

Islanders say they find one of these seeds, and no other, in each Mutton-bird (*Puffinus*).” The seeds of *C. Bonducella* are large, grey, smooth and more or less oval in shape, and measure approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch x $\frac{5}{8}$ inch x $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.

No evidence is available as to how the young Mutton-birds on Lord Howe Island obtain the foreign matter. All three substances mentioned—seeds, pumice-stone, and charcoal—could be collected by the adult birds from the surface of the sea and fed to the nestlings. It seems unlikely that almost fully-developed birds would leave their burrows at night and collect pumice-stone from the shore. Indeed, the nature of the nesting areas on the island, except at Ned’s Beach, would make this a difficult venture for the birds. Charcoal, from burnt timber, is present within some of the nesting areas. The few ‘wait-a-bit’ plants now growing on the island are restricted to a small area at Ned’s Beach. It seems probable, therefore, that the adult birds collect the seeds of this plant at sea from the numbers washed out of the sand by high tides, or from among those borne by the sea towards the island from places lying to the northwards.

My sincere thanks are accorded to Captain J. D. McComish for making available much of the data and the correspondence, relating to Lord Howe Island, used in these notes.

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Stray Feathers

Swifts and the Weather.—In the pages of *The Emu* in the past there are some references to the appearance of Spine-tailed Swifts (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) during, or prior to, unsettled weather, notably a series of records by A. E. Bridgewater in volume 34, page 99.

My experience with the species in this district has been far different. The appearance of Swifts here has invariably been the prelude to drought conditions, and the larger the flock and the greater the height, the longer the following dry spell. They were numerous in 1928, which was exceptionally dry, but were not in evidence during the good

seasons which followed. Since 1935 they have been absent only during the 1937-38 season, which was the only good one in the ten-year period. The 1943 season was notable. From May till December was exceptionally wet and no Swifts were seen. Then, early in the latter month, small flocks appeared, hawking very low. A short dry spell followed their appearance. During the last week of December I was dismayed to see several large flocks flying high. The following months were amongst the driest we have had. A curious point is that every Swift I have seen here has been travelling in the same general direction—north to north-west.—ELLIS MCNAMARA, Mt. Kembla, N.S.W. 1/1/46.

A Query on Migration.—While in Australia in 1944, I made some observations, the interpretation of which has since puzzled me. They pertain to the Fork-tailed Swift (*Apus pacificus pacificus*) and the Rainbow-bird (*Merops ornatus*). We may take the data geographically from north to south, which is out of the chronological order. At Cairns, Queensland, Swifts were evidently migrating, and Rainbow-birds were present in numbers on July 28. Similarly at Innisfail, the Swifts were migrating on July 30 and 31, and Rainbow-birds present in reasonable numbers on July 29 to 31. However, the Swifts were not noted at Townsville either just before or just after my visit to Cairns and Innisfail, but the Rainbow-bird was numerous there on July 24 and August 2, and from their actions I concluded that a slow migration was in progress. I was in Brisbane from September 17 to 24, and from October 3 to 9. Neither species was detected during that time.

Various questions arise. Are the occurrences in the stretch from Cairns to Townsville normal? If not, why not? Why should two species have failed in two months to have covered about 700 miles to Brisbane? It seems unlikely (but possible) that they would not have been seen in Brisbane if they were present. There are no geographical barriers, and they apparently normally arrive in New South Wales in September or October. Were they really late in south Queensland and New South Wales in 1944? Mr. Edward Brooks, of the Department of Meteorology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, points out to me that the conditions favoring drought in Australia involve a northwards shift of the recurrent west to east cyclonic storms, and apparently result in southerly winds along the Queensland coast, which might have tended to slow up migratory movement. On the other side of the ledger, some migrant species were seen in Brisbane on the dates given—Drongo (*Dicrurus bracteatus bracteatus*) on Sep-

tember 17; Black-faced Flycatcher (*Monarcha canescens melanopsis*) on October 3; Spectacled Flycatcher (*Monarcha trivirgata gouldi*) on September 20; Leaden Flycatcher (*Myiagra rubecula rubecula*) on September 20. Incidentally, the Fork-tailed Swift was seen at Finschhafen, Territory of New Guinea, on August 21. — CHARLES H. BLAKE, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., 15/3/46.

Sooty Albatross at Bunbury.—On May 29, 1946, after a week's rough weather, I was walking down the South Beach here in search of anything in the way of birds washed up by the waves. I noted the remains of a large bird in the lowest sand-hills, about thirty yards above the mean tide level. A very brief examination revealed that it was not a victim of the recent gale. The plumage was much dishevelled, and all the fleshy parts had disappeared, as had the feet and tarsi. One wing, however, was perfect, and I found the head and neck intact a few yards away. The dull black of the flight feathers, the general shape of the wing, and the black beak, enabled me to identify the bird as an immature specimen of the Sooty Albatross (*Phœbetria fusca*). The feathers of the lower parts were of a greyish-brown to white. After more than twenty years' experience in beach-combing for birds, this is the first specimen of the species which has come under my notice; apparently it is uncommon in the adjacent seas. — F. LAWSON WHITLOCK, Bunbury, W.A., 2/6/46.

Black Falcon in Western Australia.—On March 28, 1946, Mr. Neville A. Beeck, of Katanning, 90 miles north of Albany, sent to the Western Australian Museum, Perth, a bird of prey that was a stranger to him. On examination it was found to be a Black Falcon, *Falco subniger* Gray, ♀, and apparently the first unquestionable record of this rare bird's presence in Western Australia. — L. GLAUERT, Museum, Perth, W.A., 12/4/46.

Mating Display in the Magpie.—In his paper on the Western Magpie (*Emu*, Jan., 1946), Hugh Wilson states that the process of coition and mating are imperfectly known. An observation on the display of the White-backed Magpie at Wellington, New Zealand, on May 9, 1943, may be of interest. There is, however, no reference to sex in my notes of that period.

Three birds were seen, two of which were excited, and attempting to copulate with the third. This bird lay with its under-parts on the ground, and with wings outstretched, and copulation was attempted by one of the courting Magpies. Next the *presumed* female was seen lying on its back with wings still spread and feet stiffly erect. The

others each seized a wing and began to tug in opposite directions; their victim waved its feet, then suddenly attacked them. A bunch of grass was offered, but the ceremony was obscured by a natural feature. The display finished with a short fight and a seizure of a twig by an individual, the identity of which has been confused. Two birds flew off. When the third persisted in joining them they commenced to scurry, but eventually flew to some eucalypts, where a low carolling sub-song was recorded. — H. L. SICKER, Wellington, N.Z., 7/4/46.

Lorikeets Prefer Different Diets.—Whilst watching the ways of birds in the Wallangarra district, Queensland, I have observed that the Little Lorikeet feeds always on the mistletoe, when that plant, so abundant in the area, is in flower. The larger and more common Musk Lorikeet prefers the blossoming eucalypts.

This preference for different nectar-exuding blooms between two species, apparently so closely related to one another, is interesting. As the mistletoe blossoms at a different time of the year from the gums, the two species are not observed flying together. The Blue Mountain (Rainbow) Lorikeet is also to be seen in small numbers. I have been informed that this species is prevalent along water-courses thirty miles north-west of Wallangarra. — LAWRENCE C. HAINES, Sydney, N.S.W., 9/4/46.

Charadrius leschenaulti again in N.Z. — In *The Emu*, vol. 45, part 3, we reported the occurrence of a single example of Geoffroy's Sand Plover (*Charadrius leschenaulti*) in New Zealand. It was seen near Auckland in Manakau Harbour on August 20, 1943, and again on September 5.

We now have a second occurrence to report. On September 20, 1945, as the tide was coming in over wide, sandy flats, we were watching a large flock of recently-arrived Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*), when we noticed, apart from them, and in the shallower water, much smaller waders. Two were at once seen to be Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*). The third was clearly a dotterel, and as it proved to be readily approachable, we had it under observation for half an hour, and had no hesitation in identifying it as *Charadrius leschenaulti*. Ten days later it was still present on the same shore, which is about seven miles from the locality where the first New Zealand specimen was seen in 1943. On the second visit it was easily found, but not so easily approached, as it ran about by itself, feeding in the shallow pools left by the receding tide. It was in poor plumage, but in certain lights a pronounced

reddish tinge showed on the sides of its upper breast. Whether it was a juvenile or an adult in winter dress we could not decide. It could not be found on October 22, nor on subsequent visits. — R. B. SIBSON and P. C. BULL, Auckland, New Zealand, 7/3/46.

Hovering by Cuckoo-Shrike. — This is an extract from notes made at Ravenshoe (Atherton Plateau, North Queensland).

"The ten-minute halt at 11 a.m. during the route-march to-day (4/8/44) was made more interesting by the unusual sight of a Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novæ-hollandiæ*) hovering. There was a slight breeze blowing, and the 'Blue Jay', facing into it, was hovering as easily as any Kestrel, about 12 feet from the ground. Suddenly it closed its wings and dropped into the grass, only to rise again and continue hovering at about the same height as before."

Whistle-blasts, warning the troops to prepare to move, caused the bird to cease its performance and fly away. — P. A. BOURKE, Wallsend, N.S.W., 17/4/46.

Fuscous Honeyeater in South Australia — In 1944 the writer announced the re-discovery of the Fuscous Honeyeater (*Meliphaga fusca*) on the Mount Mary Plains, South Australia, after an interval of more than thirty years (*S.A. Orn.*, xvii, 18). The previous specimen was taken in May, 1911, by Dr. J. B. Cleland, and was made the type of *M. fusca dingi* by Mathews (*Novitates Zoologicae*, xviii, 404, 1912). Since writing my above-mentioned article, I have had an opportunity to compare the specimen secured by me with skins of the species from eastern Australia in the South Australian Museum, and to confirm the identification. Details of the specimen, which has been deposited in the National Collection, are as follows: no. B.22985, sub-adult ♂, Sutherlands, S.A., Feb. 7, 1942. Total length in flesh, 166 mm., iris brown, pharynx bright yellow, base of bill and nostrils yellow.

The Fuscous Honeyeater appears to be decidedly rare in South Australia, and is possibly only a straggler in this State. — E. F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 5/4/46.

Owing to transport and other difficulties in connection with holding a Congress and Camp-out in one of the other States, the Council has decided to have the Annual Meeting in Melbourne again this year and this will be held on Tuesday, October 15. There will be no Camp-out. Notices will be sent out in due course.