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Newsletter of the Australian Bird Study Association

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## NEWSLETTER 133



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### Editorial

Members will be aware that ABSA is an affiliate of Birdlife Australia, whilst maintaining its valued independent role in the study of Australian birds.

Later in this issue, there is an advertisement for the Australasian Ornithological Conference, a joint venture between Birdlife Australia and Birds New Zealand. Held every two years, its main aims are to:

- Promote communication and interaction among ornithologists in Australasia;
- Encourage student participation and provide networking opportunities, particularly for early-career ornithologists;
- Showcase the best ornithological research from across Australasia.

ABSA has a long history of involvement in AOC, funding a "Best Poster" prize for many years. This time, we are hoping to host a bird banding symposium in conjunction with the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme and New Zealand Banding Scheme. The symposium will be along the lines of "The past, present and future of bird banding in Australasia". It will take a look at the history of banding, and how its current practice fits into present and future trends in ornithological research.

If you go to AOC, make sure you put this one into your dance card.

*Stein Boddington*  
Newsletter Editor

### **Bird Haven Festival at Shoalhaven Heads, NSW**

**Sunday 21 October, 2018**

Bird Haven Festival is a new celebration to promote an appreciation and understanding of birds and their habitat. It will become

an annual event held in Shoalhaven Heads and will be based around the themes of Science, Conservation, Education, Community and Creativity. BirdLife Shoalhaven are delighted to be a supporter of this exciting initiative.

This first "fledgling" Bird Haven Festival will be on Sunday 21 October 2018 to coincide with the beginning of National Bird Week starting at 9am, so stick it in your diary now.

The organisers are bringing together a program of talks, focusing on the special importance of Shoalhaven Heads for bird lovers of all levels of experience, as well as promoting the Aussie Backyard Bird Count. Harry Saddler, author of the new book *The Eastern Curlew*, will talk about the miraculous 10,000 kilometre journey these birds make each year from their breeding grounds in Siberia to Shoalhaven Heads. A diverse range of activities are being organised, including a Saturday night showing of the wonderful film about the Twitchathon, *Chasing Birds*, and walks at various locations around the Heads. Children will be well catered for to encourage the next generation of birders.

The Festival's underlying aim is to support the conservation of birds and their habitats by making festival goers bird advocates.

Tickets to this year's event will be available online shortly for \$10, including morning tea. Numbers are limited due to the size of the venue, so register your interest now at <http://www.birdhavenfestival.com.au>.

### **Animal Tracking**

The Guardian published this article on animal tracking, and it includes some composite tracking data that is of interest. Included are two bird species, some Grey-headed Albatrosses and an individual Vulture, tracked in detail over a 3 1/2 minute period as it gains altitude in a thermal.

Go to: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/aug/30/where-the-animals-go-wildlife-tracking-secrets-revealed>

### **New Penny Olsen Book on the Night Parrot**

Greg Roberts reviewed Penny Olsen's book "Night Parrot - Australia's most elusive bird" in *The Australian*. A copy of the review is on his blogspot at:

<http://sunshinecoastbirds.blogspot.com/2018/08/night-parrot-new-book-stirs-fresh.html>

### **Eastern Curlews**

*From the Threatened Species Hub*

The Hub's far eastern curlew project team has tagged a bird travelling as far as North Korea this year. Along with other recent discoveries, the Darwin-based project is succeeding in its aim of closing significant knowledge gaps in the breeding habits and migratory movement of the bird. Amanda Lilleyman provides an update on their latest research findings and activities.

The far eastern curlew is in rapid decline in Australia – listed as Least Concern in 2004, it was upgraded to Endangered in 2015 and Critically Endangered in 2016. But while concerted effort is being made in Australia to conserve the species, we will not succeed unless we also consider the threats facing the bird along other parts of its migration route.

The exceptionally long-beaked bird is the world's largest migratory shorebird. It travels 9,000 to 12,000 km each way along the 'East Asian–Australasian Flyway', between breeding grounds in Russia and China and non-breeding habitats in south-east Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Hub researchers focusing on one of Australia's largest populations, which is found in Darwin Harbour, want to discover exactly where their birds go to breed as well as the migration path they take.

They also want to better understand their local movements within Darwin Harbour as this will provide valuable information about the birds' preferred habitats and how and when they use them. This will include the most important feeding and roosting areas, and how these vary with tides.

More at <http://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/news/tracking-the-far-eastern-curlew-news-from-darwin-and-beyond> about the two radio-tracked Eastern Curlews, and positive developments in Chinese treatment of coastal mudflats.

Ed: Curlews seem under threat all over, with Birdlife research in UK indicating that that Eurasian, and other Curlews have suffered substantial losses over the last few years. See <https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/curlews-crisis>

### **The Next Bin-chicken?**

We're conducting an online survey about Sulphur-crested Cockatoos – we hope you can all contribute.



Help us learn about bin-opening by Sulphur-crested Cockatoos: <https://tinyurl.com/y8a5xpl6>. Please take ~2-minutes to report

whether you "have" or "have not" observed bin-opening in the Greater Sydney region, including the Illawarra, Wollondilly, Blue Mountains and Central Coast – please share with your network.

This study is being conducted by Dr Barbara Klump and Dr Lucy Aplin of the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology, Germany with Dr John Martin, Royal Botanic Garden, and Dr Richard Major, Australian Museum of The Wingtag Project.

### **DigiVol - short for 'Digital Volunteers'**

DigiVol is a crowdsourcing platform that was developed by the Australian Museum in collaboration with the Atlas of Living Australia. It is used by many institutions around the world as a way of combining the efforts of many volunteers to digitise their data. This data may be in the form of museum object labels, field notebooks and diaries, recording sheets, registers or photographs.

There are many ways of extracting information or data from images depending on what the end use will be. Some data can be extracted from museum labels and field notebooks by transcribing (or typing out) the handwritten words. Other forms of collecting data may be by tagging images or identifying animals and their behaviour in the images.

DigiVol uses several approaches of data collection in its website. Online volunteers are presented with tutorials to help them get started in joining a project (virtual expedition).

Anyone can become a DigiVol volunteer, all you need is a computer, internet access and an email address.

To become a volunteer you must register on DigiVol before you can join an expedition. By registering you will be given access to DigiVol and associated forums. You will also receive occasional updates and newsletters.

#### *How to get started.*

Once you have registered, you can join any 'virtual' expedition in the list on the front page of the website. After choosing an expedition, click on the 'Get Started' button.

When you do this, you will be presented with your first task. For museum specimen labels you will see a picture of a specimen and its labels and you will need to transcribe the information from the labels into the set of fields in the template below the image. Each expedition has a tutorial attached that explains the process and how to fill out the template. We HIGHLY recommend that all users read the tutorial for an expedition before starting transcribing.

Once you have completed filling out the template of your task, click 'Submit for validation' and you can go to your next task. You can transcribe as many or as few tasks as you like.

If you have any questions about a task you can visit the discussion forums or contact us by email. To see your progress and your contribution you can visit your 'Notebook' through the 'My Profile' tab.

#### *What happens next.*

When an expedition is finished, the tasks will be validated by an experienced volunteer. The data will then be returned to the institution, checked and processed. Data can then be uploaded to the relevant data sharing portal such as Atlas of Living Australia (<https://www.ala.org.au/>), where it can be used by the general public and the research community.

To contribute, or for more information, go to: <https://digivol.ala.org.au/about/index#/what-is-digivol>

### **They Go where We Would Like to Go**

A small village on the South Island of NZ has done what many bird(and animal)-lovers would like to do across Australia - deal with cats!

In Omaui, on the far south coast, they have acknowledged the damage that cats do to the local fauna. An initiative proposed by Environment Southland will require all cat-owners to register, microchip and neuter their cat(s). When the cats eventually die, the residents will not be able to replace them.

Cats are known to kill millions, even billions, of birds and native animals in NZ, as in Australia. In Australia, there are many more feral cats than there are pets, so a similar plan here would only make a small difference to the appalling death rate for our birds and native animals.

Click on <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-45347136> to see the rest of the story.

### **Australasian Ornithological Conference 2019 - Darwin**





## Trip Reports

### ***Sugarloaf State Conservation Area 1 July 2018***

(just west of Newcastle, NSW - I didn't know either. Ed.)

0700 - 1230

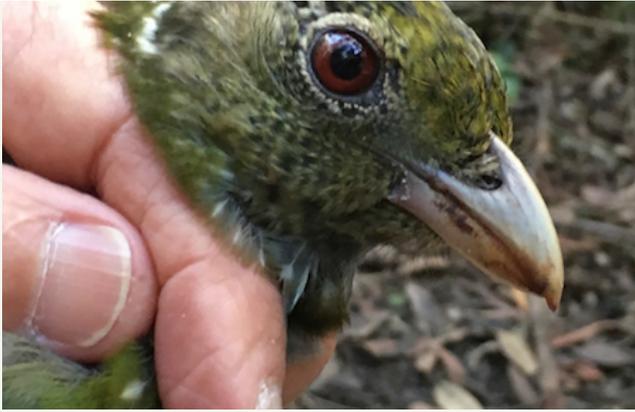
Temp: 5°C - 13°C

Cool, clear and sunny (no wind)

Attendees: Judy Little, Greg Little, Emily Mowat and Rob Kyte

We spent a 'cool' winter morning in this wet forest banding site. The enclosed forest area was very wet though not flooded. There were gums in flower and plenty of birds up high with large pools of water present amongst the trees and many Honeyeaters coming down to take advantage of this resource.





Total number of birds banded - 18

Total number of species banded - 8

Large-billed Scrubwren (1)

Eastern Yellow Robin (1)

Yellow Throated Scrubwren (1)

White-naped Honeyeater (9)

Brown Gerygone (2)

Green Catbird (1)

Silvereye (2)

White-throated treecreeper (1)

*Retrap information:*

No retraps

*Notable banding observations:*

Green Catbird

Juvenile White-naped Honeyeater



*Other observations:*

Bassian Thrush was seen around banding area.  
An Eastern Whipbird and Large-billed Scrubwren escaped from nets.  
A total of 26 bird species of birds were either seen or heard.  
A thoroughly enjoyable morning, thanks to those who came along.  
Rob Kyte <[robhboc@bigpond.com](mailto:robhboc@bigpond.com)>



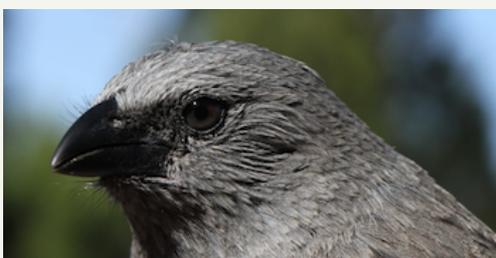
***Weddin Mountains NP 25 May 2018***

On the weekend of the 25th May I was joined by Jeff Hardy, Alistair, Ira, Harvey, Joy, Jen and Kim, Peter Davidson, Grace and Ash at Holy Camp. Jeff set nets on Armstrong property, Harvey and Alistair down at winter sites.

By the time the remainder of us setup down the creek and paddock we had 37 nets up. This all added up to plenty of species caught, especially retraps.

There was a golden theme with a Shrike-tit in net 14B, two male Golden Whistlers together in 13C, surprisingly four Yellow-tufted HE in 45 followed by eight Turquoise Parrots on Sunday morning, not to forget a steady stream of E Yellow Robin retraps. Also plenty of big birds and old retraps.

*Richard Allen*





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