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

held on Friday September 28th, 2018

at the

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

1. **Welcome address:**

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

1. **Apologies:**

Lynton & Karen Huxley, Jeff Groves, Alan Burns, Jody Gates.

**2.1 Members Present -** 76

1. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the Birds SA General Meeting 31st August, 2018,**

as posted on the web site and notice board.

Moved by Graham Carpenter. Seconded by John Hatch CARRIED

1. **New Members**

Harry Beauchamp Murray Bridge

Andrew Hall Hallett

Gavin Springbett Rose Park

Luke Leddy Padthaway

Chris Finch Coromandel Valley

Julian Behrens Adelaide

Janet Fisher Torrens Park

Gawain Letheby Banksia Park

Chris Braham West Croydon

Roberta Mitchell Upper Sturt

1. **Announcements**

John Gitsham

* 1. **Changes to Membership Fees 2019**

The Management Committee of Birds SA after much discussion, suggest the following changes to the Birds SA subscription rates at the end of this year:-

Single $45, Family $55, Full-time Student $10, plus $20 added to subscription fees if a printed copy of Birds SA publications is requested. CARRIED

**5.2 Spring Wetland and Waterfowl Surveys** Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th October are the dates set the Spring Wetland and Waterfowl Surveys organised by Suresh from DEW’s Conservation,

Sustainability & Wildlife Management Unit. If you wish to participate please contact:-

Suresh (08) 82077731 [Suresh.Kumar@sa.gov.au](mailto:Suresh.Kumar@sa.gov.au).

* 1. **Aleisa Lamanna & Emma Stephens- BirdLife Australia & NRM Board2018 Beach-nesting**

**Birds Biennial Count -** Saturday 17th November or Sunday 18th November are

the dates set for the Samphire CoastBiennial Count. BirdLife would like volunteers to support this activity. You may receive an email seeking assistance with this count.

The Biennial count started in 1980, and then it was just for the Hooded Plovers, but now, every 2 years in November, we count all shorebirds. November is chosen because it is their breeding time and the birds are more sedentary and are therefore easier to count. The count has included birds such as Red-capped Plover, Oystercatchers and Terns since 2014. This count is the best opportunity to visit beaches that are not regularly monitored. It gives us an estimate of how many are left and determines the movement of birds that we have flagged in the past. In 2010 we had 257 volunteers who covered 1753 km coast by 2014 this had increased to 426 volunteers covering 2339km. Data shows an increase in threats in particular the loss of suitable habitat. BirdLife believes that this type of survey in 2014 captured about 90% of the Hooded Plover population.

We do need volunteer assistance on both Yorke and Eyre Peninsula. There is a small budget to reimburse folk for fuel.

If you wish to be involved please fill in a “Registration Form” available on-line and undertake the on-line “Induction Quizz” to support your understanding and identification skills. Maps are provided and after you have filled in your “Data Sheets” please then enter the data on-line in “Birdata”– or send paper “Data Sheets” back to the Coordinator Amy Adams [bnb.count@birdlife.org.au](mailto:bnb.count@birdlife.org.au). This is a “single” survey opportunity and it is necessary to also record any “threats”.

* 1. **Shorebird Festival** Ian Falkenberg is organising “bird-walks” with a focus on Shorebirds on

Saturday 17th November – Magazine Road Wetlands, Saturday 24th November – Port GawlerSunday 25th November – Light Beach & Pt Prime. Volunteers are required to assist in bird identification.

* 1. **Sophie’s Garden** Sophie’s Garden will again be open to the public on 10-11-12th November.

Volunteers are required to support the Birds SA stall at this event.

* 1. **BirdLife Twitchathon**

The BirdLife Australia “Twitchathon” will be held on 27-28th of October. There are various categories, such as, 30 hours, 12 hours, or even 3 hours. There is no cost to enter and entry forms are available on-line. It is also an opportunity to raise money for BirdLife, though there is no obligation to do so.

* 1. **BirdLife “Aussie Backyard Bird Count” 23-29 October “Bird Week”**

The BirdLife Australia “Aussie Backyard Bird Count” programme is being advertised and you can get involved by going on the BirdLife Australia website.

* 1. **Latham's Snipe Survey** is being organised by Brigitta at particular wetlands. If you wish to be involved please contact John Gitsham for further details.
  2. **Birds SA Merchandise** such as windcheaters and polo shirts, will be available next year. Birds SA will not hold any stock, all orders will be placed directly with the manufacturer, via our link on our web site.

1. **Introduction of Guest Speaker.**

John Hatch – Peter Waanders has been a Birding Guide since early 2002. He takes people out on Grasswren Tours. Most folk have difficulty finding Grasswrens and identifying them.

Peter Waanders –Grasswrens are difficult birds to see, but rewarding when you do find them.

(Photograph and map shown of Rusty Grasswren, Winton Queensland, White-throated Grasswren, Kakadu) It was this unique sighting of the White-throated Grasswren that started my obsession with Grasswrens.

There are now 14 recognised species, including, Grey, Short-tailed, White-throated, Carpentarian, Pilbara, Sandhill, Rusty, Striated, Western, Thick-billed, Black, Eyrean, Dusky (Alice Springs), Kalkadoon (Mt Isa). (A map was shown where all species of Grasswren can be located, identifying the areas for each individual species and sub species.)

I have run air-tours to these remote regions to see the Grasswrens starting at:-

Mildura, Striated Grasswren, (Grasswrens do not like wind or rain). Spinifex in Mallee is their habitat, so they can be seen at Gluepot as well. Mallee Emu-wren also favour this habitat.

Whyalla, Western Grasswren, (split from Thick-billed Grasswrens.) Wild Dog Hill habitat of dense blue bush and prickly acacia is favoured by the Western Grasswren.

Hawker – Flinders Ranges, Short-tailed Grasswren (split from Striated), they have been declining since 2012, and continue to do so. There is concern over their survival. Habitat is open areas spinifex, rocky grounds

Leigh Creek, Thick-billed Grasswren, also found at Lyndhurst, along the Strzelecki, near Farina and at Witchelina, I think that there is a slow but steady decline of these birds as well. Habitat, they live in vast open areas of blue bush plains and prickly acacia.

Mungeranie, Birdsville Track, Eyrean Grasswrens in the dunes behind Mungeranie. Cane grass habitat.

Goyder Lagoon, inner Birdsville Track, Grey Grasswren. Habitat large expanse of lignum.

Winton, Queensland, home of the dinosaur museum, Rusty Grasswren (split from Striated). Numbers seem stable. Habitat large areas of spinifex. Night Parrots and Halls Babbler are also found in this area of granite plateaus.

Mt Isa – Carpentarian Grasswren – it looks similar to the White-throated but more brown on the back. Habitat is the flat boulders in spinifex around Mt Isa were there are large areas of spinifex. Kalkadoon Grasswrens are also found in this area. They look like a Dusky Grasswren but they are now split.

Tennant Creek, Dusky Grasswren, most often found around Alice Springs, but there is a small population at Tennant Creek – may be another sub-species. Habitat, spinifex, boulders,

Uluru, Sandhill Grasswren, another split from Striated because DNA identifies them as separate species. Striated Grasswrens have been split into four. Habitat, sand dune, spinifex.

Kimberley, Mitchell Plateau, Black Grasswren. Habitat, rocky boulders,

Kakadu, Jim-Jim escarpment, White-throated Grasswren. Habitat, top of the escarpment which is flat.

The Pilbara Grasswren has now been split as well.

Questions

Q. Are they affected by dry seasons?

A. They have adapted – but Short-tailed Grasswrens are being affected by other factors and a drought could knock them over the edge

Q. Are Striated Grasswrens numbers at Gluepot and Taylorville reducing?

A I believe that there is not one single factor but a number of things contributing to the reduction in numbers. In the past farmers and pastoralists did their best to suppress fires. So the spinifex is of the same age and getting a bit old and ragged and becoming unsuitable for the Striated Grasswrem. In 2006 fire destroyed large portion of Striated Grasswren habitat. With all the right intentions, there has been a reduction in fox numbers by baiting, so cat numbers are going up. Climate change also contributes – the very hot heat waves in November 2009 hit right in the middle of breeding season. This could have knocked out a whole year of reproduction. All of these things together have reduced the number of Grasswrens in that area.

1. **Conservation** (J Gitsham – on behalf of Jeff Groves)

**Proposed Ski Race for Murray River near Renmark**

* It has been confirmed that the ski race proposed for the Murray near Renmark in October (through part of a Ramsar listed wetland) has been abandoned due to widespread opposition (including from Birds SA).

**Laratinga** – The meeting of the Laratinga Working Group with Mt Barker Council scheduled for late August was cancelled at the last minute because of the sickness of two of the presenters. The next meeting will take place on November 22, Birds SA have been invited and Jeff Groves and David Andrewartha will attend. Our involvement relates to the potential impacts on birdlife (both positive and negative) with the planned expansion of the wastewater treatment facility at Laratinga.

**Brookfield Conservation Park**

* An initial meeting of staff from DEW, from Bush Heritage Australia and the Friends of Brookfield, facilitated by Birds SA, will take place in the week commencing November 12. Birds SA sees considerable potential in the management of Brookfield by an organisation such as Bush Heritage Australia, now that the contract with Conservation Volunteers Australia has lapsed.

**River Murray Forum Hosted by Amanda Rishworth MP – Federal Member for Kingston and Tony Burke – Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water**

* Meeting was attended by David Hansman. The published summary of the discussions contained several interesting points:
  + Labor will take the recommendations from the Royal Commission very seriously and compliance will be a high priority.
  + People in attendance believed that crops such as rice and cotton should be outlawed in arid conditions – Tony Burke stated that it is not the Government’s role to dictate what farmers can or can’t grow
  + Labor is supportive of moves to address seepage and evaporation by moving from open canals to piping such as occurred in Victoria
  + There is considerable concern over the clean-up consequences if a virus is released to quell carp numbers

**Duck and Quail Season Reference Panel Meeting Hosted by DEW**

* + After considerable deliberation and strong views for and against, it has been decided that Birds SA will not participate in the Duck and Quail Reference Panel Meeting which will shortly be convened by DEW. The primary reason for this is that the meeting is essentially a rubber-stamping exercise for an activity that Birds SA opposes, namely recreational hunting of native birds. Birds SA will this year concentrate its efforts on reducing or placing a moratorium or outlawing altogether the taking of Stubble Quail by direct approach to the Minister, citing the total lack of independent scientific data proving the sustainability on Quail numbers and their ecology.

1. **Bird Call (Graham Carpenter) -** Panorama - White-winged Trillers. Greenacres - Barbary Doves, 20-21st Sept. North of Pt Augusta – Rainbow Bee-eaters. West Beach - Black-eared Cuckoo (dead). North of Pt Augusta - Ostrich and Ostrich egg.

B Blaylock - Oraparinna - No Short-tailed Grasswrens because the area has been trashed by the abundance of Euros and Kangaroos, trees have been eaten back to stumps. Stokes Hill has also been eaten out.

G Carpenter - Short-tailed Grasswrens are doing better in the Gawler Ranges.

A Black - Why are DEW not culling? Birds SA should make representation to the Minister to cull Kangaroos and Euros. There is a serious decline in bird life and we can identify the cause, we need to make this clear to the Minister**.**

Member - I recognise that people are interested in particular species but you cannot take out one for the protection of another.

J Gitsham - DEW do see culling as controversial - it does need a wholistic view.

A Black – Witchelina, I have recently been part of the Nature Foundation SA Raptor conducted by Ian Falkenberg. 50 Wedge-tailed Eagles were seen, despite the season. Breeding activity was occurring, usually commenced and then abandoning because of insufficient resources. A nest was sighted on a cliff – not a tree in sight - Ian Falkenberg has investigated 500 Wedge-tailed Eagles, and this is the first time he has ever seen one nesting on a cliff – possibly the first time this has been document.

All eagles nests were investigated to identify their food source – there was evidence of some rabbits, but it was largely Bearded Dragons. The interesting point was that the Bearded Dragon remains were still visible. They would normally be cleaned up by foxes and dogs but it is obviously too dry. There were also 5 Black-breasted Buzzards on the property.

Swan Reach - Emus 8 first time seen them south of Swan Reach in years.

Gluepot – dry, Kangaroo numbers minimal, so no overgrazing, but bird numbers are down.

Cooper Creek Clifton Hills, quite lot species, but low numbers, even Singing Honeyeater numbers were low. Bush Stone-curlew heard, Eyrean Grasswrens on dunes, no Barking Owls. Freckled Duck and water birds on a waterhole and fleeting glimpse of Grey Falcon.

Macclesfield - Pied Butcher bird - unusual, 50ks from River. Grey Shrikethrush, 10 days on nest, chicks have arrived.

1. **Field Trips –** (Lynton Huxley and Alan Burns are both apologies because they are at the long-weekend campout. Details of Field Trips are in the eNewsletter and the Birder)
2. **Any Other Business**
   1. John Barkla, BirdLife Australia will be one of the “Speakers” on Member’s night in November.
   2. “Open Day” at Tolderol will be on November 18th.
   3. The Birds SA and Fleurieu Birds held an event as part of the “Flourishing Fleurieu Festival” last Wednesday. It was a very successful day with about 40 people attending an “Introduction to Birding”. Thank You to Wendy Phillips for organising the event.

**Next General Meeting will be held on Friday 26th October 2018 at 7.45pm**

**Close 9.20**

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