

THE SUNBIRD

Vol. 3

No. 3

## CUCKOOS IN THE BURDEKIN REGION OF NORTH QUEENSLAND

D.H.C. Seton

Twelve species of the family Cuculidae have been recorded in Queensland (Lavery, 1969). Of these, eight species were found in the Burdekin region between 1960 and 1968, and seven of these are known to breed in the area. A ninth species may be present, not having been positively identified, while another two are expected to be found in the Mt Elliot area which is geographically included in a major paper on the birds of this region currently being prepared. For the purposes of this article, the Burdekin region is defined as the lowlands of the Haughton and Burdekin River systems radiating approximately 50 kilometres north, south and west of the town of Ayr, and east to the coastline.

## NOTES ON THE SPECIES

Frequency ratings have been broadly allocated as common, uncommon or scarce. Names follow Lavery (1969).

ORIENTAL CUCKOO *Cuculus saturatus*

Scarce. Observed in dry scrub areas along the Burdekin River and tributary creeks, always singly. Specific records were: January 1961, January, February, March and December 1962, February and March 1963, and February 1965.

PALLID CUCKOO *Cuculus pallidus*

Uncommon. Recorded in all months, but noticeably scarce in 1961 and 1967. Observed in open forest, dry scrub

and mangroves. Juveniles have been observed between November and April being tended by Black-chinned Honeyeaters *Melithreptus gularis*, Yellow-fronted Honeyeaters *Meliphaga plumula*, White-throated Honeyeaters *Melithreptus alboocularis*, and Leaden Flycatchers *Myiagra rubecula*. A Black-chinned Honeyeater's nest contained one Pallid Cuckoo's egg as well as two honeyeater eggs in February 1969.

#### BRUSH CUCKOO *Cacomantis variolosus*

Common. Inhabits mainly open forest and dry scrub. It calls monotonously during spring and summer months, particularly in wet weather and often well into the nights. Young birds have been observed being tended by White-throated Honeyeaters from May to October and were particularly noticeable from July to October in 1962 and 1963. An egg was seen in the nest of a Leaden Flycatcher during December 1961 and in the nest of a Brown-backed Honeyeater *Ramsayornis modesta* during December 1962.

#### HORSFIELD BRONZE CUCKOO *Chrysococcyx basalis*

Common from September to April but scarce from May to August. Usual habitat is open forest. This species regularly parasitises Red-backed Wrens *Malurus melanocephalus* from December to February and appeared to be particularly common during the summer of 1961/62. An egg was found in a deserted nest of a Tailor-bird *Cisticola exilis* in February 1962. A large chick in a nest of a White-throated Warbler *Gerygone olivacea* in January 1964 could have been either *C. basalis* or *C. malayanus*.

#### LITTLE BRONZE CUCKOO ) RUFIOUS-BREASTED BRONZE CUCKOO ) *Chrysococcyx malayanus*

Common in mangroves and uncommon in open forest. Its movements are uncertain but it frequently parasitises Large-billed Warblers *Gerygone magnirostris* from October to March in the mangroves. Often two cuckoo's eggs are found in one nest.

KOEL *Eudynamys cyanocephala*

Common. This is a regular migrant, arriving in September and departing by April. It is extremely vocal day and night particularly during rainy weather. Recorded foster species include Little Friar bird *Philemon citreogularis*, Noisy Friar bird *P. corniculatus*, Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*, Yellow-throated Miner *Mysantha flavigula* and Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis* during the months of October to February. The remains of an egg similar to that of the Koel was found beneath the nest of a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae* in December 1964. On two occasions, two Koel eggs have been noted in one nest; once with a Little Friar bird (December 1960) and once with a Blue-faced Honeyeater (December 1963). It appears to favour Blue-faced Honeyeaters when these occupy old Babbler nests.

CHANNEL-BILLED CUCKOO *Scythrops novaehollandiae*

Common. Another regular migrant which arrives within days of the Koel and departs again by April, usually ahead of the Koel. Commonly parasitises crows and to a lesser extent, Black-backed Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen*. It frequents open forest and dry scrub with particular emphasis on areas where native fig trees occur. In this respect it is similar to the Koel.

PHEASANT COUCAL *Centropus phasianinus*

Common. Resident throughout the area except in the mangroves. It breeds from November to March, usually laying four to five eggs and sometimes up to seven. The nests are commonly built in guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*) but are also seen six to eight feet off the ground, sometimes in citrus trees.

## DISCUSSION

The Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis pyrrophanus*

and Golden Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx luoides* have been recorded from the Townsville district - both by collected specimens. It is anticipated that these two species should be present at higher altitudes in or adjacent to rainforest on Mt Elliot (nearly 4,000 feet) between Townsville and Ayr.

It is suspected that the Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo *Cacomantis castaneiventris* has been seen in mangroves near Ayr. Several fleeting glimpses of a cuckoo, not unlike the Fan-tailed but certainly smaller, were had in the same area between 1962 and 1964. During February 1962, two Brown-backed Honeyeaters' nests were examined in this area and each contained a single cuckoo's egg which at that time I concluded must have been that of the Brush Cuckoo. However, having subsequently seen other eggs supposedly of the Brush Cuckoo in nests of Leaden Flycatcher and Brown-backed Honeyeaters, my notes indicate a fairly sharp dissimilarity in description other than for size, which appeared to be about the same. My description of the 'mystery' egg was as follows. 'Noticeably smaller than the honeyeater, creamy ground colour as opposed to pure white of honeyeater, well defined zone of brown and lavender markings near large end'. There does not appear to be any description recorded for the egg of the Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo.

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## MELODIOUS CALLS OF THE EASTERN WHIPBIRD

Clarice Clarke

During the first week of January 1968, my husband and I spent a few days at Mistake Mountains, which is a spur of the Great Dividing Range just north of Cunningham's Gap in southern Queensland. The area on top of the range is plateau-like, mainly rainforest, with some fringes of eucalypt forest on the western side. There is no human habitation as this is a State Forest. Bird life is abundant and varied.

One of the unusual bird calls we heard on this, our first visit to Mistake Mountains, was that of an Eastern Whipbird *Psophodes olivaceous*. The call was distinctly different from any call we had previously heard from an Eastern Whipbird, was heard on many occasions from the same bird, and was definitely melodious. We nicknamed this bird the 'Melodious Whipbird'; and so began a study of the calls of Eastern Whipbirds wherever we went.

## DESCRIPTION OF CALLS

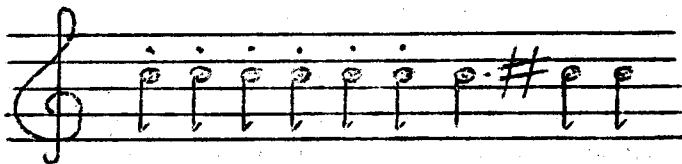
The call of the Eastern Whipbird could generally be described as consisting of three phrases - the first two from the male and the third from the female:

- the initial phrase of several short notes followed by a longer note, all of the same pitch;
- the whipcrack;
- and finally 'chew-chew'.

Frequently the initial phrase is one long whistle with a constant or very slightly increasing frequency and containing no harmonics. Watson (1969) has shown that there is variation in both the duration and frequency of this introduction between different individual males. The whipcrack, on the

other hand, appears remarkably constant and species specific. Watson found no variation in this part of the song. The female part of the song is the most variable; typically a 'chew-chew', sometimes 'choo-ee' and at other times a rollicking 'whee-a-whee-a'. The male is known to complete the full duet, although this is not normal.

The variation which claimed our attention at Mistake Mountains was a melodious first phrase. This phrase was not reported by Watson from his analysis of two hundred introductory phrases which were recorded mostly in Victoria but included recordings from New South Wales and southern Queensland. The structure of the phrase was about six short notes of the same pitch, followed by another longer note of the same pitch, then a short note a semitone higher, then another at the pitch of the first seven. This phrase was followed by the whipcrack and the third phrase was invariably 'chew-chew'. The first phrase could be written musically thus:



Though in fact only one note of the call is altered, the effect is a lovely melody. The melody is enhanced by the fact that the call is fully an octave lower in pitch than those more commonly encountered.

The 'melodious' note does not appear in every call, but the pitch of the call is generally an indication of whether or not the bird is a potential 'Melodious Whipbird'.

Whipbirds with the higher-pitched call, on the other hand, have never been heard by us to render the 'mel-

odious' call. Their third phrase, however, is quite variable. It might be 'chew-chew', 'choo-oo-ee' or 'whee-a-whee-a', whereas, as mentioned previously, the third phrase of the 'Melodious Whipbird' was always 'chew-chew'.

#### INCIDENCE ON MISTAKE MOUNTAINS

Following our discovery of this new bird call, we visited Mistake Mountains on a number of occasions throughout the year and sought to establish whether there was any possibility that the makers were juveniles, although we did not believe this to be so. Throughout the year we heard the melodious call, even at those times when vocal activity was at a minimum. The calls were strong, rendered by pairs, and in no way resembled the amateurish efforts of juveniles.

There is a fairly widespread incidence of the 'melodious' Whipbird on Mistake Mountains and on any day's walk one was likely to hear one or more of these calls.

The bird population here does, of course, appear to be dense, so that there is a very good chance of hearing or seeing anything of a rare or unusual nature which exists there.

#### INCIDENCE IN OTHER AREAS

Having discovered this new call, it then became important to establish where else, if anywhere, it was to be heard.

From 13 to 15 June, 1970, we visited Spicer's Gap, some 32 kilometres south of Mistake Mountains. There, on 15 June, in a small patch of rainforest, we heard the 'melodious' call. It was the full, low-pitched call as previously described.

During the early part of October 1970 we were at Green Mountains, Lamington National Park. On two occasions we heard the melodious note from a Whipbird. There was a slight difference, however, as the first phrase was the abbreviated type, consisting normally of one long-drawn-out note, but in this instance punctuated by the additional note a semitone higher. Again, the call was of lower pitch than those of other Whipbirds in the vicinity.

This is the extent of our knowledge of the incidence of the 'Melodious Whipbird' to date.

There are probably innumerable variations in Whipbird song which could be recorded. For instance, at Dandabah National Park in the Bunya Mountains, some of the birds limited the final phrase to a single 'chew'; while J. A. Bravery (1963), referring to the Whipbird call in tropical northern rainforests says "...one bird delivering the long drawn out whistle and the other bird completing the swish or crack." He also refers to the "final crack" but makes no mention of a third phrase.

From the musical viewpoint, however, no variation we have noted has the significance of the 'melodious' call.

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NOTES ON SEABIRDS OBSERVED DURING MIDWINTER VISITS TO  
BRIBIE AND STRADBROKE ISLANDS, SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND

Chris Corben

A brief visit was made to Bribie Island on 23 July 1972 in the company of Glen Ingram and Robert Raven. From 17 to 25 August 1972 I made a trip to Stradbroke Island. Most of this visit was spent in the vicinity of Point Lookout. Over most of the time the weather was calm except for a thunderstorm on the night of the 19th. During the first few days the sea was rough but it rapidly calmed and there was a corresponding reduction in the number of seabird sightings. Notes on the more interesting species seen are presented below.

BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS *Diomedea melanophris*

This species was identified at Point Lookout on three occasions. The first sighting was of an immature bird but the subsequent two were of adults.

WHITE-CAPPED ALBATROSS *Diomedea cauta*

Identified about ten times at Point Lookout. It appeared that one adult and one immature were staying around the general area. They were noted following fishing boats several times and all those identified were of the nominate race *D. c. cauta*.

## ALBATROSS (Species uncertain)

Altogether about thirty sightings of albatross were made at Point Lookout. Of these the majority were at too great a distance for positive identification. However, one bird was almost certainly a Yellow-nosed Albatross *D. chlororhynchos* on the basis of its small size, slender build and very black and white upperparts.

SOUTHERN GIANT PETREL *Macronectes giganteus*

Petrels of the genus *Macronectes* were seen a number of times at Point Lookout but most were too far away to identify further. On three occasions, however, good views were obtained and the birds identified as *M. giganteus* by the greenish tip to the bill. In each case the bird was in the very dark, glossy plumage indicative of first year individuals.

FLUTTERING SHEARWATER *Puffinus gavia*

Several hundred were seen feeding well off shore from the ocean beach just north of Woorim, Bribie Island.

Numbers of Fluttering Shearwaters were seen in Moreton Bay on the way to Stradbroke Island as well as around Point Lookout. They were often seen feeding with other species in small flocks off the Point.

SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER *Puffinus tenuirostris*

During the visit to Point Lookout thousands were seen moving south in continuous lines, particularly towards evening. Many would be seen feeding in the area by day. They became progressively more numerous over the observation period.

BROWN GANNET *Sula leucogaster*

Douglas Miller, who was with me at Point Lookout from 17th to 22nd, reported seeing one specimen on the 19th.

REEF HERON *Egretta sacra*

One dark phase bird was seen many times around the rocks and islands near Point Lookout on the 20th and 21st.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

At Bribie Island, more than forty were watched along the ocean beach near Woorim. At any one time, most of these were feeding along the breaker line in groups of

three to ten, but there were always some resting on the sand. The birds studied showed a variety of plumage phases. Some were obviously immature, with dark mottling in the secondaries. Others showed typical eclipse plumage. Quite a number, however, showed partial nuptial dress. One bird was in almost full breeding plumage, showing the characteristic dusky underparts, paler, more uniform upperparts, whiter rump and tail, neat black cap including the forehead, and red legs. The long tail streamers were not fully grown. As the bill showed no trace of red colouring, this bird was presumably a member of the eastern race *S. h. longipennis*.

Several were noted resting on the main ocean beach and individuals or small flocks were often seen feeding off Point Lookout, Stradbroke Island.

#### BLACK-NAPED TERN *Sterna sumatrana*

A bird of this species was observed near Woorim, Bribie Island. At first it was noted flying steadily southwards, but later on, a Black-naped Tern, presumably the same individual, was studied while resting on the beach with Little Terns *S. albifrons*, Crested Terns *S. bergii*, Lesser Crested Terns *S. bengalensis* and Common Terns *S. hirundo*. In size it appeared intermediate between Common and Little Terns, and the upperparts were much whiter than in any of the other species present. The black head band was clearly defined through the eye, but became indistinct on the nape, indicating that the bird was in eclipse plumage.

#### LESSER CRESTED TERN *Sterna bengalensis*

At least two were seen feeding in the vicinity of Woorim and resting on the beach with other species (see under the previous species).

Four were seen at Point Lookout on the 22nd, feeding with Crested Terns, Common Terns and Common Noddies.

COMMON NODDY *Anous stolidus*

On 22nd, around 0900, a flock of about thirty was observed flying offshore. This flock dispersed and individuals or small groups were subsequently noted a number of times in the vicinity. Up to three birds spent more than an hour feeding with other species (see under Lesser Crested Tern) immediately offshore and excellent views were obtained. They were readily identified by size, upperpart's colouration and tail and bill shapes. The pale cap was often very difficult to see. The flight was usually tern-like, but occasionally the birds would glide considerable distances. The feeding behaviour was particularly characteristic. They would approach the water, then hover close to the surface. At the same time the tail would be fanned out and elevated. The neck would also be elevated, and elongated, with the bill pointing downwards. This most unusual-looking posture reminded the observer more of a pigeon than a tern. The tail was often closed, at which time it appeared slender and pointed.

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## SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

## WADERS ROOSTING IN TREES ON ISLANDS

I was interested to read Miss Nancy Hopkins' note 'Curlews in the Tree Tops' in 'The Sunbird', vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 83-84, in which she described Eastern Curlews *Numenius madagascariensis* resting in trees on Green Island.

I do not know if Miss Hopkins was referring to the Green Island in Moreton Bay or on the Barrier Reef off Cairns,\* but I had similar experiences on both these islands in 1971.

Around mid year in 1971 (I did not record the date), I was circumnavigating Green Island in Moreton Bay at low speed, looking for a suitable break in the mangroves to beach my boat, when I disturbed several groups of large waders which were roosting in the mangroves at the tide edge. The birds flew directly away from the boat, and I could not positively identify them but, from their size, I suspected they were Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*.

On 12 December 1971, when bird watching on Green Island off Cairns, my wife and I repeatedly disturbed flocks of Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* roosting in tall trees in the island forest. No Curlews were seen, although they could have been present in the fairly dense canopy. The only calls heard were the alarm notes of the Whimbrel.

I mentioned this sighting to Mrs H.B. Gill of Innisfail, a few days later, and she remarked that she had seen similar behaviour on Green Island herself. The two observations recorded above are the only times in seven

\*Miss Hopkins was referring to Green Island off Cairns  
- Editor

years of wading that I have seen waders roosting in trees, although I have noted Tattlers *Tringa brevipes* perching on rocks, sea walls and boats. The habit of perching on posts and similar objects is common with certain northern hemisphere species, such as the Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*.

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#### BRUSH BRONZEWINGS IN SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND

On the Easter weekend of 1972 (30 March - 3 April) at Teewah Creek on the northern extremity of the Noosa Plains, Cooloolah, Chris Corben, Robert Raven and myself flushed a bronzewing pigeon. It perched in a *Banksia aemula* tree 12 metres from us and stayed there for three minutes, giving us adequate time to study the bird thoroughly. The underparts showed a distinct bluish tinge, with a chestnut patch on the throat. A chestnut line passed through the eye and back to merge with an extensive, bright rufous patch which included the nape, hind neck and upper back. We had no doubt that the bird was a Brush Bronzewing, *Phaps elegans*.

It has always been a matter of speculation whether or not this species should be placed on a list of Queensland birds. Kersey (1919) reports having seen one bird in the trees along the banks of the Cloncurry River near Dolomite in western Queensland, and that a few days later a Mr A.J. Corr reported having seen four near his home in the same area. Chisholm (1929) found a nest with two eggs in it on

Fraser Island in 1922 which he identified as that of the Brush Bronzewing. Until recently these were the only two published records of this species in Queensland. Elks (1966) and Lavery (1969) did not include the species in their lists covering the areas. Recently, Vernon and Barry (1972) included Brush Bronzewing on their Fraser Island list. They did this on Chisholm's report and on a personal communication from I.G. Filmer which is quoted: "one pair was flushed from a track just north of Lake Wabby" and "another pair from drier forest near the mouth of Bowarrady Creek".

Since last Easter three people have reported to me sightings of Brush Bronzewings in south-east Queensland. Greg Czechura flushed a party of five birds on several occasions for two successive weeks immediately after Easter, near Beerwah. Robert Raven flushed a single bird on 22 August at nearly the same place as our original sighting. Greg Roberts saw two birds near Capalaba on 5 September.

These observations suggest that the Brush Bronzewing should be admitted to any future list of Queensland birds.

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MOUNTAIN DUCK *TADORNA TADORNOIDES* AT MOUNT ISA

On 16 February 1971, I investigated reports of sightings of what were thought to be Burdekin Ducks *Tadorna radjah* near the pump station at Lake Moondarra, Mount Isa, in north west Queensland.

Three birds were located and identified as Mountain Duck *Tadorna tadornoides*: one male and two females. The white eye ring and bill base on one female was not as evident as in the second female but the chestnut breast classified it without doubt.

The birds had been sighted by the caretaker about 9 February. They were closely studied also by Dr A. Thomason twice in the week following 16 February, but had disappeared by 24 February.

By February 1971 the Mount Isa area was reaching the end of a record dry spell and, with limited rain over the last couple of years, Lake Moondarra had reached an all time low level, with the water being contained within the Leichardt River banks. However, there is a clear water lagoon adjacent to the pump station, to provide a clean water supply to Mount Isa when the dam floods. Seepage through a retaining wall adjacent to the pump station road had created a small marshy pond, in what would normally be the bottom of the dam. It was here that the birds were found, 25 metres from the road.

Sam Carruthers, in an unpublished list prepared before leaving Mount Isa in 1968, lists the Mountain Duck as a very rare and nomadic vagrant, with a pair listed as being present from May to August 1966. Slater (A Field Guide to Australian Birds: Rigby 1970) shows the bird as a nomadic visitor to this area. However, specific information on



sightings of this bird so far from its normal habitat should be recorded.

It is difficult to understand why this bird should appear in the centre of a vast area suffering from a prolonged drought. Drought conditions were possibly even more severe in western New South Wales than at Mount Isa at the time, and thus whether the birds came from the south or the west they would have travelled many miles over very arid areas.

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#### AN EARLY CUCKOO AT A BUFF-TAILED THORNBILL'S NEST

In the early afternoon of 6 August 1972 I was walking in open eucalypt forest country near my home when I chanced upon a very well concealed nest of a Buff-tailed Thornbill *Acanthisa reguloides*. The dome shaped nest was situated in the fork of a rough barked tree (species unknown) approximately two metres from the ground. The outer portion of the nest was constructed of bark, giving it an excellent camouflage; so much so that had the bird not flown from the nest it would have gone unnoticed.

Later in the day I returned to the nest site in the company of Mr and Mrs H. Briggs and found to my amazement that the nest had been irreparably damaged. On closer inspection we found a broken egg in long grass at the base of the tree. This egg contained a developing embryo which we judged to be two to four days old. I decided to see how many more eggs were there, and on probing amongst the

thick feather lining of the nest found one more Thornbill's egg and also the egg of a Golden Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx plagosus*. The Thornbill's egg (16 x 11 mm) had a pinkish-white background lightly speckled with reddish-brown spots, with darker brown spots concentrated on the broad end. The Cuckoo's egg (17 x 11 mm) was uniformly olive-green in colour. This egg also contained a young developing embryo.

Judging from the age of the embryo, nest building must have taken place at the end of July. This appears to be early for both the Buff-tailed Thornbill and the Golden Bronze Cuckoo which usually nest from August onwards.

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MIGRATION MOVEMENT DATES AND NOTES  
MURWILLUMBAH DISTRICT

Migrants leaving after 1971/72 summer at Reserve Creek (Lat.28.21S; Long.153.30E).

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|---|----|--|
| Sacred Kingfisher<br><i>Halcyon sancta</i>                | .. | 5 March; only small numbers in area this season and no nesting records.  |
| Dollar-bird<br><i>Eury-stomus orientalis</i>              | .. | 7 March. They were in greater numbers but had only a medium nesting season.                                    |
| Channel-billed Cuckoo<br><i>Seythrops novaehollandiae</i> | .. | Early March; only in small numbers.  |
| Brush Cuckoo<br><i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>              | .. | 16 March; in usual numbers.  |
| Spine-tailed Swift<br><i>Hirundapus caudatus</i>          | .. | 3 April. Recorded on 124 days; numbers of birds below usual for all months except December, January and March. |

- Cicada-bird *Edolisoma tenuirostre* .. 14 April; in usual numbers.
- Leaden Flycatcher .. Mid April; in usual numbers.  
*Myiagra rubecula*
- Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea* .. 19 April; in usual numbers. One youngster being fed by *Pecwees* *Grallina cyanoleuca* on 19 April was last observed on 3 May. Additionally, at 2115 hours on 10 June a straggler calling as it passed headed north.
- Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus* .. 23 April; had successful breeding season.
- Species returning to Reserve Creek for winter 1972.
- Rufous Fantail .. 24 February; in usual numbers.  
*Rhipidura rufifrons*
- Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa* .. 24 March; highest numbers for years.
- Rose Robin .. 26 March.  
*Petroica rosea*
- Golden Whistler .. 26 March.  
*Pachycephala pectoralis*
- Yellow-faced Honey-eater *Meliphaga chrysops* .. 24 April; at 1400 hours four birds passed heading north. 25 April; 1120 hours first flocks started passing to north, general movement of flocks of 4 to 18 birds continued to 1430 hours. More flocks of 8 to 24 birds passed during the next two days, then the northerly movement ceased and the birds settled down locally in high numbers. Their favourite food trees, the Blackbutts, started to flower in mid April and continued to do so through the winter.
- Noisy and Little Friarbirds .. 12 May at 0920 hours a mixed flock of about 60 birds passing to north. Smaller flocks of Noisy Friarbirds only continued to move through to the north all that day.  
*Philemon corniculatus* and *P. citreogularis*

## GENERAL

On 3 April at 1600 hours a party of six Barred Cuckoo-shrikes *Coracina lineata* was feeding in the fig trees in the cowyard; they fed at these trees regularly to 24 April. This is my first record of these birds in the Tweed District. They continued to feed even when approached closely.

The partly albino *Cisticola* (Sunbird 2:81) was observed throughout the year. Her nest was not located but during the breeding season she was seen frequently in the company of a golden headed male.

Birds seldom recorded in the area included: Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis*, February 1972; Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, May 1972; Wonga Pigeon *Leucosarocia melanoleuca* from 22 May to late July 1972; Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*, one flying over on 9 June, and eight on 10 July; Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* during June (one on Reserve Creek).

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NOTES ON THE FEEDING OF  
WHITE-BROWED WOOD-SWALLOWS (*ARTAMUS SUPERCILIOSUS*)

On 2 September 1972, Robin Brown, Chris Corben and myself were bird-watching at Teewah Creek, Cooloolah. We were attracted by a distant twittering sound. The effect produced reminded me of the sound of mixed flocks of Masked Wood-swallows *Artamus personatus* and White-browed Wood-swallows *A. superciliosus* feeding, as I have heard them in

the Carpentaria region. On scanning the horizon, large numbers of Wood-swallows were noticed flying above the trees about one kilometre away. After reaching them, we realised that they were all White-browed Wood-swallows. There would have been at least 600 in the area. As we watched, large numbers of them drifted away from the trees to the flowering Grass-trees (*Xanthorrhoea* sp.) which were concentrated along the edge of the plain. On closer observation they were seen to be clinging sideways to, and feeding from, the flowers. Earlier we had examined these flowers and found them to be liberally studded with thick drops of delicious-tasting nectar. The Wood-swallows, as well as Brown, White-cheeked and Blue-faced Honeyeaters (*Lichmera indistincta*, *Phylidonyris niger*, *Entomyzon cyanotis*) and Noisy Friarbirds *Philemon corniculatus* were obviously feeding on this nectar. These observations reminded me of seeing Black-faced Wood-swallows *A. cinereus* taking nectar in a similar manner from the green bottle-brush flower of *Melaleuca argentina* on the Einasleigh River near Carpentaria Downs.

After we had watched the White-browed Wood-swallows for about six minutes, they suddenly rose from the plains and quickly flew back to the trees, resuming the noise that had attracted our attention in the first place. The reason for their concern soon made itself apparent in the form of a large female Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* flying through at a height of about six metres and roughly fifty metres from us. While she was in the area, there was not a bird to be seen. When she had gone, the Wood-swallows were observed flying above the trees further to the south. They were not seen again on that day, but on the following day Robin Brown noted them again in the same area.

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## FOLIAGE BATHING OF FIG-PARROTS

While on a trip to North Queensland during May 1972, my wife and I stopped about six kilometres from the township of Bartle Frere, in a section of rainforest sign-posted Josephine Falls. During a heavy shower of rain a small but noisy flock of Fig-parrots *Oropsitta diophthalma macleayana* landed in a tree approximately six metres in front of me. For about six minutes they bathed and preened in the dripping foliage of a rainforest tree, no more than four to five metres from the ground. I heard two calls; a chattering twitter while they were preening and a call rather similar to that of the Little Lorikeet *Glossopsitta pusilla* but more harsh and metallic. This latter call was given as they flew away. This was a rare opportunity to observe Fig-parrots closely as they are normally very quiet and difficult to observe.

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## ERRATA

In Sunbird 3(2) two mistakes occur in the report of The Queensland Ornithological Society first annual bird count.

Sunbird 3(2):29. Line 25. "G. Czechura" should read "G. Ingram".

Sunbird 3(2):32. Lines 34 and 35. These should read:

|                  |   |   |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Little Thornbill | 0 | 2 | 6 | 9 |
| Brown Thornbill  | 1 | 5 | 0 | 5 |

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