

The Australian**BIRD BANDER****The Cape Woolamai Banding Station,
Phillip Island, Victoria**

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The establishment of the Cape Woolamai Banding Station is an event of some importance for Australian ornithology. Dr Serventy's station at Fisher Island has of course functioned for 20 years, but that is a specialised project, established for the study of a single species. Cape Woolamai promises to be the first Australian bird observatory in the style of the British coastal bird observatories, and appears admirably situated for the study of migration—a long-felt want in Australia.—Editor.

On November 28, 1965, the Victorian Ornithological Research Group banding station at Cape Woolamai, on Phillip Island, was opened by Mr M. C. Downes of the Victorian Fisheries and Wildlife Department in the presence of members of the Victorian Ornithological Research Group. The station, a hut of galvanised iron, was donated by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department as an aid to the work being undertaken at the Cape, and replaced an unused "prototype" which had been destroyed by gales earlier in the month. Items of furniture, etc., have been provided by VORG members. Thus the first Australian bird observatory was officially declared open. Dr D. L. Serventy, who was also invited to be present, then gave field demonstrations of two of the techniques used in his extensive work on the Short-tailed Shearwater or mutton bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), i.e. sexing of adults and banding.

The programme on the Cape was, however, begun as long ago as the 1958-59 season when the first adults (134) and chicks (141) of the mutton-bird were banded. Since then the total banded on the Cape has reached about 15,000, with young birds predominating. Yearly

totals, for the years 1960 through 1965, are given in Table 1, and selected recoveries of Woolamai birds in Table 2.

Table 1
Banding totals of Short-tailed Shearwaters
Cape Woolamai, Phillip Island, Victoria.

Year	Adults	Young	Total
1960	267	1,763	2,030
1961	485	3,283	3,768
1962	545	3,179	3,724
1963	100	3,020	3,120
1964	454	1,080	1,534
1965	—	529	529
	<hr/> 1,851	<hr/> 12,854	<hr/> 14,705

Current Work

At present, apart from mass banding at the Cape, attention is being paid to marked burrows which are being checked throughout the breeding season so that the breeding success can be determined. Corpses are collected in a pre-determined area and this gives an indication of the effects of the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), in the

Selected recoveries of Short-tailed Shearwaters banded at Cape Woolamai

Table 2

Band No.	Date banded	Age	Place of recovery	Date	Movement
160-39914	8.4.61	P	Cape Bridgewater, Vic.	15.1.66	216W
-31634	8.4.61	P	Port Fairy, Vic.	23.1.66	170W
-42606	10.12.61	A	Lady Bay, nr Warrnambool, Vic.	2.1.64	154NW
-52369	15.4.63	P	nr Evans Head, N.S.W.	12.5.63	820NE
-51701	31.3.63	P	Burleigh Heads, Qld.	5.12.63	870NE
-52714	6.4.63	A	Port Haiden, Alaska	28.7.65	7,900NE
-68534	4.4.65	P	Bering Sea	15.7.65	7,100NE
-04058	30.3.61	P	nr Mikura Is., Japan	27.5.61	5,150N
-03971	30.3.61	P	50 miles NE of Hachijo, Japan	20.5.61	5,000N

Movement in miles;

P = pullus;

A = adult.

area. Clearly, many birds are taken through the season and preliminary figures, after one year's observation, give 1.6 per cent. mortality. The rookeries on the Cape were surveyed in 1961, when it was estimated that some 284,000 burrows had been used, and the present status is under review.

Banding recoveries have assisted in confirming the migration route of the mutton-bird, first suggested by Serventy (1953). An adult, 160-52714, banded at Woolamai on April 6, 1963, was recovered in Alaska on July 28, 1965, being the first long-distance recovery of a breeding adult (immature birds would have left the area by late March—see Serventy, 1961). Other notable recoveries have been of three birds in western Victoria. These could indicate feeding movements away from the natal rookery or a dispersal into new breeding grounds, though, since two of the birds were banded as chicks and recovered less than five years later, this would seem less likely.

Future work

In an attempt to increase the number of adults banded in the area, a new technique has been devised. A small meshed fish net is put across one of the numerous take-off paths during the night and birds are captured as they come up to the net. On the first trial a half-inch meshed net (30 ft. by 5 ft.) was used, and 40 birds were banded, though the same number or possibly even more escaped since the net did not cover the take-off completely. The initial success of this type of trapping has led to the design of a larger net fitted with

baffles and a catch-up zone to facilitate removal of the bird. Pre-preparation of the bands, i.e., bending to stage one of Serventy's (1956) method, is planned to enable a more rapid processing of birds caught during the morning exodus which lasts less than an hour.

Plans to increase the banding totals and widen the scope of the station include the construction of Heligoland-style traps and the extensive use of mist-nets in the tea-tree scrub along the coast of the Cape, where migratory species congregate before and after their crossing of the Bass Strait. At the same time, visual observations on movement and species may give additional information on the birds involved in trans-Bass Strait migration.

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