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## BIRDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NEWSPRINT MILLS CONCESSION - FLORENTINE AND STYX VALLEYS

B. C. Mollison

THE area of the A. N. M. Concession, centred on Maydena, is shown in Gilbert (1965 fig. 71). It includes the Florentine and Styx Valleys and is adjacent to the Mount Field National Park. The following observations were made while I was undertaking investigations into game control during 1958-60. Some additional notes from Mount Field National Park are included.

Because my observations were sporadic it is not claimed that this list is complete. It is hoped that it will serve as a basis for further work in an area for which little has been published.

Black Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo. Individuals enter the Florentine and Styx Valleys and I have seen them flying high over the forests.

White-faced Heron Ardea novaehollandiae. Occurs in the Tyenna Valley and in open grassland between Maydena and Westerway. Occasional at Maydena and National Park.

Black Duck Anas superciliosa. The only duck recorded from the forested areas. Pairs found around Maydena, in waterholes and quarries and gullies (some completely surrounded by tall trees). Breeds along the Florentine Valley.

Australian Goshawk Accipiter fasciatus. Appears reasonably common.

Collared Sparrowhawk Accipiter cirrocephalus. Appears reasonably common.

Wedge-tailed Eagle Aquila audax. Occasionally seen in the area.

Swamp Harrier Circus approximans. One or two around cleared paddocks at Maydena in summer. Occasionally seen passing over forested areas.

Brown Hawk Falco berigora. Sparse. Is attracted to slash fires where presumably they feed on amphibians, reptiles and small rodents fleeing from the fires.

Brown Quail Synicus ypsilophorus. Small coveys flushed from bracken - grass-land around Junee and John Bull.

Tasmanian Native Hen Tribonyx mortierii. Absent from wet heaths and buttongrass. Common around the Maydena depot. A single bird was seen crossing the Styx road in an area of rainforest and mixed forest; several miles of rainforest separated this bird from any known Native Hen community.

Spurwinged Plover Vanellus miles. Occurs at Maydena, Kallista, Junee and

occasionally at the Settlement. The largest flock was of 80 birds at Maydena (June) Silver Gull Larus novaehollandiae. Occasionally seen flying across the Florentine Valley (per D. Frankcombe).

Brush Bronzewing Phaps elegans. Pairs and individuals have been seen at Junee, Burma Road, Kallista and National Park.

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo Calyptorhynchus funereus. Common throughout the forested areas all year. Large flocks, up to 60, form from February on. An exceptional flock of 300 birds was seen at Lake Webster in winter.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo Cacatua galerita. Less common than the previous species. Found in rainforest in small numbers and flying over buttongrass at Tim Shea.

Swift Parrot Lathamus discolor. Common in the Florentine in summer with flocks of up to 300 from late February to April/May. Breeds. Is particularly attracted to the flowers of Eucalyptus regnans.

Green Rosella Platycercus caledonicus. The commonest resident parrot although outnumbered by the Swift Parrot in late summer. Flocks form from March, the largest being 80 birds on the Styx, South Spur (July). Flocks of 10 to 20 are more common. I have seen them feed on the dried flowers of Nothofagus cunninghami and opening green mature capsules of E. globulus, E. obliqua, E. viminalis and E. regnans. They also feed on dock and buttercup seeds and open green pods of Acacia dealbata for their milky seeds.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo Cacomantis pyrrhophanus. The only cuckoo recorded. Present around Maydena and on all coupes from September to January.

Boobook Owl Ninox novaeseelandiae. Not plentiful. Occurs in the cleared and rest-forested areas of the Florentine and Styx Valleys and around Maydena.

Masked Owl Tyto novaehollandiae. Heard around Maydena. One seen at Nicholls Spur.

Tawny Frogmouth Podargus strigoides. Probably the most common night bird in the concession area, on cut-overs and along roads.

Owlet Nightjar Aegotheles cristatus. One seen at night on the Styx, South Spur.

Superb Lyrebird Menura novaehollandiae. Introduced into National Park some years ago. Reports of vocal mimicry were prevalent in the Florentine Valley (1960) and one or two have been taken in game snares (per A. Nicholls). Not common (1960).

Skylark Alauda arvensis. Present on pastures at Maydena.

Welcome Swallow Hirundo neoxena. Pairs nest under most of the bridges in the concession and at the Settlement.

Tree Martin Petrochelidon nigricans. Occurs in lightly timbered areas (Tim Shea, the Settlement, National Park, Karanja) and are commonly seen around the Maydena recreation ground. Breeds.

Pipit Anthus novaeseelandiae. One or two found at the Settlement and around Maydena.

(To be concluded)

## CATTLE EGRETS AT CRESSY, NORTHERN TASMANIA

R. M. Tyson

THIS record of an observation of Cattle Egrets *Ardeola ibis* at the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture Research Farm at Cressy gives some details of one of the largest concentrations of these birds yet seen in Tasmania.

Cattle Egrets in Australia The Cattle Egret originated in Eurasia and Africa, but now occurs also in America, Australia and New Zealand. In 1933 an organisation of pastoralists in Western Australia introduced 18 birds from India to the Kimberley region, the idea being that these birds would help combat the cattle-tick in Northern Australia. It is thought that none of these birds survived. However in 1948 the Cattle Egret was seen in large numbers at Oenpelli, Northern Territory (Deignan 1960) and has since spread throughout much of Australia. It was first sighted in Victoria in 1949 (Wakefield). Since 1954 (RAOU 1960) Cattle Egrets have been recorded breeding near Grafton, northern New South Wales.

The nest is a saucer shaped structure made from sticks and is usually placed in a tree standing in or near water. The eggs are white with a faint blue tinge, clutch size from three to six. When breeding this normally white 21 inch (54 c.) long bird is adorned with orange-buff plumage on the head, neck and body, and the legs and bill take on a reddish hue.

The eighth supplement to the official 1926 checklist of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union lists Cattle Egrets as No. 184A and gives further literature references.

Cattle Egrets at Cressy The Cressy Research Farm is situated approximately two miles (3 km) south of Cressy. A weir which has been created by the water overflow from the H. E. C. power station at Poatina is situated on the farm. This weir is favoured by numbers of birds including duck and cormorant species. The first Cattle Egret seen at the Cressy Research Farm was a single bird in the early winter of 1965. Workmen at the farm thought this bird to be an albino form of the White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*. However, the following year two such birds appeared and were identified as Cattle Egrets. Their numbers are known to have subsequently increased each year (no actual figures are available). In June 1972 I commenced observations and found 24 birds were present. In 1973 the number increased to 25 birds. Observations at the farm have, until 1973, revealed a definite migratory pattern. The birds arrive in early winter and depart in early November.

In mid-October 1973 seven of the birds were adopting the orange-buff breeding plumage. When on the 3rd November eleven birds had breeding plumage and had not left the area I studied their roosting site in willows growing in the weir as I wondered if they intended to breed in the area. There was no sign of this and the birds finally left on the 13th of November. They were noticed flying in a north-easterly direction on their departure.

Observations: The Cattle Egrets at Cressy were very shy, never letting me get close to them unless I was in a Land Rover to which they appeared quite accustomed. They were usually clustered together in paddocks and always flew in a group and

landed together.)

They frequented paddocks which were being grazed by stock, with particular favouritism for areas occupied by pigs, and where these animals had rooted up the ground. Unlike Forest Ravens Corvus tasmanicus Cattle Egrets appear not to disturb surface soil and pasture in their search for insects and their larvae.

It may also be interesting to note that twelve White Egrets Egretta alba which I had been observing in the St. Helens area left (presumably for their mainland breeding ground) only a week before the Cressy Cattle Egrets.

The Cattle Egret appears now to be a regular visitor to Tasmania and not a rare vagrant as was the case a few years ago. It was first discovered at Rostrevor on 19 April 1965 (Thomas 1966) and at King Island on the same date (McGarvie 1965)

I thank the staff at the Cressy Research Farm for their co-operation, and Mr. R. H. Green for criticising the manuscript.

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| McGarvie, M. 1965   | Notes on King Island birds. Tas. Nat. 2 : 2-3.  |
| R. A. O. U. 1960    | Eighth supplement to the official checklist of the birds of Australia (second edition). Emu 60 : 140-145. |
| Thomas, D. G. 1966  | The Cattle Egret in Tasmania. Emu 65 : 205.   |

(A flock of 36+ birds was reported from Moriarty from August to November, 1973.)  
- Ed. )

### COMMUNAL NESTING BEHAVIOUR IN THE GENUS SERICORNIS

J. G. K. Harris and O. M. G. Newman

A BIRD was flushed from a domed nest beside a track at Fern Tree, Mt. Wellington, on 6 Jan, 1974. Investigation showed that the nest contained two eggs and that the occupant was a Brown Scrub-Wren Sericornis humilis. Subsequent visits indicated the following nest contents : two eggs on 13 Jan, two young on 20 Jan, 24 Jan and 27 Jan. On 31 Jan. at 0730 hours one young was in the entrance hole of the nest and as it was judged ready to leave the nest the area was vacated immediately. Inspection of the nest at 1900 hours on 31 Jan. indicated that both young had left. Adults and fledgelings were subsequently located in dense vegetation approximately 30 metres from the nest.

During visits to the nest it became apparent that more than one pair of Brown Scrub-Wrens were territorial in the vicinity of the nest. Vegetation in the area is very dense, consisting of regrowth from the 1967 fires, and this makes detailed observation difficult, but birds could be located spatially by their vigorous alarm calls. At first this was taken to be a response of birds attracted by the alarm call of one bird; the Brown Thornbill Acanthiza pusilla often participates in such events. However, during periods of prolonged observation after the eggs had hatched, it was apparent that about four birds were carrying food in the vicinity of the nest. There was a noticeable plumage difference in these birds, some having much yellower

throats and breasts than others.

In an attempt to verify this apparent communal feeding of the nestlings a mist net was erected adjacent to the nest at 0645 hours on 31 Jan. A Brown Scrub-Wren was trapped immediately, and by the time it had been banded, three others were also trapped. All four were trapped within 1.1/2 metres of the nest. It was apparent, examining the birds in the hand, that the four comprised two adults and two immatures, distinguished by their darker brown, less clearly marked plumage and by fresh appearance of their soft parts. There was also a difference in wing measurements; the wings of the adults measuring 68 and 69 mm, while the immatures measured only 59.5 and 60.5 mm.

A colour photograph was taken of one adult bird during the banding operation and of a bird feeding at the nest. Comparison of these photographs indicates that the bird feeding the young at the nest is a dark throated immature.

McGill (1970) gives the breeding season of the Brown Scrub-Wren as July to December, which indicates that the event reported above was exceptionally late in the season. Harrison (1969) has reviewed instances of helpers at the nest in Australian passerine birds and comments that the proportion of species showing this behaviour is high in comparison with other regions. Examples of communal nesting behaviour are cited for the families Campephagidae (Cuckoo-shrikes), Acanthizinae (Thornbills), Malurinae (Fairy Wrens), Timaliidae (Babblers), Sittidae (Sittellas), Meliphagidae (Honeyeaters), Grallinidae (Choughs), Artamidae (Woodswallows) and Cracticidae (Butcher-birds).

In the present instance, it is apparent that two immature birds, probably the young of a previous 1973-74 season brood, were helping the adults to feed the young of a later brood. This is apparently the first published record of such behaviour for the genus Sericornis. This adaptation of breeding behaviour, as evidenced by the present instance, does not appear to be as advanced as that of, for instance, the Malurinae (Fairy Wrens) where sub-adult birds, potentially capable of breeding, assist in the care of the young of an adult pair (Harrison 1969).

#### References :

- McGill, A. R. 1970      Australian Warblers      Melbourne : BOC.  
Harrison, C. J. O. 1969      Helpers at the nest in Australian passerine birds.  
Emu 69 : 30-40.

## BEACH-WASHED BIRDS, KING ISLAND, 1973

M. T. Templeton

IN July 1973 I left King Island to reside in South Australia so this will be my final annual report of beach-washed birds for King Island.

The following birds were collected on beaches from January to July 1973.

Thick-billed Penguin Eudyptes pachyrhynchus. One live bird in partial moult and with a broken flipper was collected at Porky Beach on 27 Jan. It died several weeks later when half the moult was completed and was forwarded to K. G. Simpson, Melbourne for study.

Little Penguin Eudyptula minor Over 40, mainly juveniles, were found dead on Porky Beach in January and February.

Great-winged Petrel Pterodroma macroptera One at Half Moon Bay on 22 Feb.  
Cape Petrel Daption capense One at Porky Beach on 9 Jun. , 1973.

Fairy Prion Pachyptila turtur One Porky Beach 9 Jun. ; an estimated 100 dead, killed by cats, on Grassy Island on 24 Jul. , 1973. Nesting burrows were being cleaned out but the colony was greatly depleted.

Dove Prion Pachyptila desolata One at Porky Beach on 20 Feb. , 1973.

Thin-billed Prion Pachyptila belcheri One dead in paddock at Loorana, 1 Km. inland on 27 Jun. , 1973.

Black-browed Albatross Diomedea melanophris. One desiccated specimen at Half Moon Bay in July was forwarded to the CSIRO Canberra.

White-capped Albatross Diomedea cauta A dead juvenile was collected at Currie by Robert Kemp on 16 Jun. , 1973.

## WADERS IN TASMANIA (Concluded)

31. Red-necked Stint C. ruficollis

The most numerous of the migratory waders. Flocks (50 - 1500) occur regularly at Circular Head, Port Sorell, Kelso, Low Head, Cape Portland, Anson's Bay, St. Helens, Okehampton, Rheban, Blackman Bay, Sorell, Barilla Bay, Lauderdale, Clear Lagoon, Pipeclay Lagoon and South Arm. Smaller numbers occur elsewhere on the coast (Ocean Beach, Strahan; Scamander, etc. ) and inland ( Tunbridge, Lake Augusta, Shannon Lagoon). Numbers remain during the winter.

32. Curlew Sandpiper C. ferruginea

Large flocks of this summer visitor from Siberia occur each year at Cape Portland, Sorell and Barilla Bay. These flocks may contain 1000 birds. Regular at Kelso and irregular elsewhere. In some winters numbers remain behind.

33. Dunlin C. alpina

Rare summer visitor from Siberia. Only recorded in one year, when as many as 5 birds may have been present in the Barilla Bay-Orielton Lagoon - Lauderdale area.

34. Western Sandpiper C. mauri

Rare summer visitor from Siberia or Alaska. The only Australian record

is of a single bird at Clear Lagoon, Sandford in September 1969.

35. Sanderling C. alba

Regular summer visitor from Siberia to Anson's Bay where a flock of 20-40' forms each year. The only other record is from Cape Portland.

36. Buff-breasted Sandpiper Tryngites subruficollis

The only record of this Siberian breeding bird is from Barilla Bay in October 1967.

37. Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa

Rare summer visitor from Siberia. Only two records, single birds at South Arm in January 1965 and Orielton Lagoon in November 1966.

38. Bar-tailed Godwit L. lapponica

Common summer visitor from Siberia. Flocks of up to 100 occur each year at Low Head, Sorell and South Arm. Small numbers occur elsewhere, particularly on the northern coasts and at Blackman Bay. Some remain each winter.

39. Ruff Philomachus pugnax

Occasional summer visitor from Siberia. The only positive record is of five birds at Barilla Bay in September 1966. There is a probable record of a flock of 40 at Cape Portland. The smaller female, or Reeve, may easily be confused with a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

AVOCETS & STILTS - Recurvirostridae

Rare visitors from the mainland.

40. Banded Stilt Cladorhynchus leucocephalus

There are no records in the last 15 years.

41. White-headed Stilt Himantopus himantopus

The only recent records are of single birds near Granville Harbour in 1965 and at Rostrevor near Triabunna in May 1960.

42. Red-necked Avocet. Recurvirostra novaehollandiae

There have been no records in the last 15 years.

STONE CURLEWS - Burhinidae

43. Southern Stone Curlew Burhinus magnirostris

There are no recent records

## ORNITHOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES, BIOGRAPHIES &amp; ARCHIVES

WITH the co-operation of people connected with Australian ornithology I am continuing the work commenced by H. M. Whittell in his The Literature of Australian Birds. 1954 : Paterson Brokensha : Perth : Western Australia. i. e. compiling bibliographies and biographies of all who have made a contribution to Australian ornithology. Taking up in 1950, where the late Major Whittell left off, I am bringing the book up to date to 1975, thus adding 25 years to the work. Accordingly, the completed project is envisaged as, A Bio-bibliography of Australian Ornithology : 1951-1975. Although I have found that many people keep their own bibliographies, I am prepared to compile these myself. However, I will need assistance with the biographies, and as I hope to give these a personal touch, I would be very happy if interstate and country visitors to Melbourne would contact me at 89 7631. In time, I will contact everyone who should be included.

I have also commenced a "Catalogue of Archival Material". This was originally intended to merely record the location of archival material relating to Australian ornithology such as field note-books, diaries, letters, drawings and photographs, thus ensuring that these valuable sources of ornithological information were not only preserved, but also made available to the serious worker. However, in response to some previous notices of this plan, I have not only been advised of its location, but been sent the material itself. It will be appreciated that the custody of this material imposes a great responsibility on me, and for this reason I have made arrangements with the La Trobe Library Section of the State Library of Victoria to accept, on loan, as a separate collection, the material entrusted to me. This will be held by the Library in safe keeping, and made available only on Library premises for the purposes of research. The nucleus of this collection is already at the Library, and a list of the holdings and the conditions under which they may be examined has been published in R. A. O. U. Newsletter No. 18, February 1974.

I would be most grateful to hear from anyone holding such material who would be prepared to consider seriously the desirability of its being safely housed in the La Trobe Library, or to having it photo-copied, or to simply letting me have a list of their collections. It should be realized that all records, however trivial they seem, may be of great significance in the future, and should be preserved.

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