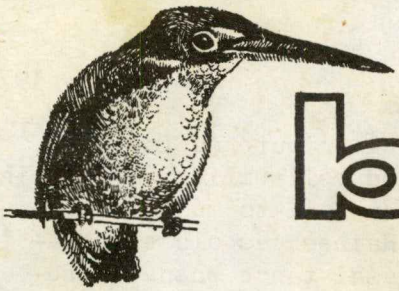

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Price 25c Published by the N.S.W. Field Ornithologists Club
Vol. 7 No. 1 1st July, 1972

A TRIBUTE TO THE RETIRING EDITOR.

With the completion of Volume 6 of Birds (1972) Lawrence Courtney-Haines retires as Editor, a position he has held from March, 1967, when No. 5 of Volume 1 was published. He had then taken over that important office from Mr. Peter Roberts, who edited the first four parts. Mr. Haines also had been Secretary when the Club was formed in 1966 to the end of 1969, when Mrs. Lola Smith (the present Secretary and Treasurer) commenced duties. The early years of any new Society are difficult and it is noteworthy that Laurie Haines fulfilled the three most arduous positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Editor with competence for a period of two-and-one-half years. It might also be mentioned that he was for a period of two years (1964-1966) Chairman of the combined monthly ornithological meetings then held in Anzac House, but now at the Australian Museum.

I have known Laurie since the early 1940s and been with him many times on field excursions, and appreciated his keen interest in Natural History, not only in Ornithology for he is also a qualified entomologist. When he resided at Haberfield he joined me often on excursions to study the bird life of the Botany Bay area, especially that connected with the migratory waders. On most of these field trips it was a trio of enthusiasts, as Allen Keast, now Professor of Biology at Queens University in Canada, was usually with us. Laurie Haines and the writer are the only living Australian ornithologists of the six persons who obtained extended views of the Yellow-headed Wagtail in Australia, as two were from America and the other two, K. A. Hindwood and J. M. Hewitt are now deceased. Our retiring Editor, also, reported the occurrence in January and February, 1958 of a party of nine Little Whimbrels (a very rare bird in the Sydney area) on a reclaimed recreational area at the head of Iron Cove, and which remained for six weeks to the delight of Sydney bird observers.

In extending our appreciation and paying tribute to Lawrence Courtney-Haines for his ability, keenness and reliability during his five-year term as Editor of Birds, one cannot fail to make mention also to the late Keith Hindwood, with whom Haines was closely associated over many years and who gave vital assistance whenever required. We also wish Mr. Alan Morris, who now takes over the all-important editorial duties, a successful and enjoyable term of office.

Arnold R. McGill
Moorebank 602 9998

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

In the RAOU Newsletter, May 1972 it has been noted that the Council of that organisation has resolved to publish the long awaited "Checklist" in two parts, the section on non-passerines in 1973 and the section on passerines in 1974. Until that time and because of the editorial difficulties associated with the publishing of an ornithological journal, where there is no recognised or accepted list, index or checklist of scientific or vernacular names, it would be appreciated if contributors would use the names as used in "An Index of Australian Bird Names", published by the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research, Canberra, A.C.T.

Dates should be written " 1 January 1969 " except in tables and figures where they may be abbreviated. Due to lack of space references can be abridged as follows " Norris 1965, Notornis 12:96. " and are to be included in the text. The title of journals should be abbreviated in the acceptable manner.

Where possible distances should be given in the metric system and the 24 hour clock used, time being written 05:30, 17:30 for 5.30 a.m. and p.m. respectively.

Hon. Editor

NESTING HABITS OF SPOTTED NIGHTJARS

In the south-western Riverina, the Spotted Nightjar (Eurostopodus guttatus) is usually associated with clumps of Green Mallee (Eucalyptus viridus) which grow to a height of about 20 feet. Most of their foliage is on top forming a thick canopy; below this the trunks are widely spaced giving the Nightjars relatively open views for up to 300 yards. These trees shed leaves and bark profusely and it is amongst this litter that the Nightjars nest; the dead bark on the ground being a perfect camouflage especially if there are also a few yellow coloured stones present.

No nest is made; the single egg, which is light green in colour with a few blackish spots, being laid on the bare ground. When incubating or brooding the adult birds sit very tight (and are normally only stumbled upon by chance).

A Nightjar chick about two weeks old is one of the cleverest pieces of camouflage in nature. They are covered with a silky down, rufous in colour, which extends to the tip of the bill making them appear like the small rock alongside which they crouch. Should an adult bird be flushed off its young, it only flies a short distance before settling on the ground again, usually making a loud popping sound with its beak. Often they give a distraction display consisting of little jumps into the air and throwing their wings about at the same time.

If the chick is alone during daylight, it sits motionless and silent but as darkness falls, it starts a persistent "beep beep beep" call uttered in single notes. At night when the adult arrives with food it calls the young after alighting with a single grunt note. It would appear that the calling by the young helps to guide the parent to it in the dark, since, should the chick move between feeds the parents have no trouble re-locating it.

Young Nightjar chicks have often been found to move around between observations, in one instance by as much as 100 yards after excessive disturbance. Whilst I have never actually observed a young bird being moved by an adult I have records of chicks, incapable of movement themselves, being moved from sunlight into shade on hot days and vice-versa on cold days. The largest chick apparently moved in such a way was about 3 inches (80 mm) long.

In North America, two closely related Nightjars have been observed to move their young. Chuck-Will's-Widow (Caprimulgus carolinensis) is recorded as moving its eggs with its bill (1971, Birds of the World, pp. 1389-90) and the Whip-Poor-Will (C. vociferus) has been observed to carry eggs and young between its legs to a safer place (op. cit. pp1391 -2). It is interesting to note that a number of overseas taxonomists place the Australian Spotted and White-throated Nightjars in the genus Caprimulgus, with the above Nightjars.

R. Miller,
Rankin Springs. January, 1972.

THE REMARKABLE SHRIKE-TIT

On 29th January, 1972, whilst inside my house the unmistakable call of a Sacred Kingfisher was heard coming from close outside my front door. On investigating I found only a male Eastern Shrike-Tit, perched in a Bottle-brush near my side fence. The Shrike-Tit was observed to mimic the calls of the Sacred Kingfisher, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike, and Rufous Whistler, intermingled with its own drawn out notes. When the Shrike-Tit mimicked the call of the Rufous Whistler, it held its head back repeating the call three times.

At the time I was unaware that the Shrike-Tit was such an artist and it was the first time that I had witnessed vocal mimicry in this species. However, Chisholm (1965, Emu 65: 57-64) records it as a "Minor Mimic" and again (1967 Birds 2: 1-2) gives details of E.P. Ramsay's diary where in 1862 he records a Shrike-Tit imitating the notes of the White-naped Honeyeater, Yellow Robin, Sacred Kingfisher and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater.

A. Colemane,
Northmead. 1.2.72.

RECORDS REPORT

It would greatly ease the problem involved in producing the Annual Bird Report if members would send in observations more regularly i.e., at least half yearly - in July and January. Some members already contribute on a quarterly basis which is much appreciated.

It should be remembered that records of rare or unlikely occurrences should be accompanied by substantiating details including field notes.

A NEW RECORD OF THE WHITE-TAILED TROPIC-BIRD FOR NEW SOUTH WALES

On the evening of 10 March 1972, I collected a live immature female White-tailed Tropic-bird from the yard of a suburban house in Gordon, a northern suburb of Sydney. The bird died several hours after it was collected. Gordon is located nine miles (14.4 km.) from the sea at the nearest point. The Tropic-bird was discovered in the garden when the householders arose for breakfast that day. Hindwood (1957, Emu 57:66-67) indicated that prolonged and extensive tropical air stream extending south into New South Wales could easily carry the birds from the region of Walpole Island, a coral islet located about 150 miles (241.5 km.) south east of New Caledonia and about 800 miles (1288 km.) from coastal New South Wales, the nearest breeding place to eastern Australia.

The day the Tropic-bird was collected the winds were blowing from the south south east, with moderate seas but the weather was overcast and raining. Most of New South Wales at the time was covered by a moist easterly air stream caused by a high in the Tasman Sea. No tropical air stream was present.

The bird is a rare straggler to this State, McGill (1958, Handlist of the Birds of New South Wales) records six specimens for New South Wales i.e., an adult male, Manly June 1890; an immature Botany Bay, February 1898; an immature Murramurrang, February 1938; an adult in flight Neutral Bay, January, 1939; an immature Bulladelah, February, 1956; and an immature at Cronulla, March 1956. An immature bird was picked up on Bellambi Beach, Sefton and Devitt (1962, Emu 62:185), and another 29 March, 1963 on Bulli Beach by P. Strong. Finally, on 26 January 1967 an immature was found alive on Pittwater Road, Bayview by P. Cohen (1967, Birds 1: No. 5 page 3).

The Gordon bird was typical of other immature White-tailed Tropic-birds in that it had barrings on the back and under-wings, with a prominent black eye strip. The three outerprimaries had black shafts and all the primary quills were black. However, it differed from the descriptions of the immature White-tailed Tropic-birds as given in Slater (1971, Field Guide to Australian Birds) and King (1967, Sea Birds of the Tropical Pacific Ocean) in that the bill was grey, tipped with black (not greenish yellow to reddish orange); and the legs and base of the

feet were bluish white (not yellow). The measurements and other plumage details corresponding with the usual description of the immature plumage. The specimen has been lodged in the Australian Museum reference collection.

This is the tenth record for New South Wales and would indicate that the status of the White-tailed Tropic-bird is "accidental" with most observations being made or specimens collected during the period January to April. All but two of the recorded observations are for immature birds.

Alan Morris,
Old Toongabbie. 10.4.72.

THE BLACK BITTERN - A FURTHER EXTENSION OF RANGE.

On 30 December 1971 at 10:25 hrs. I observed a male Black Bittern sitting on a log, 1m. above the middle of the river, at the ford below the hut at Nadgee River, within the Nadgee Nature Reserve. The bird remained motionless for five minutes, viewed from 10m. away with 8 x 50 binoculars. As I subsequently crossed the ford, the Bittern flew to a high over-hanging log about 20m. upstream.

Plumage description taken at the time is as follows:- Dark sooty black plumage, white throat and conspicuous yellow patch on side of throat; iris yellow-brown; bill and leg colour nondescript and these did not stand out from the basic black plumage as did the throat and neck.

This observation extends the range of the Black Bittern a further 104.6 km. (65 miles) further south, to within 8 km. (5 miles) of the Victorian Border. See Morris (1971 Emu 71:175).

J. McIlroy,
Canberra. A. C. T. 16.3.72.

LEADEN FLYCATCHER NOTES

At Black Mountain Reserve, Canberra, on 26 October 1971, I found what I thought to be an unusual nest of the Leaden Flycatcher, Myiagra rubecula.

In my long association with the late K. A. Hindwood in the field he had always told me "when ever you find the nest of a Leaden Flycatcher it always will be placed on a dead branch with a live one directly above". This has always been the case except for the Canberra nest.

It was placed on a horizontal live branch about an inch and a quarter thick, and against a perpendicular live branch with the outer side of the junction horizontal, dead, about three feet in length and three-quarters of an inch thick. Above was a thin (half-inch) live and leafy branch.

This strange habit prompted me to establish whether Mr. Hindwood had discovered it.

D. Le Souef (1900, Emu 1:59) stated "The Myiagrae construct their nests of shreds of bark and situated on the outer dead bark of the horizontal branch of a Eucalyptus tree, such as those of the Leaden Flycatcher etc." It appears that Le Souef was not aware of the usual situation.

Campbell's Nest and Eggs 1901 did not mention it but A. J. North in his "Nests and Eggs" 1903 stated "...on the top of a horizontal bough and frequently at the junction of a forked dead branch". He did not mention whether the dead branch came out of a live one but he stirred enough interest in the subject for other observers to be aware of the occurrence.

Ross (1925, Emu 25:141) states "As far as my experience goes, these birds always build their nest on a horizontal limb which has another arm of the limb curving over and running about a foot above and approximately parellel to the part on which the nest is placed". No mention of dead or alive.

H. Wolstenholme (1925, Emu 25:296) wrote, "As to the nesting site of this species, my experience tallies with that of Mr. Ross about the horizontal limb and a branch above it. The limb carrying the nest is always a small one, I think, and dead but I have seen not more than half a dozen nests".

In Mr. Hindwood's files there are extensive unpublished life histories and photographs of the Leaden Flycatcher, he did a tremendous amount of detailed study of this bird. His earliest record relating to the position of the nest was on 21 December 1928 at Middle Harbour, Roseville, he wrote "the nest was built on a dead branch with a living one directly above it".

Also in Mr. Hindwood's files is a record of a nest in 1938 half finished which was never used and with no live branch overhead. In 1940 a nest with "no limb overhead"; another "a deserted nest on a dead limb, with a dead limb overhead"; and "on a dead limb between two thin upright dead twigs"; and finally in 1966 "on a dead limb having an upward slope but no limb above it, only a few leafy branches a few feet above".

It would seem that H. Wolstenholme was the first to note the habit after being made aware of it by Ross and although he mentions the branch which holds the nest is always dead we can assume the branch above is alive.

Mr. Hindwood was probably inspired by Ross or Wolstenholme to be aware of the situation and established specifically that the nest is built "on a dead branch with a living one directly above it".

The habit being fairly regular but not always so.

Ernest S. Hoskin,
Eastwood. 1.3.72.

SWIFT PARROT OBSERVATION

During 1971 there were no Sydney records for Swift Parrots last winter. However, already two flocks have been observed flying north over Sydney this winter viz. 23 Caringbah, 8 April 1972 (F. Johnston) and 30 at Oatley Bay the following day.

G. Dibley

RED-CHESTED QUAIL OBSERVATIONS

During oat harvesting operations between 2nd January and 5th January 1972, I banded five Red-chested Quail on my property "Balmoral", located 12 miles east of Mudgee on the Wollar Road. However, on 20th December, 1971 I did record in my diary that these quail were numerous in the oat crop, but I was unable to catch any until the block got smaller. Stubble Quail and Little Quail were present in the same paddock. None were observed again until 17th March, 1972 when a single bird was flushed by a dog in a grass paddock.

N. Kurtz,
Mudgee. 3.4.72.

Red-chested Quail were seen on a number of occasions this summer in the Finley area. It was the first time that I had recorded this species and it was also the wettest summer experienced in the Riverina since arrival 14 years ago. Mr. George Thomas who had previously seen these quail in the Finley area (about 20 years ago) also recorded a pair in the middle of December, 1971.

Details of observations are as follows:-

24.12.71	One in barley crop with Stubble and Little Quail
25.12.71	as above
1. 1.72	One in skeleton weed
2. 1.72	Two in wheat stubble
12. 1.72	Two in wheat stubble
15. 1.72	One in lucerne
26. 1.72	One in skeleton weed
31. 1.72	Male and three young in lucerne, Male caught and now at C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife, Canberra A.C.T.

These quail sat very close before flushing and were impossible to flush a second time. The orange-chestnut flanks of the Red-chested Quail were in strong contrast to the dazzling white flanks of the Little Quail when both species were flushed.

T. Izzard,
Tocumwal. 12.4.72.

(A full description of the male, including measurements, was included but has been omitted due to lack of space. Ed.)

NOTICE OF THE 1972 ANNUAL R.A.O.U. CONGRESS

The 71st Annual Congress of the RAOU will be held in Sydney from Saturday, 30 September to Monday, 2 October, 1972. The official opening will be at 10 am on Saturday, 30 September in the Australian Museum. Field trips to local birding areas are scheduled for Sunday and can be arranged privately for Tuesday, 3 October.

Registration.

To cover the cost of hiring halls, entertainment and other expenses a registration fee of $5 per adult will be made. Half rates will apply to full time students. A buffet lunch will be available in the Australian Museum on the Saturday and persons wishing to attend this should include an additional $2 per head.

Programme.

Presentation of papers will be held on the Saturday and Monday. These will include papers on recent ornithological work on Lord Howe Island and current research on seabirds.

From 3 to 11 October, 1972, a camp-out will be held in the Myall Lakes National Park. Accommodation will be available at the Smith's Lake Field Station (University of New South Wales). Food will be purchased and prepared communally and will cost $2 per day plus a $2 donation for use of equipment. For information and registration contact Dr. H. F. Recher, Australian Museum, 6-8 College Street, Sydney (Telephone 26-6954).

CONSERVATION NOTES

Airport Swamps and the Mill Pond, Botany.

In reply to letters sent protesting against the filling in of the Airport Swamps along General Holmes Drive, and the proposal to spray the Water Hyacinth on the Mill Pond, Botany, the following letter was received from the Minister of Civil Aviation.

"...The Department's consulting Ornithologist has recommended that the ponds on the airport side of General Holmes Drive should be

filled in, not so much because of any hazard from the local birds but rather because they are waters which attract large numbers of flocks of migratory birds to a position which is quite close to the airport operating area. The land is also required for additional airport services and facilities.

Only hard fill is being used in reclaiming this land and the work is being undertaken in consultation with the NSW NP&WS.

Reference the ponds on the far side of General Holmes Drive, the water hyacinth is to be removed by chemical spraying from the air with maximum practical regard to nesting birds. This work is being undertaken after discussions with Met. Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board which controls the use of these waters..."

Your Club has since replied and suggested that if the Commonwealth Government feel justified in destroying waterbird habitat, it should provide funds to the States for waterfowl conservation projects to compensate for this loss.

Mangrove and Shale Reserves.

Continued representations have been made on the need to preserve reserves on the Wianamatta Shale in the western section of the County of Cumberland; also on the necessity to preserve the mangroves and salt marshes of Towra Point and the coastal reefs at Boatharbour. Members Vincent Serventy and Paul Barnes have been particularly helpful in bringing these matters to the attention of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Representations have also been made concerning the management of Fraser Park, Swansea, suggesting that it should come under the control of the Service.

New Parks & Reserves.

Myall Lakes National Park was recently proclaimed, consisting of 13,000 acres of forest and 23,000 acres of lake and waterways. Thirlmere Lakes State Park, Picton of 1550 acres was established as well as Yanga Nature Reserve, Balranald (4,000 acres of Belah and Saltbush Plain) and Barton Nature Reserve, Orange (1130 acres of dry sclerophyll forest).

MUSEUM MEETINGS

20th January, 1972

A record attendance of 150 members and visitors heard Mr. Ellis McNamara give what is now regarded as an annual treat of bird photography. Last year he spent some time in the Cairns, Cooktown and Atherton Districts of Queensland. He obtained many beautiful and rare pictures of some of the birds of these areas - Victoria Rifle-bird (displaying), Golden Bower-bird, Tooth-billed Cat-bird, Graceful and Macleay Honeyeaters, Black Butcher-bird and many others. He had arranged his slides into groups or families enabling the audience to compare closely related species. One picture of the Eastern Shrike-tit was taken from a forty foot high tower. Mr. Alec Chisholm said this was the first time, to his knowledge, that the bird had been photographed in colour.

17th February, 1972

Four films were screened. The photography was carried out by the Australian Museum and sponsored by BHP Co. The titles of the films were: "Dry Australia", "Some Australian Marsupials", "Where Water is Plentiful", "The Australian Sea Lion". (Attendance 95).

16th March, 1972

An illustrated talk on Indonesia, centred mainly on Bali was given by Mr. and Mrs. Norman Chaffer. (Attendance 85).

20th April, 1972

Dr. Peter Fullager of CSIRO, Division of Wildlife Research, gave an illustrated talk on the three species of shearwaters that breed on Montagu Island. The three species are Short-tailed, Sooty and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. The wing pattern, flight action, description of the birds in the hand and the playing of tape recordings of calls of both young and mature birds, gave the large audience no excuse not to be able to identify each species.

Two areas of Montagu Island have been marked off into grids with tape instead of the usual numbering of burrows with stakes. Records

are kept of the successful raising of chicks of each species each year. The investigation has shown that the numbers fluctuated annually and the eggs are laid almost without exception on the same day each year. Graphs shown during the talk indicated results to date and illustrated the value of keeping up these investigations. Attendance at the meeting was 80 persons.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting of the N.S.W. Field Ornithologists Club will be held at 8 p.m. 3rd August, 1972 in the Australian Museum.

All positions on the Committee will be open for election. The present committee has nominated the following members:

President	Mr. G. Dibley
Vice-President	Dr. R. Mason
Sec. Treasurer	Mrs. L. Smith
Editor	Mr. A. K. Morris
Activities Officer	Mrs. M. Dibley
Conservation Officer	Mr. H. Battam
Records Officer	Mr. A. Rogers
Assistant Secretary	Mr. R. Cook
Assistant Editor	Mrs. B. Marchant (Miss B. Chegwidden)
Assistant Cons. Officer	Miss M. Cameron
Assistant Records Officer	Mr. T. Kenny

Members wishing to make other nominations for the positions may do so at the meeting or by posting such nominations to reach the Secretary before 1st August, 1972.

Following the election of officers a Symposium on Ornithological Research Work in N.S.W. will be conducted. It is hoped to include the following speakers:

Messrs. A. R. McGill
A. Rogers
S. G. Lane
J. Disney
Dr. H. Recher

NOTICE OF FIELD EXCURSIONS.

Saturday, 22 July - Curra Moors, Royal National Park.
Sunday, 20 August - Yeramba Lagoon, Picnic Point, Georges River.
Saturday, 23 September - Hawkesbury Swamps.
Saturday, 28 October - Seven Mile State Park near Berry
Sunday, 19 November - Colo River and Kurrajong.
Saturday and Sunday 9-10 December - Carlon's Farm, Megalong Valley.

Saturday, 22 July, Curra Moors Track, Royal National Park.

Leaders: G. & M. Dibley. 570-1298.

Meet at 9.30 a.m. Curra Moors parking area on Stevens Drive between Wattamolla turnoff and Garie turnoff. Forest, moors and cliff top views of sea birds. Distance anything up to 6 miles. Carry lunch.

Sunday, 20 August, Yeramba Lagoon, Picnic Point.

Leaders: A. & C. Lloyd. 53-7060.

Meet 10 a.m. Drysdale Avenue, Picnic Point. Gregorys Map 56, 13B. Carry lunch. This most interesting area features a man-made waterfowl habitat where swans and ducks breed. The Lagoon is surrounded by forest with heathland on higher ground. 103 species of birds have been recorded from this area.

REPORTS OF FIELD DAY EXCURSIONS.

Meryla Pass and Morton National Park - Weekend Camp - 22&23 April, 1972

Leaders G. & M. Dibley led the trip which 16 members attended and 12 camped overnight. A sudden storm on Saturday morning followed by a cold westerley wind did not make conditions pleasant. However, the walk down the Old Kangaroo Valley Road was very enjoyable. 53 species of birds were recorded including Brown and Brush Bronzewing Pigeons, Lyrebirds, Pilot-bird, Rose Robin, 23 Wood Duck and 9 species of Honeyeaters.

Albion Park and Macquarie Pass - 20th May, 1972

33 members attended this excursion travelling by deluxe coach. First stop was the property of Mr. & Mrs. C. H. Thomas of Albion Park where the party was joined by members from Illawarra and the Southern

Highlands. Weather was fine but moderately windy. Bird observing was delayed by an inspection of the clustering of thousands of Wanderer Butterflies. Later, the farm paddocks and open-forested hillsides yielded 38 species including Olive-backed Oriole, Rufous Whistlers (M & F), 50+ Wood Duck, Black Duck, Scarlet Robin, Rose Robin, White-throated Treecreeper, Eastern Striated Pardalote, Spotted Pardalote, Little Eagle, Little Falcon and Brown Falcon.

Near Albion Park, 7 Cattle Egrets were seen. A visit to Macquarie Pass State Pass Park was curtailed by rain but in a short time 27 species were logged including Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, King Parrot, Wonga Pigeon, Brown Warbler, Red-browed Treecreeper. The Park seemed to be a very promising area which would repay future visits.

M. Dibley

MUSEUM MEETING JULY - DECEMBER 1972.

20 July	Mr. Jack Purnell	"Birds in Colour"
17 August	Mr. Allen Fox	"Offshore Islands and Estuaries of New South Wales"
21 September	Mr. Alan Rogers	"Seabirds"
19 October	Members Night	
16 November	Dr. D. L. Serventy	"Short-tailed Shearwaters"
21 December	Mr. Harry Battam will screen films.	

(All meetings commence at 8 p.m. in the Lecture Room, Australian Museum, College Street, Sydney - meetings close at 10 p.m.)

NOTE TO THE EDITOR.

While bowing to the superior knowledge of Mr. H. J. de S. Disney and Mr. S. G. Lane, I would like to point out that the new Flycatcher? had a large head and robust build not at all like the slimly formed White-winged Triller. I have seen the male and female Varied Triller and the bird under question if an immature male did not have the softly shaded underparts of the female but bore a definite white chest and rufous abdomen. There was no white eyebrow and though my field notes do not show it, I believe the bird had a black chin extending on to the throat.

These notes may be of help should other information be forthcoming.

M. Baldwin
Gilgai via Inverell.

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OFFICE BEARERS.

Hon. Editor: A. K. Morris, 20 Harrison St., Old Toongabbie 631-7892

Hon. Sec. - Treasurer: Mrs. L. Smith, 84 Arabella St., Longueville 42-2418

Field-Day Organiser: Mrs. M. Dibley, 18 Russell St., Oatley 570-1298

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION - Due 1 July each year.

Single member - $2.00; Junior member - $1.50; Family - $2.50.

(Registered for posting as a periodical - Category B.)