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NEWSLETTER 155



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Image: Red-capped Robin. Darryl MacKay

Editorial

Regular readers would be aware of my long search for a replacement. I am happy to announce that this will be my last newsletter, and that Patrick Williams will be your new editor from the next issue.

It has been quite a journey from raw rookie in the early 1990s, encompassing my ten years as President of the Association, and an active committee membership totalling over 27 years. I will remain on the Committee, if re-elected, for a little while yet, but will willingly relinquish my place if there is an influx of younger members.

It has been a great pleasure collecting material, editing, formatting, sorting out copyright issues, seeing the transition to email format, and watching an ever-increasing sophistication in the research methods available to researchers. I have been here long enough to track young, enthusiastic beginners through to being wise elders of the research community.

The years have also seen an inexorable decline in membership of ABS A, a phenomenon shared by many small volunteer organisations. We have steadfastly held that ABS A occupies

a necessary niche in the landscape of Australian bird research, in particular for our Journal 'Corella', and the Mist Net Service. The declining membership may yet force radical change to how we publish *Corella*, already very different from the four-hard-volumes-a-year it was when I first joined, as costs go up and income declines.

I would like to thank all members of the ever-changing committee for their generous support over the years, but single out John Farrell, current president, who introduced me to the bird research world, supervised my acquisition of an "A" Class license, and has been a central presence in ABSA throughout my time, as Editor of *Corella* and as President and various other formal and informal roles. Thanks, John.

This time in September I will probably be restlessly scanning the internet for stories, but I will resolutely pass them all on to Patrick. He is young, energetic, and will no doubt bring his own interests and talents to the job, starting with including a lot more Western Australian content, for that is where he lives and works.

So from me, it's goodbye, and thanks for all the birds!

Stein Boddington
Editor

ABSA Policy on Return and Disposal of Used Banding Equipment

We field occasional requests from people, often retired banders, or banders' families, re the disposal of unwanted banding equipment. This policy outlines how ABSA will, in future, handle such requests.

1. Mist Nets:

1.1 As mist nets are sold under restrictions re their use, it is in the interests of the integrity of that system for them to be disposed of in a way that keeps them from unauthorised use. However, ABSA is a volunteer organisation, and does not have the resources to set up, inspect and repair old nets so that they become suitable for resale. Therefore:

1.2 It is the Policy of ABSA to encourage retired banders and/or their families to return mist nets, including supplies of bulk netting, to ABSA for disposal.

1.3 We will not offer recompense for or assistance in resale of such items.

1.4 We may, at our sole discretion, pass some nets on to co-operative banding project co-ordinators, recognising the benefits of long-term monitoring which inevitably means turnover of nets in typical time frames of over a decade.

1.5 Disposal will be in such a fashion as to render the nets incapable of re-use to trap birds of any sort.

1.6 Records of appropriate disposal will be kept, recording the original owner, and the date of destruction or passing on to a licensed bander.

2. Colour Bands

2.1 Colour bands degrade over time, even in storage, and therefore, it is the Policy of ABSA that no colour bands other than those sold by the ABSA Mist Net Service (MNS) in the previous two years, will be considered for return.

2.2 Colour bands purchased from MNS within the previous two years will be accepted as a donation at the absolute discretion of the MNS manager.

2.3 No colour-bands purchased from other entities will be accepted.

3. Other Perishable Items

3.1 Perishable items such as thread, shelf loops and Bird Holding Bags (used) will not be accepted for disposal. It is recommended that inquirers be advised to dispose of them in the garbage. Donation of unused bird holding bags purchased from MNS may be considered at the absolute discretion of the MNS Manager.

4. Non-Perishable banding Equipment

4.1 Non-perishable items such as poles, banding pliers, scales, files data cards, rulers, etc may, at the absolute discretion of the MNS Manager, be accepted as a donation, and offered for re-sale if appropriate. We thank any ex banders and families who contribute to ABSA in this way.

This Policy was adopted by the Committee of ABSA Inc on 25 June 2024, and will be placed on the Association's website soon.

Birding NSW Photographic Competition

Entry to this competition closes on 27 September 2024. Entry fee of \$20 for non-members.

If interested, contact Birding NSW at info@birdingnsw.org.au



Bush Stone-curlew, by Darryl MacKay

Using the Internet to Track Species in Peril

Cameron Rutt and colleagues have released a list of birds that have not been documented on the internet within the last ten years. The work is a collaboration between American Bird Conservancy, Re:wild and BirdLife International. Rutt said that repeating this exercise every year or two will help capture new species approaching the 10 year benchmark without searchable media.

Abstract

Biodiversity knowledge gaps, which limit scientific research and conservation planning, are especially acute for the most poorly known organisms. Citizen science offers a powerful and effective means to fill these gaps. The recent growth of citizen-science platforms has resulted in near-complete coverage of global avian diversity (~11,849 species). Because shrinking knowledge gaps increasingly reveal meaningful absences, we evaluated the potential of citizen-science data to establish “lost” bird taxa: those without documentation for more than 10 years. Collating more than 42 million photographic, audio, and video records returned 144 bird species (1.2%) as lost, the majority of which (62%) are in danger of extinction. The higher the coverage by citizen scientists and the longer the interval since their last documented record, the more likely that lost birds are to be imperiled. Our approach provides a data-driven and reproducible method to identify lost species and elucidates high-priority knowledge gaps to inform future conservation action.

Reference: Cameron L Rutt, Eliot T Miller, Alex J Berryman, Roger J Safford, Christina Biggs, John C Mittermeier. Global gaps in citizen-science data reveal the world’s “lost” birds. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 2024; DOI: 10.1002/fee.2778 <https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/fee.2778>

Ospreys and Footie-field Lights

Reported in both the Far South Coast Birdwatchers newsletter, and in Column 8 in the Sydney Morning Herald is the story of Ospreys nesting on top of a light tower at the local sports field in Berrambol on the far South coast of NSW. FSCB reports a chick successfully hatched, and SMH mentions that the local authorities leave one of the lights on at non-sporting times for warmth in the winter nights.

Column 8 later reported that other sports grounds have similarly supported nesting Ospreys.

Recipient of Twitchathon 2024 Funding Announced

BIGnet NSW, the forum for bird groups in NSW has announced the recipient of this year’s Twitchathon fundraising event. The money will go to Dr Catherine Price, of the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Sydney.

Dr Price’s project:

Aims and Justification:

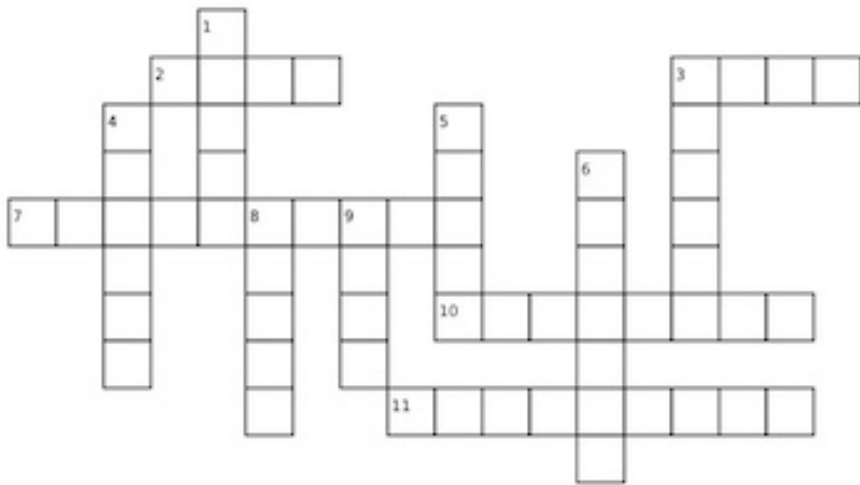
Introduced mammalian predators (rats, foxes, cats) threaten beach-nesting birds, hunting both eggs and chicks of threatened species such as Pied and Soot Oystercatchers, Beach Stone-curlews, Hooded Plovers and Little terns. A single predator can wipe out entire nesting colonies in a night or two. Tactics that neutralise the cues predators use to find nests, such as olfactory misinformation, have been shown to reduce nest predation by up to 70%. However, chicks may become vulnerable after hatching if predators find them using sound cues. Investigating which cues betray the location of nestlings and fledglings is the next step in undermining predation of nesting birds and expanding the effectiveness of misinformation techniques.

Dates for the Twitchathon will be notified later this year. It is usually held in late October.

Here's a Crossword to Print Out for your Amusement

All answers are birds. Answers at bottom of Newsletter.

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

1. bread with tea
3. make America great with pumpkin dessert
4. Gordon
5. recoil in terror
6. his mouth can hold more than his belly
8. abreast
9. undertrain

Across:

2. fly high with string
3. many of these indians
7. heat up a donkey
10. ole! Trike!
11. almost indian meal by the foreign minister

Trip Report - Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve

Rob Kyte

We had a great turn out for the weekend's banding. On Friday afternoon the team started to arrive at Honeyeater Flat and set up camp. A small group of us drove to the various sites to review conditions. We had a good team comprising of four A Class banders with all their banding gear along with several other A Class and C class banders. It was good to welcome some new faces in Grace, Sang, Lucie, Kiara, Louis Kara and Dallas while also welcoming back Dean, who last banded here 20 years ago.

The condition of the reserve appeared to be very dry with little in flower. There was good access to all sites and we decided to band first at Site 4 (Moolarben Creek/Old Homestead), where there was water flowing in the Creek.

Before we go into the report here's an interesting bird we caught on the last day of our visit at Site2, the campsite. A brush or a fantailed?



Juvenile Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* captured at Site 2 on Monday 1 January.

This bird was difficult to apply a positive ID. The morphometrics, barring on the undertail coverts and dull eye ring contributed to the bird being recorded as a female juvenile Brush Cuckoo. Comments welcome!

Attendees

Rob Kyte, Graham Fry, Liz Cameron, Greg Little, Judy Little, Louise Williams, Marty Filipczyk, Drew Garnett, Sophie Poole, Lucie Dale, Sang Tran, Grace Heemstra, Dean Portelli, Louis O'Neill, Kiara L'Herpiniere, Doug Moffat, Kara Stevens, Dallas.

Late afternoon Friday, we set nets ready for the following morning. Greg and Judy set up their nets to the south east of the banding station near the dam, Graham set his nets to the West along the Creek line and Rob and Louise set three nets each to the north and east. 17 nets totalling 226 net meters were utilised.

Saturday 30th December

It was 12°C, clear and still when nets were opened at 0600. By 0800 the temperature had risen to 20°C and at the time nets were closed at 1130 it was 32°C. There was a steady start to the morning's banding with a good number of Silveryeye and smaller birds such as Superb Fairywren, Brown Thornbill and White-browed Scrubwren. Later in the morning we picked up a Mistletoebird, Rainbow Bee-eater, a feisty White-winged Chough and four Noisy Friarbirds. An omission from the day's banding was Yellow-tufted Honeyeater which we usually find at this location. In total 66 birds were banded from 13 species, 29 of which were Silveryeye, cornwalli. Many of the birds banded were experiencing primary moult. Our re-trap rate for the day was 24%, six of which were Superb Fairywrens.

Interesting recoveries:

- Male Superb Fairywren first banded by Alan Leishman at this site in August 2019. The bird was aged 5+ and this was the fifth time it had been captured.
- Eastern Yellow Robin first banded by Rob at this site in November 2018. The bird was aged 7+ and this was only the second time it had been captured.

Later in the afternoon the team set nets at Site 6 and Site 5. Two sites were chosen as we had the opportunity to open 4 banding stations. Louise, Greg and Judy set their nets up at Site 5 to the North of Moolarben Road near the junction with Moolarben Creek Trail. Their nets were located up the hill and also along the level ground at the base of the hill. Rob and Graham set their nets at the usual locations around Site 6 at Moolarben Creek. At Site 5 there were 10 nets totalling 117 net meters and at Site 6 there were 12 nets totalling 135 net meters. Later in the day we were joined by Kara and Dallas, who had driven from Dubbo.



Varied *Sittella Daphoenositta chrysoptera* from Site 5 (below) and a Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* having its streamers assessed at Site 4. Images by Louise and Grace.

Sunday 31 December - Sites 5 & 6

Nets were opened at 0545. There were gusty winds and it was 15°C, overcast with a slight drizzle which soon cleared. The ground was dry and there were patches of pooled water in the creek. We started catching birds early and by the time the nets were closed at 1400. Today, 58 birds were banded in total at these two sites, 26 at Site 6 and 30 at Site 5. Most notable were 7 White-browed Babblers, a Varied Sittella, 2 Brown Treecreepers, 5 Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters and a Pied Currawong at Site 5 along with a White-winged Chough, Mistletoebird and Olive-backed Oriole at Site 6. There were 20 species banded with a re-trap rate of 21% and a low catch rate of 0.38. In total 37 species were either seen or heard including Dusky Woodswallow, Restless Flycatcher and Emu. Marty found a large lace monitor. *Angophora floribunda* and *Bursaria spinosa* were in flower.

Interesting recoveries:

- Brown Treecreeper first banded as a 2+ over 5 years ago in November 2018 by Graham and now aged 7+. It had been recaptured 4 times previously and was first banded at Site 4. It was recaptured today at Site 5.
- White-browed Babbler that was banded by Graham at Site 4 in October 2020 as 1+ and aged now at 4+. This bird had moved from Site 4 to Site 6.

After closing nets we returned to the campsite for lunch and to explore the rock face overlooking the paddock. Kara

and Dallas left us late afternoon to travel back to Dubbo for work and the rest of the team set about putting up nets for banding on New Years Day. Louise set 3 nets and Greg set 7 nets to the north of the campsite at Honeyeater Flats. Graham set 5 nets around the campsite and Rob set 6 nets up along the slopes of the rock face. Two of these nets were left open for a short period and a Rockwarbler and Grey Fantail were caught close to where there was pooled water at the rock-face. In total there were 21 nets located at Site 2 totalling 243 net metres.

In the evening the team settled in for New Years Eve with a game of boules, a chat around the camp fire with plenty of food and 🍷 .



Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus* and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops*.

Monday 1 January - Site 2

2024 started clear and cool with a slight breeze and nets were opened by 0600. The nets along the rock face mainly caught small birds including Buff-rumped, Striated and Brown Thornbill along with 2 Rockwarbler. Graham's nets brought in Silvereye and Superb Fairy-wren while nets to the north, in the more open country, brought in a good mix of species including Satin Bowerbird, White-throated Treecreeper, Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Spinebill, a juvenile Brush Cuckoo and the only Speckled Warbler banded this weekend. At 1230 the 'mercury' hit 32°C and it was decided to close the nets. There were 57 birds banded from 16 species and 40 species were either seen or heard including Wedge-tailed Eagle, Superb Lyrebird, Cicadabird and White-throated Nightjar.

Interesting recoveries:

- Satin Bowerbird first banded as a 6+ male in October 2020 by Rob and now aged 9+. Its moult to complete adult plumage almost complete.
- Brown Thornbill banded by Graham at this Site in September 2018 as 1+ and aged now at 6+. This bird has been recaptured 6 times, all from this site.
- Another Brown Thornbill originally banded by Greg in April 2019 was aged at 5+.



Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*

DISCUSSION

Over three days 181 birds from 32 species were banded with the average re-trap rate being 27%. Silvereeye, Eastern Yellow Robin, Brown Thornbill and Superb Fairywren made up over half the number of birds. There were a few species that showed signs of a parasitic orange mite on the bare skin of their brood patch (see images below). This phenomenon has been recorded previously at the Sugarloaf State Conservation Area. Even though our birds having finished breeding we'll keep a look out for them during our next visit. If we do find them Sang will take samples for future analysis.



The below table lists the species caught at each site over the long weekend.

DATE	TOTALS			30-Dec-23			31-Dec-23			1-Jan-24			
Attendees				RK, GF, LC, LW, GL, JL, SP, DG, ST, GH, MF, LO, KL, DP, LD.			RK, GF, LC, LW, GL, JL, SP, DG, ST, GH, MF, LO, KL, DP, LD, KS, DS, DM.			RK, GF, LC, LW, GL, JL, SP, DG, ST, GH, MF, LO, KL, DP, LD, DM.			
Nethours	384			93.5			154			136.5			
Site				4			5 & 6 & 2			2			
Code	Species	New	Ret	Total	New	Ret	Total	New	Ret	Total	New	Ret	Total
322	Laughing Kookaburra	1	0	1				1		1			
329	Rainbow Bee-eater	1	0	1	1		1						
339	Brush Cuckoo	1	0	1							1		1
361	Grey Fantail	2	0	2				2		2			
364	Willie Wagtail	5	0	5				5		5			
392	Eastern Yellow Robin	8	5	13	3	3	6	2	1	3	3	1	4
401	Rufous Whistler	5	3	8	1	2	3	4	1	5			
445	White-browed Babbler	7	1	8				7	1	8			
470	Striated Thornbill	3	0	3							3		3
475	Brown Thornbill	4	8	12	1	1	2				3	7	10
484	Buff-rumped Thornbill	4	0	4							4		4
488	White-browed Scrubwren	4	3	7	2	2	4	1	1	2	1		1
504	Speckled Warbler	0	1	1								1	1
505	Rock Warbler	2	1	3				1		1	1	1	2
8316	Superb Fairywren	17	9	26	6	6	12	5	2	7	6	1	7
549	Varied Sittella	1	0	1				1		1			
555	Brown Treecreeper	0	2	2					2	2			
558	White-throated Treecreeper	1	1	2				1		1		1	1
564	Mistletoebird	3	0	3	1		1	1		1	1		1
574	Silvereeye	40	3	43	28	1	29	1	1	2	11	1	12
591	Eastern Spinebill	2	5	7							2	5	7
614	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	1	0	1	1		1						
619	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	5	0	5				5		5			
625	White-plumed Honeyeater	1	1	2		1	1				1		1
632	New Holland Honeyeater	0	1	1		1	1						
645	Noisy Friarbird	4	0	4	4		4						
662	Red-browed Finch	5	3	8				4	3	7	1		1
671	Olive-backed Oriole	2	0	2				2		2			
679	Satin Bowerbird	0	1	1								1	1
693	White-winged Chough	2	0	2	1		1	1		1			
694	Pied Currawong	1	0	1				1		1			
705	Australian Magpie	1	0	1				1		1			
TOTAL		133	48	181	49	17	66	46	12	58	38	19	57
CATCHRATE				0.47			0.71			0.38			0.42
Retrap Ratio				27%			26%			21%			33%
No. of Species				32			13			20			18

Solution to Crossword

ACROSS

2. Kite
3. Myna
7. Kookaburra
10. Lorikeet
11. Currawong

DOWN

1. Pitta
3. Magpie

4. Drongo
5. Quail
6. Pelican
8. Booby
9. Rail

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