

Centre for Continuing Education

Understanding birds

Ian Fraser

Learn to think like a bird! Evolution, biology, behaviour, taxonomy of birds, with an Australian emphasis; birdwatching books, tools and techniques. No prior knowledge assumed, lots of slides.

Please refer to detailed course outline attached.

Ian has spent over 30 years in the Australian bush, twenty of them living in Canberra, with a special passion for birds. He is co-author of six books on local natural history, has run a successful nature-based tourism program since 1984, and has been a local ABC natural history personality since 1992.

DATES/TIMES: 6.30-8.45pm on 6 Tuesdays from 27 October
+ 2 f/trips 8-11am on Saturdays 28 November & 5 December

FEE: \$325

COURSE LOCATION: The venue for this course can be found on your tax invoice/receipt (under "Course Information"). Please allow enough time to locate the venue on the first evening.

"The views expressed in this course/activity are those of the presenter and do not necessarily represent the views of The Australian National University"

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The definition of a bird; ancestors and evolution

Definition

Ancestors

Evolution of the Australian avifauna

1. *Bird-watching techniques and tools*

Field Guides

Reference books and tapes

Binoculars

Telescopes

Techniques

2. *Basic adaptations*

Minimum size – temperature control

Maximum size – mechanics

Feathers

Skeleton and musculature

Wing shape

Respiration and circulation

Digestive tract and feeding; excretion

Reproduction, nests and eggs

Senses and vocalisations

Swimming

The flightless option

3. *Australian bioregions and habitats*

Bioregions

Habitats

4. *Bird ecology and behaviour*

Community and population ecology

Migration and nomadism

Territory

Reproductive strategies

- r vs K strategies
- monogamy vs polygamy
- seasonality vs opportunism
- co-operative breeding

Courtship

Feeding strategies

1. *Brief introduction to taxonomy and DNA hybridisation theory*

Purpose of taxonomy

DNA hybridisation method

2. *The Australian bird fauna – an outline*

Considers all the Australian bird families in order, with mention of, and some detail about, all local species. This where we apply all the above.

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