



RESPONSE



## Response to Olsen's question of reliability

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The aim of Cooney *et al.* (2006) was to collate recorded instances of mistletoe nesting among Australian birds. We reviewed nesting accounts and also sought out unpublished records of this behaviour. Unpublished descriptions from experienced ornithologists, naturalists and field workers are important, because they often provided additional information omitted from published records. As Olsen notes, a substantial number of these accounts were provided by Young. Young does not specialize in mistletoe-nesting birds, but three aspects of his contributions are noteworthy. Firstly, Young has spent considerable time in the field, including decades of field-work in regions where little formal ecological research has been conducted. Second, Young was the only source of records which specifically noted birds nesting in fallen mistletoes. Thus, species that nest on the ground, in reeds or within spinifex, occasionally build their nest in mistletoe clumps that have fallen upon their usual substrate. This is specifically noted in Table 1 (Cooney *et al.* 2006). Third, Young is an exceptional naturalist with considerable expertise in finding

nests, as described previously by Hollands (1991). Unexpected observations of mistletoe nesting birds were not confined to his records. The instances of Laughing Kookaburra and Peregrine Falcon nesting in mistletoes were from independent observers (Table 2, Cooney *et al.* 2006), both of which represent families previously unrecorded exhibiting this behaviour in a global review (Watson 2001). Cooney *et al.* 2006 specifically states that further work is required to assess the significance of these observations and outlines a framework by which this might be undertaken.

### References

- Cooney, S. J. N., Watson, D. M., and Young, J. (2006). Mistletoe nesting in Australian birds—a review. *Emu: Austral Ornithology* **106**, 1–12. doi:10.1071/MU04018
- Hollands D. (1991). 'Birds of the Night: Owls, Frogmouths and Nightjars of Australia.' (Reed Books: Balgowlah NSW.)
- Watson D. M. (2001). Mistletoe—a keystone resource in forests and woodlands worldwide. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* **32**, 219–249.