

(a)



(b)



Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, Elliott River, Queensland, 17 December 1988: (a) adult at nest with three eggs, (b) runner.

Nesting of the Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* at Elliott River, North Queensland

There are few, widely scattered breeding localities known for the Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* in Queensland, and any information may assist in the management of this endangered species (Hill et al. 1988). I first recorded the Little Tern nesting at Elliott River in north Queensland (19°53'S, 147°53'E) on 12 June 1954, when many eggs were destroyed by a high tide. Subsequently, I was informed by reliable sources that a colony of Little Terns nested on a sandspit at the mouth of the Elliott River in June 1985. On 15 December 1985 I therefore made a return visit to this sandspit, where I found a few Little Terns flying around and many scrapes in the sand at high-water mark. Only two scrapes contained eggs (two in each). It was apparent that the first high tide would destroy these nests.

On 9 December 1986 I made a further visit to Elliott River, where I found four Little Tern nests containing two eggs each and several with one egg. A few Black-naped Terns *Sterna sumatrana* with eggs were in a scattered colony. On 19 December only three pairs of Little Terns were nesting, and only one nest contained two eggs.

On 17 December 1988 I found three Little Tern nests — one with one egg, one with three eggs and one with one chick (Plate 50). A visit in June 1989 found the sandspit unsuitable for Little Tern nesting, following a cyclone in April. About 20 Little Terns were sitting on another sandbar which was exposed at low tide. I could not determine whether the birds were in breeding or non-breeding plumage.

It appears that the Little Tern colony at this site is small, produces few young each year, and nest sites are susceptible to high-tide and cyclone damage. However, it is significant as there are very few breeding colonies known in Queensland, especially colonies known to be regularly used (R. Hill pers. comm.).

References

Hill, R., Bamford, M., Rounsevell, D. & Vincent, J. (1988), 'Little Terns and Fairy Terns in Australia — an RAOU Conservation Statement', *RAOU Report* 53.

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Observations on the Green-backed Honeyeater *Glycichaera fallax*

The literature concerning the Green-backed Honeyeater *Glycichaera fallax* refers to its iris colour as white (e.g. Rand & Gilliard 1967, Beehler et al. 1986), grey-white (Pizzey & Doyle 1980), and pale grey (Slater et al. 1986) or brown (Slater 1984, Macdonald et al. 1984); Iredale & Medland (1956) noted that it has been recorded as both white and brown. There is apparently no reference to the soft-part colours of young birds, either juvenile or immature.

On 21 August 1989 while accompanied by N. Baker, M. Black, C. Lear and W. Powell I chanced upon an adult Green-backed Honeyeater feeding a juvenile between the Middle and East Claudie Rivers near Iron Range in north Queensland. The birds were found in the outer foliage of a large *Barringtonia acutangula* near a dry creek bed in semi-deciduous vine thicket adjoining semi-deciduous mesophyll vine forest (see Hynes & Tracey 1980). The young bird, although fully fledged, had only recently left the nest as it was continuously repeating a low *chip* call to which the adult responded by feeding it.