

Inside BOCA



Richard Hunter
Chief Executive Officer

With the start of the new year, the previously advised changes to the publication sequence of *The Bird Observer* are now in place. From this issue, our magazine will be posted to members in the third week of February, May, August and November of each year.

BOCA AND BIRDS AUSTRALIA

Members will have received a letter from the Presidents of the two organisations providing information on the Joint Working Group set up to advise on future working relationships. The aim is to ensure that the birding movement is best placed to provide for members' birding interests and to advocate for birds and their environment.

Once the Working Group have developed a set of discussion points a process of member consultation will be put in place.

Any member who has not received the Presidents' letter should contact me for a copy.

AUSTRALIAN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY

Responses to the member survey on the *AFO* continue to come in with about 20% of *AFO* readers responding and another 3% through *The Bird Observer*.

Among current subscribers to the *AFO*, the concept for an electronic publication is supported by less than half the respondents. The great majority of readers indicate that they would support either an increase in subscription rate or a reduction to three issues per year to ensure paper publication continues.

Readers of *The Bird Observer* who have responded are evenly divided between cost and content as a reason for not taking the *AFO*. They are also more or less evenly divided on the issue of electronic publication. There has certainly not been any indication of a significant rise in readership by going to a lower cost electronic publication.

This important issue will not be decided upon until June, so please continue to send in your views.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

BOCA Director, Dave Torr, has taken over as website designer and work on the new website is now progressing at a good rate. Emphasis is being placed on ease of use to ensure that National Office staff and branch representatives are able to efficiently update material. This is important to ensure that website items are current.

We have an urgent need for a volunteer Website Content Manager and anyone interested in taking on this editorial role please contact me.



Photo: John Barkla

BIRD OBSERVATION & CONSERVATION AUSTRALIA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 15 May 2010

Notice is given by the Directors that the Annual General Meeting of Members of Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA) will be held on Saturday, 15 May 2010 at 2.00 pm in the Edna Walling Room at 183-185 Springvale Road Nunawading Victoria.

Members are advised that nominations for the positions vacated by the three retiring Directors are now called for. Currently there are ten Directors serving on the Board in the ten approved positions.

Nomination Forms are available on request from BOCA National Office. Nominations must be signed by a member and countersigned by the nominee and received by the Chief Executive Officer no later than close of business on 16 April 2010.

The business of the Annual General Meeting shall be:

- To receive and consider Financial Report, Auditor's Report, and the Report of Directors for the year ended 31 December 2009
- To declare the election of members of the Board for the ensuing year
- To deal with any matter of which due notice has been given
- To discuss any other matter agreed by the meeting but which may not be resolved.

Any notice of motion submitted by a member must be received by the Chief Executive Officer no later than close of business on 16 April 2010.

ANDERSON RICE LAWYERS

Honorary Solicitors to BOCA are available for consultation

Areas of practise include Business and Property Law, Conveyancing, Family Law, Workplace Relations, Insurance, Motor and Litigation

You can contact us for a free 20 minute consultation on 03 9672 2666 or visit our web site at: www.andrice.com.au

VICTORIAN DUCK SEASON

Once again, the Victorian Government has caved in to the shooters interests and declared a duck season in 2010. This is contrary to the information available regarding the effects of prolonged drought but hardly unexpected given the influence of the gun lobby. The issue is covered extensively in our Conservation pages.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY

2010 has been declared International Year of Biodiversity and this will be the central focus of BOCA Bird Week later in the year.

While it is pleasing to see this important issue given some recognition, the concept is largely pointless unless governments actually take some action to address the issues. Without this, the year will simply be another when biodiversity suffers.

JOHN HOBBS MEMORIAL MEDAL

BOCA and Birds Australia member, Mike Carter, has been awarded the 2009 Hobbs Medal by Birds Australia.

The John Hobbs Memorial Medal is awarded each year to an amateur birdwatcher who has made a significant contribution to the knowledge or conservation of birds in Australia.

Mike Carter is best known as the person who has seen more bird species in Australia than any other birdwatcher and this has often overshadowed his enormous and invaluable contribution to Australian ornithology.

Our congratulations on this very well deserved recognition.

Richard Hunter
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AUSTRALIAN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY

2009 was the 50th anniversary of the *Australian Bird Watcher/Australian Field Ornithology*, BOCA's journal of bird study, which has a long and rich history. *ABW* first appeared in March 1959. Initially biannual, with three parts appearing in 1971, it became quarterly from 1972 with the growth in amateur field ornithology. *ABW* grew from a Victorian-based journal (when BOCA was Melbourne-centred) to become a national journal of amateur bird study complementing *Emu* and *Corella*. The future of *AFO* will likely lie increasingly with amateurs.

In 1957 a sub-committee of the Bird Observers Club was established to plan and implement the production of a new Club journal. Members of the initial sub-committee were Len Robinson, Dudley Dickinson and Roy Cooper, with Helen Aston, Ina Watson, Roy Wheeler and Frank Pinchen joining in later. All of these members were great contributors to the Club's bird conservation objectives and continued to guide *ABW* through its early years.

Prominent *ABW* personnel include BOCA stalwarts such as founding editor Roy Cooper (17 years to September 1976); Jack Hyett (index compiler until 1992, acting editor in December 1976, assistant editor for 12 years June 1981–March 1996); past BOCA president Ken Simpson (of Simpson & Day field-guide fame: editor March 1977–March 1981); Rex Buckingham (acting editor June 1981–March 1984); Will Rolland (production editor for 11 years March 1981–December 1992); and Julia Hurley (past editor of *The Bird Observer*, and 17 years on *AFO*: assistant editor from December 1992, production editor from March 1993, and index compiler from 1994).

The aims of BOCA include 'to encourage the scientific study and research of Australian birds and their habitats, so as to facilitate their conservation and well-being'. *AFO* is BOCA's study and research arm, and part of its conservation arm, through the activities of its contributors and the publication

of ecological or natural-history information that underpins conservation. As such, *AFO* is BOCA's flagship publication of bird study. It therefore deserves greater support from the membership, in the form of a much greater proportion electing to subscribe to it. Amazingly, only 10% of BOCA's 3000 members subscribe, but if most (or ideally, all) members took it, the annual subscription to *AFO* could drop from \$32 p.a. to about \$20 p.a.

Some members apparently say that *AFO* is too scientific, but, in reality, much of *AFO* is written by amateur ornithologists, and easily understood by amateurs willing to go beyond mere birdwatching and graduate to understanding birds.

I've also heard it said that many BOCA members wouldn't wear a rise of just \$2 p.a. in their club membership rate in order to support *AFO* and hence, BOCA's aims. An extra \$2 p.a. in club membership rates or, alternatively, a majority of BOCA members subscribing to *AFO* would enable *AFO* to get back in the black, and remain available as paper copy rather than electronic-only. It seems a small price to pay to help BOCA fulfill its aims, and in doing so help birds and their (and hence our) environment.

I'm sure that BOCA members will want to continue to have birds to watch, but that will only be possible with the continued conservation and advocacy activities of organisations like BOCA. So please, help birds, and help BOCA to fulfill its aims, by subscribing and contributing to *AFO*. Have a look at articles from past issues which are now available on the following website www.search.informit.com.au/browseJournalTitle.

Stephen Debus
 Editor, *AFO*

CEO's note: In writing the above, Stephen has very modestly overlooked his own contribution with twenty-five years as Co-ordinating Editor and Editor, predatory birds. A truly remarkable commitment.