

# Inside BOCA



John Barkla  
President



Photo: John Barkla

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BOCA's Board and CEO have been working hard to address the challenges I outlined in the August edition of *The Bird Observer*. Some members took the time to give us feedback and I thank them for it. The comments we have received have generally been positive, but one issue in particular has caused a small number of members to express concern. That is the Board's proposal to discontinue printing *Australian Field Ornithology (AFO)* and only issue it in electronic form from 2010. With the *AFO* soon to celebrate its 50th year (in part under its former name of *The Australian Bird Watcher*), it is prudent to ensure we are not taking an action that could, as some members fear, result in the demise of the journal. The Board proposes to work with the *AFO* Editorial Board to canvas the views of BOCA members and other subscribers to ensure the actions we take are the right ones.

What we do know about the *AFO* is:

- we have a high quality journal that is produced by committed professionals who work entirely on a voluntary basis – there is only a very small amount of administrative labour cost to produce the *AFO* (virtually all our cost is printing and postage charges);
- with the current subscriber base and \$32 subscription, the revenue from the *AFO* falls well short of the production cost; and
- slightly less than 10% of BOCA members currently subscribe to *AFO*. To retain the printed journal we must increase this percentage – a doubling from 10% to a modest 20% would create a small surplus. If we could reach 50% we would have a very healthy surplus indeed.

We need to know why 90% of BOCA members do not subscribe to the current printed journal and what the subscription rate might be if it were electronic (where printing costs would not limit the number of pages or the number of full colour photographs). With an electronic *AFO*, it would be possible to reduce the subscription price (because we would no longer incur the production cost) and, at the same time, turn the current deficit into a surplus. This was the Board's thinking when we decided this was a sensible course. What some

members are now asking us to do is canvas the members and current *AFO* subscribers to establish what the likely impact on subscriber numbers will be.

As the insert in this copy of *The Bird Observer* (and in the September issue of *AFO*) requests, we are now seeking more feedback from BOCA members (and *AFO* subscribers) to enable the Board to review its decision. Please take the time to give us this feedback. Even if you are not a current subscriber to *AFO*, we want to know what you think. What can we do to encourage you to subscribe?

On the other matters I outlined in August, I can report we have made considerable progress.

- The Trustees of Australian Bird Environment Foundation (ABEF) have agreed to significantly increase their support for the conservation work BOCA undertakes, thus ensuring that this work will continue and will not need to be funded from other sources.
- We have purchased the new membership software and computer hardware needed to generate efficiencies in our administration area.
- We have appointed our Board member, Graeme Hosken, as our new Volunteer Co-ordinator with the goal of increasing our use of volunteers and making the experience for all volunteers a satisfying one.
- We have invited Brian Snape AM to join the Board (initially as an Alternate Director) and he has accepted. Brian has considerable experience with many environmental groups and has a strong marketing background from his business career. We are confident he will make a wonderful contribution to BOCA.
- We have gained a further substantial contract for bird and habitat monitoring.

We are working hard in the interests of BOCA. Please do what you can to help.

John Barkla  
President



Richard Hunter  
Chief Executive Officer

## CEO'S REPORT

At the time of writing, the *Game and Feral Animal Amendment Bill*, sponsored by the Shooters Party, is still before the upper house of the NSW Parliament. It may seem beyond belief that there should be any possibility of this Bill, which would allow shooting for the pleasure of killing in our national parks and the reintroduction of duck hunting in a State where the community has overwhelmingly supported its banning, succeeding – sadly, not so.

This is an issue which must concern all right minded Australians, with the possible fallback negotiating position being acceptance by the State Government of the legalising of recreational duck hunting. If the NSW Government rolls over to the shooters lobby, we can expect real pressure for Queensland to follow and little hope for a ban in Victoria and Tasmania where this barbaric practice is still legal.

BOCA has made its objections clear and this can be supported by our members writing to the Premier of NSW, adding their voices to those who have already spoken out.

## BRANCHES & AFFILIATES

- It is very pleasing to welcome Cumberland Bird Observers Club to our growing list of affiliated organisations. CBOC is a very active and well respected NSW group which contributes a great deal to the birding “family”. The up-to-date list of our affiliates, totalling 24, is available on the BOCA website and members are encouraged to make contact when travelling and to encourage visiting members of affiliated groups to join our activities.
- During the last two weeks of September John Barkla and I will be visiting BOCA's four Queensland branches to exchange ideas and look at environmental work being done locally. This is a quite arduous 6,000km drive but one to which we are very much looking forward.
- On our way north, John and I will be attending the BIGnet meeting being held at Mittagong in NSW. For those not aware, BIGnet is the umbrella group for NSW birding organisations and provides an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas and development of policy.

BIGnet meets twice a year and the September meeting is being hosted by our Southern Highboc Branch. Two days of meetings will be relieved by a breakfast walk on the Sunday morning.

- Don't forget that the bi-monthly Photoboca Newsletter is available to all members on our website. Providing the newsletter via the web represents a considerable saving both in paper and money but we are, of course, aware that not all members have internet access, so please contact National Office if you would like a paper copy.

## BOCA'S ABEF GRANTS

The Trustees of BOCA's environmental foundation, ABEF, have met to consider recommendations for project funding for 2009. Three projects have been approved for funding after final conditions being agreed:

- Grant of \$5,000 to Christina Zdenek of ANU to study vocal individuality and conservation of Palm Cockatoos on Cape York Peninsula.
- Grant of \$5,000 to Dr Mike Weston of Deakin University to study nesting success and causes of nest failure among Australia's resident shorebirds.
- Grant of \$4,724 to Ambrose State School P&C Association, Queensland, for replanting of a forestry plot adjoining the school with indigenous plants and student excursions to Boyne Island Environmental Education Centre and to Tondoon Botanic Gardens.

Applications for 2010 Grants are now open with a closing date of 31 May 2010. Details may be obtained from the BOCA website or by contacting the Administration Manager at National Office.

BOCA is able to make grants each year and to fund its own environmental work because of the very generous support we receive from our donors and those who consider BOCA in their wills.

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF AUSTRALIAN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY

This year sees the 50th Anniversary of the first publication of this valuable and informative magazine, previously known as *Australian Bird Watcher*. *AFO* continues to be almost entirely produced by a team of dedicated volunteers with minimal assistance from BOCA staff.

The Editor, Dr Stephen Debus, has been in the position for twenty-five years and Assistant Editor, Dr Julia Hurley, for sixteen. The Editorial Board which oversees the process is headed by Associate Professor Alan Lill and is again marked by the length of service of its members. The expertise and application of the production team over such a long time is an extraordinary achievement.

While BOCA is proud of *AFO* and is committed to its continued publication, the fact that less than 10% of members subscribe is a cause for concern. We need to consider what can be done to lift readership while containing costs, so members are asked to provide feedback using the questionnaire included with

this issue of *The Bird Observer*. This can be done by completing and returning the form by post or by emailing it to me.

The September issue of *AFO* contains a number of articles which will be of interest to BOCA members. Included below is an informative item from Assistant Editor, Julia Hurley, which outlines some of them. The full index of articles in the September issue will also be available on the BOCA website.

Richard Hunter  
CEO@birdobservers.org.au

### BIRDS RESPONDING TO REVEGETATION AT CLARKESDALE

Replanting degraded farmland with selected native plants certainly encourages honeyeaters to come to profuse nectar supplies. But what effect does this have on our dwindling insectivorous birds? It is important to at least try to answer such questions. The lead article in the September issue of *Australian Field Ornithology* assesses such questions from a 3 year study, some 40 years after replanting commenced, at the Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary, near Ballarat, Victoria. Replanting, especially with Western Australian plants specifically to attract birds, was planned by the late Gordon Clarke. The property is now owned by BOCA and Trust for Nature (Victoria).

The other major article in this issue is a detailed study of the breeding cycle of the Little Eagle. Shorter papers discuss variations and a possible hybrid of the Australian Ringneck in Queensland, Bell Miner colonies in inland northern New South Wales, and photographic evidence of a White-throated Treecreeper feeding on nectar. There is also a book review.

Please support BOCA and subscribe (\$32 p.a. or \$40 p.a. overseas)/ contribute to *AFO*, our quarterly journal on field ornithology.

*Julia Hurley*



Little Eagle. Photo: David Whelan



Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary (Vic). Photo: David Courts

**Wetland Habitat - Wetland Birds**  
BOCA Bird Week 2009 | 25 - 31 October

Fivebough Wetlands. Photo: Annette Cook. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Photo: John Barkla