

june 1998

# southcoast birdwatch



for your diary

**WEDS JUNE 17th. OUTING. NURRIGI CP**

Meet at intersection of Strathalbyn and Milang Rds at Finniss.

**SAT JUNE 27th. OUTING. HINDMARSH**

**RIVER.** Meet on the Adelaide Rd, 100 m east of Hindmarsh River Bridge, near Wattle Drive.

**SUN JULY 10th. MEETING. Speaker: Duncan MacKenzie.**

**SUN JULY 12th. OUTING. MT BILLY- (HINDMARSH VALLEY RESERVOIR RESERVE).** Meet: Turn off the Adelaide Rd to Myponga. Meet near the tennis courts and Hall which are just a couple of hundred metres on.

**WEDS JULY 22nd. OUTING. GILBERT SIDING**

Meet at corner of Strathalbyn and Gilbert Siding Rds, Finniss.

**SAT AUG 1. OUTING. HINDMARSH ISLAND**

Meet on causeway immediately after ferry crossing.

**WEDS AUG 12th. OUTING. MT COMPASS BOARDWALK and SCOTT CP.**

Meet at Boardwalk.

**WEDS AUG 22nd. OUTING. MANNING RESERVE** (Map in next Newsletter).

**OUTINGS:** Meet at 8.30am. Bring lunch and chair.

**MEETINGS:** Start at 7.30pm at Glendale Christian School, Goolwa.

**CONTACT:** Judith Dyer, 3 Egret Ave, Goolwa, ph 8555 2736

Kate Bruce, PO Box 403, Goolwa  
ph 8555 5 020

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We have some new members since our last newsletter, and it is a pleasure to welcome **Peter Moore** of Maslin Beach, **Carol Milburn** of Clapham, and **Bruce Riglin** and **Elizabeth Wilson** who have a 'part-time' house at Yilki.

*We are very glad to welcome you, and hope you find friendship and great birding experiences with us.*

Our membership is now 65 (forty Single, twelve Family and one Junior), and it is good to report that all subs have now been paid!

**Plant Trees For Me** has written to us, as mentioned in our last newsletter, asking for any help members might give in planting trees along roadsides and reserves in the Port Elliot and Goolwa area as part of a local revegetation project. They ask only for a couple of hours, and the work can include: drilling holes, planting trees and staking them. All tools are provided. *Over the last two years, 20,000 local trees and shrub species have been planted in this area.*

Good recent rainfalls make conditions ideal for planting, and 10,000 seedlings are waiting volunteers!

## Help is needed for these days:

Sun, June 14. Goolwa Rd, Middleton, with Middleton Town and Foreshore Association.

Tues, June 16th. Ocean Rd, Middleton, with Pt Elliot and Glendale Schools.

Sun, June 28th, Currency Creek by the Gun Club off Cemetery Rd. Bring lunch. (With South Coast Peace and Environment Group).

If you are interested, please contact: **Peter McLachlan (8554 2432)**, **Kallan Dennis (8554 5252)** or **Derek Tickner (8554 2031)**.

*More trees - more birds!*

## 1998 CAMPOUT - NARACOORTE

This will be held on the weekend of Oct 31st to Nov 1st, although some of us will be there from the 30th to the 2nd. Any member who would like to join us would be very welcome.

A choice of cabin, caravan or tent accommodation will be booked at Naracoorte Caravan Park.

*Please phone Judith for details.*

## working group notes

At the meeting on May 22nd a decision was made on the 1998 Campout (see previous page for details). The resignation of Lilian and Bob Harper was regretfully accepted, and they were thanked for a donation to our funds.

The Treasurer reported a balance of \$936.03, and it was suggested that some of this money be used to erect two stiles at the Effluent Ponds Bird-hide site to give access to a road reserve at the rear of the ponds, making possible an interesting round trip.

## meeting report: may 8th

Seventeen members attended, apologies were received from: Kit Smith and Liz Barry.

Kate reported the positions allocated within the Working Party we had elected at the previous meeting. These are:

- Kate and Denzel.....Chairpersons
- Judith.....Secretary and membership
- Judy Jones (Gaynor assisting).....Treasurer
- Ann.....Publicity
- Denzel.....Bird records
- Belinda.....Working Group minutes
- Chris.....Outings

After the business was finished, we had lots of fun with two quizzes organised by Anna and Judith. Not many of us could label all the parts of a bird, and listing birds with similarities in plumage or structure caused lots of discussion and argument. All winners received chocolate frogs, and a few escaped to hop to non-winners, too.

A heartfelt vote of thanks was given to the creators of this evening's fun.

## birdcall

Kate: Two Magpie Geese at Hindmarsh Island

Anna: Darter, Whistling Kites, Nankeen Night Heron at Wellington

## NEXT MEETING'S SPEAKER WILL BE DUNCAN MACKENZIE FROM ADELAIDE.

Duncan's topic will be 'Wildlife of MacQuarie Island'. He spent a period on the Island as a biologist, and will give an illustrated talk. *Bring your friends - spread the word - this will be a good night!*

## outings reports

### onkaparinga gorge (april 4)

We met in the car-park of the Noarlunga Institute under cloudy skies. Waiting for us was Susan, a member of the Friends of Onkaringa Park, who had come to offer us the benefit of her local knowledge. Before we set off, Susan was able to show us a Nankeen Night Heron which was settling down for a day's sleep high in a pine tree near the water's edge. Some 17 people arrived for the outing, including four visitors who had seen a notice in the SAOA magazine.

We began the outing at Sundews. Along the fire-track we saw numerous Eastern Spinebills and NH Honeyeaters, also saw

and heard a number of Crescent Honeyeaters.

From the lookout there was an excellent view down into the gorge above which spiralled a Peregrine Falcon and a Brown Goshawk. On the way back to the track we saw White-browed Scrub-wrens, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and a Scarlet Robin which seemed to want to play hide-and-peek.

Near an old water-trough, Ann spotted a collection of Red-browed Firetails. We also saw a very highly-coloured Spotted Pardalote. We arrived at the dam towards the end of our walk, and since it was a cool day there were not many birds there, though Babblers announced their presence in the nearby bush. We returned to Old Noarlunga for lunch and the Bird-count.

By now the Night Heron had settled itself in the high branches of the tree. Across the river we saw an immature Heron. Our total count was 37 species. I would like to thank the Friends of Onkaparinga Park, and particularly Tony Bainbridge for his helpful advice and the supply of some very useful maps!

*Edith St George*

### brand's property, parawa (april 18th)

Denzel was our leader for the day as seven members enjoyed the autumn sunshine and a cool breeze while exploring this beautiful piece of Cup-gum and Tea-tree scrub owned by Nigel Brand. It was very quiet as we wandered down the slope towards the dam which gave us a chance to have a closer look at the flowering heath.

An Australasian Grebe and a Dusky Moorhen were spotted on the dam. Grey Fantails, Brown Thornbills, Superb Fairy Wrens and NH Honeyeaters were seen in the thick vegetation along the creek near the dam.

We crossed the sloshy spring water after watching and listening to a pair of Kookaburras, and headed up the other side of the property where we found a large gum tree in flower which was attracting many birds. We spent some time watching Grey Fantails and White-naped Honeyeaters in the tree, while also seeing Red Wattlebirds, Grey Currawongs and Adelaide Rosellas on the other side of the valley.

As we ventured up to the top of the block through the grass-trees and stringy-bark a Golden Whistler and Grey Shrike-thrush were spotted. We had a wonderful view of a White-browed Scrub-wren, Red-browed Firetails and Brown Thornbills as we found the path back to the dam.

One of the highlights of the morning was spending some time watching a Brown Goshawk soaring with a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles.

Many Crescent Honeyeaters and Striated Thornbills were seen in the scrub throughout the morning, while several Little Ravens flew overhead. A total of 31 species was seen on the day.

*Marg Kitto*

## tonkin's winery (april 29th)

Five members met on a cool but fine morning to explore the area downstream from the ford to the dam, some kilometer or so from the gateway. On the left walking in is the large expanse of high reeds of Black Swamp, and on the right is medium to low mallee-type growth with some open areas of grassland. The impression was that this area does not sustain quite the same number of species and birds that we have found in the upstream part of the property north of Winery Road; but as this was our first foray into this area I may be proved wrong in the future.

Having said that, our final count was 36 species with White Ibis, Black-shouldered Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Swamp Harrier, Black Falcon and Rainbow Lorikeets all flying over, Little Grass-bird calling in the reeds, and a variety of bush birds seen and calling including Striated and Spotted Pardalote, Mistletoebird, Restless Flycatcher, Red-browed and Zebra Finches and five species of Honeyeaters.

*Judith Dyer*

## mount compass boardwalk, and cole's crossing (may 10th)

**Mount Compass Boardwalk.** Eighteen birdwatchers left their cosy beds on a crisp overcast Mothers' Day morning, necessitating a division into two groups to observe birds from the boardwalk.

Many, if not most, were hoping to see the Southern Emu Wren. It was heard by those who knew the call, but alas, not seen by the rest of us. We had to be satisfied with sightings of Fairy Wrens, Golden-headed Cisticola, sixty Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, a mob of Cattle Egrets co-habiting with cattle, and an unidentified raptor overhead.

**Cole's Crossing.** Most of the group moved on to Cole's Crossing Road to try our luck there on a very quiet morning of bird-watching. Scarlet Robins (Mr and Mrs), and good views of a Grey Shrike-thrush and Crescent Honeyeater were seen in the roadside mallee. Currawongs were heard but not seen.

Small flocks of Red-browed Finches were seen at both sites.

*Gaynor Jones*

## ashbourne and meyers scrub (may 27th)

Parking our cars next to the Ashbourne Golf Course, ten of us set off on a cold and windy morning. The Brown Treecreeper was the first on our list, followed by the Grey Shrike-thrush. Plenty of Superb Fairy Wrens were hopping about, also Red-browed Firetails. On the golf-course there was a large group of Yellow-rumped Thornbills, and White-browed Scrub-wrens were nearby.

Further on, we had a good sighting of a Scarlet Robin, an excellent close-up of a White-throated Tree-creeper, and two more Brown Tree-creepers were nearby.

Just before we returned, a Wedge-tailed Eagle was seen, soaring on the wind. Moving from tree to tree, a Golden Whistler followed us back to the cars.

Then we went to Meyers Scrub. As we entered, we had a beautiful view of an Elegant Parrot sitting on a dead branch. It was hard

to keep up with all the birds! Among them were Hooded Robins, White-browed Babblers, Jacky Winter, Striated Pardalote and Grey Fantails.

A dam was very still and quiet. Close to a clearing we saw a group of Striated Thornbills and a pair of Scarlet Robins. Soon after, two Wedge-tailed Eagles put on a show for us, soaring close by, and a third was flying on the horizon.

As we were on our way back, a group of Red-rumped Parrots were in a tree with a Red Wattlebird.

Over the whole morning there were plenty of Adelaide Rosellas about. We saw a total of 23 species at Ashbourne and 30 at Meyers Scrub.

*Belinda Filkin*

## kyeema cp (June 6th)

Ten intrepid birdwatchers set out in the rain to traverse the park in 'full-on wet-weather gear', to quote Denzel, but also full of enthusiasm.

An inquisitive Golden Whistler accompanied us along the track as we observed Brown-headed, New Holland, White-naped and Crescent Honeyeaters, and Striated, Yellow, Brown and Yellow-rumped Thornbills, and Red-browed Fire-tails.

Soon the rain cleared and sun sparkled on wet foliage as we reached the top of the ridge. All the way along we were delighted by pairs of Scarlet Robins displaying themselves by the track, and by parties of Superb Fairy Wrens which flitted across the path.

As we descended the Heysen Trail, two Common Bronzewing flew out of the bush. Alternate showers and sunshine continued but it was not really cold.

On our return we found our cars surrounded by curious cows. A bird-call of 30 species finished a most enjoyable morning.

*Rosalie Sharpe*

## Report on the Byrnes Road Wetland.

The development of this area seems to have come to a halt. The dry weather since commencement may well be the cause.

Grasses and weeds have grown and seeded. The trees planted by the Primary School Children have for the most part survived the drought. Some have even grown.

Recent rains have raised the water level in the ponds, and rushes have taken root at one spot on the water's edge.

Four Pacific Black Duck were seen swimming and dabbling.

Welcome Swallows were skimming the water. Twenty Red-rumped Parrots were feeding on grass seeds. Eight Crested Pigeons were foraging in the weeds. The usual Magpies were evident, as they have been even during the bulldozing and earthworks. Masked Lapwing and Ibis are frequently seen in the paddocks across the road from the wetlands.

## report on the saoa easter campout

Again this year I attended the Easter Campout of the South Australian Ornithological Association. It was held on Calperum Station where some of our members were privileged to have a conducted outing last year while camping at Ere-mophila Park.

We were camped at the shearing sheds at Oak Bore on the eastern boundary, just over 40km north of the Old Wentworth Road. The weather for most of the weekend was fairly cool and overcast, with 17mm of rain falling overnight and early on the Sunday. The rain brought about the departure of quite a few campers, but those of us who sat it out (over a Champagne breakfast!) found that the sandy roads were much more negotiable and that the muddy areas soon dried out.

On the Saturday a large contingent in convoy made its way by back station roads to Danggali CP which is north-east of Calperum. Bird activity was not great in either park, but a fair variety of species were recorded as members wandered around in small groups to various places in these very large Parks.

The official count for Calperum was over 90 species for the weekend, but yours truly finished with 56 species for Calperum and 32 for Danggali on my personal list.

The highlights for me were Crested Bellbirds (heard but not seen), Major Mitchell Cockatoos, Regent Parrots, Red-capped Robins, Apostlebirds, Choughs, Gilbert's Whistler, White-browed and Masked Woodswallows, Chestnut Quail-thrush, and for me a 'tick' - the Striated Grass-wren.

*Judith Dyer*



## Have you seen any Flame Robins?

Flame Robins are winter visitors to our area and individual birds seem to take up residence in the same locations each year arriving from late April and leaving again sometime in August.

These birds withdraw in springtime to the highlands of south-eastern Australia from Tasmania to the New England tablelands to breed in alpine and subalpine woodlands and scrubby forest.

Returning to the same site each winter, individual birds may share their field with a partner and/or immature birds diving to the ground for food, small insects and larvae. Posts, bare low branches, rocks and fences are favoured.

One male bird has been seen by Ann on a friend's property at Myponga where several of us saw a party of six last year. Norm Bence of Goolwa North has reported to us on a single male in the area of Byrnes Road and North Road at Goolwa and we are monitoring this site. Kate is waiting verification of sightings on Hindmarsh Island.

Please check your Field Guides for the identification and further details of this bird noting the differences to the Scarlet Robin. If you think you may have a sighting/s I would appreciate a phone call from you with the details.

Judith 8555 2736

Included is John Eckert's article from the Southern Argus which is published at Strathalbyn.

# About our birds

by Robin

**Flame Robins have returned to our area and the first sighting came reasonably early when a fine male was seen at John Folletts on April 24th.**



Last year a pair frequented the area close to his house for several months, often going into the sheds and sitting on fences close to the house in search of insect prey.

I would strongly suspect that this is the same male back again, for this species does often seem to spend some time in favoured areas year after year.

It will be interesting to see if a female comes to join him before too long.

Adrian Watkins at Woodchester has another of those spots to which Flame Robins often seem to come.

His did not return until May 8th this year but this is still a good deal earlier than when he first saw them last year.

So far a good male and a suspected juvenile male, judging by its pinkish tinge to the breast, are the only ones seen.

This means that no females have yet been sighted but they are not far away since they were seen near Ashville only a few days before

Adrian Watkins saw his birds.

With a couple of sightings before mid-May we could well hope for quite a few others before the winter ends and the birds depart.

No doubt the earlier start to the season this year with plenty of green grass about has been a help in encouraging the birds to travel this far.

They seem happy to obtain the bulk of their insect food from near the ground and amongst the grass.

It was interesting to see in the Advertiser how two Flame Robin sightings had recently been made on Kangaroo Island, the first there for over thirty years.

The background to the Flame Robin situation on the island is entirely different to ours though.

Over there they were unknown until the mid 1940's when a sighting was made near Peneshaw by the late Cecil Rix.

There was some doubt about the accuracy of this record until some years later when Alan Loshman was able to substantiate that they were occasional visitors.

Here they were once common winter visitors, and those of us who can remember back to the fifties will recall the little family parties being

seen fairly regularly along fence lines.

Now we can no longer claim that they are common but at least they can still be classed as regular winter visitors, albeit in small numbers.

This is better than west of the Mt Loftys where in 1967 Condon was still able to write, "The total numbers present in the vicinity of Adelaide seem to vary from year to year, and there may be a preponderance of females or uncoloured birds at times."

Nowadays the numbers recorded in the greater metropolitan area do not vary at all and there is no imbalance of sexes.

Flame Robins seem to no longer visit that area.

Thankfully we have not yet reached that stage and though we sometimes have to work hard for our sightings we can hope that the situation might stabilise so that we can receive regular visits for many more years to come.