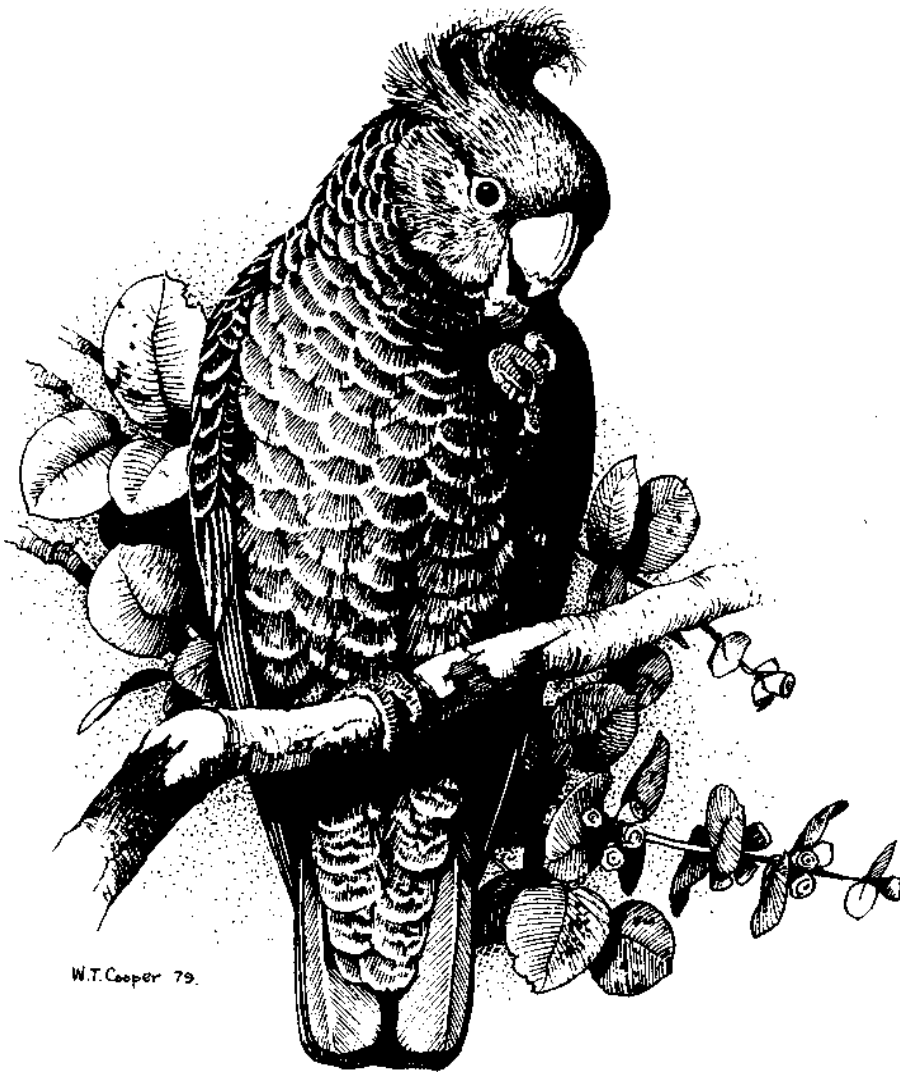


CANBERRA BIRD NOTES

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W.T. Cooper 79.

EDITORIAL

In the Editorial of the January 1981 issue of CBN group members were asked to comment on various aspects of the publishing of the Annual Bird Report. A number of members took the opportunity to comment to committee members on the topic or to write to the Editor. Thanks go to all of those people.

It appears that members appreciate the current detailed annual bird report. Indeed, Steve Marchant of Moruya ranks the COG Report as being of a high standard compared to other reports produced in Australia. The report is not for light bedtime reading and so a coded form is recommended. Richard Mason feels that the detailed information needs to be presented in as much concise form as possible. This will save on space and costs at the same time as allowing all information to be included. This opinion is supported by Mrs C C Crowe of Berrima who also states that a list of observers is all that is required and not full surnames beside each observation. Perhaps surnames or initials could be limited to unusual records and contributions on common birds could be acknowledged in summary form at the beginning of the report.

So in summary the following are the most common answers to the questions asked in Vol 6, p 2. These answers are based on those forwarded to the Editor either verbally or by correspondence.

- i) Should the Report be contained within one 24 page issue of CBN?
The Report should be as brief but accurate as possible but not necessarily confined to 24 pages.
- ii) Should the Report be published in full in CBN? Yes
- iii) Should the Report be published as a separate item? Not unless absolutely necessary because of costs or availability of surplus material for publication.
- iv) Should the Report be short 'chatty' notes? No
- v) Should the Report be an exact notation of what has been seen?
- vi) Yes.
- vii) Should observers be acknowledged by full name after each
- viii) entry? This is desirable but may not be possible because of lack of space and may be reduced to initials only or full acknowledgement for unusual records only.
- ix) Do you read the Report? It seems that some members do, some members feel that all members should, and all members use it as a reference source.

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE:
RELATIONS WITH OTHER BIRDS DURING NESTING

E C Metcalf

In 1975 and 1976 I had noted the nest of a pair of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes (BFCS's) *Coracina novaehollandiae* in a large Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora* adjacent to my house in O'Connor.

In 1977 I had had the chance to observe the pair more closely. They had lived a precarious life on a small nest of twigs and spider-web, cemented with spit. It was on the northern side of the tree, about 25 m up.

The following year, on 26 September 1978, a pair of Australian Magpie-larks *Grallina Cyanoleuca* had arrived first, and built a nest toward the southern side of the tree, and were already brooding when the BFCS's arrived on 6 October 1978.

The two nest areas were well apart and there was no friction. Indeed, they seemed to like the work of shared policing of the tree and its environs against the attention of falcons, sparrow-hawks, kookaburras and such like.

Compared with the busy life of the magpie-larks, the life of the BFCS's seemed leisurely. They had immediately selected the precarious fork they had used before situated on the northern side of the tree. They draped it with spider-web. Then they went away for a couple of days.

They returned, inspected it, and talked about it a lot. Finally, on 2 November 1978 they began to build. Nearly a month had passed since their arrival.

They used the building materials as before - gobs of spider-web emerging from their mouths cemented twigs no bigger than match-sticks; most were smaller, and were joined together if the gap was too wide. Twigs came from both eucalypts and European trees. The birds carried a great deal of web - the air was full of it. They took a long time to clear their bills as the result was a tacky substance.

On 2 November 1978 the magpie-lark family left the area of their own nest. The nest of the BFCS's seemed to be complete, but the birds could only be heard now, and not seen from my garden.

The evening of 29 November was one of thunderstorm with driving wind and rain. Their nest disappeared. I did not see the BFCS's on the tree again that year, but I knew they were building not far away.

The magpie-larks remained and raised a second family from 16 December 1978 to 2 February 1979. Four days later, on 6 February 1979, the BFCS's brought their single young one to the tree, and this juvenile stayed there, mostly by himself, for three days. (I think he needed the vital food of grubs from a eucalypt tree, having been bred in an area of European trees.)

The spring of 1979 was still a black-and-white affair, only, this time, the tree was pre-empted by a pair of Australian Magpies (CBN, Vol 5, No 4, p 4). As from 12 July 1979 these birds had brooked no opposition from the smaller residents. The magpie-lark had struggled obstinately to return, but finally began a nest close by. Unfortunately, the hen had suffered a damaged leg, cause unknown, and the magpie-larks raised no family that season.

The BFCS's put up no fight. They arrived to check the old nest site on 29 November 1979, but bowed to the magpies and again built elsewhere.

To everyone's relief, including our own, on 26 June 1980, the magpies began pulling out their old strings and wire, and carrying their demolishings for rebuilding about 150 m away.

The magpie-larks returned, the female still limping. The cock and the hen could not agree on a nest-site. They made three false starts before finally choosing the highest possible central part of the tree, which choice fatefully moved them closer to the BFCS's accustomed, but as yet, unoccupied site, on the eucalypt.

On 12 September 1980 they began to build. On 2 October 1980 just two days before brooding commenced, the BFCS's arrived and innocently began to build. They brought in web as before, and in addition some streamers of wool they had found, some threads about 20 cm long. (The wool blew away, of course, unmixed, as it must have been, with saliva.)

Immediately, there was trouble. The two nest sites were closer than ever before. The BFCS's were conciliatory. For two days they looked for a different place on the tree. Not finding one, they returned to their accustomed site and went on building and, this time, defending. They seemed to mark time, waiting for the magpie-larks to go.

On 21 October 1980, after the hatching of their eggs, the magpie-larks were to issue an ultimatum. This year, there would be no compromise. On 6 November 1980, eight days before the young magpie-larks were to fly, the battle took place. It lasted for three minutes, and was doomed to failure for the BFCS's; but while it lasted, it was fast, and in deadly earnest.

Under compulsion, the BFCS's left that tree. In 1978, as we have seen, the magpie-larks seemed disposed to tolerate the BFCS's. Robinson comments on this toleration on the part of magpie-larks at nesting-time (Emu, Vol 47, 1947-1948, 'A Study in Behaviour', Part 3, p 24). However, this season the BFCS's were also consistent in attempting to maintain the continuity of a nest-site on a eucalypt, albeit unsuccessfully. And, once again, in 1981, they brought their offspring back to visit their old home.

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NESTING ASSOCIATIONS OF THE NOISY FRIARBIRD

Alan Morris

In Canberra Bird Notes (1981 Out and About 6:46) mention is made of the nesting association between Leaden Flycatchers *Myiagra rubecula* and Noisy Friarbirds *Philemon corniculatus* in the Canberra Botanic Gardens. In the Coonabarabran district, including the Warrumbungle Ranges and the Pilliga Scrub, the Leaden Flycatcher is a regular summer migrant but in the six years (1975-80) of my residence here I have not been able to locate a single nest. However, a number of breeding records have been obtained through seeing adults feeding young.

In contrast to the situation at Canberra I have records of a number of Noisy Friarbirds nesting associations between it and a large range of other passerines. Of the 10 associations recorded, the highest number (six) have been with the Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*. As Willie Wagtails commence nesting in August/September but friarbirds not until November in this district, it is most likely that the wagtail's earlier nest is located close to that of an Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* or Australian Magpie-lark *Grallina cyanoleuca*. The distance between the wagtail's nest and that of the friarbird has ranged from 2 m to 16 m and all nests have been in eucalypts or Rough-barked Apples *Angophora floribunda*.

In the same period three Australian Magpie-larks nested in association with Noisy Friarbirds as have two Striped Honeyeaters *Plectorhyncha lanceolata*, two Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes *Coracina novaehollandiae*, one Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus* and one nest of a White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone olivacea*. The latter nest was located two metres from the friarbirds nest and a similar distance from that of a Willie Wagtail but only the warbler's nest was successful due to interference caused by children to the other two nests. It is obvious that birds nesting later in the season can benefit from the pugnacious temperament of the Noisy Friarbirds.

Many of the nesting associations were in multiples of three or more and these are set out below:

Noisy Friarbird X Willie Wagtail (3)

Noisy Friarbird X Willie Wagtail X White-throated Gerygone

Noisy Friarbird X Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike X Dusky Woodswallow

Noisy Friarbird X Striped Honeyeater (2)

Noisy Friarbird X Australian Magpie-lark

Noisy Friarbird X Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike X Australian Magpie-lark
X Willie Wagtail

Noisy Friarbird X Australian Magpie-lark X Willie Wagtail

Alan K Morris, PO Box 39, Coonabarabran, NSW, 2875

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE ACT RAPTOR GROUP

Jerry Olsen

A raptor study group was formed in 1980 after a brief survey in 1979 indicated that enough raptors were breeding in or near Canberra to support a larger survey of Canberra and its suburbs. Members were: Julie Cardew, Kim Day, Bob Digan, Tony Lawson, David Mollinson, Slim Metcalf, Diana Metcalf, Rosemary Metcalf, Penny Olsen, Jerry Olsen, Tony Ross, Alison Rowell, Tony Stokes.

Our aim was to direct and co-ordinate the efforts of those individuals already studying or interested in raptors. Our broad objectives were to:

1. determine which species nested in or near the city and where;
2. determine raptor densities within and between species;
3. ascertain what these raptors were eating;
4. obtain breeding information.

This information could then be compared to data from other areas or examined for long term changes.

Two areas were outlined for study (see maps opposite). Though we don't feel we have yet located all raptors in the study areas as some sections have not been adequately searched, a large number of raptors were recorded and prey remains collected. Most pairs present during the breeding season produced young. Including the 1979 observations they were:

- 2 pairs Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*
- 4 pairs Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus*
- 1 pair Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*
- 3 pairs Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*
- 4 pairs Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*
- 2 pairs Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus notatus*
- 5 pairs Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*

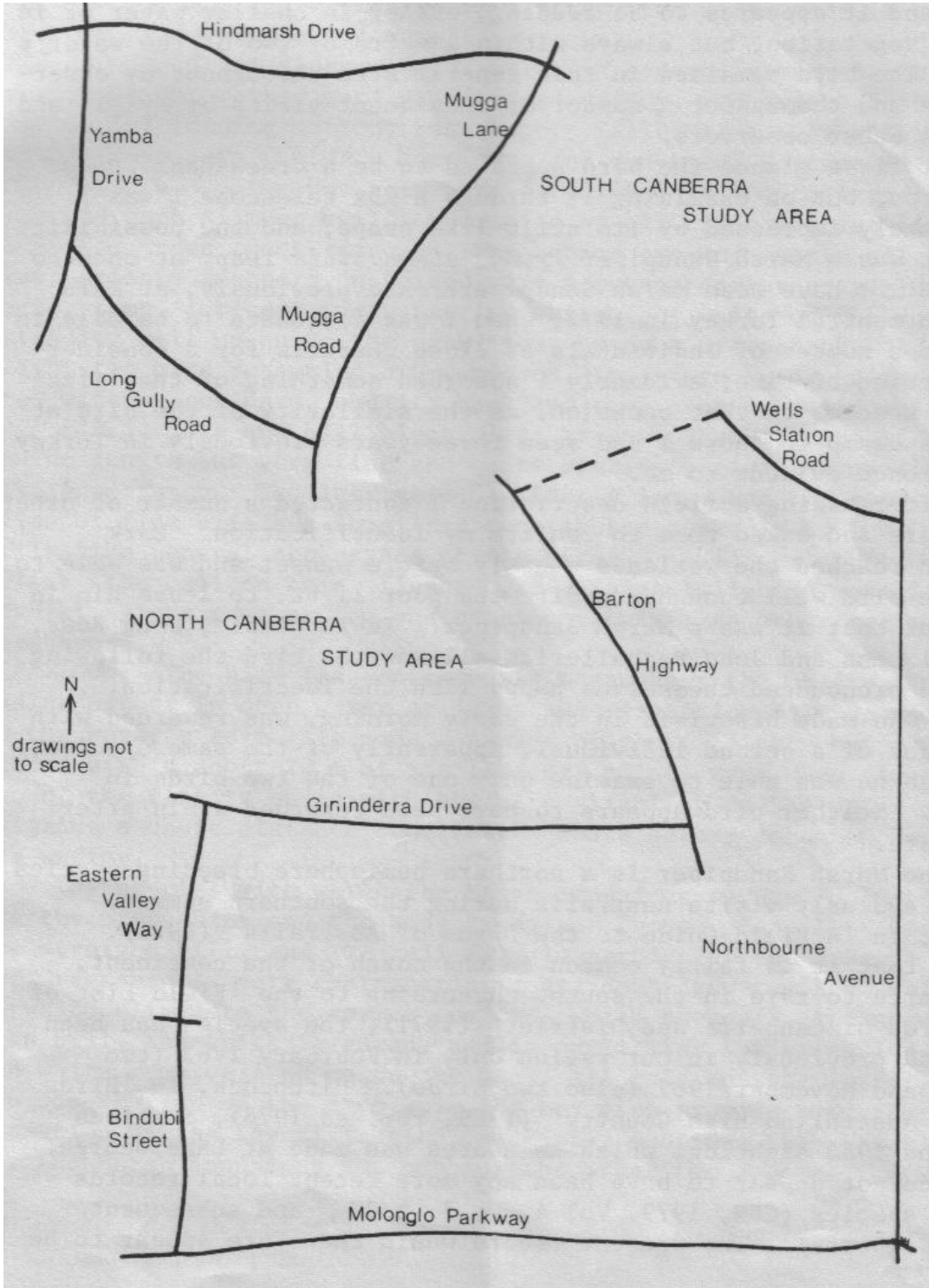
Other small areas were also visited all within 3 km of suburban housing. Raptors located were:

- 3 pairs Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
- 2 pairs Little Eagle
- 1 pair Australian Kestrel

It is interesting that these raptors utilised introduced pines *Pinus radiata* in city parks as well as metal, high voltage power pylons to nest on, and introduced birds and mammals such as Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, House Mouse *Mus musculus* and Rabbit *Oryatolagus unicolor* as food. A non-urban grazing area that Penny and I surveyed in 1978-79 (CBN, Jan 1981, p 42) had more Brown Falcons, fewer Little Eagles and no Collared Sparrowhawks. Because of the relatively good populations of Little Eagles and Collared Sparrowhawks in or near Canberra David Mollison in co-operation with us has undertaken a special study of the former and Slim Metcalf has been conducting a special study of urban Collared Sparrowhawks.

We welcome any new members to the group who are serious about studying raptors intensively in or near Canberra and we would greatly appreciate any reports of breeding raptors, or pairs of raptors seen consistently in a particular location.

J Olsen, RMB 1705, Read Road, BUTTON, NSW, 2620



MARSH SANDPIPER AT THE JERRABOMBERRA WETLANDS
Alistair Drake

During a late afternoon visit to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 7 December 1980 I noticed an unusual wader in the 'Kelly's Swamp' pond. When found, the bird was located on the western side of the pond, and it appeared to be feeding, either in shallow water or in marshy vegetation, but always within a metre or two of the water's edge. The bird remained in this general area throughout my observations and throughout a number of subsequent visits by myself and several other observers.

At first glance the bird appeared to be a Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, but on examining it through a 25x telescope I was immediately impressed by its stilt-like shape, and the possibility that it was a Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* leapt at once to my mind. I have seen Marsh Sandpipers once previously, at Kulu Golu in central Turkey in 1977, when I was fortunate to be able to examine a number of individuals at close quarters for a considerable period of time; evidently I absorbed something of the 'jizz' of the species on that occasion, as the similarity of the bird at Kelly's Swamp to those I had seen three years previously in Turkey was at once evident to me.

After taking a field description I contacted a number of other observers and asked them to confirm my identification. Mark Clayton reached the wetlands shortly before sunset and was able to see the bird well enough, despite the poor light, to leave him in no doubt that it was a Marsh Sandpiper. Kevin Windle, Doug Ross, Michael Lenz and John Penhallurick all saw the bird the following day and pronounced themselves happy with the identification. Kevin, who made his visit in the early morning, was rewarded with the sight of a second individual, apparently of the same species, although he was able to examine only one of the two birds in detail. Neither bird appears to have been recorded again after this date.

The Marsh Sandpiper is a northern hemisphere breeding species which regularly visits Australia during the southern summer. Pizzey, in 'A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia' (1980), states that it is fairly common in the north of the continent, but scarce to rare in the south. According to the 'Field List of the Birds of Canberra and District' (1971), the species has been recorded previously in our region only in February 1963 (two birds) and November 1967 (also two birds). Hitchcock, in 'Birds in the Australian High Country' (1969, revised 1976), mentions only the 1963 sighting, which he states was made at Lake George. There do not appear to have been any more recent local records of the species (CBN, 1979, Vol 4, No 7, p 20, and subsequent annual reports). The present record would therefore appear to be

the third for our district, and the birds the fifth and sixth individuals. Pizzey states that the frequency of records of the Marsh Sandpiper in southern Australia is increasing; he reports that flocks of more than 200 birds have been observed on the Hunter River estuary, NSW, so the occurrence of the species in Canberra can hardly be regarded as surprising.

The following description is derived from notes made in the field by Kevin Windle and myself:

SIZE AND SHAPE: A sleek wader similar in general appearance to a Greenshank but rather more slender and dainty, and somewhat stilt-like in its feeding actions and shape. Taller than nearby Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata* and Red-kneed Dotterels *Erythrogonys cinctus*, but this size difference is due to larger legs and much slimmer build; body size of all three species similar.

PLUMAGE: Crown, neck, side of face behind eye and mantle all pale grey; primary feathers on folded wing a rather darker grey. Underparts, rump, forehead and eyestripe white, the white on the rump extending well up on to the back, just as on a Greenshank. In flight the bird resembled a Greenshank, its wings being uniformly grey without any bars, and its back and rump conspicuously white.

BARE PARTS: Eye and bill black, legs green. The bill was of medium length but very fine and quite straight, giving a needle-like appearance. The legs were distinctly long, and the combination of fine bill and long legs contributed markedly to the stilt-like general appearance of the bird.

VOICE: The call on being flushed was a faint, slightly metallic 'tchik', given once or, on one occasion, twice; no other calls were heard.

BEHAVIOUR: The bird fed continuously throughout the observations, wading either in open water or in marshy vegetation, always close to the water's edge. It made a number of short flights but always landed within about 20 m of its take-off point, even when flushed. Two of the flights ended with the bird alighting on the water and swimming a short distance towards the shore before recommencing its wading.

The species with which the Marsh Sandpiper may be confused are the Greenshank and the Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*. Size, the straight bill, and the call (and in particular the absence of the Greenshank's very characteristic strident 'tew-tew¹tew¹' call) serve to eliminate the former species, while the call, the needle-like bill, the white forehead, and in particular the extension of the white rump well up on to the back, all rule out the latter. The observation of the bird swimming may also provide some confirmation of the identification, as Pizzey mentions this behaviour for the Marsh Sandpiper but not for the other two species.

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IDENTIFICATION OF WATTLEBIRDS

Mark Clayton

There are three species of wattlebirds in Australia and all are endemic to Australia. They are the largest of the Australian honeyeaters.

The first is the Yellow Wattlebird *Anthochaera paradoxa*, which is confined to Tasmania with occasional sightings on King Island. It is the largest of the three wattlebirds and is very similar in colouration to the Red Wattlebird. It differs in having a much longer tail and long pendulous yellow fleshy wattles on the side of its head. The bird inhabits forested country.

Because it is not found anywhere near the local area I will not deal in detail with this species.

The second species is the Red Wattlebird *A. carunculata*, which is quite common in the local area. It is a large noisy honeyeater, inhabiting wet sclerophyll and dry forests. It is found from south-eastern Queensland, down the Great Dividing Range in southeast Australia to the Adelaide region in South Australia. The range may then be continuous across the southern Nullabor Plain (which does have a broken covering of small mallee type eucalypts) to south-west Western Australia where the species is relatively common.

The Red Wattlebird's plumage is dark grey brown on the back and head, with small pale streaks in the centre of the feathers. The breast is paler with heavier striations while the belly shows the best field character - it is bright yellow and this is quite a distinct feature. The wattles are small and red in adult birds and cannot always be seen, while in juveniles the wattles are absent.

In the Canberra region it is probably a winter migrant, leaving the high country in late autumn. Part of the population leave the area and the remainder are altitudinal migrants into the lower valley areas of Canberra and surrounding districts.

The bird is chiefly insectivorous, but will take nectar, especially from plants of the family Proteaceae - eg. banksias and grevillias.

The third species of this group is the Little Wattlebird *A. Chrysoptera*, which is the smallest and lacks wattles.

This bird is particularly tied to the banksia scrub of the coastal areas, from central coastal Queensland, south through NSW, Victoria, to as far as the York Peninsula and Kangaroo Island in South Australia. An isolated population occurs in the south-west corner of Western Australia and some authorities are now regarding this as possibly a new separate species. This is similar to the pattern in two other honeyeater species - the Eastern and Western Spinebills *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* and *A. superciliosus*.

This bird is a uniform dark brown colour with distinct striations in the centre of the feathers. The best and most easily

seen diagnostic feature is the chestnut area in the wings. Of course this can only be seen when the bird flies, but like the other wattlebirds, the Little Wattlebird is extremely active. It is generally found in small groups and is possibly nomadic following the flowering of banksias. It is during these wanderings that it may turn up in the local area. It is considered to be a rare vagrant in our area, but on the south coast near Canberra it is particularly common in *Banksia ericifolia*. Elsewhere along the coast it can also be found in *B. serrata* and *B. integrifolia*.

As mentioned earlier, the wattlebirds are very noisy, they have a variety of loud raucous calls and attention is often drawn to them by these notes. All are very pugnacious and especially when nesting will chase off any bird in their vicinity.

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WHY GO TO POINT HUT? (HONEYEATER MOVEMENTS)

Doug Ross

Devotees of Kelly's Swamp are familiar with the dirt track that leads off Dairy Road along the southern bank of the Molonglo. The track is particularly good for sightings (according to the season) of Sacred Kingfisher, Darter and Rufous Night Heron.

The willows between the track and the river may also be a link in the migratory chains for honeyeaters moving through the Canberra area.

On 8 April 1979, at about 0930 hours (soon after heavy morning rains had lifted) I saw about 20 flocks, ranging from 10 to 30, of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus chrysops* moving along the line of willows.

The birds called in the air and moved, in spurts, from tree to tree, in typical migratory fashion.

One unusual feature was that birds were moving in both directions: up-river, the direction taken by most of the flocks seen, and down-river. It was not possible, of course, to establish whether the same birds were going up-river then down (or vice versa). There is a continuous tree line from the mouth of the Molonglo to well upstream of the Dairy Flat Bridge, that provides a protected route.

It is possible that the birds seen were simply 'milling', preparatory to definitive migratory movement, but if that were the case, some flocks were 'milling' over a linear distance of about 200 metres.

I had not seen Yellow-faced Honeyeaters in the area at this time in earlier years so if the willows are a migratory route, the route could be new.

D Ross, 64 Sprent Street, NARRABUNDAH, ACT, 2604

July 1981

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At 1500 hours on 28 October 1980 whilst walking in Haig Park, Braddon, I saw a male Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus* about 10 m above me. He saw me but paid little attention. He continued fluttering and flying from one tree to another, climbing as he went - 'climbing', because he seemed to use his feet as much as his wings. Finally, he lodged in a junction of three boughs of some size, against a single main trunk, only 5 m from the top of a pine about 35 m high.

Twenty seconds later, he left; and whilst I sought a better vantage-point, he flew into view again in the same flapping circuitous way; only this time he was carrying a thin dried pine-twigg about 200 mm long. It was then I recognised the beginnings of a nest. He spent about two minutes adjusting the furniture before leaving. There was no sign of a female bird.

Two days later, I visited the nest at 1045 hours, and saw a male bird seated on a low bough, two trees away from the 'nest'. He seemed to be looking for something. He inspected the area of his immediate bough, and of another closeby, before flying away.

When he had gone, I searched the ground at the foot of this tree and found a half-eaten young sparrow, cold, but recently killed. I checked the area further, and found another body in a similar condition, but about two or three days old. By this time, the bird returned with another freshly-killed sparrow, and began to eat it in a different place. He was harassed by ravens, and moved out of my sight, and I left.

At 1500 hours on the same day, I saw him again, and this time he was building with pine-twigs; but, in addition, on one side of the nest lay a spray of fresh green oak-leaves.

Over the month of November, I inspected this area on twelve occasions, and on ten of them I saw evidence of his building and eating. I was never present for more than one hour.

The bird was vocal, announcing himself before I would see him, with an amiable repetitive call: 'Chew, chew, chew, ...'. The call changed its note for different events, sometimes not unlike a blackbird's cautionary noise.

SUMMARY: 1. Over 30 days I saw only a cock in the area.

2. He was most vocal, whether flying, feeding or building.

3. He selected a site, built and decorated a nest.

4. He fed himself at the spot, and made provision to feed a mate and/or a family. The sparrows he provided were partially

prepared, the head and neck having been removed.

QUESTIONS: Did this bird go through the motions of setting-up house for one month before giving up, because he had failed to find a mate? OR Did he have a mate and family in a different nest?

It is known (Ian Newton, 'Population Ecology of Raptors', Berkhamstead, 1979, p 88) that some raptors will build more than one nest, and that it is largely done by the cock. Is this performance known to be so of the sparrowhawk?

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BREEDING NOTES ON HOODED PLOVER

Gerald Horey

In front of where I live at Bingi which is about 15 km south of Moruya by road, are two beaches separated by a rocky outcrop known locally as Grey Rocks. It was on the landward side of Grey Rocks about 100 m from either beach that we first saw on 27 December 1980, a nest in a shallow dish of what had once been an Aboriginal midden.

The nest contained three eggs and appeared to have been fabricated. It was elliptical in shape, about 600 x 400 mm, and consisted only of quartz stones with an inner sanctum of small chips up to 5 mm containing the eggs and an outer ring of much larger stones up to 75 mm in size.

The eggs obviously belonged to the plover family though to which species I could not be sure. We had to wait two days before we saw and identified the sitting bird as a Hooded Plover *Charadrius rubricollis*. Thereafter until 19 January 1981, when we found the nest empty we saw the sitting bird every day usually on the nest but otherwise hovering nearby. On 2 January there were only two eggs, one presumably having been taken by a Christmas visitor. On two occasions we saw two birds in the area, male and female.

On 22 January David Purchase who was staying in our next door neighbour's house told me that he had seen a pair of Hooded Plovers with a single young on the left hand beach which unreasonably Shirley and I regard as our own. Surely these must have been the breeding birds we had been watching for, in three and a half years during which we have been living here, I have never seen another Hooded Plover. The only other sighting was on 7 February when I saw three Hooded Plovers on the seaward edge of a mixed flock of Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae* and Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* in much the same place as David first saw them.

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FIELD TRIP TO LAKE ILLAWARRA REGION

David E Pfanner

A small but enthusiastic group from COG were treated to some superb birding in late January 1980 during a field trip to the Lake Illawarra region. Alistair Drake, the group's leader, organised and led an excellent programme that included Lake Illawarra, Macquarie Rivulet, Windang Bridge, Coomaditchy Lagoon, Barren Grounds, Minnamurra Falls and Comerong Island. The Illawarra Bird Observers Club were very helpful in showing the local hot spots to the Canberra tourists.

The following species were the highlights for the Canberra group at Lake Illawarra, Macquarie Rivulet, Windang Bridge or Coomaditchy Lagoon: the Great, Pied, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants, Hardhead, Marsh Harrier, Eastern Curlew, Tattler sp., Greenshank, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Stint, Pacific Gull and Little Tern.

The stop at Fitzroy Falls produced features like the Gang-Gang' Cockatoo, White's (Scaly) Thrush, Origma (Rock Warbler) and Speckled Warbler.

At Barren Grounds, despite rain and fog, the group turned up the Ground Parrot, Southern Emu-wren, Eastern Bristlebird and Beautiful Firetail. On a forest road near Barren Grounds, additional species sighted were the Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Australian King-Parrot and Superb Lyrebird.

Minnamurra Falls was crowded with holiday makers but this did not prevent the Black-faced Monarch, Yellow-throated Scrubwren and other species from showing up for the visiting COG birders. Moving on to Comerong Island, Alistair Drake spotted a Little Penguin in the waters near the ferry, while on the island itself we saw (unidentified) dark shearwaters offshore, and Mongolian Plover.

To conclude this note, participants in the Lake Illawarra field trip want to record their appreciation to Dave Thompson and members of the Illawarra Bird Observers Club who helped make this outing such a success.

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INDEX OF CBN VOL 1 TO VOL 4

Kay Anway has compiled a complete species index for the first four volumes of CBN and these will be published shortly. This index augments the four individual volume indices and will be published in the old smaller format which was discontinued at the end of Vol 4.

COLLARED SPARROWHAWK COLLECTING TWIGS FOR NEST

Penny Olsen

At 1315 hours on 28 October 1980 in a belt of old, established pine trees in suburban Canberra I watched a male Collared Sparrow-hawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus* arrive at a nest (found previously by Slim Metcalf). The sparrowhawk arrived silently alighted in the tree next to the nest tree, and peeped softly several times. He then proceeded to tug forcefully at a dry pine twig attached to a branch. He attempted unsuccessfully to snap off the twig - holding it in his beak and pulling sharply backwards flapping his wings to maintain balance at the end of each tug. Hopping to another branch he tried another twig. He was successful with a third twig which he carried to the nest in his beak and carefully placed it, peeping softly twice.

Leaving the nest tree he returned to the adjacent tree and hopped around the branches after a Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala*. Neither bird appeared particularly worried about the encounter. This sequence of events took approximately 5 minutes.

It is interesting that this nest was one half to two thirds completed on the date the male was first found and on this and subsequent visits no female was seen although the male continued to build and called softly during our visits. It is also of interest that fresh oak leaves were used to line the nest.

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WHISKERED TERNS ON LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN

Denis Wilson

A loosely formed flock of Whiskered Terns *Chlidonias hybrida* was observed circling low and occasionally feeding late in the afternoon of 4 January 1980. The birds were seen flying over Lake Burley Griffin between the mouth of Sullivans Creek and the boat jetty near the Canberra Hospital carpark. The terns were flying rapidly and moving in an area between the shore and Springbank Island. There was an easterly wind building up as I left the area 5 minutes later and the flock was now in a tighter formation and flying over choppy water near the hospital carpark.

The birds were identified by their medium size, silvery white upperparts and dark underparts. Although I did not have binoculars present a clear view of the birds was obtained in the bright light. I am familiar with this species from sightings in north-western Victoria.

D Wilson, 39 Anzac Park, REID, ACT, 2601

A FIELD GUIDE TO NESTS AND EGGS OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS:
Gordon Beruldsen: Rigby 1980: Pp 437: Col Pl1 80:
ISBN 0 7270 12029: \$16.95

At long last a book for the average bird watcher that does not duplicate a book already on the market and provides him/her with information not otherwise available (unless they could afford North or Campbell's books - or the Wren facsimile of Campbell). If you are interested in trying to find nests and/or identify eggs then this book is for you. The format is easy to follow and for once the author hasn't had to boost his own ego by inventing his own names for certain species but is willing to accept an existing standard - surely a first time for Australian bird books!

The text at times can be repetitious and in some cases does not marry with the illustrations. The Fairy-wrens are illustrated I by three clutches in the plates which look different to me yet the I descriptions indicate they are the same. Also I am a bit worried in case the book raises the latent collector's urge hidden in most people and causes an increase in the number of egg-collectors around. However, most people who would have in the past succumbed to the egg-collecting urge have the alternative avenue of 'ticking' available to them and can satisfy their urges thus.

A useful, helpful book for the bird watcher that says something new at last.

STEVE WILSON - LIFE MEMBERSHIP OF COG

At the April meeting of COG it was announced that the Committee had elected Steve Wilson a Life Member of COG. As was noted in the Editorial of the previous issue, Steve was Editor of CBN from 1976-1981 and was President of COG for a short period. He has been an active member of the group and committee since 1964 when the group was a branch of the RAOU.

Steve has written many articles in a number of journals on the birds of Canberra and the region beginning in 1963 with articles in Emu. He wrote entries in the 'Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds' and wrote many of the passerine entries in 'Birds in the Australian High Country'. Steve has now retired from an active position on the COG Committee and it is timely that his efforts are now recognised by the conferring of Life Membership of COG. The Committee, on behalf of all COG members, thanks Steve for his contribution to Canberra ornithology over the last 30 years.

I now look forward to many years of contributions from Steve's pen to fill future issues of CBN. Ed.

In these days of many and varied conservation societies people tend to overlook the major problems we are faced with, concentrating only on saving 'their' bushland, 'their' wetland area or 'their' state parks. In fact they concentrate on the trees and not the forest - though in all fairness one must admit a forest is composed of many trees and if the trees are removed - no forest!

All this is a terribly roundabout way of saying that one of the major world wide issues facing us is the wholesale clearing of trees and forests without any global realisation of the effect it will have on our climate. One society that is concerned with fostering the love of trees and forests all over the world is the Men of the Trees founded by Richard St Barbe Baker in Kenya in 1922.

The group has now spread to Australia and hope to encourage people who work on the land to plant trees and to regard them as a friend and not an enemy and also to train young people to understand, respect and plant trees wherever they go. They would like to foster the endowment of plantations/shade plantings by private organisations and to have their own members plant trees in places where no-one else has bothered such as car parks, school yards and foreshores.

If you would like further information on Men of the Trees or would like to join, write to the West Australian President, Mr Charles Peaty, 1179 Hay Street, WEST PERTH, WA, 6005.

The New South Wales Forestry Commission (talking of trees) has recently had a fight on its hands with its forestry practices receiving more and more opposition both verbally and (more recently) physically in Terania Creek. Therefore, you would think they, the NSWFC, would be very conscious of 'doing the right thing' when releasing any further Environmental Impact Statements on logging. They have to prepare EIS's now and so they have done so on the controversial question of logging Washpool rainforests. However, when releasing the EIS they waited until 23 December before doing it and charged \$25.00 per copy; obviously not caring too much about public convenience. But then why should they since submissions on the EIS have to be returned to guess who? Why the proponents of the logging - the New South Wales Forestry Commission!

Don't forget if you are in Melbourne for the weekend of 24-26 July, VORG are holding a conference on 'Ideas for Local Ornithological Research in the Eighties' and one of the speakers is Michael Lenz on his local bird censusing. Other topics will cover work that can be or has been done by the backyard bird watcher. Further details from: VORG Conference Secretariat, PO Box 203, SOUTH MELBOURNE, VIC, 3205.

The Bird Observers Club are at long last about to prepare an annual bird report for Victoria. If you have any unusual records for that State and wish to submit them for the Bird Report then please submit them to the BOC, PO Box 185, NUNAWADING, VIC, 3131.

Research Note No 42 of the Forestry Commission of NSW is in 'Effects of the Eden Woodchip Industry on Terrestrial Vertebrates with Recommendations for Management' and the authors are H F Recher, W Rohan-Jones and P Smith. In it is mention of a new bird to the Australian list, the SCARED Kingfisher! I just hope the recommendations for management are better than the proof reading or our descendants will be in trouble! (In the paper by the way, the SCARED Kingfisher is regarded as one of the species that is 'sensitive' to wood chipping, which is why it is SCARED, I suppose.)

A nice little publication that I have just seen is Pumkins Poisons and People or What Every Home Gardener Ought to Know published by the Conservation Council of Victoria at \$2.95 (ISBN 0 909 365 10 5). It covers the topic of pests, pesticides and alternative solutions to pests very well and if you have any spray stuff in your garden shed, you ought to read this book before using it.

Finally, the Department of the Capital Territory have just published bird lists for Tidbinbilla and Gudgenby Nature Reserves. They are free and available from Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. As is usual with such publications there are a few omissions and problems but for the average person who visits these places they are very good little lists.

20 YEARS OF BIRD STUDY AT NEW CHUMS ROAD

Neil Hermes

For the last twenty years numerous members of COG have been involved in bird study projects at New Chums Road in the Brindabella Ranges, west of Canberra. Initially, transect studies were conducted at the same time as bird banding. In recent years, the project has relied principally on bird banding.

The first trip to the area was on 9 April 1961 by Don Lamm, Bill Bellon, Dick Schodde, Steve Wilson and sons, Denis and Brendon. On 3 May 1981, forty-two people met at New Chums Road to celebrate 20 years of bird study at the site. Those attending included Don Lamm and Steve Wilson, Gerald Horey, David Purchase and their wives.

The project is now run by the Brindabella Banding Group and five of the current leaders were present on 3 May. The current leaders are Sonia Tidemann, Kath Brit, Tony Stokes, Neil Hermes, Steward Davey and Simon {inwards. The current team is now tackling the enormous job of analysis of the data collected over the past 20 years. This is a critical stage of the project and will produce the fruits of all those years of effort by so many people.

Any members of COG who would like to participate in the work of the Brindabella Banding Group can contact any of the leaders mentioned above.

N Hermes, 'Kanangra', RMB 907, QUEANBEYAN, NSW 2620.

ODD OBS

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH

Doug Ross

The population of European Greenfinch on Kelly's Swamp is so small that any indication of breeding is welcome. I saw a young bird on 16 November 1980 - dull brown without the characteristic green of the adult bird but with the diagnostic soft gold wing stripe.

For those who want to find the greenfinches - seen variously in October/November as singles and in groups of 5 or 10 - the best route is to follow the thornhedge, to the north of the big pond, down to the willows that lie upstream of the pond on Jerrabomberra Creek. The greenfinches are more likely than not to be in the hedge (or feeding on the thistles in the paddock) or in the willows. They appear to be quite active and their call is distinguishable from that of the goldfinches which are very common in the area.

(Some people would hope that the European Greenfinch does not build up in numbers since it is an introduced species: Ed)

The nest of a Large-billed Scrubwren found during the 1979 season was about 15 m up a moss-hung Sassafras tree in a rainforest gully at Plumwood Mountain (see CBN, Vol 5, No 1, p 24). It was not possible to see all details clearly at that distance, but it was definitely not the re-used nest of a Brown Gerygone, and did not appear either to be that of the Yellow-throated Scrubwren (which I have never seen in that particular area anyway and which is still using the nests it built not far away last year). It seems from appearance and location that it is a nest of the Large-billed Scrubwren built for itself - which casts some doubt on the statement in the Reader's Digest 'Complete Book of Australian Birds' that it rarely or never constructs its own nest in southern Australia. I hope that further observations will cast light on this point.

Further observations of local groups of the Large-billed Scrubwren, all luckily at different stages of the breeding cycle and thus readily distinguishable, has also clarified its local frequency and distribution. There appear to be at least 3 groups in the area shown on the map in the article, centred on rainforest areas. Thus they seem to be similarly distributed to the Brown Warbler, but perhaps a bit more sparsely.

However, they are very unobtrusive birds, and many of their calls consist of mimicry or are easily confused with either Brown Thornbill or White-browed Scrubwren calls, and this plus their quietness means that they are difficult to locate at a distance and easily lost.

V Routley, Plumwood Mountain, PO Box 37, BRAIDWOOD, NSW 2622

UNCONFIRMED RECORD OF LETTER-WINGED KITE AT BRINDABELLA ^x

Helen Dowling of Brindabella has reported a possible siting of a Letter-winged Kite. She is familiar with Black-shouldered Kites which occasionally occur in the Valley. Late in the afternoon on a day in February 1976 a solitary bird flew over Brindabella home-
stead from east to west. Although the observation was very brief Mrs Dowling is confident that the bird was a Letter-winged Kite.

The only confirmed sightings of this species in the Canberra area were in March and April 1977 when a total of 5 individuals were recorded in Narrabundah, Duffy and Lake George (CBN, Vol 3, No 12, p 4). A previous unconfirmed sighting for the region was at Deakin in 1967 (CBN, Vol 1, No 3, p 7). Ed.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN BALI

Richard Gregory-Smith

My wife and I spent a week on the island of Bali from 26 August-2 September 1979. As it was our first visit to the island there were many features to occupy our attention, but we spent a fair proportion of our time bird-watching. This volcanic island is lozenge-shaped with the western point elongated. It is 144 km from west to east and 80 km from north to south, covering 5,426 sq km. The population of nearly three million is mostly situated in the north and south, the arid western peninsula being sparsely settled.

We did not visit the west of the island, but spent most of our time in the south. Here the sandy coconut plantations and mangrove swamps give way to terraced padi as one proceeds north. The centre of the island (north to the Balinese from whichever way they view it!) is volcanic and mountainous; it is forested where there has been no recent volcanic activity and the cultivators have not encroached. North of the mountains is a relatively dry coastal plain. We had insufficient time to investigate mountain and forest species of birds; they were shy and kept in dense cover.

For such a highly fertile island as Bali the lack of birds is remarkable. This is probably due largely to the omnivorous appetites of the Balinese; but we have a theory that volcanic activity and periods of poisonous gas emissions may have contributed to the death of species and individuals. We are seeking an institution to finance us to research this theory globally!

The following is a list of the species we saw during our short stay on the island:

Christmas Frigate Bird <i>Fregata andrewsi</i>	3 - off coast at Kuta
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	flocks in padi fields
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	
Little Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	flocks in padi fields
Hawk sp. <i>Accipiter sp.</i>	1 - mangroves, Kuta
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tvinga glaveola</i>	open country
Eastern Curlew	2 - Padangbai
<i>Nianenius madagascariensis</i>	1 - mangroves, Kuta
Green-winged Pigeon <i>Chalcophaps indiaa</i>	1 - open woodland
Spotted Dove <i>Streptopelia ohinensis</i>	
White-bellied Swiftlet <i>Colloaalia esculenta</i>	common common
Brown-capped Woodpecker <i>Picoides moluecensis</i>	1 - coconut plantation
Stork-billed Kingfisher <i>Pelargopsis amauroptera</i>	1 - padi field

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White-collared Kingfisher	
<i>Halcyon chloris</i> Blue-tailed	2 - mangroves
Bee-eater	
<i>Merops philippinus</i>	3 - electricity lines in
Pacific Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	woodland clearing
Pied Triller <i>Lalage nigra</i>	open country
Black-headed Shrike <i>Lanius schach</i> ssp	1 - open fields, Padangbai
Rufous-backed Shrike <i>Lanius schach</i> ssp	(Frequent open areas,
Grey-backed Shrike <i>Lanius tephronotus</i>	(coconut plantations,
Yellow-vented bulbul	(orchards
<i>Pycnonotus goiavier</i>	common - median cranial
	stripe darker than that
	of birds of Malay
	peninsula common,
	gardens,
	plantations
Magpie Robin	2 - open cliffs, Padangbai
<i>Copsychus saularis</i> Pied Chat	gardens, orchards
<i>Saxicola caprata</i> Ashy Tailorbird	
<i>Orthotmus ruficeps</i> Pied	
Fantail Flycatcher	
<i>Rhipidura javanica</i>	4 - open woodland
Flowerpecker sp	
<i>Dicaeum flarumeum</i>	
	nest suspended in tree
	beside Kuta-Denpasar road;
	composed of cobwebs and
	pale vegetation with side
	entrance. Head and tail
	red, bluish/ slate back,
	white belly. Similar to
	scarlet-backed, but head
	completely red.
	coconut palms, flowering
	shrubs and trees
	(
	(common in urban gardens
	(and cultivation
	(
Olive-backed Sunbird	2 - coconut plantation
<i>fleatarinia jugularis</i>	
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i> Scaly-	
breasted Munia	
<i>lonchura punotulata</i>	3 - coconut plantation
Javan Munia <i>Lonchwa leucogastroides</i>	bill yellow
White-vented Myna	2 - coconut plantation
<i>Acridotheres javanicus</i> Purple-	1 - coconut plantation
backed Starling?	2 - open country
<i>Sturnus sturnius?</i>	
Black-naped Oriole <i>Oriolus chinensis</i>	
Drongo sp. <i>D-icruvus</i> sp.	
Large-billed Crow	
<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	

R Gregory-Smith, 13 Astelia Place, RIVETT, ACT, 2611

ODD OBS

UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LATHAM'S SNIPE

Doug Ross

Latham's Snipe is normally a very shy bird, keeping to sheltering grass or hiding away below the banks of pools and streams. When the bird is approached, its usual reaction is to 'kek' and fly off. One of four birds seen on the edge of the Kelly's Swamp pool on 16 November 1980 behaved very differently. It perched on a post quite in the open and I was able to walk round it, very slowly and observing under ideal conditions, at a distance of less than 10 m. The bird was very much aware of my presence, following my progress all the way, but showing no nervousness so far as I could see. When eventually, it took off, there was no 'kek'.

DUSKY WOODSWALLOWS FLOCKING WITH STARLINGS

Eric Andrew

Observing a large flock of Common Starlings near Boorowa, NSW, my attention was drawn to occasional flashes of white amongst the dark birds. Closer examination showed several Dusky Woodswallows accompanying the flock.

Not only were the woodswallows flying with the starlings but they were also alighting and apparently feeding with them on the ground. The flock was observed for about 15 minutes through 10 x 50 binoculars at a distance of about 10 m. During this time the woodswallows remained as part of the main group of birds and did not separate from it.

COMMON KOEL

Editor

A solitary male Common Koel was observed over the Christmas period in parts of south Canberra and Woden. Vance Russell of Lyons reported the bird on 1 to 8 January 1981 from the parkland between Curtin and Lyons above Scottsdale Street. Other observers saw and heard a bird (possibly the same individual) in Curtin, Hughes and Yarralumla. The previous record of the koel in the Canberra region was by Lamm and White along the Cotter River in 1946. Any member with other dates and localities for koels during this period should forward details to the Records Officer, Michael Lenz.

BACK ISSUES OF CBN

The following back issues of CBN are held in stock and are available from the Editor for 50 cents each. Vol 1 Parts 3, 14; Vol 2 p Parts 1, 4, 7, 9; Vol 3 Parts 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; Vol 4 Parts 4, 5, 6 7, 8.

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