



Canberra bird notes

No.10 Price 25c
January 1971

A well known and respected member, Dr. Francis Ratcliffe, died in Canberra last month after a short illness.

Dr. Ratcliffe is best known to most Australian naturalists as the author of "Flying Fox and Drifting Sand", a record of his own experiences while engaged in research on Queensland fruit bats and desert erosion in the inland. This book has become a classic in its field.

For us who knew him, the memory is of a kindly naturalist and philosopher whose sympathy for wild creatures was matched by a genuine regard for his fellow man.

The sands of time drift on relentlessly, and we are the poorer for it.

N.S.W. PARKS AND RESERVES - A BIRDLIST

Michael T. Rowe

This list has been compiled from information supplied by the National Parks & Wildlife Service and individual observers. The parks and reserves have been numbered from 1 to 9, and this key is retained in the bird-list for easy cross-reference. The number preceding each species name is the official RAOU Checklist number.

Brief details of the localities are given in the next section.

1 . BURRINJUCK WATERS PARK

Location: 34 miles south of Yass on Burrinjuck Dam.

Area: 105 acres with several thousand acres of faunal reserve surrounding the park.

Features: Backed by a rugged mountainous mass culminating in Barran Jack, 3173'. The bush is dry sclerophyll with moist gullies, the lake providing an aquatic habitat. The area is noted for its Devonian fossils; the deposits are equal to any in the world both in extent and variation.

Activities: Bushwalking, birdwatching, fishing, watersports, swimming.

Accommodation: Cottages available for hire, caravan and camping facilities.

Information: Park Manager, Burrinjuck Waters Park, Private Bag, via Bowning, 2583.

2. BARREN GROUNDS NATURE RESERVE

Location: 12 miles west of Kiama.

Area: 4390 acres.

Features: A plateau of undulating flat land some 2100' above sea level, situated on a south easterly spur of the Illawarra Range. It is typical 'hanging swamp' almost encircled by sheer sandstone cliffs. A variety of faunal habitats exists: open heath, open eucalypt forest, swamp heath, wet sclerophyll forest, some rainforest and some stands of mallee. The Illawarra escarpments are horizontally layered Hawkesbury Sandstone (Triassic).

Activities: Bushwalking along specified, trails, birdwatching (habitat of the Ground Parrot, Bristlebird, many heath-haunting honeyeaters).

Accommodation: Camping and caravanning at the Visitor's Centre.

Information: The Ranger, P.O. Box 8, Jamberoo, 2533

3. THE ROCK NATURE RESERVE

Location: 20 miles south of Wagga Wagga.

Area: 670 acres.

Features: Residual open forest, with notable geological formations.

Activities: Walking track to the peak, birdwatching.

Accommodation: Visitors' car-park, no overnight.

4. KINCHEGA NATIONAL PARK

Location: 2 miles south-west of Menindee 75 miles from Broken Hill.

Area: 175,000 acres.

Features: Grey soil plains and red sand ridges. Overflow lakes. Aboriginal campsites.

Activities: Boating, swimming, birdwatching.

Accommodation: Hotels at Menindee.

Information: Ranger-in-charge, P.O. Box 40, Menindee.

5. MOUNT KAPUTAH NATIONAL PARK

Locations 30 miles north-east of Narrabri.

Area: 35,200 acres.

Features: A peak on the receding crater edge of an extinct volcano, Mount Kaputah rises 4000' above the surrounding plain. The slopes of volcanic debris are clothed in open forest and woodland savannahs.

Activities. Scenic viewing, short bushwalks, bird-watching.

Accommodation: Cabins and camping ground at Dawson's Springs.

Information: The Secretary, Mount Kaputah National Park Trust, 114, Balonne Street, Narrabri.

6. ROUND HILL NATURE RESERVE

Location: 25 miles west of Euabalong.

Areas 12,980 acres.

Features; Mallee regrowth with Mallee Fowl population.

7. COCOPARA NATIONAL PARK AND NATURE RESERVE

Location: 12 miles north of Griffith.

Area: Approx. 90,000 acres.

Features: A low wooded range, culminating in Mount Bingar, 1493'. This range is the eastern limb of a large syncline in Devonian rocks, and consists of quartzite, shales and sandstones. A variety of habitats, with many interesting bird species.

Activities: Bushwalking, birdwatching and nature study.

Accommodation: Hotels and motels in Griffith.

Information: Ranger-in-charge, 97, Noorilla Street, Griffith.

8. THE WARRUMBUNGLES NATIONAL PARK

Location: 20 miles west, of Coonabarabran.

Area: 15,800 acres.

Features: Spectacular scenery resulting from the erosion of a complex of ancient volcanoes.

Activities: Bushwalking birdwatching and nature study.

Accommodation: Cabins and camping area.

Information: The Secretary, P.O. Box 269 Coonabarabran.

9. THE MUNGHORN GAP NATURE RESERVE

Location: 20 miles north east of Mudgee.

Area: 7050 acres.

Features: Situated on the Dividing Range, an area of flat sandstone covered with typical xeromorphic flora, but containing many species of special interest to botanists.

Activities: Bushwalking, birdwatching and nature study.

Reference Key:-

1. Burrinjuck Waters Park,
2. Barren Grounds Nature Reserve
3. The Rock Nature Reserve
4. Kinchega National Park
5. Mount Kaputah. National Park
6. Round Hill Nature Reserve
7. Cocopara National Park/Nature Reserve
8. The Warrumbungles National Park
9. The Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve

Cont/-

The Birdlist:-

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Emu				x		x	x	x	
7 Mallee Fowl						x			
8 Brush Turkey					x				
9 Stubble Quail	x			x				x	
10 Brown Quail		x							
14 Painted Quail		x			x	x		x	x
27 Topknot Pigeon		x							
29 Brown Pigeon		x							
30 Peaceful Dove				x			x	x	x
31 Diamond Dove	x			x		x	x		
32 Bar-shouldered Dove						x	x	x	
34 Common Bronzewing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
43 Crested Pigeon			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
44 Wonga Pigeon	x	x							x
49 Spotted Crake				x					
55 B/T Native Hen				x					
56 Dusky Moorhen				x					
58 Swamphen				x				x	
59 Coot	x			x					
60 Crested Grebe	x			x					
61 Little Grebe	x			x			x	x	
62 H/headed Grebe	x			x					
96 Black Cormorant	x			x					
97 L/Black Cormorant	x			x					
99 Pied Cormorant				x					
00 L/Pied Cormorant	x			x			x	x	
01 Darter				x					
06 Pelican	x			x					
10 Whiskered Tern				x					
11 Gull-billed Tern				x					
12 Caspian Tern				x					
25 Silver Gull	x			x					
32 Redkneed Dotterel	x			x					
33 Spurwinged Plover	x			x			x	x	
35 Banded Plover				x				x	x

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
143 Redcapped Dotterel				x					
144 B/fronted Dotterel	x			x		x			
145 Australian Dott.				x					
146 Pied Stilt	x			x					
147 Banded Stilt				x					
148 R/necked Avocet				x					
168 Japanese Snipe		x							
173 Aust. Pratincole				x					
174 S. Stone Curlew	x								
177 Brolga				x					
178 Glossy Ibis				x					
179 White Ibis	x			x					
180 S/necked Ibis	x			x			x	x	
181 Royal Spoonbill				x					
182 Y/B Spoonbill	x			x					
185 Little Egret				x					
186 Plumed Egret				x					
187 White Egret	x			x				x	
188 W/necked Heron	x	x		x			x	x	
189 W/necked Heron				x				x	
192 Night Heron				x				x	
197 Brown Bittern								x	
202 Wood Duck	x			x			x	x	
203 Black Swan	x			x					
207 Mountain Duck	x			x					
208 Black Duck	x			x			x	x	
210 Chestnut Teal				x			x		
211 Grey Teal	x			x					
212 B/winged Shoveler				x					
213 Pink-eared Duck				x					
214 Freckled Duck				x					
215 W/eyed Duck	x			x					
216 Bluebilled Duck				x					
217 Musk Duck	x			x					
218 Spotted Harrier				x					
219 Swamp Harrier	x			x		x			

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
0 Grey Goshawk		x			x				
1 Brown Goshawk	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
2 Sparrowhawk	x		x	x				x	x
4 Wedgetailed Eagle	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5 Little Eagle	x	x				x	x	x	x
6 Sea Eagle	x			x					
8 Whistling Kite	x	x		x	x			x	x
9 Black Kite				x				x	
0 Squaretailed Kite				x				x	
1 Blackbreasted Buzzard				x					
2 B/shouldered Kite				x			x	x	
5 Little Falcon			x	x				x	
6 Grey Falcon				x				x	
7 Peregrine Falcon	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
9 Brown Falcon	x	x		x			x	x	x
0 Kestrel	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
2 Boobook Owl	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
9 Barn Owl	x						x	x	
4 Rainbow Lorikeet								x	
8 Musk Lorikeet	x							x	x
6 Scalybreasted Lorikeet								x	
0 Little Lorikeet	x	x						x	x
4 R/T Black Cockatoo				x					
5 Glossy Black Cockatoo		x							
7 Y/T Black Cockatoo	x	x							x
8 Gang-gang Cockatoo	x	x							x
9 White Cockatoo	x			x		x		x	x
0 Pink Cockatoo				x		x	x		
1 Little Corella				x					
2 Corella				x					
3 Galah	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
4 Cockatiel				x	x	x	x	x	
7 Superb Parrot						x	x		
0 Redwinged Parrot								x	
1 King Parrot	x	x			x			x	x

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
282 Crimson Rosella	x	x			x		x	x	x
284 Yellow Rosella				x					
288 Eastern Rosella	x	x	x					x	x
291 Ringneck Parrot				x		x	x	x	
295 Redbacked Parrot	x			x		x	x	x	x
296 Mulga Parrot				x		x	x		
297 Bluebonnet Parrot				x		x	x	x	
302 Turquoise Parrot					x			x	x
306 Bluewinged Parrot				x					
310 Budgerygah	x		x	x		x	x	x	
309 Swift Parrot								x	x
311 Ground Parrot		x							
313 Tawny Frogmouth	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
317 Owlet Nightjar				x		x		x	x
318 Dollarbird	x							x	x
319 Azure Kingfisher									x
322 Kookaburra	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
325 Redbacked Kingfisher				x		x		x	
326 Sacred Kingfisher	x	x		x		x		x	x
329 Rainbowbird	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
330 Whitethroated N/jar									x
331 Spotted Nightjar					x	x		x	
334 Spinetailed Swift					x	x		x	x
335 Forktailed Swift	x			x					
337 Pallid Cuckoo		x		x		x	x	x	x
338 Fentailed Cuckoo	x	x			x		x	x	x
339 Brush Cuckoo		x					x		x
342 Horsfield Br/Cuckoo	x	x		x		x		x	x
344 Golden Br/Cuckoo	x				x			x	x
348 Channelbilled Cuckoo								x	x

(to be concluded).

IN CAMP AT GOSSE'S BLUFF

R.J.S. Cooke

I spent the five days 1-5 October 1968 camped at Gosse's Bluff, about 30 miles west of the Finke River at Hermannsburg, N.T. Gosse's Bluff is an annular ring of rock about three miles in diameter and with walls about 700-800 feet high, believed to have originated in a comet impact. There is only one easy route into the interior of the Bluff, via a creek-bed on the east side. The only water in the whole area lies in a few waterholes at the western inner edge of the Bluff wall.

This ring of rock stands on Missionary Plain, with the MacDonnell Range six or seven miles to the north and the Krichauff Range an equal distance to the south. The particular season had been good and there was notable ground cover throughout the area - in fact it rained once or twice while I was there.

I observed the following birds during the course of geophysical work in a belt about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles square immediately outside the Bluff wall on the east. Observation was entirely casual with no opportunity for anything but notes of species seen. A few species, as noted, were observed during a couple of visits to the waterholes inside the Bluff. The names and order of listing are taken from G.M. Storr's "List of Northern Territory Birds" (Western Australian Museum, 1967).

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Elanus, sp. One distant view of a perched bird.

BLACK KITE Milvus migrans Present in the area.

WHISTLING KITE Haliastur sphenurus Call heard, once or twice.

WEDGETAILED EAGLE Aquila audax A pair seen and photographed at the nest.

NANKEEN KESTREL Falco cenchroides Present in the area.

DIAMOND DOVE Geopelia cuneata Seen occasionally on tracks.

CRESTED PIGEON Ocphaps lophotes Regularly seen. I saw several of this species at Katherine on Sept. 19, 1967 (see remarks in Storr).

PLUMED PIGEON Geophaps plumifera Common inside the Bluff, but not seen outside. This is in contrast to the foregoing species which was not seen inside the Bluff.

GALAH Cacatua roseicapilla Seen occasionally.

PORT LINCOLN PARROT Platycercus zonarius Seen regularly in small numbers in and near stream beds (more or less heavily timbered).

MULGA PARROT Psephotus varius One distant view.

BUDGERIGAH Melopsittacus undulatus Common in trees along watercourses.

PALLID CUCKOO Cuculus pallidus Call heard once.

BOOBOOK OWL Ninox novaeseelandiae Call heard once.

cont/-

REDBACKED KINGFISHER Halcyon pyrrhopygia Seen once at the Bluffs outer wall.

WHITEBACKED SWALLOW *Cheramoeca leucosterna* Seen a few times.

Petrochelidon spp. Seen inside the Bluff near the waterholes.

PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae* A bird seen inside the Bluff was probably of this species.

BLACKFACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE *Coracina novaehollandiae* Present in the area.

WHITEWINGED TRILLER Lalage sueurii Seen regularly.

CRIMSON CHAT Epthianura tricolor Seen a few times.

WESTERN WARBLER *Gerygone fusea* One probable sighting in a low thicket in a very desolate spot.

BANDED WHITEFACE *Aphelocephala nigrincincta* Seen once in a very desolate area.

WILLIE WAGTAIL *Rhipidura leucophrys* Seen once inside the Bluff.

WESTERN SHRIKE-THRUSH *Colluricincla harmonica* A very poor view of what was probably this species in a tree upon the interior Bluff wall. Very fine, clear and loud voice.

WEDGEBILL Sphenostoma cristatum Seen once on the tracks.

YELLOW-THROATED MINER Myzantha flavigula Common in trees along watercourses.

ZEBRA FINCH *Taeniopygia guttata* Small flock seen inside the Bluff by the waterholes.

MAGPIE LARK Grallina cyanoleuca Present in the area.

MASKED WOODSWALLOW Artamus personatus Seen a few times,

LITTLE or BLACK-FACED WOODSWALLOW Artamus sp. Common inside the Bluff near the waterholes.

PIED BUTCHERBIRD Cracticus nigrogularis Seen a few times.

BLACK-BACKED MAGPIE Cracticus tibicen Present in the area,

Corvus sp. A 'crow' was present, but could not be identified to species.

32 Lawley Place. Deakin, A.C.T.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER - SECOND A.C.T.RECORD

The sighting of four Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* at Fyshwick on November 4, 1970 constitutes the second A.C.T. record for this species. The birds were watched for a full hour by A. D'Andria and G. Clerk, and numerous field notes were taken which put the identification beyond doubt. They were resting and feeding in flooded grassland at Kelly's Farm. When feeding they walked slowly and deliberately, occasionally pecking at food on the ground. They allowed close approach (to about 50 feet) before showing any signs of nervousness. These consisted of an upright alert stance and rapid head-bobbing. The flight was low and direct. They flew only a short distance alighting on the opposite of the pool. The call note heard was a musical "tloo-ee" on flushing. The weather was fine, with 3/8 alccumulus cloud a mild SE'ly wind. Observations were made with 10 x 50 and 12x50 binoculars.

LETTER TO THE EDITORMortality of Barn Owls,

Sir,

Canberra Bird Notes No_e9 refers to the irruption of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* from the west, and the many sightings of living and dead birds around the A.C.T. I first became interested in the influx of Barn Owls while travelling in the districts of Moulamein and Swan Hill last autumn, at a time when the mouse plague was easing off. I noticed many owls dead on roads and highways, and this continued right through central Victoria and as far south as Geelong.

In my nature page in the Ballarat Courier, I appealed for information about Barn Owls being found, dead or alive, and I had a big response from places as far away as Donald in the north, Stawell in the west and Queenscliff in the south. Many people had found owls in a weak and distressed conditions and most eventually died in spite of care. Mortality on the reads was also high.

At Lethbridge, a farmer cared for three weak owls and fed them mice but they did not survive. At Geelong, one owl was found perched on a wardrobe in a spare bedroom.

There is little doubt that the recent mouse plague caused this irruption of Barn Owls, and as the food supply ran out they were caught in the extremes of our winter, and many thousands must have perished. There was also quite an influx of Kestrels *Falco cenchroides*, Black-shouldered Kites *Elanus notatus* and a few Letterwinged Kites *Elanus scriptus*, but few of these were reported in low condition or dead.

Yours,

Jack Wheeler

Belmont, Vic.

BOOK REVIEWSome Garden Birds of South-east Australia

Tess Kloot & Ellen M. McCulloch - Collins Ltd.

138 pp. \$2.50

This is another book dealing with the birdlife of our gardens. It covers the area from Sydney to Adelaide. The title is somewhat misleading as several species included would rarely be seen in suburban gardens, if at all. Examples are the Pacific Gull and the Black-faced Cormorant. Several of the waterbirds would also be unusual garden birds unless one lived near an ornamental tool in a park.

After brief introductory sections dealing with topics such as how to start birdwatching, attracting birds to the garden, bird-feeding and record-keeping, the authors then go on to cover approximately 70 species. Each bird is described in full detail, with information on its plumage, behaviour, food, nesting and voice. An interesting section at the end of each species entry puts forward suggestions for beginners to work at.

Another feature is the inclusion of a few lines of poetry in reference to some species. This does not really add anything to the book's ornithological value but it could well appeal to many readers.

The scraperboard sketches by Rex Davies are of average quality. In several cases they do not help much in identification. For example, the Little Thornbill sketch could be anything in the Thornbill/Warbler group or even the Brown Weebill. There are also six plates in colour, and these are elegant as well as useful.

cont/-

Following the main body of the book there is a small chapter dealing with native trees and shrubs that attract birds and a chart showing the topography of a typical bird. Finally there is a bibliography of selected reading and an index.

Taken as a whole, this book provides a pleasing introduction to suburban birds in our part of Australia. It carries a wealth of interest and information for comparatively new birdwatchers, and should also attract those just interested in looking at birds through the living-room window.

MC

A WORLD TRIP FOR MR FORSHAW

A Churchill Fellowship has been awarded to Mr Joe Forshaw, an authority on parrots and one of the initial members of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. He leaves Australia in July on a world trip, during which he hopes to gather further material for his book "Parrots of the World". This monograph, to be fully illustrated by W. Cooper, will deal with all known species and subspecies in the Order Psittaciformes.

Mr Forshaw's itinerary will take in visits to museums in Djakarta, Genoa, Vienna, Stockholm, Leiden, Paris, London, Caracas, Sao Paulo and many cities in the United States. He intends to try and establish the validity of certain subspecies by the critical examination of study skins, and will also take photographs of extinct or very rare parrots for inclusion in his book, which should be out in late 1972.

Mr Forshaw will return to Australia via the Pacific Islands.

C.O.G. ACTIVITIESOctober 14

Mr John McKean of the Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, spoke on bats as Mammalian Birds. After describing his own initiation to bat study, Mr McKean compared the flying abilities of birds and bats and, in brief, discussed the fibre composition in the pectoral muscles of both groups. It was considered that bats replaced birds ecologically at night and examples of fruit, blossom, fish and flesh-eating bats were given. Predation on bats by both mammals and birds was noted and the complex echolocation systems of bats surveyed. Bat-banding projects and their results were briefly outlined. Mr McKean concluded his lecture with detailed life histories of two distinct species - a fruit-eating flying fox and an insectivorous cave-dwelling bat.

October 18

Nine members and friends recorded 36 species of birds on an outing to the Molonglo swamps. The party was most interested in a massed flying display by about 90 Pelicans, which frequently soared to great heights. Other interesting birds seen included two Japanese Snipe, two Royal Spoonbills, two Plumed Egrets and a White Egret.

cont/-

November 11

Queleas, those notoriously destructive weaver-finches, were the subject of a very informative talk by Mr H.J. de S. Disney of the Australian Museum, Sydney. Mr Disney showed slides of the birds in their nesting and roosting habitats, and used an interesting selection of skins to illustrate plumage variation in the species. The talk touched on methods of Quelea control, one of which can only be described as home-made napalm. In another method, roosting and nesting sites are sprayed with insecticide. Despite these drastic measures, the Quelea remains a major pest in Africa, and flocks of a million birds are not unusual.

November 15

Six members braved the cold wet weather to attend the outing to Russell Hill. The bird count was low, only 26 species being recorded. The most interesting birds seen were a Tawny Frogmouth and an Olive-backed Oriole (both sitting on nests), a Sacred Kingfisher and a female Leaden Flycatcher.

COMING MEETINGS

February 10

Dr R. Schodde, of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research, will speak on "Birds of Paradise and Bowerbirds". Birds of the month will be the Bronzewings, by M. Clayton.

March 10

Film evening. Films to be shown include "Secret Bowers" (in colour) and a film on Canadian birds.

April 14

Mr Alan Morris, of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, on "Island Reserves". Birds of the month will be

the small grebes, by A. D'Andria.

C.B.N.

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January 1971

A LIST OF PERIODICALS

Following requests from members, we are listing the publications of societies throughout Australia whose interests are related to those of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Here they are:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Published by</u>
Australian Aviculture	Avicultural Society of Aust.
Australian Bird Bander	Bird Banders Ass'n of Aust.
Australian Bird Watcher	Bird Observers' Club
Bird Observer	Bird Observers' Club
Wildlife in Australia	Wildlife Preservation Society of Aust. and Qld W.P.S.
Birds	N.S.W. Field Ornithologists Club
Gould League Notes	Gould League
North Queensland Naturalist	N.Q. Field Naturalists Club
Bird Keeping in Australia	Avicultural Society of South Australia
S. Australian Naturalist	Field Naturalists Club of S.A.
S. Australian Ornithologist	S.A. Ornithological Ass'n
Tasmanian Naturalist	Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club
Bird Lover	Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club
Geelong Naturalist	Gould League
Victorian Naturalist	Geelong Field Naturalists Club
W.A. Gould League Notes	V. Field Naturalists Club
W.A. Naturalist	Gould League W.A. Naturalists Club

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