

Black Swan Colour Marking Programme

During the past four years a marking programme has been conducted on Black Swans in south eastern Australia. In this time approximately 4,500 swans have been marked with distinctive plastic collars in addition to the usual monel bands supplied by the Australian Bird Banding Scheme.

The colours of the neck bands or collars used to mark the swans at each location are as follows:

White—Lake Brewster and Lake Cargellico, N.S.W.

Red—Lake Cowal (north of West Wyalong), N.S.W.

Yellow—Lake George and Lake Bathurst (between Canberra and Goulburn), N.S.W.

Green—Lake Alexandrina, S.A.

Although only 34 bands have been recovered, 298 sightings of marked birds at a distance from their marking locality have been reported.

The majority of these sightings have come from the Sydney area, and the south coast of New South Wales, where regular surveys are conducted by the Division of Wildlife Research and where there are a large number of interested observers. Marked swans from all banding localities, including Lake Alexandrina, have been observed on Bushell's and Baker's lagoons near Windsor, N.S.W. Marked swans from Lake Cowal (red collar) and Lake George or Lake Bathurst (yellow collar) have even been reported from Centennial Park in Sydney.

The distribution of sightings and recoveries, to date, indicates a general dispersal in south-eastern Australia of swans from each of the marking localities. Swans marked at Lake George and Lake Bathurst have been observed as far north as Port Macquarie on the coast and as far west as Griffith in N.S.W., and as far south as Moulting Lagoon (5 recoveries and a sighting) on the east coast of Tasmania. Marked swans from Lake Cowal, have been sighted regularly on the south coast of New South Wales, and again, one has been reported from Moulting Lagoon in Tasmania.

Swans marked at Lake Brewster and Lake Cargellico have been observed regularly in southern Victoria, on the south coast of New South Wales, and one has been reported from the Coorong in South Australia.

There is a general paucity of sightings and recoveries in northern and inland regions of New South Wales, due evidently to the prevalence of drought conditions, and a subsequent restriction of habitat since the marking programme was initiated, and also, to the general sparsity of

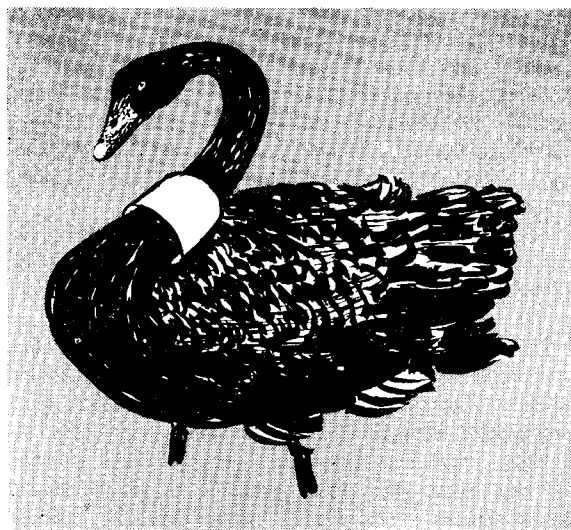


Illustration by I. Rowley.

observers in this region.

Should any marked swans be observed, information, including date, place and number of marked and unmarked swans present, will prove invaluable in understanding the movement patterns of Black Swans.

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[We should like to draw attention to an important paper on the Black Swan which has just appeared. This is "The Breeding of the Black Swan (*Cygnus atrata*) in Tasmania with Special Reference to some Management Problems", by E. R. Guiler, published in *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 1966, vol. 100, pp. 31-52. In this the author gives a detailed account of the breeding of this species in Tasmania, with particular reference to the seasons 1960 to 1964. Data are presented on egg weights and measurements, clutch size, incubation period and estimates of total population. The breeding success for 1961 and 1962 is estimated, and breeding conditions at Moulting Lagoon are fully discussed. There is also an extensive discussion of management problems. In the course of this work a large number (4,315) of Black Swans were

Parasitic Leeches

I am preparing a paper on leeches which form a permanent site of parasitic attachment by pathologically inducing a cavity.

It seems that only a few cases have been noted overseas. However, 13 such cases have been noted affecting the eyes of birds near the Illawarra district of New South Wales (south of Sydney). Thus Australian banders may have a unique opportunity with regard to this type of association. The only published record of this occurrence in an Australian bird which I have been able to find is a note by A. J. Marshall in *Emu*, 1934, vol. 33, p. 323, describing an example of this intestation in a Maggie-Lark.

The leeches which I examined were of a uniform dull-brown colour, and occupied a bag-like cavity opening through the under-surface of the eyelid into the tissue just under the skin between the eye and the back edge of the skull.

A number of cases were very obvious, as there were dramatic swellings at the side of the head. These were caused by large leeches, the largest of which was 33 mm. in length and 12 mm. in maximum width. In dim light the leeches were capable of extending their front end some distance through the mouth of their bag-like home and wave around in front of the eye. In other cases the leeches were smaller and not so easily detected. The smallest measurements were about 10 mm. long and 3 mm. in maximum width.

It is possible that routine examination of eyes and eyelids whilst banding in leech country might reveal that the association is more common than expected, especially if the necessary care is taken to find the smaller leeches.

Dr. L. R. Richardson, now residing in N.S.W.,

banded. At the time the paper was written, the only recoveries outside the State had been two from Cowra and Corowa in New South Wales (see Recovery Round-up, *Aust. Bird Bander*, June, 1964). More recently there have been two more recoveries, one at Marlo, Victoria, the other at Khanonbin, N.S.W. (see Recovery Round-up, *Aust. Bird Bander*, March, 1966). There is also the recovery of a bird banded at Lake George ("juvenile"), and shot at Moulting Lagoon 17 months later (see Recovery Round-up, *Aust. Bird Bander*, September, 1965), as well as sightings of N.S.W. marked birds (see above). It should be noted that the Black Swan is a game bird in Tasmania, though shooting is permitted only in certain seasons, and Güler's figures are instructive in showing how properly controlled shooting can be made compatible with species conservation. — Editor.]

and one of the handful of workers on leech systematics, has initially examined my specimens. At the moment he considers them possibly members of the genus *Chironohdella*, formerly known as *Geobdella*.

In view of the lack of knowledge of parasitic leeches on Australian birds, any leeches on a bird should be collected with full field notes and even sketches of the intestation if necessary. If the leeches are in the cavity described above, they can be withdrawn by a steady and prolonged pull with forceps or fingers. If there is no suitable equipment or time in the field to preserve the leeches, they should be taken home alive. To prevent drying-out, they may be placed in a specimen tube of water, or a plastic bag with damp grass, and sealed with several elastic bands.

During preservation, care must be taken to prevent contraction of the specimens. They can be anaesthetised and relaxed in soda water, or in water with the slow addition of drops of alcohol or of a saturated solution of epsom salts. As soon as the animals are no longer sensitive to touch, they should be straightened, placed in a flat dish, then killed and preserved without delay by adding 2 to 5% formalin. After 24 hours the formalin should be renewed and the specimens sent to your State museum accompanied by full data.

I would welcome correspondence from any reader on any leech parasite on birds. I would particularly welcome information on cases in any animal where the leech has pathologically induced a cavity.

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A TRANS-EQUATORIAL MIGRATORY WADER

The Director of the Queensland Museum has advised that a Grey-tailed Tattler found dying at Manly, Moreton Bay, Queensland (and forwarded to the Museum) was banded in Japan. (See Recovery Round-up p. 81.)

This is the first recovery south of the equator of a bird banded in Asia under the Migratory Animals Pathological Survey (MAPS).

Two waders banded in Australia have been recovered in the Northern Hemisphere. A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper banded near Perth, W.A., was recovered in Siberia (see Recovery Round-up Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 76) and an Eastern Curlew banded near Sydney was recovered in Korea (see Recovery Round-up Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 59).