

Birds of the Carnarvon Region, Western Australia

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Carnarvon, situated north of the 26th parallel and some 904 km north of Perth, is a large northern town of about 8000 people. Located at the mouth of the 300 km long Gascoyne River, it is acclaimed for its prawning industry and for its orchards and market gardens which supply Perth with various fruits and vegetables.

The town and surrounding plantations obtain drinking and irrigation waters from a large subterranean storage extending beneath the river bed.

Following expeditions of the area in 1858 by F. T. Gregory, Carnarvon was settled about 1876. In January 1883 Carnarvon was gazetted a town-site (Scott Memory 1967).

The period of observation extended over two and a half years, from March 1977 to September 1979, when the observer was stationed at the Carnarvon Police Station.

Locality and vegetation of areas studied

With one exception, Cape Cuviar, the areas of observation are within a radius of 80 km of Carnarvon town-site.

Boolathanna Station

Situated about 28 km north of the town-site, and occupying about 145 000 ha, the station has a diversity of habitats including mulga scrub, tree-lined creeks, saltbush, dams, mudflats, claypans and, after good rains, swampy country.

Rocky Pool

Situated about 55 km east of the town-site, and a popular tourist spot, it has a large permanent water pool located on the Gascoyne River. River gums and paper-barks are plentiful around the pool. The surrounding country is mulga scrub.

The blow-holes

Situated 70 km north of the town-site, it is another popular tourist area on the coast with sand dunes, sandy beaches, and a small offshore island at high tide (Quobba Point) with offshore reefs.

The boat harbour

Situated a short distance from the centre of the town-site, it has very good mud flats at low tide, sandy beaches, and mangroves.

Chinamans Pool

Situated about 5 km from the town-site, it is a medium sized permanent pool on the Gascoyne River, with a very small area of reed beds.

Pelican Point

Sandy spit of beach on Babbage Island, frequented by waders feeding on shore line. Situated about 5 km from town-site.

Babbage Island

Was once an island separated from the town-site by the Gascoyne River and reached by a causeway when the river was not flowing; levee

banks divert water from the causeway, nevertheless this area is subject to flooding on the arrival of a large river. The island consists of sandy beaches, low samphire scrub, and mangroves.

Oyster Creek

Situated a short distance from the town-site. A tidal estuary with mud flats, a large area of mangroves, and low samphire scrub.

Miaboolya Beach

Situated 22 km north of the town-site, with coastal dunes, and sandy beaches. The road leading to the beach is mainly open country with low scrub.

Cape Cuviar

Situated 30 km north of the blowholes, and outside the range of the study area, Cape Cuviar is a deep water port for ships taking on salt from the nearby Dampier Salt operations on Lake McLeod. On a nearby cliff face a White-bellied Sea-Eagle has a large nest in use every year.

Yandoo Creek

Situated about 50 km north of the town-site along the North West Coastal Highway. The creek is dry during the summer months but fills rapidly after rains. The surrounding area is mulga scrub which is alive with birds after rains.

Bibbawarra Bore

Located 16 km north of the town-site is this hot artesian bore about 1000 m deep, with surface water temperature of about 70°C. This area has a large reed bed around it.

One Tree Point Reserve

Situated north, off North River Road, this is 'A' Class reserve number 28220, comprising of 523 ha for the conservation of flora under the Wildlife Conservation Act. A variety of habitats include mulga scrub, and samphire flats.

Carnarvon has an average annual rainfall of 229 mm precipitated by cyclones and winter rains. During the period of observation from March 1977 to September 1979 the yearly rains were below average. The month by month records were as follows:

	1977	1978	1979
January	no data	3	nil
February	no data	1	1
March	24	8	50
April	5	51	4
May	86	1	8
June	45	20	5
July	0.2	59	0.2
August	3	39	17
September	nil	3	1
October	4	2	1
November	6	nil	no data
December	nil	1	no data
Totals mm	173.2	188	86.2
Months	10	12	9

Species recorded

Bird nomenclature and order follow the RAOU list of recommended English names for Australian birds (Schodde et al. 1978).

Emu

Very common most times of the year, except in summer when it moves away from the coast. Noted in plague proportions between March and September 1977 when there was a drought inland.

Hoary-headed Grebe

Common at Rocky Pool, Chinamans Pool, Boolathanna Station and Yandoo Creek.

Australasian Grebe

Observed in small numbers at Rocky Pool, Chinamans Pool and Boolathanna Station.

Yellow-nosed Albatross

Several birds sighted feeding on the water due west of the town-site near Koks Island on 10.6.79 and 17.6.79.

Southern Giant-Petrel

A dead bird was found on Miaboolya Beach on 25.7.79 wearing leg band no. 1131577 from the British Museum of Natural History. This bird was ringed on the 31.3.79 at Bird Island, South Georgia, Antarctica, travelling a distance of 13 108 km in 116 days.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel

Two birds sighted flying above water about 40 km offshore on 10.6.79. One bird sighted in the same area on 17.6.79.

Australian Pelican

Sighted at Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station and at sand banks around the town-site in moderate numbers.

Darter

Sighted at Rocky Pool only where it is common in small numbers.

Pied Cormorant

Common in suitable habitats such as Rocky Pool, the boat harbour and Chinamans Pool.

Little Black Cormorant

Common at Rocky Pool, beach areas and mangroves.

Little Pied Cormorant

Common around town coastline, the blow-holes, Miaboolya Beach, the boat harbour and mud-flats and Chinamans Pool.

Pacific Heron

Common only after heavy rains. Large numbers arrived in the area after cyclone 'Alby' in April 1978. Prefers inland pools. Very common on Boolathanna Station.

White-faced Heron

Unlike the Pacific Heron this species frequents mangrove and beach areas, also sighted at Rocky Pool, Pelican Point, boat harbour, Chinamans Pool and Boolathanna Station.

Great Egret

Very common in suitable habitats, such as Miaboolya Beach, Rocky Pool and Oyster Creek.

Little Egret

Common around mangroves.

Eastern Reef Egret

Two birds (grey phase and white phase) were observed feeding on reefs at the blow-holes on 29.8.78.

Striated Heron

Common in mangroves. Only single birds sighted.

Glossy Ibis

Sighted on four occasions at Chinamans Pool, the largest number being fourteen birds.

Straw-necked Ibis

Only sighted in mid 1977, in large numbers, at Miaboolya Beach Road area and Boolathanna Station. One flock of 100 plus birds was sighted not far from the Aboriginal Mission near Miaboolya Beach Road.

Wandering Whistling-Duck

Seven birds sighted on town sewage farm on 4.2.79. Also one bird observed at Chinamans Pool over a period of weeks between 22.6.79 and 25.7.79.

Black Swan

A common species at Rocky Pool, also sighted at Miaboolya Beach and Babbage Island.

Australian Shelduck

Uncommon; one bird sighted near golf club 8.11.77, two birds sighted on Boolathanna Station 28.4.78.

Pacific Black Duck

Sighted in small numbers at sewage farm, Rocky Pool, Chinamans Pool and Yandoo Creek.

Grey Teal

Very common on all watercourses and, at times, on the seashore.

Australasian Shoveler

Uncommon; two birds sighted on Boolathanna Station 17.5.78.

Pink-eared Duck

Uncommon; small numbers sighted on four occasions on Boolathanna Station, and Chinamans Pool. Largest number was four birds.

Hardhead

Uncommon; one male sighted on three occasions at Chinamans Pool.

Maned Duck

Uncommon; observed in small numbers on Boolathanna Station, and Chinamans Pool. Largest number was seven birds.

Osprey

Single birds observed on power lines, in saltbush around the golf course, along coastline and at Chinamans Pool.

Black-shouldered Kite

Moderately common, only appears in area after suitable rains. Earliest noted arrival mid April, departs about September when the countryside begins to dry out.

Brahminy Kite

One pair appears regularly at Oyster Creek. Single bird sighted at Chinamans Pool on 17.7.79.

Whistling Kite

Common; observed at Chinamans Pool, One Tree Point Reserve, Boolathanna Station. Observed nesting at Rocky Pool in September 1977.

Brown Goshawk

One bird sighted at Rocky Pool 27.8.78.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle

Appears common along coastline; nesting occurred every year in late August, with one young sighted on both occasions one kilometre north of Cape Cuiar, on sandstone cliffs.

Wedge-tailed Eagle

Sighted at Boolathanna Station, where it appears to be very common. A newly lined nest was located at Boolathanna Station on 18.6.78 but it was not used that year. Sighted on numerous occasions perched on the power lines on the Gascoyne Junction road.

Little Eagle

Observed in small numbers at Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station and One Tree Point Reserve.

Spotted Harrier

Very common on Boolathanna Station, also sighted at Chinamans Pool. Single birds sighted on all occasions.

Australian Hobby

Single bird sighted on three occasions, once on the telegraph pole in the main street of Carnarvon in November 1977 and the other times at Chinamans Pool on 10.7.79 and 5.7.79.

Brown Falcon

Sighted at Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station, and around town-site in moderate numbers.

Australian Kestrel

Common in suitable habitats, such as Boolathanna Station, Rocky Pool, Yandoo Creek, and around town-site. Nesting observed at Rocky Pool in September 1977 where four eggs were laid and three young raised. Nesting also occurred in ceiling of home in town-site August 1978. Nest was a hollow in the fibreglass roof insulation, three eggs were laid. Occupants of dwelling removed eggs and subsequently the adults departed from the area.

Little Button-quail

Sighted in moderate numbers on Boolathanna Station in the small grasses of open country.

Black-tailed Native-hen

Observed in large numbers after cyclone 'Alby' April 1978. At other times small numbers were observed around the larger water-courses on Boolathanna Station and at Chinamans Pool.

Eurasian Coot

Sighted in small numbers on pools at Boolathanna Station, Rocky Pool, sewage farm and Chinamans Pool.

Australian Bustard

Sighted on two occasions, the first sighting being of one bird flying across the highway near the Gascoyne Junction turn-off. The second was of two birds walking across the road near the golf course.

Pied Oystercatcher

Common in small numbers on sandy beaches such as Miaboolya Beach, the boat harbour and Pelican Point.

Banded Lapwing

A common species in the area after heavy rains. Observed nesting near Miaboolya Beach road on 12.6.77 and on Boolathanna Station on 19.4.78 and 27.4.78. All nests contained four eggs. Most birds depart when the country begins to dry up, although fifteen birds were sighted on the grassed area of the Pony Club grounds in December 1978 when it was very hot.

Grey Plover

A common wader, sighted at Pelican Point, boat harbour and the blow-holes.

Lesser Golden Plover

Moderately common on mud-flats and beaches. Sighted at the boat harbour, the blow-holes and Babbage Island.

Red-kneed Dotterel

Very common on the freshwater pools. Sighted at Boolathanna Station and Chinamans Pool.

Mongolian Plover

A common wader on the boat harbour mud-flats, also sighted at Pelican Point and on Babbage Island.

Large Sand Plover

A common wader, observed at boat harbour, Miaboolya Beach, the blow-holes and on Babbage Island.

Red-capped Plover

A very common wader, sighted on all tidal flats and beaches; also sighted on Boolathanna Station.

Black-fronted Plover

The most common of the plover family found on freshwater. Sighted at Rocky Pool, Chinamans Pool and Boolathanna Station.

Inland Dotterel

Observed only on two occasions, namely on Boolathanna Station 21 & 28.4.78. At that time a nest with three eggs was located on top of a small mound in the middle of the dry mud-flats. Nest was taken by a predator a few days later.

Black-winged Stilt

A common species found in small numbers at Chinamans Pool and Boolathanna Station.

Banded Stilt

Uncommon; one immature bird sighted feeding in shallow salt water on Babbage Island near the mile-long jetty on 19.7.79.

Red-necked Avocet

Observed in moderate numbers on the waterways and marsh country on Boolathanna Station. Largest number sighted was forty birds.

Ruddy Turnstone

Sighted in small numbers on both sandy and rocky shores at Pelican Point and the blow-holes.

Eastern Curlew

A common wader found at the boat harbour, mud-flats and at the mangroves on Babbage Island. One bird sighted at the blow-holes on 6.7.79.

Whimbrel

Sighted on four occasions; at the blow-holes, Miaboolya Beach and the boat harbour. Largest number sighted being two birds.

Grey-tailed Tattler

Sighted in small numbers on four occasions at the boat harbour and Babbage Island.

Common Sandpiper

Observed in small numbers at Chinamans Pool, blow-holes, Oyster Creek and along the fascine in the town-site.

Greenshank

Found in small numbers at Chinamans Pool, Boolathanna Station, One Tree Point estuary, and small pools along the Gascoyne River. Largest number sighted being two birds.

Terek Sandpiper

Uncommon; sighted on three occasions at the boat harbour mud-flats.

Bar-tailed Godwit

By far the most common wader in the area; found along all mud-flats and beaches along coastline.

Red Knot

A very common wader sighted at the boat harbour, One Tree Point estuary, and on Babbage Island. Several birds were sighted in breeding plumage in July 1977 and again in June 1979.

Great Knot

Observed in small numbers at Pelican Point and the boat harbour.

Red-necked Stint

A common wader on the boat harbour mud-flats, also sighted at a small pool on the Gascoyne River near the Research Station on 31.3.78.

Curlew Sandpiper

Uncommon; one bird sighted on two occasions at the boat harbour.

Sanderling

Four birds possibly of this species were sighted on the boat harbour mud-flats on 10.9.78.

Silver Gull

Very common around the coastline.

Pacific Gull

Very common around the coastline.

Whiskered Tern

Common in small numbers on freshwater lakes at Boolathanna Station and Chinamans Pool.

White-winged Tern

Sighted on one occasion at the blow-holes on 29.8.78.

Gull-billed Tern

Moderately common; sighted at the boat harbour and at the blow-holes.

Caspian Tern

Common; around coastline in moderate numbers.

Common Tern

Some 40-50 birds in non-breeding plumage were sighted at the blow-holes on 29.8.78. Fourteen birds in full breeding plumage were sighted at the same location on 6.7.79.

Roseate Tern

A common species sighted at the boat harbour, and at the blow-holes. Observed in full breeding plumage at the blow-holes on 29.8.78.

Fairy Tern

Moderately common around coastline near town-site. Very common at the blow-holes where nesting was observed on 29.8.78.

Crested Tern

Common around coastline.

Lesser Crested Tern

Noted as common only at the blow-holes. Also sighted at the boat harbour mud-flats.

Feral Pigeon

Common around town-site.

Peaceful Dove

Very common around town-site and surrounding bush.

Diamond Dove

Common around watercourses such as Rocky Pool, Yandoo Creek and on Boolathanna Station.

Crested Pigeon

Common in all bush areas.

Galah

Very common in area.

Little Corella

Very common along watercourses and around town-site. Is regarded as a pest in town-site as it destroys leaves of the river gums. The Carnarvon Shire undertook to have a number destroyed in November 1977.

Cockatiel

Uncommon; observed six birds on one occasion at Rocky Pool, 27.8.78.

Budgerigar

Observed in small numbers on Boolathanna Station and at Rocky Pool.

Port Lincoln Ringneck

Common along watercourses. Breeding observed at Rocky Pool in August 1978.

Mulga Parrot

Observed on most occasions at Rocky Pool. In September 1977 two birds were observed flying into a nesting hollow after illegal trappers had removed the young.

Pallid Cuckoo

Only observed on Boolathanna Station in moderate numbers.

Black-eared Cuckoo

Observed in small numbers on Boolathanna Station and at Rocky Pool.

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo

Observed in small numbers at Yandoo Creek, Rocky Pool and on Boolathanna Station.

Southern Boobook

Observed on one occasion at Rocky Pool on 9.9.77 when one bird flew from a hollow in a tree.

Tawny Frogmouth

Observed on two occasions. One bird at the Research Station in February 1978 and two birds in a tree behind the Boolathanna woolshed on 18.6.78.

Spotted Nightjar

One bird flushed from the ground at One Tree Point Reserve on 2.7.79.

Blue-winged Kookaburra

Only sighted at Rocky Pool where it is common.

Red-backed Kingfisher

One bird sighted on the Gascoyne River near South River Road crossing 8.9.78.

Sacred Kingfisher

Small numbers sighted in all seasons of the year, at Chinamans Pool, boat harbour, Boolathanna Station and around town-site.

Rainbow Bee-eater

Common around town-site, also sighted at Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station and One Tree Point Reserve.

Singing Bushlark

Sighted on one occasion at Boolathanna Station on 27.4.78.

White-backed Swallow

Sighted in moderate numbers at Yandoo Creek, Boolathanna Station and near the Research Station.

Welcome Swallow

A common species sighted at Yandoo Creek, Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station and the blow-holes.

Tree Martin

A common species at Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station and Yandoo Creek.

Fairy Martin

Moderate numbers observed on Boolathanna Station near the home-
stead dam. Twenty-four nests were observed being built under a concrete
culvert, about six kilometres along the Gascoyne Junction Road from
the main highway, on 27.8.78.

Richard's Pipit

Very common in and around town-site, also observed at Rocky Pool,
Boolathanna Station, Babbage Island and Miaboolya Beach area.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike

Very common in and around town-site. Nesting observed at Rocky
Pool in September 1977.

White-winged Triller

This species only appears in the area after suitable rains; only sighted
on Boolathanna Station.

Red-capped Robin

Uncommon; one immature male sighted at Yandoo Creek 3.6.77, one
male sighted at Boolathanna Station 17.5.78, and one male and female
sighted on the Miaboolya Beach Road 13.8.78.

Hooded Robin

Uncommon; one bird sighted on Boolathanna Station 7.5.78.

Grey Shrike-thrush

Uncommon; one bird observed on Boolathanna Station 11.5.78.

Crested Bellbird

Uncommon; single males sighted on one occasion each at Miaboolya
Beach Road, Boolathanna Station and Rocky Pool.

Grey Fantail

Sighted in moderate numbers mainly in mangroves, although it has
been observed at Yandoo Creek.

Willie Wagtail

Noted as common at Rocky Pool, Yandoo Creek, Chinamans Pool,
One Tree Point Reserve and Boolathanna Station.

Chiming Wedgebill

Common in large numbers in the mulga scrub areas visited. Nesting

was observed near the Miaboolya Beach Road in August 1977. This species appears to move away from the area during the hotter months December to March.

Grey-crowned Babbler

Sighted on one occasion, namely at Rocky Pool on 12.6.79 when four birds were observed carrying material to a nest located about 3.5 m in a tree close to the river bed.

White-browed Babbler

Moderately common; sighted at Miaboolya Beach, Yandoo Creek, Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station and One Tree Point Reserve.

Clamorous Reed-Warbler

Have only heard this species calling at Bibbawarra Bore.

Rufous Songlark

Common in area after suitable rains. One bird sighted carrying nesting material at the banks of the Gascoyne River near the Research Station 8.9.78.

Brown Songlark

Not as common as the Rufous Songlark; both species arrive in the area about the same time. First sighted on 6.4.78. Stays near permanent water.

Variegated Fairy-wren

Have only observed this species on Boolathanna Station where it is moderately common.

White-winged Fairy-wren

A very common species sighted at Miaboolya Beach Road, Yandoo Creek, Boolathanna Station, Babbage Island and One Tree Point Reserve.

Redthroat

Noted as common on Boolathanna Station; also sighted at Yandoo Creek, and Miaboolya Beach Road area.

Calamanthus

Common on Babbage Island and on the salt flats near Oyster Creek.

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill

Moderately common on Boolathanna Station.

Southern Whiteface

Moderately common on Boolathanna Station.

Black-tailed Treecreeper

Two birds sighted at Rocky Pool 12.6.79.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

Several birds sighted at a caravan park in the town-site 20.10.77. Noted as common at One Tree Point Reserve on 9.7.79.

Yellow-throated Miner

Observed only on Boolathanna Station near the homestead dam.

Singing Honeyeater

A common species sighted at Miaboolya Beach Road, Boolathanna Station, Rocky Pool, Babbage Island, One Tree Point Reserve and around town-site.

White-plumed Honeyeater

Without doubt the most common honeyeater in the area. Very common around town-site, and on rivers and creeks amongst river gums. A nest was located on Boolathanna Station on 9.5.78, being built in the overhanging branches of a river gum about 1.5 m from the ground. Nest was made of wool and small twigs.

Pied Honeyeater

Common in moderate numbers. Only arrives after suitable rains. Observed only near Miaboolya Beach Road area. On 11.8.77 a nest with three eggs was located next to the road leading to Miaboolya Beach.

Crimson Chat

Arrives in area after suitable rains. Observed on Boolathanna Station and Miaboolya Beach Road area. On 16.8.77 a nest with three eggs was located near the Miaboolya Beach Road area. This species departs with the arrival of the hotter months.

Orange Chat

Observed in small numbers in the saltbush near the golf course.

Mistletoebird

Observed on one occasion, a male at Yandoo Creek on 3.6.77.

Yellow White-eye

Observed on one occasion in the mangroves on Babbage Island on 5.4.77 when an adult bird was feeding three young birds just out of the nest.

Silvereye

Sighted in small numbers in gardens around town-site.

Star Finch

Eight birds sighted on one occasion on 6.4.78 in small bushes on the river bank opposite the Research Station.

Zebra Finch

The most common finch in the area. Sighted at Rocky Pool, Miaboolya Beach Road area, Chinamans Pool, Boolathanna Station, One Tree Point Reserve and around town-site. A nest with three young was located in the Miaboolya Beach Road area 11.8.78.

Australian Magpie-lark

Common on all watercourses such as Rocky Pool, Boolathanna Station, and Chinamans Pool. Nesting was observed on Boolathanna Station on 9.5.78.

White-breasted Woodswallow

Common along the Gascoyne Junction Road, also sighted in small numbers around town-site.

Masked Woodswallow

Noted as common on Boolathanna Station and around Rocky Pool.

Black-faced Woodswallow

Common on Boolathanna Station, Rocky Pool and the Gascoyne Junction Road leading to Rocky Pool.

Pied Butcherbird

Sighted in small numbers at Boolathanna Station and Rocky Pool.

Australian Magpie

Two birds sighted on 24.6.78 near the Gascoyne River bridge.

Corvus sp(p).

Common in area; unable to identify without a hand held specimen.

Discussion

A total of 147 species (104 non-passerines and 43 passerines) have been recorded from the area covered in this paper. However, more could be added as very little work was carried out in the mangroves on the coast.

Also there are some 24 species sighted by M. G. Brooker & A. J. Estbergs (1976) which were not sighted by the writer and include:

Fork-tailed Kite (now Black Kite), Square-tailed Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk, Swamp Harrier (now Marsh Harrier), Australian Pratincole, Common Bronzewing Pigeon (now Common Bronzewing), Bourke's Parrot, Elegant Parrot, Barking Owl, Owlet Nightjar (now Australian Owlet-nightjar), Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous Whistler, Quail Thrush [sp. ?], Splendid Wren (now Splendid Fairy-wren), Spotted Scrub Wren (now White-browed Scrubwren), Banded Whiteface, Broad-tailed Thornbill (now Inland Thornbill), Western Warbler (now Western Gerygone), Black Capped Sittella (now Varied Sittella), White-browed Treecreeper, White-fronted Honeyeater, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Woodswallow and Grey Butcherbird.

Species recorded by me, but not by Brooker & Estbergs, include Australian Pelican, Darter, Glossy Ibis, Wandering Whistling-Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Black-shouldered Kite, Fairy Martin, Clamorous Reed-Warbler and Orange Chat.

Keith & Beryl Richards (1978) list three more species recorded by neither the writer nor by Brooker & Estbergs; they are the Wedge-tailed Shearwater, White-breasted Whistler and Black Honeyeater.

Adding the 147 species sighted by the writer and the other 27 species not sighted by him but observed by Brooker & Estbergs and K. & B. Richards, 174 species have been recorded in the Carnarvon region.

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