

# THE SUNBIRD

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## AN ORNITHOLOGICAL TOUR OF WESTERN QUEENSLAND

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This paper summarizes the observations made by the authors when they travelled with their families from Brisbane to Opalton (23° 15' S, 142° 46' E) and back between 28 April and 12 May 1973. The main object of the tour was to observe the bird life south of Winton and to spend as much time as possible in the Opalton area, hoping to see the Spinifex-bird, Rufous-crowned Emu-wren and the Striated Grass-wren. The route followed is shown in Figure 1, where encircled numbers indicate overnight campsites.

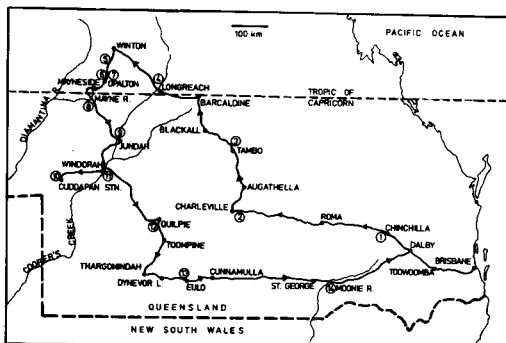


Figure 1. Map showing route taken

Mr & Mrs E.M. Tucker reported seeing emu-wrens at Opalton in June 1969 (Tucker, 1969). The following year Brigadier H.R. Officer and Mrs H.B. Gill visited the area and identified the birds as Rufous-crowned Emu-wrens *Stipiturus ruficeps* (Officer, 1970). At the same time an unidentified species, thought to

be either the Spinifex-bird *Bremiornis carteri* or a grass-wren *Amytornis* sp., was flushed from spinifex bushes. Mr J.D. and Dr Macdonald visited the area also in June 1970 and, instead of finding emu-wrens, found the Striated Grass-wren *Amytornis striatus* (Macdonald, 1970). In September 1970, Miss Andree Griffin and Mrs Gill visited Opalton, obtaining good views of the Striated Grass-wren and Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, and added other interesting species to the list of Opalton birds (Griffin, 1971). Brigadier Officer, Mrs Gill and her son Keith made another trip to Opalton in September 1971, which led to the identification of the Spinifex-bird (Officer, 1971). Later, Mrs Gill published a list of birds of the Opalton area (Gill, 1973). Two Rufous-crowned Emu-wrens have been collected from the Standish Range, further to the west of this area, for the Queensland Museum (Vernon, 1972).

Flood rains had fallen in Queensland just prior to our trip, and heavy falls earlier in the year had produced abundant green vegetation in what is usually parched dry country at that time of year. Nearly all our route west of Roma and St George has an annual average rainfall less than 500 mm, and in the section between Winton and Cunnamulla less than 250 mm. Habitat varied from eucalypt woodland and brigalow scrub on the western Darling Downs, through to semi-arid shrubland with mallee, spinifex grass and salt tolerant plants at Opalton, and with extensive natural grasslands between Longreach and Winton. Woodland and shrubland covered much of the route from Chinchilla to Barcaldine, and again from Windorah to Moonie River, but the remainder seldom supported vegetation taller than shrubs. Semi-arid shrubland was seen between Winton and Cuddapan. Dwarf shrubland, with many halophytes, was present between Windorah and Cuddapan, and from Toompine through to Dynevor lakes. Other habitat examined included lagoons near Tambo, at Mayne River, and between Quilpie and Toompine; watercourse eucalypts at Opalton and along the Thompson River at Jundah; and lastly gibber country between Windorah and Cuddapan.

Bird species and where they were sighted are shown in the appended table. Numbers are not given and the circles indicate only that the species was recorded as present. Names follow CSIRO (1969). A comparison of our list of species for the section from Winton through Opalton to Mayneside with that of Gill (1973) for approximately the same area, reveals the following additional species: White-necked Heron, White-faced Heron, Wood-Duck, Black-shouldered Kite, Black-breasted Buzzard, Little Falcon, Little Quail, Banded Plover, Black-fronted Dotterel, Barn Owl, Sacred Kingfisher, Cinnamon Quail-thrush, Black-headed Pardalote, Little Friarbird, Painted Finch, Plum-headed Finch and Pied Butcherbird. On the other hand we did not sight such species as Red-tailed Thornbill and Red-browed Pardalote which Gill recorded as being fairly common, nor did we see Emus or Australian Bustards although they were still in the area.

The following is a short annotated list of bird species that are mostly restricted to the outback and were of more than usual interest to the observers.

Australian Dotterel *Peltohyas australis*

Five were recorded on stony plains 26 km west of Windorah.

Black-breasted Buzzard *Hamirostra melanosterna*

Five, one dark and four light phase, were seen approximately 80 km south of Winton in open country. Another light phase was seen at Dynevor Lakes.

Little Quail *Turnix velox*

These were seen, and heard calling at night, in the grasslands and spinifex country between Longreach and Jundah.

Australian Bustard *Eupodotis australis*

Three were seen between Jundah and Windorah, and another at Cuddapan Station.

Plumed Pigeon *Lophophaps plumifera*

First seen south of Winton at campsite 5 and fairly common to Jundah. A nest with two white eggs was on the ground at campsite 5.

Flock Pigeon *Histriophaps histrionica*

The only sightings of this pigeon were between Longreach and Winton in open grasslands. Flocks of up to 100 were flushed from tall grass.

Spotted Nightjar *Eurostopodus guttatus*

Two were flushed at campsite 5. One was flushed near the campsite at Opalton and could be heard calling at night.

Cinnamon Quail-thrush *Cinlosoma cinnamomeum*

First seen near campsite 5. Eight were observed calling to one another in a group. Not common and seen again only at 8 km south of Opalton.

Spinifex-bird *Eremiornis carteri*

Two seen in spinifex near campsite 5. Two more were seen in spinifex near the campsite at Opalton.

Rufous-crowned Emu-wren *Stipiturus ruficeps*

Shy and difficult to observe. One seen in spinifex near campsite 5. Two located 6 km east of the Opalton campsite and again observed in spinifex 8 km south of Opalton.

Striated Grass-wren *Amytornis striatus*

Shy as the above species. One seen in spinifex 6 km east of the Opalton campsite. Seen again with much difficulty 8 km south of Opalton in similar habitat.

Orange Chat *Epthianura tricolor*

A pair were located 58 km west of Windorah. They had one fledged young.

Gibber-bird *Ashbyia lovensis*

A pair were seen in gibber country 16 km west of Cuddapan Station.

Wedgebill *Sphenostoma cristatum*

The only sighting of this species was in *Lignum* bushes at Dynevor Lakes.

White-winged Sittella *Neositta leucoptera*

These striking sittellas were first seen near Longreach at campsite 4. Small numbers were seen again 32 km south of Winton at the Opalton campsite and 15 km southeast of Jundah.

Black Honeyeater *Myzomela nigra*

Glimpses of a male and female were obtained near the campsite at Opalton. Good views were had of three pairs feeding from the flowers of *Gastrolobium grandiflorum*. 24 km south of Opalton.

Grey-headed Honeyeater *Meliphaga keartlandi*

Fairly common along watercourses and in mallee at Opalton. Seen again about 80 km west of Windorah.

Painted Finch *Emblema picta*

An unexpected sighting. Two pairs with nests and eggs were found in spinifex along a watercourse near campsite 5. The nest was bottle shaped with side entrance near the top. Three more birds were seen at the Opalton campsite.

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SPECIES	LOCATION																							
	CHINCHILLA / C'VILLE	CHARLEVILLE	AUGATHELLA	TAMBO	BLACKALL	BARALDINE	LONGREACH / WINTON	WINTON / OPALTON	OPALTON	OPALTON / MAYNESIDE	MAYNESIDE / MAYNE R.	MAYNE RIVER	MAYNE R. / JUNDIAH	JUNDIAH	JUNDIAH / WINDORAH	WINDORAH / CUDDAPAN	CUDDAPAN	WINDORAH / OULPIE	OULPIE / TOOMPINE	TPINE / THARGOMINDAH	DYNEVOR LAKES	ELLO / MOONIE R.		
EMU	o				o		o								o	o	o					o		
PELICAN																								
DARTER					o																			
LITTLE-BLACK CORMORANT					o																			
PIED CORMORANT					o																			
LITTLE GREBE					o																			
HOARY-HEADED GREBE					o																			
WHITE-NECKED HERON	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
WHITE-FACED HERON		o								o	o		o		o									
WHITE EGRET					o																			
STRAW-NECKED IBIS					o											o		o						
ROYAL SPOONBILL					o										o									
YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILL															o	o	o							
BLACK SWAN																								
BLACK DUCK	o				o	o															o			
GREY TEAL																					o		o	
WOOD DUCK									o				o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE	o					o	o	o								o								
FORK-TAILED KITE	o	o				o	o	o				o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
BLACK-BREASTED BUZZARD								o														o		
WHISTLING EAGLE	o	o	o		o	o				o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
AUSTRALIAN GOSHAWK											o	o												
LITTLE EAGLE												o												
WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE		o													o	o							o	
SPOTTED HARRIER			o				o	o		o														
BLACK FALCON			o										o		o									
LITTLE FALCON	o							o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
NANKEEN KESTREL	o	o		o		o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
BROWN HAWK	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
LITTLE QUAIL						o	o	o		o	o	o												
BROLGA								o			o													
AUSTRALIAN BUSTARD															o		o							
SPUR-WINGED PLOVER		o																			o			
BANDED PLOVER							o			o	o	o			o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL							o						o							o	o	o	o	o
AUSTRALIAN DOTTEREL															o						o	o	o	o
WHITE-HEADED STILT																				o				

SPECIES	LOCATION																						
	CHINCILLA / C'VILLE	CHARLEVILLE	AUGATHELLA	TAMBO	BLACKALL	BARCALDINE	LONGREACH / WINTON	WINTON / OPALTON	OPALTON	OPALTON / HAYNESIDE	HAYNESIDE / MAYNE R.	MAYNE RIVER	MAYNE R. / JUNDIAH	JUNDIAH	JUNDIAH / WINDORAH	WINDORAH / CUDDAPAN	CUDDAPAN	WINDORAH / QUILPE	QUILPE / TOOMPINE	TYNE / THARGOMINDAH	DINEVOR LAKES	ELDO / MOONIE R.	
AUSTRALIAN PRATINCOLE							o						o			o							
WHISKERED TERN																							
PEACEFUL DOVE	o		o					o				o		o					o				o
DIAMOND DOVE		o	o					o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
COMMON BRONZEWING	o		o					o														o	o
CRESTED PIGEON	o	o	o																				
PLUMED PIGEON								o	o	o	o	o	o										
FLOCK PIGEON							o																
RAINBOW LORIKEET					o																		
SCALY-BREADED LORIKEET	o				o																		
YELLOW-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO												o	o	o			o						o
RED-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO												o	o	o									
SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO	o																						
MAJOR MITCHELL																							
LITTLE CORELLA							o					o		o		o	o		o				o
GALAH	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
COCKATIEL	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
RED-WINGED PARROT	o	o	o				o																o
PALE-HEADED ROSELLA	o	o	o									o				o			o				o
RINGNECK PARROT		o	o							o						o			o				o
BLUE BONNET					o														o				o
RED-RUMPED PARROT																							o
MULGA PARROT		o																					o
BUDGERYGAH					o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
PALLID CUCKOO					o			o	o			o						o	o				
HORSFIELD BRONZE CUCKOO								o	o														o
CHANNEL-BILLED CUCKOO																							
BOOBOOK OWL					o					o		o								o			
BARN OWL					o			o	o								o	o					
OWLET NIGHTJAR					o			o	o					o									o
SPOTTED NIGHTJAR									o	o													
LAUGHING KOOKABURRA	o	o	o	o	o																		o
RED-BACKED KINGFISHER			o		o																		
SACRED KINGFISHER					o				o					o			o	o	o	o			
SINGING BUSHLARK								o															
WHITE-BACKED SWALLOW																o	o	o					
WELCOME SWALLOW																						o	o

SPECIES	LOCATION																						
	CHINCHILLA / C'VILLE	CHARLEVILLE	AUGATHELLA	TAMBO	BLACKALL	BARCALDINE	LONGREACH / WINTON	WINTON / OPALTON	OPALTON	OPALTON / MAYNESIDE	MAYNESIDE / MAYNE R	MAYNE RIVER	MAYNE R. / JUNDIAH	JUNDIAH	JUNDIAH / WINDORAH	WINDORAH / CUDDAPAN	CUDDAPAN	WINDORAH / OULPE	OULPE / TOOMPINE	TPINE / THARGOONDAH	DYNEOR LAKES	EULO / MOONE R.	
TREE MARTIN	o						o																
FAIRY MARTIN							o	o															
AUSTRALIAN PIPIT												o				o		o					
GROUND CUCKOO-SHRIKE	o			o	o		o						o									o	
BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE		o		o			o	o				o				o		o	o			o	
WHITE-WINGED TRILLER													o										
CINNAMON QUAIL-THRUSH								o		o													
GREY-CROWNED BABBLER	o																			o			o
CHESTNUT-CROWNED BABBLER																					o	o	
HALL'S BABBLER																							
SPINIFIX BIRD								o	o														
BROWN SONGLARK			o	o			o	o															
RUFIOUS SONGLARK							o	o		o							o			o			
BLACK-BACKED WREN					o															o			
BLACK & WHITE WREN																o	o					o	
VARIEGATED WREN		o	o	o				o	o		o					o				o		o	o
RUFIOUS-CROWNED EMU-WREN									o	o	o												
WESTERN WARBLER									o														
WEEBILL	o	o	o					o				o							o	o			o
RED-TAILED THORNBILL	o	o		o																			
YELLOW-RUMPED THORNBILL				o				o	o														
WHITEFACE																							o
SPECKLED WARBLER				o																			
STRIATED GRASS-WREN										o	o												
CRIMSON CHAT																o	o				o	o	
ORANGE CHAT																	o						
GIBBER BIRD																	o						
JACKY WINTER	o	o		o				o	o														o
RED-CAPPED ROBIN				o																	o	o	o
HOODED ROBIN		o		o				o	o												o		o
GREY FANTAIL	o	o		o																			o
WILLIE WAGTAIL	o			o	o		o	o	o			o		o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
RESTLESS FLYCATCHER												o									o		o
RUFIOUS WHISTLER	o	o	o	o			o	o	o	o	o	o	o							o			o
GREY THRUSH	o	o	o	o					o												o		o
CRESTED BELLBIRD	o	o	o	o			o	o	o	o	o	o	o							o		o	o
WEDGEBILL																							o

SPECIES	LOCATION																						
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WHITE-WINGED SITTELLA																							
BROWN TREECREEPER				o																			
MISTLETOE BIRD	o		o				o	o	o	o	o	o	o					o		o	o	o	o
STRIATED PARDALOTE													o				o						
BLACK-HEADED PARDALOTE										o	o							o					
BROWN HONEYEATER										o	o								o				
BLACK HONEYEATER										o	o												
SINGING HONEYEATER			o	o			o	o													o		
GREY-HEADED HONEYEATER									o	o													
WHITE-PLUMED HONEYEATER	o	o	o	o	o		o					o	o	o			o	o	o	o	o	o	o
WHITE-EARED HONEYEATER	o																						
BLUE-FACED HONEYEATER	o	o																					
LITTLE FRIAR-BIRD	o	o	o	o				o	o										o				
NOISY FRIAR-BIRD	o	o																			o	o	o
STRIPED HONEYEATER	o	o		o																			
NOISY MINER	o	o	o																				
YELLOW-THROATED MINER	o	o	o				o	o			o		o				o	o	o	o	o	o	o
SPINY-CHEEKED HONEYEATER				o											o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
PAINTED FINCH								o	o														
BANDED FINCH	o		o	o																			o
ZEBRA FINCH		o	o	o	o		o	o	o			o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
PLUM-HEADED FINCH		o	o																				
HOUSE SPARROW	o	o					o	o								o			o				
MAGPIE LARK	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o			o	o	o	o	o	o	o					o
APOSTLE BIRD	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o			o		o	o	o	o	o	o				o
WHITE-BREADED WOOD-SWALLOW	o	o																					o
MASKED WOOD-SWALLOW		o	o				o	o			o	o	o	o	o								
WHITE-BROWED WOOD-SWALLOW		o	o	o	o	o	o	o					o	o					o	o	o		
BLACK-FACED WOOD-SWALLOW		o	o				o	o	o			o	o	o					o	o	o		o
LITTLE WOOD-SWALLOW		o	o						o			o	o	o						o	o		o
PIED CURRAWONG	o																						
PIED BUTCHER-BIRD	o	o		o			o	o				o			o				o				
GREY BUTCHER-BIRD	o	o		o																			
BLACK BACKED MAGPIE	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o						o				o				o
SPOTTED BOWERBIRD								o					o										o
RAVEN / AUSTRALIAN CROW	o	o	o						o			o	o				o	o	o	o			o



## THORNBILL RECORDS FROM NORTH QUEENSLAND

A.C.M. GRIFFIN

The following sightings of a party of Broad-tailed Thornbills *Acanthiza apicalis* about 90 km east of Hughenden, and of two Chestnut-tailed Thornbills *Acanthiza uropygialis* approximately 115 km east of Hughenden, may be of interest because of the difficulty in defining the exact ranges of these species.

On 7 May 1973, a party of very red-rumped thornbills, white underneath with heavy striations on the breast and with conspicuous flecking on the forehead, were seen 25 km south of Torrens Creek (20°46'S, 145°02'E) feeding 1 - 2 m in bushes. They were calling animatedly and tunefully and were observed for some time until they flew up into eucalypts. I have based my identification of these thornbills as *A. apicalis* on McGill (1970). They had however, much more richly coloured rumps than the Broad-tailed Thornbills seen in Western Australia and much more closely resembled those seen at Opalton in September 1970 (Griffin, 1971) and identified by Mrs H.B. Gill as Inland Thornbills *A. apicalis albiventris*.

On 11 and 12 June 1973, two thornbills with bright chestnut rumps and white underparts were seen feeding in the lower branches of small bushes and on the ground in dry savannah woodland with sparse ground cover at Burra (20°44'S, 145°11'E), midway between Pentland and Torrens Creek. They were constantly chivvied by the resident Varied (or Buff-tailed) Thornbills *A. reguloides squamata*, their white underparts contrasting markedly with the yellow breast and abdomen of the latter species.

Storr (1973) gives the distribution of *A. uropygialis* as west and south interior of Queensland, north nearly to Winton and west to Opalton. This record would be over 300 km north-east of Winton.

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## ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF YELLOW-TINTED HONEYEATER AND FUSCOUS HONEYEATER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

H.J. LAVERY

The inconclusive situation with regard to the ranges of the *Meliphaga flavescens* - *Meliphaga fusca* group has recently been described in detail from available museum material (Parker 1971). Specific distribution data remain wanting in particular from the Cairns-Cardwell region of north-eastern Queensland.

During fauna surveys throughout Queensland for conservation purposes, the opportunity has been taken to obtain additional data (Table I) from localities through this region. All specimens taken near Georgetown were from low woodland along creek beds. The Kirrama specimen was in woodland and those from Gowrie Creek and Black River were from woodland near freshwater. The habitat at Mt Fox was open forest (vegetation forms follow Specht 1970).

The material falls into two recognizable classes - smaller (notably lighter) birds having distinctly yellow underparts especially throat, and larger birds having faintly yellowish or pale buff underparts.

These descriptions fit those given, for example by Gilbert (1845) and Officer (1965), for the Yellow-tinted and the Fuscous Honeyeaters respectively. Consequently, the geographic and habitat distributions are in accordance with Parker (1971), that is Gulf of Carpentaria and north-eastern drainage basins including lowlands respectively.

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TABLE I

## SIZE AND THROAT PLUMAGE APPEARANCE OF FAUNA SURVEY SPECIMENS

Specimens	Weight (g)	Length (mm)					Degree of yellow colour on throat
		Total	Wing	Exposed Culmen	Tarsus	Mid-toe ex.claw	
<i>M. flavescens</i>							
Near Georgetown 18°15'S, 143°15'E							
Adult M. 13.8.66	13.4	161	75	13	19	12	-
Near Georgetown 18°15'S, 143°55'E							"Distinct" (greyish yellow 2B6*)
Adult M. 12.8.66	11.6	149	71	11	18	11	
Near Georgetown 18°15'S, 143°55'E							"Distinct"
Adult F. 12.8.66	11.3	140	76	10	18	11	
Near Georgetown 18°15'S, 143°55'E							"Distinct"
Adult F. 12.8.66	11.4	153	74	13	18	11	
<i>M. fusca</i>							
Kirrama 18°08'S, 145°36'E							"Faint"
Adult M. 17.4.72	16.7	166	82	12.9	19.0	11.8	
Gowrie Creek 18°25'S, 145°50'E							"Faint" (olive brown 4D3)
Adult M. 11.12.72	16.9	164	80	11.5	19.1	13.8	
Gowrie Creek 18°25'S, 145°50'E							"Faint"
Adult F. 11.12.72	16.0	136	-	11.5	17.1	11.7	
Gowrie Creek 18°25'S, 145°50'E							"Faint"
Imm. F. 11.12.72	14.2	-	73	13.0	18.2	11.4	
Mt Fox ** 18°50'S, 145°48'E							"Nil" (biege 4C3)
Adult M. 9.11.72	17.1	168	76	12.3	18.8	12.2	
Black River *** 19°20'S, 146°30'E							"Faint" (olive 3D4)
Adult M. 3.6.74	16.5	160	78	12.2	19.0	12.8	
Black River 19°20'S, 146°30'E							"Faint"
Adult M. 3.6.74	14.9	157	82	12.3	19.7	13.3	

\* Estimated colour after Kornerup and Wanscher (1963).

\*\* Study skin Q.M. 011774 (D.P.I. NQ184).

\*\*\* Study skin D.P.I. NQ1828.

## A QUEENSLAND SPECIMEN RECORD OF SILVER-GREY PETREL (ANTARCTIC FULMAR)

D.P. VERNON AND J.H.D. MARTIN

On 9 October 1972, after a severe storm the previous evening, a freshly-dead specimen of the Silver-grey Petrel, *Fulmarus glacialisoides*, was found by J.S. McEvoy at high water mark on Eager Beach, 7 km south of Cape Moreton, Moreton Island, south-eastern Queensland. Shortly after, the specimen was weighed, measured and prepared as a study skin with one wing separate and spread.

The Checklist Committee, Ornithological Society of New Zealand (1970, p.21) states that distribution of this pelagic southern ocean petrel is "circumpolar, breeding on Antarctic coast and outlying islands, including Balleny and Heard islands, possibly regular straggler to New Zealand as far north as Auckland west coast and Bay of Plenty (at least twenty records)."

According to Serventy *et al.* (1971, p.87), in Australia only "eight beach-washed specimens have been found, three in Western Australia, one in New South Wales and four in Victoria". Macdonald (1973, p.42) cites "mid-New South Wales" as the northern limit of its eastern Australian range but this should now be extended to latitude 27°S. Murphy, (1936, p.598) states that this species "ranges regularly northward in the southern oceans across the Sub-Tropical Convergence; on the east coast of South America to Cape Frio, and on the west coast to the northern end of the Humboldt Current or about latitude 6°S." In view of this considerable south to north movement along both coasts of South America, the species may range further north in eastern Australian seas than has hitherto been suspected.

Details of the specimen are as follows: Q.M.014802, adult female, ovary not enlarged, (12 x 8mm), oviduct straight, skull fully ossified. The feathers are in pristine condition, no moult is evident and the specimen compares closely with Mathews (1912-13, Pl. 82). Measurements in millimetres are as follows:- total length in flesh 465, culmen 42, wing 324, wingspan 1085, tail 120, tarsus 49, middle toe and claw 67. The weight of the specimen was 494.8 grams.

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## SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER FROM NORTH QUEENSLAND

G.B. BAKER AND H.B. GILL

Heavy storms lashed the north Queensland coast from 10 to 13 December 1973, with over 750 mm of rain during this period in the Innisfail district. On 14 December we were investigating a mangrove area (Coquette Point, 17°31'S, 146°04'E) at the mouth of the Johnstone River and found a dead Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*. The bird was preserved as a skeleton because, although it had been dead for only about a day, it was too decomposed for preparation as a skin. The specimen was lodged in the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Wildlife Research collection in Canberra, Reg. No. PROS274. Measurements in millimetres taken before preparation of the skeleton were; wing 276, tarsus 50.9 and culmen 33.1.

Storr (1973) gives the range of *P. tenuirostris* in Queensland as being the south-eastern seas, north to latitude 23°50'S. This record substantially increases the known northward range of this species in Queensland waters.

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## A SIGHTING OF DARK SHEARWATERS NEAR NORTH KEPPEL ISLAND

N. W. LONGMORE

On 2 June 1974 at 13:00 while on a boat trip ca 1 km east of North Keppel Island (23°04'S, 150°57'E) off the central Queensland coast I noted a group of five sea-birds resting on the water. The weather was fine and warm with a light north-west wind and a calm sea. The boat moved to within 100 m of the birds and at this point a Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* flew in and joined the group. Their appearance confirmed that they were dark shearwaters. A size comparison was taken with the Booby and also with a Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* which flew by at an appropriate moment. The shearwaters were about three quarters the size of the Booby, larger than the Crested Tern, and slightly larger than the commoner Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus* which were also seen in the vicinity.

They had short-rounded tails and dark bills consistent with either the Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus* or the Short-tailed Shearwater *P. tenuirostris*. After three minutes two of them flew off. On rising from the water it was evident that they were a new species for the Keppel Bay area. Apart from the size, an area of "ashy" coloured feathers was visible on the undersides of the wings.

During residence in New South Wales I became familiar with both the Sooty and the Short-tailed Shearwaters as beach-washed birds, in the field as birds migrating and feeding along the coast, and once at Lion Island on the mouth of the Hawkesbury River. Birds of either species at Keppel Bay at this time of year give both a new area record and an unusual period of the year for either species to be found locally.

The overall size and colour, the dark bill, "ashy" wing and short-rounded tail would suggest initially the Sooty Shearwater, although the Short-tailed Shearwater also fits this description. I feel that the former is the bird seen on this occasion.

With reference to the Sooty Shearwater, Slater (1970) shows a Queensland distribution extending to about Brisbane, but it is not mentioned by Lavery (1968), Macdonald (1973), Serventy *et al.* (1971), or Storr (1973). Robertson (1973) gives details of two beach-washed specimens collected in southern Queensland during October and November, 1956. The Short-tailed Shearwater is mentioned as having been recorded as beach-washed birds by Slater (1970) and Robertson (1973). Both these refer to birds

found at a different season of the year and in an area some 600 km to the south.

Mention has been made by various authors that little is known of the movements of the Sooty Shearwater in its non-breeding period. The Short-tailed Shearwater tends to move further to the east rather than north along the Australian coast-line. If, like many other sea-birds, they occasionally wander irregularly they could occur more frequently than previously suspected in our northern waters.

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## BIRD PREDATION ON A LARGE RAIN FOREST SNAIL

HELEN M. KING AND BRIAN KING

While engaged in a study of the biology of a marked population of the large terrestrial snail *Sphaerospira fraseri* in the rain forest of the Noosa National Park, the following data were obtained on the predation by birds, presumably the Noisy Pitta *Pitta versicolor*.

Bird predation appeared to be a major cause of mortality in the adult and large juvenile snails. Broken adult and large juvenile shells were often found in large clusters around anvils. Anvils were usually rocks, and in one case a tree root, on which

the snail shells were broken by the bird, and around which discarded shells and fragments accumulated. The shells were broken in a consistent manner which suggested that only one species of predator was involved. The spire was knocked off leaving the large final whorl intact. In the 3.6 hectare study area, six anvils were located. Occasional single broken shells were found in the leaf litter away from any anvil. Extensive weathering of some of the shells at anvils indicated that the anvils had been in use for many years.

TABLE I

Monthly totals of broken *S. fraseri* shells

	Month	at anvils	elsewhere		
1973	May	2	0		
	June	1	0		
	July	3	1		
	August	4	2		
	September	4	1		
	October	5	0		
	November	0	0		
	December	0	0		
	1974	January	0	0	
		February	0	0	
April		0	0		
May		5	3		
July		8	5		
	TOTAL	32	12	44	

Each month all freshly broken shells (both marked and unmarked) at the six anvils or in the vicinity of any of the 225 reference points in the study area were recorded. A total of 44 shells, of which 25 were marked, were recovered during the period May 1973 to July 1974. The 25 marked shells represented approximately 6% of the snails marked during the study. Predation appeared to occur only in the winter and spring months (Table I), corresponding with seasonal movements of the Noisy Pitta. Storr (1973) reports, and our observations confirm, that the Noisy Pitta moves into forest patches in the coastal areas of southern Queensland during winter months and migrate inland during summer.

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## A QUEENSLAND SPECIMEN RECORD OF THIN-BILLED PRION

D.P. VERNON AND J.H.D. MARTIN

A live Thin-billed Prion *Fachyptila belcheri* was found by an island worker between Eurong Beach and Hook Point, Fraser Island, south-east Queensland in September, 1973 and donated to Mr. W. Dunmall of "Urimbirra Park", Torquay, Queensland. The bird died overnight and was mounted by the recipient shortly afterwards. In this form, the specimen was donated by the Fauna Conservation Branch, Department of Primary Industries, to the Queensland Museum on 10 July, 1974. It was later prepared as an excellent cabinet skin with wings outspread, registered QM 015548.

The type of *Fachyptila belcheri* was described by Mathews (1912) from a beach-washed specimen found on Torquay Beach 21 km south of Geelong, Victoria. Subsequently the nest and eggs were also described by him (1931) and later again figured (1936, pl.58). Falla (1937) described a sub-species, *P. b. orientalis*, from one of a series of specimens collected in 1929 on Kerguelen Island during the B.A.N.Z. Antarctic Research Expedition. However, later he consigned this race to the nominate *P. b. belcheri* (Falla, 1940).

Oliver (1955, p.120) states that the species "Breeds on Kerguelen, Bouvet Islands and Falklands, and probably on South Orkneys". On New Island, one of the smallest of the Falkland group, Cawkell and Hamilton (1961, p.8) record that "the bird is increasing .... Here it breeds in thousands and the total of all their notes at night is like the heavy roar of the surf." Murphy (1935, p.629) wrote "It is strange to consider that the Slender-billed Whalebird (*F. belcheri*)... has been observed, and doubtless collected, in waters off southern South America for well over a hundred and fifty years without being recognised as a distinct form." It is interesting to note also that in the Falklands they are known as 'Fire-birds', because of their predilection to fires.

Distribution is circumpolar in the sub-antarctic zone. According to Oliver (1955, p.120) the species is a winter visitor to New Zealand "but only observed when storm-killed birds are cast up on the beaches." Serventy *et al.*, (1971, p.112) state that in Australia "Most records of this species come from Western Australia ... Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia."

Macdonald (1973, p.48) cites, "mid New South Wales" as the northern limit of range of the species in eastern Australia but on the basis of this specimen this should now extend to about 25°50'S.

The sex of the specimen is unknown. Measurements in millimetres

are: Total length 276, culmen length 26, culmen width 11, wing 190, tail 95, tarsus 34, middle toe and claw 41. These measurements compare closely with data from three specimens from Western Australia. Plumage is in good condition of a young adult, and shows neither moult nor wear.

We thank Dr G. Storr, Curator of Birds, Western Australian Museum, Perth for loan of specimens for comparison, Mr. W. Dunmall of Torquay, Queensland for information, and Mr C.G. Wilkinson of Fauna Conservation Branch for procuring the specimen for the Queensland Museum.

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## NOTE ON THE BRUSH BRONZEWING

J.D. MACDONALD

I have been reminded more than once that in my book (Macdonald 1973) I omitted to record the Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans* in south-east Queensland. In extenuation my typescript was with the publishers before Ingram's (1972) note appeared - but I could have put a note in the Addendum! The only information I had, and the only record north of about Sydney, was mention of a nest with eggs on Fraser Island by Chisholm (1924). As nothing was said about birds being seen I was doubtful if the nondescript nest and eggs of the Brush Bronzewing could be identified readily from those of the Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*, frequently recorded in that region, although not often placed on the ground. I did not accept the record, nor did others.

Now Lt.Col. H.A. Bell has written to say, "I found it common at Noosa in 1957 in three separate periods each one week. I have kept both bronzewings in captivity so know them". This of course fits in with Ingram's statements. It is interesting to recall a shrewd comment by Campbell (1901) on the Brush Bronzewing when he quotes from a letter sent by a correspondent in south-east Queensland, "Although frequently seen in the interior, the (Common Bronzewing) is only met with in the little plains or meadows that intersperse the coastal scrubs, where this handsome bird is mostly seen at the sheltered vegetation amongst the sand dunes, close to the roaring billows of the Pacific". In a footnote Campbell adds, "There is a slight doubt in my mind whether this coastal bird is not really the Brush Bronzewing".

The two bronzewings seem to have distinct habitat preferences. Any bronzewing observed in scrubby coastal heaths between south-east Queensland and Sydney is worth a second look for the distinctive markings of the Brush Bronzewing. Col. Bell suggests it may occur on Moreton and Stradbroke Islands; I would add as a likely place the area south of Yamba, near the mouth of the Clarence River, where the Ground Parrot *Pezoporus wallicus* occurs. The Common Bronzewing seems to prefer dry open woodlands.

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## REVIEW

A LIVING RIVER - THE NOOSA by Kathleen McArthur. Published by the author (16 Orvieto Tce., Caloundra, Queensland 4551) for the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Inc. Caloundra Branch 1974. 28pp including 38 photographs and several illustrations by the author. Price \$1.00 plus postage.

Those who know the Noosa well will probably also know Kathleen McArthur and *vice versa*. Kathleen is as much a part of the Living River as the many and diverse aspects which are incorporated in her story. This is not a reference work on birds and wildflowers, nor a detailed guide for tourists and photographers. Neither is it specifically a history nor a detailed appraisal of recent development or degradation. It is in fact a combination of all of these and more, woven together in frequently poetic prose by one who has had a long association with the area.

The story begins with the water falling on the sand mass of Cooloola and follows its path as it "percolates through the fine white sand grains", crosses the wildflower plains and eventually joins the Noosa via "the young and slim" Teewah. From here we are taken on a boatripe downstream while the shadows and shapes, the fauna and flora and the history of human habitation are interpreted for us. We are taken through Lake Cootharaba with its many moods and on down the tidal reaches where "Every stake or beacon has its resident tern, lectern-posed cormorant or guano-squirting Darter". We move on past the settlements of Tewantin and Noosaville to Noosa Heads, where "our river loses its identity in the Pacific Ocean.

The text is followed by numerous monochromes which illustrate various aspects of the Living River. Unfortunately their potential is lost because of the poor quality of the paper and printing, and the repetitive layout with all photographs of equal size and shape. The problem lies in the limited financial backing and it is unfortunate that this section could not have been made more attractive by the use of the excellent techniques now available. More is the pity since in our rapidly changing surroundings there is great need for just this sort of writing evoked from personal involvement with our natural heritage.

David Gravatt.