

DRAFT
MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL GROUPS MEETING
held at 60 Leicester Street, Carlton Vic. – 23 November 2007

The meeting opened at 9.40 a.m.

Present: Allan Briggs (BA Capricornia), Shirley Cook (BANNNSW – Minutes), Rob Davis (BAWA – Chair), Doris Graham (BAVic), Tony Grice (BANQ), Graeme Hamilton (BA CEO), Ian Hume (BASNA), Grahame Rogers (BASQ), Alison Russell-French (BA President), Jennifer Sutfin (BA – Communications Coordinator), Eric Woehler (BATas).

Observers and Reporters (PM only): Mike Bamford (BAWA), Rob Clemens (BA – Shorebirds 2020), Stuart Dashper (BAVic), Guy Dutson (BA – IBAs), Glenn Ehmke (BA – OBP and NRS), Dean Ingwersen (BA – OHS and TBN), James O'Connor (BA – Research Manager), Andrew Silcocks (BA – Atlas & Birdata).

Minutes of the meeting in Mt Gambier S.A. 25 May 2007

Business arising:

1. GR to circulate spreadsheet on conservation priorities to groups.
2. Jen Sutfin and Amy Butcher will be formulating a policy on badging and branding in the next couple of months. The appointment of Jen as Communications Co-ordinator was noted (see CEO's report below). The issue of logos adopted by the various RGs, SIGs and observatories was discussed. It was agreed that all should be encouraged always to use the Birds Australia logo in a prominent place.
3. The generic rules are ready for final comment. GH will circulate and seek comments before Council adopts them.
4. The Policy and Procedures Manual is still incomplete. JS will help to make it progress. ARF asked that it be finalised before the February Council meeting.
5. Allocation of space for RG reports in *Wingspan* was discussed. RGs should establish with the editor what is wanted and liaise with her through JS. DG noted that photo credits and pictured bird ID were sometimes missing in newsletters, and this should be addressed. There was further discussion about educating the general public. EW suggested that all groups to send any brochures that they use to JS. SC said that Ricki Coughlan has set up a website covering many birdwatching brochures
6. A Memorandum of Understanding between BA and Birds SA is still in progress.
7. Recruitment: the 'family and friends' campaign is not going to happen.
8. Status of the Nest Record Scheme – Glenn Ehmke has revitalised the NRS. (Glenn later reported that it has a huge amount of data that is in great demand from researchers.)
9. BA's land-clearing statement – Chris Tzaros, BA's Conservation Officer will liaise with conservation officers of the RGs. ARF represents BA in liaison with other conservation bodies. BA's "Conservation Issues Response" document was tabled. Each group should look for individual landscape issues affecting birds and take action in their region. GH reported that the new website has links with Gardmen Australia, Horticulture Australia, Nursery Association and Flora for Fauna. These firms have become corporate members of BA.

The minutes were accepted: Moved – Allan Briggs, Seconded – Doris Graham.

Agenda

FINANCE

1. Tardy payments to RGs from NO were noted. GH says this issue will be resolved soon.
2. Acknowledgement of registrations and banking of cheques for Congress/Conferences should be done more efficiently. This will be noted in the P&P Manual.
3. Cost of excursions on members day and campouts was noted. It was agreed that these were an extra burden on delegates and should be kept to a minimum.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. See (2) and (5) in Business arising. The new website that is being developed can allocate unlimited space to RGs. NO is able to manage web pages for RGs if they wish – the group to advise JS about the information that they want to appear. JS reported that the new website would be up before Christmas.
2. ARF said that it was important that any media exposure involving Birds Australia is endorsed by NO or a Regional Group. Anyone purporting to be speaking as a member of BA should be made aware of this responsibility.
3. RGs logos were discussed again and Council's recommendation that RGs, Observatories and SIGs should be using the BA logo in a prominent position in publications was repeated.

CALENDAR

GR had circulated a proposed Calendar to RGs. It was extremely difficult to avoid clashes with other events. There was some discussion about changing the name "Members' Day" to something that may be more attractive to potential participants from other conservation groups who were not members of BA. A suggested possibility was "Birds Australia Annual Conference".

ARF said that it was important to make a distinction between BA's two major annual events.

There was further discussion about rotation of the two events around the State Capitals. The costs involved in going to Perth and Darwin was noted, and the suggestion that events could be confined to the eastern Capitals was put forward.

The change of name of Members' Day and the rotation of the AGM/Members Day and Congress around the eastern Capital Cities should be **recommended to Council**.

Congress 2008 in Hobart on Thursday-Friday 23 -24 Oct. Campout following

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. It was recommended that a student concession membership fee for joining BA be introduced. (GH to take suggestion to Council?)
2. Affiliation with smaller conservation groups was discussed and it was agreed that because of insurance and liability issues, it was not advisable.
3. There are now several Twitchathons around Australia and it was recommended that they appear on the calendar and on the BA website.
4. More promotional material will be produced from NO – stickers, bookmarks etc. JS is doing this.
5. There was some discussion about funded administration positions for RGs. GH advised that the money to do this is not available at present.

6. GR tabled two documents: “Brief for Grahame Rogers...” and “Conserving the NSW Travelling Stock Routes (TSRs) and Qld Stock Route Network (SRN) a position paper of the BASQ for submission to BANO”. This initiative gained the unanimous support of the meeting and A R-F will write a letter of support.

President’s Report

Future directions for the Decade – 2008-17.

- The statement on Future Directions for the Decade 2008-17 will be included in the December edition of *Wingspan* as a separate insert.
- RGs are encouraged to have their members read it and provide comments.
- The Directions document is a working document that will be reviewed regularly with the BA Strategic Plan.

Broome Bird Observatory Appeal.

- \$27,000 has been raised so far
- \$23,000 will be added to this to make up \$50,000
- President and CEO will meet with WA Department of Environment and Conservation to discuss matching funds for BBO in December.

Long term Investment Policy

- Council has put in place a Long Term Investment Policy

Congress and Campout

- The Congress and Campout at Rockhampton was a very successful event with “community” as a theme.
- It was well attended with a good range of topics and presenters.

State of Australian Birds

- This is an important report that BA needs to actively promote.
- RGs and GA generally should look for all opportunities to promote and publicise it.

Australian Geographic

- The *Australian Geographic* is convening a panel to determine Australia’s 12 most interesting/unique birds – President has been invited to participate in the panel.
- President invited RGs to send her their ideas on this.

Norman Wettenhall lecture

- Discussion about how BA could more actively engage in landscape management/restoration for birds.
- Landscape management/restoration is an area that BA could play an active role in advocacy through its information/knowledge and we need to pursue this more actively to help raise BA’s profile as an advocate for bird conservation.

Future Directions

- President will meet with new Federal Minister for Environment as a starting step to raise BA profile.

CEO’s report

Communications Co-ordinator

Jen Sutfin has taken on the much-needed role of Communications Co-ordinator. As discussed elsewhere in the meeting Jen is responsible for managing the content of the new website and will be working with Regional Groups to set up and manage their pages on the new website. More broadly speaking, Jen will provide the point of contact between Regional Groups and National Office to facilitate two-way communication.

Conservation Manager

The departure of Mike Weston has provided an opportunity to redefine roles and responsibilities of some key staff in National Office. We have re-established the position of Conservation Manager, and Chris Tzaros had been appointed to that role. So that we can take a more strategic and consistent approach to conservation issues Chris will establish a National

Conservation Network involving a representative from each Regional Group. This network will serve as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas on how BA should address important conservation issues.

Projects

Recently the CEO has approved several projects proposed by Regional Groups, in spite of some opposition from Research and Conservation Committee. These projects are often of a low priority for research and conservation but engage members, raise the profile of BA and importantly raise money for other activities. These projects would seem to pose only a limited risk to the organisation and are a source on much-needed funds.

Gardman Wildbird Care

BA has entered into an agreement with Gardman Australia to endorse their approach to promote responsible bird feeding. This is a contentious issue but is seen by BA Council as a way to promote the message of taking a responsible approach to supplementary feeding of wild birds. It could also be a vehicle to engage customers of garden centres to educate them about creating bird-friendly backyards and urban areas by encouraging them not just to feed birds but to plant bird-attracting plants.

Regional Groups reports

Allan Briggs – BA Capricornia

Allan reported on several projects:

- Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc wetlands habitat restoration
- Quarterly survey of eight sites on Forestry Plantations Queensland's Paddy's Lagoons plantation.
- Bird Monitoring in Regions established on eight sites around the Fitzroy River basin.
- Bi-annual surveys at Gordon Downs a property leased to the North Australian Pastoral Company.
- IBA project is progressing slowly but is making progress. Several sites remain to be actioned.
- Monthly wader surveys for the Queensland Wader Studies Group at Kinka Beach and Wetlands.

Congress and Campout

Allan reported on the successful campout with 75 delegates attending the Congress and 54 attending the Campout.

Also attached to Allan's report were a profit and loss statement, and an analysis of feedback obtained from 30 people who attended the Congress.

Shirley Cook – BA Northern NSW

- Andrew Ley has resigned from the position of convenor and from the committee. Jenny Watts from Tamworth is stepping in until elections in March.
- The Bundarra-Barraba Ops Group for the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Project has been doing regular searches. The group has received another grant of \$10,000 for netting and attaching radio-tracking devices to the birds.
- During a RHE survey it was noticed that Boral who has a sand mining lease at one of the RHE nesting sites had extracted sand beyond their legal boundary. After contacting Uralla Shire Council and then the company, Boral gave a grant of \$2,750.00 for restoration work to be carried out. An area will be fenced, several hundred trees planted and a sign erected ("Habitat for Regent Honeyeaters etc.) The felling of 30+ mugga ironbarks near Linton Nature Reserve created a flurry of publicity. It was devastating, but legal because the trees were on Linton Station.
- Several campouts have been organised as well as an overseas tour of Costa Rica. Surveys of the Diamantina National Park have continued.
- Several newsletters have been produced.

- Planning is underway for the Australasian Ornithological Conference in 2009.

Rob Davis – BAWA

(Requested electronic report to come)

Doris Graham – BA Vic

- Stuart Dashper will take up Doris Graham's position as Convenor in 2008. The National Office has allowed BA Vic to use meeting rooms in the Green Building (60L) – thanks to the CEO.
- Finances have been kept in good order. Income from Twitchathon has decreased in recent years.
- Two Deacon University PhD students have received research awards of \$1,500 each from Twitchathon monies.
- Monthly meetings with speakers have continued with the new venue at 60L attracting some younger members from the University of Melbourne fraternity.
- Conservation issues addressed include: waterfowl hunting, River Red Gum forests and the Port Phillip Bay channel deepening proposal. The latter is likely to have a devastating effect on the Little Penguin colonies at Phillip Island and St Kilda. Other smaller issues include developments at Port Fairy and Barwon Heads; quail hunting, fire regimes, Port of Hastings land use and transport strategy.
- The Twitchathon was a success with a representative from the *Australian Geographic* accompanying one team, so some publicity made arise from that.
- Activities include participation in TBN, IBA and NRM projects. Long-term projects include surveys at the Eastern Treatment Plant (15 years), Rushworth Forest (12 years) Devilbend (3 years), and You Yangs (7 years). It is hoped to publish data from these projects.
- Campouts and monthly land and pelagic trips have continued.
- A quarterly newsletter, *VicBabbler* has been produced.
- The website has been maintained.
- Doris thanked her committee for their hard work, as well as several members who work at home, and/or lead trips.

Tony Grice – BA Nth Qld

(Requested electronic report to come)

Ian Hume – BASNA

- Establishment of the Birds Australia Discovery Centre – four small buildings at the Newington Armory within Sydney Olympic Park now house the Centre. BA Council accepted a business plan in May and BASNA office moved to the Centre in November. The official opening will be in May 2008, to coincide with the RGs meeting and BA AGM and Members Day. Financial support has come from Birds Australia, partly from funds from the Barren Grounds Bird Observatory. Courses/ workshops have already been held with more planned. In 2008 with the Sydney Community College, courses on “Beginning Birdwatching” are planned.
- Birds in Backyards project (BIBY) – a joint venture between BA and the Australian Museum has run several workshops with more planned. BIBY has been launched in Cowra, marking the first extension of the Program into a country town. Recently BIBY received a Commendation in the NSW Premier's Public Sector Awards.
- Cowra Woodland Birds program began in 2000 aims to reverse the decline of woodland birds in the region. A bird brochure has been produced. A grant of \$30,000 has been received from Lachlan CMA to cover the cost of a detailed statistical analysis of the Cowra WBP database. Cowra WBP was awarded second prize of \$1,000 in the Bushcare section of the Lachlan Catchment Natural Resource Management Awards.

- Regent Honeyeater Project is BASNA's longest running project started in 1993. To date over 70,000 trees and shrubs have been planted in the Capertee Valley near Lithgow, with the help of volunteers. Regular surveys are conducted in the valley.
- North Head Bird Surveys – the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust extended this project to March 2008. It is hoped to expand the project to Middle Head.
- Engaging Ethnic Communities in Bird Conservation in Urban Areas. Project Officer Sue Stevens has developed a 30-page Resource Kit to give supplementary information to multi-lingual educators to conduct workshops.
- Port Botany Extension – two contractors to monitor shorebirds in Penrhyn Estuary of Botany Bay have retained BASNA. This may continue for three years.
- Botany Wetlands – Sydney Water has asked BASNA to survey the birds in the Botany Wetland, to run for 13 months starting in December 2007.
- BASNA Tours – took place, one to the Kimberley and one to northwest NSW.

Grahame Rogers – BASQ

- **Atlassing in the Regions.** BASQ is investigating the distribution of birds by habitat type in the Burnett-Mary Region, especially in the western parts.
- **The Armchair Twitch™** is a competition to observe the most species of birds from a fixed location. In Sep 2007, there were 18 teams from all over Australia, with over 100 participants. Over \$1000 was raised for Bird Conservation and Research.
- **Surveys** – Brisbane City Council Conservation Partnerships Program: Quarterly surveys on land for Wildlife and Voluntary Conservation Agreement properties in Brisbane. Bundamba Wetlands: This Sporting Shooter Association property is being rehabilitated and is surveyed monthly. Mulligan River Nature Refuge: second survey conducted on 21 - 29 Sep 2007.
- **Lower Namoi Cotton Project.** Biodiversity values assessment and regular bird surveys on 17 cotton farms. A joint project between Birds Australia Southern Queensland, Australian Cotton Growers Research Association and the Cotton Catchment Communities CRC. A book, *Birds on Cotton Farms: A Guide to Common Species and Habitat Management*, is to assist cotton farmers with their Best Management Practice.
- **Birds, Backyards and Binoculars** Toowoomba residents record the numbers of birds in their garden, school or other area each month – the data is processed for the Toowoomba Council.
- **Important Bird Areas (IBAs)** BASQ is working on sites in Southern Qld.
- ***Birds of the Darling Downs: A Land Manager's Guide*** – this book simplifies the identification of the 100 most common and important bird species on the Darling Downs. Guidelines are given for enhancing bird habitats on rural properties. The book is available for \$22 from Landcare Discovery Centre, Toowoomba.
- **Threatened Species.** BASQ is particularly interested in: Albert's Lyrebird; Painted Snipe; Regent Honeyeater; Swift Parrot and Glossy Black-Cockatoos.
- **Travelling Stock Routes** in Queensland and NSW have the only examples of Regional Ecosystems left in cleared landscapes. They are also important biodiversity corridors, and may prove valuable to birds affected by climate change. BASQ has developed a strategy to ensure their conservation (tabled at the meeting).
- **SEQWater Regional Biodiversity Corridors Project.** BASQ has joined with Birds Queensland and BrisBOCA to conduct surveys around Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine Dams as part of this project, to restore vegetated linkages between existing remnant ecosystems in the Brisbane Valley riparian corridor and the D'Aguilar Range biosphere.

Eric Woehler – BA Tas

- Eric Woehler produced a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation showing the large number of areas of surveys and research that are carried out by BA Tas. Goals were set by the group in 1971 to encourage and support research into the Tasmanian avifauna and they now have much long-term data from all over Tasmania and the

Bass Strait islands. They take an active interest in conservation issues having made approximately 40 submissions to Federal, State and Local Governments.

- Priscilla Park has been awarded an AOM for her conservation work.
- A project called, “Dog’s Breakfast” has been very successful. The aim is to educate dog owners about the destruction by unleashed dogs, of nests and chicks on beaches. Dog owners are invited to bring their dogs to the beach where the dogs are given a bowl of food and the owner’s are given a leash with the words, “I’m a wet sand walker and I don’t chase chicks,” and a guidelines brochure. The project has been very well received.

Other Reports (p.m.)

James O’Connor – BA Research Manager (part of Mike Weston’s role – Mike has resigned) is investigating the best way to respond to conservation issues. He monitors research programs.

Damien (?) – BA TBN reported that TBN is in its 12th year. He has a 12 months contract and produces the volunteer newsletter and e-mail alert, as well as general public education about threatened species issues and revegetation programs.

Glenn Ehmke – BA OBP and NRS, reported that OBP project has led to better land management for the survival of OBPs. He also reported on the revived Nest Record Scheme that has been in operation since 1964. Glenn is trying to simplify the NRS form.

Dean Ingwersen – BA OHSC is developing a form for completion by excursion participants and induction of BA employees. (Note forms from BASQ and BAWA that were tabled).

Andrew Silcocks – BA Atlas & Birdata. The Atlas has been in progress since 1982 and many different individuals and organisations use the data. The development of Birdata has streamlined the input of data and there are now about 1000 entries each month. The Atlas Newsletter will be recommenced. Fees paid for use of the data amounts to about \$20,000 per annum.

Guy Dutson – BA IBAs. The 3-year program funded by Rio Tinto is about half way through. Ninety percent of the IBAs submitted have been GIS mapped. There is money available to help with follow up monitoring IBAs and to assess the state of the environment. There is to be a February meeting with RG IBA coordinators.

Rob Clemens – BA – Shorebirds 2020 reported the threats to migratory shorebirds both in Australia and overseas. He conducts monitoring and habitat analysis at 30 of 120 shorebird sites regularly. The SW Gulf in Queensland is coming under threat from proposed cotton farming. ARF will engage in dialogue with the new Federal Minister for the Environment. He has developed a training kit that will be available on the BA website soon.

NRM report from **Chris Sanderson** was circulated at the meeting.

The next Regional Groups meeting will be in Sydney in May 2008.

The meeting closed at 5.40 p.m.