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Editorial

I draw your attention to the note below from the Editors of *Corella*, outlining the new procedures for publishing papers. We will no longer have four editions of *Corella* in a year; just a series of papers and articles, and the end of year compilation in hard copy.

The publication of each edition of *Corella* has always been temporally connected to the publication of this Newsletter. We have decided that the Newsletter should nevertheless remain a quarterly publication.

It is time again for renewal of your subscription. The Treasurer has asked me to remind everyone who pays by recurrent PayPal order to update the amount to the new subscription rate (from 2015).

Stein Boddington

Newsletter Editor

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Corella Contents - Dec 2016 Vol 40(4)

Papers:

Nestling and post-fledging growth and development in an Australian passerine: Hall's Babbler *pomatostomus halli*
D.J.Portelli

Do exotic birds dominate feeding at garden food stations in Melbourne in winter?

C. Ruwandeniya and A. Lill

Use of ultraviolet light to help age nightjars, owl-nightjars, frogmouths and owls

M. D. Blythman and J. L. Sanson

Observation of mass road-kill of Superb Parrots *Polytelis swainsonii* feeding on spilt grain

J. D. Rees

Dry season diet of a Barking Owl *Ninox connivens peninsularis* on Adolphus Island in the north of Western Australia

R. Palmer and W. Caton

Book Reviews

Bird Minds: Cognition and Behaviour of Australian Native Birds, by Gisela Caplan

Reviewed by C. Young

Recovery Round-up.

Corella - editorial note

To try to reduce the interval between submission of a manuscript and publication after acceptance, *Corella* will institute two measures from 1 January, 2017:

- (1) Quarterly issues will be scrapped and accepted papers will be published online as soon as the review and editorial processes are complete. A similar procedure will apply for material that is not formally refereed, such as book reviews, obituaries and banding recovery summaries. ABSA members will be alerted to each online publication by email. The annual hardcopy version of the journal will be retained.
- (2) Reviewers of submitted research manuscripts will be asked to complete and return their review within four weeks; if they are unable to meet such a deadline, they will be asked to nominate an alternative potential reviewer if possible.

It is anticipated that these changes will substantially reduce the time between submission and publication of a paper (or other article), and thus further encourage authors to submit their findings to *Corella*.

Alan Lill

Honorary Editor

Alan Leishman

Honorary Production Editor

ABSA Conference and AGM 2017

Planning for the 2017 ABSA Conference and AGM is continuing apace, with a great line-up of speakers engaged and a wonderful venue booked at the Australian National University in Canberra. So please mark Saturday 11 March in your diaries; and if you don't live in Canberra start planning to be there for the weekend. The nation's capital is full of things to see and do so you'll have no trouble filling in time on Sunday morning before you head home.

As previously advised, the theme for this conference will be **Long-term banding studies for monitoring bushland birds: what we've learned and future directions**. There are two parallel issues we will be considering under this heading. The future prospects of our bushland birds and the future directions of our efforts to study them through the bird banding scheme.

Everyone interested in birds will be familiar with concerns about the future of our bushland birds, especially those that live in the "wheatbelt woodlands". Pressures caused by habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and feral animals (amongst other things) are now being added to by climate change and a renewed program of land clearing. The last couple of decades have seen much of research published on this topic, but there is much we still don't fully understand.

At the same time, the practice of bird banding has also been slowly but surely changing. Regulatory requirements are getting stricter; community expectations about research practices are increasing; new technologies (like micro GPS trackers) are emerging; and the internet and social media are new and powerful forces in our world. We need to move with the times and make sure that we adapt what we're doing and how we're doing it to these changes.

It's going to be a lot for one day but it should make for a very interesting conference. Our morning speakers will help set the scene with reviews of some well-known long-term banding projects. After lunch has given us all a chance to absorb and ponder all that we've heard we'll then have a plenary discussion to consider the big questions: where to from here? We're keen to hear from everyone - young and old, amateur and professional - as all perspectives are welcome. So please come along for a day where you'll be informed, entertained and challenged; and hopefully help us to shape the future course of bird banding in Australia.

Banding Site at Wianamatta Nature Reserve destroyed.

Some twerp, with nothing better to do, set fire to Wianamatta Nature Reserve (near Penrith) on Friday 4 November. The fire not only burnt out our banding site but threatened adjacent houses and properties. It also necessitated the evacuation of a nearby school. All but one small area of our banding site was destroyed. The Reserve is a "green island" surrounded by suburbia and is home to a great variety of bird and reptile species. The trees will hopefully recover but we are concerned about the regeneration of the endangered grevillea species, the flowers of which are a great drawcard for at least 10 different species of honeyeater.

A similar scenario played out at Windsor Downs Nature Reserve in August 2013 which was completely destroyed by a wildfire along with our banding site there. We have recently recommenced banding at Windsor Downs and have been pleasantly surprised by the number of retrapped birds that were banded before the fire struck. These include: Eastern Yellow Robins, Variegated and Superb Fairy-wrens, Fuscous and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, a Yellow Thornbill and Rufous Whistlers. So, there is hope that the bird community at Wianamatta Nature Reserve may be able to re-establish itself.

John Farrell - Co-ordinator,
Cumberland Plain Avian Research Team

Bird in the Hand

The species added are:

31 October 2016 - 31 new species profile sheets and two revisions - taking the total number of species covered in Bird in the Hand (Second Edition) to 407.

Jeff Hardy

Quails & Button-quails

King Quail	<i>Excalfactoria chinensis</i>
Red-backed Button-quail	<i>Turnix maculosus</i>
Black-breasted Button-quail	<i>Turnix melanogaster</i>
Chestnut-backed Button-quail	<i>Turnix castanotus</i>
Buff-breasted Button-quail	<i>Turnix olivii</i>
Red-chested Button-quail	<i>Turnix pyrrhorthorax</i>

Pigeons & Doves

White-headed Pigeon	<i>Columba leucomela</i>
Laughing Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia leacomela</i>
Spotted Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	<i>Macropygia amboinensis</i>
Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Common Bronzewing	<i>Phaps chalcoptera</i> (Revised)
Brush Bronzewing	<i>Phaps elegans</i>
Flock Bronzewing	<i>Phaps histrionica</i>
Spinifex Pigeon	<i>Geophaps plumifera</i>
Partridge Pigeon	<i>Geophaps smithii</i>
Squatter Pigeon	<i>Geophaps scripta</i>
Wonga Pigeon	<i>Leucosarcia picata</i>
Banded Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus cinctus</i>
Wompoo Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus magnificus</i>
Superb Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus superbus</i>
Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus regina</i>
Pied Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula bicolor</i>
Topknot Pigeon	<i>Lopholaimus antarcticus</i>

Diurnal Raptors

Brown Goshawk	<i>Accipiter fasciatus</i>
Collared Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter cirrocephalus</i>

Parrots

Budgerigar	<i>Melopsitticus undulatus</i>
Red-capped Parrot	<i>Purpureicephalus spurius</i>
Bourke's Parrot	<i>Neopsephotus bourkii</i>
Elegant Parrot	<i>Neophema elegans</i>
Rock Parrot	<i>Neophema petrophila</i>

Cuckoos

Eastern Koel	<i>Eudynamis orientalis</i>
Channel-billed Cuckoo	<i>Scythrops novaehollandiae</i>

Butcherbirds

Grey Butcherbird	<i>Cracticus torquatus</i> (Revised)
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And some late additions, taking the total to 413:

Diurnal Raptors

Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus axillaris</i>
Australian Kestrel	<i>Falco cenchroides</i>

Waders

Inland Dotterel	<i>Charadrius australis</i>
Banded Lapwing	<i>Vanellus tricolor</i>
Masked Lapwing	<i>Vanellus miles</i>

Pratincoles

Australian Pratincole	<i>Stiltia isabella</i>
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Honeyeaters

Little Friarbird	<i>Philemon citrogularis</i> (Revised)
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Fund for Avian Research - call for grant applications

The deadline for applications for funding support from ABSA's Fund for Avian Research (FAR) Grants is fast approaching. The FAR Grants are intended to support researchers with project-related expenses such as buying equipment and/or travel within Australia. This year we have also produced a set of assessment criteria (see below) to help researchers sharpen their applications.

The amount of money isn't large (grants typically don't exceed \$2,000) but the applications don't need to be lengthy, either! If you are running a research project on some aspect of the Australian bird fauna and could use some extra funding, give it a go. Last year we supported projects as diverse as radio-tracking grey grasswrens; survival and persistence of woodland birds in restoration plantings; and the evolution of female song in birds.

Applicants should email their signed applications (as attachments either in .pdf or .doc formats) to: info@absa.asn.au by 31st December 2016.

FAR Grants – Assessment criteria

1. General Criteria

How well does the proposal relate to ABSA's objective "to support, encourage and promote the study of Australian birds and to contribute to their conservation" and the purpose of the avian research fund to "assist with the publication of information, the provision of education or the carrying on of research into various aspects of the avifauna of Australia"?

2. Scientific and Technical Criteria

- Does the proposal have a clearly stated objective?
- Does the proposal include a clearly stated and practical methodology to achieve its objective?
- Is the methodology consistent with good scientific design and with good practice (including ethical considerations)?
- Is the achievement of the objective able to be measured or quantitatively assessed?
- If successful, how significant and/or useful will the outcome be in terms of our knowledge of the Australian avifauna and its conservation?
- How likely is the project to result in formal publication of results?

3. Financial Criteria

- Does the proposal provide a clear and itemised account of how the funds will be spent?
- Are the allocations in the proposed budget appropriate and do they provide reasonable value for money?

IBAs and KBAs

Just as we all got used to Important Bird Areas, they have decided that, from now, they will be Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).

The move recognises the biodiversity of important areas, and includes fauna other than birds. Most Australian IBAs are KBAs, so there is little practical change at ground level.

Details of the bigger picture can be found at: <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/top-conservation-players-partner-identify-most-vital-places-life-earth>

and information on Australian KBAs at: www.birdsyoulove.org

NSW Bird Atlassers win Whitley Award

On Thursday 22 September at the Australian Museum, Sydney, a dedicated group of volunteers was recognised by the Royal Zoological Society of NSW's Whitley Awards Committee when their publication 'AN ATLAS OF THE BIRDS OF NSW & THE ACT: Volume 2' was announced as the Best Zoological Resource published on any Australian fauna or flora during 2016. The 2nd Volume is one of a 3 part set which, when complete, will cover every species found in NSW and the ACT, including the Lord Howe group, and what needs to be addressed for the long-term welfare of each species.

The NSWBA Co-ordinator, David Martin, said "he was thrilled that the Whitley Award Committee of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW had recognised our Bird Atlas as the Best Zoological Resource published during 2016". He added that "Our group is indebted to the dedicated band of birders who collaborated in systematically surveying New South Wales and its waters in order to document the changing distributions of those bird species that find their homes here. This award recognises the quality and excellence of the contribution the NSWBA is providing for Australian birds and their conservation."

Lead author Richard Cooper, in his acceptance speech, was generous in his praise of all the hundreds of contributors who had done the field work over 40 years. The RZS award reinforces the value of the work of the NSW Bird Atlassers Inc. and gave credit to the vision of the past and present members of NSWBA Committee, the many people who supported the data collection, contributed photographs and/or provided the much needed financial support.

The award presenter Dr Phil Straw said the incredible detail of the book was a key feature. When the final volume is published all Australian Bird species found in NSW and the ACT will have their current habitat, distribution, migratory habits and current status assessed. The Atlas is a benchmark for the scientist, environmentalist and field observer alike.

The NSW Bird Atlassers Incorporated (NSWBA) was established in 1982 as an independent, volunteer-based, non-profit group with the joint aims of monitoring the distribution of birds in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, preserving habitats, providing a proper basis for environmental impact studies and for other ornithological reference purposes.

Dick Cooper
NSW Bird Atlassers
www.nswbirdatlassers.org.au

Treasurer

2017 Australasian Bird Fair and Wildlife Expo

Advance notice is given that this event will be held at Newington Armoury, Sydney Olympic Park on 3-5 November 2017. It promises to be bigger and better than ever before. ABSA will have its own stall this time around.

More details will be published as they become available.

Orange-bellied Parrot Fundraiser

A critically urgent and worthwhile conservation project which you might like to support:

<https://pozible.com/project/operation-obp>

For those of you unfamiliar with crowd funding, this is an internet-based appeal for a multitude of small donations, in this case, in the cause of providing more nesting boxes for the Orange-bellied Parrot, whose numbers are once again in the hyper-critical zone - 14 left in the wild at last count.

And for those who know of the “First Dog On the Moon” in “The Guardian”, here is the link to First Dog’s account of the OBP crisis. <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/22/help-save-australias-orange-bellied-parrots-there-are-only-14-left>>

New Date for the Spread of Song-birds from Australia to the World

Chris Cooney, postdoctoral research associate, University of Sheffield, writes in an article on “The Conversation” website, that research has shown that the song-birds used the emergence of the Indonesian archipelago, around 24 million years ago, to island hop out of Australia and spread all over the world.

Read it all at:

<<https://theconversation.com/how-songbirds-island-hopped-their-way-from-australia-to-colonise-the-world-64616>>

Egrets Breeding - sightings requested.

A request for birders who visit northern Victoria or southern NSW near the Murray River.

The recent flooding and rain in SE Australia are likely to have created suitable conditions for breeding by egrets, night-herons and other waterbirds.

If you see or encounter any egrets in BREEDING plumage then I am keen to hear details of:

- date
- location
- species and numbers of birds

Egrets in breeding plumage can indicate a breeding colony nearby. As most egret species are threatened in Victoria I am keen to document relevant sightings etc.

Please contact me directly:

<martin.obrien@delwp.vic.gov.au>

Martin O'Brien

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Human Adaptation to Climate Change Shifts Breeding Timing of Wildlife

Summary

Warming temperatures cause temporal changes in growing seasons and prey abundance that drive earlier breeding by birds, especially dietary specialists within homogeneous habitat. Less is known about how generalists respond to climate-associated shifts in growing seasons or prey phenology, which may occur at different rates across land cover types.

We studied whether breeding phenology of a generalist predator, the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), was associated with shifts in growing seasons and, presumably, prey abundance, in a mosaic of non-irrigated shrub/grasslands and irrigated crops/pastures. We examined the relationship between remotely-sensed normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) and abundance of small mammals that, with insects, constitute approximately 93% of kestrel diet biomass. We used NDVI to estimate the start of the growing season (SoGS) in irrigated and non-irrigated lands from 1992 to 2015 and tested whether either estimate of annual SoGS predicted the timing of kestrel nesting. Finally, we examined relationships among irrigated SoGS, weather and crop planting.

NDVI was a useful proxy for kestrel prey because it predicted small mammal abundance and past studies showed that NDVI predicts insect abundance. NDVI-estimated SoGS advanced significantly in irrigated lands ($\beta = -1.09 \pm 0.30$ SE) but not in non-irrigated lands ($\beta = -0.57 \pm 0.53$). Average date of kestrel nesting advanced 15 days in the past 24 years and was positively associated with the SoGS in irrigated lands, but not the SoGS in non-irrigated lands. Advanced SoGS in irrigated lands was related to earlier planting of crops after relatively warm winters, which were more common in recent years.

Despite different patterns of SoGS change between land cover types, kestrel nesting phenology shifted with earlier prey availability in irrigated lands. Kestrels may preferentially track prey in irrigated lands over non-irrigated lands because of higher quality prey on irrigated lands, or earlier prey abundance may release former constraints on other selective pressures to breed early, such as seasonal declines in fecundity or competition for high-quality mates.

This is one of the first examples of an association between human adaptation to climate change and shifts in breeding phenology of wildlife.

Ref: Shawn H. Smith, Karen Steenhof, Christopher J.W. McClure, Julie A. Heath. Earlier nesting by generalist predatory bird is associated with human responses to climate change. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 2016; DOI: 10.1111/1365-2656.12604. Note: The full article is available on-line, under the creative commons licence.

