

pers. obs.) have shown that movements occur from late evening to dawn. Unless disturbed the birds rarely leave their habitat during daylight.

The data nevertheless clearly indicate the instability of a small transient Black Swan population, with probably few, if any, birds being resident for more than one week.

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The taxonomic status of *Acanthiza katherina* De Vis

The most recent reviewers of the genus *Acanthiza* (Mack 1936: *Mem. natn. Mus. Vic.* 10: 86-118, Mayr & Serventy 1938, *Emu* 38: 245-292) regard *Acanthiza katherina* as a subspecies of *A. pusilla*. The two forms are closely related, but we consider that they are distinct species. *A. katherina* is greenish dorsally with deep olive-buff forehead and yellowish-buff underparts. Thus it differs from the various forms of *pusilla* and approaches *murina* of New Guinea. It differs from *murina* in having faintly developed breast streakings, more pronounced forehead scallopings, a pale dull rufous rump, a longer tail and shorter wing. No form of *pusilla* is so dull on the rump or has breast streakings and forehead scallopings so poorly developed.

An important character for separation, missed by previous reviewers, is the light coloured iris of *katherina*. De Vis (1905: *Ann. Qd Mus.* 6: 41-45) gives the iris colour of *katherina* as yellow. Birds caught in mist nets on Mt Lewis (16°34'S lat., 145°12'E long.), north Queensland, had cream-white irides. Those of *pusilla* and *murina* are reddish and yellowish-white respectively. Both *katherina* and *murina* inhabit montane forest and their general behaviour is similar, but *katherina* frequents the forest canopy rather than the undergrowth where *pusilla* is found. The contact call of *katherina* is quite different from that of *pusilla*, but unfortunately a quantitative comparison is not possible because no tape recording of the voice of *katherina* is available.

A specimen of *katherina* from Mt Lewis is in the CSIRO collection (Reg. No. 6588) and was identified after the examination of the type and other specimens of *katherina* in the Queensland Museum. We are grateful to R. Schodde for first drawing our attention to the presence of a thornbill on Mt Lewis.

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Square-tailed Kite, female, Southwest Island, Sir Edward Pellew Group, N.T., 26 July 1967.
Photo by W. B. Hitchcock