

Stray Feathers

Ibis and Little Whimbrels in New Guinea.—Whilst I was collecting in the Mekeo Sub-District of Papua, on August 1, 1957, five specimens of the Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*) were observed in a spent rice field at the edge of an extensive swamp area. As no previous record had been made of the occurrence of this species in New Guinea, a specimen was shot and a study skin prepared: this was forwarded to the Australian Museum. Local natives claim that the species is not uncommon in the swamp area, and that it is present in other seasons, though information from such a source as this is often unreliable. The locality where the birds were observed is lat. 8° 40' s., long. 146° 32' E.

On October 10, 1957, approximately two dozen individuals of the Little Whimbrel (*Mesoscolopax minutus*) were observed in a quarantine paddock close to Port Moresby. Two birds were shot and the study skins were forwarded to the Australian Museum. The group remained in the paddock for three to four weeks before departing. The precise locality of the observed occurrence is lat. 9° 29' 30" s., long. 147° 11' 30" E. On February 6, 1958, four birds of this species were observed in the above paddock, and they remained there for almost one week.—K. R. SLATER, Division of Animal Industry, Port Moresby, N.G., 2/4/58.

Honeyeaters near Portland.—The dry conditions to the north and east of Portland are causing some unusual bird movements. Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters (*Gliciphila melanops*) are never very common near Portland, being restricted to scattered pairs. This year (1958), from early March onwards, they have been the commonest bird on the heathlands south and west of the town, even out-numbering the Yellow-winged Honeyeaters (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*). Then, on April 24, for two hours from 2 p.m., flocks of Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters flew over South Portland in the direction of Mt. Clay across the bay, and on April 30, when I visited Point Danger, only odd birds of the species were there.

On April 26 Percy Finck, who keeps a keen eye on bird life at Heathmere, 9 miles from Portland, rang me to go out there as soon as possible. He had just seen three honeyeaters rare in our areas, namely the Regent Honeyeater (*Zanthomiza phrygia*), Yellow-tufted (*Meliphaga melanops*) and White-plumed (*M. penicillata*). Regent and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters have not been seen here for ten years, and the White-plumed is very local at Tyrendarra, 18 miles east. I went out immediately and was fortunate to see two of the species, but Regent had moved on. Many of the ribbon gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) were in full flower and in addition to the foregoing, these following honeyeaters were feeding in the blossoms—White-naped (*Melithreptus*

lunatus), Tawny-crowned, Yellow-faced (*Meliphaga chrysops*), White-eared (*M. leucotis*) and Yellow-winged (*Melornis novae-hollandiae*).—NOEL F. LEARMONTH, Portland, Vic., 2/5/58.

The Painted Snipe: A Brisbane Occurrence.—Although widespread over Australia, the Painted Snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*) is so rarely seen that any occurrence is usually worthy of note. At dusk on July 7, 1957, at Samsonvale, north-west of Brisbane, three waders were flushed from the sandy bed of a deeply-eroded creek. The three birds went to ground in the creek-bed only 50 feet from a road bridge over which heavy traffic was passing. Of the three, two were females in full plumage, one standing and one sitting, and the other was a male standing in the water. The male bird was scarcely more than half the size of the females. All three birds 'froze' on sighting the observer and remained in that position for half an hour, despite the heavy traffic passing in their full view. Eventually they were flushed but only after being approached to within 20 feet.

There are few records of the Painted Snipe in Queensland, and, to the knowledge of the local R.A.O.U. members, none in the Brisbane area, although possibly the bird is always present in southern Queensland, but overlooked due to its normally-secretive habits and the lack of interested observers. The Samford Valley area, where Samsonvale is situate, affords none of the marshy environment frequented by this species, so one can only conclude that drought conditions had occasioned the presence of these birds at Samsonvale.—H. L. BELL, Epping, N.S.W., 15/3/58.

A Barn Owl's Peculiar Roost.—On the lip of the Portland Harbour Trust quarry at Cape Grant a small branch of a dead moonah tree (*Metaleuca pubescens*) juts out over the cavity. On May 2, 1958, one of our bird men (Roy Campbell) was surprised to see a bird perched thereon. On close approach it was seen to be a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) fast asleep—so much so that the observer was able to stretch out and catch the bird, a healthy specimen which flew off when liberated. The Owl could not have found a more exposed site in the district, with no trees handy and facing all the sea gales. Two hundred feet below bulldozers, shovels and 'euclids' roared the day long.—NOEL F. LEARMONTH, Portland, Vic., 2/5/58.

News and Notes

ANNUAL CONGRESS AND CAMP-OUT, 1958

The following is the tentative programme. Intention to attend and requests for further information should be notified to the State Secretary for Queensland, Mr. Noel Jack, 54 Cochrane Street, Paddington, Brisbane, Queensland.