

- (b) Wet weather appeared to prevent "flock" migration to some degree this being replaced by "drift" movement at such times. As the "drift" occurs at very low levels, this brought large numbers within the range of the nets:
- (c) G. juniperina is a major food plant of honeyeaters in the A.C.T. in spring and the stands along the river and plants in the garden attracted large numbers.

Experience in netting this species this year emphasises the importance of associating mist netting with known food plants where this is possible.

We have much to learn regarding our migrant honeyeaters. What are the limits of the migration? Do all populations move or are the birds sedentary in certain districts? Why does the migration extend over such a long period? What factors trigger the movement? To what extent is the availability of food an influence? What effect has weather on the matter? Do all birds return to their breeding areas? How long does one bird take to move from winter quarters to the breeding area? These are just a few of the obvious questions that come to mind.

Any information from other members, particularly those who have banded the species and those who know the Yellow-faced Honeyeater in it's winter quarters would be greatly appreciated.

NOTES ON BANDING RAINBOW BIRDS.

S.G.Lane, Lane Cove.

The Rainbow Bird (Merops ornatus) is found throughout most of Australia except Tasmania. It is a migratory species at least in the southern parts of the continent arriving in September or October to breed and departing in the autumn in March or sometimes as late as April. The range of the species extends to the islands to the north of Australia as far as the Celebes.

Little is known in detail of its movements and few have been banded. The Sixth Annual Report of the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme (July, 1959 to June, 1960) shows that 44 Rainbow Birds were banded to June, 1960. Two years later (June, 1962) the total was 102.

My banding of this species has been mainly carried out at Broke, about twenty miles south of Singleton in the Hunter Valley, N.S.W. This site is 96 miles from my home and unfor-

tunately is visited only once or twice during the breeding season.

When nesting, Rainbow Birds dig a sloping tunnel into flat sandy soil or burrow into eroded river banks sometimes as far as 4 or 5 feet from the entrance, making an enlarged chamber at the end of the tunnel. Because of this nesting habit, the birds can be readily caught during breeding. As a general rule, it is inadvisable to trap birds in the process of building - or tunnelling in this case - otherwise desertions may result. This particularly applies to Rainbow Birds because of their rather timid nature.

The equipment used to catch the birds consists of some twenty hand nets constructed from wire rings approximately 5 or 6 inches in diameter to which is attached enough netting to form a pocket about 9 inches in depth. Prawn netting of half-inch gauge is very suitable. Wire "pins" bent in the form of hooks and about 6 inches in length are used to hold the nets over the burrows by the wire ring, leaving the pocket slack.

Examination of breeding burrows at night with a torch, has shown that in many cases both birds roost in the burrows. Even when disturbed by the light of the torch these birds remain in their burrows. Pardalotes (Pardalotus ornatus and P. substriatus) likewise remain in the burrows but White-Backed Swallows (Cheramoeca leucosterna) often fly from their burrows when disturbed at night. These birds are more easily caught in this manner or with the use of a torch in daytime. No known cases of desertion have resulted from such operations so far.

It has been found that the Rainbow Birds remain in the burrows in most instances until about one hour after first light when one bird will leave, the other remaining often as long as two hours later.

Occupation of burrows is more easily determined during darkness and nets may be fixed during the examination. If this is done, two important precautions are essential. A complete record of the number of nets used and the location of each net must be kept. Each net is drawn tightly behind the wire ring and pinned in this manner, to prevent birds leaving the burrow but, at the same time, ensuring that none is caught in a set net which is not under observation.

Just prior to, or immediately after daylight, the nets are "opened" in preparation for catching. Nets are only fixed in positions where they can be kept under constant observation or nearly so. It is often possible for one observer to place nets

on 10 to 15 burrows extending over approximately 200 yards of bank and then to patrol the area. As birds are observed in the nets they are removed, banded and released. Where a second bird is known or anticipated to be in the burrow the net is replaced.

So far no recoveries have resulted away from the banding site and this is not unexpected with so few birds banded (I have only banded 31 Rainbow Birds). However, five of these have been recovered at the banding site in the following season.

Details of the recoveries are set out below:

<u>Band No.</u>	<u>Sex.</u>	<u>Date.</u>	<u>At.</u>
040-			
05203	F	B 7.11.58	Wallacia, N.S.W.
		R 29.11.59	" "
06806	F	B 30.10.60	Broke, "
		R 22.10.61	" "
* 06807	M	B 30.10.60	Broke "
		R 22.10.61	" "
06808	F	B 30.10.60	Broke, "
		R 21.10.61	" "
* 06809	F	B 30.10.60	Broke. "
		R 22.10.61	" "

* Breeding pair on each occasion.

BANDING AT MANOBALAI PUBLIC SCHOOL

Miss H.A.Doyle, Muswellbrook. N.S.W.

Manobalai is a small one-teacher school and of course the pupils are not registered banders, but the teacher is and some of the pupils are keen junior members of the Bird Banders Association. It is far more exciting than ordinary lessons!

We commenced operations in October, 1959, and so far have banded 45 species, but our total is only equal to a good day's work for the experts! Our best species is the White-plumed Honeyeater (Meliphaga penicillata) of which we have banded 71 and had several retraps. For a while the Red-backed Parrots (Psephotus haematonotus) and Peaceful Doves (Geopelia striata) were easily caught, but they are extremely cautious now and we don't often get one to band.

We depend almost entirely on two wire traps over water