**MINUTES - BIRDS SA GENERAL MEETING FRIDAY 27TH JULY 2018**

**CHARLES HAWKER CONFERENCE CENTRE - Waite Road, Urrbrae.**

1. **Welcome address:**

John Gitsham (President) opened the meeting at 7.45pm.

1. **Apologies:**

Lynton & Karen Huxley, Kate Buckley, Merilyn Browne, David & Miriam Hansman,

Bea Rogers.

1. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the Birds SA General Meeting 29th June, 2018, as posted on the web site and notice board.**

Moved by David Robertson, Seconded by Jeff Groves - CARRIED

1. **New Members**

Richard & Blanche Koehne Flagstaff Hill

Janet Harris Colonel Light Gardens

Jim & Wendy Smith Kings Park

Stana Camelin Alice Springs

Janine Clipstone Albertson

Rosemary Goland Oaklands Park

1. **Announcements (John Gitsham)**

**5.1 Night Parrot Project**

Birds SA has undertaken to collaborate with the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia on investigating the possible presence of night parrots in the Gawler Ranges region. The project will initially run from late Sept 2018 to early summer, utilising sound recorders. Funding is being sought for this project through an Australian Ethical Investments Community Grants submission. Members were encouraged to support this through voting for the project at

**https://www.australianethical.com.au/community-grants/**

**5.2 Presentations to Long-serving Birds SA Committee Members**

The President presented awards certificates to the following Birds SA current and former office bearers for their outstanding service to the Association over many years:

**Brian Blaylock** – former Secretary and current Committee Member

**John Hatch** – current Vice-President who has held several senior roles with the Association, including President

**Cynthia Pyle** – Newsletter Editor

**Brian Walker** – former Treasurer

1. **“Member’s Night” Guest Speakers introduced by John Hatch**

**6.1 Ian Falkenberg – Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary National Park**

**On-ground operations aimed at reducing threats to shorebirds and their habitat**

Ian described the threatening human activities to shorebirds and their habitat including:

* Motorbike and off-road vehicle use in the Port Prime/Thompson Beach area
* Dogs off leads
* Rubbish dumping
* Crabbing and cockling by predominantly Asian groups

The AIBS Compliance Strategy is reliant upon a range of compliance actions coupled with effective deterrence. The point was made that Government can’t do this alone. A goal in the Port Gawler area is to facilitate a change from high impact ORV use to passive recreation activities.

* 1. **Colin Rogers – Interesting Winter Records June - July 2018**

Colin provided details of interesting recent bird observations. These included:

* An Arctic Tern at the Goolwa Barrage, June 16-17, 2018
* Overwintering Red Knot and Great Knot in Gulf St Vincent, many in breeding plumage – observations were as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Colin Rogers** | **Paul Taylor** |
| Thompson Beach – 22 June 2018  150 Red Knot  30 Great Knot | Bald Hill Beach – 24 July 2018  170 Red Knot  30 Great Knot |

* Overwintering waders at Tolderol – observations were as follows:

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| --- |
| 200 Curlew Sandpiper  300 Red-necked Stint  4 Black-tailed Godwit  3 Marsh Sandpiper  1 Long-toed Stint  1 Little Stint  12 Double-banded Plover |

Colin provided key appearance characteristics for several of the species to aid identification.

* 1. **Robert Rowland – Neonicotinoid Insecticides (Neonics)**

Robert provided an overview of neonic pesticides and their widespread use in agriculture. Of great concern is the effect of these toxins on birds and bees. Some key points were:

* Farmland bird numbers have declined massively in the UK. Whilst habitat loss is the major issue, neonics insecticides are increasingly being recognised as another major issue.
* Most agricultural seeds have been coated with neonics.
* Neonics are also used as sprays.
* Most of the active ingredients go into the soil, not into the plant.
* European studies show Neonics are lethal to bee populations.
* The chemicals can get into waterways.
* Use of pesticides such as Neonics shows close correlation with the worldwide decline in insect populations upon which many species depend.
* These substances can kill birds and upset the navigational abilities of bees.
* The EU in 2018 has banned their use in the open.
* Canada is conducting research into the effect on bees and aquatic life.
* In Australia Bunnings is phasing out the sale of these materials to home gardeners.
* Currently the Aust Govt APVMA (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority) is not planning to review the use of neonicotinoids in Australia.
  1. **Chris Steeles – Pinery Fireground Bird Box Project**

Chris showed the extent of the 2015 Pinery bushfire and its impact on the small patches of remnant and re-vegetated scrub impacted by the fire. Pengilly Scrub, well known to many Birds SA members, was one such area.

Chris determined that provision of bird boxes would go some way to alleviating the loss of tree hollows for birds and bats. Four sizes of box have been tried so far. Designs were based upon some of the guidelines provided by BirdLife Australia. Boxes are secured to the tree with Tek screws. The lids of the boxes are screwed on. To date the boxes have been constructed from weather resistant ply. The height to which they have been installed has been limited only by the size of Chris’s largest ladder.

The first season for the installation of the boxes was 2016. It was observed that birds started to inhabit the boxes within weeks of their installation. Chris showed images of parrots using the boxes as well as an Owlet Nightjar at Pengilly Scrub which he found very rewarding.

The Men’s Shed at Owen has built many of the bird boxes as well as bat boxes. Chris indicated that it is his hope that the entire Pinery Fireground area will eventually have these boxes. Approximately 20 boxes can be installed in a weekend.

It was clear that Birds SA members greatly appreciated the work that Chris and his associates have done with this project.

**6.5 John Gitsham – Finding the Bunyip**

**Surveying for Australasian Bitterns in South Australia**

John discussed the characteristics of Australasian Bitterns and a DEW co-ordinated, state wide survey in spring/summer 2017-18 to increase knowledge of these elusive birds and the significance of natural and artificial wetlands for the species. John provided historical distribution data for the species and discussed the survey approach taken.

A total of 29 wetland sites were surveyed with 39 Australasian Bitterns recorded at 10 sites. Highlights included an individual bird flushed at Greenfields Wetlands and one new location identified at Cape Douglas near Port MacDonnell.

More work is needed to determine the optimal survey design to reliably detect individuals.

1. **Conservation (Jeff Groves).**

* Based upon the report prepared by Colin Rogers identifying relatively large numbers of Red Knot and Great Knot overwintering at Thompson Beach and their reliance upon small molluscs, a submission has been sent to the Environment Minister requesting that a moratorium be placed on crabbing and cockling for the entire year at those locations within the AIBS identified as important habitat for migratory waders. DEW has confirmed receipt of this submission.
* As part of our investigation into the impact on birdlife of the proposed expansion of the Laratinga wastewater treatment plant at Mt Barker, Birds SA has been in contact with the Mt Barker Council for more details. Birds SA has been invited to the next meeting of the Council’s Laratinga working group on August 23.
* Birds SA member Trevor Caldwell has highlighted a proposed ski race to be held in October on the Murray River between Renmark and Chowilla Station Homestead. This would pass through a Ramsar listed wetland. Birds SA has contacted the Acting CEO of DEW for confirmation that this proposed race will not proceed.
* The contract between the State Govt and Conservation Volunteers Australia for the management of Brookfield Conservation Park has not been renewed. This appears to provide an opportunity for another entity or consortium to take up the management role. Birds SA is facilitating discussions on this with Bush Heritage Australia, the Friends of Brookfield and DEW. Bush Heritage appears to have the resources and the experience to take on this management role. The response so far has been positive and DEW has offered to host a meeting of potential stakeholders.

1. **Bird Call (Graham Carpenter).**

* Australian Bustards have been reported in the southern regions of the State including the Barossa
* Rose Robin – Belair NP
* Gannets off the Bluff at Encounter Bay
* Black-shouldered Kite – Adelaide Botanic Gardens
* Hooded Plovers at Hallett Cove
* 16 Double-banded Plover and approx. 20 Whistling Kite at Bird Island
* Grey Goshawk (white morph) near Burra
* Two reports of Grey Goshawk in the Greenwith/Tea Tree Gully area
* Masked Lapwing with northern race appearance - Balaklava

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

* Currency Creek Gorge – July 29 at 8.30am – Trip Leader Neil Cheshire

1. **Any Other Business.**

**November Members Night**

The President advised that BirdLife Australia will attend the November Members Night and provide an update on their activities.

**Next General Meeting will be held on Friday 31st August 2018, at 7.45pm.**

**Meeting Closed at 10.10pm**

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