

THE SUNBIRD

Vol. 2

No. 3

DISTRIBUTION OF *MELIPHAGA FLAVESCENS* AND *M. FUSCA*
IN NORTHERN QUEENSLAND

S. A. Parker

Salomonsen (1967) gave the range of *Meliphaga fusca* (*sensu stricto*) as eastern and south-eastern Australia, west to Adelaide and north to Cairns, Atherton and the Lynd River. The populations from Mackay northwards he distinguished as *M. fusca subgermana* (Mathews), type locality Cairns.

Mathews (1912) described *subgermana* as a race of *M. flavescens*. Whilst in the American Museum of Natural History during September 1964 I examined Mathews' three syntypes of *subgermana* together with forty-five other specimens of *M. fusca* from the entire range of that species. In May 1971 I assembled for study thirty-one specimens of *M. flavescens* and forty-five Queensland specimens of *M. fusca*, including two syntypes of *subgermana*. A minor colour-cline exists in *M. fusca*: birds from northern Queensland differ from those at the southern end of the range in having the face and crown faintly washed yellowish-olive. Whilst agreeing with Salomonsen (*loc. cit.*) that *Ptilotis flavescens subgermana* Mathews, is based upon specimens of *M. fusca*, I can not accept his division of this clinal species into three races, *fusca*, *dawsoni* and *subgermana*. To use Storr's (1967, p.37) excellent expression, such splitting illustrates the futility of trying to draw lines through a continuum.

Geographic variation in *M. flavescens* is also minor.

Amongst populations from the Australian mainland (Derby to the Norman River) and the Port Moresby district of New Guinea I could find no differences worthy of nomenclatural recognition, and regard these populations as belonging to the nominate race *M. f. flavescens* (to include the 'races' *germana*, *zanda*, and *deserticola* accepted by Salomonsen, 1966, 1967). Three specimens from Melville Island, however, differed noticeably from the above in having the underparts deeper yellow with bolder and more extensive streaking. Possibly this population should be distinguished as *M. f. melvillensis* (Mathews, 1912).

Salomonsen (1967) gave the Queensland range of *Meliphaga flavescens (sensu stricto)* as 'Northwestern Queensland north of lat. 21°S. (but absent from Cape York Peninsula), east occasionally to Cairns, Herberton and Kirrama,

Salomonsen (*in litt.*) wrote that his records from Cairns and Herberton were taken from Gannon (1962, p.160). Unfortunately, Gannon had based these records on the skins of *M. fusca* in the American Museum of Natural History from Herberton and Cairns, which were at that time placed under *M. flavescens* (Keast, *in litt.*).

Salomonsen's third record of *M. flavescens* from the Atherton Tableland area, Kirrama, is based on an otherwise unpublished sighting by Mr. T. Jasper, relayed to Salomonsen by Gannon (Salomonsen, *in litt.*). Jasper (*in litt.*) writes: 'The sighting of *M. flavescens* on Kirrama (about 30 miles south of Ravenshoe and on the western slopes of the Cardwell Range), 6 Sept 1962 has been the only one made by me of this species east of the Divide. On the other hand, on two subsequent visits to the same general area - open forest country on the eastern slopes of Kirrama - I twice encoun-

tered *fusca* feeding young. I held - and still hold - the opinion that *flavescens* was a visitor, while *fusca* was quite obviously a well-established resident.'

To judge from specimens alone, *Meliphaga flavescens* in northern Queensland seems confined to the Gulf of Carpentaria drainage; there are no specimens of it from the Atherton Tableland, where *M. fusca* has been collected several times. This suggests that observers recording *M. flavescens* in open forest of the Atherton Tableland, but not *M. fusca*, are misidentifying the northern yellowish-faced populations of *M. fusca* as *M. flavescens*. Bravery (*in litt.*) has recorded only *M. fusca* from the open forest of the Atherton Tableland, but in June-August has observed both *M. fusca* and *M. flavescens* at Watsonville on the Walsh River (seven miles west of Herberton, on the western slopes of the Divide and in the Gulf of Carpentaria drainage). Here *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* grows along the watercourse, with *E. tereticornis* abundant on the margins, while away from the river is dry sclerophyll forest, mainly of Narrow-leaved Ironbark, Yellow Stringybark, Lemon-scented Gum and *Grevillea* and *Melaleuca* spp. Bravery writes: '*M. fusca* and *M. flavescens* occur together near the stream, *M. flavescens* being more numerous.... I have observed *M. fusca* away from the river in dry sclerophyll but not *M. flavescens*, which seems to be confined to the River Red Gums. To confirm **this**, I was in Georgetown (on the Etheridge River, Carpentaria drainage) in August 1968; River Red Gums were flowering in and along the stream bed and *M. flavescens* was quite numerous and appeared to keep to the River Red Gums... I did not see or hear *M. fusca*.'

My observations of *Meliphaga flavescens* in the Nicholson River district, N.T. (1967) and Moonlight Creek,

50 miles north-west of Burketown, Queensland (1964), agree with those of Bravery and Jasper (*in litt.*): in the Gulf of Carpentaria drainage this species is essentially a bird of water-side thickets. *M. fusca* in northern Queensland seems to be predominantly a species of the open forest.

Salomonsen (*loc. cit.*) regarded *M. flavescens* and *M. fusca* as conspecific. In northern Queensland the two forms, although largely allopatric, appear to present differences in their ecology. Investigations should be made and specimens collected in the zone of approach and putative overlap in order to determine the status of the two forms.

Material Examined from Northern Queensland

Meliphaga flavescens

Lawn Hills (2, AM); Thornton Station, 90 miles NW of Mount Isa (1, QM); Normanton (1, AMNH); Kimberley (= Karumba) (4, QM).

Meliphaga fusca

Cairns (2 syntypes of *Ptilotis flavescens subgermana* Mathews, AMNH); Herberton (1, AMNH); Wondecla, 3 miles south of Herberton (3, AM); Cardwell (5, QM); Mackay (1, AMNH).

In addition, Miss L. Arnold kindly examined for me the following specimens of *M. fusca* in the H. L. White Collection, NMV: Cardwell (2); Kirrima (=Kirrama) (1); Cairns (1).

Differences between *M. fusca* "subgermana" and *M. flavescens* that are of possible value in the field

	<u><i>M. fusca</i> "subgermana"</u>	<u><i>M. flavescens</i></u>
Throat	Pale grey-buff, sometimes with faintest trace of yellow	Light yellow
Rest of underparts	Breast pale grey-brown (streaking usually absent), going to off-white in centre of belly	Obscure ashy streaks on pale yellow breast, belly dull yellowish-white
Face	Darker: dull greenish-grey, tinged yellowish	Lighter: pale dull yellow
Back	Darker: dark grey-brown	Lighter: light grey-brown
Habitat	Mainly open forest (uplands of the Great Dividing Range)	Mainly riverine thickets (Carpentaria drainage)
Voice	'Arig-arig-a-taw-taw' (Officer, 1964, p.49)	'Song a high clear porra-cheu, porra-cheu-cheu, chi-porra-cheu, porra-cheu-cheu-cheu. Contact note a descending, often harsh, tew, tew, tew (Parker Ms., Nicholson River District, N.T.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the loan of material I am indebted to Mrs Mary LeCroy, American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), Dr H. J. Frith, C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife Research, Canberra, Miss Lorene Arnold, National Museum of Victoria (NMV), Mr. D. P. Vernon, Queensland Museum (QM) and Mr H. J. de S. Disney, Australian Museum (AM). For information and valuable discussions I thank Mr J. A. Bravery, Mr. T. Jasper, Professor J. A. Keast, Professor F. Salomonsen and Dr G. M. Storr.

REFERENCES

This list contains references not cited above.

- BOURKE, P.A. and AUSTIN, A.F. 1947. The Atherton Tablelands and its avifauna. *Emu* 47: 87-116.
- BRAVERY, J.A. 1970. The birds of Atherton Shire, Queensland. *Emu* 70: 49-63.
- CAMPBELL, A.J. and BARNARD, H.G. 1917. Birds of the Rockingham Bay District, North Queensland. *Emu* 17: 2-38.
- CROWHURST, J. 1968. Cairns to Georgetown. *Bird Observer* 445: 7-8.
- GANNON, G.R. 1962. Distribution of the Australian Honey-eaters. *Emu* 62: 145-166.
- GILBERT, J. 1845. *Ms. diary.*
Some of Gilbert's references to *M. flavescens* and *M. fusca* were mentioned briefly by A. H. Chisholm (*Emu* 44: 131-150, 183-200). Dr G. M. Storr, in preparing an annotated checklist of the birds of Queensland, has evaluated Gilbert's observations more thoroughly, and has generously supplied me with the following details: 'Gilbert recorded *fusca* at 3 places on the middle and upper Burdekin, the last and northernmost being near Lake Lucy during a halt, 11-15 May 1845. His only subsequent entry is on 7 June when he was on the Lynd about 4 miles SE of Torwood; "*Ptilotis sonorus* is still abundant, and so is *P. fusca*.' On 23 June when he was on the Mitchell about 9 miles ENE of Dunbar he wrote "In the evening I visited the brush of the river and shot a second new species of honeysucker; it is very like

P. fusca, but in its whole style of colouring much lighter, having a good deal of yellow about the head, and in (*sic*) being much smaller in size." I should point out that all Gilbert's northern records of *fusca* are visual or auditory; he evidently collected no specimens of *fusca* further north than the head of Zamia Creek (25°05' S) and even there he recorded it as "*Ptilotis* like *fusca*." His first specimen (from near Barakula) was recorded as "a *Ptilotis* which is either *fusca* or a near ally." (Storr, *in litt.*).

GILL, H.B. 1970. Birds of Innisfail and hinterland. Emu 70: 105-116.

LAVERY, H.J., SETON, D. and BRAVERY, J.A. 1968. Breeding seasons of birds in north-eastern Australia. Emu 68: 133-147.

MATHEWS, G.M. 1912. Novit zool. 18: 411 (Description of *Ptilotis flavescens subgermana*).

---- 1923-24. Birds of Australia, vol. 11.

NORTH, A.J. 1907. Nests and eggs of Australian birds, vol. 2: 128.

OFFICER, H.R. 1964. Australian Honeyeaters. Melbourne: Bird Observers Club.

SALOMONSEN, F. 1966. Preliminary descriptions of new honeyeaters (Aves, Meliphagidae). Breviora 254: 1-12.

---- 1967. Meliphagidae, in J. L. Peters, Checklist of Birds of the World, vol. 12: 338-450. Cambridge, Mass: Mus. Comp. Zool.

STORR, G.M. 1967. List of Northern Territory Birds. Spec. Publ. W. Aust. Mus. 4. Perth.

WHEELER, W.R. 1967. The birds of Cairns, Cooktown and the Atherton Tablelands. Aust. Bird Watcher 3: 55-76.

Mr S. A. PARKER, 44 Mills St., Clarence Park, S.A. 5034.

BIRD NOTES FROM 'CABANDA'
CENTRAL NORTH QUEENSLAND

John Bell

Many of the lower-rainfall regions of inland Queensland have been fortunate in experiencing a reasonable wet season during the past year. This has been of tremendous value to all types of plant and animal life, and birds have been abundant in these areas (see Broadley *et. al.*, 1971, Sunbird 2(2): 27-34). 'Cabanda' received good rains during the past year, with particularly heavy falls in March and April 1971. Rainfall data for 'Cabanda' is given in Table I, where the monthly totals for the past year are compared with the monthly averages for the last 50 years.

TABLE I
Rainfall recorded at 'Cabanda'

Month	Average for past 50 years (points)	Totals for the past year (points)
September	13	35 (1970)
October	55	96 "
November	108	10 "
December	278	163 "
January	508	443 (1971)
February	491	411 "
March	241	1103 "
April	58	501 "
May	73	- "
June	44	25 "
July	27	- "
August	10	- "
Total	1906	2787

'Cabanda' (20°21'S, 141°23'E) is a sheep and cattle property of 43,000 acres which is situated 50 miles by road north-west of Julia Creek in central north Queensland. The property is covered mostly with Mitchell and Flinders grasses, growing on the Black Soil plains. Sandy ridges occupy the rest of the area and these are covered with a thick scrub of *Bauhinia*, Beefwood Box, Bloodwood, Teatree, Rosewood and other species, with an undergrowth of several species including Currant-bush. There is a small lake (diameter of half a mile) that holds water for about six months of the year. An artesian bore providing 220,000 gallons of water per day supports 20 miles of drains on the property. Five earth dams built in water courses also help to water the property.

The following notes provide some information on the status of birds of 'Cabanda'. The property also supports at least 100 Red Kangaroos.

EMU *Dromaius novae-hollandiae*.

The property supports about 50 birds which appear to be present all year round. Six have been seen with chicks which must have been hatched in early September. The usual number of chicks is six to eight, although one bird was seen with thirteen.

DIAMOND DOVE *Geopelia cuneata*.

Always some present in flocks of about twenty.

CRESTED PIGEON *Ocyphaps lophotes*.

Often encountered in pairs.

DUSKY MOORHEN *Gallinula tenebrosa*.

About 50 were present on the lake for several weeks in April. These birds (as with most of the water birds) were not unduly disturbed when a car was driven up to the lake or a horseman rode among them.

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* and
LITTLE PIED CORMORANT *P. melanoleucus*.

During March and April there were about 50 at 'Cabanda' but numbers dwindled until only two Little Black Cormorants were seen in September.

AUSTRALIAN PELICAN *Pelecanus conspicillatus*.

There are about a dozen present at all times.

SPUR-WINGED PLOVER *Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*.

About 300 were present in April and would 'dive-bomb' the dogs any time they disturbed the birds. Most have since departed and only four remained near a bore drain in September.

BLACK FRONTED DOTTEREL *Charadrius melanops*.

During February and March about 200 were present.

WHITE-HEADED STILT *Himantopus leucocephalus*.

Present in hundreds from February to May but none were seen in September.

BUSTARD *Eupodotis australis*.

There were many about but were difficult to observe in the long grass. They were breeding in February.

BROLGA *Grus rubicundus*.

About ten pairs live on the property and all of these had one or two chicks which hatched in early May. One pair nested on a backwater of the dam about 200 yards from the house. When the chicks were young they would sit motionless in the nest when approached while the adults put on a broken wing display. When the young were about a month old, one adult would crouch down low in the grass and try to lead the young away, while the other parent would approach very close to the observer and put on a distracting

display. All the Brolgas seemed to disappear in August, but about 50 were found together at Lara Water Hole, on a neighbouring property. In September they all returned to their normal areas on 'Cabanda' and the young were still with their parents.

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*.

This species started arriving in late January and by the end of February there were about 200 birds present. These left again by the end of April.

WHITE IBIS *Threskiornis molucca*.

A few arrived in late December and by February there were about 200 around the lake. They left about the end of April, however some were present mixed with the Straw-necked Ibis flocks seen later in the year.

STRAW-NECKED IBIS *Threskiornis spinicollis*.

One bird arrived during the last week of December when it was very dry and stayed near the house for about a week. Two more came in the middle of January and stayed for a couple of days. After they left it rained and by the first week of February there were about 400 present. By the end of February there were about 2000 and by the end of May, 5000. By the end of June the number of birds reached 15,000. When approached to within 200-300 yards the flock would rise off the lake and circle above at about 100 feet. If the observer remained for more than about five minutes the birds would settle in the trees around the lake. At daylight the birds would leave the lake to feed in flocks of 50-400 birds at distances of up to ten miles away. The flocks returned to the lake between 09:30 and 11:00. Sometimes when in flight they would stretch for as far as the eye could see. At about 15:30 they moved out again to feed and returned to the lake at dusk. On 12 July there were only about 8000 birds remaining and these departed on the

13th and 14th of that month, when there was very little water left in the lake. There were a few White Ibis scattered throughout the flock at this stage. On 24 July fifty were seen flying eastward and on the 25th one bird was at the lake but it left on the following day. On 18 August twenty-five flew in from the north and landed on the lake about 10:00. The next day a further 500 arrived from the north about 10:30. The whole flock was gone the next day. At daylight on 1 September sixteen were on the bore drain at the homestead but they departed early the following day.

ROYAL SPOONBILL *Platelea regia*.

Some live here all year but they were particularly abundant from February to April. In September there were none about.

YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILL *Platelea flavipes*.

About 100 visited 'Cabanda' during the wet but none are here at the moment.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*.

During March-April about 50 were here but most left soon after. By September there were no birds present.

WHITE-FACED HERON *Ardea novaehollandiae*.

The same sort of pattern was observed, with numbers reaching several hundreds during the wet.

NANKEEN NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax caledonicus*.

About 20 were present during April-May but these have since left.

WOOD DUCK *Chenonetta jubata*.

There are usually some here all year round but the number reached about 4000 during the wet. At present about 2000 are on a water hole on a neighbouring property.

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE *Aquila audax*.

There are about five nests on the property and

the birds were breeding during July and August. Most of the young were ready to fly by the end of August. Zebra Finches built about four nests in the side of one Wedge-tailed Eagle nest that had two young eagles in it.

RED-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO *Calyptorhynchus banksi* and
YELLOW-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO *C. funereus*.

A few of each species were seen during the year, but none were evident in September.

LITTLE CORELLA *Cacatua sanguinea*.

There were only a few present early in the year but numbers built up to 500 in early August. In some years these birds arrive in thousands during July and August. This year they departed again in late August.

GALAH *Cacatua roseicapilla*.

There are always several hundred about but they become more numerous about July each year.

BUDGERIGAR *Melopsittacus undulatus*.

There are not many of these birds about but those that were nested in May.

LITTLE CUCKOO SHRIKE *Coracina robusta*.

These breed in the garden and the children get a lot of amusement from watching them push the young out of the nest to encourage them to fly. Last year a pair built their nest under the tank stand and they pulled it to pieces before the last young bird would fly.

PURPLE-BACKED WREN *Malurus assimilis*.

They nested in the garden during April, with the young hatching during the last week of the month. They spend a lot of time in the *Bougainvillia* and are seen periodically throughout the year.

YELLOW-THROATED MINER *Myzantha flavigula*.

There are usually about a dozen near the house and an estimated 200 on the property.

Other species which are present at 'Cabanda' all year round include: Brown Quail, Brown Goshawk, Whistling Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Little Falcon, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Hawk, Cockatiel, Rainbow-bird, Brown Thrush, Willy Wagtail, Babbler (Grey-crowned?), Zebra Finch, Magpie Lark, Grey Butcher-bird, Magpie and Crow.

Mr JOHN BELL, 'Cabanda', Julia Creek, Queensland 4823.

COUCAL NESTING QUERIES

Ella Pratt

Some queries have been raised by observations in the summer of 1970/71 of the pair of Coucals which occupy territory near our home. They frequent the area around the house, dairy and barn, and the adjoining part of a neighbour's paddock, totalling in all roughly 14 acres. In late December 1970 they were observed going to and from a spot in the small paddock behind the barn. Their nest was found to be there.

On 12th January 1971 they were seen taking food to this nest. Inspection showed it contained two chicks which seemed to be about three days old. The estimated hatching date was thus 9th January. The nest was not visited again as this tends to make the young leave it prematurely.

The parents continued to take food to the nest until about 19th January when the chicks left it. This was

about ten days after hatching. Up to 22nd January, a further three days, the chick(s), then thirteen days old, was definitely being fed in the paddock. The returning food-bearing parent Coucal would give a soft call, interpreted by us as indicating something like "Where are you now, come on, here's a crushed spider or lizard for lunch?" After 22nd January, that is thirteen days after hatching, no more was heard of them but the old birds continued to frequent the area though they ceased both food carrying and scolding at any human intrusion.

On 9th February the old Coucals were observed again taking food into the area. This occurred at thirty-one days after the original hatching and only eighteen days after they were known to be feeding the first brood. An inspection was made three days later of the patch of grass they were continually visiting. There was another nest containing two chicks, also an addled egg.

These second brood chicks left the nest about 21st February, seemingly about twelve days after hatching. They remained in the nest paddock for a few days, then appeared to move into the neighbour's paddock, a distance of ten chains. At this time they were about seventeen days old. The young Coucals were not positively seen immediately in the neighbour's paddock but it was plain from the parents' behaviour and agitation if we approached them there that their young were very close. Continued observations showed one of these chicks survived to the flying stage, which was on 7th April or fifty-seven days from hatching.

From previous observations here it is known that when young Coucals vacate the nest they are only about 4" in length and are still clothed in long white hairs with a few downy feathers all over them. Their wings are very

rudimentary and the tail is a mere half inch in length. Their legs, however, are well developed and very strong looking. This is not surprising as they appear to be dependent on their legs solely for movement from ten or twelve days old to fifty-seven days when they fly.

These observed facts raise at least these questions. Did the parent Coucals, in the eighteen days from seeming loss of the first brood to the feeding of the next batch, build a new nest, incubate the eggs, and hatch out young, or, alternatively, was the second nest in hand before the loss of the first brood? If the second nest was, in fact, being built before the loss of the first brood, does this mean that the male usually tends the first brood while the female builds a second nest and broods the second clutch? What happens when the second brood hatches? Do they all combine and jointly tend the younger batch?

Coucals are, of course, Cuckoos, and it is recognised that Cuckoo eggs hatch generally in a shorter period than the eggs of host species, so possibly Coucal eggs require only a short brood period. Nevertheless, eighteen days seems a very short time for a full cycle from feeding the first hatching to feeding the second.

ELLA PRATT, *Reserve Creek, Murwillumbah, N.S.W. 2484.*

S H O R T C O M M U N I C A T I O N S

FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF GULL-BILLED TERNS

While walking the ocean beach on North Stradbroke Island about five miles south of Point Lookout at approximately 13:00 on May 12, 1971, a young Gull-billed Tern, *Gelochelidon nilotica*, was noticed resting near the water. It was as large as an adult but had the heavily mottled plumage of a very young bird.

Shortly after being noticed, the young bird started screaming and dropped its wings in a begging posture. It was then joined by an adult which fed it. After feeding-the young bird, the adult flew screaming toward the observer and flew in tight circles over his head for about 30 seconds.

This sequence was repeated four times over a period of about ten minutes and terminated when both birds flew away down the beach. The young bird could fly strongly.

This behaviour was observed again at approximately 14:30 on the same beach some two miles further north. Two young were present and were begging from and being fed by one adult. Again, both young were competent fliers.

A similar pattern of behaviour has been noted with Fairy Terns, *Sterna nereis*, at Ryde in Victoria (M. Carter and C. Corbin, pers. comm.).

These observations suggest that some terns at least take a parental interest in their young after reaching flying age. It seems likely also that the Gull-billed Tern breeds on North Stradbroke Island.

Mr IVAN FIEN, 61 Highlands Street, Wavell Heights, Q. 4012.

GREY FALCON AT 'RIVERSIDE', CHINCHILLA

A very rare visitor turned up at 'Riverside' on 7 July 1971 in the form of a Grey Falcon, *Falco hypoleuca*, which was seen wheeling and flying low around a clump of trees. On approaching the area, the Falcon was seen to land in a Belah tree and to pounce on a Quarrion. It carried its prey to the ground in its talons but was attacked by a pair of Pied Butcher-birds and driven off. All the while as it was attacking and capturing its prey the Falcon kept up a loud cluck-cluck-cluck" call.

There is absolutely no doubt as to the identity of this bird, as two of us were within forty yards of the scene and were able to make continuous observations with the aid of binoculars. This is the second sighting of this species on 'Riverside', the previous being in April 1970, when I observed the bird flying in a leisurely fashion above me at tree-top level. The under-wing pattern was very clearly seen.

Mr ROY HANDO, 'Riverside', Chinchilla, Queensland 4413.

It seems that this species, which is rarely recorded in Queensland, has been more common in some areas this year. Cecil Cameron has also provided some observations of the Grey Falcon. They are:

30 May 1971. A pair near Thylungra Station, 70 miles north-west of Quilpie.

5 July 1971. One bird on the Charleville-Quilpie road, 40 miles west of Charleville.

6 July 1971. One bird on the Windorah-Jundah road, approximately 30 miles north-east of Windorah.

Cecil also reports that Mr Sandy Kidd of Windorah has observed the bird occasionally in good seasons.

Editor.

MIGRATION MOVEMENT DATES - MURWILLUMBAH DISTRICT

Migrants leaving after summer residence at Reserve Creek, near Murwillumbah, North-east N.S.W.:

- Channel-billed Cuckoo .. December 20/70. The last of very few.
- Sacred Kingfisher .. February 14/71. Numbers have been declining yearly for several years.
- Whimbrels .. February 10-20/71. Heard calling as they passed over during the nights.
- Dollarbird .. April 2/71. These had a good nesting season.
- Koel .. April 4/71. Very numerous.
- Leaden Flycatcher .. April 4/71. More numerous than usual.
- Brush Cuckoo .. April 9/71. In good numbers.
- Spine-tailed Swift .. April 10/71. In good numbers.
- Cicada-bird .. April 28/71. In usual numbers.
- Spangled Drongo .. May 9/71. In usual numbers; a pair nested successfully in their usual tree, and three young ones left the nest on January 21/71.

Species returning to winter in the area:

- Scarlet Honeyeater .. January 18/71. In good numbers.
- Rufous Fantail .. January 28/71. Usual numbers.
- Red-tailed Cockatoo .. January, 1971. A pair of these black Cockatoos was about in the scrub. It is several years since they have been recorded here, though their cousins, the Glossy Cockatoos, are regular visitors

in their searches for the acorns of
the Forest Oak (*Casuarina torulosa*).

- Golden Whistler .. February 25/71. In usual numbers.
Grey Fantail .. April 1/71. In usual numbers.
Rose Robin .. April 21/71. Smaller numbers than
usual.
Yellow-faced .. April 28/71. About half their usual
Honeyeater numbers. This year they settled in
and have remained quietly in the
area without signs of their usual
northerly movement.

Miss ELLA PRATT, *Reserve Creek, Murwillumbah, N.S.W. 2484.*

BLACK-CAPPED SITTELLA - AN EXTENSION OF RANGE?

On 16 August 1967 at 'Barrakee', a property some 50 miles east of Wanaaring on the Bourke road in the north-west of New South Wales, I found a pair of Black-capped Sittellas (*Neositta pileata*) in a patch of gidgee scrub (*Acacia cambagei*). The birds appeared to be nesting but I could not find the nest.

On 3 September 1967, in an area of mixed gidgee-mulga (*Acacia aneura*) on the Windorah-Adavale road, close to the turnoff from the Quilpie-Windorah road (25°43'S, 143°27'E) another pair was found feeding newly hatched young. The nest was about 12 feet up in a gidgee and I was able to photograph one of the birds at the nest. The two adult birds were assisted by three immature birds in the feeding of the nestlings and we presumed that the immature birds were from a previous brood.

From the literature available, we have not found any previous firm record of this bird in Queensland. The Queensland sighting is approximately 300 miles north of the Wanaaring one, and as the country in between is all of the same general type, these birds could be distributed throughout the area and possibly even further north.

Mr C.A.C. CAMERON. '*Callitris*', e/- 'Rockwood', Chinchilla, Qld. 4413.

O B I T U A R I E S

Keith Alfred Hindwood was clearly for many years one of Australia's most distinguished Ornithologists. For over 40 years he was Honorary Ornithologist to the Australian Museum in Sydney. He was one of those rare souls who happily combined many fine qualities. He had great field capacity in both observation and photography, equally good cabinet and research knowledge, and the knack of writing a lucid and properly documented statement of his results. His books and numerous articles in all the bird journals are eloquent evidence of these capacities. With it all he was very approachable and helpful. The memories of many of us cherish details of happy days spent out birding with Keith.

Always keen to follow leads to sources of information he became fully aware of QOS within the last year during his search for data on the Double-banded Dotterel. Typically he promptly became a member.

The Society joins with his relatives and many friends in mourning his so early loss.

J. S. Robertson.

Stanley McCosker, a Digger of two Wars, did not get down to many meetings from his home of retirement in Caloundra, but he was keen and loved his birds. As a Bird Bander since 1964 he had opportunities to look for those extra intriguing details. His bright cheerful outlook made him a splendid companion.

On 1 June 1971 he was alone and looking for new areas unmarred by development, and there he was found next day, sitting under a tree, complete with hat and spectacles. Those who knew Stan will miss him. QOS extends to his surviving relatives sincere sympathy.

J.S.R.