

## Notes on the Pied Currawong

Some comments on banding Pied Currawongs (*Strepera graculina*) after reading "Notes on the Pied Currawong" by J. E. Walsh (*Aust. Bird Bander*, vol. 3, no. 3).

I live at Leura on the Central Tablelands and we too have a large population of Pied Currawongs during the winter months. They usually leave during October, but this year departed suddenly and earlier than usual, on September 24, probably due to an unseasonable spell of hot dry weather we had at that time.

I am not really interested in banding the Currawongs, as I am too busy with the Satin Bower-birds, but the two species seem to have some strong association during the winter months, and the Currawongs are always about with the "Satins" and interfere quite seriously with the banding operations.

We therefore band any that do trap themselves, and, when they become too obnoxious, we have a blitz on them and bait the trap to catch them. We also find the Pied Currawong difficult to lure into a trap, especially if one or two have recently been captured and banded. They cry out in great alarm during the whole operation. Other Currawongs in the area immediately set up a din at the alarm call, and fly in quite close to us to see what is happening. A pair of Black-backed Magpies always joins the mob and they all perch in the trees above our banding station and remain there with loud noise until we release the bird. When released it flies right away. During July and August we banded 16, and only one returned to our garden. This bird fed at our food trays but kept well away from the trap. After we have banded one or two, the other Currawongs will not enter a trap for several days. They perch on top and try to get at food through the wire but will not pass through the door which is large and at ground level.

When we have a blitz on them, as we must sometimes as they attack any other bird trapped, we bait the trap with cut-up beef which they seem almost unable to resist. We do not normally provide food specially for the Currawongs, but we find they will eat almost anything on the food trays. Bread, cut up banana and apple peel and core, and some even try to eat the sugar and syrup water which we provide for the honey eating birds. They love cheese in winter time

and also fat, and we therefore must place these in suspended coconut shells which they cannot manipulate. We also notice from their droppings that they eat privet berries, and have often watched them eating berries of the holly trees, and also the fruit of the English laurel and the rowan trees.

It had not occurred to me that the birds went to cooler districts during the summer months. The elevation here is 3200 ft. and our climate is normally temperate with only a few hot days in summer and usually cool nights. I had presumed that they departed to more natural breeding places or suitable feeding grounds.

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## Supplies of Bulk Netting

Several requests have been received for bulk netting, i.e. netting not made up as nets. A very reasonable quote has been received from the manufacturers and an order has been placed for a bulk supply of netting 3 feet high, i.e. the equivalent of one shelf of a standard net.

It is considered that such netting will have many uses, e.g. in heathlands for banding honey-eaters, wrens, etc.; in grasslands for quail; and along forest roads, where there is plenty of undergrowth, for the many species of the lower levels of such areas.

Such netting is very easily rigged in the field. Supports are desirable at intervals of about 60 feet. A short stick driven into the ground with a rubber band to support each shelf string is all that is needed, particularly if the net is angled slightly at each support.

The netting will be available shortly in any desired length at \$1.40 per 10 yards. The usual 12½% discount is available for all members of the Association. There are no shelf strings in this bulk netting so rigging is a matter for the individual. Shelf string thread is 30 cents per spool.

Contact Steve Wilson, 2 Scott Street, Canberra, for supplies.