

## Ian Dowling Dedicated all-rounder

*"Birding is good fun, and fascinating."  
"BOCA is an avenue of shared birdwatching."*

A BOCA display at the Yarra Valley School first drew Ian Dowling, long-standing PENBOC president, walks leader and branch conservation nominee to BOCA, which he joined in the mid 1940s.

The club remains important to Ian partly because of its involvement in conservation issues and because it provides members with an opportunity to share birdwatching experiences.

Ian is an all-rounder: "I enjoy watching birds, studying their habits and activities and understanding their needs."

Of his involvement with the PENBOC group - based south of Melbourne on the Mornington Peninsula - he says: "I enjoy the company and find a sense of achievement in finding new locations for birdwatching and in helping members to find new birds.

Like many birdos, Ian has been an avid reader of articles by the late Crosbie Morrison, noted naturalist and BOCA member, and by the late Graham Pizzey.

Reg Johnson and Leslie Feather were early BOCA contacts. "Reg (and I) had a dramatic first meeting but he taught me quickly the disciplines of birdwatching and how to identify birds.

"Leslie, through her arrangement of camps and Tagalong (trips) showed just how much there was to see and just how good was the companionship. The effort she put into those early major Tagalongs was invaluable." Such activities took Ian to many remote and interesting places he may never otherwise have seen, he said.

Ian's interest in conservation and observation began 20 years ago and he first took part in the then Peninsula Bird Watchers (now PENBOC) in 1984, reacting to a newspaper notice of the group's activities.

He took his own car to his first outing which was organised by the late Fred Thompson. Also in attendance on this occasion were Ken and Elaine Watson and Joan Peters.

Some habitats may have been lost or become overgrown with weeds but birding today is still fun and fascinating, Ian said.

He admires Crimson Rosellas for their "stunning colour" and well remembers the time he saw a Peregrine Falcon attack an Ibis.

President of the peninsula group since 1989, Ian has spent much time promoting the group's image so it would become a legitimate conservation voice in its home territory. Conducting meetings, and arranging group outings brought his previous managerial experience to the fore.

His interest in birds, he says, underpinned another interest - this time in native plants, especially those indigenous to the Peninsula. The depth and breadth of Ian's concern with birding are expressed in the articles he has written for *'The Bird Observer'* and for local newspapers - and by the talks given to community, service and conservation groups.

That these were successful became apparent by his good reception at question time, he says modestly. "Resources were sometimes a problem, but it was all fun."

Ian's major aim has always been to promote further interest in the welfare of birds. Among his achievements he rates highly being able to get some management into the presence of Red-capped Plovers on Rosebud Beach.

*Written by Leonie Robbins from his notes 6 May 2004*