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Editorial

The ABSAs AGM was held by email again this year, and we thank Secretary Jeff Hardy for organising and running it successfully - see reports below. Let's hope that 2022 brings us back to normality and a celebration Conference. Committee has decided to make tentative preparations for a 2022 conference, without much confidence that COVID will allow it.

We welcome a late decision by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) to not approve an application by the NSW Government for use of Bromadiolone poison in its effort to deal with the mouse plague wreaking havoc in rural NSW. Whilst having every sympathy for the farmers, townspeople, even prison populations suffering in this plague, it was frightening to see the concerns of conservationists brushed aside by the Government in its efforts to gain approval. They ignored predictions of mass deaths of raptors from eating mice poisoned by this long-acting agent, which is banned precisely because of its effects on wildlife.

The new ABSAs Management Committee is virtually the same as the last one, with the welcome addition of Natasha Webb, who has kindly joined to take on the role of Treasurer.

There is a casual committee vacancy available if any member wishes to put themselves forward. You would be welcome, even if

inexperienced in Committee work - most people just watch and learn for their first few months on any Committee. The Committee meets for one to two hours every three months, typically on a Saturday morning, and currently by Zoom, but more typically with locals in person and others on the screen - a habit we would likely continue if new, distant members were to join. There is perhaps half an hour's reading of reports in the week preceding the meeting, and after that, as much or as little as you decide.

For a young person, being on a Committee is perhaps their first experience of management, of taking decisions, of working together to achieve an aim, of taking responsibility for a task. It looks very good on a person's CV, especially if that has nothing but "Student: 2017 - 2021" on it! Think about it. Do it! Just contact President John Farrell on <info@absa.asn.au> for a chat.

Stein Boddington
Editor

ABSA AGM

The Association's Annual General Meeting was again held by email, and successfully brought to a conclusion. We thank Jeff Hardy for the preparation and running of the meeting.

AGM Reports

President's Report

This being the first year as President, I would like to thank all committee members for their contribution to the Association and their understanding and help in my transition into this role: Jeff Hardy in his role as Secretary, Stein Boddington as Newsletter Editor, Alan Lill as Editor of Corella, Alan Leishman as Production Editor, Tony Hunt as Mistnet Service Manager and David Smith who oversees the uploading of Corella articles onto our website. One of our long-term members, Catherine Young, has decided not to stand for the committee in 2021, but has agreed to still monitor the ABSA Facebook page. I thank her for her contribution over the years, especially as our Treasurer. Talking about the Treasurer's position, our current Treasurer, Genevieve Kyi, has decided not to stand for that role again and I also thank her for the job she's done.

As you can see from the Auditor's report the Association continues to be financially viable and with sufficient funds to continue publishing excellent research projects in Corella. Many members have made use of our Newsletter in spreading the word about ongoing banding activities mainly within NSW. I would encourage members from other states to send reports of their activities to our Newsletter Editor - I'm positive others would find them of great interest.

Although interest from our term deposits has been lower than in previous years, donations from our members has enabled us to still support our Fund for Avian Research (FAR) Grants and also to present our two awards: the 'Durno' Murray Award for the best paper in Corella for 2020 and the 'Bill' Lane Award for the student at Charles Sturt University who achieves the highest Grade Point Average in the Graduate Certificate of Ornithology course in 2020. The recipient of the FAR Grant and the recipients of the two awards are featured in our next Newsletter. I offer my congratulations to you all!

Issues were raised in General Business in the 2020 virtual AGM relating to the Future of Corella and Investment options for ABSA funds. Both of these issues were widely canvassed, discussed and resolved and all financial members were informed of the outcomes by email messages during the year.

Most of our effort this year has focussed on getting our website journal listings in a format that is accessible to web search engines (e.g. Google Scholar). This we thought was going to be fairly easy but it didn't turn out that way. At the moment Michael Franklin, in conjunction with our Web Manager Bettina Kaiser, have tidied up the overall presentation but there still needs to be some adjustments made to eliminate duplication and simplify accessibility.

John Farrell
President

Treasurer's Report (abridged):

The audit was completed on the 13th of February 2021 for the financial year ending 30th September 2020 by Ross Fowler & Co (the full audit report is available on request).

Annual income received during 2019-2020 financial year (1st Oct. - 30th Sept.) was \$22,301.20. Primary source of income were subscriptions (\$10,541.13 - down from \$11,870.36 in 2019), interest from term deposits (\$726.61 down from \$3,968.97 in 2019) and the Mist Net Service (\$5,000). There was an increase in donations to our Fund for Avian Research from \$2,581.74 in 2019 to \$2,867.30 in 2020.

Total expenditure was \$20,874.26 with the main cost being the publication of Corella.

This gives us a \$1,426.94 surplus.

[details of ABSA's exact financial position are available on request to members, but withheld here from general publication]

The Auditor's Report was tabled for the virtual AGM

Genevieve Kyi
Treasurer

Editor of Corella's Report

Volume 44, 2020 contained eight major scientific papers. The topics covered were lyrebird song dialects, nest predation in Tasmanian songbirds, distribution of the Striated Grasswren, urban foraging ecology of galahs and corellas, Silvereye subspecies on Broughton Island, nesting ecology of the Masked Lapwing, and behaviour and family association in Southern Boobooks. There were three articles in the Seabird Island series and three banding project reports. Additionally, the volume contained two book reviews and Recovery round-up. It was particularly good to see the publication of the reports on the long-term banding projects, which makes the results of these valuable studies available to the wider ornithological community.

The Durmo Murray Award for the best major paper in Volume 44 was awarded to:

Clare Lawrence, James Briskie and Melanie Massaro (2020). **Nest predation rates and identification of predators at songbird nests in Tasmanian woodlands. Corella 44:** 14-21. Congratulations to the authors.

For Volume 45, 2021, there are currently two major papers in the production phase (on Black Swans and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, respectively), three in revision and one in review.

The ABSA committee recently decided that all papers published in Corella should have 5-6 key words added and much work (led by Michael Franklin) has been undertaken to make papers in the journal more accessible through online searches and hence raise the profile of the journal.

I thank the sub-editors (Birgita Hansen, Richard Noske and Geoffrey Smith) for their invaluable assistance in the editorial process and the assistant editors for their important contribution. David Smith kindly made the completed manuscripts available online. I thank Alan Leishman for his vital and efficient contribution as Production Editor and am grateful for the continuing support of the President. I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the individuals who acted as reviewers for the material published in 2020.

Corella continues to make a very important contribution to our scientific knowledge of Australian birds and I believe this is widely recognised in the Australian and broader ornithological communities. I encourage ABSA members and others to submit their research findings to Corella.

Alan Lill,
Honorary Editor of Corella

Mist Net Service Report (abridged)

In the 12 months since March 15th 2020 ("the period") a total of 53 orders were received and processed, with a value of \$22,519.80 (excluding freight). One of these orders was later returned and a refund of \$386.00 was issued, resulting in net revenue for the year of \$22,133.80. Postage payments received (charged at cost) as part of these orders were a further \$760.00, resulting in total net revenue of \$22,893.80 for the 12 months.

Bank merchant fees for the period were \$334.78

The annual contribution of \$5,000.00 was transferred to the ABSA General Account in Sept 2020.

The current balance of the MNS bank account (at 15/3/2021) is +\$13,124.82

There are currently three new invoices outstanding, with a total value of \$2,907.00 (including freight). Four aged debtors, with a total value of \$418.80 (including freight) were written off as unrecoverable in the F2020 accounts.

The current financial situation of the MNS remains good, and trading in the past year has held up very well, much better than anticipated given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic activity over the past 12 months.

The accounts for the F19-20 year have been audited and the auditor's report was tabled for the virtual AGM.

A review of prices was completed in February 2021 and resulted in modest price rises across most of the product range. Mist nets, in particular, have become more expensive during the year so unfortunately price increases were necessary to maintain margins. Prices were last reviewed and increased in November 2019.

Tony Hunt,
Manager - ABSA Mist Net Service

Committee for 2021

President - **John Farrell**
Vice-President - **Alan Lill**
Treasurer - **Natasha Webb**
Secretary - **Jeff Hardy**
Editor of Corella- **Alan Lill**

Committee ordinary members - **Ian Bailey, Stein Boddington, Michael Franklin, Genevieve Kyi, Alan Leishman, Darryl McKay, David Smith.**

Past President - **Tony Hunt** is automatically appointed.

New Manager Needed for ABSA Mist Net Service

Tony Hunt has managed the Mist Net Service for ABSA for many years. He has now decided to retire from the job, and we extend a hearty thankyou to Tony for the work he has done in this position. We are looking for a new manager.

The job involves keeping stock - several large boxes - and filling orders, posting goods, receiving payments, ordering new stock and reporting to the ABSA Committee.

A gratuity is paid related to the value of sales. Any interested member is invited to contact the President, John Farrell at <info@absa.asn.au> to discuss further.

Committee News

The new Committee met via Zoom on 12 June. It held a discussion on the possible publication in Corella of research papers received from two overseas groups - India and Indonesia. It has traditionally been ABSA policy to confine Corella to work performed in relation to Australian native birds.

It was decided, after much discussion, that the Editor be given the go-ahead to consider both potential papers for publication if suitable, on the grounds that, although they did not deal with Australian species, the species studied did share higher taxonomic groupings with Australian birds, and that this broader knowledge of those wider taxons would be of benefit to Australian researchers.

ABSA FAR Grants

Each year ABSA funds research to the tune of around \$2000. We almost always receive grant applications totalling much more than that. To expand the reach of our grants program, we have negotiated an arrangement with Cumberland Bird Observers Club, in which unsuccessful and suitable ABSA grant applications are forwarded for consideration by CBOC under their own grants program.

We thank CBOC for this generous arrangement, that maximises the research funded under both programs. Note that CBOC has its own criteria for assessing grant applications. As CBOC is a Sydney-based club, this includes the project being primarily targeted at the Cumberland Plain - Sydney and its surrounds - or, sometimes, further away parts of NSW.

AOC 2022

The 11th Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held in Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand 8-10 February, 2022. Abstract submissions are now open, and will close on 3 September 2021. Details at: <https://cie-deakin.com/2021/06/10/abstract-submissions-now-open-the-11th-australasian-ornithological-conference-2022/>

Corella and the Search Engines

After much work by Committee members and Corella production staff, changes have been made to the way Corella is published to enhance its visibility to Google Scholar, the principle search engine for academic work. Progressively, the archive will be re-formatted with the ultimate objective that the entire Corella oeuvre will be searchable worldwide.

The status of a journal depends in part on the ease with which papers are found and subsequently referenced in further work, so this work benefits Corella's visibility, and its accessibility to the world's research community, and in turn, makes it more likely for Corella to be recognised in international databases and websites.

Our thanks go to President John Farrell, and Committee members Michael Franklin, Alan Leishman, David Smith for their work in this important area.

Early ABSA Journals available - free

Walter Boles has a full run of Australian Bird Bander and numerous early years of Corella available for free (you might have to pay postage if not nearby).

Email Walter at <web3ks2007@hotmail.com>

Lacking character? A policy analysis of environmental watering of Ramsar wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia

Erin Kirsch, Matthew J. Colloff and Jamie Pittock

Abstract

Freshwater ecosystems are among the most vulnerable and endangered in the world, facing continued uncertainty under climate change, development of water resources and land use change. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971) is one of the longest-standing international agreements on biodiversity conservation. Its central objective is the maintenance of the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance and the wise use of all wetlands. Here, we examine how the maintenance of ecological character has been addressed in Australia as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, one of the most ambitious water reform programs to be undertaken globally and intended to restore water from irrigated agriculture to the environment. We analyse policy and planning documents from Commonwealth and state jurisdictions on the management of environmental water. Despite stated objectives to conserve Ramsar wetlands in the Basin Plan, we found a pattern of complex and convoluted arrangements for delivering environmental water to Ramsar wetlands and a lack of transparency and accountability about how Ramsar obligations are considered within each jurisdiction. We conclude that consideration of the ecological character of Ramsar wetlands has been marginalised by governments when managing environmental water, despite the statutory requirements to maintain these wetlands.

<https://www.publish.csiro.au/mf/MF21036>

Published in Marine and Freshwater Research -

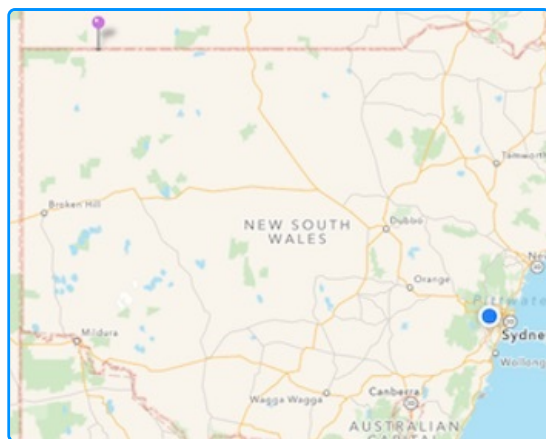
<https://doi.org/10.1071/MF21036>

Trip Report

Grey Grasswren Trip Report - Narriearra Caryapundy Swamp National Park

25-31 April 2021

Approximate location of Narriearra Caryapundy Swamp National Park:



In April 2021 the ABSA Grey Grasswren research team travelled to north-western NSW to continue our radio-tracking study for the first time since the property was acquired in mid-2020 by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for dedication as the Narriearra Caryapundy Swamp National Park. The new national park is not yet open to the general public because the necessary infrastructure, including access roads and camping area, will not be completed until at least late 2021. Nevertheless, the research team was kindly granted permission to enter the park to continue our Grey Grasswren study which has now entered its 21st year on Narriearra.



Prior to leaving for the remote arid north-west of the State we had been informed that the tracks to the Grey Grasswren sites would be navigable, but when some of our members ventured out the day prior to meeting up with the rest of the team they discovered that the main track to Adelaide Gate and the grasswren habitat was impassible with the main flood channel still being covered in deep water with dozens of Black-tailed Native-hens running around the edges of the channel and lots of Whiskered Terns patrolling the flowing floodwaters.

The team (this year with the assistance of new park ranger Courtney Davies) assembled in Tibooburra on the Sunday and it was decided that we would drive out to Narriearra and set up camp at a site which we had used in 2016 when we had been unable to get to the grasswren study site due to the creeks which flow into the swamp being flooded by local unseasonal heavy rainfall.

After further discussion with the former property owner, Bill O'Connor, an alternative route, which we had never before used, to by-pass the Adelaide Gate track was suggested as possibly being trafficable, so two vehicles ventured forth to check it out. The property management tracks had suffered significant damage with huge, deep washaways adjacent to the creeks making for very slow and diligent driving. After having to winch one vehicle out of a bog and with the end of the alternative route in sight, we discovered that this track was also inundated and impassable. So that was the end of our hopes of accessing the grasswren habitat. On the bright side though, hundreds of waterfowl, including several Brolgas, were sighted as they were disturbed by the vehicles. This all bodes well for the birds on Narriearra.



So it was decided to stay at our previously used backup study area for bushbirds on the property that does not require driving though the flood channels. This site is adjacent to a small swampy area which is not utilized by grasswrens, but did present the opportunity to catch some of the small waders frequenting the area.

A small group of members ventured out on several nights to spotlight for any nocturnal birds. They saw numerous Stubble Quail, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Southern Whiteface, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Chestnut-crowned Babbler, Rufous Whistler, Black-faced and White-breasted Woodswallows, Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark, Apostlebird and Zebra Finch. Of special note was the re-capture of two Southern Whitefaces banded at the same location in 2016. These two little birds had both survived within their same territory during what was possibly the worst drought in living memory.

Over the next five days we observed 82 bird species and caught 213 individuals of 30 species. The highlights were 18 Bourke's Parrots, 31 Red-capped Robins, 5 Black Honeyeaters, 3 Pied Honeyeaters and a Painted Honeyeater which was about 200 km west of its previously recorded distribution range. Other species banded included Crested Pigeon, Diamond Dove, Peaceful Dove, Pallid Cuckoo, Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels, Blue Bonnet, Mulga Parrot, Budgerigar, Purple-backed Fairy-wren, White-winged Fairy-wren, Crimson Chat, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Southern Whiteface, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Chestnut-crowned Babbler, Rufous Whistler, Black-faced and White-breasted Woodswallows, Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark, Apostlebird and Zebra Finch. Of special note was the re-capture of two Southern Whitefaces banded at the same location in 2016. These two little birds had both survived within their same territory during what was possibly the worst drought in living memory.



During our banding activities we were visited by author Tim Bonyhady who has been contracted by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to compile a history of Narriearra. He had been interviewing Bill O'Connor (some of you may have seen Bill on the recent episode of the ABC's Landline program featuring the new national park) regarding not only the historical side, but also the trials and tribulations of being a pastoralist in this remote region. Tim interviewed Jeff Hardy about the Grey Grasswren research project and joined us in some of our activities to get a handle on some of the wildlife and a feel for the 'great outdoors' and, like the rest of us, he attracted his personal cloud of flies and mosquitoes.



As the week drew to a close with no likelihood of getting through the flooded tracks we decided that we would call it quits and headed back to Tibooburra and wended our various ways back home.

It was a long way to go (two-day drive from Sydney and Canberra) to find that the grasswren habitat was not accessible, but we will hopefully re-visit again in Aug/Sept to complete the radio-tracking phase of our research.

All photos by Genevieve Kyi.

ABSA Grey Grasswren Research Team.

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