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EASTERN SPINEBILL (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) AT NEST.

Photo: N. Chaffer.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

The main "Bander" news for the past quarter concerns our Annual General Meeting held in February, and the very successful scientific session which followed it. It is no reflection on the excellent collection of colour slides of Honeyeaters shown, with appropriate commentary, by Steve Wilson, to say that the highlight of the proceedings was Warren Hitchcock's paper on the first ten years of the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme. For bird banders, this is a most interesting as well as an historically important paper, and we have great satisfaction in being able to announce that it will be published in our next issue. Full reports of the meeting will be found further on in this issue, and here it will be sufficient to draw attention to the change in the name of your Journal, and, as a matter of duty, to the change in the subscription rates. "The Australian Bird Bander" is undoubtedly a more appropriate title for a Journal which caters specifically for Australian bird-banders; that this was not selected in the first instance may be explained by the fact that our first two issues were published as the Journal of the Bird Banders' Association of New South Wales - later to become the B.B.A. of Australia.

To return to the question of subscription rates, a change in these was fore-shadowed in the Editorial Notes of our last issue, and this was agreed to at the Annual Meeting. It will be noted that the balance sheet for the past year shows a comfortable surplus, so it is perhaps necessary to repeat that this favourable state of affairs exists only because the "Bird Bander" is at present produced and distributed by a few voluntary workers, for the cost of materials and postage only. We must look forward to having our Journal commercially printed, but for this we need a larger circulation and more money.

While on the subject of our Association it is perhaps a good time to say something about two important functions of the Association and its Journal. The first, one of our main functions is that of keeping banders supplied with up-to-date information about banding activities and events throughout Australia generally. This implies an interest in all Australian banding schemes, not only the A.B.B.S. Some of our members may not realise that four States have local banding schemes, run by their Fisheries and Game Departments (or equivalents), in addition to and quite

independent of A.B.B.S. activities. It is therefore very satisfactory to be able to report that your President has received assurances of cooperation from the sponsors of three of these State Schemes, and as a result of this we are able to include in our Recovery Round-Up for this issue interesting recoveries of birds wearing Tasmanian bands. Incidentally, this is one of the advantages of our independence. Publications emanating from the A.B.B.S. (Annual Reports, or the former "Newsletter") or other banding scheme must restrict themselves largely to the work of that scheme.

The other function we should like to mention is that of helping to maintain a high standard of banding "ethics". All banders must realise the extreme importance of avoiding any practices which might bring the hobby of bird-banding into disrepute with the general public. It is a fundamental axiom of bird banding that in competent hands large-scale banding programmes can be carried out with a negligible casualty rate and without harm or danger to the vast majority of banded individuals. In some overseas countries there has been strenuous opposition to banding by a section of nature lovers; this is partly due to emotional reactions on the part of people who know little about banding, but it has probably been contributed to by poor work on the part of some individuals. As a result, in Britain new applicants for enrolment as banders are expected to undergo a period of training at one of the recognised observatories, and it is possible that something similar may eventually evolve in Australia. But at present we are simply in conscience bound to avoid any practices which might tend to cause harm or suffering as a result. (I do not believe that the alarm occasioned by orthodox methods of trapping can be fairly regarded as inflicting a seriously traumatic experience.) All banders, on enrolment, receive a set of "Instructions to Banders" in which some guiding principles are laid down. These are amplified in some notices from the Secretary of the A.B.B.S., published on p.18 of this issue. It appears that some members have not fully appreciated that, in many situations in which there is danger of causing premature fledging, or of damaging the nest so as to endanger the brood, there is only one correct course of action - DON'T BAND.

It is hoped that all members will read the notices on p. 18 carefully and help the Secretary of the A.B.B.S. by following them strictly.