

that the priority of *D. novaeguineae* over *D. gigas* is unassailable. The only way to save *D. gigas* for use in zoological nomenclature would be an application to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, for the suppression of the senior synonym *D. novaeguineae*. The main objection against the name *D. novaeguineae* is that it conveys a false impression of the distribution of the species, the Laughing Kookaburra being the only member of its genus not occurring in New Guinea. Although personally I am emotionally biased in favour of *D. gigas*, the case for suppression of *D. novaeguineae* would have been stronger if a submission had been made fifty years ago. It is true that Australian ornithologists have grumbled from time to time, for example Mack (1953: 17), who wrote: 'As this kingfisher does not occur in New Guinea, it should be possible to have the name suppressed in favour of *gigas*' but the name he used was *D. novaeguineae*.

It may be relevant to quote two examples from the most recent Australian literature, as an illustration of how much the problem here discussed is alive and how much it needs thrashing out. The first is Macdonald (1973: 226), who calls the Laughing Kookaburra *D. gigas* and then lists a subspecies under the name *novaeguineae* (because *gigas* and *novaeguineae* are objective synonyms, which means that they are based on the same specimen, they can never be used for different subspecies). The second is Condon (1975: 231), who uses the name *D. novaeguineae*. In the synonymy he gives as substitute type-locality of *Alcedo novae Guineae* Hermann, New South Wales, as type-locality of *Alcedo gigas* Boddaert, northern Queensland, as

type-locality of *Alcedo undulata* Scopoli (another objective synonym), northern Queensland.

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### REPTILIAN PREDATION ON BIRDS AND EGGS AT LAKE COWAL, NSW

Information on predation by the Lace Monitor *Varanus varius* and the Mainland Tiger Snake *Notechis scutatus* on birds and eggs at Lake Cowal, NSW, was obtained from 1970 to 1976. Both species are common and are active between spring and autumn. The largest numbers seen in one day were eight Monitors and forty-two Snakes. Both species are found on the ground and also in trees, including some standing in water and up to two kilometres from the shore; Tiger Snakes are also found on lignum bushes. Information on predation by these reptiles was obtained by observations of attack and also from analysis of stomach contents.

#### RESULTS

##### Lace Monitor

Details of the attacks observed are given in Table I. The contents of eighteen stomachs also were examined. Two contained remains of birds: one the remains of a nestling White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphus*; the other, unidentified white egg-shell. Other

material in the eighteen stomachs included the remains of: Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, Black Rat *Rattus rattus*; House Mouse *Mus musculus*, eggs of Snake-necked Tortoise *Chelodina longicollis*, spiders, grasshoppers, stick-insects, bug, bees, beetles and ants.

TABLE I  
Observed predation by the Lace Monitor *V. varius*

| Species   | No. obs. | eggs/chicks | Site           |
|---|----------|-------------|----------------|
| Little Black Cormorant<br><i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i> | 1        | 1           | tree in water  |
| Little Pied Cormorant<br><i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>  | 4        | 3           | "              |
| Royal Spoonbill<br><i>Platalea regia</i>                    | 2        | 2           | "              |
| Silver Gull<br><i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>                 | 1        | 1           | "              |
| Rainbow Bee-eater<br><i>Merops ornatus</i>                  | 2        | 3           | tunnel in soil |

### Mainland Tiger Snake

Details of attacks observed are given in Table II. The contents of twenty stomachs also were examined. Three contained remains of birds: two adult Spotted Crakes *Porzana fluminea* and one, a Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis* chick. Other material in the twenty stomachs included the remains of House Mice, frogs, spiders, centipedes, grasshoppers, bugs, beetles, moths, fly-larvae and ants.

It appears that the avian food taken by the Lace Monitor consists mainly of birds' eggs and that of the Mainland Tiger Snake, young birds. Although the Tiger Snake generally feeds on frogs, it may concentrate on other food when available. During the summer and autumn of 1970 when a plague of House Mice occurred on the shores of Lake Cowal, hundreds of Snakes concentrated on the shore; very few were on trees and lignum bushes in the lake. Observations in colonies of Straw-necked Ibis each year showed an increase in the number of Snakes in parts of the colonies when hatching occurred. During one observation seventeen Snakes were found in approximately forty square metres and three chicks were observed to be taken but the number of birds taken by Tiger Snakes compared with the number present is very small.

The Tiger Snake at Lake Cowal has been observed in the food of several birds including: White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca*; Whistling Kite *Haliastur spheurnus*; Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*; Swamp Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae* and Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis*.

TABLE II  
Observed predation by the Mainland Tiger Snake *N. s. scutatus*

| Species                            | No. obs. | No. chicks | Site        |
|------------------------------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Little Pied Cormorant              |          |            | tree above  |
| <i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>  | 1        | 2          | water       |
| Little Grebe                       |          |            | water       |
| <i>Tachybaptus novaehollandiae</i> | 1        | 1          | surface     |
| Straw-necked Ibis                  |          |            | lignum      |
| <i>Threskiornis spinicollis</i>    | 21       | 21         | in water    |
| Glossy Ibis                        |          |            |             |
| <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>        | 1        | 1          | "           |
| Black Duck                         |          |            | tree hollow |
| <i>Anas superciliosa</i>           | 1        | 1          | above water |
| Pink-eared Duck                    |          |            |             |
| <i>Malacorhynchus membranaceus</i> | 1        | 1          | "           |
| Spotted Crane                      |          |            | lignum      |
| <i>Porzana fluminea</i>            | 3        | 3          | in water    |
| Dusky Moorhen                      |          |            | tree stump  |
| <i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i>         | 1        | 2          | above water |
| Coot                               |          |            | lignum      |
| <i>Fulica atra</i>                 | 2        | 3          | in water    |
| Masked Plover                      |          |            |             |
| <i>Vanellus miles</i>              | 1        | 1          | shore       |
| Silver Gull                        |          |            | tree hollow |
| <i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>       | 1        | 1          | above water |
| Crested Pigeon                     |          |            | lignum      |
| <i>Ocyphaps lophotes</i>           | 1        | 2          | in water    |
| Sacred Kingfisher                  |          |            | tree hollow |
| <i>Halcyon sancta</i>              | 1        | 2          | above water |
| Welcome Swallow                    |          |            | old         |
| <i>Hirundo neoxena</i>             | 1        | 4          | building    |
| Little Grassbird                   |          |            | lignum      |
| <i>Megalurus gramineus</i>         | 1        | 2          | in water    |
| Clamorous Reed Warbler             |          |            |             |
| <i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>     | 2        | 5          | "           |
| Willie Wagtail                     |          |            | tree above  |
| <i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>        | 2        | 6          | water       |
| White-plumed Honeyeater            |          |            |             |
| <i>Lichenostomus penicillatus</i>  | 1        | 3          | "           |

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### MIGRATION OF PALAEARCTIC PASSERINE BIRDS IN WALLACEA

This paper completes a survey of the migration of Palearctic landbirds to Wallacea and summarizes the occurrence there of passerine species. Only ten species winter there regularly, of which four have been recorded rarely from Australia. The picture is essentially similar to that presented by the non-passerines (White 1976).

Conventions of details in the list of species are as in White (1975).

#### LIST OF SPECIES

**Hirundo rustica** Barn Swallow  
Sixty-five: September–March. Winters throughout Wallacea including series from Timor and Wetar. It is surprising that Australian records are so few.

**Anthus gustavi** Pechora Pipit  
Seventeen: September–February. Records from all parts of Wallacea, including Timor and Damar. Thus a possible vagrant to north-western Australia.

**Anthus cervinus** Red-throated Pipit  
One: April. North Celebes, probably vagrant.

**Motacilla flava** Yellow Wagtail  
Seventy-three: September–April. These are grey-crowned birds and all have been identified as *simillima* where racial identification was possible. None has been identified as *tshutschensis*, which has been reported from Australia. Nine from Celebes, Butung, Ambon, Tanimbar and Kai Islands are green-crowned *taivana*.

**Motacilla cinerea** Grey Wagtail  
Sixty-one: September–April. Throughout Wallacea including a dozen from Timor and adjacent islands. There is only a single sight record from Australia. It winters commonly on