

SGAP BIRD AND NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

Introductory Newsletter May 1983

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Dear Members,

Welcome to this newly formed study group. I hope that membership of the group will provide us all with an opportunity to enhance and share our knowledge as well as being an enjoyable experience.

As you are all new members I am a very new leader. I cannot stress enough that I would welcome and appreciate suggestions you might have concerning all aspects of this group. I should prefer to be a co-ordinator rather than a leader. I feel that a group such as this has great potential and would like to hear your thoughts on specific directions you would like to see the group take.

The relationship between birds and plants are many and varied. Plants may provide resources such as food, nesting materials, nesting sites, shelter etc. whilst birds may be agents of pollination, seed dispersal and germination. And, as you no doubt know, birds and plants can provide the observer with a great deal of pleasure. Modern development often leads to the destruction or depletion of the resources essential to birds and plants. I feel that if we can increase and share our knowledge of these resources then we should be able to not only appreciate the birds and plants more fully but provide better for them in the future. Provision can be made for birds in our own garden and also in public places - in parks, street plantings, around libraries and shopping centres etc. With the current "Greening Australia" move why not at the same time be "birding" or "re-birding" Australia as the case may be?

Observation and recording will no doubt play a large role in this study group but experiments with different species and structural arrangements in the garden could also be rewarding. Observations on the propagation and cultivation of bird attractive plants as well as the birds themselves will be valuable.

The following are some suggestions of my own, again I hope you will have many to add and criticisms to make of mine -

Observations and records to accumulate and share

1 ) A BIRD/ PLANT DIARY

The frequency of records will no doubt depend on your available time. These records should include a note as to where they are made e.g. own garden, local park etc. A brief description of the location would also

be helpful.

a) PLANTS - notes on flowering period, seed, fruit, bud-carrying period, bark-shedding period, etc.

b) BIRDS - species present, arrival and departure dates of migrants, comments on frequency and regularity of visits, numbers of individuals, presence of juveniles, different sexes, social arrangement (e.g. pairs, small groups), breeding status, etc.

Then, tying this together a bit -

## 2) PLANT/BIRD INTERACTIONS

a) which plants attract which birds

b) why does this attraction exist, for example

- source of nesting material e.g. bark, twigs

- nesting site

- source of food e.g. nectar, lerps, insects, seeds, etc.

- is bird an agent of pollination, seed dispersal, germination

- shelter site

and so on

c) do plants differ in their relative attractiveness, why?

d) do individuals compete for available resources, how?

e) how do birds feed e.g. height, part of plant, feeding action

e.g. probing, tearing, pecking, etc.

## 3) FURTHER AREAS OF OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

a) comparison of resources available to, and utilised by, birds in different geographical areas

b) recommendations for plantings in public places, particular climates, topographies, soil types, etc.

c) role of structural arrangements in attracting birds

d) role of artificial food, water, nesting sites

e) daily activity patterns of birds

f) movements of birds in relation to plant resources over a wide

area

g) bird communication

and I guess the list can go on!

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEWSLETTER

ALL ARE WELCOME!!!

In addition to sharing readers' observations and records, I feel

the newsletter would be enhanced by some feature articles, perhaps amongst other features a

"Bird (or group of birds) of the newsletter" and a

"Plant (or plant group) of the newsletter".

Such articles could provide a range of information as well as dealing with bird/plant interrelationships. By nominating the subject ahead of time members' experiences of the bird or plant could be incorporated into the article. I would be happy to write about the

EASTERN SPINEBILL and BANKSIAS

in the first newsletter and look forward to hearing from anyone with experience of either of these.

If you have a particular bird or plant you would like to write about for future newsletters please say and we could arrange to send other members' observations of the subject to you.

Drawings Clear line drawings can be included in the newsletter and would be very welcome.

Book review Would you like a short book review to be included in each newsletter? Would you like to review a book of your choice?

Record Sharing I hope that eventually our newsletter might include tables which could correlate information such as

bird/ plant resource/ time of year/ geographical area and that conclusions might be drawn from our records. If you have, or will have, records and would like to share them they will be much appreciated. Initially I plan to keep cards for each plant and bird species to help correlate information.

Nomenclature Inevitably there is confusion when using common names. Perhaps this could be lessened if when referring to plants the scientific name is included if known. I shall attempt to use the bird names of the RAOU list of official common names in the newsletter.

#### WHICH BIRDS?

Would you like to limit observations to only native birds or include introduced species?

One step further - what of the possums, gliders, bats etc. that use our gardens. Do you feel that they are worthy of inclusion?

#### NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1

Initially I should like to get a newsletter together about every three months, the first newsletter I should like to be ready for early September. I hope that in time the newsletter might be produced more frequently but this will depend on members' interest. Eventually I hope it will be a forum of observations, records, comments and interpretations (and illustrated) with a flexible format, and not just a monologue from me.

I look forward to hearing from you again soon,