



NEWSLETTER 158



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ISSN 2202-297N (Online)
March 2025

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Image by William Rutherford



From the President:

I would like to thank all members who “attended” our online AGM. All reports/motions and nominations were carried with no comments or queries.

1. **John Farrell** (President)
2. **William Rutherford** (Vice President)
3. **Michael Paul** (Treasurer)

4. **No nominations Secretary**
5. **Walter Boles** (Editor of Corella)
6. **Amy Tipton** (Manager, Mist Net Service),
7. **Patrick Williams** (Newsletter Editor),
8. **Alan Leishman** (Production Editor),
9. **Ian Bailey** (Conservation Officer),
10. **Michael Franklin**,
11. **Stein Boddington**, and
12. **Susie Stockwell** (Presentations Coordinator)

We are still short of a Secretary so if anyone is willing to take on this duty, please contact me to discuss the specific role.

John Farrell

ABSA Annual Conference

By now, you will all be aware of the new format for the ABSA annual conference - a series of online presentations on the chosen theme, this year being "Australian Ornithological Studies". We trust you will find these presentations interesting and/or informative. Please feel free to comment or make further suggestions by emailing. And we extend our thanks to Suzie Stockwell for organising this year's presentations.

ABSA Awards

Fund for Avian Research Grant 2025

This year we had a lot of really good applications come through, and the committee struggled to pick a winner based on the application criteria. In the end we decided to award two applicants, Jacqui Marlow and Karina Sorell.

Project Title: Powerful Owl hollow camera monitoring project



Winner: Jacquie Marlow (above)

The Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*), Australia's largest owl, has adapted to life on Sydney's peri-urban and urban landscapes in response to habitat loss and fragmentation. While its overall breeding activity has been monitored through the Powerful Owl Project since 2011, there remains a gap in detailed knowledge of its day-to-day nesting ecology. This project builds on an initial 2024 study using a monitoring camera at an active hollow in northern Sydney and will redeploy that equipment to a new site to gain further insights into the species' breeding behaviour. By enabling close, continuous observation via a wildlife camera, the study will document other species frequenting the hollow, activity leading up to nesting, movements to and from the site—including prey deliveries—the fledging process, and the impact of weather events. Through empirical research and both quantitative and qualitative findings, the project aims to support land managers and wildlife organisations in better understanding the Powerful Owl's breeding cycle and informing conservation efforts.

Funding Provided \$1,800

Project Title: Bridled Terns as indicators of ecosystem health, connectivity, and recovery

The Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) plays a crucial role in assessing ecosystem health and connectivity on Browse Island, a small, historically degraded seabird breeding site in the Timor Sea. Following past guano mining impacts and the introduction of invasive species, restoration efforts led by Monash University and Western Australia's Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions began in 2023. This project builds on initial satellite tracking of Bridled Terns in 2024 and will deploy additional transmitters in 2025 to monitor their at-sea movements, nutrient transfer roles, and inter-island connectivity. These data will provide insights into the species' recolonisation potential, inform seabird conservation strategies, and evaluate the effectiveness of island restoration actions. By correlating movement data with environmental variables, the study will enhance

understanding of seabird resilience and guide future management of similar island ecosystems. Findings will be shared with conservation agencies and published in scientific journals to support evidence-based restoration and conservation planning.

Funding provided \$1,970



Winner: Karina Sorell (above)

‘Durno’ Murray Award for Best Paper in Corella 2024

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 \$200 cash and a year’s membership of the Association



2024 winner: Jonny Schoenjahn (above)

Abstract: The Grey Falcon (*Falco hypoleucos*) is a rare Australian endemic bird of prey confined to the arid/semi-arid zone of the continent. The species is listed since 2020 as threatened under the EPBC Act 1999, category Vulnerable. Before the commencement of this ongoing research project in 2004 the species was known largely from anecdotal information and obtainments from museum specimens. The aim of this study was, therefore, to increase our knowledge about this species. During 2004–2023, and across Australia’s arid/semi-arid zone, I banded 23 individuals, and fitted 11 of these with satellite-transmitters. Capture, handling and banding/tagging of the birds were subject to a strict protocol to ensure their welfare; protocol details are presented. I observed the birds before and after capture, and recorded their behaviour and circumstances. Sixteen (70%) of the 23 tagged individuals were resighted or generated, by means of satellite-telemetry, location data pertinent to this study. My observations of resighted tagged birds were complemented by those of volunteer informants. The data collated provide novel insights into the ecology of the Grey Falcon, specifically pertaining to age at first breeding, breeding preparedness, pair bond, furthest distance travelled from banding site, overcoming illness, longevity, and natural cause of death. These insights may provide crucial information for conservation considerations.

‘Bill’ Lane Award 2024

‘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 \$200 cash and a year’s membership of the Association.



2024 Winner: Melanie Tempest (above)

Avian Influenza

Australia remains free from the highly contagious H5 bird flu strain that has spread worldwide. However, a new outbreak of H7N8 avian influenza has been confirmed on two commercial poultry farms in northern Victoria, unrelated to previous outbreaks in 2024. Agriculture Victoria is leading the response, working closely with affected farmers and industry to contain the virus. Measures include quarantining infected properties, humane culling of poultry, and enforcing strict movement controls to prevent further spread.

Intensive surveillance is also being undertaken to detect whether there has been further spread. Poultry farmers, backyard chicken owners, and bird keepers are urged to report any unexplained bird deaths to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline.

To limit transmission, movement controls are in place in the Strathbogie Shire, with restrictions on transporting birds, eggs, and poultry products unless under permit. A housing requirement has been introduced for poultry owners with 50 or more birds in restricted areas. While bird flu poses little risk to humans, public health authorities emphasize the importance of biosecurity practices, including keeping poultry separate from wild birds and maintaining strict hygiene standards.

Wildlife Health Australia continues to monitor avian influenza in wild bird populations, conducting extensive testing to track circulating strains. Resources are available to support bird banders, researchers, and poultry keepers in maintaining biosecurity. For more information on movement restrictions, permits, and ongoing surveillance, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/avianinfluenza.

Banding Reports

Nurragingy Reserve, Doonside – Western Sydney



Highlight of a recent visit (Photo: M. Paul) Satellite image of banding site. Image courtesy of Google Earth.

Our small group (Jeremy Webb, Ken Gover, Michael Paul, Michael Franklin and John Farrell) has been revisiting one of the banding sites featured in the *Birds of the Cumberland Plain – Australian Avian Communities Through Time publication.

Banding (one visit every month) had previously been carried out over 2001-03, 2009-10 and 2013-14 so it has been 10 years since the last banding visit. During the last period (2013-14) a total of 99 species was recorded with 36 different species banded.

The first thing that we noted during our present visits was the influx of Bell Miners and a marked decrease in sightings/captures of other species, especially honeyeater and leaf gleaning species. Of particular note was the White-plumed Honeyeater which was the dominant honeyeater species prior to 2014 but this species has not been seen or heard during our current visits. After 5 months, 51 species have been recorded at the site with only 15 species being captured – a considerable decline!

Species captured:

Shining Bronze-cuckoo, Eastern Yellow Robin, Yellow Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren, Superb Fairy-Wren, Spotted Pardalote, Silvereye, Eastern Spinebill, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Bell Miner, Noisy Miner, Red-browed Finch, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie and Red-whiskered Bulbul.

* ABSA still holds copies of this free publication. Just contact info@absa.asn.au and we will send you a copy – we do ask for a small postage and handling payment.

Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve

Friday 4 October 2024 – Site 2

Louise, Graham, Liz, Rob

We decided to band at Site 2 (campsite) on Saturday and so the team prepared net lanes and set six nets before dark. Britt arrived later in the evening and joined the team around the campfire. Later that evening the weather turned, and we experienced fairly strong wind and rain.

Saturday 05 October 2024 – Site 2

Rob, Graham, Liz, Louise, Britt, Sooraj, Elaine, Alan

All nets were set-up and open by 0600. Rob had his nets set along the rock face overlooking the campsite, Louise had her nets in the more open ground to the Northwest. Alan arrived early morning and immediately set to work setting up nets in the wood to the Northeast. Our

first catch of the day were two Satin Bowerbirds, both green birds. By 10 o'clock the weather started to brighten up though the wind was still quite gusty at times. This didn't affect our catch rate and by the time the nets were closed at 1pm we had caught 51 birds. Only 3 birds were caught in Rob's nets along the rock face, 8 birds in Alan's nets with the remaining 40 coming from Louise's nets. There was very little *Styphelia triflora* in flower and the Eastern Spinebills appeared to be feeding on the *brachyloma daphnoides*.

A total of 57 bird species were seen or heard around the campsite during our banding session including Rainbow Bee-eater, Weebill, White-winged Triller and Gang Gang Cockatoo.

Interesting captures and recoveries:

Satin Bowerbird first banded by Rob at this site as an adult 7+ in October 2020, now aged 11+ and it had been captured 3 times.

Eastern Spinebill first banded by Graham at this site in October 2020, now aged 6+ and this bird had also been captured 3 times previously.

Sunday 6 October 2024- Site 4

Rob, Graham, Liz, Louise, Britt, Sooraj, Elaine, Alan, Sophie, Callum, Marty, Mattea

Nets were set the previous afternoon, and we all arrived on site at 0600 to open by 0645.

Louise had nets set to the north along the creek, Alan set his nets in the south paddock and near the dam while Rob had nets in the east along the fringe of the homestead paddock. The bird tally for the day was 39 with 16 being re-traps. This included seven Noisy Friarbirds that gave us all practice in dealing with a tricky bird. The nets were closed at 1500, and we had lunch before moving to sites 5 & 6 to set nets ready for the next day.

A total of 44 bird species were seen or heard around banding station. These included Emu. Varied Sittella, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and Striped Honeyeater.

Interesting captures and recoveries:

- White Plumed Honeyeater first banded by Graham as a 2+ at this site on 20 September 2017, now aged 13+ and this was the fourth time it has been caught.
- White Plumed Honeyeater first banded by Graham at this site on 1 October 2017, now aged 8+ and this was the sixth time it has been caught.
- Rufous Whistler first banded as an adult male at this site on 4 October 2020, now aged 7+, this was the second time it had been caught.

Monday 7 October 2024 - Sites 5 & 6

Rob, Louise, Britt, Sooraj, Elaine, Sophie, Callum, Marty, Mattea

Today we had fewer nets set as Alan had to make his way back home closely followed by Graham and Liz. Louise set her nets up the hill at site 5 and Rob had nets set in the usual places at site 6. The team were split in two while keeping in touch by two way radio. Nets were open. By 0600 and closed at 1400 when the mercury hit 25°. In total we banded 36 birds with 23 coming from site 6 and 13 from site 5. Of these 21 were re-traps, a 58% re-trap rate. An Eastern Whipbird was recorded at site 5 though it evaded capture.

A total of 34 bird species were seen or heard around banding station. These included: White-necked Heron, Eastern Crested Shrike-tit, Scarlet Robin and Leaden Flycatcher.

Interesting captures and recoveries:

Leaden Flycatcher banded as 2+.

Rufous Whistler first banded by Rob at this site in October 2022, now aged 4+.

6 Brown Treecreepers were banded at Louise's banding station along with a male Rufous Songlark aged at 3+.

Summary

We enjoyed another productive and interesting long weekend banding. As expected, we didn't record many young birds, but many birds had active brood patches. Moulting was apparent in only one bird, an Eastern Spinebill. We enjoyed a vibrant dawn chorus, particularly on Monday morning. From the 33 species and 127 birds captured there were 54 re-traps, a recovery rate of 43%.

One un-welcomed experience was the noise from the mine which could be heard during the day, and throughout each night. It is difficult to know how this may affect birds that live close to mining activity. One may assume that birds (and other animals) are being pushed further into the reserve to escape the disturbance. Is this why our capture totals have increased in the past couple of years?

We recorded over 70 species in the three days including White-necked heron, Scarlet Robin, Crested Shrike-tit, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Emu, Boobook and Wedge-tailed Eagle. 2025 will mark 60 years of bird banding at Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve. The first banding records are from Bill Lane and Alan Morris on 3 September 1965. I hope to combine this anniversary with a weekend banding celebrating the history of the Reserve.

Herdsman Lake

24 December 2024

Joe Sollis, Ethan Broom, Patrick Williams, Bill Rutherford

An early 4.45 start marks one of the first banding sessions since the summer solstice. Few of us could make it out given it was Christmas eve, however we still managed to get to standard mound nets up as well as the duck net. It was a very slow morning with nothing to show for our efforts in the first few hours. Although, just as we were about to close up the nets an Australasian darter popped out of the drain in front of our duck net. To our delight, the bird flew straight into the net before we could even get in position to walk it in. Over the next hour we were able to catch 3 passerines including a willie wagtail and 2 silvereyes.

At this project, we have caught 5 Australian Darters. The last time we caught this species was in November 2018 and we caught 2 individuals during the last round of the morning. We have never retrapped this species at the project.

4 January 2025

Ethan Broom, Patrick Williams, Bill Rutherford

This morning, we snuck in another quick session before conditions got too hot again. We caught a few birds over the morning, with Silvereyes dominating the spreadsheet. During the processing we noticed that there was a range of moult patterns between the young silvereyes. Some species had body moult and some birds didn't. We hypothesized that this varied stage of moult might be due to birds with body moult may have been laid earlier in the breeding season than the individuals without. We also wondered if there may have been a break in the breeding season due to the hot conditions.

Species caught:

1 new x Pacific Black Duck

5 x Silvereye

1 x Brown Honeyeater

1 x White-cheeked Honeyeater

1 x Willie Wagtail

11 January 2025

Joe Sollis, Patrick Williams, Bill Rutherford

This morning was very quiet with few birds to be seen over the morning. Perth has been experiencing very hot weather this summer, so activity is very low. We still managed to get out for a few hours before it was too hot to band and had a few interesting observations. With one of our newest trainees wrapping his head around moult for the first time we had lots of discussions about growth bars, fault bars, and how this all applies to aging passerines. The biggest discussion point was around when a bird is no longer aged as a juvenile and is aged 1 (in its first 12 months). This discussion was mostly looking at Silvereyes, our bread-and-butter species at Herdsman. I'd be interested to see how the readers define this age, and whether there are any unpublished indicators. A common feature we utilise is moult and whether the individual is undertaking its post-juvenile moult.

Species caught

1 x Brown Honeyeater

1 x Silvereye

1 x Singing Honeyeater

1 x Striated pardalote

20 January 2025

Ethan Broom, Bill Rutherford

Last week was fairly interesting week down at Herdsman, with a lot of variety in species and band sizes from a relatively small number of birds.

From the main CES nets up on the mound and an additional 30ft net targeting Rainbow bee-eaters and Tree Martin, we caught 15 birds from 7 species. This included 1 Grey Butcherbird (size 6, pictured), 1 Western Gerygone (size 1), 1 Laughing Kookaburra (Size 20), 1 Willie Wagtail (size 3), 3 silvereyes (size 1), 2 Rainbow Bee-eaters (size K) and 6 Tree Martins (size 2).

As spring turns to summer the number of birds we're catching is slowly increasing. Most of the birds caught last week were juveniles or in their first year of life, and many of the Tree Martins in particular were in various stages of wing moult.

We're hoping to be as many weekends as possible during summer (if it isn't as disgustingly hot as this week!), so hopefully the number of birds picks up and we have a few good hauls.

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