

# Woodlands on the Wing

Issue 17 Spring 2018

*The Great Western Woodlands in Western Australia is the world's largest remaining temperate woodland. The Birds of the Great Western Woodlands (GWW) Project aims to assess distribution, population status, movements and ecology of the bird species there, to better inform the conservation and management of this significant region. The Great Western Woodlands Committee (BirdLife WA) oversees the project, which is now in its seventh year, 2018. The first four years (2012 to 2015) were funded by a partnership between BirdLife Australia and The Nature Conservancy*

## FROM THE CHAIR

A few notable activities have occurred since the last WoW issue thanks to the enthusiastic GWW volunteers.

The 2018 autumn surveys were a huge success with around 306 bird sightings across five survey areas, an excellent effort from our survey co-ordinators Lorraine and Libby plus the wonderful survey volunteers.

We have been successful in winning an ABEF grant thanks to the enormous undertaking by Liz Fox and her team. This will fund a bird data analysis of the GWW bird surveys to date. The analysis will give us an insight into the management and conservation of birds in the GWW and the results will help us convince Governments and Local Authorities that the GWW is worth conserving.

We are currently planning a raffle to raise funds to support our continuing surveys and help with an application to recognise the GWW as a KBA (Key Biodiversity Area). We will be in touch with all WA BLA members in the near future seeking your help.

A training trip to Credo Station has been finalised, to run over a few days, from 14th to 17th September, by Tegan Douglas and the GWW committee. It is for volunteers who want to improve their birding skills, particularly identifying GWW birds. We hope that they will expand current survey teams and maybe even join our GWW committee.

We are part of a group of like-minded organisations that are encouraging our Environmental Minister Stephen Dawson to proclaim the Helena and Aurora Range into an A Class reserve. If any of you would like to support our efforts you could email Minister Dawson offering encouragement.

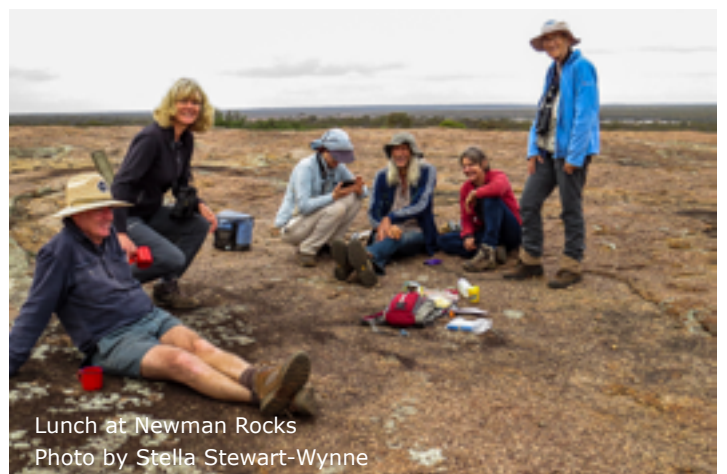
His email address: [minister.dawson@dpc.wa.gov.au](mailto:minister.dawson@dpc.wa.gov.au)

My thanks go to all our committee members and the tireless bird surveyors who contribute their valuable time into the wellbeing of the GWW.

Alasdair Bulloch – Chair – GWW Committee



Steep descent to Lake Dundas  
Photo by Stella Stewart-Wynne



Lunch at Newman Rocks  
Photo by Stella Stewart-Wynne

# Autumn surveys 2018

## Fraser Range

May 13 – 16 2018

A party of eight assembled at Fraser Range on Sunday May 13th. We started our survey on Monday morning on the north-east track. Having divided the party into two groups we leapfrogged, starting at FR6. Some of the gates required keys to gain access, but one gate for which we had a key was no longer a gate but was completely fenced off; which meant a 1km walk to get to site FR8. Halfway along the main track in an open paddock we came across eight **Banded Lapwings**. We recorded four raptors, namely **Wedge-tailed Eagle, Whistling Kites, Australian Hobby, and Brown Falcon**. The whole station was very dry with paddocks grazed to the ground, and thousands of kangaroos which were being culled. Water had been turned off to the caravan sites in the park. In spite of this the cattle looked in reasonable condition. We recorded **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** even though eucalypts were in bud with minimal flowering; as well as **Galaha, Australian Ringnecks** and **Mulga Parrots**. Honeyeaters were plentiful despite the small amount of blossom - we recorded nine species. Both **Shy Heathwren** and **Rufous Fieldwren** were seen, but the only whistler we found was the **Grey Shrike-thrush**. Three of the stakes marking the survey sites were missing, and several missing caps were replaced. The track to site FR23 was blocked by a fallen tree, requiring a 600m walk in. Probably the best site for birds was FR4 near which was a small dam. There were **Redthroats**, both fairy-wrens, treecreepers, thornbills and honeyeaters amongst others. A total of 53 species was reached which was good considering the dry conditions.

**Participants:** Libby McGill, Stella Stewart-Wynne, George Shevtsov, Linda Brotherton, Jane Putland, Mike Pekin, Marieke Weerheim and Belinda Forbes.

### Bird List

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Emu, Mound-builders</b>      | Emu                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Swans, Ducks, Grebes</b>     | Grey Teal                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Herons, Ibis, Spoonbill</b>  | White-faced Heron                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Birds of Prey</b>            | Wedge-tailed Eagle, Whistling Kite, Australian Hobby, Brown Falcon                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Waders</b>                   | Banded Lapwing                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Pigeons, Doves</b>           | Crested Pigeon                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Cockatoos, Parrots</b>       | Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Galah, Australian Ringneck, Mulga Parrot                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Cuckoos</b>                  | Pallid Cuckoo, Black-eared Cuckoo                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Night Birds</b>              | Tawny Frogmouth                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Tree-creepers</b>            | Rufous Treecreeper                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Wrens, Pardalotes</b>        | White-winged Fairy-wren, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Scrubwrens, Allies</b>       | Shy Heathwren, Rufous Fieldwren, Weebill, Inland Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Redthroat                                                                                                             |
| <b>Honeyeaters</b>              | Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird |
| <b>Babblers</b>                 | White-browed Babbler                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Whistlers, Shrike-thrush</b> | Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Bellbird                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Magpie Lark, Flycatchers</b> | Magpie Lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Cuckoo-shrikes</b>           | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Woodswallows</b>             | Black-faced Woodswallow                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Magpie, Butcherbirds</b>     | Grey Currawong, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Ravens</b>                   | Australian Raven, Torresian Crow                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Bowerbirds, Pipits</b>       | Australasian Pipit                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Swallows</b>                 | Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Thrushes, Silvereyes</b>     | Silvereye                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Dundas Reserve

May 16 - 20 2018

Six birders in three cars continued on to Balladonia, where we topped up fuel, then turned onto the Balladonia road south towards the coast. After continuing for 12km on bad corrugations we turned west onto the telegraph track, which was much better. Dividing into two groups we leapfrogged, stopping for lunch at DR16, and making camp near DR12. The countryside looked much better than at Fraser Range, but the suite of birds seen was smaller and less varied due no doubt to the uniformness of the woodland. **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** continued to be numerous even though there did not seem to be much flowering. **Red Wattlebirds** and **Weebills** were probably the most plentiful, while Pardalotes, **White-eared, White-fronted** and **Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters** were recorded at virtually every site. A **Wedge-tailed Eagle** provided the photographers with wonderful close-up views before it slowly took off and circled for a final photo-op. Fine views of a **Brown Falcon** were enjoyed too. At our final campsite west of DR3 we identified two honeyeater species not on the list for Dundas, namely **Tawny-crowned** and **Purple-gaped**. They perched on a dead tree about 10m from where we were

seated, offering excellent views in the bright light of the afternoon sun. This last campsite was the coldest on the trip, with ice on all the tents in the morning. **Gilbert's Whistler** was at last recorded at the western end of the telegraph track, while the only area where **Grey Shrike-thrushes** were seen in Dundas was on the southern section of the Fraser Range Road. The final total was 41 species. Two of the birds seen on this survey were not previously on the GWW list of birds for Dundas Reserve, namely **Purple-gaped Honeyeater** and **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**.

**Participants:** Libby McGill, Stella Stewart-Wynne, George Shevtsov, Linda Brotherton, Jane Putland and Mike Pekin.

#### Bird List

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Birds of Prey</b>            | Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Pigeons, Doves</b>           | Crested Pigeon                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Cockatoos, Parrots</b>       | Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Australian Ringneck                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Cuckoos</b>                  | Pallid Cuckoo, Black-eared Cuckoo                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Night Birds</b>              | Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Owlet-nightjar                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Treecreepers</b>             | Rufous Treecreeper                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Wrens, Pardalotes</b>        | Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Scrubwrens Allies</b>        | Shy Heathwren, Weebill, Inland Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Redthroat                                                                                                              |
| <b>Honeyeaters</b>              | White-fronted Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird |
| <b>Chats, Robins</b>            | Western Yellow Robin, Southern Scrub-robin                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Whistlers, Shrike-thrush</b> | Gilbert's Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Bellbird                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Magpie Lark, Flycatchers</b> | Willie Wagtail                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Cuckoo-shrikes</b>           | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Woodswallows</b>             | Dusky Woodswallow                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Magpie, Butcherbirds</b>     | Grey Currawong, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Bowerbirds, Pipit</b>        | Australasian Pipit                                                                                                                                                                        |

## Cave Hill and Jilbadji

22 – 28 April 2018

In this trip, Volunteer Co-ordinators Libby and Lorraine decided to trial combining Cave Hill and Jilbadji into a single survey trip, to save time and kilometres. These survey areas, both adjacent to the Great Eastern Highway, were then completed in an efficient five days.

### Cave Hill

The first part of the team, consisting of Sue, Xenia, Lorraine, Richard, Libby, and Ray, arrived on the Sunday night and with an early start on Monday commenced surveying sites along the road running east to Cave Hill and those sites adjacent to Cave Hill. The track from Victoria Rock Road running east to Cave Hill was wet with deep ruts which would make it difficult to negotiate for vehicles with a low clearance or towing a camper or caravan. Several sites with Allocasuarina vegetation were devoid of birds at the time of our survey.

Site CH7 gave us lovely views of a **Golden Whistler**, **Purple-gaped Honeyeater** and **Western Yellow Robin** plus a juvenile **Australasian Grebe** in the dam on the rock.

The following day with Jan, Ron, Sue, and Graham joining the group, we set out to McDermid Rock to complete surveying the remaining sites. Thus all the Cave Hill sites were completed in two days.

Without flowering gums and other species Honeyeaters or **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** were not in abundance. Only seven of the possible fourteen honeyeater species were seen. However we did get nice representation from the robins and whistlers, as **Jacky Winter**, **Red-capped Robin**, **Western Yellow Robin**, **Southern Scrub-robin**, plus **Golden**, **Rufous** and **Gilbert's Whistler** were all seen. Raptors were in short supply. Total number of species identified in the Cave Hill reserve was 44.



Cave Hill dam where juvenile Australasian Grebe seen  
Photo by Ray Walker



## Bird List

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Swans, Ducks and Grebes</b>  | Australasian Grebe                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Birds of Prey</b>            | Brown Falcon                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Pigeon, Doves</b>            | Common Bronzewing                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Cockatoos, Parrots</b>       | Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Australian Ringneck, Western Rosella                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Night Birds</b>              | Southern Boobook, Australian Owlet-nightjar                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Treecreepers</b>             | Rufous Treecreeper                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Wrens, Pardalotes</b>        | Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Scrubwrens, Allies</b>       | Weebill, Inland Thornbill                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Honeyeaters</b>              | Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater, Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird |
| <b>Chats, Robins</b>            | Jacky Winter, Red-capped Robin, Western Yellow Robin, Southern Scrub-robin                                                                                                           |
| <b>Babblers</b>                 | White-browed Babbler                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Whistlers, Shrike-thrush</b> | Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Gilbert's Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Bellbird                                                                                           |
| <b>Flycatchers</b>              | Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Cuckoo-shrikes</b>           | Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Woodswallows</b>             | Dusky Woodswallow                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Butcherbirds</b>             | Grey Currawong, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Ravens</b>                   | Australian Raven, Little Crow                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Bowerbirds, Pipit</b>        | Australasian Pipit                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Swallows</b>                 | Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Thrushes, Allies</b>         | Silvereye                                                                                                                                                                            |

## Jilbadji

By Lorraine Chyne

After refuelling with petrol and food at Coolgardie, we proceeded to Karalee Rocks to convoy into Jilbadji. Our plans to leap frog survey and reach JR9 by 4pm on Wednesday were doubly dashed – firstly by the multitude of fallen trees that had to be cleared from the track and secondly by a slight navigational hiccup - we had taken a wrong track! After camping overnight and back tracking we decided it best for Jan and Rob (with their caravan) to return to the highway and take the Marvel Loch - Forrestania Road to complete sites near Lake Cronin. The track into JR9 from Karalee Rocks is too overgrown for caravans and tricky for lower camper trailers. Even on the correct track we were clearing the road approx. every 500 metres. An axe or chainsaw proved very helpful – thank you to Graham and Ray for supplying theirs!

Notwithstanding the difficulties, the Gimlets were just beautiful - especially in the early morning light - and we were cheered on by **Gilbert's Whistlers** at every stop.

With two survey parties the remaining sites were completed on Thursday and Friday. Following a similar trend to Cave Hill, the absence of flowering plants at Jilbadji made **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** scarce and the variety of Honeyeaters much lower compared with our Spring 2017 visit. Only one raptor was seen – a **Brown Falcon**. The southern end of Jilbadji produced two exciting sightings for Jan and Ron. **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** and even more exciting – a **Crested Shrike-tit**. The Shrike-tit was on top of a bush and at first glance appeared to be a **Golden Whistler**, but closer examination revealed the crest with heavy striping. This sighting is a great incentive to visit Jilbadji. Total species number for Jilbadji was 44.

Thanks go to the band of committed surveyors who worked so hard and cooperatively to complete a total of 50 survey sites within 5 days.

**Participants:** Lorraine and Richard Chyne, Libby McGill, Sue Abbotts, Xenia Dennet, Graham and Sue Johnson, Ray Walker, Ron and Jan Waterman.



Track becoming impassable for large caravans  
Photo by Ray Walker



Photo by Libby McGill

## Bird List

### Emu, Mound Builders

### Birds of Prey

### Pigeons, Doves

### Cockatoos, Parrots

### Cuckoos

### Night Birds

### Treecreepers

### Wrens, Pardalotes

### Scrubwrens, Allies

### Honeyeaters

### Chats, Robins

### Quail-thrush, Allies

### Whistlers, Shrike-thrush

### Woodswallows

### Magpie, Butcherbirds

### Swallows

Emu

Brown Falcon

Common Bronzewing

Purple Crowned Lorikeet,  
Australian Ringneck, Western  
Rosella, Mulga Parrot

Black-eared Cuckoo

Southern Boobook, Tawny  
Frogmouth

Rufous Treecreeper

Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Spotted  
Pardalote, Striated Pardalote

Shy Heathwren, Weebill, Inland  
Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped  
Thornbill

Brown-headed Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater,  
White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Spiny-cheeked  
Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird

Jacky Winter, Red-capped Robin, Western Yellow Robin, Southern Scrub-robin

Varied Sittella

Crested Shrike-tit, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Gilbert's Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested  
Bellbird

Dusky Woodswallow

Grey Currawong, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie

Tree Martin



Photo by Ray Walker

## Karroun Hill

May 2018

by Mark Binns & Wayne O'Sullivan

We entered Karroun Hill Reserve at the south east corner and were first of all surprised to find a solitary **Black-tailed Native Hen** on the fence track. No sign of any water for kilometres around and, disturbed by our vehicles, it ran into the fence almost becoming entangled between the layers of netting. Surveying was then very quiet, the birds that were present not calling much making finding them and identifying them more difficult. We worked our way west to the road then went back up into the high country in the centre of the reserve to do some more random surveys. We thoroughly enjoyed the place, leaving the vehicles and walking kilometres further in to interesting and delightful country. With rain threatening to make the track impassable we came back out to the road and finished off the other fixed sites that remained. The rain then became torrential. The second day of rain however the bush was no longer silent and **Crested Bellbirds** and all were singing again. The long dry season had ended.

There were a number of memorable bird encounters. One was two **Tawny Frogmouths** together on the ground, the fifth time I have had them in a two hectare plot. On our return we found them again, this time in a tree. One morning while breakfasting we were visited by a **Spotted Nightjar** repeatedly flying low over our camp in broad daylight. After the rain another surprise was a lone **Australian Bustard** which flew into the reserve. Final tally for the survey was 49 species.

The marker stake for Site KH4 was missing, but the aluminium tag was lying on the recently graded road. We replaced the original stake with a bent one to which we attached the tag, hoping that no-one would walk off with a bent stake!

**Participants:** Mark Binns and Wayne O'Sullivan

**Note:** Two of the birds seen on this survey were not on the GWW list of birds of Karroun Hill – namely **Black-tailed Native Hen** and **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**.



Black-tailed Native Hen  
Photo by Mark Binns



|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bird List</b>                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Mound Builders</b>            | Malleefowl                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Birds of Prey</b>             | Wedge-tailed Eagle                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Crakes, Rails, Gallinules</b> | Black-tailed Native-hen                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Bustard</b>                   | Australian Bustard                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Pigeons, Doves</b>            | Common Bronzewing                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Cockatoos, Parrots</b>        | Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Australian Ringneck                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Night Birds</b>               | Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Spotted Nightjar                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Treecreepers</b>              | Rufous Treecreeper                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Wrens, Pardalotes</b>         | Splendid Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Scrubwrens, Allies</b>        | Weebill, Inland Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Redthroat, Southern Whiteface                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Honeyeaters</b>               | Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird |
| <b>Chats, Robins</b>             | Jacky Winter, Red-capped Robin, Western Yellow Robin, Southern Scrub-robin                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Babblers</b>                  | White-browed Babbler                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Quail-thrush, Allies</b>      | Chestnut Quail-thrush                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Whistlers, Shrike-thrush</b>  | Rufous Whistler, Gilbert's Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Bellbird                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Magpie-lark, Flycatchers</b>  | Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Magpie, Butcherbirds</b>      | Grey Currawong, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Ravens</b>                    | Australian Raven, Little Crow                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Swallows</b>                  | Tree Martin                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |



Southern Whiteface  
Photo by Mark Binns

## WINTER IN THE WOODLANDS

### Karroun Hill

JUNE 2018

June can offer a number of extremes in the GWW - rain, freezing clear nights, absolutely fabulous clear-skied days, strong easterlies, no wind but best of all, great campfires. Being aware of all the above four of us set out for a week in Karroun Hill to survey the 24 allocated sites there. The weather gods were with us in that we only had one wet day when some of us agreed it was no disadvantage having a day when all that could really be done was to eat, drink and sleep.

Karroun Hill Nature Reserve occupies 309,678 hectares (one sixth of the area of state forest in Western Australia) in the north of the Shire of Mt Marshall extending eastward from Lake Moore to the rabbit proof fence, the State Barrier Fence (SBF) on its south, and lies along the Wheatbelt's north-eastern limit. Karroun Hill is the largest (and probably the least widely known) nature reserve in the south west of Western Australia. Here, a rich array of vegetation supports an equally diverse animal wildlife, much of which has escaped the influence of long-established agricultural, pastoral and gold mining communities that surround it.

Our first campsite was in open woodland on Bimbijy Road, the western side of the nature reserve. **Red-tailed Black-cockatoos** were back and forth overhead. On day one we leapt frogged our way north surveying the nine sites along this road. A day marked by the lack of both bird species and numbers. The northern most sites, KH2 and KH3, were almost impossible to access because of dense acacia thickets – hazardous for hearing aids. A wind change and gathering clouds as we sat over the open fire had us securing the camp for the rain – and down it came, all night and into the next day, just as forecast.

Then south again to the SBF on day three with much discussion on whether to drive on the north or south side of this east-west fence, both reasonable tracks. Most of the survey sites were north of the SBF and again some of the sites, KH19, KH20, KH21, quite impenetrable. But few birds and where were all the raptors? Four **Wedge-tailed Eagles** high above but that as all. A number of nil Birddata returns.

We took on board the recommended camp site 2km north of the Three Way (SE corner of the nature reserve) in the lee of a large quartz outcrop. A perfect campsite - flat, dry, shady and lots of good firewood. Sitting by the campfire at night the making moon reflected on the Gimlet leaves leaving an impression of fairy lights overhead – magic. Southern Boobook and Australian Owlet-nightjar were welcome sounds during the night. Climbing the quartz outcrop at the campsite is only for the desperate and dedicated, desperate to try for an internet connection and dedicated to the welfare of the grandchildren. The descent is aided by gravity.

It is one thing to be held up by peak traffic but to have survey effort impeded by **Emu** chicks travelling the same route north as us along the SBF was an unforeseen hold up. But what a great sight, one flock of five, approximately a third grown, along with a flock of six almost fully-grown chicks. The attendant, presumably male bird, jumped the fence and patrolled the other side, leaving the chicks stranded in front of our vehicles. No room to pass them, not wanting to panic the flock, we delayed, surveyed, cups of tea, all on a beautiful woodland survey day.

We aimed to cover all the sites on the eastern side of the GWW area in one day, succeeding with all but the extreme north sites, KH18 and KH24. A slow track, shrubs crowding in on either side much of the way, fallen logs, deviations but all manageable. Only one site, KH14, had an abundance of birds, particularly honeyeaters - **Red Wattlebird**, **Spiny-cheeked** and **White-eared Honeyeater**. It was hard to see what had attracted them to this Gimlet area but the assumption was that the tall trees were beginning to flower. There was excitement with **Purple-crowned Lorikeet** at the northern end of the track. **Hooded Robin** was seen in the heath but overall still few bird species.

In five days of surveys we had covered 22 of the allocated 24 sites but had added a number of both incidental and other 20minute 2ha surveys to the database. Apart from a few small patches of flowering mistletoe in low growing acacia there was no other obvious flora species in flower. The final total was 32 species, the big dips being raptors and small insectivores.

**Participants:** David and Pam Free, Sue and Rob Mather.

#### Bird List

|                                 |                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Emu, Mound-builders</b>      | Emu                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Birds of Prey</b>            | Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon                                                                                                      |
| <b>Cockatoos, Parrots</b>       | Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Australian Ringneck                                                               |
| <b>Night Birds</b>              | Australian Owlet-nightjar, Southern Boobook                                                                                           |
| <b>Scrubwrens, Allies</b>       | Weebill, Inland Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Redthroat                                                                       |
| <b>Honeyeaters</b>              | Singing Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird |
| <b>Chats, Robins</b>            | Jacky Winter, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin                                                                                          |
| <b>Whistlers, Shrike-thrush</b> | Rufous Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Bellbird                                                                                 |
| <b>Magpie-lark, Flycatchers</b> | Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail                                                                                                          |
| <b>Cuckoo-shrikes</b>           | Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike                                                                                                             |
| <b>Magpie, Butcherbirds</b>     | Grey Currawong, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie                                                                 |
| <b>Ravens</b>                   | Little Crow                                                                                                                           |

## Birds in Focus

### WESTERN YELLOW ROBIN

by Shapelle McNee

*EOPSALTRIA GRISEOGULARIS*



Photo by Mark Binns

The Western Yellow Robin has a distribution throughout the broad south west of Western Australia from Peron Peninsular in the north to the Great Australian Bight at Eyre Bird Observatory. There is also an apparently disjunct population in South Australia.

The diet of the Western Yellow Robin consists predominantly of insects and other arthropods. They forage on the ground, often pouncing on prey from a low perch such as the trunk of a tree or low branch. They can pounce effectively even through dense foliage. Usually seen singly or in twos, they live as pairs or in small family groups.

Western Yellow Robin occurs in eucalypt forests, woodlands, mallee and tall shrublands. They often favour a dense understorey and a moderately dense mid-storey. They can tolerate a bare understorey when there is plenty of leaf litter on the ground and numerous small eucalypt saplings present. The mid-storey component can include *Banksia grandis* (Bulls Banksia) in Jarrah-Marri forests, *Agonis flexuosa* (Peppermint Tree) in Tuart forests and *Acacia acuminata* (Jam Tree) in Wandoo woodlands. They have not been found to occur in forests affected by dieback. In mallee country they usually occur where there is a continuous canopy. In the Great Western Woodlands, habitat used by Western Yellow Robin includes a mid-storey of *Acacia*, *Eremophila* and *Senna* species. Within Gimlet

woodlands the Western Yellow Robin increases in occurrence up to 150 years post fire as mid-storey vegetation and leaf litter cover increased over time.

The distribution of Western Yellow Robin in the Great Western Woodlands is extensive, with records throughout the western half and in the south east quarter. To date it has not been reported in the very north east corner. They are less common in pastoral country - land grazed by cattle, and in the north east Great Western Woodlands by sheep. Grazing is likely to

reduce understorey cover, increase areas of bare ground and compact the soil. All of which could reduce the abundance of arthropods.

The Western Yellow Robin differs from other Yellow Robins in Australia by its grey chest above its bright yellow belly. The chin and throat are white. There are two nominate races in WA, *griseogularis* and *rosinae*.

Gould described this robin in 1838. The species name, *griseogularis* refers to the grey throat (*griseus* grey and *gula* throat). Declines in its distribution have been observed, particularly in the Wheatbelt. The IUCN lists Western Yellow Robin as of Least Concern.

The nest is cup-shaped and well-camouflaged, usually placed in the forked branches of a tree or tall shrub. Its calls can be loud and include a rapid series of four notes, described as 'chierp, chwep-chep-chep' by Michael Morcombe. One of the larger robins, the Western Yellow Robin is a welcome sight to see and not shy when found, often continuing on its business scanning the ground for food.

## Helena and Aurora Range

by Mark Henryon & Shapelle McNee

### Push for secure conservation tenure

In the Autumn edition of *Woodlands on the Wing* (Issue 16, 2018), we let you know that Environment Minister Stephen Dawson and the WA Government said "no" to mining at the Helena and Aurora Range (Bungalbin).

Minister Dawson announced that:

- Mineral Resources' proposal to mine iron-ore at the Helena and Aurora Range would not proceed
- The decision is final and without appeal
- Investigations to create a Class-A reserve over the Helena and Aurora Range to commence

WA Premier Mark McGowan recently reiterated his government's decision. "There's certain things you don't do environmentally", he said when asked by *The Kalgoorlie Miner* (July 19, 2017) if the government had made the "right call" by not allowing mining at the Helena and Aurora Range. "You don't cut down the trees in Kings Park and you don't go knock over the old-growth forests and you don't drill for oil in the middle of Ningaloo Reef. There's just some things you don't do."

Although this is wonderful news, the Helena and Aurora Range still needs to be safeguarded through secure conservation tenure. Until then, it remains vulnerable to mining. The GWW Committee, BirdLife WA, and an alliance of other conservation groups are pushing the McGowan Government to protect the Helena and Aurora Range in a Class-A reserve or National Park in its current term of government.

The procedure for protecting the Helena and Aurora Range in secure conservation tenure is outlined below. We encourage everyone, who also wants the Helena and Aurora Range protected, to write to Environment Minister Stephen Dawson. We believe that the Helena and Aurora Range is such a unique and majestic landmark. It should be fully protected for all Western Australians to enjoy.

#### A special treat!

Drone footage highlighting some of the wonders of the Helena and Aurora Range.

If you know anyone who would like to see more of the Range, but cannot visit it in person, this is one quick way to share it with them.

[youtu.be/LyflBHvrP4E](https://youtu.be/LyflBHvrP4E)

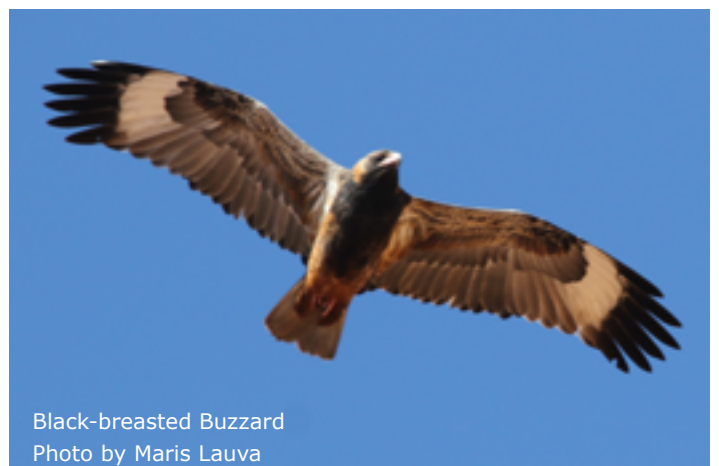
### Creating a Class-A Reserve

The Land Administration Act 1997 provides the Minister for Lands with the power to reserve Crown land for purposes that are in the public interest. In creating a reserve, the land is dedicated for a specified purpose (for example "National Park"). Once the reserve is created, the description of the reserve's purpose is registered on the Crown Land title and is shown on a map held at Landgate. The Minister for Lands has the power to classify a reserve as "Class-A". This affords the highest level of protection for an area's natural, cultural, or other values.

Creating a reserve involves two particular requirements:

(i) Agreement from the Minister for Mines (under the Mining Act 1978), before any land can be placed into a reserve, where that land is subject to a "proclaimed mineral field" – which is the case for the Helena and Aurora Range; and

(ii) Processes under the Native Title Act (1994) to be followed as the creation of a reserve can impact on Native Title rights



Black-breasted Buzzard  
Photo by Maris Lauva



and interests..

In relation to (i), since the government as a whole has decided to reject mining at the Helena and Aurora Range and supports progress towards Class-A reservation, we would not expect the Minister for Mines to withhold or delay approval.

In relation to (ii), we believe the government will need to negotiate an agreement with Bungalbin's Traditional Owners and Native Title claimants (application lodged in December 2017), the Kalamaia Kapurn people, to ensure their full involvement in, support for and benefit from the protection and management of the range. This includes options for joint vesting and joint management under recent amendments to the Conservation and Land Management (CALM) Act (1984) and the opportunity to grant to the Kalamaia Kapurn people an area of freehold land within the Class-A reserve land for the establishment of a cultural centre. The Kalamaia Kapurn people have been amongst the most dispossessed and marginalised Indigenous peoples of any part of WA. The protection of the Helena and Aurora Range offers a long overdue opportunity for recognition and the return of some of their traditional lands.

## Birdlife WA Great Western Woodlands Spring 2018 Surveys.

*"The woodlands are calling me and I must go".*

### **Our next two planned forays into the Woodlands will be in September:**

Transline – September 2 – 7. We initially planned this survey for October but have decided to move it a month earlier because of the heat, and the earlier date seems to suit people better. Meeting place in Kalgoorlie on Sunday afternoon still to be decided. Leader: To be announced.

Karroun Hill – September 24 – 28. This outing will take place immediately after the Birdlife Campout to Remlap. Remlap has a great selection of birds and plants. There are still places available for this campout. Meeting place to be decided nearer the time.

There are no facilities at either of these venues so participants need to be completely self-sufficient with respect to 4x4 vehicles, camping gear, fuel, water and food for the trip.

Further details from [gww@birdlife.org.au](mailto:gww@birdlife.org.au)

Libby and Lorraine – GWW Co-ordinators.

For beginner birders keen to experience the Great Western Woodlands you should be a member of Birdlife WA and attend the following course first:

Great Western Woodlands ID course at Credo Station. This will cover bird identification and calls, use of GPS, survey methods, and how to enter details into the Birdata website. The current course is fully booked but another one will be held early next year.

## Frequently Asked Question: Why 2-hectare, 20-minute area searches? by Dr Tegan Douglas

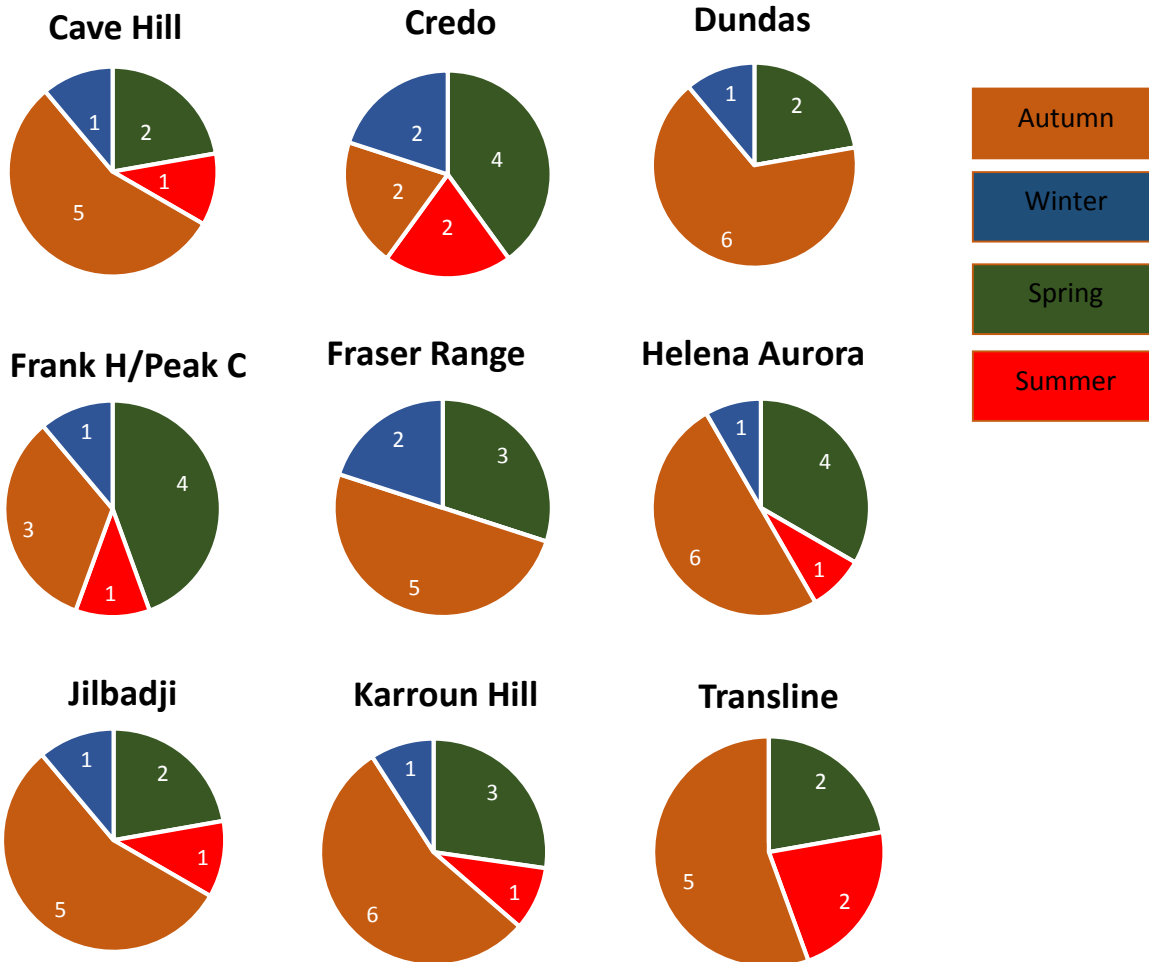
As funny as it sounds, the aim of a single survey isn't to document ALL the birds in an area in one go. We actually learn more about bird communities by having a fixed protocol to our surveys – restricting the area that we survey and/or the time we spend doing it. Hence a 2ha, 20min survey. Consider this – if a particular bird turns up in every 20-minute survey, we know that it is both common and conspicuous. By everybody surveying using the same protocol, it allows us to compare across time and space. If we suddenly only record that species in one in every eight surveys, it is a reasonable assumption that that bird has become less common. The 2-hectare 20-minute survey method has been used since 1998, across Australia, so it creates an amazing legacy of bird survey data. Every bird species might not be recorded in a single survey, but over time, with repeated visits, the entire bird diversity of an area will be recorded.

That isn't to say that it isn't useful to know what else is seen at a particular site – particularly if we've travelled a long way to get there! One way to capture those additional sightings at the survey point is to do an embedded survey – a 2-hectare 20-minute survey nested within a 500m area search. That way the birds that you see from when you stop your vehicle, walk to your survey point, the ones recorded within the 20 minutes (but outside the 2ha area), and the ones recorded when your survey time is up, can still be recorded. And incidental sightings are important for recording bird diversity (particularly of uncommon species) between survey points.

## Plans for surveys in 2019

The 2018 autumn surveys just passed were used to trial the possibility of doing two surveys on one trip where the areas are reasonably close together, for example Fraser Range and Dundas. This saves a lot of travel time and distance. We would like to know what our surveyors thought of the idea? Did you like it or not? We realise that we should have allowed more time to avoid rushing the surveys – probably as much as ten days would be needed for the distant areas.

The pie charts (Figure 1) show the number of surveys done per season since 2012 and indicate that the priority areas for 2019 are Cave Hill, Jilbadji, Dundas and Frank Hann/Peak Charles.



**Figure 1** Pie diagrams showing the number of surveys conducted for each of the nine survey areas in each of the four seasons (since 2015 the main focus has been on surveys in autumn and spring)

For more information about the project please contact:  
 Survey Coordinators:  
**Libby McGill, Lorraine Chyne**  
 Great Western Woodlands bird surveys  
 E [gww@birdlife.org.au](mailto:gww@birdlife.org.au)  
[www.birdlife.org.au/projects/great-western-woodland](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/great-western-woodland)

Note – Karroun Hill and Transline will each have an additional survey completed by the end of 2018.

We hope this information will be helpful to you for making your plans and we would appreciate prior notification of your plans to help us making decision for the 2019 group surveys.