



birds

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NOTICES.

At a special meeting held at the Australian Museum on the evening of 21st July last, it was decided that the new name of the Club should be the "N. S. W. Field Ornithologists' Club".

The Committee for the Club's current year (1st July 1970 to 30th June 1971) is as listed on the front cover.

Constitution.

Any member who would like a copy of the Constitution as amended and adopted please send a stamped, addressed envelope to the Secretary.

Subscription.

Members are reminded that Annual Subscriptions are now over due. "BIRDS" will be published bi-monthly in future and with our limited funds prompt payment of your subscriptions will greatly assist the Club.

INTRODUCTION OF AN ANNUAL BIRD REPORT

For many years the recording of observations in N.S.W. has been carried out by a small number of the State's more senior ornithologists and but for their diligence much valuable information would have been lost or forgotten. To expand and publicise this important aspect of field ornithology, our Club plans to produce an Annual Bird Report, which, it is hoped, will contain in systematic list form, all the more important observations made in N.S.W. Information of this nature built up over a number of years could then be of use in determining the status or changing distribution of species for conservation purposes and for updating local lists or handbooks.

As the report will be confined to one complete issue of "Birds" per year, the published records must be selective, e.g. omitting the more common day to day observations. Some headings for which records required are as follows:-

Rare visitors.

Species well outside their normal range.

- Arrival and departure dates for migrants.
Over-wintering or summering by migrants.
Relative abundance of summer or winter visitors from year to year.
Common species, particularly large numbers or species well out of their normal habitat (Winter flocking etc.)
Beach washed records of sea birds.
Breeding recordings (perhaps indicating an extension of range).

The minimum information required for each species is number observed, date and locality; however, the more information supplied the more valuable will be the record. In the case of rare or unusual observations, details of plumage, calls, habitat and behaviour should be supplied. Messrs. Hindwood and McGill have consented to consider such observations before publication.

Although 1970 is well advanced it is intended to produce a report for that year. This may be limited in content but it will act as a guide to members for a full scale report in 1971. The success of this scheme depends on members' contributions and your enthusiastic support is requested.

Please send in observations commencing 1st January 1970 NOW and at regular intervals to - The Records Officer, C/o 84 Arabella St., Longueville, NSW 2066.

ALAN ROGERS
Coogee N. S. W.

THE SPANGLED DRONGO IN SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA.

The Spangled Drongo (Chibea bracteata) is a regular migrant between New Guinea and eastern Queensland; at the same time it is present in eastern Queensland throughout the year. Its known breeding range extends south to about Macksville, 250 miles north

of Sydney. Whether, during migration, northern populations of this species move farthest south, or whether there is an overall shift south during spring and early summer and a return northern movement in late summer and autumn is a matter that has yet to be determined.

A point of considerable interest is that, after the close of the breeding season, numbers of Drongos move into central-coastal and south-eastern New South Wales; even extending, at times, into eastern and southern Victoria (less than a dozen records) and northern coastal Tasmania (at least three occurrences). Most of these southern records are for the autumn and winter months.

The intriguing question about the southern movement of Drongos is this: Why do individuals of a species that is essentially tropical and sub-tropical in its distribution move into an autumn and winter climate at the close of their summer breeding season? Some of the birds seen in south-eastern Australia have golden-yellow eyes (irides) and are presumably immature; others, with deep red eyes, are adults.

Near Sydney the species has been noted during every month of the year, though it is quite rare from mid-October to January, with numerous observations of single birds or small parties between February and September. The "peak" period is March to August.

Mr. J. Debert informs me that similar circumstances apply to the Forster district, though more birds are to be seen in that locality, which is about 150 miles north of Sydney. I have seen them near Forster catching honeybees coming into hives. The bees were held in the tip of the bill and wiped against branches before being swallowed. Such an action may have something to do with the sting of the bee. In one instance Jack Debert observed (July 1963) about 30 drongos in a loose party and he not infrequently sees from six to a dozen birds in one day when bird watching.

The following records from near Sydney during 1966 will

give an indication of what usually takes place when a proportion of the Drongo population moves into south-eastern Australia:-

24.2.66, Seaforth, one (Mr. Douglas); 25.4.66, Warwick Farm, one (E.S. Hoskin and K. Hindwood); 30.4.66, Bayview, one killed by a cat (L.C. Haines); 19-21.6.66, Caringbah, one (F. Johnston); 26.6.66, Lugarno, one (A.R. McGill); 9.7.66, Bayview one (G. Stevens and K.A. Hindwood); 21.7.66 to early October 1966. as many as four birds in a bush garden being fed on bread and meat (Mrs. Barter); 22.7.66, Newport, one (E.S. Hoskin).

Drongos are omnivorous in their diet, eating insects, grubs, nectar (especially from coral-tree blossoms) and pollen. Small birds, such as pardalotes and thornbills, are chased and killed and then plucked before being eaten. Drongos also follow cuckoo-shrikes and leatherheads and rob them of insects.

K. A. HINDWOOD.

Lindfield. N.S.W.

OCCURRENCE OF THE BLACK FALCON NEAR NARRABRI. N.S.W.

On 29th June, 1970, at "The Pines" six miles from Narrabri on the Bullawa Creek Road, I was walking through a grass paddock with my German short-haired pointer dog, searching for quail.

The time was 1135 hours and after a few minutes the dog pointed and I flushed a pair of Stubble Quail. I was surprised to see a dark falcon-like bird make a half-hearted swoop at one of the quail. After I flushed the next quail the dog had pointed, the bird returned accompanied by its mate. At first I thought they were Brown Falcons (Falco berigora) but this was not the case.

The dog again pointed and another quail was flushed and one of the falcons swooped after it. To the surprise of the landholder Jim, Egan, who was droving cattle along the road and was standing by his horse, the quail landed between himself and the horse. In Jim's own words, "I was so scared that I might frighten the bird, I could hardly breathe". The quail stayed there for about 30 seconds

whilst the falcons circled overhead. However, the horse stamped its foot and the quail flew into the next paddock, the falcons again giving chase but missed! I observed all this standing in the paddock and for the next 20 minutes the falcons soared about me, waiting, but the dog did not flush another quail.

The falcons were under observation for 30 minutes. During this time I did not observe either bird to flap its wings, they both soared and glided continuously. The birds were dark overall with lighter facial markings but these were not very prominent. The wings were a dark brown underneath with no underwing pattern, except that the primaries appeared lighter than the under coverts. Legs were whitish and not particularly noticeable. The tail was sometimes fanned and appeared to be square, and not rounded. Neither of the birds hovered, side-slipped or flapped, features normally associated with Brown Hawks.

One bird was smaller than the other and neither was heard to call. During the period of observation the birds were consistently mobbed by a pair of Black-shouldered Kites. There was no doubt in my mind that they were Black Falcons (*Falco niger*).

The day was fine and observation was made with binoculars size 7 x 50. A Brown Hawk was flushed two hours later and enabled field comparisons to be made.

ALAN K. MORRIS

National Parks and Wildlife Service

MIGRATION OF HONEYEATERS.

During the period 12th to 21st May, 1970, I was on recreation leave and stayed at Dunbogan, a seaside resort on a headland overlooking the entrance of Camden Haven River. During my stay there, I observed considerable numbers of Eastern Silvereyes (*Zosterops lateralis*), Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga chrysops*), Red Wattle-birds (*Anthochaera carunculata*) and Noisy Friar-birds (*Philemon corniculatus*) flying northwards.

To the north at Lake Inness, Limeburners Creek, and North

Haven, flowering of Broad Leaved Paper Barks (Melaleuca species) Swamp Mahogany (Eucalyptus robusta) and Flooded Gum (Eucalyptus grandis) was in progress and the above mentioned honeyeaters were observed in these forests, the commonest bird present being the Noisy Friar-bird. The following notes were taken:-

12th May, 1970: 8.10 a.m. - winds - light westerlys.

Yellow-faced Honeyeaters passing over and heading north at the rate of c. 249 per hour, in flocks ranging from five to 26 birds. Total time of observation was 22 minutes.

16th May, 1970: 9.05 a.m. - winds - light westerlys.

Yellow-faced Honeyeaters passing over at the rate of 240 birds per hour in flocks ranging from five to 46 birds. The migration was still continuing at midday when I left the area.

19th May, 1970: 7.30 p.m. - winds westerly.

Whilst bream fishing in shallow water in the Bay of Dunbogan I heard Noisy Friar birds calling and by the light of the moon I observed a flock of c. 40 flying northwards across the bay. By this time the sun had been set for at least an hour and it was quite dark. If it was not for the birds calling I would not have observed the flock passing over.

20th May, 1970: 5.25 a.m. - bream fishing - wind light from the west and still quite dark.

Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were heard calling as they flew across the Bay northwards. No numbers could be assessed because of the darkness. Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, although common in Banksia near the house were not observed migrating later that morning.

ALAN K. MORRIS

National Parks and Wildlife Service.

NOTES AND NEWS.

The following letter was received from Mrs. Dulcie O'Leary of Kundabung, North Coast, NSW. The letter is dated 21st April 1970.

Dear Sir,

Would you please advise me whether a pure black Pee-Wee (Magpie Lark) is very rare. We have one here, it is a wild bird. The parent birds brought him into our yard when he was very young. The young bird is pure black and when in direct sunlight has a touch of green sheen on his back. The parents are normally coloured.

I would like to know if a black Pee-Wee is rare, as I have never seen one before and I have lived in the bush all my life. - Yours faithfully etc.

N. B. It would appear that a pure black Pee-Wee is indeed quite rare. The Australian Museum has in its reference collection of birds a long series of Pee-Wees or Magpie-Larks as they are officially named; but the collection is completely devoid of melanic specimens.

Editor.

The following is an extract from a letter I received from Mrs. Elsie Worthington of Blackpool, England. The letter is dated 12th March, 1970.

"I saw our first returning waders at Knott End on August 16th, 1969. Turnstones, Ringed Plover, Oyster Catchers and Dunlin feeding on the mud flats and salt marshes of the estuary of the river Wyre, eight miles north of Blackpool. As Blackpool is a very popular holiday resort catering annually for nine million visitors (I check the figures at the Town Hall this morning), it is late October before they're all departed and I can resume wader-watching on our seven miles of lovely golden sands. Our tides range between 27 feet and 33 feet at high water and take two and a half to three hours before the sand is uncovered, leaving plenty of food for both gulls and waders. Three of our four species of gull, the Great Black-back (worlds largest gull), the Herring gull,

and the Black-headed Gull are resident; but the Lesser Black-backed Gull goes south for four winter months.

Our waders are montly Redshanks, Oyster Catchers (your Pied) Dunlin, Knot, Sanderling, Turnstone, Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and occasionally the Black-tailed Godwit. Near my home are some 100 foot cliffs of boulder clay and I often see wintering Meadow Pipits (smaller than your Pipit) feeding on the grass-grown slopes and Rock Pipits on the shore. A pair of Pied Wagtails usually winter in the Sunken Gardens near the cliffs. Last winter I saw a Purple Sandpiper, a rare visitor to Lancashire. By the end of March all the waders are off to their breeding grounds; the Knot and Sanderlings to the barren Arctic tundra, the rest to Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Holland and Scandinavia."

Editor.

Our Assistant Secretary, Mr. R. Cooke, is to be married on 10th October and on behalf of the President and all members I would like to extend to Bob and Joan our best wishes for their future happiness.

Editor.

At Mona Vale, N.S.W. on 12th May, 1970, I observed five Swift Parrots.

L. C. H.
Bayview. NSW.

OUTING - YERAMBA LAGOON - SUNDAY, 21st JUNE, 1970.

The excursion to Yeramba Lagoon was held on a beautiful winter's day and attracted 53 members. The attractiveness of the area (including wattle in bloom), fine weather and the Annual General Meeting in the afternoon no doubt accounted for the large attendance.

Yeramba Lagoon and the surrounding bushland afforded members a very fruitful bird count - in all 50 species (almost 1 bird per member).

The water birds were most plentiful and included 5 Nankeen Night Herons in trees on the water's edge, White Ibis, Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, White-eyed Duck, Little Grebe and Brown Bittern.

Landbirds sighted included White-naped Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote nesting, Fuscous Honeyeater, Brown Weebill, Painted Quail, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Rose Robin and Golden Whistler. Fleeting glimpses were had of the Little Marshbird and some members suffered some confusion in deciding whether it was the marshbird calling or Ernie Hoskin.

Much credit is due to Bankstown Council in the good work it has done in freeing the area of pollution, installation of sewerage and creation of the lagoon conducive to nesting water birds. A wild flower garden is also under construction for the area.

The party then drove to Oatley Park for lunch and discussion ensued for the rest of the afternoon on the formation and re-naming of the Club.

Many thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Goldstein for a most enjoyable day.

NOELA KIRKWOOD
Mosman. N.S.W.

MEETING, 18th JUNE 1970

Illustrated Address - Mr. George Dibley, retiring Chairman, gave an address entitled "Stamps and Ornithology".

A number of colour slides were screened excellently illustrating many of the postage stamps discussed. Some countries have never issued stamps depicting birds, but a great number had, and some, particularly South American countries, had used some of the more interesting birds found there, over many years. The lecturer traced the history of some Australian issues. Five pages of bird stamps were tabled for inspection.

Observations:

R. Cooper noted 4 Spotless Crakes on a lagoon near Uralla; A. McGill reported on 28 Pink-eared Ducks and 8 Red-kneed Dotterels at a small swamp near Baker's Lagoon; M. Henry reported a Jabiru at Myall Lakes; Pam Cooper observed a White-necked Heron at Roseville Golf Course and a King Parrot feeding on Camellias at Roseville.

MEETING, 16th JULY, 1970.

Illustrated Address - Given by Mr. K. A. Hindwood and entitled "Nadgee Nature Reserve".

This inviting Reserve was visited by Mr. Hindwood and others for a week a short time ago. It is situated on the coast north of the Victorian border. The bird list for the area was 130 species, including such rare birds as the Ground Parrot, Eastern Bristle-bird, Olive Whistler and Striated Field-Wren. A number of colour slides were screened, depicting the various habitats found within the Reserve's boundaries, as well as coastal beaches, rocky headlands and some short swift-flowing rivers. There was some indication of human occupation in earlier years. Quite a number of slides showed birds found there and of particular interest was one of the nest and eggs of the Ground Parrot.

Observations

P. Roberts observed a Barn Owl at Hornsby on June 15; E. S. Hoskin reported two pairs of Regent Bower-birds at Mitchell Park; T. Lindsay noted a Jabiru south of Nowra in early July; M. Dibley found 2 grey Currawongs near Heathcote on July 5; Mrs. Bonser located a Stone Curlew at Sackville in early July; A. Rogers stated that a Giant Petrel ringed as a nestling in the South Orkney Is. was recovered 3 months later off Malabar -- also 20 Blue-winged Shovelers and 20-30 Red-kneed Dotterels at Bushells and Bakers Lagoons during July 5-12.

FIELD DAYS

In the event of bad weather, fuel shortages, bushfires etc., ring leader to see if outing has been cancelled. No outing has been cancelled to date, but it is possible.

For details of September Field Day see "BIRDS" Vol 5, No. 1 or contact Mrs. Dibley, 'phone 57-6298.

SATURDAY, 17th OCTOBER.

St. Albans Town Common.

Leader: Mrs. E. K. Bigg, 634-2503

Meet 9.30 a.m. on St. Albans Road. Cross on right hand Wiseman's ferry and turn left. Meet at small clearing on left 1.3 miles from ferry. This is a birdy spot for morning tea. We then proceed to St. Albans. Very little walking necessary. Lunch at cars.

NOVEMBER OUTING - has been changed from Sunday, 22nd to Saturday, 14th.

M. DIBLEY.