

### SUMMARY

Records of past and present distribution of the Ghost Bat, *Macroderma gigas* (Dobson) in Western Australia show that the range is shrinking and the animal is now restricted to the arid country in the Western Desert, and also to the North-West and the Kimberley Division. In Sub-Recent times it occurred much further south, and as far as the Margaret River. The bat is a cave-inhabiting species and it has taken also to live in abandoned mine shafts in the Pilbara district. It feeds on small mammals (mainly rodents and small marsupials, and to a lesser degree on the smaller bats), small birds (mainly Budgerigahs and Owlet-Nightjars), reptiles and insects. Small embryos are found in females in the Pilbara district in early August and the young are born towards the end of October or early in November. In the Kimberley Division the breeding season is earlier.

### FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Green Pygmy-Goose near Perth.**—On March 4, 1967, accompanied by Arthur Tydeman, I visited Jandalup Lake, which lies about 3 miles inland and 5 miles north of North Beach. At approximately 9 a.m. I saw two very small, pretty ducks with white face patches below the eyes and heavily barred breasts and flanks; the necks and upper-parts looked a dark brown from where we were stationed not more than a hundred yards away.

I immediately identified these as Green Pygmy-Geese, *Netta pulchellus*, as I had been familiar with this species only a week previously, and in the company of Don Tulloch, at Knuckeyes Lagoon near Darwin. My companion confirmed the identification and *pulchellus* was added to our list without further thought. It was not until I was told of this bird's rare occurrence in South-Western Australia that I realised I had seen anything unusual. The birds did not appear to be present on the following day.

—B. D. BOND, Malacca, Malaysia.

[Mr. Bond discussed this observation with me. The only specimen of this species collected in the South-West was taken by T. L. Riggert at Moora on January 8, 1966. Other observations are summarised in the *Birds of Western Australia*, Serventy and Whittell, 4th. edn., 1967: 147.—D.L.S.]

**Another Record of the Spur-Winged Plover.**—The Spur-winged Plover, *Lobibyx novae-hollandiae*, has been recorded in the South-West of this State only rarely and I submit this record of a solitary bird which I believe to be of this species.

It was on the edge of the sand flat near shallow water just inside the entrance to Wilson Inlet, approximately four miles from Denmark, during the last week of December 1965. Other birds in the vicinity included Silver Gulls, Crested Terns, sandpipers and a pair of Sooty Oystercatchers.

I was not sure of the identity of the species at the time, whether it was the Spur-winged or the very similar Masked Plover (*L. miles*). However, after referring to the drawings of both species, done by Mr. Peter Slater, I feel certain that the bird I saw was the Spur-winged Plover.

(Mrs.) N. GRAY, Claremont.

**Black Falcon in Metropolitan Area.**—At my home in Wembley I looked up into the eastern sky at 7.20 p.m. on January 3, 1967, and saw what at first glance appeared to be a crow. The bird was



drifting slowly westwards at a height of about 300 feet and only occasionally beating its long narrow wings. Because of its dark coloration and buoyant flight, I believed it might be a Black Kite, but as it flew overhead it was clear that its tail was unforked. Suddenly the hawk wheeled round and, catching the south-westerly breeze, flew swiftly towards the north-east. With its wings beating rapidly, its profile was not unlike a Peregrine Falcon's.

If, as I believe, the bird was a Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*), it would be the first record of this rare hawk for the Swan River district.

—G. M. STORR, Western Australian Museum.

#### **Congenital Malformation of the Jaw in a Tiger Snake.—**

Born in captivity, one of a litter of fifteen Tiger Snakes (*Notechis scutatus*) died at 85 days old. This animal had obvious signs at birth of malformation of the upper jaw involving absence of half of the first labial (proximal to nasal scale) on the left side, and all of the first labial and portion of the nasal scale on the right side, along with underlying tissue on both sides of the snout. This gave the lip closing surface a serrated appearance. Additionally, the upper surface of the rostral splayed and separated the internasals. The bifurcate portion of the tongue was imperfect and the nasal orifices missing.

This animal, in all other respects normal, had never shown any inclination to feed itself and had never been observed to extrude the tongue.

It is probable that if this specimen had been caught in the bush, the disfigurement would have been attributed to injuries inflicted by a rodent predator.

—A. SOFTLY, Department of Microbiology, Royal Perth Hospital.

## **OBITUARY**

### **W. B. ALEXANDER, M.A.**

Wilfrid Backhouse Alexander, an Honorary Life Member of this Club, and former Keeper of Biology in the Western Australian Museum, died in retirement at Parkstone in Dorset, England on December 18, 1965. He had a varied scientific career and was in Australia, and later in England, a scientific catalyst, as it were, inspiring fruitful developments in many natural history studies. In this State he will always be remembered for his ornithological work which set in train the modern school of bird observers. His family's association with Australia, however, began early in the last century. His great grandfather on his mother's side was the well-known Quaker missionary, James Backhouse, whose book, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (London, 1843), is crammed with valuable observations on natural history. Backhouse was in Albany and Perth from December 1837 to February 1838 and two chapters in the book deal with this visit.

W.B.A. or W.B., as he was universally known in England in his later years, was born on February 4, 1885 at Croydon, Surrey and he and two of his three brothers were initiated into nature study by their two maternal uncles who were keen amateur naturalists—James Crosfield was primarily interested in birds and Albert Crosfield was an expert botanist. From his earliest boyhood one of his keenest pleasures was to join their Saturday excursions in the Surrey lanes and woods. Both of his uncles were



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