



Canberra bird notes

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EDITORIAL

Stephen Marchant in his letter to the Editor in CBN vol. 4 no. 3, pp. 18-19, raised an old matter of the desirability of a more comprehensive annual bird report.

Two matters are immediately apparent.

- (i) the availability of one person to give a lead in the matter of what, where and how to record; and
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- (ii) the availability of adequate records from which the annual report can be compiled.

Dr Michael Lenz has had considerable experience in Europe in leading groups in local recording and he is our Records Officer. With the committee he is considering methods whereby we may be able to compile records from which we will be able to produce an annual report more truly reflecting the situation in this area. A comprehensive article will appear in our July issue.

76TH RAOU CONGRESS, NORFOLK ISLAND, DECEMBER 1978

Delia Johnson

The plane from Sydney circled widely before coming in to land, giving us a clear view of Norfolk with its two contrasting offshore islands, Philip and Nepean, and our first birds - White Terns flashing through the typical Norfolk pines near the airstrip. That evening the 76th RAOU Congress was opened by its president, Dr N. Wettenhall, and the Island Administrator, Mr D.V. O'Leary, gave a welcoming address to the fifty-nine delegates from New Zealand and all States of Australia. We were issued with maps and census forms for land birds, and met some of the local naturalists who were to be our guides and bests.

We were fortunate that the weather was suitable for a visit to Philip Island the following morning - five open motor boats ferried us the 6.5 kilometres south across the swell to a precarious landing at the foot of a cliff. Above us hundreds of Sooty Terns wheeled over their nests; we had to watch our feet as we climbed, aided by hand ropes, as the best foothold could contain a blotched egg and the indignant parent could be squawking overhead! At the top the ternery made way for a colony of Masked Boobies, each large fluffy white chick guarded by an adult who considerately moved aside to allow the chick to be banded. I saw only three Australian Gannets' nests, at the edge of the colony. Walking southwards, parts of the island presented a vivid lunar landscape of red, purple and ochre soils arid rock - it was badly eroded by pigs, goats and rabbits last century, but only the latter remain. Vegetation survives in gullies and in the whiteoak trees we found many Black Noddies building nests and beginning to lay one small white spotted egg. On rocks above the beach we saw some Common Noddies, and a small colony of Grey Ternlets nesting in rock hollows near the sea.

We made our way to the highest point and on ledges in the sea-cliff there were Red-tailed Tropicbirds nesting - a magnificent sight as they sailed past. A more accessible nest for photographers was found after lunch and the tally of species by then included an Australian Kestrel, two Black-winged Petrels and a Great Egret. The islanders cull whalebird (Sooty Tern) eggs until 30 November

each year but after that breeding flourishes; we saw neither gulls nor skuas.

Up early the next morning for a Red-crowned Parakeet survey - its numbers appear to be falling. I was allocated a patch of dripping guava jungle and nearly got bushed. It yielded no parrots (except a pair of Crimson Rosellas) but there were Scarlet Robins, Grey Fantails, Silvereyes, Grey Gerygone (Warbler) and Golden Whistlers. The island whistlers of both sexes look like our female Golden Whistler and are known as 'tameys'. The gerygone is common in all habitats, a busy little bird native to Norfolk. Disappointed searchers were promised a definite sighting by Joe Forshaw, who is studying this parakeet, and sure enough all of us who were prepared to go up the mountain another day before breakfast heard and saw several 'Norfolk Island parrots' - a race of the New Zealand Red-crowned Parakeet.

Nepean Island the next day provided a green contrast to Philip Island. It is a windswept grassy plateau with no trees except a few newly planted pines and stunted 2 metre high whiteoaks. One of these sheltered two Sooty Tern chicks, and the Masked Booby chicks seemed more advanced than on Philip. A grey Noddy chick was banded, also a Little Shearwater still in its burrow - the majority had flown and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were in occupation but not yet laying.

Back in the meeting hall there was a large map for each species of land bird, and as census returns came in appropriate squares (with a side of 0.5 km) were marked off. By the end of the week every square had been covered. No one found the native Blackbird or Guava bird, the White-breasted Silvereye proved very rare and the Boobook almost as elusive. Lest it sounds like all work and no play I hasten to say that all field work was voluntary and one could combine it with sightseeing. I noted introduced European Blackbirds while studying gravestones in the colonial cemetery, counted Golden Plover and Turnstones in Kingston, the stone-built settlement of convict days, sought an elusive Cuckoo round the lovely mission chapel and heard a Sacred Kingfisher in the shopping centre. (This bird is so common that the locals call it the nufka - Norfolker.) Even a hot morning spent sifting sand in a quarry was rewarded by some worthwhile, possibly fossil, bird bones.

Several interesting papers were read at our evening

meetings: Dr Pat Rich on the Fossil history of birds on islands; Mr John Disney on Land birds of Lord Howe and Norfolk; Dr Roy Swaby on

dialect differences between mainland and island subspecies; Mr Alan Morris on the declining breeding status of the Little Tern in N.S.W.; and Mr Jack Wheeler on the colonisation of a navigation light in Port Philip Bay by the Australian Gannet. On other evenings we were entertained at an island barbecue and the Congress dinner.

Sincere and grateful thanks are due to the members of the Flora and Fauna Society and of the Conservation Society of Norfolk Island for their generous hospitality and guidance, and to Rosemary and Richard Schodde and the C.O.G. subcommittee for organising such a happy and fruitful Congress.

LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED ON NORFOLK, PHILIP AND NEPEAN ISLANDS

Black-winged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma nigripennis</i>
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus pacificus</i>
Little Shearwater	<i>P. assimilis</i>
Pied Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax varius</i>
Little Black Cormorant	<i>P. sulcirostris</i>
Australian Gannet	<i>Morus serrator</i>
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>
Red-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>
White-faced Heron	<i>Ardea novaehollandiae</i>
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Pacific Black Duck	<i>Anas superciliosa</i>
Mallard	<i>platyrhynchos</i>
Australian Kestrel	<i>Falco cenchroides</i>
Feral Chicken	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
California Quail	<i>Lophortyx californicus</i>
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Lesser Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Grey-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>
Wandering Tattler	<i>T. incana</i>
Sooty Tern	<i>Sterna fuscata</i>
Common Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Black Noddy	<i>minutus</i>
Grey Ternlet	<i>Procelsterna cerulea</i>
White Tern	<i>Gygis alba</i>
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>

Emerald Dove	Chalcophaps indica
Crimson Rosella	Platycercus elegans
Red-crowned Parakeet	Cyanorhamphus novaezelandiae
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Chrysococcyx lucidus
Long-tailed Cuckoo	Eudynamis taitensis
Norfolk Island Boobook	Ninox undulata
White-throated Needletail	Hirundapus caudacutus
Fork-tailed Swift (first record)	Apus pacificus
Sacred Kingfisher	Halcyon sancta
Welcome Swallow	Hirundo neoxena
Blackbird	Turdus merula
Song Thrush	T. philomelos
Scarlet Robin	Petroica multicolor
Golden Whistler	Pachycephala pectoralis
Grey Fantail	Rhipidura fuliginosa
Grey Gerygone	Gerygone igata
Silvereye	Zosterops lateralis
White-breasted White-eye	Z. albogularis
Long-billed White-eye	Z. tenuirostris
European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis
European Greenfinch	C. chloris
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
Common Starling	Sturnus vulgaris

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A POCKET LIST OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

Copies of A pocket list of Australian birds by Richard Schodde can be obtained from the publications officer for 50c (plus postage) or five for \$2.00 (plus postage). This handy little booklet provides space against each bird not only for a tick to indicate its presence but the box can also accommodate letters such as A = abundant, B = breeding etc., which are probably more informative than just a tick. When you have been on ten trips and have filled your book get another from the publications officer, Sonia Tidemann, P.O. Box 301, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608. This publication is available at C.O.G. meetings, as is the *Field-list of birds of Canberra and district*.

IDENTIFYING SEA-BIRDS: ALBATROSSES

John Penhallurick

No one who has ever seen an albatross gliding effortlessly down a Force 7 gale is likely to forget the sight. We are fairly fortunate in that on the south coast of New South Wales one can confidently expect to see four of the world's thirteen species during a season: the Wandering, Shy (White-capped), Black-browed and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses. And one can hope (particularly if one watches regularly from Green Cape) to see the other five southern species. Another three species - the Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses, together with the rare Short-tailed - occur in the north Pacific, while the Waved Albatross is found in the vicinity of the Galapagos, where it breeds.

Although a few birds are present off the far south coast below Montague Island during summer, albatrosses are essentially winter birds in this area. Off Burrewarra Point, the first birds usually appear around mid May. Few are seen after October. The frequency of occurrence of the different species also varies during this period. Stephen Marchant (1976) reported that Black-browed are the most common until late August, when the Wandering and the White-capped start to predominate. Only the occasional Yellow-nosed are seen, although they were noticeably more common in 1977 than in the previous few years. In this article, we will concentrate on the recognition of the four species you are likely to see, with only a few words on the less common species. For much fuller accounts readers are again referred to the standard handbooks: Slater (1970), Serventy, Serventy and Warham (1971) and Harper and Kinsky (1974).

The major division within the family Diomedidae is between the two 'great' albatrosses - the Wandering and the Royal - and the Mollymawks. The two groups are most readily separated by the great size and long wings of the first two, and the dark mantles of the latter.

The plumage of the Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* varies greatly with the age of the bird. However, the birds most frequently seen off Australia are in the intermediate plumage: the body is

white above and below; the upperwings are black, but with a white or mottled triangular area near the body. There may be other patches of white in the wing, and there is a black tip to the tail. In birds of all ages, the underwing is white with a very narrow black edge and black tips.

Immature birds are unmistakable: dark brown body, all dark upperwings and white face. The 'leopard' stage, where the white plumage is beginning to come through on the body, is sometimes seen. Occasionally, too, one sees an old bird - the beautiful 'snowy' albatross, where only the tips of the upperwings remain dark.

Very similar to the snowy Wandering Albatross are adults of the epomophora race of the Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*. Various diagnostic points have been suggested, such as the lack of a black tip to the tail. But the old male Wandering Albatross also lacks the tip. The only certain guide is the black cutting edge of the upper mandible, which is unlikely to be visible at over 400 metres. Generally speaking, while one can be sure that a given bird is a Wandering Albatross (e.g. from the upper wing pattern, or the dark tip to the tail), one cannot be sure that a given bird is a specimen of *Diomedea epomophora epomophora*. However, the other race of the Royal - *sanfordi* - is easily recognisable from its all dark upper-wings and white body. A Wandering Albatross with similar upperwings would also have brown on the body.

In all of the mollymawks, the black of the upperwings also extends across the back. The combination of this feature with the white body enables one to pick a mollymawk from a great albatross at a large distance. The main criteria for distinguishing between the species are size, underwing pattern and bill and head colour.

The largest of the mollymawks is the Shy (White-capped) Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. This has white underwings with a narrow black border and tips. The combination of black back and white underwing means that one can pick out this species at a great distance. The bill is horn coloured.

Smaller than *cauta* is the Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys*, which also differs from it in having a very broad black border to the leading edge of the underwing. The yellow bill is also easily seen. With immature birds, there is only a small area of smudged white in the middle of the underwing. The bill is black and there is a grey crown and collar. The underwing patterns of the

Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma* are very similar to those of the Black-browed. But the immature Grey-headed differs

from the immature *melanophrys* in having a dark head; and the adult in having a grey head and black bill with a yellow stripe along its top and bottom.

Smaller again than *melanophrys*, and of more slender build, is the Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchus*. The underwing of this species has a black leading edge wider than that of the Shy (White-capped) but less broad than that of the Black-browed. The bill is black with a yellow stripe above and below. Immature birds differ only in having an all-black bill. Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri* has a similar underwing and bill, but can readily be distinguished by the greyish head with white cap. Buller's also differs from the Grey-headed in having a narrower leading border to the underwing.

Anyone who sees either of the two species of the genus *Phoebetria* has a rare privilege. With their slender body, long narrow wings and graceful flight, they are surely the most beautiful of albatrosses. These, together with their dark plumage and wedge-shaped tail, are distinctive. The Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata* differs from the Sooty *P. fusca* in its pale ashy-brown back. These birds are unlikely to be confused with the all-dark Giant Petrels, which are bulkier in the body and far less graceful in flight, flapping often.

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SILVER GULLS 'HAWKING' FOR INSECTS

Ian Baird 'and Henry Nix

On the afternoon of 24 January 1978 a large flock of Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae* suddenly appeared, wheeling and circling, above a parking lot adjacent to the CSIRO Division of Land Use Research on Black Mountain. Individual birds were wheeling in tight circles and then characteristically changing direction during gliding flight by dropping one wing and terminating in a fluttering/hovering/beak-snapping phase which apparently coincided with the taking of an insect.

When first noticed at 1615 hours and for some 10-15 minutes thereafter the birds were concentrated in the area above the parking lot. Presumably daytime heating of the large area of black bituminised surface had created an updraught which swept a patch of insects out from the surrounding trees and shrubs and carried them aloft. Numbers of birds fluctuated, but upwards of 150 were present at the peak of the activity. Most of the 'hawking' flights took place within a zone from tree-top height (about 15 m) upwards to about 50 m. After a 10-15 minute period of intense activity, the flock broke up into smaller groups which continued their 'hawking' flight towards Lake Burley Griffin at increasing heights (up to 100 m).

Later on the same day at 1715 hours a flock of 30 Silver Gulls exhibiting the same behaviour were observed adjacent to the ANU Staff Centre. Observation with 8 x 40 binoculars confirmed that they were taking insects. Although 'Christmas' beetles *subf. Rutelinae f. Scarabaeidae* were much in evidence flying above and between the canopies of large Eucalyptus trees, they were not seen to be taken by the birds. On two occasions however the gulls were seen to take a small (about 1.5 cm long) dark beetle with black elytra and bright orange abdomen, which flies through the air in great numbers during warm, humid summer evenings.

On the afternoon of 24 March 1978 at 1550 hours a flock of some 70-80 Silver Gulls provided a repeat performance over the parking lot adjacent to the CSIRO Division of Land Use Research. On both

days the weather was fine, warm and humid with a build-up of cumulus cloud in the afternoon.

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Editorial note: The Silver Gull is a very successful species possibly because it so readily takes advantage of any source of food. Since the erection of the high road lights at the south end of Commonwealth Bridge about five years ago, Silver Gulls have often been seen in the hours of darkness in the hotter months hawking for insects (probably beetles) in the vicinity of the lights.

LITTLE SHEARWATER IN THE A.C.T.

Chris Sonter

The presence of the Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* in waters adjacent to the ocean shoreline of Jervis Bay is confirmed by a beach-washed specimen found on Steamers Beach on 27 December 1977 and is significant. Not only is it a new record for the Bherwerre Peninsula (C. Sonter, *Australian birds* 12, 3) but, when coupled with seven records from the Illawarra coastline up to 1975 (J.D. Gibson, *Australian Birds* 11, 3), strengthens the impression that it must occur live off the coast of New South Wales.

McKean and Stewart (*Australasian Seabird Group Newsletter* no. 10, May 1978) stated that they saw three Little Shearwaters, with other shearwaters, when watching seabirds from a point near the old lighthouse on Bherwerre Peninsula on 30 January 1978.

This is a difficult species to identify at sea, especially when in company with other similar-plumaged species such as the Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*, and inexperienced observers should be most careful in observing this and similar species.

Chris Sonter, 72 San Mateo Avenue, Mildura, Vic. 3500

OIL OR CONSERVATION OF BIRDS

Richard Gregory-Smith

In a Reuter dispatch dated 29 December 1978 Indian zoologists denounced the Government for bowing before oil politics and allowing Saudi Arabian princes to hunt one of India's rarest birds, the Great Bustard.

Although the large desert-loving bird is heavily protected and faces extinction, a big Saudi hunting team, complete with refrigeration vans, has been allowed to enter the Jaisalmer Desert in western India from Pakistan.

The zoologists, meeting in a seminar in Jaipur today, said the 87-strong group of hunters, which includes royal Saudi princes, was welcomed at the border two days ago by Indian officials.

The Saudis were reported to have brought with them the trained falcons which swoop on the bustard in what is considered a great sport in some Middle East countries. The party will also be shooting birds.

The zoologists conference passed a resolution calling on the central and state governments to enforce a total ban on the killing of the bird. They said the Great Bustard, confined to some desert areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat states, was on the verge of extinction.

'It is a beautiful living treasure of the country which needs special attention and protection for its survival and multiplication', the resolution said.

The problem for the New Delhi Government is that it does not want to upset delicate oil diplomacy between India and Saudi Arabia.

The Rajasthan state government has expressed its disapproval of the hunting, but a visit by External Affairs Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Jaipur, the Rajasthan capital, four days ago was reported by the Hindustan Times newspaper today to have convinced the state government to change its views.

Local feelings are reported to be high, and the Hindustan Times said an Indian External Affairs Ministry official had explained the sensitivity of the situation to the Saudis, who have promised to kill only a limited number of birds.

The Great Indian Bustard *Choriotis nigricops* is a large

slow- flying bird whose meat was much prized by the ancient Moghul rulers of India.

R. Gregory- Smith, Brassey House, Barton, A.C.T. 2600

WHITE-CHEEKED HONEYEATER SOUTH OF NOWRA

Chris Sonter

During a beach patrol and bird-watching excursion to the Bherwerre Peninsula of Jervis Bay, A.C.T., on 22 September 1978 I recorded the White-cheeked Honeyeater *Phylidonyris nigra* from two localities. These two observations were my first sighting of this species during two years of regular visits and four years of more casual trips to the area. Previously I had recorded several in the dune vegetation near the aerodrome between Moruya and Broulee on 29 March 1975 and it is of interest to note that Penhallurick and Marchant (Canberra Bird Notes vol. 3 no. 12, pp. 9 & 22) also observed them in what appears to be the same locality near Moruya. They were seen also by observers during the Pilot Scheme for the Australian Bird Atlas project. This suggests that the population may be a resident one.

Gannon, in his 'Distribution of the Australian honeyeaters' (*Emu* vol. 62 no. 3, 1962) , states that 'a few birds may be found as far south as Ulladulla' , and one is left to wonder as to what Wolstenholme saw when he commented that 'other honeyeaters were numerous here etc.' in writing of a trip to Jervis Bay (*Emu* vol. 24, p. 117). Of significance is that Gould found it to be 'tolerably abundant' in the Illawarra district (Gould, *Birds of Australia*, vol. 4, 1848). The White-cheeked Honeyeater is not common in the Illawarra (J.D. Gibson, *Australian Birds* vol. 11 no. 3) , and looking through the Annual Bird Reports for New South Wales (A.E.F. Rogers, *Birds and Australian Birds*, 1970-77) it appears the species is infrequently recorded from the south coast of N.S.W.

From the above it would seem the white-cheeked Honeyeater is a resident species on the south coast, being found in isolated populations, and that localised movements erupt during blossoming of the coastal species of Eucalyptus and other flora on the narrow coastal belt of forests and heathlands.

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THE AUTUMN-WINTER MOVEMENT OF THE YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATER

Gerald Horey

Christmas 1977 saw my happy superannuation from the Public Service and retirement to the coast some 14 km south of Moruya where we have 2 hectares of bush. The exact location is 36°00'18"s, 150°08'20"E. Here I have been building a house.

To bring electricity to the house the local authority has cut a 60 metre wide swathe from west to east and it has been this gap in the trees that has enabled me to observe what might best be described as typical autumn migratory activity of the Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops*. The tree line runs parallel with the coast and finishes along the eastern boundary of our land about a kilometre from the sea, the intervening space being open paddock.

My observations have been spasmodic. Building operations were at a maximum during the period and it was a matter of luck if I should see their flight or, more likely, hear their characteristic migratory chatter. However I did keep some notes.

The first observation was made on 28 April and the last on 18 July 1978. The period really divides into two. The earlier, until 19 May, may be described as regular with flocks of 50-100 birds flying south or south-south-west and only between 0800 and 1100 hours. The weather was generally fine with 0/8th cloud and on the few dull days I neither saw nor heard activity.

Behaviour was typical of that I have previously seen of the autumn migration south along the Murrumbidgee. Birds would collect in the tallest tree on the northern edge of the cutting until, on one leading the way, they would all take off to the tallest tree on the opposite side of the cutting some 60 metres away. From there they changed course to west-south-west, due probably to Lake Coila barring their continued southerly progress. During all this time they kept up their typical 'chip' 'chip' note.

The second period started on 26 May after a week of total cloud with quite disjointed flights, as many going north as south. On 8 June, under clear skies, two flocks (10-12) flew north. On 12 June it was again fine, with three flocks (all fewer than 50) passing, one to the south, one to the north and one directly west.

Were there really three flocks or was this just one flying around in circles? The following day, also clear, saw one large flock (50-100 birds) flying south and then two hours later another of 20 birds came to rest on the tallest tree on the northern side of the cutting, when they changed direction to due west.

After another gap of rainy weather, on 25 June four flocks (each of 20-50) flew south-west and one of 10 birds flew north. The day was cold with 2/8th cloud. Finally on 18 July a flock of 50 birds was seen flying north.

On three occasions, twice in the first period and once in the second, small flocks of Red Wattlebirds *Anthochaera carunculata* of about 10-12 birds were seen flying south.

It is difficult to account for these observed flights so similar to those of the Yellow-faced Honeyeater elsewhere. Is it a true migration? If so, where are the birds going, north or south? Is this movement no more than a general restlessness during the non-breeding months? Or is the generally observed movement of this bird away from its summer breeding territory no more than an atavistic relic of a true migration, aeons ago, when climatic conditions dictated that it escape the rigours of a sub-arctic winter? Perhaps future observations will help to provide answers. I intend during this coming 1979 autumn to keep more detailed records and perhaps even to extend the range of my observations.

G. Horey, P.O. Box 147, Moruya, N.S.W. 2537

ODD OBS

PACIFIC HERON AT KELLY'S SWAMP Jim McNaughton

There has been a further influx of the Pacific (White-necked) Heron *Ardea pacifica* in the general Kelly's Swamp/East Basin area. On 7 February 1979 they were observed catching and eating carp 10-15 cm long. The following numbers have been recorded:
1-3 December 1978; 1-6 January 1979; 2-16 January 1979; 4-21 January 1979; 6 or 7 - 27 January 1979; 4-30 January 1979; 6-4 February 1979; 11-7 February 1979.

HONEYEATER DISTRIBUTION

D. Balfour

Canberra Bird Notes vol. 4 no. 4, October 1978, carried as an appendix to the Bird Report for the period 1.7.77 to 30.6.78 a table showing honeyeater sightings from 5 Orchard Place, Melba, for the period May-July inclusive in the years 1976, 1977 and 1978. The table illustrated an upsurge in honeyeaters in 1977.

The pattern shown is not matched by sightings from 24 Calvert Street, Ainslie. The story here has been a marked reduction in honeyeater sightings from a peak which occurred in 1974. It was in fact the variety of honeyeaters seen in 1974 which prompted the keeping of records.

Table 1 hereunder shows sightings from this residence for the same periods (plus the two earlier years) and for the same species listed in *Canberra Bird Notes*, excluding the Fuscous and Brown-headed Honeyeaters - the former has never been sighted here and the latter only on four occasions, August 1976 (3) and September 1977 (1). The White-eared Honeyeater and the Eastern Spinebill have been added to the table.

Table 2 is intended to illustrate still further the 1974 peak and subsequent drop-off of the honeyeaters. It records sightings in a six-month period, May-July (as per Table 1) and August-October 1974, and total sightings in the fifty months since October 1974. The Noisy Friarbird, Red Wattlebird and Eastern Spinebill are excluded from Table 2 because figures would not show any overall drop-off in occurrence.

The figures shown in the two tables represent the number of days on which birds of the particular species were sighted, not the number of birds seen. Nonetheless I recall that in 1974 it was common to see flocks of about six birds at each sighting, whereas since that time sightings have usually represented one, sometimes two birds. Statistics are in no way definitive since they represent only casual observations from windows as opportunity offered.

Recordings have been maintained continuously since 1974, apart from a break of six weeks in March-April 1977. That break would not significantly affect the overall picture.

I have no theory as to the 1974 explosion and subsequent drop-off. This garden and the area generally was well established in 1974. It is however a fact that 1974 was probably a peak year so far as a Grevillea (Canberra Gem) in the front garden was concerned. It was in that Grevillea that all sightings were made. Since 1974 there has been a steady and significant lessening in the vitality of that shrub. This may have some bearing on the matter.

TABLE 1 - SIGHTINGS AT 24 CALVERT STREET, AINSLIE, FOR THE PERIOD MAY-JULY INCLUSIVE

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	41	1	11	1	11
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	51	-	-	-	-
White-plumed Honeyeater	63	18	22	22	1
White-naped Honeyeater	9	1	-	1	-
White-eared Honeyeater	7	8	17	-	1
Eastern Spinebill	89	82	87	85	87
Noisy Friarbird	2	1	-	-	-
Red Wattlebird	75	33	60	5	1

TABLE 2 - SIGHTINGS AT SAME ADDRESS IN 1974 AND TOTAL SIGHTINGS SINCE 1974

	Inclusive Period 1974			Sightings since Oct 74 50 months
	May-Jul	Aug-Oct	Total	
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	41	68	109	58
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	51	-	51	-
White-plumed Honeyeater	63	35	98	48
White-naped Honeyeater	9	36	45	3
White-eared Honeyeater	7	1	8	24
Brown Headed Honeyeater	-	-	-	4

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NOTES OF RECENT C.O.G. EXCURSIONS

Carmen Zenetti

The three C.O.G. excursions dealt with here were led by Mark Clayton, and without his presence we would not have seen the variety or number of birds we did.

Round Tree Hill Nature Reserve

This trip took place over the long weekend in October 1978. It was made memorable by the abundant birdlife and wildflowers, the peak condition of the countryside after good winter rain, and the very convivial company. We camped near the Round Hill Nature Reserve and Red-capped Robins, Splendid Fairy-wrens and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters were fairly constantly seen around the campsite. We explored the mallee in and around the Nature Reserve and also some unatlassed squares in the Mt Hope area.

The species listed were: Emu, Great Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Grey Teal, Black Kite, Brown Goshawk, Little Eagle, Spotted Harrier, Brown Falcon, Banded Lapwing, Silver Gull, Bar-shouldered Dove, Crested Pigeon, Galah, Pink Cockatoo, Cockatiel, Mallee Ringneck, Red-rumped Parrot, Mulga Parrot, Pallid Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Black-eared Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Tawny Frogmouth (nesting), Australian Owlet-Nightjar, Laughing Kookaburra, Red-backed Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Singing Bushlark, White-backed Swallow, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, White-winged Triller, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, Jacky Winter, Crested Shriketit, Rufous Whistler, Crested Bellbird, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, White-browed Babbler, Little Grassbird, Rufous Songlark, Splendid Fairy-wren, White-winged Fairy-wren, Shy Hylacola, Weebill, Western Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, Southern Whiteface, Varied Sittella (nesting), Brown Treecreeper (nesting), Striped Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Little Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Yellow-throated Miner, Singing Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater (nesting), Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Mistletoebird, Striated Pardalote, Silvereye,

House Sparrow, Zebra Finch, Olive-backed Oriole, Spotted Bowerbird and bower, White-winged Chough, Apostlebird (nesting), Australian Magpie-lark, White-breasted Woodswallow, Dusky Woodswallow, Grey Butcherbird (nesting), Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Australian Raven, Little Crow.

Mt Ainslie

This was a morning's excursion in November to the lower slopes of Mt Ainslie in the area near the turn-off to the lookout. It was notable for the breeding species seen and some excellent views of a male Satin Flycatcher.

The breeding species were: Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, Grey Fantail, White-throated Gerygone, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Varied Sittella, Brown Treecreeper, Mistletoebird, Pied Currawong.

Other species noted were: Great Cormorant, Black Duck, Galah, Pallid Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, White-winged Triller, Rufous Whistler, Willie Wagtail, Superb Fairy-wren, Speckled Warbler, Weebill, Western Gerygone, Buff-rumped Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Red Wattlebird, Noisy Friarbird, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, white-naped Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Common Starling, Olive-backed Oriole, Dusky Woodswallow, Australian Magpie, Australian Raven.

Shoalhaven Heads - Barren Ground Nature Reserve - Minnamurra Falls

This trip was made over the late January long weekend. It began at Shoalhaven Heads near Nowra, where we went looking for waders. After wandering around the in-shore area of the estuary, which was filled with holidaymakers but few birds, we took the car ferry to Comerong Island. Overall, and aided by the telescopes brought along by Alastair Drake and Cedric Bear, we saw: Australian Pelican, Great Cormorant, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants, Pacific Heron, White-faced Heron, Black Swan, Pied Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Lesser Golden Plover, Mongolian Plover, Red-capped Plover, Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Stint, Silver Gull, Little Tern, Crested Tern, Dollarbird, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin, Richard's Pipit, Willie Wagtail, Golden-headed Cisticola, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, Silvereye, European Goldfinch,

House Sparrow,

Australian Magpie-lark, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Australian Raven.

The following morning we birdwatched in the rainforest along the road up to the Barren Ground Nature Reserve. The Reserve itself was closed so we did not get an opportunity to observe in the heathland. In this area we recorded: Topknot Pigeon, Spotted Turtle-Dove, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Wonga Pigeon, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Gang-gang Cockatoo, King Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Brush Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Superb Lyrebird, White's Thrush, Eastern Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Black-faced Monarch, Rufous Fantail, Grey Fantail, Eastern Whipbird, Pilotbird, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thorn-bill, White-throated Treecreeper, Red-browed Treecreeper, Lewin's Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Red-browed Firetail, Common Starling, Common Myna, Satin Bowerbird, Pied Currawong.

The party then moved on to Minnamurra Falls, where we had excellent views of two more species, the Large-billed Scrubwren and the Yellow-throated Scrubwren.

Miss C. Zenetti, c/- P.S.B., Barton, A.C.T. 2600

BOOK MARKET FOR SALE

Part of Vol. I of North's Nests and eggs of birds found breeding in Australia and Tasmania (1904). In mint condition and consists of title page to Vol. I and Parts 3 and 4, pp. 121-366.

Offers to Canberra 51 1041 or to Tony Stokes, 16 Badgery Street, Macquarie, A.C.T. 2614.

PINK-EARED DUCK AT FYSHWICK

Doug Ross

Ten Pink-eared Ducks were on the Fyshwick sewage farm on 18 February 1979, the largest number I've seen there.

Editorial note: At times this is a most common species at Lake George; however it is not a common bird in the A.C.T. and ten is an unusual record here.

WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS - NO. 3 - LAKE GEORGE, SOUTH END

Mark Clayton

Area: The southern end of Lake George has the distinction of having two entirely different habitats - the relatively heavily vegetated escarpment and the Lake itself - so two different avifauna groups are represented.

Access: There are two ways of getting to the southern, or Bungendore end of Lake George. One is through Queanbeyan and along the coast road to Bungendore. At Bungendore turn left at the Shell petrol station and follow this road for about 3 kilometres until you come to 'Lake Road' sign on your right. The second is along the Federal Highway until you come to the 'Gundaroo' (better known as the Bungendore) Road. Turn right and follow this until you come down the steep escarpment, and about half a kilometre from the base of the escarpment Lake Road is on the left.

General description of area: The vegetation on the lower slopes and along the road, where the 'land' birding is best, comprises a mixture of native Eucalypts and Acacias with introduced blackberries and briar roses. Around April-May in my experience seems to be the best time for birds - towards the end of the blackberry fruiting season, but spring is good too. Both Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters are abundant on migration, as are Silvereyes. Other species regularly recorded are the Brown, Striated, Yellow-rumped, Buff-rumped and Yellow (Little) Thornbills, the latter especially in the Acacias. Often associated with the Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Southern Whitefaces, especially just past the first gate.

The water birds are best observed after going through the first gate. By following the road, small 'inlets' can be observed and it is possible to view ducks etc. at close range if you do not leave the car. All the southern species of waterfowl with the exception of the Plumed Whistle-duck and Cape Barren Goose can be regularly seen on the lake - including the Freckled Duck.

There are two dams beside Lake Road that bear investigation. The first is on the left near a house with horse and cattle yards. Here it is possible to get excellent close-up views of the ducks, as well as local rarities such as the Red-kneed Dotterel and the Black-winged

Stilt, which sometimes occur here. The other is about a quarter of a kilometre further on, on the right. During late summer and early autumn there are generally several pairs of Australian Shelduck (Mountain Duck) to be seen here.

WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS - NO. 4 - TIANJARA FALLS

Area: Tianjara Falls is in the sandstone area south of the Shoalhaven River and it has a wide variety of heathland flora, especially *Banksia ericifolia* which flowers in autumn and its nectar is especially attractive to honeyeaters.

Access: Tianjara Falls is about 3½ hours drive from Canberra, between Braidwood and Nowra. Take the King's Highway (the Bateman's Bay road) towards Braidwood. Just past the Braidwood Showground and before reaching Braidwood itself take the Nowra road on the left at a sharp bend. Approximately the first third of this road is sealed but much of it is unsealed and fairly narrow and it can be rough in places. Pass through Nerriga and cross the Endrick River, which edges the sandstone. It can be worth a stop to see Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, which are usually in the *Banksia* upstream of the bridge. Continue on to the signpost indicating Tianjara Falls and the car park.

One can camp in any of the cleared areas away from and to the east of the car park. Running stream water is always available but there are no other amenities.

General description of area: The area is rather typical of the sandstone surrounding Sydney. It is possible to see quite a variety of birds by walking fairly flat country but the gorge below the falls is tough going. Vegetation is often dense, especially among the *Banksias* and in the heathlands. Much of the going is fairly rough but not beyond the capabilities of most of our members.

Birds: Autumn and winter are the best seasons at Tianjara Falls as *Banksia ericifolia* and other *Banksias* are then attracting large numbers of honeyeaters - Red Wattlebird, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Crescent Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, and especially Eastern Spinebill. The Origma (Rock Warbler) has been observed in the car park.

About half a kilometre towards Nowra is a swampy area bordered by stunted Eucalypts, *Banksias* and *Hakeas* and the

Southern Emu-wren,

Chestnut-rumped Hylacola, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and sometimes the Beautiful Firetail have been seen here.

The weather in autumn and winter is often cold, wet and windy, so be prepared. A C.O.G. outing was held here in June 1978 (CBN 4, 4, p. 15) after heavy rain and it was found that many sections of the road were under water; care should be taken in driving the Braidwood Nowra road during wet weather.

M. Clayton, 81 Maribyrnong Avenue, Kaleen, A.C.T. 2617

OUT AND ABOUT

G. Tibicen

The recent bushfires in our area have obviously displaced some birds from their territories, and as a by-product provided Frank Cranston with some material for a semi-humorous piece in the Canberra Times about the invasion of Canberra by displaced birds. Seriously though, we do not know what the effects of the bushfires will be so now is your chance to help. If you live near a burnt area why not visit a part of it regularly over the next year and note when each species returns.

You do not have to be an expert birdwatcher to help in this way as long as you accurately record what you see. If you are interested but want some guidance ring the Records Officer (Michael Lenz) on 49 1109.

If you did not see it, the above-mentioned article by Frank Cranston was a reasonable little piece when compared with his usual articles defending Qantas and the government against those naughty foreigners who want to force the Australian public to pay less for their overseas travel.

For those who are interested, the Australian Bird Banding Scheme has had its first recovery from China. A Curlew Sandpiper banded at Kooragang Island, N.S.W., was recovered 7300 km north-west at Huangp'u

commune, Chungshan County. Perhaps and hopefully more records will follow the first now that China is participating more in the international scientific community.

The New South Wales Field Ornithologists Club are reprinting a revised (by A.R. McGill and A.K. Morris) edition of the *Handlist of the birds of New South Wales*. This task is well overdue and the outcome is awaited with interest. (I wonder if it will be a truly scientific book and have its own special English names or whether it will be boring and use the existing ones.)

Mr K.W. Lowe, Zoology Dept, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic. 3052, is colour banding Sacred Ibis (that's White Ibis to traditionalists and stirrers. The bands are placed either on the tibia (upper leg bone) or the tarsus (lower leg bone) . Therefore if you on your travels notice any colour-banded Ibis please let him know the following information: date, locality, colour of leg band, the leg (right or left) the band is on and which bone (tibia or tarsus) it is on.

DOLLARBIRD IN THE SUBURBS

Steve Wilson

The Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* is not regarded as a bird of Canberra gardens but a number of sightings have been recorded at my home in Narrabundah. An adult and a juvenile were seen perched on power lines on our block at 8 p.m. on 30 January 1976 and four were seen on 6 February 1976. One was seen on 30 November 1977 and from then to 8 February 1978 there were seven sightings, five again on the power lines. This season there have been three sightings (one on the power lines) between 10 January and 6 February 1979.

This species breeds regularly near Narrabundah Lane and Mugga Road, which is only a little over 1 km distant.

S.J. Wilson, 2 Scott Street, Narrabundah, A.C.T. 2604

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