

No. 105 December 2011

Contents

Obituary - Dr "Bill" Wakefield.....	2
"Bill" Lane memorial edition of Corella.....	2
Macquarie Island Rabbits.....	2
John Woinarski - ANH Medal Winner.....	2
The Jesus Bird Returns.....	3
New Book - "Measuring Birds".....	3
Climate Change Adaptation Research Program.....	3
Regent Honeyeater News.....	4
Boom Year for Storks.....	4
Penguins Smell!.....	4
Eastern Bristlebirds.....	4

Editorial

We hope for a good turnout to the AGM and Scientific Day in March 2012. A lot of effort goes into organising these days, and a good crowd makes it worthwhile for the speakers who often go to some trouble to prepare and deliver their talks. Make a weekend of it in the beautiful Hunter region.

Capricorn Yellow Chats

We have been studying the Yellow Chats in the Rockhampton, Qld area for some years, and are aiming to further this research with banding and DNA work. This would hopefully clarify the level of genetic difference between the Capricorn and nominate subspecies, and between the local subpopulations, and how long since separation has occurred.

As we are not qualified banders we are hoping to contact one or more qualified banders who could help with mist netting, banding, and possibly blood samples.

We are running the study on a small budget, so would need volunteers, but we could cover travel and accommodation. We are hoping to do this work in the March- May period, 2012.

The fieldwork would involve several very interesting sites with a great range of wetland birds.

Thanks for your help,

Bob Black

Centre for Environmental Management,
C.Q.University, Rockhampton, Qld 4702
phone (W) 07 49322075
Email: <r.black@cqu.edu.au>

AGM 2012

Notice is hereby given that the Association's Annual General Meeting and Scientific Day will be held at the Shortlands Wetlands Centre in Newcastle, NSW, on **Saturday 10 March 2012**. The theme of the day's lectures will be "Sea and Shorebirds".

A full program and registration form will be published in the March 2012 Newsletter. There will be an excursion in the local area on Sunday 11th.

Applications for Research Grants 2012

The Australian Bird Study Association operates a fund to provide financial assistance to researchers. The fund, known as the ABSA Fund for Avian Research, provides grants on an annual basis. The total value of grants this year is in the order of \$2500 and is intended to provide researchers with assistance in the acquisition of equipment and research material.

Expressions of interest for obtaining a grant are now being sought from members of the Association. The Association would like to encourage grant applications from both amateur and professional researchers. Expressions of interest must be in writing, clearly setting out the aims and objectives of the proposed study.

The successful recipients would be encouraged, at the completion of their study, to provide a paper for publication in Corella outlining the results of their research.

All applications should be forwarded by **31 Jan 2012** to:

The Secretary,
Australian Bird Study Association,
PO Box A313, Sydney South, NSW 1235.
or by email to <info@absa.asn.au>

The final decision will be made at the February meeting of the Committee.

Obituary

Dr William (Bill) Charles Wakefield M.B., Ch.B.
1937 - 2011



Bill's earliest bird memories at about age two were of a pair of robins that had built a nest within his family's Yorkshire greenhouse. He fondly remembered looking at their beautiful eggs and watching their young fly.

His interest inspired him to become a bird bander from the early 1950s. He was a founding member of several conservation areas in UK, three of which are now RSPB Reserves, all accomplished while working as a doctor in Scotland. By this time he was married and raising three boys. In 1974 they migrated to Tasmania where he practised in Claremont for 30 years.

Since his arrival, Bill studied the introduction of the Kelp Gull and its influence on the Pacific Gull. He made regular weekend visits to all the shore-bird breeding colonies on the islands around the south east of Tasmania.

Bill made frequent trips to the Furneaux Group where in the late 1970s he and Dr Bruce Robertson studied predation of White-faced Storm-Petrel by Pacific Gull. Here Bill set up a co-operative bird banding station to study Bass Strait migration. This station is now the second longest running in Australia. He helped set up the Patriarchs Wildlife Sanctuary for the protection of the Cape Barren Goose.

From 1994 to 2004 Bill was Tasmania's recorder for birds, compiling the annual status reports. He was on the executive of Birds Tasmania. He was published in *Corella*, *Yellowthroat* and *The Tasmanian Naturalist*. His observations of seabirds around our coastline have assisted in developing our knowledge of the species utilising this habitat. He lectured at the University of Tasmania and assisted various doctoral students.

Bill was respected throughout Australia and internationally for his exceptional ornithological skills. His rich voice with a soft Yorkshire accent often revealed a quirky sense of humour balanced by his wise, calm demeanour. His medical experience gave him a deep understanding and empathy with his fellow man as well as for his feathered friends. Bill's contribution to conservation and to our understanding of birds leaves an inspiring legacy.

Els Wakefield

13th October 2011

Bill Lane Memorial Edition of Corella

The March 2012 edition of *Corella* will be dedicated to the memory of S.G.(Bill) Lane, who died in 2000

Bill was a founding member of The Bird Banders' Association of Australia, which subsequently became the Australian Bird Study Association. He held almost all positions on the Committee at various times, all the time continuing a heavy load of research and publication. Many current banders remember him as mentor and fount of all wisdom in bird matters.

The Association gives a prize each year in his name, to the top student in Ornithology at Charles Sturt University, who receives \$150 and a year's membership of ABSA.

Macquarie Island

Read an interesting bit about the personal side of extirpating rabbits & rodents from Macquarie island here: <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=15267>

ABSA Member wins ANH Medal

Dr Don Franklin wrote, on the Blog of the Research Institute for Environment and Livelihoods (Charles Darwin University):

Dr John Woinarski is the 2011 Australian Natural History Medallist, and a most worthy recipient.

John has studied the fauna and flora of the Top End of the Northern Territory for almost 30 years. He has been an inspirational leader of research and survey teams and mentor of numerous research students.

He instituted and implemented the systematic survey of the vertebrate fauna of the region and documented the results in over 100 scientific papers. He is senior author of the seminal book [The Nature of Northern Australia](#), reflecting a remarkable ability to see and understand the landscape as a whole as well as to understand the lives of the myriad species that occur there.

More than anyone else he recognised the biodiversity crisis that northern Australia is currently facing with the loss of small- and medium-sized mammals and seed-eating birds, investigated its causes and sought to ensure that the issue is not ignored.

The Medallion is awarded annually to one who has made a most meritorious contribution to the understanding of Australian natural history. Dr Woinarski accepted the award at a meeting of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria early in November. He was nominated by the Darwin-based Northern Territory Field Naturalists Club.

Congratulations, John!

The Jesus Bird Returns

Go to this website for an account of the re-discovery of the New Zealand Storm Petrel *Oceanites maorianus*, presumed extinct for 130 years, and recently re-discovered.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/features/5675510/The-Jesus-bird-returns>

Book: “Measuring Birds”

Developed by a team of field and museum ornithologists, this book is the first up-to-date comprehensive presentation of a large number of different measurements that can be taken on birds: easy to use and with detailed illustrations it offers concise instructions and recommendations on how to measure birds. Problems with particular measuring techniques are discussed, as well as accuracy, reliability and comparability of measurements, the numbering of flight feathers, skull ossification, measuring tools and weight. A comprehensive list of references rounds off this useful book.

Printed on durable water resistant plastic and with a convenient spiral binding, this manual has been designed for use in the field and for taxidermy. An absolute must for bird ringers, museum curators, taxidermists and everyone concerned with morphometry.

Contents:

- Why measure?
- Accuracy and reliability of measurements
- Comparison of measurements on fresh and dried specimens
- Numbering of flight feathers
- Measuring live birds
- Skull ossification as an ageing criterion in passerines
- Weight (body mass)
- Equipment for measuring
- Bird measurements in detail
- References
- Index

Authors

Siegfried Eck, *et al*

Published by the DO-G project group “Ornithological Collections”

Order online at: www.media-natur.de

Any further questions regarding this publication, please contact: [<measuring.birds@web.de>](mailto:measuring.birds@web.de)

Amazing Footage of Owl

There is not a birder who won't be amazed at this 1000 frames a second video of an Eagle Owl coming in for food from its handler, especially the last two or three seconds as it goes into full braking mode, with feathers ruffling and claws spreading. Watch it in “full-screen” mode for best viewing.

[<http://www.dogwork.com/owfo8/>](http://www.dogwork.com/owfo8/)

Climate Change Adaptation Research Grants Program

Project title:

Adaptation strategies for Australian birds.

Principal investigators: Stephen Garnett

Lead organisation: Charles Darwin University

Objectives:

Identify adaptation strategies for Australian birds based on modelling, building on a current review of Australian bird status

Project design and methods:

New analytical tools and methods, utilizing and building upon well-established methods, will be used to assess current and future changes in the spatial patterns of distribution and abundance of the Australian bird fauna. Projecting models of the 'current' distribution of species onto future climate scenarios presents the potential changes in distribution and abundance.

Making use of high performance computing facilities of Queensland Cyber Infrastructure Foundation (QCIF) hosted at James Cook University (JCU) & University of Queensland (UQ), we will model the spatial patterns of distribution and abundance of individual species (now and future) using Maxent (common species distribution modelling algorithm). Novel analytical methods (e.g., modelling spatial patterns of abundance and definitions, e.g., definitions of distribution) will be developed and applied here. The models will align shifts in the suitability of overall habitat and current climate refugia for each taxon with threat and tenure maps to determine the implications for each taxon. This will identify the taxa most likely to be threatened by shifts in climate space. These models will identify priority species and the spatial context of relative vulnerability, potential refugia, the uncertainty involved based on different climate futures and the potential timing and sequencing of adaptation actions under various mitigation scenarios.

While there have been some analyses of the interaction between species and protected areas in Africa, this level of assessment has never been undertaken at this scale for all species and will represent a truly global benchmark for assessments of climate change vulnerability. The modelling will then be combined with the three dimensions of susceptibility - sensitivity, adaptive capacity and exposure - using protocols developed by *BirdLife International* to develop adaptation species specific strategies.

The recommendations will be guided by the decision framework developed by the NCCARF Terrestrial Biodiversity Network (TBN) for management actions focused on ameliorating impacts of climate change on biodiversity. Similarly the principles developed for genetic adaptation and managed relocation generated by other NCCARF TBN workshops will be used to guide adaptation recommendations in the final plan. The cost of actions will also be estimated based on the threatened bird database so that an overall estimate can be made of conserving Australia's birds in the face of climate change. This will be the first time such a costing has been made for an entire faunal group for a continental avifauna.

Regent Honeyeater

From the Parks Victoria Facebook page:

“The first documented, successful breeding from a captive bred and wild Regent Honeyeater has occurred near Chiltern. The female captive bred bird, released over 18 months ago, is the sixth of forty four released birds to be confirmed alive this season. The bird had not been recorded since shortly after the release date in May 2010.

The successful fledging of a chick on private property close to Chiltern Mt Pilot National Park ticks the final box of the breeding and release program. It has demonstrated the potential for captive bred birds to integrate and add new genes to the greatly diminished wild populations.

Ten days after fledging the young bird was observed taking nectar from blossom for the first time.”

Brian

Ranger

A boom year for Clarence Valley, north coast NSW Storks

We are presently in the middle of a bumper Black-necked (Satin) Stork breeding season. On a trip between Grafton and Tullymorgan in September we observed a total of 30 Storks. Eight adults known to occur locally weren't seen on that day and when you add the juveniles and immatures seen recently the number would exceed 40 birds just in the Clarence Valley. The total state population was estimated in the 1960s to be between 39 and 43 birds.

Yesterday I visited a nest at Tullymorgan to band the 'three' nestlings that were there. When I reached the level of the nest (23 m above-ground) in the cherry picker, I was shocked to see four nestlings. I only had bands for 3 as there has never been more than 3 nestlings reported in New South Wales. I hope to return to the nest to band the fourth bird but the paddock is still a little wet causing some difficulty to the cherry picker (read 'it got bogged!!').

Prior to yesterday's banding I had only colour-banded 15 Storks and have had 11 of these recovered, mostly by people noting the band colours. A Stork banded as a nestling at Gilletts Ridge near Ulmarra in 2007 is now the adult male at a new nest only a few kilometres from where he was hatched and banded. He is now a father to one small nestling. A female bird that I banded at Bulahdelah in 2009 turned up at a wetland at Coutts Crossing, where I live. A banded adult male Stork, banded as a nestling at Gilletts Ridge in 2008, was photographed at Micalo Island, near Yamba in August.

Could anyone observing a Stork please check its legs for colour bands. The bands are placed, one on each leg, above the leg joint. Please note on which leg each colour is on as there are birds with the same colour combinations but in the reverse order.

Dr Greg. P. Clancy
Coutts Crossing, NSW

Ecologist and Wildlife Guide
<www.birdrangers.com>

Penguins Recognise Kin by Smell

Abstract:

“Studies of kin recognition in birds have largely focused on parent-offspring recognition using auditory or visual discrimination. Recent studies indicate that birds use odors during social and familial interactions and possibly for mate choice, suggesting olfactory cues may mediate kin recognition as well. Here, we show that Humboldt penguins (*Spheniscus humboldti*), a naturally philopatric species with lifetime monogamy, discriminate between familiar and unfamiliar non-kin odors (using prior association) and between unfamiliar kin and non-kin odors (using phenotype matching). Penguins preferred familiar non-kin odors, which may be associated with the recognition of nest mates and colony mates and with locating burrows at night after foraging. In tests of kin recognition, penguins preferred unfamiliar non-kin odors. Penguins may have perceived non-kin odors as novel because they did not match the birds' recognition templates. Phenotype matching is likely the primary mechanism for kin recognition within the colony to avoid inbreeding. To our knowledge this is the first study to provide evidence of odor-based kin discrimination in a bird.”

Citation: Coffin HR, Watters JV, Mateo JM (2011) Odor-Based Recognition of Familiar and Related Conspecifics: A First Test Conducted on Captive Humboldt Penguins (*Spheniscus humboldti*). PLoS ONE 6(9): e25002. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0025002

Eastern Bristlebirds

The Eastern Bristlebird Recovery Group welcomes reports of any suspected presence of Eastern Bristlebirds – it is essential birders are not reluctant to report a potential sighting. However, the sighting of any such critical species must be validated as soon as possible.

Volunteering for Eastern Bristlebird monitoring is tough; steep hillsides at altitude, wading through complex grasses with fallen timber, rocky outcrops and ticks to boot is not most people's idea of a pleasant days bird watching. So my gratitude as ever to those that bother to be involved. We certainly need more capable volunteers, so make contact if you are up to it.

Essentially any birder finding Eastern Bristlebirds should keep the location confidential and report the sighting as soon as possible to Dr David Stewart:

<david.stewart@derm.qld.gov.au> or to myself at:
<sheena@naturesound.com.au>

Sheena Gillman, Volunteer Coordinator of EBB Northern Recovery