

From: **ABSA** info@absa.asn.au  
Subject: **ABSA - Newsletter 135** March 2019  
Date: 5 March 2019 at 1:25 PM  
To: steinbod@pnc.com.au

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Newsletter of the Australian Bird Study Association

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## NEWSLETTER 135



Editor: Stein Boddington  
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ISSN 2202-297X (Online)  
March 2019

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### Editorial

A last minute reminder that the ABSA annual Conference is on Saturday 16 March, at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, in Newcastle. We hope to see you there.

ABSA continues to examine the economics of publishing Corella in hard copy. For some years now, it has printed numbers below the level where reduction in print-run achieves cost savings. Any further cuts just raise the price per copy. We are dependent on the subsidy provided by the Mist Net Service, which has slowly switched from servicing the amateur banding community to servicing the professional, mostly university-based researcher. The Mist Net Service itself is becoming increasingly vulnerable to international internet-based competition.

The organisation as a whole is in good financial shape, but as our demographics change to a younger, more internet-savvy membership, there will be less and less justification for maintaining the printed edition of our journal. The changes are not imminent, but at some time in the future, some hard questions will have to be answered.

*Stein Boddington*  
Newsletter Editor

### ABSA Conference 2019 and Annual General Meeting

Don't forget the ABSA Conference and AGM on Saturday 16th March 2019 at Hunter Wetlands Centre, 1 Wetlands Place, Shortland, near Newcastle, NSW, in conjunction with the Hunter Bird Observers Club.



# Australian Bird Study Association Conference 2019

Saturday March 16th 2019

9:20 am - 4:00 pm

Registration from 9:00am

Hunter Wetland Centre

1 Wetlands Place, Shortland NSW 2307

(see map overleaf)

## Conserving our birds – Research and Management

### Talks will include:

Albatrosses—a year on Macquarie Island.

The Painted Honeyeater—nomad or migrant?

Managing bird banding data in the Information Age.

Restoring Hunter wetlands for shorebirds.

Woodlands and birds in the Lower Hunter.

### Registration is \$60

Morning and afternoon tea as well as a cold lunch are included. Payment must be made prior to the Conference for catering purposes .

Registration is via a secure on-line portal: [www.trybooking.com.au/466225](http://www.trybooking.com.au/466225)

See bottom of email for map and directions.

### Malleefowl chick found in Eyre Peninsular refuge

The ABC has reported that a Malleefowl chick has been found at the Secret Rocks Nature Reserve on the Eyre Peninsular in South Australia. The birds were common but no active mounds had been sighted in the last three or four years, according to ecologist John Read, who has been monitoring the population for 9 years.

For full report, see:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-11/malleefowl-chick-discovery-on-eyre-peninsula/10797772>

### Evidence that Cassowary’s Casque is a radiator, or ‘thermal window’.

#### Abstract

Many ideas have been put forward for the adaptive value of the cassowary casque; and yet, its purpose remains speculative. Homeothermic animals elevate body temperature through metabolic heat production. Heat gain must be offset by heat loss to maintain internal temperatures within a range for optimal performance. Living in a tropical climate, cassowaries, being large bodied, dark feathered birds, are under thermal pressure to offload heat. We tested the original hypothesis that the casque acts as a thermal window. With infrared thermographic analyses of living cassowaries over an expansive range of ambient temperatures, we provide evidence that the casque acts as a thermal radiator, offloading heat at high temperatures and restricting heat loss at low temperatures. Interestingly, at intermediate temperatures, the casque appears thermally heterogeneous, with the posterior of the casque heating up before the front half. These findings might have implications for the function of similar structures in avian and non-avian dinosaurs.

Danielle L. Eastick, Glenn J. Tattersall, Simon J. Watson, John A. Lesku, Kylie A. Robert. **Cassowary casques act as thermal windows.**

Scientific Reports, 2019; 9 (1) [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-019-38780-8](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-38780-8)

### Bird in the Hand

Bird in the Hand (2nd Edition) species profile sheets for the following 18 species have been uploaded to the ABBSA Website:

Australian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>
Plains-wanderer	<i>Pedionomus torquatus</i>
Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula bengalensis</i>
Bush Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>
Beach Stone-curlew	<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>
Red-capped Plover	<i>Charadrius ruficapillus</i>
Double-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius bicinctus</i>
Large Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>
Mongolian Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Oriental Plover	<i>Charadrius veredus</i>

Hooded Plover	<i>Thinornis rubricollis</i>
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Double-eyed Fig-Parrot	<i>Cyclopsitta diophthalma</i>

All species that were included in Bander's Aid and its Supplement now have profile sheets in BIH2.

The following species were added on 28 Feb 2019.

These species are shown in 'Recent Additions' under 'Index' on the ABSA web site <[www.absa.asn.au](http://www.absa.asn.au)>

#### **Grebes**

Little Grebe	<i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>
Hoary-headed Grebe	<i>Podiceps poliocephalus</i>

#### **Petrels**

Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>
Northern Giant petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>

#### **Prions**

Broad-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila vittata</i>
Salvin's Prion	<i>Pachyptila salvini</i>
Antarctic Prion	<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>
Slender-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>
Fairy Prion	<i>Pachyptila turtur</i>
Fulmar Prion	<i>Pachyptila crassirostris</i>

#### **Shearwaters**

Wedge-tailed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus pacificus</i>
Flesh-footed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>
Short-tailed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus tenuirostris</i>

#### **Waders**

Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>
Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i> (Revised)

#### **Terns**

Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>
White-fronted Tern	<i>Sterna striata</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>

#### **Skuas**

Brown Skua	<i>Catharacta skua</i>
South Polar Skua	<i>Catharacta maccormicki</i>

#### **Gulls**

Pacific Gull	<i>Larus pacificus</i>
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>

#### **Honeyeaters**

Strong-billed Honeyeater	<i>Melithreptus validirostris</i> (Revised)
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Jeff Hardy

#### **Warrumbungles**



## Back to 'Bungles Bird Week

25 to 28 April 2019

The Back to Bungles bird count is on again. Come and join other enthusiastic volunteers to count birds along different trails within Warrumbungle National Park.



A surprisingly (given the dry conditions) rich Spring survey meant we saw 79 species, including 18 turquoise parrots. We'll be heading out again to survey bird diversity and abundance as part of an ongoing project to continue to monitor the Park's recovery from the fire in 2013.

We'll go out counting birds each morning from 25 to 28 April inclusive – leaving you plenty of time for other bird-watching and exploring Warrumbungle National Park.

Anyone can be involved and can join for as little or as much as they want.

For information about the previous bird counts, see <http://bit.ly/2u6UErp>

Please contact Gillian Dunkerley at [gillian.dunkerley@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gillian.dunkerley@environment.nsw.gov.au) for more information and to register your interest.

Working links: Previous bird counts: <http://bit.ly/2u6UErp>

More info and registration: Contact Gillian Dunkerley at [gillian.dunkerley@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gillian.dunkerley@environment.nsw.gov.au)

## The Birds of South-east Queensland revisited

The Queensland Conservation Council in 1979 published a booklet I wrote, *The Birds of South-East Queensland*. It was an annotated list of birds from the state's south-east with a focus on status, distribution, habitat and environmental threats. Forty years later, in 2019, I thought it timely for a “then and now” look at how things have changed for some species listed in the publication.

Here's the first post:

<https://sunshinecoastbirds.blogspot.com/2019/01/changes-in-status-of-south-east.html>

Greg Roberts (via Birding-Aus)

## Regent Honeyeater

“Contemporary breeding biology of critically endangered Regent Honeyeaters: implications for conservation.”

*Abstract*

Identifying factors influencing the demographics of threatened species is essential for conservation, but a lack of comprehensive demographic data often impedes the effective conservation of rare and mobile species. We monitored breeding of critically endangered and semi-nomadic Regent Honeyeaters *Anthochaera phrygia* (global population c. 100 pairs) over 3 years throughout their range. Overall nest success probability (0.317) was highly spatially variable and considerably lower than previous estimates for this (and many other honeyeater) species, as was productivity of successful nests (mean 1.58 juveniles fledged). Nest surveillance revealed high predation rates by a range of birds and arboreal mammals as the primary cause of nest failure. An estimated 12% of pairs either failed to establish a territory or their nests did not reach the egg stage. We also found a male bias to the adult sex ratio, with an estimated 1.18 males per female. Juvenile survival for the first 2 weeks after fledging was high (86%). Management interventions that aim to increase nest success in areas of low nest survival must be investigated to address an apparent decline in reproductive output and avoid extinction of the Regent Honeyeater. We show that temporal and spatial variation in the breeding success of rare and highly mobile species can be quantified with robust population monitoring using sampling regimens that account for their life histories. Understanding the causes of spatio-temporal variation in breeding success can enhance conservation outcomes for such species through spatially and temporally targeted recovery actions.

Ref:

Ross Crates, Laura Rayner, Dejan Stojanovic, Matthew Webb, Aleks Terauds and Robert Heinsohn

First published: 27 August 2018

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.12659>

## Juvenile Emperor Penguins' early days examined

*Abstract*

Adult Emperor Penguins *Aptenodytes forsteri* breed on fast ice and forage within sea ice in winter. However, it remains unknown whether juveniles exhibit similar foraging behavior during their early life at-sea movements, and how it links with the oceanographic conditions. We investigated the first at-sea odyssey of 15 juvenile emperor penguins from Terre Adélie in 2013-2014. The average tracking duration was 167

± 110 d SD (range 86-344 d). After departing the colony in December/January, the juveniles traveled north up to 53.76°S before heading south in April/May to forage within the sea ice. The juveniles spent 49 ± 14% of their total recorded trips (n = 12) in the sea ice, over both the continental slope and deep ocean regions. The penguins dived primarily during daylight. Within sea ice, the juveniles performed both shallow and deep dives, with the proportion of each varying seasonally. The switch to primarily deep dives in the autumn and winter within sea ice may be a consequence of (1) a seasonal change in the krill distribution from surface to deep waters and/or (2) the presence of macrozooplankton at depth due to a reduced/absent diel migration (diurnal vertical migration - *Ed*). Furthermore, we showed for the first time that the diving behavior of juveniles was associated with the mixed layer depth. We suggest they feed on mesopelagic prey aggregating near the thermocline. This study provides insight into an important, but poorly understood, part of the emperor penguin life cycle, essential to predict their response to future climate change.

Ref: Labrousse S, Orgeret F, Solow AR, Barbraud C and others (2019) First odyssey beneath the sea ice of juvenile emperor penguins in East Antarctica. *Mar Ecol Prog Ser* 609:1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3354/meps12831>

## Trip Reports

**Sugarloaf State Conservation Area** - 9 December 2018 (Killingworth NSW - west of Newcastle)

Here's a banding summary for my last visit to Sugarloaf State Conservation Area – Wet forest location  
It was a last minute decision to go so apologies for not circulating a memo.

09 December 2018

0630 - 1300

Temp: 16°C - 28°C

Cool to warm, sunny with no wind.

*Attendees:* Rob Kyte, Judy Little and Greg Little

Total number of birds banded - 19

Total number of species banded - 10

Large-billed Scrubwren (5)

Yellow-throated Scrubwren (3)

White-browed Scrubwren (1)

Spotted Pardalote (1)

Lewins Honeyeater (2)

Variegated Fairy-wren (1)

Eastern Spinebill (1)

Green Catbird (1)

Rufous Fantail (3)

Golden Whistler (1)

*Retrap information:*

Yellow-throated Scrubwren (f) first banded at the same location 20 October 2017 as 1+ and now aged 2+

Large-billed Scrubwren first banded at the same location on 01 July 2018 as 1+ (see note below)

*Notable banding observations:*

1. Green Catbird - Two adult birds have been observed in this area for several years. The bird caught today is the second adult caught here, just 10m from where the last bird was caught in July 2018. Both sexes are monomorphic but there is said to be a slight size difference with the male being larger than the female (Bird in the Hand). The bird caught today was slightly larger than the July bird and it did not have a bare patch at all (we're in middle of breeding season) so I have recorded this as being male.

2. Rufous Fantail - A Juvenile Rufous Fantail was caught at the same time as an adult.

3. We found there were unusual lesions on the abdominal bare patch of three species: Golden Whistler, Lewins Honeyeater (x2 birds) and Yellow-throated Scrubwren. Photographs of these have been sent to an avian vet for his comment.

4. Large-billed Scrubwren - This retrap individual with engorged brood patch and an egg in the oviduct weighed in at 11.5g. When it was first banded in July it weighed 8.4g.

5. Large-billed Scrubwren - Four LBSW were caught in a net at the same together and taken 30m to the banding station.

They were processed and kept in their separate holding bags for release at the same time. Prior to release another LBSW with food in its mouth appeared, quite agitated, and very close to the bags containing the LBSW that were hanging in a bush. When released they immediately joined one another close by.

*Other observations:*

A total of 34 species of birds were either seen or heard including Cicadabird, Brush Cuckoo, Leaden Flycatcher



A rather funny looking Green Katydid was caught in a net. Haven't been able to ID it yet.

Yellow-throated Scrubwrens nest

Eastern Yellow Robin feeding young on nest

A great morning with some interesting birds banded and observations noted.

*Rob Kyte*

PHOTOS from Sugarloaf State Conservation Area

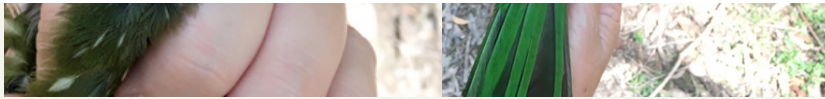


Spotted Pardalote



Rufous Fantails

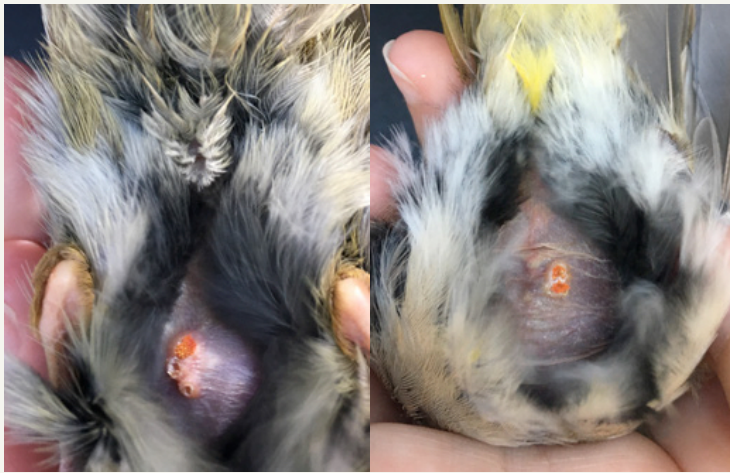




Catbird



Yellow-throated Scrubwren



Orange lesion seen on Lewin's Honeyeater and Golden Whistler

**AND DON'T FORGET THE AOC COMING UP IN JULY**

**AUSTRALASIAN  
ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE**  
DARWIN 3-5 JULY 2019

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#### Directions for the ABSA Conference

#### Venue:

The Hunter Wetlands Centre is located at the Shortland Wetlands. The Hunter Wetlands Centre is a ten minute drive from Newcastle or about two hours from Sydney. Detailed directions on how to get there are available on the Centre's website at <http://wetlands.org.au/visit-us/>.

Free parking is available at the venue (note: the \$5 entrance fee is waived for conference attendees).





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