Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters In The Mudgee District

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The article entitled 'Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters in Bendigo District' by J. C. Ipsen (*Aust. Bird Bander vol.* 3, *no.* 3) has prompted me to record my experiences in banding these birds at Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve, No. 20, near Mudgee, New South Wales.

The reserve of 7,000 acres is located about 21 miles north-east of Mudgee on a subdued spur of the Great Dividing Range. The area is of largely upper marine conglomerate which has weathered into some interesting caves and large outcrops.

The flora consists generally of a wet sclerophyll forest in the valleys and flats dominated by Grey Gum *(Eucalptus punctata)* and on the ridges a dry sclerophyll woodland dominated by Cypress Pine *(Callitris sp.),* and a complex of Red Stringybark *(Eucalyptus macrorrhyncha),* White Gum *(Eucalyptus rossi),* and Mugga Ironbark *(Eucalpytus sideroxylon).* Such a forest together with a heavy undergrowth of acacias, banksias, leptospermums, melaleucas, and callistemons provide an excellent habitat for Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters *(Meliphaga melanops).*

This environment, of Cypress Pine/Red (Mugga) Ironbark complex is described by Wakefield (1958) as being the typical habitat of the inland race of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *(M.m. meltoni).*

The banding site is located at a series of spring-fed waterholes where two 30 ft x 9 ft mist nets catch between 0-160 birds in a 24 hour period. Banding commenced at Munghorn on the 3 September 1965, and up to the present time 899 birds of 37 species has been banded. One of the most common species is the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and 254 of these have been banded with a retrap rate of about 22 per cent.

Ipsen mentions the fluctuations in numbers in the Bendigo District and relates this to the availability of nectar. While this undoubtably had a considerable bearing on numbers of birds throughout the area generally, I have found that the weather conditions prior to and during banding operations are the main factor influencing the number of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters netted on each visit at Munghorn Gap.

Birds Banded and Retrapped each Month

	1965			1966			1967		
	Banded	Retrapped	Total	Banded	Retrapped	Total	Banded	Retrapped	Total
January				*—	—	—	6	2	8
February				35	4	39	—	—	—
March				13	5	18	12	—	12
April				—	—	—	71	11	82
May				25	3	28			
June				6	5	11			
July				1	—	1			
August				*—	—	—			
September	11	—	11	1	2	3			
October	13	3	16	—	—	—			
November	58	14	72	*—	—	—			
December	2	2	4	*—	—	—			
Total	84		103	81		100	89		102

*No netting took place during these months.

Observations have shown that regardless of the time of the year some eucalypts and shrubs are always in flower and large numbers of "Yellow-tufts" are present throughout the year.

Forty-one individual Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters have been retrapped 51 times but so far no recoveries have been recorded away from the banding site.

Summary of Retraps
26 birds less than 3 month after banding
6 birds 3 to 6 months after banding
15 birds 6 to 12 months after banding
4 birds over 12 months after banding

All birds which have been retrapped more than 6 months after banding have been retrapped on a number of occasions and are probably permanent residents.

The colour of the iris, gape, bill and legs are recorded and measurements taken of wing span, wing, tail and length of all birds banded to provide information for future analysis and to assist in determining age and sex.

It is hoped in the future to establish banding sites amongst the undergrowth both near the location as well as in other sections of the Nature Reserve. Daily weather conditions will then have less influence on the banding figures than at the exclusive water attraction.

References

Ipsen, J. C. (1965), 'Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters in Bendigo District', *Aust. Bird Bander*, 3:7.

Wakefield, N. A. (1958), 'The Yellow-tufted Honeyeater with a Description of a New Sub-species'. *Emu*, 58: 163-198.

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Unusual plumage of Superb Blue Wrens

On 7 April 1967, I banded two male Blue Wrens *(Malurus cyaneus)* whose plumage differed from any which my sister and I have seen in the course of a study begun in 1956. Both birds appeared to be moulting from sub-adult plumage into adult eclipse plumage. They came to the garden in company with an adult female, a male in course of moult from blue plumage into fresh blue plumage, and two juveniles undergoing normal first moults. Both birds were banded and colour-banded, but unfortunately neither has presented itself for further observation—a disappointment, as we would like to know the final colour of their bills and legs. Males in eclipse plumage are occasionally reported with brown bills and two such individuals were reported in the *Emu*, vol. 58, p. 323. These birds differed from the present two, as they had moulted out of normal blue plumage. The plumage detail of the two birds is set out in the following table.

Description

	Band No. 010-98993.	**Band No. 010-98994.**
Crown	New brown feathers growing.	New brown feathers growing.
Lores and Orbital Ring	Fairly dark chestnut.	Fairly dark chestnut.
Back	No pin-feathers seen.	Pin-feathers visible.
Wings	Flight feathers moulting.	Flight feathers moulting
Wing-coverts	Blue.	Blue haze.
Tail	Old feathers indistinct blue, as often seen in sub-adult male, new feathers bright deep blue, as seen in adult male.	Old feathers indistinct blue, as often seen in sub-adult male, new feathers bright deep blue, as seen in adult male.
	Bases of all feathers darker than is usual in sub-adult males.	Bases of all feathers darker than is usual in sub-adult males.
Bill	Dark chestnut-brown.	Brownish chestnut, not as dark as 010-98993.
Claws	Blackish-brown, midway between normal colours for adult male and adult female.	Blackish-brown, midway between normal colours for adult male and adult female.

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