

3. The clutch size at Wyperfeld may be lower than that of other populations.

Serventy and Whittell (1976) recorded a 4-10°F temperature difference between the nest and the water in which it lay. Although the temperature difference was not measured at Black Flat, it was apparent that the water in the egg chamber was considerably warmer than the water surrounding the nest. Whether this was due to the recent presence of the incubating bird or was a product of decomposition of the plant material in the nest is not known, but warrants further study.

The Australasian Grebe and the Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* are thought to form a superspecies (Cramp and Simmons, 1977). The nest structure of the Little Grebe in Europe is similar to that of the Australasian Grebe. The nest diameter at the base was up to 60 cm wide; the average diameter of the nest cup (incubation depression) was four centimeters and the height of the nest above water was four to five centimetres (Cramp and Simmons, 1977). These are similar to the values in Table 1. In Europe, the mean dimensions of 100 eggs of the Little Grebe were 26 mm x 38 mm with ranges of 24-28 mm and 33-44 mm respectively. The mean egg weight was 14 g (presumably at laying). Clutch size is given as four to six, ranging from two to seven with up to ten recorded (Cramp and Simmons, 1977). Thus, egg weights and clutch sizes of the Little Grebe and the Australasian

Grebe are similar. While these features do not represent reliable taxonomic characters, they do illustrate close resemblances in some aspects of the breeding biology of the two species.

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## Auxiliary at the Nest of the Blue-faced Honeyeater

Dow (1980, *Emu* 80: 121-140) listed sixty-five species of Australian birds for which communal breeding had been recorded. He mentioned several others that may be possible communal breeders. Although he cited reports of Blue-faced Honeyeaters *Entomyzon cyanotis* exhibiting this behaviour in aviaries, he had no similar reports for wild birds.

On 15th October 1979, we observed this species nesting one kilometre east of Weethalle, N.S.W. (33°5'S., 146°37'E.). The birds were observed in attendance at the nest which was about 4.5 m from the ground in the outer canopy of a low eucalypt. Two had blue facial patches, the other, an olive-green facial patch. One blue

faced individual was sitting on the nest while the other two birds brought food to the young. The young were fed about once a minute. Alexander (1976, *Aust. Bird Bander* 14: 52-53) noted from banding studies that the facial patch retained the olive-green colour for at least six months before obtaining the blue of the adult. We assume that the bird with the olive-green patch was the offspring of the primary pair (the blue-faced pair) and hence satisfies Dow's definition of an auxiliary.

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