



## NEWSLETTER 124

ISSN 2202-297X (Online)

June 2016

**Editor: Stein Boddington**

<[info@absa.asn.au](mailto:info@absa.asn.au)>

### Contents

Editorial  
Corella Contents Volume 40(2)  
Feather Map of Australia  
Grey Plover  
Japanese Crested Ibis  
Bird in the Hand uploads  
Additions to EPBC List  
Black-throated Finch Presumed Extinct in NSW  
Yellow-faced Honeyeaters  
Carnaby's Cockatoo  
Australian Field Ornithology  
Albatrosses, Petrels and transmitters  
The Cuckoo Mafia  
Australian Bird Feeding & Watering Study.

### Editorial

As the editor of this Newsletter for over twenty years now, I have often wondered what it would take for it to be a "people's newsletter" - to be populated not by my own incoherent ramblings and disjointed web-surfing, but by the news, questions, articles, pictures and opinions of the members of ABSA.

We tried and failed to stimulate conversations with web-based bulletin boards. The other newsletter I edit, in the disability field, is similarly afflicted. I have periodically asked, pleaded and begged for contributions, and thank profusely those few who responded. But nothing seems to stimulate that flood of contributions about which editors dream.

So we continue, quarter by quarter, issue by issue. I have set my sights on 100 issues, in about four years, after which, someone else will have to dream those dreams.

*Stein Boddington*

Newsletter Editor

### Corella Contents- June 2016 - Vol.40(2)

#### Papers:

Importance of 'pre-adaptation', consumer opportunism and limited interference competition in facilitating urban living by exotic Common Mynas

*S. Meles-Taberner and A. Lill*

Diet of the Satin Bowerbird *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* in the Illawarra Region, New South Wales, Australia

*M. Mo and D. R. Waterhouse*

#### Seabird Islands

No. 267. Suomi Island, Easter Group, Houtman Abrolhos, Western Australia

*C. A. Surman and L. W. Nicholson*

#### Abstracts:

ABSA Conference, Yarramundi Conference Centre, 2016

#### Book Reviews

Where Song Began: Australia's Birds and How They Changed the World

*Reviewed by M. Keighley*

Birds & Animals of Australia's Top End. Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, and Kununurra.

*Reviewed by D. Franklin*

#### Recovery Round-up.

### Feather Map of Australia

The Feather Map of Australia project aims to collect waterbird feathers from wetlands around Australia. These feathers will be analysed using nuclear techniques, such as mass spectrometry and high resolution X-ray fluorescence, to identify stable isotopes and minerals that are incorporated into feathers through the ingestion of food.

These analyses will identify the differences in feathers from diverse parts of Australia, creating a Feather Map.

A joint project of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) and University of New South Wales (UNSW), the Feather Map will be used to track the movement of waterbirds around Australia from wetland to wetland based on an analysis of the feathers to identify stable isotopes and mineral elements.

Wetlands around Australia are under threat from reduced river flows and flooding, drought, climate change and land use changes. Wetlands are habitats that are critical for Australia's waterbirds. They provide places for nesting, feeding and roosting. For many species of waterbirds, flooded wetlands are essential for nesting. Without floods and river flows many waterbirds don't breed. This project will collect information on which wetlands waterbirds use, how they use them and wetland health.

This information is of great interest to water and wetland managers, helping inform decision making regarding environmental flows and water management issues. It is also important for understanding the ecology and life cycles of waterbirds and waterbird populations to ensure that populations of Australia's waterbirds are maintained or increased.

This project is an Australian first and provides a new non-invasive method of tracking waterbirds without the need for capturing birds.

For information on how to be involved in this project, please go to: <http://feathermap.ansto.gov.au/>

## Grey Plover

The Grey Plover is the largest plover that occurs in Australia, but we know very little about it.

We know they migrate 12,000 kilometres to breed in northern Siberia and Alaska during the northern summer, and then they return to spend our summer in Australia. We know that the Australian coastline hosts around 12,000 Grey Plovers between September and March each year. We also know that nearly all the Grey Plovers that occur in Australia are females, but we have no idea why. It makes their migration even more mysterious. Why do females migrate to Australia, but males do not?

### We are using satellite tracking to find some answers

Last year you may have heard about the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) [crowdfunding campaign](#) to raise funds to unlock the mysteries of this unique migratory species. With thanks to the generous support of both donors and volunteers participating in the North-West Australia Wader Expedition, we are delighted to announce that satellite transmitters have now been successfully attached to five Grey Plovers in north-western Australia's Roebuck Bay. [Click here to see the photos!](#)

These solar-powered satellite transmitters, weighing just five grams each, enable us to follow the birds' journey to better understand their migration strategy, stopover sites and breeding locations. We'll be monitoring them as they move around the north-west of Australia before they start their northward migration (usually in April) to their breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra.

### Follow their migration from the comfort of your own home!

We'll be tracing the Grey Plovers' individual journeys online, giving scientists, volunteers and supporters like you the opportunity to follow their route and discover their breeding grounds as part of this fundamental research.

[Stay tuned for further updates](#) and learn more about our migratory shorebirds today by [joining a shorebird event](#) near you.

## Japanese "Crested Ibis" Paints its own Feathers Grey.

I came across this unusual habit of the Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon*, and wondered if there are any Australian instances of plumage colour being modified by the bird itself. The complete description of the species is at [www.bird-research.jp/1\\_shiryo/seitai/toki.pdf](http://www.bird-research.jp/1_shiryo/seitai/toki.pdf). Ed.

"The male and female are similar in plumage coloration. They look rosy white all over in the non-breeding period from September to January. The flight feathers are reddish orange in the rachis and become paler towards the periphery of the vane. The underpart of the wings looks salmon pink in flight ... The Crested Ibis turns its own plumage charcoal grey from the nape to the back in the breeding period.

However, they do not develop the breeding feathers by moulting. They rub the black lipid that comes from the skin of the nape on the feathers after they bathe. Since the lipid is not soluble in water, it is thinly applied to the feathers after it is emulsified by water.

They look black immediately after bathing, but turn grey when they dry up. The grey of the feathers deepens in colour every time they bathe from January to April. When the breeding period is over, [they] cease to rub the lipid on the feathers, and the feathers become lighter in colour until the back looks mottled in the moulting period when the old feathers are replaced with new rosy white ones.

Crested Ibises become rosy white all over again in September when the moulting period is over. It is birds of over two years that rub the lipid on the back feathers in the breeding season, and one-year-old birds remain rosy"

## Bird in the Hand Uploads

24 new species profiles and two revisions uploaded today. This takes the total to 376 species sheets and completes the profiles for all Australian passerines (with the exception of a few vagrants). Apart from the passerines, all of the Rosellas and Cuckoos are also now completed.

Jeff Hardy

President

(A titanic effort, Jeff. Well done! - Ed.)

### Cockatoos, Lorikeets & Parrots

Rainbow Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus</i>
Red-winged Parrot	<i>Aprosmictus erythropterus</i>
Superb Parrot	<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>
Regent Parrot	<i>Polytelis anthopeplus</i>
Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i> (Revised to add
Adelaide & Yellow Rosellas	& include all other subspecies )
Green Rosella	<i>Platycercus caledonicus</i>
Pale-headed Rosella	<i>Platycercus adscitus</i>
Northern Rosella	<i>Platycercus venustus</i>
Western Rosella	<i>Platycercus icterotis</i>

### Cuckoos

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*

### Lyrebirds

Albert's Lyrebird *Menura alberti*  
Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae*

### Emu-wrens

Southern Emu-wren *Stipiturus malachurus*  
Mallee Emu-wren *Stipiturus mallee*

Rufous-crowned Emu-wren	<i>Stipiturus ruficeps</i>
<b>Grasswrens</b>	
Short-tailed Grasswren	<i>Amytornis merrotsyi</i>
White-throated Grasswren	<i>Amytornis woodwardi</i>
Carpentarian Grasswren	<i>Amytornis dorotheae</i>
Dusky Grasswren	<i>Amytornis purnelli</i>
Kalkadoon Grasswren	<i>Amytornis ballarae</i>
Black Grasswren	<i>Amytornis housei</i>
Grey Grasswren	<i>Amytornis barbatulus</i> (Revised)

#### **Manucode & Riflebirds**

Paradise Riflebird	<i>Ptiloris paradiseus</i>
Victoria's Riflebird	<i>Ptiloris victoriae</i>
Magnificent Riflebird	<i>Ptiloris magnificus</i>

## **Additions to EPBC Act List.**

The following birds were listed as "Endangered" or "Critically Endangered" under the EPBC Act on 5 May 2016:

#### **Critically Endangered:**

<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Great Knot
<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	Swift Parrot

#### **Endangered**

<i>Amytornis dorotheae</i>	Carpentarian Grasswren
<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Red Knot
<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	Lesser Sand Plover

Full list: <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicthreatenedlist.pl>

## **Black-throated Finch (southern subspecies) presumed extinct in NSW**

The NSW Scientific Committee has made a preliminary determination that the Black-throated Finch (southern subspecies) *Poephila cincta cincta* is extinct in NSW. It is currently listed as 'endangered under the EPBC Act.

The bird has not been recorded since 1994. I quote here paragraph 7 of the determination, which discusses the presumed reasons leading to the extinction.

"7. Loss and degradation of habitat appear to be the major threat to the Black-throated Finch (southern) (BTFRT 2004, 2007; TSSC 2005; Garnett et al. 2011). The decline of the Black-throated Finch (southern) in northern NSW and southern Queensland coincided with the introduction of livestock (primarily sheep) grazing in the early 20th century (Franklin 1999; TSSC 2005; Garnett et al. 2011; Forshaw et al. 2012). Grazing by livestock and the introduced European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) is thought to have degraded grassland habitats and riparian vegetation leading to a reduction of seed availability from native grasses (Franklin 1999; TSSC 2005; Garnett et al. 2011). The clearing and fragmentation of woodland for agriculture, especially cropping, which has been particularly extensive in the southern part of the subspecies' range, are also likely to have had a negative impact on the Black-throated Finch (southern) through the loss and degradation of riparian breeding habitat (Woinarski and Caterall 2004; TSSC 2005; BTFRT 2007; Garnett et al. 2011; Forshaw et al. 2012). Altered fire regimes and the spread of weeds and exotic grasses may also have been detrimental to the subspecies (Woinarski and Caterall 2004; TSSC 2005; BTFRT 2007; Garnett et al. 2011). All of these threats are on-going and are likely to be exacerbated by periodic drought (Garnett et al. 2011; Forshaw et al. 2012). 'Clearing of native vegetation', and

'Competition and grazing by the feral European Rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus* (L.)' are listed as Key Threatening Processes under the Act. "

The full determination can be viewed at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/threatenedspecies/determinations/PDBlackthroatFinchSPE.pdf>

## **What is going on with Y/F Honeyeaters?**

Birding-Aus, the birding email network, has been awash with reports of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters migrating in the wrong direction.

Carol Proberts, of Blue Mountains Bird Observers, noted that a bumper northerly migration was observed in Autumn, both in the Blue Mountains and the Hunter Valley.

Then came all these reports, mostly from more coastal places eg Como, in southern Sydney, detailing substantial migration in a southerly direction.

One correspondent noted that he had seen the same thing in several previous years.

## **Carnaby's Cockatoo**

A group of us started a petition re Carnaby's Cockatoo. Much of their original habitat has been destroyed and many birds are now roosting in pine forest around Perth. Pine forest is now being removed and while the WA Government plans to replace the trees it won't happen fast enough to save the birds. For anyone who'd like to sign here is the URL:

<https://www.change.org/p/dpc-wa-gov-au-save-carnaby-s-black-cockatoo-s-in-pinjar-wa>

*Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow* in Birding-Aus

## **Australian Field Ornithology**

Some exciting news about Australian Field Ornithology - All papers back to Volume 1 Issue 1 in 1959 are now available online as a pdf and can be downloaded as individual papers. There are some real gems in here from a very impressive number of contributors.

Australian Field Ornithology publishes papers on a broad spectrum of topics in Australasian ornithology, including ecology, behaviour, breeding biology and natural history of Australasian birds The link is here:  
<http://www.birdlife.org.au/afo>

If you are an Australian Birdlife member you will need to log in using your membership password - this gives you unrestricted access to every paper.

If you are not a member you will need to create a (free) username and password and you will then be able to access everything except the subscription-only papers. Subscription only applies only to some papers in 2014 and 2015. Note that all papers that deal with the avifauna in Wallacea, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia are always treated as open access regardless of their publication date.

*Rohan Clarke*

## Effects Of Satellite Transmitters On Albatrosses And Petrels

The Auk 120(4):1082-1090. 2003 doi: <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1642/0004-8038\(2003\)120\[1082:EOSTOA\]2.0.CO;2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1642/0004-8038(2003)120[1082:EOSTOA]2.0.CO;2)>

Richard A. Phillips<sup>1</sup>, Jose C. Xavier, John P. Croxall

### Abstract

Effects of deployment of miniaturized transmitters and loggers have been well studied in penguins, but much less so in flying seabirds. We examined the effects of satellite tag (platform terminal transmitter, PTT) deployment in Black-browed (*Thalassarche melanophris*) and Gray-headed (*T. chrysostoma*) albatrosses at South Georgia and reviewed the recent literature for other albatrosses and petrels. In our study, although a few individuals may have slightly extended their foraging trips, overall there was no significant difference in trip duration, meal mass, breeding success, or rate of return in the next season between birds with PTTs and controls. By comparison, most other studies of albatrosses and petrels recorded extended trip durations and, in some cases, high rates of nest desertion following PTT attachment. That occurred particularly where transmitter loads exceeded 3% of adult mass. Extended trip durations may result from reduced flight efficiency, as well as the effect of capture and temporary restraint, but affected birds seem nonetheless to commute to representative foraging areas. To minimize device effects, we suggest that transmitter loads be reduced to a minimum, use of harnesses be avoided (particularly for breeding season deployments when tape attachment to feathers is an effective alternative), and careful attention be given to limiting handling times during incubation when some species are particularly sensitive to disturbance.

## Cuckoo mafia:

### Host birds only tolerate parasitic eggs in their nests when they fear retaliation

#### Summary:

The brown-headed cowbird is nothing short of a nightmare for its hosts: If they eject the brood parasite's eggs from the nest, it punishes them by destroying their entire clutch. Researchers have designed a mathematical model for analyzing the interaction between avian brood parasites and their hosts. The model calculations show that birds only accept a brood parasite's eggs in their nests if they are forced to by threat of retaliation on the part of the invader.

Ref: Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. "Cuckoo mafia: Host birds only tolerate parasitic eggs in their nests when they fear retaliation." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 18 May 2016. <[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/05/160518094714.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/05/160518094714.htm)>.

## Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study

The Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study is a citizen science initiative being conducted by researchers at Deakin University and Griffith University. Our interests are the interactions people have with birds in their own backyards, as this can have a huge impact on bird diversity and abundance. One of the most common ways people interact with birds is through providing food and water.

Why do we find this interesting? For the simple reason that we do not know how providing food and water might impact on bird ecology and diversity in Australia. While providing food and water to birds is a popular activity, little



is known about what species are attracted to these resources and why people like to provide them. Most importantly we need to understand the ecological and behavioural effects of bird feeding as almost all information from other countries regarding bird feeding simply does not apply here. We acknowledge that feeding of wild birds is an important activity for large numbers of people and that the practice may be a significant way for many to connect with nature.



The Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study aims to gather quantitative data on the effects of supplementary feeding and providing water for birds and the reasons why people provided food and/or water. In doing so we aim to develop purpose

guidelines for people who feed birds to do so with minimum risk to birds.

If you provide food or water for birds and would like to take part in this exciting study, Register your interest today! We would love to have you involved. Go to: <https://csdb.org.au/feedingbirds/home.aspx>

