

# THE SUNBIRD

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Volume 31 No. 1

April 2001

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## **THE CHOWCHILLA AND OTHER DYIRBAL/YIDINY (ABORIGINAL) NAMES – REDISCOVERED**

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Indigenous Australians, like all humans, have rich and sophisticated languages. Indigenous Australian (Aboriginal) languages have frequently been perceived as structurally simple, consisting of euphonious words related to sounds from the environment. On the contrary, their languages have grammars, and a set of speech sounds, typical of other well-known languages such as the European Languages (Yallop 1982, Blake 1991). Dialects of Aboriginal languages interact with neighbouring dialects in much the same way that European languages do over a geographical gradient. However, neighbouring dialects are probably less restricted by arbitrarily defined political borders than their European counterparts. Some published word-lists (e.g. Endacott 1924 and 1990, cited in Thieberger & McGregor 1994) have added to the misconceptions about Aboriginal languages by listing words from various areas of Australia, but not stating exactly where they came from. This type of publication provides no more information than a list of words collected from all over Europe (Thieberger & McGregor 1994).

200 years ago Australia had approximately 250 Aboriginal languages (Dixon *et al.* 1990, Blake 1991, Thieberger & McGregor 1994), composed of approximately 600 dialects (Blake 1991). However, these can be divided into 26 different family-like groups, which are related to each other and probably share a common ancestral origin (Thieberger & McGregor 1994). There has been a consistent loss of these languages since European settlement, with

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now only approximately 100 remaining. Moreover, most of these are only spoken by a small number of adults (typically less than 100 speakers) with few children currently learning to speak them (Dixon *et al.* 1990, Thieberger & McGregor 1994). Some language revival programs have been initiated to try to halt this loss. These include the introduction of bilingual education, and the establishment of language centres to maintain and record the indigenous Australian (and other endangered) languages.

Transcription of Aboriginal languages to English is problematic because some Aboriginal sounds have no direct translation into English, or because some English letters/sounds are interchangeable, for example *d* and *t*, *k* and *g*, as are *ch*, *j*, *tj* (Dixon *et al.* 1990). Bird names have often been incorrectly transcribed for two reasons. Firstly, because the original tabulator had had a limited understanding of the species in question (Condon 1955, Hindwood 1965). Secondly, because the early recorders were not trained linguists and subsequently transcribed the Aboriginal words in terms of English sounds rather than a phonetic alphabet (Dixon *et al.* 1990, Thieberger & McGregor 1994).

Recently, eleven bird names were rediscovered attached to specimens in the Australian Museum. The birds were originally collected by Cairn and Grant in 1889, in the Herberton district near Atherton, and the Aboriginal name was transcribed at that time.

Edwin James Cairn and Robert Grant, under instruction from Dr. E. P. Ramsay Curator of the Australian Museum, undertook an expedition to the Bellenden-Ker Ranges from 13 April to 12 October 1889. They collected mammals, birds, reptiles, insects and some ethnographic materials. Cairn & Grant (1890) provided both a list of these items and an account of the trip. In addition, E. J. Cairn's report of the trip (to the trustees of the Australian Museum) is held in the Australian Museum's archives, and is referred to hereafter as Cairn (1889).

Cairn & Grant (1890) included Aboriginal mammal names, but not the Aboriginal bird names. The bird names have been unearthed on specimen labels attached to study skins in the Australian Museum. These labels are all

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written in the same handwriting, on the same paper, and only one aboriginal name label per species was written. However, many of the specimens collected have since been exchanged, or in some cases written off and destroyed. Nevertheless, three complete sets of a species remain: the Spectacled Monarch *Monarcha trivirgatus* (*Pūcha pin*), Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* (*Chu-ka-bah*) and Noisy Pitta *Pitta versicolor* (*Wab-kǎ-wah*). In each case there is only one specimen carrying the Aboriginal name-tag. In some instances the Australian Museum label, in E. P. Ramsay's hand writing, carries the annotation "native name for the Herberton district". The Aboriginal names collected and transcribed by Cairn and Grant are listed in Table 1.

The Aboriginal bird names were acquired from either native troopers or the 'Myalls' ('wild aboriginals, strangers' from the Dharuk language in the Sydney region, see page 172 of Dixon *et al.* 1990) enlisted at the Boar Pocket camp, situated on the Cairns-Herberton road. Cairn (1889) & Cairn and Grant (1890) stated that some natives had been acquired by the police at Atherton, about 16 km from Boar Pocket. Hence they took steps to obtain their assistance and had "two or three with their gins attached to the camp". In addition, all the mammals (except for tree kangaroos) were collected at Boar Pocket and the Aboriginal names for these were published in Cairn & Grant (1890). It seems probable that the Aboriginal bird names were collected at the same time. Cairn and Grant also reported that they undertook an additional collecting trip to the 'dividing range' (13 km east of Herberton), in August, which included four native trackers and eight 'Myalls'. However, this trip was unsuccessful in obtaining birds due to heavy rain (Cairn 1889). Finally, although birds were collected at Double Island (25 km north of Cairns), there was no mention of any Aboriginal assistance (Cairn 1889, Cairn & Grant 1890).

Given that Cairn and Grant collected the Aboriginal bird names at Boar Pocket (16 km from Atherton) from the local Aborigines, it is possible to assign them to a language group. Dixon (1972, 1991a) placed Atherton in the Dyirbal/Yidiny language area, although there are six dialects meeting in this area. The geographically most likely are Yidiny, Ngayungu and the Mbabaram. However, the names for the Tooth-billed Bowerbird *Scenopoeetes dentirostris* and Spotted Catbird *Ailuroedus melanotis* are known for Yidiny and are quite different from those transcribed by Cairn and Grant (see Dixon

1991b). However, the Mbabaram dialect is excluded because it was more common on the western side of the ranges around the upper Walsh River area (Dixon 1991a). The Ngaygungu dialect appears geographically most probable. However, according to Dixon (1991a) this is the least known dialect of all, with only 187 words recorded by Roth (1900) and seven by Tindale (1938). Both the Mbabaram and Ngaygungu are also considered to have the least in common with the other dialects of the area. However, because the six different dialects were relatively close to the Boar Pocket camp, and European activities (e.g. road-building and commerce) probably encouraged the greater movement from all of these groups, more than one dialect may be present in the bird names acquired by Cairn and Grant.

Nevertheless, R. M. W. Dixon (*in litt.*) recognises the following bird names from the Dyirbal language:

1. *Wind-an* as a name given to a bird known loosely as a 'ground thrush'. The Grey-headed Robin *Heteromyias albispecularis* feeds on the ground in the litter, similarly to thrushes *Zoothera* spp., but it is half their size and appears distinctly different. Since the specimen of Grey-headed Robin in the Australian Museum carries the *Wind-an* label, it seems most likely that this is the Dyirbal name for the species.
2. *Wagawa* was given in Dyirbal for 'a bird that nests in leaves at the foot of a tree'. The Noisy Pitta frequently nests between buttress roots of trees (Schodde & Tidemann 1988, Pizzey & Knight 1997). Moreover, since *k* and *g* are interchangeable in most Australian languages, *wab-kā-wa* is interchangeable with *wagawa* and thus this name is clearly transcribed from the Dyirbal language.
3. Furthermore, *jawajawa* (or *chavachama*) are given for 'black-breasted magpie' in both Dyirbal and Yidiny. However, as they are both close phonetic mimics of the call of the Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*, as is the *coab-coab* of Cairn and Grant, the latter is most likely an attempted transcription of the Dyirbal/Yidiny name.
4. In addition, since *ch* and *j* are interchangeable, *Ju ka Bah* (Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*) and *Chu-ka-bah* (Golden Whistler) are clearly two attempts to transcribe the same word. However, It is possible that this could be a generic expression for a bird with yellow underparts.

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Aborigines in the Atherton area sometimes had a single name for two distinct species of plants, although they were typically from the same genus or family.

Notably, many of the Aboriginal bird names reported here appear to be mimics of the bird calls that they represent (onomatopoeic). However, *Wärinbāb* (Tooth-billed Bowerbird), *Pū cha pin* (Spectacled Monarch) and *Coleman* (Golden Bowerbird) are not onomatopoeic, which highlights that the language/s do not follow a simple rule of mimicking the sounds of the environment.

### A brief history of the name Chowchilla

The Chowchilla *Orthonyx spaldingii* is of particular interest, because it is widely known and is currently the recommended English name for the species (RAOU 1978, Christidis & Boles 1994). In 1889 when Cairn and Grant collected the Chowchilla specimen (which carries its label), they identified it as *Orthonyx spaldingii*, which was commonly known as the Spalding's Orthonyx (Meston 1889). Subsequently, it has been called the Auctioneer-bird, Black-headed Log-runner and Spalding's Spinetail (CSIRO 1969). The type description by Ramsay (1868) does not provide a common name, which follows Ramsay's usual practice. Chowchilla has been adopted from the Dyirbal/Yidiny language groups of north Queensland (Dixon *et al.* 1990). The earliest published record of the name Chowchilla detected is in the Proceedings of the Queensland's Legislative Council, in a report by Archibald Meston, in 1889. The Chowchilla name first appeared in the ornithological literature in *Emu* 8 (Jackson 1909). Sydney Jackson cited "Chowchilla" in a short list of names given to birds by the local Aborigines (at Tinaroo Scrub); and described its call as "Chow-chilla, chow-chow, chow-chilla". The bird's distinctive call has been referred to frequently in various references since (e.g. Barnard & Campbell 1917, Barnard 1926). The first detected occurrence of Chowchilla as the English name for the species appears in the "*Official Checklist*" (RAOU 1926) as the Northern Chowchilla. It has subsequently reappeared as the Northern Chowchilla in CSIRO (1969), and as Chowchilla in RAOU (1978). It is noteworthy that, Chisholm (1934) commented that settlers in northern Queensland had adopted the name

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“Chow-chilla” for the Black-headed Logrunner. Clearly, the name has been ‘borrowed’ into the English language over time, and has now become the official recommended English name of the species (RAOU 1978, Christidis & Boles 1994).

In order to conserve any indigenous Australian language, or words, we need to know where the words came from and report this as accurately as possible. Moreover, the best way to conserve any language is to use it; that is, read, write, and speak it. In this instance, the Dyirbal name for *O. spaldingii* has been preserved by borrowing it from the Dyirbal language group. More Aboriginal names could be preserved by using them as subspecies epithets, or promoting them as the colloquial regional name, in much the same way as the ‘Murray Magpie’ is used for the Magpie-lark *Grallina cyanoleuca* in the Murray River region

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Walter Boles for providing access to the Australian Museum’s bird collection. Thanks to S. J. S. Debus and R. M. W. (Bob) Dixon for proof reading the draft manuscript. Moreover, thanks to Prof. Dixon for his advice on the Dyirbal/Yidiny languages that was essential for the preparation of this paper.

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**TABLE 1. Bird names collected and transcribed by E. J. Cairn and R. Grant and their associated languages/dialects.**

Note a ‘.’ accent indicates a long vowel sound and the ‘u’ shaped accent indicates a short vowel sound.

Scientific name	Common name	Aboriginal	Specimen	Sex	Indigenous
<i>Alluroedus melanotis</i>	Spotted Catbird	Chela yōw	0 3539	?	Ngayungu ?
<i>Eopsaltria australis</i>	Eastern Yellow Robin	Ju ka bah	0 3567	F	Ngayungu ?
<i>Heteromyias albispecularis</i>	Grey-headed Robin	Wīnd-an	0 3414	M	Dyirbal
<i>Monarcha trivirgatus</i>	Spectacled Monarch	Pūcha pin	0 3466	M	Ngayungu ?
<i>Oreoscopus gutturalis</i>	Fernwren	Mīlmorīn	0 3475	M	Ngayungu ?
<i>Orthonyx spaldingii</i>	Chowchilla	Chowchilla	0 3514	M	Dyirbal
<i>Pachycephala pectoralis</i>	Golden Whistler	Chu-ka-bah	0 3425	M	Ngayungu ?
<i>Pitta versicolor</i>	Noisy Pitta	Wah-kā-wa	0 3396	?	Dyirbal
<i>Prionodura newtoniana</i>	Golden Bowerbird	Colēman	0 3457	M	Ngayungu ?
<i>Scenopoeetes dentirostris</i>	Tooth-billed Bowerbird	Wārinbāh	0 3528	M	Ngayungu ?
<i>Sericornis citreogularis</i>	Yellow-throated Scrubwren	Twikim	0 3478	M	Ngayungu ?
<i>Strepera graculina</i>	Pied Currawong	Coah-Coah	0 3580	?	Dyirbal/Yidiny ?

## REPORT OF THE QUEENSLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY INC. RECORDS APPRAISAL COMMITTEE, 1998 - 1999

STUART PELL and IAN GYNTHNER

This is the second report of the Queensland Ornithological Society Inc. Records Appraisal Committee (QOSI RAC), whose major function is to appraise reported sightings of rare or vagrant species in Queensland, or of any species new to the State. Details of the objectives and mechanisms of the QOSI RAC are given in the first report of this series (Gynther & Pell 1999). The present report updates details of Committee membership and of the 'List of Rare Queensland Birds', and summarises the results of the Committee's considerations of submissions received during the two-year period 1998 - 1999.

The current membership of the QOSI RAC is Stuart Pell (Chair, as Records Officer, QOSI), Greg Czechura, Ian Gynther, Rod Hobson, Glenn Holmes, Pat McConnell and David Stewart (Snr). During the period, Chris Pavey and Anita Smyth retired from their positions, and the Society thanks them for their valuable contributions to the operation of the Committee.

### **Review of 'List of Rare Queensland Birds' during 1998 - 1999**

In general, the Committee appraises reported sightings of species included on the 'List of Rare Queensland Birds', which is given as an Appendix to this report. Birds on the List qualify as 'rare' based on reporting rates of less than 20 records in Queensland over the last decade.

During the period in question, Northern Giant-Petrel *Macronectes halli*, Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*, Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*, Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis* and Elegant Parrot *Neophema elegans* were added to the List, as was Eastern Bristlebird *Dasyornis brachypterus*, given the critically endangered status of this species in Queensland. Buff-breasted Button-quail

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*Turnix olivii* was removed from the national Birds Australia Review List, but has been retained on the Queensland List.

### **QOSI RAC considerations, 1998 - 1999**

During 1998 - 1999, a total of 33 submissions was received by the Committee, of which one was subsequently withheld (Grey Ternlet *Procelsterna cerulea* : QOSI RAC Case No. 63), and one related to a submission of Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* from near Bunbury, Western Australia (QOSI RAC Case No. 57), which was transferred to the Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC). Of the remaining 31 submissions relating to Queensland observations, six concerned species on the national Review List, which were forwarded to the BARC for their consideration. These are listed at the end of this report. The outcome of these deliberations will not be provided here, but will be documented separately by the BARC. Of the 25 submissions appraised by QOSI RAC, 17 were accepted and eight were not accepted. A brief summary of each accepted submission is given below, followed by a list of those records which the Committee voted not to accept. Cases in each section are ordered phylogenetically according to Christidis & Boles (1994).

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to other members of QOSI RAC, and to past members Chris Pavey and Anita Smyth, for their hard work and attention to detail in reviewing the cases submitted to them. Their willing contribution of time and expertise has enabled the Committee to continue to operate effectively. We would also like to thank those people who submitted their records for appraisal. Without the understanding of the appraisal process by submitters and their support of the Committee's decisions, QOSI RAC could not function adequately.

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## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF CASES ACCEPTED

### **Northern Giant-Petrel *Macronectes halli***

Case No. 70 involved a single bird seen in pelagic waters, east of the Southport Seaway, SEQ on 12 July 1997. The bird was viewed for several minutes, at distances of less than 10 metres, both sitting on the water and flying just above the waves. The large brownish-black petrel (similar in size to the small albatrosses *Diomedea* spp.), had disproportionately short slender wings, a short blunt wedge-shaped tail, and a large horn-coloured bill with reddish-coloured maxillary unguis and mandibular unguis. These latter features distinguished the bird from Southern Giant-Petrel (*M. giganteus*). Body size and proportions, and bill characteristics, allowed separation from the two sooty albatrosses (*Phoebastria*) and from the *Procellaria* petrels.

### **White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis***

Case No. 61 referred to a single bird, 25 - 30 metres above the open ocean, ca. 800 metres from the headland at Point Danger on the Queensland / New South Wales border. The bird was viewed through a 30 x 60 power telescope in excellent visibility. Detailed sketches of the upper and lower views of the bird were supplied. The major features for clear identification of White-necked Petrel were included. The white collar, black head-cap, prominent upperwing 'M', and white underwing with black diagonal bar were all apparent. The high arcing flight was typical of *Pterodroma* species. The black head-cap and white nape separated it from other 'cookalarias'; the underwing pattern from the Juan Fernandez Petrel *P. externa*. Barau's Petrel *P. baraui* is smaller and has a grey hindneck. Flight-style, underwing pattern and white collar enabled differentiation from the superficially similar Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*.

Case No. 66 involved a bird found as a beach-washed derelict, recently washed ashore, 6.3 km south of Point Lookout on Main Beach, North Stradbroke Island, SEQ on 19 March 1993, following several days of strong south-east winds associated with a cyclonic depression (Cyclone Roger). The detailed description, made of the specimen at the Queensland Museum (QMO 30022), clearly identified the specimen as that of a White-necked

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Petrel. The submitters noted that the specimen was a relatively large individual, with several of its measurements slightly exceeding the range limits provided for the species by Marchant & Higgins (1990). The Queensland Museum has a further two specimens from Queensland beaches, both from Noosa Heads, SEQ. The present record has been published (Stewart & Gynther 1999).

Case No. 69 described a large, pale *Pterodroma*, with a white belly, long pointed wings, and a wedge-shaped tail, seen by multiple observers in pelagic waters, south-east of the Southport Seaway, SEQ on 18 January 1997. The bird was observed for 1 - 2 minutes, at distances down to 20 - 30 metres, in excellent visibility. A comprehensive description was given, including all key features enabling unequivocal identification as White-necked Petrel. Flight pattern involved little flapping with high arcing above the waves, typical of *Pterodroma* spp. in slight to moderate seas. The identification was well supported by detailed elimination of other possible *Pterodroma* (Gould's Petrel *P. leucoptera*, Black-winged Petrel *P. nigripennis*, Juan Fernandez Petrel *P. externa*, Barau's Petrel *P. barani* and Black-capped Petrel *P. hasitata*).

### **Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis***

Case No. 67 involved two birds found as beach-washed derelicts, recently washed ashore, 4.2 km and 20.1 km, respectively, south of Point Lookout on Main Beach, North Stradbroke Island, SEQ on 19 March 1993, following several days of strong south-east winds associated with a cyclonic depression (Cyclone Roger). The specimens were donated to the Queensland Museum where they are registered as QMO 30081 and QMO 30029. The plumage of the two specimens was very similar, and clearly identified the specimens as Black-winged Petrels. The submitters commented that all measurements taken on the specimens were within the ranges derived from data in Marchant & Higgins (1990), that the Queensland Museum has an additional seven specimens from Queensland, and that there are a further five published records of the species from Queensland (Reid 1965, Kikkawa & Boles 1976, Griffin 1980, Smyth & Corben 1984, Marchant & Higgins 1990). Details of the two birds referred to in the present case are given in Stewart & Gynther (1999).

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**Slender-billed Prion** *Pachyptila belcheri*

Case No. 74 was of a single bird observed in pelagic waters, on the Continental Slope ca. 54 km east of the Southport Seaway, SEQ on 21 June 1998. The bird was viewed intermittently during a 15 minute period, at distances down to 10 metres, in good visibility. Prior to its final decision on this record, the Committee discussed aspects of taxonomy of the prion group, and decided as a matter of policy to follow the taxonomy detailed in Christidis & Boles (1994), recognising six prion species, and to base assessments on the descriptions given in Marchant & Higgins (1990). On these bases, the record was accepted. In general, it was agreed that a sufficient combination of characters had been noted by experienced observers to support the identification as *P. belcheri*. These characters included the broad white supercilium and white cheeks (leading to a very pale-faced appearance); the dark line through the eye to the neck; the narrow black area on the central upper tail; the less-obvious upperwing 'M' pattern compared to other prions present; and the relatively long, slender bill.

**Buller's Shearwater** *Puffinus bulleri*

Case No. 73 detailed a single bird seen at Cape Bowling Green, NEQ on 16 December 1998. The bird was in view for 5 minutes, at distances down to ca. 50 metres, both on the water and in the air. The bird was rather slender and long-winged, with a long dark bill. The underwing was white; the upperparts were predominantly greyish, with a distinct blackish 'M' across the upperwings, a distinct blackish cap, and a blackish wedge-shaped tail. A distinctive broad pale wing-bar bordered by dark areas on either side was noted when the bird was sitting on water. The bird was larger than two accompanying Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *P. pacificus*, although field guides generally indicate that the size of the two species is similar. The submission notes, however, that Marchant & Higgins (1990) indicate a cline in size of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters from the western Indian Ocean (smallest) to the mid-Pacific (largest). The data imply that eastern Australian birds may be smaller on average than Buller's Shearwater, which approximates the size of the largest central Pacific Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. Separation from *Pterodroma* gadfly petrels and other species with similar 'M'-pattern on the upperparts was on the basis of size, bill, and flight pattern. Pale-phase Wedge-tailed Shearwater was ruled out since it shows, at best, a faint darker 'M' on brownish upper wings, and a concolorous, rather than contrasting, head-cap.

**Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri***

Case No. 75 was of a single bird seen on the Continental Shelf, ca. 31.5 km east of the Southport Seaway, SEQ on 18 July 1998. The bird was viewed for ca. 15 minutes, in good visibility, both cruising at a distance and then down to a distance of ca. 10 metres when feeding behind the boat. Overall, the bird was a stocky 'mollymawk', with stocky head and bill. The detailed description of plumage and bill characteristics, and the excellent photograph included in the submission, clearly identified the bird as Buller's Albatross and allowed separation from Grey-headed Albatross *D. chrysostoma*. The lores of the individual concerned were noticeably pale behind the bill, which is characteristic of *D. bulleri bulleri* as against *D. bulleri platei*. The submitter noted that the latter moves further east of New Zealand when not breeding and would be highly unlikely to occur here at this time of the year.

**Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis***

Case No. 51 related to a single bird seen on an open, intertidal zone of a northern beach of Bribie Island, SEQ over the period 17 - 19 May 1998. The bird was approached to within 3 metres, and was seen in flight on two separate occasions. A total of 12 photographs was supplied, clearly demonstrating front and rear views of the bird. The orange to pink legs, pink eye-ring, pale red bill with black tip, partial breast-band, dark colour of the secondaries in flight, and in particular the width of the broad white collar, strongly supported the identification as a young Hooded Plover. Details of this observation and the implications of the record for the past and present distribution of Hooded Plover in eastern Australia are presented in Cameron & Weston (1999).

**Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus***

Case No. 46 involved a single bird on sand at the Cairns Esplanade, NEQ on 15 November 1997. The bird was seen at a distance of 20 metres, both standing and in flight. The submission was supported by a photograph which clearly indicated the lack of red on the upper mandible, enabling effective separation from Pacific Gull *L. pacificus*. The bill shape, and the dull blue-grey legs, allowed separation from the less likely Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*.

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### **White Tern *Gygis alba***

Cases No. 53 and 54 described separate sightings of single birds, on 31 January 1998 and 21 February 1998, 34 km and 47 km east of Southport, SEQ on the Continental Shelf and Slope respectively. The birds were viewed in good visibility, for 30 and 25 minutes, and at distances down to 35 and 15 metres, respectively. Both birds were fairly small, compact, dazzlingly white terns, with buoyant flight. The dark bill, on a comparatively large head, appeared conical and uplifted. The dark eye, with some associated 'smudging' around it, appeared large. From underneath, the primaries and secondaries appeared translucent at times, contrasting with dusky underwing coverts. The tail took on a triangular appearance when fanned during manoeuvring. The lack of markings on the head and mantle indicated adult birds. The descriptions given clearly differentiate the birds from the Grey Ternlet *Procelsterna cerulea*.

### **Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma***

Case No. 68 concerned a single bird sighted by the side of the airstrip ca. 1 km west of Byra Homestead on the Culgoa Floodplain National Park, 200 km south-west of St. George, SWQ on 6 April 1999. The bird was observed for 5 minutes, at distances from 15 down to 3.5 metres, initially on the ground, and later on a wire fence. A photograph was submitted with the record. The description and photograph indicated a dull green *Neophema* parrot, with a broad blue band in the wing, and a blue tail. The extent of blue in the wing, and the relatively uniform nature of this colour with no indication of a contrasting two tone pattern, allowed identification as Blue-winged Parrot, as against Elegant Parrot *N. elegans*, or others of this genus. The bill appeared bluish-grey. This, together with the lack of an obvious frontal band, and the dull greenish-olive plumage, suggested a juvenile typical of autumn-winter, in accordance with this April sighting. The observation date coincided with the timing of the annual northward movement of Blue-winged Parrots from southern Australia.

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**Elegant Parrot *Neophema elegans***

Case No. 55 involved a single bird observed ca. 10 km north of the Wompah Gate, near Pyampa Station, SWQ on 7 June 1998. The bird was in view for at least 10 minutes, at distances down to ca. 10 metres, initially perched in lignum grasses, and then feeding on the ground. When flushed, the bird called a sharp 'tz-ee'. A photograph accompanied the record. The bird had a greenish back and bright yellow breast and lores. It clearly demonstrated the two tone blue frontal band, pale blue above dark blue, extending above the eye and ending just behind the eye, and the narrow two-toned blue leading edge of the folded wing, features diagnostic of the Elegant Parrot. The above features enabled elimination of the Blue-winged Parrot and of other *Neophema* species. There have been no previous confirmed sightings of Elegant Parrot in Queensland and the sighting represents a considerable extension of range. Details of this record, including a colour photograph, are provided by Carter & Shimba (1999).

**Banded Whiteface *Aphelocephala nigricincta***

Case No. 43 documented a sighting on 8 June 1996 of ca. 15 birds in sandy desert country ca. 90 km west of Birdsville in the Simpson Desert National Park, SWQ. The birds were observed for 10 minutes, initially at a distance of 25 metres on the ground and then at 15 metres as they perched in a small dead tree. The birds were described as smaller than House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, with thick sparrow-type bill and short tail. The face, throat and chest were white, and an obvious black band dissected the chest and abdomen. The submission described a constant, sweet, tinkling call. The birds were very actively feeding on the ground, interspersed with short-distance flights. The black band across the lower chest clearly ruled out the other *Aphelocephala* spp.

**Regent Honeyeater *Xanthomyza phrygia***

Case No. 44 involved two birds seen in woodland savannah near Cement Mills Road, north of MacIntyre Brook, Gore, west of Warwick, SEQ on 2 November 1996. The birds were viewed at a distance of ca. 4 metres, at a height of ca. 2.5 metres, in excellent visibility. The submission described a medium-large honeyeater, black and white with yellow markings on wings

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and extensive yellow on the tail. The facial skin around the eye was pinkish. The habitat description (mixed Grey Box / Blue Gum savannah woodland, with scattered Acacias) fitted well for Regent Honeyeater, as did the behaviour pattern reported (birds were upside down, feeding from Blue Gum blossoms). Regent Honeyeater has been reported previously (and since) from this general locality.

Case No. 72 concerned a single bird seen in the Durikai State Forest, 40 km west of Warwick, SEQ on 16 June 1999. The bird was observed over two periods of 1 - 2 minutes, at a distance of ca. 25 metres and a height of ca. 3 metres. It was perched in a small tree overhanging a man-made waterhole in dry eucalypt forest. The individual was described as predominantly black with yellow markings, and of similar size to the Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus melanops* present in the area at the same time. The area around the eye was pinkish-red. An open-weave 'net' appearance was created by large V-shaped markings on the body. The species is known to regularly visit this locality.

### SYSTEMATIC LIST OF CASES NOT ACCEPTED

**White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessonii* : One bird off Point Danger, on the Queensland / New South Wales border on 24 October 1998 (Case No. 59).

**Grey-headed Albatross** *Diomedea chrysostoma* : One bird off Point Danger, on the Queensland / New South Wales border on 29 August 1998 (Case No. 56).

**Red Goshawk** *Erythrotriorchis radiatus* : One bird east of Mt. Molloy - Mt. Carbine Road, NEQ on 18 December 1998 (Case No. 64).

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* : One bird on bank of Russell River, 60 km south of Cairns, NEQ on 25 November 1995 (Case No. 45).

**Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus* : One bird at Point Danger, on the Queensland / New South Wales border on 6 February 1999 (Case No. 62).

**White-rumped Swiftlet** *Collocalia spodiopygus* : Between 100 - 150 birds above Red Beach, Bribie Island, SEQ on 28 November 1998 (Case No. 60).

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**Barred Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina lineata* (NG race) : Two birds at Mount Lewis Road, Julatten, NEQ on 22 January 1997 (Case No. 47). Details appear in Leonard (1998).

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* : One bird at Great Sandy National Park (Cooloola section), SEQ on 11 April 1998 (Case No. 49).

### **CASES FORWARDED TO BIRDS AUSTRALIA RARITIES COMMITTEE**

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* : one bird observed on pelagic trip south-east of Southport, SEQ, 28° 05' 21" S; 153° 52' 10" E, on 27 February 1999 (QOSI RAC Case No. 65; BARC Case No. 262).

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* : one bird observed close to mouth of Lower Daintree River, NEQ on 23 October 1998 (QOSI RAC Case No. 58; BARC Case No. 257).

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* : one bird at North Reef, Scarborough, SEQ, 27° 12' S; 153° 07' E, on 30 March 1999 (QOSI RAC Case No. 71).

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* : one bird observed at Tinaroo Dam, Atherton Shire, NEQ from 12 October to 25 November 1997 (QOSI RAC Case No. 48; BARC Case No. 236).

**Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* : one bird observed at Southbank, Brisbane, SEQ on 18 June 1998 (QOSI RAC Case No. 52; BARC Case No. 249).

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* : up to seven birds observed at any one time on 21 February 1998 on power lines at Newell Beach, Mossman, NEQ (QOSI RAC Case No. 50; BARC Case No. 276).

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**LIST OF RARE QUEENSLAND BIRDS - 2000**

Revision date: 1 February 2000

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
<b>*Spotted Whistling-Duck</b>	<b><i>Dendrocygna guttata</i></b>
<b>*Northern Shoveler</b>	<b><i>Anas clypeata</i></b>
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Little Penguin	<i>Endyptula minor</i>
Common Diving-Petrel	<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>
Northern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>
Southern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialisoides</i>
Kerguelen Petrel	<i>Lagenosa brevirostris</i>
White-headed Petrel	<i>Pterodroma lessonii</i>
<b>*Kermadec Petrel</b>	<b><i>Pterodroma neglecta</i></b>
<b>*Herald Petrel</b>	<b><i>Pterodroma arminjoniana</i></b>
Soft-plumaged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma mollis</i>
Mottled Petrel	<i>Pterodroma inexpectata</i>
White-necked Petrel	<i>Pterodroma cervicalis</i>
Black-winged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma nigripennis</i>
<b>*Cook's Petrel</b>	<b><i>Pterodroma cookii</i></b>
<b>*Broad-billed Prion</b>	<b><i>Pachyptila vittata</i></b>
Salvin's Prion	<i>Pachyptila salvini</i>
Antarctic Prion	<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>
Slender-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>
<b>*Westland Petrel</b>	<b><i>Procellaria westlandica</i></b>
<b>*Black Petrel</b>	<b><i>Procellaria parkinsoni</i></b>
Buller's Shearwater	<i>Puffinus bulleri</i>
Little Shearwater	<i>Puffinus assimilis</i>
Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>
Grey-headed Albatross	<i>Diomedea chrysostoma</i>
Buller's Albatross	<i>Diomedea bulleri</i>
Sooty Albatross	<i>Phoebastria fusca</i>
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross	<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel	<i>Fregatta tropica</i>
<b>*White-bellied Storm-Petrel</b>	<b><i>Fregatta grallaria</i></b>
Red Goshawk	<i>Erythrotriorchis radiatus</i>
<b>*Gurney's Eagle</b>	<b><i>Aquila gurneyi</i></b>
Buff-breasted Button-quail	<i>Turnix olivii</i>
Plains-wanderer	<i>Pedionomus torquatus</i>
Swinhoe's Snipe	<i>Gallinago megala</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
<b>*Lesser Yellowlegs</b>	<b><i>Tringa flavipes</i></b>

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- Long-toed Stint  
**\*Dunlin**  
 Ruff  
 Red-necked Phalarope  
 Banded Stilt  
**\*Ringed Plover**  
**\*Little Ringed Plover**  
 Hooded Plover  
 Great Skua  
**\*South Polar Skua**  
 Long-tailed Jaeger  
 Pacific Gull  
 Kelp Gull  
**\*Laughing Gull**  
**\*Franklin's Gull**  
 Arctic Tern  
 Fairy Tern  
 Grey Ternlet  
 White Tern  
**\*Collared Imperial-Pigeon**  
 Purple-crowned Lorikeet  
 Double-eyed (Coxen's) Fig-Parrot  
 Princess Parrot  
 Paradise Parrot  
 Blue-winged Parrot  
 Elegant Parrot  
 Scarlet-chested Parrot  
**\*Night Parrot**  
**\*Long-tailed Cuckoo**  
**\*Glossy Swiftlet**  
**\*Uniform Swiftlet**  
**\*House Swift**  
 Slaty-backed Thornbill  
 Banded Whiteface  
 Regent Honeyeater  
**\*Grey Wagtail**  
**\*Black-backed Wagtail**  
 Star Finch (eastern form)  
**\*Red-rumped Swallow**  
 Pacific Swallow  
**\*Oriental Reed-Warbler**  
**\*Blue Rock Thrush**  
**\*Singing Starling**  
*Calidris subminuta*  
**Calidris alpina**  
*Philomachus pugnax*  
*Phalaropus lobatus*  
*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*  
**Charadrius hiaticula**  
**Charadrius dubius**  
*Thinornis rubricollis*  
*Catharacta skua*  
**Catharacta maccormicki**  
*Stercorarius longicaudus*  
*Larus pacificus*  
*Larus dominicanus*  
**Larus atricilla**  
**Larus pipixcan**  
*Sterna paradisaea*  
*Sterna nereis*  
*Procelsterna cerulea*  
*Gygis alba*  
**Ducula mullerii**  
*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*  
*Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni*  
*Polytelis alexandrae*  
*Psephotus pulcherrimus*  
*Neophema chrysostrama*  
*Neophema elegans*  
*Neophema splendida*  
**Pezoporus occidentalis**  
**Eudynamys taitensis**  
**Collocalia esculenta**  
**Collocalia vanikorensis**  
**Apus affinis**  
*Acanthiza robustirostris*  
*Aphelocephala nigricincta*  
*Xanthomyza pbrygia*  
**Motacilla cinerea**  
**Motacilla lugens**  
*Neobornia ruficauda ruficauda*  
**Hirundo daurica**  
*Hirundo tabitica*  
**Acrocephalus orientalis**  
**Monticola solitarius**  
**Aplonis cantoroides**

\* Entries in bold text are on the BARC Review List for Australia

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**SPOTTED BOWERBIRD *CHLAMYDERA MACULATA*  
OBSERVED EATING FLOWER HEADS OF  
*ACACIA SALICINA*.**

CRAIG EDDIE

On 10 May 1998, at approximately 1310 (EST) a Spotted Bowerbird was heard calling from the house garden at 'Six Mile' (26°12'41"S, 148°42'02"E), a cattle grazing property 42km NNW of Roma, south central Queensland. I located the bird of unknown sex (nuchal crest inconspicuous), as it flew into a mature and flowering Doolan or Sally Wattle (*Acacia salicina*). It began picking flower heads from the racemes using its bill and immediately swallowed them. At least 15 flower heads were consumed during the 10 minute period of observation. The bird was still feeding in the tree when I ceased observation. Upon examination of flower heads on the same tree approximately one hour later, no appreciable numbers of potential invertebrate prey were present, thus I concluded that the bird was attracted to the flowers and not a food item associated with them.

Plant material consumed by the Spotted Bowerbird *Chlamydera maculata* is predominantly fruit (eg. Cooper & Forshaw 1977, Barker & Vestjens 1991, Donaghey 1996). Flowers and flower buds are consumed by other bowerbird species (Frith 1993), but records of Spotted Bowerbirds consuming flowers have not been reported. Other parts of *Acacia* spp. have been found in stomach contents of Spotted Bowerbirds, including seeds and funicles (Parker 1979, Barker & Vestjens 1991), and the fruit of *Acacia salicina* has been observed being fed to nestlings (Frith & Frith 1990). The closely related Western Bowerbird *C. guttata*, has been recorded eating flower buds of *Acacia trachycarpa* (Binsted 1978).

*Acacia salicina* is a common plant of woodlands in southern inland Queensland, and blooms for months at a time, usually between February and June (pers. obs). Further observation is required to determine if *A. salicina* flowers are a regular component of the diet of Spotted Bowerbirds, or whether flowers provide a supplementary food source when fruit and invertebrate prey become scarce.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the staff of the Environmental Protection Agency library for providing photocopies of references and access to books in their care. Thanks to Richard Johnson, Rod Hobson, David McFarland and an anonymous referee for commenting on this note.

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CRAIG, P. EDDIE, *Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 981, Roma, Q 4455.*

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## PRE-COPULATION DISPLAY BY CICADABIRD *CORACINA TENUIROSTRIS*

DAVID McFARLAND

Present interest in the Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris* centres on whether two species exist, separated on the basis of calls and habitat use (Brandwood 1999, Holmes 1999, MacQueen 1999, van Gessel 1999), but more detailed information is needed to resolve the issue (Schodde & Mason 1999). The species is an uncommon bird of rainforest, riparian vegetation (including mangroves) and eucalypt forest of eastern and northern Australia, and a regular summer breeding migrant to south-east Queensland (Blakers *et al.* 1984, Shields & Rowland 1994, Pizzey & Knight 1997). Generally unobtrusive, Cicadabirds are more often heard than seen and little is known of their behaviour and ecology. This note details a pre-copulation display which supports a previous description at a more in southedistant location rn New South Wales (Marchant 1978).

The following observations at Moggill (27°34'38" S. 152°52'27"E) near Brisbane, relate to a 'faster call' bird (*sensu* Holmes 1999) typical of south-eastern Australia. [All of the Cicadabirds netted at Moggill fell within the size range for *C. t. tenuirostris* (unpublished data cf. to data in Schodde & Mason 1999).] At 0900 on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1999, I was birding in an area of riparian eucalypt forest when attracted to the familiar cicada-like call of the species. While trying to get a better view of the bird, the call stopped and was replaced by a rhythmic (approx. 1 call/second), almost mechanical 'wit-chew' call emanating from the same location. From directly below I saw a male and female Cicadabird facing each other on separate branches about 15-20 m above the ground in a Brushbox *Lophostemon confertus*. As the female sat passively, the male jumped from side-to-side in front of her. The male maintained an upright and almost side-on stance with tail noticeably fanned (Fig. 1). Although beak movements by either bird could not be seen, I assumed the 'wit-chew' call was from the male as the call was in time with the bird's side-to-side movement. After approximately 30-60 seconds, the male ceased calling, hopped to the female's perch and proceeded to mount her. After copulation both birds flew from the tree in different directions. No further observations were made.

None of the standard literature (e.g. Schodde & Tidemann 1988, Strahan

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1994, Pizzey & Knight 1997) or tapes (e.g. Buckingham & Jackson 1991) describe such a display or call, while only flight and possible begging displays are noted elsewhere for other *Coracina* species (Schodde & Tidemann 1988, Clancy 1990, Wood 1994). Marchant (1979, 1984, 1985) details some aspects of breeding behaviour in Cicadabirds without any mention of breeding displays. However, Marchant (1984) gives a fleeting and uninformative reference to an earlier paper on nuptial behaviour in the *Coracina* (Marchant 1978). This paper describes, in far more detail, the same behaviour I had observed, although referring to the call as 'tick-oo'. The note illustrates two points. First, Marchant's report of a pre-copulatory display in the Cicadabird is supported by my observations at a distant location close to the likely mid-range limit of breeding for *C. t. tenuirostris* (Blakers *et al.* 1984, Schodde & Mason 1999). Second, material published in journals, even marginally outside mainstream Australian ornithology, may be overlooked and it certainly pays to follow all leads before making any definitive statements.

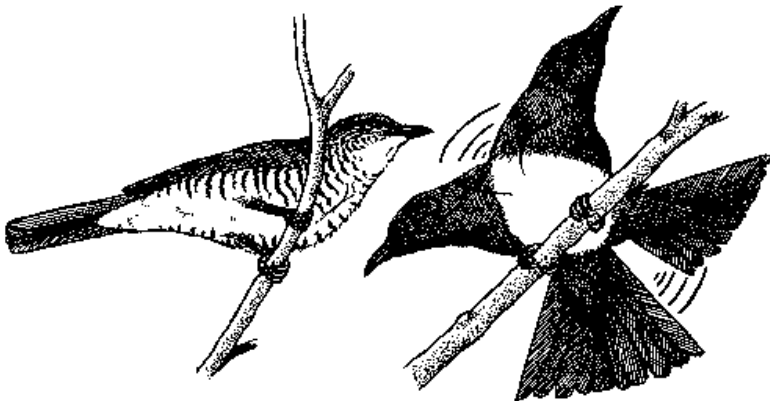
My thanks to an anonymous referee for their helpful comments.

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DAVID McFARLAND, 15 Currong St, Kenmore, Q 4069.



**Figure 1. Pre-copulation display involving male (right) and female (left) Cicadabirds observed in December 1999 at Moggill, south-east Queensland.**

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**AN UNUSUAL RECORD OF LITTLE BUTTON-QUAIL  
*TURNIX VELOX* IN RAINFOREST AT MT GLORIOUS,  
SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND.**

MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM and BARBARA K. MABLE

On 9 January 1994, while spotlighting along the Green's Falls track, in D'Aguiar National Park (27° 04' 37"S, 152° 45' 09"E, 580m asl), Mt Glorious, at approximately 11:30pm we encountered an adult male Little Button-quail, *Turnix velox*. This inconspicuous bird was discovered accidentally, though somewhat belatedly, upon sitting among ferns above the track. The unfortunate individual died shortly thereafter and was deposited in the Queensland Museum the following day (registration number O. 30117). Apart from a broken neck, presumably the cause of death, the bird was in good condition with mass of 30g, light cream iris colouration and mature testes. Measurements of this specimen are: total length 127mm; wing length 73mm; tail length 32mm; culmen 15.1mm; tarsal length 16.3mm; head length 30.8mm; testes size 5-6mm x 3mm (left - right). The plumage is consistent with other Queensland specimens, although this differs slightly from field guides and other published descriptions (e.g. Olsen 1993; Frith 1976), as follows: dark, mottled brown crown; pale mantle, neck and sides of the head; scapulars and back feathers with cream edges and black bars over a cinnamon background (cf. cinnamon bars over a black background in Red-chested Button-quail, *T. pyrrhobothorax*); pale, indistinctly marked wing-coverts; grey-brown primaries with cream edges; cream throat and chin; buff breast with lateral cinnamon scallop marks merging into neck and mantle colouration (cf. black and white scalloping on neck, contrasting with breast, in *pyrrhobothorax*); and a white belly (observations by MC, from 14 *velox* and 8 *pyrrhobothorax* study skins in the Queensland Museum). Identification was confirmed by N.W. Longmore. Little Button-quail are common and widespread inhabitants of semi-arid and arid grasslands, but are rarely found in areas exceeding 500mm in annual rainfall (Frith 1976). This record is unusual, as mean rainfall at Mt Glorious is 1651mm p.a. (Australian Bureau of Meteorology), and the collection site is in primary rainforest with continuous canopy and sparse ground vegetation. Despite being the most abundant Australian button-quail, movement patterns of this species are poorly studied, perhaps due to its preference for semi-arid habitats and nomadic tendencies (Olsen et al. 1993). There are no other records of the Little Button-quail from the Greater Brisbane area (27° 00'-28° 00'S, 152° 30'-153°

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30'E) in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service "WildNet" database, although there are occasional sightings in drier, western areas of the Brisbane Valley (I. Gynther pers. comm.). Little Button-quail have previously been recorded in the vicinity of rainforests in the Wet Tropics, at Paluma, Mt Carbine, Mt Lewis and Mt Molloy (Griffin 1995, Nielsen 1996), and at Eungella (Crouther 1994). Both the Paluma and Eungella records are from town gardens. At Eungella Little Button-quail and other birds were observed "wandering dazedly on the ground where the lights extend from the house" on nights of heavy fog (Crouther 1994). The encounter at Mt Glorious was after rain on a warm, overcast night with low cloud. As with the above sightings this individual was probably a confused vagrant from inland.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Wayne Longmore for examination of the specimen, measurements and encouragement to publish, Kate Henderson for tarsal measurement, QPWS for the prompt "WildNet" search, and Peter Britton for review and bringing the Eungella record to our attention.

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## LITTLE AND LONG-BILLED CORELLAS FEEDING ON HOOP PINE SEEDS, AND THEIR 'FOOTEDNESS'

PETER F. WOODALL and LEITH B. WOODALL

On 10 March 2000, a mixed flock of 3 Galahs *Cacatua roseicapilla*, 24 Little Corellas *Cacatua sanguinea* and 4 Long-billed Corellas *Cacatua tenuirostris* were watched feeding under Hoop Pine *Araucaria cunninghami* trees near the lake at the St Lucia, Brisbane campus of the University of Queensland. On the previous two days up to 50 Little Corellas had been seen in the flock. These corellas were not listed for south-east Queensland by Roberts (1979) but since early records in the 1980s (Palliser 1985, Niland 1986) they are now regularly recorded from suburban Brisbane and surrounding areas (Britton 1991, 1992; Bielewicz & Bielewicz 1996). Self-sustaining populations of these species have established themselves around other urban centres in Australia (Blakers et al. 1984).

The birds foraged on the ground under the pine trees, where pinecones had been breaking up. A bird would pick up and hold a sporophyll in one foot and nibble it to release the embedded seed, which was then swallowed while the sporophyll was discarded. All three species seemed quite adept at this feeding technique and, judging by the aggregation of birds, it must have provided a rich food source. However, the Hoop Pine has not previously been recorded as a food for any species of Australian bird (Barker & Vestjens 1991). Hoop Pine naturally occurs in closed forest, far from the more open habitat of these birds, and the tough sporophylls would probably prevent most other birds gaining access to the seeds. The time taken to extract ten seeds from the sporophylls was less in the Long-billed Corellas (mean = 134 secs, s.e.m. = 33 secs, n = 3) than in the Little Corellas (mean = 192 secs, s.e.m. = 17 secs, n = 7). This difference was not statistically significant (t-test,  $P > 0.11$ ), possibly due to the small sample size. The ability of these birds to exploit a new food source is further evidence of the inquisitiveness and flexible foraging behaviour of many parrots.

The birds were quite tame and allowed a close approach, enabling us to see which foot they used to hold the sporophylls and estimate their 'footedness'. The entire flock was scanned several times to determine how many birds were using their left or right foot to hold the seeds (Table 1).

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**TABLE 1. Footedness in three ground-foraging parrots.**

Species	Number of individuals holding sporophylls with:	
	Left Foot	Right Foot
<b>Galah</b>	3	0
<b>Long-billed Corella</b>	3	1
<b>Little Corella</b>	20	4

We also watched the feeding actions of individual birds on ten successive sporophylls to investigate whether they consistently used the same foot or switched from one to the other. In doing this we attempted to ensure that the same individual was not monitored more than once. Three Long-billed Corellas were watched: two used their left foot consistently and one its right foot consistently. Eleven Little Corellas were watched: three used their right foot consistently; six used their left foot consistently; one used its left foot for nine out of ten feeds and one used its left foot for eight out of ten feeds.

Previous studies have shown that most species of parrot have a preference for using the left foot when holding food (Rogers 1980, Harris 1989, Joseph 1989, Rogers & Workman 1993), with rosellas being an exception. Joseph (1989) suggested that parrots that feed in trees (Glossy Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami*, Gang-Gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum*), hold food only in their left foot while terrestrial foragers had a greater (although still minor) use of the right foot. The data presented here support this with 16% of these ground-feeding birds being right-footed. This study also shows a consistency of foot use within individuals, that has not been documented before.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Mrs Ruth Thomson for first bringing these foraging flocks to our attention and to Ms Megan Thomas of the Queensland Herbarium for confirming the identity of *Araucaria cunninghami*.

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