

SHORT NOTES

Underwater feeding by Short-tailed Shearwaters

The Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* is known to be a surface feeder, taking crustacea, small fish and small cephalopods, and its habit as an underwater feeder has never been reported. However, shearwaters of the genus *Puffinus* are highly adapted for aquatic life and may hunt prey by diving from the surface or plunging from the air using their wings and also their feet for propulsion under water (Ashmole 1971, *Avian Biology*, 1: 223-86).

The following account was related to me by Peter Frost, an abalone diver from Flinders Island, Tasmania. In February 1978, while diving in about twelve metres of water, sixteen kilometres north of Babel Island (east of Flinders Island), he sighted about sixty-five Short-tailed Shearwaters feeding among weeds on the bottom of the sea. The birds were darting quickly to and fro with the wings held half out. They did not use their feet for propulsion. He told other divers about his experience but said he was the only one who had observed the birds feeding underwater. However, fishermen from Flinders Island have caught Shearwaters in fishing nets set in ten to twenty metres of water. Other fishermen have reported birds shooting quickly out of the water for a metre or so before settling or flying off. Apparently these birds were feeding underwater.

The above account establishes that these Shearwaters feed underwater and suggests that other species of petrels may feed similarly.

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Male Logrunner carrying twigs

The female Logrunner *Orthonyx temminckii* is reported to build the nest alone (Reader's Digest [1976], *Complete Book of Australian Birds*: 394). At 13:40 on 11 June 1978 I began to watch a male *temminckii* near a path at Binna Burra, Lamington National Park, south-eastern Queensland, and continued to do so for twenty-five minutes. Though I did not use binoculars I could approach quietly within two metres of the bird. No female was seen. It was foraging in the way described by Hindwood (1966, *Australian Birds in Colour*: 60) and at intervals of about five minutes it uttered a 'kweek, kweek, kweek' call, which I took to be territorial.

Often, whenever the bird changed its foraging patch, it picked up a leaf or twig, sometimes much longer than itself, and scurried or flew to the next patch up to five metres away, dropped it and started to forage again. The objects were taken to new and to recently used foraging patches but they were never carried on to the succeeding patch. Then, another object was selected.

After fifteen minutes I found a nest when the bird put twigs and leaves on its exterior a number of times and foraged round its base. The interior was quite disused with thick cobwebs blocking the entrance and platform.

The male has not been previously reported to carry twigs and its occurrence is difficult to explain. Probably it was not displacement behaviour elicited by my presence. The bird seemed oblivious to me, was not agitated and showed no sign of being disturbed; it carried twigs repeatedly, apparently as part of its normal foraging technique. Both Beruldsen (1974, *Sunbird* 5: 22-24) and McNamara (1935, *Emu* 34: 177-180) also found the species to be easily approached.

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26 June 1978.

Wing-flashing in *Eugeryone rubra*

Keast (1977, *Emu* 77: 228-229) suggested that the Red-backed 'Warbler' *Eugeryone rubra* is most closely related to *Petroica*. I had reached the same conclusion based on a study of museum specimens. There is, however, little behavioural information on the species available to support this view (Mayr and Gilliard 1954, *Bull. Am. Mus. nat. Hist.* 103: 317-374; Diamond 1972, *Publ. Nuttall orn. Club* 12: 14-38) and I wish to record a display of *E. rubra* similar to one in *Petroica*.

On 18 October 1973, during the RAOU camp-out at Wau, PNG, I observed a pair of *E. rubra* in low vine-covered tangles along a creek at approximately 1,750 metres above sea-level on Mount Kaindi. The birds permitted close approach by several observers. The male sang frequently, a light tinkling series of notes similar to the song of the Rose Robin *Petroica rosea* (cf. Diamond 1972). At one point the male performed an apparent wing-flashing display, flicking the wings open alternately in rapid succession. This prominently exposed the white bar across the flight-feathers. At times the male and female perched close together, side by side and facing the same

direction, and alternately extended the wing on the side facing the other bird outward and downward, exposing the wing bar.

Wing-flashing displays also occur between members of a pair in *Petroica*. On 8 June 1974 I observed such a display between a pair of Tomtits *P. macrocephala* on Little Barrier Island, New Zealand. As in *Eugeryone rubra*, the birds alternated in flicking their wings towards one another but did so facing one another and flicking both wings simultaneously. Despite this difference in attitude the performance recalled that in *E. rubra*.

Because *Eugeryone rubra* is a flycatcher, the vernacular name 'Red-backed Warbler' is inappropriate. The peculiar shade of red on the male bird

is very bright in life and our party on Mount Kaindi, with the bird in front of us, suggested 'Garnet Robin' as a distinctive alternative. This name has since been published (Peckover and Filewood 1976, *Birds of New Guinea and Tropical Australia*) and I offer it here for consideration.

I am grateful to L. W. Filewood for his assistance in New Guinea. R. Schodde and M. D. Bruce discussed the subject of this note with me. R. W. Storer read an earlier draft of the manuscript.

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13 July 1978.

OBITUARY

HELEN BRAILSFORD YOUNG

Helen Young (née Bright) died, after a long illness on 13 April 1978 at the age of 57. The RAOU owes much to her as administrator of the Nest Record Scheme, an office she assumed in 1972, when the Scheme was declining because her predecessor had been ill. She devoted most of her leisure time to rebuilding it, stimulating renewed and increasing interest. Overtaken by ill-health, she continued her administration diligently until a suitable replacement was found in 1977.

In childhood, her life-long interest in birds was aroused and fostered by the late Johnny Mann (RAOU member) who lived nearby in Frankston, Victoria. Educated at Toorak College, Helen then graduated from Melbourne University in Physical Education, which she taught in Victoria and Western Australia.

For five years she wrote a weekly column on birds for *The Whittlesea Post*, an outer suburban newspaper, and other articles were published in *Stock and Land*. Her writing created great local interest in Whittlesea, where she worked, and was responsible for encouraging one young artist, Margaret Towt, to pursue and realize her considerable talent as a bird painter.

Though Helen's interest in birds was broad, nests were her first love. At the time of her death, she was compiling information on the selection of hosts by cuckoos. All relevant notes are lodged in the archives of the RAOU.

Her two daughters can remember their mother's achievements with justifiable pride.

Pauline Reilly