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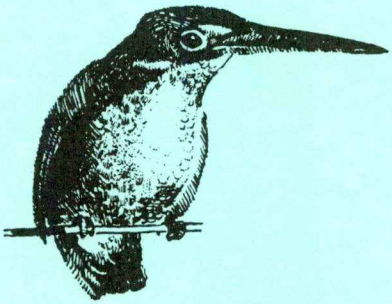

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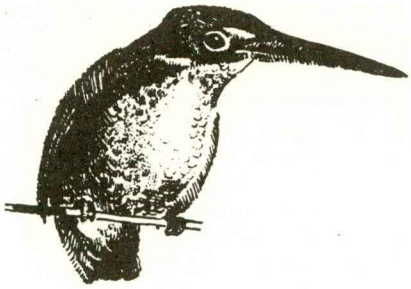

Vol. 16, No. 3 March, 1982

RANGE AND STATUS OF THE RED GOSHAWK IN NEW SOUTH WALES

S.J.S. DEBUS

INTRODUCTION

The status of the Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radiatus* in New South Wales requires review. Morris *et al.* (1981) listed it as "?Rare. ?Resident", and gave its range as "Northern Rivers". It is now on the N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service list of endangered fauna (Hermes 1980). The main pressures on it are stated to be "habitat alteration".

A search of the literature has revealed several localities from which the species was recorded last century. Since then it apparently went unrecorded until recently. Because of its apparent scarcity and possibly threatened status, I have collated the following summary of records for New South Wales, some of which were obtained from the RAOU Atlas of Australian Birds.

HISTORICAL RECORDS

North (1912) and Mathews (1916) gave details of the following early records. The first specimen was taken in or near Sydney soon after settlement, and a drawing of it is in the Watling collection. However since the Watling drawings came from Port Stephens as well (W. Longmore pers. comm.), the exact locality must remain in doubt. Early reports of the Red Goshawk along the Parramatta River have been shown by Mathews to be the result of confusion with the Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* (hence also the belief that the Red Goshawk was a carrion eater and a sea-eagle). In the 1800s, specimens of the Red Goshawk were obtained from Bourke and the Richmond River, and were lodged in the British Museum (Natural History) and the Australian Museum respectively. From his own researches, N. Favaloro (*in litt.*) considers that the Bourke specimen is suspect as to locality, and that it was probably taken much closer to Sydney. Details on the Richmond River specimen are incomplete and there is now no museum record of it. The mounted display specimen devoid of any collection data may be this bird. Gould reported the species in the "dense brushes" of the Manning and Clarence Rivers.

RECENT RECORDS

All recent records of which I am aware are detailed below in chronological order:—

Ben Lomond — Llangothlin Lagoon area late Ausut 1961 — one seen "a number of times by many (Gould League) observers, at rest and in flight" *(Gould League Notes* 28, 1962, per Atlas).

Narran Lake area 1960s — J. Cupper *(in. litt.)* has informed me that "one of the most knowledgeable persons on Australian birds and eggs" told him of nests found, including one with three eggs. If the birds themselves were not clearly seen then they could have been Little Eagles *Hieraaetus morphnoides,* since eggs of the two species are easily confused (Favaloro 1981). More details on these remarkable records, if correct, are desirable.

Tilbuster, north of Armidale mid — 1960s — one seen regularly "about 15 years ago" (G. Kleindienst pers. comm. 1980). There seems no reason to doubt this record, but further details would be useful. The observers knew the local raptors well.

Scone late January 1968 — one reported by C. Austin (Wheeler 1968). The bird's features were clearly seen at down to seven metres; Austin was familiar with the species, and a second observer (S. Beggs) was familiar with the Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* and other similar species (C. Austin *in litt*). The sighting was made during the 1967—68 drought.

Wooli 12 July 1968 — one observed by M. Tarburton (per Atlas; the limited description on the URRF tallies with the Red Goshawk).

Kyogle 7 February to 23 August 1969 — one or both of a pair seen frequently but not since (J. Hobbs *in litt.*).

Canberra, A.C.T. 13 December 1969 — a pair described in detail by Slater (1970). He stated that it was an extremely doubtful record, however the description fits the Red Goshawk perfectly and can scarcely apply to another species.

Narromine late December 1969 — three reported by F. Stephens (Wheeler 1970). The observer does not claim a positive sighting, but noted the following features for all three birds: even rich rufous colouring; goshawk size and flight, gliding and soaring on flat wings; wings not as rounded as a normal goshawk glide, but not pointed; "fingers" not as prominent as sometimes illustrated for the Red Goshawk, otherwise silhouette as for that species (F. Stephens *in litt.*). The Square-tailed Kite, Little Eagle and red phase Brown Falcon *Falco berigora* were ruled out.

The number and date suggest a family party.

Collarenebri 17 April 1971 — one, possible vagrant, along the Barwon River (F. Morris *in litt.*).

Northern Tablelands 6 March 1974 — one east of Armidale, possibly resident as it seemed to know the area well (F. Morris *in litt.*).

Both the above records were mapped in Morris (1976), p. 101.

Central Tablelands mid—1970s — a nest found with a partly incubated egg "a few (about six) years ago" (G. Beruldsen *in litt.* 1981). This information was given verbally, and the person concerned "has a very sound knowlege of . . . raptors. It is highly unlikely that he erred." Again, unless the bird was clearly seen this remarkable record must remain in some doubt because of possible confusion with the Little Eagle.

Upper Orara, near Coffs Harbour 18 May 1976 — one reported by G. Holmes (Rogers 1977).

North-west Slopes — two observed on 1 March 1978 and several times subsequently by N. Rogers, which suggests a resident pair (per Atlas; URRF contains a good description).

Queensland border, near Tenterfield October 1979 to April 1981 — one observed many times by N. Aiken and others; suspected to nest (per Atlas; field notes contain good description of the bird).

Grafton 3 March 1980 — one observed by I. McDonald (per Atlas; URRF contains a very good description and comparison with potentially confusing species).

Ballina 1980 — two observed on 30 March, one on 20 May by J. Izzard (Lindsey 1981).

Northern Tablelands 5 January 1981 – one observed by R. and C. Cooper east of Glen Innes, confirmed by examination of museum specimens (R. Ccooper pers. comm.; field notes contain a good description).

Northern Tablelands 19 April 1981 – one observed in escarpment country south-east of Tenterfield by Atlas observer E. Finley (R. Cooper pers. comm.; URRF contains a very good description).

Queensland border September 1981 – one seen by J. Izzard in the extreme north-east of the state (G. Holmes *in litt.*).

Except for the somewhat doubtful cases discussed, none of the above were confirmed breeding records. I did not see the species during two years' residence in Armidale (1979-1980) and frequent travel in the north-east of the state, and G. Holmes *(in litt.)* has not seen it during a similar period at Kyogle although he has a probable sighting just over the Border. As far as I am aware, recent detailed fauna surveys in the controversial Washpool Wilderness Area have not identified it..

DISCUSSION

Recent records of the Red Goshawk have been from the same general area as the first records (see map). The reason for the absence of records in the first half of this century is not clear, but the lack of field guides and very scanty knowledge of the species are probable factors.

The apparent clumping of recent records, eg. in the late 1960s and early 1970s, suggests a minor irruption at this time. This is borne out by the remarkable number of southern and inland records: Collarenebri, Narromine, Scone and Canberra. The proliferation of field guides since 1970 and the increase in field work since the Atlas in 1977 may partly explain the spate of records over the last few years. However another minor irruption may have occurred.

It is likely that the Red Goshawk is seldom seen in relation to its numbers. Like some other accipiters it may deliberately avoid humans, and could be more numerous and regular in New South Wales than suspected. It is also likely that it naturally occurs at low density.

The Red Goshawk is so little known that its conservation status is difficult to assess. Slater (1978) felt that it is declining, and stated that only about a dozen have been recorded in the last 50 years. Nineteen records (at least 14 positive) in New South Wales alone within the last 20 years, some involving two or more birds and repeated sightings, are therefore encouraging. However New South Wales may be marginally within the Red Goshawk's range, surplus birds from Queensland possibly spilling over following good seasons and then drought there. These birds may settle and breed.

Habitat notes associated with some of the above records included river timber, sometimes with a dense tea-tree understorey, and open forest, sometimes associated with hilly country and/or clearings. This generally agrees with the literature on the Red Goshawk's habitat preferences. Remoteness from humans may also be a prerequisite, at least for breeding birds. The Red Goshawk may have retreated before large-scale land conversion in the south-east of its range, but there seems no reason to suspect a decline in areas still close to their original condition. T. Lindsey (pers. comm.) mentioned that all six of his Red Goshawk sightings in Queensland were over rainforest. Therefore the remaining subtropical rainforest may be the most important habitat in this state for the species. This habitat has been greatly reduced in area and is still under threat.

Conservation action will depend on knowledge of the Red Goshawk's life history and ecological requirements, and the New South Wales population is badly in need of survey. It will be important to locate resident pairs and study their food requirements and breeding biology, especially to monitor breeding success. To this end all New South Wales sightings should be reported. Localities of breeding records and suspected resident pairs would be better submitted to the Club's Records Officer, rather than published. It would also be worth reporting any further "old" records.

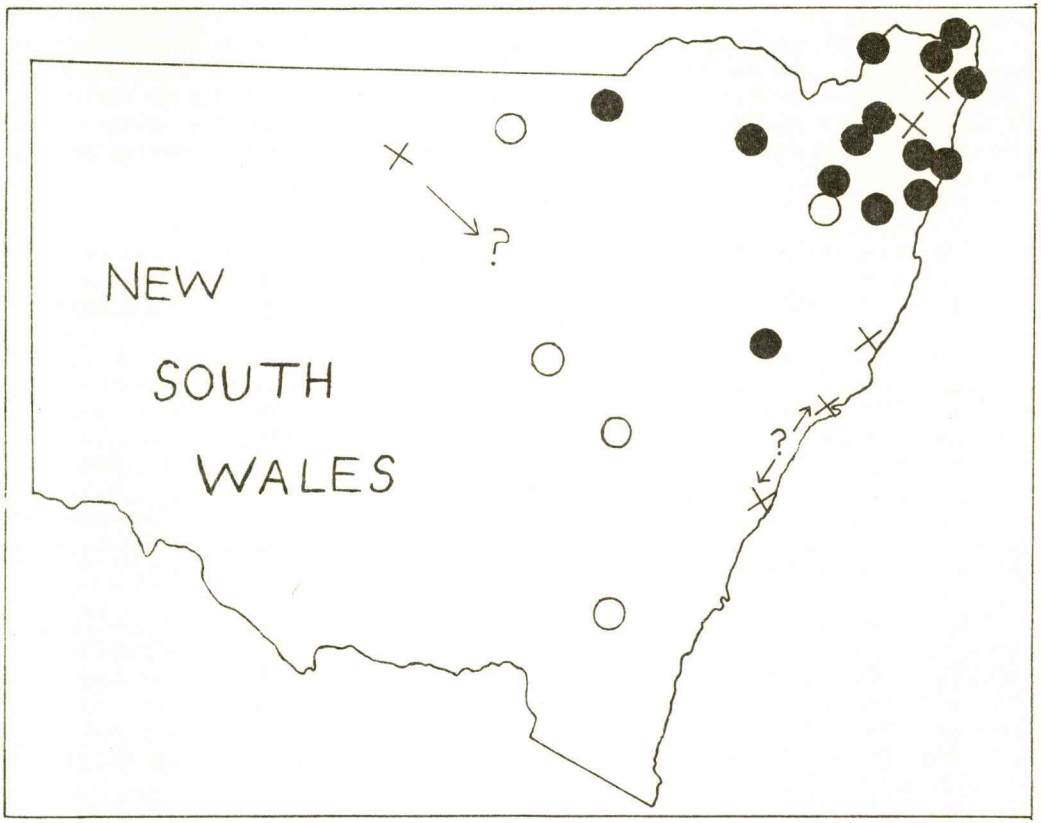

Fig. 1. Map of New South Wales showing pattern of Red Goshawk records. Crosses – historical records; circles – recent records (solid=positive, open= those for which more details needed).

FIELD CHARACTERISTICS

Other observers have remarked that the Red Goshawk can be difficult to identify (especially in flight), having features in common with other raptors, and can look like different species from different angles. Recent field guides and other works provide incomplete information, therefore I offer the following based on a sighting in Queensland (Debus *in press*).

Wing carriage: wings held slightly raised in gliding and especially soaring flight, but less so than other reddish species. This feature was also noted on the birds seen by I. McDonald and R. Cooper. Has a wider wingspread than the other accipiters.

Tail tip: apparently variable, at least in females. The bird I observed (possibly male) had a square to slightly notched tail tip. The bird observed by N. Aiken had a rounded tail. Specimens in The Australian Museum have tails as follows: square to slightly notched on the two males and one large (probably female) bird; rather rounded on one female.

Several other raptors are similar to the Red Goshawk in colour scheme, especially the Square-tailed Kite, immature Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis,* and some dark phase Little Eagles. However their different shape and flight behaviour separate them at once. At close range, the Red Goshawk's striking pattern of rufous wing linings and boldly barred underside of flight and tail feathers is very diagnostic (Favaloro *loc. cit.*). There is a need for Red Goshawk sighting to be more fully documented, especially with details on their biology and behaviour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A paper of this nature requires the help of many people. I wish to thank the following especially for their assistance with the collation of records: Ms M. Blakers of the Atlas, Messrs C. Austin, G. Beruldsen, R. Cooper, J. Cupper, N. Favaloro, J. Hobbs, G. Holmes, J. Izzard, G. Kleindienst, T. Lindsey, W. Longmore, A. Morris, F. Morris, F. Stephens. T. Lindsey also commented on a draft of this paper.

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STEPHEN J.S. DEBUS 42 Kenneth St., Longueville. N.S.W. 2066.

RED–BACKED KINGFISHER BREEDING IN COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND

A.P. McBRIDE AND A.R. DAMPNEY

While driving along Wrights Lane, Castlereagh on 1 November 1980, a Kingfisher was observed perched on telephone wires adjacent to one of the gravel pits that are located in the vicinity. The bird was immediately recognised as a Red-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon pyrrhopygia* because of its grey/white streaked cap and orange/red rump, visible through the folded wings. A. McBride was already familiar with the bird in Central Australia.

The bird was extremely co-operative in allowing us to confirm the salient features of its plumage, by flying from an overhead wire to a small bush next to the road, then on to a fence-post and back to the overhead wire again. In all these movements the back and rump were observed quite distinctly. These markings together with the general bright appearance of the bird led us to suspect that it was a male. All of the underparts were noted as white. The bird was observed as close as four metres at times.

The Red-backed Kingfisher was subsequently observed at the same place on 16 November 1980, and by ourselves and other observers until January 1981. On 3 December 1980 a nest was located in which at least two distinct "voices" could be heard. No birds were seen by AM on 24 January 1981 and it is presumed breeding was successful. Many observers were fortunate in being able to observe this pair of Kingfishers during their stay at Castlereagh.

It is interesting to note that in all standard reference texts studied, it is stated, or implied, that the Red-backed Kingfisher can live far from water. Yet at the observation site, the gravel pits contained approximately six good-sized depressions all with extensive water. G. Beruldsen (1980 *Nest and Eggs of Australian Birds* P. 276) states "seldom, if ever, nests in a cliff overlooking or close to water in the stream bed . . . . ." Our birds chose a vertical wall in the south-west corner of the gravel pit on what can only be called from above, "a cliff overlooking water". The nest was approximately 1.5 m from the top of the cliff and 12 m above the water level. The cliff dropped straight down to water.

This record represents the fifth occasion when the Red-backed Kingfisher has been observed and the first instance that breeding has occurred within the County of Cumberland. Hindwood and McGill (1958 *The Birds of Sydney)* give the first three records as Ashfield 1873, Artarmon June 1919 and Caringbah July 1930; G. Chapman (1962 *Emu* **61**, 316) records one, which was seen and photographed by A.R. McGill and M. Kaveney between Luddenham and Bringelly on 29 July 1961; and A.R. McGill (in Lindsey 1981 *Australian Birds* **16**, 23) observed one at Camden on 20 May 1979. This last mentioned record was just outside the Cumberland boundary and within the County of Camden. Most previous observations therefore have been in the winter months May – July and this is consistent with coastal occurrences elsewhere in New South Wales. The widespread drought in parts of inland New South Wales at the time of our observation may well have been the reason why at least one pair of Red-backed Kingfishers nested nearer to the coast than usual in 1980.

The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of A.R. McGill and A.K. Morris in the preparation of this note.

A.P. McBRIDE 26/8 Haride Street, Neutral Bay N.S.W. 2089.

A.R. DAMPNEY 5 Poole Road, Kellyville N.S.W. 2055.

MISTLETOEBIRDS FEEDING AT BOTTLEBRUSH FLOWERS

GREG P. CLANCY

At 1645 hours on 17 February 1980 a female plumaged Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* was observed in a Weeping Bottlebrush *Callistemon viminalis* at suburban South Grafton. It was feeding at the blossoms by working its open bill over the stamens. The tongue was apparently being used to collect nectar or pollen in lorikeet fashion. The method of feeding was more suggestive of nectar or pollen gathering than insect seeking. The bird fed in this fashion for about an hour. At 1820 hours an adult male and an immature of the same species were feeding in the bottlebrush in a similar manner to the first bird.

On 29 June 1981 two adult male Mistletoebirds were observed feeding at the blossoms of the same bottlebrush. Mistletoebirds have been seen or heard in the tree on numerous occasions but other commitments have prevented closer observations to determine feeding methods.

When discussing the diet of Mistletoebirds H.J. Firth (1976 Ed. *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*) lists a variety of berries, and insects as being eaten. He does state, however, that some members of the family Dicaeidae (flowerpeckers), to which the Mistletoebird belongs, do feed on nectar.

The relative abundance of the Weeping Bottlebrush in the Clarence Valley, especially along watercourses, may account for this apparent adaption by the Mistletoebird to feeding on nectar or pollen.

GREG P. CLANCY, 17 Margaret Cres, South Grafton N.S.W. 2461

LIZARD HUNTING BY A GREY CURRAWONG

D.C. McFARLAND

While observing honeyeaters at Waterfall in the Royal National Park, Sydney, a Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor* was noted feeding in an unnusual manner. During the early afternoon (13:00 - 14:00 hr) on 16 June 1980 a single bird was seen walking slowly through the very low heath of the Uloola Ridge. The ridge saddle was dominated by scattered clumps of *Darwinia fascicularis* and mosses, with the intervening areas being exposed sandstone littered with rock debris. It was in these open areas of bedrock that the currawong was feeding.

With slow and deliberate strides the bird would approach and then inspect each rock. At some (notably small ones) the currawong would bend over, crook its head to one side and force its beak beneath the rock. The bird then straightened its head and proceeded to lift the stone off the substrate by opening its beak. On a number of occasions (three of the ten observed), the bird suddenly thrust its beak forward below the rock and dragged out a lizard (most likely hibernating *Ctenotus taeniolatus,* which were very common on the ridge).

Such foraging behaviour, whether common or rare, indicates a substantial ability of Strepera spp. to modify their behaviour to capture otherwise obtainable prey.

D.C. McFARLAND, Zoology Department, University of New England, Armidale N.S.W. 2351

THE STATUS OF THE REGENT HONEYEATER IN THE UPPER MACQUARIE AND CASTLEREAGH VALLEYS

A.K. MORRIS AND N. KURTZ

INTRODUCTION

In recent years fears have been expressed that the Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia* has disappeared from its more favoured haunts. In the most recent comprehensive review Peters (1979) demonstrated a decline in population status throughout its former range, particularly in Victoria. More recently, E. Incoll (1981) and others writing in the Bird Observer have corroborated Peters' conclusion. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether there has been a decline in populations of the Regent Honeyeater in the Upper Macquarie-Castlereagh regions of News South Wales, compared with published reports dating back over 100 years for the same area.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

The area considered in this paper encompasses the Shires of Coolah, Coonabarabran, Wellington, and Mudgee. These Shires are located on the Cudgegong River (Mudgee), Talbragar River (Coolah), Macquarie River (Wellington), and Castlereagh River (Coolah and Coonabarabran). The area generally forms part of the "Central-west slopes and plains", climatic district of the State. The Cudgegong and Talbragar Rivers are tributaries of the Macquarie River, the former joining the Macquarie at Burrendong Dam, the latter near Dubbo. The geographical location is generally between 31 degrees – 29 degrees south, 148 degrees 30' – 150 degrees east, in mid central-north-west of New South Wales.

NATURAL VEGETATION

The rolling hills and wide, flat valleys of this Region have been developed primarily for cereal growing, mainly wheat, and the raising of fat lambs and beef cattle. The river valleys were formerly covered in a woodland dominated by Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora,* Blakeley's Redgum *E. Blakeleyi,* and Rough-barked Apple *Angophora floribunda* with an understorey of acacias. The hill slopes were clothed in White Box *E. albens* and White Cypress Pine *Callitris columellaris,* again with an understorey of acacias, while the ridges were characterised by a dry sclerophyll forest dominated by Narrow-leafed Ironbark *E. creba,* Mugga Ironbark *E. sideroxylon,* White Gum *E. rossii,* Black Cypress Pine *C. enderlicheri,* Silver-leafed Banksia *Banksia marginata* and many understorey plants. In the upper reaches of the rivers, River Oak *Casuarina cunninghamiana* was the dominant tree, while lower down, River Redgum *E. camaldulensis* predominated.

While much of the river valleys and slopes have been cleared, there still remains a considerable amount of natural vegetation. The steeper ironbark-clad hills still remain, and while the woodland on the slopes has been thinned and much of the White Cypress Pine removed for timber purposes, the Yellow Box and White Box are still very common trees. Except in the towns like Wellington and Mudgee where the introduced willow trees *Salix babylonica* have been planted, Redgums and River Oak still line the rivers. In this region, large areas have been set aside for State Forests (14 forests covering 102000 ha), Nature Reserves (five, totalling 43000 ha), National Parks (one the Warrumbungle National Park 19000 ha) , Burrendong Catchment Area (12000 ha), Mr. Arthur Reserve (1300ha), and Windermere Dam Catchment Area (6000 ha). In addition, there are numerous travelling stock reserves and other areas of crown land which retain the natural vegetation, including the higher section of hills and ranges. It is doubtful whether the extent of natural vegetation is less now than it was in the 1930's, because although clearing of land has continued since that time, the catchment areas, National Parks and Nature Reserves established in recent years, all included formerly cleared lands that now are being allowed to revert to natural woodlands, generally dominated by Yellow Box and White Box.

FORMER STATUS OF REGENT HONEYEATER

This area is fortunate in having three very detailed accounts of the avifauna of the Region made between 50 – 100 years ago. It is from these accounts that it is possible to assess what changes may have taken place since.

During the period 1880–1888 Messrs Cox and Hamilton (1889) made a detailed account of the birds of the Mudgee District, collecting eggs and skins. They recorded 205 species for an area that roughly co-incides with the present day boundaries of the Mudgee Shire. They said of the Regent Honeyeater,

"not common here until 1885 and 1886 when large numbers were observed in July feeding on the White Box blossom *Eucalyptus hemiphloia* (=*albens*), and young birds not able to fly were observed in September. One of us took two sets of eggs and heard of another being taken; so that there can be no doubt as to their breeding".

At Cobbora, on the banks of the Talbragar River, 13 km west of Dunedoo, T.P. Austin (1918) recorded the birds on his 3600 ha property, "Cobbora Station", during the period 1905 –1917, and gives details of 132 species found breeding in the District. The property consisted of timbered ranges, arable river flats, and timbered watercourses. The status of the Regent Honeyeater was given as follows:–

"Being a nomadic species, it arrives some years towards the end of winter, as a rule, most of the birds depart before the end of November. Some years, or even several years in succession, not a bird will be seen. Only once have I known them to remain here all winter. They breed here in great numbers laying mostly two eggs for a sitting, but occasionally three, and they often become the foster parents of the Pallid Cuckoo. The nests are sometimes placed within a few feet of the ground, but it is not unnusual to see them forty or fifty feet up. The earliest date on which I have taken their eggs is September 2 and the latest November 26".

In the Dripstone area, 12 km south of Wellington, G.W. Althofer lived and he recorded the birds of that area over a ten year period 1924–34. Of the Regent Honeyeater he said (p. 106) ..... "Regular visitors during winter and spring.....". From 1 June 1933 to 31 May 1934, Althofer made a daily list of all birds recorded, and the number of species seen during this time was 149, compared with 169 for the previous ten years. Among the species recorded on the daily counts was the Regent Honeyeater, being recorded on three days in August, two days in September 1933, and on one day in April 1934, a total of 6 days out of 365. The Regent Honeyeater therefore was hardly very common in that year!

Finally A.J. Campbell (1900) records that John Gould who did much of his collecting in central N.S.W. ..... "regarded it as a stationary species but Hermann Lau, a noted egg collector, records that during the period 1865-1869 it only appeared in numbers now and again".

To conclude, prior to 1935, the species in the area in question was known to be nomadic, appearing irregularly in large numbers mainly during the period July-October, but often absent for several years at a time.

CURRENT STATUS IN THE MUDGEE DISTRICT

Between 1965–1973 AKM made a regular banding trip to Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve, 30 km east of Mudgee, each of two to three days' duration. In addition, from 1968 onwards an additional three day quail survey was carried out at Cooyal, midway between Mudgee and Munghorn Gap. NK has lived at "Balmoral", Cooyal since 1940 and kept records of the birds on the area since 1973 up until the present time. Between us, we have monthly records of all species observed since 1965.

A summary of our Regent Honeyeater observations in the Mudgee area during the period 1965–1981 are set out below:–

1967 August – October, maximum 48 in May, Munghorn Gap.

1968 2 in January, possible the last of the large numbers in 1967 at Munghorn Gap.

1970 January – October, on 5 occasions, max 15 in July at Munghorn Gap. Also nested at Cudgegong, 38 km south of Mudgee on 4 January 1970 (Rogers 1971).

1971 March – May, max 100 in April Munghorn Gap.

1973 April, 30 + on 19 April, Munghorn Gap.

1977 April, "large numbers" but no details (A. Cam pers. comm.) Munghorn Gap.

1978 October, Max 8 birds in creekside vegetation at "Balmoral", Cooyal.

1979 May, single bird Cooyal Creek near "Balmoral".

1981 September, single bird Cooyal Creek near "Balmoral".

1981 October, small numbers at Munghorn Gap.

The present status in the Cooyal-Munghorn Gap area is similar therefore to that described by Cox and Hamilton *(loc. cit)*, for the Mudgee District in 1889. Unfortunately, we do not know how widespread the birds were in 1887 as the authors mentioned no localities but Munghorn Gap itself is referred to elsewhere in their paper.

CURRENT STATUS IN THE COBBORA DISTRICT

Few visits by ornithologists have been made to Cobbora in recent years and on the two or three occasion that AKM made brief stops in the area between 1975 – 1981 no Regent Honeyeaters were observed. The nearest observation by AKM was at Wongoni Creek 20 km north of Cobbora HS, a single bird on 11 June 1976 (Rogers 1977). However the area is still well timbered at Cobbora and the habitat appears to be suitable.

CURRENT STATUS IN THE WELLINGTON DISTRICT

G.W. Althofer (pers. comm. 1982) advises that although he has recently moved from Dripstone into Wellington, the status of the Regent Honeyeaters has not changed since he wrote his article in 1935. The birds usually were present when the White Box flowered, some years early in April, but other years it flowers as late as August – September. The numbers of birds however, varied considerably, some years they were abundant, at other times very few were sighted.

At nearby Mumbil, George's brother, Peter Althofer is manager of the Burrendong Arboretum. He advises (pers. comm. 1982) that here the birds can be found most years when the White Box is in flower, staying two to three months. Once again numbers fluctuate, sometimes in flocks of 20-30 birds throughout the District, other times only one or two birds are sighted. Rarely do the birds stay to breed but in October 1980, a pair bred in the Burrendong Caravan Park and fed the young on nectar and insects taken from a *Grevillia longifolia* in flower at the time. These birds were also seen by C.M. Bonser and the observation was recorded in Lindsey (1981). Peter Althofer said that large numbers were present elsewhere in the District at the time that this pair were nesting.

Other sightings in recent times in the area are as follows:–

1958 May, One bird amongst many honeyeaters 16 km south of Wellington. (A.R. McGill *in litt.* 1982).

1978 September, 10 in Yellow Box near Mumbil on 18 September (AKM).

STATUS IN THE WARRUMBUNGLE NATIONAL PARK

During residence in Coonabarabran 1975 – 1981, the Regent Honeyeater has only been recorded in this Shire at the Warrumbungle National Park. There are some earlier sightings for the Park, but without any details, i.e. February 1965. The birds have been recorded along Spirey Creek and Mopra Creek near Camps Pincham and Blackman. Each stream is lined with River Oak, Red Gum, Yellow Box and White Box, and Rough-barked Apple. Details of sightings are as follows:–

1965 February.
1976 20-30 birds Sept – December when nesting took place near Camp Pincham, but also observed at Camp Blackman by AKM, A.R. McGill and others.
1977 A few birds remaining in January.
1979 Small numbers present in creekside vegetation April – May.

Without any earlier reports to compare it with it is not known whether these observations could be considered to be unchanged over the years. Since the Park was established in 1953 with 2200 ha, it has now been extended to 19000 ha, much of which consists of Yellow Box and White Box woodland, considered to be suitable Regent Honeyeater habitat.

BANDING DATA

During the period 1965 – 1977, 40 Regent Honeyeaters were banded at Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve banding station. For details of the site see Morris (1975). No birds have been retrapped at the banding site or recovered elsewhere. All birds were banded by AKM or Annette Cam.

Details of banding dates are set out below:–

19. 4.1967 – 20.4.1967	4	8	12
18. 5.1967		3	3
28. 7.1970	1		1
23. 8.1970	2		2
27.11.1970		1	1
19. 4.1973	10	8	18
9. 4.1977	1	2	3
			40

Adults were separated from immatures in that the former have chestnut-red irises, dark gape and bright yellow wattles. Immatures have pale gapes; brown irises; pale, very small or no wattles around the eye; and brown head feathers.

The mass of seven adults taken on 19 April 1973 averaged 47.6 gm, range 41-52 gm.

The length of 14 adults averaged 237 mm, range 218–247 mm.

The wing length of five adults averaged 113 mm, range 108–118 mm.

The wing span of 17 adults averaged 339 mm, range 320–357 mm.

CONCLUSION

Based on information presented in this paper, there is no indication that Regent Honeyeaters have declined in the Upper Macquarie and Castlereagh River valleys. Certainly there have

been less observations in the past five years than the previous five years, but that could reflect less birding in the areas where the birds are known to occur, than any other reason. Between 1965–1975 AKM visited Munghron Gap almost every month, but not so any longer, yet the Regent Honeyeaters were recorded during several visits by ornithologists in the past five years at very irregular intervals. Therefore, we are of the opinion there is no sign of a decline in populations of the Regent Honeyeaters in this area as yet.

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We are indebted to the Secretary, Australian Bird Banding Scheme for the provision of banding equipment and for advice and information on the banding data. P. Althofer, G.W. Althofer, A. Cam and A.R. McGill provided data, and made helpful comments concerning the draft.

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A.K. MORRIS, P.O. Box 39 Coonabarabran N.S.W. 2857.

N.K. KURTZ, "Balmoral" ' RMB 4, Wollar Road, Mudgee N.S.W. 2850.

BIRDS IN A NATIVE TAMARIND

GREG P. CLANCY

On 28 December 1981 a large pigeon was observed in a tall Native Tamarind *Diploglottis australis* in a patch of gully rainforest near Coramba, north-west of Coffs Harbour. On closer inspection the pigeon was seen to be a Wompoo Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus magnificus.* While it was perched there two Topknot Pigeons *Lopholaimus antarcticus* landed in the tree, followed by a flock of Rainbow Loriketts *Trichoglossus haematodus,* an Australian King Parrot *Alisterus scapularis* and a Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina.* Although none of these birds was observed feeding they were apparently attracted to the tree's profuse crop of sticky fruits. The fruits are also edible to humans.

GREG P. CLANCY, 17 Margaret Cres, South Grafton N.S.W. 2416

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Contributors are requested to observe the following points when submitting articles and notes for publication.

1. Species, names, and the order in which they occur are to be in accordance with "Handlist of Birds in New South Wales". A.K.Morris, A.R.McGill and G. Holmes 1981 Dubbo: NSWFOC.

2. Articles or notes should be typewritten if possible and submitted in duplicate. Double spacing is required.

3. Margins of not less than 25mm width at the left hand side and top, with similar of slightly smaller at the right hand side of pages.

4. No underlinings and no abbreviations except as shown in the examples.

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6. The *Style Manual,* Commonwealth Government Printing Office, Canberra (1966) and subsequent editions will be the guide for this Journal.

7. Diagrams should be on plain white paper drawn with india ink. Any lettering is to be 'professional style' or lightly pencilled.

8. Dates must be written "1 January 1975" except in tables and figures where they may be abbreviated.

9. The 24–hour clock will be used, times being written 06:30, 18:30 for 6.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. respectively.

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REFERENCES

Finch, B.W. and M.D. Bruce 1974 The Status of the Blue Petrel in Australian Waters Aust. Birds **9**, 32–35

13. Acknowledgements to other individuals should include Christian names or initials.

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