$7072.57.

As a consequence of having to pre-pay for more nets than was planned, and after transfer of the annual donation of \$5000 to the Associations general operation account of the Association and payment of the honorarium for management of the MNS, bank and audit fees etc that totalled \$12305.01, we actually had a net operating loss of \$955.58.

However as at 30 September 2015 the MNS held net assets valued at \$54,415.44, so we are looking pretty good for the future.

I table the balance sheet, trading and profit and loss statements and the Auditors Report for the year 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015.

I should mention that Tony Hunt will be taking over the management of the Mist Nets Service within the next month or so.

J.W. Hardy

Manager, Mist Net Service

ABSA Social Media presence

ABSA now has not only a FaceBook page, but also a Twitter feed.

Please feel free to 'follow' and 'like' as appropriate.

Your New Committee

At the AGM, the following nominations were received and those nominated were elected unopposed to the Association's management committee:

President: **Jeff Hardy**

Vice-President: **Tony Hunt**

Secretary: **Katy Wilkins**

Treasurer: **John Farrell**

Editor of Corella: **Alan Lill**

Ordinary Members: **Stephen Debus, Ken Gover, Amy**

Greenwood, David Hamilton, Darryl McKay, David Smith, Catherine Young

Past President (automatic appointment): **Stein Boddington**

Bird in the Hand Uploads

Pittas

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Red-bellied Pitta | <i>Pitta erythrogaster</i> |
| Noisy Pitta | <i>Pitta versicolour</i> |
| Rainbow Pitta | <i>Pitta iris</i> |
| Blue-winged Pitta | <i>Pitta moluccensis</i> |

Scrub-birds

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Rufous Scrub-bird | <i>Atrichornis rufescens</i> |
| Noisy Scrub-bird | <i>Atrichornis clamosus</i> |

Fairy-wrens

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Superb Fairy-wren | <i>Malurus cyaneus</i> (revised) |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|

Bristlebirds

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Western Bristlebird | <i>Dasyornis longirostris</i> |
| Rufous Bristlebird | <i>Dasyornis broadbenti</i> |

Scrubwrens and Heathwrens

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Striated Fieldwren | <i>Calamanthus fuliginosus</i> (revised) |
|--------------------|--|

Honeyeaters

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater | <i>Acanthagenys rufogularis</i> (revised) |
| Striped Honeyeater | <i>Plectorhyncha lanceolata</i> (revised) |
| Helmeted Friarbird | <i>Philemon buceroides</i> (revised) |
| Silver-crowned Friarbird | <i>Philemon argenteiceps</i> (revised) |
| Regent Honeyeater | <i>Anthochaera phrygia</i> (revised) |
| Yellow-tufted Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus melanops</i> (revised) |
| White-eared Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus leucotis</i> (revised) |
| Yellow-throated Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus flavicollis</i> (revised) |
| Graceful Honeyeater | <i>Meliphaga gracilis</i> (revised) |
| Yellow-spotted Honeyeater | <i>Meliphaga notata</i> (revised) |
| White-naped Honeyeater | <i>Melithrepyus lunatus</i> (revised) |
| Western White-naped Honeyeater | <i>Melithreptus chloropsis</i> (revised) |
| New Holland Honeyeater | <i>Phylidonyris novaehollandiae</i> (revised) |
| White-cheeked Honeyeater | <i>Phylidonyris niger</i> (revised) |
| Varied Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus versicolour</i> |
| Mangrove Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus fasciocularis</i> |
| Yellow Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus flavus</i> |
| Grey-headed Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus keartlandi</i> |
| Yellow-tinted Honeyeater | <i>Lichenostomus flavescens</i> |
| Brown-backed Honeyeater | <i>Ramsayornis modestus</i> |
| Bar-breasted Honeyeater | <i>Ramsayornis fasciatus</i> |
| Grey Honeyeater | <i>Conopophila whitei</i> |
| Dusky Honeyeater | <i>Myzomela obscura</i> |
| Green-backed Honeyeater | <i>Glycichaera fallax</i> |
| Banded Honeyeater | <i>Cissomela pectoralis</i> |
| White-streaked Honeyeater | <i>Trichodere cockerelli</i> |
| Helmeted Friarbird | <i>Philemon buceroides</i> |

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Silver-crowned Friarbird | <i>Philemon argenteiceps</i> |
| Macleay's Honeyeater | <i>Xanthotis macleayanus</i> |
| Tawny-breasted Honeyeater | <i>Xanthotis flaviventris</i> |

Babblers

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| White-browed Babbler | <i>Pomatostomus supercilliosus</i> (revised) |
|----------------------|--|

Butcherbirds & Currawongs

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Black-backed Butcherbird | <i>Cracticus mentalis</i> |
| Black Currawong | <i>Strepera fuliginosa</i> |
| Grey Currawong | <i>Strepera versicolour</i> |

Corvids

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Australian Raven | <i>Corvus coronoides</i> |
| Forest Raven | <i>Corvus tasmanicus</i> |
| Little Raven | <i>Corvus mellori</i> |
| Little Crow | <i>Corvus bennetti</i> |
| Torresian Crow | <i>Corvus orru</i> |

Fantails

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Grey Fantail | <i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i> (revised) |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|

Grassbirds & Songlarks

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Spinifexbird | <i>Eremiornis carteri</i> |
|--------------|---------------------------|

Bulbul

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Red-whiskered Bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|

Thrushes

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| Song Thrush | <i>Turdus philomelos</i> |
|-------------|--------------------------|

Starlings

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Metallic Starling | <i>Aplornis metallica</i> |
| Common Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> |
| Common Myna | <i>Sturnis tristis</i> |

Sparrows

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> |
| Eurasian Tree Sparrow | <i>Passer montanus</i> |

Cuckoos

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Little Bronze-Cuckoo | <i>Chalcites minutillus</i> |
| Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo | <i>Cacomantis castaneiventris</i> |

Bowerbirds

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Spotted Catbird | <i>Ailuroedus melanotis</i> |
| Green Catbird | <i>Ailuroedus crassirostris</i> |
| Tooth-billed Bowerbird | <i>Scenopoeetes dentirostris</i> |
| Golden Bowerbird | <i>Amblyornis newtonianus</i> |
| Regent Bowerbird | <i>Sericulus chrysocephalus</i> |
| Spotted Bowerbird | <i>Ptilonorhynchus maculatus</i> |
| Western Bowerbird | <i>Ptilonorhynchus guttatus</i> |
| Great Bowerbird | <i>Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis</i> |
| Fawn-breasted Bowerbird | <i>Ptilonorhynchus cerviniventris</i> |

Orioles

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Australasian Figbird | <i>Sphecotheres vieilloti</i> |
| Yellow Oriole | <i>Oriolus flavocinctus</i> |

Shrike-thrushes

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Little Shrike-thrush | <i>Colluricincla megarhyncha</i> |
| Bower's Shrike-thrush | <i>Colluricincla boweri</i> |
| Sandstone Shrike-thrush | <i>Colluricincla woodwardi</i> |

Manucode & Riflebirds

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Trumpet Manucode | <i>Phonygammus keraudrenii</i> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|

Larks

Horsfield's Bushlark *Mirafra*

javanica

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Cisticolas

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Reed-warbler

Oriental Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*

Starlings

Singing Starling *Aploornis cantoroides*

Sunbirds and Flowerpeckers

Red-capped Flowerpecker *Dicaeum geelvinkianum*

Pipits

Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Old World Finches

Common Greenfinch *Chloris chlorine*

European Goldfinch *Carduelis cardueli*

Obituary - Olive Dariel Larkins

Olive Dariel Larkins (née Havard) 1931–2015

The birdwatching community has recently lost an un-sung luminary. Dariel Larkins was named Olive after her mother, but was universally known by her middle name Dariel, heroine of an obscure late-Victorian novel. She was born in Sydney and from an early age was interested in wildlife and nature. She spent most of her early childhood at a home just below the top of Gore Hill and wandered the bush of Lane Cove. Like many in her era she was a member of the Gould League and kept notes of the birds she saw, and importantly always kept her note-books, much as her historian parents had taught her. All notebooks tell a story and Dariel's were no exception.

When compiling the NSW Bird Atlasers historic database years later, Dariel extracted her records and with later checking we found that the earliest record of the Double-barred Finch for the Southern Tablelands was a bird drawn by Dariel in her notebook by the Wollondilly River at Goulburn when visiting an aunt in Easter 1944.

In her teens her father purchased 'Bernera', a colonial-period homestead at Hoxton Park, west of Liverpool. This was then largely rural and for a young woman, miles from anywhere. Despite this, Dariel met and married Brian Larkins, and in the 1950s they moved to South Turrumurra and had two sons, John and Greg. As the boys grew older Dariel began walking the Lane Cove Valley at a time when there were few bush tracks. She also gained part-time work as a guide at Kuring-gai Chase NP and began to investigate the local birds more closely, in particular the Grey Butcherbird. Part of this study involved getting up in the dark in the local bush and mapping out the roost sites for individual birds, not something your average suburban housewife would do.

Through these activities she met ornithologists such as Keith Hindwood, Tony Rose, Arnold McGill and Bill Lane and was drawn into the NSW Field Ornithologists Club (Birding NSW) and the Australian Bird Study Association (the banders). At times in the 1970s and 1980s she acted as a committee member in both organisations and in particular the conservation officer of the NSWFOC. In this role she made submissions on numerous subjects, including developments on Kooragang Island and Port Botany. Enquiries into the status of Little Terns in Port Botany led to a banding study from which it was shown that the Little Tern was in some trouble locally – this was the impetus for work by others that finally resulted in meaningful conservation measures being undertaken for the species.

Dariel was heavily involved with the NSWFOC at the start of the first Atlas of Australian Birds, and so she and several friends, including John Waugh, Ethel & Kik Lisser, Joy Pegler and Wilma Barden made trips to the north and inland of Australia to visit those rarely surveyed areas. After the first Atlas these trips continued for some years but in the mid-1980s Dariel joined the NSW Bird Atlasers. She once again became a committee member and for some years during the 1990s she acted as Secretary and at one point the newsletters were compiled and mailed from her front room. Dariel was also occasionally roped in to help Bill Lewis look for funding for the Atlasers' activities. On one notable occasion they cornered Robert Hill, the then Minister for the Environment at a function at the Australian Museum – the result being funding for the Habitat guide.

Trips to inland NSW were required to fill holes in the map – at first with a series of expeditions organised with Bert Bolton and later as 'tag-along' trips, Dariel usually travelling with David Martin. Perhaps the most memorable trip was the six-week trip in late 1997 in which over 100 previously-unvisited 10-minute blocks were looked at. As with the rest of the team, Dariel endured the scorching temperatures, lack of water, flies, a full-on dust storm at White Cliffs and of course the hundreds and hundreds of farm gates.

Unfortunately time catches up with us all, and Dariel's movements became more restricted. This did not prevent her looking at the birds around her yard. When something interesting was on offer she was willing to look at it including the interactions between Channel-bills and Pied Currawongs, and an increase in Powerful Owl visits. I have a memory of popping in on the way home from work and helping Dariel cutting up a dead possum and measuring it on the old brass kitchen scales to figure out what proportion was the gut discarded by the Owls. When Dariel moved into a nursing home less than a year ago she was still looking at the birds in the gardens, but sadly no longer. We will all miss her deeply.

Ian McAllan

