



birds

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EARLY NOTES ON THE BIRD LIFE OF THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK.

Situated not far south of Sydney and easy of access, the Royal National Park is a wide expanse of mostly natural bushland. Here, coastal plateaux, ocean beaches, heathland, some low swampland, open forest and brush entices the ornithologist. My first visit there was a little over 40 years ago when the only trafficable road traversing the area ran through one-way, from Waterfall to Audley, with a spur at Audley going to spots on Port Hacking for those venturesome enough to try out their cars up the steep and narrow Artillery Hill. There was an entrance gate not far from Waterfall and an exit gate the other end. A car trip through Lady Carrington's Drive was then a genuine experience and a visit to an avian wonderland. Nothing stirred my eagerness during the 1930's more than a week-end with an earlier colleague, Frank Clarke, at the old Zoologist's Cabin. I have little doubt that birds were more abundant then, than now and Catbirds, Satin Bower-birds and Lewin Honeyeaters readily perched on the lunch-table.

In one of my early scrap-books (at that time I did not consider it important to add the date and reference to paper cuttings, but the publication date would be before 1940) there is an article on the bird life of "The National Park" (the "Royal" prefix was not added until later) commencing -- "That whereas birds in The National Park have not been disturbed with the advent of the motor car, they have been affected by domestic cats and dogs gone wild, is revealed in a report on the status of the bird life in the area prepared by Mr. Neville Cayley, well known Australian Ornithologist". Neville Cayley was then a Park Trustee. In the report are some matters that need emphasis and comment. "Over 200 species of birds are listed ... With one exception, the Ground or Swamp Parrakeet, which disappeared over 30 years ago, and Accidental (sic!), the Pacific Gull, all are still to be found within the area". I have made over 250 trips there, covering most parts that are readily accessible, purposely to assess the bird life and my personal species total is 167, which includes such "accidentals" as the Plumed Tree-Duck, Painted Snipe, Spangled Drongo, Royal Spoonbill, Hoary-headed Grebe and about six kinds of derelict sea-birds.

Not many species are mentioned in the Cayley report, but the statement that "Honeyeaters, such as the ... Fuscous, White-plumed and Scarlet, were in thousands" is surprising. The first-mentioned two move in during irregular nomadic movements, but hardly in thousands, whilst the White-plumed would be unlikely to be even seen back in the 1930's. Another extract, "The heath lands teamed (sic!) with bird life", is a rare event nowadays. I have often walked through so much of the extensive heathy areas and frankly have been disappointed with the general scarcity of birds. There is little doubt that the ravages of bushfires in recent years have taken serious toll, and have been the largest destroying factor, and I agree readily with Cayley when he states -- "Undoubtedly the worst bird-pest in the area is the Pied Currawong, which takes heavy toll annually of the eggs and young of others." This bird is far too abundant and the Part authorities might think seriously of a long-range plan of their nests and eggs destruction.

The Royal National Park can be both a recreation area and a wild-life refuge. I can assure anyone that a list of 150

species of birds over a long period depicts able observing, and should this fine park be spared the ravages of bushfires for some years and predator control be applied, then it can again become the place that Neville Cayley described so enticingly over 30 years ago.

ARNOLD R. MCGILL,
Arncliffe, N.S.W.

SOME ALBERT LYREBIRD OBSERVATIONS.

From 4.50 a.m. till 10 a.m., 7/9/1967, fellow Gould League Camper, Mervyn Grahame and I were in rainforest of a western McPherson Range escarpment. Nearby spring water erupted in farming land and, overhung by rainforest and debris-like Yellow-throated Scrub Wrens' nests, dropped almost sheer from waterfall pool to waterfall for about 400 yards and disappeared underground in the cunjevoi covered depression of a false crest.

Apart from ledges, false crests and steep saucer-shaped slopes, most negotiable terrain was one-in-one gradient, but with plenty of midginbils, vines and saplings to grasp. Cold light rain fell as we moved at just over and under the 3,000 feet level.

We tape-recorded three male Albert Lyrebirds who called off and on from 5.30 a.m. to 10 a.m. and observed at distances of 40 yards to about 25 feet a foraging female Alberti, tail curved sideways from brooding.

A male Alberti was performing on the mossy ground of a very small clearing. My final approach with Gould League Tape Recording equipment, through wild grape tendrils, made it difficult to aim the Parabolic Sound Reflector. Chances of a first class recording were ruined by my failing to notice a mound-raking Scrub Turkey which, with a perched bird unrecognizable in the dim light, gave the alarm. With available time exhausted, our departure was rewarded by the finding of an Alberti's grey, main tailfeather, 18 1/8 inches long.

Arriving noon, 16/1/1969, with Mr. E.J. Hayes who had observed Albert Lyrebirds there for over 50 years, we made unsuccessful attempts to photograph. We saw two male and two female Alberti, one male being twenty feet away as he balanced for 20-30 seconds on the top wire of the boundary fence between rainforest and farmland. No Lyrebirds called until

just before sunset to dusk when two called from below where the male had balanced. Three rufous tipped Alberti "flank" feathers were found, $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches long.

On 17/1/1969 attempts at photography failed.

On 14/6/1969, arriving 10 a.m. with Messrs. E.J. Hayes and E. Bell we descended the escarpment. No Lyrebirds were calling. We erected a prefabricated hessian and green mosquito net hide near the mossy ground, a favourite male performing spot. There I waited with Tape Recorder and cameras while my companions unsuccessfully sought elsewhere for nests but collected a specimen of Umbrella Fern, Sticherus flabellatus. Soon after playing my tape made on 7/9/69, three male Alberts were answering, mainly with territory calls. On my way out my companions pin-pointed five males calling with much mimicry. Berries fell from feeding Wompoo, Green-winged and Brown Pigeons, but only the Wonga called. One giant Broad-leafed Stinging Nettle Tree was glorious with large pink flowers.

Study that night showed the territory calls I had taped matched those of Graeme Pollock's gramophone record of a Mt. Tamborine Albert Lyrebird.

At 5.40 a.m. on 15/6/1969 a dawn chorus of birds and three male Albert Lyrebirds were taped as we entered the rain-forest. Yellow-throated Scrub-Wrens came close with lively warbling, Lewin Honeyeaters called vigorously and two excited Spine-tailed Logrunners scurried between us as the dawn tape was re-played. Ned Hayes saw one male Albert Lyrebird's rufous, reaping hook-shaped, central tail feather with a narrow inner web increasing in width towards the tip $22\frac{7}{8}$ inches long. The outer webs were about an inch wide for the first three inches above the quill and were replaced by short, well-spaced bristles growing longer towards the tip. Two large grey tail feathers with dainty herringbone tips and a score of thistledown texture rufous tipped "flank" feathers were found. I taped territory and alarm. calls and varied mimicry. The hide was left to moulder and better merge into landscape for future use.

Alberti occupation seemed near capacity, as over half the area was freshly and lightly raked Lyrebird fashion or deeply raked and dug in places by Scrub Turkeys.

We formed the opinion that from the top of the scarp, tree, log and stump perches with vast panoramas, which with the tall rain-forest, its undergrowth and shrubby fringes provided for the aesthetic and material needs of Albert Lyrebirds, while the steep slopes, cliffs and trees gave adequate scope to outwit traditional and introduced enemies.

Any suggestions to help with photography would be appreciated

TWO TOOLOOM SCRUBS.

Mr. Ned Hayes and I wish to record that for over fifty years he has often camped in, worked and observed in, while for over twenty years I have spent considerable time in that "Toooloom Scrub", part of Mandle and Beaury State Forest No. 2, which between Legume and Urbenville dips in and out of Wallaby Creek, Toooloom. We have not met any person who has heard, seen, or found evidence of any Lyrebird in this scrub.

Road signs and maps show about twenty miles away, between Urbenville and Bonalbo, another "Toooloom Scrub" which is part of Yabbra State Forest. There are reports of Lyrebirds there and nearby, but we have yet to identify them positively.

MILTON TRUDGEON, Tumbulgum,
N.S.W.

EAGLES AND HAWKS OF THE CASINO DISTRICT, N.S.W.

The following list with brief notes, are the Hawks and Eagles that frequent the Casino district in North-eastern N.S.W. The surrounding countryside is mostly woodland and open forest with areas of flat and hilly grassland.

Nankeen Kestrel. A resident species and quite plentiful during breeding season. Two or three pairs nest within one square mile of territory. Hollows in dead trees of the open woodland are selected for nesting sites.

Black-shouldered Kite. Pairs arrive here during April or May and depart by the end of October. Construction of nests generally commences during 1st or 2nd week of arrival. Favourite sites are the top most leafy branches of Rough-barked Apple trees, these usually adjoining corn or other crop paddocks.

Little Falcon. Single birds mostly observed throughout the year in lightly timbered areas. During their hunting hours, which are early morning and again from 3.30 p.m. until dusk, they may be seen harassing Starlings or Sparrows from trees or cockspurs. To-day, 3rd June, a Little Falcon made a lightning attack on a Crested Pigeon, the Pigeon although flying swiftly itself was quickly overtaken and struck from below, slightly wounded, it escaped to a nearby thicket.

Black Falcon. Rarely observed in the district. Odd birds have been observed to sweep rapidly over open grass-land only to brake and dive to retrieve a fallen Quail or other ground species.

Peregrine Falcon. Odd pairs are sighted throughout the year with extra arrivals during the winter months.

Collared Sparrow-hawk. Occasionally observed, singly or in pairs. Timber fringed creek areas are mostly favoured.

Crested Hawk. Most pairs arrive during September or October and depart in February and March, though a few pairs are occasionally seen feeding through the forest tree-tops in winter. The unique whistle notes, "weit-chew weit-chew", often draw attention to a pair of these Hawks high in the sky. The species nests regularly in the district.

Brown Hawk. Resident species. Territories are large areas covering roughly eight square miles of flat grass-land or hilly open woodland. A graceful Hawk in appearance and in flight it is capable of great speed. A very useful species destroying many snakes during breeding seasons on which they feed their young in nest.

Goshawk. Pairs arrive during February departing again in October or November. The species is often observed singly. Food sometimes consists of Butcher-birds and Tawny Frogmouths as well as smaller species of birds. Breeds here in swamp areas and tall trees are chosen as nest sites.

Swamp-harrier. Odd pairs on the larger swamplands.

Little Eagle. A rare species. Pairs some years frequent the oak-fringed creeks and dry forest ridges. Little Eagles have sometimes nested at the extreme top of large Spotted Gum trees. In this district they prey chiefly on rabbits.

Whistling Eagle. With possible exception of the Kestrel, this species is more numerous and widespread in its distribution than any of the other Hawks or Eagles in the Casino area.

White-breasted Sea Eagle. Occasional single Eagles may be seen flying along the creeks and over lakes.

Wedge-tailed Eagle. Occurs throughout the year with an increase during winter and breeding season which is from June to October. Territories then are roughly eight square miles with any type of suitable large trees selected as nesting sites. The Wedge-tailed Eagle is a magnificent bird and is the second largest Eagle in the world. It is a very useful species, as it destroys countless rabbits throughout Australia.

ARTHUR BOND.
Casino, N.S.W.

Correction - Regarding my article on "Some Avicultural Nesting Notes" which appeared in "BIRDS" Vol. 3, No. 2, page 15; a sentence dealing with the Dartford Warbler reads "The Dartford Warbler is an all the year round resident of Britain and its only 'breeding' warbler." The latter part of the sentence should read as follows - "and its only endemic warbler."

Apart from the resident and very local Dartford Warbler, eleven other species of warblers, all migratory in their habits, also nest in the British Isles. They are, the Whitethroat; Lesser Whitethroat; Garden Warbler; Blackcap; Grasshopper Warbler; Reed-Warbler; Sedge Warbler; Marsh Warbler; Willow-Warbler; Wood-Warbler and the Chiffchaff. Of these by far the rarest is the Marsh Warbler which is very local and only nests regularly in a few southern counties, especially Somerset, Gloucester and Oxford.

L. COURTNEY HAINES.

FIELD NOTES.

On Rodd's Peninsular, Iron Cove Bay, I observed on 25th May, 1969, 50 plus Bar-tailed Godwits. They were very quiet and I was able to approach very close to them. Other birds of interest were eight Hoary-headed Grebe, three Little Pied Cormorants and two Crested Terns.

L. COURTNEY HAINES.

FIELD DAY REPORTS.

ELOUERA BUSHLAND RESERVE FIELD OUTING. - June 22, 1969.

A fine Winter's day and prospects of birds being plentiful greeted the 40-50 people (21 cars) who attended this outing.

An area of heathland and nearby parkland, adjoining the Elouera Estate, proved productive and observations included the New Holland, Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters, Little and Red Wattle-birds, Golden Whistler, Eastern Rosella, Nankeen Kestrel and a Mistletoe-bird.

Old Quarter Sessions Road provided an excellent area for lunch, beside an old sandstone quarry and White-eared Honeyeaters called frequently. A number of parties searched for the Rock-warbler, a bird often seen here, but to no avail. An excellent view of the extent of the Elouera Reserve was obtained from this area and other points of interest included some aboriginal rock-carvings and an excellent view of a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

The party then split up, one group walking down the fire-trail to the Hornsby Valley floor and the remainder drove to the opposite side of the Valley and met the first party at the bottom of the fire-trail. Interesting observations by both parties included White-eared Honeyeater, King Parrots, the Grey Thrush, Brown Warbler and a large flock of Red-browed Finches.

A total of 32 native species were recorded and our thanks go to Dr. Mason for providing an interesting outing in this area, my personal thanks are twofold, as being a "local", I was able to add 3 new species to my list for the area.

RICHARD COOPER,
Hornsby, N.S.W.

Monday, 20th July, 1969. Heathland survey at Heathcote.

This was a most successful outing and a pattern for future field work. At first, the party split into very small groups and combed the heathland surrounding the playing fields. The most common bird here was the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater. Its appearance, song, flight and perching habits

were observed by all. Next most common was the Yellow-winged Honeyeater.

The party re-assembled at the Fire Trail to compare notes and have morning tea, but the latter was interrupted by the report of a Beautiful Firetail Finch in the vicinity. Altogether, four of these birds were seen - interesting, because the Dibleys had never seen them in this area before. Since the playing fields have been developed and extended, the Pipits have moved in. In the hunt for the Firetails a Heath Wren was discovered.

Two groups were then formed, one going to the Dam by the track, the other by the fire trail. Returning in the afternoon, routes were reversed. The track didn't yield much except numerous raucous Little and Red Wattle Birds - an interesting comparison; two White-cheeked Honeyeaters were observed by both parties. One party beat through a swampy area near the fire trail and flushed Emu Wrens. But a hunt for these birds in an area where they are always found near the Dam proved fruitless. It had been badly burnt out.

Lunch was had in a compact group and much useful ornithological discussion took place. These discussions are regarded as an important feature of the outings. 32 species were seen in the relatively small area covered by the survey. Four species of Banksia were in flower.

MARIE DIBLEY,
Oatley, N.S.W.

Saturday, 16th August, 1969. Windsor District, Scheyville, Cattai Creek and Blue Gum Creek.

This is about the best district near Sydney for an outing and all were highly delighted with the day. 83 species were observed, the following nesting:- Black Swan, Dusky Moorhen, Little Cuckoo-shrike, Striated Thornbill, Buff-tailed Thornbill, Yellow-tailed Thornbill, Brown Weebill, Jacky Winter, Grey Thrush. Other interesting observations were the Cattle Egrets and White-backed Swallow at Pitt Town, two Red-kneed Dotterels at Bushell's Lagoon and the group of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters resplendent in the late afternoon sunlight. Our thanks to Ernie Hoskin for leading a most rewarding trip.

MARIE DIBLEY,
Oatley, N.S.W.

Notes of Field Trip to Dharug National Park.

After a cold wintery week, Saturday, 20th September dawned sunny and warm - a perfect day for the outing to Dharug National Park led by Mr. & Mrs. G. Dibley.

A group of 24 bird-watchers met at Mangrove Creek and a short time was spent here before moving on. The main area visited was Sugee Bag Creek which was followed along in to the foothills and the party soon found that here was an excellent place for bird watching and a number of those present had no difficulty in adding more "first sightings" to their lists.

The variety of wildflowers added another attraction to the day and Mr. Dibley pointed out some orchids growing in the trees.

Among the species of birds sighted, those worthy of special note were a male and female Spotted Quail-Thrush, 2 Ground Thrush, a White-throated Treecreeper and, within a short time, a Red-browed Treecreeper, making this an interesting comparison, as these two birds are similar in habits.

There were two separate sightings of the Glossy Black Cockatoo. In Casuarinas along the roadside a male and female were observed feeding, the female having yellow markings on the head and, it was thought, the female was a larger bird than the male. The second sighting was a group of 3 birds, again in Casuarinas, near the creek.

In all a total of 65 species of birds were observed and everyone felt that the day had been really enjoyable. We are indeed grateful to Mr. & Mrs. Dibley for making this a day to remember.

BERYL CHEGWIDDEN, Eastwood, NSW.

FIELD-DAYS FOR OCTOBER, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER.

Sunday, 19th October, 10 a.m. Plumpton. Leader: Ernie Wood.

Meet in the Richmond Rd. just past the Rooty Hill Rd. junction. Object of excursion is to see birds of the shale area. Many of them should be nesting.

Saturday, November 22. Bulli Pass Natural Park.

Leader: Peter Roberts (479240)

This is normally the habitat of many rainforest birds

some of them rarely seen elsewhere in the County of Cumberland despite severe damage in the bushfires last November, many species remained in the area. There will be a walk of about one mile each way along a well-graded track.

By car: On Princes Highway, 19 miles south of Waterfall turn left at Bulli Pass signpost; park 1 - 2 miles from signpost, 400 yards below the sharp left-hand bend, on the "uphill" side of the road 10 a.m.

By rail: Catch 8.20 train from Central, arriving Bulli Station at 9.57. Train will be met if leader has been notified beforehand.

Sunday, 7th December, Heathland Survey No.2 (Summer).

Leaders: G. & M. Dibley.

Meet at east side of railway station at Heathcote 9.45 a.m.

Public Transport: Train departs Central at 8.50 a.m. change into motor train at Sutherland.

Private Transport: Follow Princes Highway through Engadine, turn off to left over railway line near Liverpool Road, just before Heathcote and follow railway south to Heathcote Station.

Lunch will be had away from cars. Bring pencil, paper. Aim of the outing is to follow the procedure of the July outing and compare our observations with those of the winter survey.

GEORGE DIBLEY, Oatley, NSW.

REVIEW

"An Australian Bird Book" J.A. Leach revised by P. Crosbie Morrison.

9th Edition, 3rd impression. Whitcombe and Tombs Pty. Ltd. \$3.60.

The edition of Leach under review, with the exception of the tabulated list of species and their brief descriptions and distributions is almost a completely different book to earlier editions bearing the same title.

The lecture has been rewritten by the reviser - author Crosbie Morrison and all the coloured plates and half tone figures of birds have been re-drawn by Anne Lissenden.

It is possible that the older generation of bird watchers, literally "reared" on the earlier presentations of "An Australian

Bird Book" will miss the intrinsic charm of "those old magnificent plates," as one bird-lover perhaps over enthusiastically described them; the plates in question were drawn by the artist Miss Ethel M. Paterson from mounted museum specimens. However, despite the drastic changes, the enthusiastic spirit of Dr. Leach still seems to pervade the pages of the new revised edition.

The new lecture is interesting and informative and the Bowdler-Sharpe arrangement of families and species has not been dramatically changed. The individual accounts of species have been amended where necessary and brief description of nest and eggs have been added. The latter is a decided improvement.

The book has xvi, 224 pages, 32 coloured plates depicting 224 birds and 103 birds drawn in black and white. Though the majority of coloured figures merit commendation, some lack colour strength and design; included also, are eight full-page photographs.

An interesting table well worthy of study compares bird orders in earlier and the present editions and that of Alexander Wetmore. Other useful tables give particulars of protected birds in Australia.

The new edition is beautifully produced and in this regards far exceeds all previous editions. The book is strongly bound and has a limp water-proof plastic cover; the title and motif is blocked with bright orange-gold and the paper is of a good quality. The book fits easily into one's coat pocket.

The new edition deserves a place on all bird students book-shelves and is especially recommended to members of the "Gould League Bird Watchers Club".

L. C. H.