**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF BIRDS SA**

held on Friday June 29th, 2018

at the

**CHARLES HAWKER CONFERENCE CENTRE, WAITE ROAD, URRBRAE**

1. **Welcome address:**

John Gitsham (President), opened the meeting at 7.48pm.

1. **Apologies:**

Karen Donkin, Lynton & Karen Huxley, Bea Rogers, Jody Gates, Cynthia Pyle, Philippa Horton, Krystyna Rowland, Graham Carpenter, John Hatch.

**2.1 Members Present - 90**

1. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the Birds SA General Meeting 25th May, 2018,**

as posted on the web site and notice board.

Moved by Alan Burns. Seconded by Merinda Hyland CARRIED

1. **New Members**

Kelvin Sparks Frewville

Desiree Frahn Blackwood

Barry & Wendy Brain Beachport.

1. **Announcements**

John Gitsham

* 1. **Vale Peter Gower**

Sadly, Peter Gower passed away suddenly on 6th of June. His funeral, which was held last Friday up at Mt Barker was well attended by Members of Birds SA. Peter co-wrote a book, “Grasswrens” and wrote the successful book “Fleurieu Birds”. He was an exceptional photographer, and keen birder. He will be missed.

* 1. **BirdLife Network Meeting - Melbourne.**

I attended the BirdLife Network Meeting in Melbourne recently. Over 100 people from all over Australia attended. Birds SA was very warmly welcomed. It was great to see people around the table talking about conservation and saving our bird life through various projects and programmes. I also attended the BirdLife AGM, listening to presentations from the CEO and the President. BirdLife are financially very stable.

* 1. **Birds in the Backyard**

Birds in your Backyard will be held in July and August. Go onto the website and log in and be part of this programme.

* 1. **Tolderol**

The pump and shed at Tolderol has collapsed but the Department for the Environment are undertaking ground work there, which will firmly support the pump in the future. This shows that the Department for the Environment are making a long-term commitment to Tolderol.

PLANTING DAY – there will be another planting day at Tolderol in the near future. We would like about 20 volunteers to assist on that day. You will be advised of the date and time soon.

* 1. **AIBS**

Birds SA have sent a letter to the Minister regarding the harvesting of bivalues along the shore-line of Gulf St Vincent – in particular, the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary.

Mary-Ann van Trigt – **The Friends of the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary** are having a “planting day” 750 plants, at Pt Gawler, Sunday 15th July 9-1pm. Contact FAIBS if you are interested in helping.

* 1. **July Member’s Night - Supper**

Because the Huxley Family are away the Supper for the July Member’s Night will just be the usual cup of tea or coffee and biscuits.

* 1. **The Birder and the South Australian Ornithologist.**

The latest issues of the Birder and the South Australian Ornithologist are available on the web-site to Members only. However, previous issues of both are available free to anybody who wishes to log onto the web-site

* 1. **The Birder – Identification Errors.**

May 2018. Issue 246. Page 24 should read “Immature Double-banded Plover” not Lesser Sand Plover. Page 25 should read “Inland Thornbill” not Brown Thornbill, Page 43, the Green Rosella is a separate species to the Crimson Rosella.

1. **Short Presentation – “Tree Martins” by Merilyn Browne.**

Tree Martin appearance: medium sized, dark head, streaked frons and chest, whitish rump and underparts; streamlined body, long pointed wings, squared-off tail; small, wide bill for catching insects in flight. They are found across Australia (except deserts), New Guinea and nearby islands. They migrate seasonally, breeding July-January in South, move North over winter. They are members of the Swallow/Martin family: ‘martin’ used for square-tailed species, ‘swallow’ for those with long outer tail feathers or streamers. Three others in this family breed in Australia:

* White-backed Swallow – white back, not rump; white crown; tail streamers
* Welcome Swallow – chestnut fronts and chest, tail streamers, no white on rump; often fly quite low.
* Fairy Martin – all chestnut head, white rump. Builds bottle-shaped mud nests under culverts, rock overhangs.

Tree Martins nest in tree hollows, may use mud to modify nest hole shape.

In late summer and autumn, may gather in large flocks to roost. Flock may perform spectacular aerial displays before plunging down to the roost. Philippa Horton of the SA Museum wants to document this behaviour, so please let her know if you ever see it – contact details in the current Birder (No 246, May 2018).

1. **Introduction of Guest Speaker – “Princess Parrot and Marble Gums” by Harald Ehmann.**

Brian Blaylock introduced the Guest Speaker, Harald Ehmann who has worked in various areas of natural resources for many years. In 2012 he organized the “resurvey” of the Nullabor Plain. Harald’s presentation tonight is on “Tjukurpa Para munu Wipu Wara Maralingajara – The Princess Parrot and Marble Gums”

“The Marble Gum is significant in the life of the Princess Parrot. The Princess Parrot has the longest tail of any of the parrots. This research represents 10 years of work has been aggregated together. ‘Friends of the Great Victoria Desert’ have assisted with this work. The next trip to the GVD is in September and people are welcome to join us.

The ‘Great Victoria Desert’ it is not really a desert, there are trees and other growth. (Satellite imagining shown of the Marble Gums) – they are associated usually with dunes. They don’t grow terribly well on top of the sand dunes, sometimes the swale supports large Marble Gums. Fire is a significant factor in this environment. (Mapped zones of burnt areas displayed). Trees burnt in 2012 are now sprouting with new growth. Fires out there are very patchy, depending on the winds and the amount of understory.

Rain is also important to the trees and the parrots. The trees only germinate within one year of the fire and the rains coming. Trees vary in size, some are very large.

The female Princess Parrot has a slightly up-turned tail, because of lack of roosting space in the nest, forcing the tail in upward position. Tail feathers can trail downwards in flight.

(Video footage courtesy of Fred Murray-Walker, Jan Forrest and other contributors shown. – the Princess Parrot was feeding on an Acacia.)

Nesting hollows are often a dead branch on a live tree. If the Princess Parrot is to survive we need to make sure that the hollows survive, I have estimated it takes 100 years for a hollow to form. Fires are part of the ecology and they are common. Fires scar the bottom of a branch the branch dies and then becomes suitable for a nesting hollow as part of it the dead branch snaps off. Termites also contribute to making the hollows by coming up on the inside of the trunk and go out towards the dead limbs and hollow out the dead limb. It becomes an open hollow. So if there are no fires or insufficient fires or no winds, then there will be no hollows.

What are the trees defenses and how does that relate to hollows – the Marble Gum does all it can to seal off any openings to their bark. Adaptations of trees to fire, (photograph shown of a tree, 16 years since it was burnt – some have grown well since the fire and others not so well.) The Marble Gum suppresses triodia under its canopy, it also has a method of breakage settling of its fallen branches, the branch tissue breaks and settles onto the sand to reduce the flammability of material under the tree. Seed nuts are closed whilst on the tree, once they have dried out the seeds tumble out and are blown off in the wind.

(Fred Murray-Walker’s footage taken in 2011 shows Princess Parrots breeding).

Princess Parrot nests are about 2.2 Metres down inside the trunk. The hollows have to be of a certain size. A big hole is not liked. They prefer something that they can squeeze into. They are difficult to find. The nesting trees need to be high and shaded hollows. High to be away from fire. They need to be shaded because the temperatures can get up into the low 40s even in September. Always in hollows in live trees where it is shaded. Nesting trees are usually within 2-3 kms of recently burnt country.

Dennis Lomman has wild birds in captivity and he made them available for me to monitor over a couple of months. (Photographs of eggs inside hollow and hatched young shown).

Hollows are lined with termite fretting out of the branch – hollows are used over and over again.

Management Issues – (A map showed the distribution of three significant items, Marble Gums, Princess Parrots and Mallee Ringnecks.) The Princess Parrots keep away from Mallee Ringnecks because they do compete for the same hollows. Brown Falcons predate on the fledglings.”

QUESTIONS – D Hansman – You have stressed the importance of fire, what is the cause of the fires and perhaps the fire regime is not as good for the smaller birds that may be adversely affected.

H Ehmann - Lightning strikes, and they are common and frequent, and the other is human activity. In traditional times they used to burn – they never ever lit a big fire – that is the key point, they were small fires and they chose exactly when they would light a fire which was dependent on weather conditions and other factors, so that the fire would behave in the way that they expected it to. Lightening strikes can burn over large areas. The firing was not uniform. Huge islands that don’t get burnt form a mosaic in a very complex eco system.

A Black – The GVD is more known for the Scarlet-chested Parrot, the Great Sandy Desert for the Princess Parrot, you have made strong case that it is a place for both. Can you make the case a little bit more about how the GVD is important for this bird compared to other parts of the country?

H Ehmann – The bird is a long distance traveller, it is not nomadic. I would guess that they travelled to this area in the last 10 years - they have been seen in the last 7 years.

A Black - Is this where you think these birds are centred?

H Ehmann - No, I think that is further north.

B Wheaton – What food do they eat, do they rely on is it spinifex?

H Ehmann - No that is not correct, triodia gets burnt right off. Grasses, annual, that have seeds that are much more accessible, Acacia seed pods that are not fully ripe.

1. **Conservation (Jeff Groves)**

**Tolderol**  - Phil Cole is undertaking research to see if what has been done at Tolderol could be repeated elsewhere.

**AIBS** – Bill Breed is continuing to explore the possibility of treated water from Bolivar Treatment

Plant could be used to support the birds in the AIBS.

Colin Rogers has written a Report on the Great Knot and Red Knot feeding on bivalves at Thompson Beach. We will pursue this because the human activity is having an affect on this feeding ground. Hopefully with the new Minister for the Environment we will get some action.

**Laratinga** - David Andrewartha is investigating the expansion of the waste water treatment plant with the Mt Barker Council.

**Mountain Biking** - Bill Breed has invited his son to talk to the Conservation sub-Committee at our next meeting regarding Mountain Bikers and Birders can work together.

1. **Bird Call (Andrew Black)**

Bellevue Heights, 86 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike seen at St Peters, Aldinga, and other areas. Female Golden Whistler at Flexistowe and two other areas. Eastern Spinebills seen across quite a few suburbs.

Pink-eared Ducks x 2 at Aldinga, Washpool. Bustard at Pt Broughton in a farmer’s paddock.

1 Osprey flying from Troubridge to Edithburg - a pair at Gleeson’s Landing.

Terry Dennis – The pair of Osprey from The Gap at Innes have disappeared.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle O’Halloran Hill.

Osprey Thorndon Park for about 4 weeks back in April.

St Clair Wetland, 1 Peregrine Falcon, 1 Black-shouldered Kite, Hardheads, Pink-eared and Grey Teal Ducks.

Cattle Egrets x3, Waterport Rd, Pt Elliot.

200 Royal Spoonbills and 11 Freckled Duck at Whites Road.

30 Diamond Firetails Rockleigh.

Witchelina – it is extremely dry anywhere north of Jamestown, in the pastoral country it is even drier. At Witchelina they have had 5 inches of rain since January 2017 – about 100 ml fell in January2018. So the bird numbers are very low, 61 species, and diversity is very low, but it is winter, compared with 126 species in November 2011. We have now recorded 164 species on Witchelina. Most bird were in very small numbers, but we saw 32 Wedge-tails, Zebra Finch, Black-faced Wood-swallows, huge numbers of Mistletoe Birds, and a new bird, Dusky Wood-swallow – there are very few records of Dusky Wood-swallows in the northern Flinders Ranges.

1. **Field Trips (Alan Burns)**

Taliska CP - Scarlet Robins were seen, good numbers of Thornbills and Fairy-wrens and a Wedge-tailed Eagle flew over. We then went down to Lands End, Cape Jarvis, where Miles Ramm, our youngest Birder pointed out a White-fronted Honeyeater.

Sunday trip will be Anstey Hill Recreation Park - check your eNewsletter for further details

7th July Cox Scrub will be the Fleurieu group outing.

Brownhill Creek on the 15th July, Thursday 19th July Kaiserstuhl.

1. **Any Other Business**
   1. **Glenthorne Farm**

Alan Burns – In September 2005 I gave a talk to Birds SA on Glenthorne Farm. After much canvassing and years of hard work, we were promised in the lead up to the recent election by David Speirs, if the Liberal Government was elected Glenthorne Farm would be declared a National Park. The University of Adelaide have agreed to hand back the land to State Government. The legalities will take a couple months. The housing will be preserved. A Ranger station will be set up at Glenthorne. This permanent Ranger will help other Conservation Parks in the area. Local input will be encouraged. However, it will be the status quo until the paper work is finished. Pedestrian paths are needed, bird surveys to be done, plant surveys needed. The University will be involved in the revegetation research. From a budget of $10,000,000 about $2,000,000 will go to University for their research. The archaeologist will be working along-side DEW. Andrew West, NRM, believes that there will be national and international tourism interest. The Community will be involved in the allocation of the budget. The Minister for the Environment is passionate about protecting this site that stretches from Happy Valley Reservoir right through to Hallet Cove.

* 1. **Arid Lands Botanic Gardens – Port Augusta**

Teresa Jack – In a recent presentation about the Arid Lands Botanic Gardens at Port Augusta it was noted as a place of interest for national and international tourists, but they failed to mention its significance to bird watchers.

**Next General Meeting will be held on Friday 27th July 2018, at 7.45pm.**

**Close 9.38**

Signed……………………………………………………. Date………………………