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Newsletter of the Australian Bird Study Association

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NEWSLETTER 134



Editor: Stein Boddington
<info@absa.asn.au>

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Editorial

This newsletter has never had a name. It is just The Newsletter. In the spirit of the new age, Committee decided to put it to members via social media to come up with a suitable name - something sensible, culturally appropriate, relevant, sonorous.... you know what I mean. Nb: BirdyMacBirdFace has already been disqualified!! So keep an eye out for the contest on Facebook, or if you don't have that, send suggestions to <info@absa.asn.au> Obscure suggestions should be accompanied by a short explanation.

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**News** has come (see letter in body of newsletter) that David Drynan has moved on from his long tenure at the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes - the Banding Office to anyone else. Technically he is on secondment to another part of the Department, but few believe in the second coming!

David has been running the Banding Office for as long as most of us can remember. He has continued the enormous effort in bringing the processes of the Banding Office into the electronic age. He has streamlined the interactions between banders and the database. He has weathered the usual string of funding cuts. And most importantly, he has fended off government attempts to abolish or privatise the Banding Office over the years.

But mostly, we remember him for his infinite patience, sound knowledge, friendly demeanour, and common-sense helpfulness in dealing with a population of prickly, dogmatic and at times cantankerous banders. So we collectively wish you well in your future endeavours, and now, all together:

"Thanks, and good luck, mate!"

*Stein Boddington*  
Newsletter Editor

### ABSA Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held at 3pm on Saturday 16th March 2019, following the ABSA Conference at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, 1 Wetlands Place, Shortland, NSW 2307.

All members, and people attending the Conference, are cordially invited to attend the meeting. Nominations are sought from members to fill positions on the ABSA Committee - please see the form included with the mail-out of Corella in late November. Nominations should be received by 8th March 2019, by mail, or by email to <[info@absa.asn.au](mailto:info@absa.asn.au)>

### ABSA Conference 2019

We are pleased to announce that the ABSA Conference will be held on Saturday 16th March 2019 at Hunter Wetlands Centre, 1 Wetlands Place, Shortland, near Newcastle, NSW, in conjunction with the Hunter Bird Observers Club.

Details will be emailed to all members as they come to hand, and you can be assured of a day of fascinating lectures and much bird-talk in the breaks! Put the day in your diary.

### **Fund for Avian Research - call for grant applications (due 31 December 2018)**

The deadline for applications for funding support from ABSA's Fund for Avian Research (FAR) Grants is fast approaching.

The FAR Grants are intended to support researchers with project-related expenses such as buying equipment and/or travel within Australia. It is anticipated that approximately \$2,500 will be available in the 2018 round of funding. That amount is usually distributed across several applications.

The amount of money isn't large, but the applications don't need to be lengthy, either! If you are running a research project on an aspect of the Australian bird fauna and could use some extra funding, give it a go.

Please read the Assessment Criteria below carefully. Applicants should email their signed applications (as attachments either in .pdf or .doc formats) to: [info@absa.asn.au](mailto:info@absa.asn.au) by **31st December 2018**.

#### **FAR Grants – Assessment criteria**

##### *1. General Criteria*

How well does the proposal relate to ABSA's objective "to support, encourage and promote the study of Australian birds and to contribute to their conservation" and the purpose of the avian research fund to "assist with the publication of information, the provision of education or the carrying on of research into various aspects of the avifauna of Australia"?

##### *2. Scientific and Technical Criteria*

- a) Does the proposal have a clearly stated objective?
- b) Does the proposal include a clearly stated and practical methodology to achieve its objective?
- c) Is the methodology consistent with good scientific design and with good practice (including ethical considerations)?
- d) Is the achievement of the objective able to be measured or quantitatively assessed?
- e) If successful, how significant and/or useful will the outcome be in terms of our knowledge of the Australian avifauna and its conservation?
- f) How likely is the project to result in formal publication of results?

##### *3. Financial Criteria*

- a) Does the proposal provide a clear and itemised account of how the funds will be spent?
- b) Are the allocations in the proposed budget appropriate and do they provide reasonable value for money?

#### **Membership Renewal**

It's that time of the year again. The membership renewal was posted out to all members with the 2018 Corella. Please renew as soon as possible, and if you can, make it an electronic payment - these are much easier for the Treasurer to process.

#### **Decline in Shorebird Numbers Linked to Climate Change**

Researchers have discovered that daily nest predation of shorebirds has increased threefold over the last 70 years. The data suggest the larger increase in the Arctic relative to the tropics indicates a link to climate change.

University of Bath. "Decline in shorebirds linked to climate change, experts warn." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 8 November 2018.

[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/11/181108142405.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/11/181108142405.htm).

#### **From David Drynan**

Hi Everyone

Just a short note to let you all know I have decided to take up an offer of a new job for the next 6 months. I'll still be in the same Department, but working in an area that looks after data management issues across the agency. It may turn into a permanent role over this period, but this remains to be seen. I start Monday 17 September.

I just worked out that I have been in the banding office for 23 years, and have managed it for the last 15. One of the main reasons that I have stayed this long is because of people like you, and our awesome banders in general. Not to mention the birds & bats and one of the most interesting data-sets that our department holds. It has been a fantastic job, and I have already had a few moments thinking "what am I doing?", but I feel that the time is right to move onto new things.

Naomi is stepping up to fill my duties whilst I am away, and she may well call on you for advice from time to time. So please be kind :-)

Please send all emails to the general ABBBS address ([abbbs@environment.gov.au](mailto:abbbs@environment.gov.au)), rather than to me directly.

Hopefully I will see some of you out in the field when I finally get around to upgrading to A-class!!!!!!!

Feel free to pass this on to anyone that you think may be interested.

All the best

David

David Drynan  
(Formerly) Senior Project Officer  
Australian Bird & Bat Banding Scheme  
Department of the Environment and Energy

#### **Bird in the Hand**

The Golden Whistler sheet has been updated to correct an error relating to subspecies. If your sheet was downloaded before September 2018, please replace it with the revised sheet.

#### **Threatened Species Network Rates Birds' chances of extinction**

"The trajectory and timetable of species to extinction is at least partly predictable. To provide forewarning, a TSR Hub project is identifying the Australian animal species at greatest risk and estimating the likelihood that they will become extinct over the next 20-year period, if there is no change in current management. Our rationale is that if governments, managers and the community are aware of which species are most imperilled, they can take emergency care to seek to prevent such extinctions – to act before it is too late."

See the full text at:

<http://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/news/no-surprises-no-regrets-identifying-australias-most-imperilled-animal-species>

The 20 Australian birds most at risk of extinction over the next 20 years

Mean

| Rank | Species or sub-species                                                                 | likelihood of extinction within 20 years (%) |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1    | King Island brown thornbill<br><i>Acanthiza pusilla archibaldi</i>                     | 94                                           |
| 2    | Orange-bellied parrot<br><i>Neophema chrysogaster*</i>                                 | 87                                           |
| 3    | King Island scrubtit<br><i>Acanthornis magna greeniana</i>                             | 83                                           |
| 4    | Western ground parrot<br><i>Pezoporus wallicus flaviventris*</i>                       | 75                                           |
| 5    | Houtman Abrolhos painted button-quail<br><i>Turnix varius scintillans</i>              | 71                                           |
| 6    | Plains-wanderer<br><i>Pedionomus torquatus*</i>                                        | 64                                           |
| 7    | Regent honeyeater<br><i>Anthochaera phrygia*</i>                                       | 57                                           |
| 8    | Grey-range thick-billed grasswren<br><i>Amytornis modestus obscurior</i>               | 53                                           |
| 9    | Herald petrel<br><i>Pterodroma heraldica</i> <sup>^</sup>                              | 52                                           |
| 10   | Black-eared miner<br><i>Manorina melanotis</i>                                         | 47                                           |
| 11   | Northern eastern bristlebird*<br><i>Dasyornis brachypterus monoides</i>                | 39                                           |
| 12   | Mallee emu-wren<br><i>Stipiturus mallee*</i>                                           | 34                                           |
| 13   | Swift parrot<br><i>Lathamus discolor*</i>                                              | 31                                           |
| 14   | Norfolk Island boobook<br><i>Ninox novaeseelandiae undulata*</i>                       | 27                                           |
| 15   | Mount Lofty Ranges chestnut-rumped heathwren<br><i>Calamanthus pyrrhopygia parkeri</i> | 24                                           |
| 16   | Fleurieu Peninsula southern emu-wren<br><i>Stipiturus malachurus intermedius</i>       | 17                                           |
| 17   | Helmeted honeyeater<br><i>Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*</i>                         | 17                                           |
| 18   | Cocos buff-banded rail<br><i>Hypotaenidia philippensis andrewsi</i>                    | 17                                           |
| 19   | Western bristlebird<br><i>Dasyornis longirostris</i>                                   | 16                                           |
| 20   | Alligator Rivers yellow chat<br><i>Epthianura crocea tunneyi*</i>                      | 15                                           |

### New Bird Species in Indonesia

A joint research team from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Indonesian Institute of Science has described an unusual new songbird species. The bird was named the Rote Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus rotiensis* after the island of Rote where it is found. The discovery was published in the journal Scientific Reports on 23 October 2018.

Between 5 and 10 new bird species are described every year. This is the second from the island of Rote in the last twelve months, which highlights the unexplored diversity on Indonesia's myriad islands. The bird has been immediately classified as vulnerable, due to the human population pressures on the island.

Ref: Nathaniel, S. R. Ng et al. A striking new species of leaf warbler from the Lesser Sundas as uncovered through morphology and genomics, Scientific Reports (2018). DOI: 10.1038/s41598-018-34101-7 The full article is available from:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-34101-7>

### Birdlife Photographer of the Year

Visit <https://www.birdlifephotoworld.org.au/gallery-home> to see the winners and finalists of this competition.

The award winners are:

Bird Behaviour winner — 'Slight Disagreement' by Shelley Pearson

Bird Portrait winner — 'A Family Affair' by Gary Meredith

Human Impact winner — 'A tragic end' by Danny McCreddie

Special Theme: Black-Cockatoos winner — 'Shadow Dancer' by Lachlan Hall

Birds in the Landscape winner — 'Brolgas flee fire' by Cathryn Vasseleu

Creative/Fine Art winner — 'Swooping' by Sar Nop

Youth winner — 'Crested Pigeon' by Campbell Mole

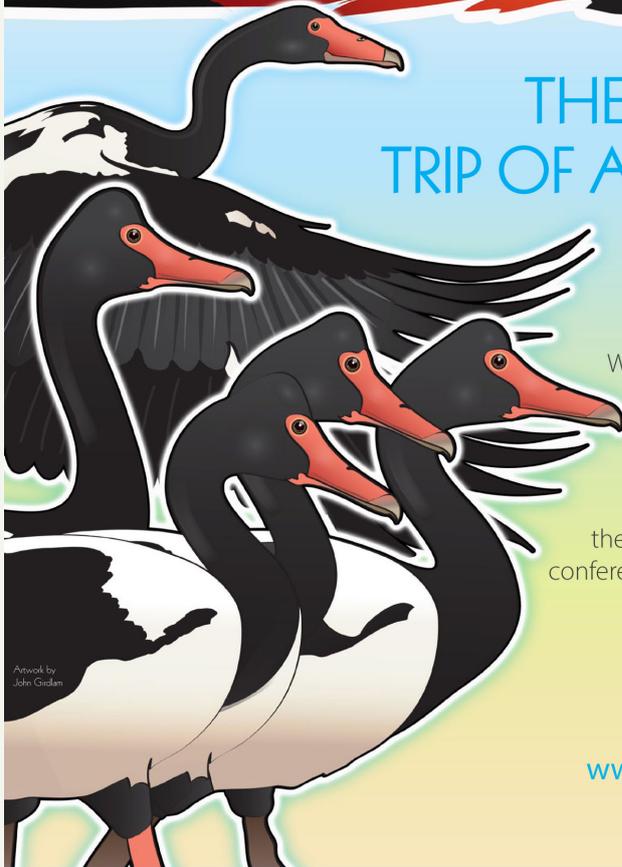




Australasian Ornithological Conference - Darwin 2019

# AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

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### Trip Reports

*Weddin Mountains NP - 22/23 September 2018*

On the weekend of 22-23rd September Mark A, Alistair, Ash, Grace, Alex, Sarah, Teagan, Cassandra, Adam, Claire Davis, James and William Nicholls and myself banded at Weddins. We started setting nets down creek and in paddock and soon noted many woodswallows and heard Painted HE. Weather was perfect and we managed to set only 15 nets. James who banded regularly in the 1990s chose a good trip to return with new birds to band and plenty of entertainment for William (echidna, goanna etc). On Saturday we caught 156 birds with Painted HE and a hybrid Masked X WB Woodswallow being biggest surprise. Catching 34 species in 15 nets is a sign of lots of birds on the move (only 11 sp retrapped). There was no water in creek and about 7 eucalypts in paddock and down creek flowering. Other highlights were Kookaburra and Sacred Kingfisher (for Teagan), 72 White-br, 15 Masked Woodswallows, Trillers, Turqs (oldest retrap), Black-eared Cuckoo, Black-chinned HE and a female Spiny-cheek HE retrap with brood patch.

Richard Allen

| Trip 165                 |     |   |       |        |
|--------------------------|-----|---|-------|--------|
| Species                  | New | R | Total | oldest |
| 302 Turquoise Parrot     | 2   | 2 | 4     | 4      |
| 322 Laughing Kookaburra  | 1   |   | 1     |        |
| 326 Sacred Kingfisher    | 1   |   | 1     |        |
| 341 Black-eared Cuckoo   | 1   |   | 1     |        |
| 364 Willie Wagtail       |     | 2 | 2     | 5+     |
| 392 Eastern Yellow Robin |     | 4 | 4     | 4+     |
| 401 Rufous Whistler      | 2   | 4 | 6     | 8      |
| 408 Grey Shrike-thrush   | 1   |   | 1     |        |

|           |                           |     |    |     |     |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| 424       | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 430       | White-winged Triller      | 5   |    | 5   |     |
| 443       | Grey-crowned Babbler      | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 504       | Speckled Warbler          |     | 2  | 2   | 2+  |
| 509       | Rufous Songlark           | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 529       | Superb Fairy-wren         | 3   | 2  | 5   | 4+  |
| 544       | Masked Woodswallow        | 15  |    | 15  |     |
| 545       | White-browed Woodswallow  | 72  |    | 72  |     |
| 547       | Dusky Woodswallow         | 4   |    | 4   |     |
| 564       | Mistletoebird             | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 580       | Black-chinned Honeyeater  | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 583       | Brown-headed Honeyeater   | 3   | 2  | 5   | 6   |
| 585       | Striped Honeyeater        | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 598       | Painted Honeyeater        | 2   |    | 2   |     |
| 613       | Fuscous Honeyeater        | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 614       | Yellow-faced Honeyeater   | 3   |    | 3   |     |
| 617       | White-eared Honeyeater    | 2   | 2  | 4   | 2+  |
| 625       | White-plumed Honeyeater   | 10  | 21 | 31  | 10+ |
| 634       | Noisy Miner               | 4   |    | 4   |     |
| 640       | Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater  | 2   | 1  | 3   | 3   |
| 645       | Noisy Friarbird           | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 646       | Little Friarbird          | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 652       | Diamond Firetail          |     | 1  | 1   | 2+  |
| 693       | White-winged Chough       | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 705       | Australian Magpie         | 1   |    | 1   |     |
| 976       | Striated Pardalote        | 3   |    | 3   |     |
| Total     |                           | 147 | 43 | 190 |     |
| # species |                           | 30  | 11 | 34  |     |





### *Grey Grasswren Trip August/September 2018*

Through the efforts of Jeff Hardy, ABSA recently obtained a contract from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) to further study the endangered Grey Grasswren on Narriearra Station – their only known habitat in NSW. This property is situated east of Tibooburra adjacent to the NSW/Qld. border. This contract follows two previous ones in 2014 and 2015 and a partly sponsored trip in 2017 which tested the feasibility of using small radio transmitters to track the movements of this species.



*The NSW/Qld. border fence*

A 3-week trip was organised for the last week in August and the first 2 weeks in September to visit the area again. We were a little apprehensive as this trip coincided with one of the worst droughts on record for the western region of NSW but this was an ideal opportunity to map the birds' territories during these harsh conditions. What faced us when we entered the property was not pretty.



*Not a pretty sight on the property*

Our research team consisted of 11 people at the beginning: Genevieve Kyi, Richard Allen, Jeff Hardy, Heather Parsons, Rudy and Rebecca Jacobs, Greg and Judy Little, Ros and John Farrell and Lorna Mee. We rendezvoused at Tibooburra for lunch on 26 August and headed out, in convoy, to our usual camping site at Barton's Crossing.



*Our campsite at Barton's Crossing*

Our aim was to try and capture at least 5 Grey Grasswrens, place transmitters on their backs and track their movements. Once their movements were determined we would fly a drone over that area to record the vegetation communities the birds utilised. Google Earth images were used to pinpoint the birds' positions but were not at a high enough resolution for our habitat study thus the use of a drone.

As the whole area was extremely dry we concentrated our trapping efforts in those sites where we had previously recorded birds. With the number of banders present we decided to try and saturate each site with as many nets as possible. The weather was not always kind to us as on some days the wind gained strength and didn't present ideal conditions for capturing birds. This culminated in a rather severe dust storm hitting us towards the end of the first week.



*The dust storm – our gazebo survived the onslaught*

We lost an awning and had to replace our toilet several times but didn't lose our gazebo this year – thanks to the purchase of a 'cyclone resistant' one. It did rain during one evening but only enough to settle the dust and get our shoes muddy – the farmers would have been praying for much more. Dust that was raised during the persistent windy weather gave the whole landscape a surreal sepia glow during late afternoon.





*Late afternoon glow*

To brighten up the bleak outlook we celebrated Jeff's 70th birthday with some fine wine, a roast dinner and a birthday cake to top it off. Phil Bell, who was carrying out some surveying work for OEH on a neighbouring property, joined the festivities with his wife Ruth.



*Happy birthday Jeff*

Unfortunately Genevieve, Richard, Judy and Greg had to leave at the end of the first week. Despite our huge trapping effort it was only into the second week, when we were joined by Cassandra Taylor, that our luck changed. We caught two Grey Grasswrens on consecutive days and were able to attach transmitters to them and track both over the following week and a half accumulating enough readings to clearly establish their territories and their roost sites.



*Grey Grasswren with transmitter attached*

We had to leave flying the drone until all tracking readings were completed so that we didn't disturb the birds but unfortunately windy weather curtailed our flying to early in the morning and sometimes late in the afternoon – not ideal times to take vegetation photographs as we really needed the least amount of shadows possible.



*Our drone which we nicknamed "Darryl" after one of our original team who couldn't make it this time*

As expected, our overall capture rate was well down on previous years but we did manage to trap a number of species including: Purple-backed Fairy-wren, White-winged Fairy-wren, Redthroat and probably the highlight, apart from the Grey Grasswrens, was an Orange Chat.



*Orange Chat*

Towards the end of the last week we had sampled 6 sites covering about 12 square kilometres so we then concentrated our efforts on tracking the birds and also defining, utilising quadrats and photographs, the three major vegetation communities. As it was going to take 2½ days to get home we decided to pack up on the Friday morning, have lunch at Tibooburra (we can highly recommend the egg and bacon rolls) and say our goodbyes. We will be going out again in April 2019 to sample during a different season and hopefully, when the rains come, the property will be in much better condition. Experienced banders (including trainees with considerable experience in handling and processing birds) that would like to assist in April 2019 should contact Jeff ([Aurkez@live.com.au](mailto:Aurkez@live.com.au)).

Thanks to Richard Allen for providing the photographs.

*John Farrell*

On behalf of the team

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