

REVIEWS and ABSTRACTS

Tenth Annual Report of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme, July 1963 to June 1964, by W. B. Hitchcock, 1966. Published as CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research Technical Paper No. 11.

This report is a commendably full account of the year's activity of 153 banders in all States, plus Papua-New Guinea, Australian Antarctic stations, and Lord Howe Island.

The magnitude of effort is manifested by the total of 104,200 birds banded; and by nearly 5,000 retrappings in the total of 14,000 recoveries. Approximately half of all birds banded were taken by mist net.

Three hundred and ninety-two species were banded (taking the cumulative total since 1953 to 544 species) but the number of individuals involved varied from one (33 species) to 14,369 (Eastern Silver-Eye), with only 21 topping the 1,000 mark (Royal Penguin, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Short-tailed Shearwater, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Pied Cormorant, Crested Tern, Silver Gull, Straw-necked Ibis, Black Swan, Superb Blue Wren, Starling, White-naped Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Zebra Finch, Red-browed Finch, House Sparrow, Raven) and 88 others over 100. In 106 of the 392 species, less than ten individuals were banded.

Numbers of recoveries varied from one (41 species) to 1,655 (Eastern Silvereye) with 23 others passing the 100 mark (Senegal Dove, Wedge-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters; Pied Cormorant; Silver Gull; Black Duck; Southern Yellow Robin; Striated Thornbill; White-browed Scrub Wren; Superb Blue Wren; White-naped, Yellow-faced, Yellow-tufted, White-plumed, New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeaters; Eastern Spinebill; Zebra and Red-browed Finches; House Sparrow; Raven; Pied Currawong; and Black-backed Magpie).

Notable recoveries included a Sooty Shearwater in California, two Short-tailed Shearwaters in Japan and Russia (although perhaps such occurrences are now becoming commonplace in spite of the distances involved), a Giant Petrel in Christchurch, N.Z. (from Fremantle in 2 months), a Gannet in W.A. (from Bass Strait), a Whistling Kite in Queensland (from Adelaide—1,020 miles, a raptor record), and a Wandering Albatross breeding on Macquarie Island nine years after being banded there as a pullus (though it is not stated whether this was known to be its first breeding attempt or not). Full data for 62 selected recoveries are given.

These and other conclusions can be drawn from perusal of the extensive details given in tabular form. Also listed are those species which are the subjects of special studies (including colour-banding) and the workers concerned, and the recovery rates of species whose banded totals have exceeded 1,000 since 1953. (Sedentary species and those being especially studied are relatively very high, presumably because of the number of individuals re-trapped, but, nevertheless, the variation in the figures, e.g., Black-backed Magpie 50.8%, Short-tailed Shearwater 0.56%, is remarkable and must reflect factors such as size of sample banded relative to total population and the degree of mixing that takes place, as well as the specialisation and extensive effort of certain workers.)

Australian banders are exceptionally well served in having such a detailed break-down of their efforts compiled for them; every responsible bander should read

this report very carefully and ponder the value of his work in the overall scheme.

D. F. Dorward, Clayton, Vic.

Australian Birds in Colour, by Keith Hindwood. A. H. & A. W. Reed, Sydney, 1966. 112 pp. Price £3.25.

This book portrays in vivid colour 52 species of Australian land birds—nearly all endemic to the continent. The photographs have been contributed by eleven of Australia's leading bird photographers, and the colour printing (by the Kyodo Printing Company, Tokyo) is of a high standard; a few of the "brown" birds have emerged paler than they should be, but the brilliant colours of the fairy-wrens, robins, parrots, Buff-breasted Pitta, and Azure Kingfisher have been faithfully reproduced.

The four-page Introduction is a masterly summary of the history of Australian ornithology, and of the Australian environment in relation to its bird life, with emphasis on the endemic groups, and some pertinent comments on the pressing need for habitat conservation.

The page of text, which faces each plate, bears the stamp of an experienced field ornithologist. In non-technical language the author gives the essence of the species' life habits, including, where applicable, a neat summary of the world distribution and diagnostic features of the family; a "plug" for conservation here and there; and often weaves in an interesting historical note. To achieve this, in the span of about 500 words per species, calls for special talent.

This attractive book, with its colourful dust jacket (Rose Robin and Black-backed Wren), will not only catch the eye of the browsing booklover, but also whet the appetite of any bird-watcher (of any age) and would-be photographer. The author, publishers and printers are to be congratulated on a first-class job.

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Pygmy Geese in Australia, by H. J. Lavery, *Queensland Agricultural Journal*, 1966, vol. 92: 294-299 (May).

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries has been investigating various aspects of the waterfowl population of that State in connection with their fauna management and conservation activities. Some of the results of this survey work have been published in this important article on the Pygmy Geese of Australia by H. J. Lavery. In it the author sets out the present status of these birds so far as Queensland is concerned. Details are given of the birds' description, distributions, habitats and general habits, feeding, breeding, parasites and conservation. There are eight photographs in addition to the maps. The closing paragraph gives the comforting assurance that "numbers of these Geese in Northern Queensland have not varied appreciably in 120 years".

In the special case of the Pygmy Geese it was possible to establish the broad position without banding. For several other species banding was used to determine more detailed facts of life histories. It is understood that the *Queensland Agricultural Journal* will be publishing further articles in this series, giving particulars of other species. The Department's work in this matter followed by these valuable contributions to the store of knowledge concerning these birds will be much appreciated by the wide range of people who are interested in understanding and preserving the Australian Ducks.

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