

First Record of Spurwing Plover for Western Australia.—The first record of the Spurwing Plover (*Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*) for Western Australia was made at Lake Muir on November 11, 1956. Two birds were first seen on the south-west end of the lake and the attention of one of us (W.H.B.) was drawn to them by the differences between the bird and the Banded Plover (*Zonifer tricolor*) observable even at a distance. It proved impossible to procure a specimen but from a distance the lack of the black breast band and the unmarked upper wings could be seen. On consulting the *Handbook of the Birds of Western Australia*, Serventy and Whittell, 2nd ed., 1951, it was realised that these birds were not immature Banded Plover, as one of us (V.N.S.) thought they might be, but Spurwing Plover. The black neck and shoulder patch served to distinguish them from the Masked Plover (*Lobibyx miles*) of the north.

It became imperative to obtain a specimen to make sure of the identification. On our return to the lake two days later we saw three birds together. Two seemed to be paired and the third individual was collected. This bird (W.A. Museum No. A7873) proved to be a female with convoluted oviduct. The iris was yellow, the same colour as the mask. The bill was yellow at the base and horn-coloured at the tip for about half an inch. The legs were purplish pink, brighter above the "knee." The toes were horn coloured. The spur was yellow with a horn tip. The bird weighed 12 oz., using a pharmacist's balance.

Since two days elapsed between seeing the first birds and obtaining the specimen, the visit was not a fleeting one. At all times the birds kept to the margin of the lake or rocks in it and when disturbed made no attempt to fly inland. However, at this point, steep cliffs and thick timber would be a barrier to flight away from the water.

During the October Campout of the R.A.O.U. at Dumbleyung there was mention made of a local report on "lapwings." Possibly this report might have been the result of seeing Spurwing Plovers in this area. Mr. Alex Jones, with whom we discussed the find at Lake Muir, said he had noticed the birds on the lake on previous visits. It would appear, therefore, as though this is not an isolated record but the Spurwing Plover may be a fairly frequent visitor or perhaps a locally established colony.

—V. N. SERVENTY and W. H. BUTLER.

Additional Notes on the Little Shearwater.—A further visit to Eclipse Island from January 26 to February 11, 1956, gave additional opportunities for observing the behaviour of the Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*) and the following notes supplement those in my previous contribution on this subject (W.A. Nat., 5, 1955: 31).

During earlier visits when the birds had eggs (July 9-24, 1954) or young (September 9-24, 1954) Little Shearwaters were not noisy at night. During this latest visit, some 4 months before

any eggs would be laid, we found the birds far noisier than formerly and the din at night increased progressively during our stay. This increase may have been due solely to a growth in the number of birds coming ashore nightly or to the fact that the moon was waning, or to both these factors. Even on the night of January 26 we heard duetting pairs at work inside their burrows and further observations over the next few days revealed that some Little Shearwaters, either singly or in pairs, were remaining in their nests by day; these individuals would often begin crooning before dark and before the nightly influx of birds from the sea. Probably these birds were mature individuals which had bred previously in the burrows and which were reunited there after two months or so at sea, a situation which Lockley believes holds for *Puffinus puffinus* and Roberts for *Oceanites oceanicus*. Certainly, some of the Little Shearwaters seen to alight during the early part of this visit seemed already to have established their territories since immediately after landing they would run 20 or 30 yards to disappear without hesitation into a burrow. This seems unlikely behaviour for an inexperienced bird.

The number of shearwaters present did seem to be influenced by the phase of the moon. Thus on the night of January 29-30 with a clear sky and a bright moon there was less calling and fewer birds to be seen than on the previous night when the moon was full but obscured by a 10/10ths cloud layer. Again, the night of February 7-8 was dark and there were very many shearwaters present with *assimilis* calling loudly. Nevertheless, some birds would also call on bright nights with the moon appearing from behind cloud.

On February 1 a territorial dispute was seen at the mouth of a burrow. Fighting was accompanied by a medley of raucous growling sounds. The bird outside held the one within the tunnel by the wing and appeared almost to tear this off, so fierce was the struggle. The attacked bird managed to force past its opponent and flapped shakily away into the darkness, leaving the other to enter unopposed.

On February 5 the peculiar phenomenon was encountered of a shearwater singing whilst perched in a tree. Two days later this behaviour was again seen in the same place, presumably by the same bird. It was squatting 20 feet up on the crown of a tea-tree where it had presumably crash-landed as Little Shearwaters often do on Eclipse Island. The bird was singing lustily from this perch and although no other similarly situated shearwaters could be seen, there were many of them dotted about on the ground below.

On February 10 one of a pair which were courting was seen to have a reddish oil oozing from its nostrils; possibly in Little Shearwaters as with the Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), oil is passed between the birds during mutual preening operations.

—JOHN WARHAM, Perth.



Warham, John. 1957. "From Field and Study: Additional Notes on the Little Shearwater." *The Western Australian Naturalist* 5(8), 235–236.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/273730>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/311922>

Holding Institution

Western Australian Naturalists' Club (Inc.)

Sponsored by

Atlas of Living Australia

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Western Australian Naturalists' Club (Inc.)

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.