

Nesting Habits of the Yellow-tipped Pardalote

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Yellow-tipped Pardalotes *Pardalotus striatus* have been banded at a breeding colony at Kelso, Tasmania for seven successive seasons and the results have indicated a strong tendency for the birds to return to the same nesting area. Four birds have been retrapped after five years and one after six years.

This species is generally considered to be a migrant and it is rarely seen in Tasmania in winter. However, during that season it is regularly recorded in the south-eastern portion of the mainland in numbers which indicate an influx from other areas. Mainland records during spring and summer are rare and H. J. Frith (1970) recorded that "The few breeding records from the Australian mainland are poorly documented."

Method

A study of the nesting habits was commenced at Kelso, Tasmania in November 1964. The site chosen was at a nesting colony of about 30 pairs, established in a 100 foot section of an 8 foot high vertical bank of a tidal creek. Burrows had been drilled into the sandy overburden which varies from one to two feet in depth and covers a substratum of yellow clay. Tidal action has gradually eroded the bank, causing sections to occasionally collapse.

Burrows were individually numbered and breeding birds, caught at the burrow entrance, were banded. Trapping at the burrows has been carried out in each of the six subsequent breeding seasons. Traps were made of half inch wire netting folded into tubes about ten inches long by two inches in diameter and closed at one end. Because of the birds' tolerance of people, it was possible to watch their movements from as close as ten feet.

As soon as a bird entered the nesting burrow the open end of the trap was quickly placed

in the burrow entrance. Provided that the bird was not incubating, usually it entered the trap within a minute. The trap was then removed and the open end crimped, securing the bird. Banding was carried out by pulling one foot through a hole in the wire netting. Generally incubating birds were difficult to flush but the return of the mate frequently precipitated their attempted departure.

Egg laying was found to commence about the beginning of November. By mid December the early breeders were feeding fully fledged young but others were still incubating eggs. Most burrows were deserted by mid January. Some burrows were destroyed by minor vandalism and erosion, partly disrupting the study.

Results

Two hundred and forty-seven birds, including 49 nestlings, have been banded in seven seasons. Eighty of these have been retrapped 122 times (see Table 1). This indicates that the birds have a strong tendency to return to the same nesting area in succeeding years. In 28 instances burrows were reused by the former occupant. On only two occasions have a pair been found occupying the same burrow in two successive seasons. On several occasions pairs of one season were found separated in subsequent seasons and breeding with other mates. S. G. Lane (1967) recorded similar behaviour with Spotted Pardalotes *Pardalotus punctatus*.

TABLE 1

The number of adults and nestlings banded each year and those retrapped from each previous year's banding.

Year	Number Adults	Banded Nestlings	Number Retrapped						Total Retrapped
			1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	
1964	43	5							
1965	30	7	14						14
1966	18	—	11	16					27
1967	51	8	11	7	6				24
1968	6	—	4	4	4	11			23
1969	27	18	3	—	2	7	—		12
1970	23	11	1	2	—	9	—	10	22
Total	198	49							

The eroding banks and enlargement of some burrow entrances by vandals made a number of nests accessible for banding of nestlings. No burrow was deliberately enlarged for this purpose.

The "oldest" bird recorded to date was banded as an adult on 29 November 1964 and retrapped in 1966, 1967, 1969 and lastly on 6 December 1970, over six years after banding. (See Recovery Round-up, page 43). Four other birds have been retrapped five years after banding. Only one bird banded as a nestling has been retrapped and this was three years after banding.

Predation of Yellow-tipped Pardalotes by Grey Butcher-birds *Cracticus torquatus* was observed at the Kelso study area. No doubt the concentration of birds entering and leaving the nesting burrows provided easy prey.

It is intended to continue the banding study at the Kelso colony.

References

- Frith, H. J. (1970). Birds in the Australian High Country. A. H. & A. W. Reed, Sydney.
 Lane, S. G. (1967). 'Habits of Spotted Pardalotes'. *Aust. Bird Bander*, 5:27-29.



• Yellow-tipped Pardalote at entrance to nesting burrow.

Photo: J. R. Napier

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