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Newsletter of the Ecological Consultants Association of NSW Inc.

President's Message

With the warmer weather around the corner, I am just sitting down to check over the numerous pieces of 'red tape' that seem to confound any forward movement. Here is a list of demands that I need to satisfy as part of being an ecological consultant:

1. Scientific Licence - comes with requirement for an annual report plus the provision of flora and fauna records
2. DEC Data Licence Agreement - annual renewal
3. Animal Research Authority from ACEC - several annual reports and notification of commencement of project
4. Animal Care and Ethics Certificate of Approval
5. State Fisheries scientific collection permit - must state location, 'must display a clearly marked sign during all collecting and field activities, identifying the name of the organisation conducting the research and the word "Research"', also an annual report and provision of records
6. State Forests Special Purposes Permit - annual report and provision of data, and must comply with the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations
7. Professional Indemnity Insurance
8. Public Risk Insurance
9. Worker's Compensation Insurance - two needed if working at coal mines (see article)
10. Vehicle Insurance
11. Memberships of societies and associations
12. Certifications and accreditations
13. Inductions
14. Safety Management Plans and Risk Assessments

By the time I have satisfied all the above (I'm sure there are more), spring has sprung and I am desperately behind in my survey schedule. Both State and Federal governments continue to say that they are making life easier for business, by lessening regulations and smoothing the path for a more efficient economy. I'd hate to

see what it would be like if they took a contrary view!

Although most of us don't think much about the IUCN Red Book, the listing of a species on the 'Red Book' provides a signal that some conservation effort is needed. Every 10 years each faunal group is reassessed and species under threat are listed. It is currently time for mammals to be evaluated, and a IUCN Global Mammal Assessment Australasia workshop is to be held in Adelaide later this month. The Global Mammal Assessment is a project coordinating a major reassessment of the conservation status of all of the world's 5,000-plus mammal species. There have been workshops in London (where the status of some 800 species of African rodents, bats and shrews was reassessed), India (South Asia mammals), Thailand (Southeast Asia) and Madagascar. The planned Australasia workshop will bring together experts with a mix of knowledge on taxonomy, distribution, threats on the ground, and conservation actions. I have been invited to attend this workshop. The task is monumental - those attending will be locked away for five days and we have to reassess the conservation status of over 590 Australian mammals (marsupials, rodents and bats). It should be interesting and I will report back in the next newsletter.

If you want to see what comes out of these exercises, go to www.globalamphibians.org and search for Australian frogs. Each species is listed with its conservation status. Click on each species and a profile appears that gives general habitat preferences, threats etc, as well as the latest distribution map. A handy site for your web favourites!

This is my final message as President, and I want to thank all of you for your enthusiasm and support in developing the ECA to a body that is recognised as a legitimate voice for our profession. I say profession seriously. Too many have thought of ecological consultants as people wearing loud-checked suits and smoking cigars in the company of rampaging developers. Some consultants over the years may have given that impression, but they soon fade away. Ecological consultants, particularly those belonging to the ECA, are true professionals, using their knowledge, expertise and experience to provide objective and balanced information and advice to clients. The ECA has achieved a lot for ecological consultants and will continue to do so.

Two last words (who gets the chance to bend anyone's ear these days). First, as ecological consultants we should set our standards high and always strive to satisfy them. Secondly, any advice given should be your honest opinion and you should make

sure that you can defend it under rigorous cross-examination in court.

All the best

Your nearly-ex President

Martin Denny

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It's all in the feather

One specialised field of ecological consultancy is forensic ornithology, a discipline that I am trialing in partnership with several organisations around Australia. It involves the identification of bird carcasses, components of birds (feathers, feather fragments, bones, bone fragments) or other bird

materials (eggs, shell fragments or nests) at locations in need of specific ecological management or crime investigation. Examples of the application of forensic ornithology are presented below.

1. Bird strikes

Forensic ornithology is often employed to identify bird species that have collided with aircraft, rotating blades on wind farms, tall buildings (especially multi-storey buildings with lots of glass windows) or power lines. Bird remains collected from collisions or strikes range from entire carcasses to feather fragments no larger than a few square millimeters.

Whole feathers can often be identified by comparing them with specimens in museum collections. Feather fragments are more difficult to identify and their structures need to be examined microscopically to identify birds to order, family or genus levels. Arrangements of the barbs and barbules on a feather, when examined microscopically, can help identify these taxa. However, it is usually not possible to rely on microscopic analysis of feathers to identify birds to species level and additional information is often required to confirm species identification. For instance, if feather fragments are found in the engine of an aircraft that had collided with birds in airspace at an Australian coastal airport were identified as belonging to gulls (*Larus*

spp.), and flocks of Silver Gulls (*Larus novaehollandiae*) frequented the airport, then there's a good chance that this species was the subject of the bird strike. Feather samples that are often difficult to identify and may need to be examined microscopically have one or more of the following features:

- ❑ downy feathers,
- ❑ the feather size gives no clue of the host species; and
- ❑ feathers that are white or other nondescript colour.

Macroscopic and microscopic techniques of feather identification are currently being trialed by Ambrose Ecological Services Pty Ltd.

Other techniques of feather identification include keratin electrophoresis (analysis of protein structure of the feather) and DNA analysis of feather pulp (if there are pulp cells at the base of a feather shaft). These techniques are available in a range of museums and universities throughout Australia.

Identification of feathers or feather fragments can lead to the development of environmental management programs aimed at reducing the risk of the occurrence of bird strikes.

2. Crime scenes

On a few occasions bird feathers or feather fragments

have been found at crime scenes. Examination of these feathers, either macroscopically or microscopically, can classify the feather to family or sometimes to genus or species levels. Many bird species have restricted geographical and habitat distributions. Identification of feathers at crime scenes and knowledge of the ecological requirements of the host taxon can help solve crimes. Here are a couple of real life examples:

Example 1: Murder Scene Investigation

In 1953 when police were investigating a murder in northern South Australia, a wheat bag was found at the crime scene, which the suspect had wrapped around his feet to disguise his footprints. Investigators found a small contour feather and shell fragments of a mollusc inside the bag.

An ornithologist brought into the investigation concluded that the feather belonged to a subspecies of Port Lincoln Ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius barnardi*), whose range in South Australia is confined to the south-eastern part of the state. A witness later testified that the suspect had shot a parrot several months earlier and had placed it in a wheat bag. The feather had presumably remained in the bag when the parrot was removed.

A conchologist identified the mollusc as a freshwater shellfish species that was confined to central Australia. The police speculated that the suspect had camped by a water hole and had collected some of the shellfish to eat. It was subsequently established that the suspect had camped by a water hole close to the scene of the murder and where this shellfish species occurred.

This evidence was not sufficient to prove anyone guilty of the murder, but when added to other evidence it provided a clearer picture of what happened leading up to the crime and who committed it.

Example 2: Illegal Poaching of Waterfowl

In the USA, a woman was arrested recently by a Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Officer for poaching ducks out of season. The officer's only hard evidence (non-circumstantial) was a knife that he found in the suspect's boat. The knife had fresh blood and a small piece of downy feather attached to the blade. Although the suspect admitted the knife was hers, she denied poaching and claimed that she was not a duck hunter. Subsequent microscopic examination of the fluffy barbs and barbules confirmed that the feather structure was typical of the genus *Mergus* (merganser ducks). While the feather may have conceivably belonged to a domesticated farm bird, the

evidence presented to the suspect led her to admit to the poaching charge.

3. Quarantine issues

Forensic ornithology is also used to identify bird feathers, eggs, shell fragments, bird specimens and nests of bird stowaways in ships, cargo containers, aircraft and road vehicles. Identification of these stowaways and their extermination by the relevant authorities help quarantine our national, state, agricultural and ecological borders from unwelcome avian visitors.

4. Confiscated bird goods

In 1994 a woman was apprehended at Melbourne Airport trying to smuggle fertile eggs of Galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) out of the country. The eggs were being kept warm inside a large bra that the woman was wearing at the time. Aware that she was about to be apprehended, the woman smashed the eggs in her bosom, presumably to destroy incriminating evidence. The customs officers collected the remains of the eggs and sent them to the Museum of Victoria for examination. Ornithologists at the Museum relied on DNA sequencing to identify the species because the samples provided were insufficient for other techniques of identification to be used. Consequently, the suspect was convicted with attempting to smuggle native wildlife out of Australia.

This is a clear example that forensic ornithology can be employed to identify bird specimens or materials that have been confiscated by customs officials at airports and shipping ports.

5. Anthropological artefacts

Ornithologists have also been called upon to identify feather, egg and bird bone items in anthropological artefacts. Identification of these items, and those of other vertebrates, in historical artefacts have sometimes provided clues to the historical distributions of species or have led to the present-day discovery of populations previously unknown to occur in a particular area.

The boundaries of ecological consultancy are ever expanding, largely to cater for the market demands, but also to cater for our own interests and areas of expertise. I look forward to reading more about other specialised areas of consultancy offered within the membership of the ECA of NSW.

Stephen Ambrose



Are you a coal miner?

A word of advice from Martin Denny

Do you undertake any contractual work for coal mines in NSW? If you undertake more than 10 days work for a coal mine company, then you must have separate Worker's Compensation Insurance for any employees. Why 10 days? This is the time for two shifts at a coal mine and is taken as the minimum time spent before this specific insurance is required.

In 2002, Coal Services Pty Ltd (CSPL) was created following negotiations between Federal and NSW Governments, the NSW Minerals Council and the CFMEU. One of the services of CSPL is to provide Worker's Compensation Insurance to NSW Coal Miners through Coal Mines Insurance Pty Ltd. Only this company can provide Worker's Compensation Insurance to those working in coal mines. Yes, this is a monopoly, but governments etc agreed to it, with inquiries after two and five years. This isn't the only insurance monopoly - there are similar schemes for jockeys, police and newspaper agents. I can only surmise that these four industries are considered too dangerous and/or specialised for a general Worker's Compensation Insurance scheme (what do newspaper agents do that is too

dangerous, perhaps papers are becoming too heavy?).

The range of services used in the coal mining industry is wide, ranging from the people who actually mine to cleaners, surveyors and ecological consultants. In the Hunter Region alone, there are over 900 businesses that probably require Worker's Compensation Insurance through Coal Mines Insurance PL.

The Coal Industry Act points to the creation of the insurance company:

Coal Industry Act 2001 No 107

31 Workers compensation

- (1) The workers compensation company has the power to require any employer in the coal industry in the State to effect with or through that company all workers compensation insurance in respect of the employer's employees in the industry.
- (2) An employer in the coal industry in the State must comply with any such requirement.
- (4) The maximum penalty that may be imposed for failure to comply with a requirement under this section is:
 - (a) in the case of a corporation— 100 penalty units for the first day the contravention occurs and an additional 50 penalty units for each subsequent day on which the contravention continues, or
 - (b) in the case of an individual— 50 penalty units for the first day the contravention occurs and an additional 25 penalty units for each subsequent day on which the contravention continues.

This can be viewed on
www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

The company was created
under Order no. 10 of the Joint
Coal Board

ORDER NO. 10

THE JOINT COAL BOARD in
pursuance of powers conferred
by the Coal Industry Act 1946, of
the Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia and
the Coal Industry Act, 1946 of the
Parliament of New South Wales,
hereby orders and requires, as
follows:-

1. This Order may be cited as the "Coal Industry (Workers' Compensation Insurance) Order".
2. Each employer in the coal industry in the State shall, from and including the prescribed date, effect with the Joint Coal Board all workers' compensation insurance in respect of his employees who are mineworkers.
3. In this order, unless the contrary intention appears:-

"Coal mine" includes every shaft in the course of being sunk, and every level and inclined plane in the course of being driven, for and in connection with the winning of coal in the State, and includes all shafts, levels, planes, works, buildings, tramways and sidings, both below ground and above ground, in and adjacent to and belonging to the coal mine, and includes open cut operations undertaken for the purpose of producing coal in the State;

"Mineworker" means:

- (a) A person who is employed or usually employed (whether underground or above ground) in or about a coal mine in the State or in connection with the operations thereof;
- (b) A person who is principally engaged in the transport or handling of coal between a coal mine and the point of delivery by or on behalf of the owner; and for the purposes of this paragraph "point of delivery" means the place at which coal is delivered by or on behalf of the owner of the coal mine to any railway of the Commissioner of railways, or to the South Maitland Railway, or to any wharf or other place appointed for the purpose, and includes, in any case where process works are carried on by the owner of a mine at a place which is outside the colliery holding, the place at which coal is delivered at such works, and
- (c) A member of a permanent rescue corps established at a central rescue station pursuant to the Mines Rescue Act, 1925.

"Owner" means any person or body corporate who operates a coal mine or any part thereof whether as the immediate proprietor, or lessee, or occupier, or as a **contractor** for the working, of that mine or of that part thereof;

"The prescribed date", in relation to any employer and in respect of any employees, means the first day of

October 1948 or the date of the expiration of workers' compensation insurance effected by the employer before the first day of July 1948 in respect of those employees and now in force, whichever is the later date.

So, if you are contracted to any coal mine, you are classed as an 'owner' and your employees are mineworkers. If only we could obtain some of the benefits of ownership.

If you are an 'owner' then you should contact Wendy Cairns (Underwriter Coordinator) at Coal Mine Insurance PL on 82703215.

I was informed that if you only have your insurance through the normal companies, these companies will seek payment from Coal Mine Insurance if one of your employees seek compensation whilst working at a coal mine. Coal Mine Insurance will then bill you for all of your past premiums through them. So, you need two insurance policies - one for work outside coal mines i.e. normal insurance company, and one through Coal Mine Insurance. The current rate is 0.8% of assessable wages.

Bring out your Dead

Road killed reptiles wanted

Two PhD students need fresh roadkills for research. Danny Wotherspoon can use lizards, especially Bearded dragons, and snakes to provide data for his research on vegetation habitat for reptiles, and

parasite loads as that affects population viability. Danny will then pass the bodies to a second student for general reptile parasite research. Put the body into a freezer bag, labeled with location, date, collector, and adjacent vegetation type if possible. Keep it in the freezer and let Danny know at info@abeleecology.com.au We can arrange a collection somehow.



Grey-crowned Babbler in south-western Sydney

I observed a single Grey-crowned Babbler (*Pomatostomus temporalis*) in East Leppington in the Camden Local Government Area while surveying woodland remnants in the locality on 29 July 2005. I had a good view of the bird as it headed in a westerly direction through the understorey of a Shale Hills Woodland remnant on privately-owned property.

I did not have an opportunity to revisit the property again until 6 August 2005 when I surveyed the same woodland

remnants, as well as woodland on neighbouring properties. On this occasion no Grey-crowned Babblers were observed despite six hours of bird surveys across more than 300 ha of woodland.

As far as I am aware, this is the only record of the Grey-crowned Babbler occurring in the Sydney metropolitan area in recent times. Higgins & Peter (2002) states that in NSW this species is:

“widespread W of the Great Divide, inland to line near Wanaaring, through Manara Hills, to Tooleybuc (i.e. c. 143° E). E of Great Divide, widespread but scattered S to Laguna in Hunter Region, including coastal areas; more restricted farther S, where irregularly recorded, and only away from coasts, e.g. near Wiseman’s Ferry; vagrant near Sydney, at Lane Cove, 21 Sept. 1942 (Hindwood 1943, 1951); S of Sydney, not generally recorded E of Great Divide, only occurring as far E as Bigga and Bungendore, though once reported at Twofold Bay and Durras ... “.

Grey-crowned Babblers inhabit woodlands dominated by mature eucalypts, with regenerating trees, tall shrubs, and an intact ground cover of grass and forbs, and are usually seen in sedentary family groups of 2-13 birds (Davidson & Robinson 1992).

Grey-crowned Babbler populations are on the decline, with most groups in southern NSW comprising 2-4 birds. The species is extinct in the

Orange area (Heron 1973) and possibly also from around Bathurst. Recent surveys show a decline in the number of family groups that remain in the southern portion of its range, such that approximately five groups remain in the Boorowa Shire, less than 10 around Wagga Wagga, and less than 30 groups in the shires of Young, Junee and Harden. A survey of 96 woodland sites in the Holbrook Shire revealed only four groups. Furthermore, the species has disappeared from the Shires of Gundagai, Gunning, Yass and Yarrowlumla (Scientific Committee 2001).

I suspect that the individual that I observed at East Leppington was either:

- ❑ the last surviving member of a previously undetected family group that was sedentary in the locality; or
- ❑ an individual that has moved way beyond its usual home range and dispersed into new areas.

If the latter is true, it demonstrates the extreme importance of retaining suitable wildlife corridors for woodland birds (and other biota) in western and south-western Sydney. This means retaining woodland of suitable width and floristic structure within roadside reserves, on private land and along watercourses.

References

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Higgins, P.J. and Peter, J.M. (2002). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol. 6: Pardalotes to Shrike-thrushes (Oxford University Press, Melbourne).

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Stephen Ambrose



2005 ECA Conference

Meeting the Challenge.

Understanding Endangered Ecological Communities

When:

Friday 16th September 2005.
8:30 am registration;
9 am start.

Where:

Hallstrom Theatre,
Australian Museum,
6 College St, Sydney

Cost:

\$50 (ECA member)
\$90 (non-member)

Programme

Various presentations from different experts approaching the subject from different angles, and hopefully offering advice on how to classify and deal with EECs (or Threatened Ecological Communities, EPBC Act). There will be plenty of time to discuss the tricky problems you are dealing with on a daily basis.

The areas being covered will be:

- Overview and ecological aspects – Paul Adam
- Case Studies and ecological aspects – David Keith
- Legal aspects, case studies – Brian Preston (a barrister)

- Restoration of EECs in urban environments – Judie Rawling (Urban Bushland Management)
- Definition and listing at the Commonwealth level – Peter Komidar, DEH
- Implications for regulation and impact assessment – Steve Mercer, DEH

Parking:

A special parking rate of \$9 (max. 12 hours) is available at Secure Parking, 70 Riley Street, East Sydney car park (2 minute stroll to the museum). Guests collect a Universal Rebate Ticket from Museum staff, to be placed in the automated payment machines, to receive the discounted price.

Enquiries:

Martin Denny at 02-6336 2244 or 0404 845 592 or mtking@ozemail.com.au

IF YOU ARE GOING TO ATTEND, PLEASE CONTACT:

Paul Burcher
24 Alberta Ave
Cowan NSW 2081
Ph and Fax 02 9456 3853

Have you built a better mouse trap? Or discovered a better method than a random meander? If so, let us all share it with you and write for the newsletter.

New commercial supplier of nest boxes: Ngurrala Aboriginal Corporation

From what started as a casual conversation to an engineer I was working with for a job on the mid north coast last year has led to the establishment of a fledgling business enterprise that may be of significant benefit to researchers, naturalists, birdwatchers and ecological consultants: commercial supply of nest boxes.

Nest boxes are used for a range of reasons as follows:

- Research eg monitoring of threatened species such as the Brushtailed Phascogale (Soderquist *et al* 1996, Lindenmayer 2002).
- Threatened species survey eg Brushtailed Phascogale and Eastern Pygmy Possum.
- Environmental impact ameliorative measures eg to replace losses of hollows in hollow-bearing trees.
- Biodiversity eg to enhance the effectiveness of wildlife corridors and bushland regeneration area.
- Ornamental eg to attract wildlife to gardens.

While no panacea for replacement of hollow-bearing trees, nest boxes have demonstrated ability to support the recovery of threatened species and enhance the use of forest where hollow-bearing trees are rare (Lindenmayer 2002, Dashper and Myers 2003), hence some ecological consultants are inclined to recommend them as an ameliorative measure.

Personally I have more often than not withheld from this measure mainly on the basis of the awkward answer to the client's question, "so where do I buy them?" For those who've undertaken a frustrating internet search, they will know the answer to this question has been "You have to make them yourself". Those consultants who've laboured many an hour in the garage manufacturing their own can well appreciate the cost in time and resources involved and know it is not a labour of love. It's just labour and a costly amount of time.

Some clients are happy to manufacture their own (eg the one-off private clients) but the majority in my experience are not as it doesn't fit into the "quick fix" category such as redistributing fallen trees as habitat components or replanting vegetation. Additionally, consent authorities may see the measure as nothing more than an idealistic platitude or motherhood statement that has no basis for effective implementation if there is

onus on the proponent to manufacture the nest boxes, rather than purchase them and hence readily demonstrate compliance.

My conversation with the subject engineer about 12 months ago has led to some networking on his part and provision of information on nest box designs from various sources I've collated to the Ngurrala Aboriginal Corporation (NAC). NAC is based in Macksville and is a Federally funded enterprise encouraging Aboriginal youth support and development programs, including skill development to assist their employment potential. To cut a long story short, NAC has been successful in achieving short term funding to engage a furniture manufacturer to train four lads to build nest boxes on a commercial supply basis for ecological consultants, government departments, non-government organisations (eg Birds Australia, Australian Mammal Society, Australasian Bat Society, etc), naturalists and the garden enthusiast. To say they are keen and hardworking is an understatement - they are paid for two days per week work, and they are in there for at least one extra day per week. They are keen to make this a viable commercial enterprise and need orders *urgently* to subsist.

Currently, the NAC lads have at least 15 generic nest box designs:

➤ *Owlet/Night Jar*

- Rainbow Lorikeet
- Pygmy Possum
- Antechinus
- Eastern Rosella
- Sugar Glider
- Brush-Tailed Phascogale
- Ring-Tailed Possum
- Greater Glider
- Yellow Bellied Glider
- Barn Owl/Boobook Owl
- King Parrot
- Feather-Tailed Glider
- Brush-Tailed Possum
- Variety of Microchiropteran Bat boxes

These can be modified according to custom order in dimensions, entrance size/orientation, bee excluder, India Myna baffles, etc. All nest boxes are constructed using exterior-grade construction ply for maximum weather resistance or of any other custom specified materials. All joins are glued, sealed and galvanised screwed together ensuring a long service life (which is important given nest box life is a limitation on their application).

NAC is also looking at other products which may be useful to ecologists such as hair tubes manufactured from stormwater pipes, and shelves for mounting traps. Any ideas or suggestions are welcome.

Contact details are:

Rob Henry 0407 901 066

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E-Mail:

ngurrula@bigpond.com.au

www.ngurrulacdep.com.au

As a favour to the NAC, I can bring down some samples of the nest boxes to the ECA conference on the 16th September. If anyone is specifically interested, please let me know via wolfen@kooee.com.au.

References:

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Jason Berrigan



Unusual/casual observations.

The importance of White Cedar to fruit-eating animals

As a newcomer to the mid north coast, I was amazed at the incredible bounty of fruit provided by the White Cedars *Melia azedarach* that line the creeks around my house near Bellingen. The season lasted about a month, starting in early June and finishing around the beginning of July, and the output was prodigious. By day, a noisy and ever-shifting flock of Figbirds, Olive-backed Orioles, Regent Bowerbirds, Satin Bowerbirds, Catbirds, Lewins Honeyeaters, Wompoo Fruit-doves, and probably

White-headed Pigeons and Brown Cuckoo-doves, feasted on the small yellow fruits. At night, Black Flying-foxes, here at their southern limit – and absent from the local Flying-fox colony until late May – took over. Interestingly, I never saw any Grey-headed Flying-foxes – which are generally much commoner round here – feeding in the White Cedars. Fruits of the Red Ash *Alphitonia excelsa* were also eaten by the birds, and possibly by the Black Flying-foxes too.

The abundance was staggering. Wompooos breed near my house, but until the White Cedars began fruiting I seldom encountered a group of more than 3 individuals. One day in June, however, while the fruit-frenzy was in full swing, I saw a loose flock of *twenty-four* (24) Wompooos fly over and land in the trees just up the hill. Another time I saw eight Wompooos feeding in the crown of a single Red Ash. By contrast, the Black Flying-foxes occurred in groups of only one or two per tree. One individual (at least I presume it was the same individual – it had a distinctive rufous collar) returned to the same White Cedar every night for a week.

Now the fruiting has finished and the birds and Flying-foxes have moved on. For the first time since I moved here (last December) there seem to be no Wompooos around. If anyone knows what they are feeding on now, and where, I'd be grateful to hear of it.

Brian Hawkins

Little Penguins sighted in Lane Cove River

Local birder, Phillip Duke, reported to Birding-aus, a bird discussion group on the internet, that two Little Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) were observed in the Lane Cove River, offshore from Longueville Park on 24 July 2005.

This is about 2 km upstream from where Lane Cove River meets the Parramatta River. Although I have observed Little Penguins in Sydney Harbour, this is the first time I have heard of them occurring in the Lane Cove River. These birds are probably members of the endangered population of Little Penguins that occur near Manly – something for ecological consultants to consider when assessing potential impacts of developments on the lower reaches of the Lane Cove River.

Stephen Ambrose

Camouflaging your traps

Most of my fauna and flora survey work is in and around urban areas on small remnants of vegetation. I suppose that many of you are in a similar situation. Sometimes the vegetation on a site is fairly thick and sometimes not. My predicament is setting arboreal traps such that the local kids and any other curious folk are less likely to see them and

therefore are less likely to disturb or take them. So far this has not happened but the traps are not cheap and I do not want to lose any.

Therefore when I set arboreal traps in trees, usually Elliot B traps, I try to choose situations where the traps are somewhat concealed by placing them on the hidden side of trees or where they are hidden in thick vegetation or both. It is surprising what people do not see. However this does not always work and I have driven past sites where I have arboreal traps set and with the sun at the right angle the traps shine out for the world to see, like the proverbials. So I have often thought about camouflaging them.

One day when visiting the RAAF base I noticed that the fighter planes are painted in a very simple matt grey, very much like automotive undercoat paint. This made me think that if the “powers that be” have done their research and found that the best non reflective camouflage paint is matt grey (probably 17% grey) then this may also work with my traps. I simply went to the local auto spares shop and bought a spray can, for less than \$10, of undercoat grey paint for automobiles, it dries in 20 minutes, lined up a box of ten traps on a trestle and let them have it. The matt grey coloured external coating has made a difference as the traps while still visible if you are looking for them do not attract attention as some shining spectacle in the

bushes. Possibly one could go the next stage and paint them green and brown patches etc however I am sticking with the grey. There you go, it may be worth a try.

Greg Little

Winter Dunnarts.

I am doing some survey work in the Western Division country near Bourke, and to my surprise Dunnarts do emerge from torpor in July! So far captures are only females, so I'm wondering if this means that climate change might affect the dispersion of these little fellas. Bourke area mostly has significant rain events in June, apart from sub-monsoonal events in summer months, but this year the mid-year rain event did not occur until July.

The Dunnarts (*Sminthopsis murina*) are in fair condition following drought conditions (weighing in at a little under 15gms), but I am leaving the obtaining of blood samples for a few weeks so as not to provide another stress.

We are looking at:

- a. ectoparasites and disease in native animals, and
- b. their impact on plague locusts as another incentive to landholders to keep native habitat areas intact as possible.

I have also had invitations from landholders in the

Western Division and western margins on the Central Division, to do biodiversity audits of their properties, so I look like being busy for the next few months.

Phil Burrell

ECA Web Page

The ECA web page is at www.ecansw.org.au so go and have a look, then let others who might be interested know about it. The site contains some information on the history of the ECA and why it was formed, and a Mission Statement on what the ECA stands for. As well the Office Bearers are listed as well as the Committees and their members. There are details on how to join with the various categories of membership, and a list of current members with their contact details.



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