

BIRDS IN PINUS PINASTER PLANTATIONS -
A FREQUENCY COUNT

by

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Being aware of the adverse effect exotic conifer plantings have on native plant life one is moved to enquire into what effect these plantings might have on native bird life, for surely they will favour some bird species in preference to others. If there is an answer to this question it may never be found and perhaps the best one can do is prepare a list of birds observed in local pine plantations, as was done by naturalist H. Butler for the Ghangara area, and by making frequency counts from time to time.

A frequency count was made (see table) in coastal pine plantations over a six month period, April to September 1971, using Mr. Butler's list as a guide to identification of bird species. It was thought that if members of Dwellingup fire research staff recorded the name and number of each bird species sighted during visits to the plantations - Myalup, McLarty, Somerville and Ghangara in the normal line of duty, a frequency table might be produced which would be of interest.

No attempt was made at "bird watching" and the time taken in recording the data was no greater than that given to filling in the vehicle running book each day. The record includes birds sighted by the recorders whilst travelling through or working in any plantation; the one stipulation being that only birds sighted within or above the plantation would be recorded.

In all, 49 visits were made during the six month cold-half of the year. Such an assessment could well provide a different answer were it carried out during the hot season.

It is evident that the seed eating cockatoos and parrots will be the numerically dominant species in Pinus pinaster plantations followed by the ground feeding magpies and ravens, whilst the presence in good numbers of the carnivorous butcher birds and kookaburras can be taken as a good omen. Many small birds appear to find sustenance from the pine trees by pecking about in the

thick bark, among the branches and in dead thinning tops, whilst there is no shortage of winged insects for swallows, flycatchers, etc.

Where the smallest birds are concerned, the question of habitat comes to mind for during the survey, wrens, silvereyes and several other small birds were observed mainly among scrub bushes in swamps or in young plantings which still contained scrub bushes. It would appear that uncleared swamp areas, no matter how small, within pine plantations, would be beneficial to numerous small birds as nesting places.

Frequency Table

Birds Observed in Pinus pinaster Plantations

April to September 1971

NAME	NO.	NO. VISITS	NO. PER VISIT
White tailed cockatoos	1,643	21	78.23
28 parrots	200	30	6.67
Magpies	122	23	5.30
Red tailed cockatoos	57	1	57.00
Fantails	47	19	2.47
Little wattle birds	47	19	2.47
Scarlet robins	38	19	2.00
Grey butcher birds	37	24	1.54
Ravens	34	16	2.13
White cockatoos	32	2	16.00
Splendid wrens	29	6	4.83
Yellow tailed thornbills	25	5	5.00
Kookaburras	24	14	1.71
Pipits	22	6	3.67
Golden whistlers	21	13	1.61
Black ducks	17	5	3.40
Spotted scrub wrens	11	3	3.67
Pallid cuckoos	10	8	1.25
Swallows	9	5	1.80
Silvereyes	7	3	2.33
Bronzewing pigeons	7	2	3.50
Rufus whistlers	5	1	5.00
Wagtails	4	3	1.33
Restless flycatchers	4	1	4.00
Western thornbills	4	1	4.00
Spotted pardelotes	3	1	3.00
Emus	2	1	2.00
Rosellas	2	1	2.00
Western warbler	1	1	1.00
Wedge tailed eagle	1	1	1.00
Yellow robin	1	1	1.00