

The reason that Parry did not record *Antechinus* in the diet of Kookaburras may have been because *Antechinus* are only available to Kookaburras for a very short period each year. In late spring, after mating, male *Antechinus* undergo a rapid senescence and die. The *Antechinus* observed in this incident could only have been a senescent male or pregnant female.

A question that arises from this observation is whether or not, under natural conditions an *Antechinus* could, when attacked, overpower a Kookaburra?

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ABW

Black-faced Woodswallow attempting to feed on a skink.

In August, 1975, the recently dead body of a Black-faced Woodswallow *Artamus cinereus*, was found at Ivanhoe, New South Wales. The cause of death was undoubtedly the skink jammed in the bird's throat and which it is reasonable to assume the Woodswallow had taken as prey.

The skink, which was measured as exactly 4 inches (102mm) in length was forwarded to the Australian Museum, Sydney, where P. Webber classed it as member of the genus *Ctenotus* with a very tentative specific identification as *Ctenotus regius*. Important characters were missing in its semi-digested condition.

I have consulted much of the Australian literature and can find no record of this or any other woodswallow feeding upon lizards. All agree the diet of the woodswallows consists of insects caught in the air, diversified by pollen or nectar gleaned from blossoms. However a certain amount of prey is taken by them all from a fixed perch and in the case of the Black-faced probably the greater part of its feeding activity is the 'ground pounce from a high perch' type. In inland Australia one can be excused for assuming telephone lines were strung for Black-faced Woodswallows



Black-faced Woodswallow choked to death by skink.

to sit on (and the telephone poles erected for Brown Falcons *Falco berigora*). It can therefore be expected that the Black-faced will grab anything small moving on the ground, including skinks. In this particular instance the 'eyes were definitely bigger than the belly (or throat)', with fatal consequences.

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ABW

Giant Petrels at Casey, Antarctica. The Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* breeds at several localities on the Antarctic Peninsula and on subantarctic islands but there are only four known breeding places on the edge of the Antarctic Continent itself. One of these is at the Frazier Islands near the Australian base at Casey. The Fraziers, which lie 17 km offshore at 66°14'S., 110°10'E., comprise Charlton, Dewart and Nelly Islands, as well as several small rocks and they are the outermost of the Windmill Islands.

Because of the notoriously unpredictable nature of the sea-ice in the Casey area, the Fraziers cannot be visited over the ice in winter. The distance is too great for safe travel by small boats in Antarctic conditions, even though such boats were used for ornithological work at Casey during the summer of 1977-78. Thus, helicopter travel is the only practicable means of access.

The author was Medical Officer with the 1977 Wintering Party at Casey. Visits to the Fraziers were made during both the February 1977 and January 1978 changeover periods, while the *Thala Dan* was anchored at Casey and the helicopters she carries were available for scientific work. Thus the chicks of two successive breeding seasons were banded. Previous bandings at these colonies have been reported by Murray (1972).

The Fraziers are steep and rocky. Much snow and ice remains permanently on the islands but there are several raised exposed ridges which are kept clear of snow by the wind during most of the year, and it is on these that the birds breed. The sites are completely exposed and loose stones provide the only nesting material.

In 1977, visits on February 13 and 17, revealed an estimated total of 75 flying birds on Nelly and 150 on Dewart. Several of these were very dark juveniles. Birds were seen on Charlton also but time was not available for landing there on these visits. Only one white-phase bird was seen, on Dewart.

Seventy chicks in the pre-flying stage were found and all were banded (27 on Nelly; 43 on Dewart). There was a very striking variability in the size of the chicks and in their state of plumage. Some were still covered in down while others had very well-developed feathering, especially on the wings. There is clearly a very extended and asynchronous breeding season among these birds. Watson (1975) gives hatching dates as late November to early January and fledging to April. Bills were measured on fifty-seven of the seventy chicks, using the distance from the tip of the bill to the limit of the feathering. Bill lengths ranged between 63 and 93 mm with a mean of 78 mm. For adult birds, the corresponding measurements given by Watson (1975) are above 97 mm for males, and below 97 mm for females.

Another helicopter trip was made to the Fraziers on January 25, 1978. All three islands were visited on this occasion. A total of 101 pre-flying chicks was banded (48 on Nelly; 47 on Dewart; 6 on Charlton). One