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EASTER CAMP, 31st March - 4th April 1972

Cynthia Bay, Lake St. Clair

L. E. & M. Wall

FINE weather favoured the 23 members who attended, enabling them to enjoy to the full the delightful and most interesting area. Visits were made to Mt. Rufus, Mt. Hugel and the Hugel Lakes, Cuvier River Valley and the H. E. C. Pumping Station, and launch trips were made to Narcissus River at the north-western end of the lake.

In 1952 the Club held its Easter Camp at Cynthia Bay, but no record of observations made then has been published. However, "The Emu", Vol. 50 pp 41-51 records observations made in the same area during the R. A. O. U. Camp-out in November 1949 and while these are primarily of birds seen there are good summaries of habitats and their vegetation and a note also of native animals seen.

This record of Easter Camp, 1972, will basically comment on variations between the recorded observations of 1949 and 1972 with some additional notes on the botany of the area. The 1949 observations were recorded within the following habitats and this is repeated, firstly because it is a definitive method, and secondly for ease of reference : - Eucalypt forests, Myrtle (Beech) forest, Snow Gum (sub-alpine) forest, Buttongrass, the lake and its shores.

BIRDS

Eucalypt forests In the Eucalypt forests the 1949 report lists the four most common species as the Crescent Honeyeater, Flame Robin, Yellow-tipped Pardalote and Yellow-throated Honeyeater, whereas in 1972 the Yellow-tipped Pardalote was seldom seen or heard. It must, however, be borne in mind that this bird is now generally accepted as a migrant (partially at least) and by April most migrants have departed from Tasmania. The interesting point is that the Spotted Pardalote was very common in 1972 while in 1949 it was not seen at all although three people heard it call (all on the first day of the camp and none during the remaining five days) Ignoring the migratory birds, those recorded in 1949 but not in 1972 were

were Brown Goshawk, Tawny Frogmouth and Goldfinch, and in 1972 but not in 1949 were Spotted Owl, Swift Parrot and Common Bronzewing. In addition, the Brush Wattlebird was reported in 1972 by D. Mosey but this was not confirmed by others, and the Yellow-tailed Thornbill by M. Wall.

Myrtle (Beech) forest. The following birds not reported from this habitat in 1949 were recorded in 1972 :- Golden Whistler and Swift Parrot.

Snow Gum forest. In 1949 an unidentified owl was seen, but none was reported in 1972. A Peregrine Falcon was added to the list.

Buttongrass. Striated Field Wrens, a Blue-winged Parrot and a Brown Hawk were listed in 1949 but not in 1972.

The lake and its shores. It is interesting to note that a White-breasted Sea Eagle was seen in 1949 and again in 1972. At the earlier camp a pair of Silver Gulls was also recorded, but not in 1972. Black Cormorants were in greater numbers in 1972, but no Little Pied Cormorants were seen, as was the case in 1949. The Eastern Swamp-hen was seen in 1949 only, and Hoary-headed Grebes and White-faced Heron in 1972 only. Probably the observation of greatest interest this year was a pair of Black-fronted Dotterels on the sandy beach near the H. E. C. Pumping Station as apart from being a new record for this district, it indicates a significant extension of range. In the Derwent Valley we have not previously seen it above Hamilton nor do we know of its occurrence on the Central Plateau.

MARSUPIALS

Bennett's Wallabies and the smaller Rufous Wallabies were very numerous about the camp but the latter were somewhat shy and seldom appeared until dark. Brush Possums also were in large numbers and very tame, even to the extent of raiding campers' tuckerboxes. Ringtail Possums were also present in small numbers but were not so sociable, and a Native Cat which dodged about among the caravans after dark was a popular attraction.

It is interesting to note that in 1949 the Ringtail Possum was noted as "fairly common" and that "the only evidence of the presence of the Brush Possum was a small piece of fur found in the Byron Gap". During the last twenty years there has been a drastic reduction in the population of the Ringtail and a corresponding increase in the Brush, but recent observations indicate that the Ringtail is starting to increase in numbers again.

Platypuses can be seen on the surface of the lake occasionally but we believe they are not as numerous as formerly. One was seen this year on Shadow Lake near Mt. Hugel in the middle of a clear sunny day although they are usually active only early and late in the day.

One unidentified bat was seen one evening on the verge of the camping ground.

BOTANICAL NOTES

A good list of plants in flower observed during Easter was made but these records were mainly of odd flowers rather than plants in full bloom - the exception was of Banksia marginata which was flowering well. Berries and other fruits were more common, especially in the eucalypt forests and lake areas.

Eucalypt Forest

The dominant tree of this area is the Gum-topped Stringybark E. delegatensis - this name has been changed from E. gigantea which appears in "The Emu" report. Plants with flowers recorded were :- Prickly Geebung Persoonia juniperina, Banksia marginata, Blue Bell Wahlenbergia ceracea, Trigger Plant Stylidium graminifolium, Lobelia gibbosa, Parson's Bands Eriochilus cuculata and Hibbertia sp. Plants with fruits were :- Pink Mountain Berry Cyathodes parvifolia, Hakea lissosperma, H. microcarpa, Climbing Blueberry Billardiera longiflora, Coffee Berry Coprosma hirtella, Native Currant C. quadrifida, and Dianella tasmanica.

Myrtle (Beech) Forest

The wetter forest of Beech Nothofagus cunninghami, Sassafras Atherosperma moschatum and Gum-topped Stringybark is favoured by ferns, mosses, lichens and fungi. Some shrubs with fruits noted in this area were :- Waratah Telopea truncata, Port Arthur Plum Cenarrhenes nitida, Heart Berry Aristotelia peduncularis, Mountain Pepper Drimys lanceolata, Pimelea drupacea, Snow Berry Gaultheria hispida and Sassafras. Flowers were seen on Leatherwood Eucryphia lucida and Persoonia gunnii.

Snow Gum Forest

The higher altitudes above 3,500 feet are exposed so trees are small and twisted. Tasmanian Snow Gum E. coccifera is the main tree, with Pencil Pine Athrotaxis cupressoides, and Grass Tree Richea pandanifolia common in more sheltered areas. Richea scoparia was found still flowering, also Baeckia gunniana, and Pentachondra pumila had berries.

Buttongrass

In the wet Buttongrass areas of peaty soil the purple flowers of the Bladderwort Utricularia dichotoma were seen. The Buttongrass Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus had many fruiting "buttons".

The Lake Shore

Tea Tree shrubs grow on the better-drained areas near the lake. The only flower in bloom here was the Sundew Drosera binata.

CRAGGY ISLAND, BASS STRAIT, TASMANIA

J. S. Whinray

Craggy Island lies at the eastern end of Bass Strait between the Furneaux Group and Kent's Group. It is about two thirds of a mile long and about one third of a mile wide at its broadest point. Its area is about 80 acres. The island is a granite ridge which slopes to the sea on all sides. The five rocky peaks of the ridge range from the highest of 371 feet at the western end to the lowest of about 280 feet at the north eastern end.

VEGETATION

The main vegetation of the southern slopes of the ridge was Blue Tussock-grass Poa poiformis and Rookery Fireweed Senecio capillifolius. They grew together usually but there was an area of about half-an-acre where only the Rookery Fireweed grew. The main vegetation of the northern slopes was very different from that of the southern slopes for it was dominated by low shrubs. These were Coast Saltbush Atriplex cinerea, Australian Hollyhock Lavatera plebeja var. tomentosa, Seaberry Saltbush Rhagodia baccata and Cape Wattle *Albizzia lophanta. Rookery Fireweed Senecio capillifolius was common, and Blue Tussockgrass Poa poiformis was occasional, amongst these shrubs.

Cape Wattle *Albizzia lophanta was the commonest shrub on the rocky peaks of the ridge. The native shrubs on the peaks were Seaberry Saltbush Rhagodia baccata, White Correa Correa alba and one bush of the Sea Box Alyxia buxifolia. The occurrence of the West Australian Cape Wattle was not very surprising as I found it growing on some cliffs of North East Island, Kent's Group, in November 1971. It was collected in Bass Strait on Deal Island, Kent's Group, in 1883 (J. H. Willis, pers. comm.) and on Rodondo Island in 1947 (Bechervaise, 1947).

Some small herbs were widespread on the island and occurred mainly in shallow soil on the margins of outcrops or in crevices. They were Austral Stonecrop Crassula sieberiana, Pink Purslane Calandrinia calyptata, Tall Daisy Brachycome diversifolia var. maritima, Leek Lily Bulbine semibarbata and a Pearlwort Sagina sp. (too weathered to be determined).

Plants confined to the coastal zone were Coast Goosefoot Chenopodium glaucum ssp. ambiguum, Sea Celery Apium prostratum (coarse form only), Salt Couch Sporobolus virginicus, Coastal Sandspurrey Spergularia media and Beaded Glasswort Salicornia quinqueflora. Other species growing in this zone were Coast Saltbush Atriplex cinerea, Shore Spleenwort Asplenium obtusatum, Rounded Noonflower Disphyma australe, Karkalla Carpobrotus rossii, Bower Spinach Tetragonia amplexicomia and Blue Tussockgrass Poa poiformis.

The only introduced grass noticed was the Ratstail Fescue *Vulpia myuros which was confined to the summit of the first peak east of the highest peak.

A list of the twenty six plant species I recorded on the island is given below. As I walked around most of the coast, and climbed the five peaks, it should be a nearly complete one for the island.

Between forty and fifty per cent of the island's surface area is granite and lichens grow on most of this. Some specimens were collected but I could identify

only two species, viz , Xanthoria ectanea (Ach.) Ras. ex R. Filson and Teloschistes spinosus (Hook. f & Tayl) J Murray Other specimens obtained from dead Cape Wattle also included the above species. The lichen specimens were lodged at the National Herbarium of Victoria

FAUNA

No mammals were noticed on the island. However one Metallic Skink Leiopisma metallicum was collected and lodged at the National Museum of Victoria. Five other Metallic Skinks were seen.

The Blue Tussockgrass and Rookery Fireweed areas of the southern slopes were the main nesting area of the Common Diving Petrel Pelecanoides urinatrix which came in large numbers to burrows at night while I was on the island. No immature birds were found in the seventy burrows checked but some adults remained during the day. A few Common Diving Petrel burrows were found on the northern slopes. The Fairy Prion Pachyptila turtur also nested on the southern slopes but under boulders and in crevices of the cliffs. This species landed in large numbers at night but, as its nests were inaccessible, I could not check them for immature birds. Specimens of both these species were collected and lodged at the National Museum of Victoria and the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston.

Little Penguins Eudyptula minor occurred over most of the island. Some adult penguins were moulting; others were tending large nestlings. I expected to find Short-tailed Shearwaters Puffinus tenuirostris nesting on the island but found no burrows. No shearwaters were seen coming in at night with the petrels and prions.

The only gulls seen were Pacific Gulls Larus pacificus and up to nine were in sight at the one time. No oystercatchers were seen but a flock of sixteen White-faced Herons Ardea novae-hollandiae was present. Grey-breasted Silvereyes Zosterops lateralis were common and were seen over much of the island. The one specimen obtained was lodged at the Queen Victoria Museum. The Blackbird *Turdus merula was the only introduced bird and at least twelve were present.

Other birds seen were :- Brown Quail Synoicus australis (about twenty); Cape Barren Goose Cereopsis novae-hollandiae (two pairs); Black-faced Cormorant Phalacrocorax fuscescens (twelve); Australian Gannet Morus serrator (one rose almost to the summit of the north east peak); Welcome Swallow Hirundo neoxena (a pair) and Grey Fantail Rhipidura fuliginosa (a pair). The two birds of prey seen were probably the Nankeen Kestrel Falco cenchroides and the Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus.

My visit to the island was for two days from 30 March to 1 April 1972.

REFERENCES

- Bechervaise, J. M 1947 The Rodondo Episode. Victorian Naturalist, 64 : 18-20.
 Willis, J. H Personal communication The specimen is held at the National Herbarium of Victoria

LIST OF PLANTS OF CRAGGY ISLAND, 1972

An asterisk marks a non-Tasmanian species and H marks a specimen lodged at the University of Tasmania Herbarium. All determinations are by the author.

FERNS

H Asplenium obtusatum Shore Spleenwort

MONOCOTYLEDONS

Poaceae

H *Vulpia myuros Ratstail Fescue H Sporobolus virginicus Salt Couch
Poa poiformis Blue Tussockgrass

Liliaceae

H Bulbine semibarbata Leek Lily Dianella revoluta Blackanther
 Flaxlily

DICOTYLEDONS

Chenopodiaceae

Atriplex cinerea Coast Saltbush H Chenopodium glaucum ssp.
Rhagodia baccata Seaberry Saltbush H ambiguum Coast Goosefoot
 H Salicornia quinqueflora Beaded
 Glasswort

Aizoaceae

Disphyma australe Rounded Noon-
 flower Tetragonia amplexicoma
 Bower Spinach

Carpobrotus rossii Karkalla

Portulacaceae

Calandrinia calyptata Pink Purslane

Caryophyllaceae

Sagina sp. A Pearlwort

H Spergularia media Coastal Sandspurrey

Cruciferae

H Lepidium ?foliosum A Peppercross

Crassulaceae

Crassula sieberiana Austral Stonecrop

Mimosaceae

H *Albizzia lophanta Cape Wattle

Rutaceae

H Correa alba White Correa

Malvaceae

Lavatera plebeja var tomentosa Australian Hollyhock

Apiaceae

H Apium prostratum Sea Celery

Apocynaceae

H Alyxia buxifolia Sea Box

Lobeliaceae

H Lobelia alata Angled Lobelia

Asteraceae

Brachycome diversifolia var maritima Tall Daisy
Senecio capillifolius Rookery Fireweed

BIRDS OF LAKE PEDDER AND THE SENTINEL RANGE - (Cont'd from last edition)

Olive Whistler Pachycephala olivacea. Heard in temperate rain forest and sub-alpine forest. Recorded by Museum personnel from several localities. Probably not uncommon.

Grey Shrike-Thrush Colluricincla harmonica. Heard in temperate rain forest on the Serpentine Range. Recorded at Lake Pedder by Alexander. Not common.

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike. Coracina novaehollandiae. Only recorded by Alexander, at Lake Pedder.

Tasmanian Thornbill Acanthiza ewingii. Common. Seen in most habitats - temperate rain forest, sub-alpine forest, and wherever clumps of shrubs occur, particularly along streams in tussock sedgelands. Recorded by Museum personnel.

Brown Scrub-Wren Sericornis humilis. Present in temperate rain forest. Recorded by Museum personnel.

Striated Field-Wren Calamanthus fuliginosus. Fairly common on the edge of sub-alpine forest.

Southern Emu-Wren Stipiturus malachurus. Recorded in clumps of dense shrubs in tussock sedgland and at the mouth of Maria Creek. Recorded from Lake Pedder and Scotts Peak by Museum personnel. Probably common but easily overlooked. It is quiet compared to other wrens, the alarm call is a very soft "Tzit Tzit", similar to that of the Superb Blue Wren but only carrying for a short distance. It rarely leaves cover but is not shy and can be "called up" readily.

Superb Blue Wren Malurus cyaneus. Recorded on the Gordon Road and in Banksia scrub at Lake Pedder. Also recorded from Lake Pedder and Scotts Peak by Museum personnel. Prefers scrub surrounded by areas with low or no ground vegetation. Uncommon.

Grey-Breasted Silveryeye Zosterops lateralis. Small flock in sub-alpine forest, Lake Pedder. Recorded from the same locality by Museum personnel.

Strong-billed Honeyeater Melithreptus validirostris. Small flocks recorded at Swampy Creek searching for insects on the branches and trunks of tall eucalypts. Recorded from Lake Pedder by Museum personnel.

Eastern Spinebill Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris. Only recorded by Alexander, Lake Pedder.

Yellow-throated Honeyeater Meliphaga flavicollis. Widespread wherever moderately tall trees present. Recorded by Museum personnel.

Crescent Honeyeater Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera. Abundant in all habitats with vegetation more than three feet high, even isolated bushes in tussock sedgeland. A very noisy bird, calling from dawn to dusk. An altitudinal migrant that may not winter in the area.

Yellow-winged Honeyeater Meliornis novaehollandiae. Uncommon. Recorded in the same habitat and localities as the Superb Blue Wren. Museum personnel also recorded it from the Serpentine River.

Australian Pipit Anthus australis. Only recorded from Lake Pedder by Alexander. Surprisingly absent on all other visits.

Beautiful Firetail Zonaeginthus bellus. Recorded in the more open sub-alpine forest. Also recorded by Museum personnel. Widely distributed but not numerous.

Forest Raven Corvus tasmanicus. Only recorded by Thomas. Uncommon.
 Black Currawong Strepera fuliginosa. Single birds and small parties encountered throughout the area. Probably not numerous as individual birds range over a wide area.

We do not claim that the above list is complete and are certain that additional species will be added. We hope that it will serve as a basis for future study of the birds of Tasmania's magnificent South West. We would be grateful to receive any additional records for the area.

References: Green, R.H. & Mollison, B.C. 1961. Birds of Port Davey and south coast of Tasmania. Emu 61 : 223 - 236.
 Ridpath, M.G. & Moreau, R.C. The birds of Tasmania ecology and evolution. Ibis 108. 348-393.
 Sharland, M.S. R. 1958. Tasmanian Birds 3rd. ed. Sydney Angus & Robertson.

UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTING

David Pinner

OBSERVED coming home from work 5 p.m. on 24 April, 1972. First glance thought to be a seagull as it looked about the same size. It was very obvious on further study to be some sort of kite as the bird was seen hovering, almost stationary at times. I was able to get a fairly good description as it was some 30 yards away in a paddock, about 20 ft. up.

It looked a very dainty bird, all white underneath and grey above with a distinct dark grey marking on each shoulder. It would hover for about 2 mins. then wheel to one side to give me a good view of the bird from above and below. I watched it for ten minutes or more before it began to wheel off and fly to another position some 20 yds. away, down the paddock.

I come to the conclusion the bird was a Black shouldered Kite Elanus notatus as it differed from the Letter-winged Kite E. scriptus which has the extended black line on each under wing.

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Sir,

L. E. Wall's reference to the Broad-billed Prion Pachyptila vittata (Tas. Nat. No. 29) prompts me to record a specimen in the collections of the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston. This bird was found, apparently dying, on the Orford golf course on 12 June, 1970. The finder placed it in the shelter of some bushes and on the following day returned to find it dead. It was received at the Museum on 16 June and made into a study skin. Details are as follows :- Reg. No. 1970.2.24, adult female, weight 132 gm, total length 320 mm, wing (chord) 184, wing spread 670, tail 96, tarsus 37.3, middle toe ex. claw 42.4, bill - measured after drying - exposed length 34.5, culmen 41, depth 12, width 22.2.

R.H. Green - ZOOLOGIST

Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston

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