

CONCLUSION

The pattern of the duckling of *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* resembles no other duckling found in Australia. Least of all does it resemble the duckling of the shovellers, a group with which *M. membranaceus* has certain similarities in feeding and display. The description of the duckling does not give any direct clue to its relationship within the family.

The pattern of the duckling of *Aythya australis* is typical of the tribe Aythyini; *Nyroca valisineria* and *N. americana* in particular. Both these are included by Delacour and Mayr in group 1 of the tribe. Descriptions of the ducklings of group 2, which includes *A. australis*, are not available for a further comparison to be made.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is indebted to Gene Willsford who accurately drew the duckling in figure 1.

REFERENCES

- Delacour, J. and Mayr, E. (1945). 'The Family Anatidae', *Wilson Bull.*, 57, 3-55.
 Kortright, F. H. (1942). *The Duck, Geese and Swans of North America*, Wildlife Management Institute, Washington, U.S.A., p. 456.

Stray Feathers

Migratory Flight of Honeyeaters.—At Mallacoota, eastern Victoria, about 7.30 a.m. on May 7, 1955, my attention was drawn to a constant stream of small birds flying in a direct line to the north, and following the coast-line around from the south and west. A careful scrutiny with binoculars showed that the birds were not circling, or approaching from the sea, at least in the vicinity of the township. Many hundreds of thousands of birds were involved, as the flow continued for approximately two hours, reaching its peak about 8 a.m.

Over the township of Mallacoota and the cleared paddocks about Mallacoota House they divided to the shelter of the timber, but nothing interrupted the continuous flight as they streamed through the trees. At the peak the flight was some 50 yards wide, even over the cleared paddocks, and viewed from the house over the tea-tree at the water's edge the birds looked like swarming bees.

It appeared to be a mass migration of honeyeaters, primarily of the White-naped species (*Melithreptus lunatus*), although they were accompanied by a few Yellow-faced (*Meliphaga chrysops*) and Wattle-birds (*Anthochaera carunculata*), but one got the impression that these latter species

were just going along 'for the ride', as they did not fly with the directness or the sense of urgency of the White-naped species.

Later in the morning we drove to Genoa (15 miles to the north approximately) but there was no sign of the birds, although the trees throughout the area were in heavy blossom.

I was told that a similar flight, to a limited degree, had gone on the previous morning, but the day following not a bird was to be seen, and there even seemed a dearth of the ubiquitous Wattle-birds.

A local man told me that these flights were seen for two or three mornings each year at this time, but as he had no idea what birds they were, and no other local person had noticed them, that observation should be treated with reservations.

The weather throughout the period was calm, sunny and warm after cold nights.—INA WATSON, Jolimont, Vic., 13/5/55.

Grey-crowned Babblers Removing Parasites from Plumage.—In May 1955 I was watching a party of Grey-crowned Babblers (*Pomatostomus temporalis*) in box trees near Deniliquin. Four of them that were sitting quietly on a branch engaged in a performance I had not previously seen. One would approach another, lift the latter's wing with its bill, and probe underneath in the same manner as when lifting loose bark. Its attention would then be transferred to the breast and throat of the other bird, its bill probing deep into the feathers, gradually shifting the scene of action to the nape and crown. The second bird would give such assistance as required; for instance raising the wing slightly, stretching the neck when the breast and throat were being surveyed, or bending the head to give access to crown. All four of the birds engaged in this activity, changing partners at short intervals. The movements used were identical with those used in normal feeding action; there was no sign of excitement indicating the possibility of some sexual behaviour and, although no swallowing was noticed, it was obvious that the birds were 'de-lousing' each other. Apparently Babblers are well aware of their reputation of being verminous and at times take steps to remedy the condition.—J. N. HOBBS, Deniliquin, N.S.W., 13/7/55.

Recovery of Banded Ducks.—The recovery of a banded Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*) at Rolls Lagoon, about 65 miles from Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, nineteen months after it was banded at Lara, near Geelong, Victoria, adds a further long distance record to those given previously (*Emu*, vol. 54, part 3, p. 178). The Teal was banded on June 11, 1953, by officers of the Victorian Fisheries and

Game Department, and recovered on January 10, 1955, by Mr. A. E. Lavrick of East Kalgoorlie.

Details of birds recovered at points furthest from banding stations are as follows—

Species	Banded at	Recovered at
Grey Teal ..	Lara, Victoria, on Jun. 11, 1953	65 m. west of Kalgoorlie, Western Aust. on Jan. 10, 1954.
Grey Teal ..	Lara, Feb. 19, 1953	20 m. west of Townsville, Sep. 30, 1953.

The approximate distances between the localities are 1,600 miles (in a line north of the Nullarbor Plain) in the former case, and of 1,400 miles in the latter.

Others of interest are—

Grey Teal ..	Port Fairy, Vic., May 7, 1953	25 m. north-west of Windorah in south-west Queensland.
Grey Teal ..	Lara, Feb. 17, 1953	Moulting Bay on east coast of Tasmania, Mar. 1, 1954.
Black Duck ..	Queen's Park Lake, Melb., Apr. 2, 1952	West Rockhampton, Jun. 2, 1953.
Black Duck ..	Port Fairy, May 16, 1953	10 m. from Hobart, Tas., Mar. 8, 1954.
Grey Teal ..	Lara, May 26, 1952	Kangaroo Is., South Aust., Apr. 19, 1953.
Grey Teal ..	Lara, Apr. 9, 1953	Cowell, Eyre Peninsula, South Aust., Nov. 12, 1953.

Many other birds have been recovered in between these localities and Victoria.—M. C. DOWNES, Fisheries and Game Dept., Melbourne, Vic., 22/3/55.

Shock Moult in Birds.—On several occasions during the past twenty years when collecting birds, especially parrots, for scientific purposes, I found that the fluttering bird readily shed one or more of its tail-feathers and many body feathers. In October 1954, I captured an adult male Black-capped Sittella (*Neositta pileata*) near Bower, S.A., which was unable to fly because of a slight wing injury. Although I handled the bird carefully and gently, it shed three tail-feathers and a number of rump-feathers in my hand before I released it.

In a recent paper under the title 'Über die Schreckmauser', Dr. Heinrich Dathe (*Journal für Ornithologie*, 96 (1), 5-14, 1955) suggests that in cases of shock moult the bird involuntarily sacrifices a part of its plumage in order to save its life. "The furred and feathered predators secure, through the shock moulting of portions of the plumage, a mouth or claws full of feathers, while the bird itself slips away," he states.—ERHARD F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 14/7/55.