

birdwatch



JUNE 1997

newsletter of the southcoast birdwatchers

editorial

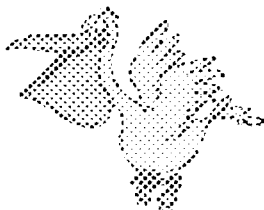
Members are enjoying our new venue at Glendale Christian School in Goolwa, judging by the lively discussion which occurred during our first Meeting there, on May 9th (see report later)

The Working Group met on May 16th and have arranged some great Outings for us. They are seeking donations of good quality bird pictures from calendars, magazines, etc, for the Publicity Board, so please - turn out those cupboards and bring along what you find!

The Group hopes that a draft copy of our information pamphlet will be available for members to examine at our next meeting.

x x x x x

Please note that although most members have paid their subscriptions, there are still some of us with bad memories. **THIS WILL BE THEIR LAST ISSUE OF BIRDWATCH UNLESS SUBS ARE RECEIVED BY OR AT OUR NEXT MEETING..**



WELCOME to our new members since last Birdwatch:

Margaret Arnold of Victor Harbor, and
Mardi Crawford of Willunga.

HAPPY BIRDING!

for your diary

SAT, JUNE 7. MUNTIRI SCRUB, Milang property of Dr A Black. Meet at Old Canoe tree at Currency Creek.

WEDS, JUNE 18. 'WOODCONE' Mt Compass. Meet at corner of Main South Road and Woodcone Rd, Mt Compass, along side of the Dairy Vale factory.

SAT, JUNE 28. NEWLAND HEAD CP .
Meet at the hut in the camping ground.

FRIDAY, JULY 11, MEETING. John Eckert with a collection of Bird Skins (stuffed birds).

SUNDAY, JULY 13. TONKINS WINERY.
Meet at the winery.

WEDS, JULY 23. NURRAGI CONSERVATION RESERVE. Meet at the Milang/Clayton turnoff on the Strathalbyn Rd.

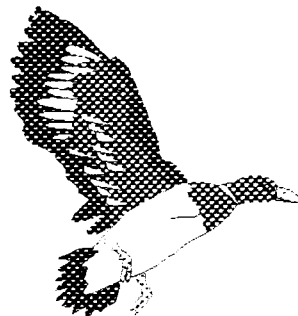
SAT, AUGUST 2. ASHBOURNE AREA.
Meet near the phone box at Ashbourne.

WEDS, AUGUST 13. HINDMARSH FALLS. Meet at the Falls in the picnic ground car-park.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING: FRI, JULY 18, AT THE DYER RESIDENCE.

*OUTINGS: MEET AT 9.30 AM.
BRING LUNCH AND CHAIR*

*MEETINGS: GLENDALE
PRIMARY SCHOOL.
GOOLWA, 7.30 pm.*



outings

GILBERT'S SIDING, 26 APRIL

A warm sunny day, and ten members, including our new Junior Member, Daniel, spent a very pleasant morning along a section of the railway reserve at the Siding.

The call of what proved to be very elusive Black-chinned Honeyeaters led us to two large Eucalypts in a gully quite near the old railway platform. We were rewarded at last by good sightings of at least one pair (we weren't sure if we were seeing the same pair in different places). These trees were attracting many other birds as well, and most of our time was spent in their vicinity. The Grey Butcherbird was another which took some time to locate at the edge of a neighbouring ploughed field.

Bird Call reported 35 species altogether, including: Common Bronzewing and Crested Pigeons, six species of the Parrot family, Fantail Cuckoo, Kookaburra, Welcome Swallows and Tree Martins, Golden Whistlers, Grey Fantail, Weebills and Yellow Thornbills, seven species of Honeyeaters, and the Striated and Spotted Pardalote.

Judy Jones

SCOTT CONSERVATION PARK, 3 MAY.

Late Autumn, and the mist turned to proper drops. The scrub felt and smelt delightful and the birds appreciated it. Large and small, they welcomed eight of us with a chorus of warbling and chirping, and we seemed hardly to disturb their antics as they frolicked among the foliage. We headed first along the track parallel with the creek.

In the first few minutes the diligent had recorded several Parrots, Honeyeaters, Thornbills and a Cuckoo. And then it was down to specifics: really good observations of Musk and Purple-crowned Lorikeets; Yellow-plumed, Yellow-faced, Brownheaded and Crescent Honeyeaters; Striated Pardalotes; Grey Fantails, and Yellow and Yellow-rumped Thornbills ('Butter-burns'). About thirty species were seen in just over an hour before we turned and added Galahs, Magpies, Currawong and Kookaburra (h) to our list.

Several of us watched enthralled for some time as a pair of Musk Lorikeets explored a tree hollow. Then some Wrens and a few Thornbills later, alongside the track, I spotted a Treecreeper. This was my first close-up observation of him, and the experts enlightened me with his first name - Whitethroated. My thrill for the day!

By now we were slightly damp, so donned our rain gear and crossed the creek. The track to the right was strangely quiet there, so we turned back and tried the left track. The leaders moved into the scrub following the elusive trail of Black-chinned Honeyeaters, but without further reward. Whitebrowed Babblers flitted about here too, but I was too slow to sight them, so that will be a pleasure in store!

The Bird Call at lunch netted 36 species including ten different Honeyeaters, but still no confirmed Kookaburra (only a masquerading Wattlebird!). An altogether very pleasant Saturday morning!

Verle

BLACKFELLOW CREEK and MOUNT MAGNIFICENT, 11 MAY.

Four members ventured out on this very chilly morning. The sky was overcast until the sun broke through about 10.30 am, and the wind remained lazy throughout. Although only 21 species were recorded, we all agreed that we had quality sightings.

Firstly we wandered the scrubland down and along the creek. The Purple-crowned Lorikeets were the most active bird there, with a 'D' recorded (31 to 100) on the recording sheet. The abundant sightings allowed the less experienced to observe closely their features for comparison with other Lorikeets. Red Wattlebird, Adelaide Rosella and New Holland Honeyeater were also active in this area. Seven species of honeyeaters were recorded (see accompanying article on the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater).

We crossed the road to Mount Magnificent CP as the sun peeped through. As we climbed the rise the small-bird activity increased, and we had an excellent comparative view of the White-naped and Brown-headed Honeyeaters feeding actively in the same tree. Not far away was the most brilliant Golden Whistler I can recall seeing - maybe because his feathers were fluffed up to protect him from the chilly breeze! A Scarlet Robin also in brilliant plumage was closely observed. Other sightings of note were the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, White-throated Treecreeper, and European Goldfinch.

Judith Dyer

COLE'S CROSSING, 14 MAY

A cool but fine morning greeted five members and two visitors at Cole's Crossing. Noisy Crescent Honeyeaters greeted us as we parked our cars near flowering Cup Gums, and further sightings of these birds occurred during the morning. The sighting of 20 to 30 Scarlet Robins was a highlight for most of us. They were seen along the fence-lines of open paddocks and at the edges of the pine forest; both mature and immature birds were seen. Further sightings of Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters occurred; also of Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Whistling Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown- and Yellow-rumped Thornbills, Eastern Spinebill and numerous Superb Fairy Wrens.

A total of 28 species was seen, and by the end of the morning our two visitors had become Members of our Club!

Dianne



meeting report

FRIDAY, 9 MAY, GLENDALE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Eighteen members and two visitors attended at our new venue. Apologies were received from three members. The surroundings were very pleasant and convenient. The video on some of the birds found in Kakadu NP was enjoyed by all, and brought back memories to those who have already visited, and whetted the appetites of those of us who haven't yet had that privilege. Our round-table discussions that followed were most rewarding, with a lot of knowledge gained as we shared our experiences and sightings. The first Discussion Paper, from the Coorong and Lower Lakes Ramsar Management Committee, was tabled. A few copies are still available for absent Members (please see Judith).

Gaynor gave an update on the initial development of the Byrnes Road Wetland Project where she and Judy are monitoring the birdlife for our group.

Members are invited to a special meeting of the Hindmarsh Island Landcare Group on Friday 6th June at 7.30pm. The speaker will be David Paton talking on the relationship of vegetation to the environment, and the importance of understorey to animal species. David is a well-known ornithologist. The 'Vegetation Report on Hindmarsh Island', prepared by Denzel, will be launched that evening. It is proposed to hold the meeting in the supper room of the Goolwa Centenary Hall, but this should be confirmed with Kate (8555 5020) closer to the time



SOME SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE
OVERDUE.
PLEASE CHECK!



A NOTE ON YELLOW-PLUMED HONEYEATERS

Provided by Judith

Unusually abundant sightings have been had of the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater across the southern Fleurieu Peninsula in the last month, so it is thought Members might find these notes of interest.

In appearance and size they are similar to the White-plumed Honeyeater (or Greenie) that we often see, but have a yellow plume and strong striations on the breast. The Yellow-plumed is common in mallee, dry forest and woodland. Paula and I recorded up to 30 birds at Newland Head, right on the cliff top, while we were on a SAOA outing at the end of April. An estimated 20 - 30 were seen at Scott CP during our SCBW excursion, with one sighted at each of our next two outings at Blackfellow Creek and Cole's Crossing Road.

Denzel reported large numbers of them at the Nurragi Conservation Reserve between Finnis and Milang. He has checked his records back to 1990 and has not previously reported them for this area. I have checked many of the DENR Bird Lists for parks across the peninsula without finding any reference.

Why this explosion of birds in our area? Has the unusually dry autumn driven them south looking for food? *Have you seen any?* If so, we would like to hear about it - how many and where.

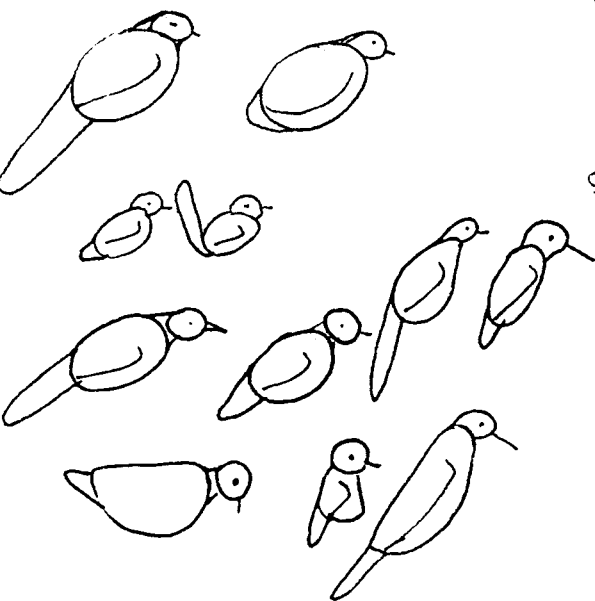


Key Features for Identifying Birds

It is often difficult when viewing a bird to pick out and remember the features which will be important in making an identification. The features listed below are not usually presented by the bird in the neat categories I have used, e.g. the shape a bird appears is often influenced by its behaviour. However, if these categories can be kept in mind it may aid in focussing the observer's attention and aid in clarifying the observations.

SIZE : Compare the bird's size to a bird you know like a sparrow, magpie, willy-wagtail etc.

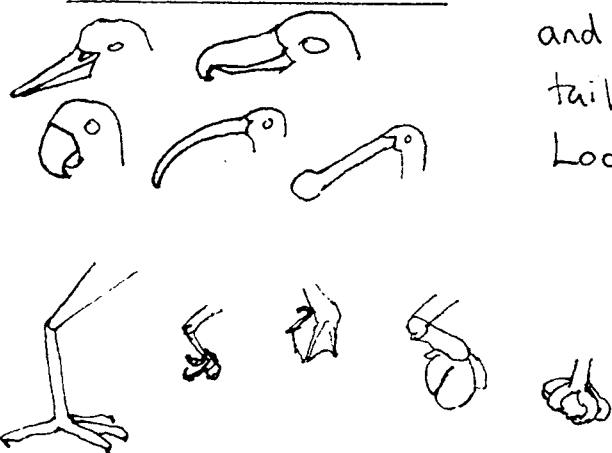
SHAPE & STANCE : Look at the shape and relative proportions of the head, body and tail:



e.g. "Small head, round fat body, long tail"
vs. "Small head, round fat body, stubby tail"
or "Medium head, small body, short tail"
vs. "Medium head, small body, long tail-cocked"

After some practice these mental descriptions begin to allow you to place the bird with a group of birds.

BILL & LEGS :



The shape and relative size of the bill and legs, when combined with the head/body/tail, are usually enough to identify the bird.

Look at : bill size compared to head
bill shape
bill use

leg size compared to body size
leg shape
leg use