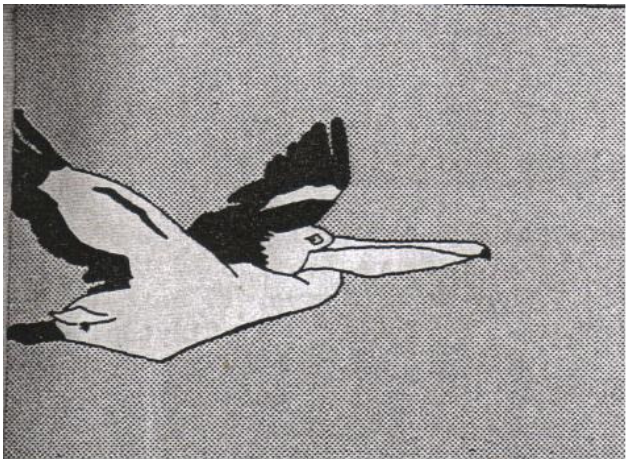

Canberra bird notes

Volume 3 Number 5 January 1976

EDITORIAL

By comparison with other parts of Australia outside our capital cities, it is safe to say that the status of birds in the A.C.T. and in nearby N.S.W. is fairly well understood. The Field List, Birds of the Australian High Country and Canberra Bird Notes have helped in this regard. Nevertheless, those who have contributed o the present state of our knowledge (and these are quite numerous) are well aware that we really need intensive observations in many areas - breeding details are unknown or are incomplete for many-species, our knowledge of migratory species is still deficient and information regarding accidental and occasional species is lacking. With the publication of the series of articles on the status of birds in our area it was hoped to provoke reactions from our members; in this the results have been very disappointing. The fact remains that it is well within the capability of every member to contribute something to the total of our knowledge. We look for assistance from all.

THE AUSTRALIAN BIRD-BANDING SCHEME

David Purchase

The Australian Bird-Banding Scheme which was launched in 1953 is administered by the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research. Through the Scheme bands are supplied to approved ornithologists, amateur and professional, for use in specific research projects. Bands provided by the Scheme have been used throughout Australia, as well as in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Borneo, Fiji, the New Hebrides, Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, Christmas Island (Indian Ocean), Cocos—Keeling Islands, Gough Island (South Atlantic Ocean), cays and reefs in the Coral Sea, and in Antarctica.

Two classes of authority are issued to banders enrolled in the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme - an ‘A’ class authority is issued to those ornithologists (minimum age 18 years) who require the use of bird-bands to carry out specific research projects and a 'B' class authority is issued to those (minimum age 16 years) who wish only to assist in these research projects. Those holding 'B' class authorities are not issued with bands and may band birds only under the general direction of an 'A’ class bander.

These authorities permit the holder to use bands provided by the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme - they do not permit the capture of birds. As most species of birds in Australia are protected by law the bander must also obtain a licence to trap, band and release birds from the fauna authority of the State or Territory in which the birds are to be banded.

Banders enrolled in the Scheme undertake their own specific research projects, or assist in those being undertaken by other banders - they do not band for or on behalf of the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme. Some banders have assisted in, and have made substantial contributions to, research projects being undertaken by the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research and other government instrumentalities.

Banders enrolled in the Scheme come from all walks of life and as well as professional ornithologists they include housewives, surgeons, solicitors, scientists, tradesmen, clergymen, high school students, labourers, etc. All have one thing in common - an urge to learn more about birds.

Banders are required to supply the Secretary of the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme with information pertaining to the use of bird-bands issued to them. This is to ensure that if a bird wearing a band is found by a member of the public the bander can be informed immediately. It also ensures that these data are preserved for future studies.

The 294 banders currently enrolled in the Scheme comprise 219 'A' class banders who undertake specific research projects and 75 'B' class banders who assist them. The Scheme is supporting 209 research projects. Of these, 138 are being undertaken by amateur ornithologists, 38 by universities (by staff and by undergraduate or postgraduate students), 12 by the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research, 10 by State Government Departments, five by the Antarctic Division, Department of Science, five by museums, and one by the CSIRO Division of Animal Physiology. These projects range from the intensive study of a few individuals in the one area to the large-scale banding of one species throughout its distributional range. Some of these projects involve the co-ordinated activities of a large number of banders.

Since the inception of the Scheme in 1953, 1 250 000 birds of 790 species have been banded. Of these, approximately 115 000 individuals of 500 species have been recovered. Many birds are recovered on more than one occasion, the record being held by an Eastern Silvereye banded in Sydney which has been recaptured a total of 677 times in 1148 days.

One of the expected results from any bird-banding organisation is the acquisition of data on the movement of birds. This is of course true of the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme. However, because of the limitations of space, it is not possible to do more in this article than mention a few examples of the type of movement records being obtained.

On a global scale, the banding of Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exutans* at sea off the New South Wales coast by a group of amateur ornithologists has resulted in spectacular recoveries of some of these birds from their breeding grounds. These are: South Georgia (79 birds) in the southern Atlantic Ocean; Prince Edward Islands (6 birds), Crozet Islands (43 birds) and Kerguelen Islands (13 birds) in the southern Indian Ocean; and Auckland Islands (15 birds) in the southern Pacific Ocean. In addition Wandering Albatross banded on these and other islands where they breed (Macquarie Island and

Antipodes Islands in the southern Pacific Ocean) have been recovered off the coast of New South Wales. Many of these birds have been shown to commute regularly between the New South Wales coast and the islands where they breed.

On a continental scale, the banding of diurnal birds of prey has shown that the young of this group of birds can be highly mobile. Young Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* have been recovered at distances of up to 400 km from the nest in which they were banded; Black-shouldered Kites *Elanus notatus* up to 1000 km; Black Kites *Milvus migrans* up to 800 km; Whistling Kites *Haliastur sphenurus* up to 1600 km; Brown Goshawks *Accipiter fasciatus* up to 900 km; White-breasted Sea-eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster* up to 1800 km; Wedge-tailed Eagles *Aquila audax* up to 800 km; Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* up to 400 km; and Brown Falcons *F. berigora* up to 400 km.

One of the interesting, and unexpected, results to come from the operations of the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme has been the longevity records of some of the smaller passerine species. Many of these were adult birds when banded. The elapsed time, in years, recorded between banding and recovery for some of these birds is:

Fuscous Honeyeater *Meliphaga fusca*	14.1
White-browed Scrub-wren *Sericornis frontalis*	13.0
Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Meliphaga chrysops*	12.8
Eastern Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus*	11.9
New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*	11.9
Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*	11.8
Southern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*	11.7
Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*	11.6
Lewin Honeyeater *Meliphaga lewinii*	11.3
White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus lunatus*	10.9
Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*	10.9
Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*	10.5

These longevity records are not isolated incidents within the species concerned and would hardly have been considered credible had they been proposed as possibilities prior to banding being initiated. The birds are all small, and weigh from about 7 g (1/4 oz) for a Brown Thornbill to about 70 g (2 1/2 oz) for a Little Wattlebird.

As well as telling us how long birds live and how far they travel, banding is also telling us a lot about bird populations. Useful data in terms of known individuals are accumulating on population size and

structure; and on the mortality, survival, migration, breeding biology, etc. of birds within these populations. Such information is vital if we are to understand fully and comment sensibly on the effects which man's changes to the environment are having on our bird populations.

A study yielding data of this nature is the one being undertaken at New Chums Road in the Brindabella Ranges. This study, which was initiated in 1961, is being undertaken by the Brindabella Banding Group (see A. Stokes (1975) *Canberra Bird Notes* 3 (2):2-5) and has provided a lot of information on the birds of New Chums Road. The real value of this information became apparent after a bushfire burnt through the area in December 1972. Although a lot of comment has been made about the effects which bushfires and burning off have on bird populations, we really know little about the subject. The work being undertaken at New Chums Road is now providing some objective data on this subject.

In species which are killed for sport or for food, banding is frequently used to establish what proportion of the total population is killed each year. This information is vital if sensible legislation for the management of these species is to be formulated.

One such species is the Short-tailed Shearwater (Tasmanian Muttonbird) *Puffinus tenuirostris* which supports a small local industry on a number of islands in the Furneaux Group in the Bass Strait. The Short-tailed Shearwater is the only wild bird commercially exploited in Australia and many thousands of nestlings are killed each year by licensed operators during the course of a five-week harvesting period.

In order to establish what percentage of the chick population is taken a large sample of nestlings are banded each year on these islands immediately prior to the harvesting period. During harvesting the licensed operators take a number of these banded individuals in their total catch. The bands are then handed to the State officer who supervises the industry. The number of bands returned, when computed together with the number of bands originally placed on nestling and the total number of nestlings taken, enable the authorities to establish what percentage of the nestlings is taken and how many nestlings were present in the population prior to harvesting. This information can be used to formulate harvesting regulations which will ensure the maintenance of a stable population of *P tenuirostris* on the islands where the species is commercially exploited

From this short note it can be seen that the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme is an active and wide-ranging organisation and that information gained from bird banding is used for a variety of purposes. It is of prime importance to seek out and make available –the wealth of information that has accumulated. This is being done at an increasing rate and aiready 262 scientific papers relating in whole or in part to banding studies or techniques have been published.

D. Purchase, Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, P.O. Pox 84, Lyneham, A.C.T. 2602.

FURTHER DETAILS OF THE PORT LINCOLN PARROT IN THE A.C.T.

Further to the remarks of Balfour (1975), Parrots have been fed at 12 Selwyn Street, Hackett, for more than ten years. My tenant, Mr McClure, first noted Port Lincoln Parrots *Barnardius zonarius* in October 1974.

On my return to Canberra in December 1974 they were daily visitors two adults and their three young being fed by the adults. They were regular visitors (in number up to five) until March, since when only one or two have been seen from time to time, most recently 13 June 1975. Competition from the regular winter influx of young Crimson Rosellas has been noted and may be the reason for their less regular visits lately. There is a probability that the adults were escapees but it is of interest to observe that the pair have apparently raised a clutch of three young in the wild.

Reference

Balfour, D. 'A record of Port Lincoln Parrots at Mt Majura, A.C.T.', Canberra Bird Notes 1975, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 14.

I. Grant, 12 Selwyn Street, Hackett, A.C.T. 2602.

OBSERVATIONS AT CAMPBELL, A.C.T., 1974-75

Mildred Hasten & Editorial Panel

The following observations cover the period July 1974 to June 1975, and were made in an area at Campbell, A.C.T., previously described (Basten 1973 and 1975).

A list of birds recorded during this period and submitted to the Records Officer has been examined by the Editorial Panel and is presented on a monthly presence-absence format in the following table.

PRESENCE — ABSENCE OF BIRD SPECIES AT CAMPBELL, A.C.T., JULY 1974 TO JUNE 1975

PRESENCE—ABSENCE OF BIRD SPECIES AT CAMPBELL, A.C.T, JULY 1974 TO JUNE 1975

	Jul	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*Jun*
White-faced Heron	x	–	x	–	–	x	–	x	–	–	x	–
Black Duck		x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Grey Teal	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	–	–	–	–	–
Wood Duck	–	x	–	–	–	–	x	–	–	–	–	–
Black-shouldered Kite	–	x	x	–	x	–	–	–	x	–	–	x
Brown Goshawk	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	x	x	–	–
Wedge-tailed Eagle	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	–	–	–	–
Little Falcon	–	–	–	–	x	x	x	–	x	–	–	–
Nankeen Kestrel	–	x	x	–	x	–	x	x	x	x	–	–
Gang-gang Cockatoo	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	–
Galah	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
King Parrot	–	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	x	x
Crimson Rosella	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Eastern Rosella	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Red-rumped Parrot	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	–	–
Pallid Cuckoo	–	–	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	–		–
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	–	–	–	x	x	–		–xx				
Spotted Owl	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Tawny Frogmouth	–	–							–	–		
Spine-tailed Swift	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	x		

	Jul	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*Jun*
Fork-tailed Swift	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	–	–		
Kookaburra	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sacred Kingfisher	–	–	–	x	x	x	x	–	–	–	–	–
Dollarbird	–	–	–	x	x	x	x	x	–	–		
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike:	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
White-winged Triller			–	–	x	x	x			–		–
Blackbird	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Rufous Songlark	–	–					–xx				–	–
Superb Blue Wren	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
White-throated Warbler		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		7
Weebill	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Striated Thornbill	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Little Thornbill	–	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	–
Brown Thornbill	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Buff-rumped Thornbill	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Speckled Warbler	x	x	–	–	–	x	x	x	x	x	x	
White-fronted Chat	–	–	–	–	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–
Jacky Winter	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Scarlet Robin	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	x	x
Flame Robin	–	–	–					–	–	x	–	
Rose Robin	–	–	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Southern Yellow Robin			–	–			–	x	–	–	–	–
Grey Fantail	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Millie Wagtail	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Leaden Flycatcher	–	–	–	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	–	–
Golden Whistler	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rufous Whistler	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		–
Grey Shrike-thrush	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
orange-winged Sittella	x		x	x	x		x	x	–	x	x	x
Brown Tree-creeper	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	–
White-throated Tree-creeper	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mistletoe Bird	–	–	–	x	x	–	–	–	–	x	–	–
Spotted Pardalote	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Eastern Striated Pardalote	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

	Jul	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*Jun*
Grey-breasted Silvereye	x	x	x		X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Fuscous Honeyeater	x	x				-					x	X
Yellow-faced H'eater	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	–	x	x	x
White-plumed H'eater	x										x	–
White-eared H'eater	x	x								x	x	x
Brown-headed H'eater	x										–	–
White-naped H'eater	x									–		
Noisy Friar-bird											–	
Eastern Spinebill	x	x	x						–	x	x	x
Noisy Miner	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	x	x	x	x
Red Wattle-bird	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
Diamond Firetail	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Red-browed Finch	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	–	–	–
Banded Finch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
House Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Goldfinch	–	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	X
Starling	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Olive-backed Oriole	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	–	–	–	–	–
Magpie Lark	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
White-winged Chough	–	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	x	x	x	x
Dusky Wood-swallow	–	–	x	–	–	x	x	x	x	x	–	–
Pied Currawong	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	–	x	–		–
Grey Currawong	–	–	–	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	–
Black-backed Magpie	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Australian Raven	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Little Raven	–	–	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	x

x denotes at least one record during the month
– not recorded during the month

References

Basten, M. (1973) 'Garden Birds at Campbell, A.C.T.', Canberra Bird Notes, vol. 2, no. 8, pp. 1–6.

Basten, M. (1975) 'Bird Observations at Campbell, A.C.T.', Canberra Bird Notes, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 2–11.

Lady Mildred Basten, 13 Holmes Crescent, Campbell, A.C.T. 2601.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS BIRDS

Graham Goodrick

Christmas Island is situated in the Indian Ocean some 350 km south of Java at latitude 10°30' South. Its area of about 135 sq km consists mainly of an inland plateau generally 180 to 250 m high, more or less bounded by a steep inland cliff dropping to a shore terrace of less than 50 m altitude. Except for a few small beaches, steep sea cliffs surround the island.

The island is geologically a raised atoll formed by volcanic uplifts and consists mainly of coralline limestone with some basaltic outcrops. Rich fields of phosphate occur, chiefly on the plateau. The island is completely vegetated with monsoon rainforest except where this has been cleared to mine phosphate.

The island has interesting flora and fauna, and of particular note are the land crabs and the resident birds. The red crab, *Gecarcoidea humei*, is extremely abundant all over the island and occupies a prominent ecological role as an omnivorous scavenger and soil burrower. Also common is the robber crab, *Birgus latro*.

Christmas Island has a small but unique avifauna. It is the only known nesting locality for several species and subspecies of birds. Nine of the eighteen species that nest on the island are sea birds and their nesting sites are such as to minimise interspecific competition for nest sites within a particular group.

The Brown Booby, *Sula leucogaster*, and the Red-footed Booby, *S. sula*, which occur in very large numbers, nest around the coast, the former on and near the ledges of the sea cliffs and inland cliffs, the latter in the trees on the shore terrace.

Abbott's Booby, *S. abbotti*, a very distinct sulid now nesting only on Christmas Island, nests in the canopy of rainforest trees on the central and western parts of the plateau. Its breeding population has been estimated at some 2000 pairs, it lays one egg every two years, and reproductive success is low. Its main nesting areas overlap substantially with phosphate fields, and clearing for mining has caused concern for its survival.

The Greater Frigate-bird, *Fregata minor*, and the Christmas Island Frigate-bird, *F. andrewsi*, feed largely on fish stolen from boobies; the former nests in tall trees

on the slope or edge of the inland cliff, whereas the latter, which breeds only on CI, nests in the trees on the outer portion of the shore terrace.

Two tropic-birds occur, the White-tailed Tropic-bird, *Phaethon lepturus*, which has a local golden-apricot coloured race, *fulvus*, known as the 'Golden Bosunbird', nesting in tree cavities on the edge of the plateau and on the shore terrace; whilst the Red-tailed Tropic-bird, *P. rubricauda,* the 'Silver Bosunbird', nests in cliff cavities on the inland cliff.

During the breeding season the Noddy, *Anous stolidus*, occurs in very large numbers, nesting on ledges on the sea cliff. The Reef Heron, Egretta sacra, occurs in very small numbers, feeding on the fringing reefs and in rainforest clearings; both colour phases occur and breeding has been recorded.

Whilst most sea birds breed from March to August or later, predominantly during the period of settled winds, most land birds breed from November to March, predominantly during the rainy season.

The Christmas Island Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula whartoni*, occurs only on the island where it feeds and nests in the rainforest canopy on the plateau. It appears to be uncommon and may be an endangered species. The ground-feeding Christmas Island Green-winged Pigeon, *Chalcophaps indica natalis*, however, appears quite common.

There are three raptors on the island and all appear quite common. The Christmas Island Goshawk, *Accipiter fasciatus natalis*, and the Christmas Island Hawk-owl, *Ninox squamepila natalis*, are endemic subspecies, occurring in the rainforest, whilst the Kestrel, *Falco cenchroides*, is self-introduced in relatively recent years and hunts over man-made clearings.

The Christmas Island Swiftlet, *Collocalia esculenta natalis*, is very abundant, and nests in limestone caves around the island. Also very abundant and very tame are two passerines, the Christmas Island Thrush, *Turdus poliocephalus erythropleurus*, and the Christmas Island White-eye, *Zosterops natalis*.

The only introduced bird to have established is the Java Sparrow, *Padda oryzivora*, which has however not succeeded in spreading beyond the gardens of the settlement.

The resident avifauna of CI is still intact and if appropriate conservation measures are adopted now, it should remain so.

G. Goodrick, Department of Environment, Canberra, A.C.T. 2800.

Editorial note: The preceding article is a précis of the talk given at the October meeting of C.O.G. Talks at our meetings are of a high standard and it is hoped to present a precis of each in future issues of Canberra Bird Notes.

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FOOD PREFERENCE OF THE EASTERN ROSELLA

Merle Baldwin

The Eastern Rosella is common in the Inverell district in north eastern New South Wales. Small numbers are usually present in our garden at Gilgai and it was here that they were first seen to feed on gazania leaves.

This plant has a cushion of leaves about 200 mm long, from which rise the bright flowers containing numerous cylindrical achenes. One would expect Eastern Rosellas to eat these seeds but they were not seen to do so.

Instead they stood beside or sat on the gazania (as in a nest) and nipped off about 100 mm of leaf. This was held near the fracture and nibble-swallowed quickly.
One adult ate nine leaves in three minutes (0740 on 5 November 1975), immediately regurgitating five times in one minute to feed a fledgling.

An inspection of a gazania leaf showed that it had a thick mid-rib containing slightly sweet 'milk'. This was obviously suitable for fledglings, but adults without young also consumed many leaves. The preference for gazania leaves was marked, although other 'milk-veined' species of the family Compositae, such as dandelions and thistles, were numerous.

M. Baldwin, Gilgai, via Inverell, N.S.W. 2260.

GREY FALCON SIGHTING IN THE CENTRAL TABLELANDS

Ian McRae

On Saturday 19 July 1975 a single adult Grey Falcon *Falco hypoleucos* was observed in an area of rabbit-infested country 10 kilometres due west of Blayney. The habitat consisted of unimproved grazing country, thickly covered with decaying ring-barked trees and scattered clumps of mature and over-mature Candlebarks (*E. rubida*) and Applebox (E. *bridgesiana*), surrounded by open grazing country. The altitude ranged from 850 to 920 metres.

The bird was viewed sitting for approximately 10 seconds at 20 metres with 8-power binoculars before it flew out of sight. The plain white breast and flanks as well as the yellow eye ring were clearly visible, as were the light grey crown, back and secondaries and darker primaries.

On being disturbed it flew very quickly and with very rapid wing beats. The overall wing shape appeared even more pointed than shown by Slater.

The Grey Falcon is a rare species over its whole inland range and this sighting is interesting, being so far east and at such a high altitude. The species is not recorded in the bird list for the Orange district (Heron 1973).

Reference

S.J. Heron, 'Birds of the Orange District, N.S.W.', The Emu, vol. 73, Part 1, Jan. 1973, pp. 1-8.

I. McRae, Corin Dam Huts, Box 4 P.O., A.N.U., Canberra, 2600.

THE DIET OF THE BARN OWL AT BOOLIGAL, N.S.W.

Neil Hermes and Tony Stokes

As part of a field trip by the A.N.U. Zoology Department to 'Woorandara Station', near Booligal, N.S.W., in May this year, the authors examined the diet of the Australian Barn Owl *Tyto alba delicatula* in the area by analysis of ten pellets.

The station vegetation is mainly saltbush *Atriplex sp.* with patches of black box *Eucalyptus largiflorens* and river red gum *E. camaldulensis*. The pellets came from roosts in an old homestead situated in saltbush and near a river red gum swamp. Two owls had been flushed from the abandoned building.

The pellets were weighed and measured and the remains of prey in each were counted and identified. To check the number of mammals present, the skulls and jaws were counted separately. The table lists the results together with those from the study by Morton (1975) in Victoria.

Place	No. Of Pellets	Mean weight (g)	Dimensions max	min	av.	Length max	min	av.	No. Of animals	Mean No. Of animals per pellet
Woorandara N.S.W.	10	7.9 wet	30	24	27	44	25	35	34	3.4
Werribee Victoria	275	3.9 (dry)	37	18	27	67	22	37	924	3.4

* Morton notes that dry weights are probably about half the weight of freshly cast pellets.

All the mammals in the pellets at Woorandara were the introduced House Mouse *Mus musculus* and in the Werribee pellets this species comprised 97% of the total number. It is notable that very few small, mammals, other than mice, have been recorded at Woorandara. The only other material recorded were infrequent blades of grass and small twigs.

Unfortunately it is not possible to calculate the amount of food the owls are consuming since they may feed only on the head and thorax of the mouse and leave the skin and hindquarters (Eckert 1971). Also, although it is assumed that only one pellet is disgorged daily, this has not been shown conclusively in Australia.

Though our sample was smaller than Morton's it is significant that the results are quite similar. Since these results and other authors (e.g. Calaby 1969) suggest a high dependence of the owl on the introduced house mouse it is interesting to contemplate the effect of the rodent's introduction on the distribution and abundance of this owl.

References

Calaby, J.H. in H.J. Frith (ed.), Birds in the Australian High Country (Reed, Sydney, 1969).
Eckert, J. (1971) Birds of the Franklin Islands and Eyre Island, South Australia', Emu 71:61-64. Morton, S.R. (1975) 'The diet of the Barn Owl in Southern Victoria', Emu 75:31-34.

N.L. Hermes, 'Oaklands', Spring Range Road, Hall, A.C.T. 2600. A. Stokes, 16 Badgery Street, Macquarie, A.C.T. 2824.

****

A CATHOLIC MAGPIE?

S.J.W

The nest of a Black-backed Magpie *Gymmorhina tibicen* built this season at Curtin, A.C.T., in a cultivated eucalypt on a residential block was ornamented in an unusual way: a string of rosary beads was woven into one side of the structure.

Two young were hatched; one was found dead under the nest when it had reached an approximate age of two weeks, while the other flew successfully on 18 October 1975.

OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

The purpose of this column in future will be to provide an information service for our readers. The information provided will cover places to stay, requests for information, advance warning of future projects - in fact anything that might be interesting in general but not important enough to warrant an individual article. So, here goes ...

*****

One of our members, Alan Cowan, has been on a trip to North Queensland and can recommend the Lake Eacham Caravan Park. The site runs into rainforest and there are platypuses just across the paddock. There are very good showers, laundry, store and on-site Vans. Therefore if you are lucky enough to go that way, why not try the site?

*****

[Editor: A few years ago my wife and I stayed for a week in a cabin at Woodlands Caravan Park, 141 Herberton Road, Atherton, North Qld. This was highly recommended by the late Jim Bravery and proved most satisfactory. The Atherton Tableland is wonderful bird country.]

*****

THE RAOU are hoping, providing money is forthcoming, to extend the Atlas scheme to cover all Australia. The difficulties involved in this will be considerable, but one way that the ordinary bird watcher can help is by keeping lists when he visits out-of-the-way places. Especially valuable will be breeding records.

*****

The Peninsular Naturalists Club has produced a list of the birds of Mornington Peninsula, Phillip Island, French Island and Mud Island in their publication The Peninsula Naturalist.

If you are interested copies can be obtained from Miss S. Spillane, 99 Rutland Avenue, Mount Eliza, Vic. 3930, at 70 cents including postage.

*****

In the last Bird Report there was a comment about the possibility of the Willie Wagtail being at least a partial migrant in our area. This caused a great deal of comment, but nearly all of it was subjective as nobody had continuous records in one area throughout the year. Therefore a request is being made to all members to regularly record the numbers (and/or absence) of Willie Wagtails in particular areas throughout the year, together with breeding records.

A BLACK KITE SIGHTING

Penny Woollard & Jerry Olsen

A Black Kite Milvus migrans was seen on 31 August 1975 on the road between Tarago and Charleyong. The bird was circling over and descended into shearing shed yards, possibly in search of carrion. While details could not be recorded, the bird appeared to be midway through the moult.

ODD OBS.

Doug Ross

BARN OWL During mid April, a friend who is not a bird watcher saw an unusual bird in the rafters of a house under construction on the edge of the suburb of Macgregor. There were no tiles on the roof. On being shown Birds in the Australian High Country he confirmed that the bird was a Barn Owl *Tyto alba*.

NANKEEN NIGHT-HERON One Nankeen Night-heron *Nycticorax caledonicus* was sighted in the willows at Jerrabomberra Creek near the lake on 7 September 1975.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE NANKEEN NIGHT-HERON AND THE BROWN BITTERN

Steve Wilson

Don Lamm, now resident in Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A., while an officer of the American Embassy in Canberra in the early 1960s did a regular survey of the north-western part of Lake George from January 1961 to December 1963 and a comprehensive paper was published (Lamm 1964). The Brown Bittern *Botaurus poiciloptilus* was sighted on 43% of visits with a maximum of nine birds being sighted on one occasion. The Nankeen Night-heron *Nycticorax caledonicus* was not sighted during the survey.

Some observers feel diffident about identification especially with regard to the immature plumage and this matter was mentioned in a recent letter to Don. The following extract of his reply helps clarify the matter for those in doubt about these species:

> On the subject of Bitterns and immature Nankeen Night-herons, I suppose there could be some confusion in a briefly glimpsed flying bird. Behaviour alone is sufficient to separate them on the ground. No Night-heron, immature or otherwise, sits tightly and slowly raises its bill till it is pointing skywards for one thing; and most Bitterns do so. During my census I found Bitterns only in that marshy section right at the head of the lake. That, of course, is long since gone and I do not know if there is another suitable (extensive marsh) terrain about the lake at present. The Night-heron was never seen by me at Lake George ...

Reference

Lamm, Donald W. 'Seasonal Counts of Birds at Lake George, New South Wales', The Emu 1964, vol. 64, pt. 2, pp. 114-28.

S.J. Wilson, 2 Scott Street, Narrabundah, A.C.T. 2604.

BOOK REVIEWS

Checklist of the Birds of Australia, Part 1, Non-Passerines by H.T. Condon. Royal Australian Ornithologists Union, 1975. Obtainable from A.F. Stewart, 23 Central Avenue, Moorabbin, Vic. 3189. $10.50 plus postage.

Don Lamm

I presume that my selection to review Part 1 of the R.A.O.U. Checklist is due to my being physically far, far away, and I am certainly aware of the admonition 'fools rush in ..." The following comments are made with due humility and recognition of the vast amount of effort necessary to produce this much needed work.

By far the most important point is that the Checklist is finally in print and that thoroughly modern techniques have been combined with reasonably conservative nomenclature. The complete listing of synonyms is particularly useful in Australia and those of us who have used other checklists which lack this treatment (such as that of the American Ornithologists' Union) are aware of its importance. The gazetteer at the back is a somewhat unusual and a valuable feature. In perusing the Checklist, one finds numerous indications of areas where further studies are needed, such as the remark under the Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides* 'at least five, probably more subspecies', and the Spotted Nightjar *Caprimulgus guttatus* 'the species needs revision'. The recognition of divergent taxonomic views (i.e. the Red-backed Button-quail *Turnix maculosa pseutes* 'treated as a subspecies of *Turnix sylvatica* in Peters' Birds of the World) is to be commended. The indication of rarity for some birds is another somewhat innovative feature. Ranges are at times vague and too general, but this is due principally to our lack of knowledge rather than a fault of the volume.

The reviewer regards the brief description of subspecies with mixed emotions. Admittedly they are sadly needed, notably in Australia, where some races named by Mathews are recognisable but at times not for the reasons advanced by that authority. However it is doubtful whether such information is appropriate in a checklist where the limitations of space may cause it to be misleading. For example, *Rallina tricolor* has four or five subspecies, one

in Australia. This race, *robinsoni*, is 'less barred on abdomen, shorter, more slender bill, shorter tarsus'. Compared with what? we might ask. There are many similar instances and treatment is not uniform. Thus *Gallinula tenebrosa* has three subspecies, one in Australia, but no description of the Australian race.

As the author anticipated in the introduction, vernacular names, since there are no rigid guidelines, constitute a problem. In Peters' *Birds of the World* the editors included English names in Volumes IX and XV but discontinued the practice subsequently because of criticism of the names used. Obviously, vernacular names had to be used in the R.A.O.U. checklist and in most instances were appropriately chosen. The reviewer however feels strongly that such a distinctive name as the Boobook Owl which must be known to most Australian school children should not be replaced by the virtually unknown name of Spotted Owl. An additional objection is that the latter is already the English name for a North American Owl. Moreover the disappearance of the Spur-winged Plover in favour of 'Masked', formerly applied only to the northern bird, will doubtless be deplored by many. In the Introduction it is stated that 'we should not necessarily adopt the usage of other countries, some of which disregard names accepted in Australia'. Well and good, but in the case of *Bartramia longicauda* with a single Australian record it seems logical to accept the name of the bird in its normal range, 'Upland Plover', or more recently 'Upland Sandpiper (*Auk*, vol. 90, no. 2, p. 419, supp. to the A.O.U. *Checklist*), rather than revert to Bartram's Sandpiper. Regarding the latter, that stalwart American authority, Arthur C. Bent, in *Life Histories of North American Shore Birds*, Part 2, 1928, remarked 'Let us be thankful that this gentle and lovely bird is no longer called Bartramian Sandpiper'.

Notwithstanding these few criticisms, the Checklist as a whole is a fine, readily usable volume which should be acceptable for many years to come. It is hoped that Part 2 will be published without too long a delay.

D.W. Lamm, 6722 East Nasampta Drive, Tucson, Arizona 85715, U.S.A.

Editorial note: The appearance of Part 1 of the Checklist after such a protracted period (almost 50 years since the last Checklist) is a great milestone in Australian ornithology. This is the authoritative voice in regard to scientific and

vernacular names of all species of birds occurring in Australia; as such it is a reference volume which should be in the hands of everyone with any serious interest in the subject.

Normally addresses of reviewers are not published, but an exception is made in this case. We are looking forward to other book reviews promised by Don.

Birds and Where to Find them – New South Wales by W. Roy Wheeler; published by the Jacaranda Press.

The increase in numbers and mobility of bird watchers over the past few years has led to the production of the 'where to go to watch birds' type of book. The trend has at last reached Australia and this is our first example of that type, the author being the indefatigable Roy Wheeler.

The book defines fifty areas which are good for bird watching in N.S.W., the term being used loosely to include Lord Howe Island and the A.C.T. As well as a large map showing the locations of the fifty areas, details included for each area are a local map, accommodation available, points of interest, vegetation and of course a list of birds. The list is a straightforward one of birds that have been recorded in the area at least once, unfortunately without any indication of their status. The lists are cross-indexed so that they can be used not only to find what birds are in an area but also the areas in which specific birds occur. The systematic order used for this is alphabetical – an unusual twist which is presumably intended to assist the novice.

It is rather pointless to criticise in detail the completeness or otherwise of the lists since it is virtually impossible to cover all vagrants. The important thing is that the book gives visiting bird watchers a very good indication of areas worth visiting, details of the bird community to be seen and how to get to each place.

One criticism is of its format. For a book which is presumably to be taken into the field in a car it is too big and too fragile (being a paperback). This is the second case recently (the first being *Bird in the Hand*) where the producers of a book appear to have gone for the 'pretty' rather than the ‘practical’ approach. The annoying thing about the book is that so much of it is taken up by unnecessary illustrations which are not in a field guide form.

Presumably the publishers felt it necessary to dress the book up for the popular market.

In summary this publication will be useful for any bird watcher, whether he is just somebody who likes to go somewhere different to watch birds or he is one of the rapidly increasing band of 'life-listers' or 'tickers'.

This volume fills a definite library niche and the other volumes will be eagerly awaited - will it be too much to hope for a change in format?

Available from all bookshops price $5.80 or at C.O.G. meetings price $4.00.)

G.C.

Tasmanian Bird Report no. 4 - 1974. Edited by O.M.G. Newman; published by Bird Observers Association of Tasmania.

This is the latest annual report produced by the B.O.A.T. and each has improved on its predecessor. A new departure for this year's report is the distribution maps for eight species, five being endemic to Tasmania. The report also includes an editorial, the systematic bird report, details of the continuing survey of wader populations in the Derwent Estuary, additional records and amendments to previous reports and a bibliography of the year's publications relating to Tasmanian birds. All is very well packaged as a small book.

One area where a non-Tasmanian might need help is in relating place names to particular areas of Tasmania. Perhaps in the next report a gazetteer or map showing place names mentioned in the text could be included.

This type of publication has an important role to play in our total understanding of Australian bird distribution and it is to be hoped that these bird reports continue to be produced. If you are a student of Australian bird distribution, if you are interested in Tasmanian birds or in seabirds around our southern coast, this will be of great interest.

(Copies available price $1.00 plus 30 cents postage from the Secretary, B.O.A.T., G.P.O. Box 68A, Hobart, Tas. 7001.)

G.C.

Every Australian Bird Illustrated, Rigby, Adelaide, 1975. $25.00; 320 pages with index; 32 cm x 25 cm.

I view this ambitious book with very mixed feelings. The concept is good and the printing commendable. Some of the illustrations are quite excellent, but there are too many that are quite frankly dreadful and even some that are abhorrent. The text is almost valueless. An attempt at depicting the range and variety of bird habitats in Australia is quite misleading, since many of the photographs chosen are inappropriate to the habitat they are supposed to illustrate. For the price, the book cannot be recommended to anyone just for the few gems it contains.

P.J.F.

BOOK MARKET

FOR SALE

Bannerman, *Birds of the Atlantic Islands*, vols 2, 3 and 4. Price $30.00 for the three.

Matthews, *Bird Navigation* (1968 edition). Price $13.00

*Alexander, W.B., *Birds of the Ocean*. Price £stg 2.95 (a few plates in this edition are bound in upside down).

*Harrison, P.P.O., *Sea Birds of the South Pacific* (Royal Naval Bird Watching Society). Price £stg 0.75.

N.B. Both the books marked * should be obtained from the Scottish Ornithologist Club, Bird Bookshop, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh, EH7 5BT, U.K. (Postage of 25p should be added for orders of less than £2.50.)

WANTED

A New Dictionary of Birds, ed. Sir A.L. Thomson

Bird Display and Behaviour, E.A. Armstrong

The next issue of the Book Market will concentrate on back numbers of journals and magazines, so if you have any for sale, or need any, please contact the Book Market, P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608, or phone G. Clark on (062) 541279.

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Secretary: Mr S. Bennett, P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, Canberra, A.C.T. 2608.
Editor: Mr S.J. Wilson, P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, Canberra, A.C.T. 2608.
Editorial Panel: Messrs B. Baker, G. Clark and D. Purchase