

In view of the ideas expressed in these references my field notes already quoted are amplified as follow. 'Size of Hooded Dotterel'—this referred to body size and was approximate only. The bird appeared very little, if at all, larger than the Hooded Dotterel. The side-face patch appeared quite dark, but examination of skins shows this to vary considerably in both the Mongolian and the Large Sand-Dotterel; in the latter it can be dark enough to appear blackish under certain conditions of light. The note on leg length particularly incorporated length of leg visible above the 'knee-joint', and the 'bandy-legged' impression which might be better described as a 'looseness' referred to this region.

Measurements of culmen, tarsus and tibia (from 'knee-joint' to beginning of feathered region) of all available specimens of the Mongolian and Sand-Dotterels in the National Museum Collections give the following figures—

Charadrius mongolus (Six specimens including two possible subspecies)

	Culmen	Tarsus	Tibia
Min. ..	17 mm.	80 mm.	11 mm. (estimated)
Max. ..	19	85	18
Av. ..	17.9	82.5	14.6

Charadrius leschenaultii (Thirteen specimens)

Min. ..	20	36.5	18 (11 only measurable)
Max. ..	24.5	38	24
Av. ..	23.2	37	20.9

A comparison of the averages shows that the Large Sand-Dotterel is much longer in the bill, tarsus and tibia than the Mongolian, regardless of body length, and that these features, coupled with the relatively-small body size, provide a distinctive field key. Measurements of the culmen in six Hooded Dotterels for comparison give—Min. 18, max. 18.5, av. 18.25. Whilst it is readily agreed that bill length and shape in waders can be extremely deceiving in the field, it is considered worth noting that, so far as these limited figures indicate, a wader can hardly be a Mongolian Dotterel if its bill is noticeably longer than a Hooded Dotterel's bill. In the recent observation the bill was 'distinctly larger'—i.e. longer and heavier. The side-face patch is actually more below than through the eye.

The observation is submitted as a first Victorian record.

Stray Feathers

Notes on Silver Gulls.—The population of Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*) around Portland Bay at its peak—which is from December to June—can be roughly estimated at 5,000. By the end of July it is difficult to count 100, the birds having left for their various nesting rookeries. This year (1957) the routine has changed and as I write, on

August 22, Gulls can be counted by the thousand. On the beach, and just beyond the breakers at the north-west corner of Portland Bay, there were at least 6,000 birds, and at the same time 600 at Borthwick's Freezing Works and 1,000 more scattered around the harbour. Of the 6,000, part were on the water with 250 Crested Terns (*Sterna bergii*) and 150 Little Black Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) and part up to twenty deep along the beach. It was a rough sea and as the breakers foamed up the sand the Gulls retreated in one long line, but as soon as the backwash started they turned and followed it, feasting on numbers of tiny fish left stranded. Occasionally an extra big sea washed up to the marram grass, leaving no beach. At such times the line of Gulls rose as one bird, hovered above the water, and then dropped to the wet sand and resumed the advance and retreat and the feast on what the sea had left. Like the Silver Gulls the Little Black Cormorants have never before been seen by us near Portland in such numbers.—NOEL F. LEARMONTH, Portland, Vic., 22/8/57.

Pallid Cuckoo Feeding Young.—Although there are many records of the parasitic species of cuckoos having been seen in the vicinity of the nests of birds that they have 'parasitized', there is little evidence to show that they take any interest in the welfare of their young. Usually, when the cuckoo has laid its egg in the nest of the future foster-parent, it does not concern itself with either the incubation of the egg or the rearing of the young. The presence of the adult near the nest can be generally classed as fortuitous.

At Bendigo, on November 20, 1955, I was watching a young Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) being fed by a number of different species of small birds. It had obviously only recently left the nest as the tail feathers were not fully grown and a number of hair-like, immature feathers were still protruding from the feathers on the nape and head. It was being fed by Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga melanops*) and Brown-headed Honeyeaters (*Melithreptus brevirostris*) and, as far as it was possible to observe, at least ten birds were taking part in the feeding. Nearby an adult Pallid Cuckoo was seen, and for some time it did not appear to take any interest in the young Cuckoo, nor was it molested by the smaller birds. It was feeding on the ripe yellow berries of the mistletoe, and it was swallowing them whole, without extracting the soft inner pulp from the outer casing.

The young Cuckoo suddenly flew to a nearby tree, followed by its retinue of foster-parents. The adult Cuckoo, which was now approximately 100 yards away, continued to feed on the mistletoe berries, and did not appear to take any notice of the young bird. The honeyeaters continued to bring insects to the lusty baby. There was almost a continuous line of birds

pushing food down the cavernous throat, but nothing seemed to satisfy the young Cuckoo. Between each offering it would emit a thin piping call, and at the same time slightly crouch down and tremble the wings.

Suddenly an adult Cuckoo flew through the trees, closely pursued by a large number of honeyeaters. Ignoring the other birds, it alighted on the branch next to the young Cuckoo, which had now opened its mouth in the usual manner of seeking food. The adult Cuckoo had three yellow mistletoe berries in its bill, which it proceeded to push down the throat of the young bird. Two berries were taken at the first attempt, and, while the young bird was swallowing them, the adult sat calmly nearby, although the honeyeaters were making attacks on it. The third berry was fed to the baby Cuckoo and the adult then flew away, closely followed by the honeyeaters. Feeding was then continued by the foster-parents.

About five minutes later the adult Cuckoo again appeared, this time with two berries. The alarm notes of the honeyeaters had attracted numerous small birds, of many species, to the scene, and the branches around the Cuckoo were swarming with birds. They all appeared to be intent on driving the Cuckoo away from the scene. After feeding the young bird, it flew off, with many birds in pursuit. It returned to the clump of mistletoe on which it was seen previously, and continued to feed on the berries. The small birds had abandoned the chase after the Cuckoo had flown fifty yards and many departed to other sections of the bush. The young bird was still being fed by at least eight honeyeaters. None of the other species of birds that had been attracted to the scene were seen to offer food to the young Cuckoo.

I watched the adult Cuckoo, which after swallowing a number of berries, began to hold some of them in its beak. When it had collected four berries, it again flew to the young one and fed it. While the Cuckoo was under observation, it was seen to feed the youngster six times with a total of 17 berries, before it finally flew away and was not seen again.—
ROY P. COOPER, Surrey Hills, Vic., 12/7/57.

Sea-Birds and Storms.—That storms have a direct influence on the number of beach-washed dead sea-birds is clearly shown by our Portland records during the winter months of 1956 and 1957. The former year was a succession of south-westerly gales and wild seas, while during 1957 there has been only one decent 'blow' from that quarter. From May 9 to October 31, 1956, I picked up the following dead birds on the Portland Bay beaches—1 Wandering Albatross, 5 White-capped Albatrosses, 53 Fairy Penguins, 7 Medium-billed Prions, 2 Narrow-billed Prions, 6 Dove Prions, 23 Fairy Prions, 29 Short-tailed Shearwaters, 2 Fluttering

Shearwaters, 2 Sooty Shearwaters, 4 Giant Petrels, 2 White-headed Petrels, 1 Blue Petrel, 3 Cape Petrels, 3 Diving Petrels, 1 White-fronted Tern and 3 Crested Terns.

On Discovery Bay beaches, in the same winter, Cliff Beaglehole picked up many of the above species and, in addition, the following—1 Rockhopper Penguin, 1 Grey-mantled Albatross (second Australian record), 2 Great-winged Petrels, and 1 Silver-grey Petrel.

The foregoing represents, in all, 21 species, the majority of the birds being sent to the National Museum, Melbourne.

During 1957 I have walked the beaches every week and the total result of the effort has been one Silver Gull. Harm whom it may, I look forward to gales.—NOEL F. LEARMONTH, Portland, Vic., 28/8/57.

Interesting Feeding Habits.—A Ringneck Parrot (*Barnardius barnardi*) having eaten the last fallen almonds in our garden, began eating the flowers of the violets and freesias, nibbling with great speed from flower to flower. We finally had to frighten it away to save our freesia beds. The bird nibbled quickly through the nectar-holding portion of the flowers, discarding the main petals. It was so persistent it would seem that the freesias yielded more nectar than most flowers.

I once watched a young Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) attempt to pick insects from a mass of spider's web. There were many of these webs attached to the dead leafless branches of a black box-tree—newly-spun webs interlacing twigs and appearing in masses measuring some three feet by two feet. The webs were thickly covered with what I judged to be dead mosquitoes. Failing to extract cleanly the individual insects, the bird began to swallow the whole mass. With much beak-cleaning and awkward swallowing, it moved from branch to branch and consumed four large masses of web. At last, appearing surfeited, it gave its beak a final cleaning and sat for several seconds before flying away.

A family of White-browed Babblers (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*) in our home garden frequently feed on almond nuts. The nut selected is a very soft-shelled variety. The birds pick up fallen nuts and usually carry them to a safe place beneath a large hedge of boobyalla. Here they attack them by placing one foot firmly on the nut and, standing upright, by dealing repeated hammer-like pecks to remove the shell and break up the kernel. A surprising item of diet for these supposedly insect-eating birds!

To the nut-eating Babblers can be added the Singing Honeyeater (*Meliphaga virescens*), for today (15/2/57) one of these birds was vigorously attacking an almond in shell on the ground. We suspected a grey possum had raided a tree during the night, for many nuts were strewn about the ground and probably the Singing Honeyeater had dis-

covened one already breached. Not using a foot like the Babbler, or dealing hammer blows, the bird inserted its bill and pushed and scraped at the kernel, having a troublesome time as the nut slid away from it. Four times it left its prize to chase away a fellow Singing Honeyeater and after the fourth chase appeared dismayed to find the nut gone—picked up by a raiding House Sparrow.—V. T. LOWE, Mystic Park, Vic., 15/2/57.

Birds' Habits in Forest at Wellington, New Zealand.—Differences were recorded, between 1955 and 1956, in the behaviour of certain birds during frequent three-mile transections of predominantly *Nothofagus* (beech) forest with an open canopy, at Butterfly Creek, Wellington, New Zealand. This area is close to the Orongorongo Forest. The Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sancta*), which was not recorded in the spring of 1955 until October 23, was seen in the forest interior on August 19, 1956, and September 30, 1956. The Whitehead (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) rendered its musical call often on November 26, 1955; this call was heard hardly at all on November 18, 1956. Its vigorous slurring call, judged to denote threat and territorialism, was rendered more frequently on November 18, 1956, than on November 26, 1955. An additional chattering call, believed to be a contact note, was rendered freely on the latter date, but not so often on the former occasion.

The Pied Tit (*Petroica macrocephala*) was noted once between March and June 1955. On the other hand, this species was heard in April 1956, while in late May it was noted frequently. This bird, however, called vigorously in each year from late July to October in about the same numbers. Chaffinches (*Fringilla caelebs*) were recorded as not uncommon in the forest interior in late November 1955. However, though three birds were singing weakly in the forest at the end of September 1956, they had not increased three weeks later. The Yellow-hammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*) came into the forest to feed on fallen *Nothofagus* seed in winter 1955, the Yellow-hammer and House Sparrow keeping close to its edge. This was not repeated in 1956. The Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), present in the forest interior in winter 1955 and subsequently breeding, judging from egg remains and an empty nest, was not recorded after April 1956. It had not reoccupied territory by late October judging from absence of song. Somewhat similar behaviour was noted with the Hedge-Sparrow (*Prunella modularis*). Though the Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*) was in small flocks on October 9, 1955, this was not so, and it was noted seldom, about a week earlier the following year.

The White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*) did not inhabit the outskirts of the forest in autumn 1955; how-

ever, the following autumn it was present. Throughout 1955 the Morepork (*Ninox novæ-seelandiæ*) was not recorded, though it was observed regularly the next year. In addition the Long-tailed Cuckoo (*Eudynamis taitensis*) had different haunts each year, presumably because the foster parent of its young, the Whitehead, had different breeding places each time, judging from its behaviour. Finally, the Shining Cuckoo (*Chalcites lucidus*) was rarer in spring 1956 than the preceding year in the same season.—H. L. SECKER, Upper Hutt, N.Z., 11/6/57.

Crested Grebe at Melbourne Suburb.—Crested Grebes are seldom observed near Melbourne. I have notes of seeing them on the old Yarra channel at Coode Island and on Hobson's Bay near the mouth of that river. At about 8 p.m. (dusk) on January 5, 1958, my wife drew my attention to a single Crested Grebe at the mouth of the Dandenong (here called the Mordialloc) Creek, at Mordialloc, a seaside suburb of Melbourne. It was swimming, and occasionally diving, between the retaining walls, and appeared unconcerned at the proximity of moored craft, cars and people on the banks, and a few boats being rowed along the stream and passing within ten feet of it.

I surmise that it had entered the creek from the sea and would probably stay at the mouth during the night. It preened itself frequently and sometimes turned well over on its sides when so engaged. I wondered whether it had been in contact with oil, but, if so, its swimming ability appeared unimpaired.—C. E. BRYANT, Melbourne, Vic., 7/1/58.

Strange Gull at Bunbury, W.A.—I have an interesting 'record', of which Mr. W. B. Alexander and I thought members might like to know.

On August 10 of this year, I was walking along the Leschenault estuary, near Bunbury. Where the Preston River runs into the estuary, there is a small spit of sand, on which was assembled a flock of Silver Gulls and Crested and Caspian Terns. Among these, however, was a small gull with a black head. I examined it first with the aid of 16 x binoculars, and subsequently with 60 x telescope. It was between twenty and thirty yards distant, on the far side of a narrow channel.

The description I recorded was as follows. It was a small gull, about 13½ inches long, which was slightly (but perceptibly) smaller than the Silver Gulls beside it. It had a black head with a small circlet of white above and below the eye. The bill appeared to be black, and the legs were very dark red. The under-parts and tail were white. Mantle and wings were very dark grey, and in flight the wing had a clear white trailing edge. There were black areas on the primaries, which were tipped with white: there was a small, but clearly defined, white area between the grey and black parts of the

They feed mainly on bulbous roots, such as onion grass. primaries. I am familiar with the Laughing Gull, which I have seen in the West Indies, and knew it was not that species. Moreover, the description does not tie in at all with that of Bonaparte's Gull—another possibility.

I sent the above description to Mr. W. B. Alexander, and he replied that "I should think it must have been a Franklin's Gull . . . indeed what you say about the wing-pattern makes this almost certain". I had already come to such a conclusion after checking with Taverner's *Birds of Canada* and Peterson's *Field Guide to the Western Birds*. Alexander's latter comment doubtless alludes to my bird's absence of white on the 'wrists'.—TIMOTHY G. DIXON, Bunbury, W.A., 2/10/57.

Parrots and Cockatoos of the Mooroopna District, Victoria.—The district has eight species resident throughout the year, and three visitors, and they represent a large percentage of the birds of the district, in numerical strength.

The Red-backed Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*) is by far the most common species. Nests are easily located. The birds appear to be breeding very early this season 1957. Eleven nests are known, containing eggs, and two families each with five young are already searching for food. Mostly observed in small flocks of four to ten birds, and by no means shy. Numbers appear constant throughout the year with a slight increase around July and August, and a return to normal around January and February.

The White Cockatoo (*Kakatoë galerita*) is a common resident, nesting along the Goulburn River. The birds have many feeding grounds and are usually observed in flocks of approximately two hundred, with seven known different flocks.

The numbers of Galahs (*Kakatoë roseicapilla*) vary considerably from week to week, with no apparent climatic or feeding reason. A small flock of twenty-three appear to be permanent residents, as they feed daily in a confined number of paddocks of no great area, roosting mainly in one particular clump of trees. Otherwise flocks vary from five to over one hundred in numbers and as many as six large flocks may be in the district at once.

Five pairs of Eastern Rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*) are permanent residents, nesting in the area. One nest usually contains seven eggs and another five. During August a large flock of about thirty-five birds stayed in the district for sixteen days and then left.

The Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*) is an irregular visitor, occasionally seen on the ground feeding upon grass-seeds. Usually in pairs, and so tame that close approach is possible.

Occasionally a small flock of King Parrots (*Aprosmictus scapularis*) is seen, but they appear to stay close to the river where tree growth affords more protection. One nest

has been recorded with three eggs, but the birds deserted it.

Several pairs of Regent Parrots (*Polytelis anthopeplus*) are permanent residents at Undera and Tatura. A small flock of from fifteen to twenty birds spent many hours in flowering eucalypts at Shepparton during August.

Occasionally the Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsoni*) is seen throughout the district, one pair nesting at North Mooroopna. Four young birds were reared successfully; but later only three were seen with the parent birds.

The Budgerygah (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) is a rare visitor. A small flock was recorded at Tatura in March, and at Shepparton nine birds were seen near the lake on August 17.

One flock of seventeen Elegant Parrots (*Neophema elegans*) is occasionally seen in the North Mooroopna/Coomboona area. They appear to be very shy and, although seen carrying grass in the vicinity of hollow trees, no actual nest has been discovered.

The Blue-winged Parrot (*Neophema chrysostoma*) was recorded once, at Byrneside, when a pair rose from tall dry grass at the roadside and flew along the road.—GEORGE W. BEDGGOOD, Mooroopna, Vic., 11/9/57.

News and Notes

AUSTRALIAN NATURAL HISTORY MEDALLION, 1957

The medallion for 1957 was awarded to Mr. C. E. Bryant, Editor of *The Emu* and the immediate past president of the Union. Mr. Bryant's nomination was sponsored by The Victorian National Parks Association.

COLLOQUIUM ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

It is hoped that at the Fifteenth International Congress of Zoology, to be held in London in July, 1958, it will be possible for that Congress finally to approve and adopt the new text of the International Code for Zoological Nomenclature as revised by the preceding Congresses held in Paris in 1948 and Copenhagen in 1953. As arranged at the Copenhagen Congress, a draft of the revised text will be submitted for such purpose to the London Congress.

Arrangements have been made under which a Colloquium on Zoological Nomenclature is being organized on the lines of the Colloquium organized in connection with the Copenhagen Congress.

The Colloquium will open on Wednesday, July 9, one week prior to the opening of the London Congress. It is hoped that this body will be able to submit to the Congress agreed recommendations as to the text to be adopted. Invitations to the Colloquium have already been issued by the Trust to a large number of zoologists known to be interested in zoological nomenclature.