



# birds

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## EDITORIAL

The "Gould League Bird Watchers Club", senior section of the Gould League of N.S.W. has been in existence for two years, during that period two volumes of the bi-monthly bulletin "BIRDS" has appeared, and twenty-four field days have been held.

All field days have been well attended, and members have assisted with the production of "BIRDS" by sending to the Editor interesting field notes and articles for publication.

The Section now enters its third year with a membership of 143. Subscriptions for 1968-9 are now due and, if the annual fee is paid promptly "BIRDS" will continue to appear.

The Editor wishes to point out that only an increase in membership can improve the Bulletin, both in number of pages and in format. The suggestion is made that members tell their friends about our club, its field days and, of course, its journal "BIRDS".

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## NESTING NOTES

Interest attaches to a remark by Milton Trudgeon ("Birds", 1st. May) that the top of a Buff-breasted Pitta's nest found in northern N.S.W. "seemed to have been depressed to hide the eggs or to simulate disuse". A similar idea occurred to me in respect

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of a Pitta's nest found in rain-forest near Mackay in 1964.

Situated on a stump about 2ft high, that the nest when found was empty, damp, and somewhat dishevelled, so suggesting desertion. Yet, a few days later, I was surprised to find that the chamber, though still damp, contained two of the thrush-like eggs. Both eggs were quite cold and no bird could be seen or heard nearby, wherefore the idea arose that the Pitta, whose nest suggests a miniature edition of that of the Lyrebird, may share Menura's habit of deserting the nest for some days immediately after laying.

A second Pitta's nest seen in the same period, placed between buttress-roots of a jungle tree, had its top completely covered with sawdust. Timbermen had sawn down the tree before noticing the nest, but when they removed the log the bird returned and resumed her brooding.

Another note in Milton Trudgeon's article states that a pair of Spotted Quail-Thrushes disturbed at a nest circled the area at a short distance. That is a habit of the species. When I first sat near a nest of the kind, in Victoria many years ago, the owners created surprise by circling unobserved and stealing up behind me, and I have known such birds to act likewise (and perform other odd tricks) numbers of times since.

A further note in the same issue, by the Editor, states that a nest of a Tailor-bird (*Cisticola*) which I found at Dee Why in 1961 was the first known instance of this species being parasitized by a Bronze Cuckoo. Not so. It was my own first discovery of the kind, among very many such nests examined, but there are several earlier records in point, including two by S.W. Jackson.

A.H. CHISHOLM. Sydney.

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### THE SCARLET ROBIN (*PETROICA MULTICOLOR*)

Breeding records near Sydney.

Although quite common in the Blue Mountains, the Scarlet Robin is a rare bird near Sydney, and most sightings have been during the winter months; the obvious deduction is that they move to higher altitudes as the breeding season approaches. On three or four occasions since 1960 a pair of Scarlet Robins has taken up residence near the railway station at Mount Kuring-gai during autumn and stayed until late in August. I used to see them nearly every day during winter, but had never seen one outside those months until in September, 1967, I observed a male and two

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immature birds (brown, with no trace of pink on the breast) half a mile north of Mt Kuring-gai. Both the young birds would beg food from the male at every opportunity, and were seen to do so on several occasions during the next two weeks.

On November 1, I saw, for the first time, an adult female with the trio, and after watching her for some time saw her fly to some dense sucker growth on a horizontal limb 25 feet up in a Bloodwood tree that had been burnt in a bushfire the previous January. Closer inspection revealed that she was sitting on a nest, presumably with eggs. A week later, the nest was deserted and the robins had all left the area.

Mr. K. A. Hindwood has very kindly supplied me with the following records, the only other instances known to him of this species breeding in the County of Cumberland:

- 10.9.35, Woronora; nest with three eggs (F. Johnston)
- 21.8.37, Loftus; nest with three eggs (F. Johnston)
- 10.10.37, Dural; pair nesting (N. Chaffer)
- 21.8.54, Loftus; pair building (A. McGill)
- 2.9.1901, Middle Harbour; 3 eggs taken by A. J. North
- Some time prior to 1945, Loftus; nesting (N. Chaffer)
- Some time prior to 1945, Heathcote; nest with eggs  
(N. Chaffer)

Maddens Plains; pair building (K. Hindwood & A.H. Chisholm)

P.E. ROBERTS, Mt. Kuring-gai. N.S.W.

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A 'COLCURED' TURNSTONE

In "BIRDS" Vol.2, No.5, Page 34, Mr. L.C. Haines reported sighting a Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) with a green plastic band. Details of the sighting, which was reported first by David Sawyer, were published in The Aust. Bird Bander, Vol.6, No.I, Page 16 (March 1968).

Subsequently I received a reply to my enquiries concerning these observations from the probable bander. Max C. Thompson, Kansas, U.S.A. wrote advising me that he had been banding these birds with a metal band on the right leg and a green plastic 'streamer' on the left leg. In addition he had painted the rumps with 'international orange' dye which fades to a pink shade.

The banding was done in August 1967 on St. George Island, Pribilof Islands, Alaska, about 7,500 miles NNE of Sydney. Over

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16,000 Turnstones were banded on St. George Island in four years.

Mr. Thompson's letter was published in The Aust. Bander, Vol. 6, No.2, Page 34 (June 1968).

S.G. LANE, Lane Cove. N.S.W.

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SOME WATERFOWL OBSERVATIONS

Recent reports in the press have mentioned that because of a severe drought the Riverina duck populations are having an unsettled existence and that there has been little breeding. The authorities did not open the duck-shooting season because of these conditions. A dispersal of the ducks to other more favourable areas is likely so that Sydney birdwatchers should be on the alert and regularly check all marshes and ponds for waterfowl.

About one year ago I began to visit two habitats on the George's River, the first of which I call Picnic Point Lagoon, is a good area of mostly open water, fresh and non-tidal, with an outlet to the river. The second habitat is at the junction of Little Salt Pan Creek and the George's River.

Water-lillies flower in the first of the areas and the breeding species of birds include the Little Grebe, Coot, Eastern Swamp-hen, Dusky Moorhen, and Black Duck. Also observed have been Chestnut and Grey Teal, White-eyed Duck, Little Pied, Little Black and Big Black Cormorants, White-faced Heron, Nankeen Night-Heron, and numerous Silver Gulls. Other birds of interest noted have been Maned Goose, Plumed Tree-duck, and the Reed Warbler, the latter species being recorded throughout the year.

In the second habitat wildfowl rest on a sand-spit which can be seen from the road and they also feed nearby. Other than the species already mentioned the following birds have been recorded: White Ibis, Egret (alba) and a smaller Egret (probably the Plumed).

REG TAYLOR, Cabramatta. N.S.W.

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SWIFT PARROTS OBSERVED

On May 1, 1968, at Hornsby, I observed a flock of about 20 Swift Parrots flying in an easterly direction.

The Wonga Pigeon was heard calling on the same day. I fear that this species may be driven away soon by the clearing of nearby areas for settlement. \* \* \* \* \* R. MASON, Hornsby. N.S.W.

NOTES and NEWS

Mr. Ernie Vale, of Haberfield, writes that on June 10, 1968, he observed at Rodd's Peninsula, Iron Cove, 70 plus Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 Red-necked Stints and a lone Golden Plover.

Here, at Bayview, I have been watching two Sacred Kingfishers which take up residence each winter in a small clump of mangroves. The birds are, at times, crepuscular in their habits and I have watched them feeding along a sea-wall until dusk is well advanced. They appear to feed on sea-lice. Both the White-fronted and the Mangrove Herons have re-appeared and can be observed feeding along the edge of the water and also about the fringes of the mangroves.  
EDITOR.

In a letter to me Mr. Hindwood mentioned that at Cromer Golf Links, in an area bordering South Creek, he noted during June numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets and some Scaly-breasted, Little and Musk Lorikeets feeding in the flowering mahogany trees; also noted was a flock of about 30 Galahs and a number of Red-backed Parrots. Nearby, in a backwater of the creek, a Lewin Water-Rail was seen.  
EDITOR.

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FIELD-DAY REPORTS

Field Outing to Albion Park, Sunday, May 19, 1968.

Despite cold, gale-force winds, 25 members from the Sydney area, and a large party from the Illawarra Natural History Society, gathered at "Oakvale", the property of Mr. & Mrs. C.H. Thomas.

Our hosts and the leader, Allan Sefton, were pessimistic about the success of the outing. However, a sheltered gully yielded 22 species including Scarlet, Rose and Yellow Robins, Brown Warbler, Brown Yellow-tailed and Buff-tailed Thornbills, Little Lorikeets, a Tawny Frogmouth and a Whistling Eagle.

Lunch was an unsociable affair eaten in the cars. Afterwards there was a short excursion to the thick creekside vegetation at the foot of Macquarie Pass, but few species were observed in that locality.

A Wedge-tailed Eagle was perched in a tree in a paddock and the lagoons near the village of Albion Park were of interest. The birds seen here were three Cattle Egrets, two White Egrets, Two Swamp Harriers, many Eastern Swamphens, Spur-winged Plovers and

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Straw-necked Ibis; also a few White Ibis and a White-faced Heron. On the water were Black Duck, Grey Teal, Hardheads and Hoary-headed Grebes.

MARIE DIBLEY, Oatley, N.S.W.

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Field Outing to Berowra Waters, June 15, 1968.

Members visited the Sir Edward Hallstrom Nature Reserve on Berowra Waters and enjoyed a pleasant day's outing.

One group of 28 walked from the sanctuary gate near Cowan Village and followed the fire trail to the water at Bujiva Point, there meeting 10 other members who had travelled in two boats from the Berowra Ferry wharf.

The Hallstrom Reserve was established for the breeding and study of the Koala and for the general preservation of the sandstone fauna. It comprises 1980 acres of Hawkesbury Sandstone country west of the Pacific Highway between Berowra and Cowan, with a frontage to Berowra Waters. On its northern boundary it adjoins the well-known wildflower reserve of Muogomarra. The main habitats are dry sclerophyll forest and heathland.

In response to agitation by local fishermen the Hornsby Shire Council is pressing the State Government to have the Bujiva trail through the Reserve opened to the public. Thus, it is again apparent that the reservation of land is not the end of the fight for parklands but often the beginning of pressures from outside interests.

Mr. Ken Metcalfe, the resident Ranger, met our party and helped in many ways to make the day a success. Our thanks are duly accorded to him for his help. Naturalists wishing to visit the reserve are advised to contact Mr. Metcalfe at 610-1246.

Some 37 species of birds were observed. Most members had good views of a magnificent White-breasted Sea-Eagle flying over the waters. Many honeyeaters, of 8 species, were noted; they were attracted by the flowering banksias (*B. ericifolia*). Noisy Miners, not often seen in the sandstone country were observed. There was some disappointment that the Rock Warbler, a characteristic bird of the sandstone, was not seen, nor was the Powerful Owl observed, though it had recently been reported in the Sanctuary. Low tide

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prevented taking the boats into the mangroves.

The following birds were recorded for the day:-

Little Pied Cormorant	White-throated Tree-creeper
Silver Gull	Mistletoe-bird
White-faced Heron	Spotted Pardalote
Sea-Eagle	Silver-eye
Crimson Rosella	White-naped
Eastern Rosella	Honeyeater
Azure Kingfisher	Eastern Spinebill
Grey Fantail	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Rose Robin	White-eared Honeyeater
Yellow Robin	White-cheeked Honeyeater
Golden Whistler	Noisy Miner
Grey Thrush	Little Wattle-bird
Whipbird	Red Wattle-bird
Striated Thornbill	Olive-backed Oriole
Brown Thornbill	Raven
White-browed Scrub-Wren	Magpie-lark
Variegated Wren	Pied Currawong
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	Grey Butcher-bird
	Black-backed Magpie

RICHARD MASON, Hornsby. N.S.W.

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FIELD EXCURSIONS

Sunday, July 14, Heathcote. Leaders: George & Marie Dibley.

Meet on the east side of Heathcote Station at 9.45 a.m. (to link with train travellers ex Central 8.50, change at Sutherland to rail motor). Cars turn east from Highway and cross railway line near the Liverpool turn-off, follow road south to Heathcote Station.

We will walk along a fire trail for  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles to a dam on Goon-dera Brook, passing through good heathland to open forest.

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FIELD EXCURSIONS (Cont'd)

Saturday, August 10, Cowan. Leader: John Disney

The area to be visited is part of the Hallstrom Reserve, but is quite different from the area visited in June. Most of the route will be through heathland, and it is hoped that some of the honeyeaters and small warblers will be nesting.

A signpost on the Pacific Highway half a mile south of Cowan indicates the turn-off to the Reserve; meet at the Warden-Ranger's cottage at 2 p.m.

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