

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.

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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).