

The Australian

BIRD BANDER

A Summary Of Silvereye Banding

JOHN LIDDY

This is a straightforward report on banding Eastern Silvereyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) in two widely separated localities, illustrating what may or may not be expected from such energetic campaigns. A few more such reports from other parts of the country would do much to fill in an outline of Silvereye movements, at least as far as the Tasmanian race is concerned, if banders have faithfully recorded plumage details. But most of this information is still locked up in banders' notebooks. These reports also illustrate an important rule—if you discontinue banding in any area where you have banded any considerable number of birds and are not likely to resume, write up a summary of what has been done—no one else will.—Editor.

1. Riverside, Tasmania

In autumn Silvereyes persistently feed upon carrot aphids infesting fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*). A vacant allotment of about 20 acres at Riverside, Tasmania contained about an acre of fennel and several acres of blackberries, and attracted many Silvereyes during the autumn.

In 1962 the allotment was netted on 23 mornings between February 27 and March 24, and 478 Silvereyes were banded. In 1963 netting was carried out on 48 mornings between February 13 and April 25, and 1,398 Silvereyes were banded. An additional 21 Silvereyes were banded at Riverside in 1961 and 1962.

On the allotment, nets were all set for Silvereyes, as there was no effective concentration of any other species. Normal practice was to have all nets erected by sunrise, and most Silvereyes were taken in the hour after sunrise. Silvereyes were not active early, and were never netted before the time of sunrise. About an hour after sunrise the birds became much less active, and the rising wind also decreased the capture rate on most days. Good catches were made on overcast and drizzly days in April, 1963, after 9 a.m., but these were exceptional. Maximum take, including retraps, was 124 Silvereyes on

30.3.63. Nets used were untethered, and I am sure that the use of nets tethered on top and bottom shelf strings (as all of my nets are now tethered) would have about doubled the take of Silvereyes.

The typical plumages of Tasmanian type Silvereyes were given by S. G. Lane (1962). However the statement that Tasmanian birds may have slight yellow dusting near the chin "but not extending over the throat to form the clear line found in Sydney birds", is not quite correct, as few birds—perhaps 2 per cent. of those I handled—could be so described.

No definite sign of immaturity was found on any of the Silvereyes examined, although the breeding season would have been completed only recently, and many of the birds taken would have been young birds. Many of the birds were moulting.

To date four of the Silvereyes have been recovered dead, all within a mile of the banding site:

010-48617, banded 16.2.63, found dead 2.3.63.
010-48658, banded 18.2.63, killed on road 1.3.63.
010-55333, banded 25.2.63, found dead 15.3.63.
010-67174, banded 5.3.63, found dead 24.5.65.

One bird has been retrapped away from the place of banding by another bander: 010-67681, banded 31.3.63, was retrapped 10.8.63 by D. M. Walker at Turramurra, N.S.W., some 570 miles to the N.E. (reported *Bird Bander*, vol. 1, p. 144).

Retraps taken by myself can be briefly summarised as follows:

- (a) one bird banded 8.5.61 was retrapped 18.2.63, some 300 yards south of the place of banding.
- (b) eleven of the 478 birds banded in the autumn of 1962 were retrapped at the same site during the following autumn. Ten birds were retrapped once each, and the eleventh, banded 23.3.62, was retrapped 17.2.63, 3.3.63 and 4.4.63.
- (c) of the 478 birds banded during the autumn of 1962, 80 were retrapped some 100 times during the banding period.
- (d) of the 1,398 birds banded during 1963, 331 birds were retrapped 490 times during the banding period.

Most birds retrapped were taken within two weeks of banding, and were not seen again. During February and March 1963, retrapped birds were consistently one-third of the netted birds. During April 1963 the retrapped birds were less than one sixth of the netted birds, although there were then many more banded Silvereyes at large. The lower retrap rate in April indicates an intensified movement through the area, assumedly in preparation for migration.

The basic object of the intensified banding of the Silvereyes was to build up a substantial population of Tasmanian banded birds in the hope that some birds would be retrapped by other banders in N.S.W. One such retrap did result, and this has been the only significant result of the banding to date.

2. Kingscliff, N.S.W.

Between June 1963 and February 1966, I lived at Kingscliff, in the extreme north-east corner of N.S.W. Regular mist netting was carried out near Hastings Point and Cudgen to determine the status of the various species in the banksia heaths. In all, 746 Silvereyes were banded from about 150 mist netting days. Significant numbers of Silvereyes were taken on only two occasions. In April 1964, by coincidence, I was netting honeyeaters near a patch of flowering *Banksia asplenifolia* near Hastings Point, when flocks of migrating Silvereyes were intercepted, and 292 Silvereyes were banded on two week-ends. Near Cudgen, on 19.6.64, 76 Silvereyes were banded

near flowering *B. ericifolia*, and these were probably birds overwintering. These five days accounted for 368 Silvereyes, or nearly half of all banded in the area.

Autumnal migration was noted in both years. Migrating Silvereyes were moving northwards in flocks of 30-50 birds about a mile inland from the sea on April 11, 12, 18 and 19, 1964. Many of the birds drifted downwards through thin eucalypt cover to feed on *B. asplenifolia* and, as mentioned above, 292 were banded. Significantly none of these birds was ever retrapped.

In May 1965 large scale migration of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters (*Meliphaga chrysops*) occurred along the coastal strip of northern N.S.W. On May 22 and 23, many flocks of over 1,000 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters passed during the early mornings, and several flocks on each day contained several hundred Silvereyes migrating northwards with the honeyeaters. Near Hastings Point a large mixed flock of birds of several species was heard moving northwards in the dark, at 5.45 a.m., on the morning of 22.5.65. Judging from the volume of the calls, the flock contained several hundred Silvereyes.

No southwards springtime movement of Silvereyes was ever noted. However on the heath at Hastings Point 30 Silvereyes were banded on 19.9.65, in contrast to the usual nil to two taken at this time of the year. Two of the 30 birds were Tasmanian types, and it is probable that the flock was drifting southwards.

D. M. Walker (1964) listed the combinations of throat and flank colours for various Silvereye populations, and divided throat colours into grey, yellow and bright yellow, and flank colours into grey, tawny and rufous. With the possible exception of birds with bright yellow throats and rich rufous flanks, all other plumage types listed are present in the area during the autumn and winter, as well as many intermediate types. The local birds have bright yellow throats and grey flanks. About 5 per cent. of the Silvereyes netted during the winter are Tasmanian types, and it is probable that some of these winter in the area.

To date there are two significant recoveries of Silvereyes banded in the area:

010-98280, banded 2 miles south of Cudgen, N.S.W. on 15.6.64, was shot in a cherry orchard at Silvan, Victoria about 15.11.64, some 823 miles to the S.W. (reported *Aust. Bird Bander*, vol. 3, p. 37).

011-13608, banded at Hastings Point, N.S.W. on 3.7.65, was recovered dead at Don, Tas-

mania 14.5.66, some 995 miles to the S.W. This recovery is the longest movement of a banded Silvereye reported to date. (See Recovery Round-up, p. 82.) It is only a matter of time—and more banded birds—before the range of Tasmanian Silvereyes is extended to south-eastern Queensland.

Many of the local Silvereyes banded during the summer months are apparently stationary. The two longest series of retraps are of birds banded near Cudgen:

1. Banded	16.11.63	2. Banded	6.10.63
Retrapped	26.12.63	Retrapped	12.10.63
	22. 3.64		21.12.63
	30. 5.64		11. 1.64
	30. 1.65		22. 3.64
	2.10.65		2. 8.64

However there are no data available which preclude movement of some of the local breeding birds during the winter. Comparison of the banding and recovery dates of some of the Tasmanian banded birds recovered in N.S.W. indicates that some birds may only migrate on alternate years, and the same could well be true of N.S.W. birds.

Two birds banded at Cudgen have virtually identical histories:

Band Number	Dates	Banded and Retrapped
010-75929	16.11.63	26.12.63 30.1.65
	2.10.65	4.10.65
010 76004	26.12.63	30.1.65 2.10.65
	4.10.65	

My field book shows that they were netted together in the same net on three occasions; the fourth entry is not conclusive, as although the two retraps are written in together, there is no indication whether or not they were netted together. Perhaps they are a mated pair; certainly they show the type of attachment which Lane demonstrated for Tasmanian type Silvereyes in the Sydney area.

It is an interesting point that two significant recoveries should have eventuated from 746 Silvereyes banded in north-eastern N.S.W. when no particular effort was devoted to them, while only one worthwhile recovery eventuated from 1,897 Silvereyes banded in Tasmania as the result of considerable effort. It is, of course, possible that further recoveries will result from either batch of Silvereyes.

John Liddy,
1 Guthrie Street,
Bathurst, W.A.

References:

- Lane, S. G. (1962). Notes on Recoveries of Tasmanian Type Silvereyes in Sydney. *Bird Bander*, 1: 11.
Walker, D. M. (1964). The Relationship Between Plumage Colouration, Breeding Location and Body Weight in the Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*). *Aust. Bird Bander* 2: 79-81.

The Co-operative Silvereye Project

S. G. LANE

The Co-operative Silvereye Project was initiated during the latter part of 1958 and was recorded as a large scale banding project in the Fifth Annual Report of the Australian Bird Banding Scheme, July, 1958 to June, 1959.

Thanks to the co-operation of many banders and assistants, 39,894 Silvereyes were banded up to June 30, 1964 (later figures are not yet available), and numerous interesting recoveries have been reported, many of which are the result of retraps by other banders. A considerable amount of data is accumulating from this project but certain obvious gaps exist. There is now a definite requirement for—

1. concerted banding of nestlings.
2. concerted banding and sex determination of known breeding birds.
3. recording of plumage data.

Banding of Nestlings

Only 181 (about 0.4 per cent.) nestlings have been banded and as far as is known, none of these has been recovered away from its natal area. I would be interested to hear from any bander who has details of any retraps of Silvereyes banded as nestlings and returning in a subsequent season to the natal area.

Banders are requested to endeavour to locate nests of Silvereyes and to band the nestlings. If only fifty banders in Eastern Australia were to band six nestling Silvereyes each during the current breeding season, the total would in one year be nearly double the number banded since