



birds

Price 25/- Published by the Gould League Birdwatchers

Vol. 5 No. 1

1st July, 1970

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Annual Subscription - due 1st July each year. Single Member -
\$1.50; Junior Member - \$1.00; Family - \$2.00

(Registered at the G.P.O. Sydney for transmission by post as a
periodical)

LYREBIRD'S ALLEGED MIMICRY

There has always been doubt in my mind about truth of claims that the Lyrebird has been heard to mimic mechanical sounds - for example, the sounds of chain saws, axes cutting wood, motor horns, noises emitted by timber mills and sounds of a like nature which it hears in the bush. A celebrated mimic of bird calls, yes; but does its mimicry actually go beyond bird calls? There are several reports saying it does.

In fact the Lyrebird is said to be able to mimic almost any kind of sound, even the human voice as represented by the "cooe" of one man to another in forest country. One report even has it that a bird in the Dandenong Ranges near Melbourne used to mimic the sound of a train puffing up the steep grades of the mountain line penetrating Lyrebird territory. There are also reports of its imitating the sound of self-starters on motor cars.

To me these sound somewhat fanciful and I believe them to be the outcome of some person's imagination, with an anthropomorphic slant. It is not so much a question whether the bird is capable of producing this kind of mimicry - I think it is - but whether in fact it really does so, sporadically or as a regular thing. It would be interesting to have authentic instances of "mechanical" mimicry if they exist. I have spoken to experienced ornithologists on the point, and though some have said they had heard of cases of the kind they admitted that the information was given them by somebody else, and thus was second-hand. They themselves had not heard the bird to mimic anything but the calls of other birds.

My own association with the Lyrebird goes back some thirty years, in N. S. W., Victoria and Tasmania. During four consecutive breeding seasons I devoted almost every weekend to making a photographic record of the birds life history as far as this could be pictured. Neither my hearing nor my interpretation of calls was considered to be at fault; but though I listened carefully and analysed the calls, no "foreign" sounds ever came into the mimicry. All of it was confined to bird calls.

Thus, through the years, whenever I have seen references to the bird's being heard to reproduce all manner of mechanical sounds, I never failed to wonder whether the statement was based on fact or fiction. What is the truth?

MICHAEL SHARLAND

GREAT CRESTED GREBE NESTING AT BRINGELLY

During the Wallacia excursion led by Athol Colemane on Sunday, 22nd February, 1970, a visit was made to the property "Maryland" at Bringelly, which holds some excellent dams.

These dams held a number of interesting species including 40+ Wood Duck, Musk Duck, Black-fronted and red-kneed Dotterell, Greenshank, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Little Grebe and Great Crested Grebe.

As the party were about to depart, I noticed a Great Crested Grebe amongst some bushes growing in the dam and with the aid of a telescope was able to note that the bird was sitting on a nest. This is the first record of the Great Crested Grebe nesting in the County of Cumberland.

The following weekend it was found that the nest contained three eggs and the weekend after, the nest was empty.

On this second weekend, when I observed the nest from the position of my first sighting, it appeared that one of the parent birds was sitting and as the nest was approached, the bird probably left the nest accompanied by the chicks and hid them amongst other bushes on the dam. This action has been reported by observers of the Great Crested Grebe previously and although I have not been able to return to the area to affirm that the young were hatched, it is probable that the parents would have left the area had the clutch been destroyed by a predator.

RICHARD M. COOPER, Hornsby. N. S. W.

YELLOW-FACED HONEYEATER MIGRATION

On 13th May 1970 between 1030 hours and 1400 hours I observed a migration of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga chrysops*) at Tesselate Hill near Mt. Irvine in the Blue Mountains.

The size of the flocks varied from 7 to about 250 and the lapsed time between successive flocks ranged from less than a minute to 33 minutes. In all 17 flocks totalling about 2,000 birds were observed. No observations were made after 1400 hours and I do not know if the migration was in progress before 1030 hours. It is possible that other species were present in some of the flocks but none were observed.

The direction of flight was from S. S. E. to N. N. W. and followed a narrow ridge. The altitude was also constant at an estimated 20 metres (treetop level). The day was sunny and calm with no wind and the mean temperature was 60° F. 23 points of rain had fallen overnight.

Details of Observations of Migration of Yellow-faced Honey-eater at Tesselate Hill, near Mt. Irvine on 13th May 1970:

<u>Flight No.</u>	<u>Time Observed</u>	<u>Number in Flock</u>
1	1035 hrs.	50
2	1036 hrs.	70
3	1040 hrs.	50
4	1052 hrs.	150
5	1102 hrs.	250
6	1105 hrs.	150
7	1120 hrs.	200
8	1135 hrs.	150
9	1143 hrs.	100
10	1216 hrs.	200
11	1222 hrs.	150
12	1250 hrs.	250
13	1306 hrs.	150
14	1326 hrs.	50
15	1326 hrs.	30
16	1346 hrs.	7
17	1348 hrs.	20
		2027 (total)

ELLIS G. REYNOLDS, Hornsby N. S. W.

Mrs. Molly Thomas of "Oakvale" Albion Park N. S. W. tells of the playfulness of young Magpies. - "We have semi-tame Magpies which have been coming for food for some years and I feel that I must report on the antics of the last pair of young.

They are as playful as kittens, most trusting (of us) and of a generally humorous disposition and we are very fond of them.

Whilst waiting to be fed they pick up pieces of grass or small objects left for them, such as tin lids and strings etc. The birds chase each other for possession, catching each other at times by toes or wings.

My husband built a very light swing for them and one bird frequently jumps on it, balancing and swinging upside down. They are both most diverting and friendly birds".

KURNELL FIELD DAY

About 50 birdwatchers were at the rendezvous on Captain Cook driveway on the morning of March 14, to be led by Arnold McGill across the sandhills to overlook the mudflats at Quibray Bay. With the tide rising fast, birds were feeding busily and we had soon identified a good sample; notably a dozen Sea Curlews, 80 odd Grey-tailed Tattlers, lesser numbers of Golden Plovers and Mongolian Dotterels, with an immature White-breasted Sea-Eagle overhead. As the water rose to cover the best feeding places, it was noticeable that the piles projecting above the water were utilised by the Tattlers as perches, but not by any other waders.

Boat Harbour was the next stop, after negotiating with various degrees of skill a very rough road over the sandhills. Whilst eating lunch Gannets were diving just offshore and Skuas could be seen chasing Silver Gulls, but much too far away to be labelled as anything but Skua (sp.).

After lunch a short walk brought us to the rock platform. The tide by now was nearly full, which meant that the offshore reef was awash and the birds that shelter there had been obliged to move onto the main platform-where we could get a close range look at them! Mr. McGill was able to illustrate his little lecture on the differences between Mongolian and Double-banded Dotterels with specimens side by side and beautifully lit. There were large groups of Turnstones, Golden Plover (many changing into breeding plumage), a pair of Reef Heron and three Sooty Oyster-Catchers. Little Tern were abundant, and one bird, lacking a black loreal streak, might have been a Fairy Tern-much discussion, but no finality. However, a few Common Tern were observed.

To round off the day, a visit was made to the swamp near the refinery, where about 100 Little Pied Cormorants were nesting (building, incubating and tending young). While the party watched a Skua flew in and spent five minutes bathing only 30 yards away from us! It is hard to imagine how anyone could get a better view and Mr. McGill had no hesitation in pro-

nouncing it an Arctic Skua.

Altogether a very fine day's birding, and members deeply appreciate the privilege of sharing it with an authority of such stature in the bird world as Arnold McGill.

P. E. ROBERTS Mt. Kuring-gai N. S. W.

MERYLA PASS FIELD DAY

18th-19th April, 1970

This was our first outing to a more distant area, involving a return trip of approximately 200 miles. Despite the early start necessary, 20 members plus some visitors attended. Also, camping was optional and 10 members camped overnight. Weather was perfect.

Cars were left at the top of the pass and the party walked down the old road which was the original way down to Kangaroo Valley. Those who walked the furthest and stayed the longest saw the most along this fascinating road, traversing changing habitats.

The 64 species observed included 4 Lyrebirds on the road and two others giving a marvellous duet of imitations, 4 Pilot Birds, 3 Grey Currawongs, Square-tailed Cuckoo, several Rock Warblers, Large-billed Scrub Wrens, Red-browed Tree Creepers, Rose Robins, Barking Owl and a White-throated Nightjar.

This outing proved very worthwhile and it was agreed that one or two outings of this nature should be included in each year's activities.

M. DIBLEY, Oatley, N. S. W.

FIELD REPORT OF HEATHCOTE STATE PARK OUTING

Sunday, 24th May, 1970

The day proved to be typical of those presently being experienced in Sydney and as such was an excellent day for the birds. The outing was led by Mrs. M. Barnes whose knowledge of the park was excellent.

A total of 36 species were recorded and the most interesting fact was that approximately 28% (10 species) were members

of the Meliphagidae and included:

White-naped Honeyeater	Eastern Spinebill
Fuscous Honeyeater	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
White-eared Honeyeater	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater	Little Wattle-bird
Red Wattle-bird	Noisy Friar-bird

Other species of interest included the Spotted Pardalote, Mistletoe-bird, Variegated Wren, Gang-Gang Cockatoo (4), Rock Warbler, Rose Robin and one little Pied Cormorant.

Approximately 100 yards upstream from the Causeway the party stopped for lunch. The area proved to be an extremely favourable habitat for birds and, as a result, lunch consisted of quick bites between observations.

Our thanks to Mrs. Barnes for introducing us to an excellent bird-watching area.

List of Birds Recorded -

Magpie-lark	White-eared Honeyeater
Black-backed Magpie	Spotted Pardalote
Pied Currawong	Grey Fantail
Red-browed Finch	Grey-backed Silvereye
Grey Butcherbird	Fantailed Cuckoo
Red Wattle-bird	Mistletoe-bird
Noisy Friar-bird	Welcome Swallow
Crimson Rosella	Yellow Robin
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Raven
Eastern Spinebill	Brown Thornbill
Superb Lyrebird	Golden Whistler
Fuscous Honeyeater	Gang-Gang Cockatoo
White-naped Honeyeater	Little Wattle-bird
Rock Warbler	Little Pied Cormorant
Grey Thrush	Rose Robin
White-throated Treecreeper	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Variegated Wren	Striated Thornbill

FIELD DAYS

Sunday - 19th July : Between Kurnell and Boat Harbour.

Leaders : G. & M. Dibley.

Meet 10.00 a.m. in Sir Joseph Banks Drive where it joins Captain Cook Drive. This is the turn-off for A.L.O.R. and Boat Harbour, but we later turn left behind the refinery instead of right for Boat Harbour. Albatrosses and coastal heath. Carry lunch.

Sunday - 23rd August : Pennant Hills

Organiser : Mrs. C.M. Bonser

Meet 10.00 a.m. at Koala Park Sanctuary, Castle Hill Rd., West Pennant Hills. To proceed and visit the N.S.W. Forestry Commission, Castle Hill Rd., West Pennant Hills. Gregory Map 67. Leaving cars at entrance it is an easy walk to check on the Bower Bird and Bower, the small colony of Bell Birds and many other species of birds.

After lunch exploring another area of Bushland.

Saturday - 19th September : Annangrove, Maraylya,
Windsor Swamps.

Leader : E. Hoskin - 88-2900

Meet 9.00 a.m. at Rogans Hill in Old Northern Road as soon as parking is available for us, north of Castle Hill Road. We will first visit Blue Gum Creek and Murphy's Bridge.

This is the best bird trip in the Sydney area.