

## CRITICAL NOTES ON THE STATUS OF SOME NORTHERN TERRITORY BIRDS

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### INTRODUCTION

These notes deal mainly with data additional to those summarized by G. M. Storr in his *List of Northern Territory Birds* (1967), and their implications in relation to previous knowledge of the species concerned. Some critical records are re-examined. Once again I am considerably in the debt of Dr Storr for his groundwork in this field and for his valuable criticisms of this paper in draft.

Abbreviations of observers' names and institutions are: AL (A. Lendon), AON (A. O. Nicholls), BG (Mrs. Billie Gill), CC (Mrs. C. Cox), CDF (C. Dean Fisher), CSIRODS (C.S.I.R.O. Wildlife Research Dingo Survey: Messrs Laurie Corbett, Peter Hanisch, Harry Wakefield), DC (David Crawford), DH (David Howe), DN (Desmond Nelson), DS (David Stewart), HD (Hans Dimpel), JB (John Bywater), JE (John Elliott), RB (Ronald Berry), RK (R. Keetch), RKC (R. K. Carruthers), SP (author), WBH (Warren Hitchcock); AM (Australian Museum, Sydney), AMNH (American Museum of Natural History, New York), BMNH (British Museum (Natural History) London), HLW (H. L. White Collection, National Museum of Victoria), NMV (National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne), NTM (Northern Territory Museum, Alice Springs), QM (Queensland Museum, Brisbane), SAM (South Australian Museum, Adelaide).

All measurements in this paper are in millimetres; bill measurements are taken from the skull and wing measurements are of the flattened wing unless otherwise stated.

### LITTLE BITTERN (*Ixobrychus minutus*).

The Point Charles specimen, listed by Storr in his Appendix (1967:69) is in the AM, and was, according to H. J. de S. Disney (*in litt.*), correctly identified by North (1913:41) as belonging to the Australian race *dubius* Mathews. This bittern has also been observed in mangroves at the mouth of

the McArthur River in November 1964, and at Walkers Creek near Normanton, north-west Queensland (RKC).

### BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE

(*Elanus notatus*).

Map 1 shows the recent Northern Territory records detailed by me (Parker, 1969: 61) and the following: between Henbury and Erldunda, one seen on May 31, 1935 (Cleland, 1936:194); Idracowra, sighting in early March 1911 (Hill, 1913:240); sandhill country near Chambers' Pillar (S. A. White, 1914:425); Katherine, one collected (Anon., 1943:7); McArthur River, few seen and nest with 3 young found, May 1913 (Barnard, 1914:42); Humpty Doo, two seen, July-August 1964 (Lendon, 1966:196); Oenpelli-East Alligator River, sightings in late September 1948 (Deignan, 1964:356); South Alligator River, 8 specimens collected by J. Tunney in September-October 1903 (Hartert, 1905:208); Alexandria, one collected by W. Stalker in June 1905 (Ingram, 1907:398). (Specimens in the AMNH from the last two localities were kindly checked as to species by Mrs Mary LeCroy).

Other (unpublished) records of this species appearing on Map 1 are: few miles south of Gallipoli homestead, one over blacksoil plains, August 14, 1967 (WBH); Central Mount Wedge, sighted August 26-28, 1967 (BG); Yuendumu, sighted June 1968 (DS); Barrow Creek, one seen August 15, 1968 (SP); 10 miles north of Banka Banka, one above shrubby *Acacia/Eucalyptus* woodland, August 4, 1968 (SP); 8-10 miles east of Allambi homestead, one seen June 16, 1968 (DH); 47 miles south of Tennant Creek, one quartering *Plectrache* savannah, June 16, 1968 (SP, AON); midway between Hermannsburg and Alice Springs, one seen, August 17, 1968 (SP, AL); south-east of Curtin Springs towards Mount Conner, one over mulga/red sandhill country, May 21, 1969 (SP); Mount Olga, a pair, and Ayers Rock, a pair in open bloodwood/*Grevillea striata*/mulga woodland, July 24, 1969 (SP,

DH); Mount Barkly, one bird, mid-October 1969 (JE); Arltunga, one bird, October 25, 1969 (JE); Reedy Rockhole, George Gill Range, one bird, August 31, 1969 (DS). 1969 records indicate the species' continuing presence in the Alice Springs area, though in smaller numbers than in 1967 and 1968.

The picture is thus of a species which *at present* is fairly common in the range country of the southern Northern Territory, with scattered occurrences north to the coast. The breeding season in the southern ranges, as indicated by 1967 and 1968 nesting records, is from May to September.

#### LETTER-WINGED KITE (*Elanus scriptus*).

Map 1. Recent records of this species in the Northern Territory are almost all from the Barkly Tableland: Attack Creek, two collected, February-March 1966 (McEvey, 1967:20, 31); Austral Downs, sighting, May 1967 (RKG); Ranken Store, one seen, early 1968 (CC); Brunette Downs, late March 1966, small flock nesting (RKC); McArthur River mouth, sighting in February 1965 (RKG); Brunette Bore, flock of 16 birds on October 2, 1967 (Blackburn, 1968:234); Frewena, nest in shrub savannah with three nestlings, August 8, 1968 (DH); Rockhampton Downs, nest with four eggs, September 9, 1968 (CSIRODS); Banka Banka, between bores 12 and 1 in open grassland, two adults and three full-grown young flying around nest and feeding-platform in small tree, July 30, 1968 (CSIRODS); Georgina Downs, Sandover River, two seen on August 9, 1968 (DH); *c.* 6 miles south of Brunette Downs homestead, nesting colony on March 20, 1968 (Hall, 1969); Elliott township, one seen on November 13, 1969 (SP).

It appears from the foregoing that the Letter-winged Kite is *at present* not uncommon on the Barkly Tableland, in open grassland and shrub savannah, presumably in consequence of the current abundance there of *Rattus villosissimus*. The indications are that the breeding season is prolonged, from March to September.

An extralimital record from near the Northern Territory border in Western Australia is from the Forrest River Mission, 26 miles north-west of Wyndham, two specimens in the AM collected by Allen Keast on May 30 and June 18, 1952.

#### BANDED LAND-RAIL (*Rallus philippensis*).

There are two currently-accepted Australian forms of this species (Mayr, 1938; Deignan, 1964): *R.p.mellori* Mathews (*olim australis* Pelzeln) of mainland Australia except Cape York Peninsula, and *R.p.yorki* Mathews of Cape York Peninsula and islands of the Great Barrier Reef south to 24°S. (Lady Musgrave I., specimens in NMV). My examination in the NMV of seven skins of *yorki* and twenty-one of *mellori* showed that the former differs from the latter mainly in its darker, narrower breastband (6-10 mm. deep in *yorki*, 14-30 deep in *mellori*), and the shorter wing of its females (129-135 m.m. in three females of *yorki*, 134-140 in five females of *mellori*). As, however, there appears to be no break in the distribution of this rail from Cape York southward, it is to be expected that the two races grade imperceptibly into each other.

The following Northern Territory specimens were compared with material in the NMV and may all be assigned to the race *R.p.mellori*: Borroloola, female ad., February 6, 1914 (HLW 4904), shot on nest with eight eggs by H. G. Barnard; Larrakeyah, Darwin, ? sex, September 29, 1968 (NTM 4219); Howard Springs swamp, south-east of Darwin, male ad., August 25, 1968 (NTM 4203); Alice Springs, male ad., February 12, 1965 (NTM 2706); Alice Springs, female ad., March 9, 1965 (NTM 2751). It may be that whereas the northern records represent resident birds, those from Alice Springs are of individuals which have travelled to the Centre with adventitious rains.

#### CRESTED PIGEON (*Ocyphaps lophotes*).

Map 2. Further records of this species have permitted a finer resolution of its Northern Territory range than that outlined by Storr (1967:31). The following recent northern records also indicate its increasing frequency in areas where it was formerly considered to be either a rare vagrant or absent:

1. Barkly Tableland (one previous record, Alexandria, *vide* Ingram, 1907:391): 43 miles north of Gallipoli homestead, one in low grassy woodland, August 14, 1967 (SP); between Barry Caves Motel and Soudan, one in shrub savannah, March 24, 1968 (SP); 20 miles north of Anthony Lagoon turnoff (116 miles east along Barkly Highway), in shrubby

*Acacia lysiphloia/Eucalyptus terminalis* woodland with *Triodia* and other grasses, flock of at least twelve birds, May 16, 1968 (AON); Avon Downs and Soudan, frequent along *Eucalyptus microtheca*-lined watercourses, June 13-14, 1968 (SP, AON); Brunette Downs, several seen in *Acacia cambagei* woodland near homestead, November 17, 1969 (SP).

2. Carpentaria drainage (no previous records): Cleanskin Creek yard, open grassland with scattered trees, one on August 16, 1967 (SP); Seven-Ten Waterhole, upper Nicholson River, fairly common in open grassy forest, August 26, 1967 (SP); Border Waterhole, common in open woodland, late August-early September 1967 (WBH, AON, HD); Borrooloola area, and Mount Roper, near mouth of Roper River, "good numbers" in savannah woodland (Fifth Harold Hall Expedition, 1968, *ms.*); 90 miles east along Roper River road from Stuart Highway, one on May 5, 1968 (DC); 15 miles north-west of Mataranka, one on May 5, 1968 (DC).

3. Northern drainage (one previous record, Katherine; *vide* Thomas, 1947:56): Katherine, several in open grassy area with a few trees, July 27, 1967 (SP); Old Marrakai homestead, one on August 16, 1969 (DC); between Elliott and Pine Creek, in fair numbers, July 1964 (Lendon, 1966:193).

The predilection of the Crested Pigeon for dead bare trees of the mulga habit (*Acacia aneura*, *A. georginae*, *A. shirleyi*, etc.) is a noticeable feature of its ecology in Central Australia. The range extension into the northern drainage system and across the Barkly Tableland into the Carpentaria drainage, where such trees are rare or absent (the areas concerned comprising mainly low mixed woodland and savannah woodland), suggests the recent acquisition of greater habitat tolerance in this species.

PINK COCKATOO (*Cacatua leadbeateri*)  
and LITTLE CORELLA  
(*Cacatua sanguinea*).

In the Northern Territory these two species show a remarkable degree of allopatry (Map 3). The closest points of approach so far recorded are:

1. Hatches Creek: *sanguinea* common near township along gum-lined watercourses amongst the ranges, while ten miles to the west *leadbeateri* occurs regularly in open

hummocky areas with few creeks, June-December 1968 (RB).

2. Sandover River: *sanguinea* common around Ammaroo homestead on September 18, 1956, while 24 miles west-south-west along the Sandover, at No. 8 bore, *leadbeateri* observed on May 22, 1954 (DN). (At 16 miles west-south-west of Ammaroo homestead there is a Corella Bore.)

3. Plenty River area: *sanguinea* recorded from near Huckitta out station (CSIRODS), while 20 miles west, on Entire Creek, *leadbeateri* observed on July 13, 1967 (DN).

4. MacDonald Downs: both *sanguinea* and *leadbeateri* recorded (Chalmers, 1934:213; Ellis, 1948:15).

In the Tanami semi-desert area and adjacent regions near the Northern Territory/Western Australian border, the density of both forms is considerably reduced, and occasional instances of sympatry have been recorded. The plotted records for this area on Map 3 are:

*sanguinea*: western end of Wilson Creek, c. 30 miles north-north-east of Talbot Well, one bird on April 11, 1959 (DN); Newry, Auvergne, Top Springs and Timber Creek, fairly common, August 1968 (SP); Humbert River, several birds, May 1968 (RK); Flora Valley (Jenkins, 1947:38).

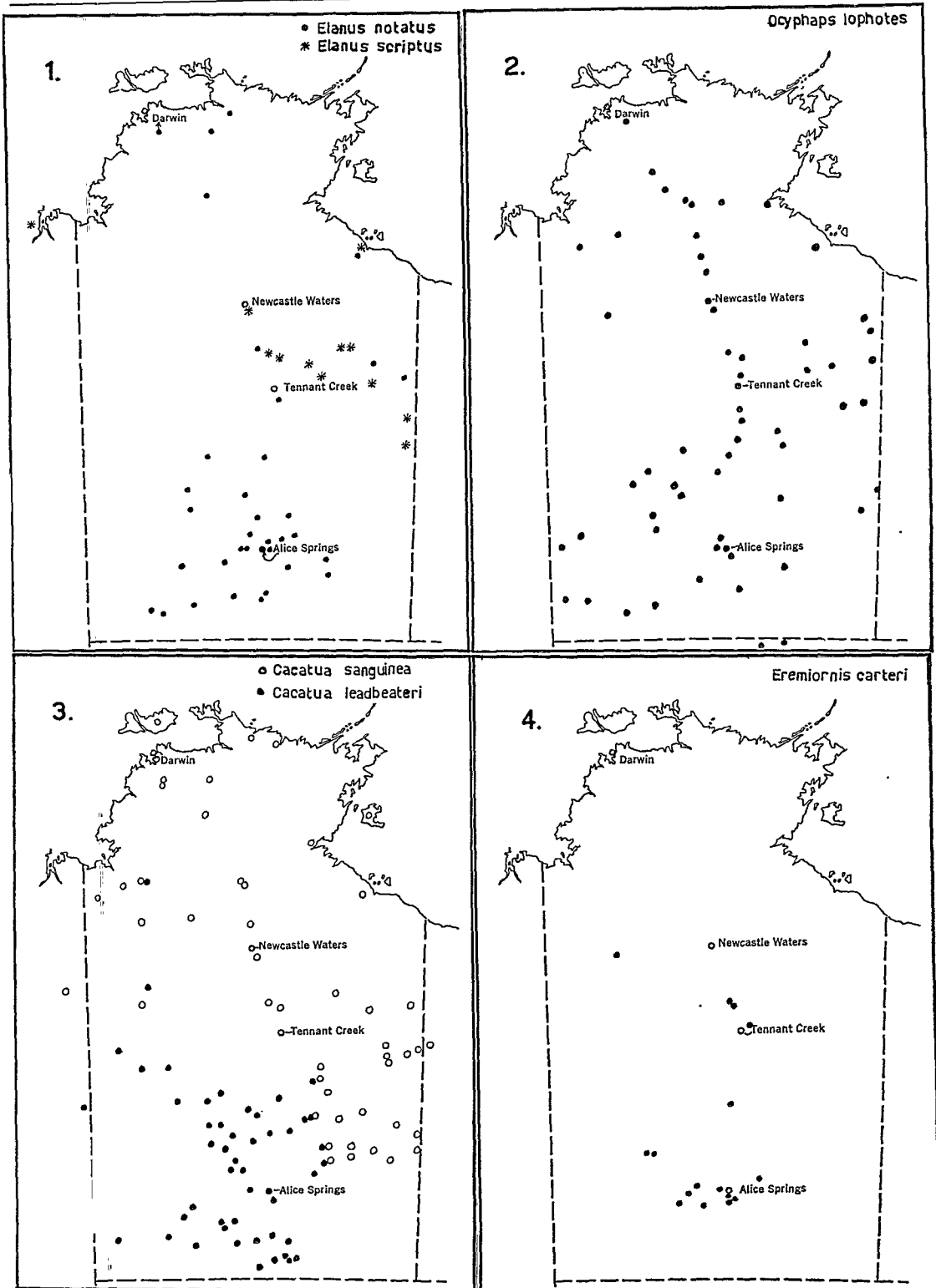
*leadbeateri*: Timber Creek, flock of seven birds on June 12, 1969 (JB; furthest north record for this species in the N.T.); Hooker Creek area (Else, 1857: 26-27, *vide* G. M. Storr, *in litt.*); Tanami Goldfields, March 1910 (Clark, 1910:76); Red Hill (= Quartz Ridge, nine miles west-north-west of The Granites), five birds seen regularly during 1928 (Terry, 1930:163); Thomson's Rockhole, August 1936 (Cleland, 1938:128); Brookman Waters, south of Lake Hazlett, Western Australia, June 1933 (Terry, 1937: 239).

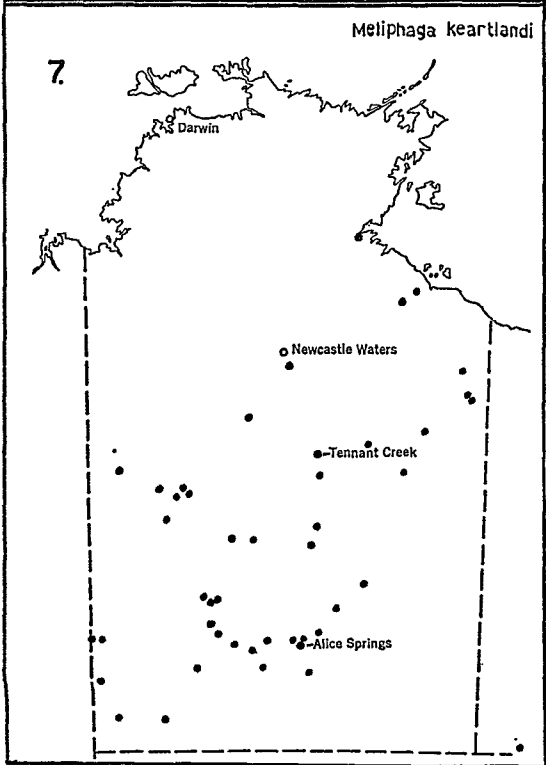
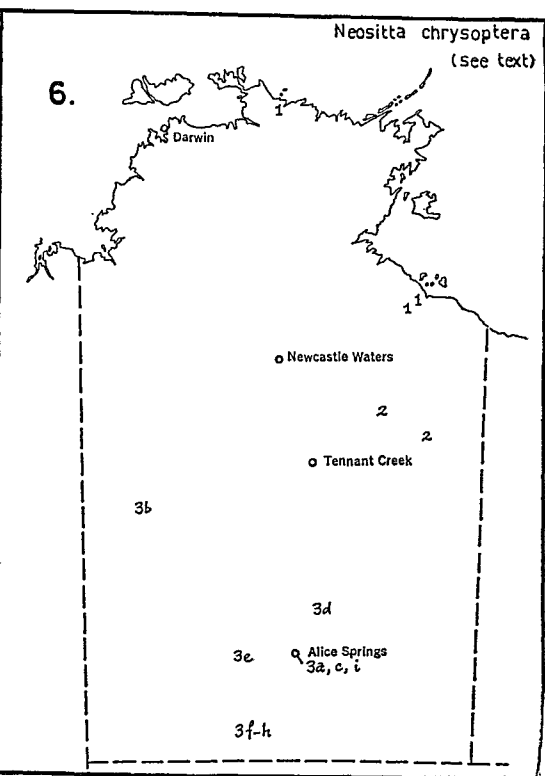
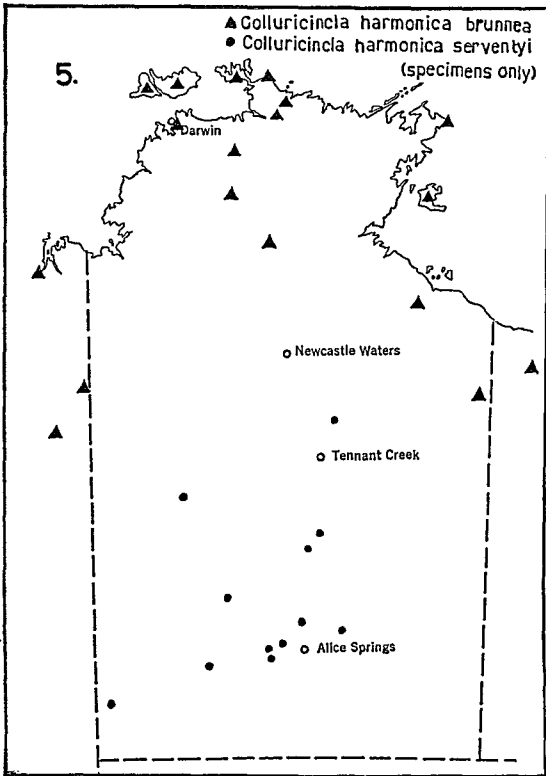
Thus the most sharply-defined allopatry occurs where both *sanguinea* and *leadbeateri* are common. The reasons behind this allopatry in the Northern Territory are at present not apparent; the entire situation, both here and in other parts of Australia where a similar allopatry is indicated, calls for further study.

#### GOLDEN BRONZE CUCKOO

*Chrysococcyx lucidus plagosus*).

The specimen collected by W. Stalker at Alexandria on December 25, 1905, and iden-





DISTRIBUTION OF  
 SELECTED NORTHERN  
 TERRITORY BIRDS

tified by Ingram (1907:402) as the above form (Storr, 1967:70), is now in the AMNH (Mathews Collection). Mrs. Mary Le Croy (*in litt.*) informs me that it is actually an immature of the Horsefield Bronze Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx basalis*, and continues: "plagiosus immatures differ most noticeably from immatures of *basalis* in being more green above, having a subterminal black spot on central rectrices and in lacking ochraceous on the basal two-thirds of most of the rectrices—except the outer. The Stalker bird agrees with *basalis* in these characters."

#### NORTHERN SCRUB-ROBIN

(*Drymodes superciliaris*).

Storr (1967:70) questions the Roper River as the provenance of the ochraceous specimens described by Mathews as *D.s. colcloughi*. The holotype, AMNH 585473, is an adult male collected on the Roper by M. J. Colclough in September 1910 (data on label). Of the male and female in the QM the latter alone bears a register number, 011/19 female, the male being a mounted specimen. Under 011/19 in the QM register are listed both specimens, entered on February 15, 1911 with other Colclough material from the Roper River (D. Vernon, *in litt.*). There seems little doubt, therefore, that the three known specimens of *D.s. colcloughi* did come from the Roper River area.

#### SLATE-BACKED THORNBILL

(*Acanthiza robustirostris*).

Listed by Storr (1967:46) as scarce, occurring in the south-western corner of the Territory, north and east to Hermannsburg. This species is apparently fairly common in mulga areas; some recent records are: Ayers Rock, April 1952 (specimen in AM, collected by A. Keast); Ayers Rock, and midway between Ayers Rock and Mount Olga, May 22, 1968, common in dense mulga (SP, DS; NTM 4136-7); 12 miles north of Mulga Park homestead (NTM 4138), and near the homestead, and 22½ miles east of the homestead, May 23, 1968, common in dense mulga (SP, DS); Napperby Station, August 6, 1968, specimen collected in dense mulga (DN; NTM 4198); 2 miles west along the Yuendumu road 16 miles north of Alice Springs, August 16, 1968, two adults feeding three fully-fledged young in dense mulga (SP, AL); hills to the east of the Rodinga Range on the north-western edge of the

Simpson Desert, at 24°19'S., 135° 09'E., December 27, 1968, party of four birds feeding in flowering mulga-like trees (*Acacia* sp. innom., aff. *dovratoxylon*) in hollow on summit of range (SP).

The specimen collected at Cockatoo Creek on August 21, 1931 by A. Rau and identified by J. B. Cleland as *Acanthiza uropygialis* (Cleland, 1932:131), is in fact an example of *A. robustirostris* (specimen in SAM, examined); Cleland states (*loc. cit.*:127) that Cockatoo Creek runs through mulga plains. The northern limit of *A. uropygialis* in the Northern Territory is maintained at c. 22°S., however, by a specimen of the latter in the AM collected at Mount Doreen on May 9, 1952 by A. Keast (H. J. de S. Disney, *in litt.*).

#### RUFOUS GRASS-WREN

(*Amytornis striatus*).

The holotype and paratype of *A.s. rufus* Campbell and Kershaw were obtained by G. F. Hill in 1911 in the Tanami semi-desert. The authors (1913:276) gave data for the holotype as "No. 52, July 3, 1911, Lat. 19°27", about 160 miles north of Camp 4" (Hill's Camp 4 was on the Lander River at 21°26'33"S.), and for the paratype "No. 37, June 2, 1911, Lander Creek (Spirit specimen—some of notes obliterated)". The number 52 for the holotype must be a misreading of 32, since 52 is one of Hill's missing specimens (c. 50-74) from the McArthur River.

The error involving the paratype is more serious. Hill stated (1913:248) that this grass-wren was first encountered 20 miles west of Camp 4. On June 2, 1911 (Campbell and Kershaw's date for the collection of the paratype) Hill was approaching Camp 2, which was in 22° 47' 43"S., 131° 35' 35"E. [Oodnappina Waterhole in the Siddeley Range,] and where he stayed for the 3rd and 4th June, collecting specimens No. 23-27. As the paratype's field number, 37, succeeds that (corrected) of the holotype, 32, we may assume that it was collected after the latter. Hill further stated that *rufus* was not observed north of "about 19°S.", which rough latitude he notes for July 4. Specimen No. 34 [*Malurus lamberti*] was collected on this date; Campbell and Kershaw (*loc. cit.*:278, under *M. assimilis*) gave its location as 179 miles north of Camp 4, which is actually about 18°44'S. ("about 19°S.").

Therefore, the paratype of *A.s. rufus*, No. 37, was almost certainly taken on July 4, 1911 at about (but not much north of) 179 miles north of Hill's Camp 4.\* Keat's (1958: 44) "Calder River" as type-locality is doubtless a lapse for "Lander River," itself erroneous.

Mees (1961: 115-116, 135) records specimens of *A.s. rufus* from wells 35 and 48 on the Canning Stockroute, Western Australia. In the NTM there are three Northern Territory specimens of *rufus* (i.e., with the blackish dorsal streaking confined to the forehead; subspecific determinations confirmed by A. E. McEvey): Davenport Hills, April 21, 1967, male ad. (NTM 3619) and Mount Strickland, April 28, 1967, female ad. (NTM 3620), both collected on spinifex plains by the British Combined Services Expedition (Norris, A.Y., in preparation); 12 miles east of Irving Creek, Petermann Ranges, January 16, 1969, female ad. (NTM 4360) collected by DH in mallee/spinifex on red sand. There is also, in the SAM, an immature (of this race, by locality) from Western Australia near Lake Mackay, collected in May 1933 by the explorer Michael Terry. The frontal feathers in this specimen have the central shaft streak bordered palest grey.

Other Northern Territory records of *Amytornis striatus* (not identified to subspecies) include: 3 miles from Ayers Rock towards Mount Olga, several birds seen, a search revealing three old nests, and c. 50 miles east of Ayers Rock, a pair seen; spinifex clumps unusually large in both localities (Ellis McNamara, 1958, *in litt.*); Willy Rockhole, sighting, and between Willy Rockhole and the Ehrenburg Range, specimen collected and skeletonized, April 1967 (British Combined Services Expedition, *vide* A. Y. Norris, *ms.*).

#### SPINIFEX-BIRD (*Eremiornis carteri*).

Map 4. Recorded in the Northern Territory from Krichauff and James Ranges (Whitlock, 1924:268-9); 14 miles south-west of Arltunga; Wave Hill; few miles west of Ooraminna Rockhole; 15 and 17 miles south down the Deep Well road, south of Alice Springs; Corroboree Rock; Honeymoon Gap and Serpentine Gorge, west of Alice Springs (Parker, 1969:68). Further records are

from: 3 miles south of Barrow Creek, in dense spinifex in creekbed, a pair on April 17, 1967, and one, same locality, April 15, 1968 (DC); 3 and 5 miles east of the Stuart Highway, on Attack Creek, two single birds (one collected, specimen in Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan), and 20-25 miles east-north-east of Tennant Creek, two single birds, during September 1967, all in large dense clumps of spinifex growing on flats near a stream (CDF); Pulka Currinya Gorge, Stuart Bluff Range, one in tall spinifex of creekbed, June 8, 1968 (AON), and several on June 22, 1968 (SP, AON); Sidedeley Range, two, June 9, 1968 (AON); Coporyllia Springs, several in spinifex of creekbed, August 17, 1968 (SP, AL). Dr Lendon, after seeing this species at the last locality, informed me that his sighting of Tawny Grassbirds, "pair between Banka Banka and Tennant Creek" (Lendon, 1966: 202), is undoubtedly referable to *Eremiornis carteri*, and that the actual site was a spinifex-lined creekbed within a mile of Churchill's Head Rock on the Stuart Highway, on August 7, 1964.

#### WESTERN AND BROWN SHRIKE-THRUSHES (*Colluricincla harmonica* group.)

Map 5. Macdonald (1968) describes a pale ecophenotype, *Colluricincla rufiventris serventyi*, ranging from mid-western Western Australia, across to south-western Northern Territory and northern South Australia, differing from *C.r. rufiventris* in the paler upperparts and the more extensive rufous-cinnamon of the underparts. The following specimens from the Northern Territory have been compared with the holotype of *serventyi* and other material from within the range specified by Macdonald, and are referable to this form: NTM 434, male ad., Docker River, Petermann Ranges, June 23, 1958, wing 118.8, tail 100.1, bill 28.6;\* NTM 2933, male ad., Honeymoon Gap, west of Alice Springs, June 2, 1965, wing 126.9, tail 106.6, bill 28.5; NTM 3651, male ad., near Kings Canyon, George Gill Range, June 12, 1967, wing 124.4, tail 104.5, bill 28.5; NTM 4169, male ad., Pulka Currinya Gorge, western end of Stuart Bluff Range, June 22, 1968, wing

\* Matthews (1922:203-4) indicated but did not resolve the discrepancies in the dates.

\*These measurements may be fully integrated with those in Macdonald (1968), which were also taken by me.

123.1, tail 97.8, bill 28.2; NTM 2239, female ad., Refuge Basin, Tanami Sanctuary, September 11, 1964, wing 114.2, tail 97.2, bill 27.3; NTM 2843, female ad., Alice Springs, April 21, 1965, wing 119.2, tail 107.5, bill 27.3; NTM 2934, female ad., Honeymoon Gap, June 2, 1965, wing 120.4, tail 99, bill 28.4; NMV B.43, male ad., Hermannsburg, 1933, wing 125, tail 102, bill 28; NMV 7097, male ad., Attack Creek, Brunchilly, March 7, 1966, wing 123, tail 102, bill 27; specimens in SAM, not measured: Harry Creek, 30 miles north of Alice Springs, April 28, 1962 (2 specimens); 5 miles east of Central Mount Wedge, October 16, 1954; Hanson's Creek, 1891.

The holotype of *Colluricincla brunnea julietae* Mathews from Sturt Creek, northern Western Australia, is, as by Mees (1964:94), correctly referred to *C. brunnea*. It is a female and appears to be not fully adult, to which one may attribute its small size. Far from regarding this single specimen as representing a separable form, as Mees (*loc. cit.*) and Mayr (1967:42) have done, I suspect that west of the ill-defined range of *C. b. "superciliosa"* (northern Queensland; this name is merely one of convenience applied to the populations of the extensive zone of intergradation between *C. brunnea* and *C. harmonica*), none of the proposed races within the undoubtedly continuous range of *C. brunnea* is worthy of nomenclatural recognition, thus concurring with Deignan, 1964:408. J. P. Rogers' record of *C. brunnea* from Tanami (Clark, 1910:76; possibly a sighting only, as no *Colluricincla* appears in Mathews' *ms.* catalogue with Rogers' Tanami specimens) may indeed refer to that form, though this is precisely the area in which one would expect to find intergradation between *C. brunnea* and *C. rufiventris* (see map 5).

(N.B. *brunnea*, *rufiventris* and *harmonica* are treated as species in the foregoing merely for convenience of discussion; they are clearly no more than subspecies-groups within the one widespread species *C. harmonica*).

WHITE-WINGED SITTELLA (*Neositta chrysoptera leucoptera*) and BLACK-CAPPED SITTELLA (*N.c. pileata*). Map 6. Specimens examined:

(1) Typical *N.c. leucoptera*: NMV: Napier Broome Bay (3), Leopold Downs, West Kimberley (3), Oscar Range, Fitzroy River (1), King River, south of Goulburn Is. (3), Mc-

Arthur River Station (2), Borrooloola (1), upper McArthur River (1). In these specimens the dorsum is pale grey-brown with black striations, and the wing-patch pure white; measurements: 8 males: wingchord 75-82, bill 14-16; 6 females: wingchord 77-82, bill 13.5-14.

(2) Near *leucoptera* but only a few feathers of the dorsum with blackish centres (less heavily-streaked above): NWV: Brunette Downs, 2 males, wingchord 86, 81, bill 15.5, 15.5. (*subleucoptera* Mathews, type-locality Alexandria, belongs here).

(3) Specimens intermediate between northern *leucoptera* and southern *pileata*:

- a) NTM 3009, female ad., Alice Springs, July 1, 1965: wing-patch mainly white, secondaries and some inner primaries faintly tinged cinnamon; dorsum pale brown-grey, few feathers with dark centres; wingchord 79.5, bill 15.5; plumage fresh.
- b) AM 041477, male subad., Camp Noll, Tanami semi-desert, April 9, 1965: wingpatch white, very faintly tinged cinnamon; dorsum unmarked pale grey-brown; wingchord 76, bill 16.
- c) NTM 3010, male ad., Alice Springs, July 1, 1965: outer primaries of wing-patch white, tinged cinnamon, grading to pale cinnamon on inner secondaries; dorsum almost unmarked pale brown-grey; wingchord 77, bill 16.5; plumage slightly worn.
- d) NTM 3967, male imm., Alcoota, December 10, 1954: wing-patch very pale cinnamon; wingchord 80, bill 14; plumage fresh.
- e) HLW 7716, male ad., Hermannsburg, June 17, 1923: wingpatch very pale cinnamon but slightly darker than in 3d; dorsum unmarked brown-grey; wingchord 83, bill 17.5; plumage fairly fresh.
- f) NTM 4548, female ad., 2 miles west of Acacia Well, Eridunda, May 17, 1969: as 3e but wing-patch slightly darker, pale cinnamon throughout; wingchord 84, bill 16.5; plumage fresh.
- g) NTM 4546, male ad., (shot with NTM 4548): wing-patch light cinnamon, slightly darker than in 3f, but still noticeably paler than in typical *pileata* from further south; dorsum unmarked light brown-grey; wingchord 84, bill 17; plumage fresh.



- h) NTM 4547, male ad., (shot with NTM 4548): as 3g; wingchord 85, bill 17; plumage fresh.
- i) NTM 2831, male ad., Alice Springs, April 8, 1965: as 3g and 3h; wingchord 76, bill 17; plumage fresh.

Into series 3 would fit the specimen collected by Whitlock at Coporyllia Springs, west of Hermannsburg (not found in NMV), in which several of the flight-feathers had the "orange band replaced partly by white" (Whitlock, 1924:276).

(4) Typical *N.c. pileata* (from within same longitudes as above specimens): NMV: Ooldea, South Australia, 1 female ad., Kychering Soak, South Australia, 2 female ads., 1 female imm. Wingchords and bills of the 3 adults 82, 15.5; 84, 15; 82.5, 15.5; of the immature 79, 14. Wing-patches bright cinnamon-chestnut as in other typical *pileata* from southern Western Australia and Victoria; dorsum light grey-brown, practically unmarked.

Three factors may have contributed jointly towards the situation presented by the *sittellas* in Central Australia:

- 1) The response of the melanins to the central arid environment, causing the southwards reduction and loss of the blackish dorsal streaking of *leucoptera* and the northwards paling of the wing-patch of *pileata* (and see Austin, 1968:5).
- 2) Hybridization over a wide area between the northern white-winged *leucoptera* and the southern chestnut-winged *pileata*; influence of *pileata* genes extends as far north as c. 20° 30' S. (specimen 3b) and of *leucoptera* genes for at least as far south as the Macdonnell Ranges.
- 3) Nomadism of individual birds, and of flocks or family parties with little crossing amongst them, hindering the formation of the hybrid gradient possible between more sedentary forms.

#### GREY-HEADED HONEYEATER (*Meliphaga keartlandi*).

Map 7. Listed by Storr (1967:57) as ranging north in the Territory to Tanami, north-west of Tennant Creek in about 19°S., Frewena and Alexandria. Localities north of these are: 14 miles south of Elliott (2 specimens in SAM, collected on May 2, 1962); Borrooloola (specimen in NMV col-

lected by Hill in February 1912; this is probably the one listed by Campbell and Kershaw, 1913: 277, as having no particulars); McArthur River Station (3 specimens in the HLW Collection obtained by Barnard on August 29 and September 24, 1913; Barnard, 1914:49); China Wall, George Creek, and Springvale, upper Nicholson River district (sightings by SP during August and September 1967); Mount Roper, in sandstone outcrops (Fifth Hall Expedition, 1968, *ms.*). This honeyeater is frequent in the Tanami semi-desert (Parker, in preparation), but is apparently absent from the Simpson Desert. Although the most easterly record in Central Australia is from Macdonald Downs (Ellis, 1948:15), the species probably occurs sparingly further east to connect with the scattered populations of western Queensland.

The crescent-marked honeyeater observed in the lower portion of the Petermann Ranges in February 1934 by Finlayson (1935:89) was probably *M. keartlandi*. Other plots from the south-western corner of the Territory on Map 7 are based on observations made by DS whilst on patrol to the Bonython Range in April 1967, and by DH whilst on a faunal survey of the Petermann Ranges during January and February 1969.

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## SELECTED GAZETTEER

The following localities mentioned in this paper are those which have not already been listed by Storr (1967) or Parker (1969).

- "About 19°S". (Hill, 1911) = 160-179 miles north of Hill's Camp 4 (*q.v.*), i.e., from about 19° 0' 27" S. to 18° 44'S. along 132° 26'E Acacia Well, Erldunda, 25° 36'S., 132° 53'E. Allambi, cattle station, 24° 13'S, 134° 25'E. Bonython Range, Western Australia/Northern Territory border, 23° 38'S., 128° 59'E. Border Waterhole, Queensland/Northern Territory border, 18° 36'S., 138° 00'E. Brookman Waters, flowing into Lake Hazlett, Western Australia near Northern Territory border, 21° 37'S., 128° 42'E. Brunette Bore, at Brunette Downs Homestead (see Hall, 1969; Mrs. Billie Gill, *in litt.*, states that there was no mistake as to the name of this bore, as suggested by Hall in reference to the note by Blackburn, 1968). Camp 4 (Hill, 1911), on the Lander River at 21° 26' 33"S., 132° 26'E. Churchill's Head Rock, Stuart Highway, 18° 55'S., 134° 07'E. Cleanskin Creek Yard, 18° 25'S., 137° 27'E. Davenport Hills, 23° 35'S., 129° 21'E. Docker River, Petermann Ranges, approx. 24° 48'S., 129° 02'E. Ehrenburg Range, 23° 17'S., 130° 21'E.

Entire Creek, approx. 22° 54'S., 135° 12'E.  
 Forrest River Mission, Western Australia, 15° 11'S.,  
 127° 51'E.  
 Gallipoli, cattle station, 19° 09'S., 137° 53'E.  
 George Creek, near upper Nicholson River, 18°  
 15'S., 137° 16'E.  
 Georgina Downs, cattle station, 21° 07'S., 137°  
 39'E.  
 Hanson's Creek (T. W. Cornock, 1891) = Hanson  
 River near the Telegraph Line, approx. 21°  
 50'S., 133° 37'E.  
 Hatches Creek, mining township, 20° 56'S., 135°  
 12'E.  
 Howard Springs, near Darwin, 12° 27'S., 131°  
 03'E.  
 Huckitta Out Station, 22° 54'S., 135° 27'E.  
 Humbert River, approx. 16° 29'S., 130° 39'E.  
 Irving Creek, Petermann Ranges. 25° 08'S., 129°  
 50'E.  
 Kings Canyon, George Gill Range, 24° 15'S.,  
 131° 35'E.  
 Kychering Soak, South Australia, possibly near  
 Kychering Hill (Malbooma) on the Trans-  
 continental Railway at 30° 40'S., 134° 09'E.  
 Lake Mackay, Western Australia/Northern Terri-  
 tory border at approx. 22° 20'S., 129° 00'E.  
 Leopold Downs (Old HS), Western Australia,  
 17° 51'S., 125° 53'E.  
 Mount Barkly, 21° 35'S., 132° 27'E.  
 Mount Roper, 14° 51'S., 135° 03'E.  
 Mount Strickland, 23° 19'S., 129° 26'E.  
 Mulga Park, cattle station, 25° 55'S., 131° 40'E.  
 Napier Broome Bay, Western Australia, 14° 05'S.,  
 126° 36'E.  
 Napperby, cattle station, 22° 31'S., 132° 45'E.  
 Ooldea, South Australia, on the Transcontinental  
 Railway at 30° 28'S., 131° 50'E.  
 Oscar Range, Western Australia, 17° 57'S., 125°  
 23'E.  
 Pulka (or Pulca) Currinya Gorge, Stuart Bluff  
 Range, 22° 50'S., 137° 52'E.  
 Quartz Ridge, Tanami semi-desert, 20° 30'S., 130°  
 14'E.  
 Red Hill = Quartz Ridge, *q.v.*  
 Reedy Rockhole, George Gill Range, 24° 18'S.,  
 131° 36'E.  
 Rockhampton Downs, cattle station, 18° 57'S.,  
 135° 11'E.  
 Seven-Ten Waterhole, upper Nicholson River, 18°  
 00'S., 137° 17'E.  
 Siddeley Range, approx. 22° 47'S., 131° 31'E.  
 Sturt Creek, Western Australia, 19° 09'S., 128°  
 09'E.  
 Talbot Well, 19° 33'S., 129° 55'E.  
 Timber Creek (near A. C. Gregory's Victoria  
 River Depot No. 1), police station, 15° 39'S.,  
 130° 28'E.  
 Walkers Creek, near Normanton, Queensland,  
 approx. 17° 28'S., 141° 10'E.  
 Well 35, Canning Stock Route, Western Aus-  
 tralia, 22° 12'S., 125° 04'E.  
 Well 48, Canning Stock Route, Western Aus-  
 tralia, 20° 15'S., 126° 31'E.  
 Willy Rockhole, 23° 16'S., 129° 45'E.  
 Wilson Creek, headwaters crossed by Tanami-  
 Hooker Creek track at approx. 19° 09'S., 130°  
 04'E.  
 Willy Rockhole, 23° 16'S., 129° 45'E.  
 Wilson Creek, headwaters crossed by Tanami-

Hooker Creek track at approx. 19° 09'S., 130°  
 04'E.  
 Corrections to "New and interesting distribution  
 records of Central Australian birds," *S. Aust.*  
*Orn.*, 25 (1969): 59-71.  
 p. 62, col. 1, seventeenth line from bottom, for  
*Micropteranthes* read *Macropteranthes*.  
 p. 66 col. 2, fourth line from bottom, for Darkin  
 read Darken.  
 p. 67, col. 1, twentyfourth line from bottom, for  
*cinnamomium* read *cinnamomeum*.  
 p. 67, col. 1, fourth line from bottom, for *cinna-*  
*momeum* read *castanotum*.  
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