

SHORT NOTES

Distraction display of the Fawn-breasted Bowerbird

The Spotted Bowerbird *Chlamydera maculata* leads intruders away from the nest with a distraction display combined with mimicry (Marshall 1954, *Bowerbirds. Their display and breeding cycles*). I believe the habit has not been recorded for the Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *C. cerviniventris*.

On 15 May 1965, a nest of this species with one young was found at Taurama Beach, Port Moresby, 3 m from the ground in a small isolated mangrove near a line of mangroves fringing the beach. When approached, an adult flew from the nest into a nearby mangrove uttering a harsh 'churr'. When approached again, the bird hopped down to the ground and slowly went away through the mangrove roots drooping and fluttering its wings feebly. At the same time it clearly mimicked the calls of the Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii*, Black-backed Butcherbird *Cracticus mentalis*, and especially those of the Mangrove Heron *Butorides striata*. Finally the bird flew away, but repeated the performance twice after it had returned to the nest. On 20 May the bird again gave the performance imitating the Heron, Butcherbird and the Willie Wag-tail *Rhipidura leucophrys*.

The species nested with certain or probable success in 1965, 1966 and 1967 in a mango tree at Taurama Barracks and in 1965 at Government House, Port Moresby. No distraction display was seen at these sites in spite of frequent observation, presumably because the adults had become accustomed to men in these urban areas.

H. L. BELL, 21 Jagara St., Aranda, ACT 2614.
12 November 1968

Burdekin Duck in NSW

At about 1700 h on 25 September 1968 at Lake Brewster, 50 km west of Lake Cargelligo, NSW, a large duck flew directly over my wife at a height of about 4 m. It was the size of a domestic Muscovy Duck and, seen clearly from below at this close range, was entirely white except for the outer part of the wings, and the tail, which were blackish, and a dark brown band across the breast. The head was white and the bill whitish. My wife described this bird and drew it for me. Later she identified it from *Waterfowl in N.S.W.* (CSIRO & Natn. Parks Wildl. Serv.) and *Australian Waterfowl* (Fish. Wildl. Dept., Vic.) as a Burdekin Duck *Tadorna radjah*. Although the last acceptable record of *T. radjah* in NSW was in 1901 (Frith 1967, *Waterfowl in Australia*; McGill pers.

comm.), there seems to be no doubt that the bird at Lake Brewster was this species.

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20 November 1968.

Breeding of the Bridled Tern in South Australia

The Bridled Tern *Sterna anaetheta* was first recorded in SA in 1968 (Bonnin 1968, *S. Aust. Orn.* **25**: 18). A pair with a recently hatched nestling were found on the Baudin Rocks near Robe on 4 January 1968. On 29 December 1968 there was a pair of birds in the same area which repeatedly alighted on a horizontal dead branch of a nitre bush. A fresh egg was found nearby in the shade of a bush on the bare ground approximately 3 m from the site of the nest found earlier in the year. The egg was pale green with moderately dense markings evenly distributed, varying in colour from light brown to almost black. The birds were not timid and allowed close approach, but during five hours neither incubated the egg. One or both birds stood guard and drove away Silver Gulls *Larus novae-hollandiae* from time to time.

Once a third Bridled Tern in adult plumage approached the pair when on the wing but it soon left them. This bird had a perch about 25 m away within 2 m of a Silver Gull's nest with two eggs and within 5 m of an outlying small colony of Crested Terns *Sterna bergii*. The Bridled Tern behaved in the same manner as regards its perching area as did the nesting pair. When approached it took to the air and circled close by until we left and then returned to its resting perch. Except when disturbed it stayed there for five hours. There was very little cover nearby and no egg was found, nor was it ever joined by a fourth bird.

On 27 January 1969 in the company of Messrs M. H. Waterman and M. Young I found that the egg had hatched. The dark grey nestling, estimated to be five days old, was banded with a CSIRO band on one leg and a pink band on the other. We failed to trap and band the parents although we tried to do so. The third adult bird was again on its perching site. This bird could be the nestling found twelve months previously, now grown to maturity.

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2 February 1969.

Status of the White-Winged Triller in New Guinea

The White-winged Triller *Lalage sueurii* has generally been regarded as a migrant to New Guinea from April to August (Mayr 1941, *List of New Guinea birds*; Tubb 1945, *Emu* **44**: 266) but Gilliard (1950, *Am. Mus. Novit.* (1453)) found it not uncommon at Port Moresby in February and Watson *et al.* (1962, *Emu* **62**:

7) found nests in and near Port Moresby in October. Local observers have now recorded the species throughout the year with no diminution of numbers during the Australian summer. On 11 November 1966 E. D. Cleland and myself at Port Moresby saw two pairs feeding at least three young out of the nest, possibly indicating communal breeding similar to that in Australia. The species is spasmodic in appearance and fluctuates in numbers, as apparently it does in so much of its range, because it does not always frequent the centre of Port Moresby where Watson *et al.* found it, and yet flocks, possibly of migrants, have been seen (February 1967) at Jackson's aerodrome. A. Hoogerwerf (*in litt.*) did not find it at Merauke nor has it been recorded in the Trans-Fly and southern West Irian, which seems strange because it is fairly regular at Port Moresby.

H. L. BELL, 21 Jagara St., Aranda, ACT 2614.
6 February 1969.

The White-chinned Petrel: third Australian specimen

The White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* has been found beach-washed in Australia twice previously; at Discovery Bay, Victoria, in March 1959 (Learmonth 1960, *Emu* 60: 103), and on Port Kembla Beach, NSW, in June 1963 (Gibson & Sefton 1964, *Emu* 64: 70). On 10 December 1968, on Newcastle Bight, central coastal NSW, I found a third beach-washed specimen.

The head, wings, legs, and tail were collected and are preserved in my collection (ref. No. 68.027). The white 'chin' in this specimen is almost restricted to the inter-ramal space, and the bill characters agree with those depicted by Gibson & Sefton, except that the mandibular unguis is wholly dark. The dimensions (mm) are as follow: wing 367, tarsus 61.5, exposed culmen 49. Sex was indeterminable. The stomach contained a few cephalopod beaks, and what appeared to be macerated flesh.

During November 1968, the weather was generally fine with only light scattered rain; a light south-easterly airstream persisted across the whole of NSW during the first few days of December, immediately before the petrel was found; but the cause of the bird's death is not known.

Serventy & Whittell (1967, *Birds of Western Australia*: 424) state that the White-chinned Petrel is a common species in the southern oceans, following ships on the Cape Route and across the Great Australian Bight. Amiet (*in litt.*) states that he usually observes the species from May to September, in the deeper waters east of the continental shelf between Newcastle and Montagu Island. It breeds on Marion, the Crozet, and Kerguelen Islands, laying in December; the young leave their burrows during April and May.

From these three specimens and the various sight records, *aequinoctialis* appears to be the species of *Procellaria* that most often visits Australian seas, although perhaps rarely approaching land.

I am grateful to Mr L. Amiet, and to Mr K. A. Hindwood, who confirmed my identification, examined the stomach contents, and commented on the manuscript.

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10 March 1969.

CORRIGENDUM

Spice Finch in New Guinea

On page 53 above a sight record of the Spice Finch *Lonchura punctulata* was claimed for New Guinea. The observers on that occasion remain positive of the identification, unlikely though it would seem to have been. After submission of that note Major Bell wrote to say that some months after the sighting a specimen of the Streak-headed Mannikin *L. tristissima* was caught in a mist net in the same area. This species which is vaguely similar to the Spice Finch was previously unknown in southern New Guinea, and Major Bell therefore rightly asked for the note to be withheld until the occurrence of the Spice Finch was confirmed by a specimen. Unfortunately his letter was overlooked at the time of publication of the note on page 53. It should, however, be disregarded until confirmation of the species in New Guinea is forthcoming.

EDITOR.