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EDITORIAL

What is native bird species to an area and what is not? What is good management of species in a natural system and what is not?

A letter to the editor in this issue of Canberra Bird Notes has raised important issues to people interested in the management of bird species. It seems quite logical that if a particular native species of bird is rare and perhaps even endangered and another bird species which has been introduced is the cause of the problem, the exotic species should be controlled. This is quite clearly the case with exotic Mallards threatening the survival of the native Pacific Black Ducks by competition and hybridization or of the exotic (to Norfolk Island) Crimson Rosella in virtually eliminating the native Red-fronted Parakeet.

But often it is not as simple as that. The case of the Cattle Egret in Doug Ross's letter is an example. The Cattle Egret may never have reached Australia unless people had introduced cattle and created the correct conditions for the egrets. Similarly Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island were once totally forested and people have cleared areas. Australian birds, once not recorded on the islands, are now establishing populations. They are species that favour open country, such as Australian Kestrels, Welcome Swallows, Lesser Golden Plover, etc. Are these species exotics to Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island? If they are not then what is the status of Starlings, Greenfinches or Goldfinches which are also probably self-introduced from Australia and New Zealand?

Many of these questions are obviously very complex and may require concessions on points of principle or solutions which vary from place to place or case to case. However, in Canberra, I think the issues of management of exotic birds are quite clear.

A small number of species of birds in Canberra today did not occur in the Canberra region before settlement. Some of these are native birds that have adapted to newly created habitats or are species whose populations are fluctuating for various 'natural reasons' (eg. drought, flood, etc). Some of the new settlers are birds which have been deliberately introduced to Australia by people. These birds start off with small populations and may struggle for many years before becoming well established. In Canberra species that come into this category are the Common Myna, European Greenfinch, Nutmeg Mannikin and Mallard to name a few. These species could be removed from the ACT before they become a threat to other native bird species of the area.

Perhaps other members have particular views on the rights or otherwise of exotic bird species in Canberra? What is your opinion?

MAGPIES IN THE CANBERRA-COOMA DISTRICT
Black and White and Spread All Over
Ian Taylor

Two races of Australian Magpie live in and around the ACT. They are the Black-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen tibicen* 'bare-nose flute-player'), and the White-backed Magpie (*G.t.hypoleuca* - 'bare-nose almost white').

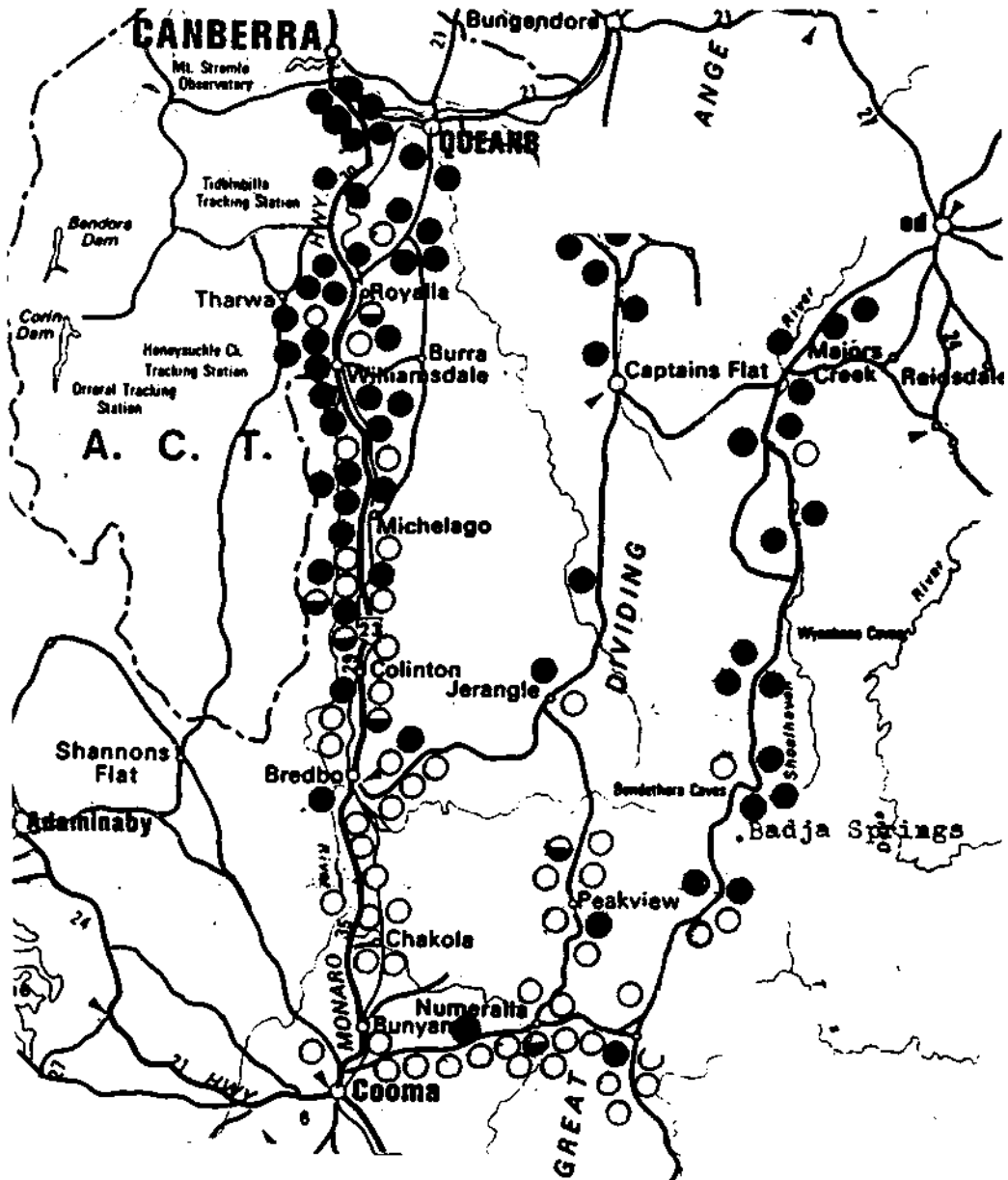
In *Birds of the Australian High Country*, Carrick says: ... 'The region exclusively occupied by the white-backed form includes the southern end of the Great Dividing Range from 35°S (Cooma-Narooma) and a coastal belt rarely exceeding one hundred miles through southern New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia as well as the whole of Tasmania.' Pizzey also refers to this Cooma-Narooma line in *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. He says 'a broad overlap zone, in which the two races intergrade, extends from about the ACT south and west through Victoria, on and inland of the Great Divide. The zone is apparently expanding or moving south but (this is) not precisely understood. The picture is confused by a possible winter north movement of the White-backed form to northern Victoria and southern New South Wales.'

With this in mind, I set out to investigate the distribution of the two races. Between July and September 1981 I made four trips into the region between Canberra and Cooma. I used 7 x 50 glasses to identify birds from the car window. The position of each bird was recorded on a 1:100,000 Topographic Survey Map using a simple code to distinguish between Black-backed, White-backed and hybrid magpies. For convenience, the results have been transferred to an enlarged 1:1,500,000 map which is shown below.

The task of distinguishing the two races is complicated by extensive interbreeding. For the sake of simplicity and consistency, I used the following criteria: *G.t.hypoleuca* - no black on back; *G.t. tibicen* - white nape separated from white lower back by unbroken black band; hybrid - some black on back, black band on shoulder broken by a bridge of white which joins nape and lower back. It could be argued that some birds classified as 'black' are in fact hybrids.

From the map one can draw the following conclusions: south of Colinton, Jerangle and the Badja Springs homestead, the White-back form predominate. Numbers of the two races are approximately equal between Colinton and Michelago; along the highway while north of Michelago, Jerangle and Badja Springs the Black-backed form is more common.

There were several areas where few magpies were seen: southwest of Jerangle on the Bredbo Road, southeast of Jerangle on the road to Peakview and in the area around Pikes Saddle where the



CANBERRA-COOMA DISTRICT

O *Gymnorhina hypoleuca*

● *Gymnorhina tibicen*

Q Hybrid

(Each circle represents five birds)

Braidwood-Countegany Road crosses the Great Divide. These are all areas of dry sclerophyll forest or rather poor and unimproved grazing country. Magpies prefer open paddocks of improved pasture because the richer soil in these paddocks harbours more of the soil surface invertebrates on which magpies feed.

It is significant too that these less hospitable areas of forest and unimproved land divide the regions dominated by Black-backed Magpies from those that are dominated by the White-backs. These areas where the magpie cannot live appear to form a natural boundary between the two populations. It is also worth noting that along the Monaro Highway where no such natural barriers exist, and where most of the country will support magpies, there is no clear line of demarcation between the territories occupied by the two races.

A year or two of continuous observation may reveal some seasonal movement of the two populations, but any long-term changes may not appear for many years. I would be pleased to share my experience and data with any interested reader.

(If you would like to see a White-backed Magpie in Canberra, try Campbell High's Oval, Ainslie Primary's oval or the areas around the Civic Pool. There is also a White-backed in the kangaroo enclosure at Tidbinbilla.)

Mr I Taylor, 8 Dirrawen Gardens, REID, ACT, 2601

ODD OBS

BLUE-BILLED DUCK DISPLAY

David Pfanner

During a recent trip to Booligal, NSW to attend a CCE course on the Birds of Booligal, I was fortunate in being able to observe the courtship display of the male Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis* in a quiet pool of the Marrowie Creek. This display began with a rigorous bobbing of the head followed by a ruffling of the wings close to the body. The bird then churned forward quickly in jerks pushing several bow waves before it. Another part of the display involved thrashing the tail under water which took on the appearance of a small motor behind the duck. No sound accompanied the display and the female was apparently unmoved by it in as much as she offered no immediate response.

PIED CURRAWONG DIVEBOMBING

W Beveridge

A Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina* dive-bombed me while I was walking in Haig Park in October 1981. He made half a dozen swoops and may have made contact had I not turned on him and lashed out.

HISTORICAL RECORDS OF BIRDS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS SERIES, NO 2
 BIRDS FROM NEAR CAPITAL HILL, CANBERRA IN 1943
 Neil Hermes

The information in this article was extracted from a typed list produced by John de la Valette and found in a booklet once owned by him. de la Valette was a birdwatcher who lived in Canberra in 1943 and was an associate of G M Mathews. This article is one of a series which I have written based on the chance discovery of some old unpublished records (see CBN 7:45-46, 1982 'Origins of Information Used in Mathews ACT Bird List'). I have not been able to contact de la Valette or independently establish the accuracy of this information. I therefore present this data as it appears in its original form and leave the reader to determine its validity. These bird records should be considered as, at best, unconfirmed sightings.

The following list of birds was observed by de la Valette during the late morning of 28 November 1943 on the 'lightly wooded knoll that stands west of Capital Hill in the bend of State Circle between the Office of the High Commissioner for Canada and the Prime Minister's Lodge'. This presumably was in bushland near the South African Embassy, some of which may have subsequently been cleared by the building of Capital Circle and the clearing for the new Parliament House. The numbers in brackets indicate the numbers observed and the species names in brackets are those used by de la Valette.

Black-shouldered Kite	(1)	Rufous Songlark	(Few)
Gang-gang Cockatoo	(5-6)	Noisy Friarbird	(2 pairs,
Galah	(Several)	(Leatherhead)	1 young)
Cockatiel	(1)	Regent Honeyeater	(4+)
Eastern Rosella	(1)	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	(Few)
Mallee Ringneck	(Pair)	White-plumed Honeyeater	(Several)
(Ring-necked Parrot)		Mistletoebird	(2)
Red-rumped Parrot	(Several)	European Goldfinch	(Several)
Rainbow Bee-eater	(Pair)	Common Starling	(Several)
Dollarbird	(4+)	Olive-backed Oriole	(Pair)
Welcome Swallow	(Several)	White-winged Chough	(5)
Richard's Pipit (Pipit)		Australian Magpie-lark	(Pair)
	(Several)	Dusky Woodswallow	(Many, 1
Black-faced Cuckoo- shrike		young)	
	(Several)	Australian Magpie	(Several)
Willie Wagtail	(Several)	(White-backed Magpie)	

The following list was typed under the previous observations.
 'At other times in the same spot the following have been seen:

Peregrine Falcon	(1)	Rufous Whistler	(Several)
Australian Kestrel	(1)	Brown Treecreeper	(2)
(Nankeen Kestrel)		White-naped Honeyeater	(Few)
Sacred Kingfisher	(3 or 4)	Masked Woodswallow	(Few)'

A number of 'small unidentified honeyeaters and thornbill-kind of birds' were also observed. G M Mathews confirmed 'most of the observations made on 28 November except for the first 5 parrots listed and 'a couple of others'. It is not clear whether Mathews accompanied de la Valette while he was making these observations.

It is interesting to note that these observations were mainly of birds that would be expected today from a similar area of dry open woodland around Canberra. The exceptions to this are as follows. (It should be noted that one of de la Valette's primary reference works appears to have been 'An Australian Bird Book', (Leach, edition unknown).) Two nomadic inland species noted were the now rare Cockatiel and the now uncommon Masked Woodswallow. Another inland species, the Mallee Ringneck, has not been recorded in the ACT. This must be considered a doubtful observation and an unconfirmed record for the ACT. The Regent Honeyeater observation is noteworthy. The observer did record all the common honeyeaters and similar species such as orioles on his full ACT list (in press, CBN). The listing of a Peregrine Falcon is interesting especially if the list is an indication of common or conspicuous species. The list is also interesting because of its omission, for example, of some of today's conspicuous Canberra birds such as Crimson Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, Pied Currawong and Australian Raven.

REFERENCES

Leach, J A (edition unknown), *An Australian Bird Book*, Whitcombe and Tombs, Melbourne

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

ODD DBS

FOLLOW THE EASTERN SPINEBILL

Grahame Clark

An Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* CSIRO Band Number 013-31971 has been divulging some secrets of its local movements to Canberra birdwatchers. I banded the bird in the Botanic Gardens on 30 June 1979 and it was retrapped on 20 October 1979 30 km to the west at New Chums Road by the Brindabella Banding Group. The bird avoided banders in 1980 but was caught again in the Botanic Gardens on 2 May 1981 and retrapped at New Chums Road on 13 September 1981. This pattern is consistent with the current views on local Eastern Spinebill movements; that is that some spend the autumn and winter in the lower country around Canberra and move into the Brindabellas in spring & summer to breed.

BIRD INJURIES IN CANBERRA
Tony Stokes

Few people know of the large number of injured wild animals in the ACT which are regularly being received, treated and often released, by competent individuals operating under authority from the Conservation and Agriculture Branch of the Department of the Capital Territory, and in co-operation with the RSPCA.

Table 1 lists the animals treated by members of the Wildlife Foundation (ACT) Incorporated in the 22 months to June 1980. The Foundation is a non-profit umbrella organisation co-ordinating the activities of many individuals concerned with the rehabilitation of injured wildlife in the ACT district.

Table 2 lists the 559 individuals of at least 53 species treated by the Foundation and the RSPCA in the year ended 31 March 1981.

Keen new members of the Foundation are always welcome and any enquiries can be directed through: PO Box 207, JAMISON, ACT, 2614. The Foundation maintains a 24 hour telephone answering service on (062) 804537.

TABLE 1: ANIMALS TREATED BY THE WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (ACT) INC
END OF SEPTEMBER 1978-30 JUNE 1980*

Date	Birds	Marsupials	
Sept 1978 to June 1 1979	82 Australian Magpies & Australian Magpie-larks	37 Kangaroos	
	20 Currawongs	20 Possums	
	Laughing Kookaburras 8	6 Wombats	
	Heron 27 Other Water	2	
	Birds 12 Owls 15 Birds	Wallabies	
	of Prey (diurnal?) 37	2 Echidnas	
	Galaha 34 Other Parrots	67 TOTAL	
	66 Miscellaneous Species		
	403 TOTAL		
	Releases : Birds		65%
Kangaroos		55%	
Other animals		73%	
June 1979-	Birds	Marsupials	
June 1980	805 All Species	56 All Species	

*details from Wildlife Foundation Annual Reports 1978-79, 1979-80

TABLE 2: ANIMALS TREATED BY THE WILDLIFE FOUNDATION AND THE
RSPCA IN THE ACT - 1 APRIL 1980-31 MARCH 1981

BIRDS:

157 Australian Magpies	36	7 Sacred Kingfishers
Australian Magpie-larks	57	6 Boobook Owls
Galahs		1 Australian Hobby
40 Eastern Rosellas		1 Brown Falcon
29 Crimson Rosellas		14 Barn Owls
14 Australian King Parrots		7 Australian Kestrels
1 Peach-faced Lovebird		1 Owlet Nightjar
6 Red-rumped Parrots		1 Tawny Frogmouth
2 Superb Parrots		8 Dollarbirds
3 Gang-gang Cockatoos		1 Eastern Spinebill
17 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos		3 Rainbow Bee-eaters
25 Pied Currawongs		1 Purple Swamphen
7 Silver Gulls		18 Laughing Kookaburras
5 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes		5 Red Wattlebirds
1 Cormorant		15 Noisy Friarbirds
2 Masked Plovers		1 Thrush
1 Fantail Cuckoo		4 Noisy Miners
1 Stubble Quail		6 Maned Ducks
1 Olive-backed Oriole		13 Pacific Black Ducks
1 Australian Pelican		8 Spotted Pardalotes
1 Emu		3 Striated Pardalotes
1 Welcome Swallow		2 Australian Ravens
11 Silvereyes		1 Eurasian Coot
1 Dusky Moorhen		2 Pallid Cuckoos
1 Yellow-faced Honeyeater		3 Bronze-cuckoos
1 White-necked Heron		
1 Rufous Night Heron		559 TOTAL

OTHER ANIMALS*:

18 Brush-tailed Possums	5 Wallaroos
1 Great Glider	3 Dingoes
3 Ring-tailed Possums	2 Red-bellied Black-snakes
6 Swamp Wallabies	1 Carpet Snake
4 Red-necked Wallabies	6 Blue-tongue Lizards
1 Platypus	3 Bearded Dragons
1 Wombat	2 Long-necked Tortoises
7 Echidnas	
	63 TOTAL

Information provided by Dianne Beatty.

* NOTE: The Foundation is not licenced to care for Red or Grey Kangaroos

*T Stokes, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Box 636,
CANBERRA, ACT, 2600*

FIRST ACT RECORD OF BREEDING RED-BROWED TREECREEPER

Mathew Larkin

While camping near Booroomba Rocks (near Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station) at the end of October 1981 Red-browed and White-throated Treecreepers *Climacteris leucophaea* and *C. erythroptus* were observed. The birds were reasonably confiding, often alighting on trees less than 10 m from an observer and thus allowing easy identification. Both male and female Red-broweds were seen, and the male was observed feeding the female. One of the birds was seen to fly to a hollow branch on a Mountain Gum *Eucalyptus viminalis* and the heads of several (3-4) young appeared and feeding took place. The dead branch was about 30-50 cm long and 10 cm in diameter. The tree was about 25 m high.

Although the literature often refers to the Red-browed as a bird of rainforests and wetter eucalypt forests, the forest was basically dry sclerophyll, with Mountain Gum, Snow Gum, Broad-leaved and Narrow-leaved Peppermints being the major trees. It was noted that, contrary to Birds of the High Country, the Red-broweds were not confining themselves to the upper branches but frequently alighted on a tree about 2-3 m from the ground and proceeded to work up the trunk and branches.

M Larkin, 6 Wambaya Crescent, WARAMANGA, ACT, 2611

ODD OBS

LARKS IN THE ACT

Alastair Morrison

The nearest to the ACT that I have seen Brown Songlarks *Cinchorhamphus cruralis* in the past has been in the Ginninderra Falls area, just over the NSW border. But this summer, between 25 December 1981 and 9 February 1982, I have seen quite a number in the Pine Island Road area. This was immediately to the south of the road and east of the junction with the road to Tuggeranong.

The largest number in view at any one time was 6 - all perching on the fence adjoining the road. I twice saw a trio of 1 male and 2 females perching together on the fence. The only indication of breeding was a female carrying food on 18 January 1982. My impression is that the extensive grasslands extending from the Pine Island Road towards Lanyon are probably a regular summer habitat for the species.

Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* are also common in the area and on 9 February 1982 still in the same general area, I saw 15-20 Singing Bushlarks *Mirafra javanica* just below the dam over the Tuggeranong Creek. They were quite tame - taking little hovering flights but never going very far.

PREY REMAINS FOUND AT TWO PEREGRINE FALCON EYRIES NEAR CANBERRA

Jerry and Penny Olsen

We have been studying the biology of breeding and non-breeding Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* at 27 sites near Canberra since 1975. Listed below are prey remains collected in and under two of these eyries.

EYRIE AT LAKE GEORGE: 1975-1980

- * Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla*
 - * Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*
 - * Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*
 - * Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
 - Feral pigeon *Columba livia*
 - Noisy Friarbird *Philemon corniculatus*
 - Red-rumped Parrot *Psephotus haematonotus*
 - Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*
 - Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata*
 - Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*
 - Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*
 - White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos*
 - (Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops*
 - (Brown-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus brevirostris*
 - Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*
 - Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*
 - Teal (Grey and/or Chestnut) *Anas gibberifrons* *A. castanea*
 - White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*
 - Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae*
 - An unidentified wader
 - Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*
 - Rabbit *Oryctolagus uniuolus* Traces of insect
 - European Hare *Lepus capensis*
 - Ring-tail Possum *Pseudocheirus peragrinus*
- Young macropod

EYRIE ON NORTHWEST ACT/NSW BORDER: 1977-1980

- * Feral pigeon *Columbia livia*
- * Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla*
- * Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
- * Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*
- * Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*
- Feral Chicken *Gallus gallus*
- Trace of beetle
- Noisy Friarbird *Philemon corniculatus*
- Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostorms chrysops*
- White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus brevirostris*

Rabbit *Oryctolagus auniulus*
Cormorant (not identified to species)
Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*
 Stubble Quail *Coturnix novaeseelandiae*
Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*
Gang-gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum*
Red-rumped Parrot *Psephotus haematonotus*
Bat (not identified to species)

* By far the most common species found

Thanks to Ian Mason and Gerry Van Tets for help with pellet analysis.

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

GREAT CRESTED GREBE DISPLAY ON LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN?

Doug Ross

During the week beginning 5 July 1981, I had several sightings of a single Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps Cristatus* on East Basin, fairly close in to the bank along Mundaring Drive.

I saw the bird (I assume it was the same bird all along) very close to on the morning of 12 July. It was feeding among some coots, 2-3 metres from the bank, and I was able to get well within 20 metres of it. The bird did not appear to be in breeding plumage.

On the afternoon of 12 July, wishing to refocillate my spirits after an hour or two in the Treasury, I went back to Mundaring Drive and was trebly rewarded. There were now two birds, swimming together, sometimes abreast, sometimes in echelon, about 80 metres offshore.

From time to time, the bird that was leading at the time would come up out of the water, while still facing ahead, and flap its wings. Alternatively, the leading bird would go about, face the following bird, and then come up and go through the wing-flapping act. After each routine, the birds would revert to abreast or echelon position and swim on. At no time did I see the two birds come up together, breast to breast, in a full courtship display. The activities seen on East Basin were perhaps some threshold stage of display. This was the first time I have been such activity in the Lake area. Sightings of Great Crested Grebes in the area are, of course, uncommon.

One bird continued on in East Basin during the week beginning 12 July.

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

LITTLE WHIMBRELS AT LAKE BATHURST, NSW

John Brooke

I was counting Sharp-tailed Sandpipers in the extreme north-east embayment of Lake Bathurst as part of the National Wader Count, on Sunday 7 February 1982, at approximately 1045, when my attention was drawn to 2 larger waders in flight over the water. The sun angle was not good, but they appeared to be dark with darker wing-tips, and my first thought was of *Stiltia isabella*, the Australian Pratincole. Inspection from a little closer revealed 11 of these larger waders in a group on the dried mud some distance from the water's edge. They were walking quickly around without any particular purpose, in the manner of native hens. Their long legs and dark colouring immediately suggested something unusual - they were too stocky for pratincoles.

As I approached closer, they moved to the edge of the water and even waded into it. Depths did not exceed a few centimetres. They moved around the shore in front of me, never panicking, but not allowing a very close approach. However, I was able to get clear views of them next to both Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Pied Stilts. In size they were about half way between the two, both in body size and height. They had a somewhat upright stance, and both the colouring and scalloping on the back were very similar to the golden brown of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. The most noticeable feature, however, was a dark bill about 1 ½ times the length of the head with a noticeable but not exaggerated down-turning, and a white eyebrow. The region of the eye was dark. The underparts were buff with no obvious markings.

For some reason, the birds were loathe to be seen in flight, but I was eventually to observe them. The pattern was fairly uniform, with no paler sections or wing stripes. The tips of the upper wing were very dark, and the tail was noticeably short, and fan-shaped, with a distinctly speckled rump.

An alarm call was given on flushing on only one occasion - a harsh, fairly deep, three-noted call with a rhythm reminiscent of that of the much shriller Sharp-tailed Sandpiper call.

The birds eventually moved further from the shore to some mud islands, and the surrounding very shallow water.

My tentative identification was Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* mainly because of the length and shape of the bill, and the size. (The Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* is a noticeably larger bird than the Pied Stilt.) At Tarago, the observation was discussed with John Penhallurick and Mike Doyle, and both Slater and Pizzey were consulted. The identification was strengthened by details of the tail markings, size, and call, although the Little Whimbrel is normally a bird of the grasslands, and rare in Southern Australia. Penhallurick and Doyle returned to the site

and found the birds in the vicinity of the mud islands. They later advised their agreement with the identification.

W J L Brooke, 116 Ganger Street, TORRENS, ACT, 2607

This record has been accepted by the COG Rarities Committee as being valid and is the first record of the species for the southern tablelands. This species has not been recorded in the ACT.
Editor

CRIMSON CHAT AT GUNNING
C Weatherstone

On 19 October 1981 at about 1100 while working on our property adjoining the Hume Highway and 10 km south of Gunning my attention was aroused by an unusual birdcall - a very high pitched soft whistle - and one which seemed ventriloquial in nature. Being such, made it a little difficult to discover from whence it came.

However, when its source was located I was confronted with a bird which I had not seen previously and one which may well be amongst our most colourful. Apart from a white throat, the front and crown were crimson and the back and wings appeared almost black. After obtaining a fair description of the bird I returned to my reference library where it was clearly apparent that it was the Crimson Chat *Epthianura tricolor*.

Returning several hours later with binoculars and camera I was pleased to find not only the one previously observed but the female also, the colouring of which was similar although much more subdued than its mate.

Having noticed the male bird repeatedly returning to a branch on a dead wattle tree I was able to get sufficiently close to obtain quite a good photograph.

Then again on 10 December about 1½ km away and at about the same time in the morning, another male bird was sighted. Since then no further sightings of it have been made.

C Weatherstone, 'Lyndfield Park', RMB 647, GUNNING, NSW, 2581

The colour photographs have been examined by the COG Rarities Committee and this has confirmed the identification. The Fieldlist of the Birds of Canberra and District and Steve Wilson in the Birds of the Southern High Country mention one previous record of this species in the region. This was in 1957 and was found breeding 'near Canberra'. The eastern limits of range in our region as given by Morris et al in the Handlist of Birds of NSW is approximately Molong, Cowra and Albury.

Editor

CAMP-OUT AT BACK YAMMA STATE FOREST, 7-8 NOVEMBER 1981

Alistair Drake

With Crimson Chats continually flitting between our tents, this camp-out could hardly have been a failure. Thanks to the expertise and local knowledge of Neville Schrader, a COG member who lives nearby, the four enthusiasts who travelled up from Canberra enjoyed one of the most interesting field meetings that has been held for some time.

Back Yamma State Forest is an area of cypress pine *Callitris* woodland with a scattering of White Box *Eucalyptus albens* standards and a few mature Kurrajongs *Brachychiton*. It is situated near the towns of Forbes and Parkes on the central-western slopes of NSW, at a distance of about 270 km from Canberra. Although the forest is actively managed for wood production, the management practices are not intensive and regeneration occurs naturally rather than by planting, so that the value of the area as a habitat for birds remains high. Almost all the country around the forest has been cleared, and is now used primarily for growing wheat.

The party from Canberra arrived after dark on the Friday night. An early morning walk around the campsite produced sightings of a number of species not easily seen around Canberra: Peaceful Doves, Crested Pigeons, Blue Bonnets, Hooded Robins, Brown Treecreepers, Noisy Miners and Apostlebirds. The high point of this pre-breakfast session, however, was surely the sighting of a male Crimson Chat perched at the very top of a cypress which stood in the middle of the campsite. Other birds seen during this period included Dollarbird, White-winged Triller and Jacky Winter, and a colony of nesting Fairy Martins was found along the banks of a dried-out creek.

Neville arrived after breakfast and led us to an area in the middle of the forest where the ground rises and falls in a series of long low ridges. We soon heard a Gilbert's Whistler calling, and spent the next hour or so trying to track it down. It did not take long for us all to become familiar with the distinctive calls of this species, but the birds proved to be very adept at flying around us in circles without ever allowing a close approach, and the best sighting we had for all our efforts was just a glimpse, of a male. During this search we also heard, and again failed to see, several Western Gerygones and a Crested Bellbird. Success came, however, with the discovery of a party of Turquoise Parrots, and excellent views of a young bird and two of the exquisitely coloured adults were obtained. Other birds seen in this part of the forest included a Little Eagle, Red-capped Robins, Yellow Thornbills, Fuscous Honeyeaters, a Speckled Warbler and a Rufous Fantail. The last species was completely unexpected, as Neville had not recorded it in the Parkes district before. The bird was

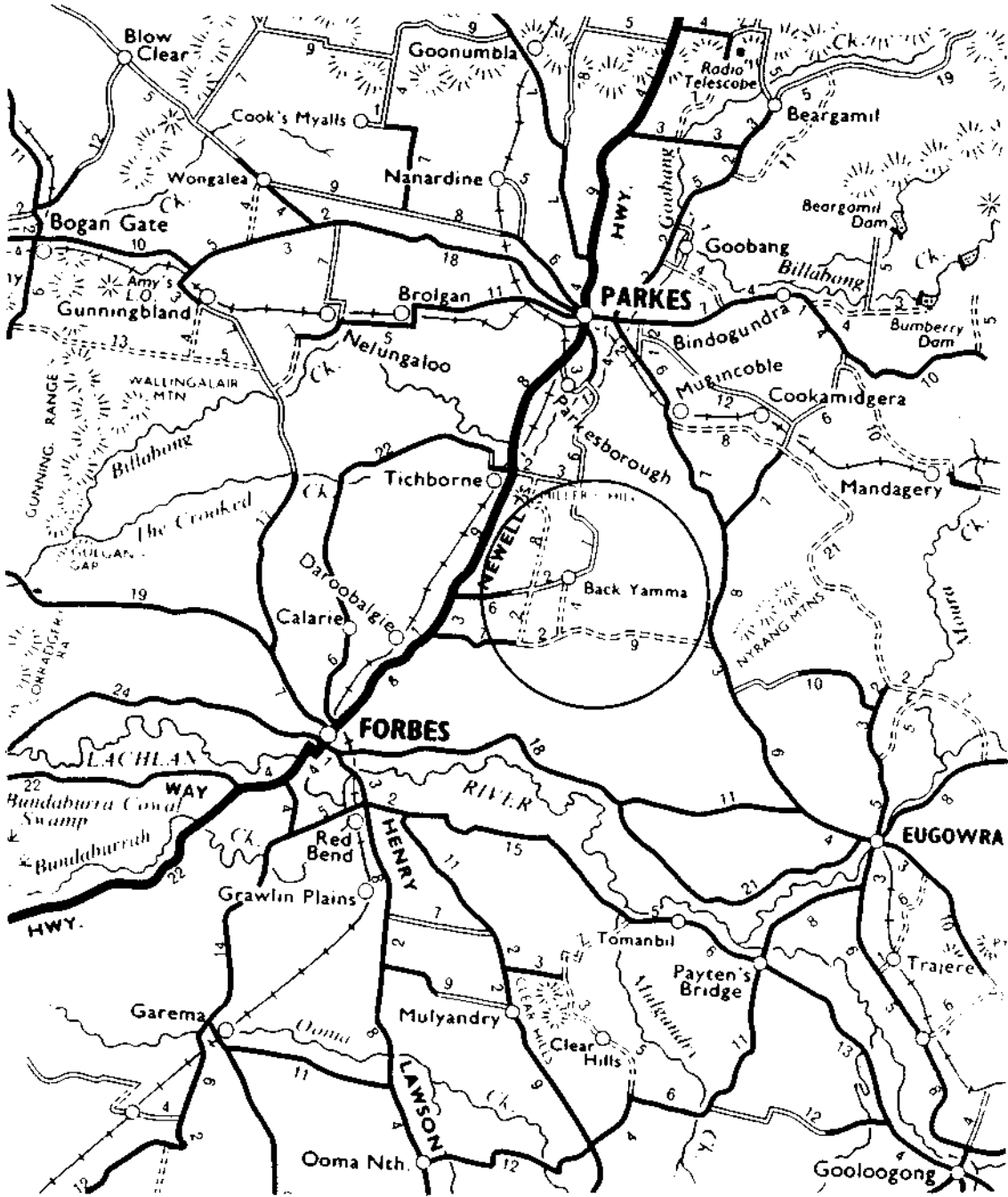
no doubt, a migrant which had stopped off at Back Yamma on its way down to the wetter forests of the coastal regions and the ranges.

At lunchtime back at the campsite, the Crimson Chats were evident once again, and Neville soon located a nest with two eggs. The nest, a cup of grass, had been built on the ground, and was beautifully hidden beneath a small piece of dead wood. Later, a second, empty, nest was found, and a newly fledged young bird seen, and we realised that we had set up our camp in the middle of a small breeding colony. Fortunately, our presence did not seem to disturb the birds very greatly.

After lunch we walked through a more open area at the western end of the forest, where we found Cockatiel, Southern Whitefaces, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, Double-barred Finches and White-browed Woodswallows. It was only when we were almost back at the cars, however, that we found what we were really looking for: a Black-eared Cuckoo. With this success under our belt we set off for Forbes to inspect a flooded lagoon that forms a part of the town's sewage treatment works. Here we found a good variety of water-bird species, but nothing that cannot be seen fairly easily in Canberra. The most interesting find was a small breeding colony of Pacific Herons, with at least one nest containing a downy chick. On our return journey to the campsite, however, we found something more exceptional: a party of five Budgerigars, perched on a barbed-wire fence between two wheatfields. Other birds seen in the wheat country included Black-faced Woodswallows and Pied Butcher-birds, and a Red-rumped Parrot's nest, with two chicks, was found in a hollow fencepost.

After such a start it was inevitable that the remainder of the expedition should have been rather a case of 'more of the same', and the only additional species seen around the Back Yamma area were Rainbow Bee-eaters and Grey-crowned Babblers. For two of us, however, the trip was brought to a satisfactory close when, on our way home, we saw a beautiful male Spotted Harrier flying over the hilly grazing country between Boorowa and Young.

For anyone who wants to see a good selection of the bird species that are typical of the central and western regions of New South Wales and who does not want to travel too far from Canberra, Back Yamma State Forest would appear to be a very attractive destination. Indeed, on the evidence of this camp-out, Back Yamma would seem to compare very well with even that most popular of nearby inland destinations, Ingalba Nature Reserve. Although it will probably not always be possible to find Budgerigars, Black-eared Cuckoos and Crimson Chats there, the presence of resident populations of species like Turquoise Parrot and Gilbert's Whistler ensures that the Back Yamma area would still be of considerable interest to Canberra birdwatchers even in a more typical year.



V A Drake, 48 Brigalow Court, O'CONNOR, ACT, 2601

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir

A propos a reference to breeding in a perfectly inoffensive note of mine on the Kelly's Swamp greenfinches, you inserted the editorial observation 'Some people would hope that the European Greenfinch does not build up in numbers since it is an introduced species.' (CBN 6 3 1981)

Now, if I had been that model of mildness, St Jerome, my reaction would perhaps have been something like this:

I refuse to be put down by a damp-eared, starry-eyed unrealist like you. Come off your editorial perch and show yourself in your true colours as a member of an 'introduced' species, dependent for your daily food, clothing and shelter on other 'introduced' species. You're not even from the first wave of your 'introduced' species: you're part of the second, self-introduced wave, that has done more to destroy, damage, warp and modify the environment (including the first wave) into which it introduced itself than almost any other group on earth.

Where do you and a greenfinch differ except in your respective powers of damage and destruction?

And don't beg questions. You've conveniently omitted to define an 'introduced' species. If a sailor came ashore at Sydney with a pair of macaws in a cage and let them go, you'd be invoking every devil in hell against him. But if a wind had blown the macaws on shore, how would you react then? Or do you recognise as 'native' only those species that have developed wholly locally (from what - Australia's own primeval soup?) or have been here so long that parvenus like you daren't criticise them (a typical blue-blood cringe).

The trouble with people like you - apart from your wanting a virginal world, peopled solely by highminded birdwatchers living on hand-gathered nuts and dew - and mind the mosses, as you do so - is that you recognise DNA, mutations, winds, waves, the odd log and so on as the only legitimate world evolutionary and ecological influences and completely ignore the purposive (and often wilful) actions of man. You're like the wets who sit complacently by while habitats are destroyed wholesale and whimper over planting native trees or putting feed trays and nest boxes in home gardens.

Like it or not, greenfinches are here to stay along with sparrows and Common Mynas and blackbirds (halleluia) and rabbits and foxes and *Homo sapiens*. Why not recognise the fact? Greenfinches now have as much right as you to this altogether different world your own self-introduced species has created here? Pots and kettles, pots and kettles.

Stop hiding behind 'some people'. Give me a straight answer, if you can, to these two questions:

(1) Your introduced species introduced cattle to Australia. The Cattle Egret came here recently, attracted presumably by the feed conditions created by the cattle. Are Cattle Egrets an introduced species? Do you feel vinegar in your mouth when you see them?

(2) If the Common Myna had been blown here by the wind, would you be prepared to contemplate the brutes squabbling on your lawn with a beaming smile on your silly face and to warm the cockles of your miserable little heart with the thought that it was all the will of Nature?

Si vales, bene est. Ego valeo.

Hieronymus

But I'm not Jerone, and am deficient in his mansuetude. Imagine what my response would be if I dared to write it.

Yours faithfully

A D Ross

WATCH OUT FOR WING-TAGGED HARRIERS

David Baker-Gabb

Since the winter of 1979, 80 Swamp Harriers *Circus approximans* have been banded and individually marked 40 km south-west of Melbourne on the MMBW farm at Werribee. 56 (72%) of these birds have been resighted or retrapped on the farm a total of 420 times which has allowed details of home range, size and overlap, population density and residency status to be worked out. A further 18 resightings of Swamp Harriers outside the MMBW farm have been made by other ornithologists. Their results have shown that most birds tend to move in a southerly or westerly direction and that adults (220 km) travel on average much further than juveniles (55 km). 3 adults have been seen in Tasmania and one at Bool Lagoon in South Australia. More distant Victorian sightings come from Lake Corangamite, Port Campbell, Linton and Lake Murdeduke.

In the spring of 1980 wing tags were placed on 30 Spotted Harriers *Circus assimilis* at Pirlta, 30 km south-east of Mildura. To-date no distant resightings of these birds have been made.

I would ask all birdwatchers who see a wing-tagged harrier to write to me with as much of the following information as possible: harrier species, date, location, colour of wing tag or tags, the presence or absence of a black lateral stripe on the tags and the wing the tag was on.

*Mr D. Baker-Gabb, Department of Zoology, Monash University,
CLAYTON, VIC, 3168*

ACT RECORDS OF LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER
Neil Hermes

There have been 5 published ACT records of the Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (previously known as Eastern Golden Plover or Golden Plover). These are summarised below:

DATE	NUMBER SEEN	REFERENCE
13 Nov 1965		CBN 2(9) 22
4 Nov 1970	1	CBN 1(10) 13 and CBN 2(9) 22
23&24 Sept	4	
1972 21/25 Oct	1	CBN 2(6) 13 and CBN 2(4) 10
1979) and		
4&11 Nov 1979	1	CBN 6:17 CBN 7:14
7 Sept 1980	2	

All these observations were made at the eastern end of Lake Burley Griffin and most if not all at Kelly's Swamp. The 1979 record was incorrectly published as the third ACT record, however the 1980 record was correctly published as the fifth ACT record. The Status of Birds in Canberra and District (CBN 2(9) 22) also lists 2 records of this species from Lake George. This species is normally found on the coast but could be recorded in any suitable habitat in the south-east region of NSW or the ACT.

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

PIED CURRAWONG CATCHES INSECT ON THE WING
Tony Stokes

Though it is well known that insects form a significant part of the diet of the Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina* (Rose, 1973, Wimbush, 1969) there are few descriptions of its feeding behaviour and the following fleeting observation may be of interest.

At about midday on 2 May 1982, while driving through Sutton, New South Wales, I saw an adult Pied Currawong fly from a large pine tree for about 30 metres in a horizontal plane and abruptly stall, dip its head, and catch an unidentified flying insect in its beak. The wings of the insect protruded from the beak as the bird flew off.

V Russell (personal communication) has reported similar behaviour by several Pied Currawongs near Canberra.

REFERENCES

- Rose, A B (1973), *Food of Some Australian Birds*, Emu, 73:177-83.
Wimbush, D J (1969), *Studies on the Pied Currawong in the Snowy Mountains*, Emu, 69:72-80.

T Stokes, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Box 636, CANBERRA CITY, ACT, 2601

BOOK REVIEW: A FIELD GUIDE TO THE REPTILES OF THE AUSTRALIAN
HIGH COUNTRY
by R Jenkins and R Bartell: Inkata Press, Melbourne
1980: Pp 278

This is a field guide which is true field guide size and format for use by bushwalkers and field naturalists alike.

The authors have successfully attempted to produce a sequel to Frith's book, *Birds of the Australian High Country* and have written about a group of animals about which very little is known but which are frequently encountered in the field.

The text is presented in a flowing readable manner and is accompanied by excellent colour photographs of the various reptiles that inhabit the region as well as very useful diagrams. Where it has been necessary to employ specialised terms, readers like the reviewer are educated by means of an extensive glossary at the rear of the book. Individuals with more than a passing interest in herpetology (the study of reptiles) are catered for by easy-to-use identification keys and appropriate references by which it is possible to research particular species and/or species groups in much greater detail.

Moderately priced at \$17.95 this publication should be considered as a useful addition to the library of any person interested in Australian wildlife and especially those interested in the wildlife of our region.

B Baker

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ODD OBS

UNCONFIRMED SIGHTING OF PINK ROBIN NEAR BERMAGUI, NSW
Richard Mason

On Sunday 30 August 1981 at about 1100 I observed what was almost certainly a Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster* in the trees around my family's coast house at Wallaga Lake about 10 km north of Bermagui. I had a good view of the bird as it flitted nervously about in a large wattle and a large gum tree, often not far above my head. I watched it for 20 minutes or more, with and without binoculars, and looked hard to detect white outer tail feathers. I could not see any, and therefore conclude that it was a Pink, and not a Rose Robin *P. rosea*. The bird seemed friendly, but was quite silent. Presumably, it was on its way south, moving in the general direction of Victoria and Tasmania.

ODD OBS

CORROBORREE OF KOOKABURRAS

Richard Gregory-Smith

It was the last day of summer and at 0630 the morning was calm and the sun rising. Mr Peter Charlton and his son Scott were awakened at their Giralang home by the sound of a large number of Kookaburras. There were at least 12 on the power lines in the space of two blocks and a considerable number more in the nearby lightly wooded area.

The Kookaburras were collectively making a considerable volume of noise, but it was quite melodious as they were carolling and 'laughing' softly. Some sang, head up and tail down, others with both head and tail up. There was a lot of changing of positions between the birds.

On four occasions there was a strange pairing in which one bird flew to another, firmly grasped its beak in its own and the pair then spiralled to earth like a sycamore seed, disappearing behind a fence line, and then ascending separately. The whole performance by this large group of Kookaburras lasted at least thirty minutes before they gradually dispersed.

It was well after the breeding season for Kookaburras and the birds did not appear aggressive towards each other, either individually or by group as they might have been if they had been defending territory. Perhaps the explanation for their behaviour was that they were in fact holding a sociable meeting.

MAGPIES SUNBAKING

W Beveridge

On three occasions I have seen magpies lying on the grass in strong sunlight. They were stretched out, half on their side and appeared dead. Only when I approached within 2-3 metres did they get up and fly away.

GREAT-CRESTED GREBE AT BURRINJUCK DAM *Gordon, Mark & Chris De Cean*

Between 1300 and 1500 hours on 10 October 1981 the De Cean's were birdwatching at Burrinjuck Dam. A range of water birds such as Pink-eared Duck, Maned Duck, Chestnut Teal, cormorants and Australian Pelicans were observed. However the highlight of the day was the sight of 46 Great-crested Grebe on the water.

ACT RECORDS OF BLACK-FACED MONARCH
Neil Hermes

There are three apparently different references to Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis* in the ACT during the period 1966-67. There is only one record of this species for the ACT at this time and it is held as a specimen in the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research collection at Gungahlin. This specimen is labelled 'juvenile found dead outside a window of a house in Curtin on 28 March 1967'. This record appeared correctly in the Status of Birds in Canberra CBN 3(3) p 18, July 1975. M Clayton subsequently published a report in which he incorrectly referred to this specimen being found in Hughes (CBN 4(5) p 7, Jan 1979). The same record was incorrectly listed in the Field-list of Birds of Canberra and District (1974, 2nd edition) as March 1966.

To date, there are two correct and published records for the Black-faced Monarch in the ACT; first ACT record - 28 March 1967 (a juvenile found dead in Curtin) and second ACT record - 9 November 1980 (a male in Ainslie) (CBN 7 p 21). In our region this bird normally occurs on the coast and has been recorded as far inland as the Budawang Ranges (Morris et al, 1981, Handlist of Birds in NSW) .

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

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ODD OBS

THE CROWDED SKY

Geoff Duggan

In December 1981 a Wedge tailed Eagle *Aquila audax* collided with a two seater trainer glider at about 400 m. This event occurred at Polo Flat near Cooma. The eagle was presumably killed in the incident and its body fell to the ground. Eagles often share thermals with gliders as do flocks of ibis.

BLACK-NECKED STORK ON KELLY'S SWAMP *Michael Braysher*

On the afternoon of Sunday 1 June 1981 I observed a single Black-necked Stork (Jabiru) *Xenorhynchus asiaticus* wading and feeding in Kelly's Swamp, Jerrabomberra Wetlands. The animal had adult plumage.

The bird was seen in the same spot on the following morning by Chris Mobbs and Esther Beaton both of Conservation & Agriculture Section, ACT. Ms Beaton managed to take a couple of long range photographs of the bird before it flew off in the direction of Lake George.

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CONTENTS

Editorial	62
Magpies in the Canberra-Cooma District	63
Historical Records of Birds in the Southern Highlands Series	66
No 2: Birds from Near Capital Hill, Canberra in 1943	68
Bird Injuries in Canberra	70
First ACT Record of Breeding Red-browed Treecreeper	71
Prey Remains found at Two Peregrine Falcon Eyries	72
Great Crested Grebe Display on Lake Burley Griffin	73
Little Whimbrels at Lake Bathurst,	74
NSW Crimson Chat at Gunning	75
Camp-out at Back Yamma State Forest, 7-8 November 1981	78
Letter to the Editor	79
Watch Out for Wing-Tagged Harriers ACT	80
Records of Lesser Golden Plover	80
Pied Currawong Catches Insect on the Wing	81
Book Review: A Field Guide to the Reptiles of the Australian High Country	83
ACT Records of Black-faced Monarch	84