Banding and Observation Notes on Brown Goshawks

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Banding and observations of Brown Goshawks *Accipiter fasciatus* have been carried out at my residence on Chain of Ponds Creek about 1.5 km north-east of Riverstone, New South Wales, since January 1969.

The habitat is open woodland interspersed with grassland; the creek lines are bordered with stands of oaks *Casuarina sp.* and gums *Eucalyptus spp.*

A seasonal movement appears to commence late in January and finishes in July. Records and observations by other ornithologists tend to confirm this seasonal movement. From my observations the movement seems to be in a southerly direction, the birds flying from lightly timbered areas to the north across the open grassland to the timber along the creek line. They leave the area in the same general southerly direction.

A brief analysis of K. A. Hindwood's records for the Sydney district shows most sightings during autumn and winter months. Also, since 1969 Mr A. Coleman (pers. comm.) has recorded his observations of Brown Goshawks at Toongabbie Creek about 16 km south-east of Riverstone. Of 67 sightings, 48 have been in autumn and winter months. In the same area Mr A. K. Morris (pers. comm.) has recorded these birds near his home at Old Toongabbie and along the same creek. Of 16 sightings 11 were for the period autumn to winter (March to July). The majority of birds sighted by him were immature.

My own observations of these birds at Riverstone are made along about one km of the creek and an estimated 20 to 30 goshawks pass through this area between February and July each year. Their occurrence is heralded by the alarm calls of Noisy Miners *Myzantha melanocephala* which inhabit the creek vicinity.

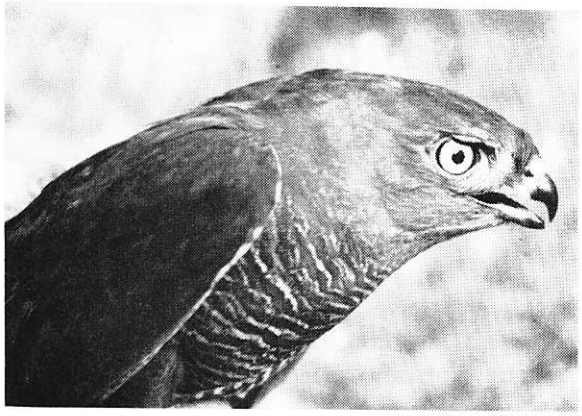
The catching method is an automatic sliding door type cage trap* which has a separated lower compartment for the 'bait'. House Sparrows *Passer domesticus,* with food and water provided, are used for this purpose. They are protected from injury by the small mesh wire of the lower compartment.

Three traps are sited at intervals of about 100 m along the creek; they are in sight from the house and are under regular observation throughout the day.

Trapping commenced in January 1969, and to April 1973, 29 birds had been banded; these comprised 12 immature females, 7 immature males, 5 adult females and 5 adult males. No birds have been retrapped at the banding place but one immature male banded on 30 January 1969 was recovered the following August at Warriewood, N.S.W. about 30 km east of Riverstone. It was found in a pigeon loft and (mercifully!) released by the pigeon fancier.

Certainly not all the goshawks passing through the area are caught. Some apparently do not see the 'bait' and sometimes others seem to ignore the baited traps. Goshawks appear to be absent from the area during the months of August to December. No observations have been made during these months and although the traps were set throughout the year in 1969 and 1970, no birds were caught in that period.

* Details of the trap were given in *Banding News,* Number 11, June 1973, which is on private circulation to members of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme.



• *Brown Goshawk (adult male).*
Photo: S. G. Lane

Most breeding occurs in the nearby mountain areas outside the Sydney district. Nesting normally commences towards the end of October or early in November and young are flying before the end of January. No doubt this would account for the absence of breeding adults from August to December but what of the non-breeding immature birds? The records indicate that apparently there is a post-breeding dispersal and movement into the coastal plain with a preponderance of immature birds.

There is no migratory concentration as occurs with a number of raptors in other parts of the world.

Further banding and recoveries will provide additional evidence of the movements and habits of these birds and will contribute further towards filling the gaps in the life history of this species.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are extended to Mr E. S. Hoskin for providing information from the records of the late K. A. Hindwood, to Messrs A. K. Morris and A. Coleman for details of their observations and to Mr S. G. Lane for comments and assistance in the preparation of these notes.

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Editorial

The Bird Banders' Association is not unique in experiencing the current inflationary trends. In the past few years, costs have risen alarmingly and the impact of the Government policy to eliminate concession postage for publications (such as this Journal) will add substantially to our problem. After very careful consideration, the Committee has decided to recommend that from 1 January 1974 the membership subscription be raised to $5.00 ($2.50 for junior members).

This is the first increase in five years—a rather remarkable achievement. Nevetheless, considering the level of current values, the cost is small for a Journal of this type; it is still less than 10 cents per week. We therefore hope that all members will appreciate the need for the increase and will continue their membership and support, as subscriptions are devoted entirely towards the cost of producing the Journal.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to satisfy all members regarding style, format and content of the Journal—sometimes the Editor is dissatisfied with the content! But it is essential that most members feel they are getting value for their membership and a gratifying number have indicated their satisfaction. All complaints are studied by the Committee, and the few received have revealed a lack of knowledge of the situation.

The continued success of the Journal, and of the Association, is entirely dependent on the efforts of the members. Many banders have valuable information hidden in note books and records, information which should be written up for publication. Short, informative, factual notes are needed just as much as the larger, detailed presentations. Very few banders forward information suitable for Recovery Round-up, e.g. on longevity which is not normally available otherwise. While the Committee welcomes constructive criticism, the great need is for practical support.

Finally, all members can help by endeavouring to obtain new members for the Association. Surely there must be many persons interested in birds who would be pleased to receive *The Australian Bird Bander* if they were aware of its existence and contents. We request your assistance to obtain new members who should be informed that membership of the Association involves no obligation to become a bander. In fact, the Journal could not exist without our large number of associate members.