

## **Julia Hurley** **Hands-on work with words**

*"I can't imagine life without birds"*

Much of Julia Hurley's involvement with BOCA has been in the world of words and publishing.

She was editor of *The Bird Observer* from June 1986 to Dec 1991, bringing to it her considerable skills. She is matter-of-fact about taking on this work. "Keith Richards asked me if I would consider editing *The Bird Observer* and it went from there. There would not have been a 'Bird Observer' without an editor".

Editing the club magazine was demanding and left her little time for personal birdwatching. As well as the hands-on tasks she had with each issue, she learned much about the club and the wider issues within it and outside, such as conservation. 'Meticulous' is the word others have used to describe her editorship.

At the time of writing (May 2004) her work on *The Australian Bird Watcher* (ABW) - now *Australian Field Ornithology* (AFO) - as assistant editor and production editor was ongoing.

Why has she done so much? "Who can tell? If I hadn't done this I would have done something else", is her somewhat wry reply.

Birds themselves are the paramount influence on her association with BOCA. Working with 'like-minded' people and the environment are also catalysts. "Monitoring what is happening to the environment and considering what, if anything, we could or should be doing about it" is her typical response.

Julia has worked with Stephen Debus, Claire Appleby, Will Rolland, Jack Hyett, John Peter, Andrew Ley, Graham Cam and Ken Simpson in pursuit of getting these publications to press.

Working on the AFO is most challenging, she says, requiring both editorial input and the ability to work to a tight schedule with other editors as well as authors and printers. "ABW/AFO would not have been published without someone - me or someone else - doing the work," she said.

Her interest in birds has been life-long - initiated, she says, by family from her earliest days "before I could even walk or talk, I think."

She joined BOCA about 45 years ago and worked as a shop volunteer in earlier times - "before the days of fancy cash registers" as she puts it.

A monthly meeting in Melbourne's CBD, which she attended after being attracted by articles in the club magazine, was her first BOCA activity.

Birding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, she believes, is more competitive and more commercial than ever before, with more organised tours available. Better equipment and guide books and up-to-date access to information via the internet are all part of today's scene, although Julia puts a question mark against the reliability of some of the 'net' input.

Three specific birding experiences remain special for her: watching an Azure Kingfisher fishing, learning to distinguish pardalote species “feather by feather” and seeing three Hooded Plovers on a beach.

Observation and research have kept her interest levels high. “I hope I still have some curiosity,” she said.

*Written by Leonie Robbins from answers to questionnaire 25 May 2004*