

what their thoughts on the subject were. They confirmed my impression that crested grebes are very few this year in comparison with past years.

The reason for this scarcity seems clear: the water in the south-west corner of the lagoon is highly polluted to an extent I've not known previously. I understand that the effluent from Midway Point Sewerage plant is not filtered before being discharged into Orielton Lagoon. There is thus little chance of any improvement in water quality in the lagoon unless better sewerage treatment facilities are installed.

Members of the Bird Observers Association of Tasmania have been lobbying for years to have the lagoon and the adjacent Pittwater proclaimed a wildlife reserve, but so far without success. The area is recognized as being of international importance for migratory birds. Given its significance it is deplorable that the authorities are willing to sanction the degradation of the Lagoon.

THE LESSER WANDERER BUTTERFLY *DANAUS* *CHRYSSIPUS* IN TASMANIA.

Peter Brown

Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, 134 Macquarie Street, Hobart,
Tasmania 7000

On a brief field trip to the north-west of Tasmania on 18/19 January 1993, I observed five specimens of the vagrant Lesser Wanderer butterfly, *Danaus chrysippus*, at four different locations (Stanley, Mt. Cameron West, Marawah and along the Temma road near Arthur River). I was able to examine three of the specimens closely and all looked extremely fresh, almost as if they had just hatched, so much so that my companion Mark Neyland expressed some doubt that they could have crossed Bass Strait. The weather conditions at the time were mild to warm, but, importantly, it followed two days of extreme temperatures on 15/16 January with moderate to strong northerly winds.

The Lesser Wanderer is a large butterfly, approximately the same size as the Common Brown, *Heteronympha merope*. It is caramel brown on the upper surface with a dark, almost black margin, broadest on the outer forewing where there is also a white blotch. The hindwings are paler caramel with a dotted dark brown and white margin. It is not a particularly swift flyer nor does it appear particularly strong on the wing but obviously its looks belie its capabilities for it is able to fly long distances. We did not see any of our specimens land, but one showed some interest in some flowering thistles.

The butterfly is known to occur at intervals in Tasmania, but it is never

recorded in any numbers. Despite my long interest in butterflies in Tasmania, these are the first ones I have seen in the State. The late Len Couchman who had a lifelong interest in butterflies and who had been actively collecting in Tasmania for more than 30 years when he wrote *Butterflies of Tasmania* (Couchman and Couchman 1977) had only seen one specimen on the wing during all that time. Couchman collected his specimen in 1968 at Bronte, and in searching various museum records was able to locate only one previous specimen taken at Zeehan in 1907. In March 1971 five butterflies were reported from Zeehan and in 1974 a keen collector observed three specimens in different parts of the State in January and February. In 1975, one was collected on Mt. Anne.

The five specimens observed in the far north-western corner of the state indicate that there was probably a considerable influx of this species into Tasmania, and it is likely that they would have radiated out into other parts of the State subsequent to the sightings reported here.

REFERENCES

- Couchman, L.E and Couchman, R. (1977) *The Butterflies of Tasmania*. pp. 66-96. In *The Tasmanian Yearbook* No. 11. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Hobart).

ESTUARINE PLATYPUS ACTIVITY

Don Hird

17 Union Street, West Hobart, Tasmania 7000

Published records of platypus utilizing estuarine habitats are apparently lacking (Grant 1984). However, Tom Grant (pers. comm.), an expert on platypus, has received verbal reports of such events. The following observations of platypus utilizing estuarine habitats are apparently the most detailed available to date. The information was transmitted to the Mammal Survey Group of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club by observers who prefer to keep their identity and the details of the site confidential for fear of disturbance to the animals involved. I have spoken to the observers and believe that the information is reliable.

The observations reported here are from an estuary in south-eastern Tasmania. The estuary is fed by a substantial river, with the actual river mouth being more than three km upstream of the report site. The section of the estuary from where these sightings were made is about 600m wide, with the waterway gradually narrowing upstream to the river mouth. The salinity of the water concerned is