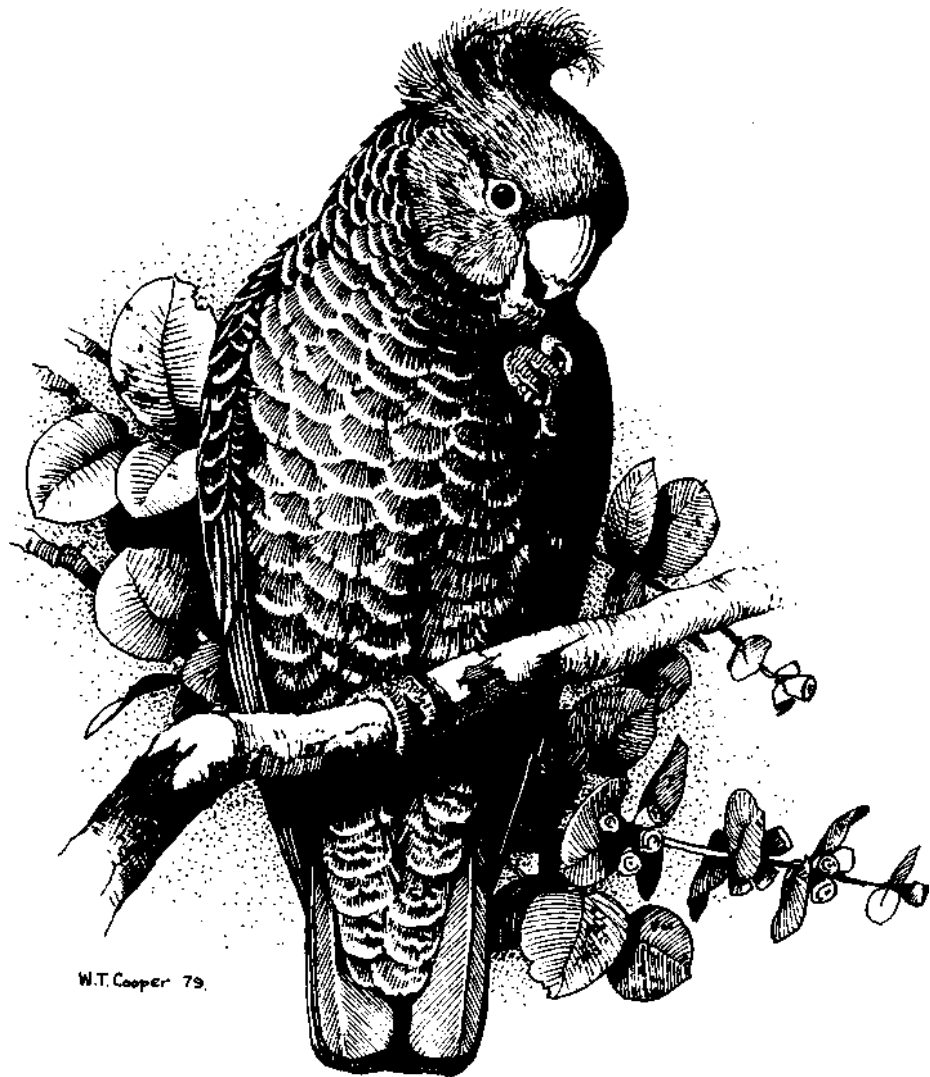


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# CANBERRA BIRD NOTES

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Volume 5  
Number 1  
January 1980



## 1 . General

This report tries to shift emphasis from the rare/unusual observations more to descriptions of the status and its changes within the year for as many species as possible. In many cases, especially with very common species, the attempt has certainly failed; the material available did not allow a fair assessment of the local situation; other species had to be left out completely. In many of these instances it is mentioned that the records are not representative, with the hope that observers will take more notice of these species in future and will make their notes available for reports to come. The number of records of breeding birds is especially low.

In addition to the notes provided by members, future reports will be based on the results of a range of programs, either started in late 1979 or in the process of finalising the working procedures, like the water bird survey, street counts, mapping of breeding birds, recording of first and last observations of migrants etc. Material from both sources should, over some time, provide the necessary information to make the annual report a better reflection of the bird life of Canberra and the A.C.T. than at present.

This report gives commented species lists for non-breeding and breeding birds separately. A table of monthly observations at Lee's Creek in the Brindabella Ranges is presented in the appendix. A table with some climate data for our area is included; such information might help to understand certain movement patterns or occurrence/absence of species in the course of the year; for example the first occurrence of the Blue Bonnet and the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater in our area and the comparatively high numbers of some duck species at Lake Burley Griffin, east end, as well as the concentration of the Freckled Duck at Lake George could be seen in connection with the very dry and warm spring/summer.

From this report onwards names of birds (English and scientific names) and the sequence of species are as given in '*Recommended English names for Australian birds*', *Emu* 72, 1978, or *A pocket list of Australian birds* by R. Schodde. When the English names differ from the ones previously in use (*Field list, Birds of the Australian high country*) the old ones are given in brackets.

On the technical side of recording, members are asked to give

their observations on separate sheets for each species or, as in the case of C.O.G. programs, on prepared sheets provided by the organisers. In general the records should be as complete as possible with regard to date, number of birds, locality, name of observer etc. (for details see CBN 4 7; also section 3 of this article). Please have these points in mind when you write your records in the observations folders at the monthly C.O.G. meetings.

Hand in your records at any time but always at the latest by mid July for observations of the past year. It is hoped that all members will assist in the preparation of the annual reports and make their notes available, as so many do already. We would like to thank very much all members who contributed with their observations to this report for their co-operation.

R. Anderson	A. Drake	H. Nix
E. Andrew	Billie Gill	P. Ormay
Kay Anway	B. Graham	J. Penhallurick
C. Appleby	R. Gregory Smith	D. Purchase
K. Atkinson	M. Hinchey	A.D. Ross
C. Bear	Sir L. Huxley	Margaret Scrivenor
R. Blakers	Delia Johnson	J. Sewell
G. Clark	M. Lenz	J. Slobbe
M. Clayton	F. Lucas	K. Thaler
A. Cowan	R. Mason	G. Weatherstone
R. Cox	J. McNaughton	S. Wilson
R. Digan	B.C. Metcalf	
M. Doyle	Rosemarie Metcalf	

*The underlined part of a name is used as abbreviation. Names occurring only once in the report are given in full in the text.*

## Abbreviations

### (a) localities

suburbs	the first four letters of the name are used
ANU	Australian National University
Bot G	Botanical Garden
Brin	Brindabella Ranges
Cot D	Cotter Dam Reserve
Jer Cr	Jerrabomberra Creek
KS	Kelly's Swamp at Dairy Road, Fyshwick
LBG	Lake Burley Griffin
LBG, E or W	Lake Burley Griffin, east end or west end
L Geo, N or S,	north-west part along Federal Hwy or south-west part near Bungendore
L Gin	Lake Ginninderra
Scri D	Scrivener Dam
SP	sewage ponds at Dairy Road, Fyshwick
Sul Cr	Sullivans Creek, part of which runs through ANU

Tidb                      Tidbinbilla Reserve

(b) others

T                      territory, area occupied by breeding pair/group  
E, M, L                early, middle, late part of a month (ten-day  
                         periods)

WBS                    water bird survey

*Summary of meteorological observations from Canberra City,  
July 1978 -June 1979*

Month	Temperature (°C)		Rain Fall (mm)	Number of rain days		Mean daily sunshine (hours)		Number of days with frost			
	actual	normal*	act.	norm.	act.	act.	norm.		act.	norm.	
July	5.1	5.4	55	37	12	10	6	5.2	23	21.2	
Aug.	6.6	6.7	15.2	46	8	12	7	.4	6.1	24	18.8
Sept	9.6	9.3	155	51	18	10	6	.1	7.3	11	13.7
Oct.	12.8	12.4	27.2	73	8	12	8	.6	7.9	12	6.1
Nov.	15.7	15.3	59.2	62	8	10	8	.6	8.8	2	2
Dec.	17.7	18.6	68	54	10	8	8	.9	9.1	0	0
Jan.	23.7	20.1	7.4	62	3	8	10	.5	8.9	0	0
Feb.	22.1	19.7	1.6	61	2	7	9	.7	8.2	0	0
Mar.	18.5	17.4	111	53	11	7	7	.3	7.4	0	0
Apr.	12.7	13.0	74	50	9	8	7	.0	6.9	7	4.8
May	9.3	8.9	15.2	51	5	9	5	.6	5.6	16	14.4
June	7.5	6.4	4.8	38	8	9	5	4.8	24	18	

\* normal = long-term average

All values from 'Monthly weather review New South Wales', Dept  
of Science and the Environment, Bureau of Meteorology.

## 2. Species list

GREAT WESTERN GREBE *Podiceps cristatus* Remarkable increase in  
records from urban lakes, total of 10 observations: 1/5 Jul  
LBG, (Ros) ; 1/27 Sep Black Mt Pen (Andr) ; 1/6 Dec LBG, W  
(Wil) ; 1/30 Dec (Len) ; 1/18 Jan; 1/6 Apr; 2/8 Apr; 1/20 Apr  
(Ros); 2/1 May (Andr), all LBG, E; 4/26 May L Gin (Bea) . -  
79/10 Jun L Geo, N (Len).

HOARY-HEADED GREBE *Poliocephalus poliocephalus* LBG, E peak  
Mar-Apr with larger numbers from Dec onwards. Monthly max.  
(mainly McN, Ros) :

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
?	?	48	40	45	109	200	175	250	300	227	98

AUSTRALASIAN GREBE (Little Grebe) *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*  
LBG, E peak Jul-Aug + Nov, no records Dec, highest numbers in

spring. Monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
40	40	7	15	55	0	25	14	20	6	5	26

SMALL GREBES WBS/24 Jun: 182 LBG, 132 L Gin, mainly Hoary-headed Grebes

AUSTRALIAN PELICAN *Pelecanus conspicillatus* In contrast to previous year only small number LBG with max. Oct-Nov. Monthly max. for LBG, E (Mainly McN, Ros):

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
4	2	1	13	12	2	2	1	0	1	1	10

Interesting observation: 1/20 May Scri D arriving up high from W, close to dusk, circling for a while, then E (Len). - L Geo, N: 350/10 Dec; 30/10 Jun (Len).

DARTER *Anhinga melanogaster* Regular all months LBG, E in small numbers, increase in number of observations May-Jun; information generally insufficient to permit separation of breeding birds and later offspring from other birds (see also section 3).

GREAT CORMORANT (Black Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax carbo* LBG, E peak Nov; monthly max. (Ros):

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
?	?	?	?	116	60	30	38	40	45	22	25

WBS/24 Jun: 68 LBG + L Gin (see also section 3).

PIED CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax varius* (McN, Len). 1 record: 1/11-12 Mar LBG, E

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* LBG, E lower numbers than last year; Jan-May numbers constant, mainly breeding birds (see also section 3); monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
3	16	5	3	20	20	32	32	30	31	26	70

WBS/24 Jun: 171 LBG, not reported from L Gin.

LITTLE PIED CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* LBG, E most of the year in small numbers only; monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
0	23	22	0	4	5	7	6	8	20	16	20

Good numbers in Jun: WBS/24 Jun: 95 LBG, 55 L Gin.

PACIFIC HERON (White-necked Heron) *Ardea pacifica* LBG, E spring (Sep) and autumn peak (Jan-Feb); monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
0	1	6	0	0	1	6	11	4	0	1	1

11/7 Feb catching 10-15 cm long carp (McN). In autumn also at other localities: 1/29 Jan L Gin (Pur); 1/7 Feb Sul Cr (Len); 1/12 Apr Ginninderra Cr (Pur).

WHITE-FACED HERON *Ardea novaehollandiae* LBG, E small number

Jul-Dec, then rise with max. 42/20 Mar (McN) ; monthly max.

(McN, Ros) :

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
9	4	2	3	3	5	19	27	42	26	10	12

WBS/24 Jun: 13 LBG, 3 L Gin.

CATTLE EGRET *Ardeola ibis* LBG, E increase in numbers in comparison to last year, no records Sep and Jan-Feb; monthly max. (McN, Len, Ros) :

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
8	3	0	10	35	6	0	0	25	24	42	16

11/20 May LBG, W circling low over Government House at 1630 hours, roosting there? (Len).

GREAT EGRET (White Egret) *Egretta alba* LBG, E regular in small numbers; monthly max. (Len, McN, Ros) :

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
1	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	4	3	3	4

WBS/24 Jun: 9 LBG, 1 L Gin; 1/20 Apr onwards regular Sul Cr (Len).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta* (Len, McN); 1/24 Jun (Ros).

2 records LBG, E: 1/11 + 12 Mar

INTERMEDIATE EGRET *Egretta intermedia* Records only from second half of report period; monthly max. LBG, E (McN, Ros) :

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
2	4	1	2	0	1

1/5 Apr - 11 Jun Sul Cr (Len) ; 2/24 Jun LBG, Nerang Pool (Blakers, Doy) .

RUFIOUS NIGHT HERON (Nankeen Night Heron) *Nycticorax caledonicus* Larger numbers only LBG, E; monthly max. (Mas, McN, Nix, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
13	1	5	0	0	2	3	14	14	1	1	8

Most likely only part of the actual numbers seen, e.g. 14 immat/ 11 Feb KS (McN), 5 ad, 9 immat/17 Mar flushed Molonglo Riv. (Nix); Sul Cr: 1/13 Aug; 1/25 Aug - 21 Sep roosting during day in 6 m high eucalyptus over footpath ANU, about 250 m away from Sul Cr; 1 immat/8 Mar, 20 Apr (Len).

LITTLE BITTERN *Ixobrychus minutus* 1 rare record: 1 male 4 Jan Sul Cr, flying across water, for little while on edge of reed bed (Len).

SACRED IBIS (White Ibis) *Threskiornis aethiopica* LBG, E peak late winter/early spring, smaller peak in autumn; monthly max. (Dra, Len, McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
40	60	60	20	5	0	8	35	25	22	18	3

STRAW-NECKED IBIS *Threskiornis spinicollis* LBG, E mainly late winter/early spring, in autumn only in small numbers; monthly

max. (McN, ROS):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
10	80	25	0	0	0	0	12	2	8	0	4

Other localities: 35/19 Aug L Geo; 40/3 Jan Button (Len).

ROYAL SPOONBILL *Platalea regia* 16 records LBG, E: 7/ Nov; 2/Dec; 1/Jan; 2/Apr; 2/May; 2/Jun (McN, Len, Ros), always 1 bird except: 2/5-9 Nov (Ros); 2/17 Dec (McN); 4/21 Nov (Ros).

YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILL *Platalea flavipes* LBG, E only 7 records between 30 Mar and 6 May (McN, Ros), max. 4/8 May (Ros) - 25/10 Jun L Geo (Len).

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus* LBG, E mainly Jan-May; monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
6	2	0	1	2	6	16	19	24	18	29	3

100/19 Aug; 400/7 Oct L Geo, S; 265/10 Jun L Geo, N (Len).

FRECKLED DUCK *Stictonetta naevosa* Remarkable numbers at L Geo, apparently in connection with dry conditions more inland: 50/10 Dec L Geo, N (Len); 25/2 Jan L Geo, S (Dra); 154/10 Jun L Geo, N; 100+/18 Jun L Geo, S (Len).

AUSTRALIAN SHELDUCK (Mountain Duck) *Tadorna tadornoides* LBG, E from Oct to Jun with peak Jan-Feb; monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
0	0	0	2	7	4	50	45	23	40	29	8

65/10 Jun L Geo, N (Len).

PACIFIC BLACK DUCK *Anas superciliosa* LBG, E all months, max. Jan-Feb; monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
8	40	22	16	70	60	280	250	90	40	60	90

Also max. Sul Cr 110/4 Feb (Len); WBS/24 Jun: 450 (= 10.8% of all water birds) LBG, 43 (= 3.2% of all water birds) L Gin.

MALLARD/DOMESTIC DUCK *Anas platyrhynchos* L. Gin.  
WBS/24 Jun: 7 LBG, 12

GREY TEAL *Anas gibberifrons* LBG, E peak Jan-Feb, thereafter only gradual decline; monthly Max. (Mainly McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
11	30	22	12	45	98	250	240	170	130	120	86

2250/10 Jun L Geo, N (Len).

CHESTNUT TEAL *Anas castanea* First records for LBG, E for some years: 2/13 Aug (McN); 1/28 Jan (Ros).

AUSTRALASIAN SHOVELER (Blue-winged Shoveler) *Anas rhynchos* LBG, E largest numbers Jan-Mar; monthly max. (McN, Len, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
10	4	2	2	6	10	69	63	71	26	52	16

174/10 Jun L Geo, N; 500+/18 Jun L Geo, S (Len).

PINK-EARED DUCK *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* LBG, E except 1/1 Jul (Ros) regular from Oct onwards, with max. 15/May (McN, Len), highest number so far for this area; monthly max. (mainly McN, Ros) :

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
1	0	0	2	2	3	8	13	10	10	15	10

Also L Geo increase: 6/10 Dec (Len); 50/29 Jan L Geo, N (Dra); 200/13 May L Geo, S (Len).

HARDHEAD (White-eyed Duck) *Aythya australis* LBG, E significant increase from Nov to peak in Dec-Jan; monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
23	22	9	21	160	250	300	200	80	90	50	50

80/18 Jun L Geo, S (Len).

MANED DUCK (Wood Duck) *Chenonetta jubata* LBG, E larger numbers than in previous years with peak Jan-Feb; monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
0	2	0	4	14	95	200	200	70	64	30	10

Later in the year apparently more dispersed over the lake: WES/ 24 Jun: 122 LBG, 16 L Gin.

BLUE-BILLED DUCK *Oxyura australis* 1 rare record, also outside expected time range: 1/12 Mar Uriarra Homestead (Cox).

MUSK DUCK *Biziura lobata* LBG, E winter max. as in previous years, but in later months in small numbers than usual; monthly max. (Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
21	34	28	7	7	4	14	16	15	8	13	8

WBS/24 Jun: 32 LBG, 43 L Gin; 79/10 Jun L Geo, N (Len).

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE *Elanus notatus* LBG, E all months, most observations winter-spring; monthly number of records (mainly McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
7	6	4	5	2	4	1	1	1	2	4	4

Max. 4/3 + 21 Aug (McN). Regular also Bruce, CCAE campus with max. 5/Apr (Anw).

BLACK KITE (Fork-tailed Kite) *Milvus migrans* 1 rare record: 1/12 Jan near Goulburn (Clay), see CBN 4 5.

WHISTLING KITE Whistling Eagle *Haliastur spheonurus* 11 records of single birds LBG, E (Ros): 1 Sep, 1 Nov, 2 Jan, 1 Feb, 1 Mar, 2 Apr, 2 May, 1 Jun; 1/4 Jan Mt Mugga (Wil); 2/10 Jun L Geo, N; 1/17 Jun Scri D, 1653 hours flying SE, same route as roosting currawongs and parrots (Len).



BROWN GOSHAWK *Accipiter fasciatus* Regular observations only for LBG, E available (McN, Ros), certainly not representative. Where else does it occur?

COLLARED SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter cirrocephalus* 1/4 Oct catching Willie Wagtail in suburban street Ains, few metres away from observer (Len). Otherwise few records available!

WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE (White-breasted Sea-Eagle) *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Only from L Geo: 1/1 Jul (Lucas); 1 ad/10 Jun N (Len); see also section 3.

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE *Aquila audax* Only few records, certainly not representative: 3/14 Dec Tidb; 2/15 Dec Cooma Rd/Tharwa turn-off (Wil); over Canberra: 1/13 Aug AND; 1/21 Apr Mt Ainslie (Len).

LITTLE EAGLE *Hieraaetus morphnoides* Interesting distribution of records LBG, E (mainly McN): 2/21 Aug, then only with 1 observations per month Mar-Jun: 2/6 Mar + 8 Apr, on the other 2 occasions single birds. 2 single birds/28 Apr moving N 2 hours apart over Mt Ainslie; migration? 2/10 Jun L Geo, N (Len).

SPOTTED HARRIER *Circus assimilis* Only 1 record: 1/6 May LBG, E (Ros).

MARSH HARRIER (Swamp Harrier) *Circus aeruginosus* 9 records of single birds LBG, E: 1 Jun, 2 Aug, 1 Sep, 1 Nov, 1 Feb, 2 Mar, 1 Jun (McN, Ros). 2/10 Dec near Collector, Fed. Hwy (Len).

AUSTRALIAN HOBBY (Little Falcon) *Falco longipennis* Most common Jan-Mar; monthly distribution of records, combined for several areas, though mainly LBG, E (Len, McN, Ros, Wil):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
0	0	0	0	3	0	0	4	8	1	0	1

BROWN QUAIL *Coturnix australis* Series of observations 1 Nov - 1 Jan, LBG, E (McN): 2/26 Nov, 3 Dec, 17 Dec, 6 Jan; 1/21 Jan.

BUFF-BANDED RAIL (Banded Landrail) *Rallus philippensis* Only reported from Sul Cr (Len): 1/13 & 21 Aug, 18 Sep, 5 Apr.

BAILLON'S CRAKE (Marsh Crake) *Porzana pusilla* 1 record LBG, E: 1/16 Feb (McN).

AUSTRALIAN CRAKE (Spotted Crake) *Porzana fluminea* From 2 localities: LBG, E: 1/20 Feb, 2/22 Feb; 1/1, 6/11 Mar (McN); Sul Cr: 1/15 Dec, 30 Jan, 7 Feb (Len).

DUSKY MOORHEN *Gallinula tenebrosa* Max. winter numbers LBG, E: 80/Aug, 72/Jun (McN, Ros); likewise Sul Cr: 75/Aug, 84/Jun (Len). WBS/24 Jun: 257 LBG, none L. Gin.

PURPLE SWAMPHEN (Eastern Swampphen) *Porphyrio porphyrio* Monthly max. for LBG, E show remarkable fluctuations (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
40	60	18	16	5	16	30	60	62	30	32	90

WBS/24 Jun: 167 LBG, 4 L Gin.

EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra* Monthly max. LBG, E (Len, McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
300	200	120	100	100	460	725	520	500	780	530	400

WBS/24 Jun: 1995 (= 48.1% of all water birds) LBG, 936 (= 68.7% of all water birds) L Gin; 4700/10 Jun L Geo, N (Len); see also section 3.

BROLGA *Grus rubicundus* First record for A.C.T.: 1/10 Nov flying across LBG (Gregory-Smith); see also CBN 4 7.

MASKED LAPWING (Masked Plover) *Vanellus miles* Largest numbers LBG, E; monthly max. (McN, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	7	9	6	16	40	46
30	33	55	25	10	13	WBS/24 Jun: 30	LBG, none	L Gin; 42/10	Jun L Geo, N (Len).								

RED-KNEED DOTTEREL *Erythrogonyx cinctus* LBG, E 11 records Jan - early Mar: 2x1 bird Jan, 3x2, 4x3 birds Feb, 2x3 birds Mar (McN); 2/14 + 15 Apr (Mas); 2/13 May (Len); 3/2 Jun L Geo, S (Dra).

BLACK-FRONTED PLOVER (Black-fronted Dotterel) *Charadrius melanops* LBG, E only Jul - mid Mar with max. 16/6 Mar (McN); monthly max. (Atk, McN, Len, Ros):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
2	9	7	7	1	4	6	6	16	0	0	0

LATHAM'S SNIPE (Japanese Snipe) *Gallinago hardwickii* Mainly LBG, E mid Sep - early Mar; monthly totals of birds and number of observations (Len, McN, Ros):

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
no. birds	10	0	3	4	13	10	2
no. observations	3	0	1	2	5	5	1

Other localities: 5/22 Nov Sul Cr (Len); 1/21 Jan Bot G (Appleby).

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER *Calidris acuminata* Only from LBG, E recorded: 10/14 Sep (Atk) + 17 Sep (McN); 1/26 Nov; 1/4 Feb (Ros); 2/6 Mar (McN).

WHISKERED TERN (Marsh Tern) *Chlidonias hybrida* 1 record LBG, E: 3/27 Nov (Andr); 5/10 Dec swamp near Collector (Len).

PEACEFUL DOVE *Geopelia placida* (Andr). 1 record: 1/27 Sep Black Mtn Pen.

BAR-SHOULDERED DOVE *Geopelia humeralis* 1 record from coast: 2/26 Dec Burrewarra Pt, escapees? (Pen) .

COMMON BRONZEWING (Forest Bronzewing) *Phaps chalcoptera* 2

records available, certainly not representative: 1/16 Jul Bot G (Dra); 1/1 Apr Scri D (Len).

YELLOW-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO *Calyptorhynchus funereus* Only from Brin: 3/15 Aug Picadilly Circus; Jan, Feb, Apr Lee's Cr (Bea, Pen).

GANG-GANG COCKATOO *Callocephalon fimbriatum* Roost flight Scri D (Len): 18/5 Aug; 55/1 Apr; 16/20 May; 6/17 Jun. Max. in winter, ANU: 20 (Len). Apparently common in many suburbs in winter, but hardly any records available. More records please!

GALAH *Cacatua roseicapilla* More than 100 (up to 200) LBG, E: Aug, Oct, Dec (McN); max. 200/9 Jan Narr (Wil). Another neglected common species. More records please.

SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO *Cacatua galerita* Suburban concentrations: 200/15 Jul ANU (Len); 500/8 Jun Narr, feeding on pin oaks (Wil); 200-300/9-23 Apr Uriarra Crossing, on ploughed fields, left when seeds germinated (Len).

AUSTRALIAN KING-PARROT *Alisterus scapularis* Remarkable numbers during roost flights Scri D (Len): 468/5 Aug; 71/1 Apr; 662/20 May; 977/17 Jun, at all times adult males present. Several hundred 18 Mar Cot D including only 1 adult male (Clay); see also CBN 4 7.

COCKATIEL *Nymphicus hollandicus* 1,0/24 Jan Chap with Galahs, escapee? (Slo).

PORT LINCOLN RINGNECK (Port Lincoln Parrot) *Barnardius zonarius* 1/23 Oct La Trobe Park, on ground with Eastern Rosellas, escapee? (Ros).

RED-RUMPED PARROT *Psephotus haematonotus* Pre-roost gathering Scri D: 40/1 Apr; 70/17 Jun; 64/6 Jun ANU, feeding flock (Len); 10/5 Apr Bruce, chasing a Black-shouldered Kite (Anw).

BLUE BONNET *Northiella haematogaster* Remarkable record from outside normal range: 3/15 May to 3 Jun Gunning (Weatherstone).

Neophema spec. 1/6 Dec Black Mt, calling in flight (Wil).

SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO (Golden Bronze-Cuckoo) *Chrysococcyx lucidus* 1 record well before normal arrival: 1/3 Jun Chap

CHANNEL-BILLED CUCKOO *Scythrops novaehollandiae* 1 very rare record: 1/10 Dec near Gungahlin, calling repeatedly, close views (Gill).

POWERFUL OWL *Ninox strenua* Recorded Apr, May Brin, Lee's Cr (Bea, Pen).

SOUTHERN BOOBOOK (Boobook Owl) *Ninox novaeseelandiae* Only 3 records: 2 calling 28 Dec Mt Ainslie (Ande); 1/2 Mar Narr (Wil); 1/10 May Deak, road kill (Cox).

BARN OWL *Tyto alba* 3 records: 1/3 Aug KS (McN); 1/13 Aug ANU (Len); 1/17 Dec KS (McN).

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL (Spine-tailed Swift) *Hirundapus caudacutus* Only seen towards end of normal range in our area: 30 + 30/ 3 Mar Kamb + Ains moving with rain front, first rain for 2 months (Len); 1/11 Mar Narr (Wil); 130/1 Apr Scri D, also moving with rain front (Len).

AZURE KINGFISHER *Ceyx azurea* 1 rare record: 1/13 Jun Jembaicumbene - (near Braidwood) (Slo).

RED-BACKED KINGFISHER *Halcyon pyrrhopygia* 4 rare records for our area: 1/9 Dec east of L. Bathurst (Scrivenor, Joh), see also CBN 4 7; 1/25 Jan Rive, for half an hour sitting on branch overhanging a fishpond (Hinchey) , - 1/20 Feb Hugh (Sir L. Huxley) ; 1/12 Mar near Tharwa (R. Metcalf).

SACRED KINGFISHER *Halcyon sancta* Only very few records available, not representative, please report all observations.

RAINBOW BEE-EATER *Merops ornatus* all future records please. 10/3 Oct Acto, moving S (Ande);

DOLLARBIRD *Eurystomus orientalis* Only few records available, but species apparently more common; please in future make all records available. Recorded from: Mint; Gung; LBG, E; Narr; Mt Ainslie; near Hall; ANU (Len, McN, Wil); max. 8/26 Dec Mt Ainslie (Len). See also section 3.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis* Regularly recorded LBG, E with max. 16/ 2 Jun (McN). Otherwise no information about status/distribution available.

WELCOME SWALLOW *Hirundo neoxena* Migration most noticeable at LBG, E; max. in spring: 20/3 +13+27 Aug (Len, McN, Ros); more numerous again from mid Feb: 100/13 Feb (Ros); 100/5 + 12 May (McN, Ros); 50/5 Mar CSIRO/Black Mt (Len).

TREE MARTIN *Cereopsis nigricans* Few records, mainly from spring migration, certainly not representative: 25/27 Aug KS (Len); 7/17 Sep LBG, E (McN); autumn: 10/23 Feb Mt Ainslie (Len).

FAIRY MARTIN *Cereopsis ariel* Few records, mainly from spring migration, certainly not representative: mid Aug - mid Sep LBG, E with max. 20/24 Sep (McN); autumn: 3 records Feb with 3-4 LBG, E + ANU; 6/5 May LBG, E (McN).

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE *Coracina novaehollandiae* Single birds at a few places in winter, also some flocks: 5/22 Jul Melba (Pur); 9/15 Jun; 14/19 Jun Ains, early morning, apparently coming from roost (Len). Please send all records of this species; see also section 3.

WHITE-WINGED TRILLER *Lalage sueurii* First arrival LBG, E: 19 Oct, later 3-4, O, only O, 1 seen (Ros); only one suburban record: 1, 1/7 Dec Ains Oval, defending T, later gone (Len).

WHITE'S THRUSH (Australian Ground Thrush *Zoothera dauma* Series of observations: 1 early Nov early Jan LBG, E (McN), normally only in winter outside ranges; 1/16 Jun found dead CSIRO/Black Mt (Nix), apparently had flown against window.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* The spread of this species into new suburbs should be documented, e.g. 3 records between mid May and early Jun Melba, Orchard Place, 2.-4. record for the area

ROSE ROBIN *Petroica rosea* 2 winter observations well outside normal range: 1,0/29 Apr + 19 May Red H (Cow).

PINK ROBIN *Petroica rodinogaster* 3 observations from suburban gardens: 0,1/11.-14. Apr Maws (Cox); 0,1/14 Apr Fish (Andr); 1,0/19 Jun O'Con (Nix).

FLAME ROBIN *Petroica phoenicea* Interesting summer records from LBG, E: 1 female 17 Dec; 1 pair 6+16 Jan (McN).

RED-CAPPED ROBIN *Petroica goodenovii* Only 1 record: 1/6 Aug between Gunning and Yass (Bea).

HOODED ROBIN *Melanodryas cucullata* Several records: 1/29 Jul Shoalhaven R., Warri Bridge (Ande); 1 male and female Glendale Crossing, A.C.T. (Slo); 1 male and female 19 Oct Oakdale, near Button (Len), 1 male 18 May Tharwa/Angle Crossing; south of A.C.T.: road Bredbo to Jerangle, near Strike-a-light R.: 1,0 adult plus several females 21 Jul; 1 immature, 1 female 4 Feb

CRESTED SHRIKE-TIT *Falcunculus frontatus* 1 record: 2/11 Jun Tidb, on *Eucalyptus viminalis*, ripping open curled bark (Orm).

ROBINS, GOLDEN and RUFOUS WHISTLER In future please send all records from suburbs and surroundings to establish status changes in the course of a year; no representative records available for Whistlers at present.

LEADEN FLYCATCHER *Myiagra rubecula* Arrival in breeding territory, ANU: 2 males 16 Oct (Len). Otherwise no records available.

SATIN FLYCATCHER *Myiagra cyanoleuca* 2 records from non-breeding areas: 1 male 1 Nov Bot G (Clar); 1 male 12 Nov Mt Ainslie (Clay).

RUFOUS FANTAIL *Rhipidura fuliginosa* 2 records: 1/1 Nov Bot G (Clar); 1/18 Mar Cot D (Clay). See also CBN 4 7.

WILLIE WAGTAIL *Rhipidura leucophrys* First observation in 8 later breeding T, ANU: early Aug - early Oct (!); 1., 4., 22., 23., 24., 28. Aug, 20. Sep, 2. Oct (Len). Concentration of

independent young ones: 8/11 Jan ANU, South Oval (Len). Winter records: 1-3/ Apr-Jun ANU (Len); 2-3/May-Jun LBG, E (McN). Winter records please.

SPOTTED QUAIL-THRUSH *Cinclosoma punctatum* 1/21 May Uriarra Forest (Len).

CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus stentoreus* First spring observations: 1/27 Aug LBG, E (Len, Ros); 1/30 Aug ANU (Len); regular at LBG, E mid Sep - late Apr (McN, Ros); several winter records, also LBG, E: 1/17 May (McN); 1/30 May; 2/10 Jun; 4/17 Jun (Ros).

BROWN GERYGONE *Gerygone mouki* First record for our area (not included in previous report): 1/14 May 1978 L Geo, S (Clay), see CBN 4 5.

WESTERN GERYGONE (Western Warbler) *Gerygone fusca* Only 1 record: 2/24 Sep Mt Ainslie (Ande).

WHITE-THROATED GERYGONE (White-throated Warbler) *Gerygone olivacea* No records available, except: 1,0/31 Mar still singing Bot G (Len).

YELLOW-RUMPED THORNBILL (Yellow-tailed Thornbill) *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* Larger numbers: 20+/27 Jan (McN); 20/23 Mar LBG, E (Ros); 20+/20 Jun Bruce, CCAE (Anw).

YELLOW THORNBILL (Little Thornbill) *Acanthiza nana* Records from 4 areas: 1/7 Aug; 2/29 Oct ANU (Len); 1/17 Dec; 4/11 Mar LBG, E (McN); regular in summer Red H (Cow); 'small feeding flock often O'Con (Nix).

SOUTHERN WHITEFACE (Whiteface) *Aphelocephala pectoralis* Only 1 record available: 2/19 Oct Oakdale near Button (Len).

VARIED SITELLA (Orange-winged Sitella) *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* Only records from 1 area, certainly not representative: 9/21 Apr + 19 May Mt Ainslie, SW slopes (Len).

RED-BROWED TREECREEPER *Climacteris erythrops* 1 record from Tidb: 6/12 Jun on *Eucalyptus viminalis* and *E. fastigata* (Orm).

RED WATTLEBIRD *Anthochaera carunculata* Largest groups: 8/19 Sep ANU; 15/14 Apr Ains (Len).

SPINY-CHEEKED HONEYEATER *Acanthagenys rufogularis* First record of this inland species: 3/11 Jul - 1 Aug Scul, native garden (Clar).

NOISY FRIARBIRD *Philemon corniculatus* First spring observation: 1/8 Sep ANU (Len); 1/25 Sep Hugh; last observation: 1/3 Apr Hugh (Joh); highest number: 11/22 Feb Ains (Len).

NOISY MINER *Manorina melanocephala* Regular Holt (Gra). Where else does the species occur?

HONEYEATER - migration

YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATER *Lichenostomus chrysops* Spring: late Sep - lat Oct Melba, movements mainly in westerly directions (Pur). Autumn: early Apr - late May (Cox, Len, Pur, Wil), max. recorded over suburbs: 1100/15 Apr Ains (Len). Same day 'moving through in thousands' Point Hut Crossing; 'mixed in were several large flocks of White-naped Honeyeaters and a sprinkling of White-eared Honeyeaters, Fuscous Honeyeaters and Eastern Spinebills (Clay); see CBN 4 7.

WHITE-NAPED HONEYEATER *Melithreptus lunatus* Autumn: mid Apr - early May, max. recorded over suburbs: 400/24 Apr Ains (Len). Two well-frequented passage ways' along Molonglo River and Jer Cr., LBG, E (Ros).

YELLOW-TUFTED HONEYEATER *Lichenostomus melanops* Only 1 record available: 1/19 May Mt Ainslie (Len).

FUSCOUS HONEYEATER *Lichenostomus fuscus* 6 records mid Apr - mid Jun, of these 4 in Jun (Cox, Joh, Len); Max. 2 + 8/3 Jun Ains, reserve + suburb (Len).

BROWN-HEADED HONEYEATER *Melithreptus brevirostris* 4 records only, certainly not representative: 1/2 Aug ANU (Len); 1/17 Dec LBG, E (McN); 10 + IP with juv. still feeding it 4 Feb; 5/20 Apr ANU (Len).

CRESCENT HONEYEATER *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera* Records from 2 areas: Bot G 1/16 Jul; 1/24 Jun (Dra); O'Con, native garden, 1,1/ 27 Aug onwards, staying for some weeks, feeding in *Grevillea ros-mariginifolia* and *Banksia ericifolia* (Nix).

NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* Max. ANU: 8/6 Jun together in *Grevillea* complex (Len); 1 small group Sep-Apr O'Con, native garden (Nix). Please forward all suburban records of this species.

EASTERN SPINEBILL *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* Few records available, certainly not representative. Recorded for 18 days between 18 Apr and 23 Jun Melba, native garden, previously only 1 record 9 May 1974 (Pur); regular 24 Apr-30 May Narr.

WHITE-FRONTED CHAT *Ephthianura albifrons* Series of Canberra records: 5 Jul - 21 Sep regular LBG, E, max. 5/Jul; 6/Aug; 4/Sep (Ros).

MISTLETOEBIRD *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Interesting record: several females 18 Mar Cot D (Clay); see also CBN 4,7.

STRIATED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus striatus* In migrating honeyeater flocks: 3/15 Apr; 2/16 Apr Ains (Len)

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* Larger concentrations LBG, E; monthly max. (McN):

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun

60    150    40    100    42    40    60    150    300    200    200    120

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris* Regular only LBG, E;  
monthly max. (Atk, mainly McN) :

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
0	6	6	0	5	0	12	15	3	3	10	33

Only 1 suburban record: 1/27 Apr Ains (Len) .

ZEBRA FINCH *Poephila guttata* Only 1 record: 2+/9 May Spen  
(Len).

DOUBLE-BARRED FINCH *Poephila bichenovii* Observations only from  
Bruce, O'Con, ANU, Uriarra Crossing (Dra, Len); certainly not  
representative. Please report all observations of this sp.

COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* Larger numbers LBG, E: max.  
1000+/9 Nov; 700/16 Jan; 1000+/5 May (McN).

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLE *Oriolus sagittatus* Only observation except  
from breeding areas: 1/23 + 28 Sep Ains (Len); certainly,  
species is more common!

WHITE-WINGED CHOUGH *Corcorax melanorhamphos* Winter records in  
built-up areas: 16/30 May ANU; 4/15 Jun Civic, Workmen's Club.

DUSKY WOODSWALLOW *Artamus cyanopterus* Migration on 4 days  
between 14 and 28 Apr recorded over Ains: 60 + 57 + 20 + 15.

GREY BUTCHERBIRD *Cracticus torquatus* 2 records from ranges:  
I/Apr Brin, Lee's Cr (Bea, Pen); 1/30 Jun Tidb (Orm) .

PIED CURRAWONG *Strepera graculina* Roost flight count Scri D:  
734/5 Aug; 181/1 Apr; 2060/20 May; 2360/17 Jun (Len) .

GREY CURRAWONG *Strepera versicolor* Records outside breeding  
season Ains, Maws, ANU, Black Mt, Mt Ainslie (Cox, Dra, Len).  
1/20 May Scri D, last bird at roost flight of Pied Currawong,  
the only time the species was noticed there (Len) .

LITTLE RAVEN *Corvus mellori* 1-5 most months Hugh ( Joh) ; 10  
records early Dec - early May Narr (Wil) . Only information  
available.

### 3. Species List, breeding records

Only a small number of records were available; we need more  
representative material, specially for common species. Most  
information in this section originates from systematic surveys  
of selected species or entire communities of:

(a) suburbs

Ainslie (Len) ; Barton (Doy) , Chapman (Slo) , Mawson (Cox)

(b) range of other habitats

wetland: Lake Burley Griffin, east end (McN, Nix, Ros)

woodland: Mt Ainslie, SW slopes (Ande)

park: ANU (Len)

native garden: O'Connor (Nix)



Some records were unfortunately rather vague with regard to locality etc., especially when several pairs of a species were said 'to occur in the area'. Please forward breeding records with sufficient detail to plot them on a Canberra map (distribution maps). 'Vague terms' with regard to locality should only be given for reasons of conservation in the case of endangered species/ habitats. (For details about how to write breeding records see CBN 47.)

In many cases the quality of a breeding record is described by the letters A to E:

- A = territorial singing in breeding season
- B = resident pair/group in breeding season
- C = carrying nest material or food
- D = feeding fledged young ones
- E = nest with contents

DARTER *Anhinga melanogaster* Colony at LBG, E; 6 nests altogether: 4 nests 4 Feb, each with 2-3 fully fledged juv.; 1 nest occupied 17 Mar + 9 ad., 7 juv. nearby; 1 nest occupied 19 May, bird sitting close (Nix).

GREAT CORMORANT (Black Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax carbo* 25-30/4 Feb in association with breeding Darters and Little Black Cormorants, breeding plumage, courtship, but no nest building or nest occupation seen, birds dispersed over LBG later in the season (Nix); but 6 Mar birds seen carrying nest material (McN).

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* First breeding record for our area: LBG, E: colony together with Darters in one willow: 8 nests 4 Feb with 2-3 juv. standing in and close to nest; 6 further nest likewise 17 Mar; still 6 new nests 19 May with 2-3 juv. (Nix).

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus stratus* 5 records: P + 3 juv. Jul LBG, E; P + 5 juv. Nov Jer Cr; P + 3 juv. Nov LBG, East Basin (Ros); P + 4 juv. Jan Uriarra Homestead (Len); P + 6 juv. May LBG, East Basin (Cox).

AUSTRALIAN SHELDUCK (Mountain Duck) *Tadorna tadornoides* P + 10 juv. 7 Oct L Geo, S, nearby pool (Len).

PACIFIC BLACK DUCK *Anas superciliosa* No. of females with juv.: 15 Nov-Jan SP; 3 Jer Cr; 3 LBG, Central Basin (Ros); 6 Sul Cr (Len).

GREY TEAL *Anas gibberifrons* 2 rare records LBG, E: 0,1 + 8 juv. 26 Nov (McN); 0,1 + 2 juv. 13 Mar (Ros).

AUSTRALASIAN SHOVELER (Blue-winged Shoveler) *Anas rhynchos* I rare record: 0,1 + 7 juv. mid-late Dec SP (Len, McN).

WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE (White-breasted Sea-Eagle) *Haliaeetus leucogaster* 2 ad. + 2 juv. 29 Oct L Geo, S (Dra), could indicate successful brood nearby.

DUSKY MOORHEN *Gallinula tenebrosa* 15 T Sul Cr, only 3 P/groups without juv. (Len).

PURPLE SWAMPHEN (Eastern Swampen) *Porphyrio porphyrio* 6 T Sul Cr, only 3 with juv. (Len).

EURASIAN COOT *Fulica atra* Species does not seem to breed in our area despite birds present at all seasons. Needs confirmation.

MASKED LAPWING (Masked Plover) *Vanellus miles* Only 4 records available (all D): 1 near Cook (Dig); 1 KS, 2 ANU (Len); species certainly more common than that!

BLACK-FRONTED PLOVER (Black-fronted Dotterel) *aradrius* Ch melanops 1 B Murrumbidgee, Sturt Is. (Gra).

GANG-GANG COCKATOO *Callocephalon fimbriatum* Regular Hugh, probably breeding (Joh). Where else is the species breeding?

CRIMSON ROSELLA *Platycercus elegans* Records from 2 areas only: 8 T ANU; 3 T Ains (Len) .

EASTERN ROSELLA *Platycercus eximius* Records from 2 areas only: 10 T ANU; 10 T Ains (Len).

RED-RUMPED PARROT *Psephotus haematonotus* 22 T ANU; 1 P breeding in electricity pole, entrance from top (Len). Where else in Canberra is the species breeding?

HORSFIELD'S BRONZE-CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx basalis* fed by Yellow-rumped Thornbills Ains (Len). 1 juv. 26 Dec

LAUGHING KOOKABURRA *Dacelo novaeguineae* Only 3 records available, not representative: 1 C Chap (Slo); 1 D Mt Ainslie, SW slopes (Ande) ; 1 B ANU (Len) .

RAINBOW BEE-EATER *Merops ornatus* 5 P 10 Jan feeding juv. in nest holes Point Hut (Thaler).

DOLLARBIRD *Eurystomus orientalis* 2 records: 1 ad. + 2-3 juv. 4 Feb Aran (Anw); 1 D Hawk (Gra). Regular breeding areas near Narrabundah Lane and Mugga Rd (Wil); see also CBN 4 6. Where else is the species breeding?

WELCOME SWALLOW *Hirundo neoxena* 6 records: 1 E in garage Chap, nested there for past 2-3 years (Slo); 5 E Sul Cr under bridges (Len). Where else is the species breeding?

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE *Coracina novaehollandiae* 18 records: 7 E ANU; 4 Ains; 1 D CSIRO/Black Mt (Len); 1 E Hawk (Dig); 1 D Chap (Slo); 1 D Curt (Sewell); 1 E War Memorial (Ande); 1 D

O'Con (Metcalf); 1 C Bot G; 1 C Russell Hill (Cox). Please record all breeding observations; see also CBN 4 7.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* Figures for 2 areas: 88 T (= 4.4 T/10 ha) Ains; 28 T (= 2.2 T/10 ha) ANU (Len).

ROSE ROBIN *Petroica rosea* 1 with nest 29 Oct Tidb (Clay).

LEADEN FLYCATCHER *Myiagra rubecula* Only 3 records, certainly not representative: 2 E ANU; 1 D CSIRO/Black Mt (Len).

GREY FANTAIL *Rhipidura fuliginosa* Only 3 records, certainly not representative: 1 C Hot G (Cox); 2 B ANU (Len).

WILLIE WAGTAIL *Rhipidura luucophrys* Records only from 3 areas, certainly species more common: 9 D/E (=0.7 T/10 ha) ANU; 1 B Ains (Len) , - 1 D Cook (Dig) . All breeding records of this species are requested; see also CBN 4 7.

CLAMOROUS REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus stentoreus* Max. number recorded from LBG, E during breeding season: 40+ (McN); 33 D Sul Cr, most pairs with 2 broods (Len).

LITTLE GRASSBIRD *Megalurus gramineus* Max. number recorded from LBG, E during breeding season: 6 (McN).

GOLDEN-HEADED CISTICOLA *Cisticola exilis* Max. number recorded from LBG, E during breeding season: 16 (McN).

SUPERB FAIRY-WREN (Blue Wren) *Malurus cyaneus* Count for one area: 45 T (= 3.6 T/10 ha) ANU (Len); interesting history from a native garden O'Con: 'Resident group bred successfully after 4 attempts in 1977-78, but cats reduced population from 3 ad., 2 juv. to 2 brown birds by end of summer and birds disappeared over winter and spring. Ad. male plus 4 brown birds reappeared 24 Feb 1979 and visited garden at intervals. Single pair took up residence in Aug and commenced nest building in passionfruit vine 20 Aug. Male still not in full plumage' (Nix).

WEEBILL *Smicrornis brevirostris* Counts for 2 areas: 7 T ANU; 3 T Ains (Len); O'Con, native garden: resident group bred successfully for last 10 years in Eucalyptus cinerea; first nest building 27 Aug (Nix).

YELLOW-RUMPED THORNBILL (Yellow-tailed Thornbill) *Acanthiza chrysorhoa* Counts for 2 areas: 16 T (=0.8 T/10 ha) Ains; 4 T (= 0.3 T/10 ha) ANU (Len); 1 D Chap (Slo); 2 C Stirling Park (Cox).

RED WATTLEBIRD *Anthochaera carunculata* Counts for 2 areas: 18 D/E (= 0.9 T/10 ha) Ains; 19 D/E ANU (= 1.5 T/10 ha) ANU; first juv. out of nest already 23 Aug, last (2. or 3.?) broods left nest late Feb ANU (Len); extends breeding season for our area.

NOISY FRIARBIRD *Philemon corniculatus* 12 records: 5 D ANU; 4

Ains (Len); 1 Narr (Wil); 1 D Rive; 1 D Chap (Slo). Please record all breeding observations for this species; see also NOISY MINER *Manorina melanocephala* Only 1 record, certainly not representative: 1 E War Memorial (Ande). Where else is the species breeding?

YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATER *Lichenostomus chrysops* 4 T ANU (Len). Is the species in suburban Canberra restricted to larger parks?

WHITE-PLUMED HONEYEATER *Lichenostomus penicillatus* 12 D ANU, only 1 D Ains; first juv. out of nest 2 Oct ANU (Len). Where else is the species breeding in Canberra?

BROWN-HEADED HONEYEATER *Melithreptus brevirostris* Among passing group of 13/4 Feb 1P still feeding a juv. ANU. Bred nearby? Birds must apparently leave T immediately after young are fully fledged.

NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* 5 T ANU (Len). Where else is the species breeding?

EASTERN SPINEBILL *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* 2 D O'Con Len, Nix); 1 D ANU (Len). Where else is the species breeding?

MISTLETOEBIRD *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* 1 D close to Chap, NW part (Slo); breeding birds collecting insects in oak trees Ains.

SPOTTED PARDALOTE *Pardalotus punctatus* 1 P at ANU used drainage holes in brick wall, all 3 consecutive attempts in a different hole each time failed, another P in similar situation under bridge (Len).

SILVEREYE *Zosterops lateralis* Most common native species in Ains: 119 T (=6.0 T/10 ha; dominance 10.3%); 25 T (=2.0 T/10 ha) ANU (Len).

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* Ains; 14 T ANU (Len). Counts for 2 areas: 9 T

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus* Very common in older suburbs, to rare or missing in newer suburbs. Counts for 2 areas: 732 T (= 37.1 T/10 ha) Ains, with 63.5% by far the most dominant species of the suburb; 110 T (=8.8 T/10 ha) ANU, dominance 19.1% (Len). 1 D, nest with juv. in hollow metal support above transformer between electricity poles, Chap (Slo).

COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* 86 T (=4.4 T/10 ha) Ains; 82 T (= 6.5 T/10 ha) ANU, as nesting sites in both areas mainly tin roofs (Len). First broods fledged early Nov Chap (Slo); second broods being fed early Dec Chap (Slo) and Melba (Pur). 1 P ousted 1 P of Eastern Rosellas from their nest site Cook.

COMMON MYNAH *Acridotheres tristis* 9 records available, though often not detailed enough: 1 B Yarr (Clar); 1 B Hugh (Joh); Griffith shops; Stuart Flats; Captain Cook Cres/Carnegie Cres;

playground Carnegie Cres (Wil); 1 B Maws (Cox); Garr, near Hindmarsh Drive; Red H, Mugga Way (Ros). Please report in future all observations of this species; see also CBN 4 7.

OLIVE-BACKED ORIOLE *Oriolus sagittatus* Only 2 records, certainly not representative: 1 D ANU, first nest in willow destroyed (as in previous year), 2. attempt apparently also not successful; 1 B CSIRO/Black Mt (Len).

SATIN BOWERBIRD *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* Exceptional record: 1 breeding Bot G (information from Rangers).

WHITE-WINGED CHOUGH *Corcorax welanorhamphos* Only 2 records available, certainly not representative: 1 D near War Memorial (Ande); 1 D Bot G (Cox).

AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE-LARK *Grallina cyanoleuca* Counts from several areas available: 14 T (= 0.7 T/10 ha) Ains; 44 T (=3.5 T/10 ha) ANU (Len) , - 1 E Chap E part (Slo) ; 3 D Bart (Doy) ; 2 E War Memorial (Ande); 1 C Bot G; 1 C Russ; 2 E Maws (Cox). Two unusual nest sites: 1 E with nest in scaffolding around a conveyor belt taking cement to a very large hopper Fysh (Slo); 1 E with nest on scaffolding at Police HQ city (Cox). Please report all breeding records.

AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE *Gymnorhina tibicen* Counts from several areas available: 26 T (=1.3 T/10 ha) Ains; 14 T (=1.1 T/10 ha) ANU (Len) ; 4 E Cook (Dig) ; 7 D Chap NW part (Slo) ; 3 E Bart (Doy) ; 6 (1 B, 4 D, 1 E) Maws (Cox); 1 nest on top of electricity post Aug-Sep, well hidden among crossbars, later abandoned Fysh (Slo). All breeding records are required (nests, adults feeding dependent juv. out of nest); see CBN4 7.

PIED CURRAWONG *Strepera graculina* Counts from several areas available: 6 D Ains; 6 D ANU (Len); 1 E Chap, NW part (Slo); 1 E Bart (Doy); 1 E Brad (Clar). [it is of interest to note whether the increase in the number of birds wintering in our area is paralleled by an increase in the number of breeding birds.] 1 E with nest in *Casuarina cunninghamiana* on bank of Cotter River (Slo).

GREY CURRAWONG *Strepera versicolor* Only 1 record: P + juv. 19 Nov War Memorial (Ande).

AUSTRALIAN RAVEN *Corvus coronoides* Only 1 record available: 1 C War Memorial (Ande). Is breeding in urban Canberra restricted to the outskirts and larger parks?

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APPENDIX - OBSERVATIONS AT LEE'S CREEK

*Cedric Bear and John Penhallurick*

<i>Cedric Bear and John Penhallurick</i>									
	1978			1979					
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Wonga Pigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo				✓	✓		✓		
Gang-gang Cockatoo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Australian King- Parrot			✓						
Crimson Rosella	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
Eastern Rosella					✓				
Brush Cuckoo		✓	✓		✓				
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	✓	✓	✓						
Shining Bronze- Cuckoo			✓						
Powerful Owl							✓	✓	
Boobook Owl	✓				✓		✓		
Australian Owlet- nightjar							✓		
Laughing Kookaburra		✓	✓				✓	✓	
Superb Lyrebird		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Black-faced Cuckoo- shrike		✓							
Cicadabird			✓		✓				
White's Thrush	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Rose Robin	✓	✓	✓						
Pink Robin							✓		
Eastern Yellow Robin	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Crested Shrike-tit			✓						
Olive Whistler							✓		
Golden Whistler	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Rufous Whistler	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Grey Shrike-thrush	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Rufous Fantail		✓	✓	✓	✓				
Grey Fantail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Eastern Whipbird	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
Pilotbird							✓		
White-browed Scrub- wren	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brown Thornbill	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Striated Thornbill	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

	1978			1979					
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
White-throated Tree-creeper	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Red-browed T'creeper	✓						✓		
Red Wattlebird	✓		✓				✓		
Yellow-faced Honey-eater	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
White-eared Honey-eater							✓		
White-naped Honey-eater	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Eastern Spinebill		✓	✓				✓		
Mistletoebird			✓				✓		
Spotted Pardalote	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
Striated Pardalote		✓			✓				
Silvereye	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Satin Bowerbird	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Grey Butcherbird							✓		
Pied Currawong	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
Grey Currawong			✓						
Australian Raven		✓							

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#### CORRECTION

*Editor*

Jim McNaughton advises that a gremlin hit our last issue in which on page 22 we reported 27 Pacific (White-necked) Herons. The correct figures for this species were: 11-7 February 1979 8-13 February 1979

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#### ODD OBS

##### PREDATORS AT DAIRY ROAD

Jim McNaughton

On 11 March 1979 at Dairy Road a Little Eagle was observed being harried by Australian Ravens. The latter dropped out and the attack was taken up by Australian Magpies and as these tired Masked Plovers joined in. It was like an aerial battle of World War I.

Masked Plovers of the area seem to be aggressive to hawks generally, as on 7 September 1979 a squadron of fourteen of them attacked a Brown Falcon, following it for about 1.5 km before giving up.

## SOME BIRDS OF THE SOUTH BUDAWANG RANGES

Val Routley

About three years ago we came to live at Plumwood Mountain, our property of 120 ha situated in forest country about 1.6 km to the north of Clyde Mountain in the Budawang Ranges. At that time we had a general interest in the forest and its wildlife, but no special interest in birds. However this was soon changed by the richness of the forest bird life, which we now experienced daily at close quarters, together with the impetus to improve our knowledge provided by the RAOU Bird Atlas and Nest Record Scheme. Observation of birds and recording of nests soon became a major interest.

The house is situated at 730 m in a pre-existing 1.5 ha clearing of some age but uncertain origin, which is now used for garden and orchard. The clearing adjoins the edge of the escarpment. Our area seems to have a rainfall of somewhere about 1800 mm p.a. on average. The surrounding wet sclerophyll forest has been burnt a number of times over the last thirty years and also logged quite a few times, both for eucalypt and rainforest species. It has however recovered fairly well, and contains some splendid remnants of mature, closed-canopy cool temperate rainforest which has escaped logging and serious burning. The two main rainforest species at this altitude are the Sassafras *Doryphora sassafras* and the Plumwood *Eucryphia moorei*, the latter reaching its best development locally on Devonian basalt soils. Other overstorey species which occur commonly are Blackwood *Acacia melanoxylon*, Lilly-pilly *Acmena smithii*, Eleocarpus *holopetalus* and Kanooma, *Tristania laurina*, the latter being found locally mainly in rainforest on the sandstone ridges and scarps. A number of species of vines which reach to the top of the overstorey (*Pandorea*, *Parsonsia*, *Cissus*) provide a rainforest flavour and there is a small but attractive range of epiphytic orchids and a good variety of epiphytic ferns; the fern component of the forest is fairly well developed. It is a simple rainforest by northern standards, with relatively few species, a simple structure and often sparse or ferny understorey, but it is often very beautiful and has a distinctive range of birds associated with it.

To the west of the area, in the direction of the Mongarlowe River, soil deficiencies have produced, despite high rainfall, an open woodland with no rainforest component; several *Banksia* species and Scrambling Coral Fern *Gleichenia microphylla* are characteristic of the understorey in this forest. The wet



sclerophyll forest which occupies the basalt soils to the east of this, adjacent to the rainforest patches, is dominated by tall eucalypts such as Brown Barrel *E. fastigata*, and usually carries a very dense understorey, frequently of rainforest growth, which often forms a virtually closed canopy of about 5 metres. This understorey contains saplings of large rainforest trees, smaller trees such as Austral Mulberry *Hedycarya angustifolia* and Musk Daisy Bush *Olearia argophylla*, which grow in both rainforest and eucalypt forest as understorey. A major component of the eucalypt understorey in many places is also coppice growth from the stumps of large rainforest trees which once occupied many sites now occupied by eucalypts. This phenomenon is widespread and provides clear physical evidence that the rainforest habitat in this area (so easily overlooked now in what is, to the superficial observer, eucalypt forest) was in the immediate past very much more extensive than it is today.

This type of forest then, and especially the apparently easily overlooked rainforest habitat, has provided for us the opportunity to observe a number of bird species not commonly seen on the southern tableland. Here are some of them. Obs are drawn from the area immediately around our house.

The BROWN GERYGONE *Gerygone mouki* is a common bird in the rainforest patches of the area, and during the spring is usually fairly conspicuous because of its loud voice (for a small bird) and constant calling of "Where-is-it". Single nesting records were obtained in December 1977 and again in December 1978, and two other nests have been observed in use. All the nests have been in mature rainforest patches, built of epiphytic moss and suspended from the mossy branches of mature rainforest trees, and all have been inaccessible. One nest recorded this year was built in a tree of *Doryphora* right next to an old nest of last year, which was partly dismantled during the building process, revealing an inner lining of the soft white seeds of *Parsonsia brownii* and a copious outer lining of soft tree fern fibre (the reddish hairy material from the trunk and stems of fronds of *Dicksonia antarctica*, which is a very popular nest lining material hereabouts. One pair whose building activities were watched spent over a month working on their nest (5 November to 8 December), carrying material to it frequently every day, and the nest was quite well advanced when the first observation was made.

After breeding family parties are quite often seen in the understorey of the adjacent wet sclerophyll forest. During the late autumn and early winter they become less noticeable at the higher levels but more noticeable in the lower level rainforest, so there may be some altitudinal movement. They become conspicuous again in the early spring.

The LARGE-BILLED SCRUBWREN *Sericornis magnirostris* is

seen quite frequently but rather irregularly; this is, one might see a group in the same area several days or even weeks running and then not see any again for several months. There appear to be several groups in that area, but the species is apparently fairly sparse in numbers compared to most others in the area. Although they are generally seen in rainforest I have also seen them quite often in the adjoining eucalypt forest. During the cooler months they sometimes form part of the mixed foraging parties of small birds which are seen at that time. They have been sighted at all seasons, but are particularly noticeable in summer after nesting when they apparently move more widely through the forest. No nests have been found yet, but in November 1977 a pair of adults were seen feeding a very young, downy offspring, and further observations of adults feeding fledglings have been made in 1978.

The BLACK-FACED MONARCH *Monarcha melanopsis*. This splendid and lively bird is one of the commonest and most conspicuous birds in the rainforest patches and adjacent forest of this area in the period from late September to March. Adults feeding dependent young were seen in January of 1976 and 1977. This year five nests were found in a fairly small area (as shown in the map at the end) and there were indications of a number of others in the area shown which I did not find. Nests are fairly easy to find as the birds tend to call vigorously from the nesting site during building, in the early stages of incubation, and also sometimes call from the nesting site at dawn. The mossy nests are usually placed in a bushy small tree (e.g. *Doryphora* or *Olearia*), often in dense growth on the edge of rainforest areas. Both sexes incubate the eggs at times; during a cold spell in November 1977 they were observed changing places on the nest quite a few times. The birds do on occasion capture insects (e.g. grasshoppers) on the wing, although most food is obtained by searching the foliage in the forest. I have also seen them on occasion bathing on the wing, hovering on the surface of deep water in a pond and flying out again.

The LEWIN'S HONEYEATER *Meliphaga lewinii* is one of the common birds of the area and is present in all seasons. A nesting record was obtained in 1977 for a pair which nested in a small bushy *Sassafras* tree in the dense growth adjoining a mature rainforest patch. This year, as in other years, on a number of occasions birds were observed feeding dependent young. In fact a common sight in the forest in January is young Lewin's Honeyeaters feeding or being fed on the small red fruits of Prickly Currant Bush *Coprosma quadrifida* and the fruit of native raspberry. Lewin's Honeyeaters are also fond of the prolifically produced violet berries of *Polyscias sambucifolius* and the fruits of Austral Mulberry *Hedycarya*.

The BROWN CUCKOO-DOVE *Macropygia amboinensis*, another fruit-eating bird, was first observed in our area in February 1978 in a rainforest area close to our house. It was seen by me at close quarters under excellent conditions, and details of the observation were sent to the Bird Atlas. The call of the Brown Cuckoo-Dove has a distinctive rising inflection, and calls were heard on and off over the next few months until late April, although it was not seen again. In 1979 calls were heard from 22 January onwards and it was sighted briefly on 20 February. In both years, but especially in 1978, it was heard and seen particularly in the vicinity of the fruiting Austral Mulberry. The orange mulberry-shaped fruits of this tree ripen from January through to late April and provide an autumn feast for Satin Bowerbirds *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*, Australian King-Parrots *Alisterus scapularis*, Lewin's Honeyeaters, currawongs and others, also attracting Mountain Possums. It seems likely that it is this fruit which attracts the Brown Cuckoo-Dove to the area. Perhaps it may be the Brown Cuckoo-Dove which is responsible for the seedling Cabbage Palms which are now beginning to appear in numbers through the area. Quite a number of edible-fruited species of plants occur in the local area, especially in rainforest. A list, excluding those already mentioned, of those potentially useful to fruit-eating birds would include the following: *Sambucus* sp. , Bolwarra or Copper Laurel *Eupomatia laurina*, Native raspberries *Rubus* sp., Apple berry *Billiardiera scandens*, *Morinda* sp., *Cissus hypoglauca*, *Drimys* (*lanceolata* and *insipida*), *Solarium* (three sp.), *Styphelia* sp., Fig *Ficus* (*rubiginosa* and *coronata*), Cabbage Palm *Livistona* sp., *Alectryon* sp., *Acronychia* sp., Blueberry Ash *Eleocarpus reticulatus*, Native Cherry *Exocarpus* sp., Giant Stinging Tree *Laportea gigas*, *Ehretia acuminata* and Lawyer Vine *Smilax australis*.

The TOPKNOT PIGEON *Lopholaimus antarcticus*, unlike the Brown Cuckoo-Dove, has not been sighted yet on the tableland. However a flock of between forty and fifty individuals (numbers conservatively estimated) was sighted during April 1979 on a bush walk in an area of mixed forest at about 500 m altitude immediately below the house area. They were studied with binoculars for about fifteen minutes before they flew off, and were about 18 metres high in the trees and about 18 metres distant. The brownish pink topknot could be seen clearly, as could the pink eye, pink beak and grey chest streaked with darker grey. No white was visible on the front, although a white or pale band near the end of the tail was visible from underneath in flight. The flock was virtually silent.

The flock was congregating at a point in the forest where, just prior to their arrival, Australian King-Parrots

and Satin Bower-birds could be seen feeding in tall vines of *Cissus hypoglauca* ascending eucalypts. Also in fruit at the time was *Notelea* sp. and Port Jackson Fig *Ficus rubiginosa*.

In the 'heard but not seen' category is the SOOTY OWL *Tyto tenebricosa*. Nocturnal 'falling bomb' calls corresponding to those described in Fleay's Nightwatchmen of bush and plain were heard during 1977 on the evenings of 3 April, 5 April, 20 July and 6 and 7 August. They have not been heard since. A single individual of the YELLOW-THROATED SCRUBWREN *Sericornis citreogularis* was sighted in May 1978 and recorded for the Bird Atlas. In November 1978 I was delighted to find a pair nesting on a small stream in a rainforest gully only a few hundred metres from our house. The nest, a large structure of epiphytic moss, was suspended from a vine of *Parsonsia brownii* which was hanging down in front of a small waterfall. Owing to the location, the height above the stream bed (6 metres) and the construction of the nest, it was not possible to inspect it. Patient watching confirmed that the birds were incubating, but by late December the nest appeared disarranged and abandoned. The scrubwrens were still to be seen in the area, however, behaving as they had done earlier, i.e. hopping about in company, one bird giving titbits to the other, and producing loud warning calls when I appeared. In mid January 1979 a new nest was found about 6 metres downstream from the old one, and this time it was placed only 2 metres above the stream bed and was easy to inspect. The new nest was cunningly suspended from the roots of a rainforest tree which had been exposed by slippage of the bank. It proved to contain three nestlings, which left the nest on 10 February. The adults were joined in feeding the fledglings (who seemed, incidentally, far better developed and more competent at the nest-leaving stage than those of any other species I have seen here) by an immature bird with a brown facial stripe instead of a black one, presumably the product of an earlier nesting still. When the fledglings were approached on the first day after leaving the nest one of the adult birds flew close and produced a string of fine imitations of local birds, presumably as a distraction display.

Although this is the only group of the species we have so far found (another sighting was made some distance down the stream but this may have been from the same group), I feel sure that further searching will show that it is not unusual in the area. Suitable habitat similar to that in which our group nested is abundant both at this altitude and at higher and lower altitudes. For instance on a November 1978 bush walk down a tributary of Currowan Creek two old nests were seen, one in well-developed warm temperate rainforest at 450 m, and another in Sandpaper Fig scrub at about 300 m. A further old nest was seen on a bush walk in June 1979 in well-developed

warm temperate rainforest at 150 m altitude, immediately below the house area, at the foot of the Range.

*Breeding of other forest birds in the area*

The dense understorey of the eucalypt forest and tangled rainforest edges appears to provide an ideal nesting habitat for many forest birds. Accordingly searching for nests and recording their contents is a favourite, indeed irresistible, activity during the breeding season, and for it a great deal else is neglected. Searching for nests uniquely blends the excitement of detective work with the pleasures of communion with the forest. The primary and immediate reward is the finding of the nest and its usually delightful contents, but in addition nest finding provides a guide to the density of nesting birds in the forest (usually a lot more than one thought!) and enables a much better understanding of bird behaviour by fitting it into the larger context of the bird's life and breeding activity.

Because there is so much suitable nesting habitat in this type of forest, only a few nests can be found by random searching of the foliage, and observation of 'breeding' behaviour or sightings of birds calling excitedly, carrying building material or food are more useful guides. Sometimes on still days the cries of advanced nestlings can be heard (not however when, as in 1978, all sounds were drowned out by cicada noise). Sightings of birds feeding dependent young are usually much easier to obtain here than nest records. As well as the species covered earlier, the following species have been recorded breeding in the area over the period from February 1975 onwards (\* indicates one or more nest records). Wedge-tailed Eagle, Australian King-Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo (hosts - Brown Thornbill and White-browed Scrubwren), Powerful Owl, Southern Boobook, Superb Lyrebird, White's Thrush\*, Rose Robin\*, Flame Robin\*, Eastern Yellow Robin\*, Crested Shrike-tit, Golden Whistler\*, Olive Whistler, Rufous Fan-tail\*, Grey Fantail\*, Eastern Whipbird\*, Superb Fairy-wren\*, White-browed Scrubwren\*, Brown Thornbill\*, Striated Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Red-browed Treecreeper, Noisy Friarbird, Yellow-faced Honeyeater\*, Crescent Honeyeater\*, Eastern Spinebill\*, Silvereye\*, Red-browed Firetail\*, Satin Bowerbird, Pied Currawong, Grey Currawong, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo.

The map gives some indication of the nests found in part of the area of observation during the breeding season August 1978 to February 1979. Nests which were inaccessible and could not be inspected but on which birds could be seen sitting or were seen carrying food to are also shown to indicate general density. On the basis of indications of breeding such as territorial calling and subsequent sightings of young, I would estimate that nests found were fewer than a third of those

actually present.

*Comments on breeding species of 1978-79* (The initials are those used on the map)

B.M.: BLACK-FACED MONARCH *Monarcha melanopsis*. Nests are numbered in the order found. There were strong indications that nest 4, which was fairly close to nest 1, was the second nest of the birds involved in nest 1. The indications were: the birds of nest 4 flew freely and without opposition into the area around nest 1 only a few weeks after it was vacated, a juvenile bird could be seen and heard near nest site 4, and the timing was right etc. Since nest 1 was successful, this would represent a second brood.

S.L.: SUPERB LYREBIRD *Menura novaehollandiae*. These seem to be quite densely distributed in the area. In the height of the breeding season in June it is not unusual for us to hear from our house site four or more male birds competing with one another in the immediate area, and usually at least five territories seem to exist on the surrounds of the clearing. This last breeding season there were encounters with four separate pairs of mothers and chick's in the area shown, but only one nest was found in use. The female's vocal distraction display on these occasions consists largely of imitations of the Pilotbird *Pycnoptilus floccosus* (and occasionally this evokes a response from the Pilotbird itself). Quite a lot of old nests have been found, and nest sites vary from ground sites on steep rocky slopes at the scarp edge and on steep stream banks to sites well up large rainforest trees in mature rainforest patches.

S.T.: WHITE'S THRUSH *Zoothera dauma*. Again, these are very common in the area, and they are one of the species which nest in the mature rainforest areas as well as in eucalypt areas. Nests have been found here from August till November. The top of a tree fern is a favourite site for early nests (before the fronds begin to push through), but they may also be quite high, e.g. one was found 15 m up a eucalypt on a ledge and another about the same distance up a rainforest tree. White's Thrush has great difficulty seeing window glass and even wire netting, and unfortunately a number have died or been injured by flying into these. Its beautiful ornamented song is one of the delights of the early spring and late winter, and during this period it often sings for an hour or more on end, and especially in still, misty weather it often sings for much of the day, sometimes starting as much as an hour before dawn.

R.R.: ROSE ROBIN *Petroica rosea*. This beautiful little robin also occurs very frequently, especially nesting in rainforest and rainforest edges. Nests are, however, usually inaccessible. The nest is always decorated with lichen and trees carrying a good quantity of lichen on their branches,

e.g. Blackwood, Austral Mulberry and Doryphora, are its favoured nesting sites here.

F.R.: FLAME ROBIN *Petroica phoenicea*. This is seen mainly in the less dense areas of the forest and on the edge of the clearing, where it nested in the 1978-79 season on top of a tree fern. The Rose Robin and the Flame Robin are both chased quite aggressively on occasion during the breeding season by the Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis* (Y.R.), even where they are not near the nest; other species are not chased, thus suggesting some recognition of relationship.

G.W.: GOLDEN WHISTLER *Pachycephala pectoralis*. This also is very common here, and there were indications of many more nests than those shown. Nests are often placed immediately beneath a mat of Lawyer Vine in a dense small tree. Although the Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris* appears to completely replace the Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea* in the more open forest to the west of the area, the Golden Whistler is seen in all types of forest, from open forest to rainforest.

R.F.: RUFOUS FANTAIL *Rhipidura rufifrons*; G.F.: GREY FANTAIL *Rhipidura fuliginosa*. The Grey Fantail appears to be the commonest nesting bird, and nests are found throughout the forest, avoiding only the mature rainforest. The Rufous Fantail is about in much smaller numbers and usually nests in the denser areas and often in rainforest, but there is no sharp division. For example in January 1979 a Rufous Fantail and a Grey Fantail were found nesting simultaneously only 3 m apart.

S.B.W.: SUPERB FAIRY-WREN *Malurus splendens*. No exotic birds (apart from the odd lost homing pigeon) occur in this forest area and this is probably the only bird which would not have been present in this dense forest area before European settlement, although it was probably present in the more open forest to the west. The small colony of Superb Fairy-wrens lead lives centred on the clearing, and only rarely venture far from it and its immediate surrounds. Other clearings in local forest, deriving from logging or once occupied by houses, also have their small resident groups of Superb Fairy-wrens. Two breeding groups, each of several males and a female - the second group deriving from the offspring of the original group - have divided the clearing between them. They recombine into one group for the winter. One group nested four times this year, and the other three, to produce a total of sixteen fledglings between them. Nests are always located in the clearing or on its edge.

B.T.: BROWN THORNBILL *Acanthiza pusilla*. This nests in all habitats. In December a nest was found in a tree fern in the clearing, another in a bush of *Coprosma* in eucalypt forest, and another in the ferny ground cover of mature

rainforest.

Y.F.H.: YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATER *Lichenostomus chrysops*. Nests have been found both years in dense growth of *Olearia* near the edge of the clearing.

C.H.: CRESCENT HONEYEATER *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*. A small colony of these can be found virtually all year in the general area, especially on the edge of the scarp, where they nest. In the spring it mainly eats insects taken from bark, but later takes an interest in mistletoe flowers, and in autumn and winter can be seen around *Doryphora* when it flowers and on *Banksia* in more open forest to the west.

E.S.: EASTERN SPINEBILL *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*. Nests found have been located in thickets of *Olearia*. During the spring it visits especially the flowers of Appleberry, and in the autumn may be seen visiting the flowers of *Fieldia* and *Eucryphia*.

R.B.F.: RED-BROWED FIRETAIL *Emblema temporalis*. The Red-browed Firetail nested this year in the clearing in a small bushy tree, but nesting has been observed in other years on the edges of the clearing and at points in the forest. They have been seen feeding on the seeds of both local and introduced grasses and local sedges, and the seed of the introduced weed Sheep Sorrel. This year both fledglings and adults returned to the nest at night to roost for several weeks after fledging, usually bathing first.

W.W.: WHITE-BROWED SCRUBWREN *Sericornis frontalis*. This is very common here as in most other forest areas, occurring in all the forested habitats, and several nests are found each year. One pair whose nest was under general observation in October decided to move their newly hatched nestlings to a new site. The female Scrubwren concealed the naked nestlings under leaves in front of the nest and later flew off with them, holding each nestling by a LBG, one at a time over intervals of an hour or more, presumably taking them to a new nest site considered safer.

One species which is abundant but which has not been recorded nesting is the Olive Whistler. This season however a number of sightings of birds feeding recently fledged young have been made, and it appears from these observations that during the breeding season Olive Whistlers are almost as numerous in the area as Golden Whistlers. This is contrary to the claim in The complete book of Australian birds, p. 372, that they are common nowhere. Although they are more conspicuous during the spring and early summer, calling especially in wet or misty weather, they are present all year. They spend much of their time feeding on the ground, and are often seen in and around rainforest.

Two other species, common in the area, for which breeding records are so far lacking, are the Pilotbird, which appears



to have at least five territories in the area shown, and the Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*.

An interesting feature of the recorded nests was the number which were robbed or probably robbed (eight out of forty). Circumstantial evidence suggests that responsibility for many of these lies with the Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina* and possibly the Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor*, both of which were present in the area, the former breeding. Not only was a Pied Currawong seen closely investigating a vacant Black-faced Monarch nest, harassed the while by the erstwhile occupiers, but also robberies appeared to reach a peak during the period when it required food for its own young, ceasing almost entirely after it moved out of the area. The main breeding season is an exciting time in the forest, which always seems then to be full of life and activity, and one is always sorry when it is over. However initial lyrebird breeding activity follows on almost without a break; for example a lyrebird's nest was being started just a few metres from the last Yellow-throated Scrubwren's nest on my final visit to the nest in mid February. The breeding season never comes completely to an end in these forests.

#### *Other interesting features*

Birds recorded for the RAOU Atlas 10' grid, other than those mentioned elsewhere in the article, are as follows: White-faced Heron, Grey Goshawk\*, Brown Goshawk\*, Brown Falcon, Whistling Kite, Peregrine Falcon\*, Australian Kestrel, Darter, Pacific Black Duck, Maned Duck, Banded Lapwing, Wonga Pigeon\*, Gang-gang Cockatoo\*, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Straw-necked Ibis, Eastern Rosella, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo\*, Laughing Kookaburra, Welcome Swallow, Richard's Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike\*, Cicadabird, Scarlet Robin, Rufous Whistler, Satin Flycatcher, Willie Wagtail, Spotted Quailthrush, Red Wattlebird\*, Noisy Friarbird, White-eared Honeyeater\*, Common Starling, White-winged Chough, Australian Magpie-lark, Grey Butcherbird\*, Australian Magpie, Australian Raven\*, Olive-backed Oriole.

Those with asterisks are seen fairly regularly in the heavy forest near the house, the remainder being birds of the cleared land, the open forest adjoining it, or occasional visitors. Included in this last category are two birds very common in most forested Australian habitats, the Laughing Kookaburra and the Australian Magpie; these species visit the heavy forest only rarely. The Satin Flycatcher appears briefly every year around mid January, calling vigorously, but departs quickly.

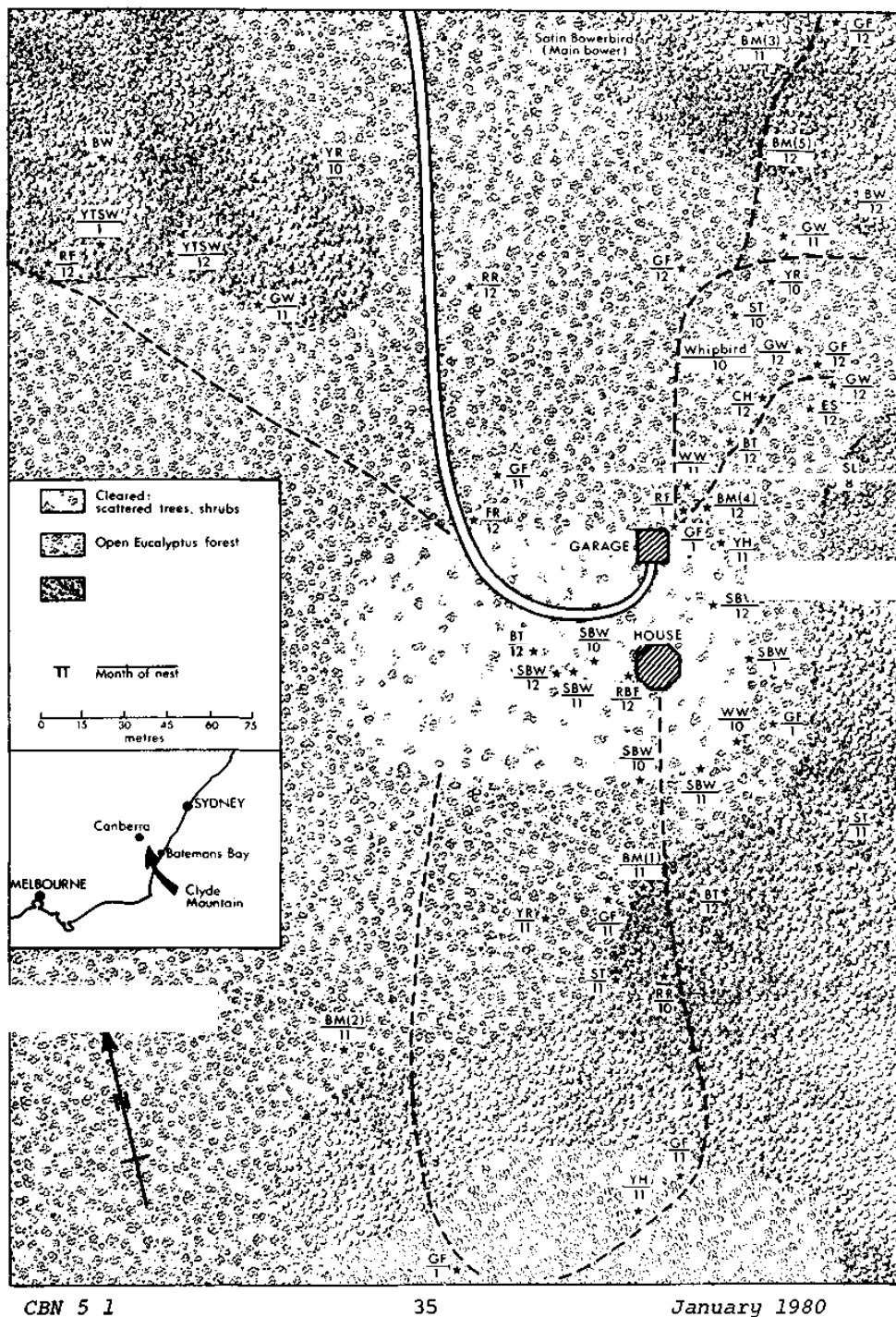
Diurnal predators are not easy to identify because of the restricted view of the sky the forest clearing provides, but the same problem does not arise with the nocturnal ones which can be identified by calls, and in these the area seems fairly

rich. Large owls in the area (other than the Sooty Owl, already mentioned) include the Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua* and the Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*. The Powerful Owl is a nearby resident, heard calling almost nightly, and was recorded breeding for the Atlas Historical Record on the basis of a sighting in 1975 of an owl in juvenile plumage with adults. A nesting attempt was apparently made in a nearby gully in May-June 1977, the area surrounding the breeding tree being littered with glider tails and 'whitewash', but insufficient details of the nesting were ascertained for a further breeding record. However during this period one of the owls could be seen quite often during the day in a nearby perch in a rainforest tree, usually holding in its talons the bottom half of a possum (apparently Ringtails and Greater Gliders). The Barking Owl is also heard fairly often and occasionally seen and heard in nearby rainforest, although it is mainly heard calling from more open forest to the west. Other nocturnal birds in the area include the Southern Boobook, the White-throated Nightjar *Cuprimulus mystacalis* (sometimes seen picking up moths in front of our house in the early morning), the Australian Owlet-nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus* (heard occasionally and seen once by torchlight), and the Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides* (heard in open forest to the west).

Occasional sightings of possible interest include the Beautiful Firetail *Emblema bella* and the Bush Thick-knee *Burhinus magnirostris*. The latter was picked up in car headlights in open forest in March 1977. A few individuals of the former were observed for half an hour at close quarters in April 1976 eating the seed of a species of large sedge (*Carex* sp.) which is common in the local forests. Neither has been sighted again. On most summer days a few White-throated Needletails *Hirundapus caudacutus* appear, and frequently large numbers can be seen playing in the area of turbulent air along the scarp edge. Groups of swifts have been sighted as late as 25 April, but regular evening swifts are last sighted on 9 or 10 April in most years.

Satin Bowerbirds are abundant in the area and two bowers, including one main one, are found not far from the house. The main bower is usually decorated by late winter, and its proprietor is at this time a frequent visitor to our garden to obtain the blue flowers of Borage and to eat spinach and other greens in the vegetable garden. He seldom however does any serious damage. At times he has also entered the house in search of suitable objects for the bower.

The forest birds of the area are a constant source of delight and interest, but are also of practical value. In several years of raising food plants in our forest clearing, I have found that problems with insect pests are almost non-



existent. When a plague of grasshoppers in the big dry in 1979 stripped the gardens and pastures of neighbours in nearby cleared land, an army of forest birds, led by the Black-faced Monarch and the Grey Shrike-thrush, feasted on the hoppers and kept damage in our clearing to a barely noticeable minimum. We feel that we are most fortunate to be able to live in such

an area, and hope to be able to arrange permanent protection for the forest land we own. It is of course difficult to think of oneself as the 'owner', in more than a legalistic sense, of an area already so thoroughly in use by other species; rather one seems to be just another user.

It is good to know that so much of this forest type on nearby public land also will be protected in recently announced National Parks along the escarpment. However, as yearly spectators of the attempt to apply broad-area control burning policies to these public lands during the cooler months, we are concerned about the effect of these policies on the quality of the forest and the quality of the habitat it provides. Mature rainforest patches, which are usually found here in topographically protected sites, do not themselves usually burn in such cool fires, but, as recent burns in the area have shown, their regenerating surrounds may be destroyed. The rainforest is thus prevented from regaining a foothold in its former area, and maintained in its present remnant status. These edge areas provide too some of the most favoured nesting sites for a number of species, as does the dense understorey of eucalypt forest control burning aims eventually to eliminate. A sound conservation policy for these mixed forests must recognise their significant component of rainforest and associated fauna, and work to maintain and enhance this habitat type.

*Ms V. Routley, Plumwood Mountain, Box 37, P.O., Braidwood,  
N.S.W. 2622*

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#### ODD OBS

CATTLE EGRETS AT DAIRY ROAD

Jim McNaughton

Cattle Egrets occur spasmodically in the A.C.T. on 9 May 1979 there were thirty-one of this species in the dairy paddocks at Dairy Road, on 14 June there were sixteen and on 29 August 1979 there were six.

GREENFINCHES

Jim McNaughton

The introduced Greenfinch has always been a rare bird in the A.C.T. but numbers are increasing. They are nearly always to be seen now about Kelly's Farm on Dairy Road, the highest count being thirty-three on 2 June 1979.

AN EARLY FLAME ROBIN NEST Jim McNaughton

Late in August at Dairy Road I found the nest of a Flame Robin containing eggs. On 7 September 1979 there were three young in it.

## OUR NEW LOOK

*Editor*

The Committee of C.O.G. has been considering the format of *Canberra Bird Notes*. It was decided to change to an international paper size, which provides several additional lines per page, and to change the front cover.

Bill Cooper, who is Australia's foremost bird artist, kindly consented to provide a drawing for the cover - our grateful thanks, Bill. This is an honour indeed.

While we do not in any way plan to depart from our traditional role in local ornithology/bird watching, we feel that members generally will approve the new appearance of our little journal.

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### ODD OBS

#### PACIFIC HERONS

Jim McNaughton

On 7 February 1979 eleven Pacific Herons had a field day at Kelly's Swamp catching carp which appeared to be 10 cm to 16 cm long. The fishing seemed relatively easy as the swamp was drying out. On 13 February two Pacific Herons feeding there were seen to jump up and down as they chased their prey holding the wings forward in a parachute shape which was most pronounced as they landed.

#### INTERMEDIATE EGRETS

Jim McNaughton

Intermediate Egrets were present at Kelly's Swamp apparently for most of February 1979, the highest number observed being four.

#### SPOTTED CRAKE

Jim McNaughton

From the third week of February 1979 till 11 March 1979 excellent views were obtained of an Australian Crake at Kelly's Swamp; good slides were obtained.

#### WADERS AT KELLY'S SWAMP

Jim McNaughton

The following waders were seen on the main swamp at Dairy Road on 20 August 1979:

Baillon's Crake            1 (photographed)  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 7  
Latham's Snipe 4

## VALE JIM

*Steve Wilson*

Jim McNaughton was a member of C.O.G. virtually since its beginning, and while he did not often attend meetings he turned up regularly on members' nights and on other occasions, usually to show the latest selections of slides. His pictures usually showed birds which are quite rare in our area.

His name shows up frequently in Canberra Bird Notes; his recordings are used probably more than those of any other member in the annual bird report in this issue. This has been the norm for many years as Jim loved the Kelly's Swamp - Dairy Road area and was our most regular observer there. Notice too how frequently his name appears in 'fill-in' notes at the bottoms of pages; usually his little reports spoke of birds seldom seen by most members. I used to look forward to his phone calls made to discuss his latest interesting sightings. Unfortunately Jim did not enjoy the long retirement which he had every reason to look forward to.

Jim was the sort of person respected by all; a quiet man with a cheerful word for all he met. He will be greatly missed by all his friends and readers of CBN generally.

His sudden death must have been a great shock to Mrs McNaughton, his son and two daughters, and our sincere sympathy is extended to them; but from another viewpoint, if Jim had to go in this sudden manner, it was appropriate surely that he died while watching his beloved water birds at his favourite spot - Kelly's farm.

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## ODD OBS

*Alan Cowan*

Two Cockatiels were seen flying over our Red Hill home on 21 October 1979. Of course, they could have been escapees.

Having just returned from the atlassing camp and having seen Cockatiels in large numbers, my confidence in the identification was complete!

## GOLDEN PLOVER AT KELLY'S SWAMP

Editor

A Golden Plover in eclipse plumage has been seen at Kelly's Swamp, Dairy Road, and has been seen as follows: 21 October 1979, Mark Clayton and Mike Doyle; 25 October 1979 (a.m.), Jim McNaughton; 25 October 1979, Mark Clayton and Peter Fullager.

## UNWRANGLING THE WADERS

*Richard Schodde*

*Note:* This information comes from a bird of the month talk given by Dr Schodde.

Nothing seems so daunting to the novice bird watcher as the identification of waders - those many species of dun-coloured wading birds that flock to the marshlands of Australia to sleep and eat each austral summer as they prepare for their return migrations to the northern hemisphere to breed.

The methods traditionally used for their identification in Australia are perplexing. Bird watchers are urged to record white wing bars, black rump stripes, white eyebrows, legs trailing beyond the tail, colour of feet and so on. To put these characters together in the hope that the bird can be identified is rather like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle - and there is always the uncertainty that one of the pieces was overlooked and is critical.

The answers offered here to these problems are just the opposite to those usually advocated. Instead of splitting individual species apart by a series of complex field characters, the lumping of waders into a few manageable groups using a few easily remembered characteristics is advocated. The smaller number of species within each group can then be more easily identified by the wing and tail markings given in conventional guides. In this process of identification some of the behavioural traits of the different groups, usually neglected in the guides, will rub off and knowledge of bird lore will improve.

The characteristics of the groups of waders described below are, it is emphasised, average characteristics to which will be found many individual exceptions as experience increases. Nevertheless the hope is that these are sufficiently general to put the observer quickly on the road to correct identification in most cases.

The first easy division of waders is into 'biggies' and 'littlies'. Biggies are waders as large as or larger than stilts or wattlebirds; they include the curlews, the godwits and the Greenshank. Littlies are waders up to the size of a starling and include a host of species of sandpipers, stints and plovers. There are also the 'intermediates'.

There are surprisingly few waders of intermediate size. Of the almost fifty migratory wader species so far recorded from Australia, only the several snipes, Asian Dowitcher, Greater Knot,

Grey Plover, the golden plovers, the Redshank and perhaps the tattlers are disconcertingly intermediate.

The snipes are easily separated by their very long straight bills, usually under-cover occurrence on sedgy freshwater swamps and solitariness. The actual species however is virtually impossible to determine in the field.

The dowitcher is just like a miniature Bar-tailed Godwit in both shape and markings. The Greater Knot is similar but it has a rather shorter bill and legs, is paler and has a white rump.

The Grey Plover and the golden plovers are identified as plovers by their comparatively large, rounded heads and short, black bills which are slightly swollen rather than narrowed at the tip. In Australia they are usually solitary, at least in the southern regions. Neither has the hint of a dark line through the eye shown in all other smaller migratory plovers; and they are easy to separate from one another as any field guide will show.

Lastly in the intermediates are the tattlers and the Redshank. Tattlers are rather large tringine sandpipers (see below) with plain backs and without white markings on wings and tails. Like other tringas they are usually fairly unsociable, rarely congregating in groups of more than half a dozen, and they bob the head when perched and nervous. The two species of tattler are difficult to tell apart but differences in calls are among the most useful clues.

The Redshank is another tringa sandpiper and is nervous and unsociable in its behaviour. It looks and behaves very much like a small Greenshank (see below) but has orange (not green) legs and a broad white trailing edge to the wing. The biggies are easily separated into two groups, those with down-curved bills (curlews and whimbrels) and those with straight bills (godwits and the Greenshank).

There are only three species in the first group, the Eastern Curlew, the Whimbrel and the Little Curlew. Each can be identified by differences in size and the proportional length of the bill. Additionally the Whimbrel has a pale back. The Godwits can be separated from each other by markings on wing and tail, the Black-tailed Godwit being fairly plain. The Greenshank, rather smaller than the godwits, is like a dull-coloured Black-winged Stilt and shows a white tail and lower back in flight.

Most of the waders, and certainly those most difficult to identify, are littlies. They nevertheless fall into three main, easily identified groups, which are the plovers, the tringine sandpipers and the calidritine sandpipers.

The plovers have, as mentioned above, proportionally rather large, rounded heads with short, straight, blackish bills, slightly swollen at the tip. They are dumpy in body and they usually stand quite upright and bob the head when alert. Their preference is sandy banks or flats for roosting. They



are sporadic feeders, often running rapidly for a distance, jabbing quickly in the mud with the bill, only to run off and jab elsewhere. In disposition they do not appear to be particularly nervous; rather, they are cautious.

The field guides give clues to identifying the species of plover. Three are particularly difficult; these are the Double-banded, Mongolian and the Large Sand Plover. In separating these the following characteristics are useful. The Double-banded appears to be a shade more brown on the back and more creamy on the breast than the other two, though this is often clearly apparent only when this species occurs alongside the others; and it often has a trace of two bands at the sides of the breast.

By comparison, the Mongolian Plover and the Large Sand Plover are cleaner and whiter ventrally and slightly more grey-brown on the back. Here the bill is used to separate them; in the Large Sand Plover the bill is almost as long as the head but in the Mongolian Plover it is barely more than half the length of the head.

The tringine sandpipers include such species as the Wood, Marsh, Terek and Common Sandpipers. They are slender and stand erect, they are nervous and unsociable and birds are often seen singly. The bills are straight and slender and they bob the head when perched. They feed erratically, some species often dashing about frantically then jabbing the bill into the mud here and there. Apart from the characters given in the field guides most of the species can be identified by their habitats and behaviour.

Wood Sandpipers occur almost exclusively on muddy freshwater swamps, Terek Sandpipers on coastal saline mud flats which are regularly inundated by the tides and Common Sandpipers on rock and steeply sloping banks of estuaries and lakes. The Common Sandpiper also has a distinctive flicking flight, rather like that of a Treecreeper.

As a group, the calidritine sandpipers have an air of earnest business about their feeding. These include the Sharp-tailed Curlew, Pectoral and Broad-tailed Sandpipers, the Red-necked, Little and Long-toed Stints, the Dunlin, Sanderling, Ruff and the Red Knot. These species often flock when feeding, usually being seen in groups with bodies hunched, heads down busily and systematically jabbing the bills in the mud as the feeding flock moves methodically along.

The species themselves appear to differ little from one to another in their habitat preferences and in behaviour while passing the summer season in Australia and, accordingly, clues to their individual identity come from their plumage characters, which are all described in the standard field guides.

There is one last group of waders that haven't been mentioned. It is the phalaropes. Phalaropes are small sandpiper-like birds that swim as much as or more than they wade and they can be identified accordingly.

*Dr R. Schodde, 30 Bamford Street, Hughes, A.C.T. 2605*

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#### C.O.G. OUTING TO INGALBA

John Penhallurick

On the weekend of 21 and 28 July 1979 some twenty members of C.O.G. braved chilly nights, tempered by sunny days, at a campout at the Ingalba Nature Reserve, just west of Temora. We were very pleased to have Neil Hermes with us from Sydney. Ingalba, which was formerly a state forest, is one of several reserves centring on grey-box -callitris forest, with some mallee-like eucalypts around the edge. Mallee fowl have been seen here in the past, and we were shown an inactive mound. But earlier grazing has probably driven the birds away. We camped in a regrowth paddock next to the reserve, owned by Ian Thompson, who accompanied us on Saturday. Among the birds seen around the campsite were Scarlet, Flame and Red-capped Robins, Hooded Robins, Grey-crowned Babblers, Brown Treecreepers and Peaceful Doves.

Henry Nix organised parties to make a survey of various habitats in the reserve. The idea was to note how many species were seen in an hour in a given habitat. A surprise for those of us who associated Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters with wettish coastal forest was to find it the most common bird in the reserve. Cedric Bear's party were lucky enough to hear and see a Gilbert Whistler calling near the edge of the reserve. For many of us, the highlight of the weekend came on Saturday night. We heard Barking Owls calling in the distance on Friday night, and on Saturday night heard the famous 'murdered woman' scream, which we were able to recognise thanks to earlier imitations from Henry Nix. Most of us drove to a spot where the owls were often seen. However, we heard no calls, and were about to give up when a torch idly directed up a nearby tree showed a Barking Owl staring at us. We, of course, stared back at it with equal intensity. A second owl was seen in the next tree.

We would all like to thank Ian Thompson and his family for their hospitality and help.

*J. Penhallurick, 86 Bingley Crescent, Fraser, A.C.T. 2615*

NESTING COLONY OF CORMORANTS AND DARTERS ON  
LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN

Henry Nix

For some years a single large weeping willow *Salix babylonica* standing free in open water in the Molonglo River opposite Duntroon has served as a primary roosting site for cormorants, darters and night-herons. The 'whitewashing' of the branches makes the tree very conspicuous from the air and it is easily distinguished on colour aerial photographs commissioned by the NCDC. When the willows are in leaf visibility is obstructed from the near bank on the Dairy Flat Road side. However, good views can be obtained with binoculars from the opposite bank near Duntroon. Purchase of a canoe early in 1979 permitted closer inspection.

On 4 February the tree was the centre of much cacophony and activity. Frequent movements in and out of the tree made counting very difficult, but around 25-30 Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*, 20-24 Little Black Cormorants *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* and 8 Darters *Anhinga melanogaster* were present.

Of 12 nests present, 4 nests were those of the Darter and each had 2-3 fledged young. The remaining 8 nests were occupied by cormorants, but of which species? The Great Cormorants were in breeding plumage and exhibiting a great deal of restless and excited behaviour, with courtship activity evident particularly in close proximity to nests. However, careful inspections revealed that, in every case, the occupants of nests were Little Black Cormorants. On a subsequent visit on 17 March, only one nest was occupied by a Darter, but 7 juveniles were counted perching in adjacent willows together with a total of 9 adults. Only 6 other nests remained and each had 3-4 fledged young of the Little Black Cormorant. What had happened to the other nests? Presumably on successful completion, nests were taken apart and reused by later nesting birds. During this visit we flushed a total of 14 Rufous Night-herons *Nycticorax caledonicus* of which 9 were juveniles. Great Cormorants were still in breeding plumage, but no longer concentrated on and around the nesting tree.

On 19 May the nest total remained at 7 with 6 occupied by Little Black Cormorants feeding fledged young (second brood? third brood?) and one nest occupied by a Darter sitting close. Absences from Canberra prevented more frequent monitoring but it is clear that Lake Burley Griffin now has an established breeding colony of both the Little Black Cormorant and the Darter. Previous records suggest that the Little Pied Cormorant has also bred

successfully in the same general area, if not in the same tree. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Rufous Night-herons also breed in the vicinity. Perhaps in the coming 1979-80 summer season breeding activity of the other species will provide sufficient stimulus for the Great Cormorant to nest. More regular and systematic monitoring of the nesting colony is planned, but great care is necessary to prevent unnecessary disturbance to nesting birds.

*Dr H.A. Nix, 22 Syme Crescent, O'Connor, A.C.T. 2601*

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#### OUT AND ABOUT

*G. Tibicen*

Everyone has heard of the decorations that bower birds use to beautify their bowers. The standard articles quoted are blue plastic straws and biro tops for Satin Bowerbirds and old Worcestershire sauce bottle tops and cartridge cases for Spotted Bowerbirds. Recently however it came to my notice that Spotted Bowerbirds are now using ring pulls from the tops of drink cans. The interesting thing was that the ring pulls were not dropped in front of the bower as normal decorations but actually hung on the twigs forming the bower walls either from the ring itself or in a couple of cases from the curled-over end. This was noted on two different bowers at Cobar and Lake Cargelligo - one bower having four pulls and the other six. Has anybody else noted odd decorations?

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By now most of you will have seen the new bird stamps being issued by Australia Post and formed your own opinions of their artistic merit. Whatever you think of the stamps themselves it is a pity that Australia Post didn't use the standard English names published by the RAOU. I suppose bureaucracy and rationality do not go hand in hand.

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The Australian National Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation has a new chairman. The previous incumbent, Roy Wheeler, resigned at the end of last year and Rex Buckingham was elected to the position on 2 August 1979. Let us wish him well for the task ahead. Perhaps C.O.G. ought to think of joining the National Section - has anybody any views?

## BIRDS AND THE CITY HIGHWAYS

*Doug Ross*

A feature of some species worthy of study is their resilience with respect to major upsets in the landscape in the shape of highways, either in place or under construction. The general area of the Parliamentary Triangle is a good place to consider for this purpose,

The new road going in in front of Parliament House does not appear to concern the hundreds of Galahs that feed (relatively) passively within 50 m of the heavy equipment at work. Masked Lapwings feed contentedly within the clover leaf approaches to Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and the median strips of Commonwealth Avenue itself appear to be a favoured feeding spot for Red-rumped Parrots.

Again, the Rondpont pool on Parkes Way is generally a good spot to see a duck, a cormorant or an egret. This pool has even attracted a Pacific Heron seen at 9 a.m. on 26 May 1979. The bird population there was even larger and more varied on 9 June between 9.30 a.m. and 10 a.m. when there were to be seen actively feeding or seeking food:

Little Black Cormorant	2	Great Egret	
Little Pied Cormorant	1	Intermediate Egret	1
White-faced Heron	2	Pacific Black Duck	8
Pacific Heron	1		

At the time, two workmen were using a bulky mechanical scoop to clean the pond. The interesting question is whether the birds were feeding because of, or in spite of, the cleaning activity. At the time traffic on the adjacent roads was of the usual Saturday intensity.

*A.D. Ross, 64 Sprent Street, Narrabundah, A.C.T. 2604*

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## ODD OBS

### RAINBOW BEE-EATER IN THE SUBURBS

*Steve Wilson*

10 October 1979 was a windy day with a strong westerly blowing. During the morning I heard many calls of the Rainbow Bee-eater and looked up to see a flock of about twenty flying in swallow-like manner in the shelter of the eastern side of our local hill 'Rocky Knob', which has an almost sheer eastern face. The birds remained there in flight for about ten minutes.

## AN AZURE KINGFISHER NEAR BRAIDWOOD

Jack Slobbe

About 9 a.m. on the clear frosty morning of 13 June 1979 during my three-monthly atlas check of the 10' square, my attention was drawn to movement amongst the piles on the side of the bridge which crosses Jembaicumbene Creek on the main Braidwood to Araluen road. On stopping the car a small bird flew low and fast in a northerly direction to a smaller bridge 30-40 metres away. Vision was however obscured due to the relatively low sun.

On investigation I managed to flush a bird with a short stumpy tail, a rich deep blue back and a large over-sized bill. This bird flew back to where I had initially seen the movement. The bridge spans, quite a large, deep pool at this point. Despite only the momentary sighting I was in no doubt it was a kingfisher and a subsequent check of Slater's Field guide identified it as the Azure Kingfisher *Ceyx azureus*, which the guide indicated could occur in the area. However, in spite of a further fifteen minutes search of the area under the bridge I was unable to locate the bird again.

I left the area to continue my atlassing feeling rather disappointed at having made a rare sighting but one that was perhaps not adequate for a positive atlas recording. A further search at my return about 2 p.m. again was fruitless. However I stopped about 1 km north where the road crosses a tributary of the creek, at a place close to a small lagoon which I wished to check prior to leaving the square (I had seen a pair of Hardhead *Aythya australis* there for the first time that morning). My attention was attracted to a small squat bird sitting facing me on the fence across the road and about 10-15 metres away. To my surprise and delight it was the Azure Kingfisher again but before I could get a good look at it through binoculars it was off, under the small bridge only to reappear on the fence at the opposite side, again about 15 metres away. As it sat there for at least thirty seconds, half turned away from me, I could get a clear sight of it before it flew off low and fast across the nearby lagoon. The bird was almost exactly as drawn in Slater, with a short stumpy tail, brilliant blue back and head with darker wing feathers, orange-brown breast and massive black bill, but while the white spot on the neck was clearly visible, that in front of the eye was indistinct. The habitat was perhaps out of character for the species, the immediate general area being flat tablelands plain with only the occasional exotic tree, all of which were leafless at the time.

I left the area to continue my way home feeling excited and privileged at having sighted this superb little bird twice in the one day.

*Dr J. Slobbe, 8 Chauvel Circle, Chapman, A.C.T. 2611*

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#### BLUE BONNETS NEAR GUNNING

*G. Weatherstone*

The first sighting of Blue Bonnets *Northiella haematogaster* was early on the afternoon of 15 May 1979 when three were observed feeding on the ground in the shade of a louquat tree in the back yard. Because of a high paling fence they were able to be observed at a distance of about 6 metres for several minutes both with and without binoculars. Not having seen them before I was particularly keen to note sufficient detail for identification, which I was able to do later from books in my possession.

They were again sighted on 20 May and one of them was photographed, and although the photograph was taken from a distance the bird is readily recognisable. On 25 May they reappeared where first observed and, when startled, settled on the fence where they remained for a minute or so before flying into a deciduous tree where they were again photographed. The last sighting was on 3 June when they were once again feeding in the back yard.

It is possible and probable that they were present for the whole intervening period, as there were a number of Eastern Rosellas *Platycercus eximius* and Crimson Rosellas *Platycercus elegans* present at the time and for that reason the Blue Bonnets passed unnoticed. However the dates mentioned were specific observations.

At close range they are birds of striking appearance; the beautiful blue of the face and parts of the wing and tail plus the red, yellow and brown patches adorning the breast and under parts and the overall brown-grey make them very attractive.

Two features in particular mark them as different from other parrots of the area. When startled they stand very erect and slightly raise the crown feathers and at the same time give warning chook-chook-chook calls in quick succession; also when preening, which they did while perched in a silky oak tree close by, they have a pleasing soft whistling chatter.

*G. Weatherstone, Lyndfield Park, R.M.B. 647, Gunning, N.S.W. 2581*

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