

Robert (Bob) Hughes **Following Grandpa's footsteps**

"Birding has sparked an interest in wildflowers and butterflies."

Bob Hughes initially became involved with BOCA when he was seeking a new interest in life following a heart attack, but it was a general love of birds that steered him towards joining the club in the 1970s.

Being a club member has enabled him to go on outings with other groups based at Balmoral and Warrnambool (V) as well as keeping him informed on general bird news and sightings. He has a special interest in the Mallee and lakes.

He went on to become the club's Western District representative which involved recruiting new members from his own area.

Bob has put on slide nights and given talks on birds to schools and groups in his local community.

It was in the 1940s when his grandfather introduced a young Bob into the delights of birdwatching. Mutual friends later encouraged him to join BOCA.

He says Fred Smith and Wally Coles had a significant influence on his birding along with his own library of bird reference books.

His first BOCA activity was as leader of an outing to Victoria's Western Plains area. Others he recalls on that occasion were Roger Thomas and Murray Grant .

The bird which made a lasting impression on Bob that day was seeing the Forest Raven and a rare sighting of the Black-chinned Honeyeater.

The biggest changes he has seen in birding over the years is a general decline in species numbers and an increase in certain species such as Galahs and Corellas.

He believes birding is now more competitive and while he aspires to notch up 600 species he says he is no twitcher.

Bob's most impressive sighting was a Franklin's Gull at Peterborough (V); his favourite bird is the remarkably coloured Gouldian Finch. Birding has also sparked an interest in wildflowers and butterflies..

Written by Trevor Robbins from answers to questionnaire 25 May 2004