

(1937, 134) found *palpebrata* nesting on Heard Island, and this had been abundantly confirmed by A.N.A.R.E. biologists in the last two years.

Following are the measurements (in millimetres) of all specimens of *P. palpebrata* in the National Museum of Victoria. The culmen was measured from its origin, i.e. length of total culmen, and the wing was *not* flattened. B3064 is a mount.

Reg. No.	Sex	Locality	Date	Culmen	Wing	Tarsus	Toe
R6023	♂ ad.	Macquarie Island	?	113	540	88	122
R6024	♂ ad.	Macquarie Island	?	112	525	86	126
B3062	♂ ad.	Heard Is.: S.W. Bay	20.2.50	112	515	86	129
B3063	♂ ad.	Heard Is.: S.W. Bay	20.2.50	112	520	88	120
B3064	♂ ad.	Heard Is.: West Bay	20.2.50	109	525	—	—
B3073	♂ nestl.	Heard Is.: S.W. Bay	20.2.50	84	—	70	95
B3074	—imm.	Victoria: Nelson	2.7.50	105	495	82	118

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Stray Feathers

Little Falcon and Bats.—In the Healesville district (Victoria), Little Falcons (*Falco longipennis*) nest, usually between the months of November and January. I have seen youngsters at the nest-leaving stage, within a quarter of a mile of my home, as late as February. The hunting activities of the parent birds in this particular case (in an old nest of Ravens) have provided some wonderful examples of sheer speed, judgment and boldness.

At dusk one summer evening I happened to be watching the exit of a colony of chocolate bats (*Chalinolobus gouldii*) by ones and twos from the lofty pipe hollow of a candle bark eucalypt and, of the forty or more in this 'battery,'

several began their erratic flitting in an open patch in the forest. Suddenly there appeared among them the male Little Falcon and, flying at breathless pace, he attacked. Employing every graceful turn, twist, vertical dive and manoeuvre known to his kind, he exerted himself to the utmost to secure a victim. Each time he overhauled at high-speed approach, and appeared certain of success, the bat would sheer off at the split second of imminent contact. The speedy bird chased his quarry both above and below tree-top level, one moment shooting high into the air and the next hurtling earthwards, though all to no avail.

In the space of five minutes, with dusk giving way to darkness that finished the chase, the graceful, hard-flying Falcon had failed signally to touch, as far as I could judge, a single bat, though his flight had been a thrilling exhibition not soon forgotten. Surely there could be no greater recommendation for, or tribute to, the efficiency of the highly-developed nervous organization and apparent echo-locative powers of small bats.—D. H. FLEAY, Healesville, Vic., 1/7/50.

Waders Perching in Trees.—In my observations of waders I can only recall one instance when a bird of this group has been seen to alight in a tree. On November 8, 1947, at Wollie Creek, Arncliffe, I noticed an Australian Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*) in flight, following the course of the creek towards me, but on the opposite side to where I was standing somewhat concealed. Evidently it had been disturbed higher up the stream. Although I do not think it had seen me it 'braked' suddenly, as if to settle, but, instead, uttered a sharp call and rose quickly to alight on the top of a dead tree, about 25 feet high, and there remained fully thirty seconds. I secured a good view of it through the field-glasses as it perched, somewhat precariously, in using its wings to keep balance. Afterwards it flew a short distance down the creek and alighted as usual in the swampy growth. It was possible that the presence of some bird, animal or reptile immediately below had caused it to refrain from 'coming to earth' earlier, and the dead tree offered the most convenient temporary refuge. Mr. Michael Seyfort was also in the locality at the time and had joined me just previously.

Although I have not searched exhaustively I can only find one previously-recorded instance of tree-perching by waders in Australia. D. L. Serventy (*Emu*, vol. 45, p. 171) states that a party of Wood-Sandpipers (*Tringa glareola*) were "seen to perch on dead branches in tea-trees, above the water" by Mr. Hugh Wilson on a swamp at the Serpentine River, Western Australia. This is apparently not

an uncommon habit with this species, as well as its close relative, the Green Sandpiper (*T. oerophus*), for in the *Handbook of British Birds*, vol. 4, they are reported to perch very freely on trees, bushes, etc., at their breeding grounds. They are recorded as sometimes nesting in old nests of squirrels, Fieldfares and the Great Grey Shrike. These two passerine birds both nest, often high up, in trees. In America the Solitary Sandpiper (*T. solitaria*) also nests (probably exclusively, although there are some doubtful earlier records of ground-nesting) in the deserted stick structures of various tree-nesting passerine birds.

There may be local unpublished records, of course. C. E. Bryant has told me that he saw approximately fifty Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*Erolia acuminata*) perching, and remaining perched for more than twenty minutes, in dead trees, at heights between four and ten feet. The Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleuca*) often perches on posts and snags, but I know of no record, in Australia, of its taking up a more elevated arboreal position.

Perching by waders upon stumps, exposed roots and fallen branches in swampy areas is not uncommon, but such a habit is within a different category from elevated perching in trees. J. A. Keast ('Field Notes on the Grey-tailed Tattler,' *Rec. Aus. Mus.*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1949, p. 248) states—"At high tide the birds [Grey-tailed Tattlers] assembled in one or two patches of bare mangrove stumps, perching a few feet above the water and excellently camouflaged against the grey wood."—A. R. MCGILL, Arncliffe, N.S.W., 24/6/50.

Abnormal Erythrisms in Birds' Eggs.—The occurrence of abnormal reddish eggs among Australian species of birds has not received any special attention from ornithologists. Several decades ago, E. C. Stuart Baker (*Ibis*, 10 (6), 68-75, 1918) carried out some research on the incidence of normal reddish eggs among birds generally, but abnormal reddish eggs have a peculiar interest of their own. Among Australian species the Silver Gull (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*), Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*), and the White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) are known to lay occasional reddish eggs. Prior to 1935, the writer found a beautifully-marked, bright reddish-brown clutch of eggs in the nest of a pair of White-backed Magpies, each season, over a period of about ten years, near Sutherlands, S.A. Except for the shape, these eggs looked more like those of some kind of falcon (*Falco*) than those of a Magpie.

The female producing these eggs seems to have died, for examination of many occupied nests of Magpies in the district during more recent years has failed to discover any reddish clutch.—E. F. BOEHM, Sutherlands, S.A., 14/8/50.