

## Fourth Victorian Bird-Banding Conference

The Fourth Victorian Bird-banding Conference was held on Saturday, November 27, 1965, in the Library of the Fisheries and Wildlife Department (F. and W.), Melbourne.

In his opening address, Mr. A. Dunbavin Butcher, Director of F. and W., referred to banders as a body working under discipline to a specific end. He said that he was happy to be associated with the Victorian Ornithological Research Group, members of which worked both on specific programmes and sometimes on co-operative projects with the Department.

When mentioning the current enquiry into pesticides, he said that the necessity for this had been queried as a full enquiry had been carried out both in the United Kingdom and in the U.S.A. However, this was necessary as conditions and agricultural methods varied from one continent to another, and it was necessary to find out whether the situation was just as grim in Australia as elsewhere. Environmental contamination of both atmosphere and water was very serious.

The Town and Country Planning Authority in Victoria was most active. An interim order had been placed along the whole of the Victorian coastline and no development would be permitted without approval from the Authority. When an interim order was placed on Phillip Island, which was an example of haphazard and undisciplined development, it was the first time that wildlife had been specifically mentioned in an order. Seal Rocks (a wildlife reserve at the western tip of Phillip Island) was the scene of a five-year survey of fur seals as a result of complaints that they were causing considerable damage to nets in the fishing industry.

Some of each type of environment was being reserved in Victoria. If we did not have wildlife reserves and national parks, the wildlife situation would be extremely grim except for those animals which had learned to live with man—e.g., possums in the metropolitan area.

The Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve was a long-term attempt to revert a denuded area to its original condition. As an example of co-operation with other Government Departments, Mr. Butcher cited the instance of T.V. towers being erected not very far from Tower Hill. The authorities were plan-

ning to floodlight them at night and not to use guy ropes, to safeguard migrating birds.

Mr. Butcher referred to the new Fisheries and Wildlife Research station at Heidelberg where all technical interests were to be centred, mentioning that meeting rooms and facilities were being provided and would be available to natural history bodies. He felt that a new programme in wildlife and conservation would be introduced.

At the conclusion of his address, Miss Helen Aston presented Mr. Butcher with a prospectus dealing with the erection of a permanent building on the State Wildlife Reserve at Cape Woolamai. This was prepared by V.O.R.G. calling in the services of an architect for advice and assistance, and is a request for a sum of £5,000 for the initial stage—a Group room suitable for meetings, discussion and use as temporary living quarters. The second stage comprises extensions for sleeping quarters, and the third covers the erection of a laboratory and store rooms for equipment. Mr. Butcher accepted this, together with small foolscap-size photostat copies, and said he felt quite confident that the money could be found for this worthwhile project which might be the first of a series of banding stations throughout Australia.

(Mr. Kenneth C. Batchelder, from Oregon, U.S.A., a visitor at the conference, presented Mr. Butcher with £5 as the first contribution towards this).

The meeting commenced at 10 a.m. and, with a short luncheon break, continued until 6 p.m., with an attendance of 49 people. The following papers were read:

- Mr. R. P. Cooper—Ecological Survey of the Birds of Wilson's Promontory.
- Mr. M. C. Downes—Serendip Wildlife Research Station.
- Miss H. Aston—Mist-netting in Japan and Thailand.
- Mr. M. C. Gottsch—Victorian Ornithological Research Group.
- Mr. S. J. Wilson—The Roles of C.S.I.R.O., V.O.R.G., A.B.B.A. and the individual bander.
- Mr. N. J. Favalaro—Hawk traps and care of mice (bait).
- Mr. J. Wheeler (Geelong)—Banding of Banded Plover on Bellarine Peninsula.
- Miss I Watson—Short report on banding of Lyrebirds of Sherbrooke.

A paper entitled "Field Data—Suggested Items for Recording" was supplied by Mr. A. R. McEvey, Curator of Birds, National Museum of Victoria, and distributed to all those interested. Mr. McEvey had intimated previously that he would be willing to prepare a standardised terminology relating to habitat for the use of banders and a resolution requesting this was unanimously carried.

**Sanctuary Banding:** A discussion took place regarding the law banning trapping and banding of birds in sanctuaries. Mr. N. J. Favaloro moved, seconded by Mrs. M. Bateman, and carried unanimously that:

The V.O.R.G. Committee be directed and authorised to confer with Fisheries and Wildlife Department with a view to amending the legislation to enable banding to take place, under the control and supervision of the Department, in Sanctuaries.

**Ibis Banding:** A discussion took place regarding the banding of Ibis in rookeries and the possible harm caused by human intrusion. Opinions ex-

pressed indicated that, with due care, no harm is caused, but that predation from hawks was a far greater menace than human intervention.

**Cape Woolamai Banding Station:** On Sunday the field outing was to Cape Woolamai for the official opening of a temporary building to be used as the first permanent bird-banding station in Australia. This was erected by Fisheries and Wildlife Department on the Wildlife Reserve and will be administered by V.O.R.G. Mr. M. C. Downes, of the Game Management Section of F. and W., whose vision was responsible for the setting aside of this area as a permanent reserve, opened the building with a short résumé of the history of Cape Woolamai, and Mrs. Mary Bateman cut the ribbon to open the doors.

Dr. D. L. Serventy, of the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Wildlife Research, from Western Australia, who attended all functions at the weekend, discussed Mutton birds in the rookeries and demonstrated sexing methods. As he is a world authority on the subject, this was greeted with special interest.

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## More Than One Way to Ruin a Mist Net: Find The Ass

I imagine all mist-netters have had their problems and in the two years that I have been operating, I have encountered my share. To name a few, there have been an inquisitive cow, fortunately dehorned, a flock of sheep (two jumped through one end—hooray for rubber bands which broke), bats (this area is thick with them in the evenings and can they chew), parrots, cockatoos, etc., that bite the net while they wait to be banded and released, sudden high wind and willy-willies that dump the net on a dead bush or on ground covered in sticks or prickles and my own dog that went straight through at high speed (have used rubber bands ever since!).

However, they all pale into insignificance compared to the latest net wrecker.

One calm day, recently, I set up my nets at Martin's Bend near Berri, in an effort to boost my banding numbers, for I've had a lean time compared to last season.\* I took the usual chance of setting three nets in an area occupied by horses, as the best area happens to be over the fence. I

always take care to chase the animals away through the scrub, but on this occasion, I did not allow for their inquisitiveness as they returned almost immediately. When I checked the net, hidden cosily in bushes and trees, a quarter of an hour later, a horse was bunting the net playfully and horror of all horrors, an ass in all his striped splendour, was belligerently examining the other side of the net. Sensing what could happen, I carefully approached end on to the net and the horse slowly walked away. But not the ass. He just had to follow the horse and jumped through. The trail of wreckage was only equalled by my speechless rage and frustration! The tattered remains were in the sticks and dry Californian Burrs!

The motto is—Beware of asses, and I am still trying to decide which one of us really was the ass.

*Joe Mack, Berri, South Australia.*

\* This manuscript was received in May, 1965.