

The Reed Warbler in Peculiar Habitat

Our netting site at Lake George has already been described (Wilson, 1963). The summer and autumn of 1964/65 was a time of extreme drought in this area. Those blackberry plants close to the lake margin managed to produce a reasonable crop, presumably by virtue of seepage of water from the lake, but those more than 20 or 30 yards from the water died back without producing berries.

The Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus australis*) is not a common bird in the A.C.T. or on the Southern Tablelands of N.S.W. as there is little suitable habitat, but where this does exist, e.g., at Pine Island, A.C.T., and along the Molonglo River in both the A.C.T. and N.S.W., a few birds of this species may be found during the warmer months. Large numbers were present in the marshy conditions formed early in 1964 as Lake Burley Griffin slowly filled.

For the last three years we have used two net sites at Lake George which we cut, in the form of a "T", into a dense and high growth of blackberries. During the berry season from February to April these nets take good catches of the Eastern Silveryeye (*Zosterops lateralis*), and the Yellow-faced Honeyeater (*Meliphaga chrysops*) which feed in large numbers on the fruit and of other species which also find it attractive, e.g. the

Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*) and the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

On February 10, 1965, we netted two Reed Warblers in the net forming the stem of the "T". While this was surprising we were inclined, on the day, to regard the birds as migrants moving off to the north. The species had not been seen, heard or netted previously in the particular area despite frequent visits over four years. The nearest normal habitat of the species is along the extreme south of Lake George three miles from the netting site. There are no reeds or rushes along the western shore near our netting site as the lake shore is stony.

One of these two birds (020-76514) was re-trapped in exactly the same net ten days later, i.e. on February 20, 1965. A further Reed Warbler was taken in the same net on March 7, 1965.

While it was not possible to ascertain whether these Reed Warblers were feeding on blackberries, the re-trapping of this bird appears to indicate that they were. Certainly normal food supplies of all forms were affected by the drought, as was evident from the depleted numbers of birds of all species in the area at this time.

References

Wilson, S. J., 1963, "Results of regular mist-netting at Lake George." *Aust. Bird Bander*, 1:160-165.

— Steve and Denis Wilson,
Narrabundah, A.C.T.

Reed Warbler Concentration

Area surveys have often revealed that observations alone are sometimes quite misleading. A further instance of this occurred recently when netting operations were being carried out in a little patch of reeds in a swamp at Richmond, New South Wales.

Netting was commenced in this area on April 26, 1965, and further visits were made during May, June and July. In August the adjoining crop paddocks were ploughed up and the vegetation in the then dry swamp area was burnt off.

On November 6, 1965, six nets were set throughout the rejuvenated reeds and swamp growth extending over an area of about 50 yards wide and 100 yards long with a public road through the centre.

While the nets were being erected shortly after daylight, Reed Warblers (*Acrocephalus australis*) were heard calling and one or two were observed flying above the reeds before dropping out of sight. From these observations and from the extent of the calling, it was considered that from four to six pairs were in the area, yet in little over two hours 41 of these birds were caught and banded.

I have never previously found this species in such a concentration, although Steve and Denis Wilson (see above) have recorded "large numbers" during the filling of Lake Burley Griffin early in 1964.

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