

# Woodlands on the Wing

Issue 4 Winter 2013

*The Great Western Woodlands is the world's largest remaining temperate woodland. BirdLife Australia is partnering with The Nature Conservancy to establish a long-term monitoring project in the woodlands to assess species distribution, population status, movements and ecology of bird species in the region, to better inform conservation and management of this significant region. This project has been made possible through the generous support of the David Thomas Challenge and individual BirdLife Australia supporters.*



Some unexpected wader watching in the GWW.  
Photo: Liz Fox

## Birds, Bush, Tea and Serenity

### Trip Report by Jacob Loughridge

I am by no means a 'birder'. Apart from compulsory units at university my knowledge of birds and their calls is limited. However, an appreciation of wildlife and interest in new experiences and new places is all that you need. Once camp was set up in the Helena and Aurora Ranges, tea was shared, stories told and our gaggle of birders was set for a long weekend of watching, listening and enjoyment.

We were exposed to gorgeous rugged landscapes, treated to a universe of stars and illuminated by a moon that refused to be outshone. Collectively we accounted for 46 species within our 2-ha plots and saw many others on our travels, including a Brown Falcon. You definitely do get by with a little help from your friends and the support and help from Liz, Logan, Digby, Lorraine, Anne and Greg aided in flashes of brown being recognised as Weebills and high-pitched *chit-chit* became Purple-crowned Lorikeets.

I still am by no means a 'birder' but I thoroughly enjoyed spending a long weekend in the Great Western Woodland trying to be one.

## Easter Capers

There was a great turnout for the Easter surveys in the GWW, with a total of 31 volunteers taking part and providing survey data from all over the region. A big thank you to each and every one — I hope the Easter bunny still managed to find you!

Rain in the weeks before the survey resulted in many lakes being filled, although on the down-side there were a few muddy tracks to contend with. The intrepid group of Cheryl and Martin Gole and Andre and Judy Du Plessis forged ahead in a rarely visited area to the east of Widgiemooltha, despite the washed-out and boggy tracks, resulting in numerous new survey points to add to the map.

There were generally low levels of flowering across the region, although large numbers of Purple-crowned Lorikeets were still present in some areas. The large number of eucalypt buds seen in some areas indicates that the next few months may be a good time to visit the region.

Malleefowl were recorded once again around Karroun Hill, which seems to be an important area for them within the GWW, as well as sightings to the south-west of Kalgoorlie. Scarlet-chested Parrots were still present in Dundas Nature Reserve, well outside their usual arid zone distribution, while the sedentary Southern Scrub-robins were a delight for Dianne and Chris Reidy and Jan and Ron Waterman around the Peak Charles area.

The next survey (winter) will take place from 15–21 June (dates negotiable). Please contact Liz Fox if you'd like to be involved.



The Helena and Aurora Ranges team hard at work filling in Atlas forms and swatting up on bird identifications.  
Photo: Liz Fox

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# Species in Focus

## YELLOW-PLUMED HONEYEATER



Chris Tzaros

The Yellow-plumed Honeyeater is the most common honeyeater in the Great Western Woodlands, and the fifth most commonly recorded of all the species. They occur anywhere with eucalypts, particularly in areas of mallee, giving rise to their previous name of Mallee Honeyeater. They feed on nectar and insects in the canopy of trees and shrubs.

They are typically a conspicuous and aggressive bird with a variety of loud calls. Large groups can congregate at feeding sites where they constantly quarrel and may even fall out of the canopy and onto the ground while fighting.

The Yellow-plumed Honeyeater can be confused with the Grey-fronted Honeyeater, which also occurs within the GWW. However, the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater has more streaking on the breast and lacks the black lores and thin black neck-plume of the Grey-fronted Honeyeater.



Frank O'Connor

The similar-looking Grey-fronted Honeyeater

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater pairs build a cup-shaped nest of wool, grass and spider web, suspended from a thin fork in low trees or shrubs. The nests can be parasitised by cuckoos.

Although still common across southern Australia, the range of the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater has severely contracted due to the loss of mallee habitat in the Wheatbelt and it is now only found in small populations in remnant woodlands in this area.

Want to sign up to receive this quarterly newsletter?  
Please send your email or home address to Liz:  
liz.fox@birdlife.org.au  
0427 947 009 or (08) 9287 2716.

# Caught the Birding Bug?

If you'd like to help the birds outside of the GWW, go on local bird walks, and get involved in a variety of bird projects, then you might like to consider joining BirdLife Australia (if you haven't already!).

Become a member of BirdLife Australia and you'll soon be enjoying the satisfaction of making a real difference to our native birds. Your membership provides you with many benefits that will enhance your enjoyment of Australia's birds. Join our flock today and become part of Australia's biggest voice for birds — BirdLife Australia is making a difference and taking action on your behalf.

Membership benefits include:

- *Australian BirdLife*, our quarterly magazine packed with photographs and articles to inspire and inform
- Discounts on accommodation, education courses and tours at our observatories, sanctuaries, reserves and centres
- Free or discounted events across the country
- Membership of the biggest bird-interest library in Australia
- Access to information, advice and expertise
- Discount on books published by CSIRO Publishing
- Membership of a local branch providing activities, newsletters and advice helping you to enjoy birds in your area. The WA branch produces a quarterly newsletter full of local information, pictures, sightings and excursions.

More information can be found at <http://www.birdlife.org.au/support-us/> or by calling the Supporter Services team on 1300 730 075.



Photo: Liz Fox



# Have You Seen These Species?

While we are aiming to get records of as many species as possible in the GWW, there are some species that we are particularly interested in knowing where they are. If you see these species in your travels through the GWW at any time, please record details of the sighting (date, GPS coordinates, number of birds) and fill in an Atlas form or provide the details to the project coordinator. Every little bit of information helps!



Frank O'Connor

## Malleefowl

One of the few endangered species occurring within the GWW. They appear to be particularly common in the north-west of the GWW.



Chris Tzaros

## Gilbert's Whistler

This species is virtually extinct in the Wheatbelt, but remains common throughout the GWW.

## Australian Bustard

Widespread across Australia but rarely seen. Moves around in response to food availability.



Frank O'Connor

## Chestnut Quail-thrush

This species has declined in numbers in the adjacent Wheatbelt.



Chris Tzaros



Maris Lauva

## Emu

Another species that moves around in response to food. An important disperser of seeds from plants such as quandong and sandalwood.



Russell Cannings

## Major Mitchell's Cockatoo

A threatened species that requires large tree hollows for nesting.

## Purple-crowned Lorikeet

Numbers in the GWW are highly variable, depending on flower availability. Requires tree hollows for nesting.



Chris Tzaros

## Western Rosella (eastern subspecies)

Another species that requires tree hollows for nesting. Recently removed from the threatened species list.



Ben Pearce



Frank O'Connor

## Southern Scrub-robin

Ground foraging insectivores like the scrub-robin have decreased in the eastern states. We will monitor their numbers in the GWW.



# What's On?

## UPCOMING SURVEYS AND EVENTS

### GWW WINTER SURVEYS

15–21 June 2013

Grab your beanie and join us for a hot chocolate around the campfire during the winter surveys! The rain has washed the dust off the eucalypt leaves and this is a great time to see the splendour of the Woodlands. Survey groups will be heading out to all the usual locations, including Helena and Aurora Range, Credo Station, Cave Hill, Peak Charles, Trans Railway Line and Dundas Nature Reserve.

### SURVEY THE GWW WITHOUT GOING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

15–21 June 2013

As well as surveys being held in the usual locations (see above), Liz will be leading a special survey this winter to Fraser Range Station, east of Norseman, for those with 2WD vehicles, little birding experience, or who prefer not to camp. Accommodation is in a caravan park with camping and caravan sites, as well as room accommodation. Places are limited so contact Liz to book a place now. Accommodation fees apply.

### GWW SPRING SURVEYS

27 Sept–3 Oct 2013

The weather is warming, birds are breeding and the Salmon Gums may be in flower. All excellent reasons to be out in the Woodlands!

### FUTURE SURVEY DATES

If you would like to organise a future trip to the GWW, all survey dates to the end of 2014 are shown below. Please remember that all dates are flexible and surveys at any time of year are appreciated.

**Summer 2013/2014:** 28 December–3 January

**Autumn 2014:** 18–24 April

**Winter 2014:** 12–18 July

**Spring 2014:** 27 September–3 October



Photo: Liz Fox



## FeralScan

Feral animals are a huge threat to native wildlife, plants and ecosystems. If you see any in your travels, consider reporting them through FeralScan.

The FeralScan project is an initiative of the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre to provide a community space for recording and using pest animal data to support local pest control. Anyone can record evidence of pest animals in FeralScan, including sightings and damage caused by pest animals, and control activities undertaken. This evidence can help to make future control actions more targeted and cost-effective. FeralScan will soon host new facilities for recording feral animals in Australia, including a mobile version for Smart Phone and iPad users, facilities to support group control, and updated resources from the Invasive Animals CRC.

For more information, visit [www.feralscan.org.au](http://www.feralscan.org.au).



Photo: Roger & Cheryl McCallum



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Photo: Martin Gole