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NEWSLETTER 150



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Photo Credit: Darryl McKay

Editorial

This is the 150th newsletter of the Association., and the 108th Newsletter that I have edited. I have foreshadowed stepping down a couple of times over the years, but when the time comes. . . . But much of the ABSAs Committee is feeling the pressure of advancing years, and if ABSAs is to survive, and with it, our journal, Corella, then renewal and generation change must proceed apace - including the position of your Newsletter Editor.

So if you are interested, make contact. All assistance and training will be given. <info@absa.asn.au>

As usual, most of this newsletter is about the AGM and the awards that ABSAs gives each year, and we congratulate this year's winners and recipients of grants for their research.

In the new Committee, we thank Chris Young for taking on the job of Treasurer, and the returning Genevieve Kyi as Secretary. Darryl McKay has stepped down from Committee membership, and we thank him for many years service and thoughtful contributions to discussions and debates. I especially appreciate his donation of

images from his private albums for use in the newsletter each quarter. We also welcome Bill Rutherford to the Committee, and in this issue, publish a summary of his project at Herdsman Lake in Western Australia. We hope this heralds a continuing participation in ABSA affairs by those most distant from the NSW centre of gravity of the membership.

ABSA Annual General Meeting 4-10 February 2023 [Online]

From the President

Dear Members,

A big thanks to all those members who participated in our online Annual General Meeting (28 with 3 apologies). All reports were passed and adopted as were the minutes of our 2022 AGM. All amendments to our Constitution were also passed.

I would especially like to thank all those members who donated to our Fund for Avian Research. Due to your generosity we were able to fund 3 research projects totally \$2,900.

John Farrell
President

The Committee for 2023

Office-Bearers:

President - John Farrell
Vice-President - Alan Lill
Treasurer - Chris Young
Secretary - Genevieve Kyi
Editor of Corella - Alan Lill

Ordinary Committee members:

Ian Bailey (Conservation Officer),
Stein Boddington (Newsletter Editor),
Michael Franklin,
Jeff Hardy,
Alan Leishman (Production Editor),
Amy Tipton (Manager, Mist Net Service)
Bill Rutherford

Ross Fowler and Co were re-appointed as the Association's auditor.

Fund for Avian Research (FAR) Research Grants for 2023

1. Lyanne Brouwer



Project Title: Is helping helpful under adverse conditions?

Aims: It has been suggested that social species have evolved in harsh environmental conditions, allowing for successful reproduction and survival in environments where pairs alone cannot succeed. This implies that social behaviour may buffer against adverse weather conditions.

However, an overlooked issue is that social behaviour itself will also be affected by adverse weather. An extreme form of social behaviour is cooperative breeding, where individuals –so-called helpers– refrain from reproducing independently to ‘help’ raise others’ young.

Here, I propose to study the dynamic interplay between ecological conditions and helping behaviour through detailed behavioural observations, using cooperatively breeding red-winged fairy-wrens (*Malurus elegans*) as a model system. I previously found that repeated exposure to temperatures over >30 C for consecutive days was negatively associated with body condition indicating that *M. elegans* do suffer from extreme weather and may trade-off certain behaviours.

Here I specifically aim to:

- 1.) Determine whether helping behaviour buffers the impacts of adverse conditions.
- 2.) Determine whether helping behaviour is traded-off against self-maintenance behaviour under extreme weather.

Funding Provided: \$1,000



2. Frigg Speelman

Project Title: Automated tracking of birds in the wild: quantifying socially monogamous partnerships and their effects.

Aims: I aim to study pair bonds of socially monogamous species with a revolutionary automated tracking technology, which will generate data that can make a significant contribution to understanding how strong partnerships are in terms of collective spatial use and close associations. Using various experimental techniques, this can then be connected to sociality, territory utilization, and response to predators and conspecifics.

The goal of my research project is to study pair associations and their effects in two common arid zone species, the chirruping wedgebill (*Psophodes cristatus*) and the crested pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*), both resident non-migratory species at the field site at Fowler’s Gap research station, New South Wales.

For both species, level of sociality and breeding ecology is still largely unknown, although they are known to be socially monogamous, meaning partnership quality is likely to affect their fitness. This study will not only offer novel insights on partnerships in general but will also significantly advance our understanding of the ecology of these species that are endemic to Australia and severely data deficient.

The project consists of the following aims:

- Quantify pair association strength in pairs and variability within pairs, among pairs, and among different species
- Understand the interplay between sociality in the pair and in social groups
- Verify how pair associations relate to risk-taking behaviour
- Test whether partnerships strength relates to coordination in locating food sources

Funding provided: \$900

And to save you wondering, Frigg is pictured with a Seychelles Warbler



3. April Timmis

Project Title: Fear, flight, and fitness: The adaptive significance of escape response in Hooded Plovers, *Thinornis rubricollis*.

Aims: This research project will investigate the adaptive nature of flight initiation distances (FID) in hooded plovers *Thinornis rubricollis*, i.e. the distance at which they initiate escape in response to an approaching threat.

Escape responses in birds are critical to avoid predators and are therefore expected to be under strong selection to improve survival (Ydenberg & Dill, 1986; Lima & Dill, 1990). Previous work on FIDs has consequently assumed that differences between individuals and species in escape responses have an adaptive evolutionary basis (Moller, 2014; Madden & Whiteside, 2014) but this research will explicitly test this assumption.

Specifically, it will address a key issue in escape ecology, by examining how FID is linked to survival and individual fitness (longevity and reproductive success) as well as the examining the heritability of FID, which is key to understand whether adaptive escape responses may evolve in populations under different levels of threat, in order to reduce the impact of those threats.

Understanding the evolutionary and conservation significance and heritability of flight initiation distances will help steer future research into fear and fitness for birds, and guide interpretation of the existing information. This is especially important in the face of growing human populations, increasing interactions between wildlife and humans, and understanding whether managing escape responses is a welfare or conservation matter, or both. It is also critical to understand the consequences of escape in lieu of rapidly growing knowledge on wildlife disturbance and FIDs. Therefore, the plasticity and heritability of fear and fitness traits, and their relationship to individual fitness, is a critical knowledge gap to be addressed by this work.

Funding provided: \$1000



Durno Murray Award for Best Paper in Corella 2022

The Durno Murray Award was instigated in 2010 and is given to the author(s) for the most outstanding paper published in Corella each year. The Award commemorates the work of Durno Murray who contributed greatly to the founding of the Association, and served in many roles in his extensive involvement in its management. Durno also contributed enormously to the development of ornithological research in Australia – particularly the study of seabirds.

The award consists of \$150 cash and a year's membership of the Association.

2022 Winner: Mark Allen, Anthony Hunt and Richard Allen

for their paper entitled:

“A snapshot survey of Painted Honeyeaters in Weeping Myall Woodlands in New South Wales”

Abstract: The Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta* is a threatened, nomadic species of shrublands and woodlands in eastern Australia, but its use of available habitat is poorly understood. The species' spatial ecology in the endangered, highly fragmented Weeping Myall, *Acacia pendula* Woodlands of New South Wales, an important habitat for its foraging and breeding, was studied at the landscape scale. Quantity, quality and condition of such habitat was examined during surveys conducted from September–October 2020 at 355 locations spread across four regions in the western slopes and plains of New South Wales.

Eighty-seven Painted Honeyeaters were recorded across 51 of the surveyed sites, with 80 individuals being sighted across 45 of the 143 sites in the two northernmost regions. Habitat cover and structural complexity and mistletoe prevalence appeared to influence the occurrence of Painted Honeyeaters. The findings highlight the importance of Weeping Myall Woodlands to this species. This survey sets a baseline for further monitoring of, and detailed research on, the distribution and abundance of Painted Honeyeaters.





'Bill' Lane Award 2022

'Bill' Lane was a founding member of the Association, and contributed enormously to the development of ornithological skills and research in Australia. The S.G. 'Bill' Lane Award in his honour, is presented annually to the student at Charles Sturt University who achieves the highest Grade Point Average in the Graduate Certificate of Ornithology course.

The award consists of \$150 cash and a year's membership of the Association.

2022 Winner - Sang Tran

Constitution Amendments

All the proposed amendments to the Association's Constitution were passed at the AGM. We have submitted the new constitution to Fair Trading NSW for approval, and upon that being granted, we will publish the new Constitution to the Association's website.

ABSA now a Registered Charity

As reported in the AGM reports, ABSA is now a Registered Charity. Becoming so was forced upon us by changes that mandated charitable status in order to retain tax deductibility for donations to the Fund for Avian Research.

That continued tax deductible status has been confirmed by the Tax Office.

RainForest Rescue

Rainforest Rescue (<https://www.rainforestrescue.org.au/>) has announced the successful conclusion to their efforts to purchase another area of untouched rainforest in the Daintree, Queensland Corridor.

Quick Thinking

Humphrey Lyttleton (died 2008) was an English jazz musician of some note, with a career distinguished enough to earn him the offer of a knighthood, which he refused. He was also a keen birder. During an interview, he was asked about this, by someone new to the world of ornithology:

Interviewer "I hear you're a bit of an ornithologist"

Humphrey. "No, I'm more of a word-botcher"

Apply Now - Birdlife Community Grant Program

Applications are now open for the 2023 BirdLife Australia Community grant program.

Previously known as the Australian Bird Environment Foundation (ABEF) conservation grant, the program has been updated to better align criteria with BirdLife Australia's new Bird Conservation Strategy. Grants of up to \$20,000 are available for conservation, community and capacity building projects that deliver the objectives of the Bird Conservation Strategy.

Any community group can now apply using the form [on our website here](#), with applications due on April 30 2023.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions, and please do share with your contacts.

Erin Farley | Campaigns and Participation Program Leader

Superb Fairy-Wrens Know Who Their Friends Are

Wild superb fairy-wrens will risk their safety for their close social circle but not unknown wrens, study finds. (ABC News)

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-10/act-superb-fairy-wrens-picky-about-who-they-help-study-finds/102075784>

Birdlife Birds-on-Farms project - ACT-Yass region



Are you interested in increasing woodland bird habitat on your property?

- If you are interested in increasing and improving woodland bird habitat on your property, contact us.
- We will come and conduct a site visit and you can tell us about your plans and what you would like to achieve with habitat restoration on your property.
- We will provide you with various options on how to increase habitat for woodland birds and we can discuss what will be most suitable for your property and/or situation.
- For eligible landholders, we can develop a free habitat restoration plan for your property including budget estimates.

While we do not have funding available to assist with the on-the-ground implementation, we can assist with applications for financial support from other organisations.

Landholders and birdwatchers from anywhere within the region are welcome and encouraged to participate.

The project area spans from Boorowa in to Crookwell and south to Canberra - See map

The project is looking for landholders and birdwatching volunteers to participate in regular bird surveys in spring and autumn.

If you are interested or would like to know more about the surveys or any other aspect of this project contact:

bof-act-yass@birdlife.org.au
or visit
www.birdlife.org.au/projects/birds-on-farms

Herdsman Lake Banding Project

We re-print here large chunks of the annual report from the Lake Herdsman Banding Group. Lake Herdsman is just a couple of kilometres north-west of the Perth CBD. Bill Rutherford has recently been re-elected to the ABSA Management Committee.

from Herdsman Lake Banding Group -2022 Annual Report

The Project under licensee Bill Rutherford commenced in December 2001 with banding conducted regularly throughout the year. This year 16 volunteers, put in over 900 hours (excluding administration) during 40 banding sessions. June 30, 2022 marked the completion of the 21st year of the project.

As at 30 June 2022, there were 27,838 banding records with 22,490 new birds from 15 orders and 94 species. There have been 5,348 re-traps including banded birds observed in the field.

BACKGROUND

The Project

Bird banding has been conducted at Herdsman Lake since the 1970s with at least three projects under different groups. The current Project was set up to undertake a study of a community of birds for the purpose of providing data to the ABBBS to assist in research to further our knowledge of ornithology, and to provide information for conservation of species and habitat.

In the early years of the study several banding sites were tried - Market

Gardens (south-east); Balgay and Baumier Hides; Wild Life Centre - with varying results before the group established itself at Settler's Cottage which has been its base since May 2005: The variety of habitats attracts a broad range of species.

The project is arguably one of the longest active studies in WA if not Australia and a large database has now been accumulated with more than 25,000 records of data contributing to a study of birds encountered up to 30 June 2020. The data includes bio-metric measurements of physical characteristics, ageing and sexing of birds as well as moult patterns and fat deposits which have become a focus of our observations.

Methods

The main focus is on small to medium passerines as well as medium-sized birds from other orders (cuckoos and bee-eaters) with over 90% of encounters coming from these groups. Accordingly, the main method of capture has been the use of mist nets.. Playback is used extensively during the non-breeding period.

A 12 meter "duck" net with larger mesh is regularly deployed across a drain to capture waterfowl and other water birds. Return for effort is low, but a number of rare and interesting captures have resulted over the years eg herons, egrets and cormorants. Spring traps [perch traps & whoosh nets] are used when the opportunity allows.

BANDING ACTIVITIES

It is important to note that the results in the following tables reflect our banding activities and are not a survey of birds present at the lake. Over 75% of all bandings are represented by half a dozen species, more than half, Silvereyes which arrive in flocks at certain times of the year;. Of the 94 species encountered nearly half have been banded on less than 10 occasions.

Monthly Totals

	2021-22	Average	High	Low
Jul	118	105	228	16
Aug	45	66	139	
Sep	8	58	149	
Oct	48	73	199	3
Nov	27	59	160	9
Dec	13	54	156	6
Jan	90	142	379	16
Feb	402	105	402	24
Mar	26	71	193	9
Apr	243	185	376	32
May	150	224	898	5
Jun	139	201	558	64
Total	1309			

All Birds

	2002-22	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
New birds	22,490	1,161	528	2,118	1,025	1,706
Re-traps	5,348	148	123	342	261	366
All birds	27,838	1,309	651	2,460	1,286	2,072
Re-trap Rate	19.2%	11.3%	18.9%	13.9%	20.3%	17.7%
Species	94	35	31	43	41	44

Passeriformes

All Passerine Encounters

	2002-22	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
New birds	20,674	1,128	498	2,077	958	1,627
Re-traps	4,801	141	109	336	246	344
All birds	25,724	1,269	607	2,413	1,204	1,971
Re-trap Rate	18.7%	11.1%	17.9%	13.9%	20.4%	17.4%
Species	37	21	17	24	22	19

Summary of Results

After an average month for July (118 encounters) numbers plummeted with just over 141 birds processed in the remaining months of the calendar year. A record 402 birds were processed in February ensuring a strong recovery in the second half of the year.

The "Monthly Totals" table below is for information only.

Passerine Encounters by Most Banded Species (re-trap rate in brackets)						
	2002-22	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
New birds						
Silvereye	11,617	786	289	1568	639	888
<i>Zosterops lateralis</i>	1,927	62	45	111	59	103
Brown Honeyeater	1,227	81	47	58	48	105
<i>Pardalote striatus</i>	1,151	52	43	100	48	46
Western Gerygone	852	23	13	45	27	45
<i>Gerygone fusca</i>	770	2	11	29	16	232
Singing Honeyeater	650	35	18	52	21	39
<i>Gavicalis virescens</i>						
Australian Reed-warbler						
<i>Acrocephalus australis</i>						
Willie Wagtail						
<i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>						
Re-Traps						
Silvereye	2,672 (18.7%)	58 (6.9%)	31 (9.7%)	218 (12.2%)	148 (19.8%)	174 (16.4%)
Brown Honeyeater	475 (19.8%)	5 (7.5%)	7 (13.5%)	16 (12.6%)	17 (22.4%)	17 (14.2%)
Striated Pardalote	166 (11.9%)	9 (10.0%)	2 (4.1%)	10 (14.7%)	13 (21.3%)	34 (24.5%)
Western Gerygone	390 (24.0%)	26 (33.3%)	31 (41.9%)	35 (25.9%)	20 (29.4%)	7 (13.2%)
Singing Honeyeater	275 (24.4%)	13 (36.1%)	7 (35.0%)	14 (23.7%)	8 (22.9%)	11 (19.6%)
Australian Reed-warbler	106 (12.1%)	1 (33.3%)	5 (31.3%)	2 (6.4%)	7 (30.4%)	44 (15.9%)
Willie Wagtail	165 (20.2%)	3 (7.9%)	5 (21.7%)	9 (14.7%)	4 (16.0%)	9 (18.8%)

Silvereyes again the most prominent accounting for just under 70% of all passerines banded; 67.7% of all birds. Only three other passerine species were banded in numbers greater than 50. There were no new species for the year.

Summary of Results (Other)

Anseriformes & Gruiformes

Waterfowl which are observed in large numbers at Herdsman throughout the year were not regularly targeted but resulted in 17 encounters overall, including 3 re-traps from 5 species: the most prominent:

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* (7 new and 1 re-trap);

Grey Teal *Anas Gracilis* (5 new);

Australasian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus*

Coraciiformes

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*: Traditionally arrive from Northern Australia and SE Asia in first week of October to breed leaving Herdsman this year by the beginning of March. An average year for encounters with 10 bandings. Flocks of up to 50 birds were again observed and bandings would have been greater but for the impact of the virus pandemic on our activities in March.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus*: Usually active near Settler's Cottage in summer and early autumn. Just one banding, a little below average over the life of the project. Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae*: Regularly observed at Herdsman, in particular around Settler's Cottage. Only one bird encountered, a re-trap.

Accipitriformes & Falconiformes

Most commonly observed raptors were Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*; Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*; Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* and Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*. Rarely approach our nets in recent years. A goshawk and a hobby the only bandings.

Longevity

The Herdsman Lake Banding Group has Australian longevity records - elapsed time between banding and recovery (re-trap) for several species including Australasian Swamphen (11 years 3 months); Western Gerygone (11 y 0m); Eurasian Coot Fulca atra (10y 6m) Australian Hobby (10y 2m) and Tree Martin (6y 0m).

There were two longevity records established during the year for the project including one Australia-wide (to be ratified **)

Species	Band #	Banded	Recovered	Time Elapsed	ABBBS Record **
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	111-32147	12 Jul 2014	17 Jul 2021	7y 0m	6y 0.6m **
Yellow-rumped Thornbill <i>Acanthiza chrysorrhoa</i>	01A-35708	9 Nov 2013	4 Jun 2022	8y 6m	13y 1.2m

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Project's resources, expertise and data have been made available for a number of activities over the years. This year other activities included:

1. TRAINING

Apart from the main objective of studying birds in their habitat, training is arguably the most important activity. The training is free but requires a heavy commitment from trainees: a trainee who regularly attends banding sessions (more than 35 in a year) typically takes two years before being accredited with an "A" Class banding licence. Twelve "A" class licences have

been granted under the program as well as several restricted licences. At the end of the year there were two trainees in the project, one close to obtaining a restricted licence.

2. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Since 2015, the Group has been represented on the Herdsman Lake Community Advisory Council (HLCAC) which has delegates from Local and State Government organisations as well as the Gould League, and local residents. This has led to a greater interest and involvement in conservation and development issues at the regional park including restoration of habitat.

3. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Public education and awareness with a view to conservation of species and the environment. Herdsman is a popular recreation area and the general public is by now used to seeing the Group going about its banding activities. Their interest and participation is welcomed and ABBBS literature handed out. Many of these include small children who are encouraged to handle the birds. The group's activities also attract banders and birdwatchers from interstate and overseas.

The group has a good relationship with ABSA [Australian Bird Study Association] and contributes items of interest for its publication Corella.

CONCLUSION

The previous year [2020/21] was very disappointing with only 651 encounters from 31 species, these figures, the lowest of any full year in the life of the project. Those results were not surprising given a number of challenges: Covid 19 pandemic affecting number of sessions and banders; weather conditions, particularly strong winds and unseasonal flooding of some of our net areas; loss of several of our regular team as a result of work commitments. These issues have persisted to some extent into 2021/22, so results were again below expectations but the total of 1,309 encounters and 35 species was a big improvement on the year before.

Over recent years we have seen a decline in the variety of species encountered and disappointingly we have not banded a new species for two years.

The ongoing training program continues to attract new people, typically young, who wish to pursue a career in biological studies, the environment and conservation. Their commitment to the project and in many cases, their continuing involvement and interest is an important factor in its continuing success.

Thanks to all who have been involved in the last 12 months. As always, we acknowledge the support and encouragement of the ABBBS, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the National Trust WA which allows us to operate from Settler's Cottage.

We look forward to continuing success in 2022/23.

<i>Euro Gerbaz</i>	<i>Bill Rutherford</i>
Administrator	Project Leader
Herdsman Lake Bird Banding Group	
30 June 2022	

AOC - 2023



CALL FOR SYMPOSIA

You are receiving this email because you previously attended the Australasian Ornithological Conference, or you are one of our ornithological colleagues.

Dear ornithological colleagues and friends,

We are pleased to announce – on behalf of [BirdLife Australia](#) and [Birds New Zealand](#) – that the 2023 Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held in Brisbane/Meanjin from November 28-30 – with side events the day before and after (workshops, field trips, a board meeting, socials etc.). Please put these dates in your calendar and sign up to receive future emails by going to our website www.2023aoc.com.

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