

~~and 1966~~

A.C.T. BRANCH, ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

SECOND ANNUAL BIRD REPORT - 1965-66

INTRODUCTION

Our second annual report covers the period from 1 July 1965 to 30 June 1966. Records and observations before and after those dates are altogether disregarded except in Mr. Judge's article which includes the month of July 1966. This report is somewhat larger than our first effort but its most outstanding aspects are the contributions by Gibson and Brown on the birds on the East end of Lake Burley Griffin, and by Mr. Judge on the birds visiting his garden in Downer. Even if the content of these articles may be trivial to some extent, their importance lies in the demonstration of the value of systematic, regular and methodically recorded observations. This enables precise statements to be made on the occurrence of the birds, which will be of great interest later, even if at the moment they do not seem to mean very much. The discerning reader may note that we are not yet at the stage when this sort of precision can be introduced generally into the systematic notes compiled by S.J. Wilson from the observations provided by many observers, where the information for many species is vague because observers simply will not record exactly the date, place and numbers of birds seen, especially for common species. The individual is not well placed to judge what is of interest and thus, if he excludes exact observations on common species we may never know the position unless individuals take up the study of specific aspects. For instance, do we really know anything like enough about the distribution and behaviour of the commonest species in Canberra? Personally I would say not. Systematic and exact observations by a number of observers in the city area would soon add to our knowledge. I can only hope that the example set by Messrs Judge, Brown and Gibson will stimulate others to take up methodical recording in local areas so that our annual bird reports can go on developing in exactness and value until we achieve a really first class local report each year.

(S. MARCHANT)
Chairman

5th October 1966

SYSTEMATIC NOTES 1965-66

by

S. J. Wilson

The period covered is strictly from 1 July 1965 to 31 June 1966, and because there is no overlap, the year has been omitted from all dates in the sequel. At the start of the period Canberra was suffering from a severe drought and although there were some moderate spring rains the total for the year was 10 inches below average. For the first half of 1966 the rainfall was still a little

below average. This has undoubtedly affected birds in the A.C.T., but as the records received still generally lack precision and detail, it is not usually possible to produce objective evidence for a decline in numbers of birds.

2.

Most of the observations have been provided by the writer but B. Baker, I. Betts, M. Clayton, I. Grant, D. Judge, J. McKean, J. McNaughton, B. Temple-Watts and Dr. G. van Tets have contributed substantially and many others too numerous to mention have also provided notes. Additional information has been taken from cards completed for the Nest Record Scheme by S. Marchant. Records for most species of water birds on Lake Burley Griffin have been omitted altogether because these are being dealt with elsewhere in this report by Gibson and Brown (q.v.). Similarly species on the A.C.T. list for which no records were received are also omitted.

Some species are placed in brackets (square brackets, if the typewriter would run to such), following the convention developed overseas. This indicates that the records, though probably valid, cannot yet be accepted for the A.C.T. In the case of parrots and finches this is chiefly because the birds seen have almost certainly escaped from captivity. For the other species, though the occurrence is possible or even probable, better descriptions or confirmation by more than one observer are needed because they are so unexpected in A.C.T. However it is useful to make the records because they could indicate the first appearances of birds which are establishing themselves here or extending their range, and could therefore be most interesting in future.

Stubble Quail. Recorded at east end of Lake Burley Griffin in January and February. Winter status uncertain.

Painted Quail. Recorded in the Botanical Gardens in September. Heard and seen from mid-October to late December on west side of Black Mt., but less regularly than in 1964. Not recorded on Mt. Pleasant.

Common Bronzewing. Regular on the city side of Black Mt. One or a pair seen intermittently from mid-October to December on west side of Black Mt. Also from the Weetangera road and fairly regularly from the Brindibella Ranges.

Brush Bronzewing. Two (one banded) at New Chum's Road 7 May; also noted there December; three at Bushranger's Creek 13 May.

Wonga Pigeon. Small numbers regularly in the Ranges.

Crested Pigeon. Reported in the north of the A.C.T. in October and March.

Marsh Crane. One on the north-west shore of Lake Burley Griffin 11 March.

Coot. 3,300 counted (many more present) Lake George 24 May.

Little Grebe. Often on dams; bred at Uriarra H.S. in December.

Great Crested Grebe. Fairly regular on Lake George.

Black Cormorant. Common on Lakes George and Bathurst. 3.

Little Black Cormorant. Usually present on Lakes George and Bathurst, but less common than last species.

Pied Cormorant. Three on Lake Burley Griffin 31 January and 6 February, additional to Brown and Gibson's records.

Pelican. Fairly common on Lake George. 14 flying over Ainslie 6 May.

Marsh Tern. In addition to Brown and Gibson's records, three on Lake Burley Griffin 21 September and then regularly till 17 October (5 present).

Silver Gull. Always present on Lakes George and Bathurst.

Spur-winged Plover. Always present near Lake Burley Griffin. Nested unsuccessfully at Olympic Swimming Pool: young near King's Ave. Bridge in February. During the very dry season watered lawns were a great attraction for this species.

Banded Plover. Four near Government House 17 October: also near Uriarra H.S. same day. Non-flying young near King's Ave. Bridge 24 February.

Black-fronted Dotterel. Small numbers along rivers and by lakes throughout the year.

White-headed Stilt. Recorded at Lake George from August to April.

Common Sandpiper. One at Acacia Inlet, Lake Burley Griffin 11 January: first A.C.T. record.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Seen at Lake George 27 August.

Glossy Ibis. Twelve at Lake George 25 October.

Royal Spoonbill. One throughout October at east end of Lake Burley Griffin, in addition to Brown and Gibson's records.

Southern Stone-Curlew. One Balmain Crescent, Acton 6 November.

Brolga. One reported by Mr. M. Tyrell near Government House in August or September.

Wood Duck. Common on dams and usually at Lakes George and Bathurst.

Black Swan. Common on Lakes George and Bathurst.

Plumed Tree-Duck. Nine wild birds joined captive birds at Gungahlin 6 to 14 April: first A.C.T. record.

Mountain Duck. More common on Lakes George and Bathurst than on Lake Burley Griffin.

Black Duck. Young first appeared at Sullivan's Creek 7 November, but fewer broods than in 1964. All disappeared when weedicide was applied to the area.

Chestnut Teal. Recorded at Lake George 27 August.

Grey Teal. Always present on Lakes George and Bathurst. 4.

Blue-winged Shoveler. Small numbers occasional on Lakes George and Bathurst.

Pink-eared Duck. Probably over 1,000 on Lake George in May.

Freckled Duck. Four on Yarralumla part of Lake Burley Griffin 6 October: four near Duntroon in November.

Musk Duck. One or two regular on the Molonglo near Lake Burley Griffin: one on a dam at Ginnindera 25 October.

Swamp Harrier. First record for season at Yarralumla 6 October.

Brown Goshawk. Single birds seen at all seasons: bred successfully west side Black Mt.

Collared Sparrowhawk. One dead in Turner in May.

Wedge-tailed Eagle. Widely spread in small numbers.

Little Eagle. Occasional records, particularly at Lake George.

White-breasted Sea-Eagle. One immature twice at Lake George in March.

Whistling Eagle. Fairly regular throughout the area.

Black-shouldered Kite. Fairly regular round Russell Offices, Anzac Parade and Yarralumla Creek area.

Little Falcon. Occasional in most areas: one New Chum's Road 24 April.

Peregrine Falcon. A few records throughout the year.

Black Falcon. One near Curtin, one Black Mt. Peninsula in March: first A.C.T. record.

Nankeen Kestrel. Usual near the City and in other suitable habitats.

Boobook Owl. No calling noted at Lee's Creek or New Chum's Road. One at Bull's Head 12 February.

Winking Owl. One at Lake George 27 August.

Powerful Owl. Three sightings at Lee's Creek between 8 and 22 January, one of these being of an adult with two young: twice adult seen eating a Greater Glider.

(Musk Lorikeet. Twenty-four at the Rifle Range 12 May were possibly Swift Parrots.)

Little Lorikeet. Fairly regular in flocks of up to 20 between January and April at Hackett: also in June at Hackett.

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. Occasional in the Ranges: twelve at the Rifle Range 12 May.

Gang Gang. Regular in the Ranges and in winter about Canberra. Thirty-five in the Botanical Gardens feeding on gum buds in May.

White Cockatoo. Regular in the Ranges: large flocks occasional in open country outside breeding season.

Major Mitchell Cockatoo. Two on west side of Black Mt. 14 November. Status remains uncertain because in spite of numerous records in recent years the general habitat is not normal for the species. Probably a small population has originated from escapes.)

Galah. Common about the City and in open country: forms large flocks outside the breeding season.

King Parrot. Occasional in the Ranges: around Canberra noted in August, January, March and June. Status uncertain because it is not seen regularly anywhere and there are no breeding records.

Crimson Rosella. An autumn survey at Hackett found many fewer immature birds in 1966 than in 1965, perhaps indicating lower breeding success.

Eastern Rosella. Widespread, common. The same Hackett survey found no difference between 1965 and 1966 numbers.

Red-backed Grass-Parrot. Fairly large flocks outside breeding season: apparently less common than in 1964-65.

Tawny Frogmouth. A pair roosted in the same place at Hackett from 6 February to end June: another pair used the same spot in O'Connor throughout June.

Dollar Bird. Regular breeding visitor in small numbers: first arrival 20 October, last record 25 April.

Sacred Kingfisher. One New Chum's Road 23 October: first record for the Ranges: calling loudly while opening knot-hole. Last record 13 February.

Azure Kingfisher. Two on the Molonglo above Lake Burley Griffin 22 and 23 November; first A.C.T (and nearby N.S.W.) record.

Rainbow-bird. First record 20 October. Young almost ready to fledge on west side Black Mt. 5 February.

White-throated Nightjar. One Red Hill School 15 February: one Canberra Grammar School 17 February.

Spine-tailed Swift. Recorded between 27 January and 9 April.

Pallid Cuckoo. First record 5 September, last record 13 February. A bird in the last stages of juvenile plumage with sub-adult voice on Black Mt. 7 October. Juvenile being fed by Hooded Robin 25 December, by Jacky Winter 6 February. Parasitism of Rufous Whistler and Brown-headed Honeyeater recorded.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Fewer records than usual: none in autumn.

Brush Cuckoo. Present near Canberra during January and February.

Horsfield Bronze-Cuckoo. Fairly numerous around Canberra in September, but less usual later. No parasitism recorded.

Golden Bronze-Cuckoo. Fairly common in the Ranges.
Parasitism of Western and White-throated Warblers found near Canberra.

Superb Lyrebird. Although still quite common in the Ranges, there seemed to be fewer singing males than usual. Laying in five nests occurred about mid-July, probably 2-3 weeks later than normal.

Welcome Swallow. Often over Lake Burley Griffin in winter. For breeding see separate note.

Tree Martin. First record 4 August and then fairly common until the New Year.

Fairy Martin. Fairly common in late spring and summer.

Grey Fantail. Always present, but scarce in winter as usual: not seen in the Ranges from June to August. First eggs on Black Mt. 30 October: nests started till 20 January in the Ranges, when breeding had stopped round Canberra.

Rufous Fantail. Recorded in the Ranges from 23 October to 5 March. First clutches started about 12 December, second about 20 January.

Willie Wagtail. Fairly common, but apparently less numerous, round the city and in open country.

Leaden Flycatcher. Regular in small numbers. First record 12 September, last record 15 March. Three unsuccessful attempts to breed noted on west side of Black Mt.

Satin Flycatcher. At Gungahlin 26 October: fairly numerous in the Ranges during summer.

Restless Flycatcher. A few records at all seasons, e.g. on Mt. Ainslie.

Jacky Winter. Only noted on Mt. Ainslie and at west end of Lake Burley Griffin.

Scarlet Robin. A pair (female banded) at New Chum's Rd. 23 October: new record for this locality, though reported already from Bushranger's Creek. Apparently fewer in the Canberra area.

Red-capped Robin. Adult male banded at New Chum's Road 14 November, a most unusual habitat. One or two at Cotter Reserve 17 April.

Flame Robin. No breeding recorded on Black Mt. Family parties very numerous at Mt. Ginini 19 February.

Rose Robin. Recorded in the Ranges from 21 August to 11 April.

Hooded Robin. Second or replacement clutches started at end of November on Black Mt. No records of first clutches.

Southern Yellow Robin. Common in the Ranges. Probably few birds on Black Mt. in spring where no breeding was recorded.

Golden Whistler. Usual vertical movements noted, but uncommon round Canberra from March to June.

Rufous Whistler. More common than usual in the Ranges where

more nests found than in 1964. First eggs laid near Canberra about 10 November, but main burst of laying apparently about first week of December.

7.

Olive Whistler. Fairly common in the Ranges, but fewer noted in the winter.

Grey Shrike-Thrush. Widespread and common. Fewer in winter in the Ranges than in summer. Two banded as juveniles and retrapped a little more than twelve months later still had the juvenile brownish eyebrow.

Magpie-Lark. Large flocks feed near Lake Burley Griffin in winter and roost in tall trees, e.g. Telopea Park.

Eastern Shrike-Tit. Regular in small numbers throughout area.

Eastern Whip-bird. Well but thinly distributed in the Ranges.

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike. Few winter sightings: common in summer.

Little Cuckoo-Shrike. Two Russell Offices 9 April: two Boldrewood St. 18 April.

Cicada-bird. One at Lee's Creek 21 January and probably two birds there on 5 March: first record for the A.C.T. and nearby N.S.W.

White-winged Triller. First report 9 October, last record 13 February. Adult male in breeding plumage 17 January. Only one pair settled to breed on west side of Black Mt., though at first there were 3-4 singing males.

Spotted Quail-Thrush. Sedentary; occasionally seen on the dry slopes of the Ranges.

Ground-Thrush. Only recorded in the Ranges, though apparently fewer in winter.

White-fronted Chat. Occasional near the large lakes.

Crimson Chat. Eggs collected in the A.C.T. near Queanbeyan in 1957, a drought year, have been identified as belonging to this species: first record for A.C.T. and nearby N.S.W.

White-throated Warbler. First record on 29 September. Fewer pairs bred west of Black Mt. than in 1964.

Western Warbler. One at Bushranger's Creek 3 October: an unusually late bird on 10 April. At least four pairs bred west of Black Mt., where none was noted in 1964.

Brown Weebill. Apparently unaffected by the drought: still fairly common near the city, e.g. Mt. Pleasant.

Eastern Whiteface. Not noted on Mt. Pleasant where previously it was usual: a pair seen once or twice west of Black Mt. in October and November.

Thornbills. The four common species are dealt with together because there is little precise information on them in the past year. Both Striated and Brown seem to have been scarcer and certainly fewer were caught and banded than in previous years. Both Buff-tailed and

Yellow-tailed were probably affected similarly. Neither bred so plentifully in the area west of Black Mt., where a reasonable comparison could be made with 1964. Only three pairs of Buff-tailed and one of Yellow-tailed were located as compared with four and five respectively in 1964.

White-browed Scrub-Wren. Distinctly fewer in the Ranges according to the numbers banded.

Speckled Warbler. Always scarce: no nests found, but one or two pairs were in the area west of Black Mt. throughout the spring.

Pilot-bird. Fairly common in moist gullies in the Ranges.

Rufous Song-lark. Six at Duntroon 1 November. Nested near the Federal Golf Course and west of Black Mt., one pair in each place. Clutches started about 27 November.

Superb Blue Wren. Adult male, banded as juvenile at Lake George 6 March 1963, retrapped New Chum's Road 21 August in eclipse plumage: direct distance 35 miles: only the second record of this species from the area. Only 2-3 pairs bred west of Black Mt., fewer than in 1964.

Masked Wood-Swallow. Ten with White-browed Wood-Swallows over Duntroon 10 October and for a few days afterwards.

White-browed Wood-Swallow. Present near Duntroon from 10 October to early January. Some unsuccessful breeding in early November.

Dusky Wood-Swallow. First seen 27 August, last in early April. Three pairs bred west of Black Mt., as in 1964.

Orange-winged Sitella. Scarce, but seen fairly regularly. Bred successfully west of Black Mt.

Brown Treecreeper. Recorded from Mt. Ainslie and west of Black Mt., but numbers seem reduced.

White-throated Treecreeper. Common in woodland, e.g. Black Mt. and in the Ranges.

Red-browed Treecreeper. Widespread in the Ranges in small numbers.

Mistletoe-bird. Fairly common in summer; absent May to early August. One clutch west of Black Mt. started about 11 December, about the same time as in 1964.

Yellow-tailed Pardalote. One Botanical Gardens 9 November (called close for identification): first record for A.C.T. and nearby N.S.W.

Yellow-tipped and Eastern Striated Pardalotes. The first species has been found to be much more common in winter flocks than used to be supposed: perhaps the second species moves away in winter.

Striated Pardalote. Occasionally recorded; uncommon.

Eastern Silvereye. Winter numbers seemed low, perhaps because availability of food reduced by drought.

White-naped Honeyeater. From banding records numbers returning to the Ranges seemed much lower than usual; yet

four nests were known close together at Lee's Creek and there seemed to be plenty of breeding pairs. Occasional winter records. 9.

Brown-headed Honeyeater. Two nests, both parasitised by Pallid Cuckoo, found in first week January; in one, three birds were feeding the cuckoo and in the other, four to six.

Eastern Spinebill. Recoveries of banded birds show that they move from the Ranges to open country, but more information is needed. Breeding (2 nests) only recorded at Lee's Creek.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater. One in O'Connor 30 July, banded 31 July; first record for A.C.T. and nearby N.S.W.

Regent Honeyeater. Small numbers regular in Hackett from 10 February to 2 April.

Fuscous Honeyeater. Occasional winter records; no spring irruption comparable to 1964.

Yellow-faced Honeyeater. Numbers banded in the Ranges were much lower than in previous years, yet nine nests were known at Lee's Creek where singing males seemed to be evenly distributed. A few winter records.

White-eared Honeyeater. Regular in Canberra in winter; always in the Ranges, but fewer in winter.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. Three banded Botanical Gardens 17 July; noted O'Connor 5 March.

White-plumed Honeyeater. Regular in Narrabundah from May throughout the winter; bred as usual on Black Mt. Peninsula.

Crescent Honeyeater. Fairly common in the Ranges but numbers smaller than usual.

New Holland Honeyeater. Probable resident population at Bushranger's Creek, associated with Banksia marginata.

(Bell Miner. The calls have been reported from Black Mt. behind Div. Land Research, C.S.I.R.O.)

Noisy Miner. Resident populations on Cooma Road, Mugga Road, Weetangera Road, Hackett and between Tharwa and Tidbinbilla Reserve.

Yellow-throated Miner. Eggs collected in A.C.T. near Queanbeyan in 1957 (a drought year) have been identified as those of this species; a first record for A.C.T. and nearby N.S.W.

Red Wattlebird. Fairly common around Canberra, particularly in winter, and in the Ranges in summer.

Little Wattlebird. One 19 October, two 28 April.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. Recorded near Wee Jasper March; has not been recorded in our area for many years.

Noisy Friarbird. First record 9 September, last about 1 April.

Australian Pipit. Always common in grasslands. Only two pairs bred in paddocks west of Black Mt. as compared with

at least six in 1964.

10.

Diamond Finch. A few summer records; winter status still uncertain.

Ze bra Finch. A flock of about 26 regular near Duntroon and some (?6) fairly regular near Nerang Pool.

Banded Finch. Apparently unaffected by drought, though perhaps the species is caught illegally for cage purposes. Only two nests found west of Black Mt. where twelve were found in 1964.

(Plum-headed Finch. One Hughes October, probably an escape)

Red-browed Finch. Now quite rare and apparently gone from many places, perhaps because of the drought. Only two nests west of Black Mt. where six were found in 1964.

Olive-backed Oriole. First record 10 October and a few later sightings.

Satin Bowerbird. Regular in the Ranges, but fewer in winter when flocks are found at the forest edge. A bower at New Chum's Road had a platform of thin twigs 4 feet in diameter and about 2 inches thick.

(Spotted Bowerbird. A bird in October at the junction of Dryandra St. and Weetangera Rd. was well described by Mark Clayton, but confirmation of what seems to be an extraordinary occurrence is needed.)

Raven. Occasional in the Ranges; common elsewhere.

White-winged Chough. Regular in the pine forests and fairly regular in open forest.

Pied Currawong. Common in the Ranges in summer and in Canberra in the winter; a few remain in each place throughout the year.

Grey Currawong. Small numbers regularly seen throughout area.

Grey Butcher-bird. A few records, mostly in the Ranges in autumn.

Blackbird. Probably extending its range as trees and gardens develop in new areas.

Skylark. Regular and common in grassland, e.g. round Lake Burley Griffin.

Goldfinch. Laying west of Black Mt. started in last week November; fewer bred there than in 1964 (2 yrs:4).

(East end of Lake Burley Griffin)

by

R. Brown and R. Gibson

INTRODUCTION

From November 1965 to June 1966 inclusive we made twenty bird censuses at the east end of Lake Burley Griffin. We tried to survey the area at least once a fortnight, but have not always succeeded.

Our chief object was to count all species of water birds but we also noted other species present though we did not always count them.

Before regular counts began, on 21 Nov, we visited the area often from 24 May 1965 onwards. Notes made on these visits are included below.

The area covered is bounded on the north by the Molonglo River from just below Duntroon bridge; on the west by the lake itself; on the southwest by Jerrabomberra Creek; and on the east by the Duntroon-Fyshwick road.

The same route was walked on each visit, viz. from the Duntroon-Fyshwick road along the left bank of the Molonglo to the lake, then along the lake edge and back along the west side of the Jerrabomberra backwaters, across to the Molonglo and back to the road: a short walk down on the west of the road by the farm about half way from the railway to the Duntroon bridge: a visit to the small swamp between the railway and Canberra Ave. on the west of the road.

SYSTEMATIC NOTES

Dusky Moorhen: Present in decreasing numbers from 24 May to 13 Nov; then none noted till 19 Dec when one present. Numbers remained low (max. 7) till 12 May when 22 were counted, but fell off again to 10 on 19 June.

Eastern Swamphen. Occasional in small numbers from 24 May 1965. Highest number (7-8) present in June 1966.

Coot. Present from 24 May to 13 Nov; then none noted until 12 Dec. when one observed. Small number (6 or less) till early April and then a sharp increase from 12 May to maximum numbers of about 30 at the end of June. The increase noted in this species and in the Dusky Moorhen early in May coincided with a fall in water level at this time.

Little Grebe. One 9 Nov., three 26 Feb., four 26 March; sharp increase to 28 on 12 May (max. 36); then numbers remained between 20 and 25 till end of June.

Hoary-headed Grebe. Only noted three times: present 25 Sept., two 26 Feb., and two 3 April.

Great Crested Grebe. Seen once 12 June 1965.

Black Cormorant. Present on all visits. On 21 Nov. 250 flew west overhead: but generally numbers varied from 2 to about 50, usually about 20.

Little Black Cormorant. Present on all visits. 75, many of them flying, on 21 Nov. Otherwise numbers varied from 2 to

about 50; again mostly about 20.

12.

Pied Cormorant. One on 21 Nov., one 27 Nov., and one 4 Feb.

Little Pied Cormorant. Present on all visits (about 5) from 24 May to December, gradually increasing to 24 in January, and afterwards generally between 15 and 30.

Darter. First recorded for A.C.T. on 24 May 1965: one to seven present almost regularly until 13 Nov.

Pelican. Occasional as single birds throughout the period.

Marsh Tern. 2 on 25 Sept., present 6 Nov., 5 on 13 Nov., one 27 Nov.

Silver Gull. Present nearly always on the lake and in the marshes. From Nov. to early Jan. considerable fluctuations, but max. 49: then numbers much lower (6 or less) till end May. 22 noted on 19 June.

Spur-winged Plover. Present on all visits. From late Nov. to end June numbers probably much increased 20-90 seen regularly except during Jan. when less than 10.

Banded Plover. Four on 21 Nov. and four 12 May, 1966.

Eastern Golden Plover. One on 13 Nov. (first record for A.C.T.)

Red-capped Dotterel. Two on 16 Dec: appears an unusual and unsuitable habitat for this species. First record for A.C.T.

Black-fronted Dotterel. Irregular throughout, usually in pairs or threes, but six or seven in Dec.

White-headed Stilt. Only singly or in pairs, during Sept. to Nov.

Wood Sand-piper. One on 21 and one 27 Nov. (First records for A.C.T.).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Present from 25 Sept. to Nov. (15 on 21 Nov). Also one 26 Feb., one 20 March.

Japanese Snipe. Present from 6 Nov. to 2 Jan. Maximum 9 on 6 Nov.

Glossy Ibis. Present in flocks of 5 to 37 from 30 Oct. to 2 Jan. One on 20 Jan., one 4 Feb.

White Ibis. Irregular in small numbers until Nov. After 13 Nov. present on nearly every visit: numbers fluctuated: 40 noted 2 Jan: 25-30 on four other visits in Nov., Dec., March, May: lesser numbers (about 10) at other times.

Straw-necked Ibis. Recorded on nearly all visits till Nov. 24-48 seen almost regularly from 27 Nov. to 20 Jan., after which irregular in much smaller numbers (1-5).

Royal Spoonbill. A single bird on 19 Dec. and again on 2 Jan.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Small numbers fairly regular till 4 Nov. apparently more (up to 18) from 13 Nov. to 19 Dec., thereafter four or less seen irregularly.

White Egret. Noted on most visits from 25 Sept. onwards in

small numbers. Maximum of 8 recorded on 27 Nov.

13.

White-faced Heron. Recorded on all visits; probably a resident population of 4 - 6. Possibly bred, as juveniles seen in Jan. and Feb.

White-necked Heron. Seen on 12 June 1965 and a single bird present in mid-December.

Nankeen Night Heron. Small numbers (1-3) present from 24 May to 4 Feb. None seen afterwards. Not recorded regularly but very likely overlooked.

Cattle Egret. A single bird on 9 and 13 Nov.

Wood Duck. Present in large numbers from 24 May to July 1965; then decreased and was absent from 6 to 27 Nov when 7 were counted. Numbers then increased and remained high with fluctuations (20-95) till end June.

Black Swan. Present on most visits from 8 July to 12 Dec. (max. 9). Irregular till 26 Feb., none noted then till 6 June when 20 counted and 28 on 19 June.

Mountain Duck. Irregular in small numbers (1-5) from 21 Nov., to 19 May.

Black Duck. The commonest duck, present on all visits. From 21 Nov. to 4 Feb. numbers fluctuated from 47 to 311 (max. 19 Dec.); then they increased and remained steady above 300 till 19 May when 513 counted; 399 on 5 June and 499 on 19 June.

Grey Teal. Present on all visits. In Nov. numbers were about 100 but during Dec. and Jan. they decreased to about 20, and even 5 on 19 Dec. Since February numbers have increased until May and June when numbers have stayed between 100 and 200.

Blue-winged Shoveller. Two on 21 Nov. (one a flapper), another even smaller young on 27 Nov., 10 on 12 Dec., 6 on 16 Dec., one female 19 Dec., and another on 4 Feb.

White-eyed Duck. Irregular in small numbers (1-9), but it is interesting that larger numbers occur in the western part of the lake, beyond Black Mt. Peninsula.

Musk Duck. A male on Molonglo River, on 19 June 1966.

Swamp Harrier. Singly or in pairs from Nov. to Feb.

Brown Goshawk. Singly in Nov., Jan and April.

Whistling Kite. One pair usually present.

Black-shouldered Kite. Two pairs present regularly.

Little Falcon. One pair seen during the summer.

Nankeen Kestrel. Seen August.

Boobook Owl. One dead on the road in June 1966.

Barn Owl. One dead in March.

Pallid Cuckoo. Seen 6 Nov.

Welcome Swallow. Irregular in flocks.

Fairy Martin. Irregular in flocks.

Tree Martin. Irregular in flocks.

Grey Fantail. Regular along rivers.

- Willy Wagtail. Regular and common, breeds.
- Scarlet Robin. Seen July.
- Flame Robin. Small parties seen in winter.
- Golden Whistler. Seen May 1965.
- Rufous Whistler. Seen 3 April.
- Magpie Lark. Regular and common. Breeds.
- Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike. Occasional in summer
- White-fronted Chat. Seen July and Nov.
- Yellow-tailed Thornbill. Seen May to July 1965, breeds.
- Brown Song Lark. 2 on 21 Nov., also seen 27 Nov. First record in A.C.T. in recent years.
- Little Grassbird. Regular from Nov.
- Reed Warbler. Regular from Sept. to Feb.
- Cisticola. Regular from Nov to Feb.
- Superb Blue Wren. Regular but uncommon.
- Yellow-faced honeyeater. Seen 3 April.
- Noisy Friar bird. Seen 6 Nov.
- Australian Pipit. Regular and common.
- Zebra finch. Seen Nov.
- Raven. Regular, common.
- Black-backed Magpie. Regular, common.
- Blackbird. Regular along river.
- House Sparrow. Seen around farm.
- Goldfinch. Regular, common - breeds.
- Skylark. Regular, common.
- Starling. Regular, common - breeds.

DAILY BIRD-COUNTS IN DOWNER.

by

D. Judge

From March to July 1966 inclusive bird counts were made in and around my garden in Padbury St., Downer, between 0700 and 0830 hrs., usually starting at 0730. Counts were made on 7 days in March, 14 in April, 10 in May, 22 in June and 29 in July.

The area (east half of both Padbury and Legg Streets) was recently built-up, most houses being occupied by February 1966. At first all the gardens were sunbaked expanses of clay. In my own garden the soil was turned in March, grass seed was

sown in April and sprouted in May when I also put up a feeding table and nut/suet feeder and made a rockery round the table. In June I built a concrete bird bath near the table and began to put out food. I also planted thirteen trees and fifty four shrubs, native and exotic. Three more trees and four shrubs were added in July.

15.

The only important vegetation in the neighbourhood when development was complete, was Eucalyptus cinerea about 15 feet high, along Berry St., mature Eucalyptus macarthurii along Swindon St., and mature pine and Quercus cerris along Melba St. The pines continue around Downer School and shopping centre and the playing fields, forming three sides of a square. The fourth side had mature stands of Eucalyptus cinerea. Around this area with trees, there was virtually an ornithological desert, when the counts were started.

The object of the counts was to record the changes in the bird life after the area was built up and as gardens matured and a habitat capable of supporting a bird population developed. Naturally observations over five months are far too limited to enable any trends to be detected, but it is worth giving a brief account of the bird population at the start of the artificial change in the area so that developments can be traced in future and partly as an example of the use of regular counts even in apparently unpromising situations. As it is, and as may be easily seen from the following account, it seems probably that the development of a lawn in May, the planting of trees and shrubs, and feeding and providing a bird bath in June have led to an increase in the number of birds visiting the garden for perching and feeding.

Species flying over.

Common species seen in March, April, May and June were Galahs, at first singly, then in small parties of three and four, with a large flock of 60 ± in June, and small parties again in July. Ravens (1-2) were sighted, with a maximum of 26 individuals during July. Rock Doves showed a maximum of 39 during June, as did Peewees, 18. Sparrows and Starlings were present during all months. Other species seen occasionally were Gold finches, a small party of 10 in March 5 in June and 3 in July: an Australian Goshawk, Red Wattle bird, Noisy Friar-bird, Welcome Swallow, Straw-necked Ibis, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike and a Spur-winged Flower. Galahs, Rock Doves, Peewees, Sparrows, Starlings, Goldfinches, Red Wattle-birds, Noisy Friar-birds, Welcome Swallows and Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes are likely to use the area as a habitat, though the Goshawk may take to hunting through it in due course. The other species are birds of passage which will probably never settle in the garden.

Species perching and feeding

No birds were seen to land during March, April and May. However, a single Kookaburra perched in March and again in May, a single Starling in April and 8 Rock Doves once in May.

Feeding began in June and a quite marked change in behaviour occurred. Sparrows and Starlings perched and then landed and fed. On three days 4 - 5 Pied Currawongs flew in and fed.

The following birds perched but did not land and feed; Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike twice, Peewee once, Red Wattle-bird once, Raven once, Rock Dove four times, fifteen individuals, and Magpies twice, ten individuals.

During July a Kookaburra perched once, Magpies four times. Sparrows continued to feed, although the number, (3) did not increase. Starlings continued and increased up to 60 ±

on occasions, with an average of 30+. A Black-faced Cuckoo 16.
Shrike fed once, as did one Willie Wagtail. Peewees came in
ones and twos on sixteen days, and Ravens made a quick dash
in and out twice. Three other times they flew around for a
while and discovered small bones, on the roofs of nearby
houses, which Starlings had apparently dropped.

The absence of Pied Currawongs was noted for this
month and may correlate with a July reduction suggested from
the 1965 Canberra census.

Pheasants in the A.C.T.

by

S. Marchant

At the June meeting 1966, Mr. A.L.G. McDonald
of Forrest displayed a drawing of a bird which seemed to
be a Pheasant (Phasianus colchicus L.) It had recently been
made by a friend of his, also living in Forrest, who saw the
bird in his garden. As some interest was shown at the
meeting, Mr. McDonald discussed the matter with his friend
and learned further that a pair of captive birds were in a
garden in Dominion Circuit. He rang me up and on 12 June 1966
we visited a Mr. Monahan of 24 Dominion Circuit where indeed
we found a fine, healthy-looking pair of Pheasants in a
chicken pen. Mr. Monahan said that the hen had been around
his garden for some while during last spring, and that in the
end he had caught it when it became entangled in a vine. He
had put it in the chicken run where it had laid an infertile
egg. The cock appeared about last February and had found
its way into the cage with the hen, where both birds have
flourished since then.

As far as I am aware, there has been no authenticated
record of this bird in the A.C.T. previously, though for some
time there have been persistent rumours of the birds in the
Forrest-Griffith area. These were particularly rife in the
last half of 1964 and early 1965. Further, an English friend
who should know something of the species, told me that he had
heard pheasants crowing in the Gadgenby valley last summer,
while Mr. Monahan said that he knew the bird in the Captain's
Flat area where he formerly lived.

Doubtless, then, there is a small, scattered
population in and around the A.C.T., but I do not know whence
they originated. It may be remarked that the Canberra birds
have evidently chosen a built-up area as their habitat, though
normally they are much more of a woodland species. In any
case they are usually regarded as very sedentary, so that
spread from a release or escape centre could be slow.

This record is given partly to find out if anyone has
information on the original introduction into and earlier
occurrences in the A.C.T. and partly for the historical record,
in case the species should be come thoroughly established
in the neighbourhood.

An enquiry into the breeding status of the Welcome Swallow (Hirundo neoxena Gould) in the A.C.T. was proposed for 1965-66. Unfortunately this failed partly because not enough helpers came forward, (some who did, were unable to do field work) and partly because the organiser did not supervise the activities adequately. However, just enough information was gathered to make this note worthwhile as a demonstration that a very good opportunity of useful field work was missed.

In the 1964-65 season swallows had nested freely under the culverts and bridges on the Cotter and Tharwa roads. The earliest egg was laid on or about 12 Sept. and several pairs must have started their first clutches before 1 Oct. Most pairs probably raised or attempted at least two broods and the last young left the nest or would have done so in mid-January.

In the 1965-66 season after a long, very dry period, not only were there fewer pairs along the Cotter road (3:5), but the birds did not start laying till 27 or 28 Oct., though nests were being renovated in the last week of August. None attempted a second brood. At the Murrumbidgee Bridge, however, from what could be guessed of inaccessible nests or deduced from flying young, probably the four pairs present laid first in late Sept. or early Oct. and may have attempted second broods. In the Hall area Christina Harding had observations of nests renovated before 7 Nov. but never laid in. On the other hand Ian Rowley at Geary's Gap had a nest with its first egg on 30 Sept., which successfully fledged young on 9 Nov.

It is interesting that records from South of Melbourne showed that swallows started building or renovating nests from mid-July and attended the nests till mid-September, but never laid eggs; and this with only three wet days in July, one in August and two in September.

One's guess, then, is that away from permanent water like the Murrumbidgee or good dams near homesteads, swallows are inhibited from laying by lack of the right amount of rain, whatever that may be. Nest building could, of course, be totally prevented by lack of mud, but in the A.C.T. last season away from good water it was just damp enough for the birds to renovate their nests at about the right time; laying, however, was probably delayed for a month or more beyond the normal time and some pairs may well have departed without breeding.

It will be realised that a thorough survey would probably have obtained some interesting data on these points and would certainly have provided an excellent criterion for comparison with future years.

S. Marchant