

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB.

Newsletter No. 1, Jan/Feb. 1978.

TONIGHT: Our first full meeting when we will be electing our committee for the forthcoming year.

NEXT MONTH: Monthly meeting:- March 6th.  
Tourist Bureau.

\* Guest Speaker:- Colin Lendon,  
Local Bird Atlas Scheme.

COMING EVENTS:

Sunday 12th. February.

Mike Fisher will take those who are interested to the Sewerage Ponds and Policemans Common for birding. Those interested in Flora are also welcome under the guidance of Andrew Mitchell and Tom Henshaw. Both noted members of Arid Zone Botany.

MEET: 7 a.m. by Refuse Dump turn off.

NEED: Field glasses, notebook and pencil, suitable clothing.

Sunday 26th. February.

Excursion to A.S.T.S.

Meet 8 a.m. at Car Park in A.S.T.S.

ANNUAL SYALLABUS.

Members are asked to forward or give to the secretary any ideas for 1978/79 Excursions. Any preference for subject - speaker activity area to visit, please let us know.

SHOW STALL.

Would any members like to join with the Australian Society for growing native plants and have a stall at the show.

Rare Birds at Ayers Rock

Greenshank and Oriental dotterel were the outstanding birds among a number of other waders seen at Ayers Rock. Included in the list are Pelicans, Common sandpipers, Glossy Ibis.

The oriental dotterel was a first sighting on the National Park and was confirmed by available photographs.

(Copy from B.O.C. club magazine 553/4 of Jan 1978 )

THE PAINTED FINCH (Emblema Picta)

Returning from the Top End, back to the Alice brought back memories of our earlier time spent here. We left behind in Darwin, the Crimson finches, Gouldians and the other varied Avifauna. Here in the Centre the predominant finch is the innocuous little Zebra finch, and to a lesser extent the Painted finch, emblema, or Mountain finch.

Many visitors to the centre hope to see this brightly coloured member of the grass finch family, few seldom do. When seen it is only in pairs or comparatively small flocks usually among the spinifex tussocks and rocky hillsides bordering the MacDonnell Ranges. When I have found them it is usually near a permanent waterhole, so necessary for existence in the arid centre, places like Stanley Chasm, Hugh River, and Palm valley are all good points to view this elegant member.

First discovered in 1839 on the N.S.W. coast very little was heard or seen of the bird again until Waterhouse mentioned in his list of S.A. birds that the finch was present in the arid central belt of Australia and across to W.A.

The birds are about 11cm in length and to the untrained eye the sexes are very difficult to define. The male has a light brown back and top of head with a scarlet rump, forehead and throat, the belly and chest are black with white spots except the central belly patch which is scarlet and he has a predominant white eyering. The female is similar to the male except that the scarlet is only on the face and a little on the belly.

The nest is found about a metre off the ground in a low bush, resembling those of other finches, being domed in shape, and made from twigs, dried grasses, spinifex shoots and lined with feathers. Unlike most other grass finches the painted does not build or use a separate nest for sleeping quarters. Most breeding takes place after the intermittent rain of the centre and 3-5 oval white eggs with a bluish tinge are laid.

M.F.