



birds

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Patron:

ALEC H. CHISHOLM O.B.E., F.R.Z.S.

Hon. Secretary and Editor:

L. COURTNEY HAINES.

10 Loquat Valley Road, Bayview.

Observations Committee:

K.A. HINDWOOD and A.R. MCGILL.

Field-day Organiser:

P.E. ROBERTS. (47-9240)

26 Bayview Street, Mt. Kuring-gai.

Art Adviser:

E.S. HOSKIN.

Photographic Adviser:

NORMAN CHAFFER

THE WHITE-WINGED WIDOW-BIRD NEAR SYDNEY.

The White-winged Widow-bird (*Coliuspasser albonotatus*), sometimes called the Golden-shouldered Wydah, was first noted in the Hawkesbury district in the early 1930's. Presumably the species, an African weaver-finch, had built up to a considerable population (on occasions 100 or more individuals were seen in a flock) from birds that had originally escaped from aviaries, or from some that were purposely liberated.

The Widow-birds were frequently observed in the Wilberforce, Cattai, Pitt Town and Longneck Swamp areas until 1953; then they seemed to disappear. Recently (March-April, 1967) numbers were again noted, and nests found, in a spot not far from the junction of Cattai Creek and the Hawkesbury River.

Males in breeding dress are black with golden-yellow wing shoulders and with white on their wings. The rather broad and comparatively long tail is almost 4" in length. In eclipse plumage males resemble females which are sparrow-like in size and appearance but with brighter back markings, paler underparts and

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and a whitish eyebrow.

The polygamous males have the habit of flying into the air above their territories and then fluttering down to an elevated perch, where they flick their wings and spread their tails. Wing-flicking is also a habit of hen birds.

In the non-breeding period (Autumn and Winter) Widow-birds have been seen in considerable flocks, which wheel and turn with speed and precision when disturbed from their feeding grounds: they are seed-eaters, though insects are also eaten.

Following the absence of records between 1953 and 1966, Mr. Tony Lucas reported the species at Cattai in March, 1967. Widow-birds should be looked for in open areas bordering fields and swamps where rank vegetation grows in profusion. K.A. HINDWOOD.

A DEAD SEA-EAGLE ON THE WESTERN PLAINS.

Travelling recently along the Newell Highway in mid-western New South Wales I saw a large bird, somewhat battered and dead, lying near the road. On examination the bird proved to be an adult (or an almost mature) White-breasted Sea-Eagle, a surprising fact because the area was a dry plain bordered by a fringe of light timber, but with no trees near the road. A map indicated that the nearest water was at Lake Cowal some five miles distant; but I found, when talking to a tourist at the Forbes Caravan Park that evening, that the Lake was quite dry. Possibly the drying up of such a large lake forced the Sea-Eagle to move away and, in so doing, it probably rested on a telephone post close to the road and was there unlucky enough to meet with a trigger-happy vandal who just could not resist shooting the noble bird which was then left by the roadside as a "fitting memorial" to one who had destroyed a "dangerous and savage" eagle. ARNOLD R. MCGILL.

BIRD NOTES FROM "YORKLEA", CASINO, N.S.W.

A very determined pair of Magpie-Larks have tiny nestlings now (April 16) and this is their third nest for the season. Their first nest, built in November, 1966, was abandoned after a Koel added its egg to the three Magpie-Lark's eggs. A second nest was then built and into this the Koel laid an egg. The young Koel, soon after hatching, ejected the nestling Magpie-Larks.

A prolonged dry spell was followed by mild flooding; the local swamps then became well stocked with bird-life. I counted one flock of about 240 egrets, mainly composed of the Plumed (intermedia), though quite a

few Large (alba) and Little (garzetta) were also present. Japanese Snipe were numerous in muddy areas bordering the swamps.
ARTHUR BOND.

DID YOU KNOW THIS ABOUT PELICANS?

On Pelican Island in the Claremont Isles, Queensland, in August 1860, the naturalist John Macgillivray made the following notes which may not be well known to ornithologists for they appeared in his "Wanderings in tropical Australia" in the Sydney Mail, 25th January 1862, page 6 (consulted in the Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney): ---

"Having secured about thirty-five pelicans in good condition, we tried upon them the experiment of boiling down to extract the oil, which served for burning and other useful purposes. As an external application in cases of rheumatism it was found beneficial. It burns with a clear flame, without smoke, and was considered by Captain B. (i.e. Captain W. Banner of the brig. Julia Percy) to be better for the binnacle than even sperm oil. These pelicans were either nearly fledged, young, unable to fly, or old birds which were moulting their wing feathers. On Pelican Island, after six had been bagged as the result of two shots, and seeing that none of the rest attempted to fly, a party of our natives went into the shoal water on the reef, and succeeded in driving on shore and capturing the remainder of the flock, fourteen in number. It was highly diverting to witness the scene. A little Tanna-man might have been seen with a couple of pelicans nearly as big as himself, holding each by the beak with one hand, and lugging them along very reluctantly, violently struggling and flapping their wings in a vain attempt to rise but still obliged to 'move on'. Then one would get adrift, squat down when closely approached, snap at anyone coming near, and present quite a formidable appearance with its great sixteen-inches bill and snake-like neck moving as on a pivot to meet the hand attempting to seize it. Many eggs were picked up, white and chalky, laid in a slight saucer-like excavation occasionally lined with a little grass".
GILBERT P. WHITLEY.

PARROTS OBSERVED AT BAYVIEW, PITTVATER, N.S.W.

The following is a list of the parrots I have observed in the Bayview district.

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1. RAINBOW LORIKEET: Rather common, particularly when the coral trees are flowering.
2. MUSK LORIKEET: With its powder-blue crown and other lovely colour combinations, this small lorikeet is one of the most beautiful. Here it is extremely common when the swamp mahoganies and coral trees are in bloom. It also likes to feed on the green seed-pods of the black wattles.
3. SCALY-BREASTED LORIKEET: Occurs in threes and fours; this species is also attracted to the bright red flowers of the coral trees.
4. RAINBOW X SCALY-BREASTED LORIKEET: This natural hybrid appears to be becoming more plentiful; some individuals are more attractive than others.
5. GALAH: Increasing in numbers. I noted with interest several young birds flying with the main flock this season. Patches of grey on the breasts of immature Galahs distinguish them in the field from adult birds.
6. KING PARROT: One of our finest parrots, which occasionally visits us in small flocks.
7. CRIMSON ROSELLA: Numbers of these birds have been recorded, always adult males in immaculate plumage. They like to feed on she-oak and black wattle seeds.
8. EASTERN ROSELLA: Small numbers only; sometimes a Golden-mantled Rosella is seen flying with ordinary Eastern Rosellas. As Golden-mantles are a northern sub-species, the Bayview bird is no doubt an aviary escapee.
9. RED-BACKED PARROT: Two observations only, both male birds.
- L. COURTNEY HAINES, Bayview.

WADERS OF THE ILLAWARRA.

November, 1966 -- March, 1967.

TURNSTONE: On two visits to Bellambi Pt., a flock of approximately 20 birds was seen on both occasions.

GREY PLOVER: Seen at the entrance to Lake Illawarra During Dec-Jan.

GOLDEN PLOVER: Four seen in January on Shell Harbour swamp.

DOUBLE-BANDED DOTTEREL: First bird of the season seen on 23.2.1967 at

Lake Illawarra; their numbers increased sharply after this date.

RED-CAPPED DOTTERL: Common at all times in suitable haunts.

BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL: Only observed at North Woolongong on 25.2.1967. Usually seen at Coomaditchy Lagoon near Port Kembla.

BANDED STILT: A single bird observed at Lake Illawarra on many occasions until 2.12.1966; thereafter absent.

EASTERN CUFLEW: Observed in moderate numbers.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT: Flocks present at Lake Illawarra at all times.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT: One or two birds observed from 23.2.1967 onwards, at Lake Illawarra.

GREENSHANK: Four birds present near the mouth of Lake Illawarra in November, and during March the following numbers were seen:- 3rd(6), 8th(10), 12th(12), and 16th(3).

RED-NECKED STINT: Observed regularly in all areas.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER: Birds recorded frequently throughout the summer, mainly in the area south of Wollongong.

CURLEW SANDPIPER: As above species, although not so numerous.

LESSER KNOT: Seen for approximately one month, November-December, 1966. WAYNE LONGMORE.

SOME FIELD OBSERVATIONS.

BIRDS OBSERVED IN SASSAFRAS GULLY, SPRINGWOOD, A.S.W., on March 25th, 1967.

Beautiful Firetail Finch; Rock Warbler; Ground Thrush; Large-billed Scrub-Wren; Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo; King Parrot and Rose Robin. At the end of a six-mile hike 42 species had been logged. Observations by A. COLEMANE, in the company of J. Harrison and W. Longmore.

BIRDS OBSERVED IN THE WARRINGAH AREA, N.S.W.

Fluttering Shearwater, one dead on Long Reef 19.2.1967; White-faced Storm-Petrel, three off Long Reef 19.2.1957; Turnstone, 16 on Long Reef 28.2.1967; Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, flocks of 20 or more seen at Palm Beach on March 5; Koel Cuckoo, two immature birds seen in Mrs Barter's garden, Collaroy Plateau, being fed by Red Wattle-birds; Regent Honey-eater, one seen Rickaby's Creek on March 4; Drongo, one recorded on Collaroy Plateau on February 12; Grey-faced Petrel, decomposed bird found on Long Reef at end of April, 1967. DAVID SAWYER.

BEROWRA, N.S.W.

Eight Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos noted on April 27, 1967.
J. DISNEY.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Full Member \$1.50; Family Membership \$2.00; Junior Member \$1.00;

Please note that subscriptions for 1967-68 are due on July 1, 1967. Your co-operation would be appreciated. Hon. Treasurer, L.C. Haines, 10 Loquat Valley Road, Bayview, N.S.W.

R.A.O.U. — R.Z.S., MONTHLY MEETINGS.

THURSDAY, MAY 18: This meeting will feature colour-slides and commentary by Jack Purnell, of Wahroonga. Mr. Purnell has recently visited the North Coast of New South Wales (where he was successful in photographing Regent Bowerbirds at their bowers), and the Cape York Peninsula (where he obtained interesting photographs of the birds of that remote area).

BIRD OF THE MONTH: Fairy Martin, which will be compared with the Tree-Martin.

THURSDAY, JUNE 15: This will be the ANNUAL MEETING with the customary address by the Chairman, Mr. Peter Roberts, who will speak on the subject of Australian Cuckoos, with particular reference to nest-parasitism and the calls of the various species of Cuckoos.

FIELD EXCURSIONS

SATURDAY, MAY 27: ROYAL NATIONAL PARK: Leaders, Marie and George Dibley. Meet at 10a.m., at the Upper Causeway picnic-ground (where the McKell Drive meets Stevens Drive). Bring lunch and boil the billy. Train travellers to catch the 8.50 a.m. from Central, arriving at Waterfall at 9.62, where transport will be available (please 'phone 57-6298 to make sure).

SUNDAY, JUNE 18: JERUSALEM BAY: Leader, Peter Roberts. Jerusalem Bay is a deep inlet of Cowan Creek, and can be reached only on foot, or by boat. It is proposed to walk down the steep, but well-made hikers' track which traverses interesting heath-land and wet sclerophyll forest. Some aboriginal carvings will be viewed en route.

Lunch will be taken at the Bay, where Sea-Eagles can usually be seen. Return distance about 5 miles, with a descent of 700 feet. Meet on the Pacific Highway at 10 a.m., at Cowan Station. Train travellers take North Shore train from Central at 8.40, change at Hornsby to the 9.37 Cowan train.

