

VERA S.

N.B. \*\*

CONTRARY TO THE INFORMATION IN THIS EDITORIAL, CIRCUMSTANCES  
HAVE PREVENTED OUR PRESENTING AN OFF-SET PRINTED NEWSLETTER  
THIS MONTH.

WE'LL TRY TO MAKE IT FOR MARCH.

"To encourage the observation and study  
of the birds of the Toowoomba area."

President: Bill Jolly,

"Ringmere", Withcott, 4344.  
Ph: 30.3206

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NEWS-SHEET No. 26 - February, 1978.

This edition of the News-sheet marks the change-over to A4 format and an offset reproduction process. It is felt that this will provide an even better looking vehicle for Club news and it opens the way to printing line drawings and sketch maps. Hope you like it.

Following on from last month's bird census report we present, this month, the Annual Summary for the local study area of 10km. radius of the Margaret Street Post Office, for 1977. This area now forms most of the Western half of the larger area adopted this year. This summary represents all the gold checklists submitted during the year (and there were many), so if you are among the members who, every month post or deliver their checklist ... thanks.

Because New Toowoomba birds are now included from beyond Helidon, as evidenced this month, the March Field Day is planned for that sector. This month it is hoped to have the Bunya Mountains camp-out, postponed from November. The week-end of 25/26th has been chosen. We will meet at the Queen's Park kiosk in Lindsay St. to avoid the Saturday traffic in Pigott's car park. More details on the last page of this issue. Hope you can make it.

Member Chris Bianchi has moved residence to Townsville, becoming the fifth Club member North of the Burdekin River. We wish her well in her new venture and look forward to reports on the state of things ornithological in North Queensland.

Of special interest during January were the Marsh Crakes (three at least) at Apex Lake Gatton, found by Phillip and Sue Elmes and the Land Rail seen by Rod Hobson in Bridge St. near the showgrounds.

Ron Hopkinson,  
Editor.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS.

187. Red-chested Button-quail (*Turnix pyrrothorax*). 4.11.77. Mt. Lofty.

John Coman.

The bird was observed by two students to fly into a building and was picked up in a stunned condition. It recovered quickly and was released after photographing.

The bird was identified by the following features: white eye, stout bill, size intermediate between King Quail and Stubble Quail, streaked brown back, fine barring below eye and chestnut breast with creamy-chestnut vent. The bird was a female since it lacked the bars on the side of the breast possessed by the male.

Editor's Note: Although John Coman was the only Club member to sight this bird, identification has since been confirmed from the colour slides taken by John.

(cont/d.)

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS (cont/d.)

As in this case, reliable photographic evidence can provide confirmation in the absence of the usual requirement of two Club members to identify a new species.

188. Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*). 29.1.78. Flagstone Creek.  
Rod Hobson, Ron Hopkinson, Bill Jolly.

One individual of this species seen at the Helidon end of the Flagstone Creek-Iredale Road.

Obvious Ibis bill - overall dark brownish colouration.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

Australian Cassowary. 7.12.77. Lake Eacham. RGH.  
Great-crested Grebe. 11.1.78. Somerset Dam. CB. EJ. WJ.  
15.1.78. Cooby Dam. REH.  
Hoary-headed Grebe. 14.1.78. Oakey sewage treatment works. JC.  
Australian Pelican. 27.12.77. Helidon weir. CD. MD.  
Straw-necked Ibis. 30.1.78. Over Mt. Lofty (200 birds). EJ. WJ.  
Musk Duck. 15.1.78. Cooby Dam. REH.  
Crested Hawk. 25.1.78. Ringmere, Withcott. EJ. WJ.  
Spotted Harrier. 18.1.78. Gowrie Little Plains. JC.  
Red-chested Button-quail. 10.12.77. Kelly St., George River. RGH.  
Marsh Crake. 30.1.78. Apex Lake Gatton. PB. SE. RGH. REH. WJ.  
Squatter Pigeon. 11.12.77. Baking Board. JC.  
Turquoise Parrot. 15.1.78. Glen Lyon Dam. RGH.  
Pheasant Coucal. 15.12.77. Harlaxton. GC.  
Forest Kingfisher. 20.10.77. Kingsthorpe. JC.  
White-backed Swallow. 13.12.77. Lake Annand. GC.  
Ground Cuckoo-shrike. 6.1.78. Ringmere, Withcott. EJ.  
Grey-headed Robin. 8.12.77. Millaa Millaa. RGH.  
Grey-crowned Babbler. 7.1.78. Ringmere, Withcott. EJ. WJ.  
Mistletoebird. 18.1.78. Gowrie Little Plains. JC.  
Diamond Firetail. 15.1.78. Glen Lyon Dam. RGH.  
Paradise Riflebird. 8.1.78. Bunya Mtns. CB. EJ. WJ.  
White-browed Woodswallow. 29.12.77. Harlaxton. GC.  
Dusky Woodswallow. 27.11.77. Oakey. JC. GT.

CB: Chris Bianchi. PB: Peter Bostock. JC: John Coman. GC: Graham Corbin.  
CD: Coranne Dolley. MD: Mick Dolley. SE: Susan Elmes. RGH: Rod Hobson.  
REH: Ron Hopkinson. EJ: Eileen Jolly. WJ: Bill Jolly. GT: Grant Tracy.

HERON ISLAND BIRD SCHOOL - December, 1977.

After debating the pros and cons of spending \$365 for a week long Bird School on Heron Island, I decided it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. I never once regretted that decision as the week proved to be the most rewarding experience of my birdwatching career! Along with nine other people from various parts of Queensland and Sydney, I attended the first Heron Island Bird School from December 10-17, 1977. The course was sponsored by the newly formed Heron Island Natural History Association.

Heron Island is a National Park located 45 miles off the Gladstone coast. It is one of two inhabited coral cays on the Great Barrier Reef with 1/3 of the island taken up by a University of Queensland Research Station and a tourist resort run by P. & O., and the remaining 2/3 a National Park. It is reached by a 30 minute helicopter flight or a 4½ hour launch trip.

(cont/d.)

HERON ISLAND BIRD SCHOOL (cont/d.)

Owing to a lack of publicity, the group participating in the course was small, but we didn't mind as it gave us a marvellous opportunity to work closely with the following experts who were engaged as lecturers:

VINCENT SERVINTY: author, president of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia and editor of "Wildlife in Australia" magazine.

PETER SLATER: well known bird photographer, artist and author of our two field guides to Australian birds.

PETER OGILVIE: National Parks & Wildlife Service of Qld. with particular responsibilities in island National Parks. (Peter was responsible for organizing the course).

JIRO KIKKAWA: University of Qld. (zoology) engaged in bird research.

The week long course included some very interesting slide lecturers: Conservation Problems in Australia; Sea Birds (V. Serventy), Heron Island Silvereyes (J. Kikkawa), Australian Birds; Bird Photography (P. Slater) and The Great Barrier Reef; National Parks of the World (P. Ogilvie). Practical sessions included observation of Silvereye and Reef Heron banding, Silvereye and White-capped Noddy nest counts, bird photography, reef walks, snorkeling and individual projects.

There were two day-long boat trips to nearby islands where sea birds were nesting. On One Tree Island, Bridled Terns were observed nesting in depressions in the coral rubble. This small island is unique in that it is composed entirely of fragments of coral and has no sand beaches at all. A central clump of Pandanus trees (from which the island got its name) houses a large Sea Eagle's nest, no longer in use, and a University Research Station provides the only other shade from the searing heat of the tropical sun. Crested Terns, although present on the island, were not nesting.

The most exciting trip was to Fairfax and Lady Musgrave Island National Parks. On Fairfax Island we were able to observe at close range, Brown Gannets nesting in depressions on the ground and chicks in their white, fluffy plumage. Greater Frigate Birds were photographed soaring just overhead. A Quonset hut, which was home to Julie Booth while she conducted extensive research on turtle mating behaviour, still remains on the island. Because of the tides, we only had a short time on Lady Musgrave Island but were treated to the sight of a colony of Roseate Terns nesting in sandy depressions. These boat trips to places seldom seen by Heron Island visitors, made our week a unique experience.

Participants in the course undertook various projects such as nest observations of White-capped Noddies, wader counts, bird photography with daylight flash and 400mm lenses (b & w film was processed and printed during the course by Pat and Peter Slater), sketching of birds and writing poems and newspaper articles. An extremely interesting project undertaken by Jan Veacock of Toowoomba, was the counting of birds dead or dying from entanglement in the fruit of the *Pisonia* trees. Apparently, the extremely dry conditions had lead to the fruit becoming dry and very sticky, and the White-capped Noddies nesting in these trees by the thousands and the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters returning to their burrows underneath the trees each night, were among the largest numbers affected. Jan counted over 1100 birds dead or dying from entanglement in the *Pisonia* fruit on Heron Island.

In addition to the species already noted in this report (White-capped Noddies, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Brown Gannets, Greater Frigate Birds, Bridled, Crested and Roseate Terns, Reef Herons - both grey and white phases - and Heron Island Silvereyes), most participants observed the following birds during the week-long course: Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants, Black-naped, Little and Lesser Crested Terns, Silver Gulls, Mongolian Dotterels, Eastern Golden Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Tattlers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sooty Oystercatcher, Banded Landrails, Bar-shouldered Doves and three Black-winged Petrels caught in the *Pisonia* fruit who were cleaned and freed. I personally saw 14 species I had never seen before. To be able to identify and separate the Crested and Lesser Crested Terns, the

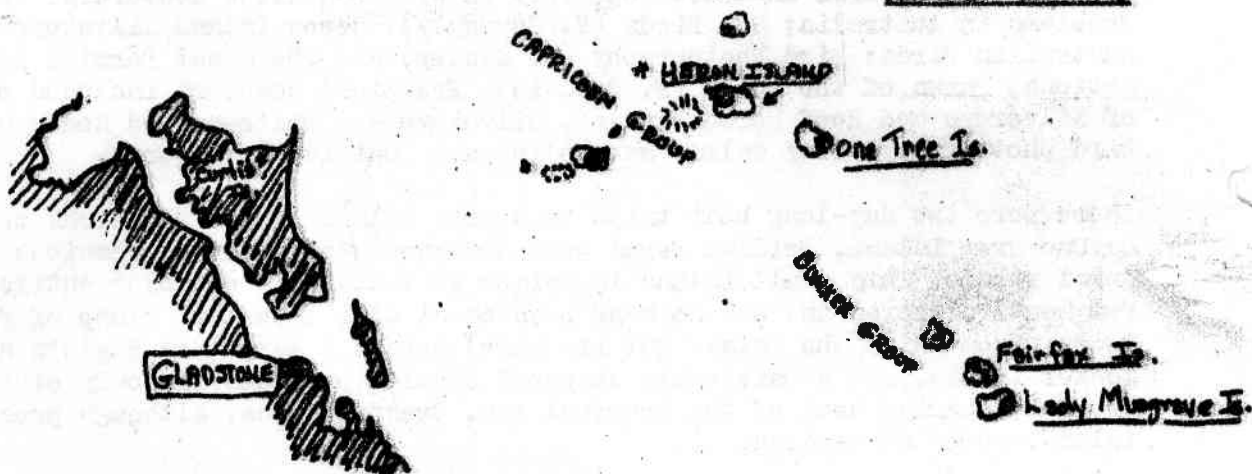
(cont/d.)

HERON ISLAND BIRD SCHOOL (cont/d.)

Bridled Terns from the Sooty Terns (although we didn't observe the latter), the Black-naped and Little Terns and the various waders was truly a rewarding experience for me.

If I were to elaborate on the highlights of the week, I would list the following strong points of the course: 1) the opportunity to work closely with Peter Slater, Vincent Serventy and Peter Ogilvie, 2) the chance to visit remote islands to view nesting sea birds, and 3) opportunities to observe many new sea birds. I strongly advise Bird Club Members to keep a lookout for information on a similar school which is envisaged for 1978. Contact Peter Ogilvie at National Parks and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 190, No. Quay, Brisbane 4000, for details.

Marilyn Jacobs.



Editor's note:

One of the photographs that Marilyn took on Heron Island during the course - a Reef Heron in Flight (b & w) - is to be published in Peter Slater's forthcoming Book on Bird Photography.

DUSKY WOODSWALLOW.

On December 3rd I was riding my bike near Oakey when I looked up to see hundreds of Dusky Woodswallows (*Artamus cyanopterus*). These birds have a strong urge to gather together and roost as a flock. So strong is this urge, that they will leave nestlings (once they are feathered and able to keep warm by themselves) and join a flock.

Outside the breeding season, which is from August to January, 100 birds may gather. They also gather to defend nests during the season. Trespassers such as Brown Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel and Kookaburra have been seen in this area.

It was thought that this flock had gathered for feeding purposes as there was a steady flow of birds to and from the never resting flock. They were constantly calling as they were feeding on the wing. Before and since this sighting I have seen them in ones and twos and a pair nested nearby.

Grant Tracy.

BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL.

The Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*) has been carefully studied in the southern part of the North Island of New Zealand by B.D. Heather among others. This is the same bird which is common in Australia.



BLACK-FRONTED DOVETAIL (cont/d.)

In particular, observations on "foot trembling" have been made which have caused some interest. The purpose of these movements is not known for certain but it is thought to be a deliberate feeding device. The whole tarsus and foot are held well above the ground, slightly lower than 45° from the vertical, and vibrated rapidly.

Each vibration is often followed by a step forward and the other leg is then vibrated in turn. This performance seems to be carried out over wet silt flats and water-logged soils, perhaps to help flush out creatures for food. However, the foot does not at any time touch the ground and consequently there can be no direct transmission of vibration to the substrata.

Birds do not seem to perform this "rite" when standing in shallow water or when they are far from water. Generally, small earthworms were being eaten while the trembling proceeded, but how can this assist with the capture of earthworms?

According to some ornithologists such as Simmons (1961) and Sparkes (1961) foot trembling is a speciality mainly of Plovers although the American Hermit Thrush (*Hylocichla guttata*) has been observed to perform a similar ritual and hence the field for study widened to Passerines.

Might I recommend to T.B.C. members (a) that they attempt to account for the activity and (b) that field observations on the feet of birds, particularly around water and damp areas, be carried out.

Robert Shaw.

PROVISIONAL LIST OF DATES FOR FIELD DAYS - 1978.

For your diary, here is a list of dates selected for Field Days for the coming year.

- 25/26th February Camp-out at Bunyas.
- 19th March - Helidon.
- 22/23rd April Camp-out at Coast.
- 21st May : 25th June : 23rd July : 20th August : 24th September
- 22nd October : 19th November : 17th December.

Changes in these dates could be necessary if circumstances dictate but it is hoped that publishing the list will be of assistance with forward planning of members' week-ends.

Ron Hopkinson.

FIELD DAY REPORT - 22.1.78.

We started off with quite a large number of people, including some rather young members, on a very overcast day. When we arrived at Highfields, we found an abundance of Cicadas making a head splitting noise, so much so that many of the birds had apparently departed.

After our morning tea break, it was decided to proceed to Cooby Dam. On the way back to the main road we were rewarded with the sight of three Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring over the road.

On the way to the Dam we stopped to look at a Common Bronzewing Pigeon and saw a White-throated Warbler flitting among the leaves and giving his unmistakeable call.

(cont/d.)

FIELD DAY REPORT (cont/d.)

At the Dam, our first sight was of two male Musk Ducks swimming slowly across the dam. Further inspection revealed Great Crested Grebe and while I marvelled at their beauty, other members tried to sort out the exact number.

A walk across the dam wall produced White-eyed Ducks, Dusky Moorhens and Coots as well as a Brush Cuckoo giving several glimpses through the trees while calling loudly. A Pheasant Coucal was heard calling in the distance. While having lunch, a male Satin Flycatcher feeding an immature caught the interest of several members. After a prolonged rest in the heat we returned home stopping only to inspect a rather dead Tawny Frogmouth.

Graham Corbin.

Species List - Highfields, Journey to Cooby, Cooby Dam - 22.1.78.

	<u>H.</u>	<u>J.</u>	<u>CD.</u>		<u>H.</u>	<u>J.</u>	<u>CD.</u>
Great Crested Grebe			X	Richard's Pipit	X		
Little Grebe		X		Black-f. Cuckoo-sh.			X
Aust. Pelican			X	E. Yellow Robin	X		
Little P. Cormorant			X	Rufous Whistler	X		
Little Black Cormorant			X	Satin Flycatcher			X
White-faced Heron			X	Willie Wagtail		X	
White Ibis			X	Eastern Whipbird	X		
Grey Teal			X	G-h. Cisticola		X	
White-eyed Duck			X	Superb Blue Wren	X		X
Musk Duck			X	Red-b. Wren			X
Wedge-tailed Eagle	X			Wh-th. Warbler		X	
Nankeen Kestrel		X		Brown Thornbill	X		
Dusky Moorhen			X	Striated Thornbill	X		
Coot			X	Little Friarbird		X	X
Peaceful Dove			X	Lewin's Honeyeater	X		
Bar-shouldered Dove			X	Y-f. Honeyeater			X
Common Bronzewing		X		Noisy Miner	X		X
Crested Pigeon		X		Silvereye	X		X
Galah	X			Red-browed Firetail	X		
Pale-headed Rosella	X			D-barred Finch	X		X
Brush Cuckoo			X	Olive-backed Oriole	X		X
Indian Koel	X			Aust. Magpie Lark		X	X
Pheasant Coucal			X	Grey Butcherbird		X	
Kookaburra	X		X	Aust. Magpie	X		
Sacred Kingfisher	X		X	Pied Currawong	X		
Dollarbird	X			Torresian Crow	X		

FIELD TRIP FOR FEBRUARY.

Date: week-end 25/26th February, 1978. Place: Bunya Mtns. National Park.

Leader: Bill Jolly. Assembly Point: Queen's Park Kiosk, Lindsay Street.

Time: 8.30 a.m. Saturday, 25th February.

NEW MEMBERS.

The Club is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Alison McCallum, "Valley View", Westbrook.

Robert Robertson, "Valley View", Westbrook.

Peter Bostock, 1, Besson St., Stafford, 4053.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Urimbirra. Vol. 12. No. 1., January, 1978.

Q.O.S. Newsletter. Vol. 8 No. 11., December, 1977.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1978.

Any members who have not yet remitted their subscription for 1978 are requested to complete the slip below and forward it with their subscription to the Secretary/Treasurer at the earliest opportunity.

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To: The Secretary,  
Toowoomba Bird Club,  
P.O. Darling Heights,  
TOOWOOMBA, 4350.

I am enclosing herewith the sum of \$3 being my membership subscription to the Toowoomba Bird Club for the calendar year 1978.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_



# The Atlas: Year 1

Four years to go! And with sheets coming in at the rate of 1,000 per month (average 30 species per sheet) and 60% of 1° grid blocks at least visited, if not thoroughly covered, the Atlas is coming along well.

This Newsletter is a review issue to mark the end of year 1 and includes a checklist of common errors and queries (p. 3) and the distillation of a year's experience of atlassing in Australia—*Practical Atlassing* (p. 2). You should also have received, with this Newsletter, a map showing how well 10' blocks in your area have been covered, while the maps on p. 2 give the picture for Australia as a whole.

During the past year, members of the Atlas Committee have been travelling around meeting atlassers and atlassing, especially in the capital cities and in western NSW and south-west WA. This we shall continue to do but we are also looking for other ways of bringing atlassers together and improving coverage in remote areas. Several "cells" are functioning and we can provide lists of atlassers in your area if you would like to know who they are. Or if you are planning a trip and want to have names of atlassers along the way or maps of coverage in any area, these we can also supply. Some ROs have organised weekend field trips (p. 4) over the next few months. Go if you can. You will find them fun and a chance to sort out problems.

In addition, we are planning big camp-outs (to 14 days) in the 1978 August/September school holidays. These will be in places, "central" to concentrations of atlassers, that lack coverage. The idea is to gather as many atlassers as possible together to introduce them to each other and to Atlas staff and to cover grid blocks round about. Details will appear in later Newsletters but we give you early warning so that arrangements can be made for taking holidays.

On the subject of holidays, many atlassers will be taking theirs in the next few months. We hope the coverage maps with this Newsletter will provide the incentive to visit some of the unvisited and low tally blocks. We emphasize that, especially in more remote areas, it is worthwhile sending in sheets compiled while travelling or during brief stops. Even if they have only a few species, they contribute to a more complete list for those grid blocks. No data is wasted. Duplicated records will allow relative abundance of species in different places or at different times to be calculated. Please remember to look for breeding evidence and note the **Warning**, p. 4.

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year from the Atlas Committee.

## Arnhem Bird Club

Early this year an article about the Atlas appeared in the Gove Gazette. As a result, there are now 7 atlassers in Nhulunbuy NT and they and other residents have formed the Arnhem Bird Club. The following article by its Secretary, Mrs. Pauline Jurkijevic, is published in the hope that groups of atlassers in other places will be encouraged to start similar clubs or more informal groups. The ABC's address is: Box 551, Nhulunbuy, NT 5797.

The Arnhem Bird Club (also known as the ABC — with apologies to the other ABC!) is in its infancy — barely a few weeks old. No brilliant observations have been made, no startling new discoveries confirmed — yet. The only unquestionable fact that has become obvious is how much we don't know, and how much we have to learn.

There are reasons, or excuses, for this. The township of Nhulunbuy, on the north-east coast of Arnhem Land, was established 6 years ago by Nabalco Pty. Ltd., an Australian-Swiss joint venture, whose major concern is mining bauxite and turning it into alumina. Arnhem Land is an Aboriginal Reserve; Nabalco leases 24,000 hectares and pays royalties and lease monies. All non-Aboriginals

who live here must have a permit; the town's population is about 3,500 and includes over 50 different nationalities.

Unfortunately, not one of them is an ornithologist, and while the members of the Bird Club are enthusiastic, we find it very difficult breaking into an entirely "new" area, with few previous records and no experience.

In compiling this article I have interviewed a number of "old timers" — people who have been here 5 years or more, to try to gain a general picture of what is happening to the Bird Life in the Gove Peninsula area.

The over-all effect seems to be somewhat difficult to establish; opinions range from "very good" to "very bad". In the following, I have tried to take a middle-of-the-road view.

About 8 years ago, when Nabalco moved in and began blasting and earthmoving, most of the birds (not surprisingly) left. Six years ago there was still very little bird life around. Schoolteacher Denise Redburn told me that she had put out food at this period but did not manage to attract any birds. There was, however, and still is, a lot of bird life some distance out into the bush. Many people have commented on how "tame" the birds are — they will allow approaches to within a few feet. I have myself watched herons, honey-eaters and Hooded Parrots from less than 3 m.

In the last 2 years the general comment around town is "The birds are back!" Almost everyone I spoke to agreed that there have been increasing numbers of egrets, ibis, kites, hawks, honey-eaters, bee-eaters, cuckoo-shrikes and parrots — particularly the Red-winged, Varied and Red-collared varieties. This is possibly due to the increased availability of water, and the establishment of gardens which attract certain varieties of birds.

Mr. Tom Beecroft, who has lived and worked with the Aborigines at Dhupuma College for 11 years, commented that the sewage and water-supply areas have attracted large numbers of duck, geese and other water-birds. He also pointed out that the Aboriginal people now buy their food from the local supermarket rather than killing the wild-life, and this also could contribute to the increase which he has noted around the Nhulunbuy area. He remarked that further back into the bush the wildlife seemed little changed by the establishment of Nhulunbuy.

When I asked him about contacting some of the remote Aboriginal outstations with a view to enrolling observers for the Atlas, he replied that certainly many of the Aboriginal people do know a great deal about the bird life. (There is, however, the language barrier. I don't speak any of the Aboriginal dialects, and somehow doubt that the RAOU computer is programmed for them either!) And Mr. Beecroft did point out that as most of the people at the outstations live mainly 'off the land' they are far more interested in observing birds with a view to edibility rather than recordability!

Nabalco re-establishes the native flora after an area has been mined. It is possible that there is damage to the nesting cycles of birds when the land is being cleared, and that they can perhaps never re-establish themselves — particularly the rarer varieties, even when the trees and other flora are replanted. On the other hand, it is questionable that the birds would nest so close to an area of noisy activity anyway, for the actual cleared areas are very small when compared to the vast expanses of surrounding bush. I have observed no nests at all around the town or industrial areas.

Of real, and immediate, concern is the damage being done by domestic cats and dogs. Unfortunately many people 'dump' their animals in the bush when they leave Nhulunbuy,



# Atlas Newsletter

No. 4

DECEMBER 1977

119 Dryburgh St., North Melbourne 3051

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Category "B"

and the number of feral cats and half-wild dogs is causing many conservationist-minded people a great deal of worry. There is particular concern at the damage to birds who live and nest on or near the ground. Although my house backs onto an area of open bush which runs down to a tidal lagoon I have observed no quail at all, and very few other ground-frequenting birds.

As Peter Brown, the town's head gardener, said, "The cats are even denuding the place of lizards, so when they're not eating the birds themselves, they're eating the birds' food!" I have written about this to the Director of Wildlife in Darwin, and the Leader of the NT Legislative Assembly and am hoping at least to prevent any further importation of cats and dogs into Nhulunbuy.

By now it is probably clear that bird-watching in Arnhem Land involves far more than just noting down numbers on a chart — which is all that I had intended doing some six months ago when I barely knew a crow from a cuckoo.

For one of our members, pharmacist Bill Pretty and his wife, bird watching has had tragic consequences. On their recent holiday to the Katharine Gorge area they photographed and recorded many varieties of birds. Unfortunately, when returning to Nhulunbuy an accident resulted in their vehicle catching fire. Luckily they were able to radio a distress signal before having to abandon it. The large amounts of fuel on board for long range bush driving quickly turned \$20,000 worth of (uninsured) vehicle, camping gear, cameras, recording equipment and personal possessions into charcoal. When I spoke with Bill he said merely that he had managed to grab a few rolls of film, and would show them at the next Bird Club meeting. He hoped that they hadn't been damaged by the heat . . . !

I would like to extend an open invitation to all keen Birdos throughout Australia — if you have any information or ideas which could be of help to us, please write. If you would like to visit Nhulunbuy we can arrange accommodation. You'll have to fly in, though, via Darwin or Cairns. There is no road, only the rough bush track that is passable for 2 months of the year, and then only to experienced drivers with 4-wheel drive vehicles. A Permit from the Police is necessary to drive in, and they prefer a convoy of at least two vehicles.

So, just pack your jeans, a can of insect repellent, and your Atlas sheets and come along. There are mosquitoes and crocodiles and wild buffaloes; the climate is hot and humid in the Wet Season, and hot and dusty in the Dry Season. But the Djapu tribe haven't done any head-hunting for at least 15 years, and the people, and the birds, are fantastic!

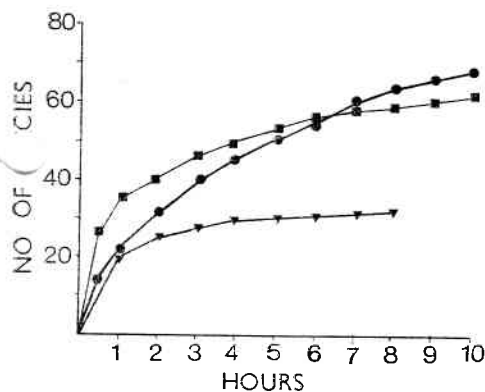
Mrs Pauline Jurkijevic

## Help Wanted

Queensland RO, Bill Horton, needs help with the routine processing of record sheets. Please contact him at home (Phone 378 3055) if you live near Kenmore or live or work in town (to enable close contact to be maintained).

Locality and Block Size	Date and Time Spent	No. Species Expected	No. Species Located (As % of no. expected)
Victoria (inland) 5 teams each covering a single 10' block.	30/7/77 10 hours	130	56, 61, 67, 68, 82 Mean 67 (50-60%)
Victoria (inland) 4 teams covering, respectively, 2, 3, 4 and 5 10' blocks	30/7/77 10 hours (divided equally amongst blocks covered)	130	*56, 51, 62, 61 Mean 57.5 (40-50%)
Tasmania (coast) 10' block	8/10/77 10 hours	120	66, 76, 78 Mean 73.3 (÷ 60%)
N.S.W. Cobar 10' blocks	1 day observations over several months	100+	50-70 depending on block (÷50%)
U.K. English lowland 10 km. blocks.	10 hours	83	63 (77%)

**Table 1.** Number of species observed during one day (about 10 hours) in various places. Number of species expected was estimated, in the Australian cases by people familiar with the areas and, in the British test, from the results of the Atlas. Data sources are acknowledged at the end of this article. \* Species totals for the whole day, not for individual 10' blocks.



**Figure 1.** Number of new species located against time. ■ U.K., 10 km blocks, summer; ● Victoria, 10' blocks, winter; ▼ Tasmania, 25 ha. of forest, spring.

say) even though the block may have been well covered already. Such records will be used to gain some idea of relative abundance.

In outback blocks and those with few records, all sightings are useful. Try to pin your observations down to 10' blocks although there is little point in submitting twelve 10' lists each with a Galah and two other species. It is best to submit 10' lists for camp-sites or blocks in which you see a number of species. Species seen while actually travelling are best on a composite 1° block list.

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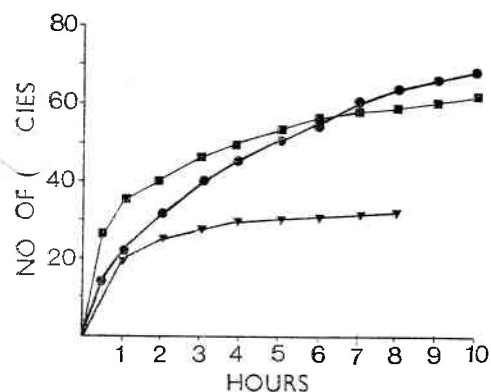
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Locality and Block Size	Date and Time Spent	No. Species Expected	No. Species Located (As % of no. expected)
Victoria (inland) 5 teams each covering a single 10' block.	30/7/77 10 hours	130	56, 61, 67, 68, 82 Mean 67 (50-60%)
Victoria (inland) 4 teams covering, respec- tively, 2, 3, 4 and 5 10' blocks	30/7/77 10 hours (divided equally amongst blocks covered)	130	*56, 51, 62, 61 Mean 57.5 (40-50%)
Tasmania (coast) 10' block	8/10/77 10 hours	120	66, 76, 78 Mean 73.3 (÷ 60%)
N.S.W. Cobarr 10' blocks	1 day observations over several months	100+	50-70 depending on block (÷ 50%)
U.K. English lowland 10 km. blocks.	10 hours	83	63 (77%)

**Table 1.** Number of species observed during one day (about 10 hours) in various places. Number of species expected was estimated, in the Australian cases by people familiar with the areas and, in the British test, from the results of the Atlas. Data sources are acknowledged at the end of this article. \* Species totals for the whole day, not for individual 10' blocks.



**Figure 1.** Number of new species located against time. ■ U.K., 10 km blocks, summer; ● Victoria, 10' blocks, winter; ▼ Tasmania, 25 ha. of forest, spring.

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## Warning

As we said in the Instruction Folder, you will continue to receive Newsletters only if you have been active during the preceding 12 months. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to continue sending Newsletters to non-contributors. That means if YOU have had your Atlas kit since the beginning of the year and have not sent in even one sheet, this is the last Newsletter you will receive.

To avoid de-registration, please send in some completed Record Sheets (either Field or Historical Atlas) as soon as possible. If you have not contributed because of difficulty with grid references, bird names, maps or anything else, let us know and we will try to solve the problem. We need you as an atlaser.

If, for any reason, you are unable to continue atlasing, please return your kit so it can be passed on to someone else.

## Acknowledging Record Sheets

To save time (and money), sheets are not acknowledged individually. Instead, we keep a tally of the sheets as they arrive at HQ and enclose an acknowledgement slip with the Newsletter.

Sometimes a sheet may be held up with the RO, either because there is a problem with the way it has been filled in or simply because the RO is busy — all the ROs are volunteers and have full-time jobs in addition to their Atlas work. This means that acknowledgement for sheets sent in shortly before a Newsletter is due may not appear until the following Newsletter. (NB. Please be patient with ROs when awaiting replies to other correspondence too!)

## WA Notes

Some successful Atlas trips have been run since the last Newsletter, and we are planning one more each month after Christmas. In the summer months it seems a good idea to do some of the coastal sites, this time north of Perth. The December trip has already been advertised, and is to Bremer Bay and Qualup Homestead. For the next three months the calendar will be:

Date	Block	Place
Dec. 16-19	34°30', 119°30'	Meet Bremer Bay P.O.
Jan. 6-8	30°30', 114°30' 30°30', 115°30'	Green Head and Jurian Bay; meet Jurian Bay P.O.
Feb. 10-12	29°30', 114°30' 29°30', 115°30'	Eneabba and Dongarra; meet Eneabba Rly. Stn.

The January and February excursions are especially to look for birds of the coast and adjacent sand plain where there are few people but where the species differ from the inland wheat belt. The excursions will be co-ordinated by Tom Delaney, 269 Canning Highway Como (367 7452), who will attempt to arrange lifts for those who need them. Please ring him if you are going so that he knows who to wait for at the meeting point. Generally the party will not camp at the meeting point and it is difficult to know how long to wait for the straggler. Furthermore, some people prefer to go direct to a grid block, work there on Saturday and meet the party on Saturday evening. Tom will suggest a suitable locality if you ring him beforehand.

Experiments in Victoria have shown that it is more efficient in terms of nest finding and the sighting of birds to atlas at length in a few ten minute blocks rather than race around all over a one degree block, so this practice will be adopted here.

There are now a large number of atlasers spread around WA. If you want to know who else in your district is active please drop me a

note and I can send you a list of people in your block.

I do not keep supplies of atlas stationery. If you want forms of any kind please write to Melbourne.

Most of you are very good about giving evidence of the breeding records that you list. These are most helpful and will be useful far beyond the atlas itself, so let me encourage you to put them in at the base of the sheet.

At some time or other many of you will be asked by me for more details of some sighting, generally as a result of my perusal of the most recent print-out. Please don't be disturbed by these requests (but do reply); they don't mean I doubt your record but rather that I foresee others will require more information to substantiate it later on. The time to get the information is as soon after the sighting as possible.

Sometimes of course, there are obvious slips or mistakes. The Crested Pigeon is common in WA where it is frequently called the Top-knot, a name reserved for a fruit pigeon of tropical rain forest. Likewise the Red-capped Parrot is often called the King Parrot in WA, but in the atlas the King Parrot is an exclusively eastern states' species. These are the two most common mistakes and I should be grateful if you could note them particularly.

Good Atlasing to you all.

Stephen Davies

## Maps and Grid References

**Historical Atlas Grid References.** The Instructions for determining Historical Atlas grid references state that this can be done in two ways.

(a) If the area falls wholly within one of the 10' or 1° grid blocks defined for the Field Atlas, grid references can be given in the same way as for the Field Atlas (see above). This is the preferred method.

(b) If the area overlaps Field Atlas grid lines, then the co-ordinates of the **centre point of the area** should be given, together with the length of the sides of a block which will contain the whole area. The instructions state that this Block Size should preferably be 1', 10' 1° or 2°. This restriction no longer applies (it was imposed to ensure compatibility with the computer programme which was not finalised when the Instruction Folder was written). Now Block Size may range from as small as 1' to as large as 2° but be as precise as possible, e.g. you may have found the bones of a Giant Emu or a living Long-toed Stint and wish to record the exact point. Do this by giving latitude and longitude and indicate a block size or 1'; or you may have kept records within a radius of 3 miles of your home, so give the co-ordinates of your home and indicate a Block Size of 6' (1'—about 1 mile).

**Field Atlas Grid References.** As we've mentioned before, there is a sheet, available on request to HQ, which explains how to work out grid references in more detail than was possible in the Instruction Folder. If, for any reason, you are unable to obtain the grid references for a block, we can try to work them out if you describe the area precisely; this may not always be possible if the area does not fit within a block.

**Buying Maps.** If you are having trouble buying maps, write and tell us which ones you want and we shall get them for you. World Aeronautical Charts (1:1,000,000) cost \$1.50 and R502 (1:250,000) maps are \$2.10 each.

**Note.** John Zitta informs us that not all R502 series maps begin and end with 30' or 1° (cf. **Ruling up 10' Blocks**, NL3). Eg. the Naracoorte map begins at 139° 28' E.

**Where Were You?** Several ROs have reported difficulty in locating small towns and station properties which do not appear on all maps. Please qualify such localities by reference to a larger town e.g. Nullawarra HS, 20 miles south of Cobar.

## A New Bird

Recent reports indicate that another introduced bird, the Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*), a species of partridge, has become established in Australia. An article in *Outdoors* magazine (October, 1977) tells of a "thriving" population on the north side of the Gulgong district of NSW (32° 22' S, 149° 32' E). The habitat is partially forested, hilly country with granite outcrops.

The Chukar, often regarded as a race of the European Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris graeca*), is native to central Eurasia. It is a prime game bird and has been successfully introduced to north America and New Zealand. Small numbers were introduced to Victoria in the nineteenth century but failed to establish. The recent private introductions appear to be more successful. This is unfortunate because most introductions have been to the detriment of indigenous species.

**Chukar** (*Alectoris chukar*). A plump, ashen-grey partridge, 34 cm (14") long, with a black ring encircling the face and throat; head and throat grey-white; brownish-grey upperparts; grey breast; underparts buffy with conspicuous black, white and chestnut bands on the flanks. Bill, legs and eye-rings red. Generally prefers to run if disturbed but will fly strongly with a series of rapid, noisy wingbeats followed by a lengthy glide.

## Field Trips

Several ROs are arranging field trips. Anyone is free to go; not just atlasers in the States concerned. We hope to see you there.

**NSW.** Dick Cooper is hoping to arrange an Easter camp at Lake Cowal. Anyone interested should contact him at 2 Rofe Cres., Hornsby Hts. 2077.

**Victoria.** A series of monthly atlasing trips is being organised, some by the Atlas Office and some by VORG (Victorian Ornithological Research Group). Most will be overnight camps, but some will take advantage of holiday periods. Details will appear in later Newsletters, but for the earlier ones, contact the Atlas Office unless otherwise stated.

Jan. 28-30 Metung. Contact G. Cameron, 10 Sevenoaks St., Balwyn 3103.

Feb. 26-27 Otways

Mar. 24-27 Mallee of NW Victoria

(Easter)

April Morwell

## Seen and Heard

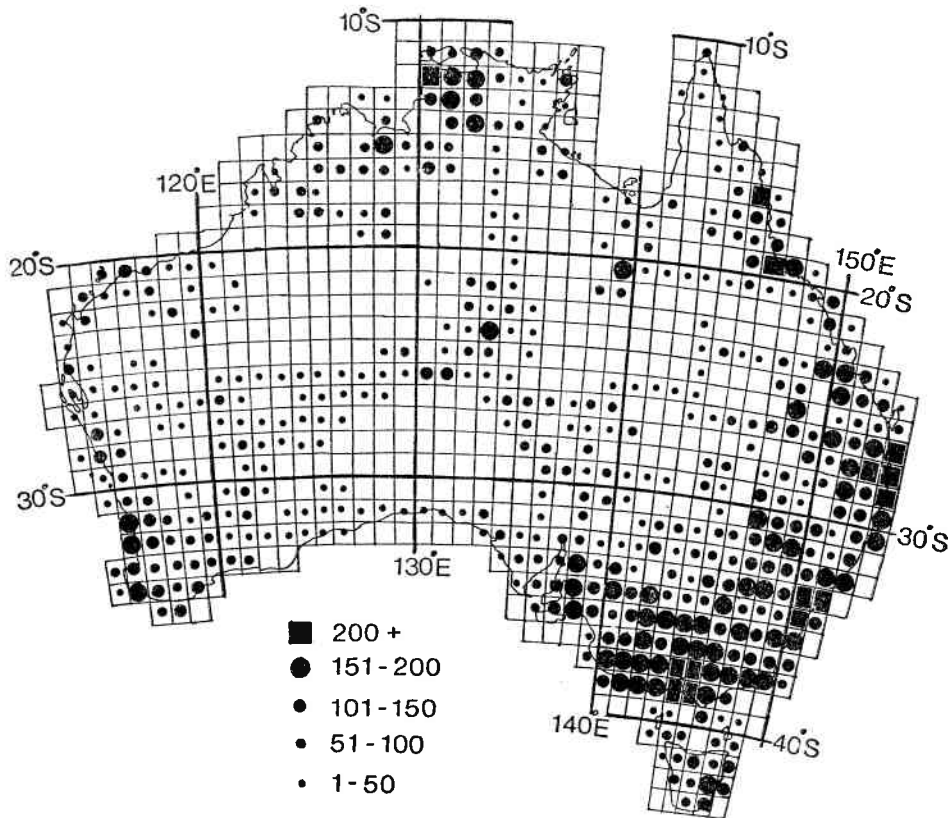
The **White-breasted Whistler** has been recorded in the Scott River area near Augustin in south-west WA by Mrs. W. Okell. The bird was about 1,000 km (700 miles) south of its published range which ends at Shark Bay. The species normally frequents mangroves but this pair was in a dense ti-tree thicket.

**Excerpt from the letters of an intrepid atlaser.** N. Schrader writes: "A heavy fall of rain occurred when I was out there (in the Tottenham area of western NSW). The Bulbodney Creek and the Bogan River both flooded and I found myself unable to do the squares that I intended . . . got bogged twice; had to go 40 miles out of my way because unable to cross Bulbodney Creek; no bridges, all crossings through the beds of creeks. A little frustrating but I considered the birds recorded worth the trouble and of interest; especially the range of the Yellow-plumed and Singing Honeyeaters." The keen atlaser is indefatigable! We hope there are lots of them.

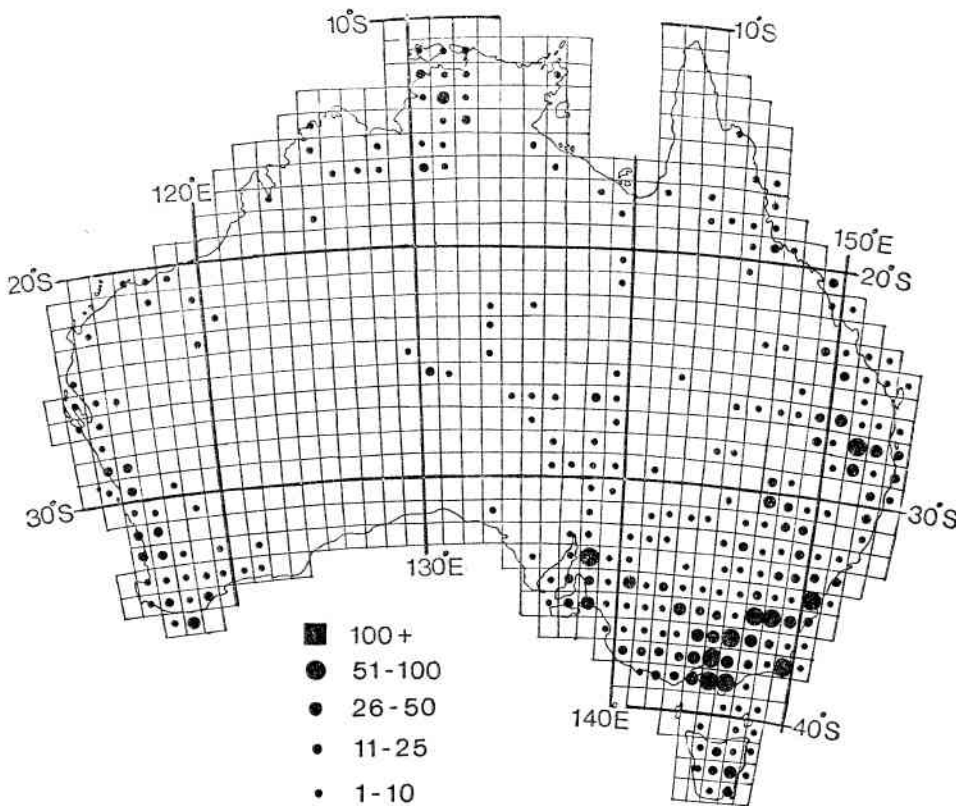
**N.S.W. RO Dick Cooper** will be travelling for about 5 weeks at Christmas time to Pt Macquarie, Walcha, Armidale, Glen Innes, Moree, Narrabri, Coonabarabran, Scone, Muswellbrook, Newcastle. He wants to call on atlasers, so if you are interested please write to him so he can plan his itinerary.



## Field Atlas Coverage



**Figure 1.** Number of species recorded in each 1° block until the end of October 1977. About 60% of 1° blocks have been visited by atlasers, almost twice as many as in July.



**Figure 2.** Number of species recorded breeding in each 1° block until the end of October 1977. Spend as much time as possible atlasing in the typical breeding season, generally spring; but remember that some species breed at other times e.g. Powerful Owl in winter. It is easier to confirm breeding late in the season when there is a higher level of obvious breeding behaviour such as begging young and food carrying.

## Practical Atlasing

A major problem in the Australian Atlas is the limited number of observers and their patchy distribution. Many grid blocks are covered by resident atlasers but the majority will need to be surveyed by visiting observers. Australia's large size means that efficient atlasing techniques must be adopted if adequate coverage is to be achieved.

What is "adequate" coverage? Clearly, we cannot hope to record every species in every block, even every 1° block. The dot distribution mapping technique we are using means that the number of blocks in which a species is recorded is proportional to how common or easily found it is. If we record 75% of the species expected in each block, all the common ones will be included; and while only a proportion of the rarer ones will be observed, it will nevertheless be sufficient to delineate their range. In the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock, 1976) this was regarded as adequate. We believe this level of coverage will be adequate for Australia.

### Grid Blocks — What Size and How Many?

If you live in Tasmania, Victoria, NSW, eastern Qld, northern NT, south-western WA or south-east SA, you will see on the map accompanying this Newsletter that many of the 10' grid blocks in these areas have already been visited. These are regions of high observer density where we expect complete coverage of 10' blocks by the end of 1981. In more remote parts of Australia, we expect complete 1° coverage but only a proportion of 10' blocks will have been visited.

Two strategies have so far been adopted by observers for one day Atlas trips. Some spend the whole day in a single grid block while others try to cover a whole 1° block or a number of 10' blocks. We conducted an experiment to see which of these methods is more efficient in obtaining maximum coverage (that is, the greatest number of species) of a 1° block. In one 10 hour day, in an area near Melbourne, 5 teams of atlasers each covered single 10' blocks while another 4 teams covered respectively 2, 3, 4 and 5 10' blocks. All were in the same 1° block. Assessing the results in terms of the number of species recorded for the 1° block as a whole, we found that teams doing single 10' blocks saw an average of 67 species (range 57 to 82) while those doing multiple blocks saw an average of 33 species in individual 10' blocks with an average of 57.5 species (range 51-62) for the whole day.

This is likely to be typical of areas with varied habitat such as those sampled. It probably reflects the fact that time spent in unproductive bird-watching time and there is insufficient difference in habitat between adjacent blocks to compensate for time lost during travelling. We therefore conclude that in areas of fairly varied habitat it is better to concentrate on single 10' grid blocks than to try to cover a larger area or a greater number of 10' blocks in a limited time period. This may not apply in regions of more uniform habitat e.g. inland areas, but it is still preferable to sample a few 10' blocks, representing the major habitat types, in each 1° block rather than to try to cover the whole block.

This does not mean that 1° block data is not acceptable, but simply that, in general, it is more effective to concentrate on a smaller area covering it thoroughly than to attempt to cover a larger area sketchily.

### Travelling

While travelling in areas of high observer density, there is little point in submitting short lists of common birds (e.g. Magpie) seen from the car. These will be recorded during serious atlas work in the blocks. Do submit records for unusual species and for areas where you obtain a reasonable total (around 10 species