

the following week-end, on one day, his experienced team banded 300 birds.

Four weeks later, after seeing large flocks of White-naped Honeyeaters in the ranges east of Pine Island, I decided to visit the area again to see if these birds were migrating along the same line as the Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and happily they were doing just that. It was obvious, however, that I should have been there before, because the flocks were less numerous and not as large as the Yellow-faced Honeyeater migration but gave every indication of having been on the same magnitude.

Throwing a stick into the air is a wonderful way to halt a flock of these birds and it can be expected that during March to early May of next year large numbers of these birds will be banded by the joint efforts of local banders.

Reference: Wilson, S.J., 1963, "Mist netting migrating Yellow-faced Honeyeaters". The Bird Bander, Vol. 1, No.4.

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#### FURTHER NOTES ON AUTUMN MIGRATION OF HONEYEATERS.

S.J.Wilson, Canberra.

Max Murn's story after his banding at Pine Island was rather incredible, but we decided to try that area on the next Saturday (April 13th) after his visit. Two things were difficult to credit, firstly that the birds travelled up river at a time when the general migration line was north-east and secondly that the nets should contrary to all our experiences, be placed in the open. With a rather half-hearted frame of mind we set our nets in the scrub over the 200 yard space between the tall trees and waited. We were ready by 6 a.m.; 7 a.m. came, then 8 a.m., and still no birds and by this time the Murn name was mud. By 9 a.m. we were all but ready to pack up and attention was waning. There had been no sign of birds to this time, least of all honeyeaters.

Suddenly, at 9.5 a.m. a dense flock of at least 1,000 birds burst out of the trees at the western end. We were unprepared and had to run to our allotted "throwing stations". A few moments convinced us that Max was right about the net positions so a few were belatedly placed as he suggested - right in the open.

Flocks continued to come through for two hours with the five team members working furiously. After hurling sticks for an hour all were anxious to take birds out, record or band - but throw? No! There were a lot of stiff arms.

Our catch of 300 included 246 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, 39 White-naped Honeyeaters and one Fuscous Honey-eater (Meli-phaga fusca). Others taken that morning included the Eastern Spinebill (Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris) and the White-eared Honeyeater (M.leucotis) both of which appeared to be moving through the area but not with the flocks.

The following morning we went back to Pine Island with a team of 15 and had the nets in perfect position by 7 a.m. Sticks were piled in strategic positions and we settled down to wait. 8 a.m. went and at 9 a.m. we were really on our toes. By 10 a.m. we were impatient and by 11 a.m. spirits were low. We pulled down at noon without having seen a migrant! Total catch 10!

The following observations regarding the migrant flocks may be of interest:

- (a) The birds reacted to anything thrown high - we used all sorts of sticks and stones.
- (b) More than one missile was necessary to divert a big flock.
- (c) The important thing appeared to be to throw as high as possible - hence the volunteers for the sedentary work after a period of throwing.
- (d) There is absolutely no danger to the birds. They dive away from the missile which goes nowhere near them finally. There was more danger to other operators and to the nets.
- (e) Once brought down, the flocks flew low through and over the scrub. We threw from positions about thirty yards into the treeless area and nets 150 yards further on took large numbers of birds.
- (f) Flocks left to themselves flew high over all nets and the scrub, except for the very odd individual.
- (g) While the direction of flight (south of the west to east line) is difficult to understand, there is little doubt that the birds follow the river for only a few miles here and turn away to a general north-east direction as the river turns south. Their normal direction through the A.C.T. is north-east and flights in this direction have been observed on many occasions during this, and other, seasons.
- (h) Max's notes regarding flocks of White-naped Honeyeaters in early May confirm earlier observations.

The Yellow-faced Honeyeater flocks which move early have a few White-naped Honeyeaters with them, and an occasional Fuscous Honeyeater, but later flocks are composed almost completely of White-naped Honeyeaters.

- (i) Weather is considered to be a most important factor. On April 13th, the early morning was calm and fully overcast. The sun broke through at 9 a.m. and it remained sunny. Migrations commenced at Pine Island at 9.05 a.m. On the following morning April 14th, there was a slight breeze but the day was cool and fully overcast and this appeared to be the reason for the absence of migrants. Flocks were seen elsewhere in the A.C.T. throughout April and early May.
- (j) On April 13th, an estimated 10,000 birds passed between 9.05 a.m. and 11 a.m. The movement on this day ceased as abruptly as it started.

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### BANDING THE LITTLE TERN.

C.B.Campion, Abbotsford, N.S.W.

For those banders who are fortunate enough to live within reasonably easy reach of one of the numerous breeding grounds of the species, the Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) offers a most rewarding and stimulating exercise during the spring and summer of the eastern coast of Australia. The beauty and charm of this graceful little sea-bird, combined with the pleasant open nature of its seaside haunts, make it a delightful subject for study. Add to this the fact that all the laurels of distant recoveries remain to be won and the result is a project to gladden the heart of any bander.

#### THE PROBLEMS

In his article, "A Review of 'Least Terns' in Australian Waters" (The South Australian Ornithologist, Vol.22, Parts 7-8, April 1959), W. B. Hitchcock summarised the known facts of the distribution and breeding of *S.albifrons* and *S.nereis* around our coastline. As regards the former species Hitchcock raises important problems which the banding technique can help to solve.

1. Where do the populations of *S.albifrons* breeding in eastern Australia spend the winter?
2. What of the relatively large numbers of eclipse plumage *albifrons*, normally present (in Sydney, at least)