

## Victorian Bird Banding Conference, June 1967

The Fifth Victorian Bird Banding Conference was held at the Library of the Fisheries & Wildlife Department, Melbourne on 3 June 1967. About fifty persons attended the Conference which had been arranged by Mrs Pauline Reilly, Regional Organiser for Victoria under the Australian Bird-banding Scheme. Mrs Reilly welcomed those present and asked Mr A. Dunbavin Butcher, Director of Fisheries and Wildlife, to open the proceedings.

Mr Butcher spoke of the great progress made in conservation matters since the time of the previous conference, held in November 1965. He mentioned particularly the privately established Australian Conservation Foundation and the Victorian Land Utilization Advisory Council established by the State Government. A representative of the Fisheries & Wildlife Department has now been added to the Council, the membership of which is now substantially identical with that of the State Wildlife Research Investigation Committee. Mr Butcher regarded this Council as a most important body and unique in the world.

He referred to the new Fisheries & Wildlife Research Institute shortly to be built at Heidelberg. He said that the Institute would include a conference room and associated facilities which would be available for the use by organisations for occasions such as the present conference.

For some time bird banders in Victoria have been unable to operate in sanctuaries because of a doubt as to whether that was legally permissible. The conference was delighted to learn from Mr Butcher that this doubt had now been resolved and that in appropriate cases permits would be amended to allow banding in sanctuaries. Mr Butcher also referred to a project planned by the Victorian Ornithological Research Group for the erection of a permanent banding station at Cape Woolamai on Phillip Island. Plans for a building estimated to cost \$40,000 had been prepared by VORG and Mr Butcher had great hopes that a particular organisation might be willing to raise money for this project.

Mr Neil Weatherill then discussed work done on Red-capped Dotterels at Somers from which it appeared that mortality was high, due often to

human interference. Mrs Ellen McCullough explained work proposed to be done at Cape Woolamai in connection with the existing banding station there. This included notably a regular walk along a fixed route and the recording of birds observed. Mrs Tess Kloot and Mrs Pauline Reilly reported progress made on the VORG Flame Robin survey. That project involves co-operative banding and the plotting of observations made by banders and other interested persons with a view to establishing the details of seasonal movements. Dr Norman Wettenhall spoke on conservation and the establishment and aims of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Mr David Purchase (secretary of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme) gave some account of the history of bird banding in Australia and the difficulties of coping with the present volume of work by the existing staff and made a number of suggestions for improvement in the completion of returns. He pointed out that if the scheme was to progress it would be necessary to be able to demonstrate that the work being done was of importance. The project system, the concentration of work at a number of banding stations and the "B" permit system were all designed to achieve this. Mr Purchase emphasised that banding is not an end but a means and that the results of banding projects should be analysed and published.

Mr Les Barrow reported preliminary work done on waders by a number of banders working together near Melbourne. Traps had been unproductive but mist nets operated on moonlit nights had produced some successful catches. Better progress was hoped for in the following season. Mr Don Bowrey explained the RAOU nest record

# Eclipse Plumage of the Purple-crowned Wren

In the references available to me I have found no mention of an eclipse plumage for the male Purple-crowned Wren (*Malurus coronata*). However, separate visits to the Gregory River (North Western Queensland) in June and July 1967, by Hamar Midgley and myself produced strong evidence of an eclipse plumage in this species.

Midgley spent a week on the upper Gregory River in June and on return, commented on the great abundance of these wrens and the complete absence of birds with the lilac crown. I visited the area in early July and noted also the complete lack of the lilac crown. Between 60 and 70 birds were observed over a period of three days.

In this plumage the head of the male is brown and there is no sign of the lilac and black on the crown. However, the males are readily distinguishable by the black eye patch which apparently is retained.

Bill Horton visited the same area in late July and caught and banded two males. These birds had partial lilac crowns, indicating that the second moult takes place at about this time. On previous visits by Bill Horton and myself in mid August and September 1965, large numbers of adult males were seen with the fully coloured crowns.

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scheme and urged banders to report their observations on the forms available. Mr Frank Jones gave an account of the associations observed by him between honeyeaters and certain flowering plants at Tyers. Finally Mr Alan Reid spoke on banding of Blackbirds in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, quite a number of individuals having been caught with elevated mist nets.

On the day after the conference, a number of members visited the Fisheries and Wildlife Department's Research Station at Serendip, where the Department traps and bands large numbers of ducks and engages in other wildlife research and management activities.

Altogether, the conference was a great success and those who were present found it most educational and enjoyable.

Peter Balmford,  
459 The Boulevard,  
East Ivanhoe, Vic.

Several males were banded on those occasions. As there is some evidence of sedentary habit, it is hoped that this and future banding and re-trapping will confirm the existence of this eclipse plumage in the Purple-crowned Wren.

Further evidence has been provided by the CSIRO activities in the McArthur River area. A specimen of an adult male of this species collected by W. B. Hitchcock and J. L. McKean at McArthur River Station on 8 August 1967 showed partial development of the lilac crown. However, there was no sign of the black patch on the top of the head or the thin black collar across the back of the neck.

R. K. (Sam) Carruthers,  
97 Oban Road,  
Mount Isa, Qld.

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## Another Point Of View

This letter was received by the Secretary, ABBS.

"Dear Sir,

The following banded bird is reported:  
Cormorant 140-37296

This bird was caught on a fishing line off Outer Harbour on 14 January.

I am a bird lover, especially black duck in season with seasoning, but am at a loss to know why you would band this species of bird. Perhaps a bleary eyed duck banded after a night out mistook same for a widgeon. Despite being past middle age, I can assure your officer I can still recognise a shag.

After capture the bird was brought home and the number on its ring taken. The bird made vulgar noises at my pedigree dog and not knowing the proper length of a shag (our fishing and game department is very active) the bird was returned to the Port River. In handling the second time, the bird badly soiled my clothing—it's a good thing you don't band elephants.

However, if you have bothered to read the above, congratulations to the Department for the work it is doing and I would like to hear earlier details of the above bird."

Perhaps in future our president might ensure that his cormorants are informed of the need for good public relations!