



canberra bird notes

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EDITORIAL

The preceding numbers of *Canberra Bird Notes* have generally varied between 12 and 24 pages, with vol. 1 no. 6 reaching 28 pages. Thanks are due to the large number of contributors who continue to provide copy and who have made this, the first 32-page *CBN* issue, possible. Keep up the good work.

NAMES TO BE USED IN *CANBERRA BIRD NOTES*

Generally, *CBN* will now follow the names used in *Checklist of the Birds of Australia, Part 1, Non-Passerines* by H.T. Condon (RAOU, 1975) and *Interim List of Australian Song Birds, Passerines* by R. Schodde (RAOU, 1975).

Exceptions will be the series entitled 'Status of Birds of Canberra and District', which will follow the names used in *Birds in the Australian High Country* edited by H.J. Frith (1969) and *A Field-list of the Birds of Canberra and District*.

WHO TOOK THE BIRDS OUT OF BRITISH ORNITHOLOGY?

C.J. Bibby

We all watch birds in our own individual ways irrespective of the level of interest. Too infrequently it appears that we stop to think what it's all about. Our thanks are due to David Purchase who brought the following thoughtful article to notice and secured permission to republish it here. Our special thanks to the editors of British Birds and to the publishers, Macmillan Journals Ltd, for permitting republication.

Colin Bibby is an amateur birdwatcher by inclination and an ornithologist by profession. He currently lives in Dorset where he is studying the Dartford Warbler for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Where has the love of birds among ornithologists gone? The huge and admirable growth of serious ornithology in Britain in recent years seems to have reduced the true amateur to near extinction. Does the corps of amateur and professional ornithologists enjoy birds and take simple delight in being in their presence and in the wild places they inhabit? Often I doubt it. With so much time spent counting, identifying, or investigating the moult of the greater coverts, how indeed does time remain for pleasure; but can study continue to be fruitful in the absence of pure delight in birds and the way they live? Undoubtedly there is now more ornithological talent in Britain than ever before, but much of it seems to be diverted to mindless pursuits or frustrated by professionalism in its worst sense.

How sad that the tick-hunting craze leaves no time to look at the birds, common and rare, because there is another to be collected on the other side of the country before the end of the weekend. How, I wonder, are such people not interested in the lives of common birds? Often, of course, the greatest enjoyment is personal, because it is a matter of skill and luck that brings one to see something fascinating in the intimate life of a bird and the view is a short-lived event never to be seen again. I recall watching a Woodchat Shrike dismembering a locust, taking each limb at a time

and cleaning the muscle from the indigestible parts, cunningly using a thorn to help it. Nothing unusual to a Woodchat, I'm sure, but what a privilege for a bird watcher to see in detail. I was thrilled recently to watch a Willow Warbler catch a caterpillar before my eyes, because I saw the luckless insect before the bird did. Why, I wonder, do some of the most skilled identifiers of birds in the country prefer to flock like sheep to well-known areas, taking directions to the very bush to see other people's finds?

At least, with comparatively few exceptions, tick hunting is harmless. More worrying is the degree to which scientific claims are used to disguise confusion and as a result bring discredit to some areas of ornithology. For instance, how many ringers (maybe the most hard-bitten of all ornithologists) have time to think about the birds they are privileged to handle? Time to contemplate that the timid, slightly bedraggled Willow Warbler they ring will shortly flicker thousands of miles unaided to Africa. Time to pause and ask just what they are learning about the birds whose lives they disrupt. Happily, the technology of ringing is now so sophisticated and well controlled that ringers can be nothing but dedicated and skilled practitioners, but this does lead to the means becoming so engrossing as to obscure the end. In days past, the aims were simpler and research was directed by the observatories. Now, some ringing groups are able to harness and direct inquiring enthusiasm, but many individuals are left bewildered by a mixture of genuine complexity caused by increased knowledge and unnecessary obscurity in the name of science. Rare is the simple curiosity of Gilbert White tying a thread to a Swallow's leg to answer a specific question. Perhaps nowadays the simpler questions are answered, and more thought and co-operation are needed to make new discoveries.

I regret the passing of the days when most birdwatchers started their interest with a love of the countryside and nature's ways. Many probably started through egg collecting: what a pity that we are now so censorious of this pursuit among children. I remember sitting for hours with a field guide (a double-edged weapon indeed), peering at little brown birds and trying to identify them. What a lot is to be learnt about the birds themselves by this approach. Now, from the outset the eager birdwatcher has so many guides that they are an embarrassment, and increasingly they encourage a view

that a bird can be summed up in a few lines of identification text - there is no time for the rest of its life, because there are so many species to be got through and so many field marks to be learnt. Surely it is possible to watch and enjoy the birds and incidentally, at the same time, to learn the finer points of identification, many of which are connected more with their character than with their plumage and coloration. Why, indeed, are we so anxious to encourage beginners in a belief that identification is a prime aim? Most people can appreciate a beautiful tree without asking what species it is or see a finely sculptured landscape without knowing that it is a cretaceous chalk stratum capped with an angular flint gravel deposit. Why should not people enjoy the sight and sound of birds, pure and simple? An awareness of differences and thus of identification will develop at its own pace.

I am sure that I have been describing a recent phenomenon. Why, for instance, is it now so difficult for an amateur to write a monograph on his bird? Why does so much currently published work on birds conform to a scientific mould which cramps divergence of thought or style? Will we again see men who can combine scholarship in ornithology with an ability to communicate their enthusiasm? I suspect that present attitudes probably dictate the least healthy answers to such questions. I am sure, for instance, that the old-time collectors now described in derogatory terms knew far more of the lives and habits of their quarry than do their modern counterparts. I know countrymen and farmers who have probably never seen a Peterson field guide, nor read *British Birds*, but who have a deep feeling and understanding of the ways of birds. Sometimes their ideas deviate from accepted scientific wisdom: and here is the centre of the matter, because it is the interested scientific and professional nature of ornithology that has forced a rift between the birds and their admirers. While there are notable exceptions, such as the BTO-IWC Atlas project, it seems as if professional ornithology is increasingly antagonistic to the amateur, which in turn has altered the outlook of many amateurs led to believe that a scientific approach is essential. Surely there is no reason to scorn birdwatchers who delight simply in seeing birds with no other pretensions.

I am sure that a generation of birdwatchers endowed with a simple interest in birds and a delight in their place in nature would produce a healthier ornithological movement in Britain. To

many ornithologists today, I can only say keep your eyes and ears open because real appreciation of wildlife cannot be switched on and off: it is an attitude of mind, an awareness of the natural scene around you. Next time you leave a theatre (or pub) at night, lend your ear a minute to listen for any migrants passing overhead. Next time a flock of Lapwings flies past, ignore their state of moult, the adult/juvenile ratio and the direction of flight, don't count them, just watch and listen to one of our most beautiful birds. By such an approach, the natural ornithologist will find himself asking and then devising ways to answer his own questions, and all will realise that birds are wonderful creatures.

Finally, if you find the periodical literature designed for amateurs unreadable, don't despair and certainly don't be ashamed. Why not write to the editors to ask who took the birds out of British ornithology?

C.O.G. IDENTIFICATION SUBCOMMITTEE

One of the difficulties in editing a journal such as *Canberra Bird Notes* is to ensure that all valid records of unusual sightings are published.

Often observers who see an unusual bird are tentative about reporting it because they are uncertain of their conclusions or perhaps are afraid of making an error.

The committee of the Canberra Ornithologists Group have therefore set up an identification, subcommittee who can assist members with identification problems. The subcommittee consists of G. Clark (the Records Officer), B. Baker and H. Nix. As well as assisting members with their identification, the subcommittee will also be responsible for vetting records appearing in *Canberra Bird Notes*. In doing this they will be assisted by other members who are specialists in their fields.

Therefore if you see an unusual bird or want assistance with any identification, write down the full details at the time and get in touch with one of the subcommittee (or ring 54 1279).

The information required for identification purposes is given in an article 'Rare Bird Records' in *CBN* vol. 2 no. 9. This article is an excellent guide. Develop the habit of making full field notes regarding all unusual sightings, and look particularly for diagnostic plumage detail and behaviour.

STATUS OF BIRDS OF CANBERRA AND DISTRICT

(continued from vol. 3 no. 3)

BROWN TREECREEPER *Climacteris picumnus*

Breeding resident, locally common in partly cleared land with plenty of dead timber, where it is found feeding on the ground and fallen logs much more often than the White-throated and Red-browed Treecreepers. Breeding occurs between late September and January, and has been noted at Black Mountain, near Hall, and behind the Federal Golf Course.

WHITE-THROATED TREECREEPER *Climacteris leucophaea*

Common breeding resident, widespread in wooded areas where it is seen searching for insects on the trunks and thicker branches of trees. Although the literature indicates breeding only occurs during October, unpublished data (B. Baker pers. comm.) indicate this species breeds from October to December.

RED-BROWED TREECREEPER *Climacteris erythroptera*

Uncommon breeding resident, thinly distributed throughout the Ranges. It is mostly observed in the higher levels of the wetter forests, occasionally descending to lower levels. In habits it is similar to other Treecreepers, spiraling up tree trunks and branches in search of insects. Although breeding has not been recorded, birds have been observed entering holes in trees, and it appears probable breeding occurs in November and December.

ORANGE-WINGED SITELLA *Neositta chrysoptera*

Status uncertain. Although there are records for every month of the year, regular observations are not available. The species is invariably observed in loose groups of six to ten birds, actively searching branches of trees for insects. The preferred habitat is open woodland and dry forests, though there is one record from New Chums Road in the Brindabella Ranges. Breeding has been recorded from September to December.

MISTLETOE-BIRD *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*

Summer breeding migrant, which is widespread throughout the A.C.T., following the fruiting seasons of mistletoes. Birds arrive in September and depart by the end of May. In some years, a few birds are recorded during winter. There are breeding records from Black Mountain, O'Connor, Lake George and along the Murrumbidgee River, the season extending from October to early February.

SPOTTED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus punctatus*

Status somewhat uncertain. Always present throughout the area, but large migrations have been noted during autumn at Lake George, Russell Hill and in the Brindabella Ranges, with mainly juvenile birds being involved. Usually observed busily searching the outer foliage of trees for insects. The breeding season extends from October to January, though nests have been found in every month except for May and June.

YELLOW-TAILED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus xanthopygius*

Rare vagrant. This species is usually associated with the mallee habitats of western N.S.W., north-western Victoria and parts of South Australia and Western Australia. There is one record for this region - a bird observed in the Botanic Gardens on 9 November 1965.

YELLOW-TIPPED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus striatus*

An uncommon winter migrant, recorded around Canberra in open woodland, forests and gardens, species breeds in Tasmania and migrates to the mainland during winter, being present in the local region from April to September. Its behaviour is similar to other Pardalotes, and it is often present in feeding flocks of the Eastern Striated Pardalote.

EASTERN STRIATED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus ornatus*

Status uncertain, but probably a breeding resident. Although always common in open forest and the Brindabella Ranges, McKean is Frith (1969) considers the partial migration may occur as the species seems to undergo some fluctuations in numbers. Breeding occurs during August to January.

STRIATED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus substriatus*

Uncommon visitor, recorded irregularly throughout the year. Similar in habits to other pardalotes, it has been recorded in most habitats in this region. The only local breeding evidence is of a bird which was mated with an Eastern Striated Pardalote and attended a nesting burrow at Mt Tidbinbilla in 1965.

GREY-BREASTED SILVEREYE *Zosterops lateralis*

Due to the lack of knowledge of the various plumage types the status of this species is somewhat uncertain. The bird is common all year throughout the region, with lower numbers present during winter except in city areas. Large migration flocks are observed which contain at least four plumage types. Breeding extends from October to February.

SCARLET HONEYEATER *Myzomela sanguinolenta*

Rare vagrant - one record of an adult male which was caught and banded in the Botanic Gardens on 14 September 1963.

PAINTED HONEYEATER *Grantiella picta*

Rare summer breeding migrant. Present along the Murrumbidgee each year in small numbers from November to January, where it breeds. Like the Mistletoe-bird, it is largely dependent on the fruiting of mistletoe, and is rarely found away from trees bearing this parasite.

REGENT HONEYEATER *Zanthomyza phrygia*

Irregular summer visitor. Spasmodically present in some years between October and April, either immediately moving through or remaining to breed if conditions are suitable. Usually found in isolated pairs in open woodland or dry sclerophyll forest around flowering Eucalypts. Breeding has been noted at Russell Hill, O'Connor and near Campbell Park during November to January.

LEWIN HONEYEATER *Meliphaga lewinii*

This species has not yet been recorded from the local area, although it is listed in *A Field-list of the Birds of Canberra and District*

because of a few unconfirmed records. Usually associated with dense coastal forest, it is possible the odd bird could be found in the Ranges during autumn and winter.

SINGING HONEYEATER *Meliphaga virescens*

Vagrant. A dry forest frequenting species, common to the west of the A.C.T. There are two records for this region - single birds recorded in Canberra in August 1962 and September 1964.

FUSCOUS HONEYEATER *Meliphaga fusca*

Uncommon autumn and spring passage migrant. A species which is normally found in dry open forest. Occurs in the A.C.T. during autumn and spring as a passage migrant, often associated with flocks of Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters, with a few birds overwintering. There are usually a greater number of birds involved in the autumn migration than in the spring movement, but from August to November 1964 an unusual irruption was noted wherever Grevilleas were in flower, with birds banded in the Botanic Gardens being present up to eight weeks later and then mysteriously disappearing in mid-November.

YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATER *Meliphaga chrysops*

Common breeding summer migrant. Commonly seen during summer in all habitats where trees remain, but more numerous in the Ranges. Arrives in September and most birds have departed by the end of May, with a few remaining over winter. Huge migrations are seen in autumn along the Murrumbidgee, in the Brindabella Ranges and at many other locations, but the spring migration is not as concentrated, occurring over a couple of months, and consequently not as noticeable. Breeding extends from November to February.

WHITE-EARED HONEYEATER

Breeding resident. Commonly found in small numbers in the ranges. In this region it prefers the higher wet and dry sclerophyll forest where breeding occurs in November and December. During the winter months, whilst some birds remain in the high country, many birds descend to lower altitudes and are then commonly observed about Canberra.

YELLOW-TUFTED HONEYEATER *Meliphaga melanops*

Breeding resident, occurring in isolated colonies at a few restricted locations in the local area. The literature indicates breeding occurs only during November and early December, but this is probably a reflection on the lack of observations as in other areas breeding occurs over a much longer period. In some years a few birds are recorded in Canberra gardens in winter.

WHITE-PLUMED HONEYEATER *Meliphaga penicillata*

Breeding resident, commonly found in open savannah woodland and parkland, generally avoiding the wetter forests of the ranges, although there are a few autumn records from the Brindabellas. It is a fearless bird and has adapted well to life in cities and gardens. No seasonal fluctuation in numbers has been noted, and the bird appears to be sedentary. Breeding extends from September to January.

WHITE-NAPED HONEYEATER *Melithreptus lunatus*

Common breeding summer migrant. Prefers the wet sclerophyll forests of the ranges, arriving in October and departing in May. There are a few winter records, but these birds are only odd stragglers. The migration flocks are more concentrated than those of the Yellow-faced Honeyeater, and also move a month later through the Canberra district. Breeding occurs in the ranges from late October to January.

BROWN-HEADED HONEYEATER *Melithreptus brevirostris*

Uncommon breeding resident around Canberra, preferring open woodland and dry forest country, but occasionally recorded in the wetter ranges. A very social bird, it is always recorded in small flocks of five to ten birds, feeding actively in the treetops. Breeding extends from September until February.

EASTERN SPINEBILL *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*

Status somewhat uncertain. Common in the ranges during the summer months, with numbers greatly reduced in winter, banding indicating that at least part of the population is static. Present at lower altitudes throughout the year, but numbers increase throughout the

autumn, winter and spring. Movement of individuals along the Murrumbidgee has been noted and is not understood. Breeding has only been recorded in the Botanic Gardens, but presumably occurs in the ranges from September to February.

TAWNY-CROWNED HONEYEATER *Gliciphala melanops*

Rare vagrant. A coastal species normally associated with heathland. There are four isolated records for the local area.

CRESCENT HONEYEATER *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*

Breeding resident. Present all year in the ranges, but never common. During winter numbers decline, and it is during this time that its presence is noted in the Botanic Gardens and around Canberra. Breeding occurs in the ranges from October to January.

NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER *Meliornis novaehollandiae*

Breeding resident, but distribution within the region is rather localised. Grevillea is an important food source and concentrations of flowering plants of this genus, whether occurring naturally as with *Grevillea juniperina* along the Murrumbidgee valley, or planted as in the Canberra Botanic Gardens, will attract this honeyeater. Breeding commences early August and may continue through to January in exceptional years. During the hotter months there is an apparent post-breeding dispersal to the forested ranges, with a return to the lowlands in winter.

NOISY MINER *Myzantha melanocephala*

Breeding resident, most common in man-made, open grassy woodland with mature eucalypts. Urban development and establishment of shrubby gardens and a denser tree canopy does not appear to favour this species. However where open woodland areas are retained within or adjoin suburbs small resident populations persist. The social organisation of this species is quite complex and has been studied by Dow. The shrill alarm calls of this species and its defensive behaviour have led to the common name 'Soldier Bird'. Breeding usually commences in September and extends to December or January.

YELLOW-THROATED MINER *Myzantha flavigula*

Status unknown. The only record of the supposed presence of this species was the collection of a nest by schoolboys. No birds were observed and therefore this record must be regarded as doubtful.

LITTLE WATTLE-BIRD *Anthochaera chrysoptera*

Uncommon visitor. Essentially a coastal species with a close association with *Banksia* occurring in heath and dune communities. Episodic movements occur with dispersal inland. Single birds or small groups have been observed in Canberra gardens and in surrounding areas, usually in winter but with some records in spring and summer. The cheerful rollicking call helps to distinguish this bird from the closely related Red Wattle-bird.

RED WATTLE-BIRD *Anthochaera carunculata*

Common breeding resident, but with some seasonal movements within and perhaps beyond the region. This is the largest honeyeater and the 'red' refers specifically to a pendant wattle behind the cheeks in adult birds. A noisy and rather pugnacious species, it is usually present wherever *Grevillea*, *Banksia* and other native shrubs are flowering and so is a common species in Canberra gardens. Breeding takes place in spring and early summer and there is some degree of post-breeding dispersal depending on available food supply. Large numbers are present in Canberra gardens in winter, but much remains to be learnt of seasonal movements.

SPINY-CHEEKED HONEYEATER *Anthochaera rufogularis*

Rare vagrant. An inland species which might be expected to appear in the local region in the event of severe drought in its normal habitat. Recorded only by Mathews (1942).

BLUE-FACED HONEYEATER *Entomyzon cyanotis*

Rare vagrant? Included in the A.C.T. list by Mathews (1942) but not recorded since. Occurs in lowland riverine forests along the Murray and Murrumbidgee in northern Victoria and southern N.S.W. as well as further north. Closest resident populations to the A.C.T. would be perhaps at Wagga or Gundagai.

NOISY FRIAR-BIRD *Philemon corniculatus*

Breeding migrant; some birds may be resident throughout the year in Canberra gardens, but most of the population moves north in winter, departing by May or June and returning in spring (late August- September), Seasonal movements are not documented and there are considerable variations in the year-to-year abundance of this species in the region. The raucous chatter and rollicking calls and the bare black skin of the head (one vernacular is 'Leatherhead') are diagnostic features. Breeding takes place from late September through to January in favourable seasons.

LITTLE FRIAR-BIRD *Philemon citreogularis*

Rare vagrant. Another species which is found further inland and which has occasional stragglers reaching the local region. One or two birds have been observed feeding with other honeyeater species in Canberra gardens on separate occasions in autumn, spring and summer months. The smaller size, reduced area of bare skin on the face and sharp 'cheeock' calls distinguish this species from the closely related Noisy Friar-bird.

RED-BROWED FINCH *Estrilda temporalis*

Breeding resident. Preferred habitat is grassy verges bordering denser shrubby growth along streams and roads, particularly in the wetter environments of adjacent ranges. Localised populations occur throughout the Canberra urban area. During the colder winter months quite large flocks can be found foraging in more open habitats in the suburbs. Breeding continues throughout the warmer months from October to April.

BEAUTIFUL FIRETAIL *Zonaeginthus bell us*

Rare vagrant. Nearest resident populations are 100 km to the northeast in the Nerriga-Tianjara area. An apparently sedentary species, so the single local record may have been a stray or aviary escapee.

DIAMOND FIRETAIL *Zonaeginthus guttatus*

Breeding resident with rather localised distribution in the region. Favours open grassy woodlands with scattered clumps of denser

timber where it may be found feeding on the ground in small flocks of 10-30 birds. The bird is not at all conspicuous despite its prominent markings and bright crimson rump. Often the only indication of its presence is the drawn-out plaintive whistle call. Breeding during the warmer months of November to January.

ZEBRA FINCH *Taeniopygia castanotis*

Breeding resident, but local populations wax and wane with climatic conditions. Very favourable seasons inland and locally lead to a local build up in population. At present this species is practically absent from the region. When present, it occurs in groups and sizeable flocks in the open woodland areas, particularly in the northern part of the region. Breeding continues through the warmer months.

PLUM-HEADED FINCH *Lonchura modesta*

Very rare vagrant? The few records probably can be referred to as aviary escapees, but one flock of ten birds in January 1960, which included juveniles, may have been vagrant from the known range limits in central western N.S.W.

BANDED FINCH *Poephila bichenovii*

Breeding resident but with rather localised populations throughout the region. Favoured habitat is woodland and open forest with a mixed shrub and grass understorey. Feeds in small groups on the ground and uses roosting nests. Breeding extends throughout the whole of the warmer months of the year.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Breeding resident. This introduced species is common in urban and farmyard areas and is essentially a commensal species dependent on man for food and nest sites. Colonisation of new urban areas appears to take place relatively quickly, but closer study this aspect would be worthwhile. Breeds in spring and summer.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Unknown status. Record of two birds in February 1969. (Aviary escapees? Deliberate introductions?)

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Breeding resident. This introduced species is well established throughout the region in both rural and urban areas. Favours open grassland areas with thistles and exotic conifer species for roosting and nesting sites. Breeds in late spring and summer and quite large post-breeding flocks may form in autumn and winter. Common in older Canberra suburbs with extensive plantings of exotic shrubs and trees and newer suburbs adjacent to open grazing lands.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

Status uncertain, but since 1961 records of this species have become more frequent. Possibly a resident breeder in the early establishment phase of colonisation of the region. Usually observed in garden areas with exotic conifers and shrubs. Because it is an inconspicuous bird its presence may well be under-recorded.

DETAILS OF AN OLD RECORD OF THE WHITE-THROATED
NIGHTJAR

Betty Temple Watts

Canberra Bird Notes vol. 2 no. 12 refers to a White-throated Nightjar *Caprimulgus mystacalis* at Gungahlin on 5 February 1959. This bird was found on a road just north of Lyneham and was kept for a week for the illustration for Birds in *the Australian High Country*. These notes were made at the time: feet dark horn, pale grey between scales; buff under; bill dull black, dull yellow-ochre tip on upper mandible, lower part of lower mandible brown; iris dark brown. The bird was released on Black Mountain above the Botanic Gardens by S.J. Wilson, H. and B. Temple Watts.

Mrs B. Temple Watts, 'Chrisca', M.S. 918, Toowoomba, Qld 4350.

OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

An interesting piece of information that came my way the other day was the fact that attempts are being made to reintroduce the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) into Great Britain. Apparently it was last seen there in 1826. The interesting point was not that an attempt was being made to reintroduce the bird but the fact that the place selected for the attempt is Porton Down Chemical Defence Establishment - the germ warfare centre. Apparently it is the only place that can guarantee the conditions needed, that is peace and quiet. There must be a moral in this somewhere...!!

In the last few months both the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union and the Bird Observers Club have bought headquarters buildings in Melbourne. In the long run this will probably be a very important step in the Australian bird scene. For too long now bird watchers have been organised on a parochial, State basis only. On the other hand the opponents of conservation have very strong national lobbying organisations as well as local groups. Perhaps in future there will be two strong national ornithological organisations both at the scientific level and just as importantly on the popular level, and the latter with the numbers to make politicians listen.

The RAOU Interim List, Passerines, has now been printed and is available at \$3.00 (including postage) from A.F. Stewart, 23 Central Avenue, Moorabbin, Vic. 3189. Members who are interested in the English names of birds are recommended to get a copy and study some of the changes. If they have any comments Dick Schodde would be glad to discuss the matter.

Did you hear about the well-known ornithologist, married to a non-ornithologist, who sprang out of bed before daybreak every morning

for weeks, leaned out the bedroom window saying in a very frustrated voice, 'There's that strange bird calling again'. Too dark to see anything and it called at no other time. Weeks later, on hearing a daytime call, the ornithologist set out (armed with two pairs of binoculars) to find the stranger, which he did. It was identified by the owner as a Japanese Quail, recently widowed, in a cage in a nearby backyard which was calling plaintively for his departed mate. Sad sequel: non-ornithological wife, having been made aware of the strange call, is now awakened at the crack of dawn by it, while the ornithological husband, having identified the bird, sleeps peacefully on!

If you have any interesting notes or information you think other members would like to read, please drop me a line: G. Tibicen, c/- P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608.

***** *

ODD OBS

LITTLE GRASSBIRD

Steve Wilson

Two Little Grassbirds *Megalurus gramineus* were seen at Jerrabomberra Creek near the lake on 29 August 1975.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER

Steve Wilson

A flock of eleven Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata* were seen on Kelly's Swamp on 29 August 1975 and four were still there the following day.

YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATER FEEDING ON BERRIES *John L. McKean*

At Bushrangers Creek, A.C.T., on 2 February 1976 I watched a Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops* feeding to begging juvenile a berry of *Coprosma quadrifida*. S.J. Wilson in *Birds in the Australian High Country* notes that Yellow-faced Honeyeaters occasionally attack soft fruit.

BIRDING ON NORFOLK ISLAND

John McKean

The historical and scenic attractions were not what induced John Lewis and me to visit Norfolk Island. They were responsible, however, for the fact that our wives accompanied us.

Having worked on Lord Howe Island we were very interested to see how Norfolk Island compared. Quite frankly Norfolk didn't score too well. Most of the land has been cleared for grazing and a motley assortment of cattle roam at will. Cattle are still allowed to roam through the one 'wilderness' area left, to Mt Pitt Reserve. In fact their well-worn tracks through the rain forest, the various tracks made for the benefit of visitors, have enabled the rapid invasion of many exotic species. Of particular nuisance in preventing the regeneration of native species are *Cassia floribunda*, Lemon *Citrus limon*, Hawaiian Holly *Schinus terebinthifolius*, Guava *Psidium guajava*, Red Guava *Rhodomyrtus psidioides*, Lantana *Lantana camara* and Wild Tobacco *Solanum mauritianum*.

The largest of the off-shore islands, Phillip Island, has been severely eroded and denuded of vegetation apparently as a result of the excess numbers of stock, particularly pigs, on it in the early days of settlement. Rabbits have been introduced to Phillip Island and probably have slowed down the revegetation of the island. None the less it has a stark beauty and is an important breeding site of various sea birds.

Recent appraisals of the status of birds on Norfolk Island can be found in Turner, Smithers and Hoogland (1968), Wakelin (1968), Smithers and Disney (1969), Disney and Smithers (1972) and De Raven (1975). Hull's account (1909) provides a historical background against which modern accounts of status can be measured. We visited the Island during November 1975 and during our stay there we had the collaboration of Owen Evans, an island resident who while mainly being a specialist in the local flora was able to provide data additional to those gathered during our visit.

LIST OF BIRDS WITH BRIEF REMARKS ON STATUS

Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis* Breeding species.

Several hundred seen; courtship flying noted during the day on Phillip Island and birds found occupying burrows there.

Fleshy-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes* Visitor. Common at sea during our visit.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* Breeding species. Colonies on all the off-shore islands and around the cliffs of the main island. About 1000 birds banded.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* Winter breeding species. A carcass found on Nepean Island.

Australia Gannet *Morus serrator* Breeding species. Three pairs breeding on Phillip Island. First noted breeding in 1961 (Mrs L.M. Marsh in Litt. To W.B. Hitchcock). A previously unrecorded breeding station.

Masked Gannet *Sula dactylatra* Breeding species. Two hundred breeding on Nepean Island where 100 youngsters were banded. Others breeding on Phillip Rock and a few pairs on the main island.

Red-tailed Tropic-bird *Phaethon rubicauda* Breeding birds noted on Phillip Island and the cliffs of Norfolk Island.

White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae* Breeding species. Odd birds noted in fields, marshy areas and on exposed reefs

Large Egret *Egretta alba* Visitor. Single bird seen.

White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* Single bird seen.

Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia* Visitor. Single bird present.

Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* Breeding species. A few birds seen in marshy areas.

Mallard Duck *Anas platyrhynchos* Up to four Mallards were present at a swampy patch near Kingston.

Swamp Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* Visitor. Single bird noted.

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides* Probable breeding species. At least two birds present. One could predict that it will only be a matter of time before this species, like many other Australian species before it, will colonise New Zealand. The Kestrel first established itself in Lord Howe Island in late 40s.

Pea Fowl *Pavo cristatus* Probable escapee A couple of birds seen at liberty probably belonged to a nearby farmhouse.

Domestic Fowl *Gallus gallus* Probable escapee A bird seen in native forest on Mt Pitt presumably escaped from a farm.

Californian Quail *Lophortyx californicus* Breeding species. This quaintly crested species was quite common throughout. It was

common in open fields but was also encountered in forest. Unlike Australian Quail species, it perched quite often on posts, bushes and trees.

Land Rail *Rallus philippensis* Presumably a breeding species. There have apparently been no published reports of this species on Norfolk Island since Hull (1909). On 19 November 1975 at dusk a Land Rail was seen at the edge of the swamp below the Melanesian Mission (St Barnabas Chapel). We spotlighted the same spot on 26 November 1975 and glimpsed three Land Rails as they scurried into thicker cover.

Swamp Hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* Breeding species. A few birds present in marshy areas.

Eastern Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Visitor. Several hundred present.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Visitor. Approximately 80 birds present. Also on Nepean and Phillip Islands.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Visitor. One bird seen on the airfield.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* Visitor. Single bird seen several times. Identified on basis of call.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana* Visitor. A bird seen in the company of the Grey-tailed Tattler on one occasion. Identified on the basis of its call and larger size.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Visitor. A few birds present.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Visitor. Single bird seen. We checked it over very carefully in case it was a Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotus*.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Visitor. One bird present.

Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae* Visitor. Not seen by us but Owen Evans told us that birds appear from time to time and that he has found odd pairs breeding on Phillip Island.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* Breeding species. Breeds on off-shore islands in large numbers. The island people gather many eggs each year for home consumption.

Sterna sp. The remains of a small Tern either *S. albifrons* or *S. nereis* were picked up at Emily Bay on 15 November 1975. The remains comprise two wings and a tail. New Zealand Little Terns could pass through the area on migration while any of the races of the Fairy Tern could occur as an occasional visitor or vagrant.

Common Noddy *Anous stolidus* Breeding species. The population is not a very big one. About 100 or so birds were seen.

White-capped Noddy *Anous minutus* Breeding species. Very abundant. Large numbers breed on the main island and a few on the few trees that exist on Phillip Island.

Grey Ternlet *Procelsterna albivittata* Breeding species. Breeding on cliffs and among rock piles on the off-shore islands. A few may nest on the main island opposite Bird Rock.

White Tern *Gygis alba* Breeding species. Abundant; nesting on the horizontal branches of the Norfolk Pine *Araucaria heterophylla* and the White Oak *Lagunaria patersonia*.

Domestic Pigeon *Columba livia* Breeding species, quite common. A few birds found nesting on ledges in a shallow cave at the bottom of a cliff.

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* Breeding species. Occurs in regrowth and forest. Few birds seen.

Norfolk Red-crowned Parrakeet *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae* Breeding species. Rarely seen, more often heard in heavy forested areas. Our considered 'guesstimate' would place the total population at between 10 and 20 pairs. We think 20 pairs is an absolute maximum. At times moved out into orchards where it often isn't welcomed, though because of its greater numbers the Crimson Rosella is even more disliked. The Norfolk form is a very distinct subspecies of the Red-crowned Parrakeet of New Zealand.

Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*. Abundant over the Island, even in the densely occurs in the heavy forested areas in considerable numbers where it may compete for food with the Red-crowned Parrakeet. Certainly it and the European Starling would be strong competitors with the native Parrakeet for nest sites.

Shining Bronze-cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Breeding species. The nominate New Zealand form has apparently as its host the Norfolk Warbler. We did not find the Cuckoo to be particularly common.

Norfolk Boobook Owl *Ninox novaeseelandiae* Breeding species. Not seen but birds heard in thickly forested areas. Call seemed much higher pitched than Australian birds.

Norfolk Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta* Breeding species. Fairly common. Pair found nesting in a burrow in the side of a cliff. This form is very close to the New Zealand race and may not be valid.

Grey-headed Blackbird *Turdus poliocephalus* Breeding species. We found two old nests of this species (identification based on

bulkiness of nest, lack of mud in lining and egg fragments present) yet failed to find any birds despite many hours' observation and mist-netting throughout the forest. It is probably no mere coincidence that as the populations of Blackbird and Song Thrush increased that of the Grey-headed Blackbird decreased. It is not simply a matter of habitat destruction as the Grey-headed Blackbird was quite abundant even around settlement. It is our opinion that this endemic race (the nominate one) is on the verge of extinction and that the population has shrunk to the point of no return. The most recent sighting is of a single bird seen below the summit of Mt Pitt by Mrs Beryl Evans during September 1975.

Blackbird *Turdus merula* Breeding species. Abundant throughout.
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* Breeding species. Common but as usual heard more often than seen.

Norfolk Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor* Breeding species. A chunky version compared to the Australian form with geographical differences apparent in voice. Once found even around settlement, now confined to forested areas.

Norfolk Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis xanthoprocta* Breeding species, quite common. This endemic hen-plumaged form of the Golden Whistler super-species is remarkably tame. Its calls and song appear more akin to the Shrike-thrushes than to Australian Golden Whistlers.

Norfolk Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa* Breeding species, endemic form, quite common even near settlement.

Norfolk Warbler *Gerygone igata* Breeding species, endemic form best regarded as a subspecies of the New Zealand *G. igata* rather than Australian Brown Warbler *G. mouki*. Quite common even near settlement.

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis* Breeding species. Common all over island including undisturbed forest.

Slender-billed Silvereye *Zosterops tenuirostris* Breeding species. Fairly common in well-forested areas. Endemic species.

White-throated Silvereye *Zosterops albogularis* Breeding species endemic to Norfolk. Apparently confined to undisturbed rainforest and there is precious little of that left. It is extremely rare and was seen on one occasion only. Perhaps the reduction of habitat and competition from the self-introduced Silvereye *Z. lateralis* is responsible for its low numbers.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* Breeding species common in open areas. Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* Breeding species common in settled areas and forest alike,

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Breeding species, abundant.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Breeding species.

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J. McKean, 3 Wirraway Crescent, A.C.T. 2614.

ODD OBS

INDIVIDUAL OBSERVATIONS

1 Osprey 12 September 1975 Moruya Heads G. Clark
1 Greenshank 14 September 1975 Kelly's Swamp S. Wilson
1 Regent Honeyeater 31 August 1975 Lake George D. Johnson
Brown Treecreepers nesting with two eggs 7 September 1975 at 'Oaklands' near Hall N. Hermes
Indian Mynahs: 1 at cnr Eloura/Torrens Sts Braddon 16 August 1975 and 1 at Elder St Braddon 2 September 1975 J. Miles

BIRD BANDERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Peter Balmford

Full membership of this Association is now open to all persons interested in bird study. This results from an amendment to the Association's constitution passed at the Annual General Meeting held in Canberra on 17 January 1976. Previously, full membership was confined to banders (many if not most of them amateurs) registered under the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research.

Many persons not themselves banders but interested in birds and in the results of bird-banding studies have been associate members of the Association; they and others like them will now be welcomed as full members.

The Association's quarterly journal, *The Australian Bird Bander*, publishes items, mostly on the results of field work involving the banding of birds and on banding techniques, which have proved interesting and valuable to both banders and non-banders. Among these are 'Recovery Round-up' which lists notable recoveries of banded birds - notable often because of the distance between banding place and place of recovery, or because of the time elapsed between banding and recovery - and 'Bird in the Hand' which facilitates the identification of species, sex and age on close examination of live birds or birds found dead.

'Bird in the Hand' has also been published in volume form, gathering and revising items which have already appeared in the journal. This comprises 130 pages and is available at \$4.75 a copy, post free. (Available at meetings at \$4.00 - Ed.)

Material is also published in *The Australian Bird Bander* which does not directly relate to banding: especially the 'Seabird Islands' series of articles which provides a foundation of up-to-date information on Australia's seabird breeding islands. Fourteen islands have already been dealt with in this series over the last three years. In 1976, two special issues covering only seabird island items will be included in the four parts to be published. After publication, these parts will be available at \$3.00 each. Membership subscription for the four parts is \$6.50.

Persons interested should write to the Honorary Secretary,
Bird Banders Association of Australia, P.O. Box A313,
Sydney South, N.S.W. 2000.

Mr P. Balmford, President, BBAA, 459 The Boulevard, East
Ivanhoe, Vic. 3079.

STRIPED HONEYEATER AND CASE MOTH

Merle Baldwin

The Striped Honeyeater *Plectorhyncha lanecolata* is common in the Inverell district of north-eastern New South Was, where its presence is made known in spring and summer by loud, cheery flight calls of 'Cherry, cherry come here!'

Two of these honeyeaters were seen on 7 January 1976 from 0620 to 0920 in a *Kunzea parvifolia* picking at the suspended silken cases of a species of Case Moth (Family Psychidae).

This method of gathering is not unusual for the striped Honeyeater lives mainly on lecaterpillars and similar destructive insects (P. Slater, 1974, *A Field Guide to Australian Birds, Passerines*), but these birds learnt skillfully to extract the larvae by inserting the bill into the lower end of the case the only vulnerable place which is left open for the disposal of excreta and then pursed together held shut by the claws of the three pairs of thoracic legs (Densey Clyne, 1972, *Wildlife in Australia* 9:34-35). Odd cases were pulled from the shrub and taken to the top of a gate-post, there to be held down by the foot while the larva was removed.

Eibl-eibesfeldt (1970, *Ethology the Biology of Behaviour*, p. 221) writes that some birds learn from the mother what to eat; but does the Striped Honeyeater learn from its parent how to open the case moth bag? Or is this skill acquired through trial and error? Close study of the feeding by juveniles may provide an answer.

Mrs M. Baldwin, Gilgai, via Inverell, N.S.W. 2360.

April 1976

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EXCURSION TO GLENDALE CROSSING

Neil Hermes

The outing on 15 February 1976 was to an area of dry sclerophyll forest near Glendale Crossing within the proposed Gudgenby National Park. The twenty members who attended were rewarded by a number of interesting observations and the party listed 35 species during the morning.

Ranger Peter Filmer met the group and told of his observations in the area which included the Lyrebird and the Wedge-tailed Eagle. Although neither of these was seen, good views of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and a female Leaden Flycatcher were had. One Satin Flycatcher, a male, was also seen.

This was a most enjoyable trip and this area can be recommended at this time of year.

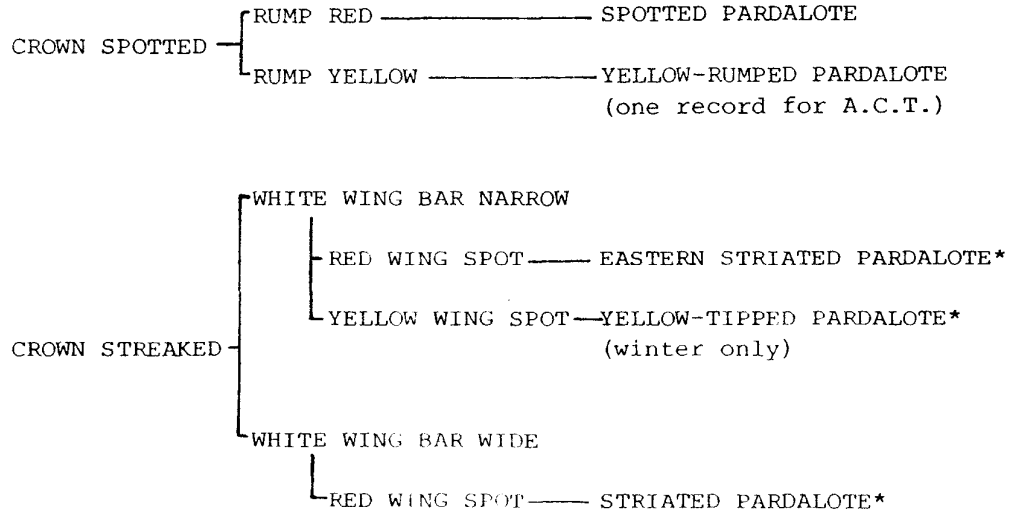
The species list was: Black Cormorant, Brown Goshawk, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Crimson Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Kookaburra, Rainbow Bee-eater, Welcome Swallow, Richard's pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous Whistler, Shrike-thrush, Leaden Flycatcher, Satin Flycatcher, Willie Wagtail, Superb Blue Wren, White-browed Scrub-wren, Brown Thornbill, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Red Wattlebird, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Red-browed Firetail, Common Starling, Australian Magpie Lark, Dusky Woodswallow, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Australian Raven.

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

A KEY TO THE PARDALOTES OF THE A.C.T.

Barry Baker

The 'Bird of the Month' talk at the February meeting was based on the following key:



*Although previously regarded as separate species, R. Schodde in his *Interim List of Australian Song Birds, Passerines* recognises only one species of Pardalote with a streaked crown - Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*.

BOOK REVIEW

Migration and Survival of the Birds of Asia by H. Elliott McClure. Published June 1974 by United States Army Medical Component, South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) Medical Project, Bangkok, Thailand. The title of this extensive study is well chosen, notably the word 'survival'. Unless one has lived in appropriate parts of Asia, it is hard to realise the extent to which all wild birds, including small passerines, are used for food. Indeed one wonders that, between their use as food and the destruction of their habitat, there are any birds at all left in many areas.

The book is primarily based on a number of banding programs undertaken in various Asiatic countries and adjacent Pacific islands, using funds provided by several U.S. Governmental organisations. Scientists from many countries participated in one facet or another of the work, including such well-known names as Dr Nagahisa Kuroda, Lord Medway and Dr Salim Ali. Both migratory and resident species were banded, comprising 1 165 288 individuals of 1218 species. A program of such magnitude is unlikely to occur again in the foreseeable future in these regions, and it is fortunate indeed that the material is available in one volume which can provide a useful basis for further specialised studies in the future. The author is to be congratulated on his accomplishments in the face of the many difficulties which confronted this program. Notable, of course, is the lack of returns from China, and maps dealing with individual species which fly over this region can only be based on pre-World War II information and conjecture. The sole recovery from that country is fascinating - a House Swallow (*Hirunda rustica*) banded at Karak, Pahang, in January 1967 and recovered there in February 1968, bearing a home-made ring marked 'Tientsin'. One wonders what bird student laboriously fashioned this band and returned the bird to the outside world.

The exhaustive statistics on each species comprising the bulk of this study are happily interlaced with attractive maps showing migration routes based on banding results. The longevity tables provide a vast amount of data which is interesting to compare with the rapidly growing volume of information on Australian birds.

Naturally, relatively few of the species normally occur in Australia. The Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sancta*) is treated as a sub-species of the wide-ranging Mangrove Kingfisher (*H. chloris*). There is little significant information in the few recoveries of Indonesian-banded Sacred Kingfishers. As might be expected, sea birds comprise most of the recoveries of Australian-banded birds. Here the author unfortunately does not bring out the fact that records such as those for the Fleshy-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carneipes*) and the Short-tailed Shearwater (*P. tenuirostris*) were banded under the CSIRO scheme. In the map dealing with the latter, Port Fairy is shown 100 miles east of Melbourne instead of about 200 miles west! This failure to credit CSIRO birds appropriately also applies to a Japanese Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*) ringed near Sydney and recovered from Hokkaido six months later.

There appear to be relatively few misprints in the volume, though there is an occasional one such as Figure 96, reporting the recovery of two Russian-ringed Bar-headed Geese labelled as Gray-lag Geese.

Most readers may find this study primarily of use in connection with the movements and longevity of specific species which interest them, but the general introductory sections dealing with such subjects as the 'Paleo-history of Migration' are well worth reading.

D.W. Lamm, 6722 E. Nasumpta Drive, Tucson, Arizona, 85715, U.S.A.

ODD OBS

'WHITE' BLUE WREN

K. Anway

A Superb Blue Wren *Malurus cyaneus* with a pure white headed, throat and large white shoulder patch was seen between the College of Advanced Education and Belconnen Way on Haydon Drive. It was sighted on 4 June 1975 and was in company with four 'brown' Wrens.

REED-WARBLER IN SUBURBAN GARDEN

J. Miles

A Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* was seen in a suburban backyard on 21 September and 22 September 1975. It spent about two hours calling from a thick Photinia hedge.

April 1976

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BOOK MARKET

This issue is a special one concentrating on magazines and periodicals.

FOR SALE

The Emu

- (a) Vols 59-67 inclusive. These have been donated to C.O.G. by Mrs J. Long and will be purchased by means of tender (see below for tendering procedure).
- (b) Vol. 68, parts 3 & 4 - offers?
- (c) Numerous parts available from Howard Jarman (Librarian B.O.C.), 30 Waldemar Road, Heidelberg, Vic. 3084. Please write to him for details if interested.

The Australian Bird Bander

- (a) Vol. 1 no. 1 to vol. 7 no. 2 inclusive (26 issues). For sale by tender (see below for procedure).
- (b) Vol. 1 no. 1 to vol. 7 no. 4 inclusive (28 issues). For sale by tender (see below for procedure).
- (c) Vol. 7 no. 3 and vol. 13 no. 2 - offers?

The Australian Bird Watcher

Vol. 4 no. 8 and vol. 5 nos 1, 2 & 3 - \$2.75 the lot.

The Ibis

Vol. 114 (4 parts) for sale by tender - offers?

Others

- (a) *Birds of the World* vol. 9 part 2 - offers?
- (b) *Wildlife* (edited by Crosbie Morrison) - various parts available from Howard Jarman (address above).
- (c) *World of Wildlife* - part no. 159 - offers?

WANTED

The Emu

The following parts of *The Emu* are required for the Bird Observers

Club library: vol. 6 pt 3, vol. 7 pt 1, vol. 9 pt 3 and vol. 24 pt 1.

Either write direct to Howard Jarman or to the address below, stating prices required. Please note complete volumes are acceptable if individual parts cannot be separated.

South Australian Ornithologist

The following parts are required also for the Bird Observers Club library: vol. 11 pt 8, vol. 12 pt 1 and vol. 14 pt 2.

Australian Bird Watcher

Vols 1 and/or 2.

Canberra Bird Notes Any back numbers.

Notornis

Any back numbers.

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Tenders should be sent to the address below or communicated to the telephone number given by that date the highest tender will be accepted.

Address for all correspondence BOOK MARKET, P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608 or tel. (062)54 1279.

***** *

ODD OBS

WEEBILL NESTING NOTES

H.A. Nix

Weebills Smicrornis brevirostris commenced nest building in *Eucalyptus cinerea* about three metres above a footpath outside 22 Syme Cr. O'Connor in early August 1975, brooding from mid to late August and feeding of young noted on 3 September. The final successful brood of the previous season left the nest in mid May 1975. At least three broods (possibly four) were raised in the 1974-75 season with the group resident in the garden throughout the year.

N.B. Does this mean that Weebills often nest in winter (cf. C. Appleby in *CBN* vol. 3 no. 2)?

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Secretary: Mr S. Bennett, P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, Canberra, A.C.T. 2608.

Editor: Mr S.J. Wilson, P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, Canberra, A.C.T. 2608.

Assistant Editor: Miss J. Wyatt

Editorial Panel: Messrs B. Baker, G. Clark and D. Purchase
