

Specimen	Sex	Culmen	Wing	Tail	Index	Tarsus
(Namban Riv., Aug. 1958) ..	♂	17.0	73.2	66.2	90.4	23
(Namban Riv., Aug. 1958) ..	♂	17.0	73	63.6	87.1	24
(Lower Hill Riv., June 1958)	♂	17.0	73	64	87.7	24
(13 miles north of Dongara, Oct. 1957)	♂	16.0	79.5	70	88.0	25
(13 miles north of Dongara, Oct. 1957)	♂	17.0	75	68	90.7	24
(5 miles south of Geraldton, Nov. 1957)	♂	16.5	75	67.5	90.0	24

J. A. Keast (*Rec. Aust. Mus.*, 24 (8), 1958, 102), in his review of speciation in the flycatchers, discusses this species and agrees with previous authors that it does not vary geographically. All the skins he was able to examine were, however, from the south coast, from King George's Sound to the Warren River.

We are indebted to Dr. D. L. Serventy for advice and assistance, and to Mr. R. D. Royce for identifying botanical specimens.

Fork-tailed Kites re-visit South-east Queensland

By F. M. HAMILTON, Brisbane, Qld.

On May 25, 1952, a flock of Fork-tailed Kites (*Milvus migrans*) was seen near Oxley, an outer south-western suburb of Brisbane. During the same year this species, the normal occurrence of which is generally recognized as northern Australia, spread as far south as southern Victoria, and reports of its occurrence in that State were published in *The Emu*, vol. 52, p. 102 ('Hawks unusual to the South-west of Victoria,' by Donald Shanks), and vol. 53, p. 77 ('The Black Falcon and some other Raptores in South-west Victoria', by Claude N. Austin).

Since 1952, during periodic visits to Amberley R.A.A.F. Station, located about four miles south-west of Ipswich, which is about twenty miles in a direct line south-west of Brisbane, I have watched for a possible return of the species. During February and March 1958, I suspected that a few of the birds were in the area, but was not able to get a positive identification until April 1 when two birds flew low over the road between Ipswich and Amberley. The Ipswich slaughter yards are located in this area and it was in the neighbourhood of these yards that a big 'build-up' in numbers of Fork-tailed Kites occurred.

The main roosting trees were in a paddock alongside the road and during May and June these trees could be seen towards evening literally laden with the birds. The maximum 'build-up' seemed to be at about the middle of June when Mr. J. S. Robertson estimated that there were as many as 1,000 birds in the area (on June 12). After that date the numbers

appeared to wane until my most recent count of 24 birds on August 1.

Mr. K. Walker wrote from Warwick, on June 4, that Fork-tailed Kites were to be seen in that district in large numbers anywhere near pig-sties and slaughter houses. He had also been advised by a friend that near the Oakey abattoirs the birds were so thick they were like a cloud. Another flock was seen by Mr. Robertson at Archerfield, 8 miles south of Brisbane, on May 4, and there were a few isolated reports of birds seen over the city. It seems probable that the extended drought conditions inland caused the birds to spread towards the coastal areas.

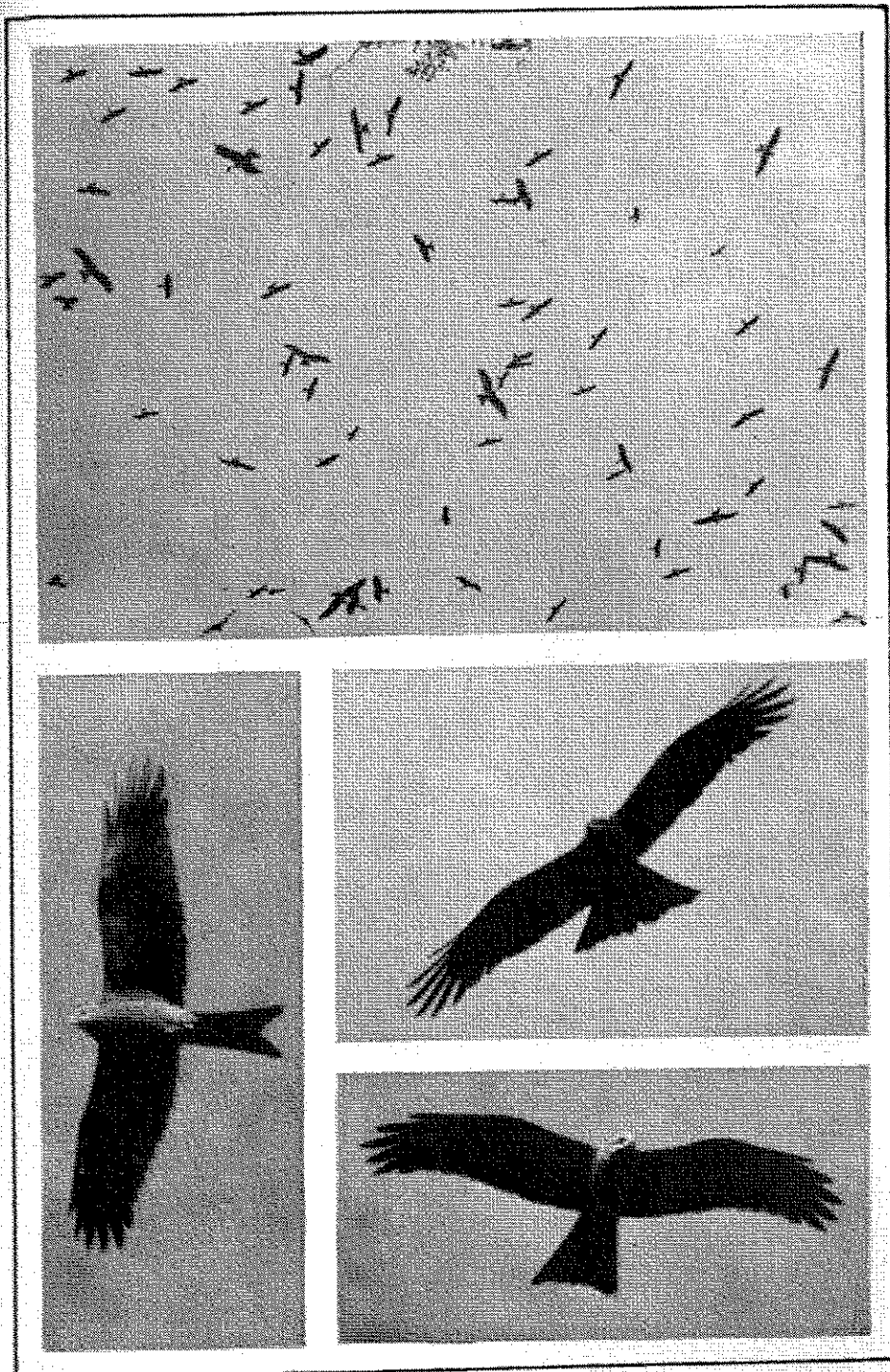
On June 14, July 6 and July 12, I was able to take some photographs of the Kites at the Ipswich roosting site. This was located on a gentle slope facing the west and was ideally suited to their habit of soaring *en masse*. Gathering into a compact group at low altitude, they would frequently rise to a considerable height and then disperse over a wide area before returning once again to the roosting site. A ridge overlooking the flats of the Redbank rifle range, some seven miles east of Ipswich and also facing west was apparently used by the same birds as a subsidiary soaring area when displaced from Ipswich by westerly winds, because, when one was travelling through by car, if large numbers were seen at Redbank, few were seen at Ipswich, and *vice versa*.

When at roost, or as was frequently the case, on the ground, the Kites were very timid and could not be approached openly, but when on the wing they appeared to be rather curious and showed little fear of an observer. It was therefore possible to obtain photographs of individual birds which indicate its varying appearance when seen in flight.

During my observations of the Fork-tailed Kite in flight, widely-spaced wing tip 'fingers' have in every case been much in evidence. The shape of the tail is a different matter; it can vary from square-cut when widely fanned, often the case when the bird is in soaring flight, through intermediate stages to a pronounced fork when the feathers are held close together, often the case when flying strongly into a head-wind. The partially-decomposed body of a Kite with a broken wing was picked up on one occasion and the various plan forms of the tail could easily be seen by manipulation of the feathers. This particular bird measured 42 inches wing tip to wing tip.

On no occasion did I hear a Kite utter a sound. In spite of being present at the roosting site at various times of day, including dawn and dusk, and even with a mass of birds wheeling just overhead, they remained always completely silent.

The visitation of such large numbers of Fork-tailed Kites to south-east Queensland during the winter of 1958 suggests that there may have been a repetition of the 1952 spread to southern parts of Australia during the same period.



Fork-tailed Kites, Ipswich, Queensland, June-July 1958.

Photos. by F. M. Hamilton.