

Table II (continued)

27 Apr.	27 Apr.	4 May	4 May	4 May	28 May	8 June	22 June	6 July	20 July	19 Oct.	30 Nov.	15 Mar. '53	29 Mar.	29 Mar.	5 Apr.	12 Apr.	19 Apr.	17 May	24 May	Times Species Recorded
*		*		*	*		*	*	*	*		*	*		*		*	*	*	24
			*		*			*				*	*		*			*		20
*		*		*			*				*	*	*	*	*	*			*	19
	*		*		*		*	*	*			*	*			*		*		16
			*		*			*			*		*	*				*		15
			*						*				*	*	*			*		12
	*									*			*				*			11
*	*	*								*	*		*	*	*					11
	*					*		*				*					*	*		11
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3	5	3	5	3	4	5	3	7	3	3	3	5	9	4	7	3	4	4	5	

(2) Several species not previously recorded in mixed flocks have been listed. These are mainly in Table I.

(3) The influence of mixed flocks on probable breeding birds has been noted.

## Stray Feathers

**Musk Duck Flying.**—At 2.30 p.m. on March 28, 1956, I stopped my car on the edge of Lake Marimley, Balranald, New South Wales. It was a hot, sunny, windless afternoon. As I stepped from the car I saw a duck fly from the water about 100 yards from the edge. There was nothing unusual in its manner of take-off particularly to attract my attention, but I soon noticed that its appearance in flight was not familiar. It flew low over the water for some 200 yards with slow but strong wing beats. The term 'slow' is used relatively

in that the wing beats were not so rapid as those of a Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) but, on the other hand, were definitely faster than those of a Mountain Duck (*Casarca tadornoides*). The landing was quite normal. The coloration was entirely dark apart from some lighter markings on the breast. The wings seemed a little short for the size of the bird. Just before its flight stopped I had realized it was a Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*), and I immediately checked this identification with a 25x telescope. It was a female bird and it settled close to a male of the same species, the only other bird within 200 yards.

Practically all writings on this bird refer to the fact that it never flies by day and it is a pity that I did not realize I was witnessing a rebuttal of this oft-repeated statement soon enough to take more note of its method of flight. It is improbable that my presence at such a distance could have alarmed the bird as it certainly did not affect water birds much closer to the shore, and its behaviour on settling betrayed no signs of alarm, or, for that matter, surprise at its achievement.—JOHN N. HOBBS, Balranald, N.S.W., 1/4/56.

**The Brown Gannet: Another New South Wales Record.**—On November 9, 1955, in latitude 31° 20' south and off Point Plomer on the north-central coast of New South Wales, an adult Brown Gannet (*Sula leucogaster*) was seen. It was at rest on the water with a number of Australian Gannets (*Sula serrator*) and flew off with them. My nearest record to this position, that of a lone bird, is off Noosa Head (26° 30' S.). The species is sometimes in evidence about Double Island Point (25° 55' S.), and from Indian Head, on Fraser Island, northwards it is quite common. In view of the report by K. A. Hindwood (*Emu*, vol. 55, p. 159) of an immature bird of this species near Port Stephens in 1954 it is of interest to find one again 110 miles north of that locality and still well southward of the usual range of the species.—L. AMIET, Mackay, Qld., 16/3/56.

**White-headed Petrel in Tasmania.**—On the morning of October 25, 1955, I found the skeletal remains of a petrel on Marion Beach, in south-eastern Tasmania, and was able to collect the skull and one leg for identification. These were handed in to the Tasmanian Museum, where my identification as a White-headed Petrel (*Pterodroma lessonii*) was confirmed.

The only specimen collected in Tasmania prior to this was reported by Sharland in 1952<sup>1</sup>, and that was in good condition and made into a skin which is in the collection of the Tasmanian Museum. In recording this Sharland stated—“Prior to this discovery the species had been listed as a ‘probable visitor’ to Tasmanian coastal waters”. Gould, however, recorded<sup>2</sup> having observed it off the coasts of ‘Van

Diemen's Land', after he had given a detailed description of his capture of a specimen on February 20, 1839. Gould's specimen was secured during his voyage from Hobart to Sydney. He left Hobart on February 15, and arrived in Sydney on February 24, and as he did not specify the exact position of the ship at the time of his capture it must be assumed that on February 20 they were closer to the latter port than the former and consequently outside Tasmanian coastal waters.

Mathews records<sup>3</sup>—"Solander's description includes the first record for Australian waters—in the Tasman Sea approaching the entrance to Bass Strait", and it would appear to be in the same vicinity as the site of Gould's capture.

I have not been able to trace any other references to the occurrence of this species in Tasmanian waters.—L. E. WALL, North Hobart, Tas., 22/3/56.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Sharland, M.S.R. 'Recent Tasmanian Records', *The Emu*, vol. 52, p. 59.
- 2 Gould, J. *Handbook to the Birds of Australia*, 1865, vol. II, p. 452.
- 3 Mathews, G. M. *The Birds of Australia*, 1912, vol. 2, pl. 85.

**A Second Australian Specimen of the Erect-crested Penguin.**—The inclusion of *Eudyptes atratus* Hutton (= *slateri* auct.) in the Australian list has previously rested on a single specimen from Lady Julia Percy Island (about 22 miles east-south-east of Portland, Victoria). This was first recognized by Cayley and A. J. Campbell (*The Emu*, vol. 25, p. 6). The provenance of this skin is open to doubt as it was obtained (probably purchased) from A. Coles, a Melbourne taxidermist, on August 1, 1891. It is in the National Museum, Melbourne, reg. no. B2491, and is unsexed.

On February 15, 1954, a crested penguin came ashore at Carrum, a bayside suburb about 22 miles east-south-east of Melbourne. It was found by two local residents, Messrs. Braddick and Reichelt, who later forwarded it to the Melbourne Zoo. A note on the circumstances of its discovery was published in the *City of Chelsea News* of 18/2/1954. This bird proved to be an adult Erect-crested Penguin. It settled down and appeared to thrive in the penguin enclosure at the zoo, but eventually died on August 31, 1954; it was donated to the National Museum and has been preserved as a study skin (reg. no. B6383, adult male).

The specimen appears to be a typical adult *E. atratus* and shows the diagnostic features of (a) culminicorn—parallel-sided, i.e. not tapering at the base as in *chrysocome* and *pachyrhynchus*; (b) crest—point of origin at very base of latericorn; (c) flipper—two rows of white feathers along hind margin, and the under-flipper pattern matches almost exactly that shown in Richdale's photograph (*The Emu*, vol. 49, pl. 14).

Colours of soft parts (Ridgway) were as follows—iris brick red; feet pale drab-gray; bill Indian red, with a narrow band of bare white skin around ramicorn and gape. The bird weighed eight pounds. Measurements (in millimetres): exposed culmen 57, flipper 223, tail 97, tarsus 31, middle toe and claw 88.

I am indebted to the Director of the National Museum, Melbourne, for permission to publish details of the above specimen.—W. B. HITCHCOCK, Chelsea, Vic., 25/9/56.

**The Oriental Cuckoo (*Cuculus saturatus*) in Coastal New South Wales.**—On March 10, 1956, at McMaster's Beach, about twenty-five miles north of Sydney, I observed a pair of dark grey birds moving about in the trees bordering Lake Cockrone, about a quarter of a mile from the ocean. I called my wife and we followed the birds until they settled quietly in adjacent trees. They were facing us and we were able to observe them closely with the aid of binoculars. It was obvious, from their general appearance and their actions, that they were cuckoos, but of a kind we had not previously identified. On referring to the illustrations in N. W. Cayley's *What Bird is That?* we determined the species as the Oriental Cuckoo.

The next day a friend, whose house is not far from where we saw the two birds, told us that he had clearly seen, also on March 10, a bird unknown to him. It was sitting on a post in his garden and his description agreed with that of the two birds we had watched.

A further check was made on our return to Sydney when we borrowed a skin of the Oriental Cuckoo from the Australian Museum. We were then certain that our identification was correct. Soon afterwards we took the specimen to McMaster's Beach and showed it to our friend, holding it on the post where he had seen his bird. He was in no doubt whatever that both birds were of the same species.

A few years ago two other observers, Mr. and Mrs. Le-Marchand, and my wife saw a 'new' bird in the bush about half a mile from the spot described. The incident has been discussed quite frequently in the meantime and it was concluded that the bird was possibly an Oriental Cuckoo. Ever since we have been on the lookout for that species, so we were very pleased indeed with our recent observation.

Mr. K. A. Hindwood informs me that the Oriental Cuckoo is stated to breed in central and eastern Siberia, northern China and Japan, and to migrate southwards as far as northern and eastern Australia. He has an unpublished field note to the effect that the late E. Nubling saw an Oriental Cuckoo at Bundeena, near Sydney, on February 20, 1921. Stragglers, apparently blown off their usual migration route, have reached Lord Howe Island, 300 miles east of New South Wales (10 specimens collected, December 1913, Febru-



ary and May, 1915), and New Zealand (two specimens collected, February 1902, and December 1944). Both adults and birds in immature plumage have been taken in Australia and New Zealand.—G. I. D. HUTCHESON, Sydney, N.S.W., 13/4/56.

**Southern Black-backed Gull in Tasmania.**—Following recent reports of the appearance of this species in New South Wales and Victoria, it is pleasing to record its appearance in Tasmania this summer. As A. R. McGill has suggested,<sup>1</sup> a general extension of the range of the species seems to be in progress.

On the morning of December 26, 1955, I made a visit to South Arm, at the mouth of the Derwent River, in search of wading birds, and whilst traversing the tidal flats of Ralph's Bay, my attention was drawn to two large gulls, the calls of which seemed to be a little less harsh than those of the Pacific Gull (*Larus pacificus*). These birds were flying overhead and circling me at a height of about one hundred feet, and at first glance appeared to be mature Pacific Gulls. As I watched them, however, I realized that the bills were yellow, and not the bright orange of *Larus pacificus*, and seemed to be more slender. The general build of the birds also bore this characteristic.

They continued to circle overhead, and it was some minutes before I was able to obtain a clear view of the upper tail which proved to be completely white. During this time I was able to note other details of the flight pattern carefully, and two points impressed me—namely the band of white along the trailing edge of the wings, and the very narrow band of white along the leading edge. These points have not been mentioned in either the New South Wales or Victorian reports. The Pacific Gull has the white trailing edge but not the white leading edge, which is clearly shown in a photograph of a Black-backed Gull taken by Edgar F. Stead.<sup>2</sup>

The legs of these birds appeared to be dark, but as they were seen only in flight this might be quite deceptive. There were no Pacific Gulls in the area at the time from which more detailed comparisons might have been made.

M. S. R. Sharland accompanied me to the same area on January 8, 1956, in the hope of finding the birds again, but neither Pacific Gulls nor Southern Black-backed Gulls could be seen on the flats. Some of the former were found at O'possum Bay and at Ralph's Bay Neck, some miles away, but none of the latter.—L. E. WALL, North Hobart, Tas., 22/3/56.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 McGill, A. R. 'The Two Larger Gulls in Eastern Australia', *Emu*, vol. 55, pp. 90-98.
- 2 Stead, Edgar F. *The Life Histories of New Zealand Birds* (1932), pl. xxvii.

**Tree Sparrow in the Riverina.**—Basing his statement on earlier writings, B. L. Sage (*Emu*, vol. 56, p. 139) says of the Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), 'outside of Melbourne its main centres [of distribution] are in the Riverina'. The term Riverina has no all-embracing definition and there are many differing conceptions of the area so called. In the extreme, it has been used to describe the whole area between the rivers Murray and Murrumbidgee (politically even north to the Lachlan), from their sources in the Dividing Range to their junction west of Balranald. Thus the scope of the term is too wide to be used when writing of a restricted bird distribution. The three towns named by Sage as places where the Tree Sparrow occurs, Albury, Holbrook and Junee, are included, for the purposes of the *Sydney Meteorological Reports*, under 'South Western Slopes' and not the 'Riverina'. There is some support for this on an ecological basis, as the habitats offered by the hilly country surrounding those towns are different from those offered by the vast plains further west—surely the true Riverina.

I have spent the past three years in the greater part of this plains area, west of a line Tocumwal/Jerilderie/Hay. At no time have I come across the Tree Sparrow. If it does occur in that area—my observations extend as far west as Euston in the Western Division—it is certainly far from common.

However, as I have already noted (*Emu*, vol. 55, p. 302), the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) has moved on to the plains and is to be found nesting in trees far from human habitation. It may be that this habit will, in the future, impede or prevent any extension west of the Tree Sparrows' range, if it has not already done this.—JOHN N. HOBBS, Balranald, N.S.W., 22/6/56.

**Inland Record of Double-banded Dotterel.**—In May, 1956, following heavy rains in the preceding months, the saltbush plains country between Deniliquin and Hay, New South Wales, was extensively flooded. Depressions which had not contained water within living memory became great lakes. Two such lakes, with a total diameter of some three miles, formed on Bundyulumblah Station, about 50 miles north-west of Deniliquin.

On May 8, in company with the station manager, B. Keays, a fellow member, I made the arduous (for the horse) trip to these two sheets of water. There were many water birds present, but the surprise of the day was a party of 36 Double-banded Dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*). They were frequenting a sort of miniature beach on the edge of one of the lakes, being the still-exposed edge of a claypan. I am familiar with this species on the Sydney beaches, but the fact that two birds were in the conspicuous breeding plumage was welcome confirmation of this unexpected record.

Previous inland records of this bird are very rare and I am indebted to K. A. Hindwood for a summary of all those known to him. None of those listed below are quite comparable with the present record, which is some 400 and 250 miles from the nearest sea to the east and south respectively. Unprecedented floods are still covering many square miles of western New South Wales and northern Victoria and it is possible that other flocks of this species have been lured from their usual coastal habitat and will be recorded by other observers. In this respect I would add that I have spent much time in the flood areas of the central and western Riverina and in the Balranald area but have not observed other Double-banded Dotterels.

New South Wales—Four specimens in the Australian Museum, Sydney. Specimens nos. 0.4132 and 0.4133 (the latter mounted), collected Goulburn, 1891. Specimens nos. 0.9424/5, in group in gallery, collected R. Rose, July 12, 1897, Buckley's Crossing Place. This locality is almost certainly identical with the present town of Dalgety.

Victoria—One Specimen in National Museum, Victoria. Specimen no. R.4033, collected July 17, 1909, Cressy near Ballarat.

Tasmania—W. V. Legge (*Emu*, vol. 4, p. 104) records a flock on the Great Lake Plain in March 1902. M. S. R. Sharland (*in litt.*) saw two birds near Great Lake on July 5, 1944, and a party of 30 to 60 birds at Tunbridge on July 7, 1946.

There are apparently no inland records from the other States.—J. N. HOBBS, Finley, N.S.W., 25/8/56.

**Unusual Nesting Site of the Black Duck.**—A Black Duck's nest was found within three feet of the main bitumen highway on the road to Paterson, about eight miles out of Maitland, N.S.W. It contained ten eggs.

The nearest water is a swampy area in Mr. Frank Sparks' property 'Stradbroke' some four hundred yards down the slope. The astounding thing is that there was ample cover for nesting anywhere between the road and the water-hole, but this bird chose to sit within inches of a continuous stream of Sunday traffic.

Unfortunately I believe the nest was deserted, as an examination some time later disclosed the eggs still in the nest. It is a matter for conjecture whether the bird was the victim of some gunman or just decided that after all Sunday traffic was a bit tough on even a Black Duck's nerves.—A. F. D'OMBRAIN, Maitland, N.S.W., 10/3/56.