



The Blue Mountains Bird Observer

September 2013.

Newsletter of the **Blue Mountains Bird Observers**

Web: www.bmbo.org.au

PROGRAM OF EVENTS

WALKS

(Map references Blue Mountains UBD 10th cd. Contact leader if uncertain about walk or weather, or if you need a lift from the station).

Wednesday walks: Mark Ley. Mob: 0416 199 638 Email: mark.ley@exemail.com.au

Sunday walks: Chris Todd. 4751 3482. Mob: 0424 521 680. **Botanical walks:** Jill Dark 4758 7061

Wednesday, 18th September

Megalong Valley. Meet 8.00 am at Station Street, Blackheath (west side of level crossing) Map 7 D 9. We'll check out a few different locations and walk a few kms of the Six Foot Track from the Old Ford Reserve. Leader Françoise.

Sunday 6th October

Capertee Valley Bus Trip. Meet 8.00 am outside Westpac Bank, Macquarie Road, Springwood. Please note: Clocks go forward on Sunday morning.

Wednesday, 9th October

Blue Gum Swamp, Winmalee. Very early dawn chorus walk. Meet 5.00 am at end of White Cross Road, Winmalee (sunrise 6.22 am) Bring a torch. No toilets.

Wednesday, 23rd October

Swallow Rock Reserve, Ebenezer. Meet 8.30 am at Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, near historic church. Map 50 K 13. Toilets.

Wednesday, 30th October

Heritage Track, Blackheath (Botanical Walk). Meet 9.00 am at Visitors Centre, Govetts Leap Road.

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2013 BirdLife Australia – Twitchathon

Hooley-dooley, is it a year since the last Twitchathon? It's time for the **Rocking Warblers** to reassemble the troops, polish our optics, stock up with chocolate and get serious about this year's Twitchathon route. The team currently consists of Jill Dark, Sue Thomson and Leanne Huxley and we may recruit Chris Huxley as driver and navigator.

Following the success of the Powerful Owl project in 2011, Birdlife Australia has decided to extend its support with the proceeds of this year's Twitchathon, to the tune of \$30,000. So we had better get fund raising.

Over the years we have received very generous support from BMBO club members and once again we ask that you dig deep into your pockets (avoiding tissues and muesli bar wrappers of course). Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Collecting sponsorship can be a tedious affair, so this year we request that your donations be placed into an envelope with your name and address (for receipting) and passed on to a team member at either one of the club bird walks or club meetings. There is always at least one of us present.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Leanne Huxley

August Quarterly General Meeting.

There was a splendid attendance of 36, including several new members and visitors, at the QGM held on Saturday, 10th August 2013 at Maria Kinder Hall.

Cheryl Slater presented her treasurer's reports, disclosing that the club remains in a very sound financial position, with membership now at record levels (see the summary of Cheryl's reports below).

Paul Vale presented a conservation report, briefly summarising the activities of the conservation sub-committee and related issues (see further the detailed conservation report in the August newsletter).

The president Carol Probeta announced that the club committee had decided to donate \$500 to BirdLife Australia's Woodland Birds for Biodiversity project, which, inter alia, manages the Regent Honeyeater recovery scheme.

Carol also advised that the new Ridgeline outdoor activities shop in Katoomba was offering a 10% discount to BMBO members on most merchandise.

The subject of the 2013 Twitchathon was canvassed. This year BMBO will likely be

represented by the Rocking Warblers and by John French, who will be joining his mates from the Cowra Woodlands.

In a canny marketing strategy, John is selling photographic calendars to raise funds, which this year will go to the Powerful Owl project.

Liz Benson floated a proposal that the club supply individual name badges to members to wear on outings and at meetings. The feeling was that this was a good idea, and the committee will explore the practicalities.

The guest speaker was Matt Herring, who gave an engrossing talk entitled 'Bitterns in Rice'. The Australasian Bittern (AB) is a nationally endangered bird, and also one of our least known. Remarkably, its stronghold is the rice-growing irrigation area in the NSW Riverina, which is among the most intensely farmed agricultural regions in the nation.

Matt has been working on a project to investigate the relationship between ABs and rice crops, and to educate the community on ways to manage their crops to boost conservation outcomes for the species.

From our Treasurer.

This short report is compiled from the full reports for the three months ending 30th June which were presented at the August general meeting. The membership renewal period went very well and at end of June we had 137 household memberships (including 10 new ones) and 4 life memberships.

Below is a summary of our financial situation:

Bank balance as at 1 April 2013	6290.85
Add: Received 1 April–30 June 2013	1832.06
Less: Payments 1 April–30 June 2013	759.74
Bank balance as at 30 June 2013	7363.17

If you have any questions about any of these figures, or would like at any time to receive a copy of the Income & Expenditure spreadsheet which is updated at the end of each month, please contact me by phone (4751 3911) or email cslater@westnet.com.au. Cheryl Slater (aka the Dollar Bird).

T-shirts for Regent Honeyeaters.

Readers may be familiar with the fashion T-shirts created by Alison Green on wildlife themes.

BirdLife Australia has announced that Alison has approached them with an offer of support for the Regent Honeyeater recovery program. October 2013 will be Endangered Species at Alison Green Designs. During the month, Alison will feature four T-shirts with her screen-printed designs of endangered species (Corroboree Frog, Regent Honeyeater, Glossy Black-Cockatoo and Gouldian Finch), and she will donate \$10 from each sale to a relevant project for the species concerned.

Proceeds from the sale of the Regent Honeyeater T-shirts will be donated to the BirdLife Australia Woodland Birds for Biodiversity Regent Honeyeater Recovery Project. The T-shirts are available in either Beige or Ocean Blue and can be viewed on the Adults T-shirts page on

www.alisongreendesigns.com.au

Orders can be placed at any time until the end of October and a donation will be made on your behalf to the recovery program (to which BMBO has also decided to make a donation (see the report on the QGM)).

Minstrels in Scarlet.

Colin Scouler.

This season I first heard it on 11th August near the Glenbrook entrance of Blue Mountains National Park. Now, three weeks later, I hear it everywhere in bushland around Glenbrook and lower down along the Nepean. It's unmistakable – the song of the Scarlet Honeyeater.

HANZAB describes it as an 'explosive, silvery tinkling, in stanzas of half a dozen notes, rising and falling erratically' (to hear a brief sample go to <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Myzomela-sanguinolenta>)

The song is surprisingly loud for such a small bird and can be heard a considerable distance away. And in early spring the birds seem to sing almost constantly through the day. Around Sydney, the species is considered nomadic, following the flowering of trees and shrubs on which they feed. As soon as they arrive the males proclaim their feeding territories by calling conspicuously high in the canopy.

The authorities differ as to whether it is only the males that utter the song. Some deny that the female sings at all; others claim that her song is different

and 'less fluent' than that of the male. H.A.Ford has suggested that the singing 'females' are actually juvenile males, which closely resemble the brown females and are quite unlike the gaudy adult males.

Certainly, both sexes give the brisk, penetrating 'chiew-chiew' contact call, which is the other vocal signature of the Scarlet Honeyeater.



Scarlet Honeyeater Photo Sue Thomson

Eagle Cam update.

Two eggs have been laid by the nesting White-bellied Sea-Eagles in Sydney Olympic Park, the first on 6th July and the second on the 9th. To view live cam feed go to www.seaeagle.cam.org/video.html

An unusual encounter occurred at 5.14 am on 29th August when a Southern Boobook landed on the nest while the female was sitting on the eggs, then left by flying at the eagle. See <http://youtu.be/sOlqxbLst-o> <http://youtu.be/sOlqxbLst-o>

WALKS REPORTS

Darks Common, Lapstone - Sunday 4th August 2013.

Chris Todd.

Fifteen people turned up on a beautiful blue sky day and there was no wind. The walk into Darks Common is along a level track that a tram ran on in the early 1900s to facilitate the building of the Glenbrook Gorge tunnel. We set off at 9.30am along the track. It wasn't long before the birds began to show themselves. **Spotted Pardalotes** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were the first to show.

Then with so many eyes looking we spotted **White-naped Honeyeater** and a pair of **Golden Whistlers**. More Honeyeaters, **Eastern Spinebill** and **Lewin's Honeyeater**. Let's not overlook the more common birds like **Crimson Rosella**, **Laughing Kookaburra** and **Eastern Yellow Robin**. About one kilometre into Darks Common the track ends abruptly at a cliff which overlooks the main western train. It was near the end that an interesting event happened. One of the ladies on the walk, Debbie Harris, was standing in the middle of the track when a **White-eared Honeyeater** suddenly flew out from the bush and landed on her head. With no shyness at all it started to pull out her hair. Everyone came along to see what was happening and soon everyone who had a camera or a phone was standing there taking pictures. There were several **White-eared Honeyeaters** flying around in the vicinity all chatting to each other. Some of the more experienced people on the walk told us that this behavior is not uncommon and in fact the birds like to collect hair for the lining of their nests. Debbie, in good spirit just stood there and let the bird pull out several strands of her hair. Our resident Bird Photographer, Sue Thomson was having a field day and she ended up with some excellent shots which I will include here. I guess the **White-eared Honeyeater** was the bird of the day and it spotted Debbie.



The White-eared Honeyeater pulling out Debbie's hair.
Photo Sue Thomson.



Debbie Harris and the White-eared Honeyeater
Photo Sue Thomson

Transit of Venus Track – Wednesday 7th August 2013.

Liz Benson.

After an extremely windy day and wet night, the chance of such beautiful weather was not expected. Twenty members made it the start of the walk in spite of detours due to road works. An early surprise was hearing a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and at the end of the walk we heard a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** too. Coming through Banksia forests, we noticed that the **Honeyeaters** were busy including **New Hollands** and **White-naped**s with the tunes being provided by the **Grey Shrike-thrush**. A big joy was a quick view of the **Beautiful Firetail**. The wattles were sunny fields and the sighting of **Brown Cuckoo-Doves** was very widespread among the group. These were elected as the bird of the day and Jo Barrett was the first to see them. After getting through some obstacles we arrived at the big tree corner and Mark got a quick look at an **Australian Owlet-nightjar** emerging from a hollow. However after a close and then distant vigil there was no further sightings. While giving it one more chance Cheryl saw a raptor which actually turned out to be a pair of **Grey Goshawks**. A total of thirty species were spotted on this flowery sunny walk.



August 2013 Observations.

Neil Kirby.

Hoary-headed Grebes were still at Glenbrook Lagoon early in the month, reported Mark Ley. Julie Neumann noted that the **HHG** at Glenbrook Lagoon had started to get their hoary plumage.

There were 2 **White-headed Pigeons** in the garden of Libby and Keith Raines at Mt Wilson between the 25th and 30th. Gail Metcalfe found a dead juvenile **WHP** in her driveway at Katoomba on the 31st. The bird had flesh torn away and Gail thought it may have been attacked by a fox.

Two **Brown Cuckoo-Doves** visited Tom and Wendy Whitton's birdbath at their place in Katoomba on the 27th.

A **Bar-shouldered Dove** was heard by Paul Vale in Blackheath during the month. It only made about 3 or 4 sets of calls.

Carol Proberts found a pile of feathers on Narrow Neck, Katoomba on the 3rd from an **Australian Owlet-nightjar**; killed by a predator. An **AON** was seen on the BMBO Wednesday Walk on the Transit of Venus track, Woodford on the 7th.

A **White-necked Heron** was seen in the backyard of a friend of Sandra Stevens and Paul Vale in Blackheath during the month. The bird was investigating the garden water feature and was being harassed by a family of **Australian Magpies**, and a **WNH** was seen by Sue Nicol on the 27th flying over the helipad behind the National Park Centre, Govetts Leap, Blackheath. It was being pursued by an **Australian Raven**.

An **Australian White Ibis** was seen by Carol Proberts at Wentworth Falls Lake on the 29th.

I saw 30+ **Straw-necked Ibis** flying west over the Great Western Highway at Blackheath near Evans Lookout Road on the 21st.

On the 18th Dennis Smith saw a **Square-tailed Kite** in his street in Mt Riverview and Julie Neumann saw a **STK** over her place in Mt Riverview on the 2nd and 3rd.

While walking up Bee Farm Road, Springwood on the 22nd, Cheryl Slater heard a bird call that was unfamiliar to her and as the bird flew over she saw that it was a raptor. Later at home she listened to her bird call CDs, and was able to identify the raptor as a **Pacific Baza** and on Birdline NSW for the 11th Matt Stevens reported a pair of **PBs** had returned to Sun Valley. They were last seen by him in April.

On the 16th in Wills Street, Blackheath a **Brown Goshawk** was seen by Barbara Crighton carrying a mostly-eaten carcass which looked quite big for the size of the bird. Gail Metcalfe saw a **BG** being harassed by **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** at her place in Katoomba during the month.



Pacific Baza

Photo Sue Thomson

A **Grey Goshawk** was seen on the BMBO Wednesday Walk on the Transit of Venus track Woodford on the 7th.

Libby and Keith Raines watched a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** riding a thermal above their property at Mt Wilson on the 21st. Two **WTE** were seen by Carol Proberts in undulating display over the Grose Valley on the 5th August.

With the large numbers of honeyeaters on their return migration through Springwood during the month, it was no coincidence that Liz Field and Elizabeth Mitchell saw a female **Peregrine Falcon** twice (on the 26th & 29th); the second time it was being harassed by a **Magpie-lark**.

Mark Ley heard 2 **Lewin's Rails** calling from near the edge of North Lawson Swamp on the 9th.

Barry McQuinn watched a **Buff-banded Rail** on the 31st on the Mt Hay Road, Leura attempting to get through a fence. It was showing a high degree of vulnerability and potential self-harm in its struggle to do so.

On the 4th at Glenbrook Lagoon a **Masked Lapwing** was seen incubating three eggs in a scrape on a small mud island; reported by Mark Ley. Julie Neumann also noted the breeding activity of this pair.

Mark again saw 3 **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** on the 9th below the air tower on Kings Tableland (Wentworth Falls), 3 were seen by Carol Proberts on Kings Tableland on the 5th and 8 were seen on

the 16th; Dick Turner recorded **GBC** in his street in Lapstone on the 29th

On the 17th at Narrow Neck, Katoomba, Barbara Crighton saw a group of 30 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** flying overhead, Tom Whitton on the 14th saw approximately 25 **YTBCs** flying north across the Great Western Highway at Wentworth Falls. On the 7th a flock of over 30 **YTBCs** was seen by Terese Ramage flying south to north just east of Faulconbridge station and on the 10th Dennis Smith had a flock of 11 **YTBCs** fly over his place in Mt Riverview.

Joy Kane saw 1 male **Gang-gang Cockatoo** and 1 other in Mimosa Street, Wentworth Falls on the 4th. Margret Baker noted that on the 7th, 2 were sighted by Wendy Pepper as they circled over *Allocasuarina littoralis* trees at 584 Hawkesbury Road, Winmalee. A friend of mine advised that she had a pair of **GBCs** visit her yard in Glenelgin Road, Winmalee on the 23rd.

Gail Metcalfe heard a **Powerful Owl** calling on the 31st between 4am and 5am from her place in Katoomba; a **PO** was calling in the early hours of the 31st near Jill Dark's place in Hazelbrook. A **PO** male 'woo-hoo' call was heard by Colin Scouler at about 4.20 am for 3-5 minutes on 31st from his home in Glenbrook. The calls were coming from the direction of Knapsack Reserve, and on the 5th a **PO** was reported to Dick Turner from Darks Common, Lapstone.

Carol Probet's has been seeing bent-tail female **Superb Lyrebirds** (which indicates they are nesting) at Katoomba and Leura throughout the month.

Wendy Whitton saw a male **Satin Bowerbird** attending to its bower and calling from a small tree above it, in the Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens at Katoomba.

At Diamond Head Point, on Narrow Neck, Katoomba on the 7th, Bob Sinclair heard a **Pilotbird** calling but was unable to see it, a **PB** was recorded by Carol Probet's on Narrow Neck, Katoomba on the 3rd and a **PB** was recorded by Carol on Kings Tableland, (Wentworth Falls) on the 5th; Carol heard a **PB** calling in a gully near Kittyhawk Avenue, Wentworth Falls on the 29th and Mark Ley recorded 2 **PBs** at Wilsons Glen, Woodford on the 1st and 2 at Murphys Glen Woodford on the 15th.

On the 5th while bushwalking at Pulpit Rock near Mt Victoria Carl Bennett watched 3 **Rockwarblers** as they approached a group of 20 or so walkers who were sitting around the rock eating lunch; 1 **RW** was seen by Carol Probet's at Mt York Lookout (Mt Victoria) on the 15th. On a cold and windy **RW** survey at Evans Lookout, Blackheath on the 23rd, Paul Vale and Sandra Stevens had 2 birds hopping

around their feet and between their legs. One **RW** was seen by Carol at Evans Lookout, Blackheath on the 5th. Bob Sinclair saw a **RW** as it flew low across the track on Narrow Neck, Katoomba on the 7th; One **RW** was seen by Carol at Sublime Point Lookout, Leura on the 6th; on the 5th Carol saw 2 **RWs** on Kings Tableland (Wentworth Falls), one of which appeared to be taking nectar from *Banksia ericifolia* flowers. It was almost exactly one year ago that she recorded this behaviour for the first time at Wentworth Falls. I heard a **RW** calling below the rock shelf at the north-western edge of the Yellow Rock Lookout (Winmalee) survey site on the 24th. Dennis Smith saw 2 **RWs** on the 29th in the reserve below his place in Mt Riverview and on the 2nd at least 2 **RWs** were heard by Julie Neumann at the start of Bennetts Ridge trail, Blue Mountains National Park, Glenbrook

There were 2 **Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens** seen by Mark Ley on the 9th in heath opposite the air tower on Kings Tableland (Wentworth Falls).

Mark saw 2 **Buff-rumped Thornbills** at North Lawson Swamp on the 9th and Dennis Smith noted that, sadly, he has not seen any **BRTs** since last May. They used to be plentiful once in the reserve below his place in Mt Riverview.

A pair of **Eastern Spinebills** was nest-building in the hedge outside Carol Probet's window at Wentworth Falls on the 28th.



Yellow-faced Honeyeater Photo Sue Thomson

Many members commented on the large numbers of honeyeaters (mostly **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped**) migrating south through the Blue Mountains during the month.

Yellow-faced, White-naped Honeyeaters, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes were migrating south at Gordon Falls Lookout, Leura from the beginning of the month; noted by Carol Proberts.

A **Scarlet Honeyeater** popped up briefly in the garden of Liz Field and Elizabeth Mitchell in Springwood on the 28th, the first time this species had been seen for some months.

Barry McQuinn saw **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters** around Butterbox Point, Leura on the 5th.



Spotted Quail-thrush Photo Sue Thomson.

Up to 8 **Spotted Quail-thrushes** were seen by Carol Proberts along Mt York Road, Mt Victoria on the 15th, Julie Neumann saw a **SQT** along the Baltzer Lookout track, Blackheath on the 5th and a female **SQT** was regularly seen by Carol at the Rhododendron Garden, Blackheath during the month.

Joy Kane and Colin Hawdon had 3 lovely **Eastern Whipbirds** calling, hopping and digging through their garden in Wentworth Falls on several days during the month.

There were approximately 16 **Varied Sittellas** at 8.40am on the 12th, observed by Cathy Griffin just south of the beginning of Lyre Bird Dell track, Leura and 4 **VSSs** were again sighted in Lyrebird Dell, Leura by Cathy on the 23rd. They were feeding in a sheltered place in gale-force south-westerly winds.

The usual little flock of 6 or so **VSSs** were around Jill Dark's place in Hazelbrook during the last few days of the month and 1 **VS** was seen on 20th by Colin Scouler in West Glenbrook Nature Area.

Debbie Harris saw a dark morph **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** at Glenbrook Lagoon on the 3rd. She couldn't identify it at first, as the dark morph wasn't in her field guide (Simpson & Day). but when she described it to Mark Ley he found it in Slater.

3 Crested Shrike-tits were back on Jill Dark's property at Hazelbrook during the month

On the 31st along the Mt Hay Road, Leura, Barry McQuinn saw a flock of **Dusky Woodswallows** feeding on the ground and flying into the low branches of the eucalypts.

Barry heard and saw a **Grey Currawong** along the Mt Hay Road, Leura on the 5th.

Graeme Lees saw a **Rufous Fantail** on the 20th on the edge of the forest at the back of his block in Springwood.

A male **Scarlet Robin** was seen by Carol Proberts at Mt York (Mt Victoria) on the 15th; a **SR** was seen by Sue Nicol on the 27th along the Fairfax track near the NP Centre, Govetts Leap, Blackheath. Barry McQuinn on the 31st watched a young male **SR** dropping to the ground and feeding along the Mt Hay Road, Leura; a **SR** was sighted by Carl Bennett on the 26th in Spurwood Road Warrimoo. A male **SR** was seen by Colin Scouler on the 30th in Mt. Sion Park, Glenbrook and a pair of **SRs** was sighted by Mark Ley on the 15th at Portal Waterhole in the National Park at Glenbrook. They've been there since April.

Out of the reporting area Sue Nicol on the 15th saw the amazing sight of 6 male **Flame Robins** and several females all together, hopping across the grass at Blast Furnace Park, Lithgow.

Bassian Thrushes were back in the garden of Libby Raines at Mt Wilson during the month. They usually move out of the rainforest when it turns dry.



