



canberra bird notes

Volume 3 Number 3

July 1975

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Checklist of the Birds of Australia, Part 1, Non-Passerines* by H.T. Condon (1975) is now available, having been published recently by the R.A.O.U. For passerines, for the present, the most accepted guide is *An Index of Australian Bird Names*, CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research Technical Paper No. 20.

In general, *Canberra Bird Notes* will follow the common and scientific names given in these two publications, as well as the arrangement of families, genera and species.

Local observations and their worth Most of us who use binoculars at all make observations which are of considerable importance in the local scene; but what happens?

In this issue we have the annual bird report compiled by Graham Clark chiefly from the observations book which is available at all meetings and from regular listings provided by several members.

The report, good though it is, makes one realise that many important observations are not formally recorded. So - more reporting please.

Several fairly comprehensive reports have been submitted regarding localised observations of a regular nature. These are most important as they record valuable facets of the changing ornithological scene in the A.C.T. These observations are the major source material for the annual bird report and they will be published in précis form in later issues.

Graham Clark

This bird report is based on sightings recorded in the observation book and also on regular observations by various observers in defined areas ranging from back gardens to the east end of Lake Burley Griffin.

There were several interesting facets of the year as far as ornithology was concerned. Firstly there was a mild winter in 1974 with some unusual observations (especially cuckoos). Secondly from a subjective point of view there were fewer Honeyeaters (especially White-naped) around over winter; this was supported by one of the regular observers who could compare numbers in a certain area with those of previous years. Thirdly there was the increase in numbers of the White-necked Heron *Ardea pacifica* and the Nankeen Night-heron *Nycticorax caledonicus*.

The big question is whether there was a decrease in Honeyeater numbers or not. The only way this could have been established for certain is by more members regularly recording actual numbers in fixed areas.

Thanks are due to all the contributors who are listed at the end of the article, but particularly to those who regularly recorded in one area, namely K. Anway, M. Basten, D. Johnson and J. McNaughton.

If there are any records to add to those listed herein please put them in the observations book or post them to Records, C.O.G., P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

NOTE: This list should be read in conjunction with the second edition of *A Field List of the Birds of Canberra and District*.

A species has been included in the list if, during the period

1 July 1974 to 30 June 1975, one or more of the following conditions applied:

- (a) it is represented in the Field List by a dotted line for part of the year at least and it was recorded during that 'non-continuous' period;

- (b) it has changed in status in our district;
- (c) it has been recorded in unusual circumstances (numbers and/ or locality); or
- (d) it has been recorded breeding outside its accepted breeding parameters in the above reference.

[Example: 3/6 Jun means that 3 birds were recorded on 6 June.]

HOARY-HEADED GREBE *Podiceps poliocephalus* A flock of 20+ near Black Mountain Peninsula 7 Jun were of this species (GC). Recorded from the east end of the lake from Dec to Apr (JMN).

PELICAN *Pelecanus conspicillatus* Since the construction of the silt trap on Jerrabomberra Creek this bird has become rare on Lake Burley Griffin, whether from this cause or not is not known. The only records are of single birds, firstly on 7 Jul then regularly from Sept to Dec and again on 23 Feb at the east end of the lake (JMN).

DARTER *Anhinga melanogaster* An unusual record was at Yarralumla Nursery 17 Jul (SW) as most records are from the east end of Lake Burley Griffin.

WHITE-NECKED HERON *Ardea pacifica* Numerous throughout the area since early summer. Normally there are very few records but this year there were many, including flocks of 100+ at Mount Vale, Brindabella, during late Jan and early Feb (EG). At the east end of the lake, birds were seen each month from Oct to Mar (JMN). Elsewhere recorded from Bungendore, Collector, Ginninderra, Hoskinstown during Jan and Feb (DP, NC, TG). One at Canberra Airport 5 Jun was still present at the end of June (RE, MF).

CATTLE EGRET *Ardeola ibis* Regular reports from east end of lake - 3/4 Aug, 2/14 Sep, 2/6 Oct, 1 (breeding plum.)/17 Nov, 6/30 Mar, 2/6 Apr, 4/13 Apr, 9/11 May, 1/1 Jun (JMN). Also recorded from Woolshed Ck - 3/4 Jul (DB) and Canberra Airport - 3/16 Jul (SW).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta* One record of a single bird, east end of the lake 8 Dec (JMN).

PLUMED EGRET *Egretta intermedia* Recorded from 29 Dec to 10 Apr at the east end of the lake - usually 2 with max. of 6 on 30 Mar (JMN).

NANKEEN NIGHT-HERON *Nycticorax caledonicus* Another species that had a population increase in our area. At the east end of the lake

there were records of 6/12 Aug and 1/20 Sep, then there were small numbers from 19 Jan to the end of June (JMN). Canberra Bird Notes Vol. 3 No. 2 gives other records at the east end during this period (AR). Birds were also reported from the Botanic Gardens, Cook, Hoskinstown and Captains Flat from Feb to June (CA, GC, NW). Nearly all birds sighted were in immature plumage.

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus* Only records were of single birds at the east end of lake 1/16 Feb and 2/3 Mar (JMN).

WHITE IBIS *Threskiornis molucca* No records from Jul to Sep, from then present in small numbers throughout the year at the east end of the lake (JMN). Also recorded near Bungendore - 3/16 Jun (GC).

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus* One interesting breeding record was of six non-flying cygnets at Kelly's Swamp 20 Aug (BB).

SHOVELLER *Anas rhynchotis* Thirty-three birds recorded at the east end of the lake at the end of June - a large number for this species (JMN).

PINK-EARED DUCK *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* Very few records this year, all at the east end of the lake - 2/18 May (SW), 6/1 Jun and 7/8 Jun (JMN).

MUSK DUCK *Biziura lobata* One breeding record (female and downy ducklings) at Black Mtn Peninsula 9 Dec (GC).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter cirrocephalus* A successful nest (3 fledglings) in the Botanic Gardens late Dec (AMW).

GREY GOSHAWK *Accipiter novaehollandiae* One record of a white phase bird on Tuggeranong Freeway at Molonglo Bridge 16 Mar (JMK).

WHITE-BREASTED SEA-EAGLE *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Two records near Canberra, both adults, at Murrumbidgee River 15 Sep (SW) and at Weston Park 11 May (GVT).

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus* An interesting record was the single bird seen in Civic on 17 May, 28 May and 5 Jun (JF).

STUBBLE QUAIL *Coturnix pectoralis* Single records on 23 Mar and 30 Mar at east end of lake (JMN).

MARSH CRAKE *Porzana pusilla* Two birds recorded on 12 Jan, then single birds occasionally to 9 Mar at east end of lake (JMN).

MASKED PLOVER *Vanellus miles* (Spur-winged Plover is the local form) An interesting record was of breeding behind the New Zealand High Commission Sep (EB).

BANDED PLOVER *Vanellus tricolor* Several records around Latham, single birds seen 28 Aug and 29 Aug, others heard in Nov, Dec and Jan (NH). Also single bird at east end of lake 24 Nov (JMN).

RED-KNEED DOTTEREL *Erythrogonys cinctus* Two birds at the east end of the lake on 2 Mar (JMN).

DOUBLE-BANDED DOTTEREL *Charadrius bicinctus* A record of 50+ birds at Lake Bathurst 8 Mar (RE).

BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL *Charadrius melanops* Regularly recorded at the east end of the lake throughout the year with a maximum of 20+ in June (SW, JMN).

PIED STILT *Himantopus himantopus* Six birds at the east end of the lake 2 Feb (JMN).

JAPANESE SNIPE *Gallinago hardwickii* One recorded on the ANU campus 2 Apr (RE), at the east end of the lake 8/5 Jan and 2/12 Jan (JMN).

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER *Calidris acuminata* Recorded at the east end of the lake on 14 Sep, 10 Nov, 26 Jan (JMN).

RED-NECKED STINT *Calidris ruficollis* Fifty plus at Lake Bathurst 8 Mar (RE).

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea* One record at the east end of the lake, 18 Aug (JMN).

PEACEFUL DOVE *Geopelia striata* A single bird recorded at Narrabundah from 24 Nov to 8 Dec (AR in *Canberra Bird Notes* vol. 3 no. 2). Also single bird at Aranda 30 Jan (PO).
(NOTE: The fact that these were records of single birds suggests that they could be escapees from aviaries since this species is normally very social.)

CRESTED PIGEON *Ocyphaps lophotes* A record of a single bird near the Lyneham Tennis Centre on 11 Mar (MC) may mean this species is still existing in the Gungahlin and Gininderra areas. Further records would be appreciated.

GANG-GANG COCKATOO *Callocephalon fimbriatum* The flocks of Gang-gangs this winter seem to be larger than usual with 50+ and 30+

being recorded at the Botanic Gardens on 25 May and 27 May (DP, AL) and one flock of 150+ at the Cooma/Queanbeyan Rd junction 26 Jun (SG). The numbers of this species seem to be increasing since it was recorded during the 1974 winter at Narrabundah where it has never been seen before (SW) and it is also recorded regularly throughout the year in the Botanic Gardens (AMW).

SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO *Cacatua galerita* The numbers of this species also seem to be increasing around urban Canberra in winter and regular reports of the variation in numbers at specified localities would be appreciated. Regularly recorded at the east end of the lake from 13 Apr to the end of June with a maximum of 33 on 27 Apr (JMN); also flock of 30+ at Haig Park, Braddon, during June (GC).

RAINBOW LORIKEET *Trichoglossus haematodus* A single bird at Red Hill 12 Nov (AL) was almost certainly an aviary escapee.

SUPERB PARROT *Polytelis swainsonii* A single male seen at Waramanga on 1 Jul (DB) was probably an aviary escapee because this species is usually a summer visitor to Canberra. Also most records have been in the northern suburbs of Canberra.

SWIFT PARROT *Lathamus discolor* A flock of 6 birds were seen at Lake George 4 May (MC).

PORT LINCOLN PARROT *Barnardius zonarius* Records of this species on Mt Majura in Sep and Oct were obviously aviary escapees (DBR). Further records would be appreciated.

BLUE BONNET *Northiella haematogaster* Two birds seen at Tralee Homestead 19 Apr (BH) were obviously escapees.

PALLID CUCKOO *Cuculus pallidus* A bird was seen and heard calling at Cook on 21 Jun, a very unusual record (MB). An early record was 11 Sep at O'Connor (BB).

BRUSH CUCKOO *Cuculus variolosus* One bird at Stromlo Forest 19 Dec (TG).

RUFIOUS-TAILED BRONZE-CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx basalis* Four birds were seen in winter (14 Aug) at Lake George (SW).

SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Winter records were of a single bird on the ANU Campus 23 Jul (IMR) and one on Mt Majura 11 Aug (DBR).

SPOTTED OWL *Ninox novaeseelandiae* (Boobook Owl) Heard calling frequently in Aug/Sep in Deakin (DJ) and twice in Melba Mar (FC); also recorded in Botanic Gardens 5 Apr (GC).

BARN OWL *Tyto alba* Recorded near Lake George 7 Sep (DJ), ANU Campus 11 Sep (RE) and Foxlow Stud on Captains Flat Road 16 Jun (NC).

WHITE-THROATED NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus mystacalis* One recorded at Cotter Reserve 20 Dec (TG) and also a nightjar between Belconnen Way and the CCAE on 14 Apr was probably of this species (SB).

SPINE-TAILED SWIFT *Hirundapus caudacutus* The only records this year were of flocks in Deakin during Mar (DJ), the Botanic Gardens also Mar (GC) and at Uriarra Forest 4 Apr (IMR).

SACRED KINGFISHER *Halcyon sancta* First record for year 6 Oct at Pialligo (SW). Successful nest Botanic Gardens Dec (CA).

DOLLAR BIRD *Eurystomus orientalis* First record for year 4 Oct at Holder (SW).

SINGING BUSHLARK *Mirafra javanica* One bird at Bungendore 9 Mar (RE) was the only record this year.

TREE MARTIN *Petrochelidon nigricans* Unusual records were of 300+ at Lake George on 14 Jun (SW), 3 at Pine Island/Tharwa Rd junction on 21 Jun (SW). Also 200+ at the east end of the lake 6 Oct (JMN).

FAIRY MARTIN *Petrochelidon ariel* The flock of 300+ Tree Martins referred to above at Lake George on 14 Jun also included a few of this species (SW).

LITTLE CUCKOO-SHRIKE *Coracina robusta* A positive identification of this species was of two birds in immature plumage at Duntroon 14 Oct (TG).

CICADA BIRD *Edoliasoma tenuirostris* One bird at Bungonia Gorge 9 Mar (IMR).

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* A late breeding record was in Feb at Deakin (DJ).

AUSTRALIAN GROUND-THRUSH *Zoothera dauma* One interesting record was of a single bird at Lake George 4 May (GC).

REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus stentoreus* Late records of this bird were in Jun and Jul (last on 21 Jul) at Sullivans Creek (SW).

Also recorded regularly throughout the year at the east end of the lake (JMN).

BROWN WEEBILL *Smicrornis brevirostris* Unusually late breeding record was a successful nest in the Botanic Gardens fledging around 25 Apr (CA).

LITTLE THORNBILL *Acanthiza nano* Several records during the year (is it becoming more common?). Further records would help to ascertain this. Present on 12 Jul, 18 Jul and 14 Aug at Lake George and weekly in Canberra during that period (SW). Small flock Botanic Gardens 15 Jul (GC). Small flock of 1 to 3 birds at Deakin in Mar/ Jun (DJ). Also recorded at 'Oaklands' (north-east of Hall) 'small flock' on 8 Jun (NH).

HEATH-WREN *Hylacola pyrrhopygia* One record in the Botanic Gardens of a single bird on 10 Jun (JM).

WHITEFACE *Aphelocephala leucopsis* Small number at 'Oaklands' (NE of Hall) 8 Jun (NH).

RED-CAPPED ROBIN *Petroica goodenovii* One male Botanic Gardens 5 Jan (AMW).

PINK ROBIN *Petroica rodinogaster* Records of one and two birds during Aug and Sep at Scullin - see Canberra Bird Notes Vol. 3 no. 2 (NC).

ROSE ROBIN *Petroica rosea* Several records outside the accepted period. A male 20 Apr at Botanic Gardens (CA), a 'brown' bird 25 May at Botanic Gardens (RM), a male at Manar homestead 18 May (COG outing) and a male at the Botanic Gardens 10 Jun (JM).

HOODED ROBIN *Petroica cucullata* Records of this species seem to be declining and extra records would be welcome. One pair on Caswell Drive 20 Jul (IMR).

WILLIE WAGTAIL *Rhipidura leucophrys* Regularly recorded at Deakin except during June and July (DJ). Is this bird at least partially migratory in our area? Regular recording in defined areas such as above would help answer this question.

OLIVE WHISTLER *Pachycephala olivacea* Altitudinal migration was suggested by the appearance for the second year running of a bird in

the Botanic Gardens during winter, recorded on 25 May (GC), 5 Jun (AMW), 10 Jun (JM).

GREY SHRIKE-THRUSH *Colluricincla harmonica* Another bird which may be a local altitudinal migrant as suggested by the apparent increase in numbers during winter in the Botanic Gardens (AMW). Also regularly recorded from Apr (74) to Aug at Deakin (DJ). Again regular reports from restricted areas would help throw light on this matter.

SPOTTED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus punctatus* A late breeding record was suggested by the presence of a fledgling 'unable to fly' at Aranda 9 Jul (HB).

YELLOW-TIPPED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus striatus* One at Deakin 2 Sep (DJ).

STRIATED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus substriatus* Only record was of a single bird in the Botanic Gardens 6 Nov (CA).

FUSCOUS HONEYEATER *Meliphaga fusca* In common with most Honeyeaters it appeared less numerous during the year. Records of single birds at Deakin 25 Jul (DJ), 28 Aug to 3 Sep (daily) at Scullin (NC) and Botanic Gardens 12 Oct (GC).

NOISY FRIAR-BIRD *Philemon corniculatus* Winter records of 7 birds 10 Jul at Belconnen Tip (HB) and 2 birds at Churchill House (Northbourne Ave) on 19 Aug (GC). Frequently seen in Aranda in Mar 'one or two birds' (KA).

ZEBRA FINCH *Poephila guttata* Recorded as follows: 8/4 Aug, 20/11 Aug and 12/18 Aug (JMN).

CHESTNUT-BREASTED FINCH *Lonchura castaneothorax* Six birds of this species were seen and photographed at the east end of the lake on 4 Aug (JMN). This is the first local record for this species.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris* Occasional records from the east end of the lake in Jan, Feb, Apr, May, Jun (JMN).

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLE *Oriolus sagittatus* Two breeding records in the Botanic Gardens in Nov (unsuccessful) and Jan (successful) - (BB, CA).

BLACK-BACKED MAGPIE *Gymnorhina tibicen* An albino juvenile was seen at Cotter 6 Jan and again 7 and 8 Jan (CG, TG).

AUSTRALIAN RAVEN *Corvus coronoides* The partially white bird first seen in Scullin in July 1970 was again seen on 19 Apr (JP). Presumably it is the same bird as it has been recorded occasionally between the two dates.

CONTRIBUTORS

KA - K. Anway	TG - T. Gourlay
CA - C. Appleby	CG - C. Green
BB - B. Baker	NH - N. Hermes
DBR - D. Balfour	BH - B. Holt
MBN - M. Basten	DJ - D. Johnson
HB - H. Bell	AL - A. Lucas
SB - S. Bennett	RM - R. Magrath
EB - E. Binning	JMK - J. McKean
DB - D. Bleach	JMN - J. McNaughton
MB - M. Brooker	IMR - I. McRae
GC - G. Clark	AMW - A. McWhirter
NC - N. Clark	PO - P. Ormay
MC - M. Clayton	DP - D. Purchase
FC - F. Crome	JP - J. Prance
RE - R. Elvish	AR - A. Ross
MF - M. Fleming	GVT - G. Van Tets
JF - J. Forshaw	SW - S. Wilson
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STATUS OF THE GALAH IN THE A.C.T.

Steve Wilson

It has long been assumed by local observers that the Galah (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) has increased greatly in numbers in the A.C.T. in line with its recorded increase in the wheat and pastoral areas inland. This idea derived from Jones (1929). Mr Jones, who was Head Teacher at Duntroon Public School, published a list of birds 'compiled since June 1913' and included dates of arrival of migratory birds in 1927 and 1928, so obviously his notes covered a period of many years. His reference was 'Galah or Rose-breasted Cockatoo (*K. roseicapilla*), a flock of four seen once'. It therefore appears that in the years 1913 to 1928 the Galah was indeed a rare species in the A.C.T.

The next published reference was Mathews (1943) where it was regarded as common in the city area, but note that Mathews used 'very common' for several other species, but not for any of the parrots, and 'common' for several other parrots including the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*), Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*) and (surprisingly) the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus magnificus*). While Mathews was a large figure in the picture of Australian ornithology of that time, his list was far from accurate and omitted such common species as the Striated Thornbill (*Acanthiza lineata*), Buff-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza reguloides*) and the White-browed Scrub-wren (*Sericornis frontalis*). So one can assume that the Galah was common at that time but not as common as it is today.

Lamm and White (1950) commented that 'In the case of such a conspicuous species, it must be assumed that Galahs have increased considerably in recent years, an observation borne out by reports from other areas'.

All later writers have recorded it as common or very common, to apply the terms used by Mathews.

A new but much older view of the status of the Galah has now been provided by the Canberra and District Historical Society and the following extract of an article from the February 1975 Newsletter of that Society is provided by courtesy of the Editor, Mrs

R.N. Wardle extract from an article entitled a visit to Duntroon a Century ago' is from a letter written by a visitor from England, Constance Frederica Gordon Cumming, and dated 2 September 1875, published in *At home in Fiji* (W. Blackwood and Sons, 1881).

One great charm of the bush here lies in the multitude of lovely cockatoos of every conceivable colour, especially pure white ones with lemon-coloured crests or pearly-grey, 'trimmed' with delicate pink. Some are very dark and handsome; and the green parrots are legion. The gentlemen have shot several and given us their plumes. They have also shot several small bears - most harmless little beasts.

Obviously the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and the Galah were common in our area in 1875 but unfortunately the reference to 'the green parrots' is too obscure. Interestingly, as this is being written a flock of over fifty Galahs is feeding on the fallen acorns of the Pin Oak on the lawn.

Thanks to the Canberra and District Historical Society for permission to reprint this most interesting peep into the past; it is requested that other similar old reference to birds be brought to COG attention as they become available.

References

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- Lamm, Donald W. and White, David (1950). 'The Changing Status of Avifauna in the Australian Capital Territory'. *The Emu*, vol. 49, pp. 199-204.
- Mathews, G.M., O.B.E., F.R.S.E. (1943). *A List of Birds of the Australian Capital Territory*. Commonwealth Forestry Bureau, Leaflet No. 53.
- S.J. Wilson, 2 Scott St, Narrabundah, A.C.T. 2604.*

STATUS OF BIRDS OF CANBERRA AND DISTRICT

(continued)

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BROWN WEEBILL, *Smicromnis brevirostris*

Breeding resident. Fairly numerous in suitable habitat, preferring more open forest and tending to avoid the closed forests of the ranges. Probably one of the more common small birds in the streets of Canberra, favouring eucalypts about 6-10 metres high. Flocks more commonly during winter. Breeds September to December inclusive.

STRIATED THORNBILL *Acanthiza lineata*

Breeding resident. Numerous throughout our area wherever there are trees - in all habitats from wet forests to suburban parks and gardens. The few quantitative records we have suggest that it flocks in the autumn and winter and splits up into smaller parties in spring and summer. Very few breeding records, ranging from October to February.

LITTLE THORNBILL *Acanthiza nana*

Breeding resident (?). There have been no confirmed breeding records and the exact status of this bird is uncertain. It is presumed to be resident in small numbers, always in or near trees (often but not exclusively acacia species). This species also

appears to be subject to fluctuations in numbers which are not fully understood.

BROWN THORNBILL *Acanthiza pusilla*

Breeding resident. Status similar to Striated Thornbill except that nests have been found, breeding being mainly from September to December inclusive. It also forms into flocks in winter, often in association with the Striated Thornbill although generally feeding at a lower level.

CHESTNUT-RUMPED THORNBILL *Acanthiza uropygialis*

The only record is in Lamm *et al.* (1963) and is of two sight records from open forest near Campbell. The lack of any further records and the species' generally accepted sedentary habits suggest that these two records were possibly aviary escapees, though it is not normally kept as an aviary species. Has this species been sighted close to the A.C.T. in recent years?

BUFF-RUMPED THORNBILL *Acanthiza reguloides*

Breeding resident. Fairly numerous in suitable habitat. Appears to be more limited in habitat requirements than other Thornbills, restricting itself mainly to the edges of woodland and open forest. Again flocking appears to be more noticed in autumn and winter. Breeding records from the beginning of August to beginning of January.

YELLOW-RUMPED THORNBILL *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*

Breeding resident. Favours more open habitats than other Thornbills, being normally found in open areas with a few trees. The numbers seem to fluctuate from year to year; it will be very numerous in a certain year, almost disappear another year and then reappear again in increased numbers. Regular observations of numbers of this species over several years in the same area would help to clarify this fluctuation. Breeding from July to January.

WHITE-BROWED SCRUB-WREN *Sericornis frontalis*

Breeding resident. Numerous in suitable habitat throughout our area. The habitat it prefers is thick brush and undergrowth in

forested areas. Breeds in our area from August to January. A few records in Canberra gardens and the more open forests around Canberra.

HEATH-WREN *Hylacola pyrrhopygia*

Status uncertain, either vagrant or very rare resident. In recent years there have been observations of single birds at Gundaroo, two observations at the Botanic Gardens and an observation of two birds in the Tinderries.

WHITEFACE *Aphelocephala leucopsis*

Breeding resident. A bird of savannah woodland and open grassland which tends to be moderately common in localised areas, but scarce elsewhere. Often associates with the Yellow-tailed Thornbill and, like it, appears to fluctuate in numbers. More information and records required. Breeds October and November.

SPECKLED WARBLER *Chthonicola sagittata*

Breeding resident. Although it can normally be found in suitable habitat throughout our area, nowhere is it particularly numerous. It prefers fairly dry open forest which has not been too disturbed and contains open areas interspersed with grass and shrubs. Very few nesting records but those we have suggest breeding from the end of August to the end of November.

PILOT BIRD *Pycnoptilus floccosus*

Breeding resident. Found in the ranges, especially the wetter areas (in similar habitat to the Superb Lyrebird). Although present throughout the year in reasonable numbers it appears to be less numerous in winter. Breeds September to January.

WHITE-FRONTED CHAT *Epthianura albifrons*

Breeding resident. A bird favouring wet grassland areas around swamps and lakes. Not very numerous in our area but locally common in selected spots, e.g. around Lake George, central basin of Lake Burley Griffin. Records suggest flocking in winter. Breeding records in our area in September and October.

CRIMSON CHAT *Epthianura tricolor*

The only record was reported in the 1965-66 bird report based on eggs found near Queanbeyan in 1957.

JACKY WINTER *Microeca leucophaea*

Breeding resident or migrant? A bird of the open forest and grassland areas. It is never very common here, although numbers fluctuate and it appears to be more numerous in summer. Perhaps an irregular summer migrant (?) or nomad (?), Breeds October to December.

SCARLET ROBIN *Petroica multicolor*

Breeding resident. A bird of the open forest, it is widely but sparsely distributed throughout the area. There appears to be some altitudinal migration away from the lower areas in summer. Breeds September to the end of November.

RED-CAPPED ROBIN *Petroica goodenovii*

Status uncertain, probably rare breeding resident. Confirmed breeding records in October 1967 and October 1968 (Marchant CBN 2 5). A bird of open forest, there are usually one or two records each year in open forest but it has also been recorded in the ranges. Early records suggest it may have once been more common in this area.

FLAME ROBIN *Petroica phoenicea*

A bird of open forest, wet forest and of the mountain tops which appears around Canberra on open grassland and in gardens during winter. Well distributed throughout the area. The classical example of an altitudinal migrant. Breeds from September to December.

PINK ROBIN *Petroica rodinogaster*

Uncommon winter visitor. All the records of this species in our area have been in the winter months. A very secretive species that prefers the densest parts of closed forests and can easily be overlooked as a result.

ROSE ROBIN *Petroica rosea*

A common summer breeding migrant. Arrives in August and departs April. Favours the wet sclerophyll habitat of the Brindabella Ranges where it breeds. During spring and autumn it is often seen on passage in Canberra parklands and open forest country. There is one winter record for the Brindabella Ranges (15.7.67).

HOODED ROBIN *Petroica cucullata*

A breeding resident. Found in open woodland and on the edges of dry sclerophyll forest, it is thinly distributed but can always be found in suitable habitat. Breeds from September to December.

SOUTHERN YELLOW ROBIN *Eopsaltria australis*

A common breeding resident. Found throughout the region in wet and dry forest country which contains thick undergrowth, its confiding and inquisitive nature enables it to be easily observed. It is particularly common in the Brindabella Ranges, where banding records suggest some local movements may occur. Breeding season is from September to December.

GREY FANTAIL *Rhipidura fuliginosa*

A common breeding resident, partially migratory. Occurs in a wide range of habitats from the wet sclerophyll forests of the Brindabella Ranges to Canberra gardens and open woodland. Although very common in summer, numbers are greatly reduced during winter and few birds remain in the Ranges and high country. Breeds from September to January.

RUFOUS FANTAIL *Rhipidura rufifrons*

A common summer migrant, living and breeding in the wetter areas of the ranges. It arrives late in October and departs in March, birds frequently being seen in Canberra and the surrounding open country whilst on passage. Due to the short time spent in this area, it is probable that only one brood of young is raised.

WILLY WAGTAIL *Rhipidura leucophrys*

A common breeding resident, occurring in open woodland, dry forest,

gardens and parklands. It does not inhabit the dense forests, although there is one record from New Chums Rd in the Brindabella Ranges (14.9.68). There are few winter records. Is this bird a migrant? Regular winter recordings are required. Breeds commonly from October to January.

LEADEN FLYCATCHER *Myiagra rubecula*

Regular summer migrant, but present only in small numbers. Arrives in early October and departs in April, during which time it is found in open forest country, preferring the high outer branches and treetops. It can be found in summer in favoured locations such as the Botanic Gardens and Caswell Drive. Breeds from November to January.

SATIN FLYCATCHER *Myiagra cyanoleuca*

Summer migrant, thinly distributed throughout the ranges. Arriving in October and leaving in March, it is found in wet sclerophyll forest where it is regularly present but never common. Whilst on migration it may be seen in open forest where it could be confused with the Leaden Flycatcher. Locally, breeding occurs from November to January.

RESTLESS FLYCATCHER *Seisura inquieta*

Status uncertain. Found in open forests, woodlands and on the edge of cleared farmland. There are records for every month of the year, usually of single birds, although a group of seven were observed on 22.8.73 at Hughes. However this species is never seen regularly anywhere in this area, and it is possibly nomadic. Local breeding has been recorded in November and December.

BLACK-FACED FLYCATCHER *Monarcha frater*

Rare vagrant. One record only - a juvenile bird flew into a window at Curtin on 28.3.67.

GOLDEN WHISTLER *Pachycephala pectoralis*

Common resident. Found in the wet gullies of the ranges in summer, where breeding occurs from October to January. In the autumn and winter most of the population migrate to the lower dry open forest,

although some birds remain in the ranges throughout the winter. By October all have returned to the ranges.

RUFOUS WHISTLER *Pachycephala rufiventris*

Common breeding summer migrant. Widespread and common throughout the area from September to March, inhabiting dry open forest and wet sclerophyll forests. Although most birds have migrated by late March, there are a few records of individuals wintering in the local area. Breeding has been recorded from October to February.

OLIVE WHISTLER *Pachycephala olivacea*

Uncommon resident. Widely but thinly distributed throughout the Brindabella Ranges, where it breeds during November and December. Although present in the Ranges throughout the year, there is some evidence of a partial altitudinal migration, with occasional winter sightings around Canberra and at Lake George.

GREY SHRIKE-THRUSH *Colluricincla harmonica*

Common resident. Found throughout the local area in a wide variety of habitats, it is common and sedentary all year, although numbers decline during winter in the ranges. Breeding occurs from September to December.

SHRIKE-TIT *Falcunculus frontatus*

Uncommon resident. Widespread and thinly distributed throughout the local area, but perhaps more often observed in the ranges. Due to its quiet nature and habit of feeding high in the treetops, it may often be overlooked, thus giving a false picture of its true status. Banding records indicate the species is sedentary, two birds being retrapped in the same area 18 months after banding. Breeding has been recorded in November and December.

COG EXCURSION TO NEW CHUMS ROAD

Neil Hermes

On Sunday 29 June approximately 35 members attended the COG excursion to the New Chums Road banding area in the Brindabella Ranges. Despite a bitterly cold and windy Saturday night which slightly dampened the enthusiasm of the banding crew in the area, Sunday was an ideal day.

All members had the opportunity to see a banding project in action and to observe the techniques used in the capturing and handling of birds and the recording of data. Unfortunately only three species were observed in the hand, White-browed Scrub-wren *Sericornis frontalis*, Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla* and Superb Blue-wren *Malurus cyaneus*, but that is fairly normal in winter. However many other species were observed along the road and these included the Red-browed Treecreeper *Climacteris erythroptis* and the Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*. Unfortunately the Superb Lyrebird *Menura superba* was not as vocal as had been expected, but everyone did hear some calls.

The occasion was interesting and instructive and when the sunny winter's weather was added, it was a most enjoyable day.

N. Hermes, 'Oaklands', Spring Range Road, Hall, A.C.T. 2600.

COG EXCURSION - BOTANIC GARDENS

The planned excursion to the Canberra Botanic Gardens on Sunday 13 July 1975 at least proved that we have a few hardy bird watchers in the A.C.T. Continuous rain resulted in bird watching from beneath umbrellas while species such as the White-throated Treecreeper, Eastern Spinebill, Superb Blue-wren, Brown Thornbill Grey Shrike-thrush and others were seen. Fortunately such weather is rare here.

The Botanic Gardens is a place well worth a visit at any season, especially in winter and spring when grevilleas and banksias attract species not readily seen elsewhere in Canberra.

G. Clark

NOTE: The following observations have been taken from the observations book which is available at meetings for the recording of note on both unusual *birds* and unusual *behaviour*. If you are unable to attend meetings, please send your observations to 'Observations Book', P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608.

PEREGRINE FALCON

A Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was seen flying low along Petrie Street, City, between the MLC Building and Monaro Mall at 0900 hours on 17 May and again at dusk on 28 May and 5 June. Has this bird been seen by anybody else? Perhaps it was hunting pigeons.

(via J. Forshaw)

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLE BREEDING

On 11 November 1974 a pair of adult Olive-backed Orioles *Oriolus sagittatus* were seen defending territory between areas 4 and 80 in the Canberra Botanic Gardens and the female (?) was seen on the nest (in area 4) on 26 Nov, 1 Dec and 8 Dec, but by 15 Dec the nest was abandoned and no young were seen. However on 11 Jan a pair of adults were seen feeding young in a nest in area 51. The young fledged by 2 Feb and an Oriole was last seen in the area on 5 April.

(via C. Appleby)

MUSK DUCK BREEDING (?)

On 9 Dec 1974 a female Musk Duck *Biziura lobata* was seen on the west side of Black Mountain Peninsula accompanied by two half-size and partially downy ducklings. They were about 10 metres off shore and the female was diving and bringing yabbies up to the surface in her beak. The ducklings would then tear pieces off the yabbies and swallow them whilst the female held the yabbies tight. Because of

the size and plumage of the ducklings they must be presumed to have been bred in Lake Burley Griffin.

(via G. Clark)

'WHITE' BIRDS

The note about the black and white Raven *Corvus coronoides* in the last issue of *Canberra Bird Notes* means this bird has probably managed to survive in a territory around Weetangera/Scullin for many years despite the apparent handicap of being an 'odd man out'. There has recently been a report of another 'white' bird. This time it was a juvenile albino Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* being fed by its parents near the Cotter Pumping Station. It was first seen by C. Green on 6 Jan 1975 and again two days later, and T. Gourlay saw it on 7 Jan 1975.

Has anybody seen it or any other unusual 'white' birds since?

OBSERVATIONS REQUIRED

The recent influx of White-necked Heron *Ardea pacifica* and Nankeen Night-herons *Nycticorax caledonicus* seems to be declining so could anybody who sees either of these birds note it in the observations book, so that we know when they finally disappear.

G.S. Clark, 24 Adair St, Scullin, A.C.T. 2614.

ANOTHER WHITE-BREASTED SEA-EAGLE

IN THE A.C.T.

An adult White-breasted Sea-eagle was seen at Jerrabomberra Creek near the lake at 10 a.m. on 9 August 1975 by Doug Ross.

While this species has been seen regularly over many years at Lake George, sightings in the A.C.T. are rare.

SIGHT RECOGNITION OF WATERHENS

Jerry van Tets

Three species of waterhens in south-eastern Australia are similar in size and shape: the Dusky Moorhen, *Gallinula tenebrosa*; the Black-tailed Native-hen, *Gallinula ventralis*; and the Coot, *Fulica atra*. A fourth species, the Swamphen, *Porphyrio porphyrio melanotus*, is substantially larger than the other three species.

The plumage of the waterhens is mainly dark blue, brown or black. The best clue for recognition is to look for white patches under the tail and on the flanks. The undertail is white in the Swamphen, dark in the Native-hen and the Coot and dark centrally with white on the sides in the Moorhen. The Native-hen has an irregular patch of white spots on the flank. A few Moorhens in the A.C.T. and elsewhere in south-eastern Australia have a line of white spots on the flank similar to the Moorhen, *G. chloropus*, of the Americas, Africa and Eurasia.

The colour of the bill and frontal shield is diagnostic to species only in adults: red in the Swamphen, red with a yellow bill tip in the Moorhen, white in the Coot, and green with orange red on the base of the lower jaw in the Native-hen. Other useful clues are the long bantam-like tail of the Native-hen and the massive bill and frontal shield of the Swamphen.

Dr G.F. van Tets, 4 Tasman Place, Lyons, 2606.

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Canberra Bird Notes is published quarterly by the Canberra Ornithologists Group. The annual subscription of \$3.00 is payable 1 July to the Secretary.

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