



southcoast birdwatch

DECEMBER 1997

Meetings: Glendale Christian School, start at 7.30pm

Outings: Meet 8.30am, Bring lunch and chair.

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Meeting Report:

Seventeen members attended the meeting. Denzel sent apologies, finding it too hard to reach us from Darwin.

Judith reported that no working party meeting had been held as our outing programme is up-to-date and no business needed attention. She told us that increased publicity (thank you, Ann) has resulted in our membership climbing from 40 to 53 since March (56 as we go to press. Ed.)

Ann and Judith are involved in the collection for a data-base on species found on developed and undeveloped roadside reserves on the Sth. Fleurieu Peninsula. It is organized by the Scientific Expedition Group, a state government body. It is a bio-diversity study of plants, mammals, reptile, birds etc. A framed watercolour of two Magpies is to be raffled at \$1 a ticket and members are urged to sell (or buy) tickets, please. To be drawn at the BBQ on the 6th December.

Our speaker, Hilary Thompson, author of 'Adelaide's Birds'. unfortunately did not find our nesting site. (I understand he will visit us later). The rest of the meeting was filled by members recounting recent sightings.

Rosalie - entertained us with a description of her heroic rescue of 11 black ducklings from rough water at the mouth of the Inman and their reunion with Mum.

Helen & Hilary - Swans sharing babies in a creche.

Craig - two male Magpies fighting in the gutter, claws locked together, becoming motionless, perhaps in shock?

Verle - did she really see Glossy Blacks?

Ann - A Hobby sitting on a post at Middleton eating a Pigeon.

Vicky - Royal Spoonbills near Sugar's Beach.

Pam - a pair of White-fronted Chats with 4 young and a Blue-billed Duck at the Effluent Ponds.

Maria - 5 Great Egret and an Echidna near the Barrage.

A great evening was had by all.

Pam

FOR YOUR DIARY:



Saturday 6th December.
Xmas BBQ at the Barrage,
Goolwa.

Birdwatching from 4pm.
Barbie at 6 o'clock.

BYO everything, food,
Xmas cheer, tables and
chairs. We will provide tea,

coffee etc. Please bring a cup and Mozzie repellent.

Jim will supply the barbie and light up at 6pm. Friends and Visitors are welcome. Park in the grounds, enter by Jim's private entrance at the rear of the residences.

Sunday 7th December
BOCA Challenge Bird Count
(see separate article.)

Friday 9th January - Meeting
Hilary Thompson, author of 'Birds of Adelaide'
(in lieu of November meeting.)

Sunday 11th January - Outing:
Goolwa Effluent Ponds and local roads.
Meet at Effluent Ponds, Kessell Road.

Saturday 7th February - Outing
Hindmarsh Falls - meet at the falls in the
lower carpark.

Saturday 28th February - Outing
Encounter Bay and the Bluff - meet at the
carpark by the Inman Bridge opposite the
Victor Harbor Council Chambers.

Note: There will be no weekday outings during summer months. We will recommence on 25th March with an outing to Aidinga Scrub.

Outing Reports:

Wednesday October 15th

Winery Road, Currency Creek

A fine and mild morning attracted 5 members and 2 visitors for this outing when we recorded 47 species as we wandered along the train-line corridor. 5 species of honeyeater including the Black-chinned were on the list along with Dusky Woodswallow, Red-browed Firetail, Mistletoebird, White-browed Babblers, Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo and a Crested Shrike-tit. The high-light of the morning has to be the unusual sighting of a pair of Black-fronted Plover standing perfectly still on the rubble alongside the track making a perfect disguise for these tiny bird. **Judith.**

Saturday October 25th

Hindmarsh Island

The day was warm and overcast with good visibility. 12 members and 2 visitors made up an enthusiastic group. Our first stop was the lookout on Excelsior Parade where we saw an amazing variety of water birds in the salt water of the Goolwa channel, including a large flock of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

On our drive to the Fisherman's Paradise reserve we stopped to admire the Skylarks, singing and circling high in the sky, and the Brown Songlarks rising into the air singing loudly. This bird also sits on posts with its tail cocked up like a wren.

On the short walk to Scab Creek we were richly rewarded with an excellent sighting of a male Superb Fairywren feeding a much larger juvenile Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo. A Golden-headed Cisticola, in breeding plumage, posed for us in the saltbush. According to Cayley (*What Bird is That*) these birds build the most complex nests using fine grass bound with cobwebs and lined with plant down and feathers, decorated with living plants. Unfortunately we did not see their nest.

At the Murray Mouth Lookout we practiced our skills at identifying the different cormorants, then a short stop by the Mundoo Channel and back to the causeway area for the "birdcall".

A strong hot northerly wind blew up causing a Black-tailed Native Hen to walk sideways and the Eastern Swamphen to run for cover in the reeds where we could hear the mournful whistle of the Little Grassbirds and the loud song of a Clamorous Reed Warbler.

The day proved to be a most varied bird outing as we observed in open farmland, grasslands, reedbeds, scrubland and pastures.

A grand total of 56 species were recorded in 4 hours. All on Hindmarsh Is. **Kate.**

Sunday, November 16th.

Mt. Billy Conservation Park

The day dawned bright and sunny. Good, I thought, I'll be able to see them well today. In the event, a few clouds gathered intermittently but it stayed fine, pleasantly cool and the light was good as we (9) set off from the top gate of the park.

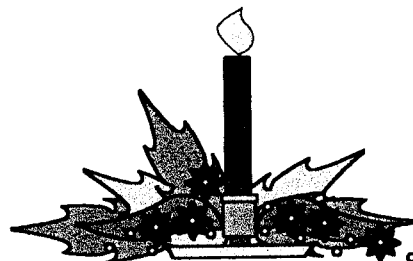
The recorders soon totted up 20 species as we walked the sandy first part of the track. The melodious Grey-shrike Thrush greeted us but stayed tantalizingly out of view until later; the Dusky Woodswallow changed his perch; the Magpies had altercations in the scrub bordering the farmland; Crows (sorry, Little Ravens) and parrots (Rosellas, Rainbow and Purple-crowned Lorikeets) squawked above and our junior, Daniel, spotted a Kestrel up there too; the ever elusive Brush Bronzwing rose from the track ahead and we admired the Superb Fairywren and a pair of Scarlet Robin

As the path levelled out we found, gorging in the gum blossom and yaccas, the honeyeaters, eight different ones by the final count, including Brush and Red Wattlebirds, Crescent, Yellow-faced, lots of White-naped, Eastern Spinebill and ...guess what! ... innumerable New Hollands. On this stretch keen-eyed Ann also 'spotted' a Spotted Pardolote's nesting hole in a bank by the track. The Striated Pardolote was flitting around and the White-throated Treecreeper was there somewhere too but very shy. Also shy, but visible, was a Common Bronzwing in very good light to show off his colours - yes, we concurred it was a male as the female has a yellow forehead.

At the bottom of the steep downhill path the habitat looked promising for sighting more birds but it was very quiet. One Mistletoebird and an abortive sidetrack for 'something different' heard, and we were back at the bottom gate.

Drivers were ferried back to their cars and then we moved round near the dam for lunch and birdcall. Waiting for us there was a pair of Musk Duck. Grebes, Coot, a Black Swan and Cormorants brought the total count for an enjoyable outing to 46 species.

Verle



Wednesday November 26th

Hindmarsh River

A cooler change in the weather gave 3 members the incentive to take part in the Hindmarsh River walk and allowed us to see 40 species during the morning. The Willy Wagtail was comfortable on a nest and Magpie-larks were busy training their young how to forage and fly. Plenty of White-plumed Honeyeaters and of course New Hollands. A single sighting of a Black-chinned Honeyeater finished the morning very nicely for us.

Ann

Boat trip: *Waders of the Coorong.*

By popular request we have booked Jack Miller's boat again and hope for better luck with the weather than last time.

The date: Sunday 8th March.

Cost: \$25 per head, payable in advance.

Maximum seats available, 26 persons.

Members will have first priority.

New Members:

Since our last newsletter we have welcomed 6 new members to our group, Margaret Kitto and Mary Heywood of Clayton, Ismey Hoffmann of Victor Harbor, Vicki Crawford of Hindmarsh Island, Jean Boomer of Somerton Park and Edith St. George of Hackam. All have attended outings with us and we look forward to sharing our hobby with them.

Working Party:

The working party met on November 21st. Chris will have the Effluent Ponds Documents ready to present to council by early December.

Programming for 1998 was carried out.

***STOP PRESS*:**

Watch the Messenger Southern Times this week for feature article on our group.

BOCA Challenge Bird Count:

This is an annual event conducted by the Bird Observers Club of Australia which has it's HQ in Victoria and of which I am a member. This is not a Twitchathon as such but an opportunity to record as many birds as possible in our own area.

Teams of 2 upwards can take part. It is hoped that our group will form at least two teams.

Any member is welcome to join Ann, Denzel and I in the southern area or Edith and Jean who will be watching in the Noarlunga /Onkaparinga area. If any member would like to put together another team I have the necessary recording forms.

The rules are simple:

1. Choose an area not more than 40km radius which a team can reasonably cover in the time you want to spend.

2. The count goes from midnight to midnight but you may spend as few hours as you like.

3. Bird species are counted if seen by two persons or heard by three persons. *A running total is kept of the numbers of each species seen during the count so that some idea of abundance is possible.*

4. Groups should contain at least one experienced birdwatcher to keep dubious sightings to a minimum.

A 40km radius from near Goolwa will take in from Milang to Parawa and north to Meadows so takes in all the sites that have been so rewarding for our group.

We will probably start at the crack of dawn with the bush birds and finish with the waders towards evening as the tide will be right then.

If any member knows where we may hear or see any owls or other night birds we would love to know of their whereabouts.

This will be a challenge but will also be a fun day - come join us. **Judith**



South Coast Birdwatchers 'TWITCH'

One of our members had previously participated on 'Twitches' while living in Queensland and urged some of us to give it a try. Having not received any information from the South Australian Ornithological Association about the official Twitchathon and with other commitments, for the set date we decided to hold our event on the weekend of the 1st and 2nd of November. The basic rules as I understand, are to record as many different species of birds in 24 hours. Teams usually consist of 3 or 4 members, but I have heard of a bus load, and you may have only 2. At least 2 members must confirm the identity of each species. We finally decided to form a team of 3, Judith, Ann and myself and to run our 'Twitch' from 1pm Saturday to 1pm Sunday.

Things were looking grim on Friday with one of our wettest October days on record. We hoped for a break in the weather. Luckily the weather did improve so with spotting scopes, binoculars and recording sheets, we set off for lunch on Hindmarsh Island and count down for our 1pm start.

We managed to record over 40 species on Hindmarsh Island in about 40 minutes, recording some water and farmland birds including Cape Barren Geese, Black-faced Cormorant, 2 Ibis, Fairy, Whiskered, Crested and Caspian Tern. We then went to the barrage area hoping for Nankeen Night Heron, but with no luck. Next stop was just south of the barrage, where there was a high tide with no waders in sight, but hiding near the bank only 10 meters away was a Great Crested Grebe. Next stop was the Goolwa Effluent Ponds where we quickly added several ducks to our list. We then tried Winery road. Unfortunately only one member saw a Red-browed Firetail so that turned out to be a missed species. Because of the previous heavy rains, we couldn't cross the causeway so only spent 15 minutes here, but we still added 5 more species. At Scott Conservation Park, again water stopped our planned itinerary, with the creek too deep to cross. We added several bush birds to our list.

Having gained some of our allocated time, we set off for Watson's Gap. While driving through Port Elliott, Ann said that Little Wattlebirds are always at Lakala Reserve. Judith just had time to stop the motor, while Ann and I both opened our doors, heard the birds and were back in before Judith could get out. At Watson's Gap we almost turned our backs on the Hooded Plovers. Hindmarsh Falls proved to be our highlight with superb views of Bassian Thrush enjoying its meal only meters in front of us. Next stop Victor Effluent Ponds where Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo and Black-chinned Honeyeater gave us another lift. Off to the Inman river mouth that gave us a difficult bird at a distance. It finally proved to be a Pacific Golden Plover by a flip of its wings. We slowly drove around Encounter Bay to Rosetta Head looking for Pacific Gull, eventually seeing one between the Bluff and West Island. A bird attacking the gulls near West Island was just too far away to be positively identified but seemed to be a Jaeger.

The tally by now was 98 and we were only likely to add Little Penguin now. Judith said that Common Sandpiper was along the Inman river earlier in the year, so we were delighted when it was there again. After a nice meal at the Hotel Victor we walked over to Granite Island to score our 100 species. We then made a phone call inquiring about Boobook Owl but it hadn't been calling. We decided to give up the 1 hour return drive for extra sleep before our 5am start on Sunday.

We enjoyed the dawn chorus at Nurragi and managed to add several to the list including Little Thornbill, Diamond Firetail and Zebra Finch. Then we drove via Strathalbyn and recorded Little Corella, then to Ferries Macdonald Conservation Park where through drizzle we managed to add an extra 3 species, being Southern Scrub Robin, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater and Grey Currawong. At Glenn Burr area we picked up 10 more species mainly mallee birds including Blue Bonnet, Rainbow Bee-eater, White Winged Triller, Variegated Wren, Striped Honeyeater, White-winged Choughs and White-browed Woodswallow. Then our final destination was Penrice Salt fields, hoping for a good finish. After 2 hours driving and no extra species seen we were through the gates by 12:20pm. The ponds were awash. Where there would normally be islands and sandy spits there was only water and no where for waders to gather. We still managed to record another 9 new species including Blue-billed Duck and Wood Sandpiper. We just managed to reach Buckland Park when it was 1pm. STOP.

The final count for our 'Twitch' was 144 species and 3 tired happy observers. Having looked through other South Australian tallies we were about average. The range in 1995 was from 105 to 192 with 10 teams competing. Perhaps there will be another attempt next year and maybe others might like to join in this interesting event.