

## ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1972

The Annual General Meeting was held on 12 May 1972 at Clunies Ross House, 191 Royal Parade, Parkville, Vic. Dr A. Graham Brown was in the Chair and 38 members attended. The meeting opened at 18:00. Apologies were received from 32 members.

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 27 May 1971, having been published and circulated (EMU 72: 35), were taken as read and adopted on the motion of Dr G. F. van Tets, seconded by Mr P. Balmford.

#### Income and Expenditure Account

The Chairman stated that the Treasurer, Mr Gove, was abroad and that at his suggestion Council had appointed Mr P. Balmford to act as Treasurer in his absence. The Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending 31 December 1971, the Balance Sheet as at that date and the reports of the Council and the Auditor thereon having been published and circulated (RAOU Newsletter 10, February 1972), were taken as read and adopted on the motion of Mr Balmford, seconded by Mr H. Bradley.

#### Secretary's Report (see below)

The Secretary's Report was read by the Secretary, Mrs Balmford, and adopted on the motion of the Secretary, seconded by Dr G. F. van Tets.

#### Treasurer's Report

The acting Treasurer stated that there was nothing useful to be said that was not stated in the report of Council already adopted.

#### Editor's Report (see below)

The Editor's Report was read by the Editor and adopted on the motion of the Editor, seconded by Mr G. M. Pizzey. Mr Jarman stated that several members found EMU in recent years to be unreadable and

that it should contain popular as well as scientific material. He asked that this matter be discussed by Council. The Editor stated that he felt it was not possible to amalgamate popular and scientific writing in one journal. There was general discussion on the matter in which Mr Pizzey, Mr Disney, Miss Aston and Dr Wettenhall spoke in favour of the present editorial policy. The Secretary assured Mr Jarman that his remarks would be discussed in Council.

#### Librarian's Report (see below)

The Librarian's report was read by the Librarian and adopted on the motion of the Librarian, seconded by Mrs Balmford.

#### Elections

The candidates nominated by the Council were all elected.

<i>President:</i>	Mrs P. N. Reilly
<i>Secretary:</i>	Mrs R. A. Balmford
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Mr C. N. Gove
<i>Councillor:</i>	Mr G. M. Pizzey
<i>Councillor:</i>	Dr D. F. Dorward

#### Auditor

It was moved by Mr P. Balmford and seconded by Mrs P. N. Reilly, and carried, that Mr R. G. Cameron should be appointed auditor for the year ending 31 December 1973 at a remuneration to be fixed by Council.

#### Other Matters

Miss Aston moved a vote of thanks to the Council, which was carried by acclamation. Mrs Reilly spoke appreciatively of the work of Dr Brown during his term as President and Mr Pizzey moved a vote of thanks to Dr Brown, which was carried by acclamation.

The meeting closed at 19:00.

### SECRETARY'S REPORT 1971-72

The Annual Congress and Field-outing in 1971 were held most successfully in New Zealand, emphasizing the Union's distinctive character as an Australasian body. The scientific sessions of the Congress took place at the Auckland Institute and Museum, and the Field-outing was held at Rotorua.

Mrs T. Kloot, who was appointed RAOU Archivist in May 1971, has been actively working on a bio-bibliography of Australasian ornithology and on the location and collection of archival material relating to Australasian ornithology.

A major achievement this year was the successful publication by the Field Investigations Committee of an *Index to Current Australian Ornithology* prepared by Dr D. D. Dow. This publication is a comprehensive guide to current ornithological research in Australia and on Australian birds.

The other new publication this year was the *Index to EMU 1961-70*, prepared by Mr A. R. McGill. This index, which became available only in April, is selling well, and several members have taken the opportunity of buying copies of the earlier indexes 1901-50 and 1951-60.

The West Australian Group has continued to have regular meetings and excursions. In each of the other States of Australia and in the two major territories, ACT and Papua-New Guinea, there are now ornithological organizations affiliated with the RAOU.

Mr R. H. Green resigned from Council because he could not attend meetings regularly, and Mrs P. N. Reilly was co-opted in his place.

The final report of the Vernacular Names Committee appointed several years ago was received by Council and referred to Mr Condon as Checklist Editor.

Dr A. Graham Brown, as a result of ill-health that had caused him to retire from his medical practice has felt it necessary to resign as President and from Council. This resignation is deeply regretted and Council is most conscious of the service that Dr Brown has done for the Union as President during a critical period in its history.

#### Membership

The Secretary's Report presented to the Annual General Meeting at Brisbane last year (EMU 72: 35) covered the period to 23 May 1971. Since then, the Secretary has been notified of the deaths of 13 members as follows:

	<i>Year of Election</i>
W. R. Bedford of Kyancutta, SA	1960
H. Berry of East Victoria Park, WA	1959
B. A. Blair of Bowmans Forest, Vic.	1966
Prof. Sir J. B. Cleland of Beaumont, SA	1902
Mrs W. L. Denney of Lavers Hill, Vic.	1954
J. A. Devitt of Epping, NSW	1947
N. C. Fearnley of West Pennant Hills, NSW	1948
C. L. Lang of Nunawading, Vic.	1925
S. McCosker of Caloundra, Q	1965
W. R. Moore of Kingscliff, NSW	1934
T. K. Moriarty of Kathleen Valley, WA	1970
Hon. Sir K. W. Street of Darling Point, NSW	1957
H. Temple Watts of O'Connor, A.C.T.	1965

The number of members at 23 May 1971 (852) has since been reduced by these 13 deaths and by 18 resignations. The Council terminated the membership of 45 persons who had not paid their subscriptions for 1971. The total reduction of 76 was offset by the reinstatement of 17 former members and the election of 52 new members, giving a net decrease of seven during the period.

At the date of this report, the membership is comprised of six Fellows, four Honorary Members and 835 Ordinary Members, a total of 845. In addition, the Union's publications are currently being sent to 197 subscribers (an increase of five since the last report) and to 39 organizations whose journals are received in exchange (an increase of five since the last report).

Rosemary Balmford,  
7 May 1972.

### EDITOR'S REPORT 1971

Four parts of EMU, Volume 71, were issued during the year. The volume contained 194 pages, including the index. Preliminary matter, in the same style as that provided first for Volume 70, was included and the indexes were made more comprehensive. A photograph of the late K. A. Hindwood was the only plate, but smaller photographs appeared of Messrs A. H. Robinson and W. R. Wheeler. No previous EMU has had so few illustrations, but it was the policy to publish photographs only when they contributed to the text.

The first three parts were of 48 pages each, but Part 4 had to be reduced to 40 pages because Government bounty to the printing industry was withdrawn from journals in the middle of the year, fortunately after the printing order for Part 3 had been lodged. Thus, Volume 72 appears exceedingly slim, but probably contains about the same of matter as an old-style EMU of 320 pages.

Parts 1 and 2 were issued 22 and 33 days late respectively, but Part 3 at last came out on due date, as did Part 4. The last time this happened was in 1951.

Seventeen papers and 11 short communications were published. The subject matter of eight papers was biological, of six geographical and of three taxonomical, which probably reflects the trend that is evident in modern ornithological journals towards biological subjects and away from taxonomy and simple descriptive work. This was seen also in short communications, which were divided about equally between biology and distribution. Contributions on the birds of New Guinea (34 pages or 23% of ornithological matter), New Zealand (8 pages or 5%) and Antarctica (5 pages or 3%) appeared. As in Volume 70, contributors were almost equally divided between professionals and amateurs, but it is encouraging to note that there seemed less tendency than last year for a few authors to dominate, because the 17 papers were contributed by 13 authors.

By the end of the year delay in publication of papers had definitely been reduced to an average of six months, and this is about the best that can be done in a quarterly scientific journal for which the copy has to be prepared and sent to the printers two and half months before due date.

During the year 16 papers and 18 short communications were received for consideration for publishing, the first considerably down and the second considerably up on the numbers (28 and 7 respectively) received during 1970. This suggests either that EMU is still regarded as the proper home for essentially incidental observations or that ornithological work throughout the region, presumably chiefly that by amateurs, is not achieving substantial results. One fears that the last is probably the chief reason. However, for the time being it may be as well that the receipt of papers is small because enough seem to be submitted to fill issues of 40 pages to which we are restricted until finance is stronger—that is, plus supplementary matter like reports, reviews and short notes. Even so, because few papers are immediately acceptable and publishable on receipt, the Editor has some uncomfortable moments, as particularly happened at the end of 1971. On the other hand if more papers of a proper standard were submitted, they would give us much better reason than we now have to seek outside help for publishing. Clearly it is up to members (and others for that matter) to support the journal with suitable contributions. We cannot publish what we do not receive. No doubt the talent and enthusiasm are there, but it will be a pity if the effort is not made to contribute in a way that will reflect credit on Australian ornithology.

S. Marchant,  
24 February 1972.

### LIBRARIAN'S REPORT 1971

During the year, Mrs Kloot moved her RAOU activities into other fields and the task of Librarian fell upon my shoulders. It was good fortune that not only did I inherit a library into which Mrs Kloot had put a lot of time, thought and work but I was also privileged to work under her for the sixteen months previously. May I pay tribute to her ability to work hard and intelligently and to get a team of people to work cheerfully for her.

I was fortunate to have Miss C. Allen as Assistant during the year. Very cheerfully she handles all the administration including requirements for new members

for EMUS and Newsletters, copying correspondence, sale of EMUS in stock. She also tries to put people into contact with others who hold stocks of old EMUS, and generally ensures that the library is making its contribution to the activities of the RAOU.

#### Statistics

The library has been open every second and fourth Thursday, at first from 14:30 to 21:00, later, from 16:45 to 21:00.

During the 12 months ended 31st December 1971 use of the library was as follows:

Number of books and periodicals borrowed	83
Number of photocopies of periodicals sent out	51
Number of books added to the Library	21

Apart from review copies, books have been donated by Messrs P. J. Jones, R. Green, G. Cameron, Miss T. Kloot, Mrs E. McCulloch, Brig. Officer, Mr and Mrs Balmford and Dr Elliot McClure.

EMU is exchanged for 39 other periodicals, several within Australia but mainly from the following overseas countries: Argentina, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA and USSR.

It is of interest to see the build-up of periodicals of good standard in Australia, and the following are being received by the Library:

South Australian Ornithologist,  
Sunbird (Queensland Ornithological Soc.),  
Australian Bird Bander  
Australian Bird Watcher (Bird Observers Club),  
Birds (NSW Field Ornithologists Club),  
Canberra Bird Notes (Canberra Orn. Group),  
New Guinea Bird Notes (New Guinea Bird Society)  
VORG Notes (Vic. Ornithological Research Group),  
West Australian Naturalist,  
Victorian Naturalist,  
Publications of CSIRO.

Several of the above societies issue newsletters which also include bird-notes.

The work involved in the sale of EMUS is quite considerable and in 12 months to May this year, the Library

has invoiced over \$420. This does not include sales of this year's EMUS.

#### What of the Future?

More use of the Library is the target, both in attendance, but more particularly in borrowing by country and interstate members. This can only be done by the issue of a catalogue. It is hoped that the flourishing back-number business may enable finances to be allocated to issue this in the near future.

One challenge to be met is advising members about some of the interesting articles appearing in periodicals received by the Library. Another is helping members with information regarding research projects. An attempt in this direction has been made with several projects. Should there be found to be a need in this field, voluntary assistance will have to be found.

Summing up, the Library has a very good periodical section; the book section is fair but could be better. Our aim should be that the Library has the best reference section on Australian publications of any ornithological society. Members in the early years of the RAOU gave us a very sound footing by their excellent donations; it is to be hoped that members will be now equally generous in giving books, including in their wills that all or part of their libraries be left to the RAOU, and that authors, will always send a review copy to the RAOU, which customarily means that it is then put in the Library.

Any suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the Library will be gratefully received and carefully considered.

F. R. B. Denton,  
10 May 1972.

#### EDITORIAL POLICY

Council has considered the criticism of editorial policy, reported above, and now wishes to re-affirm the policy, adopted since the Extraordinary General Meeting of 1969, that the object must be a journal of good quality by international standards. This does not allow for the combination of popular and scientific writing in the same journal. The matter was discussed fully by Council on the basis of a detailed submission from the Editor, which was tabled at the Council meeting of 26 September 1972 and is available for anyone interested.

## SEVENTH AND EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE RAOU NEST RECORD SCHEME

It was announced in *RAOU Newsletter* No. 12 that Mr D. G. Thomas had to give up administration of the Nest Record Scheme in the middle of 1972 because of illness and that Mrs H. Young of Eltham, Victoria, had been appointed in his place. Unfortunate delays and difficulties prevented the material of the Scheme being received in Melbourne before 27 September 1972, and even then it did not include the administrative records. Because it was important to put matters in order for Mrs Young quickly and to bring the formal reporting of progress up to date, I undertook to do this. Under the circumstances it is convenient to combine the annual reports for the 1970-71 and 1971-72 seasons into one statement and yet maintain the series of annual reports.

However, this combined report will be less complete and exact than is desirable, because at the time of writing the administrative records of participation, returns and borrowings are not available; but to wait for them in the hope of making a fully detailed report would only delay publication of a report further. Already we know that some cards returned by participants for the 1970-71 seasons are missing, though we are not certain how they went astray. It might help if participants could tell us what discrepancies and omissions occur in the record of cards attributed to them below. Even if this may not enable us to trace what is missing, it will give a more correct idea of the extent of recording during the season and thus a better comparison with previous years. Small discrepancies of a card or two either way may be disregarded because either they are simple mistakes in my counting or they are caused by totally inadequate cards being rejected or by cards being added when two nests have been reported on the same card.

### PARTICIPATION

Table I lists the names of those who contributed cards for the 1970-71 and 1971-72 seasons. The number of cards returned by each participant for each season respectively is given in brackets after the name, as well as their State of residence, which is usually also their State of operation. The list needs some explanation. Nearly all the contributions for the 1971-72 season were received in their original packages, and generally it was easy to distinguish between true participants in the Scheme and those whom they had recruited to help, but it was not always certain whether a participant or someone whom he had recruited sent in the cards. Contributions for the 1970-71 season were already incorporated in the collection of cards and had to be counted from the cards. The names of many observers were strange to me and, because some participants had not signed the cards of their recruits or indicated in some way their relations, I was forced to guess, though to some extent I was helped by a recollection of who was who before 1969. Thus, the list probably errs in two directions, by including as participants some who are members of a corporate body or who helped participants and by omitting others who rightly ought to be shown as participants.

Presumably, however, the list is fairly accurate and shows that forty individuals and four corporate bodies contributed 1,610 cards for 1970-71, and that twenty-nine individuals and two corporate bodies contributed

1,534 cards for 1971-72. That the total cards for each season was comparable while the number of contributors fell decidedly is almost entirely because Mrs Young stimulated VORG to double its effort in 1971-72. In fact, ninety-one VORG cards have gone astray and, if they had not, the totals for the two years would have been very close.

Comparing the list with those for earlier years one

TABLE I

Contributors to the Scheme for 1970-71 and 1971-72  
(Number of cards contributed, respectively for each season, in brackets after name):

G. Alcorn (41, —, NSW)  
P. Allan (7, 6, Vic.)  
P. Balmford (16, 1, Vic.)  
Mrs R. Bigg (14, —, NSW)  
E. C. Birt (3, 6, Q)  
BOC (D. Bowrey) (16, 2, Vic.)  
J. Brickhill (—, 7, NSW)  
M. G. Brooker (41, —, WA)  
P. Bulfin (E. O. Dawson) (18, 38, Vic.)  
T. E. Bush (84, —, WA)  
Miss E. Cameron (—, 11, NSW)  
D. A. B. Clement (14, —, WA)  
Mrs C. C. Crowe (61, 59, NSW)  
D. H. Davidson (9, —, NSW)  
B. L. and N. W. Doecke (22, 37, SA)  
D. F. Dorward (—, 2, Vic.)  
D. D. Dow (8, 17, Q)  
R. Garstone (214, 86, WA)  
D. Gosper (22, 37, NSW)  
T. H. Guthrie (4, —, NSW)  
J. L. Hayward (80, —, Vic.)  
L. C. Heinecke (62, 133, SA)  
Bro. M. Heron (9, —, NSW)  
J. N. Hobbs (56, 179, NSW)  
J. G. Holman (—, 22, Vic.)  
J. Hone (—, 14, NSW)  
F. F. James (10, 1, Vic.)  
Mrs J. W. Johnstone (28, 24, Vic.)  
B. J. Knight (16, —, NSW)  
S. G. Lane (15, 14, NSW)  
V. and T. Lowe (22, 11, Vic.)  
S. Marchant (2, 58, Vic.)  
J. L. McKean (1, —, Vic.)  
A. K. Morris (38, 38, NSW)  
Mrs J. B. Paton (152, 91, SA)  
D. E. Peters (1, —, NSW)  
Portland FNC (2, —, Vic.)  
RAOU Field-outing 1970 (65, —, WA)  
P. F. Roberts (2, —, NSW)  
E. H. Sedgwick (6, 7, WA)  
Bro. M. Strong (29, 24, Q)  
M. T. Templeton (71, 23, King I., Tas.)  
E. B. Thomas (1, —, NSW)  
D. G. Thomas (10, —, Tas.)  
J. M. Truran (—, 6, Vic.)  
VORG (Mrs H. Young) (250, 485, Vic.)  
N. Weatherill (29, —, Vic.)  
J. R. Wheeler (59, 92, Vic.)

recognizes at once the loyal adherents who really keep the whole Scheme going with large contributions—Mrs C. C. Crowe, B. L. and N. W. Doecke, L. C. Heinecke, J. N. Hobbs, Mrs J. W. Johnstone, A. K. Morris, Mrs J. B. Paton, VORG and J. R. Wheeler. We owe them much, as we do those other regular contributors of fewer cards such as BOC, T. H. Guthrie, S. G. Lane and others, not to mention many anonymous helpers. Yet, contributors change, and the most noticeable feature of the list is that ACT, cradle of the Scheme it may be said, has dropped out completely. Queensland is very meagrely represented, though for excellent detail Bro. M. Strong's contribution shines like a good deed in a naughty world. On the other hand Western Australia, so long neglected, has really come forward and with Victoria now dominates the Scheme. Unhappily we cannot expect the contribution by members of the RAOU Field-outing in 1970 to be repeated soon, but R. Garstone and T. E. Bush have contributed superlatively, the only regret being that T. E. Bush has not sent cards for 1971–72, yet.

There are too many notable contributions by individuals to mention in detail, but one or two have especially caught my eye, perhaps invidiously. N. W. Doecke's 1971–72 cards include several hole-nesting species not often recorded with the same exactness that he gave, and though probably there are cards in the collection that give better unambiguous records than he does for all his nests they would be hard to find. J. N. Hobbs had very useful contributions, as usual, in a good series of nests of Flame Robins and New Holland Honeyeaters. J. G. Holman's records were mostly of Dusky Moorhens, which are rarely recorded with enough detail to determine clutch-size; yet most of his cards did so.

On the other hand the quality of many records has not been good. Since the start of the Scheme, there has always been a high proportion of cards that give no details of the contents of nests, and it would be hard to say whether in these last two years this proportion has increased; but there certainly seemed to be a lot of them. In the state of our knowledge of the breeding of Australian birds some people justify this by saying that the record at least gives a locality for certain or probable breeding. This is indeed true of remote and inland areas about which we know very little and of species whose nests are rarely found, but it is not so of common birds well within their known range. There simply is no point in recording a nest of a Willie Wagtail or Magpie-Lark in mainland Australia without its contents. No doubt at the recording end the process seems harmless and inexpensive, but at this end the production, distribution and storing of cards costs the Union more money than it can well afford, and we cannot gladly waste cards by using them for purposes beyond their object. Undertakings such as nest record schemes rouse the collector's mania for quantity pure and simple, but this must be suppressed for reasons of economy and sense.

Finally in this section we must record that in the past two years J. E. Courtney and V. and T. Lowe have generously provided some hundreds of records for previous years, many of great interest and outstandingly valuable detail. These contributions have altered the totals of some earlier years as published in annual reports.

## RESULTS

Because the whole collection of cards had to be counted for this report, the following annual totals of completed cards since the start of the Scheme are probably correct.

pre-1964	768
1964–65	1,599
1965–66	1,639
1966–67	1,785
1967–68	2,405
1968–69	2,396
1969–70	1,466
1970–71	1,610
1971–72	1,534
	<hr/> 15,202

These figures exclude a very few cards submitted for New Guinean species. They cover 456 Australian breeding species of the 1926 RAOU Checklist and introduced species, giving an average of 33.3 cards per species. One hundred and five species exceed the average. It seems time now to standardize the short list of detailed returns on those species for which there are 100 cards or more, and these are presented in Table II. If the limit is lowered to 90, only six more species qualify (Laughing Kookaburra 90, Golden Whistler 94, White-plumed Honeyeater 99, Red Wattlebird 90, Pipit 95 and House Sparrow 91); if to 80, another seven (Little Grebe 85, Black Duck 80, Nankeen Kestrel 80, Galah 86, Flame Robin 85, Buff-tailed Thornbill 82 and Banded Finch 89). Most of the thirty-six species in Table II have been among the leaders for the duration of the Scheme, and all were on the short list by 1968–69, indeed in very much the same order. This was to be expected because all either are common or nest conveniently in accessible places, except the Fairy Penguin and Superb Lyrebird, which are where they are only because of a special effort by VORG groups. However, the stability of the list results to some extent only from special studies of some species in the past and not from a steady recording annually of the same species. For instance, the Spur-winged Plover remains far ahead of all other species because of D. G. Thomas's records from 1964 to 1967, but in fact is being steadily overhauled by the Willie Wagtail, its lead having been reduced from 434 in 1968–69 to 279 in the last season. Other species that are losing their places on the ladder are Banded Plover, Red-capped Dotterel, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, White-winged Triller, White-throated Warbler and White-browed Woodswallow, whereas Grey Shrike-Thrush, Noisy Miner and Starling are improving markedly.

Without the files of correspondence for the last two years it is not possible to say fully what use has been made of the records during that time, but Courtney and Marchant used the cards for their paper on the breeding of some species in south-eastern Australia (Emu 71: 121–133). Marchant with the help of D. G. Thomas extracted data on clutch-size for all species for research into the matter in collaboration with Mrs M. K. Rowan of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at Cape Town. Others have also borrowed cards, but details are not available.

## REFLECTIONS

Having come face to face with the NRS after three years I notice some curious aspects. First, it seems far too easy to explain the quite dramatic drop in returns for the 1969–70 season from those for 1968–69 by the change of organizer, even if that change meant that the Scheme was moved to Hobart, which may be thought

TABLE II

Species list of Nest Record Cards (only species with 100+ cards)

	to 1970	1970-71	1971-72	Total
Fairy Penguin	166	28	5	199
Crested Pigeon	178	16	17	211
Spur-winged Plover	822	10	16	848
Banded Plover	161	5	5	171
Red-capped Dotterel	181	12	4	197
Superb Lyrebird	81	16	14	111
Welcome Swallow	339	39	54	432
Grey Fantail	285	23	33	341
Willie Wagtail	419	74	76	569
Yellow Robin	201	28	27	256
Rufous Whistler	165	7	19	191
Grey Shrike-Thrush	109	21	22	152
Magpie-Lark	287	40	26	353
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	104	16	12	132
White-winged Triller	92	6	8	106
White-fronted Chat	107	24	9	140
White-throated Warbler	114	2	1	117
Brown Thornbill	80	22	12	114
Yellow-tailed T-bill	272	45	25	342
Reed Warbler	83	18	15	116
Superb Blue Wren	315	31	39	385
White-browed Woodswallow	114	6	13	133
Dusky Woodswallow	161	8	10	179
Silvereye	180	36	35	251
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	137	16	26	179
New Holland Honeyeater	100	32	32	164
Noisy Miner	104	14	27	145
Zebra Finch	92	6	9	107
Red-browed Finch	143	11	51	213
White-winged Chough	115	13	29	157
Black-backed Magpie	167	22	8	197
White-backed Magpie	150	18	30	198
Little Raven	117	15	23	155
Blackbird	207	45	25	277
Goldfinch	249	17	25	291
Starling	167	19	28	214

remote or at least not central, led to the discontinuation of a quarterly newsletter circulated among participants and perhaps generally caused less detailed attention to administration. The effect of such things, if they happen is usually gradual and not sudden. No doubt the loss of some steady contributors at the same time had an effect, but again this seems too easy an explanation because other such contributors had given up in previous years without effect on returns; their place was filled by new recruits or larger contributions from other participants.

Whatever the reason for the drop, the fact is that for the last three recording seasons the Scheme has not, or barely, achieved as much as it did in its first year. It is back to Square One, and this is the second point. By analogy with Britain, where among a population of 50 million or so about 20,000 nests are recorded annually, we ought to be able to record about 5,000. Admittedly, in Britain the scheme is organized much more efficiently than ours has ever been, and amateurs, especially, are much better instructed in, and familiar with, its objects; many papers based on its data have been published and have, thus, firmly and widely established the value of the exercise. Maybe we cannot expect so much just yet, remembering that in Britain recording built up very slowly over the first ten years, but still I think that we ought to be able to do better than we are doing at present and that we ought not to regard a return of 1,500+ cards per year as anything to be proud of. Rather it seems to be an irreducible minimum that can be achieved with little effort. I believe too that we will not make a real breakthrough to much higher returns until many more people, even among those who have joined the Scheme, realize clearly its importance and aims, and are prepared systematically to record each year as many nests as possible in the same definite area, rather than race round a large area hunting for rarities or simple numbers.

Finally, it is curious that with the change of organization in 1969 the recording of some species almost came to an end. The White-throated Warbler and Buff-tailed Thornbill are perhaps the best examples, but there are many others. Here, plausibly, the reason could be that personally I was not able to record much after 1968-69. In all previous years I had probably contributed most records for those two species. But both are quite common birds, their nests are fairly easy to find and they must occur in areas where others operate. I suspect that their nests are, however, just hard enough to find that people do not come across them often unless they concentrate on a definite area, visit it regularly during the season and try to find all the nests in it that they can. In other words such quite dramatic changes in recording may indicate that generally the recording for the Scheme is casual rather than systematic.

I have strayed beyond the strict limits of a report on purpose, to mention again some general aspects of the Scheme in the hope of reviving interest, and regret that this report can appear only when it will be too late to influence recording in the 1972-73 season. It is to be feared that this season may be a poor one for the Scheme. We have much lee-way to make up, but I have no doubt that it will be quickly done under Mrs Young's management.

S. MARCHANT, 63 Morey Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193.  
5 October 1972.