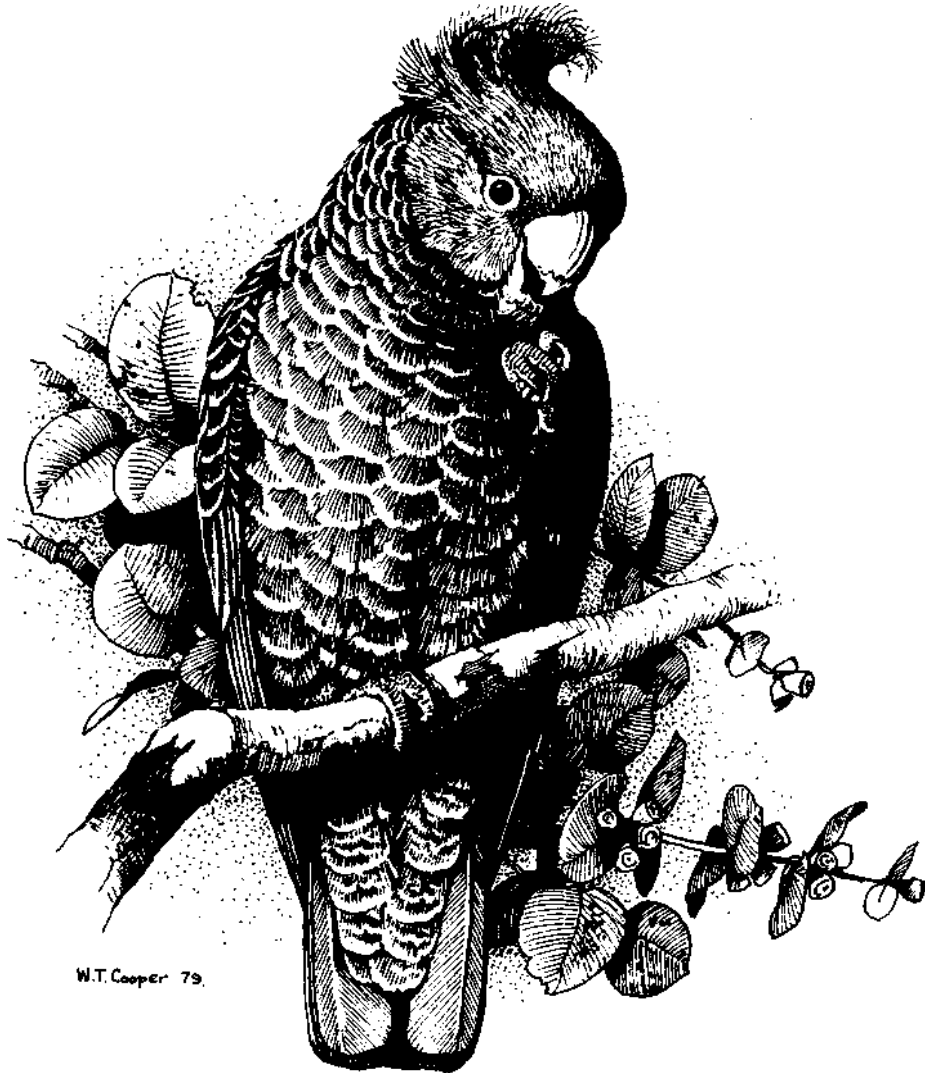


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FROM THE EDITORS

We would like to start this issue of *Canberra Bird Notes* by saying thank you to those people who, after the last issue, provided us with kind and encouraging comments. Two members also expressed concern that we are lowering the standards of *Canberra Bird Notes*. The comments were appreciated as our aim is to produce the type of journal that members want. As we said in the last issue, if you have any ideas on how it can be improved, or if you think we are pointing *Canberra Bird Notes* in the wrong direction, please let us know. Remember, it is YOUR publication and we would like it to meet YOUR requirements.

One of us was recently delving into the history of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. As many members may not be familiar with the history of the Group, we thought that the following details may be of interest.

3 June 1964. An inaugural meeting was held, attended by 27 members of the RAOU and others. It was decided that regular monthly meetings should be conducted. A request was sent to the RAOU Council that a branch be formed in the ACT. This was granted and the ACT Branch of the RAOU came into being with Graeme Chapman as Secretary and Ian Grant as State Member (*Emu* 66(3): 308).

15 April 1970. A meeting was held at which the name of the ACT Branch was changed to Canberra Ornithologists Group (*Canberra Bird Notes* No. 7:1). The need for change was brought about by the new RAOU Articles of Association which abolished the State and Territory Branches.

Projects undertaken during the early years of the Canberra Ornithologists Group (while it was still the ACT Branch of the RAOU) included surveys of: wintering Pied Currawongs; the birds of the Gudgenby Valley; the birds of the Molonglo River Flats (east end of Lake Burley Griffin); and the birds of a garden in Downer.

Before such information is lost in the mists of time, can anyone tell us who was at that very first meeting in 1964? Can someone write a history of Canberra Ornithologists Group?

Finally, would you please continue to send us material that can be published - *Canberra Bird Notes* cannot be produced without this.

David Purchase and Grahame Clark

FURTHER NOTES ON COLLARED SPARROWHAWKS IN A CANBERRA PARK

E.C. Metcalf and R. Metcalf

During the last ten years members of the COG Raptor Group have been observing the year by year behaviour of Collared Sparrowhawks *Accipiter cirrhocephalus* breeding in the Monterey Pines *Pinus radiata* of Haig Park, Turner, ACT. Information on breeding behaviour for the period 1980-81 to 1985-86 has been provided by Metcalf (1981, 1982), Olsen (1981), Metcalf and Metcalf (1986), and Metcalf *et al.* (1989). This paper summarises breeding behaviour for the period 1986-87 to 1988-89 (see also the Appendix).

1986-87 Season

During the previous season the authors were unable to find any sign of sparrowhawks in the usual areas, and as loggers had begun to fell some of the 50-year-old pines at the eastern end of the park the future looked black for the sparrowhawks. Nevertheless, we persevered with our observations and on 17 October 1986 located a nest and a pair of sparrowhawks who began incubating on 29 October 1986. They fledged two young (male and female) on 26 December 1986.

The male of earlier years, a small loquacious bird, was gone and in his place was a big dour fellow who slept a lot. The nest, as it often is, was sited on the crown of a spindly pine and hard to see. The loggers were at work and closing in on the area during the season.

1987-88 Season

This season we found the sparrowhawk pair on 18 September 1987. By this time the pines had been thinned so that there were never more than ten pines grouped together. The female spent several days building in one tree. Usually she would explore about half dozen sites but this year the choice was limited. The male spent his time resting on his perch of the previous year. He was not happy with the suggested site which may have been because there was about 60m of open ground between it and his perch - Collared Sparrowhawks do prefer cover. In any case, on 22 September the female moved her activities into the male's area and for three days made a show of building in several apparently unsuitable places. The male was obviously lobbying for last year's nest. By the third day he was frantic and in the two hours between 7.30 and 9.30am he built 3 green and 3 dry twigs into last year's nest, after which the pair mated. The next day the female flew up from the nest to a height of 150m in what we took to be a declaration of ownership and then commenced renovation work. Incubation began 20 days later and the two young left the

nest on 23 December 1988. This was the second time we had seen a nest used twice.

1988-89 Season

We did not find this season's nest until 30 October 1988 when the female was already sitting in the nest. Although it was only three trees or 40m from the previous nest it was well hidden. Fortunately the feeding tree, where the pair met to exchange food, was the same as it had been for the two previous years.

The male, another silent robust fellow, was still in immature plumage at the beginning of the season but was in full adult plumage within 28 days. This indicates that there were at least three different male birds in the area in the nine years of observations (see also Metcalf and Metcalf 1986).

After fledging on 28 December 1989, no more than two young (probably female) were seen. However, a photograph taken earlier shows three birds at the nest screened by pine needles at a time when it was unlikely that an adult would be present. The paucity of foliage gave us a better view of the activities associated with this post-fledging period, then known to be 14 days. (The post-fledging period is the period after the young have left the nest but are still being fed by the parents). This time the post-fledging period lasted for 28 days which is the same as that of a single young out-of-season female in 1983 who was fed by the adult female, also for 28 days, before being driven off by Pied Currawongs *Strepera graculina* on 3 April 1983. The two young in 1989 and the one young in 1983 were all very vocal.

The 1989 young centred their post-fledging activities around a food exchange tree some 50m from the nest. It was only towards the end of the 28 days that they started to cross the roads and open ground that bordered the park. However, they seemed to be avoiding the nest and rarely landed in any of the clump of trees around it. They were observed being fed by the adult on day 24 post-fledging. Their behaviour often appeared as that of hungry angry vocal children waiting for a late meal. Only once were they observed to try to catch a flying insect with what success the observer could not say. Interactions with other birds were mainly in the form of chasing Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita*, Crimson Rosellas *Platycercus elegans* and Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen*, or defending themselves from over-attentive Pied Currawongs. Later in the season the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos became actively aggressive towards the Collared Sparrowhawks.

A new observation for us was the use of low cover such as Laurel Bushes. Also they had much recourse to the thickets over a flowing drain. There were several perches (dead boughs on the edge of breaks in the foliage allowing vision and rapid escape to both sides of the drain) where the young birds rested in the quiet of the day and one where feeding was seen twice

(House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* of course). The drain would also provide drinking and bathing opportunities though neither was observed on this occasion. The young were not seen in the area after 27 January 1989. On that day they were observed circling to 150m above the canopy nearly 1000m away. Soon afterward, young sparrowhawks appeared in the authors' gardens some 1.5km away.

Female Behaviour

On 25 November 1988, when we deemed hatching was imminent, the pair left the nest for a short flight above the canopy. The male was seen fleetingly. The female circled up to 100m then dropped to the canopy, flattened out, circled, climbed and fell again. She then caught a thermal and slowly glided up to 250m for two minutes before she returned to the feeding perch for four minutes. Then two Pied Currawongs came and she flew to the nest calling for help. He, of course, was out hunting. The whole of the rising and plunging action was a replica of the nuptial flight which was seen once in 1983 (Metcalf and Metcalf 1986). We suggested then that the dominant swooping flight was performed by the female. This time we were sure of it.

On 27 January 1989, when the young left the vicinity of the nest for the wide world, there had been much harassment between the Collared Sparrowhawks, Pied Currawongs and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos all around the nest area. Suddenly the two young females flew up to about 50-80m and circled above the nest. Then, as if at a signal, they converged, met, touched talons, and then circled aimlessly until they were lost in the forest.

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Appendix. Summary of breeding Collared Sparrowhawks in a Canberra Park, 1986-89. This is a continuation of Table 2 in Metcalf and Metcalf (1986).

YEAR	AREA	NEST	FIRST	ACTIVITIES	YOUNG	LAST
SITE	SIGHTING					SIGHTING
						OF YOUNG
1986/87	B	6	17/10/86	Building female & male - new male	two	26/12/86
1987/88	B	6	18/9/87	Male & female - courtship	two	23/12/87
1988/89	B	7	30/10/88	Female & male - new male in juvenile plumage.	two	27/1/89

POWERFUL OWLS IN TIDBINBILLA NATURE RESERVE 1959 TO 1987

Don Fletcher and Neil Reckord

This note records observations of Powerful Owls *Ninox strenua* at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in the Australian Capital Territory.

Earliest records

The first published record of Powerful Owls in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is probably that of Lamm *et al.* (1963) who stated that a Powerful Owl "was seen by Frith at Mt Tidbinbilla on July 27, 1959" and noted that its call had subsequently been recorded by the CSIRO. According to records copied by Ederic Slater at the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology, sound recordings of a Powerful Owl were made "at Tidbinbilla" in June, July and October 1962; April 1963; and April 1964 by Norman Robinson, who at the time was studying Superb Lyrebirds *Menura novaehollandiae* in the Cascades Creek - Red Hill area.

David Kerr who lived at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve from 1967 to 1970 remembers seeing and hearing Powerful Owls on Red Hill and on Fishing Gap fire trail. On one occasion a Powerful Owl was heard, and seen in a spotlight at the ranger's house near the bird feeding area. On another occasion, a roost tree was found with conspicuous droppings and pieces of gliders beneath the perch.

Observations of owls with prey

Several studies of Powerful Owls have shown that arboreal mammals such as Ringtail Possums *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*, and Greater Gliders *Petauroides volans*, are a major component of their diet (Seebeck 1976; Hyem 1979; Tilley 1982).

Powerful Owls clutching Greater Gliders have been observed at various times during daylight hours in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Table 1 is a list of recorded sightings. As far as we know, Powerful Owls have been seen in daylight only when they were holding gliders. Presumably this is not just an indication that Powerful Owls often catch Greater Gliders. It is possible that owls not holding gliders make themselves harder to see by choice of perch or by flying away, and of course the high visibility of a **dead glider** hanging from a branch presumably draws attention to the otherwise inconspicuous bird.

Table 1. Powerful Owls clutching remains of Greater Gliders at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

Year	Month	Location	Reference
1971	February	Red Hill Nature Trail	M. Clayton, 1971
1971	May	Red Hill Nature Trail	G. Clark, pers. comm.
1971	October	Not recorded*	Anon, 1972
1980	Not known	Red Hill Nature Trail	R. Johnston, pers. comm.
1983	"Summer"	Hanging Rock, carpark	J. Crawford, pers. comm.
1984	April	Red Hill Nature Trail	Personal observation
1987	September	Red Hill near carpark	E. Slater, pers. comm.

*Two adults and two juveniles were present

Other roost sites

In 1971, after he made his observation of a roosting Powerful Owl on the Red Hill Nature Trail, Mark Clayton (pers. comm.) located nine possible roost sites in the vicinity of the Lyrebird Nature Trail. These sites were identified by the presence of regurgitated pellets.

Responses to recorded calls

Sound recordings of Powerful Owl calls have been played at night by rangers conducting guided walks and a few have heard Powerful Owls respond on the Fishing Gap fire trail. Most attempts were in summer when the owls are less likely to respond, and the equipment used seems unlikely to have broadcast a call of sufficient volume and quality. An occasion on which owls were deliberately called up is reported below.

Taking all records together, Powerful Owls have been heard calling at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in April, June, July, October, and December (7 records). Attempts to elicit responses in January, February and March have failed. Calaby (1986) reported that calling may be heard at any time of the year, but mainly in the breeding season from May to October.

Sightings in December 1987

On the night of 11 December 1987, Powerful Owls were seen at the nature trails carpark and on Fishing Gap fire trail when they responded to recorded calls played by the authors. (These sites are 3.5km apart).

At both sites a response was not heard until about five minutes after the first calls were played. The initial responses consisted of a single low "hoo" followed by the normal "woo-hoo" repeated only twice at intervals of about ten seconds. These calls seemed quieter than those of Southern Boobooks *Ninox novaeseelandiae* calling in the same general area and were emitted at a distance of at least 100m from us. In both cases about half a minute after we heard these cryptic calls we saw an owl land silently on a large branch clear of surrounding foliage, 15 to 25m above us. While the owls were watching us from these perches we obtained no further response from them to our recorded calls and after trying for about ten minutes we used a spotlight to observe them.

In the case of the Fishing Gap owl, a juvenile bird was also present. It persistently uttered a short, rising shrill, or churring call reminiscent of raptor calls. Groups of several higher pitched notes were occasionally added on to the end of the churring call. The impression we formed was of a juvenile begging for food. The calls of the juvenile were uttered more quickly and loudly each time we replayed the recorded calls.

The juvenile appeared to be slightly larger than the adult. The plumage on its back, wings and tail was similar to that of the adult, but its underside and thighs were white and fluffy and lacked the V shaped bars which are on the underside of the adult. The juvenile's face was white with a conspicuous dark mask around and between the eyes.

Shortly after being illuminated, the Fishing Gap adult owl moved away, followed by the juvenile. It returned silently to the vicinity of the car each time we replayed the recorded calls. After this had happened several times in approximately twenty minutes we refrained from trying to lure it back with the recorded call. Only then did the adult commence calling, uttering groups of approximately ten calls, four or five seconds apart, with a longer interval between groups. The juvenile moved to a nearby position, judging by the sound, and set up a persistent begging call. We left them to it at 1.15am.

Harmful effects of recorded calls

There appears to be increased concern, especially in North America and the United Kingdom, about possible harmful effects on wildlife arising from the playing of recorded animal sounds (Quinlan *et al.* 1983). The Powerful Owl might be a species which is vulnerable to such effects. Some restraint may be appropriate with the use of recorded calls, especially just prior to, and during, the breeding season.

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SUCCESSFUL BREEDING OF REGENT HONEYEATERS ON LAKE GINNINDERRA PENINSULA

Barbara M. Allan

Lake Ginninderra Peninsula is a tongue of land protruding about one kilometre into Lake Ginninderra from Ginninderra Drive in suburban Belconnen, ACT. The base of the peninsula has received the attentions of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service in recent years, and now boasts two beaches, picnic and barbecue areas, toilet blocks, car parks, sweeping lawns and assorted plantings of native and exotic trees and shrubs. As one progresses towards the tip of the peninsula, a less manicured area is reached, where the enthusiasms of the Service have been restricted to creating a cycle path, planting native tree species, clearing fallen limbs and dead trees, and infrequently mowing some of the undergrowth and stubble to reduce the fire risk. This latter area is modestly trafficked by joggers, cyclists, walkers and their canine minders.

Into this somewhat unpromising tract of avifaunal real estate there burst, in the spring of 1987, a veritable star - the flamboyant Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia*. On 10 October at about 7am a distinctive call emanated from the Argyle Apples *Eucalyptus cineria* on the hill. Flashes of black and yellow darted in and out of the flowering mistletoe which was growing on these gums. These flashes gradually revealed themselves to be four Regent Honeyeaters.

By comparison with the ubiquitous White-plumed Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus penicillatus*, the newcomers were considerably larger (about 20cm), yet they shared some of the behavioural characteristics of their more common cousins, namely hectic activity, frequent pursuit of one another, and inflight clicking noises. No difference between the sexes was detected. Each bird had prominent yellow and yellow-edged outer tail and wing feathers; a bright yellow facial skin patch; a black head and throat; black scallops on a white to off-white breast; a dark bill; red-brown eyes; darkish legs.

The birds' call seemed to me to be best described in the field guides by Pizzey (1980), who termed it "anvil-like". It was very clear, moderately prominent, and to the anthropomorphically-minded, somewhat worried, often consisting of five notes, the third of which was of a higher pitch than the rest.

The birds were subsequently seen on eleven occasions for periods ranging from a few minutes to an hour. From 7 November only a pair remained. They patrolled a small area from the mistletoe on the hill to a stand of ironbarks *Eucalyptus* sp. near the water's edge about 100m towards the tip of the peninsula, appearing not to stray from this fairly restricted area even when hassled by the White-plumed Honeyeaters and other species. Feeding was primarily in the mistletoe, though a bird was seen to peck insects from

under bark, much in the manner of the Grey Shrike-thrush, *Colluricincla harmonica*.

The pair were undeterred by an unseasonal October snowfall and built a nest in a horizontal fork half-way up an ironbark, at a height of about 7m and about 2m out from the trunk. Constructed of bark strips, the nest was roughly the size and shape of an open-style teacup. It was partly hidden by overhanging leaves.

Within a radius of 150m, numerous other species were nesting, including Willie Wagtails *Rhipidura leucophrys*, Grey Shrike-thrushes, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Olive-backed Orioles *Oriolus sagittatus*, Clamorous Reed-warblers *Acrocephalus stentoreus*, Dusky Woodswallows *Artamus cyanopterus*, Rufous Songlarks *Cinclorhamphus mathewsi*, Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, Australian Magpie-larks *Grallina cyanoleuca*, and Dusky Moorhens *Gallinula tenebrosa*.

On 14 November, a chick's head was seen in the unattended nest. An adult bird flew in almost immediately and began turning something over and over in the nest before settling down to incubate again. By 21 November, the nest had been abandoned and one healthy fledgling was observed in an adjacent tree, being fed. The fledgling was predominantly off-white to grey in colour and downy, but with the beginnings of a yellow facial patch and with yellow and black wing feathers just beginning to appear. On 5 December, the fledgling was pursuing one parent through the ironbarks begging noisily for food. The other parent perched nearby, preened itself and made sporadic efforts to drive off a Willie Wagtail. The family group was last seen on 6 December.

Sadly, the species has not revisited the area since that time.

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A NOTE ON CHARLES DALEY AND JOHN CUMPSTON: TWO EARLY CANBERRA BIRDWATCHERS

Brendan J. Lepschi

CHARLES DALEY: In an earlier article (Lepschi 1988), I discussed a paper by Daley (1946), dealing with early bird records for the ACT. Recently, information published in Gibbney (1988) has shed some light on the author, Charles Studdy Daley. Daley arrived in Canberra from Melbourne in the early 1920s (H.J. Gibbney pers. comm.) to take up the position of Secretary, Federal Capital Advisory Committee (1921-24). Subsequently, he became Secretary, Federal Capital Commission (1924-30); Civic Administrator, Federal Capital Territory Branch, Department of Home Affairs (1930-32); and Assistant Secretary (Civic), Department of the Interior (1932-52). He retired in 1952. Apart from this he also served on many other administrative bodies such as the National Capital Planning and Development Committee, and the ACT Advisory Council. Daley held degrees in Arts and Law (natural history being a spare time interest), and was a prominent figure in Canberra, both professionally and socially, until his death in 1966.

JOHN CUMPSTON: Hermes (1982), when dealing with a draft of G.M. Mathews' ACT bird list (Mathews 1943), drew attention to a number of observers acknowledged as having contributed information to the list, although they were omitted in the published article. One of these was "Dr Cumpston", this was Dr John Howard Lidgett Cumpston (Gibbney 1988, H.J. Gibbney pers. comm.). Cumpston, also originally from Melbourne, had a long and distinguished career in medicine (see Roe 1981 for a detailed account of Cumpston's professional life). He visited Canberra for a short time in 1913 (Gibbney 1988), and in 1928, in his capacity as Director-General of the Commonwealth Department of Health, he moved to Canberra following the relocation of the department from Melbourne (Roe 1981). He remained in Canberra (apart from short periods overseas), until his death in 1954. During this time he was active both professionally (serving as chairman of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee between 1931 and 1935), and socially (he was a founding member of the Canberra and District Historical Society), with natural history being one of his many interests.

Acknowledgements

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ODD OBS

AUSTRALIAN HOBBY PURSUES QUAIL IN TALL GRASS

E.C. Metcalf

Around 9am on 22 February 1988 I was about 70m from an electricity pylon in Belconnen, ACT watching two Australian Hobbies *Falco longipennis*. The adult, probably the female, sat stoically waiting, but the single youngster, about 22 days out of the nest which was on the pylon, would occasionally circle out and back but was not seen to catch anything. Occasionally other birds, such as Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen*, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita*, Crimson Rosellas *Platycerus elegans*, and Pied Currawongs *Strepera graculina*, came and went from the pylon without exciting any aggression from the hobbies, something that they could not have done 22 days earlier when the young hobby was still resident in the nest.

After an hour I decided to move through the 1 m tall summer grass/wattle scrub into the shade. My progress was halted in three paces by the sudden rise of a quail (species not known). It dropped again almost immediately into a tangle of grass and shrub, and as it vanished the adult hobby vanished with it. The youngster, a bad third, pulled up on a broken bough just about grass level some 10m away from me, and we awaited developments. The unburdened adult appeared just as suddenly as she had disappeared and flew to the nearest tree. The youngster soon returned to the

pylon but the adult watched for another 10 minutes before leaving to hunt elsewhere. In 8 years of watching hobbies this was my only sighting of a hobby pursuing prey to the ground.

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LEUCISM IN THE WHITE-EARED HONEYEATER

David McDonald and Brendan J. Lepschi

On the morning of 16 April 1989, David and Noela McDonald were driving along the Shannon's Flat to Yaouk road, in New South Wales some two kilometres south of the Australian Capital Territory border, in the ACT Bird Atlas grid number 163. Their attention was drawn to an unusual-looking bird moving in Black Sallee's *Eucalyptus stellulata* beside the road. The immediate response was to think of it as being like a large canary, but on closer examination it became apparent that the bird was a leucistic White-eared Honeyeater *Lichenostromus leucotis*. The initial perception of it being "canary-like" came from the fact that its upper parts, usually olive-green, were pale yellow in colour. Its face, throat and upper breast, normally black, were grey, and the ear patch, usually white, was an off-white, dirty cream colour, similar to that described as characteristic of juvenile birds (Wilson 1984). This bird was differentiated from a juvenile White-eared Honeyeater, however, by its particularly light plumage.

Leucism is a plumage aberration in which all the pigments are present but are reduced in their intensity. Lepschi (in press), in a review of Australian literature current to 1986, located no records of any albinistic plumage variants for the White-eared Honeyeater (albinism, leucism and schizochroism all being grouped under "albinism" for the purpose of analysis), although the Meliphagidae (honeyeaters) was well represented with 19 records for 8 species.

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D. McDonald, PO Box 1355, WODEN ACT 2606
B J. Lepschi, 24 Fullwood Street, WESTON ACT 2611

OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

Recently I came across a paper by Dr Bert Klein of the University of Florida on mixed-species flocking (*Auk* 105:583-584). The phenomenon of mixed-species flocking is well known and the hypotheses to explain it include: a reduction in predation; an increase in food-gathering efficiency; or a combination of both. It has been suggested that if mixed-species flocks increase foraging efficiency and if birds increase food intake during periods of low temperature, then one would expect an increase in mixed-species flocking with a decrease in temperature.

While studying mixed-species flocks in central New York, Dr Klein was able to test this suggestion serendipitously when a sudden cold front in January 1983 decreased the mean daily temperature by about 9 deg.0 for 10 days. He was able to show that during the cold period the number of mixed-species flocks increased.

During winter, mixed-species flocks are common in the Canberra region and it would be interesting to see if the size and composition of these flocks change in relation to average temperature. I don't think this has been studied in Canberra and would therefore be an interesting study for someone who is looking for something to do.

In response to my request for material in the last issue, I received a letter from Mildred Kirk which contains not only an interesting observation, but also a contribution of more collective nouns for the MCNAB Working Group. The letter is quoted in full:

11 July 1989

Dear G. Tibicen,

"Out and About" readers may be interested in this:

This is not strictly "Out and About" as it was all observed while sitting on the sofa in the living room. On the corner of our terrace are two wooden parrots (sp. *taiwanensis*) perched on the metal frame of an old lampshade - decorative in a mildly amusing way. Real parrots ignore them. A currawong tried aggressive postures, spreading its wings, lowering its head and even pecking at them, and was apparently disconcerted at not being able to drive them off.

Then one morning a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo arrived, plucked the more accessible bird from its perch on the lampshade, and, holding it in one foot, savagely pecked at it for some minutes before losing interest and dropping it, badly mauled, to the ground.

Is this an example of territorial behaviour, cannibalism or pure racism?

Also the MacNab Committee may be interested in the following collective nouns:

A galaxy of Starlings
A majority of Mynah birds
A jingle of Silvereyes
A shriek of Shrikes
A church of Wrens
A parliament of Lyrebirds
A currency of Dollarbirds
A blush of Crimson Rosellas
A Boston of Orioles
A thrill of Trillers
An epistle of Apostlebirds
A shunt of Choughs
An "oh my" (or "golly") of Goshawks

I must stop, this can easily become compulsive. Sorry your other reader died, but you've got a replacement!

Yours sincerely,
Mildred Kirk

My vote at the moment is for "An epistle of Apostlebirds". What do others think?

One of the known, but unquantified enemies of Australian birdlife is the domestic cat, or moggy. In an attempt to assess the effect of the cat on our avifauna a survey is being conducted on the numbers and identities of animals collected by domestic cats. The more information that can be gathered from different sources the better. If you have a cat, or you know somebody who does, your help is sought with this very simple task. If you are interested, further details can be obtained from: Dr David Paton, Department of Zoology, University of Adelaide, GPO Box 498, Adelaide, SA 5001.

REVIEWS

Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. A Book of Identification by Ken Simpson and Nicolas Day (No year of publication is given, probably 1988) Penguin Books: Melbourne. Pp 352. \$25.95.

In 1984 Ken Simpson and Nicolas Day produced "The Birds of Australia - A Book of Identification". It contained contributions from about 50 writer-ornithologists. An indication of its high quality and usefulness is that more than 75 000 copies have been sold.

Now it has been revised and published in this Penguin edition. It measures 16x22cm and has a flexible, waterproof plastic cover, and is essentially a field edition of the original hard cover.

The book is specially designed to facilitate quick and easy identification of birds, even by the novice observer. It starts with a simple, illustrated key to families. Then every Australian bird species is shown in over 2000 illustrations in colour. For each species, field information and a distribution map are shown adjacent to the painting of that species. Then there is a section of 70 pages, "The Handbook", which contains a wealth of information about: the life cycle of a bird; avifaunal regions; prehistoric birds; habitats; the taxonomy, behaviour, feeding and breeding of each bird family that occurs in Australia; and hints for bird watchers.

This book will be of interest to many people, including those who already have the original hardcover version. I'm sure that dedicated ornithologists will want to add it to their reference collection, even if only to respond to the authors' invitation for ideas and criticisms to improve the book. For the more general reader it has many values. It is a book worth having just for the beautiful plates. It would be informative for someone wanting to identify the birds in their garden or those they see on a visit to the bush or the beach. It would be a useful reference book for school and other libraries. It would be a worthwhile, and cheap, gift for someone - a child or a friend - whose interest in and knowledge of birds you want to encourage. Above all, it would be a great gift for yourself to carry permanently in the glove box of your car, in your rucksack or in a capacious pocket of your field jacket so that you can check the details of a bird while you are still observing it.

B.V. Fennessy

Bander's Aid: A Guide to Ageing and Sexing Bush Birds by Ken Rogers, Annie Rogers, Danny Rogers, Brett Lane and Bruce Male. (1986). Published

by A. Rogers, Lot 17, Ninks Road, St Andrews, Vic 3761. Pp 137. \$17.50 (plus \$2.50 for postage). Available from the publisher.

It is a very pleasant surprise these days to read a bird book that offers totally new information on Australian birds. This book does just that.

Before you buy a copy I should add that this is a specialist book as the title suggests, aimed at bird banders. However, it would be of great value to watchers with an interest in the plumages and measurements of Australian birds. It contains sexing and ageing details for 112 species of birds of which 94 are based on Victorian data only.

The data are comprehensive and contain probably the best plumage descriptions I have read. More importantly the authors list how many birds the descriptions are based on and where they come from.

The book itself is A4-sized and contains details and diagrams showing how to measure and record plumages, as well as suggestions as to what information should be recorded.

The authors have done Australian ornithology a service by readily admitting that their book is only a starting point and that a lot more work needs to be done in collating data from all over Australia. They go on to point out that this can only be done by cooperation. Hopefully their pioneering efforts will be rewarded by the successful completion of the BATH (Banders Aiding the Handbook) project which has its origin in the work of the authors.

On a personal basis this book made me want to go out to measure and record details on some birds to add to the authors' information. It also made me ashamed that no data from the ACT were included.

Every bander should have a copy of this book, not only to help age and sex birds, but also to remind them that a great deal more needs to be done, and can be done, by the amateur in Australian ornithology. Every serious bird watcher interested in plumage and measurements should also get a copy.

Thoroughly recommended.

Grahame Clark

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

GREY BUTCHERBIRDS

20 July 1989

I refer to the Rarities Panel News in *Canberra Bird Notes* 14(1) and the reference to the lack of Grey Butcherbirds in Canberra. Having lived in Brisbane where both Grey and Pied Butcherbirds are reasonably common I have often wondered about their absence from Canberra.

A friend, Ken Goodridge, suggested to me that it was because there are very few lizards, particularly the smaller skink varieties, in Canberra. This is interesting because in the bush areas where I have observed them in the Canberra region there are skink populations in reasonable numbers.

I have also been puzzled by the behaviour of Noisy Miners in Canberra compared to Brisbane. Unlike Brisbane, the Canberra Noisy Miners seem less adaptable to suburbia - they soon departed from Duffy after it was settled. I am watching developments in Fadden with interest.

Peter Roberts, 94 Appel Crescent, FADDEN ACT 2904

ELECTION OF LIFE MEMBER

Mr Doug Ross

To be successful, a group such as COG relies heavily on the tireless service of many officers in a variety of roles. A person who has worked for COG above and beyond the normal in recent years has been Doug Ross.

Since 1972, Doug has been one of *Canberra Bird Notes* most regular and significant contributors. Obviously able to manage any Editor or editorial style [!] he has published over 60 articles and notes. A quick flip through *Canberra Bird Notes* shows the following remarkable productivity: Volume 3, 19 articles; 4, 15; 5,7; 6,4; 7,3; 8,5; 9,5; 10,1; and 12,2.

Although most of these writings focussed on Doug's greatest ornithological love, Jerrabomberra Wetlands. he also wrote about many other avian subjects.

However, it is not because of his prolific writing and record keeping that the COG committee decided to confer a Life Membership on Doug Ross. From January 1984 to January 1989 Doug was at the centre of the

administration of the group during a period of great growth and activity, He performed a major managerial role within the affairs of the group which may not have been widely observed by the membership, but it was no less tireless or significant for that. In particular, as Treasurer and as the group's representative on various consultative committees, Doug has made a major contribution to the interests of COG and birds.

On behalf of the whole membership I would like to thank Doug Ross for his contribution to COG over the last two decades, and in particular over the last five years, and wish him many more decades of happy birding.

It gives me great pleasure to officially notify you of Doug Ross's election as a Life Member of the Canberra Ornithologists Group.

Neil Hermes

RARITIES PANEL NEWS

This list is a fairly small one but contains one extraordinary observation - a Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* (the first for Canberra). This was found in a distressed state on the forecourt of a service station in Braddon and could possibly have been transported from the coast by man. However, it could also have flown as these birds (particularly young ones) have been found inland.

There is another summer record of a Common Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea* (see previous endorsed list).

Two more White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes *Coracina papuensis* were recorded - both of these were the less-common dark-phase. Are we overlooking the normal phase birds given the difficulty in distinguishing them from immature Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes *C. novaehollandiae*? A note on the occurrence in our area of White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes will be published in a future *Canberra Bird Notes*.

The Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis* is an interesting sighting, as much for its location (Namadgi National Park) as for its rarity. Previous Little Friarbirds have been mainly recorded to the north of Canberra, or in Canberra itself.

Endorsed List No. 23 follows:

RARITIES PANEL ENDORSED LIST No 23

Category 3

- Wedge-tailed Shearwater
1; 29 Apr 88; N. Preston; Braddon (distressed)
- Little Egret
1; 20-24 Dec 87; P.J. Fullagar, Gungahlin
- Whistling Kite
1; 1 Jun 89; P. Veerman; Jerrabomberra Wetlands
- White-bellied Sea-Eagle
1; 7 Apr 89; I. Crawford; Acton
1; 23 Apr 89; J. Bissett; Lake Tuggeranong
- Brown Quail
2; 23 Apr 89; J. Holland; Pt Hut Pollution Control Pond
- Lewin's Rail 1; 1 Oct-30 Dec 87; **P.J.** Fullagar; Gungahlin
- Brush Bronzewing
1; 8 Apr 89; J. Bissett; Bendora Dam picnic area
- Common Koel
1m; 11 Jan 89; J. Bissett; Fisher
- White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
1 dark phase; 9 Apr 89; D. Purchase; Melba
1 dark phase; 28 May & 25 Jun 89; D. Cowley; Macquarie
- Little Friarbird
1 Juv; 30 May 89; J. Bounds & L. Andrews; Boboyan Trig,
Namadgi National Park

Possible Escapees

- Little Corella
2; 23 Jun 89; M. Smith; Farrer

Escapees

- Lovebird** sp.
1; 14-15 Jun 89; R. Kennemore; Aranda

FOR SALE

The following are available from Canberra Ornithologists Group, PO Box 301, CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608:

A POCKET LIST OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

This booklet lists the names of all bird species recorded in Australia. Alongside the names are ten columns that can be used to tally the species seen in different localities or on different days. It greatly simplifies the recording of field lists.

Price 50c

A FIELD LIST OF THE BIRDS OF CANBERRA AND DISTRICT

This booklet lists the bird species found in the Canberra region with indications of the frequency of occurrence, time of breeding, preferred habitat, localities where they may be found, and nest details. It is designed to provide supplementary local detail to larger publications which need to be consulted for identification.

Price \$3

BIRD SONGS OF CANBERRA

This cassette contains 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.

Price \$10

ACT BIRDWATCHERS HOTLINE

An up-to-date five minute recorded message with news on rarities, meetings, outings, and bargains for birdwatchers in Canberra. Twenty-four hour service up-dated every Thursday.

Telephone 47 5530

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 Canberra region (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 582252).

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