

Newsletter of the Australian Bird Study Association

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## NEWSLETTER 130



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## **E d i t o r i a l**

Book the date - ABSA's Conference and AGM will be held on Saturday March 17th, at Yarramundi Conference Centre in Western Sydney. Details will be passed on as they become available.

Great fun was had picking The Guardian's Australian Bird of the Year. In the end, the Magpie just pipped the inglorious 'bin-chicken' aka the Australian White Ibis, for first place. Why did so many vote for the White Ibis? Was it the inner city people who only ever notice a bird when it lands in their smashed avo? Is there something funny about the readership of The Guardian? Or is there a genuine affection for this brash intruder into our cities? Yours truly was one of seven people who voted for the Rufous Fantail - I bet all of them have had this exquisite bird in their hand. Jenny Macklin and Benjamin Law got a vote each, as did Big Bird, the Australian Raincheck, the Dodo, the Kentucky Fried Chicken, Ozzie Ostrich and Plucka Duck, and a host of mis-spellings, of which the Wondering Albatross stands out!

Many thanks to the people sending in a stream of trip reports! Keep them coming. But please do not include tables, as our newsletter software does not support them. Thanks

*Stein Boddington*  
Newsletter Editor

### **2018 Conference and Annual General Meeting - Save the date!**

Formal notice is given to members that the Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held at the Lutanda Yarramundi Conference Centre in Sydney (761 Springwood Rd, Yarramundi NSW 2753) on Saturday 17th March 2018. The conference will commence at 09:00 and will be followed by the AGM.

A detailed program for the conference will be circulated closer to the date.

A nomination form for the election of Committee members is enclosed with the December Corella mail-out.

In particular, we are keen to hear from any member prepared to take on the job of Treasurer, as John Farrell is standing down at the end of his term.

### **Fund for Avian Research - call for grant applications (due 21 January 2018)**

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. It is anticipated that approximately \$2,500 will be available in the 2018 round of funding. That amount is usually distributed across several applications.

The amount of money isn't large, 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. Please read the Assessment Criteria below carefully. Applicants should email their signed applications (as attachments either in .pdf or .doc formats) to: [info@absa.asn.au](mailto:info@absa.asn.au) by 21st January 2018.

## **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**

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

### **3. Financial Criteria**

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

## **Bird in the Hand Uploads**

There are no additions this month to the Bird in the Hand project. Members are reminded that a USB drive containing all of the 434 sheets currently published on the ABSA website is now available for a donation of \$25 to the Association. The donation will cover the cost of the memory stick, postage and handling. The memory stick version has all common names in the same alphabetical order as the ABBBS recommended band size list to facilitate easy reference if the sheets are loaded onto a smart phone or tablet.

## **Renewal of Membership**

It's that time of the years again! Members are reminded that there are several ways to renew their membership of ABSA.

- PayPal
- Cheque
- Direct deposit
- Credit Card

Whichever method you use, please ensure WE know who YOU are when you pay, especially using electronic payments. Just include your membership number or full name.

As always, topping up your subscription with a donation to the Fund for Avian Research is appreciated, by us and the birds!

## **Birdfair 2017**

ABSA Committee members and members ran a stall at the Birdfair for the full three days of the event. It was a shame that Sydney had its first cold and wet weekend for several months on the same weekend, and this resulted in fewer people than anticipated attending.

Nevertheless, in the time that I was there, a steady stream of people came through the door, inquiring about ABSA, and about banding studies, or just wanting to chat about birds. Some have already joined members on banding trips.

It was also an opportunity to catch up with old friends, and to make contact with new organisations and people. Ed.

## **Trip Report - Herdsman Lake, W.A.**

From Bill Rutherford.

Warm and dry conditions with light winds under partially cloudy skies looked promising but there was very little activity throughout the morning with even the lorikeets conspicuous by their absence. With our own numbers depleted just 8 nets were deployed in the Car Park and on the Mound.

In all just a dozen encounters, six of them re-traps, taking our total for the year past 250, well behind the progressive target of 570. Having said that November's total of 82 was a good result bearing in mind last week's

rest day while the group was on the Peel inlet. Species number of 29 is particularly satisfying as some of our traditional net rides have been inaccessible for most of the year (Grove and Reed-beds) or activity greatly reduced (Mound).

Among today's species, a bee-eater banded earlier in the month. Catch of the day, a pair of juvenile Shining Bronze-cuckoos adding to the one banded in mid-August. In the early years of the project these migrants were observed at Herdsman to arrive in early July to breed, and to depart before the New Year. In more recent years they have remained well into the New Year. Encounters in the 2017 calendar year have been as late as January 28 and February 17 with the last one on August 19. It will be interesting to see whether their migration and breeding patterns are changing.

### **Species List for the Year (beginning 1 July 2017)**

Australian Wood Duck;  
Australasian Shoveler;  
Grey Teal;  
Pacific Black Duck  
Laughing Dove  
Australasian Darter;  
Little Pied Cormorant  
Australian White Ibis  
Brown Goshawk  
Galah;  
Rainbow Lorikeet;  
Australian Ringneck  
Shining Bronze-cuckoo;  
Pallid Cuckoo (new)  
Rainbow Bee-eater  
Variegated Fairy-wren;  
Weebill;  
Western Gerygone;  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill;  
Striated Pardalote;  
Singing Honeyeater;  
Red Wattlebird;  
Brown Honeyeater;  
New Holland Honeyeater;  
Rufous Whistler;  
Australian Magpie;  
Willie Wagtail;  
Australian Raven;  
Silvereye

### **Trip Report - Ungarie, NSW, 15 October 2017**

This site in central western NSW is a new project recently set up by Tony Hunt and Mark Clayton to examine site fidelity in Painted Honeyeaters. Mark Clayton ran a banding session there two weeks ago and caught several birds (see his report below), but no Painted Honeyeaters, although there were several present.

So the team of Tony Hunt, Tom Burley, Gen Kyi and Richard Allen tried again and this time persistence was rewarded with success! We caught our first Painted Honeyeater, and what a wonderful bird it was. Hopefully the first of many! We also caught and banded several other honeyeaters (including a Striped), several Mistletoebirds, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and a very grumpy young Grey Butcherbird.



### **Trip Report - Charcoal Tank**

My wife Kay and I did a quick trip to CT on the weekend of September 22 – 23 prior to doing a check of what was happening with the Painted Honeyeaters at Ungarie. The weather was rather warm but very windy, and I put three nets up on several puddles below the central dam, only opening two in the late afternoon. The following morning I opened all three but the wind made them look like spinnakers on a boat in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race! Still, we did quite well considering the wind and banded 8 species with 19 new and 17 retraps. – all the usual stuff one expects when banding over water. The one disappointment was again caused by the wind and as I had just removed a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and was putting it into a bag, I looked down the net at what I thought was a male Red-capped Robin (from the back it was black and white) only to see an adult male Black Honeyeater literally get blown out of the net. Naughty words were said!! I closed up and pulled down around 1130 so that we could drive up to see what was happening at Ungarie.

Ungarie is very exposed so the wind was really howling through the site. There was one male Painted Honeyeater calling but I did not put up any nets. More on Ungarie later.

On the long weekend at the end of September, early October members of the crew banded at Buddigower Nature Reserve, down the road from The Charcoal Tank. This was only our 13th visit to the site compared to 174 for TCT. It has never really been a productive site but we are trying to pick up any movements between the two relatively close reserves – we do have one movement of a White-plumed Honeyeater. I arrived early as did Rhiannon with members of the team arriving over the afternoon and later that night. I won't mention the team that decided that they would try to find the reserve by getting lost on various private properties – they did make it in the end!! Harvey and Peter arrived on the Saturday morning . I put up 10 nets along the access track and Harvey and Peter went to their respective sites where they have banded on previous occasions; both moved to better locations later during the weekend. As I have said, it is generally not the best site that we band but I was quite surprised at just what we processed. Between the three of us we processed 154 birds of 27 species. The list of species, in no particular order is as follows with oldest recorded for this trip:-

Eastern Yellow Robin: 11 new, 0 retraps;  
White-eared Honeyeater: 25 n, 1 r, 2 years, 11 months;  
White-plumed Honeyeater: 12 n, 2 r, 2 y 4 m;  
Inland Thornbill: 17 n, 0 r;



Rufous Whistler: 9 n, 0 r;  
Red-capped Robin: 3 n, 0 r;  
White-browed Babbler: 12 n, 2 r, 6 y 11 m – this is the oldest on site;  
Striated Pardalote: 1 n, 0 r;  
White-throated Treecreeper: 2 n, 0 r;  
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater: 5 n, 0 r;  
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater: 4 n, 0 r;  
Brown Treecreeper: 22 n, 0 r;  
Golden Whistler: 3 n, 0 r;  
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo: 4 n, 0 r. This species has suddenly become quite common at both CT and Bu where we have banded a combined total of 8 birds recently and all males. Normally we may get one a year if we are lucky.;  
White-winged Triller: 1 n, 0 r. This species was not calling in the reserve. I saw two males in the trees above the net where we caught this bird and were possibly just passing through;  
Silvereye: 1 n, 0 r;  
Grey Fantail: 4 n, 0 r;  
Black-eared Cuckoo: 1 n, 0 r. Another species that was not calling in the reserve;  
Peaceful Dove: 2 n, 0 r;  
Variegated Fairy-wren: 2 n, 0 r. The race that we get at CT and Bu is *Malurus lamberti assimilis*. This race has now been elevated to full specific status and is called the Purple-backed Fairy-wren. The banding office does not yet recognise this split but it is always advisable to be aware of what races occur in your banding sites in case things are split in the future;  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill: 2 n, 0 r;  
Yellow Thornbill: 5 n, 0 r;  
White-winged Chough: 3 n, 0 r;  
Common Bronzewing: 1 n, 0 r;  
Mistletoebird: 1 n, 0 r;  
Grey Shrikethrush: 1 n, 0 r. That should all add up to 154 birds processed of 27 species.

I was very impressed with the team – Jas and Ashley Allnut, Claire Taylor, Els Tack, Rhiannon Kiggins, Shoshana Rapley, and recently joining us from England (we won't hold that against her) Sarah Biddiscombe. Everyone took turns at doing the respective tasks that we undertake and it was pleasure to have them all along. Mind you Terry K kept a firm eye on proceedings when I dozed off in my chair!!

On the Monday morning well before dawn, Rhiannon, Terry and his son Lachlan, and I packed up camp and headed for Ungarie in the hope that we could catch any Painted Honeyeaters that had arrived on site since Kay and I visited the site the week before. We had six nets up just after dawn and sat down in anticipation of things to come. There were at least five, and possibly seven, Painted Honeyeaters at or near the site and we were treated to some spectacular aerial displays over the top of us. Unfortunately the birds were staying high with their displays but started to come down lower to feed as we were leaving. It is going to be a hard job catching the little blighters but once the mistletoe starts to set fruit, it may be easier as many of the mistletoe clumps are quite low. They are flowering at present. We can but hope!! We did band 2 Little Friarbirds, two Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, a Yellow-throated Miner and an adult male Mistletoebird so all was not in vain. I gather Tony Hunt and possibly Richard Allen will be at Ungarie this weekend so better luck to them.

Cheers,  
Mark Clayton

### **Trip Report - Weddin Mountains National Park, NSW**

On 24-25th June the banding crew including Harvey, Alistair, Jen, Kim, Kelli and Ellen, Jas and Ash Allnut and parents, enjoyed some winter banding at Weddins. Alistair and Harvey banded at the winter sites 1, 2, 23 etc (I didn't realise there were many beehives there until I left on Sun).

The remainder of us were kept busy closer to camp on Armstrong side and down creek to net 45. Harvey/Alistair got to band Blue-faced HE and 3 Turquoise Parrots (see his photos below). Shortly after we got a retrap Turquoise Parrot at 45 which was from Nov 15. All this was witnessed by the Birdbanding Inspector who announced his presence over the radio (much to my confusion) ... Mark and Kaye visited for Sunday lunch. Also nice to see three races of Striated Pardalote together (got a nice pic thanks to the three hand models – MC, JH, KG I think).



**Species List:**

- Eastern Rosella
- Turquoise Parrot
- Eastern Yellow Robin
- Gloden Whistler
- Grey Shrike-thrush
- White-browed Babbler
- Yellow Thornbill
- Inland Thornbill
- Buff-rumped Thornbill
- Yellow-rumped Thornbill
- Speckled Warbler
- Superb Fairy-wren
- White-throated Treecreeper
- Spotted Pardalote
- Silvereye
- Brown-headed Honeyeater
- Striped Honeyeater
- Eastern Spinebill
- Singing Honeyeater
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater
- White-eared Honeyeater
- White-plumed Honeyeater
- Noisy Miner
- Red Wattlebird
- Spiney-cheeked Honeyeater
- Blue-faced Honeyeater
- Noisy Friarbird
- Little Friarbird
- Diamond Firetail
- Olive-backed Oriole
- Striated Pardalote



Blue-faced Honeyeater



Male Turquoise Parrot.



Female Turquoise Parrot

*Richard Allen*

**Call for Action on Christmas Island  
from Birdlife Australia**

I want to fill you in on the immediate threats that endanger this Australian wonder enough to garner global attention, including a recent article from BirdLife International.

Clearing of forests for phosphate mining and the associated impacts of invasive species are the greatest threats to the wildlife of Christmas Island. The island is deemed an "extinction hotspot" with 80% of its unique mammal and reptile species already lost, including the most recent and infamous extinction of the Christmas Island Pipistrelle, a small bat species last recorded in 2009.

Australia has a responsibility to preserve this internationally recognised Key Biodiversity Area. It is critical for conserving the diversity of life on Earth.

The ecosystem cannot recover from destructive phosphate mining. After the rainforest is cleared, the soil is dug up and exported, leaving vast barren scars in the landscape. Over 25% of the island has already been cleared for mining activities. To make matters worse, mining facilitates the spread of invasive species into the remaining pristine rainforest.

Christmas Island is at a crossroads, but we still have time to safeguard its unique plant and animal life.

A decision regarding the proposed exploratory mining lease is imminent. Join us in urging Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to end mining on Christmas Island and uphold his 2007 decision to protect the plants and animals that call Christmas Island home. Past governments have called for a sustainable future for the Island, the time has come to start the transition.

You can take action today by [signing and sharing the petition](#), forwarding this email to family and friends, or even [tweeting](#) the Prime Minister directly.

Thanks for your support.

*Andrew Hunter*

Conservation Campaigner



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