



birds

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CONSERVATION NOTES

Bakers Lagoon

On hearing that plans were afoot to drain Bakers Lagoon as part of a flood mitigation programme, the Conservation Committee wrote to the Minister for Lands requesting that the National Parks and Wildlife Service purchase the lagoon from the present owners in order to preserve the wetland environments. The Minister replied that the matter would be investigated and we have now heard that the Service investigation is completed and the report for acquisition is favourable.

Snipe

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has recently announced that the C. S. I. R. O. Division of Wildlife Research will carry out a survey of the biology of the Japanese Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*). The Chief of the Division, Dr. H. J. Frith has recently visited Japan to make a study of the breeding habits and extent of the breeding grounds in that country. The Nature Conservation Council of N. S. W. with whom we are affiliated, has made representation to the National Parks and Wildlife Service protesting about the decision to investigate the suitability of this bird as a game bird when the habitat it most commonly favours, i. e. coastal bogs and marshes, is rapidly being drained away as a result of flood mitigation works.

Mutton Bird Island, Coffs Harbour

This island, proclaimed a Wildlife Refuge and connected to Coffs Harbour Jetty by a barrage, is well known for its

colonies of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. Since 1960 over 6000 of these shearwaters have been banded and a wealth of information has been accrued on the population. It is understood that Narelle Swanson, who has been banding there lately, will publish a report on the banding soon.

In September a disastrous fire, deliberately lit, burned most of the vegetation on the island and we understand that there is a serious decline in the breeding population there this year. Hearing that a local Coffs Harbour businessman was trying to organise a youth "pop" concert on the island for two days between Christmas and New Year, our Secretary wrote to the Minister for Lands objecting to the concert because of the damage that visitors would do to the birds and requesting that the island be made a Nature Reserve. In his reply the Minister said that the application to hold the concert on the Island was rejected and that he would advise in two months time as to what progress was being made to have the island proclaimed a Nature Reserve.

Survey of Wetlands

Graham Goodrick, a Research Officer of the National Parks and Wildlife Service has just completed his survey of wetlands and this has now been published as Technical Memoranda Number 5, by the C. S. I. R. O., Division of Wildlife Research ("A survey of Wetlands of Coastal New South Wales" - available from C. S. I. R. O. free of charge). His report shows that in the last 10 years, some 60% of the high value waterfowl habitat previously available in coastal New South Wales has had its value for waterfowl much reduced, mostly due to drainage for flood mitigation. So, fewer Marsh Terns, Ducks, waders etc.

What are you going to do about it? The Government has not the resources to purchase the swamps so we must present them with alternative schemes. More will be written about this in next issue.

Bellbird Hill, Kurrajong

Recently a real estate developer bulldozed all the trees at Bellbird Hill except for those lining the road. The land being freehold, the developer was within his rights, but what a selfish attitude!

The Little Tern

In 1967, a survey was made of the Status of the Little Tern in Great Britain and Ireland because of their apparent decline in population. Human disturbance was found to be the greatest factor in causing the decline and steps are being taken to combat this. Here in New South Wales the populations of Little Terns also appear to be on a decline, breeding as it does on beaches and shingle banks at a time when human activity is at its greatest. Alan Morris is interested in doing a survey of the breeding distribution in New South Wales and any person who has information as to the location of present or past colony sites is invited to contact him at 20 Harrison Street, Old Toongabbie, N. S. W., 2146. The only colony site that he knows has any protection is one within Nadgee Nature Reserve.

Seabird Census

The Australian Bird Banding Scheme and the National Parks and Wildlife Service are combining to make a more detailed survey of the nesting population of seabirds on coastal islands. Any persons visiting these islands are asked to fill in a special form which will be forwarded to them on request to either organisation.

Alan K. Morris,
Old Toongabbie, N. S. W.

LYREBIRD OBSERVATIONS

In response to Michael Sharland's article, the following may be of interest.

My contacts with Superb Lyrebirds have been scanty and scattered over many years of Gould League, Army and other camps and private trips.

For several years I often heard and saw the Lyrebirds of Pheasant Rock, Bismuth Gorge, Feathertop and Pinchgut Mountains in the Torrington area of New England, which seem to be the "Edward" of David Fleay's current "Opera Bowl" at West Burleigh.

For the last four years I have studied and sound-recorded the Albert Lyrebirds of the Mebbin, Mount Warning and North Wollumbin rain-forests of the Tweed, have done some taping and many years study of the Alberts of Acacia Plateau at the western end of the MacPhersons. (The Hayes families who have had knowledge of the Acacia Plateau Albert Lyrebirds for over fifty years say that they have heard them imitate axes and cross-cut saws in action).

My interpretations of Lyrebird sounds heard and taped have been that bird calls only were mimicked, except that until recently I thought the Tweed Alberts mimicked part of a dingo's howling. However, other observers and my recent observations have shown that these Alberts imitate and magnify the eerie, whistle-come-howl of the local Satin Bower-birds. This peculiar call has not been made in my experience of the Satin Bower-birds of Acacia Plateau and the repertoire, heard or taped, of the Acacia Plateau Albert Lyrebirds does not contain this call. My experience of Satin Bower-birds at Wallaby Creek, Tooloom, Bonalbo and other areas south to Sydney and the South Coast and, in 1954 and 1955 inland at Torrington, has not shown them to make this call.

Milton Trudgeon,
Tumbulgum, N. S. W.

LYREBIRD MIMICRY

On one occasion while in rain-forest in the Gloucester district N. S. W., I was fooled by a Lyrebird. From a particular "brush" the train could be heard quite plainly as it crossed a span of timber bridge. I distinctly heard the train and remarked to my companion that I thought the train should be in the opposite direction. My companion said that it was a Lyrebird and that we were between the bird and the railway. To prove it to me, he suggested I stalk the bird. This I did and observed and heard a male lyrebird making various bird calls, including a Kookaburra, and then it produced the sound of the train. It was quite easy to imagine the performance imitating the shaking of the bridge by the motions of its body (an actor as well as a singer). The bird then kindly produced the axe chop and cut it off with a shake like a tree being hit.

No doubt the body movements were part of the display and coincidental to the calls.

It seems that Lyrebirds do mimic mechanical sounds, however, I would say it was sporadic and possibly only in certain areas, as I have never heard them do so in an area close to Sydney where there are approximately twenty birds.

Their acute sense of hearing would enable them to pick up minute details of sound as I have known to my cost when stalking to observe them. The slightest crack of a twig, even when they are loudly singing, puts an end to their performance.

A. B. Rose

Wahroonga, N. S. W.

Note: Mr. A. Barclay Rose is the naturalist attached to the Museum in the Kuring-gai Chase National Park. Mr. Rose has also been a farmer and a game keeper in Norfolk, England, and has considerable experience with the natural history of the Norfolk-Suffolk counties.

Other than myself, Mr. Rose is the only naturalist in Australia of which I am cognizant, who uses old-fashioned English saddleboards for the purpose of setting his butterflies and moths. The only other butterfly collector possessing a strong preference for the English mode of setting was my old friend, the late Commander L. H. Mosse-Robinson of Narara, N. S. W.

L. Courtney Haines

BUFF-BREASTED PITTA NOTES

My Buff-breasted Pitta article of 1968, "BIRDS", Vol. 2 No. 6, page 41, prompted a reader to request certain and further details, which were supplied with a colour slide of the nest and egg. The slide was returned and the reader commented that it was the driest nest ever seen. The ridges of Kangaroo Creek in the Tooloom area still have rain-forest patches where Hoop Pine predominates and such dry nests occur. (During a drought, just inside one such patch, I watched a Buff-breasted Pitta eat maggots from a dead cow.)

In response to the reader's request, my wife Gwen, son

Edward, daughter-in-law Wendy, some primary pupils and I were able to find freshly smashed snail shells and hear and see single Buff-breasted Pittas at the foot of Mount Warning and at North Wollumbin at 1,000 to 1,600 feet during the 1970 winter, including three successive weekends in June. During this 1970 winter, Miss Ella Pratt confirmed the presence of the Buff-breasted Pitta in the family's patch of virgin or near-virgin, rain-forest at Reserve Creek, east of Murwillumbah, closer to the sea and lower than the above areas. (The Pratt property has a Pied Butcherbird which mimicks the Buff-breasted Pitta's call.)

A 1970 wintertime visit inland to the Tuckerbox Road, Tooloom Scrub in Mandle and Beaury Forest No. 2 and adjoining areas, resulted in no answers to taped calls of the Buff-breasted Pitta. Area heights were mostly 3,000 to 3,500 feet. No freshly smashed snail shells were found.

At the above Mount Warning and North Wollumbin areas, in October 1970, during very short visits, three and one Buff-breasted Pittas were seen respectively and many answered the taped call.

Milton Trudgeon
Tumbulgum, N. S. W.

SACRED KINGFISHER FEEDING ON MARINE SLATERS

Halycon sancta, the Sacred Kingfisher at Bobbin Head, N. S. W., 22nd November 1967 observed feeding on Ligia australiensis (Marine Slater). Picking them off the wall and flying out of sight with them.

And at

Bobbin Head, N. S. W., 11th May, 1970 observed picking Marine Slaters (Ligia australiensis) off the wall and returning to its stand on the shark net to swallow them.

A. R. Rose
Wahroonga, N. S. W.

The above note was prompted by my observation of the Sacred Kingfisher of Bayview, N. S. W., feeding along a sea wall, on "sea-lice" (Marine Slaters) "BIRDS" Vol. 3, No. 1 page 5.

L. C. H.

THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

The actions of Drongoes and Bee-eaters when eating bees were discussed in BIRDS recently (Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 12; Vol. 5 No. 3, p. 25). I now find that interesting notes on the habit were published in the WESTERN AUSTRALIAN NATURALIST (Vol. 8, No. 4, 1962, pp. 84-6) in an article entitled "Preparation of bees for consumption by a captive Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*)."

The authors, C. A. Nicholls and D. A. Rook, in a summary of their observations, state:-

"A captive adult Australian Bee-eater when fed with honey bees, blowflies, cicadas and slaters adopted an individual and stereotyped feeding technique with each type of animal. It instantly changed to the appropriate method when, for example, a harmless bee-sized blowfly was slipped into a feeding line of honey bees. The bees, but not the other insects, were invariably dealt with by a complicated series of movements which resulted in the stinging apparatus being rendered inoperative before the bee was killed and swallowed. The bird ascertained the position of the stinging end of the bee by one, sometimes two, initial blows of the insect against the perch."

K. A. Hindwood
Lindfield, N. S. W.

A DAY IN THE OFFICE

As a Wildlife Ranger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service it is my duty, when in the office, to handle all enquiries and complaints about Native birds. Thursday, 29th October was such a day and the complaints received were of sufficient interest to share with everyone.

Early in the morning, a lady from Forestville rang to find out what bird was conducting a butchery on her rotary clothes line. Her description fitted that old rascal the Grey Butcherbird. Apparently he had found that by wedging the head of a small bird between the wires and the strut of the clothes line, he could disembowel the bird at his leisure. Much to the consternation of the lady, the Butcherbird had as many as eight individual birds hanging

on the clothes line at the one time. The caller stated that the main birds so disembowelled were Starlings but Red-browed Finches, 3 Budgerigars, other small aviary birds and 3 nestling Kookaburras had been displayed on her clothes line. Not only was this bird effective in catching wild birds, he apparently was also a very efficient raider of local aviaries.

At midday I received a call from an agitated woman at Heathcote who had been confined to her house by the activities of two magpies who swooped threateningly at her every time she went to go out of the door and "what could we do about it?" Apparently a nestling magpie had fallen from its nest and was sitting in her driveway. Ranger Sommerlad from the nearby Heathcote State Park went out during his lunch hour to the rescue. He reported that he knew which house to go to because he saw magpies swoop from a house at two people going past! The baby magpie was badly injured by his fall so the Ranger was forced to take it away. Needless to say the woman was then able to go about her shopping again.

Late in the afternoon, I received a call from a Turramurra housewife complaining about a bird that was disembowelling smaller birds on her clothes line and making a mess both of the clothes line and also her washing! From her description it too was a Grey Butcher-bird who had discovered the same method of wedging the heads of his victims between the wire and the metal strut to enable him to butcher the carcasses. This lady stated that Starlings were the only birds treated in this way. I advised her to turn the hose onto the Butcherbird every time he appeared so that he would eventually go away and her washing could again be "whiter than white."

ALAN K. MORRIS
Old Toongabbie, N. S. W.

BIRD DAY OBSERVATION COUNT

A trip to Mt. Tomah and St. Albans was planned to give an idea of the species of birds that could be recorded in a day.

Getting away to an early start at 7.30 a. m. from Northmead on 1.11.70 with fellow Ornithologists A. Rogers, T. Kenny and K. Simpson, we headed for Mt. Tomah. Some species seen there of interest were Yellow-throated Scrub-wren, Large-billed Scrubwren, Ground Thrush, Rose Robin, Flame Robin, Red-browed Treecreeper, Rufous Fantail and Black-faced Flycatcher. Our next stop was the Hawkesbury Swamps, where we recorded Red-kneed Dotterel, Japanese Snipe, Glossy Ibis, Budgerigars, Plum-headed Finch and Cattle Egret.

Final observations for the day were at St. Albans. The following species were recorded - Channel-billed Cuckoo, Darter, Brown Treecreeper, Rainbow Bird, Scarlet Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, hundreds of Spinetailed Swifts and the finding of a Regent Honeyeater sitting on a nest brought our day to a close with a record of 116 species.

A. COLEMANE

Northmead, N.S.W.

NOTES AND NEWS

Stage one of the National Photographic Index of Australian Birds has been completed and is confined entirely to the Parrot-like Birds.

Stage two is now well under way and is to be devoted to the large order Passeriformes or Perching Birds.

Mr. Donald Trounson who is the Executive Officer of the National Photographic Index recently sent me a report of the adjudication which took place during September last of passerine photographs submitted. The following are some of the statistics given in the report and tend to emphasize a very successful census.

1. Submissions - Photographers contributing = 56.
Photographs submitted = 1344. Species embraced = 213.
2. Contributors by States - N.S.W. = 21; A.C.T. = 2;
Vic. = 19; Qld. = 5; S.A. = 4; W.A. = 3; Tas. = 1; N.T. = 1.
Total = 56.
3. Results - Successful photographers = 40. Photographs accepted = 425. Species embraced = 190.

While on his tour for the "Audubon Society", Harold Pollock received an enthusiastic reception in Toronto. The following is an extract taken from a letter to Mrs. Dibley, written by Mrs. Bullock "We were so glad you told us about Mr. Pollock, we went yesterday evening (21.10.70) to hear him and see his wonderful films which we enjoyed tremendously. It was a great experience for us and we must thank you for such a memorable evening." Mrs. Bullock continues -- "I rushed through the crowds and on to the platform and reached him just before he disappeared behind the velvet curtains. He sent you his kind regards etc."

Would members who are able to give lifts to members without transport please get in touch with Mrs. Dibley, 57-6298, or see her at the meeting.

A limited number of back issues of "Birds" are available, from the Secretary, for members who would like to complete their sets. Details below -

Volume 1	Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	- 10c. each
Volume 2	Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	- 10c. each
Volume 3	Nos. 1 and 2	- 10c. each
Volume 3	Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6	- 25c. each
Volume 4	Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4	- 25c. each

In "BIRDS" Vol. 4, No. 4, page 37 my article "Hen Zebra Finch Painting" mentions a painting by Neville Cayley in which a hen Zebra Finch is depicted as having chestnut ear patches similar to those of the cock Zebra Finch.

Cayley was far too good a naturalist to have made a mistake when illustrating the "hen" Zebra Finch in question and in view of certain research into Avicultural literature that I have recently made, I now feel fairly certain that Cayley did indeed have as a model a "hen" Zebra Finch possessing cock bird characteristics in the form of chestnut ear patches.

The following is an extract taken from an article entitled "Zebra Colours" by K. H. Danks and published in "BIRD WORLD," Vol. 7, No. 5, May, 1950.

"While almost all Zebra Finches display either male or female plumage there are occasional hens which show patches of male plumage. This often appears as barring on the breast or as a cheek patch of fairly light colour. In birds such as these it is evident that the forces which determine sex were approximately

equal at the time when the bird last moulted. Due to internal changes (often diseased ovaries) hens of various species of birds occasionally change to cocks and have been known subsequently to sire young. Although these changes may have been completed some time previously, a bird's plumage will not reflect the change until moulting time."

I once bred a hen Zebra Finch which showed slight barring on the breast. It was a typical hen bird in every other way and its plumage did not change after the moult. I cannot recall whether this particular hen ever went down on eggs.

Editor.

FIELD DAY REPORT

St. Alban's Town Common, led by Robin Bigg, 17th October.

Fifty members attended the outing. Along the McDonald River good views were obtained of a pair of Satin Bower-birds in a Fig tree, also Noisy Friar-birds and Scarlet Honeyeaters which were with us through the day.

A few stops at small swamp areas provided members with views of Pelicans, Rainbow-birds, Channel-billed Cuckoo and a Wonga Pigeon.

Our next stop was the St. Albans Common where there was plenty of birdlife - Regent Honeyeaters, White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, White-winged Triller, Black Cormorant, Darter, Little Grass-bird, Brown Treecreeper and White-breasted Sea Eagle.

Also observed were Superb Lyre-bird, Rock Warbler and Rufous Fantail.

Species nesting were as follows: Blue Wren, Grey Thrush, Eastern Striated Pardalote, Spotted Pardalote, Welcome Swallow, Yellow-faced Honeyeater and White throated Warbler.

A sighting of two Budgerigars by the roadside between St. Albans and Wiseman's Ferry was also recorded.

A total of 79 species for the day. Sincere thanks to Robin Bigg.

Athol Colemane,
Northmead, N. S. W.

FIELD DAY REPORT

On 31st October an extra Field Day, announced at the previous Field Day and Meeting, was held at the Hawkesbury Swamps. About 40 were present and weather was fine, calm and mild. 88 species were observed. These included White-backed Swallows, Rainbow Birds and a pair of Brown Songlarks near Bakers Lagoon, and some unexpected waders at Bushell's; about 50 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Six Curley Sandpipers, one Red-necked Stint and two Golden Plover. Near Wilberforce Lagoon were six Cattle Egrets.

The party detoured to Pitt Town Bottoms Road to see the Plum-headed Finches which were in numbers, but very restless together with Zebra Finches, a few Chestnut-breasted, and three Budgerigars.

M. Dibley,
Oatley, N. S. W.

FIELD OUTING TO SPRINGWOOD

When the 25 plus cars lined up by the road and when approximately 60 enthusiasts stretched along the track, a mild ornithological invasion was apparent at Blue Gum Swamp Creek, near Springwood on Saturday 14th November, 1970. Those at the head of the line had found a suitable spot to rest for lunch and had completed the repast before those at the end had arrived.

Cars were left at the end of the tar-sealed portion of White Cross Road, and a broad well-graded fire trail was then followed

for approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles and the return was over the same route - the round trip back to the starting place was not possible in the time available. The locality was in excellent condition again after the disastrous fires had destroyed the area, and claimed the lives of three bushfire volunteers, two years previously.

Bird life was not abundant, but interesting. However, about 50 species were listed by all members, with 40 a good average personal tally, recording those either seen or heard. These included the Gang Gang Cockatoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Leaden Flycatcher (found nesting by some), both bronze cuckoos, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Tree Martin, Satin Bowerbird, Rufous Fantail, Black-faced Flycatcher, Pilot-bird, Rock Warbler, Red-browed Tree-creeper (a surprising number occurred in the area), Variegated Wren, Orange-winged Sittella, Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater and Lyrebird.

Everybody enjoyed the delightful surroundings, the walk which was taken quite leisurely and the good weather - in all it was an excellent day. Members of the "Lower Blue Mountains Fauna Conservation Society" joined with the "N. S. W. Field Ornithologists Club", including the President, Keith King, and the "expert" on flora, Don Perrin. The writer had given an illustrated chat to the former society the previous evening, attended by almost 100 people, and had extended the invitation to join in.

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

SUMMARY OF LECTURES GIVEN AT MEETING 15th OCTOBER, 1970

1. Mr. H. Goldstein described the 1970 R. A. O. U. Field Outing held late August in Western Australia.

The Congress of four days took place at the University of West Australia. Papers were read and discussed at morning sessions. Outings were held each afternoon.

The Field Outing was held at Wanjarri Station, Kathleen Valley, 250 miles north of Kalgoorlie. The excursion had three

aims: to make a survey of the birds of the area, to examine the habitats available to them and to consider the potential of the area as a National Park.

Slides illustrated the camp set-up and surrounding country.

2. Mr. K. Bigg gave an account and showed slides of a recent trip he and Mrs. Bigg had to England and U.S.A. They were able to have some time with Mrs. Jane Robinson in Texas and spent one weekend at the mountain cabin belonging to Professor Swanson. Roseate Spoonbills, several species of gulls and many U.S. birds were featured on slides. Books and area bird lists were tabled.

Some of the More Interesting Observations Reported.

Holiday Weekend, Oct. 3rd, 4th, 5th.

Goldsteins and Dibleys, Comerong Island - Masked Owl,
Topknot Pigeons (6), Sanderlings (6), large numbers of Knots,
Large Sand Dotterels (6), Greenshanks (7) and many
Mongolian Dotterels.

Mr. G. Reidy, Oct. 5th, 11th. Pitt Town Bottoms Road -
Green Budgerigar (12), Plum-headed Finches (3), large
numbers of Chestnut-breasted and Zebra Finches.

Mrs. B. Goldstein, Royal National Park (South End) Sept. 25th
White Goshawk.

Mrs. R. Bigg, Oct. 10th. Castle Hill - Brush Cuckoo.

Mr. P. Roberts, Marsden Park - Black Duck, 10 eggs, and
Oct. 4th, Brush Bronzewing Pigeon, West Head Road.

MEMBERS NIGHT, 19th NOVEMBER, 1970

Slides were shown by following members - Miss M.
Cameron, L. Lavender, T. Kenny, A. Rogers, R. Fordham,
W. Burlace, H. Battam, W. Lane.

Sea birds taken on a recent ocean trip arranged by Alan Rogers were well represented. Excellent pictures of Shy, Yellow-nosed, Black-browed and Wandering Albatrosses were shown. A letter from our Club to the Minister of Lands and his reply were read to the meeting. The subject was Mutton-bird Island - slides by H. Battam and W. Lane showed how the Island looked before the recent bushfires. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters breed on the island and are in need of some protection.

Mr. K. Bigg played a short tape recording of bird calls. Lyre-bird, Crested Bell-bird and other Western birds were heard.

Observations.

Mr. R. Fordham, 26th October, Lyndale near Maclean - 64 Cattle Egrets.

Mr. R. Noske, 19th November. Pugh's Lagoon, Richmond - 2 Plumed Tree Ducks.

Mrs. Robin Bigg, 6th November. Longneck Lagoon - Regent Honeyeaters, Scarlet Honeyeaters and Pair of Satin Flycatchers.

Mr. Goldstein, Late October. Ivanhoe - Grey Falcon, Lake Menindie - Crested Tern.

Mr. Jack Purnell, 19th November. Reported between Howes Valley and Singleton he found three species of Honeyeaters nesting in the one tree. They were Noisy Friar-bird, Blue-faced and Regent Honeyeaters.

Mr. Dick Cooper reported that on a recent trip to South Australia he saw 12 Black Honeyeaters in one day.

Mrs. Dibley, 25th October. Observed a Spotless Crake at Yeramba Lagoon.

Mr. E. Hoskin at his home in Eastwood on 25th and 28th October, observed a Male Satin Flycatcher.

November 9th - Barn Owl, 16th November - Channel-billed Cuckoo flying overhead.

G. DIBLEY, Oatley, N.S.W.

REVIEWS.

"Australian Warblers" by Arnold R. McGill (Bird Observers' Club, Melbourne, \$4.00). "Australian Warblers" measures $7\frac{1}{4}$ " x $4\frac{3}{4}$ " and is exactly $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick. It can therefore be easily carried in one's coat pocket or in the satchel.

The book contains 147 pages of text beginning with a foreword by K.A. Hindwood, followed by an introduction, short glossary, a table of species, 57 of which the author has personally observed in the field, the warble study, a bibliography and index.

The 24 genera represented, beginning with the old world *Aerocephalus* and ending with the endemic *Epthianura* and *Ashbyia* are arranged under headings of - Reed-Warblers; Fantail-Warblers; Songlarks; Spinifex-Warblers; Bristle-Birds; Emu-Wrens; Fairy-Wrens, Sandstone-Warblers; Field-Warblers; Scrub-Warblers; Thornbills; Whitefaces; Fairy-Warblers and Chat-Warblers.

Each genus is briefly described and the species contained within the genus is followed by seven sub-headings. They are - Brief description (museum cabinet specimens), Field descriptions, Distribution, Habitat, Voice, Breeding and General Remarks.

The slightly larger than stamp size distribution maps which re-inforce the text are neatly drawn by Reg Johnson and Alex Stirling. The maps help one tremendously to gain an instant picture of the overall range of a species and it is interesting to note that Australia's smallest bird, the Weebill, has the greatest range of all Australian Warblers. Those with the least range are several species of Grass-Wrens and the Oriental Reed-Warbler, which has but the slightest foot hold on Melville Island in the very far north.

The nests and eggs with measurements of the latter, appear to be correctly described. However, the one diagnostic feature which at once separates the eggs of the Tawny Grassbird from

those of the Little Grassbird, as in all previous books on Australian birds, is again completely overlooked!

The frontpiece, duplicated on the dust jacket illustrates the recently discovered Grey Grass-Wren against a backdrop depicting the birds natural habitat and is the first painting of this new species to be published. The eleven plates distributed at more or less even intervals throughout the book illustrates in full colour the other 82 species of warbler-like birds of Australia.

Rex Davies warbler illustrations are well drawn and painted. The colours are strong and mainly correct, while the delineations are generally in proportion. The three species of Bristle-Birds, Plate III, are good strong paintings and it is unfortunate that the bristles do not show on figures 2 and 3 which illustrate the Western Bristle-Bird and Rufous Bristle-Bird respectively. I had the pleasure of inspecting the original paintings of the Fairy Wrens which were very good, but it is noticeable that some species have been reproduced in print, perhaps a trifle too bright in colour. This is no fault of the artist.

The text is printed in letter press on good white paper and the illustrations are printed one side only on art paper. A map of Australia adorns the end papers and the book is attractively bound in sky blue book cloth between 20 oz. cover boards. On the front cover is the B. O. C. Blue-Wren motif, the title and author's name, while the spine contains title etc. running from head to tail of book. Blocking is in bright silver.

"Australian Warblers" is not only a useful field guide, but a most informative monograph on a difficult to classify group of Passerine birds.

All who like to watch birds in the field should possess a copy of this book.

L. C. H.

"Common Australian Birds of Towns and Gardens" by Graeme Chapman (Lansdowne, Melbourne, \$2.95).

Graeme Chapman, a professional ornithologist and also a first rate bird photographer, has managed to condense a surprising amount of really useful knowledge concerning the study of birds into an attractive slender volume.

Appropriately named "Common Australian Birds of Towns and Gardens" the book, after a short introduction discusses the classification of living things, followed by a chapter dealing with the external and internal structure of birds and illustrated by good line drawings. Next, a chapter on the life and distribution of the various species. Sub-headings such as - Preening, Locomotion, Fighting, Eggs and Incubation and Young and Development are of considerable interest to the bird student.

The most important part of the book however, and that which will appeal to bird watchers is the collection of coloured plates of which there are altogether 63 and they serve to illustrate 58 species of birds. The plates are arranged in scientific order, beginning with hawks, doves, parrots and moving on to the warblers, honeyeaters etc., and ending with the crowshrikes and ravens. The photographs are generally of a high standard, the most outstanding being the Flame Robin, indeed a beautiful "shot" of a beautiful bird. The House Sparrow, Red-browed Finch and Silver Eye are also very fine photographs and call for special mention.

Once again the Golden-mantled form of the Eastern Rosella is used to illustrate this species. This northern form is much brighter than the ordinary Eastern Rosella. One is able to compare the Skylark and Australian Pipit and it is difficult to notice much difference between these two birds belonging to different families. Fortunately, the text informs one of the "most important difference". The posture of the Reed-Warbler approaching its nest cradled in Bullrushes is quite good. The eggs of this very common bird are incorrectly described as "three or four eggs, white with reddish spots;" when actually, they are putty coloured or greenish-white in ground colour, having underlying markings of lavender

tinted grey with overtones of yellow ochre and adorned with marks, spots and streaks of van/dyke brown sometimes verging to black. Three eggs are always a true clutch for eastern Australia, however, four seems to be the complement for Western Australia.

The facial diagnostic features which instantly separate the Singing Honeyeater from the Yellow-faced Honeyeater can be easily seen in photographs of those species.

The Australian Raven, Little Raven, Australian Crow and Little Crow are discussed and the different calls are carefully noted.

This book is illustrated not only in colour, but also with many excellent half tone plates. Habitats and various species of birds are interesting, while the photographs of eggs in situ will appeal to those who are drawn towards the study of oology.

The book is strongly bound between heavy boards, the text and half tone plates are clearly printed and the gallery of coloured plates are printed on good quality art paper.

The book is recommended as a worthwhile addition to the bird watcher's library.

L. C. H.

Note: A paperback abridged edition of "Common Australian Birds of Town and Garden" has also been published by Periwinkle press.

Editor.

FIELD EXCURSIONS.

Saturday, 6th February, 1971. 9.0 a.m.

Newcastle.

Leader: G. Holmes. Sydney Contact: G. Dibley, 57-6298.

Intending starters please advise the Dibleys.

Meet at Merewether Heights Public School, between Toorak Court and Perina Place, on the Scenic Highway, just past the Shell Garage. (The Scenic Highway leaves the Pacific Highway at Merewether Heights).

Morning to be spent at Stockton watching waders with the outgoing tide; afternoon at Kooragang Island watching waders and swamp birds.

Saturday, 6th March, 1971. 9.30 a.m.

Quibray Bay and other places.

Leader: A. R. McGill, 59-1105.

Meet at Quibray Bay on Captain Cook Drive about 2 miles from last Cronulla turn-off.

Wading bird study. At time of writing, Boat Harbour road is very bad. We may have to walk from end of bitumen or go to some other handy place.

Birds

52.

1 January, 1971.

Patron:

A. H. Chisholm, O. B. E., F. R. Z. S.

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NOTICE

Members are reminded that all noteworthy observations of BIRDS in N.S.W. should be forwarded regularly to the Records Officer, C/- 84 Arabella St., Longueville, 2066.

All material for publication in "BIRDS", should be sent to the Hon. Editor, 10 Loquat Valley Road, Bayview, 2104.

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