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NEWSLETTER 136



Editor: Stein Boddington
<info@absa.asn.au>

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Editorial

The re-election of the Coalition Governments in both Canberra and Sydney does not auger well for the whole body of conservation work that needs to be done in Australia. The bias against meaningful climate change action came out straight away with the contested approval of the Adani coal mine in Queensland, premised upon the Black-throated Finch moving from its preferred habitat to another adjacent area. Now the Queensland Labor Government has crumbled under the pressure and given its approval as well. Clearance of native bushland will continue apace in NSW and Queensland, under both LNP and Labor regimes, and more Regent Honeyeater habitat will be lost if development proposals go ahead in the Hunter region, and at Warragamba Dam near Sydney. Dare I mention the Murray Darling Basin Plan?

The constant mantra of 'small government, lower taxes' has for some time now reached a point, at both state and Federal level, where it is difficult to name an area of government responsibility that is not starved of funds, or of key, knowledgeable personnel, gone in the latest round of 'efficiency cuts'.

How long before this all leads to the extinction of one of our wild birds?

But it's a funny thing about extinction. It's like the death penalty. You can't fix it later. Not at the next election. Not even "when things get better". You just can't. Never. Ever.

Stein Boddington
Newsletter Editor

AGM Reports

President's Report

The mission of ABSA is "to support, encourage and promote the study of Australian birds and to contribute to their conservation". Over the past year we've continued working to do just that.

The Fund for Avian Research made two grants this year:

- Investigating multiple monitoring strategies to assess population persistence following translocation of the endangered Mallee Emu-wren. William Mitchell (Monash University).
- Development of a non-invasive and efficient method to detect and study Masked Owls *Tyto novaehollandiae*. Vincent Mourik.

The only downside was that we received over a dozen excellent grant submissions, so the process was very competitive. We just wish we could have funded them all.

We also published another great edition of our peer-reviewed scientific journal *Corella*, which you'll hear more about from our Hon. Editor, Alan Lill. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Alan for all the work he is putting into *Corella*, which is going from strength to strength. I'd also like to thank Alan Leishman for the hard work and attention to detail he puts into typesetting the journal and getting it printed. I'd also like to thank all of our peer reviewers whose expert knowledge and scientific rigour contribute enormously to the quality of our journal.

Another really important initiative is the continuing development of the *Bird in the Hand* 2nd Edition datasheets. We now have over 500 of these sheets available for free download from our website and more are being added regularly, as well as updates of the existing sheets. This has been an extremely successful initiative by Jeff Hardy, who has put an unbelievable amount of work into this project. These sheets are now being used by every bander I know in Australia, and the idea has also generated interest from banders overseas.

I was particularly pleased that in 2018 ABSA member Jon Coleman was finally successful in renewing the banding approval for the Iron Range project with the Queensland Department of Environment and Science (Parks and Forests). This project was set up by ABSA in 1990 and has been stalled for the last few years due to permitting issues.

An expedition went ahead in November 2018 and about 30 banders turned up from all over Australia, including me. A very successful week of activity followed with about 800 birds banded. Amazingly, one of them was a Little Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla megarrhyncha*) that was first banded in 1990 so is now 30+ years old. An extraordinary longevity record for a 35g bird. Another trip is planned for November 2020. Attendance is highly recommended!

Our Facebook page has also been going really well and is getting our message out to a much wider audience. A big thanks to Catherine Young for her work maintaining this.

Our Newsletter has also continued to come out regularly and in the new on-line format, which allows for colour images and unlimited pages, it's a great read for all our members. Especially those that don't use Facebook! A big thanks to our tireless newsletter editor, Stein Boddington.

Later this year ABSA is hosting a session on bird-banding studies at the 2019 Australian Ornithological Conference, I hope we'll see some of you there. I'd like to thank Catherine Young, who has put a lot of effort into working with the AOC Committee to make this exciting initiative happen. Another new first for ABSA.

We've also had some challenges this year.

Our website continues to give us grief and we are now committed to a complete rebuild and modernisation of it. This will involve a fair bit of time and expense. I'd like to thank everyone for their patience in the meantime.

A new website will hopefully make our Association much more accessible; make it easier to find and use resources like *Corella* articles and *Bird in the Hand* 2nd Edition sheets; and make it easier to renew memberships, which has once again been more of a struggle than it should be.

We're also seriously considering the inevitable need to transition our journal *Corella* to a purely on-line format. I expect this will happen over the next few years.

A number of our members are active bird-banding trainers. This is a critically important activity for the future of ornithological research in Australia. ABSA is actively looking for ideas on how we can support the process of training new bird banders. Watch this space.

In summary, I think we've had a good year and I'm very proud of our achievements.

I'd like to thank all of the Office-bearers and Committee Members of the Association for their dedication and hard work. We still have lots to do in the coming year and I'm looking forward to working with the Committee to continue our mission of supporting the bird research community in Australia.

I'd also like to thank all of our members for their ongoing support, it is very much appreciated.

Finally, special thanks to our friends from the Hunter Bird Observers Club, whose support in co-hosting the conference day is really appreciated.

Thank you all for coming along, I hope you enjoyed the day.

Tony Hunt

Treasurer's Report *

Annual income received during 2017-2018 financial year (1st Oct. – 30th Sept.) was \$24,584.65. Primary source of income were subscriptions (\$12,425.01 – down from 2017 \$14,590.00 and closer to 2016. Currently \$10,218), the Mist Net Service (\$5,000) and the interest from term deposits. There was an increase in donations to our Fund for Avian Research from \$1,910.00 in 2017 to \$2,694.39 in 2018.

Total expenditure was \$28,028.21 with the main cost being publication of Corella.

2013 = \$ 19,974.09

2014 = \$ 15,366.45

2015 = \$ 13,134.23

2016 = \$ 12,620.97

2017 = \$ 12,830.39

2018 = \$ 15,210.12

This gives us a shortfall of \$3,443.56 (2016/17 had a surplus of \$7,252.87)

During the year Jeff Hardy received a grant of \$18,950.18 from the Office of Environment and Heritage for the Grey Grasswren project, of which \$7,034 remained at the end of the financial year. For ease this amount is not included in the details above as it is not part of our normal annual finances.

This year FAR grants were paid via direct deposit rather than cheques which tend to go missing. This method meant the grants came from the general account rather than the FAR account and the money will need to be transferred back across shortly.

Cat Young

Mist Net Service Report *

(This report has been lightly edited to protect sensitive financial information - Ed)

During the 2017-18 year the Mist Net Service received 54 orders. All of these orders were fulfilled. At this time two of these invoices (total value \$737.80) remain outstanding.

Outgoings during the F17-18 year included a \$5,000 donation to ABSA. Stock purchases totalled \$8,117.27 (mist nets, scales, calipers etc).

The Mist Net Service bank account currently stands at +\$15,053.75.

The Mist Net Service remains viable and healthy, with steady annual trading volumes. The Mist Net Service continues to make a positive financial contribution to ABSA and also provide a useful service to the ornithological research community.

During the 2017-18 year, on the advice of our accountants, we de-registered the Mist Net service for GST collection effective from 1st July 2018, as our annual turnover is below the required threshold.

We have a stable and reliable base of suppliers for all of the key equipment lines we sell. During the year the sole manufacturer of colour bands transferred ownership and moved the factory (in the UK). We have established a good relationship with the new operators although they are still getting used to their business and are fairly slow in fulfilling orders.

Tony Hunt

Editor of Corella's Report

Volume 42 (2018) of Corella contained:

- twelve major papers
- a Seabird Island Report on Granite Island, Corner Inlet, Victoria
- a banding project report for Scheyville National Park, NSW
- five book reviews
- Recovery Round-up

The papers included two dealing with the results of long-term banding projects, which was gratifying to see. There were also papers on raptor diets and breeding productivity; movements and space use of grasswrens, ravens, shearwaters and penguins; ageing Noisy Miners using a plumage characteristic ; nest predation; wood duck foraging.

The Durno Murray award for 2018 will be presented to J. Farrell, J. Hardy and P. Smith for their paper: An historical snapshot of avian assemblages occupying three threatened forest and woodland communities in Scheyville National Park, New South Wales. Corella 42, 1-17. Congratulations to John, Jeff and Peter on a fine contribution to Corella

We already have nearly enough material for Volume 43 (2019). Eight articles for this volume have already been, or will soon be, made available online. They comprise two papers on button-quail, two dealing with methods of assessing site fidelity and bird abundances, respectively, two documenting reproductive effort in ravens, one describing an unusual lyrebird vocal dialect and one examining the use of automated sound recording to investigate scrub-bird populations. Additionally, there are two further Seabird Island reports ready for posting online.

A further paper (on falcons) and a book review are currently undergoing the production process, two papers are in review and a book review is in preparation. If we overshoot the hardcopy volume size limit during 2019, we will still post any completed material online. Thus, Corella is continuing to be a very healthy flagship journal for ABSA!

I want to thank all our authors, reviewers, sub-editors and compilers for their indispensable contributions, and our production editor for his tireless efforts that ensure that the journal actually sees the light of day! I am also grateful for the continuing support of the President and the Committee

Alan Lill

Membership officers report

Since Peter Ewin retired from membership officer, Dave and I have taken this on. However, I am finding that along with treasurer roles this is becoming too much for me. I would very much appreciate it if someone else were able to take this on.

The role is not complicated and just involves ensuring all members details (address and email address) are up-to-date in the website when renewals come in.

Current Membership Numbers

- Full – 106
- Single overseas – 0
- Concession – 47
- Corporate – 17
- Corp overseas – 8
- Household – 11

Total – 189

Cat Young

Social Media Manager Report - @ABSAbirds

If you have anything to share on social media please [send it through!](#) Trip reports, photos, research or fun anecdotes are all welcome.

Followers:

Twitter – 2,894

Instagram – 1,058

Facebook – 1, 683

People are needed to:

- create events for banding trips on facebook
- write a facebook post for new articles in Corella as they are published online
- figure out how to turn followers into membership

Cat Young

* The Mist Net Service' and Treasurer's Reports have been lightly edited to remove sensitive figures about our finances. The full reports are available to paid up members on request to info@absa.asn.au

Bird in the Hand

Bird in the Hand (2nd Edition) species profile sheets for the following species have been uploaded to the ABBSA Website www.absa.asn.au

The update to the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo is to add the NZ subspecies to the illustrations and text. The update to the White-browed Scrubwren was necessary because a former subspecies has been elevated to species status as the Spotted Scrubwren.

Also, I am aware that the Lesser Sooty Owl is now regarded as a subspecies of the Sooty Owl, however, I have prepared separate profile sheets to maintain ABBS and HANZAB consistency

Note two newly elevated species - Torresian Kingfisher and Arafura Fantail separated from Collared Kingfisher and Rufous Fantail respectively

The new sheets are:

Waders

Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus
Banded Stilt	Cladorhynchus leucocephalus
Red-necked Avocet	Recurvirostra novaehollandiae
Black-tailed Godwit	Limosa limosa
Bar-tailed Godwit	Limosa lapponica
Pied Oystercatcher	Haematopus longirostris
Sooty Oystercatcher	Haematopus fuliginosus
Whimbrel	Numenius phaopus

Terns

Grey Ternlet	Procelsterna cerules
White Tern	Gygis alba
Caspian Tern	Sterna caspia
Gull-billed Tern	Sterna nilotica
Crested Tern	Sterna bergii
Bridled Tern	Sterna anaethetus
Sooty Tern	Sterna fuscata
Common Noddy	Anous stolidus

Cuckoos

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Calcites lucidus* (Revised)

Owls

Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua*

Rufous Owl *Ninox rufa*

Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*

Sooty Owl *Tyto tenebricosa*

Lesser Sooty Owl *Tyto tenebricosa multipunctata*

Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae*

Scrubwrens

White-browed Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis* (Revised)

Spotted Scrubwren *Sericornis maculatus*

Honeyeaters

Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis* (Revised)

White-quilled Honeyeater *Entomyzon albipennis*

Bulbul

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* (Revised)

Wagtails

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Kingfishers

Torresian Kingfisher *Todiramphus sordidus*

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris* (Revised)

Fairy-wrens

Red-winged Fairy-wren *Malurus elegans* (Revised)

Whistlers

Red-lored Whistler *Pachycephala rufogularis* (Revised)

Gilbert's Whistler *Pachycephala inornata* (Revised)

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* (Revised)

Fantails

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons* (Revised)

Arafura Fantail *Rhipidura dryas*

Thrushes

Bassian Thrush *Zoothera lunulata* (Revised)

Russet-tailed Thrush *Zoothera heinei* (Revised)

Jeff Hardy

A Celebration of Lake Wollumboola

Sunday June 23 - Culburra Beach

BirdLife Shoalhaven invites you to "A Celebration of Lake Wollumboola" to be held on Sunday 23 June from 2pm to 4pm at the Nowra Culburra Surf Life Saving Club, 4 Farrant Avenue, Culburra Beach.

You will be aware of the critical part that Lake Wollumboola plays for the survival of many of our threatened migratory shorebirds and beach nesting birds. But key aspects of the Lake's significance and ecology are often overlooked. We hope to fill in some of these gaps with a celebration of Lake Wollumboola and the people that have fought for its protection.

As part of her welcome to country, Delia Lowe, Jerrinja Elder, will talk about the significance of the lake for the Jerrinja people over thousands of years.

Kerryn Stephens will lead an interactive session exploring the unique, quirky and unusual aspects of Lake Wollumboola and its inhabitants, occasional visitors and admirers. Kerryn's involvement with the lake dates back to 1997, when she was part of studies to understand the complexities of the lake hydrology and ecology. Kerryn continued to work with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage until 2013 undertaking a leading role in development of its Estuary Monitoring, Evaluation and Review Program. After studies in media and communication, she continued her connection with the lake, assisting the Lake Wollumboola Protection Association Inc with the development of its website.

This event gives BirdLife Shoalhaven the opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Association, which has fought tirelessly for the survival of this globally significant site. Frances Bray has been the public face of this often acrimonious fight over more than two decades. Her amazing contribution is now to be recognised by BirdLife Australia with the presentation to her of their prestigious Distinguished Services Award. The event will allow her many friends on the South Coast to celebrate this achievement with her.

After afternoon tea, we hope you will have time to visit the new bird viewing platform on the edge of the lake to observe the birds.

Let us know for catering purposes if you plan to come along and please forward this invitation to anyone else you think may be interested. We would appreciate a gold coin donation on entry to go towards the costs of the event.

Brett Davis 0497 868 471
communications@birdlifeshoalhaven.org

Using remote cameras to validate estimates of nest fate in shorebirds

K. Ellis et al

First published: 20 April 2018

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.12607>

Abstract

Nest survival is a key demographic parameter, yet little effort has been made to improve the accuracy of field-based methods for assigning nest fates to shorebird nests. We used remote cameras to validate estimates of nest fate from field methods and to assess variation in accuracy of nest-fate assignment for Snowy Plover *Charadrius nivosus* in Utah, USA. We correctly identified the fates of 84% of nests in the field, and photos from camera monitoring revealed incorrect assignments for 22% of successful nests and 7% of depredated nests. Traditional field methods could be improved by checking nests more frequently when hatching date nears and spending additional time searching for eggshell evidence, especially when nests are in areas susceptible to weather disturbance.

American Bird Breeder Killed by his own Cassowary

The 'New Daily' reports that Florida bird breeder Martin Hajos was killed by his own Cassowary when he tripped and fell.

Full story at: <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/world/2019/04/14/cassowary-kills-florida-owner/>

2019 BirdLife Photography Biennial Conference

Whether you're a beginner or an expert photographer, this conference is for you. The conference will be held in Fremantle, WA, on 21-22 September. Click here to check out the Conference program and to register.

Renowned photographers Glenn Bartley and Georgina Steytler will kick off each day with a Keynote Address for all attendees.

There will be sessions on a variety of topics, catering for those beginning in bird photography as well as advanced photographers. In addition to workshops, there will be an "Ask the Expert" area where you can talk directly with the presenters at the conference to find answers to specific questions you may have.

"Conspicuous Plumage Does Not Increase predation Risk: A Continent-Wide Test Using Model Songbirds"

Abstract:

The forces shaping female plumage color have long been debated but remain unresolved. Females may benefit from conspicuous colors but are also expected to suffer costs. Predation is one potential cost, but few studies have explicitly investigated the relationship between predation risk and coloration. The fairy-wrens show pronounced variation in female coloration and reside in a wide variety of habitats across Australasia. Species with more conspicuous females are found in denser habitats, suggesting that conspicuousness in open habitat increases vulnerability to predators. To test this, we measured attack rates on 3-D-printed models mimicking conspicuously colored males and females and dull females in eight different fairy-wren habitats across Australia. Attack rates were higher in open habitats and at higher latitudes. Contrary to our predictions, dull female models were attacked at similar rates to the conspicuous models. Further, the probability of attack in open habitats increased more for both types of female models than for the conspicuous male model. Across models, the degree of contrast (chromatic and achromatic) to environmental backgrounds was unrelated to predation rate. These findings do not support the long-standing hypothesis that conspicuous plumage, in isolation, is costly due to increased attraction of predators. Our results indicate that conspicuousness interacts with other factors in driving the evolution of plumage coloration.

Ref: Kristal E. Cain, Michelle L. Hall, Illiana Medina, Ana V. Leitao, Kaspar Delhey, Lyanne Brouwer, Anne Peters, Stephen Pruett-Jones, Michael S. Webster, Naomi E. Langmore, Raoul A. Mulder. Conspicuous Plumage Does Not Increase Predation Risk: A Continent-Wide Test Using Model Songbirds. *The American Naturalist*, 2019; 193 (3): 359 DOI: [10.1086/701632](https://doi.org/10.1086/701632)

2019 BirdLife Australia Photography Awards

The 2019 BirdLife Australia Photography Awards are now open! We invite you to enter, and can't wait to see how you encapsulate our dazzling and unique avian life.

Thank you to our sponsors, Heritage Expeditions and Lake Cowal Foundation. Due to their support, we have a new Portfolio Prize as well as generous cash prizes up for grabs across seven categories, including:

- Bird Portraits
- Bird Behaviour
- Human Impact
- Birds in the Landscape
- Creative
- Youth
- And this year's Special Theme: Honeyeaters

Our aim is not just to showcase some of Australia's best nature and bird photographers, but also to highlight the need to improve conservation outcomes for Australia's bird species, encourage wider interest in all Australian birds and showcase the beauty of our exceptional wildlife.

For more information on our rules, how to enter, FAQs etc, check out the [BirdLife Australia Photography Awards](#) website.

Trip Reports

Bowra

I spent a week at Bowra over Easter with Brittany and Gabrielle and the Qld crew led by Jon Coleman. The conditions were bleak with little ground cover and the mulga looking grey. Nevertheless we had a tremendous time and caught and saw some great birds. There was also plenty of time to craft sculptures from rusty wire and rocks in between net rounds. 8 nets were lucky to catch double figures with my biggest haul being 16 at Lagoon and lowest nil (but produced 2 wind chimes) at Loading Dock! A Bellbird and a Hall's Babbler was special at Tablelands. Some of us were fortunate to see Grey-headed Honeyeater in the hand and a Major Mitchell spared our hands at Back Dam ... got away.

On Tuesday things changed with afternoon rain then more at night. We received 90mm and our tents became integrated with the lagoon. All campers moved in with the Braithwaite's in the shearing shed. The front road was closed until at least Fri and so remaining banding would be walk in or driven in by manager (we were spared the Western Paddock).

But then we witnessed a frog uprising and spirits were soon replenished (most whiskey was wiped out in an extended session that concluded with Tuesday's birdcall). Each night the area resonated with the "Whoo" call of Crucifix Toads and many others. I spent 3 nights spotlighting and was shown many amazing critters including Toadlets, Spadefoots, Water-holding Frog, Striped Dunnart and De Vis' Banded Snake.

Jon has sent me a summary of all captures: 278 if anyone is interested.



Bushlark



Blue-winged Parrot



Bourked Parrots at Loading Dock



Hall's Babbler at Tablelands





Crucifix Frog



Water-holding Frog(full)





De Vi's banded Snake

Can't wait 'til next Easter at Bowra.

Richard Allen

Australasian Ornithological Conference 2019

Don't miss out on the Australian Ornithological Conference coming up soon! This biannual conference is being held in Darwin in July this year. This is the biggest event on the Australian Ornithological calendar and this year promises to be bigger than any before with an overwhelming number of high quality abstracts submitted. We are especially excited about the symposiums on Bird Banding in Australasia (hosted by ABSA), New Technologies and Citizen Science just to name a few. We hope to see you there!

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

**BIRDING IN
THE TOP END**

Take your pick of habitat types as the Top End has a lot to offer with a variety of birds occurring in dry savanna, coastal estuaries, mangroves and mudflats, floodplains, wetlands, rocky escarpment and paperbark woodland.

With over 250 species of birds in the Top End, you're bound to see some new birds!

Join us for the AOC in Darwin in 2019 and come and see what tropical birdwatching is all about.

Visit our website for more details
www.aocdarwin.com

The poster features a stylized illustration of a bird with a black head and neck, a blue patch on its wing, and a yellow and red tail. The background is a mix of green foliage and a blue sky. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout with bold headings and clear paragraphs.



Annals by
John Gribble

#AOC2019