



ENVIRONMENT  
AUSTRALIA

# FLIGHTLINES

Newsletter of the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme

NUMBER 20 - July 1997

Edited by Belinda Dettmann

## CONTENTS

page

Banding Office Update	1
Renewal of banding authorities and current projects	1
CODD Guidelines Update: Amendments to "Producing a data file"	2
Staff changes	3
Changes to Banding Office telephone numbers	3
New Regional Organiser for New South Wales	3
New stainless steel bands	4
New bands for problem parrots	4
Order Of Australia, Medal: Steve Wilson	4
Retirement From Banding: Harold Bradley	5
Obituary: Gracie Bowker, 1906-1996	5
EURING 97	5
General Strategies For The Collection And Analysis Of Ringing Data	7
New Project Approvals	8
Bill Board	11
Fate of A. Bird	11
Invitation to join the Western Banders Association	12

## BANDING OFFICE UPDATE

### Renewal of banding authorities and current projects

This is the time of year for renewing authorities and reporting on current projects. Banders are reminded that the deadline for payment of fees and renewal of authorities and projects was 31 July 1997. Some banders have yet to advise us whether they wish to operate in the coming year. If you have not yet contacted the Banding Office about these matters you should phone (06-250 9404) or fax (06-250 9455) the office as a matter of urgency to avoid the inconvenience of a cancelled authority.

### **CODD Guidelines Update: Amendments to “Producing a data file”**

Note changed instructions for use of *MS Access*, *Excel* and **text** files.

**Export:** Generally, you will need to **export** a file to disk for despatch to the ABBBS. Many software packages have a built-in export facility as part of their Utilities, Tools, File Management, Save As or equivalent menu.

**Reports:** In some programs (databases commonly) you may be able to design a **report** or **query** format to automatically produce a file containing the required fields in the right sequence, for export to disk.

**Database Files:** If you are using database software such as *dBASE* or *Paradox*, simply export your data in a database file. The exported file should have been automatically assigned a file name extension of .DB or .DBF if this process has been successful. **Unfortunately we can not read MS Access (.MDB) database files.** If you are using *MS Access*, the data will need to be exported in one of the following file formats: comma or tab delimited text file (.TXT), *Paradox* (.DB) or *Excel* (.XLS).

**Spreadsheet Files:** If you are using a spreadsheet package such as *Quattro* or *Lotus 1-2-3*, first preference is to export your table in a database format, i.e. so it can be read by a database package such as *dBase* or *Paradox*.

If you are using *Excel*, simply send your file as a worksheet (.XLS), but it is essential that the date cell be formatted as **d/mm/yy** and fields such as “time” have a leading zero where necessary, eg 0900ES. With *Excel*, another popular format to use is a comma-separated value (.CSV) file as described below. If you are using an uncommon or obsolete spreadsheet you may need to submit data in the comma/tab-separated text format as described below.

**Text Files:** You may choose to send your data in a comma or tab-delimited text file. Most (but not all) software packages can automatically convert your file to this format. It might be referred to as comma-separated value (automatically assigns extension **.CSV**), tab-delimited text, delimited ASCII, delimited ANSI or something similar. With the last two, there is usually an options button which allows you to choose what type of delimiter you wish to insert. The extension **.TXT** is automatically assigned to identify most text files.

**Delimiters:** A delimiter is a keystroke used to signify the end of a field. If you are submitting text files, CODD can accept **comma** or **tab** delimiters, ie. the fields of the data file **MUST** be separated by either commas or tab markers. **Comma delimiters** are the **preferred** option.

- there **must not** be a comma or tab marker at the beginning of the first field
- there **must** be a comma or a tab marker at the end of each field,
- **but not** at the end of the last (fourteenth) field of a record. At the end of a record (before putting in the next band number), you need to enter a record delimiter, usually a *carriage return* or *enter* keystroke, or less commonly, a *line feed* command.

Beware - not all **.TXT** files are delimited automatically, and not all delimited text files use comma delimiters! If your software will not automatically insert delimiters, then you should **not** consider entering the delimiters yourself - it would require an enormous amount of work and would inevitably generate errors. Instead, contact the ABBBS. We will do our best to find you a solution.

### Staff changes

After five years as Secretary of the ABBBS Tom Scotney has left the Banding Office. Tom has taken up the position of Senior Project Officer in the Wetlands, Waterways and Waterbirds Section of the Biodiversity Group, Environment Australia. From here he will manage the Wetlands Research and Development Program, working on migratory waterbirds and shorebird reserve network issues. His duties include acting as liaison officer for JAMBA and CAMBA (the Japan-Australia and China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreements), and coordinating development of a Regional Wetland Managers' training course. In this role Tom will maintain his close contact with wader banders and wader research.

David Drynan will act as Secretary of the ABBBS, responsible for banding authorities and general administration, until the position is filled on a permanent basis. David joined the banding office in January 1995 and since his arrival has dealt with recoveries, receipt of banding data, administration of banding authorities and payment of fees. Barry Baker, Lisa Hardy and Belinda Dettmann continue to handle general banding policy, data administration, and projects and colour marking, respectively, as before.

### Changes to Banding Office telephone numbers

All phone numbers in the Australian Capital Territory will change on 8 August 1997. Numbers in the series 06-2xx xxxx will become 02-62xx xxxx. The old numbers will work until February 1998, when the changeover period will end. Numbers for the Banding Office will be:

	Old number	New number
Barry Baker	06-250 9402	02-6250 9402
Belinda Dettmann	06-250 9405	02-6250 9405
David Drynan	06-250 9407	02-6250 9407
Lisa Hardy	06-250 9406	02-6250 9406
	06-250 9408	02-6250 9408
General Enquiries	06-250 9404	02-6250 9404
Fax	06-250 9455	02-6250 9455

### New Regional Organiser for New South Wales

Bill Lane has resigned from the position of Regional Organiser in New South Wales after 35 years' service. Bill has played a vital role as a link between banders and the ABBBS, as a coordinator of bander training, and as a valued adviser to the ABBBS. His contribution to banding in Australia generally and to the ABBBS in particular has been outstanding. Bill has been one of the ABBBS's most experienced and active banders since June 1958. He has not given up banding but feels the time has come to step down from the position of Regional Organiser.

The new Regional Organiser for New South Wales will be Jeff Hardy, who has been banding since November 1978. Jeff is Manager of the Licensing Unit in the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and is Past President of the Australian Bird Study Association. He has banded seabirds, waders and raptors but these days his interests lie in the study of bush birds.

His contact details are:

Mr J.W. Hardy (Jeff)  
20 Lindsay Ave  
ERMINGTON NSW 2115 Phone & Fax: 02- 9684 1694 (AH)

We also have an additional Sub-Regional Organiser for NSW (Blue Mountains and Western Sydney) in the person of John Farrell. John's contact details are:

Mr JR Farrell (John)  
73 Ellison Road  
SPRINGWOOD NSW 2777 Phone: 02-9850 8656 (W)  
047-512 806 (AH)

### **New stainless steel bands**

The banding office will be receiving new batches of stainless steel bands in the previously unavailable sizes of 04, 05 and 06 shortly. These bands have been developed following discussions with SAFRING, the South African Ringing Scheme, where stainless steel has been used for smaller sized bands for many years.

It is intended that these bands will be an alternative to incoloy and alloy, where band wear and corrosion is an important factor in determining band metal. These situations can include smaller seabirds and waders, as well as ground dwelling birds.

Any banders wishing to trial these bands on a current project should contact the banding office.

### **New bands for problem parrots**

As well as the new small sizes of stainless steel bands, the banding office will be purchasing special bands for use on Gang-gang Cockatoos, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos and Palm Cockatoos. The bands are rounded in section as opposed to normal ABBBS bands, which are flat. These species currently do not have a recommended band size, as all previous band designs have been unsatisfactory.

These bands will come in sizes:

31 for Gang-gang Cockatoos, equivalent to ABBBS size 09 (8.0 mm internal diameter)

32 for Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, equivalent to ABBBS sizes 11 and 21 (11.0 mm)

33 for female Palm Cockatoos, equivalent to ABBBS size 22 (13.0 mm)

34 for male Palm Cockatoos, equivalent to ABBBS size 12 (14.0 mm)

These bands require special applicators, which we will also be ordering. If there are banders with requirements for these types of bands, please contact David Drynan on (06) 250 9407.

### **ORDER OF AUSTRALIA, MEDAL: Steve Wilson**

Steve Wilson was awarded the Order of Australia, Medal (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours list in June. He was honoured for his services to ornithological research, bird-banding and services to the community.

Steve first became interested in birds in the 1960's when he moved to Canberra from Melbourne. He had two sons who were particularly interested in birds and wished to become involved in the use of bands to mark birds for scientific research. As they were not old enough to be issued with a Bird Banding Authority Steve applied for, and was issued with, an Authority from CSIRO.

Bird banding was a relatively new technique in Australian field ornithology at that time, and Steve quickly became proficient. His interest in bird research soon outstripped that of his sons, and he recruited a number of interested school boys to assist in the banding projects he had undertaken. Under his tutelage, many of these boys developed their interest to a degree where they decided to make science their career. At least seven of his proteges are now employed throughout Australia and the South Pacific in positions relating to nature conservation and ornithology.

Steve has made a huge contribution to ornithology in the Canberra region in particular, and at 86 years of age continues to do so. Within the last year he has co-authored three papers which have been submitted to refereed journals with international standing. Papers based on data from his Brindabella Ranges project were presented at the Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress last October and at the EURING 97 conference in Norwich in April. He has also contributed to books on the birds of the ACT, writing many of the species treatises for *Birds of the Australian High Country* and the *Readers Digest Book of Australian Birds*.

We congratulate Steve on receiving this acknowledgment of his achievements.

**RETIREMENT FROM BANDING: Harold Bradley**

Having attained age 80, Harold Bradley feels that he has reached his "Use By" date for banding and has decided to hang up his banding pliers.

Harold became a bander with the ABBBS in December 1966 and studied the Short-tailed Shearwater colony at Cape Woolamai, Phillip Island, for many years. Then in the early eighties a local interest group invited Harold to help with studies of the Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*), whose numbers had been dwindling in Sherbrooke Forest. Harold and his wife Isobel became fascinated with this unique, skilful and talented species and in 1982 they began colour-banding the Sherbrooke Forest population. This was the start of a landmark study of lyrebird ecology and life history. The Sherbrooke Lyrebird Study Group continues its work on these wonderful birds, and Harold is still active as secretary of the group. However he has handed his banding duties on to Norm Carter.

We are happy to acknowledge Harold's contribution to the ABBBS and to our understanding of Australia's rich and diverse bird life. We were saddened to hear that Isobel Bradley passed away last October and extend our condolences to Harold on her loss.

**OBITUARY: Gracie Bowker, 1906-1996**

Gracie Bowker, one of the pioneers of the Australian Bird Banding Scheme, died recently in her 90th year. Gracie began banding in 1955 under the supervision of Ina Watson and in December that year was issued with Permit No 48. In the ensuing years she was involved in a number of collaborative projects banding Short-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters and Silvereyes. She also made many banding visits to Mud Island in Port Philip Bay as a member of the Victorian Ornithological Research Group (VORG).

In 1960 she was a member of the first banding expedition to Lawrence Rocks off Portland where she started banding Australasian Gannets. A number of gannets banded by her are still in residence.

By the time she "hung up her pliers" Gracie had banded 33,144 birds of 67 species, including 21,000 Short-tailed Shearwaters. She developed a reputation as a determined bander who could outlast her younger (and fitter?) colleagues. On one occasion she was stranded on Lady Julia Percy Island for several days when a sudden storm blew up and delayed her pickup.

When she retired from banding in 1973 Gracie was not lost to ornithology, being always willing to pass on her knowledge and experience to others, particularly with waders. Even in her 80's she could be found tramping the beaches searching for that elusive Golden Plover or whatever. She did get somewhat frustrated at times with new people seeking information which she had imparted to others over the years. "Please tell them I can't provide any more information on Orange-bellied Parrots" was something I heard more than once.

Gracie trained as a school teacher and taught for more than 40 years in rural Victoria. Many children taught by her became aware of natural history through her endeavours and by helping in her banding activities. Her teaching skills were used well into her retirement as she conducted walks in the evenings to her beloved Shearwater colony at Port Fairy.

Philip du Guesclin

**EURING 97**

EURING is the European Ringing Union, the body which coordinates ringing schemes in Europe. EURING 97 was held at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK from 7-12 April 1997. This conference was the sixth in a series of international meetings of biologists, ornithologists, ecologists and statisticians to develop analytical methods for data collected during the marking of individual birds. EURING 97 focussed on the estimation of survival and movement rates, and recent developments in the analysis of band recovery and mark-recapture data were presented and discussed.

The 1997 conference was organised by the British Trust for Ornithology and 93 participants attended from 19 countries. Most were from the UK (26) and USA (19, a very strong contingent). Canada, France and Netherlands had 7-10 each, with 2 from South Africa and 1 each from New Zealand and Japan. I was the only Australian present.

Banding schemes were represented by Stephen Baillie (UK BTO), John Tautin (USA), Kyoki Ozaki (Japan), Pertti Saurola (Finland), Rinse Wassenaar (Netherlands and Euring Databank), Fernando Spina (Italy and current President of EURING) and Lukas Jenni (Switzerland).

We were housed at the University in rural surroundings outside the city of Norwich. Extra activities included an early morning banding session on-site, and trips to the Norfolk Broads, the Norfolk coast and Thetford Forest.

The meeting began with a one-day course on probability and statistics. This acted as an introduction or refresher course for ornithologists attending the conference. It was designed to help newcomers understand what was going on but everyone attended. We all found it very helpful. Topics covered included basic statistical concepts, binomial and multinomial distributions, types of data, basic models for recaptures, recoveries and radio-tracking, and introductions to some computer packages.

Forty papers were presented at the conference, varying from heavyweights on estimation methods for avian movement and survival to more applied papers on the demography of single species. Early papers covered advances in statistical methods, later presentations tended to emphasise the more biological aspects of the subject, but the program overall was varied and stimulating. One evening was set aside for a formal poster session. Nineteen posters were set up during the day and authors were available for questions and discussion during the evening. Abstracts for all papers and posters were distributed to participants on arrival.

The Australian contribution took the form of a poster entitled "Use of Jolly-Seber models to study the effects of fire on a population of Australian bush birds", by Belinda Dettmann, Barry Baker and Steve Wilson.

A highlight of the meeting was the demonstration of new or improved computer programs (MARK, SURGE, MSSURVIV and RDSURVIV, POPAN-5, SURPH, ULM) designed to analyse demographic data. All have been developed in response to problems with field data, while many included advances requested at the previous EURING meeting. The programs have different strengths and weaknesses but overall were extremely impressive. Most can be downloaded from the Internet and the place to go is <http://mendel.mbb.sfu.ca/cmr/>. This site gives an excellent summary of software available for population analysis.

It is clear that recent improvements in methods of analysis have enabled banding to become a very powerful technique for studying bird demography and changes in bird populations. The new methods require that all banding data as well as retrap/resighting/recovery data be computerised. Australia is well placed in this regard, as the ABBBS database now holds computerised banding information on approximately 1.1 million birds and bats, with about 250,000 retraps or recoveries. Some of this data would be suitable for analysis to determine demographic parameters of certain species to a useful degree of precision.

However the new methods require that studies be well planned rather than haphazard, and that realistic models need to be fitted to the data before sensible answers can emerge. This means that a significant amount of time and effort needs to be expended on planning and analysis, in addition to that used to band the birds. All too often, the time spent banding birds and collecting data can turn out to have been time wasted, if the initial planning and/or the final analysis is not taken seriously. David Anderson and Ken Burnham presented an impressive paper on general strategies for the collection and analysis of ringing data. A summary is given elsewhere in this issue.

The conference concluded on an optimistic note. There is a proposal in the pipeline that a loose organisation of world ringing schemes should be set up (WORLD RINGING?) to improve channels of communication. This might be rather along the lines of EURING, but recognising the limitations imposed by different data systems. Discussions will take place at the International Ornithological Conference in South Africa in 1998, with a view to announcing the formation of an organisation in Denmark in 1999, where 100 years of scientific banding will be celebrated.

Belinda Dettmann

### **General Strategies For The Collection And Analysis Of Ringing Data**

David Anderson and Ken Burnham, EURING 97. Presented in note form to preserve the impact of David Anderson's oral presentation.

Little has appeared in the scientific literature on general strategies for the collection and analysis of ringing data. Planning a study is critical and there are many issues to consider. Planning must begin with a clear set of objectives and knowledge of the basic biology of the animal being studied.

Generally the analyst wants to make inferences concerning survival and sampling probabilities, by gender, age and year at, perhaps, several distinct ringing locations. There may be ancillary data on individual or group variables. Alternatively, one may be interested in some general process for a group of species within some higher taxon and wish to make an analysis of all relevant data. Such "meta-data" are now

commonplace in bird ringing and this further complicates analysis and begs for effective, unified analysis strategies.

For a given amount of effort, there have to be design tradeoffs. In his spoken presentation David Anderson made the following points:

- Concentrate effort early in the study rather than later.
- Band more young birds than adults.
- Put emphasis on resighting or recapturing rather than on original ringing. The following levels of banding and recapture result in survival estimates of equal efficiency:

Number ringed	Recapture %
36,000	1
6,000	40
1,300	80
400	100

- Measure variables such as weather, ringing effort, age, sex.
- Long term studies give good data for long term trends. Short term studies are worth little in this regard.
- Models should be simple, but should have a deep level of theoretical support. How do you formulate a list of models as candidates? Go to the literature before collecting the data, and try everywhere else you can to get help to devise sensible models.
- Use Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) rather than significance testing to sort out models after fitting. Models say what the data will support, not what truth might be. [The AIC is an extension of the maximum likelihood principle]
- Try comprehensive analysis, eg all sexes, sites, covariates, etc. together.
- Avoid data dredging, at least until the *a priori* considerations have been addressed. In publications, make clear when data-dredging started.
- Move away from hypothesis testing towards estimation of parameters from fitting sensible biological models. Hypothesis testing gives different answers depending on the significance level used.
- It is not sensible to test hypotheses that are obviously false, e.g. a null hypotheses that survival rates over 18 periods will be equal, obviously they won't be. The question should be: are the differences large enough to justify selection in the model? How large are the estimates of differences, small, medium, or large?
- Goodness-of-fit tests should be used with caution. If the model selected suffers severely from lack of fit you may need to think up alternative models. But beware of inferring processes from outliers in the data set.

High speed Pentium processors in computers and new developments in programs for survival and population estimators (MARK, POPAN, RELEASE, SURGE, SURPH) make it possible to consider a number of sensible alternative models and to rank them with regard to Information Criteria (eg AIC). There are deep philosophical reasons for using such criteria, and the new software can do this. This approach gives a good balance between bias and variance.

## NEW PROJECT APPROVALS

Twenty nine new projects have been approved since 1 January 1997. These are listed below with their aims and objectives.

### *Bat Species*

#### **Ray Williams                      Temporary exclusion and monitoring of a colony of Large-footed Myotis**

Aims/Objectives: To determine whether a colony of Large-footed Myotis excluded from a roost site during tunnel maintenance will remain at a different tunnel site to which they have been temporarily removed, whether the same bats will return to the original roost, and whether there is interchange between the two sites.

### *Bird Species*

#### **Jack Baker                      Eastern Bristlebirds at Jervis Bay**

Aims/Objectives: Use of radio-tracking on Eastern Bristlebirds to determine micro-habitat use, particularly in regard to edges between heath and other vegetation types; to determine the home-range of males, females and immature birds and their short-term dispersal patterns.

#### **Carla Catterall                      An investigation of the role of Noisy Miners as keystone competitors**

Aims/Objectives: To investigate whether the presence of Noisy Miner colonies is associated with reduced densities of forest-dwelling birds; to develop a method for experimentally testing this effect.

#### **Julie Dale                      Status of Striped Honeyeaters in Warraderry State Forest**

Aims/Objectives: To determine the sedentary/nomadic status of this species in central-western NSW; to study the breeding cycle and dispersal of juveniles; to develop improved methods of ageing and sexing this species.

#### **Paul Doyle                      Habitat fragmentation and the breeding biology of a migratory species (Leaden Flycatcher)**

Aims/Objectives: To determine whether the reproductive success of Leaden Flycatchers in Central Qld is affected by fragmentation of their habitat, and to compare breeding success in sedentary and migratory portions of the local population.

#### **Janet Gardner                      Social organisation and breeding biology of the Speckled Warbler**

Aims/Objectives: To determine the social organisation and breeding biology of the Speckled Warbler; to determine whether birds breed cooperatively, and if so which individuals contribute to the breeding effort and how; to use DNA fingerprinting to assign paternity to nestlings, to record reproductive success, juvenile survival and recruitment of breeding pairs and groups; to calculate territory size and patterns of use throughout the year.

#### **Robert Heinsohn                      Behavioural Ecology of Eclectus Parrots**

Aims/Objectives: To investigate the causes of reverse sexual dichromism in Eclectus Parrots; to investigate the adaptive benefit of group living and cooperative breeding; to investigate the adaptive benefit of extreme cultural control over sex allocation.

#### **Jan Komdeur                      Causes, consequences and mechanisms of sex allocation in sexually size-monomorphic and dimorphic bird species with complex mating systems**

Aims/Objectives: To exploit the unique attributes of the cooperatively breeding Seychelles Warbler, the Bell Miner and the Black-eared Miner, and the sexual size-dimorphic Brown Songlark to determine the proximate and ultimate factors responsible for sex ratio modification in birds; to examine the fitness consequences of sex allocation for parents and for male and female offspring; to predict what option individuals should take; and to determine to what extent a bias in offspring sex ratio may contribute to the decline in endangered bird species.

#### **Jan Komdeur                      Genetic benefits of mate choice and life history decisions in warbler species with complex mating systems**

Aims/Objectives: To determine whether females gain genetic or direct benefits from extra-pair males and to identify the cues used by females in selecting fathers; to test whether males are selective in directing their extra-pair copulation attempts at females and whether males adjust their investment in relation to their paternity; to identify the environmental influences on extra-pair behaviour; and to develop a model to predict which reproductive options individuals should take.

**Jordan Karubian          Social biology of the Red-backed Fairy-wren**

Aims/Objectives: To determine the social organisation and mating system of the Red-backed Wren, and to study the evolution of its mating and social system.

**Alan Leishman          Status of Gilbert's Whistler in Warraderry State Forest**

Aims/Objectives: To determine the status of Gilbert's Whistler in central-western NSW; to study population dynamics, territories and movements.

**Gary Luck          Habitat use and breeding biology of the Rufous Treecreeper**

Aims/Objectives: To determine habitat use by Rufous Treecreepers at the scale of vegetation associations, and of individual territories; to examine their breeding cycles and movements between territories; to compare habitat use, breeding biology and movement within a large continuous habitat patch with smaller, more fragmented patches.

**Manly Penguin Group   Population monitoring of the Manly Little Penguin colony**

Aims/Objectives: To monitor movements of Little Penguins from the Manly colony to nearby colonies and to monitor changes to the population size over time.

**Peter Mawson          Survival and dispersal of captive-raised Mallefowl chicks**

Aims/Objectives: To monitor the survival and dispersal of captive-raised Malefowl chicks during their reintroduction to the wild, following a fox-baiting and exclusion program in the study area.

**Jeremy Robertson      Mating behaviour and siblicide in Australian Pelicans**

Aims/Objectives: To study mating behaviour and siblicide in Australian Pelicans.

**Jeremy Robertson      Mate choice in Crested Pigeons**

Aims/Objectives: To determine the role of the spectacular crest and brightly coloured wing-bars in mate-choice in Crested Pigeons.

**Chris Surman          Population biology of seabirds on Pelsaert Island, Houtman Abrolhos, WA**

Aims/Objectives: To study the population biology and breeding behaviour of Lesser Noddies and Bridled Terns in the Houtman Abrolhos Islands.

***Bird Communities***

**Carla Catterall          Structure and ranging patterns of mixed-species flocks**

Aims/Objectives: To investigate the stability of membership, and patterns of spatial association between heterospecific individuals in a Eucalypt forest remnant near Brisbane; to determine the local movement patterns of these flocks, and whether particular groups of heterospecific individuals share a lone range.

**Andrew Cockburn      Gender of juveniles in cooperatively breeding birds**

Aims/Objectives: To identify the gender of juvenile birds, in an attempt to determine whether the sex bias that characterises adult populations of several species of birds is present among juveniles, or arises from differential mortality.

**Gavin Goodyear          Morphometrics and plumage of bush birds in south-east Queensland**

Aims/Objectives: To test for geographic variation (both clinal and between habitat types) in morphometrics and plumage in birds of SE Qld;

**Rhonda Green          Frugivory and seed dispersal by birds of subtropical forests**

Aims/Objectives: To determine which birds act as seed dispersers for subtropical fleshy-fruited plant species, both in and near rainforest and in Eucalypt woodland; to determine whether young frugivores

feed relatively more on fruit than older conspecifics; and whether latitudinal and altitudinal migrants return to particular trees or sites.

**Richard Gregory-Smith Comparative study of bush birds at stations above and below an escarpment**

Aims/Objectives: To compare populations, morphology, longevity and movements of birds at two stations, one above and one below the Southern Tablelands escarpment, Tallaganda Shire, NSW.

**Alan Lill Frugivory in birds in temperate Australia**

Aims/Objectives: To study facets of frugivory in co-habiting frugivorous birds: the significance of fruit in diet in summer and autumn and the nature of the foraging behaviour employed to exploit fruit resources; what factors influence fruit selection by silvereyes and other avian frugivores; what digestive constraints influence frugivory in silvereyes.

**Tim Male Seed dispersal by rainforest frugivores**

Aims/Objectives: To assess whether the common, large frugivores present in Coolooloa NP differ in the quality of seed dispersal they achieve for a set of common plants; to assess whether any dispersers deposit seeds in such a way that the seeds have reduced mortality from seed predators (a component of seed dispersal quality).

**Ken Mills Study of waders at Broome Sewerage Works**

Aims/Objectives: To assess the site fidelity of Common Sandpipers; to determine which species of Snipe *Gallinago* spp are present at Broome and to collect moult and morphometric information on waders.

**Ken Mills Study of birds in mangrove communities near Broome, WA**

Aims/Objective: To determine which species exhibit significant movement between mangrove communities; to collect moult and morphometric information to assist determination of age and sex and to examine the stability of populations of different species.

**Lisa Nicholson An ecological study of the seabird communities of the Lowendal Islands, WA**

Aims/Objectives: To locate the main seabird breeding colonies on the Lowendal Islands of Bridled, Crested and Roseate Terns and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters; to study and compare colony fidelity, breeding and foraging behaviour.

**Guinnevere Roberts Potential for nectar limitation in a honeyeater community**

Aims/Objectives: To assess the relationship between nectar availability and honeyeater density, reproductive success, territoriality and species composition; to compare the relative efficacy of honeyeaters and Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) as pollinators of some native Australian plants.

**Jeremy Robertson      Population dynamics, morphometrics and moult in a community of arid-land birds**

Aims/Objectives: To monitor the population dynamics of a community of birds at two arid mallee /bluebush sites; to gather morphometric data to facilitate ageing and sexing arid birds; to determine which local species would repay more intensive studies.

## **BILL BOARD**

### **Fate of A. Bird**

On 7 April 1997 the Banding Office received the following message from the Australian Federal Police:

Subject: Deceased wildlife      Persons: A. Bird (no further details)

Information: On 3 April Det Sgt Steven Kaipa from Madang CID, Papua New Guinea, contacted the Australian Federal Police. Kaipa explained that some of his officers had located a bird carrying a Canberra contact number at Saidor, south of Madang. After some initial confusion it was established that it was indeed one of the feathered variety, to which was attached an aerial and a leg tag.

Kaipa stated that as per instructions on the leg tag he had contacted Wildlife Australia and spoken to a Peter Driscoll. Mr Driscoll requested the police to forward the personal belongings of A. Bird to Canberra. Due to financial restrictions, Madang PPC advised contact with LO [Liaison Officer], who subsequently undertook to forward these to Canberra through the diplomatic bag.

In depth investigations by Royal PNG Constabulary personnel, Madang, revealed that A. Bird was travelling to Siberia (economy) and was the subject of a migratory study. Unfortunately A. Bird appears to have experienced undercarriage problems, landing just short of Madang. Local police on instructions fed A. Bird with crab meat in an attempt to keep it alive.

Unfortunately A. Bird succumbed to injuries and passed away on Easter Monday, being accorded full RPNGC police honours and buried in the confines of the Madang Police Station.

Task: For information of Peter Driscoll - Wildlife Australia. Personal belongings of A. Bird will be forwarded on receipt from Madang. [message ends]

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A. Bird, alias Eastern Curlew 101-06459, had been banded, leg-flagged and fitted with a satellite transmitter at Moreton Island, Queensland on 10.2.97, by Dr Peter Driscoll of the Queensland Wader Study Group. It dropped out of the sky at Saidor on 11.3.97 and was picked up exhausted and suffering from a damaged leg. Despite receiving most tender care it died some days later. The satellite transmitter has been forwarded to the Banding Office by diplomatic bag.

06459 was one of several Eastern Curlews (*Numenius madagascariensis*) to be caught up in Cyclone Justin shortly after takeoff from Moreton Bay on northward migration in February. Other birds banded at the same time delayed their departure until after the cyclone, and two Eastern Curlews carrying satellite transmitters have since been tracked to their breeding grounds in Russia.

The recovery of the bird caused a flurry of international communications and liaison involving the Australian Embassy in Port Moresby PNG, the ABBBS office in Canberra, Peter Driscoll in Brisbane, the Australian Federal Police, the Royal PNG Constabulary, and several PNG citizens who had discovered and cared for the bird on its arrival at Saidor. Notwithstanding some existing difficulties between the Australian and Papua New Guinea governments, the interest, goodwill and helpful cooperation between all involved could not have been greater. It is possible that the unfortunate bird was responsible for an improvement in international relations as well as increasing our knowledge of the migration strategies of Eastern Curlews.

Further details of the Eastern Curlew tracking project, jointly organised by the Wild Bird Society of Japan and the Queensland Wader Study Group, with assistance from the Queensland Department of the Environment, can be read on the Internet, on <http://www.wnn.or.jp/wnn-n/migrant/english/>

### Invitation to join the Western Banders Association

The **Western Banders Association (WBA)** was formed in February 1995 after a gathering of banders in Dryandra Forest, Western Australia. It was recognised at that meeting that there is a need for a system of quick and frequent communication between banders in Western Australia. No other avenue exists to inform people of current banding practices at relatively short notice. This often leads to missed opportunities to take part in constructive and instructive local activity.

Many projects currently operating in Western Australia are supported by experienced banders, trainees, volunteers and friends. Senior banders contribute their knowledge and equipment to support projects supervised by other researchers, especially those set up and operated by newly qualified banders and tertiary students. Some projects are designed to provide trainee banders with experience in different habitats and in handling species that they may not encounter while working with their nominated supervisor.

Members of the WBA receive a newsletter, the *Western Banders News*, which is published every 4 to 6 weeks, with news about what is happening in the West. Occasionally there are reports on members' activities interstate or abroad.

Local gatherings are organised to provide support for current banding projects and their supervising banders to provide the best possible training for new banders; to encourage better technical skills and analytical effort among banders, to hold workshops and seminars in support of the above aims. Members of WBA are currently compiling data for inclusion in HANZAAB. Meetings are held every 4 to 6 weeks and working sessions conducted to manufacture equipment. Profits from sales are directed into a fund which will provide revenue for annual grants to deserving banders.

Membership subscription is currently \$5.00 a year.

Payments and correspondence can be sent to

Greg Marston  
Honorary Treasurer  
Western Banders Association  
24 Westfield Road  
KELMSCOTT, WA, 6111

Contributions and communications from interstate banders are most welcome.