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Nestling and post-fledging growth and development in an Australian passerine: Hall's Babbler *Pomatostomus halli*

Dean J. Portelli

Centre for Ecosystem Science, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences,
University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052, Australia
Email: portellidean@gmail.com

Postnatal growth and development has rarely been studied in passerines of the southern hemisphere, particularly Australian species. Developmental changes in external morphology and the growth in body mass and size of nestling and juvenile Hall's Babblers (*Pomatostomus halli*) were quantified and described. Additionally, a guide to ageing nestlings to the nearest day was developed to facilitate studies of breeding biology. Nestling growth and development in Hall's Babblers were similar to that of its closest relative, the Grey-crowned Babbler *P. temporalis*. Body mass, skeletal and feather growth, but not the sequence and timing of developmental changes in external morphology, were affected by nestling body condition. Juvenile Hall's Babblers attained adult size by four months of age, and were indistinguishable from adults by one year of age. Nestling growth rate in body mass of Hall's and Grey-crowned Babblers is lower than similarly sized northern hemisphere passerines, but the relative size at fledging is similar. This suggests nestling growth rate may, like other life-history traits, differ between passerines of the southern hemisphere and those of temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. However, since nestling growth has been poorly studied in southern hemisphere passerines, the available data are inadequate to test this hypothesis.

Do exotic birds dominate feeding at garden food stations in Melbourne in winter?

Chanaka Ruwadeniya¹ and Alan Lill²

¹School of Biological Sciences, Monash University Clayton Campus, Victoria, Australia 3800.

²Department of Ecology, Environment and Evolution, School of Life Sciences, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia 3086.
Email: A.Lill@latrobe.edu.au

Deliberate feeding of wild birds is common in urban Australia and supposedly has both costs and benefits for the birds and the humans that feed them. If urban domestic garden food stations are dominated by common exotic species, they may ultimately not promote, or even reduce, urban native bird species diversity. However, too few investigations have been conducted in Australia to permit a thorough evaluation of this possibility. Twelve established bird food stations in suburban gardens in Melbourne, Australia were visited in one winter by 18 bird species, five of which were exotic. Introduced Spotted Doves *Streptopelia chinensis*, Common Mynas *Sturnus tristis* and Rock Doves *Columba livia*, together with native Noisy Miners *Manorina melanocephala*, were the most prominent users of stations providing bread. Spotted Doves numerically dominated feeding at stations that provided seed, but three native species were also quite prominent feeders at some such stations. Bread and seed stations were exploited by fairly distinct bird species assemblages. On average, approximately six high-intensity inter-specific agonistic interactions per hour occurred at a food station, involving 20 species combinations overall. However, only one third of encounters were between an exotic and a native bird. Displacement of native birds from food stations by exotic birds was substantially less common than the reverse event. Thus feeding at urban garden food stations was dominated by exotic birds, but some native birds also exploited them substantially and were not disproportionately aggressively displaced from them by exotics.

Use of ultraviolet light to help age nightjars, owlet-nightjars, frogmouths and owls

Mark D. Blythman and James L. Sansom

Bold Park Bird Banding Group, 15A Cassia Street, Greenwood, WA 6024, Australia.
Email: boldparkbirdbanding@hotmail.com

Observation of mass road-kill of Superb Parrots *Polytelis swainsonii* feeding on spilt grain

James D. Rees

Centre for Ecosystem Science, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW 2052, Australia.
Email: james.rees@live.com.au

Dry season diet of a Barking Owl *Ninox connivens peninsularis* on Adolphus Island in the north of Western Australia

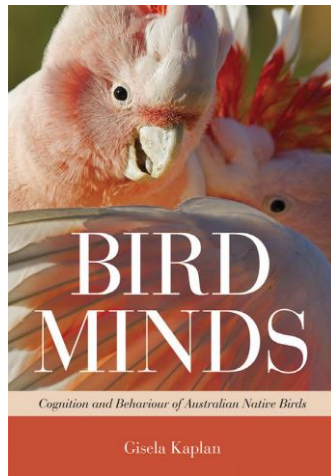
Russell Palmer^{1*} and Wesley Caton^{1,2}

¹Science and Conservation Division, Department of Parks and Wildlife,
Locked Bag 104, Bentley Delivery Centre, Western Australia, 6983.

²Evolution Fauna Consultancy, 29 Tugun Street, Tugun, Queensland, 4224.

*Corresponding author. Email: russell.palmer@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Book Review



Bird Minds: Cognition and Behaviour of Australian Native Birds

Kaplan, Gisela T. 2015. CSIRO Publishing. Paperback 280pp, black and white photographs, illustrations and tables, two appendices. ISBN: 9781486300181. RRP \$45.00.

Catherine Young