

BRUSH CUCKOO

Scientific Name: *Cacomantis variolosus*

Atlas Number: 339

Description:

The Brush Cuckoo male is grey-brown above, light grey to buff below, with a grey head, neck and breast. The tail has a white tip and is barred white underneath. The female has two colour morphs (forms): unbarred and barred. The unbarred morph is similar to the male but is much paler buff underneath, with faint grey barring across the chest. The



photo by Charles Dove

barred morph is less common, and has streaked/barred upper parts and the underbody is darkly barred. Juvenile Brush Cuckoos are heavily barred dark brown above and mottled and barred underneath.

Similar species:

The Brush Cuckoo is similar in shape to the Pallid Cuckoo, *C. pallidus*, but has more buff underparts. The Fan-tailed Cuckoo, *C. flabelliformis*, is more slate-grey on the back and has a yellow eye-ring and a longer, more fanned tail, while the Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, *C. castaneiventris*, has a rich chestnut colouring on the under body.

Distribution:

The Brush Cuckoo is found across northern Australia from the Kimberley region to the east coast, down to Victoria. Also found in eastern Indonesia, including Timor and the Moluccas, New Guinea and to the Solomon Islands.

Habitat:

The Brush Cuckoo is found in wooded habitats, including rainforest, wet sclerophyll forests, paperbarks, along waterways and in more open forests and woodlands. Sometimes found in gardens.

Seasonal movements:

Partially migratory, with southern populations moving north in winter.

Feeding:

The Brush Cuckoo eats insects, particularly hairy caterpillars. It usually forages high in the forest canopy but may sometimes feed on the ground.

Breeding:

The Brush Cuckoo is a nest parasite, which means that it lays its eggs in other birds' nests. The most common hosts are: flycatchers, especially *Rhipidura* species, Robins, Fairy-wrens, Gerygones and Honeyeaters. In northern Australia the main hosts are: the Brown-backed and Bar-breasted Honeyeaters, while in southern Australia, the hosts are mainly the Grey Fantail, Scarlet Robin and Leaden Flycatcher. Only one egg is laid in a host's nest and the eggs tend to resemble closely the eggs of the chosen host in markings. The young cuckoo ejects any other eggs or young once it hatches. The host parents brood and feed the young cuckoo, sometimes for up to a month after it fledges.

Bird species cover text courtesy of <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

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Founded in 1977

Club's Aim:

To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the bird life around them.

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.

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ACTIVITIES

CLUB MEETING:

Monday 10th June 2019

Fairy Meadow Community Hall, Cnr. of Cambridge Avenue & Princes H'way Fairy Meadow at 7.30pm

Guest Speaker Glenn Smith

Glenn mainly photographs in the Australian Botanic Gardens, Mount Annan and is trying to get a decent portrait shot of all the birds in the gardens, he has 39 more to go. This should be a very interesting presentation.

Please bring a plate of 'goodies' and a mug for supper after the meeting.

MIDWEEK WALK

Wednesday 12th June 2019

Leader *Rupert Jarvis*

North Bombo Headland

Meet at 9.00 am at the end of Cliff Drive, Kiama Downs. To reach the meeting point travel through Albion Park and continue south on the Princes Highway. Take the exit signed Riverside Drive to Kiama Downs and Minnamurra and drive about 1.6 km and take a left turn into Federal Street (signed to Minnamurra) At the end turn right onto Charles Avenue. At the end turn left and immediately right into North Kiama Drive and continue along it for about 1.3 kms where at the top of an incline the road goes right over a railway bridge. Just before the bridge take the street on the left which is Cliff Drive and continue along it to the end and park. Bring morning tea.

If weather is doubtful contact Rupert on 0403 932 635

MONTHLY OUTING

Saturday 15th June 2019.

Leaders *Alan & Anne Cousins*

Dharawal National Park - Darkes Forest

Take the Bulli Pass to the top and just after the 80kph sign take the right-hand turn towards Appin but stay in the left lane towards Darkes Forest on the Old Princes Highway, going past Boomerang Golf Course and the M.E.T School to the next left turn to Darkes Forest.

Meet at 8.30am at the Darkes Forest Rural Fire Service Station and Community **Centre 3k's down** the road on the left where arrangements have been made to use the facilities if required. We will **then travel 2k's further along the road to the parking area for trail 10H**. We will carry morning tea and return to the Fire Station grounds for lunch (you will need something to sit on). After lunch we will go back to the parking area opposite the Apple Shack and take the short walk on trail 10Z to Maddens Falls.

In the event of inclement weather contact Alan or Anne on 0413869534 by 7.30am

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING:

Monday 17th June 2019 at 2pm

The next committee meeting will be at 2pm on Monday 17th June 2019 at the home of Tom & Joan Wylie, 4 Daphne Street Bellambi 2518

Any members with anything they wish to raise are welcome to attend the meeting.

NEWSLETTER:

DEADLINE 20th June 2019

For all articles & photos in the next IBOC newsletter PLEASE E-mail contributions:

To Charles Dove newsletter@iboc.org.au or post to 3/15 Shepherd Street, Mollymook 2539.

***IBOC GIVES A BIG WELCOME TO ALL THE
NEW MEMBERS TO OUR CLUB***

Illawarra Bird Observers Club Reports

MEETING REPORT

Monday 13th May 2019

by Alan Cousins

A Special General Meeting was convened to approve the new Club Constitution. 29 members attended and the vote to approve the Constitution was unanimous.

The Special general meeting was followed by the General Monthly Meeting with a film presentation of Christmas and Cocos Islands. The film showed many birds and the millions of crabs and the flora on the islands. The film was well received by members and was followed by a presentation by Walter Boles who brought three owl carcasses and showed us with the aid of an ultra violet light shone through their wings the brilliant colours that they contain. Many thanks to Walter for this unexpected and much appreciated presentation.

MIDWEEK WALK REPORT

15th May 2019

by Richard Miller

I wondered what the unlucky people were doing with their day? Killalea was looking a picture - wonderful coastal scenery, a gentle surf, acres of lush green grassed hillsides and the trees and bushes looking in great shape. This was a perfect day to be walking at a birdwatcher's pace and 17 members thoroughly enjoyed the amble, the sightings and the company, including longtime member (since 1985) Phil Bath, who now spends more of his time at his Mudgee base.

The car parks, kiosk area and nearby viewing areas usually get the count off to a flying start with those birds most used to human interaction and the added food scraps that often come their way - Magpies, Wattle birds, Bower birds, Masked Lapwing, Rosellas and friends got Tom's list flying. As our group set off a series of platform steps eased the descent down the steep hillside, though those with hip and knee problems might not agree. At the base the support truck for one of the local surf schools spoil the natural setting while the group took a break to watch the surfers and scan the distance for seabirds. Betty was thrilled to be able to spot Cormorants on the distant rocks, I'm sure her surgeon would have been pleased that his cataract ops had been so successful and Betty was feeling like she had a new lease of life, certainly as far as her bird spotting goes.



Eastern Yellow Robin by Betty Hudson

Tom's planned route would have taken us along the dune / beach line across the front of the lagoon but the 'local expert' behind the wheel of the **surfer's truck had been able** to convince those at the front that more birds were to be seen just a little further along the route they were heading. Certainly as we neared the lagoon there were plenty of birds to be seen in the water and around the margins. Egrets, Pelicans, Swans and Ibis were the easy pickings, Ducks, Grebe, Stilts and Cormorants were on the lagoon or using the old fence posts as perches, while Purple Swamphen, Masked Lapwing and Dotterel were along the margins together with an Intermediate Egret which was battering what seemed like a small eel into submission.

The only picnic table that we found en route appeared just on time for morning tea. While it wouldn't quite seat all our group, the nearby buttress roots of a mature fig provided for the extras. The stragglers had been delayed trying to identify a bird of prey which had flown onto a timber sign, too far away to confirm its identity. Luckily it had brought its own morning tea and was well engrossed with picking this to pieces enabling some to move in much closer and confirm the identity as a Black-shouldered Kite. The figtree also proved to be a great viewing spot for the spectacular male Golden Whistler which hopped around the overhead branches.

Our return route was a track through a well treed area. On the fringe the lantana attracted the smaller birds - Spinebill, Honeyeaters, Thornbills and Wrens and a plethora of assorted Butterflies taking advantage of the Indian summer. We also disturbed a charm of Goldfinches from the tops of some casuarina bushes. We later had our first sightings of Red-browed Finches and Bill Zealey saw a Diamond Firetail although no one else was quick enough to 'second the motion'.

48 species, perfect weather and great scenery. Thanks for scheduling this walk Rupert, sorry you couldn't make it. Thanks also to Alan and Tom for keeping the flock moving and ensuring no one was lost en route.

Killalea State Park 15 th May 2019		48 Species	17 Members
Black Swan	Intermediate Egret	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Butcherbird
Australasian Shoveler	White-faced Heron	White-browed Scrubwren	Australian Magpie
Grey Teal	Australian White Ibis	Yellow Thornbill	Grey Fantail
Chestnut Teal	Black-shouldered Kite	Eastern Spinebill	Willie Wagtail
Pacific Black Duck	Australasian Swamphen	Lewin's Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Australasian Grebe	Pied Stilt	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Magpie-lark
Australian Gannet	Black-fronted Dotterel	Noisy Miner	Eastern Yellow Robin
Little Black Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Little Wattlebird	Silvereeye
Little Pied Cormorant	Silver Gull	Red Wattlebird	Welcome Swallow
Great Cormorant	Rainbow Lorikeet	New Holland Honeyeater	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Australian Pelican	Crimson Rosella	Eastern Whipbird	Red-browed Finch
Eastern Great Egret	Satin Bowerbird	Golden Whistler	European Goldfinch

WEEKEND WALK REPORT

Tallawarra Ash Ponds Sunday 19th May 2019

by Alan Cousins

15 members and guests including Walter Boles and his eldest daughter, met at 9am at Gate 37 on another glorious Autumn morning. The birds were a bit lazy in waking up this morning and there was not much sign of water but we did see few little birds, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Silvereeye, Red-whiskered Bulbul and a small flock of European Goldfinch which Walters daughter took great delight in telling us she had seen, she was very interested in the birds as one would no doubt expect considering who her dad is and she kept up with us (in fact in front of us for the whole morning). We stopped for morning tea just before reaching any sign of water and sat on a bank overlooking dry ponds. Following morning tea, we reached the small ponds and EUREKA! there was water and a good few water birds. Wayne Green had left early but returned to inform us that he had seen a Musk Duck. On arrival at the ponds we were fortunate to see Australian Shoveler, Australasian Grebe, Eastern Great Egret and Black-fronted Dotterel to name but a few. We completed the circuit of the ponds and returned to the cars with a good list of 46 species.

We drove down to the recreation area at the end of Yallah Bay Road and had lunch alongside Lake Illawarra. We recorded an additional 12 species in this area.

Another lovely IBOC outing and thanks to all who attended to make it so

Bird List for Tallawarra Walk 19.05.19		46 Species	15 Members
Musk Duck	White-faced Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Australian Magpie
Black Swan	Straw-necked Ibis	Crimson Rosella	Grey Fantail
Australasian Shoveler	Black-shouldered Kite	Superb Fairy-wren	Willie Wagtail
Chestnut Teal	Australasian Swamphen	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Raven
Pacific Black Duck	Dusky Moorhen	Brown Thornbill	Magpie-lark
Australasian Grebe	Eurasian Coot	Lewin's Honeyeater	Australian Reed Warbler
Rock Dove	Pied Stilt	Scarlet Honeyeater	Silvereeye
Australasian Darter	Black-fronted Dotterel	New Holland Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Little Pied Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Australian Pelican	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Golden Whistler	European Goldfinch
Eastern Great Egret	Galah	Grey Shrike-thrush	
Cattle Egret	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Butcherbird	

Bird List for Tallawarra Picnic Area & Boat Ramp		12 species	13 members
Little Pied Cormorant	Cattle Egret	Crimson Rosella	Australian Magpie
Little Black Cormorant	White-faced Heron	Noisy Miner	Australian Raven
Pied Cormorant	Silver Gull	Grey Butcherbird	Common Myna

Report & Bird List for the Coonabarabran Camp

30th March to 6th April 2019

Coonabarabran is an interesting area with the Pilliga Forest and Warrumbungle Range nearby as well as the Castlereagh River providing a variety of habitats.

Unfortunately the area in common with most of inland NSW has been in severe drought for a long time and a severe storm, on the Friday night before camp started, brought flash flooding and damage to road & tracks in

many places resulting in the closure of the Pilliga Forest & Nature reserve until after lunch on the last day with a major washaway on No1 Break Road the major access route. This resulted in a rethink of places to see birds.

The caravan park gave many people their first sighting of Red-winged Parrots which made a spectacular sight as they raced through the trees in the sunshine. Other species here were the Striated Pardalote; and Square-tailed Kite; for a total of 23 Species.

During the week we visited 11 locations as a group and others were visited by individual members. Some places such as Neilson Park beside the Castlereagh River both up & downstream of the Newel Hwy Bridge saw a good list of birds (42 Species with notables being Collared Sparrowhawk;



Long-billed Corella; Azure Kingfisher; as well as a number of small bush birds beside a small inlet creek).

Another highlight was the drive along the Bugaldie Bird Route west of the Baradine Coonabarabran Road which crossed the foothills of the Warrumbungle Range, with the subsequent creek crossings. Stopping frequently when birds were seen we soon compiled a very good list and had some adventures crossing causeways covered in silt from the previous floods. A morning tea stop at a road junction saw people checking around while the late comers were still eating. Soon all were hastening over to the nearby paddock where three Ground Cuckoo-shrikes had been sighted in the far distance. Out came the cameras and many photos resulted. Several raptors including a Peregrine Falcon were sighted, Grey-crowned Babbler; White-breasted Woodswallow; Pied Butcherbird; Red-capped Robin; White-backed Swallow; and Zebra & Double-barred Finches were seen lining some of the fence wires. A great days birding ending at the Pilliga Forest Centre in Baradine to check on the access to the forest, no go until at least the end of the week due to a major washaway but both the Sandstone Caves and Pilliga Pottery access roads were OK. So, it was decided to make those our destinations the next day while the Warrumbungles dried out further.

The Sandstone Caves were an interesting large isolated piece of weathered sandstone with great significance to the local Aboriginal People. Birds were scarce with only 12 species being sighted. Then off to the pottery which was a long drive off the Newel Hwy into the forest. The access to plenty of water in ponds provided a good place for the many Superb Fairy-wrens, Firetails & Finches around the buildings. Many people spent money in the pottery shop after lunch and then puzzled out how to transport them safely. A walk in the hot afternoon through a part of the property gave a good list of birds. A visit after the drought breaks would be more rewarding.

Two days were spent exploring the birds of the Warrumbungle NP. The first we confined ourselves to the area by the Visitors Centre and the adjacent Canyon Picnic Ground, the highlight being the sighting by the early arrivals of a small flock of Turquoise Parrots in the trees by the road into the Visitors Centre. The picnic area was nicely grassed and the storm had left a few small puddles in the creek. The result was an impressive list of 47 species for the day with the highlights being Common Bronzewing; 9 species of Honeyeater including the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater; Varied Sittella; Golden & Rufous Whistlers; Olive-backed Oriole; and Diamond Firetail.

The next day we walked from Woolshed Flat along a short easy track towards Tara Cave. Lots of bird activity with Sittellas again in evidence. Returning to the cars we decided that it was too dusty for our Cancer Council Morning Tea and moved to the adjacent grassy Wambelong Camping Area. Walking the Burbie Track which proved a challenge as the initial access from the road was steep and rocky, many of us turned back as few birds were seen but the more adventurous kept going for the entire loop, before we all headed back to the Canyon Picnic area for lunch. Walking down the creek after lunch Charlie found 4 Turquoise parrots bathing in a pool in the creek. Another good days birding with a total of 43 species



Our last day was the most adventurous of the week with a visit to Binnaway Nature Reserve. We started off by walking down the track between the reserve and adjacent farmland where a group of Dusky Woodswallows were seen huddling together on a branch. Distances were deceptive and we returned for our cars with those in sedans transferring to SUV's as the road looked to be deteriorating. We soon reached the first washaway, easily bypassed, but each one got worse until the last posed a real challenge with a steep rocky climb up. Bird watching was put aside to concentrate on the road, suddenly we were out and there was a large Green Road Sign showing the way! After lunch beside the Castlereagh River in Binnaway a few of us visited the Merryula Rd Castlereagh River crossing where again the water gave a good list, highlights being the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo; and Double-barred Finch for a total of 21 species. Some others contacted Pilliga Forest Centre & learnt that the No1 Break Road had re-opened so they took off there and visited the Sculptures in the Park.

Everyone enjoyed a good camp with great birding as well as the evening out at the Bowling Club for Dinner. Thank you to Neil Wheway for arranging this for us. Thanks, are also due to Tom Wylie for keeping the bird lists each day a vital contribution to the compiling of the overall bird lists.

Last but not least, thank you all for coming all that way to support the camp.

Emu	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Spotted Pardalote	Pied Butcherbird
Australian Wood Duck	Rainbow Lorikeet	Striated Pardalote	Australian Magpie
Grey Teal	Little Lorikeet	Eastern Spinebill	Pied Currawong
Pacific Black Duck	Australian King-Parrot	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Fantail
Australasian Grebe	Red-winged Parrot	White-eared Honeyeater	Willie Wagtail
Rock Dove	Crimson Rosella	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Common Bronzewing	Eastern Rosella	White-plumed Honeyeater	Little Raven
Crested Pigeon	Australian Ringneck	Noisy Miner	Little Crow
Peaceful Dove	Red-rumped Parrot	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Restless Flycatcher
Little Pied Cormorant	Turquoise Parrot	Red Wattlebird	Magpie-lark
Great Cormorant	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Brown-headed Honeyeater	White-winged Chough
Little Black Cormorant	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	White-napped Honeyeater	Apostlebird
White-faced Heron	Azure Kingfisher	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Jacky Winter
Australian White Ibis	Laughing Kookaburra	Noisy Friarbird	Red-capped Robin
Straw-necked Ibis	Sacred Kingfisher	Little Friarbird	Eastern Yellow Robin
Square-tailed Kite	White-throated Treecreeper	Striped Honeyeater	Silveryeye
Whistling Kite	Brown Treecreeper	Grey-crowned Babbler	White-backed Swallow
Brown Goshawk	Spotted Bowerbird	Varied Sittella	Welcome Swallow
Collared Sparrowhawk	Superb Fairy-wren	Ground Cuckoo-shrike	Common Starling
Wedge-tailed Eagle	White-browed Scrubwren	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Common Myna
Nankeen Kestrel	Speckled Warbler	White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	Mistletoebird
Australian Hobby	Weebill	Golden Whistler	Zebra Finch
Peregrine Falcon	Striated Thornbill	Rufous Whistler	Double-barred Finch
Eurasian Coot	Yellow Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	Red-browed Finch
Masked Lapwing	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Olive-backed Oriole	Diamond Firetail
Galah	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	White-breasted Woodswallow	House Sparrow
Long-billed Corella	Buff-rumped Thornbill	Dusky Woodswallow	Australasian Pipit
Little Corella	Inland Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird	

111 Species

NOTICES & ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Amazon Tribe Wins Lawsuit Against Big Oil, Saving Millions of Acres of Rainforest

The Amazon Rainforest is well known across the world for being the largest and most dense area of woodland in the world. Spanning across nine countries, the Amazon is home to millions of different animal and plant species, as well as harboring some of the world's last remaining indigenous groups. The Waorani people of Pastaza are an indigenous tribe from the Ecuadorian Amazon and have lived in the Rainforest for many generations. However, their home came under threat from a large oil company - they didn't take it lightly.

After a long legal battle with a number of organizations, the Waorani people successfully protected half a million acres of their ancestral territory in the Amazon rainforest from being mined for oil drilling by huge oil corporations. The auctioning off of Waorani lands to the oil companies was suspended indefinitely by a three-judge panel of the Pastaza Provincial Court. The panel simply trashed the consultation process the Ecuadorian [government](#) had undertaken with the tribe in 2012, which rendered the attempt at land purchase null and void.

This win for the indigenous tribe has now set an invaluable legal precedent for other indigenous nations across the Ecuadorian Amazon. After accepting a Waorani bid for court protection to stop an oil bidding process, the court also halted the potential auctioning off of 16 oil blocks that cover over 7 million acres of indigenous territory.

While there is no evidence, some people believe that the Ecuadorian government may be accepting bribes in some roundabout way. The land in question is meant to be protected under Ecuador's constitution that establishes



the inalienable, unseizable and indivisible rights of indigenous people to maintain possession of their ancestral lands and obtain their free adjudication.

Furthermore, the constitution also states that there is a need for prior consultation on any plans to exploit the underground resources, given the probable environmental and cultural impacts on tribal communities. The government claim they did do this in 2012, however, the tribe alleges that the agreement they came to was based upon fraudulent practices in favour of the oil companies and the government was favouring their bottom line over the people that actually still live on this valuable land. Due to this, the judges ordered the Ecuadorian government to conduct a new consultation, applying standards set by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights before anything else is agreed regarding the exploitation of the natural resources below the ground.

Nemonte Nenquimo, president of the Waorani Pastaza Organization and plaintiff in the lawsuit, remarked:

"The government tried to sell our lands to the oil companies without our permission. Our rainforest is our life. We decide what happens in our lands. We will never sell our rainforest to the oil companies. Today, the courts recognized that the Waorani people, and all indigenous peoples have rights over our territories that must be respected. The government's interests in oil is not more valuable than our rights, our forests, our lives."

This is a major win for indigenous tribes all over the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest, and even perhaps the Amazon as a whole! This has definitely set a new precedent regarding indigenous peoples' rights over the land they live in and offers them a glimmer of hope in protecting their cultural heritage. They'll definitely need plenty of support in the coming years as economical advances, such as this one will keep coming more and more as the world becomes ever growingly desperate for the natural resources that the beautiful land holds.

Little Eagle

Confirmation of little eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*) migration by satellite telemetry

Renée Brawata ^{A E}, Stuart Rae ^B, Bernd Gruber ^C, Sam Reid ^A and David Roberts ^D

+ Author Affiliations

Australian Journal of Zoology 66(4) 247-250 <https://doi.org/10.1071/ZO18060>

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Abstract

The post-breeding migration of an adult male Little Eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*) was followed from south-eastern Australia to the Northern Territory using a GPS satellite transmitter. The bird bred in open woodland habitat on the edge of the city of Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), before it flew more than 3300 km in 18 days, to winter in an area of eucalypt savannah in the Northern Territory. It remained there for 59 days, within a range of ~30 km², after which the last signal was transmitted. The bird was subsequently resighted back in its ACT territory at the end of winter, thus completing a return migration. This is the first confirmation of post-breeding migration for the species.

A sympatric pair of undescribed white-eye species (Aves: Zosteropidae: *Zosterops*) with different origins

Darren P O'Connell David J Kelly Naomi Lawless Katie O'Brien Fionn Ó Marcaigh Adi Karya Kangkuso Analuddin Nicola M Marples

Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society, 23 April 2019

Abstract - Pale-bellied White-eye (*Zosterops consobrinorum*)

Research in the Indo-Pacific region has contributed massively to the understanding of speciation. White-eyes (Aves: Zosteropidae: *Zosterops*), a lineage containing both widespread 'supertramp' species and a high proportion of island endemics, have provided invaluable models. Molecular tools have increased speciation research, but delimiting species remains problematic. We investigated the evolutionary history of *Zosterops* (White-eye) species in south-east Sulawesi using mitochondrial DNA, morphometric, song and plumage analyses, to draw species limits and assess which techniques offer best resolution. Our investigation revealed a novel *Zosterops* (White-eye) species, >3000 km from its closest relative. Additionally, we demonstrated unanticipated diversity in the alleged 'supertramp' *Zosterops chloris* (Pale-bellied White-eye) and propose the Wakatobi Islands subspecies (*Z. c. flavissimus*) to be given full species status. Furthermore, we provide the first molecular and phenotypic assessment of the Sulawesi endemic *Zosterops consobrinorum* (Pale-bellied White-eye). While local populations of this species vary in either genetics or morphometrics, none show consistency across measures. Therefore, we propose no change to *Zosterops consobrinorum* taxonomy. This study gives insight into one of the great Indo-Pacific radiations and demonstrates the value of using multiple lines of evidence for taxonomic review.

A King-size Experience

by Mike Morphett - 15 May 2019

In January 2017 I had my first King Island 'Experience', a four-day tour under the steerage of Lucinda Dengerink and Ian Johnson, covering most of this 1100 square kilometre Bass Strait island in its several aspects: the rock-lined seascape and shipwrecks (The most disastrous being the Cataracui in 1945.); undulating landscape of green pastures and forests; rivers, creeks and lakes; its kelp and former scheelite industries; creative local artists; the sampling of some of its dairy products; and in particular its wildlife with some of its endemic bird species.

So, when Birdlife Australia advertised the Wings on King autumn bird survey, I knew roughly what to expect and didn't hesitate to register, booking a room in the revamped Ocean Dunes (formerly Parer's) Hotel, Currie. On Anzac Day morning the Saab-340 flight from Tullamarine to King Island Airport was fully booked, carrying mostly golfers and much younger surfers. My appointed WoKA (assistant), Linda Leo, deceiving me in her ambulance officer uniform (handy if this septuagenarian apprentice came unstuck) welcomed me at the airport. She and her husband, Tim had settled in King island, lured by its green grass, having struggled to raise cattle on drought-affected pastures in the NSW regions of Mungindi and Nundle. Linda drove me, under the watchful eye of her cattle dog, Dancer, to the harbourside Cultural Centre. There I was introduced to the survey organiser, Kate Ravich to find out to which team I had been allocated.

Among her many achievements, in 1998 Kate co-founded the very successful Birds in Backyards program and has continued to chair the Steering Committee, and then saw the launch of the WOK survey scheme in April 2017. To my very pleasant surprise, she had assigned me to Sean Dooley, editor of *Australian Birdlife* (formerly *Wingspan*) and author of *The Big Twitch* (2005); he arrived on the island the next morning. I returned to the centre, after checking in at the hotel, to attend Kate's 'Workshop for Beginners', from which, as I expected, I gleaned some more bird knowledge, and then to meet some of the 'surveyors'.



'Turkey' seat in Currie's Main Street



Tasmanian scrubwren

Together with Shelley Graham, the island's Parks and Wildlife ranger, managing 14000 hectares of reserved land, and also secretary for the King Island Natural Resources Management Group (KINRMG), formed in 1996, Sean and I headed north-east to the Sea Elephant River region. This river is the longest, with significant tidal variation. The 20-minute survey sites took us through saltmarshes and forests within national and state protected areas and private properties. As forecast, in marked contrast to the warm and sunny Easter week, the weather posed quite a challenge with intermittent wind-driven showers (a hint of the Roaring Forties), which made birding difficult at times and bird numbers small. The edge, where timber met open space, proved the most productive. One unanticipated obstacle was the droving of 250-head of black Angus cattle along a gravel road, where sheepdogs worked alongside quad-bike farmers. Despite the delay, the liveliness of the animals was a welcome sight compared with the countless marsupial roadkill we passed on our travels.

For the Saturday surveys, which targeted the far north, Jack Baker replaced Shelley. Jack resides four suburbs south from my Thirroul home; we had met before at a few bird-related events. His expertise has been in conservation biology and environmental management, for which he was bestowed Honorary Principal Fellow at the University of Wollongong in 2008, with emphasis on such threatened avian species as the Eastern Bristlebird and Ground Parrot. From scientific papers he has turned to creative writing under the moniker, Jack Oats, with the publication of his collection of poems under the title, *Soaring* (2017). We reccied transects on the shoreline and dunes of Phoques and Disappointment Bays, then The Springs and Lake Flannagan. A welcome coffee break at the Cape Wickham Golf Links Café spared us some of the further showers and wind gusts, although conditions this day were a tad kinder with outbreaks of sunshine.



Jack & Sean seeking sheltering dune bush-birds



Sean beside Shelley's ute behind the cattle-droving

After our final survey in Tin Mine Forest, we headed to Kate's Bootlace Private Forest Reserve home to rest, reflect and prepare for the evening's FACE (Festival of Art, Culture and the Environment) 'Birds in Our Lives' gala event at the Portside Gallery, sited on a former golf course in the village of Grassy. Gallery owners for nigh on ten years, Ken and Marilyn Chapman announced they were pulling up easels to build a new gallery and studio, thereby continuing to promote local artistic talent. The premises are to become offices for the King Island Scheelite Company, which plans to reopen the open-cut mine very soon, which operated from 1917 to 1990. In its heyday, the island's population was around 5000, but nowadays has dropped to one person per square kilometre. After the world decline in prices for scheelite (used to harden steel and in the production of tungsten carbides), there now appears to be a big demand for the mineral and the forecast of a twenty years' lifespan for the mine. There was plenty of time to view the many fund-raising artistic exhibits offered for the silent auction. Those that impressed me the most were of a Nankeen Kestrel, a pair of Barn Owls, a Southern Boobook, and a White-faced Heron. The display, plus savouries, fruit, and soup refreshments, wine and beer, attracted a large and enthusiastic gathering, to whom Sean spoke about the ever-increasing need for the conservation of birdlife and their environment within and beyond the island. This followed on from his ice-breaking five-question 'Bird Nerd' quiz with a maximum score of 50.



Wind-driven Sea Elephant River towards the estuary



Harvested Muttonbird remnants beside Lake Flannigan

As with other island flora and fauna forays I have made over the years, King Island's wildlife didn't disappoint. Sean was quick to pick up five of the eleven Tasmanian endemics: Tasmanian Thornbill, Yellow-throated and Strong-billed Honeyeaters, Black Currawong and Dusky Robin. My 2014 copy of *Field Guide to Tasmanian Birds* by Dave Watts proved another very handy companion. Of the raptors, immature White-bellied Sea-Eagles were the most evident, with single appearances of the Swamp Harrier, Brown Falcon and Nankeen Kestrel. I was chuffed to get good sightings of Dusky Robins, drawn to insects that in turn were drawn to cowpats. The blue of adult male Superb Fairy-wrens appeared much more striking than their mainland counterparts, in the same way that the plumage of the Grey Fantails were so much darker than those I've been accustomed to. Gulls, both Silver and Pacific, were in abundance, particularly along the tideline in Phoques Bay. On the sand in a secluded spot beside Crown Reserve Lake Flannigan lay many remnants, mostly wings, of dead Short-tailed Shearwaters surrounding a moored boat; the fortnight's Muttonbird harvesting season had closed only thirteen days before our arrival. Tasmania is the only state that allows this native species to be killed. In accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 1993, its Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) has guidelines designed to ensure, through the non-commercial hunting of this species, "humane kill that does not increase unreasonable or unjustifiable pain and suffering to the chick", setting a bag limit of 25 birds per day per person. Whilst their feathers are no longer sought after for bedding, the birds are killed for their oil and as a food source: they are rich in Omega-3 fatty acids. Also known as Volla and Moonbirds in the vernacular, the Shearwaters end up as "plucked" products with fat or "skim" without, making for a less strong flavour. One island woman told me the bird was very much an acquired taste, best barbecued and curried. Whilst the one main threat for Muttonbird

hunters is Tiger Snakes that frequent the shoreline habitat, their prey face much greater ones: their trampled nesting burrows and ingestion of plastics, gillnet fisheries, overfishing, oil spills, and climate change.

Despite the somewhat sad conclusion to this write-up, I can certainly recommend a King Island experience. You're sure of a warm reception and much to see and do



Dusky robin in cow pasture



Superb fairy-wren in timber

What your backyard birds are really telling you

Robin Powell – SMH – May 17, 2019

It seems only right that I'm finding it hard to hear Dr Grainne Cleary over the birds. Cleary is a wildlife ecologist and researcher at Deakin University with a special interest in avian adaptation to urban life. The racket at her end of the phone line is her pet Cockatiel; at mine, it's my resident Red Wattlebird. Early Australian bird watcher John Gould described the Wattlebird's call as like "a person vomiting". I think it's more Collingwood supporter expressing disgust at an umpiring decision, but either way it's loud!

Cleary explains that the Wattlebird is most likely telling its family and friends where its been eating nectar today. I could tell them too – it's been upside down in the brugmansia, was disappointed to find the aloe not yet blooming and had a momentary humiliation when a canna snapped under its weight.

Cleary was project leader on The Australian Bird Feeding and Watering Study, a citizen science project that asked people to report their bird interactions. She received many emails that went beyond the questions in the survey to tell stories that "insisted on the personality of the birds they were interacting with". It's these stories that form the backbone of her book, *Your Backyard Birds*, (Allen and Unwin, \$29.99), contextualised within the latest science on bird behaviour.

In the book, I learn about a Magpie that would escalate its wake-up strategies on its human companion to the point of sticking its beak up his nose and yanking at his nose hairs. In doing so, writes Cleary, the bird was displaying persistence and playfulness, traits that allow Magpies to continue to learn from experience throughout their lives. Other stories in the book illustrate birds' social organisation, their partner relationships, their grief over loss, and their courting and communication methods.

Cleary believes that knowing what we're looking at when we watch the birds in the garden will increase our care factor. "As urbanisation increases, back gardens are going to be more and more important in providing refuge, for birds, and a whole suite of wildlife," she says. "We need people to look after their back gardens."

Bird-friendly gardens have a wide diversity of plants for food, home-making and clean water. Feeding requires cleanliness and care: no fatty bits of sausage, or worse, bread. For meat-eating birds, Cleary recommends an insectivore food made by Australian company Wombaroo that can be dusted over scraps of meat to lift the snack to the level of a whole food.

After I hung up the phone I went outside to talk to the Red Wattlebird, now keeping an eye on its territory from the top of the brugmansia. "Blerk", it yelled in reply to my greeting, which after talking to Cleary, I translated as "Hello, the garden's looking great".



COMMON BLACKBIRD by Mike Morphett

For several months now we've had a resident Common Blackbird on our 'estate', and the past few days I've seen it skulking on the ground under our shrubs in our front garden. This morning I opened our front door to put some recycling stuff in our bin, when I spotted him on the edge of our front path, barely five metres from me. Then I heard him singing, so very quietly, with bill barely open - just gentle throat movements accompanied by the occasional twitch of his tail feathers; this was in such marked contrast to the loud and exposed singing of this species, particularly when advertising its territory or enticing a mate. After so many years of bird study, this was my first experience of hearing a bird's sub-song. This form of vocalization is usually given by young birds, or adults prefacing the breeding season. But the Australian Blackbird's is September to December/January: four months away. Might this indicate climate change, with the warm and sunny autumn we've been experiencing in our region? Some brief research took me to Maurice Baker's reference to the antipodean Blackbird's 'quiet or twitter' singing, when it tries out new phrases while rehearsing to add to its repertoire before its breeding season kicks in; he also advances the theory that it's simply done out of pleasure. Clive Braham is of the opinion the Blackbird switches to quiet song when hunting, but our resident was just resting for several minutes. Whatever may have triggered our bird's sub-song, it was a very pleasurable experience for us.



The Australasian Bittern.

It was right out in the open at Fivebough Wetlands. As you can see it was a long way off, but as I tried to closer it took flight as they do.

Betty Hudson



Swift Parrot

We found this swift parrot at Mt Annan Botanic Gardens today. They weren't easy to see but worth the effort.

Pam Hazelwood

MONTHLY SIGHTINGS: - April/May 2019

compiled by Darryl Goldrick

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
White-headed Pigeon	5	20/05/2019	Jamberoo Public School	Powerlines	Darryl Goldrick
White-headed Pigeon	2 (m+f)	20/05/2019	Tarrawanna	Yard	Alan/Anne Cousins
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	3	17/05/2019	Thirroul	Backyard	Mike Morphett
Wonga Pigeon	1 heard	17/05/2019	Thirroul	Excelsior Mine Forest	Mike Morphett
Topknot Pigeon	27	1/05/2019	Milton	overhead	Charles Dove
Tawny Frogmouth	2	25/04/2019	Ulladulla	Millards Creek	Charles Dove
Tawny Frogmouth	2	1/05/2019	Lake Conjola	Casuraina	Charles Dove
Cattle Egret	19	09-May-19	Bellambi	College playing field	Mike Morphett
Southern Giant-Petrel	1juv	17/05/2019	Ulladulla	Beach Rescue	Charles Dove
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	2	11/05/2019	Bulli	O'head	Mike Morphett
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	2	23/05/2019	Thirroul	Eucalypts in yard	Mike Morphett
Kelp Gull	2	5/05/2019	Bulli	Beach	Alan/Anne Cousins
Straw-necked Ibis	50+	20/05/2019	Factory Lane, Jamberoo	Paddock	Darryl Goldrick
Straw-necked Ibis	~20	20/05/2019	Swamp Rd, Jamberoo	Paddock	Darryl Goldrick
Royal Spoonbill	17	25/04/2019	Dolphin Point	Dam	Charles Dove
Royal Spoonbill	1	04-May-19	Mt Annan Bot Garden	Lake Fitzpatrick	Mike Morphett
Black-shouldered Kite	1	13/05/2019	Horsley	O'head ?	Richard Fackender
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	3	15/05/2019	Ulladulla	Overhead	Charles Dove
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	2	4/05/2019	Albion Park Airport	O'head	Bill Zealey
Brown Goshawk	1	22/04/2019	Albion Park Rail	Yard	Peter Fackender
Brown Goshawk	1	7/05/2019	Thirroul	Backyard (checking out aviary!!)	Mike Morphett
Grey Goshawk	1	5/05/2019	Albion Park Rail	Yard	Peter Fackender
Wedge-tailed Eagle	2	4/05/2019	Albion Park Rail	O'head sth end of Airport	Bill/Joan Zealey
Long-billed Corella	~ 120	4/05/2019	Balarang	Powerlines	Darryl Goldrick
Crimson Rosella	12	10/05/2019	Dolphin Point	Dam	Charles Dove
Powerful Owl	1 heard	13/05/2019	Towradgi	Towradgi Ck environs	Jack Baker
Azure Kingfisher	1	10/05/2019	Dolphin Point	Dam	Charles Dove
White-throated Treecreeper	5	10/05/2019	Dolphin Point	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Red-browed Treecreeper	2	27/04/2019	Lake Conjola	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Striated Thornbill	12	25/04/2019	Ulladulla	Millards Creek	Charles Dove
Yellow Thornbill	14	28/04/2019	Ulladulla	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Spotted Pardalote	20 m/f	28/04/2019	Ulladulla	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Lewin's Honeyeater	7	29/04/2019	Dolphin Point	Dam	Charles Dove
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	2	17/05/2019	Thirroul	Backyard Robinia	Mike Morphett
Fuscous Honeyeater	2	15/05/2019	Dolphin Point	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Scarlet Honeyeater	5	12/05/2019	Primbee	Hind Dune	Bill/Joan Zealey
White-cheeked Honeyeater	14	15/05/2019	Mt Bushwalker	Track	Charles Dove
Olive-backed Oriole	1	29/04/2019	Dolphin Point	Mixed Forest	Charles Dove
Grey Butcherbird	1	14/05/2019	Mollymook	yard	Charles Dove
Grey Butcherbird	1	18/05/2019	Ulladulla	Headland	Charles Dove
Grey Fantail	1	17-May-19	Thirroul	Backyard	Mike Morphett
Golden-headed Cisticola	4	1/05/2019	Milton	Wetlands	Charles Dove
Silvereye	30	9/05/2019	Ulladulla	Headland	Charles Dove

Please remember to forward all your sighting that you think would be appropriate and not necessarily a rare sighting to Darryl Goldrick.



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