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Newsletter of the Ecological Consultants Association of NSW Inc.

President's Message

Where has that year gone?

It seems that I only just got used to writing "2006" and now here I am sweltering in the February humidity, hoping that the looming thunderstorms won't interrupt our power yet again.

Your 2006-2007 Council has lost a couple of members, recycled an old one and brought in a fresh one! Thanks to Keith Kendall and Brian Wilson for their contributions to the running of the ECA and we hope you have the energy to return in the future. Welcome again to Mark Couston, and a brand new welcome to Michael Murray.

Please communicate with your Council if you have a comment, complaint, suggestion ... otherwise we can only bring our own experiences to bear on shaping the ECA. Our contact details are included in the newsletter - I suggest you enter them in your address books.

Our February meeting has resolved to achieve a great deal in 2007, building on what was a big year in 2006.

Conference. Another topical, insightful and thought-provoking conference in September 2006 has again laid down the gauntlet for the 2007 Conference Committee. The topic this year will be "BioBanking" (or should that be "Biobanking" or "Bio-banking"? Perhaps someone can present a paper on the etymology of conservation jargon), and we expect a lively discussion on its theory and practice.

Insurance. In 2006 we negotiated a fabulous Professional Indemnity Insurance deal with Anthony Saunders of Envirosure. If you get in under the ECA umbrella program you will save lots of money, have the coverage needed for most government contracts and help ensure the viability of the scheme. Also, the more that sign up, the cheaper it gets! I can personally report that the cost savings are **real** and **significant**. We hope that our members will continue to reap the benefits of this scheme throughout 2007.

Workshops. We had two successful workshops in 2006 ("Bat call analysis" presented by Dr Brad Law and "Native Grass Identification"

presented by Dr Surrey Jacobs) and reports on these are included in this Newsletter. We are keen to follow up in 2007 with other workshops relevant to our members' needs and so we have resolved to provide a workshop on GIS (thanks to all who replied to the survey) in the middle of the year in Sydney, and one on identification of Sedges and Rushes later in the year, perhaps up north. We are also still keen to organise an Orchid workshop (perhaps in Canberra). Stay tuned for further information on these soon.

We are keen to do more batty things, but we don't want to clash with the Royal Zoological Society of NSW and the Australasian Bat Society Bat Symposium in April. We encourage you to attend and / or give a paper. Go to <http://www.rzsnsw.org.au/Bat-Conference-info.doc> and register. See you there!

If you have a skill to share or a particular need or great idea for a workshop, let us know.

Blog. We are exploring the possibility of providing a blog (abbreviation of "web log" for those old Luddites out there) through our web site to help the exchange of ideas and information, forge the ecological network and give you a place to vent. Too much time passes between conferences and newsletters; email inboxes clog up too quickly when a discussion gets

going. We think that a blog is a perfect solution.

A bigger ECA? We have been approached by a number of parties to expand your association. It is very early days yet; we will be sending out some information and inviting feedback soon. Be assured, we will only recommend bigger if it means better.

I know you are busy - every consultant I know is up to their proverbials - but PLEASE consider contributing to your Newsletter. A paragraph will do - a sighting, a comment on a book or paper you have read, a burning question, a criticism - this is **your** forum. All contributions (except the libellous) will be seriously considered.

Stay well and safe.

Liz Ashby
President

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2006 Conference Report.

It seemed to us that Martin Denny's concluding remarks at the Conference summed it all up beautifully. So, rather than reinvent the wheel, this has been taken in full and makes up the Conference report.

In this very room, the Halstrom Theatre, 12 years ago the National Trust of NSW held a seminar titled "Things we want to keep" Environmental Heritage Management under the new Local Government Act. One of the aims of the seminar was to involve local government with their environmental responsibilities. One of the matters addressed during that day was the concept of wildlife and habitat corridors.



Being a new concept to many participants the description of corridors was kept simple, as were guidelines offered to local government representatives for the incorporation of such matters into their regulations. However, it is hoped that the seeds planted on that day bore fruit in later years with the recognition of corridors as an integral part of the planning process. But have we

advanced since the simple guidelines were offered in 1994?

Obviously yes. The amount of practical knowledge offered at the 2006 Ecological Consultants of NSW Conference has been enormous and all one could do was to lie back and let all this information wash over you.

Martin Fallding set the scene by defining corridors and describing many of the concepts, problems, legislative and planning frameworks associated with them. He pointed out that there is confusion about what constitutes guidelines, objectives and a corridor. However, he provided important information about what makes a successful corridor and the purpose and design of corridors.

The confusion about corridor nomenclature was highlighted during the day as the following terms were used by different speakers to describe a particular type of corridor:

Wildlife
Habitat
Riparian
Cultural
Continuous
Stepping Stone
Movement
Sweepstake Dispersal Route
Habitat Link
Landscape Link
Bio-links
Regional
Altitudinal
Sub-regional

Coast Zone
Least Cost Pathway
Permeability

To reduce confusion there is obviously a great need to look at such terms and rationalise their use.

The morning session provided an abundance of practical information about the design and use of corridors. There were some contradictions - Richard Major pointed out that large areas of habitat are good for birds but bad for invertebrates, whereas small linear corridors are bad for birds but good for invertebrates. Liz Ashby also pointed out that connectivity may be good for animals but it is not necessarily best for plants due to the potential of invasion by weeds. However, Liz pointed out that dispersion by plants was of high importance. Liz also reminded zoologists in the audience that plants do move although it did seem that many were dependant on animals for such movement.

Precise features were described by Stephen Ambrose for corridors used by some bird species and Andrew Smith described the type of corridors used by Squirrel Gliders. Similarly, Mark Fitzgerald provided us with information about the different types of corridor used by three reptile species. Looking at all the information presented on terrestrial plants and animals, the following general features appear to be important for the creation

and/or conservation of corridors:

Diverse Habitat
Structural Complexity of the Vegetation
Presence of an Understorey
Presence of Tree Hollows
Surface Cover by Litter, Rocks and Logs
Corridor Design needs to be species-based

Both Arthur White and Peggy O'Donnell addressed the damper topics of amphibians and freshwater fish. For frogs in Australia the major use of corridors has been to direct one species of frog, the Green and Golden Bell Frog, either towards good habitat or away from an area where development will occur. This is one area where threatened species conservation appears to be driving the design and use of corridors in the planning process.

With freshwater fish there are several characteristics that can be applied to the creation of corridors. A good corridor for these species must contain either no barriers to movement or have constructed fishways. A good corridor must also be associated with a healthy and abundant riparian habitat and have environmental flows designed for the species targeted.

The afternoon session provided us with the results of the 'dirty-hands' approach to corridor creation, restoration and protection i.e. the speakers provided us with

details of the application of corridor concepts in the real world.

Judith Rawling gave us a life-history of success and frustration in dealing with corridor creation and restoration. The following words from her talk sum up the results from her work in this field:

Practical
Maintenance
Guidelines
Balance between Bureaucracy and Biodiversity



David Scotts showed how computers can be of use with the development of regional corridors that can be mapped and managed. He presented a list of government and non-government agencies in northern NSW that have already benefited from such an approach. It is assumed that such research will be used when Biodiversity Certification is developed within local government areas.

Cilla Kinross described the values of what can be called 'accidental corridors' i.e. windbreaks created by farmers in the past that now provide important habitats for a range of native fauna. Cilla found that these areas of introduced

and native vegetation are extensively used by birds, bats and invertebrates. 90 bird species have been located within windbreaks in the central west of NSW, including threatened species and declining woodland birds. The insectivorous birds have been shown to assist in the control of pest species. Cilla concluded that the wider the windbreak the better and presented a series of guidelines for plantings.

The last two speakers provided a council's perspective on the use of corridors and remnant habitat. These talks showed that local government is no longer just the instrument for rubber stamping or rejecting resident's applications, but is applying the results of research to conserve and improve biodiversity.

Mia Dalby-Ball spoke about the concept of corridors as providing permeability for the movement of fauna through a residential area and provided examples of opportunities for conservation despite the impediments of legislative and planning constraints. As with Judie Rawling, Mia showed that there needs to be a balance between public interest, bureaucracy and biodiversity and ended with a plea for greater information to be provided to councils from practicing ecological consultants.

The final speaker, David Wilks again showed how it was important for research to

provide information and guidance for the creation and management of corridors. In particular, David described the development of a Riparian Policy that included the mapping of zones associated with riparian corridors. This policy is considered to be prescriptive and flexible i.e. provides a balance between public interest and biodiversity.



Some final thoughts about the abundance of information presented and discussed today. Several of the maps (e.g. those presented by Martin Fallding, Andrew Smith and David Scotts) showed some relatively short corridors that did not appear to link areas of habitat. It is important that corridors allow fauna (and flora) to move between areas where conservation is maintained. Care needs to be taken to avoid developing corridors that are 'roads to nowhere'.

An issue constantly raised during the day was the impact from bushfires upon corridors and what mechanism, if any, needs to be incorporated into a planning instrument to prevent the loss of such features. Another issue that will need to be addressed in the near future is the

introduction of Biodiversity Certification and Biobanking.

Finally, it is worthwhile quoting from the conclusions to the section on corridors in the 1994 National Trust seminar – they seem to be as relevant today as they were 12 years ago:

“The definition, assessment and management of wildlife habitat are important roles for any Local Government and it requires certain skills to be able to undertake these roles. The main skills required are not those obtained at any university but are part of the make-up of human nature. The skills required are a feeling for the importance of the natural environment, a sensitivity to the needs of the community and, above all, common sense”.

Note: CDs containing the Conference proceedings have recently been circulated to participants and should be available on the web site soon.

Spider webs and bird mortality.

Deryk Engel's observation of the New Holland Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*) entangled in a spider's web (ECA Newsletter, Feb/May 2006) is a truly remarkable one. I have observed several small birds (all of them thornbill species) caught in spiders' webs in over 37 years of bird-watching in Australia,

but nothing as large as a New Holland Honeyeater. It demonstrates the strength and stickiness of the spider's silk thread and the potential hazard of webs to the unwary bird.

Spider silk has greater tensile strength than a strand of steel of the same diameter and can stretch more than 25% of its normal length before breaking. It never dries out completely, doesn't decay from bacterial action, and won't become covered with mould. The elasticity of the spider's web usually results in its ability to absorb the impact of the captured prey item, which neither breaks through the web or bounces off.

New Holland Honeyeaters are usually very fast fliers, darting from one tree or bush to another. Despite the tensile strength and elasticity of an orb-weaver's web, it's hard to imagine Deryk's New Holland Honeyeater flying at such speeds at the time it was caught in the web. New Holland Honeyeaters feed mostly on nectar, but also catch insects mostly by sallying in flight. I wonder if in this particular case the New Holland Honeyeater became entangled in the web by sallying an aerial insect that was in or near the spider's web?

New Holland Honeyeaters also secure the outer layer of their nests with spider web (Higgins *et al.* 2001). So an alternative explanation may be that this individual became

entangled in the web while trying to rob some spider silk.

With respect to my own observations, in 1986 I came across a dead Brown Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*), which had become entangled in a spider's web in New England National Park, near Armidale. Brown Thornbills weigh around 7 g (about one-third of the weight of a New Holland Honeyeater). Interestingly, a live leech was attached to one of the eyeballs of the thornbill. It is difficult to imagine that the leech found the captive thornbill without it being entangled in the web, too, especially as the web was at least 0.75 m from the ground. My guess is that the leech had attached itself while the thornbill was foraging on or close to the ground and that the bird blundered into the spider's web afterwards.

Graham (1997) believes that web entanglement may be a regular cause of mortality in hermit hummingbirds (*Phaethornis* spp.) in the Americas. As far as I'm aware, there have been no studies of the incidence of mortality in small Australian birds as a result of entanglement in spiders' webs, but I suspect it is very rare. Besides, the incidence of this form of mortality would likely to be underestimated because small birds caught in a web could be taken by predatory birds (e.g. raptors, artamids, kookaburras), reptiles or mammals.

Next time I inadvertently walk into a spider's web, I'll be thinking about how lucky I am that I'm large enough to break through it!

Dr Stephen Ambrose

Graham, D.L. (1997). Spider webs and windows as potentially important sources of hummingbird mortality. *Journal of Field Ornithology*. **68**: 98-101.

Higgins, P.J., Peter, J.M. & Steele, W.K. (2001). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol. 5: Tyrant-flycatchers to Chats (Oxford University Press, Melbourne).

Grass identification workshop.

This workshop, led by Dr Surrey Jacobs from the National Herbarium in Sydney, was held on the weekend of the 4th and 5th November at Newington Armoury in Sydney. The venue was Heritage Building 46, one of the old Navy bomb stores. Twenty one participants attended, from both metropolitan and regional areas, and it was a most successful weekend learning the details of grass identification under Surrey's expert tuition. Another identification workshop is planned for 2007.



Workshop in session



Surrey Jacobs & Ted Smith

Liz Norris

More on debt collection.

Liz Ashby's advice on collection of debts from clients (Feb/May issue) was spot on. Well done, Liz, for broaching this topic. Most, if not all, consultants have had problems in recovering monies owed to them and sometimes one can spend a lot of emotional energy and valuable work time pursuing debts. Delays in payment can also affect the cash flow of a consultancy practice, especially if there are several clients not paying on time.

In addition to the advice provided by Liz, I would recommend the use of a professional debt collector

before taking the final step of going to court. I engage the services of a debt collector if a client has not responded to the initial invoice and two written reminder notices.

A reputable debt collector will initially send a letter to the debtor warning him/her that legal action will be taken if payment is not made within seven days. The debt collector also conducts a desktop investigation of the debtor company's background. The fee charged by the debt collector for these services are added to the debtor's bill. I have found this to be an extremely effective way of recovering debts, with most debtors paying within the seven days designated by the debt collector, and only one case proceeding to the Local Court.

Recovery of money for the provision of expert ecological evidence in the Land and Environment Court can sometimes be more problematic than payment for other services. This is usually because clients and/or consultants sometimes underestimate the time and costs involved in receiving or providing that evidence. This could be due to bad financial planning but, in many instances, it is a result of additional work being requested by the Court or the law firms representing the parties, as the court case proceeds. If, during the provision of these services,

you realise that you are going to go over budget, then contact the client(s) and renegotiate costs, before proceeding with further work. The client(s) and the consultant should always agree to the initial and renegotiated cost estimates in the form of a written contract.

Dr Stephen Ambrose

Who's the Mother? A Story with Pictures

During a recent survey at Ulan Coal Mine I set up a series of small cage traps to catch possums etc. On checking the traps I found one site in disarray, with three possums captured in two traps.



On inspection, the tree trap contained one male Common Brushtail Possum that was released into a nearby tree.



The ground trap contained two possums, an adult female with a large young on its back. Both I assumed were Common Brushtail Possums and when I released the two, the young possum ran up a sapling and it definitely was a Common Brushtail Possum.



What about the adult carrying the young? It ran up another tree and was observed slowly climbing down as if to seek out the young on the sapling. A normal reaction for a good mother. But wait a minute! What species is that mother? Note the white tipped tail and body shape. A Common Ringtail Possum!



Could a Common Ringtail Possum adopt a young Common Brushtail Possum? Both went into the trap together and the young seemed comfortable on the adult's back. Are we seeing the melding of the two species

to have a Common Brushring Possum?

A mystery that did not repeat itself over the survey period, but does provide a lesson on getting on with your neighbour.

Martin Denny

Observations from Germany.

I have been using the latest satellite technology to conduct long-distance nocturnal surveys of rare urban birds in Germany. Here are some interesting observations as of 28 June 2006.

Feigned Portuguese Fowls (FPFs) and Diving Italian Boobies (DIBs) were common a few days ago. These species breed mostly in southern Europe, but disperse nomadically to other parts of the world every four years.

FPFs were engaged recently in lively territorial disputes with Dopey Dutch Ducks (DDD). DDDs are the less dominant of the two species because they flew back to the Netherlands after the FPFs successfully out-competed them for a gold object, used to decorate bowers.

DIBs also out-competed Australian Ankle Crushers (AACs) for this limited resource. DIBs are recognised for their ability to fall forward at the slightest touch from other species,

feigning injury. AACs are noted for their green and gold plumage and their dogged determination to fend off competitors for limited resources.

The bulk of the AAC population originates from the Baltic and Italian regions of Europe, some from the British Isles, but all spend part of their lives (usually their juvenile and immature phases) in the Australian region. At or close to maturity, many AAC individuals disperse to northern and central Europe, some moving from one flock to another, others staying in the same flock for many years. Inevitably, many return to Australia for good at the end of their breeding years.

Other migrants have departed Germany in the last few days, despite the continuing warm weather. These include Swiss Skylarks (noted for their clumsy kicking at the end of prolonged territorial displays), Yellow & Blue-faced Scandinavian Shelducks, Mexican Mudlarks, Ghanaian Godwits, Darwin's Ecuadorian Finches and Slick Spanish Snipes. Their early departures are due in part to overcrowding of their preferred habitat by noisy humans.

Communal groups of six other rare species remain in Germany in search of bower material and mates. These are the resident Klinsman Kestrel, Blue & White-striped Argentinean Avocet,

Ukrainian Crane, a group of Beckham's Babblers (the dominant male was last seen limping and calling mournfully), Dancing Brazilian Bowerbird (DBB) (the species with the most highly decorated bowers) and French Frogmouth (FF) (an aging sub-population; a complete mystery as to why it needs to collect bower material and look for mates).

The Refereebird (RFB) occurs as single individuals in mixed-species associations. It has a global distribution, a different subspecies occurring in each country. The dominant plumage coloration varies according to subspecies, but is usually red, green, light blue, yellow or black. All subspecies display yellow or red patches of bare skin prominently during displays of aggression or when threatened by other species. Other RFBs assemble around the perimeter of mixed flocks, running up and down in straight lines and occasionally raising a crest of orange feathers. Mixed species-flocks often leave an area after the Refereebird gives a single loud and long whistle, suggesting that the Refereebird may be warning others of potential danger, perhaps of the presence of predators (but this has yet to be confirmed).

Human observers twitch with excitement when a RFB displays its yellow or red skin patch unexpectedly. Such displays were numerous when AACs were in mixed flock encounters with DIBs, Red-

spotted Croatian Cormorants, DBBs and Japanese Jacanas.

Postscript (9 July): I have just observed the dominant (and oldest) FF male head-butt a DIB during an unusually aggressive encounter between these two species. It then fled, never to return to its group, when a RFB displayed its red skin patch (a typical flight-fight response). Within minutes, the DIBs seized the gold object and flew south to their breeding grounds. Interestingly, the DIBs ceased their characteristic diving behaviour once they acquired their bower material, suggesting that it is limited to the early stages of mate selection.

Dr Stephen Ambrose

A Review of DEC Vertebrate Fauna Publications for the Sydney Basin Bioregion

Earlier this year the ECA executive was asked by DEC to review the draft version of a fauna report for the vertebrate fauna of the Warragamba catchment area. The large size of the document meant that only one hard copy was provided for review and therefore, only two members of the committee provided comments. As a result of family involvement in the project, I was also able to review an additional copy of this tome.

Although this report is still to be completed, I bring to your attention the availability of a series of unpublished fauna reports for the Sydney Basin Bioregion, particularly the reserves of the Blue Mountains to the Upper Hunter. The information provided in these reports is based on the results of surveys conducted initially as part of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) process and/or more recently funding under the Central Branch Parks and Wildlife Division, Biodiversity Survey Priorities Program and other sources.

Hard copies of these reports are hard to come by, however, parts or the whole report can be downloaded from the following DEC website www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/PDFs/Title.pdf

A list of available documents is given at the end of this review.

The reports generally follow the same format and include;

- a) An introduction, which covers the aims of the project, background, history, environment, vegetation and fire regimes of the study area.
- b) The survey methods, which covers existing fauna data, survey stratification and site selection, the actual survey methods (systematic and opportunistic) and timing of surveys.

- c) The results and discussion, which includes an overview and discussion of the results for the major fauna groups.
- d) Management recommendations for the study area.
- e) Threatened species profiles
- f) References
- g) Appendices, which include survey site details and species lists.

Survey methods used are comprehensive, apart from the lack of trapping for terrestrial and arboreal mammals at most sites. This was generally a result of the size of the survey area and the spread of the survey sites making the checking of traps every morning impossible and is symptomatic of large scale surveys. Survey sites tend to be located near road access, also a symptom of the large study areas and time constraints and therefore, the more inaccessible areas have still not been surveyed, although recent surveys, not included in the reviewed documents have attempted to rectify this problem.

In general, although most surveys were conducted within the DEC estate and other public lands, the information available in these documents is invaluable to consultants working adjacent

to or near the DEC study areas. Expected species lists can be generated for a particular habitat type and many range extensions, particularly for frogs, reptiles and bats have been recorded. The threatened species profiles and associated record mapping (which extend outside of the study areas) are also a useful source of information. Additional information is also given for regionally significant species, although apart from the Illawarra Escarpment report, the information is limited. The management recommendations, while largely targeting the reserved land in question, gives useful information that could be used as a guide to consultants when assessing the management of larger tracts of bushland.

These reports also give an insight into the survey requirements for any large scale surveys that consultants may become involved in, (e.g. LEPs and LGA management plans), although based on the draft DEC survey guidelines, consultants would be required to carry out more detailed surveys that includes terrestrial and arboreal trapping.

Titles that I have been able to find are as follows;

- 1) Fauna of the Illawarra Escarpment, Coastal Plain and Plateau (Bioregional Assessment Study Part 11, dated August 2002.

- 2) The Vertebrate Fauna of South Western Blue Mountains National Park, dated August 2004.

- 3) The Vertebrate Fauna of Wollondilly River Nature Reserve, dated August 2004

- 4) The Vertebrate Fauna of Manobalai Nature Reserve and adjacent Crown Lands, dated June 2005.

- 5) The Vertebrate Fauna of Werakata National Park, dated June 2005

- 6) The Vertebrate Fauna of North-eastern Wollemi National Park, dated June 2005 and

- 7) The Vertebrate Fauna of Northern Yengo National Park, dated June 2005

The previously mentioned Warragamba report is apparently nearing completion but if the draft is anything to go by, it will require some hefty downloading.

I was also involved in a biodiversity survey of the Georges River catchment and after many years in the making, a report of sorts, titled Biodiversity of Georges River Catchment - Terrestrial biodiversity, dated Nov 2004, can be accessed and downloaded by chapter at the following NSW Department of Planning website. www.planning.nsw.gov.au/plansforaction/georges_biodiversity.asp

Hopefully this will provide a useful source of information and aid in the report writing process.

Ray Williams

Equipment register.

The ECA Committee has been bandying around the idea of developing a member's only section on our website. In this will be a series of documents that are only accessible by password to ECA members.

One of the documents proposed to be listed is a register/list of individual ECA members who are happy to lend/hire out their survey equipment. The theory is that if someone is doing a study and looking for say 100 Elliott traps, a few harp traps and hairtube traps/pitfalls, instead of hiring or purchasing these items, they check the register to identify other members who already have this equipment and may be in a position to loan it out. In finding an appropriate member(s) who has the necessary equipment you need, its up to the individual to contact that member; see if the stuff is available; and discuss loaning/hiring arrangements. Presumably issues that would be discussed is the return of equipment undamaged, or replaced if anything is stolen or lost. A suggested style for an entry on the register is provided below:

Name	Equipment available	Conditions
Name & contact details	Harp trap (x1) Elliott Traps (x70)	Replace damaged goods

As members, if you feel there is a need for such a service, and wish to contribute, can you please email your details to myself (deryke@lesryk.com.au) as I am co-ordinating this project. For simplicity sake, could you please use the form indicated above and add any notes as required.

Note, apart from establishing this register, there is no benefit to the ECA and the ECA has no involvement in any of the discussions that transpire between individual members. The equipment register is purely a service which provides between ECA members with options to obtain equipment and keep their field costs down.

Deryk Engel

Micro Bat Workshop

This wasn't a workshop for Lilliputians, but a workshop on microbats presented by Dr Brad Law of State Forests at the Coffs Harbour Botanic Gardens in October 2006. We were also lucky enough to have Titley Electronics there to help us with our Anabats, as well as offer a discount to participants.

This was a workshop to remember.

Keith Kendall organised a great speaker and a beautiful venue but didn't put in an order for good weather. We received an almighty thunderstorm that went all night: that put paid to the proposed harp trapping in the garden in the evening. But no matter really – the information that Brad shared was tremendously valuable and included hints on bat call analysis (e.g. calls collected over open ground are usually flatter than under canopy), discussion of the relative merits of protecting your microphone with thin plastic (eventually we decided against) and how to tell the difference between the calls of *Kerivoula papuensis* and rustling leaves. Plus much much more.

The quality of the information was in stark contrast to the "help" that I provided in the running of the room. Because there was no pointer, Brad valiantly used a mop. I thought that turning off the lights would make the projected images easier to see, but did not count on all of them going off and none coming back on, despite increasingly desperate flicking of switches. Brad soldiered on, wearing a head torch to operate his lap top (see sketch from my notepad – excuse the poor linework, but I was working in the dark...).



I anticipate that this will be the first of many bat workshops, but I promise I won't "help" next time.

Liz Ashby

Unusual/casual observations.

GREY-HEADED LAPWING: NEW SPECIES FOR AUSTRALIA

The Australian bird-watching community is abuzz with the first confirmed Australian record of the Grey-headed Lapwing (*Vanellus cinereus*), at Burren Junction, approximately 80 km east of Walgett.

The single bird was first observed on 19 June 2006 by Brett Davis, who immediately announced the news on the Birding-aus internet discussion group. Numerous other birdwatchers flocked to

Burren Junction at hearing the news and have since observed the species. An image of the bird at Burren Junction has been posted on the Australian Bird Image Database <<http://www.aviceda.org/abid/newimages.php?action=latestimages&p=1&pagesize=1>>

The bird seems to favour the wet grassy areas around Burren Junction's wheat silos and was still readily observed at these locations at the time of writing this article (27 June 2006).

The Grey-headed Lapwing is a migratory shorebird species that normally breeds in grasslands of north-eastern China, south-eastern Russia and northern Japan, and over-winters in wetlands or wet grassy farmland areas in mainland south-eastern Asia, especially Malaysia.

Dr Stephen Ambrose

CHATTING IN COASTAL NSW

Lots of birdwatchers had good views of an immature Orange Chat (*Epthianura aurifrons*) at Malabar (on the Anzac Rifle Range, Long Bay) and a Crimson Chat (*Epthianura tricolor*) at Gerroa (c. 130 km south of Sydney) in January 2006.

Both species are normally found in arid and semi-arid areas of Australia, typically inhabiting open chenopod and acacia shrublands. They are highly nomadic and large

influxes of Orange and Crimson Chats sometimes occur in inland areas after very heavy rains. Heavy rains associated with the remnants of Cyclone Clare were dumped in inland southern Australia in early January. It would appear that small numbers of Orange and Crimson Chats associated with larger irruptions in inland NSW made it to the NSW coastline at this time.

Dr Stephen Ambrose

EARLY GREY-HEADED FLYING FOXES

I have heard a number of Grey-headed Flying-foxes chattering over the past month in areas on the Central Coast where they usually turn up in April and May to feed on *Eucalyptus robusta* Swamp Mahogany.

What are they feeding on? I can't see any significant flowering or fruiting- it is too early for *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* Bangalow Palm fruit, *Syncarpia glomulifera* Turpentine flowers are done - any ideas?

Liz Ashby

GROUND PARROT AT MALABAR

Rod Gardner reported on the Birding-Aus Internet Discussion Group that an exhausted Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*) was rescued by a DEC officer at the

Malabar Sewage Works and taken into care on 15 June 2006. This species is listed as Vulnerable under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995*.

Once repatriated, the Ground Parrot will be released either into suitable habitat on the Malabar Headland or in Barren Grounds Nature Reserve. Ground Parrots were last recorded on the Headland with certainty towards the end of the 19th Century.

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