

CIRCULAR TO BIRD OBSERVERS

On Tuesday evening the 1st February, 1977, at 7.45 p.m. the newly formed group to be known as "The Illawarra Bird Observers Club" will meet at the W.B.A. rooms, 79 Cornhill Street, Wollongong.

The aim of this group is to join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the birds around us.

Persons who are interested to join this group are welcome to come to this the first meeting.

At this meeting we will be formulating plans for the activities of the group, so we are looking forward to an interesting and rewarding evening.

If you require further information contact can be made through Laurie Williams, of 18 Achilles Avenue, North Wollongong, Phone 29 6687 work, or 29 6637 home.

On behalf of the Formation Committee for The Illawarra Bird
Observers Club.

day
by
day



with
PADDY
GINNANE

79 Corrimal St next Tuesday, February 1 at 7.45 pm. I believe this group grew out of a WEA course on ornithology for beginners last year.

The contact is Laurie Williams, 18 Achilles Ave, North Wollongong.

☆ ☆ ☆
A new group calling itself The Illawarra Bird Observers' Club will hold an inaugural meeting at the WEA.

Friday 28.1.77

A137

BIRD OBSERVERS

If you are interested in furthering your knowledge of the bird life in the area, come along to the

**First Meeting of the
Illawarra Bird Observers' Club**

to be held at 7.45 pm on

Tuesday, February 1, 1977

at WEA, 79 CORRIMAL ST. WOLLONGONG.

Thursday 27.1.77

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

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The next meeting of the above group, will be held on Monday evening
14th. March, 1977 at St. Michael's Church Hall, Market Street, Wollongong
at 7.45 p.m.

Doug Gibson will be giving a report on the last outing and Ellis McNamara
will be showing a collection of Bird Slides.

Laurie Williams.

No meeting held in April 1977.

29/4/1977

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CIRCULAR FROM ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

On Monday evening the 9th of May at 7.45 p.m. we will be holding our monthly Meeting.

Venue: St Michaels Church of England Hall,
Market Street Wollongong

Guest Speaker: Arnold McGill from Sydney

Monthly Outing: To Douglas Park on Saturday 14th May.
Details available by ringing 29 6657.

The Readers Digest Book has been ordered from the Publishers and we are awaiting delivery.

Laurie Williams.

CIRCULAR FROM ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

4

On Monday evening the 13th June at 7.45 p.m., we will be holding our Monthly Meeting.

Venue: St Michaels Church of England Hall, Market Street, Wollongong.

Guest Speaker: Malcolm Harris from Wollongong University.

Outing: To Macquarie Rivulet on Sunday 19th June.
Further details available by ringing 29 6637.

Laurie Williams.

CIRCULAR FROM ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

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On Monday evening the 11th July, 1977, at 7.45 p.m., we will be holding our monthly meeting.

VENUE: St Michaels Church of England Hall,
Market Street Wollongong.

GUEST SPEAKER: Kevin Rigby from Wollongong Institute of Education.

SUBJECT: How to entice birds into your garden.

OUTING: To Danlea Forest on Saturday 16th July.
For further details ring 29 6637

Recs.: Mr. Keith Scott camp, Sunday 31st July
Meeting at 6.30 am to 11.30 am Laurie Williams.
subject hybrid birds

CIRCULAR FROM ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

No 6

On Monday evening the 8th August 1977 at 7.45 p.m. we will be holding our monthly meeting.

VENUE: St Michaels Church of England Hall, Market Street, Wollongong.

GUEST SPEAKER: John Hobbs from Shoalhaven.

SUBJECT: Babblers and Chats.

OUTING: Sunday the 14th August to Comerong Island, Shoalhaven

Heads, meeting at the other side of the punt -

at 8.45 a.m.

For further details ring 296637.

Laurie Williams

CIRCULAR FROM THE ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

8

Our next meeting will be held on Monday evening the 14th November 1977 at 7.45 p.m.

VENUE:- St Michaels Church Hall, Market Street Wollongong.

ELECTION:- An election of officers for 1978 will be held at this Meeting.

GUEST SPEAKER:- Tom Gorman.

SUBJECT:- A portion of the Royal National Park Bird Life and its Habitat.

BIRD OUTING:- On Saturday 19th November 1977, we will be going to the Royal National Park and meeting at 7.50 a.m. at the entrance gateway to Lady Carrington Drive, which is located on the road to Audley.

SPECIAL NOTICE:- Alteration to December Field Outing Sunday 4th December. Venue: Blue Gum Forest Campbelltown Road Appin. Meeting time 7.30 a.m. to study Bird Banding. Normal December Meeting 12th December at St Michaels Church Hall.

Enclosed details of Ecology weekend at Mt Keira on 29th and 30th October 1977.

On Friday evening the 9th September at 7.45 p.m. we will be holding our monthly meeting in conjunction with the I.B.O.S.

VENUE: Mathew Flinders Court (Formerly Neahs Motor Inn)
Flinders Street North Wollongong

GUEST SPEAKER: Norm Chaffer

OUTING: Saturday the 17th September to Corrimal Air Shaft,
Corner of Mt Cusley Road and Picton Road. 9.00 a.m.

This is a combined meeting with the Sydney Group. At this outing we will be entering Water Board property-as such it is most essential that we bring out of the area everything we take in, so please no litter and no plant samples.

FILM NIGHT: The next film showing will be on Saturday the 15th October - again two showings, the first at 6.00 p.m. and the second at 8.00 p.m. Venue:- 18 Achilles Avenue North Wollongong.

SPECIAL OUTING: At lunch time on Friday the 21st of October, a couple of members are leaving Wollongong and travelling to Griffith (a trip of approximately 10 hours) and returning late Sunday evening.

The reason for the weekend trip is to observe mallee fowl in their natural habitat.

Any member wishing to join this excursion, please contact Laurie Williams by the 9th of September.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: At our November meeting we will be calling for nominations to fill the positions of President, Secretary, Treasurer and Field Officer for the year commencing January 1978 and the election for these officers will be held during the same evening in November.
For further information Ring 29 6697.

Laurie Williams

No 9.
**We Wish You A Merry Christmas
and A Happy New Year**

**CHRISTMAS
GET-TOGETHER**

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH HALL
WOLLONGONG

MONDAY 12th DECEMBER

- 7-45 MEETING STARTS
- 8-00 LEGENDS OF BIRDS
- 8-25 WANDERINGS OF A KIWI
- 8-55 NOTORNIS EXPEDITION
- 9-10 END OF YEAR EXAM
- 9-50 THE SECRET LIFE OF
THE RARELY SEEN
UNGLE - WUNGLE BIRD
- 9-55 PRESIDENT
- 10-00 SCRAPS AT THE BIRD TABLE

HOPE TO SEE YOU IN 1978

FIRST MEETING

MONDAY 13th FEBRUARY

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ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB

INQUIRIES TEL. 042-296637

There comes along this knickerbockered woman, with binoculars about her neck, prodding the spongy turf with her shooting-stick at every other stride, and I know that she is going to ask me whether I have seen anything interesting. For I too have binoculars about my neck, and my shooting-stick is impossible to conceal. I am neither knickerbockered nor a woman, yet there is a feeling as our paths converge that one is the victim of some kind of grossly distorting mirror. It is possible that she also undergoes the same momentary illusion?

"Seen anything interesting?" she grunts, pausing.

The reply needs careful phrasing. A man may easily be excited by redstarts, if they don't grow on trees in his own part of the country, but he had better not lay himself open by admitting it. This woman probably has them in shoals for breakfast. A curtain of contempt will be drawn down over her leathery features, seamed and scarred as they are by a thousand hours spent watching Temminck's stints in the teeth of an easterly gale. She is a girl of the marshlands and the sewage farms, that's for sure, and has only strayed to these wooded pastures because of reports of a bee-eater or a pair of hoopoes. It's a fair bet that she has a squacco heron on her life-list.

On the other hand, she could be an eager tyro who would breathe through her nose and cry "*Where? Where?*" at the mention of long-tailed tits. Or again, grievous possibility, she might be one of those assured ignoramuses who can be told nothing and taught nothing, who draw no distinctions between a marsh tit and a willow tit and assume "pied flycatcher" to be a local misnomer for "spotted." The best plan, as ever, will be to lay no emphasis on *what* one has seen

but only on what it was *doing*. I learnt this very early from a stranger in East Anglia who confessed to me, as he passed by, that he had no idea the pectoral sandpiper flew off when flushed, in quite so snipe-like a manner.

"Nothing much." I say to this woman in knickerbockers. "I've been amused by the nuptial antics of a pair of pied flycatchers."

"Jolly little beggars," she agrees. "We had a practically tame one running about our lawn in Essex last winter."

Class 3, or lower. Wrong habitat, wrong district, wrong season, wrong behaviour. The poor lumbering old creature is talking about pied wagtails. The contempt she feels for a man who calls them "flycatchers" flickers across her extraordinary features, swift as a flight of dunlin but not, to me, so delightful. "Ah, well," I say, and we part, each with a word unsaid. Two bird-watchers, bound together by the silken threads of a shared passion, have made their brief salute and gone their ways.

Mr. Robert Mudie, who wrote about birds in the 1830s and from whom I have not quoted in these pages since 1964, thought that "the estrangement of the different ranks of society from each other" since the breaking up of the feudal system—"a state of things which has every day become more and more unwholesome"—could be put right by birdwatching. "The study of nature," he writes, "will bring the different ranks together again, and unite them by a bond far more secure than anything feudal"; and he goes so far as to add that "if all mankind would study nature, all mankind would be brothers." I doubt this myself. Indeed the thought of a nation of birdwatchers—and, for that matter, of botanists and badger-spotters and lepi-

dopterists and snake fanciers—makes my blood run cold. I should say there were just about enough of them around already, and some of them not too brotherly, either.

How many birdwatchers are there, then? Information is lacking. Ornithologists are extremely fond of counting things and have devised many curious expedients for the nationwide enumeration of starlings and little owls and even of wildfowl, which at times scutter about lakes and reservoirs in such mazy multitudes as to bamboozle the keenest computer. But they have not, so far as I know, taken a census of themselves. It would not, of course, be easy. Enumerators, on a given day, would have to be stationed at every Bird Reserve and Refuge and Field Centre and Research Station and Migration Watch Point and Observatory and Ringing Station in the country—and the enumeration of such localities would itself cover many sheets of foolscap. Simultaneous counts would be necessary at all sewage farms and reservoirs, on marshes and estuaries, bleak foreshores, on islands, moors, cliffs, in larch woods where the crossbill may be bagged, in disused gravel pits beloved by the little ringed plover, and in the high, hyperborean haunts of the dotterel. Reed-beds would have to be combed. Secretive watchers might have to be flushed from hides. Unobtrusive enumerators ought also to penetrate into private gardens, for this strange heterogeneous tribe of ornithologists includes many who scorn to seek out rarities or to time the submersion periods of gannets, believing that the secrets of birdlife may best be plumbed by observing blue tits at the bird table.

Other birdwatchers are at least as mobile as birds. A man looking at

roscaete terms at Blakeney in the morning may easily be out after stone curlew in the Brecklands before tea, so that some system of trapping and ringing might be advisable, to avoid duplication. There are "list" enthusiasts who try to see a hundred, or it may be a hundred and fifty, species in a day, and who flash from sewage farm to mountain top at a speed that would drive even a trained enumerator of puffins out of his wits. The whole enterprise bristles with difficulties, and I am no longer surprised that it has never, to the best of my belief, been attempted. In any case, the answer, whether it were two hundred thousand or ten million, would not alter my conviction that there are quite enough. Robert Mudie should have been in Richmond Park when the little bittern was there. Frith could have caught the spirit of the occasion.

We have the devil of a job avoiding each other, as it is. And here, to point the argument, comes another of them—bald as a coot and bearded and making enough noise to send every golden oriole in the neighbourhood scurrying for cover. If we were in eagle country I should ask him whether he was wise to go about without a hat. Do eagles actually eat tortoises, by the way? There are so many matters of bird lore on which I am ignorant; whereas this blundering ass is probably president of his county society and could pick out a second-year eider drake in eclipse by moonlight at 2,000 yards. For that alone I hate him already. Still, the civilities must be observed.

"Seen anything interesting?" I ask. "We'll," he says, "I've seen a woman in knickerbockers."

We are brothers.