

A Report on the Banding of Barn Owls

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In the 17 years up to 30 June 1971, 25 nestling and 18 adult Barn Owls *Tyto alba* have been banded through the Australian Bird-banding Scheme. Of these, 5 have so far been recovered — all by members of the public.

The numbers banded in each State or Territory are: South Australia, 10 nestlings and 9 adults; Queensland, 5 and 3; Victoria, 4 and 3; New South Wales, 3 and 1; Northern Territory, 3 and 0; Australian Capital Territory, 0 and 1; and Western Australia, 0 and 1. These were banded by a total of 17 persons.

The following data on breeding dates and brood sizes at the time of banding have been compiled from the Species Schedules on which this information was recorded. (Nestling Barn Owls are usually banded when they are from three to six weeks old):

Date of Banding	Brood Size	Location
10.1.63	4	Moolap, Vic.
21.9.63	3	7 km S. Jandowae, Qld.
24.5.64	3	Richmond, N.S.W.
30.5.65	6	Calomba, S.A.
2.5.66	3	Austral Downs, N.T.
14.1.69	4	Calomba, S.A.

The above dates on which nestlings have been banded reflect the fact that Barn Owls are known to breed at any time of the year depending on food supply.

Of the five birds recovered, two (one banded as a nestling and one as an adult) were recovered at, or near, the banding place, and three (two banded as nestlings and one as an adult) were recovered away from the banding place (see Figure 1). The banding and recovery details of these five birds are shown in Table 1.

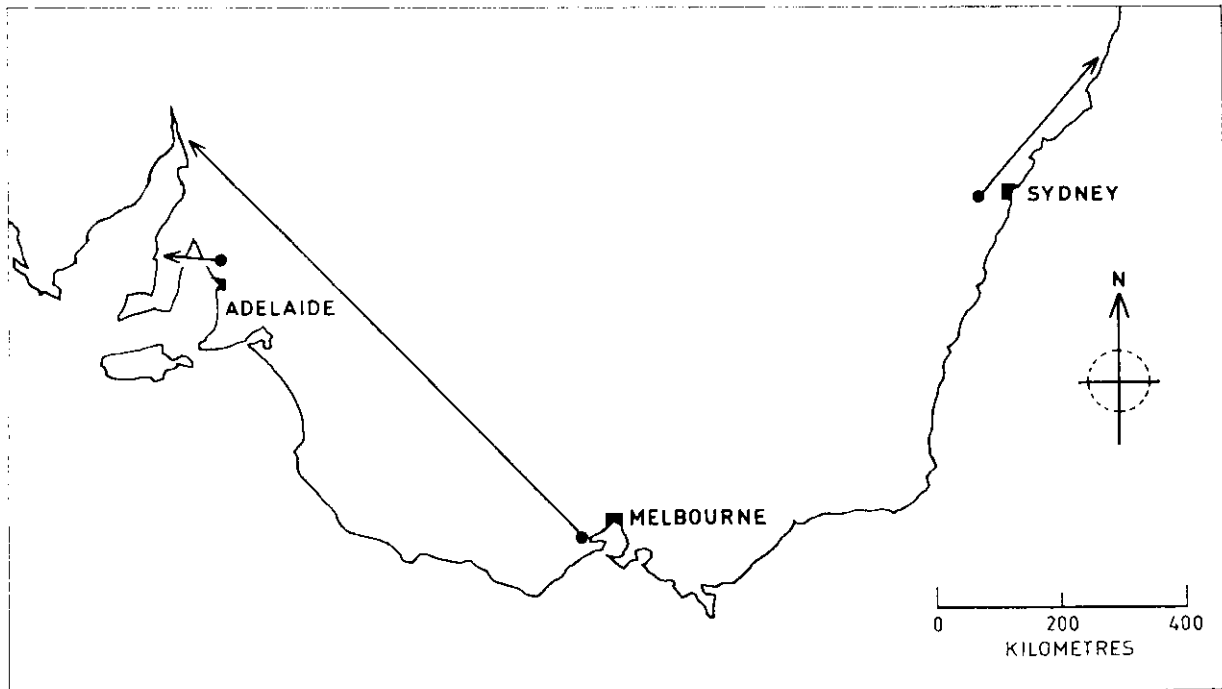
The method of recovery in each case was: 120-17801 was hit by a car and killed; 120-10215 was found in a weak condition and later died; 120-01002 was caught in a rabbit trap and released unharmed as the jaws of the trap had closed on the band the bird's leg was not damaged); 120-08202 was found freshly dead; and 120-54301 was found dead on a road. It should be noted that both 120-17801 and 120-10215 may have been unhealthy when banded—120-17801 had been hit by a car and held in captivity for four days before it was banded and released, and 120-10215 was banded and released after being rescued from the attacks of White-backed Magpies *Gymnorhina hypoleuca*.

The movements undertaken by 120-01002 and 120-08202 suggest that young Barn Owls may disperse considerable distances after they have

TABLE 1
Banding and recovery details of Barn Owls

Band Number	Date Banded	Age at Banding	Where Banded	Bander	Where Recovered	Date Recovered	Distance and Direction
120-17801	3. 6.60	Adult	6 km W. Healesville, K. Vic.	G. Simpson	Lilydale, Vic.	3. 6.60	near b-p
120-10215	7.10.61	Adult	Lara, Vic.	T. W. Pescott	Lara, Vic.	8.10.61	At b-p
120-01002	10. 1.63	Nestling	Moolap, Vic.	W. D. F. Mackenzie	Baroota, S.A.	(1. 8.64)*	840 km NW.
120-08202	24. 5.64	Nestling	Richmond, N.S.W.	H. J. de S. Disney	Taree, N.S.W.	18. 7.64	250 km NE.
120-54301	11. 1.65	Adult	Calomba, S. A.	M. H. Waterman	Maitland, S.A.	(18. 2.65)*	65 km W.

* Approximate dates.



• Figure 1. Movement records of Barn Owls.

left the nest. A similar post-fledging dispersal of Barn Owls is known to occur in Europe.

In addition to the above recoveries a band from a nestling banded at Calomba was found near the banding place eight months later. It is not known what happened to the bird on which the band had been placed or how the band had become separated from the bird.

Although only a small amount of data has been obtained to date from the banding of Barn Owls, it does suggest that further banding of this species would yield worthwhile results. Much more information needs to be accumulated before we obtain a true picture of the dispersal of the young, and, as yet, except for the one movement of 65 kilometres, nothing is known concerning the movements of adults.

In Europe it has been established, from the recovery of banded individuals, that in some years (*Wanderjahren* or "wander years") Barn Owls will disperse far and wide (Sauter 1955). This dispersal involves mainly first year birds,

although some older birds may take part, and is probably directly related to fluctuations in the available food supply. Fluctuations in the numbers of Barn Owls present in an area are known to occur in Australia (Calaby 1969). However, except for what has been reported in this paper, nothing is known concerning the distances which Barn Owls may wander in Australia in response to fluctuating food supplies.

References

- Calaby, J. H. (1969). Barn Owl, in H. J. Frith. (Ed.), *Birds in the Australian High Country*, pp. 138-140. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Sydney.
- Sauter, U. (1955). Ringweiderfunde niedersächsischer und westfälischer Schleiereulen (*Tyto alba*). *Beitr. Naturk. niedersachs* 8: 114-118.

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