

Inside BOCA



John Barkla
President

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is the final edition of *The Bird Observer* and from the New Year each member will receive the new BirdLife Australia magazine. Whilst it may be sad for some to say goodbye to the old magazine, I am confident that they will not be disappointed with the new magazine. For those members who have already renewed their membership for 2012, you will automatically become a member of BirdLife Australia with effect from 1 January 2012. As most membership renewals fall due in the months of November and December, this exciting roll-over of membership into the new organisation is happening now. If you are not due to renew until after 31 December, when BOCA and Birds Australia (BA) will formally cease to operate, you will be treated as a BirdLife member and will receive the new magazine, and this status will be confirmed when your renewal occurs.

The work to merge BOCA and BA and create a single national organisation, BirdLife Australia, is nearing the 1 January date when the staff will transfer to BirdLife Australia. Staff members have been fully consulted and involved and new employment contracts are being signed on no less favourable terms of employment than everyone enjoys now. All of the assets and liabilities and all contractual rights and obligations of both BOCA and BA will also transfer on the same date. The Australian Bird Environment Foundation (ABEF) will continue as it is now, but hopefully with more prospect of growing, due to the support of the larger entity. The ABEF Trustees will continue their valuable voluntary commitment and when a Trustee vacancy arises in the future, the new appointment will be made by BirdLife Australia rather than BOCA.

Following the 24 June meeting with representatives from the majority of BOCA branches and BA regional groups (refer my comments in *The Bird Observer* for August) the feedback to the online survey was that BirdLife Australia should operate with one strong National Office and a series of branches in different locations across Australia. Where desired by members, regional groupings would also operate as they do now, as in Western Australia for BA. With our increased membership, it is hoped that more branches can be opened and, as a result,

more activities will be offered to members and prospective members. An exciting development in this regard is that some independent bird clubs have already expressed an interest in joining BirdLife Australia as a local branch with Gold Coast Birdwatchers in Queensland in the process of doing so. I had always hoped that this would happen and it appears it will.

To update you on the developments I referred to in my August report and other matters which have arisen since then, I can now advise:

- The 10 member BirdLife board has been meeting regularly, productively and harmoniously under the guidance of our independent Chair, Gerald Early. One Board member, Max Finlayson, has resigned from the Board for unforeseen personal reasons and, as he was initially a BA appointee, the BirdLife Board has asked BA to nominate his replacement.
- The BirdLife Board has engaged Fresh Brand Communication to advise on our corporate identity, with a view to building our profile and our member and supporter base, so that we can better engage our members and the community and become a more effective voice for birds.
- Fresh have undertaken independent research and have provided advice to assist the Board to develop a brand strategy, incorporating communications and publications strategies.
- Part of the brand development has been Fresh's input into the development of a new logo. The Board was pleased to adopt a design they put forward and this will be made public during the launch of BirdLife Australia in the New Year.
- Another part has been the development of a new BirdLife website, which will build upon the work done by Dave Torr (made possible by the generous support of our member Geoff Jones) in the development of the BOCA website, such as the photo gallery, the library catalogue search facility, the birding locations resource and other features.



Superb Fairy-wren, Western Treatment Plant, Werribee, Vic. Photo: John Barkla

- We have made progress with the development of a Strategic Directions Paper as a precursor to a full Strategic Plan, to replace the previous plans of both BOCA and BA.
- We have been granted charitable organisation status by the Australian Taxation Office, and applied for Deductible Gift Recipient status so that BirdLife Australia will be able to seek tax deductible donations to continue its education and conservation work.
- We have decided to base our National Office in the former BA offices in Carlton, with a small amount of additional space. We are considering how best to use the Nunawading building in 2012 to generate much needed income.
- Our new CEO, Graeme Hamilton, has been meeting with our National Office volunteers. We are hopeful that our volunteers will continue to support us, but we understand that some who live near our Nunawading office may find it difficult to commute to Carlton.
- We have decided to close BOCA's Blue Wren Gift Shop when the office closes in December. To convert our inventory to cash, we are now offering generous discounts to members.

As BOCA will cease to operate from 31 December and will be replaced by BirdLife Australia, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their years of dedicated service and the leadership they have provided. I have particularly appreciated their support during the past two years in addressing the challenges of the turbulent times in which we live and in supporting and guiding the merger process. The members overwhelmingly supported the direction set by the Board and for that too I am very grateful.

I would like to wish all of our members, volunteers, supporters and staff and their families a happy and healthy Christmas and look forward to working (and birding whenever possible) with you in 2012. If the ongoing financial turbulence on world markets does not derail our financial system, our future should be assured: our birds depend on it.

John Barkla
President

REMINDER

Nominations for BOCA Distinguished Service Awards close on 31 December 2011. For further information and nomination form, please refer to the insert in this issue of *The Bird Observer* or contact National Office.

OFFICE CLOSURE

BOCA National Office in Nunawading and the Blue Wren Gift Shop will close at midday on Friday, 23 December 2011.



Graeme Hamilton
Chief Executive Officer

CEO'S REPORT

I don't know if it's possible to have too many pictures of the Superb Fairy-wren but I believe the staff are really trying to push the boundaries in this final edition of *The Bird Observer*. With apologies to our Members in WA, NT and North Queensland where this lovely bird isn't seen, I've decided you really can't have too much of a good thing. Many members may not realize the amount of work the staff have put in over the past few years to continue to produce for you such a high quality and interesting magazine. I know that Leanne Curnow has mixed feelings as she has taken great pride in co-ordinating the magazine's production, but now looks forward to a new role in BirdLife Australia. Thanks to Leanne, Jenny, Annette and Don for all of your hard work.

As we prepare for the move to Leicester Street Carlton there is a great deal of sorting out in progress at Nunawading. Ian Muir has rolled up his sleeves and is carefully and meticulously working through BOCA's archives to make sure all valuable documents are identified, correctly labelled and, most important, retained. Thanks Ian for your patience and care. We must ensure these unique documents are preserved, and I will soon be meeting with representatives of the State Library of Victoria which also holds the archives of the RAOU/Birds Australia.

Our library volunteers are also preparing for the move to Carlton where the BOCA and BA libraries will be merged. We have organised to lease a new dedicated space to accommodate the expanded library, which then frees up office space to accommodate all of the staff. The BOCA staff may find the open plan office a bit strange at first but I'm sure they will adjust in a short time as the BA staff have. My heartfelt thanks to the many volunteers who have spent so much time and effort managing our library on behalf of all members. It has been a real labour of love. There is an open invitation for you to continue but I know for some of you Carlton is too far away.

As part of the wider consultation about BirdLife, I've visited several Branches and these visits will continue over the coming months. Being newly arrived in BOCA I didn't know quite what to expect from these visits. I knew I'd be made to feel welcome because that's something BOCA folks do particularly well, but what would Branches be doing and how would they respond to my ideas? Frankly, I'm delighted. The Branches I've

visited so far are actively involved in bird monitoring to support conservation and birdwatching as an enjoyable social activity. I believe they have achieved the right mix to cover our range of interests. The level of engagement with local communities, government and business is really encouraging. The name of our organisation will change but the activities of these Branches should continue, albeit with more support from National Office.

The next member magazine you receive will leave you in no doubt that we have become BirdLife Australia. We approach this change with optimism and excitement; and for my part with a little discomfort because of the challenges ahead. Much is written about managing change but that is mostly about going from one defined place to another in a defined time. Our situation is a little different as we make the transition to a new organisation striving to achieve much more for our beloved birds than we have in the past. Neither the end point nor the timeframe can be well defined. What we are certain of is the clear message you gave us in May that you want us to achieve a great deal more and that you understand that change is necessary to give our birds, and our organisation, a bright future.

ABEF GRANTS

At their October meeting, the ABEF Trustees approved the 2011 round of external grants. From a number of very good quality applications the following were successful:

- Brolga Recovery Group. To produce Brolga calendars for landholders in south-west Victoria to record Brolga activities 2012-13.
- St Raphael's Primary School, West Preston, Vic. Support for their project "Let's bring back our birds" – to develop and deliver an education and information program for students and their families in relation to native birds in the environment.
- Alice Taysom, Victoria University. Investigating the extent of hybridisation between introduced Northern Mallards and Pacific Black Ducks throughout Victoria.
- St Michael's Primary School, Blacktown South, NSW. To provide funds for nestboxes, binoculars and field guides in support of their Darug Nature Garden "creating an environmentally friendly native bird habitat".
- Pelican and Seabird Rescue Inc, Capalaba, Qld. For information stickers to be used by boat owners, advising on contacts for rescuing injured birds.

All of the staff join me in wishing you, your families and friends, an enjoyable Christmas, a prosperous, healthy and happy New Year.

Graeme Hamilton
 ceo@boca.org.au

NESTING HONEYEATERS – AFO

The lead article in the September issue of *Australian Field Ornithology* is on nesting Dusky Honeyeaters in the Northern Territory, and particularly on observations from suburban Darwin.

Also from northern Australia, comes a short paper on sightings of Pictorella Mannikins, pointing to a possible irruption of this species.

Other articles are on diurnal raptors in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, an unusual prey of a Peregrine Falcon near Canberra, ACT and on the diet of the Powerful Owl in the Australian Capital Territory. Finally, two book reviews complete the issue.

Please support our birdlife and subscribe to our quarterly journal of field ornithology.

Julia Hurley



Superb Fairy-wren, grasslands near Ryan's Lagoon, Western Treatment Plant, Werribee, Vic.
 Photo: Jennifer Spry

MERGER UPDATE

A lot has happened since I last reported in August's *The Bird Observer*.

The Board has now agreed a new logo and visual identity for BirdLife Australia. This visual identity is being developed to support all of BirdLife's work – across publications and materials, the new website, locally and regionally and through all our conservation and research projects. During October and November the new visual identity was shared with staff and representatives of the Birds Australia and BOCA network around the country. We won't be unveiling it until January; watch this space.

Internally we are aligning our operations. From November we aim to have Birds Australia and BOCA members all listed under one membership database. This should help us to streamline how we communicate and will ensure we are ready for BirdLife's first magazine production and our first communications with members early next year.

During November and December, BOCA staff currently based in Nunawading will be moving to the National Office in Carlton. Birds Australia and BOCA staff contracts and employment will also transfer to BirdLife over this time.

BOCA's shop and the Nunawading building will remain open for the rest of the year (until 23 December). The Blue Wren Gift Shop offers Australian made products such as ceramics, books, toys, games and cards. All BOCA (and now Birds Australia) members receive a 10% discount on shopstock – if you can't get to the shop in person go to www.boca.org.au/shop for online ordering (see Page 20 for more information about the shop).

During the final months of the year the libraries of both organisations will be integrated. The BirdLife Australia library will be the biggest and most comprehensive ornithological library in Australia. Duplicate books held in both the current libraries are being sold or passed on to appropriate agencies such as the State Library for archiving with their collection.

The strategic plan for BirdLife Australia is currently under development. It will outline the vision and goals for the new organisation and will articulate what we aim to achieve over the next five years. This will be signed off by the BirdLife Board by the end of the year.

Consultation with branches and groups has resulted in a wealth of feedback and ideas on how we can best develop our network across the country. As we go to print the Board is finalising plans on how our network will operate locally and in relation to National Office. Our new name will allow us to retain individual identities across the country, while being part of one National organisation; under the BirdLife Australia banner local member groups/branches will be called, for example, BirdLife Western Australia, BirdLife Townsville; consistent Nationally but unique to each area.

This is your last publication from BOCA. Your next magazine will be coming out in March and will be BirdLife's first member publication. In the meantime we'll keep you up to date on the BOCA website. If you have any specific questions, feedback or comments, please contact me at j.mcvicar@birdsaustralia.com.au.

Jess McVicar

Merger Manager

THE MERGER AND ME

My involvement with BOCA/BA began in earnest when I retired early. Until then I was a birdwatcher without affiliations despite my spouse, Denise, being a BOCA member from the early '80s. We became a family membership and also joined BA. I joined the committee of MELBOCA and got involved proof reading *The Bird Observer* and *The Melbirdian*. My involvement with BA has been restricted to the Boneseeding program at the You Yangs. I am a keen surveyor, getting involved in Melbourne Water, Port of Hastings, Intertidal Estuarine and, recently, Westernport surveys. I also supplementary feed the Helmeted Honeyeaters at Yellingbo, help in field work and represent BOCA on the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Team.

Upon hearing of the proposed merger, like many, I thought of what the consequences would be. Should we have two organisations representing different aspects of birdwatching/conservation, or would the birds gain more from a combined organisation, pooling resources for the benefit of Australia's birds? I chose to support the merger for financial stability, a single membership base to support the conservation work undertaken and a louder voice to influence funding/grant outcomes. As BirdLife Australia, we are not only 10,000+ members but have the backing of BirdLife International with approximately 2.5 million members, a large voice in any language.

I see BirdLife Australia as an exciting new organisation incorporating the history of both BOCA and BA, having the ability to explore even more programs of conservation, influencing habitat preservation and having a strong voice, not only in Australia, but in support of overseas efforts in bird conservation. The retention of the Branch structure is vital and more branches should be encouraged. We should aim for an increased utilisation of members in ongoing and new endeavours, together with local community involvement. Information to members is vital, therefore, I would like to see the new magazine go to six issues a year, if not immediately, in the long term.

How do I see my role in the new BirdLife Australia? Volunteering where and whenever possible in the hope of making a difference. I hope that you can too.

Arthur Carew

BA and BOCA member and volunteer