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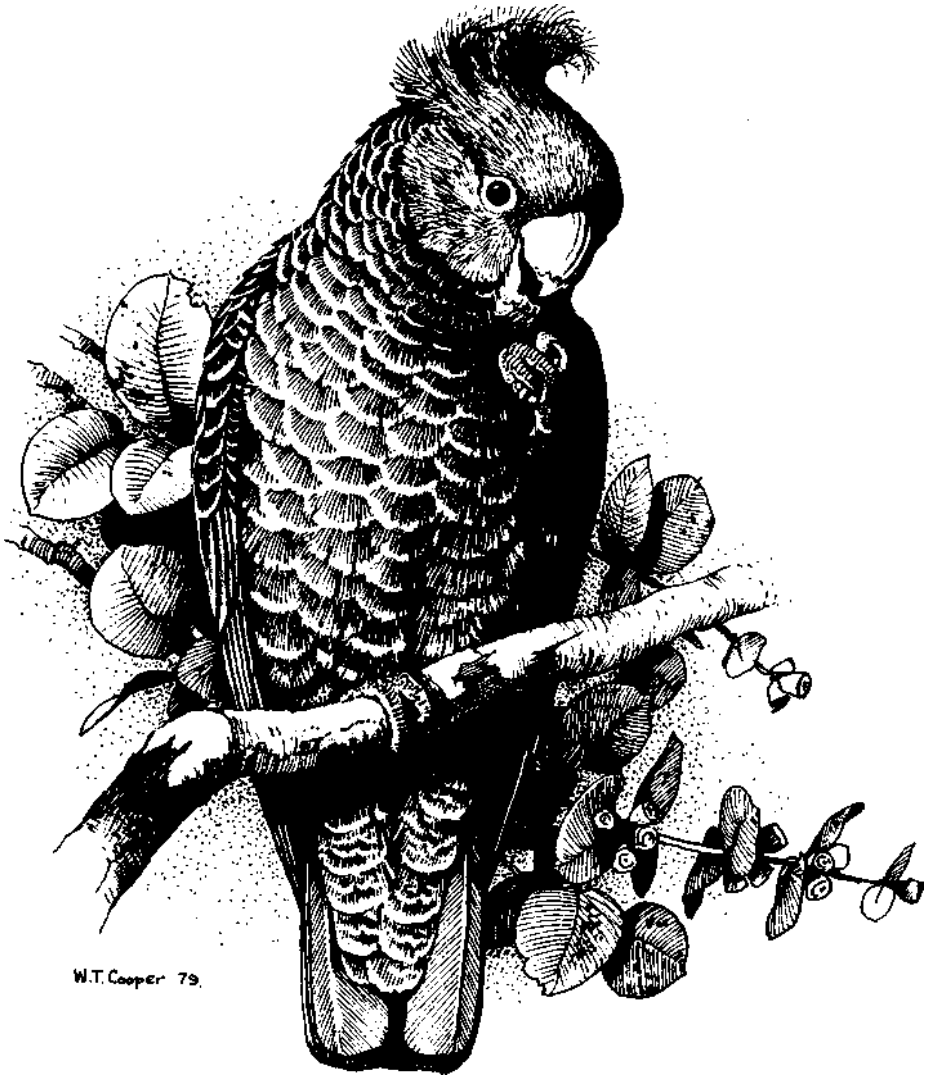

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(Continued inside back cover)

NUMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE COMMON MYNA IN CANBERRA IN JULY 1990

Chris Davey

The Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis is* a common sight in many of our major cities. It was introduced to Melbourne in the mid-1860s and has since become widespread. Mynas introduced into Tasmania have died out, but in Adelaide, although the population was never large, the bird has been actively controlled (Lever 1987). Jim Hone (1978) has documented the spread of mynas in New South Wales after their introduction to Sydney in the mid-1860s. He noted that initially the rate of spread was very low and it was not until the 1930s and 1940s that their distribution became widespread.

The myna was deliberately introduced to Canberra in 1968 and has slowly become established. Richard Gregory-Smith (1985) compiled information on the presence of mynas in Canberra suburbs from introduction until 1984. He concluded that "expansion of the myna population centred upon the releases in Forrest, spreading mainly south and south-west towards Weston Creek and the southern suburbs. .....Observations indicate a fall-off in numbers during the spring and summer and an increase in population to a maximum in May, probably due to retirement to breeding sites over the breeding season (Taylor 1983)". Gregory-Smith did not provide an estimate of numbers.

Neil Hermes (1986) describes a survey along the Hume Highway between Liverpool and Goulburn during 1979-80. He concludes that birds were present in decreasing numbers between Liverpool and 20 km south of Mittagong.

This paper discusses the results of a survey that was undertaken in July 1990. The aims of the survey were to map the distribution of Common Mynas in Canberra, determine the density in each suburb, estimate the total population, and determine the extent of distribution along the highways leading out of Canberra.

Methods

i) The Survey

The survey took place in late winter over a nine day period starting 21 July 1990. During this period population numbers should have been at their lowest because it was before the start of the spring breeding season.

Participants in the survey included members of the public, Canberra Ornithologists Group, and the CSIRO Double Helix Club. Information about Common Mynas and how to do the survey was issued to all participants, and after they had indicated where they wanted to survey, maps of the appropriate suburb were supplied to each participant.

The survey was done by travelling around the suburban streets and paths. The route travelled, and the location, number and behaviour of any mynas seen, was recorded on the suburb maps. Areas where no mynas were seen were also recorded. Participants chose their own routes and did not necessarily travel along the same route each day. A new map was used for every trip.

Observers were also asked to record the location of mynas seen along any of the major highways leading out of Canberra.

ii) Data analysis

When all the suburb maps had been returned, the routes that had been surveyed were plotted onto one map. An estimate was then made of the percentage of the total street length of each suburb that had been surveyed over the nine days. Because the survey was done by travelling along the streets of the built-up area, the total street length of a suburb was taken as being within the part that contained houses, shops, schools, playing fields, and small parks.

The area of each suburb that contained houses, shops, schools, playing fields, and small parks, was then calculated. In most cases this was the entire suburb, the main exception were those suburbs that contain extensive areas of parkland, district playing fields, or parts of the ornamental lakes.

The location and number of mynas seen each day in each suburb were marked on another map. Common Mynas form night-time roosts. All counts taken at these roost sites were rejected because birds could be counted twice; once away from the roost and again at the roost. All other records were used except the few occasions when mynas were recorded in suburbs but could not be confirmed for the area by subsequent records or by the Canberra Ornithologist Group's Garden Bird Survey.

As the participants in the survey were not restricted as to the route that they travelled, there was some duplication when more than one person travelled over the same piece of street on the same day. In these cases, if there was more than one observation for the same location, then the observation of the largest number of mynas was used and the others were discarded. The assumption was that during the period of the survey mynas did not move, and were likely to be found in the same place each day. This

assumption would not be acceptable had the survey been done during the period of post breeding dispersal by young mynas.

The above process was then repeated for each of the nine days for each of the suburbs surveyed. When this had been completed, the details of these nine maps were then amalgamated onto one map. If there were more than one observation for the same location on different days, then the observation of the largest number of mynas was used and the others were discarded. The final result was a map showing the locations and largest numbers of mynas observed in each of the suburbs over the nine day period.

The total number of mynas observed in each suburb was then obtained from this map. In the case of those suburbs for which only a portion of the streets had been surveyed, an estimated total number of mynas was calculated based on the percentage of the total street coverage.

The density of mynas for each suburb (mynas/km^2) was then calculated based on the number of mynas and the area of the suburb.

Results

i) The highway survey

This part of the survey was not a success. Only a few records were provided from the highways out of Canberra: three trips during the hours of daylight along the Federal Highway between Canberra and Goulburn; two trips along the Barton Highway from Canberra to Yass; and a single trip along the Kings Highway from Canberra to Bungendore. No mynas were seen. A thorough search of the village of Tharwa on 29 July did not find any mynas.

it) The suburban survey

There were 715 records received from 152 participants of which 24 were adults, the remainder being children under 18 years old. A record being information obtained from a single outing.

Information was received for 60 of the 83 Canberra suburbs. For all but seven of the 23 suburbs not covered myna density was estimated by taking a mean of the surrounding suburbs.

The duration of an outing varied considerably, on average it lasted for about 1 hr but was as short as 3 mins and as long as 4 hrs 45 mins. Some suburbs were covered entirely by one observer, no areas were repeated and the coverage took many outings. Other suburbs were covered less well but areas were repeated and many observers were involved. Curtin (CU*) was covered completely by many people every day but at different times. Pearce (PE) was covered completely by many people but only once over a short time period. Therefore, a great deal of variation occurred in coverage and effort between suburbs and this has been taken into account when estimating bird numbers (see Methods).

Over the nine day survey: 49% of records were collected between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.; and 24% between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. There were a similar number of records collected on each day of the survey.

in) Distribution

Distribution in all but seven of the 83 Canberra suburbs was determined (see Figure 1). Unfortunately these seven suburbs were the newest in Canberra. It would have been good to have obtained a definitive statement on the status of the myna in these newly developed areas. Common Mynas were recorded in six of the 24 Belconnen suburbs; nine of the 15 North Canberra suburbs; 16 of the 21 South Canberra and Woden Valley suburbs; all of the eight Weston Creek suburbs; and in all but one of the eight suburbs surveyed in Tuggeranong. Altogether, mynas were recorded in 46 (55.4%) of the 83 suburbs of Canberra.

Mynas were distributed throughout Tuggeranong, Weston Creek, Woden Valley, South Canberra and in the suburbs of North Canberra east of Northbourne Avenue, but in Belconnen they occur as three discrete groups based at Cook (CO), Scullin (SC) - Page (PA), and Kaleen (KA).

iv) Numbers

The density of Common Mynas varied considerably between suburbs, ranging from 1 myna/km^2 to 31/km^2, see Figure 1 and the Appendix. Mynas were not recorded in the majority of Belconnen suburbs. Where they did occur the density was low ranging from 1/km^2 to 8/km^2. In North Canberra the densities were again low ranging from 1/km^2 to 6/km^2. The densities in South Canberra and Woden Valley ranged from 5/km^2 to 30/km^2 and 31/km^2 in Hughes (HU) and Red Hill (RH) respectively. In Tuggeranong, although the newest suburbs were not surveyed, the density in the remainder ranged from 5/km^2 to 20/km^2 in Kambah (KA).

* Each suburb has been identified by a two-letter code. These codes are used in Figure 1 and are listed in the appendix.

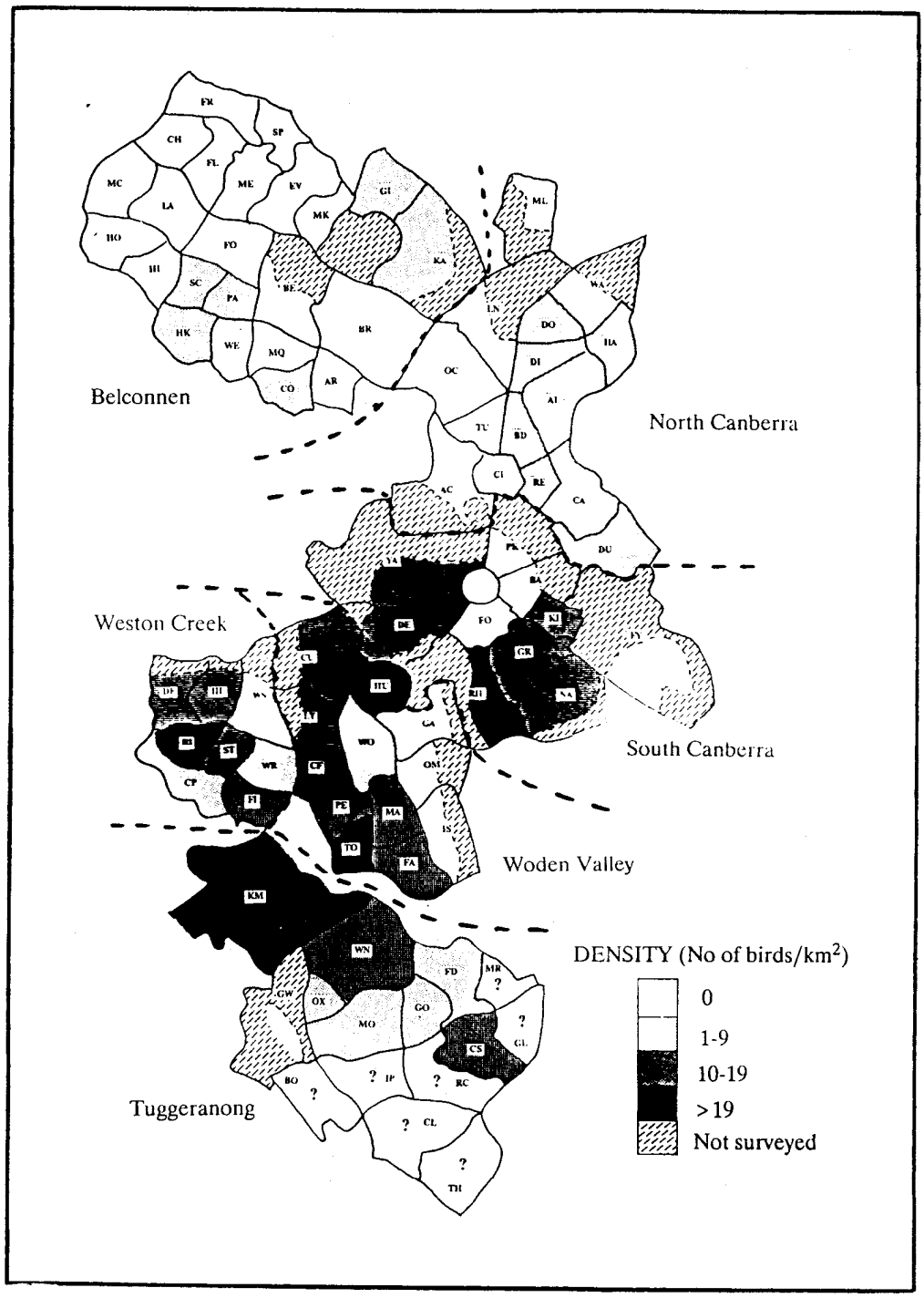

Figure 1. Distribution of Common Mynas in Canberra in July 1990.

The twelve top-rated suburbs for density of Common Mynas were Red Hill (RH), Hughes (HU), Torrens (TO), Rivett (RI), Kambah (KM), Narrabundah (NA), Pearce (PE), Duffy (DF), Holder (HL), Lyons (LY), Chifley (CF) and Fisher (FI). The average density throughout the suburbs of Canberra was 6/km^2 with an estimated total population of 1220 Common Mynas.

Discussion

The number of records for the highway survey was disappointingly low but the few observations reinforce the general impression that there are no mynas on the highways out of Canberra. If Common Mynas have spread south from Mittagong along the Hume Highway they are not obvious between Goulburn and Canberra. They do not appear to be extending outwards along any of the highways leading from Canberra.

The survey did not include the non-suburban areas surrounding Canberra. There are Common Mynas within these areas, but whether they are an integral part of the suburban population and were therefore counted, or whether they remained uncounted is not known for there is no information on the movement of mynas into and out of the suburbs.

By 1971, 110 Common Mynas had been introduced to Canberra (Gregory-Smith 1985). Given that this was the initial population, then numbers have increased to 1220 in 18 years - an increase of 13.3% per annum. If this rate of increase continues there will be 3500 mynas in 10 years time (1999).

Other species that have increased in numbers include the British population of Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* which has been increasing at the rate of 13% per annum, the Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* which has increased by up to 17% to 20% per annum in some colonies, the Greater Black-backed Gull *L. marinus* which has increased at a rate of about 36% per annum (but this also includes immigration) and the Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* which has increased by 10% to 27% per annum, depending on the colony (Nelson 1980). The Masked Plover *Vanellus miles* was first recorded in New Zealand in 1932. By 1971 the population had increased by 19.4% per annum (Barlow 1972). The Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* was first recorded in New Zealand in 1958-9 but by 1965-6 had increased by 76% per annum (Edgar 1966). The Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* has had a most spectacular increase and it is estimated that from its arrival in Great Britain in 1955 there has been an of increase of 100% per annum in the first 10 years reducing to about 25% per annum by 1970. After 1980 the population has been stable.

Rate of increase between different species is difficult to compare for it will depend on many factors: age at first breeding; clutch size; number of clutches a year; breeding success; and life expectancy; none of which are known for the Common Myna in Canberra. It would appear that the rate of increase of the Canberra population is within the range demonstrated by other species. Therefore, I can see no reason for them not becoming a very common sight in all Canberra suburbs within a few years.

Birds are regarded as undesirable for many reasons. These could be because they cause economic loss, create a health hazard, cause a nuisance, disturb the natural system, or because they have been introduced. Common Mynas in Canberra are regarded by many as undesirable because they have been introduced and it is felt they disturb the natural system. Unfortunately there is little documented evidence of the harm they do to the natural system in Canberra.

Solving a bird problem is not easy and usually expensive. The Common Myna is considered a pest in Singapore and considerable effort has been applied to disperse roosts and reduce population numbers (Kang et al. 1990). Various methods, using a combination of bioacoustics, killing and alteration to roost site, have been tried with only temporary success. In Singapore attempts to control food, nesting site and roost sites have all proved unsuccessful and the emphasis is now on preventing roosts from forming in undesirable areas, such as housing estates, by habitat modification and creation of alternative sites in areas where they will not cause a nuisance. An approach not necessarily appropriate or possible in Canberra.

Data have been collected in Canberra on distribution and population size, what is now needed is information on the disturbance caused to the natural system. If the degree of disturbance warrants control or eradication the Common Myna must be declared a pest or noxious animal and then appropriate management techniques applied. However, it is unlikely that an appropriate technique can be recommended unless information on breeding success, breeding requirements, and movements are known. This is another part of the Common Myna story in Canberra that requires investigation.

Acknowledgements

This paper was made possible by those people, too numerous to individually name, who willing participated in the survey. To these I offer my thanks. I also thank Peter Fullagar and an anonymous referee who read the manuscript and provided constructive criticism.

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APPENDIX. Name, abbreviation, and number of Common Mynas per km^2 for each suburb in Belconnen, North Canberra, South Canberra, Woden Valley, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong. Estimated densities indicated by *. Suburbs for which densities were not determined indicated by ?.

Belconnen

ARANDA	AR	0	BELCONNEN	BE	0
BRUCE	BR	0*	CHARNWOOD	CH	0
COOK	CO	6	EVATT	EV	0*
FLOREY	FO	0	FLYNN	FL	0
FRASER	FR	0	GIRALANG	GI	1*
HAWKER	HK	1	HIGGINS	HI	0
HOLT	HO	0	KALEEN	KA	3
LATHAM	LA	0	MACGREGOR	MC	0
MACQUARIE	MQ	0	MCKELLAR	MK	0

MELBA	ME	0	PAGE	PA	6
SCULLIN	SC	8	SPENCE	SP	0
WEETANGERA	WE	0			

North Canberra

ACTON	AC	0*	AINSLIE	AL	5
BRADDON	BD	2*	CAMPBELL	CA	6
CITY	CI	0	DICKSON	DI	2
DOWNER	DO	1	DUNTROON	DU	3*
HACKETT	HA	4*	LYNEHAM	LN	0
MITCHELL	MI	0	O'CONNOR	OC	0
REID	RE	3*	TURNER	TU	0
WATSON	WA	6			

South Canberra

BARTON	BA	0	DEAKIN	DE	13
FORREST	FO	0	FYSHWICK	FY	0
GRIFFITH	GR	11	KINGSTON	KI	11
NARRABUNDAH	NA	19	PARKES	PK	0
RED HILL	RH	31	YARRALUMLA	YA	12

Woden Valley

CHIFLEY	CF	15*	CURTIN	CU	13
FARRER	FA	13*	GARRAN	GA	7
HUGHES	HU	30	ISAACS	IS	0
LYONS	LY	15*	MAWSON	MA	10*
O'MALLEY	OM	0	PEARCE	PE	17
TORRENS	TO	28	WODEN	WO	5

Weston Creek

CHAPMAN	CP	2	DUFFY	DF	17
FISHER	FI	15	HOLDER	HL	16*
RIVETT	RI	25	STIRLING	ST	10*
WARAMANGA	WR	7	WESTON	WS	8*

Tuggeranong

BONYTHON	BO	?	CALWELL	CL	?
CHISHOLM	CS	10	FADDEN	FD	4
GILMORE	GL	?	GOWRIE	GO	7
GREENWAY	GW	0	ISABELLA PLAINS	IP	?
KAMBAH	KM	20	MACARTHUR	MR	?
MONASH	MO	5*	OXLEY	OX	5*
RICHARDSON	RC	?	THEODORE	TH	?
WANIASSA	WN	11			

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ODD OB

COMMON MYNAS IN EAST MELBA, ACT

David Purchase and Shirley Purchase

At 1430 hrs on 11 July 1991, we observed a group of seven Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* in the north-east corner of Melba Oval. They were on the ground, apparently feeding, next to a group of eight Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. Although they were within about 2 m of each other, the two groups remained separate. When disturbed by our close approach, each group flew off in a different direction.

This is the largest group of Common Mynas we have seen in east Melba since we moved into the area in April 1973. Our only other records are one seen on a powerline behind a neighbour's house on 6 September 1985, and one heard in the same area two days later.

The only other occurrence that we know of Common Mynas in east Melba were two that were seen in the vicinity of Zelman Place in the first week of August 1991 (C. Davey pers. comm.). Zelman Place is about 300 m west of where we saw the seven Common Mynas on 11 July.

Up to the time of writing, 26 July 1991, we have not seen any more Common Mynas in the area.

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NOTES ON A LONG-LIVED SILVEREYE

D.C.F. Rentz

As a taxonomist with the Australian National Insect Collection, CSIRO, one of my collecting techniques is to venture forth after dark in search of tettigoniids (long-horned grasshoppers or katydids). This activity involves "handpicking" and simply examining foliage for the insects. In recent years a "mini bat detector" has been of invaluable assistance both in permitting me to "hear" the high frequency sounds of katydids and to detect a number of sounds that I could have heard years ago but cannot do so now because of the loss of the ability to hear higher frequencies because of age. The mini bat detector has been responsible for the collection of many new species that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

But what has this to do with Silvereyes *Zosterops lateralis?* On the night of 8 December 1977, while collecting insects, I came across a small naked bird. As I recall it was a dark, moonless night and very cold. After some discussion with my wife, we decided to take the bird with us and attempt to keep it warm until morning. It survived the night but after dawn there was still no trace of a parent. After some hours of deliberation, we decided to foster the bird and attempt to rear it to maturity.

We initially fed it on a mixture of high protein dry baby cereal and some cottage cheese. Later we added gelatine and bird vitamins (Avidrops) to this mixture which we moistened with water. One small seedcup-sized dish (similar in size to those used in Canary or Budgerigar cages) would be consumed within one day. After the bird was fully feathered we added defrosted frozen termites which were always available from the Termite Section of the CSIRO Division of Entomology. It ravenously ate the mixture along with assorted fruits and confectionery such as cakes and pies. It seemed to prefer oranges and for its entire life it had a half orange available, the contents of which would be consumed within two days.

Later we stopped feeding termites and substituted honey in the mixture. It thrived on this diet, with the occasional spider or fly for spice! For the next nine years it was allowed to fly free in the house for most of the day. If it was not retrieved before nightfall, it would disappear, often not found until the next morning, but frequently found huddled in a fold of drapery or behind an upholstery cushion. For a time we had a Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla* in the house and the Silvereye (named Elmer) would fly into the Galah's cage and attempt to snuggle up to its flanks at nightfall. This annoyed the Galah and it would frequently take a nip at Elmer but, fortunately, no contact was ever made.

This lifestyle continued, with the exception that after nine years it spent most of its life in a small cane birdcage near a window adjacent to a glasshouse, until 22 May 1991 when it suddenly died - 13 years 5 months after being "adopted". To us this seemed an extraordinarily long time for such a small bird to live. However, I have been told that it is not unusual for individuals from many Australian bird species, including small ones, to live for long periods. Nevertheless, not many have been studied on such a personal level. According to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes the longest elapsed time between banding and recovery for a free-flying Silvereye is 10 years, 7 months, and 25 days (J. Pook pers. comm.). Some weeks prior to its death, we noticed a stiffening of one leg (I don't recall which one at the moment) which we thought were the results of a stroke.

One can learn a great deal from living intimately with a wild creature. For example, it sang only in spring, never at any other time of the year. And it sang only at daybreak, never at any other time. It always had a distinctive chirp which it would respond to if imitated. It recognised our two voices - even after we had been away for several weeks or months - it would respond, immediately upon hearing our voices even if we were outside and a great distance away. Whenever approached, Elmer would droop its wings and "beg" for food. Simultaneously, it would become feisty and enjoy a few seconds of sparring. Whenever it was flying around the house, it would apparently be on the hunt for insects and spiders. It continually investigated cracks and crevices, pages of books would be spread by inserting the beak in between them and then slightly opening the beak to detect if anything was within. To my knowledge (and hope!) it wasn't very successful in finding insects within the books, but no spider was safe in our house. It provided a great deal of interest and enjoyment, not only for us, but also for all visitors to our house.

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NESTING BROWN FALCONS

Hazel Wright and Allan Wright

In a previous article (Wright and Wright 1990), we reported watching a pair of Brown Falcons *Falco berigora* "from nest-building to the time their offspring reached independence". This needs some qualification as falcons in general lack a nest-building instinct and none is known to construct a stick nest in its entirety (Cade 1982, Newton et al. 1990). However, Brown Falcons and some others, including the Australian Hobby *F. longipennis* and Australian Kestrel *F. cenchroides,* do deposit material in existing nests (Cade 1982, Czechura and Debus 1986, Paull In press).

The Brown Falcon's nest which we observed in a farmland paddock adjoining the Cotter Road in 1987 was a large stick nest about 12 m to 15 m above the ground in a eucalypt. We did not see the entire nest constructed, and the birds may have been refurbishing an old nest. A brief diary of events was kept.

September

9 Two birds bringing green leaves, bark and other material to the nest, apparently lining it. Twigs and bark on ground under nest.

27 Bird on nest - tail only visible.

October

Nest viewed several times during month. Tail only visible. Other bird seen in vicinity. Increasing amount of debris under nest: leaves, bark, sticks and faeces. No bones, fur, feathers or other food remains on ground.

November

6 Nestlings in nest - number unknown.

13 Two nestlings clearly seen.

22 One bird had fledged - observed being fed by adults. Other bird in nest.

29 Both birds had fledged. Seen in nearby tree. Adults making excessive noise when we approached the juveniles.

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ODD OB
HOODED ROBINS RAIN BATHING

Bill Graham and Bill Handke

On 14 April 1991, we were looking for Hooded Robins *Melanodryas cucullata* in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor in an area 3.5 km SSE of Tharwa between Smith's Road and the river. Three male Hooded Robins were observed in a mixed flock which included a pair of Scarlet Robins *Petroica multicolor,* two female-plumaged Flame Robins *P. phoenicea* and seven other species. At 1000 hrs one male Hooded Robin was observed perched on a rocky outcrop near the ground soaking wet from the moderate rain that was falling. It shuffled its feathers in the rain. At 1010 h another male that was perched on a dead branch 2 m above the ground had its tail fanned out and wings spread still while it was being soaked. It shuffled its feathers back into position without too much movement. The rain bathing continued at 1020 hrs again near the ground.

Although a number observations of bird rain bathing and foliage bathing have appeared in *Canberra Bird Notes* (Stokes 1980, 5: 27; Metcalfe and Metcalfe 1988, 13: 24-25; Veerman 1988, 13: 26; Andrews 1988, 13: 26; Fyfe 1988, 13: 134-135; Lepschi 1988, 13: 135) this is the first to involve Hooded Robins. The subject has also been reviewed by Veerman (1988, *Canberra Bird Notes* 13: 27).

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ODD OB

AND IN THE RED-RUMPED CORNER

Bruce Lindenmayer

For many years, when I worked in the Edmund Barton Building on the corner of Kings Avenue and Macquarie Street in Barton, I took lunchtime walks in the surrounding parkland. On almost every occasion I encountered a small group of Red-rumped Parrots *Psephotus haematonotus*, usually on the ground. They were frequently to be found in the vicinity of the post office in Queen Victoria Terrace, and I had seen them in that location dating from the late 1970s. It was pleasing to see over the years that they survived the major changes to habitat associated with the construction of the new Parliament House on Capital Hill.

On two occasions, I have seen Red-rumped Parrots inspecting hollow branches of the mature Pin Oaks *Quercus palustris* to the east of the post office, but I was never able to confirm whether they nested in these trees.

On Friday 13 July 1990, I observed three parrots perched on overhead wires. Two females were engaged in a spirited altercation, flying at each other, calling and pecking. On each occasion the male intervened, coming between them with the apparent intention of breaking up the fight. On three occasions he left his perch and flew between the conflicting females, effectively stopping the conflict, without apparently taking sides. Each time this happened all three birds resumed perches on the wires, but on the first two occasions, after a short delay, the females started flying at each other again, with the male intervening in the same way. After the third round, one of the females flew away followed a few seconds later by the other two birds.

Despite the proximity to Parliament House, no Hawkes or Peacocks were observed in the immediate vicinity.

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OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

I have just read an interesting story about Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita.* In 1940 the big outdoor aviary at London Zoo was punctured by shrapnel and several Sulphur-crested Cockatoos escaped. These were observed around various parts of London, with up to three birds being seen over the next two years in the nearby parks and in St Johns Wood (close to the zoo). They were living quite successfully through the stresses of wartime London. These sightings were reported in *The Times* newspaper and brought to light the report of one cockatoo that had been seen near Hampton Court (about 15 km SW of central London) living with some Rooks *Corvus frugilegus.* Rooks are an all black bird and the cockatoo must have shown up well amongst them. Rooks live in communal flocks (like Sulphur-crested Cockatoos do in winter) and the cockatoo attached itself firmly to the Rooks. It took part in all their activities whether feeding in the Hampton Court meadows, following the plough, or stealing walnuts from local gardens. It roosted with them, drank with them, flew with them wherever they went, and only in the nesting season did it seem a lonely outsider. The behaviour of a flock of Rooks is very similar to a flock of cockatoos - the major difference being that, unlike cockatoos, Rooks nest communally.

The most curious thing about this episode was that an epidemic of albinism occurred amongst the Rooks shortly after the cockatoo's stay with them. I know it does not make sense but ...? After all did not Shakespeare write "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

An indirect environmental pressure on birds, especially waterbirds, is lead poisoning. In both Europe and North America the passive danger posed by shotgun cartridges filled with lead shot is well known. Even if the shot does not kill ducks or geese directly, the shot falls to the bottom of the swamp and then is eaten by dabbling species causing death by lead poisoning. This danger has been recognised in Australia and the Bird Observers Club of Australia has adopted a policy which calls for legislation to be introduced to ban the shooting of ducks with other than cartridges loaded with steel shot. I believe it is already illegal to use lead shot in most of Europe and North America. If this is so why don't the cartridge manufacturers exclude lead shot in Australia? Why can't they put the environment above financial considerations and do something positive without being forced into it by law?

Another way in which lead is killing birds is through the use by fishermen of sinkers made of lead. It has been found that birds such as Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* in Europe and Loons (or Divers) *Gavia* spp in North America swallow small stones under water to aid their digestive processes. It appears that lead sinkers lost or discarded in the water by anglers are just the right size and have the right appearance to convince the birds that they are pebbles. The birds eat them, then suffer and die from lead poisoning. Thus unaware anglers can cause bird deaths both by discarding fishing line which tangles around the legs of birds and by using lead sinkers. Perhaps COG ought to get involved with some of the local angling societies and highlight the dangers of thoughtless angling practices?

About 100 years ago a network of Travelling Stock Reserves were set up across New South Wales to help stock owners who were droving their animals from place to place. They are still there today and cover approximately 3% of the area of New South Wales. They are managed by Rural Lands Protection Boards and in most of these reserves lighting fires, cutting down trees, removing sand or gravel, dumping rubbish, and riding trail bikes are all prohibited. These days they are not used greatly by stock as most are now moved in trucks. As a result they provide excellent habitat islands for birds, especially those moving from place to place, since they still contain fairly natural habitat which has not suffered heavy grazing pressure for many years. I recently received a nice leaflet prepared by the Armidale District Travelling Stock Reserve Boards outlining the history of the reserves and their benefits. Canberra Ornithologists Group has been very active in conservation issues in the ACT. Perhaps here is an opportunity for us to spread our wings a little and bring to the attention of local shires the importance Travelling Stock Reserves for flora and fauna preservation.

Learning more about the Travelling Stock Reserves in our local area would be a worthwhile project for or a member, or a group of members of COG to undertake - especially those who like to travel around the local area. For a start it would be good to know where these reserves are and what birds occur on them. If such a project were launched it is one that should be of interest to the Conservation Subcommittee. The next time you pass a Travelling Stock Reserve stop and make a list of the birds - you will be surprised at the number compared with the surrounding country. Such lists may also help in the future preservation of Travelling Stock Reserves. It can't be long before somebody looks at the "useless" land covered by these reserves and suggests that they be put to more "profitable" uses, e.g. for rubbish dumps or roadside truck stops.

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RARITIES PANEL NEWS

This list contains a number of unusual sightings made by Michael Lenz at Lake Bathurst and at Lake George. Probably the most interesting of these were the 400 Red-capped Plovers *Charadrius ruficapillus* seen at Lake George in April 1991. Although the Red-capped Plover does not normally need recording, Michael thought the sighting unusual enough to bring it to the notice of members. Note that in the previous year he saw 130 Red-kneed Dotterels *Erythrogonys cinctus* at the same place.

Probably the most unusual sighting was the Buff-banded Rail *Rallus philippensis* seen feeding on the newly-mown grass at Commonwealth Park, near the Floriade centre.

Finally a plea. Will members please report all sightings of Little Corellas *Cacatua sanguinea* and Long-billed Corellas *C. tenuirostris.* Over the years there have always been the occasional sightings of these corellas. However, flocks of them are now being seen, which suggests either that they are being released or something has suddenly happened to enable them to breed like rabbits. If you keep reporting your sightings it will allow COG to plot the spread of the birds over the next few years. Note that they are often amongst large flocks of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *C. galerita*, so please have a good look at those flocks and fill in a Report Form if you see any corellas amongst them.

RARITIES PANEL ENDORSED LIST NO 30

Category 3

Glossy Ibis
2; 23 Feb 91; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Freckled Duck
12; 22 Jan 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
3; 28 Jan 91; M. Lenz; south end Lake George
36; 21 Apr 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
2; 25 Apr 91; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Whistling Kite

1 bird regularly recorded from 22 Oct 90 to 2 Sep 91; M. Lenz; north end Lake George
1; 6 Jan 91; M. Lenz; Mt Ainslie
1; 25 Apr 91; M. Lenz; south end Lake George
2; 21 Jul 91; J. Bissett; near Uriarra Crossing
3; 25 Sep 91; M. Lenz; south end Lake George

Grey Goshawk

1; 13 Jun 89; B. Lepschi; Mt Pleasant

White-bellied Sea Eagle

1 ad; 23 Sep 90, 20 Oct 90, 22 Jan 91, 21 Apr 91, 22 Sep 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
2 imm; 7 Jul 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
1 ad; 25 Sep 90, 6 Jul 91, 25 Sep 91; M. Lenz; Lake George
1 imm; 2 Sep 91; M. Lenz; Lake George
1 ad; 14 Sep 91; C. Lane; Lake Googong

Buff-Banded Rail

1; 6 Sep 91; B. Horrigan; Commonwealth Park

Red Necked Avocet

1; 22 Jan 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
2; 6 Jul 91; M. Lenz; north end Lake George
1; 22 Sep 91; M. Lenz; Lake Bathurst
3; 25 Sep 91; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Bar-tailed Godwit

1; 22 Oct 90; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Red-capped Robin

1 brown bird; 25 Aug 91; D. McDonald; Junction of Pt Hut and Tidbinbilla Roads

Masked Wood-swallow

3; 18 Dec 90; M. Lenz; east Mt Ainslie

Category 2

Baillon's Crake
6; 7 Jan 90; M. Lenz; north end Lake George
3; 21 Jan 90; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Red-kneed Dotterel
130 (only 5 imm); 8 Apr 90; M. Lenz; north end Lake George
13; 22 Apr 90; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Red-capped Plover
400; 25 Apr 91; M. Lenz; north end Lake George

Escapees

Little Corella
1; 15 Feb 91; D. Cowley; Macquarie

Lovebird sp (probably Fischer's)
2; 14 Jul 91; P. Veerman; Kambah

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ACT BIRDWATCHERS HOTLINE **Telephone 247 5530**

An up-to-date five minute recorded message with interesting news such as returning migrants, rarities, meetings, outings, and bargains for bird-watchers in Canberra. Twenty-four hour service regularly up-dated.

Projects Subcommittee:
Malcolm Fyfe (Secretary - Ph. 254 3310), Grahame Clark, Chris Davey, Michael Lenz, David Purchase.

Rarities Panel:
Bryan FitzGerald (Secretary - Ph. 248 5140), Barry Baker, Graeme Chapman, Grahame Clark, Mark Clayton, Jack Holland, Bruce Male.

Annual Subscriptions for 1991 are: Student (18 years of age and younger) $8.50; Individual $17.00; Family $20.00; Institutions $20.00. All receive one copy of *Canberra Bird Notes.*

HELP WANTED

From time to time we need people to assist with the entering of records from our various projects into the COG Database. If you have a personal computer that runs on a DOS operating system and would like to assist please contact Malcolm Fyfe Ph. 254 3310. We will provide the necessary input program and data sheets.

Many thanks,
Projects Subcommittee

FOR SALE

BIRD SONGS OF CANBERRA **Price $10**

This cassette contains recordings of the songs and calls of 73 birds that are commonly heard in Canberra gardens and parks. The majority have been recorded in Canberra or the surrounding area. Seasonal variation in songs have been included where appropriate.

Available from COG, PO Box 301, CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608 or monthly meetings.

Canberra Bird Notes is published quarterly by the Canberra Ornithologists Group. Contributions are welcome. These should fit into one of the following categories: major articles (up to about 3000 words); short notes and "Odd Obs" (up to about 300 words); reviews of books and articles (up to about 500 words); and where to watch birds (up to about 800 words). The articles and notes should cover matters of the distribution, identification, and behaviour of birds in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding area (i.e. New South Wales coast north to Jervis Bay, and west to the Riverina). Contributions can be sent to the editors c/o David Purchase, 5 Orchard Place, Melba, ACT 2615 (Tel 258 2252).

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