

V.O.R.G. Banding Campouts

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Since early in 1964, the Victorian Ornithological Research Group has organised a series of banding campouts for the purpose of gaining experience and exchanging ideas on mist-netting techniques. The objectives of these campouts are discussed and their progress during the first two years of operation is briefly outlined.

The Victorian Ornithological Research Group decided early in 1964 to hold a campout so that its members could share ideas and techniques with regard to mist-netting. The first was held in February at Somers on the coast near the mouth of Westernport Bay where one of the members was stationed. This was sufficiently successful to instigate further campouts, to be held at quarterly intervals throughout the year. These were in vastly different habitats—the Whipstick scrub near Bendigo, the You Yangs (mountains) near Geelong and the Cowarr Reservoir in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range in Gippsland.

The purpose of these campouts is:

1. To assist those banders who are new to mist-netting, instructing in the best methods and equipment for efficient net erection, particularly for the bander working without any assistance.
2. To help beginners acquire skill at removal of netted birds and speed in selecting and attaching bands.
3. To exchange ideas on the siting of nets and benefit by the experience of other banders.
4. To assist with identification. Even the most experienced observer may strike difficulty when handling a species for the first time, especially juveniles.
5. To assist those interested in becoming banders to learn just what mist-netting entails. If a prospective bander satisfies all the necessary requirements, then he can find referees amongst the group who will be willing to vouch for him with regard to his license.
6. To endeavour to bring together banders (whether or not they are V.O.R.G. members) operating throughout the State, so that ideas and methods can be interchanged. This is being done by varying the locations as much as possible so that, at some time, all banders are within reasonable travelling distance.
7. To endeavour to develop co-operative projects so that there will be a far greater possibility of retraps.
8. To discourage the idea of indiscriminate banding and pursue the plan of regular visits on a survey basis.
9. To eliminate malpractice due to carelessness or ignorance and establish the highest banding ethics.
10. To endeavour to network the State with banding areas so that ultimately it may be possible to trace out migration routes.

All these ideas were not envisaged when the campout scheme was first mooted but have emerged over the year during discussion with members and around the camp fire in the evening.

Initially, campouts were held by mutual arrangement with the resident bander of an area, who selected the site and placed V.O.R.G. notices along the way. Whilst this meant that the area would be regularly visited by the resident, it also meant that a good many of the birds netted were retraps. This was not considered a good thing from the point of view of the resident, because of the confusion arising out of the use of a number of different band series.

As a result, when a resident is contacted, it is now suggested that he select an area close to his normal one, where retraps both ways would be possible and which might perhaps open up a new field for him for the future.

Already there have been some results from the campouts.

A bird banding group has been formed by the Latrobe Valley (Gippsland) Field Naturalists' Club as the result of several members attending, one member now having his license after recommendation by V.O.R.G. members.

There has been a general upsurge of mist-netting activity and several new banding licenses have been issued.

More indirectly, a co-operative banding plan

has been commenced in an area relatively close to Melbourne along the Dandenong Creek. This rises on Mount Dandenong and flows into Port Phillip Bay near Carrum, a distance of some thirty miles. A good deal of vegetation has been allowed to remain bordering the creek and, though settlement has encroached in various places, for the upper half of its length fairly good cover of native vegetation remains. Four banders have taken up sites along the creek and it is expected that others may come into the project. So far, nothing spectacular has been achieved but it is too soon for results to be expected.

Another indirect result is the voluntary recording of banding areas in V.O.R.G. notes so that other banders may take up adjacent areas and also not inadvertently poach on someone else's area.

We feel that these campouts have given a good deal of impetus to serious banding effort in Victoria and will lead to banders—by the stimulating interchange of ideas—working on their notes to produce articles for publication.

Victoria is perhaps particularly suited for campouts in this style. V.O.R.G., with its headquarters in Melbourne, can give a reasonably adequate cover to a fair amount of the State. It is hoped that, when strong decentralised groups are in operation, they will be able to spread further than would be possible from Melbourne during a weekend and make this coverage complete.

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Further New Information on the Birds of N.S.W.

It was pointed out by Richard Schodde (1965) that rain forest species of birds may be found in the remnants of sub-tropical rain forest on the south coast of New South Wales, e.g. about Mount Dromedary, and in other places further south than their presently accepted range.

Inter alia, Schodde predicted the appearance of the Green Cat-bird (*Ailuroedus crassirostris*) and the Brown Pigeon (*Macropygia phasianella*) and it is somewhat strange that we are able to confirm his predictions so soon afterwards.

During 1963 and 1964 we made six mist netting visits to an area at Kiangra Creek 3 miles north-west of Narooma, N.S.W. This area still retains remnants of rain forest vegetation along the creeks and has already provided interesting new information (Wilson 1965).

Arnold McGill (1960) gives the known southern limit of the range of the species mentioned as the Shoalhaven River. Our netting area near Narooma is approximately 100 miles further south.

While netting at Kiangra Creek on the morning of December 7, 1964, we netted and banded a Green Cat-bird (080-93142) and another was taken during the afternoon of the same day (080-93143). The species was not recorded in the area during the earlier visits.

We had previously seen (but not netted) the Green Cat-bird south of the Shoalhaven River, near Bateman's Bay and at Tuross Heads, both places being north of Narooma.

On December 7 and 8 one of us (D.W.) observed the Brown Pigeon on three occasions in

the area but it was not netted. On one occasion two were seen in a tree for some minutes before they flew off; on the other occasion, single birds were seen in flight. All the birds were between 10 and 30 yards from the observer when seen. The unmistakable calls of this species were also heard several times.

A Green-winged Pigeon (*Chalcophaps chrysoclora*) was also banded in this area on December 7, 1964 (060-48889), an interesting record within the known range of the species, for it is extremely rare south of Narooma.

Other rain forest species have been repeatedly netted and banded in the area including the Black-faced Flycatcher (*Monarcha melanopsis*), Brown Warbler (*Gerygone richmondii*), Large-billed Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis magnirostris*), and Lewin Honeyeater (*Meliphaga lewinii*).

Clearly the rain forest pockets of the south are worthy of further ornithological investigation.

References

- McGill, Arnold R., 1960: "A Hand List of the Birds of New South Wales", Fauna Protection Panel, Sydney.
- Schodde, Richard, 1965: "Observations on New Distribution and Habitat of Five Australian Land Birds", *Emu*, 64: 204-208.
- Wilson, F. J., 1965: "New information on Some Birds of New South Wales", *Emu*, 64: 209-213.

—Steve and Denis Wilson, Narrabundah, A.C.T.