

# ***southcoast birdwatch***

february 1998



**meetings:** Glendale Christian School. Start at 7.30 pm.  
**outings:** Meet at 8.30am. Bring lunch and chair.

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Kate Bruce, PO Box 403, Goolwa, Ph 8555 5020

## **for your diary:**

**SAT FEB 7th. OUTING. HINDMARSH FALLS.** Meet at the Falls in the lower car-park.

**SAT FEB 28th. OUTING. ENCOUNTER BAY and BLUFF.** Meet in car-park by the Inman River bridge opposite the Victor Harbor Council Chambers.

**SUN MARCH 8th. OUTING. BOAT TRIP TO COORONG WITH JACK MILLER.** See *important details later in Newsletter.*

**FRI MARCH 13th. AGM and VIDEO: 'ENDLESS SUMMER - THE BIRDS OF BROOME.'**

**WEDS MARCH 25th. OUTING. ALDINGA SCRUB.** Meet at Willunga by the cemetery on Aldinga Road (near the access roads).

**SAT APRIL 4th. OUTING. ONKAPARINGA GORGE.** Meet at Old Noarlunga at park by old Institute building on Patapinda Road.

**SAT APRIL 18th. OUTING. BRAND PROPERTY, PARAWA.** Meet at junction of Range, Parawa and Tunkhead roads near info board.

**WEDS APRIL 29th. OUTING. TONKIN'S WINERY SOUTH.** Meet at winery car-park, Winery Rd, Currency Creek.



*Welcome to new members: June Rees (Goolwa), Pat and Brian Mawby (Victor Harbor), Beryl Osterman (Ashbourne), Betty and Doug Lawrence (McLaren Vale), Margaret and Des Dent (Victor Harbor) and June Copley (Happy Valley).*

## **outings reports**

### **christmas barbecue, goolwa barrage, 6 dec, 1997**

This Outing was well-attended with quite a few members turning up in time to wander the Barrage and the river below to record 33 species of birds before settling in to the socialising. We saw the usual gulls, terns, cormorants, pelicans and migratory waders, but of special interest were the Royal Spoonbill, two Great Crested Grebes and three Gull-billed Terns.

Our thanks go to Jim and Maria for being our hosts again this year, and for supplying and attending the barbecue and generally making us very welcome.

### **BOCA birdcount challenge, 7 dec, 1997**

Four members counted birds over a 15-hour period, and this report has been written by Dianne Shearer.

It was an early start at 5.45am as Ann, Denzel and I gathered at Judith's home at Goolwa. There were not many people about, but the birds were already putting in an appearance as we left Goolwa behind. An early sighting and highlight were three Black Falcons soaring above the Goolwa-Strathalbyn Road in the Currency Creek area. Then on to Nurragi Conservation Reserve where we saw a number of birds including a solitary Diamond Firetail but no Zebra Finches were seen. The lovely and elegant Pacific Heron was seen at the Finniss Swamp in the company of numerous White-faced Herons.

We had a clear view of the Sacred kingfisher at Scott Conservation Park, but generally this area was quiet, as was the golf course at Ashbourne. Further highlights were the Great-crested Grebe and the Gull-billed Tern in the Barrage area at Goolwa.

Other raptor sightings included the Black-shouldered Kite, Whistling Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Swamp Harrier, and both the Little Eagle and the Wedge-tailed Eagle.

We finally saw several Red-browed Finches at the Victor Harbor Effluent Ponds, and a Pacific Gull and Sooty Oystercatcher at Encounter Bay. Our final bird for the day was a Little Penguin on Granite Island, but we were also treated to a fine view of a lovely sunset and a large Stingray as it glided beneath the causeway.

An extremely successful day! In all, we counted 123 species!

### **goolwa effluent ponds and barrage, jan 11th**

A pleasantly warm day greeted those who came to this outing. We looked first at the area where our proposed bird-watching facility will be (we hope!). From this little hill we could look into the first of the three ponds and were rewarded with Black-winged Stilts, Australasian Shovelers, Grey Teal, Australian Shelduck, Hoary-headed and Australian Grebes and Black Ducks. Overhead we saw Black Falcon, Whistling Kite and Australian Kestrel. Tree Martins and Swallows swooped over the ponds, and on the shore a Banded Plover kept very still. Among the more usual birds, we enjoyed watching White-fronted Chats, Common Bronzewing, Sacred Ibis and Superb Blue Wren, and we heard the plaintive call of the Little Grassbird. In all, we saw 42 species.

We moved on to the Barrage area, and didn't need to walk far to reach our count of 28. These included Greenshanks, Red-necked Stints and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers feeding in the sandy mud. Further out on the water were a Royal Spoonbill, Pelicans, Swans, Great Egret, and both the Little and Great Pied Cormorants. Overhead were Whiskered and Caspian Terns, the latter with their usual raucous arguments when anyone caught a fish!

However, our great excitement came when, on the shore of the little island near the Barrage, we saw

two Australian Crakes, usually seen only near fresh water. They appeared to be feeding at the base of the vegetation, and often ran frantically along the shore-line. I usually see these birds at the Goolwa Effluent Ponds after rain has provided swampy areas, where I have seen six this Spring. Lack of fresh-water swamps may have driven them to such an unusual habitat as the Barrage.

*PS Kate reports (20.1.98) there are 76 Black Swans feeding at the edge of the reeds on Hindmarsh Island, immediately above-river of the ferry crossing. (Over 180 have been seen since. and John Eckert believes this may be because of lack of rain in the South-east).*

## **meeting report, 9th jan**

This meeting was attended by 21 members, and two visitors (who became members before the night was through!).

Judith reminded us that it was the third anniversary of the meeting that she and Bruce called to test interest in a birding group in our area. Twenty-two people attended that meeting. Now our membership stands at 66! Our Guest Speaker for the evening was Hilary Thompson, author of "Adelaide's Birds". He described the planning, research, production, self-publishing and sale of his book. It was a mixture of inspiration, hard work, and some hard-headed business decisions!

Hilary divided Adelaide into manageable chunks, using a street guide to make sure he had included most park areas and habitats. Then came repeated visits and careful identification, which lead to some interesting problems in recognising local variants, for example in the Adelaide Rosella.

Altogether he made a provisional list of 108 species, and later added four more. Then came selecting an illustrator, and a publisher. Flinders' Press provided the best of three quotes.

The book took 14 months from start to production, and then came the fearful business of selling!

Hilary, undaunted by this experience, is planning a book on Birds of the Fleurieu, and the meeting discussed division of the Peninsula into suitable areas. It was a fascinating and unusual talk, which left us all, I believe, with more understanding of the enormous work that lies behind our invaluable **Field Guides**, which we tend to take for granted!

**RAFFLE RESULT:** The Winner of the painting of Magpies by Mrs Verna Hayes, was Rhonda Grey, the winning ticket sold by member Jean Boomer. The raffle raised \$230 towards our pamphlet project. Congratulations, Rhonda, and thank-you, Verna!

## **TWO IMPORTANT NOTICES**

### **BOAT TRIP, SUNDAY MARCH 8TH.**

- ♦ THE COST OF THIS TRIP IS \$25 PER PERSON. THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SEATS IS 26, SO THE TRIP WILL INITIALLY BE RESTRICTED TO MEMBERS ONLY, WITH A LOWER AGE LIMIT OF 12 YEARS. WE WILL KEEP A WAITING LIST SO FAMILY AND FRIENDS MAY COME IF SEATS ARE AVAILABLE.
- ♦ BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH. TEA, COFFEE, WATER AND TOILET WILL BE AVAILABLE ON BOARD. SINCE WE MAY LAND FOR LUNCH, YOU MAY LIKE TO BRING A RUG AND SLIP, SLAP ETC!  
Departure: Goolwa Wharf, 9.30am. Return: about 4.30pm.
- ♦ **BOOKINGS MUST BE MADE ASAP WITH GAYNOR ON 08 8555 5480 (PAYMENT no later than Feb 14th, please!)**

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE!**

PLEASE PAY BY DR ON OUR NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 13TH.

A PAYMENT SLIP IS ENCLOSED WITH YOUR NEWSLETTER. PLEASE FILL THIS IN AND ENCLOSE IT WITH YOUR PAYMENT IN AN ENVELOPE, AND HAND IT IN AT THE NEXT MEETING OR OUTING, OR POST TO THE ADDRESS SHOWN. NB. FOR OUR VERY NEW MEMBERS, OR THOSE JOINED SINCE NOV 1ST, YOUR SUB IS CURRENT UNTIL MARCH 1999 AND YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE A PAYMENT SLIP WITH THIS NEWSLETTER.

## feral pest workshop - kate bruce



I recently attended a most interesting workshop at Wirrina resort on the control of feral animals, specifically foxes, rabbits, hares and cats.

Being a birdwatcher, and also involved with landcare, I was particularly interested in the impact of foxes and cats on birds and small animals, and the effects of hares and rabbits on native vegetation.

Dr Philip Stott, from the University of Adelaide, gave a fascinating talk on the ecology of each of these animals; when you fully understand their lifestyle and habits, control is more effective.

I knew that foxes were opportunistic eaters and scavengers, but was surprised to hear that examination of stomach contents had revealed that they eat carrion, green olives, grapes, frogs and tortoises as well as their expected diet of eggs, small animals and birds. In an area where there are ground-nesting birds, such as wetlands, birds and their eggs form a large part of the foxes' diet.

Foxes travel long distances over a large territory, and only seem to use their dens in Spring and Summer when they have cubs. They are not daunted by obstacles such as bridges, roads and creeks, and they adapt to urban living.

Foxes carry and spread diseases including mange and hydatids, and also spread fleas to domestic, farm and native animals.

Cats are superb killing machines. They hunt underground and in trees and bushes as well as on the ground. In other words: nothing is safe.

Feral cat numbers are re-stocked from urban pets going wild. All cats reproduce several times a year, thus feral cat numbers can increase rapidly if not controlled.

All this seems a good reason to tighten cat controls. This can only improve the lifestyle of urban pets, help eradicate feral cats and thus save our native fauna.



*I urge all cat-owners to de-sex their cats and lock them up at night, and also to become involved with the **February is Foxoff on the Fleurieu** campaign carried out by Alexandrina Animal and Plant Control Board.*