

YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILLS AT WOODANILLING

Following on the report in the last issue of the sighting of yellow-billed and royal spoonbills at "Rushy Swamp", Woodanilling, we received the following report from Honorary Warden Ray Garstone.

"Yellow-billed Spoonbills are by no means rare in this area, and odd groups may be seen at some time during most summer months. Rushy Swamp (Woodanilling) and Coyrecup Lake (Katanning) are perhaps their favourite haunts.



Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*) (Photo : R. Garstone)

"In 1965 I found a nest well out in Toolibin Lake. It was quite large and well-built, not unlike the nest of a Goshawk, and contained four eggs. The nest was watched carefully and, after the young were hatched, a steel tower was set up in the water and photographs were taken. The birds were extremely friendly and all the young were reared to maturity. Many hours were spent in the hide and it was interesting to note the difference between the nesting spoonbills and the egrets who were also nesting in the vicinity.

"In 1966, 3 pairs nested in a loose colony and in 1972 a pair nested at Lake Coyrecup.

"The recent dry seasons and the fact that the lakes have not contained sufficient water and food seem to be the reason why I have no records recently. I feel that they will nest again here in suitable years when the lakes are full.

"In March, 1973 a flock of 32 Yellow-billed Spoonbills arrived at Rushy Swamp, but soon moved off

again". (These were the birds sighted by members of the Western Australian Wildlife Authority during their tour—Ed.)

It would seem that ornithologists will have to re-write their records regarding the southerly range of the Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Serventy and Whittell give the general southerly limit as Moora, although occasional sightings have been made at Cannington (1954) and Bunbury (1958).

SEA-EAGLE AT ROTTNEST

Honorary Warden W. A. Farmer of Rottnest Island has sent us the following interesting report:—

"The din and commotion among the lesser predators as a sea-eagle flew over Rottnest from east to west has probably never been exceeded on the island. The settlement's several hundred ravens were the first to spot the stranger. Shrieking their warning call they took off *en masse* and, near the main lighthouse in the centre of the island, Rottnest's ten resident ospreys joined the attack. But the great eagle soared effortlessly in vast circles which always had the attackers flying in the wrong direction.

"No matter how vigorously they flapped their wings the ravens could not exceed above 1,500 ft., and, above them whistling madly, the ospreys reached an altitude limit of some 2,000 ft., still 1,000 ft. below the sea eagle.

"Over Vlaming Point (West End) the eagle changed the direction of its reconnaissance flight towards Garden Island and only then did Rottnest's avian defence force break off the pursuit and return wearily to their foraging grounds.

"The island's ravens have had only one previous experience of high altitude flying when, many years ago, the Perth Gun Club members were invited to thin out the ravens. Local residents expected the birds to leave the settlement after the first shotgun blasts, but instead they went straight upwards until they 'ran out of gas' and finally flopped back, not into the trees, but to the actual earth; they were completely exhausted."

(This eagle would be a White-breasted Sea Eagle. These are more commonly seen along the coast further north but are found around the whole coastline—Editor.)

CORRIGENDA—VOL 4 No. 1

Page 15—Yellow-tailed black cockatoos should read red-tailed black cockatoos. (The birds sighted were probably immature red-tailed black cockatoos—Ed.)

Page 18—Night kestrels should read night herons.