

President's Message

We are all aware of living at a time when accepted attitudes are being questioned and when accustomed circumstances of existence — even the value of money — no longer remain as they were. The Bird Banders' Association of Australia is not immune from these challenges or isolated from these changes.

The formation of the Association in 1962 arose from the desire 'to stimulate the fellowship of banders as a group; to gather and distribute as much information as possible on the technique, results and literature of our common interest and to provide a mutual service which will assist us all': *Bird Bander*, 1:3. Those aims were at the time unexceptionable: the question in 1975 is whether all those aims are still of importance and whether the way in which the Association has been serving those aims is the best way of doing so.

Doubtless new techniques of trapping and banding birds will be developed, but the rate of development seems to have slowed down. Banding is now generally regarded as a means to an end, rather than as an end in itself. Few of us would be banders if it were not for the pleasure we derive from working on wild birds; but the ultimate purpose of working on birds must be the advancement of ornithological knowledge and that can only be achieved if we publish our results.

Does all this mean that the need for an association of banders as such is passing and that the Association, by appropriate changes in the name, format and scope of its journal, should become a vehicle for the publication of the results of field work in ornithology, whether based on banding or not?

This question has been exercising the minds of your Committee and some broadening of the scope of the journal has already taken place. The Committee would welcome your views as to what the future of the Association and its journal should be.

The Association receives substantial support from a significant number of people who are not themselves banders but who are members of the Association or subscribe to its journal. It is very gratifying that the Association receives this sup-



• Mr P. Balmford, President, 1975.

port which we need and trust will continue. Their views on these questions, as well as the views of banders, will be welcomed.

Is the banding work being done in Australia at the present time producing useful results? I am confident that it is, but I believe that careful analysis of data, at any rate in well-chosen projects, would produce more material worthy of publication. Do not allow information to languish in your notebooks: the Editor of our journal is anxious to receive material and publish it. In the past, much help has been given to authors in preparing their material for publication. This help is still available and we regard this as an important function of the Association.

The costs of producing and distributing the journal continue to increase and the subscription had to be raised again at our last Annual General Meeting. If the Association and its journal are worthwhile, as I believe they are, do not regard these increases as a reason to discontinue your membership. Seek to increase the membership whenever opportunity offers — and make opportunities whenever you can.

Last year, the Association published "Bird in the Hand", a book which gathered and revised items which had appeared in the journal at

various times and which were designed to facilitate the identification of species, sex and age. Make use of this book and recommend its use to others.

Beginning in March 1973, we have published in the journal a number of reports on Seabird Islands. These reports are already proving of practical use and have been commended in various quarters. For instance, Dr W. R. P. Bourne writes, in the Ninth Report of the (U.K.) Seabird Group: "The Australians have . . . started to publish a series of systematic accounts of their seabird colonies in *The Australian Bird*

Bander which might serve as a model for us as well".

Most of the reports so far published have dealt with islands off the coast of New South Wales, but reports on islands in other parts of Australia are being prepared. Your Committee plans to accelerate the publication of this series by a special issue of the journal, as part of the 1975 volume.

A re-definition of our priorities will be needed in the coming year and a preparedness to work for them. Your Committee's task will not be easy. Evidence of your support will not only ease the task but will make their efforts worthwhile.

The White-winged Widowbird near Windsor, N.S.W.

During the 1930's a number of observations were recorded of the White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus* in the Hawkesbury area near Windsor, New South Wales. On one occasion in 1937, K. A. Hindwood recorded ". . . some 80 in an open field at Cattai" and further spasmodic observations of small numbers were made up to 1953.

In *A Hand List of Birds of New South Wales* (1960), A. R. McGill stated "Very rare. Native to Africa. Liberated in N.S.W. about 1931 and for a few years was observed breeding in rank vegetation near the Hawkesbury River, but may have since died out."

However, in March 1967, a few males and some 50 birds in brown plumage were reported a few kilometres from their former haunts. On 1 April 1967, two adult males in full plumage were caught and banded. Two months later K. A. Hindwood observed three males in partial eclipse plumage in the same area; one of them was wearing a band and apparently was one of the two banded when in full plumage on 1 April. In the same location on 20 January 1968, McGill *et al.* saw a male in full plumage 'courting a female'.

As an adequate description has not been published and as no specimen has been collected, it seemed desirable that some check of the species identification should be made as there are a number of *Euplectes* species with yellow wing patches. Accordingly, a colour transparency of one of the birds banded was forwarded to Mr J. L. McKean who has had some experience with this group. He stated (in litt.) that the bird depicted could only be *E. albonotatus* because of the distribution of the yellow and white wing



• White-winged Widowbird (male in breeding plumage) photographed near Windsor, N.S.W. on 1 April 1967.

Photo: S. G. Lane

markings, and suggested that the photograph should be published. A copy of the slide has been lodged in the collections of the Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO.

No further observations of the species have been reported from the area to date (July 1975).

I am grateful to Mr E. S. Hoskin for details of the observations from K. A. Hindwood's records.

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