

In September the birds began to desert the island, the first to go probably being those with no chick to rear. In October, adults may still be seen coming in to feed their young, but in November a Little Shearwater is a rarity, and in December all have vanished.

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When this account is compared with Lockley's results on Skokholm where the related Manx Shearwater, *Puffinus puffinus puffinus* Brunnich, was studied \* it will be seen that there are many points of resemblance and some differences, all of which have been carefully checked, especially the behaviour on moonlight nights. It may be added that the Little Shearwaters have never been seen on the water in sight of the island waiting for darkness to allow them to come ashore. Mr. S. Fowler informs me that he has seen them feeding off Cape Leeuwin and in Geographé Bay. There is no evidence, however, that these were Eclipse Island birds.

Eleven eggs collected measured, in millimetres, 56 x 35.6, 54.9 x 37.6, 54.6 x 36.5, 53.7 x 35.7, 53.5 x 36.4, 35 x 34.7, 52.9 x 35.7, 52.8 x 35.7, 49.7 x 34.7, 49.6 x 36.6, 49 x 36.

#### EXPLANATION OF CHART.

The presence of a bird in the nest is indicated by a black line; a *white disc* distinguishes the bird sitting on the egg when both are in the nest; a cross marks the presence of a bird *outside* the burrow; and a black disc shows when the egg was first seen.

In connection with birds 3 and 4, no. 4 was not seen again after July 9, its partner endeavouring to carry on alone. Even when the nest was flooded the bird was found on occasions outside the burrow. Birds 7 and 8 were not so persistent.

\* *Shearwaters*, by R. M. Lockley, London, 1942.

## Spring-time Observations at Fishermen's Bend, near Melbourne

By ROY WHEELER, Windsor, Victoria.

*September 27, 1945.*

Most land-birds bathe, and some sea-birds also make it quite a ritual. To-day I watched three Crested Terns (*Sterna bergii*) splashing water over themselves vigorously on the edge of a sand-spit. The performance was kept up for some minutes, during which the head and shoulders of the birds were immersed continually and the inner wings splashed in the shallow water, until the birds had quite

a bedraggled appearance. Then the birds waddled on to the sand bank and, after preening their feathers for some time, settled down on the sand among numerous Silver Gulls and other Crested Terns and slept with the head under the wing.

I found to-day two additional nests of the Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius ruficapillus*), each containing one egg. After patient watching and waiting, I also found the nest and egg of the Spurwing Plover (*Lobibyx novæ-hollandiæ*) in close proximity to the nest of a Red-capped Dotterel. Near the Plover's nest was the shell of a discarded egg, evidently tossed by the bird into a slight depression near the nest. By all appearances the egg had been broken during the early stage of the hatching. Four Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*) were also noted at the Bend.

Mr. C. E. Bryant made a number of visits to the Spurwing Plover egg during the next four weeks, attempting to photograph the Plover. He has supplied me with this note: "I went to the Bend on Saturday, September 29, with materials for a hide. I spent nearly three hours there and obtained three photos, one only of which was satisfactory. During the next four weeks I made several more visits, staying sometimes only about an hour and a half, but often longer. Although I was there during every kind of weather — rain, sunshine, cold and wind — the bird never came nearer than about 10 feet from the egg, and sometimes would not approach nearer than about 100 yards away. I procured no further picture. I assume that the egg hatched, for later there was no sign of it."

#### October 6.

To-day I found three more nests of the Red-capped Dotterel. One, in particular, was a very pretty sight, the brown-spotted eggs lying in a slight depression amongst the mauve blooms of the pig-face weed. Each nest contained the usual clutch of two eggs. Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*) had made their first appearance on the flat for the season, and 13 birds were noted in bright plumage, the golden sheen on the back being very apparent.

I watched a flock of Little Black Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) 'working' the shallow end of Hobson's Bay. The birds, about 30 in number, were fluttering on the water and diving continuously. All kept a fairly level line across the water and seemed to be attacking a shoal of small fish. Evidently there were not enough Cormorants to keep the shoal ahead of them, for after about 20 minutes the Cormorants scattered and the line became ragged and the diving ceased soon afterwards. There has been a number of notes published about the Cormorants

'working' in rivers and creeks in similar fashion, by driving the fish into the shallows and then feeding with ease.

*November 11.*

Holidays intervened and I did not visit the Bend until this date. Curlew-Sandpipers (*Erolia testacea*) were first seen for the season, although Little Stints (*E. ruficollis*) and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*E. acuminata*) had been there in flocks since August.

Four Mountain Duck (*Casarca tadornoides*) were seen at the Bend to-day. This grand bird always presents a fine sight, whether on the wing or on land or water. Marsh Terns (*Chlidonias leucopareia*) were also noted, wheeling and dipping in their dainty fashion over Hobson's Bay. Two more nests of *Charadrius ruficapillus* were found on the flat. The Spurwing Plover had finished nesting, but the Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*) were noted acting as though young or eggs were about. A short wait, and one bird quickly made its way back to sit on what I thought were eggs, but, on reaching the spot, I found four very young birds, all flat on the ground, heads outstretched, eyes closed, and not a movement out of any of them. Overhead the parent birds and others of the species kept up a very vicious and persistent attack until I retired.

*November 18.*

To-day I spent quite a time watching the Banded Plover, eight birds being under observation. One well-grown young bird was found lying perfectly still while I tramped around it. I picked it up, and it did not struggle, but lay placid while I examined it. When released it ran swiftly away amongst the grasses and rushes and was soon lost from view. A further brace of two very young birds was also found, lying motionless, while the parent birds and the other six made violent protest, both with voice and action, at my intrusion into the family circle.

A nest of the Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) which, by the way, is most plentiful at the Bend, was found beneath a club-rush. It contained two eggs, and one young bird just out of the shell.

Marsh Terns and Golden Plover were again noted and a pair of Pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) were feeding near the mouth of the Yarra River.

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In 1946 both the Banded Plover and the Spurwing Plover again nested at the Bend, and maybe some further notes on those species will be contributed later.