

# Inside BOCA



Richard Hunter  
Chief Executive Officer



Photo: John Barkla

## CEO'S REPORT

Welcome to the first edition of *The Bird Observer* for 2011.

The year ahead presents as one full of challenges and opportunities for BOCA, foremost being the opportunity to build a strong, effective, unified national organisation for birds and recreational birdwatchers.

At the time of writing much of Australia is devastated by natural disaster. Large areas of eastern Australia are covered by floodwater and we have seen serious fires in the West. Our thoughts are with all those, both BOCA people and the many others who have suffered so much in the last few weeks.

Many of our branch centres have been directly involved with the floods and today we are waiting for news of members at Horsham and Echuca Branches, having already heard from others in Queensland and Northern NSW.

Recent heavy rains have caused major damage to Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary. Thankfully buildings are safe but habitat damage is severe. Manager David Coutts reports the following:

- The Springdallah Creek flood destroyed the footbridge which has given access to the bird paddock and left the debris some 200 metres downstream. Foundations remain on only one side of the creek.
- Many of Gordon Clark's original plantings have been devastated, this includes the thickets of native vegetation

which Gordon Clark and his volunteers planted to replace the impenetrable gorse which once lined the creek.

- The creek swelled to over 50 metres width and water flowed back into the wetland which is well above normal creek height.
- The Linton-Piggoreet Road which runs through the Sanctuary has been cut by a 10 metre deep, 30 metre wide gorge. The century-old trestle bridge, familiar to many members, has also been destroyed.
- Many large trees have been lost and, importantly, ground scoured of plants and leaf litter cover is now very vulnerable to weed invasion.
- The lengthy drive to the Manager's house is largely destroyed.
- On the plus side, dams and wetlands are full. The Omega Dam at the Manager's house is full for the first time in more than twenty years.

Despite all the damage, the Sanctuary will survive and still presents magnificent bird habitat. We now have an urgent need for volunteers to help in the cleanup and weed control and, more long term, in replanting. We also have a great need for donations to help in the re-build of destroyed infrastructure. Manager, David Coutts, can be contacted through National Office.



Left: The Linton-Piggoreet Road. Middle: The footbridge to the bird paddock. Right: The century-old trestle bridge has been destroyed. Photos: David Coutts

## BOCA/BA MERGER

With some inevitable breaks through the holiday period, the considerations of the merger working group has continued, now very much helped by the efforts of the various sub-groups: governance, finance, operations and communications. All aspects of issues raised by members as well as those initiated by the sub-groups are being considered and reported upon.

The Working Group has brought on board some very skilled people to assist with some of its planning, particularly risk management.

A strategic development workshop is being planned for 4 February and this will involve Directors, staff, branch representatives and some other members of both organisations.

Members will see the formal advertisement for this year's Annual General Meeting at the end of this article with the date being set for Saturday, 21 May. Because of the anticipated attendance at the AGM the Board has decided that it is impractical to use the usual venue at National Office and has agreed to a move to the Balwyn centre used by MELBOCA for their meetings.

**The AGM provides the opportunity for members to cast their vote on this vital issue. If at all possible, please attend the meeting. If not able to attend please use the proxy form which will be sent to you to ensure your vote is counted.**

We are now working on a comprehensive information package which will be posted to members in early April to allow plenty of time for consideration before a vote is cast.

In voting, members should be aware that we live in a time of change. Whether the proposed merger goes ahead or not it is inevitable BOCA must continue to change to remain relevant and viable.

Honorary Life Member, Reg Johnson, OAM, has requested that his views on the issue be made known to other members and his letter is printed in Your Letters.

## DUCK SEASON

Despite a change in government in Victoria, there has been no change in approach to the killing of our native water birds. Even though reliable reports indicate duck numbers are still well down and those that are present are in a breeding cycle, the decision to allow a full, unrestricted season has been announced. Any hope that the new Victorian government would be less captive to the hunting lobby has been well and truly dashed.

We have not yet heard from the Tasmanian or South Australian governments but, as they normally follow the Victorian decision without much further consideration, there is little reason to hope for a better outcome in either State.



Male Australasian Shoveller, a "game" species in Victoria, Lake Monger, WA. Photo: Duncan Turnbull

BOCA and Birds Australia have released a joint media statement on this important issue and a copy can be found on the BOCA website.

## BLUE WREN GIFT SHOP

Our shop continues to provide a source of birding equipment, field guides, books, bird call CDs and other products for members. Recently we have received a wonderful donation of goods from the now closed Birding Shop. This significant donation of top quality goods will allow the BOCA shop to continue trading profitably. Members unable to visit personally can access the shop on-line through mail order or by contacting the National Office (see p.33 for details).

## BEST BINOCULAR FOR YOU

Dr Ian Wilson has produced a very interesting and helpful article on the optical issues relevant to choosing binoculars for birdwatching. One aspect which is often overlooked is the way in which our eyes change with age and how this affects the binocular magnification and lens sizes we should choose, while taking into consideration other factors such as low light level performance.

Dr Wilson has a PhD in optical physics and thirty years experience in the design and manufacture of optical systems for imaging and spectroscopy. Before retiring he was the Chief Research Scientist in charge of optical systems engineering at CSIRO and technical director at Optical Engineering Associates Pty Ltd. He has been an active birder since childhood. This combination of birdwatcher and optical scientist ensures that it is an authoritative paper well worth reading for those considering purchase of binoculars for birdwatching.

The full paper may be accessed on BOCA's website [www.boca.org.au](http://www.boca.org.au) or a copy can be obtained by contacting BOCA's National Office ph 03 9877 5342.

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## AUSTRALIAN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY – DECEMBER 2010

This issue of *AFO* has two new records for Australian territory: a dead Little Paradise-Kingfisher from Torres Strait and the Siberian subspecies of the Peregrine Falcon on Christmas Island.

Other articles include the nesting behaviour of Marshall's Fig-Parrot in Queensland; recent sightings of the Thick-billed Grasswren in New South Wales; notes on interesting behaviour of an atypical honeyeater in Western Australia; analysis of diet from pellets of two different owls (Eastern Barn Owl in Diamantina National Park Qld; Eastern Grass Owl in Sydney, NSW) and a short note on interactions between gulls and feeding spoonbills. This issue of our quarterly journal of field ornithology concludes with two book reviews and the index for 2010.

Enjoy your holiday reading and support BOCA by subscribing to *AFO* (\$32 pa, or \$40 pa overseas airmail).

*Julia Hurley*



Royal Spoonbill, Lowbidgee Wetlands, see article on p.9. Photo: Kate Brandis

## BIRD OBSERVATION & CONSERVATION AUSTRALIA

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 21 May 2011

Notice is given by the Directors that the Annual General Meeting of Members of Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA) will be held on Saturday, 21 May 2011 at 2.30pm at the **Evergreen Centre (Balwyn Hall) 45 Talbot Street, Balwyn (Melways 46, E8)**

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 21 April 2011.

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 2010.
- 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 (this will include consideration of resolutions proposing a merger between Bird Observation & Conservation Australia and Birds Australia, details of which will be provided with the agenda mailout.
- 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 21 April 2011.

## 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](http://www.andrice.com.au)