



No. 65
APRIL 1981

The Tasmanian Naturalist

Supplement to the Bulletin of Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club
G.P.O. Box 68A, Hobart, 7001
Editor: L.E. Wall

Annual Subscription: \$5.00

GRANITE QUARRY, COLES BAY

In 1975 an application was made for a licence to quarry granite within the boundaries of Freycinet National Park, in an area where this industry had been operating many years previously. Very strong opposition from a wide section of the community was expressed but in spite of this a licence was granted in 1976.

One of the conditions attached to the licence is that no stone is to be removed from the site except by sea because of the deep concern for heavy vehicles using the roads through the park and for the noise pollution in an area dedicated for peaceful recreation.

Application has now been made for a mobile crusher to be introduced to the quarry site, which will increase the noise from the quarrying operations, and for permission to transport the material from the site by road.

This should be strongly opposed because of the problems it will create. The Company carrying on this enterprise was prepared to operate under the conditions laid down five years ago and there should be no relaxation now.

ENGLISH NAMES OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

In *Tasmanian Naturalist* No. 63 (October 1980) it was stated on page 9 that this magazine would continue to use the names in the "Index of Australian Bird Names" produced by C.S.I.R.O. in 1969 but that changes made in the R.A.O.U. list, 1978, would be added in brackets. Because Pizzey's *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, just published, has retained the names used in the C.S.I.R.O. Index these names will continue to be used in the *Tasmanian Naturalist* but the changes which appeared in R.A.O.U. list, 1978, will not be added in brackets.

Editor.

BOOK REVIEW

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA

by Graham Pizzey, 1980

Published by Collins, Sydney. \$25

This is the second Field Guide produced in Australia in recent years. It has a distinct advantage over Slater's which is in two parts, but there are several aspects of their presentation which differ and require critical appraisal.

Pizzey's introductory remarks, including comments on Field Marks, Classification, Common Names, Expressions Used in the text, Bird-sounds, Habitat, and Range & Status are well presented and pertinent. In the main text he gives a brief description of each family — its chief characteristics, food, geographical range and number of species (both worldwide and within Australia) — before proceeding to provide details for each species under the following headings: Field Marks, Similar species, Voice, Habitat, Breeding, Range & Status. These are more extensive than those provided by Slater and Pizzey's innovation of listing similar species is well worthwhile. I have one complaint here; Field Marks commence with a measurement but there's no indication that it refers to the length of the bird from bill-tip to tail-tip when laid on its back. It is surprising how many beginners think of it as being the bird's wing-span.

Illustrations:

The illustrator of this book, Roy Doyle, was little known in this field before this production but his work is of a high standard and complementary to the text. Whilst the general standard is high there are some instances in which improvements could be made; in particular, there has been a tendency to clutter up some plates too much, especially where birds are illustrated in flight. The use of lines drawing attention to particular features of a bird, first used by the eminent American ornithologist, Roger Tory Peterson, is to be commended. In a few cases the coloured plates are not true to colour this may be the fault of the artist or the printer and I can do no more than draw attention to the worst of these for the benefit of the book's users.

Plate 2. White-capped Albatross has narrow black edges to the leading and trailing edges of under-wings and a dark grey-brown tail. Yellow-nosed Albatross has dark brown tail.

Plate 11. Black Duck's wing speculum should be darker and less conspicuous. According to the angle of light it may appear green or purple.

Plate 15. Large and Plumed Egrets have yellow bills in non-breeding plumage when they normally occur in s. Australia and Tasmania.

Plate 16. Nankeen Night-heron has white head-plumes in the breeding season only.

Plate 21. Flight patterns of Swamp and Spotted Harriers are shown one above the other for comparison. The sequences are inconsistent — reading from the left side the order for the Swamp Harrier is Imm., Adult, Imm., Adult, but for the Spotted Harrier it is Adult, Imm., Adult, Imm.

Plate 26. Pomarine Skua has a complete collar like the Arctic Skua (pale phases only).

Plate 27. White-winged Black Tern has white rump in non-breeding plumage (a distinctive field character).

Plate 28. Little Tern has distinctly darker grey primaries than Fairy Tern.

Plate 34. Great Knot and Knot have very little mottling on wings and the breast is very slightly flecked on sides of breast only.

Plate 37. Pied Oystercatcher has white secondaries but primaries are wholly black.

Plate 40. Large Sand-plover's legs extend beyond tail during flight.

Plate 55. Male Masked Owl and Barn Owl are reversed?

Plate 60. Grey Shrike-thrush has grey upper surface and light grey under.

Plate 61. Spotted Quail-thrush has light grey breast, not blue.

Plate 63. Dusky Robin has white spot on edge of wing, not in the centre.

Plate 65. Female Golden Whistler has no white in wing. Male Olive Whistler has grey head.

Plate 71. Scrub Tit has no well-defined white eyebrow but a poorly defined white ring around eye. Blue-grey ear coverts should be brown.

Plate 76. Yellow-throated Honeyeater has no yellow in wing and the crown is not streaked.

Nomenclature:

The chief cause for complaint in this book is the Nomenclature used. It is a problem which has plagued Australian ornithology for many years and it had been my earnest hope that this book, which has been in preparation over a long period, would overcome this by using the most recent nomenclature. Alas, it does not, and I cannot foresee another book in widespread use being produced in the near future to relieve the current confusion.

Scientific names used are generally in accord with Condon's "Checklist of the Birds of Australia, Part I", 1975, and its counterpart, Schodde's "Interim List of Australian Songbirds", 1975, but there are notable exceptions. The "common" or "vernacular" or "English" names (whichever term you wish to use) used by Pizzey are those used in "An Index of Australian Bird Names", produced by C.S.I.R.O. Division of Wildlife Research in 1969, but again there are exceptions. In May 1978 the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union published "Recommended English names for Australian Birds" (which also included the most up-to-date scientific names): while it is appreciated that the book now under review was already in the printer's hands at that time Mr. Pizzey would have done Australian ornithology a major service if he had ensured that the most up-to-date names had been used, even though further delay in publication may have resulted. It is strange that in the Introduction to this book, under the heading of Classification, Pizzey states that this aspect of Australian ornithology "is in some ways like the peace of God — it passeth all understanding" and nomenclature is in the same position, yet he has ignored the opportunity to bring some order out of chaos.

In the "Recommended English names for Australian birds" (1978) all the Dotterels in the genus *Charadrius* have been re-named Plovers: Pizzey has adopted that for the Common Ringed, Mongolian, Large Sand, Caspian and Oriental Dotterels, but inexplicably has left the remainder under the old name.

Distribution Maps:

These are of great value in a field guide but in this respect Slater's is much to be preferred because his map for each species is alongside the bird's entry in the text. Pizzey has placed all his maps in a small section at the rear of the book so that reference from the text to the map requires turning from one section of the book to another.

There is also inconsistency in recording vagrant and rare occurrences on the maps. In most cases of birds which according to the text are vagrants or very occasional visitors the relevant maps do not show them as occurring in Tasmania, but exceptions are – Eastern Reef Heron and Royal Spoonbill (Page 413), Spotted Harrier (P. 415), Black-tailed Native Hen (P.417), Marsh Sandpiper and Ruff (P.419) and Leaden Flycatcher (P.430). It is noted, too, that the Purple-crowned and Red-crowned Pigeons (P.152) are named Fruit-doves on the maps (P.421).

Main Text:

The following alterations should be made:—

Page 60 (and map P.413) Nankeen Night-Heron. Range should include Tasmania.

Page 103 Tas. Native Hen is stated to be "Nearly flightless". The word "nearly" should be deleted.

Page 104 (and map P.417) Dusky Moorhen is stated as "not recorded Tas. proper". The first record was in 1976 and it appears to be well established now.

Page 113 Grey Plover and Eastern Golden Plover. Include Tasmania in their ranges.

Page 116 Oriental Plover. Include Tasmania in its range.

Page 122 Whimbrel is stated to occur in n. Tasmania only. It is also found in the south.

Page 225 White-backed Swallow is stated to occur in Tasmania. This is incorrect.

Summary:

The comments above in respect to individual species are with one exception (Common Ringed Plover) in respect of only those birds on the Tasmanian list. It is left to other reviewers to draw attention to other short-comings.

The corrections listed have been detailed primarily for the benefit of Tasmanian observers and are not intended to denigrate the value of this book which I believe is to be preferred to Slater's Field Guides.

L.E.W.

NEW WAY TO CONTROL BONESEED

Extract from Victorian Dept of Crown Lands and Survey News

October 1980

Boneseed can be beaten, according to David Lane of the Keith Turnbull Research Institute at Frankston.

Boneseed is a serious threat to bushland, especially in the drier, open woodlands of granitic and coastal areas. It can form dense stands which crowd out native vegetation and is able to establish itself whether an area has been disturbed or not.

Rare species of plants growing in an infested area can be in danger of extinction. Boneseed is particularly serious in the You Yangs forest park and at Arthurs Seat on the Mornington Peninsula.

David Lane and other workers at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute noticed that little regrowth of boneseed occurred if seedlings were removed after fire had been through an infested area. They screened several chemicals and found that the herbicide bromoxynil killed seedlings of boneseed but did not harm the native wattles.

Using this chemical, and the knowledge that heat from a fire will stimulate germination of practically all boneseed seed in the soil, they were able to develop a successful treatment. Boneseed plants were slashed and the remains burnt. This stimulated germination of seeds in the soil. The resulting seedlings were then sprayed with bromoxynil.

David Lane said that this treatment is being used very successfully in the You Yangs forest park.

Before this, control relied on manual removal of the plants or use of the chemical 2,4-D amine. Neither method was completely satisfactory, especially for treating large areas.

Boneseed is a woody shrub about 3 m high. It has distinctive bright yellow daisy-like flowers and blooms in winter and spring. The oval leaves are from 25 to 75 mm long and are irregularly serrated.

The fruit is spherical and contains only one seed, and is about 6 mm in diameter. It has a fleshy green skin which turns black. The plant derives its name from the seed which is very hard and bone-like in color and texture.

Like many other weeds, boneseed was first introduced to Victoria from South Africa as a garden plant in 1858. It caused few problems until the 1940s when it began to spread rapidly. Boneseed was declared noxious for the whole of Victoria, except the Melbourne metropolitan area, in 1969.

David Lane said that infestations of boneseed tend to be concentrated around towns. He said that the plant could be spread by careless dumping of garden rubbish containing seed, and by birds and foxes which eat the fleshy outer covering of the seed. The hard seeds pass through their digestive systems unharmed, germinate, and start new infestations.

NESTING NOTES ON LEWIN'S RAIL *RALLUS PECTORALIS* AND SPOTLESS CRAKE *PORZANA TABUENSIS* IN NORTH-EAST TASMANIA

by

T.A. Singline, Honorary Assistant, Zoology,
Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, Tasmania

The following observations were made on the nesting habits of Lewin's Rail *Rallus pectoralis* and Spotless Crake *Porzana tabuensis* in the north-east of Tasmania from 1977.

The area investigated was dairy farming country in the Pyengana district, about 20 km west of St Helens. Rainfall ranges from 1,500 to 2,000 mm per annum. Lush pasture grows on the river flats. The lower lying areas are flooded for extended periods in most winters, which encourages the growth of rushes and reeds along the water courses and in flat, poorly drained places. The rushes and reeds form interconnected clumps of coarse vegetation which are not heavily grazed and here the rails and crakes are concentrated. This pattern of limited habitat distribution along the drainage lines makes them easier to locate than in large swamps and samphire marshes.

During 1977, from late August to mid October, nine visits were made following reports of small rail-like birds being flushed during slashing of rushes and reeds. In this period Lewin's Rail's nests with eggs were found and on further subsequent visits, from mid-October, nests with eggs of Spotless Crake were also found. It has since been established that, in this area Lewin's Rail nests mainly from October to November, with old birds starting to lay in late August. The Spotless Crake breeds somewhat later from about the middle of October to December. On most visits four or five occupied nests of Lewin's Rail were found, the greatest number found in one day being nine. Occupied nests of Spotless Crake appear to be somewhat less numerous.

From late August 1977 to the end of October 1977 229 eggs of the Lewin's Rail and 65 eggs of Spotless Crake were counted. In the three years of observations, these were the only crake and rail species found there.

Both species were found nesting in various locations in the rushes where they formed cup shaped nests from both rushes or reeds. Entry was gained by a narrow walkway through the surrounding vegetation and not aligned in any special direction. The cup of the nest varied from 10 to 60 cm above the mud or water. Most nests were found to be built in rushes. One was found built in blackberries.

The Spotless Crake appears to build many false nests and with both species old nests from which young have been hatched are hard to distinguish from new nests ready for eggs.

In Lewin's Rail, the largest clutch found was 8, one contained 7, and others contained 6 and 5, but the most common number was 4.

In Spotless Crake, occasionally a clutch of 6 eggs was found, a few of 5, but the most common was 4.

Many eggs of Lewin's Rail were eaten by animals, possibly swamp-rats *Rattus lutreolus*, judging from the droppings found in the vicinity of nests.

Only twice were adult Lewin's Rails seen on their eggs and on both occasions this was about 11 am. Only once were young seen in the nest, and at this time two young had emerged from their eggs and two were in the process of hatching.

"PEREGRINE'S" DIAMOND JUBILEE

Michael Sharland, under the pen-name "Peregrine", has completed a record term of sixty years as feature writer on natural history subjects for the "Illustrated Tasmanian Mail", a weekly magazine published by "The Mercury" in Hobart, from 1921 until its cessation in 1935 and since then in "The Mercury" itself. So many compliments were paid to him at the end of fifty years' service that little more can usefully be added now but our Club saw fit at its last meeting to present to him a caricature drawn specially for the occasion by "Kev" who has also served "The Mercury" well for several years.

Michael Sharland needs no introduction to naturalists throughout Australia: his chief interest has always been among birds and in this field he has earned a very wide reputation, not only for his writings but also for his photography which ranks among the world's best. However, his interest has extended to all branches of natural history as evidenced by his regular articles covering a wide variety of subjects.

He joined the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club in 1918 but there was a gap in his membership when his journalistic career took him to the Mainland in 1927. He returned to Tasmania in 1941 and assumed office as Honorary Secretary of the Club but a year later he enlisted in R.A.A.F. and saw service in northern Australia and New Guinea. On his return he was elected President of the Club in 1945 and re-elected in the following three years. He was instrumental in reviving the Club's publication, "The Tasmanian Naturalist" in 1946. In recognition of his long and distinguished service to the Club he was elected to Honorary Life Membership in 1952. He served a further term as President in 1954, the Club's Golden Jubilee Year.

RUDDY GREENHOOD (*Pterostylis rufa*, sub-sp. *rufa*)**M. Wall**

My introduction to this orchid was in November 1978 when I brought home a plant with rosette of leaves from the Margate tip area, thinking I had collected *Pterostylis barbata* (now *plumosa*), the Bearded Greenhood.

This rosette dried off and the flowering stalk started to grow, flowering in January 1979. In the same year this orchid grew in a pot of greenhoods I had collected at Coningham.

Last November (1980) I collected a plant from Kingston Heights from an area used as a turning circle for cars. The first flower opened in early January when the plant was 8 cms. high and the next flower about two weeks later. The flowers last for a month and the stem keeps growing. It is now 23 cms. high with the ninth bud ready to open.

I have not seen this orchid flowering in the wild and wonder if it would be in flower for four months like the one on the side of my kitchen sink where I can enjoy it.

SEA HARE

During late January in Bruny Island at Quiet Corner, we proceeded around the cliff to the north of the beach at low tide. There are numerous potholes in the sandstone rock which are moderately sheltered from wave action by the surrounding kelp beds. The resulting pools support a wide variety of shellfish etc.

In one such pool we observed a Sea Hare (*Aplysia hyalina*). This is a mollusc similar to a nudibranch, but containing an internal shell. It sports tentacles, whose shape is the probable source of its common name.

The specimen was about 130 mm (5 in) in length. It was olive green in colour and purplish underneath. When we removed it from the water, it secreted a slippery bluish cloudy mucus, the purpose of which is camouflage.

John and Maria Grist.