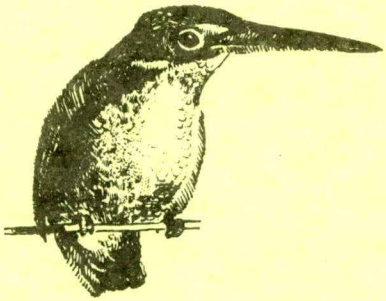
AUSTRALIAN BIRDS



Journal of the
N.S.W. FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS CLUB

Volume 13, No. 4

June, 1979

ISSN 0311–8150

Registered for Posting as a Periodical — Category B

THE N.S.W. FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS CLUB

OFFICE BEARERS

PATRON	A. R. McGill
PRESIDENT	J. Francis
SECRETARY	J.M. Pegler
TREASURER	G. Dibley
RECORDS OFFICER	T. Lindsey
FIELD DAY ORGANISER	M. Dibley
CONSERVATION OFFICER	D. Larkins
EDITOR OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS	A. K. Morris
EDITOR OF NEWSLETTER	L. Smith
COMMITTEE	J. Strudwick
	J. Dixon
	E. Hoskin

The object of the Club is to promote the study and conservation of Australian birds and the habitats they occupy.

Annual subscription rates of the Club (due 1st July each year) are:

Single Member (within Co. of Cumberland)	$8.00
Single Member (Country and overseas)	$7.00
Family Member	$9.00
Junior Member	$5.00

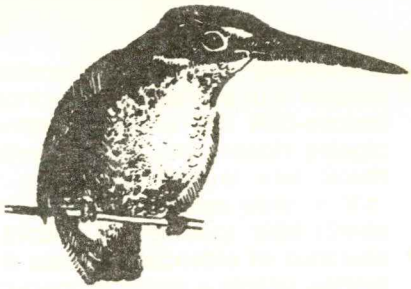
All members receive a quarterly newsletter and a copy of the quarterly journal "Australian Birds". The price of the journal is $2.00 plus postage per issue to non-members. Club badges are available to club members at $1.30 or $1.50 if posted. The Club holds a meeting and a field excursion each month.

All correspondence should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at:
90 Picnic Point Road, Picnic Point. 2213

All membership fees should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer at:
18 Russell Street, Oatley. 2223

Manuscripts should be sent to the Editor at:
P.O. Box 39, Coonabarabran. 2857

AUSTRALIAN BIRDS



Volume 13, No. 4 June, 1979

CONFIRMED OCCURRENCE OF THE NORTHERN SHOVELER IN AUSTRALIA

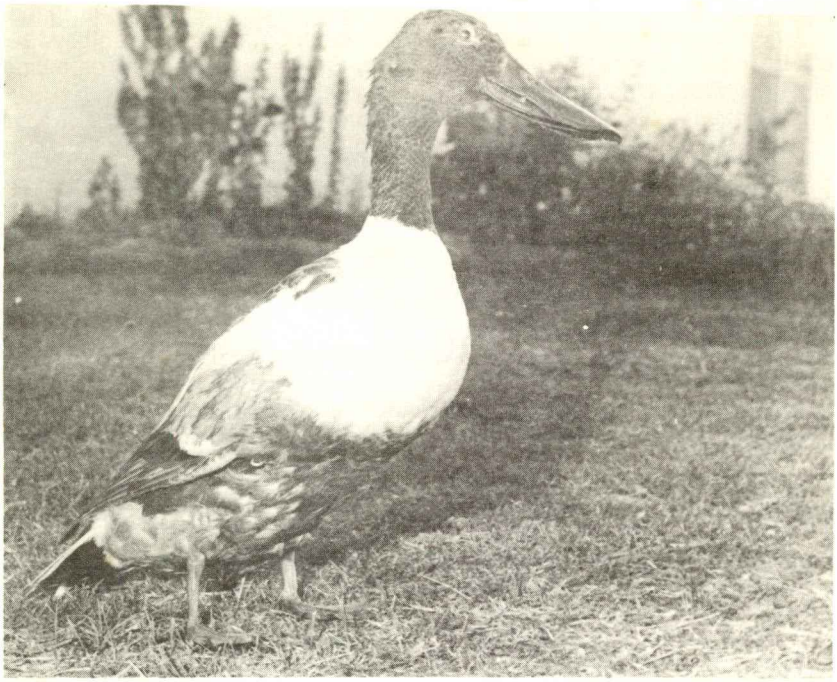
R. MOFFAT

During a recent conversation, a Cobar resident informed me that he possessed a mounted specimen of the Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata,* in which I showed an interest. He was able to provide further information to the effect that:— A party of duck shooters shot on a billabong adjacent to the Darling River, and downstream from Louth in March 1975. The flood waters were receding and there was an abundance of submerged vegetation.

Flying with five shovelers was a bird thought to be a partial albino Blue-winged Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis,* the breast being snowy white. This bird became the prime target and was subsequently taken. When fresh it was noted that the bird had yellow irides, orange legs and feet, a black bill and a brilliant glossy green head. The specimen has now been lodged in the Australian Museum, specimen No. 0.47404.

The mounted bird was examined closely and after consulting reference material, I agreed on the identification as an adult male Northern Shoveler in breeding plumage. The head and upper neck were dark grey and although faded, showed some green irridescence. The breast was white extending to form a ring around the lower neck. The belly was rich chestnut brown, being paler toward the flank which was white. The flight feathers were brown with an irridescent green speculum. The upper wing coverts were mid-blue, whilst the back feathers were brown with paler edges.

When Gould (in Campbell 1974) visited New South Wales during the wet year of 1839 "all the depressed parts of the land were filled with water, and the lagoons here, there, and everywhere, were tenanted by hundreds of ducks of various species, and every now and then one, two, or more beautifully plumaged Shovelers were seen amongst them; but I did not succeed in shooting one of them, and must have left the matter in doubt as to the particular species if the late Mr. Coxen, of Yarrundi, had not the skin of a splendid old male in his possession, which he had himself shot, and which, after careful examination, I found to be identical with the *Spatula clypeata* of Britain and the European Continent. Misfortune, I regret to say, attended Mr. Coxen's specimen, for a day or two afterwards a rat or some other kind of vermin entered the room in which it was kept, ate off its bill and legs, and so otherwise mutilated the skin as to render it useless. The debris would still have been saved had I not hoped and felt assured of obtaining other examples with



Mounted specimen of Male Northern Shoveler shot at Louth, 1976.
Photo: A. K. Morris.

my gun; this hope, however, was never realised. To this subject, therefore, I recommend the attention of those in Australia, who will doubtless meet with the bird some day when the country is subject to partial inundation".

Over 130 years passed before Gould's expectations were realised, and although he did not mention the area of New South Wales in which he saw the "beautifully plumaged Shovelers" it is interesting to note that the year in which the Louth specimen was obtained followed two years of exceptionally high rainfall causing extensive flooding in central Australia.

The only other Australasian record relates to a drake Northern Shoveler that was taken in New Zealand on 6 May 1968 near Pokeno, Lower Waikato (Howard, 1969) in full breeding plumage, now Auckland War Memorial Museum No. A.V. 1224. The Northern Shoveler is known to travel further south on its migrations than other northern ducks and is not deterred by the 'heat barrier" of the Tropics. Vagrants have been recorded in South Africa (Roberts 1966), Australia and New Zealand.

The male Northern Shoveler in eclipse plumage resembles the female which, is very similar to the female Blue-winged Shoveler (Frith 1967). Had the Louth specimen not been in breeding plumage it would not have been readily distinguished from the latter. It could be considered then, that Northern Shoveler females, and males in eclipse plumage, may visit Australia more frequently than records indicate. Perhaps closer examinations of shovelers may reveal more male Northern Shovelers in partial breeding plumage, particularly if any green gloss is remaining on the head and neck, or white feathers in the breast.

Note that in the accompanying photograph, the preparator has placed the wings outside the chestnut flank feathers, but in normal posture, the flank feathers

cover the wing and the blue upper wing coverts are therefore not noticeable except in flight.

I would like to thank Doug Osborne of Cobar for allowing access to his specimen and for providing information. G. Holmes of Armidale provided the New Zealand reference.

REFERENCES

Frith, H. J. 1967. Waterfowl in Australia. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

Gould, J. 1974. In Campbell, A. J. Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds, Melbourne: Wren Edition.

Howard, P. J. 1969. A New Zealand record of the Northern Shoveler. Notornis **15**, 253.

Roberts, A. 1966. Birds of South Africa. Cape Town: Trustees of the South Africa Bird Book Fund. Revised Edition.

R. Moffat. P.O. Box 453, Cobar, N.S.W. 2835.

THE BIRDS OF FOREST AND WOODLAND NEAR MORUYA N.S.W.

S. MARCHANT

For four years (1975-78) I have recorded the birds in two areas, each of ten hectares, at Maulbrooks Road, 4.5 km north-west of Moruya. It is worth presenting a summary of results partly as a reference for the future and partly as a record of the avian community in forested areas in these parts. It must be stressed that the record applies only to woodland and forest; in cleared and semi-cleared land only a few hundred metres from where I worked the association of species is very different and many birds that I record as accidental are common breeding residents.

Maulbrooks Road runs almost due north-south along a ridge 100 m asl. My own property (OP hereafter), a rectangle of about 200 x 450 m, runs down the western slope and just crosses a short stretch of the stream in the valley at about 30 m asl. In dry weather the stream stops flowing. An area of State Forest (SF hereafter, 250 x 400 m) was also studied; from almost opposite OP, it ran down the eastern slope of the ridge, covering a system of gullies draining into Dooga Creek. Both areas have been gridded with paths at intervals of 50 m.

SF is a fairly uniform stand of Spotted Gums *Eucalyptus maculata* and Grey Ironbarks *E. paniculata,* 30-40 m tall, with some Blackbutts *E. pilularis* and other gums; there is a patchy understorey of acacia and casuarina about 8-10 m tall, much Burrawang *Macrozamia communis* in central areas, thickets of low acacia (2-4 m) on ridges in the north-eastern part and some vine-tangled shrubberies here and there along the gullies, which are dry except after heavy rain. It has not been logged or apparently burnt for many years.

The upper half of OP is somewhat similar, though *E. maculata* and *paniculata* are not dominant, *E. pilularis* is more common as is the Yellow Stringybark *E. muellerana.* There are several large Rough-barked Apples *Angophora floribunda.* Understorey of acacia and casuarina with much *Macrozamia* is similar to that of SF. This part, particularly near the road, was logged for pitprops some years ago but evidence of the activity is now slight. The lower half of OP, however, was probably cleared or partly cleared in the past when the area was part of a large property and, though some large *A. floribunda* remain and a sparse stand of Forest Red Gums *E. tereticornis* and Manna Gums *E. viminalis* occurs towards the stream and a rather uniform stand of unidentified gums across the stream, the character of this lower half is a regrowth of acacia to 10 m tall and tangled

thickets of old and young *Kunzea ambigua* to about 5 m high; a low-lying swampy area of about one hectare on the northern side has a dense thicket of *Melaleuca* tea-tree.

My house is in the south-eastern corner of OP and some clearing has been done round it. A strip along the southern boundary of OP was also cleared for electricity supply, which reduced the woodland of OP to about 8 hectares; this has now gradually regrown with acacias, sapling gums and *Kunzea*. A small dam was made at the bottom of the clearing in September 1975. Apart from noting birds and nests in this clearing, I paid little attention to it and have not included it or nests found in it when assessing numbers of birds breeding in OP. Though some species, e.g. Dusky Woodswallow, Jacky Winter, occurred only in the clearing, it had little or no 'edge effect' and I do not think that it led to the breeding of more pairs of birds or to the occurrence of more species than would have been in OP if this part of the bush had not been cleared.

I kept daily records of all birds seen or heard, as far as possible with estimates of their numbers and was unable to do so only during short (4-5 days) periods of heavy rain, three or four occasions of 3-5 days each year when I visited Melbourne, a few other days when I visited Canberra and from 5 June to 15 August 1978 when I was overseas. Roughly, in the first seven months of the year my custom was to walk the grid of OP or SF every day slowly between about 08:30 and 11:00 hours. From late July to early January I was out almost all day from dawn to 18:00 hours except for meals. At times I also mistnetted the areas, to colour-band as many birds of easily studied species as I could, using bands supplied by the Australian Bird Banding Scheme.

Instead of giving results in a straightforward systematic list of all species, it has seemed more informative to divide the species into various categories according to status.

RESIDENT SPECIES — A

Nearly all species that were known to breed in at least one year in OP or SF or very close by and that occurred throughout the rest of the year are regarded as breeding residents. Numbers of pairs breeding in each area are given (combined if the territory of a pair apparently covered parts of both blocks). A minus sign before a single pair indicates that the territory was thought to be larger than the block, without implying how much larger; before other numbers, that the territory of one or more pairs extended outside the block. This seems better than expressing incomplete territories as ½s or using vague terms like 'rare' and 'common' to suggest abundance.

Wonga Pigeon *Leucosarcia melanoleuca*

OP 1-2 pr; SF 1-2 pr. Each year from January or early February until March or early April these birds fell silent, perhaps when moulting after the end of breeding; yet, in this period birds were often seen in the larger numbers than at other times of year.

Gang Gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum*

SF 1-2 pr. After breeding, from about mid-January to June or July, flocks of 10-30 passed through occasionally or came to feed at fruiting gum trees but pairs or smaller parties were regularly about at the same time.

Australian King Parrot *Alisterus scapularis*

SF 1-2 pr. King Parrots came to roost in the forest and did some feeding there but probably they fed mostly far away in more open places and even in Moruya. In consequence they were usually seen as pairs and small parties (< 6) outside the breeding season, flying past, but, except in 1977, flocks of 12-50 birds were fairly often seen from as early as 11 January to 6 August, specially coming to inkweed when in fruit.

Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*

SF ± 6 pr. Though Crimson Rosellas fed much on low shrubs like *Leucopogon juniperinus,* they seemed usually to move out of the woods in early morning and return in the evening, like the King Parrots but in pairs or small groups (< 5) and not noted in large flocks. Seen coming to roost in the leafy ends of branches of tall *E. pilularis* even in high winds when the whole tree was in violent motion.

Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae* OP and SF –1 pr.

Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*

OP and SF –1 pr, perhaps none in 1975 and 1978 but, even when known to be roosting in the one or two trees for several weeks in 1976 and 1977 calling was seldom heard. Roosting birds did not sit in the rigid cryptic pose but assumed it gradually as I approached; normally they sat in a rounded hunched attitude, resembling small footballs.

Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae* OP –1 group; SF –1 group.

Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae*

Three singing males occurred within 500 m of my house; females were hardly ever seen except at nests and all birds apparently avoided OP, which had no display mounds and where birds were seen only three or four times.

Rose Robin *Petroica rosea*

OP 1 pr; SF 1 pr. Enough records in every month to make it sure that birds occur throughout the year but rare in January and February when perhaps they are moulting and quiet. Both known nests failed and the pairs disappeared almost immediately after the failure.

Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*

OP ∓ 6 pr; SF 6-8 pr. Nests with young have been known to be attended by up to five birds; the population, then, is higher than the simple total of pairs.

Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus* OP 1 pr; SF 1 pr.

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* OP 2 pr; SF –3 or 4 pr.

Grey Shrike-thrush *Collurincincla harmonica* OP –2 pr; SF – 2 pr.

Eastern Whipbird *Psophodes olivaceus* OP –1 pr; SF 0-1 pr.

Spotted Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma punctatus*

One pair occupied the ridge between OP and SF, entering both and ranging for at least 200 m north and south.

Superb Fairy-wren *Malurus cyaneus*

OP 1-6 groups; SF 1-3 groups. Population in both areas decreased steadily from 1975 for no apparent reason.

Variegated Fairy-wren *Malurus lamberti* OP 1-2 groups; SF 1-2 groups.

White-browed Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis* OP –3 pr; SF 3 pr.

Brown Gerygone *Gerygone mouki*

SF 1-3 pr. Seen only once or twice in OP and rarely noted from January to June, when probably overlooked.

Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla* OP –8 or 9 pr; SF –10 or 11 pr.

Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*

OP 4-5 pr; SF 6+ pr. Difficult to assess population because nests in treetops were hard to find.

Varied (Orange-winged) Sittella *Daphnoenositta chrysoptera* OP – 1 group; SF –1 or 2 groups.

White-throated Treecreeper *Climacteris leucophaea* OP –3 pr; SF –4 pr.

Red-browed Treecreeper *Climacteris erythrops* SF 1 pr.

Lewin's Honeyeater *Meliphaga lewinii* OP 1 pr; SF –2 pr.

Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops*

OP ± 8 pr; SF ± 6 pr. Large numbers (00's) passed north in April, May and

even June, but return passage was not noticed because breeding birds became conspicuous from August onwards, and because at that season large numbers often frequented flowering trees. From late January to March birds became either very unobtrusive or scarce, and possibly, judged from the fact that banded birds that had bred, were rarely seen between January and August, the breeding population departed at the beginning of the year and was replaced by other birds during autumn and winter.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops*

OP. A colony of up to 24 birds occupied an area along the stream from April 1976, decreasing in numbers each year afterwards. At maximum, four or five groups nested.

White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus lunatus*

OP 2-3 pr; SF ? pr. Numbers hard to assess because the birds are so active in the treetops and nest high. Certainly more common in SF than in OP. Movements and fluctuations of numbers similar to those of *L. chrysops*.

Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* OP 3 pr; SF ? 3 pr.

Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*

OP 4-5 pr; SF 5 pr. Recorded in all months but very seldom from early or mid-January to early July; birds are either silent or scarce in the first six months of the year.

Red-browed Firetail *Emblema temporalis*

OP 6-8 pr; SF ± 8 pr. In flocks (< 50) from mid-February to about the beginning of August.

Satin Bowerbird *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*

One main bower owned by a dominant male in OP and another in SF. One to three females, at least, have nested near each and presumably mated with the males at the different bowers. Parties form from about March but soon seemed to move out of the woods; except for males regularly visiting their bowers, birds were not frequent until the following August.

Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*

SF –1 pr. From February to July flocks (< 35) occasionally appeared or flew over but, except when breeding, birds seemed not to forage much in the woods.

RESIDENT SPECIES — B

All species that foraged in OP or SF throughout the year or probably did so and that certainly or probably bred in woodland in the district are included. The Maned Duck is placed here because it was the one species that bred in OP but would not have done so if the dam had not been made.

White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*

Single birds appeared on stream and dam rather rarely from December to April and most commonly from May to November; probably bred downstream.

Maned Duck *Chenonetta jubata*

First seen on dam in mid-July 1976, 9½ months after it was full. One to three pairs came intermittently in August and September each year thereafter with definite breeding (flightless young) in 1978.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*

A pair bred in gums along the stream in open country 500 m west of OP. Noted in OP, seldom in SF, mostly during breeding (Sept-Jan). Display flights noted in October and November. No records May to August.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus*

Noted seldom (20 times in all) but in all months except February and April. Display flight seen in October.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami*

Irregular but doubtless resident in the district. A record of occurrences (1-3

birds each time) is worth giving to show the irregularity; 1975, 3 January, 9, 13 February, 20, 23 April, 19 May, 21, 22 October; 1976, 29, 30 October, 2-9 November; 1977, 19, 30 March, 3 April, 6-13, 28 July, 6-10 September, 23-29 October, 1, 2, 10 December; 1978, 1-6 December.

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*

Fairly regular in pairs or small parties (< 15) but more often in last six (average 12 times per month) than in first six (average 4 times per month) months of year.

Jacky Winter *Microeca leucophaea*

One or two pairs nested in rather open dry forest south of OP, certainly in two, probably in all four years. Regularly frequented clearing in OP from mid-March to early August.

Large-billed Scrubwren *Sericornis magnirostris*

Though noted only in SF and there seldom (about 4 times), probably resident in denser bush along Dooga Creek east of SF.

Buff-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza reguloides*

One group at least bred on dry, more open hill-top east of OP and was seen fairly often round house, but only once elsewhere in OP.

Yellow Thornbill *Acanthiza nana*

Pairs or small groups (6) regular until April 1977 in lower part of OP and in valley to the west, often in acacias, only one record since, 16 May 1978, but probably overlooked.

White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphus*

Though there were two old nests in SF on the ridge by the road, recorded only as parties of four to seventeen, more commonly from November to April (average 12 times per month) than from May to October (average 4½ times per month).

Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*

Regularly heard in more open country west and south-west of OP and from time to time one or two birds foraged in OP and SF. In 1978 a pair was established in SF and north thereof where they probably bred.

Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*

One or two pairs bred in cleared and semi-cleared land west and south-west of OP and after breeding 2-4 birds often came up clearing to the house. During autumn and winter up to six birds came to roost in SF or nearby.

Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides*

In 1975 a pair nested upstream from OP and probably did so each year. Birds apparently foraged and brought building material from open country well west and south-west of OP, rarely foraging in the forest but coming to the house for scraps. Fledged young were brought to cleared parts of OP. Flocks of 10-20 occasional in non-breeding season, passing through.

PARTIAL MIGRANTS

All species in this category bred in this area, but judged by the difference of records for first and last six months of the year, were less numerous in the non-breeding season. For convenience, dates of occurrence, calling, etc., are given in groups of four, indicating in chronological order events in 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cuculus pyrrhophanus*

Bred in OP and SF but numbers hard to estimate because, whenever closely investigated during the breeding season, birds seemed to be in groups of up to six; in all, there could have been 10-12 birds in and round the two areas. At the end of breeding, birds fell silent between 30 December and 6 February, though immatures fairly often and adults very occasionally were seen. There was a

recrudescence of calling between 26 February and 7 April according to the season, but not in 1977, when calling was little and intermittent from 6 February to 30 June. No calling recorded; 18 June to 4 August; 8 May to 21 August, 30 June to 22 August; 29 May to 15 August (but I was away from 5 June to 8 August). If birds are quite absent during winter, they are not away for more than about three months.

Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*

SF —2 pr. Attempts were made to build in OP and nesting occurred nearby to south and south-west. In 1975, fairly regular records of one or two birds throughout winter but in other years no records; 3 June to 18 July; 12 April to 15 September (except once on 13 June); 27 March to 10 September.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*

OP —5 pr. SF —8 pr. The population decreased some time during January-April and increased rather regularly each year between 5 and 20 September. From May to August rarely more than one or two individuals could be found.

Noisy Friarbird *Philemon corniculatus*

SF —2 pr. Occurrence outside the breeding was irregular and seldom from: 15 March to 20 May; 11 January to 12 September; 5 February to 25 August; but in 1977-78 birds were scarce from 23 December to 17 February, then becoming plentiful right through winter when *E. maculata* blossomed profusely. Small northward movement noted: 3, 22 January; 19 February; 3 March; nil; 18, 20 January, 7, 20 February, 17, 28 March.

New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*

OP 1 pr. Apart from one pair, which nested regularly in late July and early August onwards and probably remained all year at least four other pairs nested during 1977 when *E. tereticornis* flowered heavily in October-November. Each year *Melaleuca hypericifolia* flowered well in parts of OP near the stream between late November and early January; then many New Holland Honeyeaters came into the area; 28 November into December; 12 December to 17 January; 20 November to early December; 22 November to 30 December. Seldom seen in SF.

Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*

SF 1-2 pr. After breeding, between 30 December and 25 February birds fell silent or disappeared and were rarely recorded till between 19 March and 16 May but in 1977 none at all from 30 May to 24 August. In other years some were about throughout winter and the population might not have been much less than during breeding. The period of silence and rarity may coincide with the annual moult.

SUMMER BREEDING MIGRANTS

All clear-cut migrants that came to the area to breed were classed as summer breeding migrants. Abundance and dates of first and last records are given in the conventions already used but, if a fifth date is given in brackets, it refers to supplementary records in 1979 before the time of writing.

Brush Cuckoo *Cuculus variolosus*

SF —1 group. Like *C. pyrrhophanus*, numbers are hard to assess but perhaps 4-5 birds in and round SF, rarely in OP. Last and first records: 25, 6, 27, 7, (31) January; 19, 8, 15, 13 October.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

OP —1 group; SF —1 group but, because the birds were so often in trios, assessment was hard. Last and first records: ?, 2, 11 January, 26, (30) December; 22 July, 19, 26 August, 5 September. There were a few records in February, March, April, and July so that some birds may remain through winter and the species might better be regarded as a partial migrant.

White-throated Nightjar *Caprimulgus mystacalis*

1 —?2 pr. on ridge north of OP and SF. First located 31 October 1977 and

recorded till 9 March. One bird seen 27 September 1978; calling fairly regularly from 14 October to at least 11 March 1979.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*

OP —1 pr; SF —2 or 3 pr. Last and first records: 16 March, 8, 15, 19 February, (10 March); 7, 11, 2, 5 October.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

SF —2 pr. Last and first records: 31 January, 3 February, 14 March, 22 February, (10 March); 20, 24, 20, 30 October for locally breeding birds; recorded elsewhere in district somewhat earlier.

Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris*

OP —1 pair; SF —1 pr. Last and first records: 25 February (doubtful), 24, 16 March, 21 January, (10 March); 18, 20, 10, 10 October. In 1977-78 the birds probably did not attempt to breed and left exceptionally early.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*

OP —4 pr; SF —5 or 6 pr. Last and first records: 22 April, 29 March, 7, 6 April; 11, 2, 18, 28 September. In 1975, 1976 and 1977 a banded male occupied the same territory.

Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis*

SF 1 pr. Last and first records: ?, 8, 12 March, 6 February: ?, 2, 2 October, 30 September.

Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula*

SF —2 pr. Last and first records: 26 February, 28 March, 1 April, 23 March; 10, 20, 17, 6 October. All first nests have been within about 10 metres of nests of Noisy Friarbirds.

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*

OP 1 pr; SF 1 pr; but not every year in each. Last and first records: 4 April, 21, 21 March, 7 April; 28, 13, 28, 4 October. Rufous Fantails are really more passage migrants than summer breeding migrants in OP and SF: for perhaps a month after first sighting and for about the same time before the last they were rather frequent but breeding pairs seemed not to settle till late November and, if breeding did not occur in the blocks, birds were rare during summer.

White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone olivaceus*

Old nests have been seen outside OP and SF in the more open parts of the woodland and birds were heard or seen each year, first between 28 September and 21 October, last as late as 22 March.

Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*

Breeding proved only in 1978-79, OP —2 pr; SF ? 1 pr, but may have been overlooked and status uncertain. Fairly regular occurrence between: 6 November and 4 February; 24 November and 15 February; 4 December and 25 March; from 30 November; but there were eight records of single males in April and May in different years, none from May to November.

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*

OP 2-4 pr, SF 2-5 pr, but status obscured by birds of passage. Birds arrived each year; 14, 13, 6 September, 17 August, after virtual absence since June, and were then recorded regularly till: 26 April, 27 May, 19 February, 28 March. Strong northward passage was noted in April and May in different amounts from year to year and southward in September-October similarly. Except in 1976, birds were scarce or absent from March-April to September.

WINTER VISITORS (BREEDING)

The few species that come to the areas only during winter and do not breed are classed here, though White's Thrush seems quite anomalous.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*

OP 1 pr; SF 2 pr. Best regarded as a visitor from autumn to spring, breeding

in late winter (July-August). First records: 10 April, 9, 23, 28, (13) March. Last records: 6, 30, 30 August, 19 October (all soon after nests had failed). Apart from three sightings in November, 1975, 1976, and 1977 and one in December, 1976, there have been no records till March. The birds are unobtrusive but they often sing for 5-10 minutes in the half hour before dawn and I do not believe that I should have missed them for 4-5 months if they had occurred.

Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata.*

Probably winter visitors usually as single birds or a few but pronounced passage in flocks of up to 150 was noticed in the autumn and spring of 1975, 1976, and 1977. A summary of occurrence (average number of days recorded for month) for all years combined is: December to March, 1.5, April to May, 10.5, often in substantial (150) numbers; June and July, 8, mostly of 2-3 birds; August to November, 17, in substantial numbers. In 1978 the flowering *E. maculata* attracted large numbers and held them in the area from about 6 May to 7 October, by which time they had begun to dwindle and only 2-3 birds remained till about 20 November.

White-eared Honeyeater *Lichenostomus leucotis*

About six birds occurred in and near OP each year (some the same individuals for at least two years) as follows: 9 April to 18 September; 14 April to 23 August; 15 April to 29 September; 6 April to 18 September. About the same number also frequented SF.

Fuscous Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus fuscus*

Recorded in June and July 1975, August, 1976, 30 July to 22 September, 1977 and 4 May to 30 September 1978 and not otherwise. Usually in SF or near stream in OP; probably overlooked in 1975 and 1976. Long visit in 1978 coincided with heavy flowering of *E. maculata.*

IRREGULAR OR DOUBTFUL STATUS

Species that occurred from time to time throughout the year without any obvious pattern, others that bred unexpectedly once or twice and others for which records are too few to enable a good assessment of status to be made are placed here.

Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna*

Parties (4-100+) were not unusual flying through the forest or coming to flowering gums, most often in November and December (records on 57 days compared with 32 in all other months) but no clear pattern. More numerous in 1978 when *E. maculata* flowered (April-October) but apparently not attracted in large numbers.

Little Lorikeet *Glossopsitta pusilla*

Occurrence similar to that of *G. concinna* but less numerous; apparently more common in November (average days recorded 1975-77, 10), in all other months average less than 2. More numerous from May to October in 1978 *(E. maculata* flowering) than in other years but not greatly so.

Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*

Heard a few times from November 1975 to January 1976; records on 7 days in December 1976; 1-29 November 1977; 22-26 November 1978. Visits seem curiously late for breeding, but Koels did not come into OP or SF but were heard in distance in valley to west.

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*

Regular occurrence for a few days: 9 October, 6, 10 December; 1, 27 October, 17-28 November, 9 December; 9-13 October, 1-4 November; 24 November-21 December. Was told that birds appear annually at *Ficus* trees in Moruya in October or November. Visits could be in time to parasitize late nests of currawongs, as suspected in 1978 when a pair frequented SF for much longer than in other years.

Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae*

One record at hole in SF, 20 October 1977. Never heard at night but could breed locally.

Australian Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus*

SF 1 pr, 1977, but data inadequate to assess status, although presumably resident.

White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina papuensis*

Records of 1-2 birds spread fairly evenly in all months but no sign of breeding.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor*

One pair wintered near the house 11 March to 17 August 1975 and 24 February to 25 August 1976; later records only of female on 8, 12 September 1977 and 28 August 1978.

Brown-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus brevirostris*

OP 1 group 1975. Otherwise data inadequate to assess status, though recorded intermittently in all years and probably breeds regularly.

Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*

OP 2 pr; SF 2 pr; only in 1978 during flowering of *E. maculata,* when species was recorded from 19 May to 10 October with three late records of single birds in December. Otherwise, only two birds, 12 May 1975.

White-cheeked Honeyeater *Phylidonyris nigra*

One or two birds in OP from 25 September to 29 November 1977 at the time of flowering of *E. tereticornis* and the influx of breeding *P. novaehollandiae.* The White-cheeked might have nested also.

Scarlet Honeyeater *Myzomela sanguinolenta*

OP 1 pr 1977; possibly bred 1975 in OP and 1978 in SF. Recorded: 13 August to 14 October; 10 October; 25 September to 7 November; 15 April, 16 August to 24 December.

Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus* Data inadequate; recorded intermittently, mostly in SF, always in treetops.

ACCIDENTALS

For completeness, it is worth listing those species that are really irrelevant to the avifauna of the areas studied. Many of them, e.g. raptors, parrots, were seen only flying over (asterisked); others passed quickly through the woods and few were recorded more than 10 times a year. However, many are of course common breeding birds in other habitats close by in the district.

Hoary-headed Grebe *Poliocephalus poliocephalus*

One on dam 23 April to 22 May 1978.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Apart from single birds occasionally, an astonishing 70 were on the dam on 30 October 1977 during a period when several large flocks (300) flew over northwards.

Pacific Heron *Ardea pacificus*

*Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*

*Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

22 September, 4, 7, November, 15 December 1976; 25 September, 16, 23 November 1977; 11 September 1978.

*Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura*

Six records from 17 September to 2 December 1978.

*Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*

*Grey (White) Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*
One flew low through trees of SF on 30 June 1976.
*Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*
*Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*
Painted Button-quail *Turnix varia*
Topknot pigeon *Lopholaimus antarcticus*
Five flew north through trees on 31 December 1976. In 1975 and 1978 similar small parties, probably of this species, have been seen in the distance.
Brown Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia amboinensis*
Single birds in OP on 10 and 28 September 1978.
Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida*
Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans*
*Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla*
*Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*
In winter 1975 large flocks (100+) flew north up the valley west of OP rather regularly at about 07:30-08:00 hours. Otherwise only single birds occasionally except four inspecting holes in trees on 20 October 1978.
Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*
Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus*
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis*
*White-tailed Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*
Last and first records; 5 April, 16 March, 2 April, 23 January (probably overlooked later); 28 October, 2, 3 November, 30 October.
*Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*
Tree Martin *Cecropis nigricans*
Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea*
One, 29 September, 1977.
Restless Flycatcher *Myiagra inquieta*
Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*
Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia*
European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Diamond Firetail *Emblema guttata*
One, 21 January 1976.
*Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
Australian Magpie-lark *Grallina cyanoleuca*
Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus*
Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor*

S. MARCHANT, P.O. Box 123, Moruya, N.S.W. 2537.

THE WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET IN NEW SOUTH WALES

ELLA K. PRATT

The White-rumped Swiftlet *Collacalia spodiopygia* was first mentioned in the literature as occurring in New South Wales in a bird list published by the Clarence Valley Field Naturalist's Club in 1961. The list covered the period 1951-61 and the comments about the White-rumped Swiftlet (called Grey Swiftlet in the text) were "Rare, may be observed over open spaces on coast ranges". There are however, many inaccuracies in the text as a whole. Later J. D. MacDonald (1973 Birds of Australia) gave the range of the White-rumped Swiftlet to include north-eastern N.S.W. It is understood that MacDonald's reference is to a bird that I recorded at Reserve Creek, near Murwillumbah, N.S.W., details of which are given below.

The bird was recorded at Reserve Creek on the 20 September 1969 and remained in the area until 31 October 1969. It was recorded almost daily from 25 September to 7 October, then there was a gap of nine days before it was sighted again on 16 October. After that, the bird was not observed again until 31 October, the last date of sighting.

The following notes on the White-rumped Swiftlet are taken from my field notes:—

"**20 September 1969.** Just on dusk a group of Welcome Swallows were feeding overhead, suddenly there was a loud cry of 'wheet, wheet, wheet, eet-eet' and one small bird dived from the group. Its shape, flight, and every movement immediately suggested the small "Grey Swiftlet" of the northern areas, however, failing light prevented any further observations.

25 September 1969. No more was seen of this mystery bird until today, when one of my brothers saw it flying under the awning of a building, he said it was looking into a Welcome Swallow's nest (it wasn't welcome!). During the afternoon I was able to closely observe the small visitor and identify it positively as a White-rumped Swiftlet. The field markings are, an all dark grey bird, darker on the upper parts — off-white rump patch — medium forked tail (not always noticeable in flight), wide gape and prominent eyes — flight, like that of the Forked-tailed Swift *[Apus pacificus]*, darts to and fro with a few quick wing beats, then a small glide — smaller and slimmer build than a Welcome Swallow, could have a trifle longer wing-span than the Welcome Swallows. Call note, fairly loud, sounds like, wheet-wheet-wheet-eet-eet-et only seems to call early morning and late afternoon.

26 September 1969. The White-rumped Swiftlet was about this morning—it flew under the awning and took several flying looks into the Swallow's nest. During the afternoon it went into the tractor shed—it made a clicking, buzzing sound while inside the shed. It remained feeding about up to 5.50 p.m.

27 Sepember 1969. Swiftlet about again today, it seems to feed about the dairy during the early morning, then moves further afield. It returns about 1.00 p.m., the Swallows chase it, and it chases them—last seen at 5.55 p.m.

28 September 1969. White-rumped Swiftlet was heard calling at 5.25 a.m. It came into the dairy while we were milking, and again just after we had finished. All the time it was inside it made its little 'click, click' noise. At such close quarters it is possible to see that its throat and upper front area is a greyish brown.

29 September 1969. Mr and Mrs Milton Trudgeon came out just after 4.00 p.m. to see the Swiftlet—it gave them good views of it—they were pleased as it was a new bird for them. As the Swiftlet's behaviour didn't seem to vary from the above notes, I only noted the dates when it was seen after the 29th Sept. '69."

Prior to the first sighting of the Swiftlet here, there was several days of very strong north to north-west winds, it could have been blown south, and when it couldn't find any of its own species it attached itself to the Welcome Swallows *Hirundo neoxena.* Its habit of following the Swallows would explain the reason for it entering the farm buildings. It left the area soon after the arrival of the Spine-tailed Swifts *Hirundapus caudacutus.*

The White-rumped Swiftlet was no stranger to me as I had made a close study of it during field trips in North Queensland, some years previously.

ELLA K. PRATT, Reserve Creek, Murwillumbah, N.S.W. 2484.

COMMENTS ON SOME CRITICISMS OF THE INTERIM LIST OF AUSTRALIAN SONGBIRDS

SHANE PARKER

In an article criticizing Schodde's Interim List of Australian Songbirds, Noske (*Aust. Birds* **13,** 27-35) acknowledges me as having given him many helpful comments. Certainly I responded to his request that I comment upon an early draft of his article, and although I disagreed with a good deal of what he had written, I supported his attempts to have his criticisms published, simply because he had the right to be heard. I did not, however, see the final version of his article until it appeared in print. Having assumed that he would have taken my remarks into account where they bore directly upon his initial arguments, I was astonished to find that this was not the case. Noske's opinion of the Interim List is that it is tendentious and unscientific. Let us see, by shedding a little light on Noske's methods of criticism, what the strength of his own position is in this regard.

In his published article, Noske asks what evidence exists to suggest that *Chthonicola, Hylacola, Calamanthus* and *Pyrrholaemus* are scrubwrens. In my reply (*in litt.* 13 February 1978) to his request for comments, I apprised him of one such line of evidence, the markings and coloration of the eggs. I wrote: "You should examine these eggs yourself; the references you cite are rather misleading. It is the patterning that is the same in each—a very fine speckling not known to me in any other group (and I curated the egg collection at the BMNH for several years). Heavy speckling produces the darkest eggs, e.g. *Chthonicola, Hylacola, Pyrrholaemus,* and this speckling is discernible even in the 'white' eggs of *Origma* and *Oreoscopus gutturalis.*" Had Noske acted upon my suggestion that he examine these eggs, he would have seen for himself. But he wholly ignored my comments, and implied in the published version of his article that among the eggs of these species there were *important differences* that Schodde ignored.

Noske writes "The Black and Banded Honeyeaters differ from the Pied in at least three characters . . . They both have a sweet, chattering or tinkling song . . . By contrast, the Pied's call is usually described as a piercing and plaintive whistle." In my letter to Noske I wrote: "I have encountered the Black Honeyeater six times, and have never heard it give the sweet chattering or tinkling song referred to. On two occasions, however, I have heard it emit a high piercing *seep,* repeated every 4-5 seconds, and similar in quality to the notes of [the Pied Honeyeater]". Yet in Noske's article, my observations on the calls of the Black, which partly contradict Noske's remarks, are ignored.

Noske also queried Schodde's statement that the Pied, Black and Banded Honeyeater laid similar eggs. I replied to this: "Clearly there is a case to answer here. The eggs of *Certhionyx variegatus* are quite unlike those of any other honeyeater; in fact, even on a world basis they are unusual. The eggs of *nigra* and *pectoralis* are similar to each other, and different from those of *Myzomela obscura* and *M. sanguinolenta*" (they in fact resemble eggs of *Rhipidura*). Ironically, had Noske examined the eggs in question, instead of merely comparing the published opinions of others, he would have found some support for his criticisms. But again he failed to examine the material at issue, a curious lapse for one who accuses others of unscientific procedures.

Noske complained that in lumping *Peneoenanthe* with *Eopsaltria,* Schodde had ignored certain comments of Keast's, to the effect that the Mangrove Robin was very distinct and without close relatives. I replied to Noske that Keast's remarks on the distinctiveness of the Mangrove Robin were misleading. Whether my opinion was sound or not, at this juncture it behove Noske to examine the

relevant material to determine the facts for himself. A museum loan could have been easily arranged. Instead, in his published criticism Noske merely repeated Keast's views without further comment, nowhere indicating that they had been questioned.

Noske accuses Schodde of using the arguments of others only where he saw fit. Yet above we have seen how Noske himself has ignored certain matters that weakened or disposed of his own criticisms, after these matters had been brought directly to his attention.

I should like to take this opportunity to draw attention to two remarkable lapses in McGill's review of the Interim List (*Aust. Bird Bander* **14**, 80-82). In this review, McGill wrote: "Veteran ornithologist, A. H. Chisholm, believes that John Gould was probably as sound a judge as anyone of what defines a species. Despite more than 100 years since his day, as well as a general impact on systematic nomenclature, scant regard for Gould's ability is implied when the four species of sittella he named as new have been 'swallowed up' in this Interim List . . . " It should indeed be emphasized that there has been quite a lot of progress in systematics since the middle of the last century, and that Gould and his contemporaries were working with the *morphospecies* concept, at a time when the subspecies concept did not exist. If McGill complains that scant regard has been paid to Gould's abilities because the latter's sittella 'species' have been sunk in the Interim List, what are we to make of the fact that McGill himself, in his book *Australian Warblers,* treated as synonyms, explicitly or implicitly, several warblers and wrens that Gould had described as species, including *Malurus cyanotus, M. leuconotus, Cincloramphus cantillans, Sericornis parvulus, Sericornis osculans* and *Acanthiza diemenensis?* Moreover, Gould described six species of sittella, not four, the other two being *melanocephala* and *tenuirostris.* What, then, are we to make of the fact that McGill, in his review of the sittellas (*Emu* **48**, 33-52)* **accorded specific status to neither of these taxa?**

McGill noted that 65 passerine "species" of the 1926 Checklist became geographical races in the Interim List, and 21 further Australian endemics became forms of extralimital species. (I make these figures 63 and 28, but this is of little importance). McGill was evidently trying to stress the lumping proclivities of the contributors to the Interim List. He somehow forgot to point out that 13 "species" in the first category (20%) and 8 "species" in the second category (28%) had previously been sunk by the former Checklist Amendment Committee. This lapse becomes even more extraordinary when one realises that McGill himself was a member of this committee.

*See also Ernst Mayr's review of McGill's conclusions in *Emu* **49**, 282-291. Mayr himself concluded of the sittellas: "It seems inevitable in these circumstances that all forms will have to be treated as members of a single species." Does this mean that Mayr too had "scant regard for Gould's ability"?

SHANE PARKER, 26 Viaduct Road, Eden Hills, S.A. 5050.

THE SPREAD OF THE CATTLE EGRET IN NEW SOUTH WALES

ALAN MORRIS

ABSTRACT

Since 1954 when the first pair of Cattle Egrets *Ardeola ibis* was found breeding at Gillett's Ridge, near Ulmarra N.S.W., the numbers of breeding pairs have increased to 2300 by 1978/79. The birds were nesting by this time in five colonies containing from 17-1000 breeding pairs.

DISTRIBUTION

In November, 1954 a pair of Cattle Egrets was found nesting in a mixed colony of egrets at Gillett's Ridge, 8 km south of Ulmarra in the Clarence Valley on the North Coast of New South Wales. By 1959 the colony had expanded to ten pair and in the winter of 1960 the first observations of birds away from the Clarence Valley was made at Richmond on the Hawkesbury River and at Ourimbah near Tuggerah Lakes in pasture and dairying districts (Hewitt 1961).

Gradually the birds spread southwards along the coast, frequenting the main dairying districts of the State, being found in pastures and wetlands on the flood plains of the major coastal river systems. Soon a pattern was discerned whereby the egrets would commence to assume the buff breeding plumes in late October and by November they had migrated northwards to the Gillett's Ridge colony. The birds returned again in May to the coastal habitats. At present between 300-500 egrets appear to frequent each of the major coastal valleys, viz. Macleay, Manning, Hunter, Hawkesbury, Shoalhaven etc., with lesser numbers elsewhere.

Cattle Egrets were first recorded in Victoria in 1949 (Wheeler 1967) and now they occur in similar numbers as outlined above, particularly in East Gippsland and Central Regions. Similarly, they were first recorded in South Australia in 1964 (Condon 1969) and are now recorded in substantial numbers between May-November. Presumably it is these birds from South Australia and Victoria returning to the Clarence Valley colonies that have been seen as passage migrants during October-November, in inland New South Wales at localities such as Mudgee, Gilgandra, Baradine, Wagga, Uralla etc. since 1972. Inland observations become more prevalent each year and with more regularity at given locations. Regular observations have been made of a small population of birds in the A.C.T. around the foreshores of Lake Burley Griffin since 1976.

BREEDING COLONIES

During the breeding season of 1971-72, the Gillett's Ridge colony had reached 750 pairs and the birds were nesting in all available trees and not just in the melaleuca clump located in the middle of a small swamp which had been the traditional nesting site for egrets. By this time the Great Egret *Egretta alba,* Plumed Egret *E. intermdia* and Little Egret *E. garzetta* had declined in numbers in the colony due no doubt more to the loss of wetlands caused through Flood Mitigation Drainage Programmes, than through the increased numbers of Cattle Egrets.

Later in this season, a small colony of 35 pairs was found at Lawrence, 17 km north-east of Ulmarra, nesting in paperbarks in February, 1972. Whilst another five pairs nested in a small swamp at Carr's Creek, 4 km north of Grafton, and 22 km from Gillett's Ridge

In the season 1972-73, 750-1000 pairs nested at Gillett's Ridge whilst 130 pairs nested at Carr's Creek but in the following season the whole colony deserted Gillett's Ridge and became established at Carr's Creek returning there every year since, about 1000 pairs in all. The Lawrence site was only used on the one occasion. As it has been reported by E. Wheeler *(pers. comm.)* that many of the trees are dying at Carr's Creek colony due to the effect of the birds' excreta, a move away from the site can be expected.

The second colony for N.S.W. became established at Campbell Island, on the Murray River, the border between N.S.W. and Victoria where four pairs nested in Red Gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* in a mixed egret colony, during December 1974. The birds have not nested there since.

In 1976 a new colony became established at South Murwillumbah in the Tweed Valley where some 60 plus nests were recorded in March 1976. By December 1977 this colony held between 700-800 pairs and a similar number in the following season.

In January, 1977 another new colony was located nesting in melaleucas 2 km SW of Macksville on the Nambucca River, some 117 km south of the Carr's Creek colony. This site was subsequently used again the following two seasons by similar numbers of egrets.

Following heavy flooding in the Macquarie Marshes in north-west N.S.W. in July 1978, all four species of egrets were to be seen in large numbers by November. During the previous two years Cattle Egrets had passed through on pasage in October-November in small numbers, presumably en route to the Clarence Valley. No doubt the frenzied nesting behaviour of the numerous other waterbirds present (viz Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo,* Little Black Cormorant *P. sulcirostris,* Little Pied Cormorant *P. melanoleucos,* Darter *Anhinga melanogaster,* Pacific Heron *Ardea pacifica,* White-faced Heron *A. novaehollandiae,* Rufous Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus,* Great Egret, Plumed Egret and Little Egret) induced the Cattle Egrets to stay on and breed so that by late November, 17 plus nests were found in a mixed egret rookery located some 32 km NW of Quambone and up to 60 plus Cattle Egrets were observed in the area.

In January 1979 another small colony of 25 plus nests was found in Broad-leafed Paperbarks *Melaleuca quinquinerva* on the swamp within Seaham Swamp Nature Reserve some 20 km NE of Maitland in the Hunter Valley. Thus from 10 nesting pairs in 1959, in twenty years the number of nesting pairs in New South Wales has risen to about 2300 pairs, truly a remarkable achievement.

THE FUTURE

At the present rate it might be expected that other nesting colonies may soon be located in the Hawkesbury and Shoalhaven Valleys. An interesting feature of the Murwillumbah and Macksville colonies was that both Large White and Plumed Egrets were nesting with the Cattle Egrets, localities where these two species have not been recorded breeding before.

A banding project commenced by J. Willows at the north coast colonies in 1977 has produced some interesting results, with one recovery of a nestling from the Murwillumbah colony seven months later at Stratford, Victoria, 1250 km SSW (Anon 1978) and another from the Carr's Creek colony, a recovery three months later at Granton, Tasmania (Anon, 1978) 1550 km SSW away from the breeding

colonies. Even more interesting is that during 1977 a minimum of 293 Cattle Egrets were recorded in New Zealand between June and September following their first being recorded there in 1963 (Heather 1978). Following the usual pattern, most of the birds had departed by mid-November, and it is assumed that they are migrating to and from the Australian breeding colonies. For a bird to establish a trans-Tasman migratory pattern in a little over 10 years is somewhat remarkable. It is intriguing to think that banding may yet prove that the New Zealand birds are from N.S.W. However, if the pattern that develops in New Zealand is similar to that occurring in this State, then a breeding colony may soon become established in that country.

As yet there appears to be no evidence that Cattle Egrets are displacing other egret species from traditional nesting localities. Most egrets in N.S.W. demonstrate an opportunistic behaviour, nesting after major floods in the wetlands. The only permanent site used on an annual basis was at Gillett's Ridge. As their usual practice is to choose a new site, it is unlikely that competition with the Cattle Egret for nest sites will occur. Studies in the United States (McCrimmond 1978) have shown that Cattle Egrets tend to lay later than other species of egrets and herons and that direct competition for nest sites did not occur amongst the smaller egrets.

It can be expected that the Cattle Egret population will continue to increase as there appears to be large areas of suitable habitat not occupied. In particular, suitable areas such as the irrigation districts of the Riverina Region and the Macquarie Valley would appear to offer ideal opportunities for the continued expansion of the population.

The assistance of J. Willows and E. Wheeler in compiling these notes and J. Chappell for typing the manuscript, is greatly appreciated.

REFERENCES

Anon. 1978. Recovery Round-up. Corella **2**, 77.
Anon. 1978. Recovery Round-up. Corella **2**, 92.
Condon, H. T. 1969. Handlist of the Birds of South Australia. Adelaide: S.A.O.A.
Heather, B. D. 1978. The Cattle Egret in New Zealand in 1977. Notornis **25**, 218.
Hewitt, J. M. 1961. The Cattle Egret near Sydney. Emu **61**, 137.
McCrimmond, D. A. 1978. Nest site characteristics of five heron species on the North Carolina coast. Auk **95**, 267-280.
Wheeler, R. W. 1967. A Handlist of the Birds of Victoria. Melbourne: V.O.R.G.

Alan K. Morris, P.O. Box 39, Coonabarabran, N.S.W. 2857

FIRST RECORD OF RED-NECKED PHALAROPE IN NEW SOUTH WALES

GLENN HOLMES

Australian occurrences of phalaropes *Phalaropus spp.* are presumably accidental, for the three species breed in the Northern Hemisphere and migrate south, mainly to tropical regions. At their wintering places the Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus* and Grey Phalarope *P. fulicarius* typically inhabit pelagic waters; Wilson's Phalarope *P. tricolor* mainly occurs in Central and South America (Thomson 1964). First Australian records of each species were in Victoria: *lobatus* in December 1962 (Smith 1963); *tricolor* in February 1966 (Smith 1968); *fulicarius* in February 1976 (Smith 1976). It seems reasonable to conclude from these and subsequent observations that occurrences follow a similar pattern in New South Wales. However, there is a lack of records which apparently results from less intensive observing, and in particular, from the paucity of suitable habitat near major centres of population. The following account describes the observation of a Red-necked Phalarope on the Great Dividing Range in northern New South Wales.

I located the phalarope at Mother of Ducks Lagoon, near Guyra, at 1300 m altitude on the New England Tableland. Open water occupies approximately 3.5 km^2 when the lagoon is full, but at the time of observation it was reduced to less than one third of this extent, with a maximum depth of 40-50 cm. I first observed the bird from 10.20 to 11.15 (EST) on 29 January 1979. I returned from 15.50 to 16.45, accompanied by Harry Bell, Hugh Ford, Richard Noske and Sue Noske. During this period of observation Richard Noske and I obtained several photographs.

The phalarope was swimming throughout most of both observation periods, but when approached closely it flew round the lagoon close to the surface of the water. Its tameness was emphasised by the tendency to return to the area from which it was flushed. Generally it remained near Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus,* which occurred in scattered groups of three to ten birds. Since phalaropes eat floating organisms it is conceivable that food disturbed by the stilts was being utilised. However, foraging was only observed occasionally. This consisted of pecking at the surface, sometimes involving rapid gyrations through an arc of 70-80 degrees, or fluttering along the surface for 30-50 cm.

I observed the phalarope again on another visit from 15.50 to 17.15 on 3 February. All aspects of its behaviour, including association with stilts, were similar to those noted previously. The phalarope was not located during a further visit on 5 March. Open water was then reduced to about 2 ha and most waterbirds had dispersed.

The phalarope was readily identified as *lobatus*. Its plumage superficially resembled that of the Sanderling *Calidris alba* and it was of similar size, but proportionately longer necked. The forehead, anterior crown, superciliary stripe, sides of neck and underparts were white. The posterior crown, nape, hind-neck and a patch about the eye and ear coverts were dark grey-brown. The back was dark grey-brown streaked whitish, with two parallel whitish or buff stripes along each side. There was a prominent white wing-bar and the tail was dark, with white basally at the sides. The bill was black, thin and almost imperceptibly decurved toward the tip; it was approximately as long as the head, measured from lores to nape. The legs were not observed closely but appeared dark, with prominent toes. A soft call given in flight, "chuck" or "check", was uttered singly or several times in succession.

I confirmed the identification by examining two specimens in the Australian National Wildlife Collection, Canberra. These were ideal for comparison as both were collected in January, one from West Irian in 1972 and the other at Darwin in 1974. They revealed that portions of the plumage which appear white in the field, except on the abdomen and under tail coverts, are faintly suffused with grey.

REFERENCES

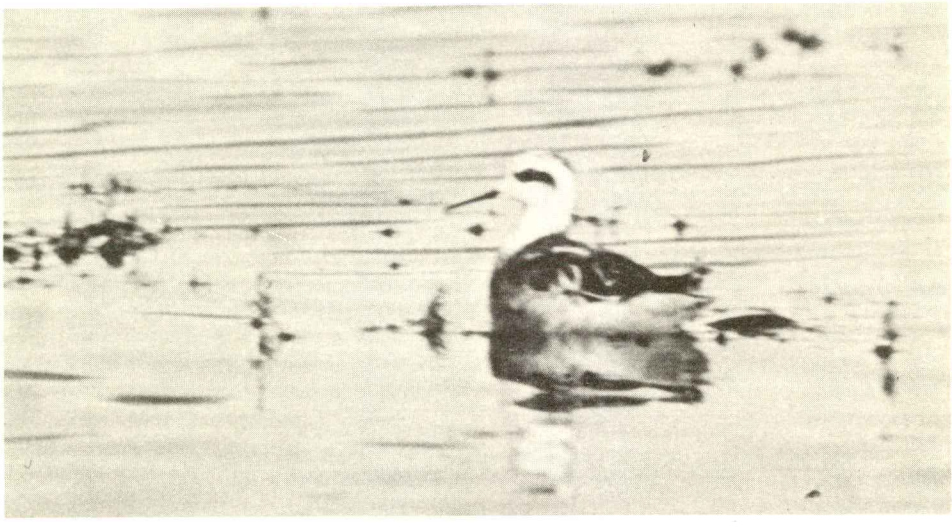
Smith, F. T. H., 1963. "An Australian Sight Record of the Red-necked Phalarope (Phalaropus lobatus)", *Aust. Bird Watcher* **2**, 1-4.

Smith, F. T. H., 1968. "An Australian Sight Record of Wilson's Phalarope", *Aust. Bird Watcher* **3**, 91-99, 144.

Smith, F. T. H., 1976. "An Australian Record of the Grey Phalarope", *Aust. Bird Watcher* **6**, 292-299.

Thomson, A. L., 1964. Ed. A New Dictionary of Birds. London: B.O.U.

GLENN HOLMES, "Girrakool" via Armidale, N.S.W. 2350.



Red-necked Phalarope at Mother of Ducks Lagoon, January 1979.
Photo: R. Noske.

TAXONOMIC STATUS OF SOME QUAIL-THRUSHES

JULIAN FORD

Noske (1978), in his criticism of Schodde (1975), disapproves of my lumping of the Chestnut-breasted Quail-Thrush *Cinclosoma castaneothorax* and Cinnamon Quail-Thrush *C. cinnamomeum* and tries to demonstrate that I (Ford 1974a, 1976) have been inconsistent in applying the biological criterion of species status and contradictory in explaining the nature of their inter-action. Unfortunately, Noske has consistently quoted me out of context and apparently has not comprehended my discussions, as I now proceed to demonstrate.

My reasons for combining *cinnamomeum* and *castaneothorax* (Ford 1974a, 1976) were: they have the same pattern of coloration and are basically similar phenotypically (Ford 1970); their ecological adaptations appear to be fairly similar because they both like arid environments with stony terrain overtopped with, at

least, some tall shrubs; the *only* area of contact sampled (the Beal Range) produced males of *only* intermediate plumage; and their songs are extremely similar. Contrary to Noske, sampling was anything but intensive as, indeed, indicated by the meagre number of specimens collected over a vast area comprising south-western Queensland and north-western New South Wales (Fig. 2 and data in Ford 1974a). Of course these taxa have "many differences in morphology and ecology"; but, more compellingly, these differences are minor compared with their many important and significant similarities (Ford 1976). As regards the specimen of *cinnamomeum* collected a little west and the two specimens of *castaneothorax* collected a little east of the area inhabited by intermediates, Noske overlooks that I indicated that these specimens are respectively darker and paler than their counterparts from the centre of their ranges (Ford 1974a). What I did not say then but do so now is that west of Windorah, including the area where the intergrades and the two specimens of *castaneothorax* were collected, field-observers consistently identify all quail-thrushes as *cinnamomeum* (A.C. Cameron pers. comm.)! Whether the brightly-backed *castaneothorax* are also called intergrades may be construed as a matter of terminology.

Because the specimens from the Beal Range are intermediate in size and coloration, as well as geographically intermediate, between *cinnamomeum* and *castaneothorax* (Ford 1974a), I think that it is perfectly reasonable to *presume* that they are hybrids or intergrades. Yet Noske apparently dismisses these as hybrids and, therefore, as evidence for conspecificity of the taxa. On the basis of probability, if all specimens collected in a contact area are intermediate, it can be confidently assumed that intermediate individuals comprise a large proportion, if not the bulk, of the population in that contact zone. Quail-thrushes are very difficult birds to collect and the series that I collected in Queensland in December 1971 to January 1972 required diligent and sustained searching for many hours and many kilometres on foot. On this visit I merely had time to demonstrate geographical contact and hybridization between these taxa and insufficient time to sample intensively and thoroughly in the zone of contact. Incidentally, what this controversy also stresses is the importance of having adequate and long series of specimens from hybrid zones.

The interaction between the Chestnut Quail-Thrush *C. castanotum* and Western Quail-Thrush *C. cinnamomeum marginatum* is quite different from that between *cinnamomeum* and *castaneothorax*. For, *castanotum* and *marginatum* are not basically similar morphologically (their ventral colorations are strikingly different), in areas of contact they favour quite different substrates and vegetation formations, their calls are dissimilar, and extensive collecting in areas of contact, as at Neale Junction, Yalgoo and Menzies, revealed *few* hybrid examples (Ford 1974a). On this evidence is based the logical conclusion that these forms inter-breed only occasionally (Ford 1976). Thus, in areas of contact between *castanotum* and *marginatum* most specimens are phenotypically pure and few are hybrids whereas in the *only* area sampled where *cinnamomeum* and *castaneothorax* meet, all the male specimens are clearly intermediate and females are probably intermediate. Differences between females of *cinnamomeum* and *castaneothorax* are not great (Ford 1970, 1974a) and consequently identification of exact intermediates on morphological criteria is less definitive than for males (Ford 1974a).

Noske does not seem to realize that clinal variation may be primary or secondary. An example of the latter occurs when two taxa come into contact and fuse completely (Ford 1974b). Presumably, therefore, he equates clinal variation as being entirely due to ecotypic causes, i.e. due to local selection in a primary continuum of populations. Clinal variation is an inclusive term for

geographical variation in which a character or character complex changes from one extreme to another. These extremes can be either slight or marked and the clinal gradient can be either gradual or steep as well as either constant or variable. Clinal variation is caused by the exchange of genes between contiguous interbreeding local populations and the tendency for local adaptation to impede the flow of such genes. In *cinnamomeum* and *castaneothorax,* clinal changes have possibly resulted from both ecotypy and the flow of genes across the zone occupied by intermediates, i.e. both primary and secondary intergradation may be operating to produce darkening in *cinnamomeum* and paling in *castaneothorax* where they abut. If *castaneothorax* from the western parts and drier parts of its range is paler than from the eastern and wetter parts of its range because *cinnamomeum* genes have intruded into its gene pool and such paling has occurred over a long, wide front (Ford 1974a), then introgression is obviously extensive. Unfortunately, Noske fails to relate the conclusions in Ford (1976) with the data in Ford (1974a) where some considerable effort is taken to disentangle the "conflicting evidence" on the relative contributions of primary and secondary intergradation to clinal variation in these taxa.

It is a fact that I remarked that "introgression is impeded because each parental gene-pool confers better adaptations to its particular environment" (Ford 1976) but Noske ignores that this is qualified by my statement that "there may be considerable flow of genes across the hybrid zone except for genes that are disadvantageous in one habitat or the other" (Ford 1974a). These two remarks are not incompatible because a hybrid zone acts like a semi-permeable membrane, allowing some genes to introgress but not others (Sibley 1961). This phenomenon also operates along primary clines: some genes flow freely; others, such as those associated with local adaptation, do not because selection operates *against* genes that lower, and *for* those that increase, fitness of the local population.

To be more precise in my rebuttal of Noske, he quotes me as saying that paling in populations of *castaneothorax* contiguous with *cinnamomeum* is due to "intrusion of *cinnamomeum* genes" when in fact I remarked "possibly because of intrusion of *cinnamomeum* genes" (Ford 1976). The former remark is definite; the latter is tempered. Noske quotes me as saying "there are many differences in morphology and ecology" between *castaneothorax* and *cinnamomeum* but completely ignores my remarks "phenotypically *castaneothorax* and *cinnamomeum* are similar" and "their ecological adaptations may be fairly similar" (Ford 1974a).

Noske also claims that Ford (1978) appears, primarily on personal preference, to dispute Parker's decision to combine *Malurus dulcis* and *M. amabilis* with *M. lamberti.* This was not so: I clearly indicated that certain specimens (collected by the British Museum's Harold Hall Australian Expeditions) showed only *possible* indications of intermediacy, and moreover Harrison (1972), who discussed these specimens, did not combine the taxa because he considered that convergence could equally explain certain similarities between contiguous forms. In May 1978 I collected a very long series of specimens in the contact zone between *M. lamberti assimilis* and *M. dulcis rogersi* in south-western Kimberley and north-western Northern Territory; the specimens exhibit every conceivable stage of intermediacy between these forms and constitute strong evidence for conspecificity.

Quite obviously therefore, Noske has selectively taken phrases out of their proper context, distorted my interpretation of the data and failed to understand the significance of certain facts. Without discussing at length his other criticisms of Schodde (1975), I have the clear impression that he has been consistently unfair. Thus, in the case of the *Pardalotus striatus* complex he avoids mentioning

Salomonsen's (1961) discovery of *considerable* hybridization between *melanocephalus* and *substriatus* and Cooper's (1961) evidence for *widespread* and free interbreeding between *ornatus* and *substriatus*. If Palmer (1946) is correct that differences between the latter two perhaps involve a single gene locus or allelic pair with dominance, obviously hybrid phenotypes would be like those of the parental forms despite some genotypes being intermediate. The naive would consider such a hybrid interaction as "a zone of overlap and hybridization". Additionally, I think that Schodde (1975) was well aware of the significance of occasional interbreeding between species (e.g. *Artamus superciliosus* and *A. personatus)* and of frequent interbreeding at or in secondary zones of contact, yet Noske endeavours to discredit him in this regard.

It is important that reviewers criticize facts and speculations fairly and objectively. Noske fails to do this. Whether he has been deliberate or unwitting is unimportant.

The opportunity is here taken to comment on McGill's (1976) review of Schodde (1975). Here, McGill states that Australian taxonomic work in recent years appears to be a "witch-hunt" for possible indications of hybridism, by which he presumably means that there has been an endeavour to ascertain how various pairs of taxa interact at their zones of secondary contact. Does he advocate the cessation of such work? Does he believe that Australian ornithology be denied critical new knowledge on the extent of evolutionary divergence between such pairs? Is he suggesting that studies on hybridization are unimportant? Certainly his suggestion that more attention ought to be focussed on plumage sequences from the juvenile to adult is commendable but his remark that such studies are *more* commendable than investigations of phenomena at zones of secondary contact is a value-judgement which rightly should be rejected.

REFERENCES

Cooper, R. P. 1961. Field notes on the nesting of the red-tipped pardalotes. Emu **60,** 1-6.

Ford, J. 1970. Distribution of quail-thrushes in the Northern Territory and their taxonomic relations. Emu **70,** 135-139.

Ford, J. 1974a. Taxonomic significance of some hybrid and aberrant-plumaged quail-thrushes. Emu **74,** 80-90.

Ford, J. 1974b. Concepts of subspecies and hybrid zones, and their application in Australian ornithology. Emu **74,** 113-123.

Ford, J. 1976. Systematics and speciation in the quail-thrushes of Australia and New Guinea. Proc XVI Int. Orn. Congr.: 542-566.

Ford, J. 1978. Geographical isolation and morphological and habitat differentiation between birds of the Kimberley and Northern Territory. Emu **78,** 25-35.

Harrison, C. J. O. 1972. A re-examination of the chestnut-shouldered wren complex of Australia. Bull. Br. Mus. Nat. Hist. (Zool.) **21,** 313-328.

McGill, A. R. 1976. Review. Aust. Bird. Bander **14,** 80-82.

Noske, R. 1978. Comments on some of the scientific names used in the Interim List of Australian Songbirds. Aust. Birds **13,** 27-35.

Palmer, C. B. 1946. Speciation in the pardalotes. W. Aust. Bird Notes (4): 11-12.

Schodde, R. 1975. Interim List of Australian Songbirds: Passerines. Melbourne: RAOU.

Sibley, C. G. 1961. Hybridization and isolating mechanisms. *In* Vertebrate Speciation: 69-88. Ed. W. F. Blair. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press.

Salomonsen, F. 1961. Notes on flowerpeckers (Aves, Dicaeidae): the superspecies *Pardalotus striatus*. Am. Mus. Novit. (2068): 1-31.

JULIAN FORD, Western Australian Institute of Technology, Bentley, W.A. 6102.

OBITUARY — D. F. GRAY

Desmonde Frederick Gray, known to all his friends as Jim, died after a long illness on 27 February 1979, aged 59 years. He is survived by his widow Shirley, and his daughter Sue Ellen. My association with Jim goes back to 1950 when we were working together at Cardiff Locomotive Workshops of the New South Wales Government Railways. Here I was introduced to Jim by a friend, Hubert Bear, who lived near him at Blackalls' Park, Lake Macquarie. Hubert was an authority on the Wattagan Forests, north-west of Wyong, and knowing that each of us was interested in birds, he brought us together. After the introduction I loaned Jim many of my bird books and so began a long friendship which ended with his death. Already a member of the R.A.O.U. since 1929, I was able to introduce Jim to that organisation in 1955.

Jim had a boat and was interested in Moon Island off Swansea, and the seabirds that nested there. We made many trips to the Island, particularly after Jim became a licensed bird bander about 1962. Here he began to band Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae* and Crested Terns *Sterna bergii,* the former for the Australian-wide study initiated by the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Wildlife Research. It was at Moon Island that the first record of the breeding of the Kelp Gull *L. dominicanus* was found in Australia; a nest with three eggs (A. J. Gwynne and D. F. Gray 1959 *Emu* **59**, 141-2). We found that a pair nested each year until 1966 when two nests were found; 16 eggs were located between 1958-1970, although only nine chicks survived to be banded by Jim.

Jim was a foundation member of the Bird Banders' Association founded in 1962, maintaining his membership to his death. He published two articles in the *Australian Bird Bander* (now *Corella*), one on the movement of a Kelp Gull he banded (1967 *Aust. Bird Bander* **5**, 18) and the other was the report for the Seabird Island Series on Moon Island (1974 *Aust. Bird Bander* **12**, 36-37). The report revealed that 1575 runners and 7 adult Crested Terns, and 2592 runners and 132 adult Silver Gulls were banded on the Island, many by Jim. We did many of the trips to Moon Island together and he was a great companion. I was able to help him with his banding and knew just how thorough he was with his records and observations. His knowledge of birds was also shared with many local Newcastle and Central Coast groups and he was a popular speaker with them.

His association with the N.S.W. Field Ornithologists' Club commenced in 1966 when the Club was first formed as the Gould League of Bird-watchers. Jim was an early contributor to the journal "Birds", writing notes on the longevity records of Silver Gulls (1967 *Birds* **1** (4), 2) and Crested Terns (1968 *Birds* **2**, 35) that he had banded himself. He took part in Club excursions to the Central Coast and Newcastle areas. Because of his love and knowledge of the Wattagan Mountains he was able to lead Club excursions to this area and the trips were greatly appreciated by the members. His love for the Wattagans was shared by his wife Shirley and they had many great times there.

Jim's love for birds has not been in vain, for in 1960 Moon Island was gazetted as a Nature Reserve, partly through his efforts. He was well known to the field staff of the then Fauna Protection Panel (now incorporated into the National Parks and Wildlife Service) and assisted them with surveys and management of the Reserve. Nature Reserves are lasting and this Reserve will always remind us of Jim.

On 27 February 1979 the Christian church lost a faithful member and ornithology a keen observer, and we are all the poorer for his passing.

A. J. GWYNNE, 52 Wallerah Road, New Lambton 2305.

CONTENTS

Registered for Posting as a Periodical -Category B

Printed by R. V. Byers Pty. Ltd., 138 Silverwater Road, Lidcombe, 2141, N.S.W.