

Although no observations were made on the 1986 brood size to determine whether it was the result of dump nesting, it would seem unlikely that a Maned Duck could physically incubate at least 50 eggs. Similarly, no observations were made on just how the breeding pair came to end up with 50 young, but one possible explanation is that the breeding pair had either accidentally or deliberately rounded up two or more clutches of young which hatched around the same time.

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Black-shouldered Kites *Elanus notatus* Active at Night

The Letter-winged Kite *Elanus scriptus* is well known for its nocturnal habits (Cupper & Cupper 1981; Hollands 1977, 1979; Klapste 1979), but the Black-shouldered Kite *E. notatus* is considered to be diurnal and crepuscular (Baker-Gabb 1984). This note records an observation of Black-shouldered Kites active at night.

During July 1988 Bruce Quin and myself conducted spotlight surveys along roads in the vicinity of Walpeup, north-west Victoria, searching for Barn Owls *Tyto alba*. One night at 2330 h a white bird was seen perching in an exposed position on a low branch by the side of the main Walpeup-Patchewollock road. Although it flew away as we approached we identified it as an *Elanus* kite. Approximately 100 m away another *Elanus* kite was perched on the outer branches of a large tree in an open field. This bird was approached on foot to within 30 m, and as it flew (almost directly overhead) it was positively identified as a Black-shouldered Kite. A short time later we observed two birds, both identified as Black-shouldered Kites, flying together over a nearby paddock. Their exposed perching sites strongly suggested that the kites were not roosting but were, or had been, active.

Previous records of nocturnal activity by Black-shouldered Kites include Bateman (1975) and Klapste (1979). Our observation was made on a cold but fine moonlit night. Recent heavy rains and cold weather had contributed to a sudden and substantial decrease in the number of House Mice *Mus musculus* in the area (CSIRO and personal trapping data). House Mice, a major food source for Black-shouldered Kites (Baker-Gabb 1984; Cupper & Cupper 1981) are mainly active at night (Hyett & Shaw 1980). Just as Hollands (1979) observed Letter-winged Kites hunting during the day when they were stressed, it is possible that the Black-shouldered Kites' nocturnal activities were associated with hunting, and they were attempting to exploit a diminished but important resource via a temporal shift in activity patterns. However, we did not see them hovering or feeding.

References

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